

Sarah Gonzales-McLinn

Clemency Application Supporting Materials

KDoC #0111666

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Personal Statement: Reasons for Seeking Clemency

Sarah Gonzales-McLinn

My name is Sarah Gonzales-McLinn. At this writing, I am 28 years old. I have been incarcerated since February 1, 2014; first at the Douglas County (Kansas) Jail, at Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF) since October 2015. I was moved from TCF's medium-security side to its minimum-security side in the fall of 2021. My "custody" is low-medium. My release date is February 1, 2039.

I am asking for clemency because (1) I have worked hard to rehabilitate myself in the nine years since my initial incarceration, (2) I have a release plan to ensure that I am supported and successful upon my return to the community, (3) Victim advocates have long raised concerns about how my case has been handled.

Achievements While Incarcerated

Shortly after my arrest, I sought help in addressing my past trauma and my mental health needs. During my 22 months at the Douglas County Jail, I took advantage of all the programming that was available to me. I completed cognitive thinking and behavior classes; I participated in the writing program and in both the Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups; I attended weekly church and Bible study meetings.

During the two years prior to my arrest, ages 17½ to 19, I was isolated from my family. My parents had divorced. I occasionally spoke to my father; I did not speak to my mother. Since my incarceration, I have mended my relationships with my parents, my sister, and others affected by my actions. I have written several letters of apology and, for my own peace of mind and healing, letters of forgiveness. This is in keeping with 12 Step program through A.A.

My relationships with family members are now healthy.

I have worked vigorously on building a relationship with God. He has taught me what unconditional love is and showed me the road to healing. I have been baptized through Freedom Place Ministries.

While at Douglas County Jail, I also embraced physical wellness. I now go to the gym at least six days a week. I love to run. Exercise has become a way of coping with the anxiety and depression that have plagued me for my whole life. I also practice yoga and meditation on a regular basis.

These practices have given me a sense of mental clarity that I did not have before. One by one, long-closed doors are opening.

Throughout my time at both Douglas County Jail and TCF, I have maintained meaningful relationships with staff at the Willow Domestic Violence Center in Lawrence. They have given me much-needed support and emotional encouragement.

While at TCF, I have completed several programs put on by the Urban Ministry Institute of Topeka: Victory Walk, Getting Motivated to Change, and Fight the Good Fight of Faith. I've also participated in the Kairos Inside

Weekend program, and I've completed courses in cognitive thinking, financial education, and character development.

I was a member of the Reaching Out From Within (ROFW) from June 2016 until fall of 2022, but recently left the program due to a scheduling conflict with my dog-training responsibilities.

Through ROFW, I helped facilitate many speaking engagements, during which I shared my story with groups touring the facility. I have also addressed groups of at-risk youth and college students. This has been a special and rewarding experience as I believe that part of God's plan for my life is to help others who may find themselves in power-and-control situations like the one I was in -- or to prevent them from going there in the first place.

As of this writing, I have been incarcerated for almost nine years, roughly one-third of my life. While at TCF, I have received only six disciplinary reports.

I served as an 'activities porter' for many years. I worked as a technician in the dental lab for two years, acquiring the skills required for making full and partial dentures. When I heard about the Washburn University program for degree-seeking students on Central Unit, I began working toward getting an 'exception' for low-medium custody. I was approved in the fall of 2021.

I successfully completed my first semester and am currently taking four fall-semester classes: Introduction to Economics, Introduction to Women's Studies, Computer Concepts and Applications, and Contemporary College Mathematics.

Finally, I am also active in the "Pooches and Pals" program that trains dogs for people with physical or visual impairments. Every dog we train has the potential to change the life of the person it goes to. The dogs are provided free of charge to people with disabilities. I am currently a primary handler.

Release Plans

Since my incarceration, I have come to realize that my immaturity and use of drugs and alcohol while in a situation governed by control and abuse impacted my ability to respond to my circumstance responsibly and without violence.

If I were to be granted clemency, I would ask that my residential and mental health needs be referred to one or more reputable programs in the Kansas City metro area. I would support making compliance with their reintegration and therapy plans a condition of my parole.

While in the programs, I plan on having a job. I am aware of a KC area hospital that hires former inmates in its cafeteria and cleaning departments. I'm also a trained Dental Lab Technician and am aware of dental labs in the KC area that have hired graduates of the TCF program.

I take pride in being a hard worker. I know I can excel at any job that fits my qualifications.

Other family members have assured me that they will assist me in finding work and attaining financial independence. My residential options will include start-up stays in Kansas, Florida, and California.

My long-term preference would be to relocate to California to be with my Aunt Mona. She has a master's degree in psychology and has worked with inmates returning to society. She would be able to connect me with resources and be a reliable source of emotional support.

Remorse

I am truly sorry for the mistakes I have made and how they caused an untold number of people to suffer -- in my family, certainly, and in my victim's family as well.

I wish that I could find the words to better describe how I feel, but I can't, because they don't exist.

I can only say that when I moved into that house, I never anticipated the things that would occur. I was young and did not know how to handle situations that would quickly come my way.

I didn't know how to handle the feelings of fear, shame, and confusion that I believed to my very core -- that I was alone, that no one cared, that my family wouldn't want me, that NO ONE would want me, that there was no help for me, and there was no way out.

Sorrow is now a part of my everyday life. I wish my efforts to reach out to doctors and mental health professionals had been more fruitful and that shame and fear had not paralyzed me and sealed my mouth shut.

I acknowledge that an abundance of drugs and alcohol further clouded my judgment.

I have written letters of apology to those that I'm allowed to. I pray for forgiveness.

For all our sakes, I wish I had known how to unscramble my thoughts and be the woman that God intended me to be. God knows that I would if I could.

Concerns About my Case

I have never denied what happened on the evening of January 14, 2014. However, it wasn't until after my incarceration that I came to realize:

- I had been "groomed."
- I had been purposely isolated from my friends and family.
- I had been indentured.
- I had been coerced into believing I was powerless to leave; that I was undesirable, a burden; that if I left, no one would want me, and I would soon find myself penniless and "on the street."

A coalition of victim advocates has put together a position paper and several exhibits on my case. On the following pages, you will find Exhibits A-F.

A Note on Supporting Materials for Exhibits A-F

Some of the evidence referenced in the following exhibits is highly personal. In our attempt to protect the identities of those who may wish to remain private and to protect additional victims of Mr. Sasko's predatory behaviors, we have omitted names wherever possible for this public document.

We have, however, provided copies of all the original materials obtained from Ms. McLinn's evidentiary files in clearly labeled envelopes with pertinent information highlighted for your convenience.

Additional materials may be requested by contacting:

David Ranney

785-760-5011

daveranney52@gmail.com

Exhibit A

Request for Clemency from Victim Advocates

November 8, 2022

Dear Gov. Laura Kelly,

As advocates for survivors of sex trafficking and domestic violence, we are writing to express support for executive clemency for Sarah Gonzales-McLinn.

Ms. McLinn killed Harold “Hal” Sasko in Lawrence, Kansas, in January 2014. She was convicted of first-degree murder and given a Hard 50 sentence. The verdict and sentence were upheld by the Kansas Supreme Court in 2018. The Hard 50 sentence was reduced to a Hard 25 as part of an ineffective-counsel settlement in May 2021.

Neither the trial nor the settlement resolved concerns that Ms. McLinn had been groomed and trafficked by Mr. Sasko and, in the words of her appellant attorney, held in “sexual slavery” for almost a year. Instead, her trial focused on whether Ms. McLinn’s mental condition (dissociative identity disorder) prevented her from forming criminal intent. It did not address her sexual trauma and its ties to her behavior.

Though Ms. McLinn’s trial attorney’s decision not to mount a battered woman’s syndrome defense was raised during the ineffective counsel appeal, Ms. McLinn was encouraged to take the reduction in sentence rather than risk a new trial.

Advocates have long argued that regardless of Ms. McLinn’s mental condition, she was a sexually traumatized young woman who killed her abuser, a much older man who’d been raping her two to four times a week for almost a year.

A Hard-25-to-life sentence is overly harsh. Ms. McLinn has been incarcerated for almost nine years. That’s long enough. We support a significant reduction in sentence or ‘time-served’ release.

Sincerely -




David Ranney
retired newspaper reporter

Megan Stuke
*Executive Director of The Willow Domestic Violence Center,
Lawrence, Kansas*



Martha Hodgesmith
*Attorney, disability rights activist, member Kansas Appleseed
board of directors*



Sarah Jane Russell
*former director of the Douglas County Rape Victim Support
Services*



Dr. Sharon Sullivan
Washburn University professor in Theatre, Women's Studies, and Creative Writing

Jane Adams
children's advocate



Joan Wagnon
former member Kansas House of Representatives, former Kansas Department of Revenue secretary, former mayor of Topeka, former executive director of Topeka YWCA

Dorthy Stucky Halley (PROXY)
co-founder Family Peace Initiative counseling service, former director of the Victim Services Division within the Kansas Attorney General's Office



Mikki Burcher
Change Coach at Mikale Burcher, community advocate + activist



Sarah Deer
University of Kansas Distinguished Professor in Women, Gender and Sexuality, and School of Public Affairs and Administration



Joan Schultz
former executive director at The Willow Domestic Violence Center, Lawrence, Kansas

Sky Westerlund (PROXY)
former executive director of Kansas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers

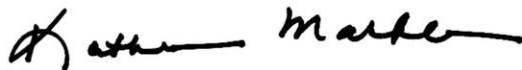
Curt & Christie Brungardt (PROXY)
co-founders of Jana's Campaign, a national organization dedicated to reducing gender and relationship violence; the Brungardts' daughter, Jana Mackey, was murdered by her abuser in 2008



Alice Lieberman
retired University of Kansas School of Social Welfare professor

Becca Speilman
Program Director, Center for Safety and Empowerment

SuEllen Fried (PROXY)
nationally recognized anti-violence and anti-bullying advocate, co-founder of Reaching Out From Within, a self-help program for incarcerated men and women



Kathleen Marker
YWCA Northeast Kansas, chief executive officer

Melinda Henneberger (PROXY)
former Kansas City Star columnist now with the Sacramento Bee; awarded Pulitzer Prize in May 2022

Exhibit B

Case Overview

Sarah Gonzales-McLinn was 19 years old when she killed Harold “Hal” Sasko; he was 52. At his invitation, she had moved in with him two months shy of her 18th birthday. He promised to give her a better life, pay for college, show her how to run a business, and be the father figure she longed for. He professed to be a Christian, he encouraged her to call him “Dad.” He told friends and associates that she was a troubled stepdaughter.

Ms. McLinn was an especially vulnerable teenager. Before she met Mr. Sasko, her mental health history included a childhood marred by a male neighbor’s multiple acts of sexual molestation; her parents’ bitter divorce, resulting in deep feelings of loss and abandonment; being raped by an older acquaintance when she was 16 (her assailant left two cigarette-burn scars on her left forearm); an attempted suicide, followed by hospitalization, a PTSD diagnosis, major depression, ‘cutting,’ and self-medicating with alcohol and marijuana.

During her parents’ divorce, Ms. McLinn, then 14 (almost 15), landed a job at one of Mr. Sasko’s two CiCi’s Pizza restaurants in Topeka. He also owned the CiCi’s franchise in Lawrence. After noticing the scars and learning that she was estranged from her parents, Mr. Sasko took an interest in her. At the time, he’d been married four times to three different women. Each marriage had ended in divorce. He was living alone.

According to police reports and recordings in Ms. McLinn evidentiary files, Mr. Sasko and his then-15-year-old daughter often took pizzas to Ms. McLinn’s house when her mother was not at home. Mr. Sasko told his daughter, who was spending the summer with him, that Ms. McLinn and her siblings were “underprivileged.”



A photo of Ms. McLinn, 14, taken around the time she began working at CiCi’s Pizza.

The daughter later told police that she couldn’t help but notice that Mr. Sasko had been texting Ms. McLinn “a lot.” When her father was driving, she said, he would ask her to use his cell phone to call someone or send a text; she could see that he had been texting Ms. McLinn. The same was true, she said, when he let her use his phone at his apartment.

After the daughter returned to her mother’s home in Texas, Mr. Sasko continued to text Ms. McLinn, then a junior at Topeka High School, with offers to take her to lunch. He told her not to tell her mother because she might get the wrong idea. The grooming had begun.

Grooming occurs when an older adult uses trust and emotional connection to build a relationship with a younger person for purposes of exploitation.

After graduating a semester early, Ms. McLinn moved in with Mr. Sasko. He provided her with unrestricted access to marijuana and vodka and, later, cocaine and ecstasy.

A month later, Mr. Sasko took her to a plastic surgeon in Liberty, Mo., for a consultation on a “nose job” that she’d long wanted. Ms. McLinn turned 18 on July 9, 2012; she had the surgery on Aug. 2.

Ms. McLinn did not testify at her trial because her attorney feared she would kill herself. During her ineffective counsel appeal, however, she said that within a few weeks of the surgery, Mr. Sasko told her he was lonely. He said he thought he was in love with her; he said they should go on dates. Ms. McLinn resisted the overtures.

Ms. McLinn told Dr. Marilyn Hutchinson, a forensic psychologist, that after a few weeks, Mr. Sasko threatened to kick her out of the house if she did not have sex with him. She relented but not until after he’d “...gotten her almost blackout drunk” on shots of vodka. The next morning, she told Mr. Sasko she didn’t want it to happen again; she thought it was “disgusting.”

Mr. Sasko dismissed her concerns, saying that these sorts of things happen when people drink. Not a big deal.

Ms. McLinn said Mr. Sasko continued to pressure her for sex whenever he was drinking. She tolerated the non-consensual encounters by drinking herself into a semi-conscious state: “I would get as drunk as I could and just lay there,” she said, adding that refusing consent wasn’t an option, “... he would just act like he didn’t hear me. Or, like, when I move my arms, like, he would just hold my arms.”

Police reports indicate that Mr. Sasko was 6 feet tall and weighed 190 pounds; Ms. McLinn was 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighted 130 pounds.

Under Kansas law, non-consensual sexual intercourse and/or sexual intercourse with someone who is incapable of giving consent due to the effects of alcohol or drugs is considered rape.

Shortly after their first sexual encounter, Mr. Sasko let Ms. McLinn know that she would have to pay rent and reimburse him for food, gas, cell phone, car repairs, and her dog’s veterinary bill. He added the nose surgery expense – approximately \$6,000 – to her tab.

Ms. McLinn, who had given up her CiCi’s job for a part-time sales position at Office Depot, told Dr. Hutchinson that Mr. Sasko soon commandeered her paychecks because she owed him far more than she earned.

At the same time, he told her she was undesirable, a burden, and destined for homelessness. He often threatened to sue her for the thousands of dollars he said she owed him. Such a lawsuit, he said, would ruin her credit rating and she would not be able to buy a car or rent an apartment; she would be homeless. Ms. McLinn became indentured; the trafficking had begun.

Sex trafficking is not limited to pimps and prostitution; it includes men exploiting women for their own gratification.

Ms. McLinn quit her Office Depot job due to anxiety and ever-worsening depression. Mr. Sasko continued to belittle her, telling her she was unattractive, that men didn’t like flat-chested women, and that she needed a

“curvier body.” He pressured her to have breast augmentation surgery but after being told she was too young, he then arranged for her to have butt implants.

Ms. McLinn told Dr. Hutchinson that while she objected to the procedure, she also felt she had no choice because she had nowhere to go, she was cut off from her family, she had no money, she knew Mr. Sasko would sue her if she left, and he “...wouldn’t stop talking about (the surgery).”

During her appeal, she testified: “I feel like, to him, I was just his at this point...like he owned me at that point, and that the (butt) surgery just solidified it for him.” Mr. Sasko added the operation’s cost, approximately \$10,000, to her bill.

Ms. McLinn’s mental health, already fragile, plummeted. She told Dr. Hutchinson that she hated herself; she hated Mr. Sasko; and “...spent the summer depressed, lying on the couch getting high.” The sexual assaults continued into the summer, fall and winter.

In late December, Ms. McLinn broke from reality. She told Dr. Hutchinson that she had thoughts of killing herself, her parents, or Mr. Sasko. She was hearing voices. She saw dead people walking around, faceless and bloody. She believed the house was poisoned. She thought the world was coming to an end.

On Jan. 11, 2014, a Saturday, Ms. McLinn asked Google, “Why do I feel so differently from other people?” Later that day, she sent her sister a text: “I’m starting to realize I don’t want to be tied down to a job or debt. I want real freedom and I know how to get it, but it means giving up a lot. It’s like, do I do what friends and family think is right or do I risk being happy and not trapped anymore? I feel like a caged animal right now and it’s making me crazy and on edge.”

On Tuesday morning, Mr. Sasko texted Ms. McLinn: “Hey good morning, thank you for last night. It was good, we never got to talk about Sunday. I apologize for trying to sleep with you. Tonight, before we get going can we talk? Please and thank you.”

Later that afternoon, Mr. Sasko texted Ms. McLinn, asking her to put some beer in the refrigerator for him. Ms. McLinn told Dr. Hutchinson that she interpreted this to mean he would be drinking, and she would be raped again that night.

Ms. McLinn killed Mr. Sasko shortly before midnight. She drove his car to Florida, where she hoped to see the ocean before her inevitable arrest. Ms. McLinn was arrested 11 days later at Everglades National Park; she had slept in the car each night. The next day, she told Lawrence detectives that immediately after killing Mr. Sasko, she used his blood to write FREEDOM on a nearby wall. When the detectives asked what she was trying to express, she replied: “I guess that’s what I felt.”

Ms. McLinn’s mental health had reached its breaking point. Dr. Hutchinson explained that in Ms. McLinn’s mind, the person known as Sarah was dead and that conflicting personalities – Vanessa and Alyssa, primarily -- had decided that the only way to escape Mr. Sasko’s abuse was to either kill him or commit suicide. Alyssa killed Mr. Sasko to protect herself and to block Vanessa’s suicide. In her mind, Dr. Hutchinson said, Alyssa acted in self-defense.

Exhibit C

Forensic Psychological Evaluations

Dr. Marilyn Hutchinson is an experienced forensic psychologist; she has testified in more than 300 murder trials nationwide, most involving the battered woman syndrome. She was retained by Ms. McLinn's attorney to conduct a thorough evaluation of Ms. McLinn's mental condition.

Typically, forensic evaluations involve three to five hours of in-person interviews. Dr. Hutchinson's interviews with Ms. McLinn spanned 8 sessions and 17½ hours.

Dr. Hutchinson concluded that Ms. McLinn had Dissociative Identity Disorder (also known as Multiple Personality Disorder) due in large part to early childhood experiences with a "demented" neighbor who, with some regularity, "...sexually assaulted her and threatened her with dead animals." Her parents failed to recognize and address their daughter's exposure to trauma.

The situation worsened when Ms. McLinn's parents went through a bitter divorce, during which both parents immersed themselves in new relationships, leaving Ms. McLinn, then 15, and her older sister, to care for their three adopted brothers with special needs.

Ms. McLinn told Dr. Hutchinson that she experienced deep and long-lasting feelings of anger, betrayal, and abandonment. When she was 16, Ms. McLinn was raped by an older acquaintance who twice burned her with a cigarette and threatened to kill her and her family if she told anyone.

The rape, Dr. Hutchinson said, allowed Ms. McLinn's latent -- *and conflicting* -- personalities to take control of Sarah who, according to Ms. McLinn, had died shortly after the rape. As Ms. McLinn's mental health worsened, the personalities concluded that the only way to escape Mr. Sasko's abuse was to either kill him or commit suicide. The more dominant personality, known as Alyssa, killed Mr. Sasko.

Dr. Hutchinson wrote: "Like the battered woman who kills when her abuser is passed out or asleep, so did Alyssa."

Hutchinson added: "The crime looks like an act of someone crazed – it actually was the ill-informed action of Alyssa because she loved the other parts of herself and did not want to be abused. Her impulse was not unlike a mother who would want to kill a person who sexually abused her daughter. Usually, that mother has the emotional maturity and ability to stop that impulse. Alyssa did not have that maturity or self-control."

Advocates for Ms. McLinn asked Dr. Hutchinson to conduct a second evaluation in July-August 2022. She agreed -- but on the condition that her findings were not to be influenced by group's support for clemency.

Meeting with Ms. McLinn for approximately five hours in July 2022, Dr. Hutchinson found that she was "very emotionally stable" and no longer relying on psychotropic medications; that she had struggled with depression during the prison's COVID lockdowns but had no "breakdowns in functioning"; that her past personalities were now "distant" and that a stronger Sarah had returned to the forefront of her being.

In her conclusion, Dr. Hutchinson wrote: "It is with a great deal of psychological certainty, that I opine that Sarah Gonzales McLinn has achieved rehabilitation and is very capable of maintaining a crime-free and productive life."

Please see the following pages for the full text of both evaluations.

2014 Psychological Evaluation

HUTCHINSON & ASSOCIATES

222 West Gregory, Suite 100, Kansas City, MO. 64141 Phone (816) 361-0664 Fax (816) 361-0677

Marilyn A. Hutchinson, Ph. D.
Arnold Abels, Ph. D.
Michael A. Anderson, Ph. D.
LaVerne Berkel, Ph. D.
Lester E. Blue, Jr., Ph. D.
Denise L. Gullette, Ph. D.
Chris Hermes, MA, LPC
Laura B. Maberry, MA, LPC
Maria Santiago Padin, Psy. D.
Shu-Fen Shih, Ph. D.
Connie Sweeney, Ph.D.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Kansas vs. Sarah Gonzales-McLinn
Case Number, 02-14-589, Douglas County Kansas

Name: Sarah Gonzales-McLinn (DOB: 7/9/1994)
Evaluator: Marilyn A. Hutchinson, Ph.D.
Dates of Evaluation: Feb 2, Feb 27, March 20, April 10, May 2, May 23, June 12, July 18, 2014
Tests Administered: Structured Inventory of Malingered Symptoms (SIRS)
Trauma Symptoms Inventory-2 (TSI)
Detailed Assessment of Post Traumatic Stress (DAPS)
Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory III
Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - II RF
Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI)
Structured Clinical Interview for DSM IV Dissociative Disorder-Revised
Consultations: Michelle Gonzales & Gina Rose Adams - mother and partner
Robert McLinn - father
Ashley McLinn - sister
Records Reviewed: Kansas vs. Sarah McLinn, Affidavit, files January 27, 2014; Mike McAtee
List of relatives provided by Michelle Gonzales
List of Sarah's childhood activities provided by Michelle Gonzales
Seven letters from Sarah to her attorney, this examiner, and her sister
Video, confession, Sarah Gonzales-McLinn
Barb Callahan, PhD, therapy records, 11/25/08-10/08/09

Sarah Gonzales Mc-Linn, Psychological Evaluation;

Marilyn A. Hutchinson, Ph.D. September, 2014

REFERRAL:

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn is charged with Murder in the First Degree, off Grid/Person/Felony for the premeditated killing of Harold Sasko on January 14, 2014 in the home they shared.

This examiner was contacted by counsel for Ms. Gonzales-McLinn and the initial introduction appointment was conducted with counsel present in the Douglas County Detention Center on February 2, 2014. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn admitted killing Harold Sasko and her subsequent flight. All subsequent interviews were by the evaluator alone in the same facility. Each interview was approximately two hours in length and involved open ended questioning of Ms. Gonzales-McLinn, except for the administration of the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM IV Dissociate Disorders, Revised by Marlene Steinberg, M.D., (SCID) and the questions for a mental status evaluation.

The consultations of mother and partner, and father were conducted in the office of her attorney and the interview with her sister occurred at the private office of the examiner. Those were 2.25, 2 and 1.25 hours in length, respectively. A total of 17.5 hours of evaluation and 1 hour of consultation have been conducted.

Previously provided by this examiner was a May 30, 2014 letter to Carl Cornwell which detailed the findings at that time.

RECORD REVIEW:

The Affidavit of Mike McAtee of the Lawrence Kansas Police Department stated the department performed an adult welfare check for Sarah Gonzales-McLinn on January 17, 2014. The family had not been able to contact her. Police found Mr. Sasko deceased. His hands were tied with zip ties behind his back, with multiple laceration and puncture wounds around his neck. They guessed he had been dead a few days. The closet for Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was nearly empty and in some disarray. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn's car was in the garage but Mr. Saskos' car was missing.

Ms. Saskos' turnpike K-tag was used in the early morning of January 15. Her cell phone was left in the home and had a message from Mr. Sasko's cellular phone on January 14, 2014 at 3:46 was displayed:

Hey good morning thank you for last night it was good. We never got talk about Sunday. I apologize for trying to sleep with you last night. Tonight before we get going can we talk? Please and thank you.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn called her sister and grandmother on January 14, at 11 pm. Michelle Gonzales did not answer several phone calls from an unknown number on the evening of January 15 from Bishop, Texas. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was identified in video images from two convenience stores in Bishop where she borrowed two clerks' personal cell phones to make phone calls.

Sarah Gonzales Mc-Linn, Psychological Evaluation;

Marilyn A. Hutchinson, Ph.D. September, 2014

A tablet found in the Sasko-Gonzales-McLinn home had the identification of "Vanessa Walker" as "me" and recent searches included:

Why do I think so differently
Why do I think differently at night
Double limb bondage
Bull tranquilizer, where to get
Badass,
Utah and Idaho maps

Vanessa Walker

A computer belonging to Mr. Sasko was found and the last file constructed was "Sarah tattoo ideas."

David Aschenbrenner reported to police he was a fourteen year friend of Mr. Sasko and was aware Sasko and Ms. Gonzales-McLinn had a "secret" sexual relationship which she had ended to his disappointment.

Gregory Kelley, Saskos' nephew, reported during November he observed Ms. Gonzales-McLinn skin a rabbit she purchased from a pet store and that she wanted to learn to kill "bigger things" as part of survival skill training.

Ms. Ashley McLinn (sister) reported her sister had made comments about serial killers and expressed her own thoughts about killing someone.

Truston Jaobs, a co-worker at Bed Bath and Beyond, reported Ms. Gonzales-McLinn said she had friends who took drugs and then fought, and she thought it would be fun to watch someone die. She also told him she was a good hunter, lived with a step-father who was a hunter, and she liked to hunt, kill and clean the animals.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was located in the Everglades National Park in Florida and was taken into custody without incident. Seized from her car were knives, an ax, two handguns and a controlled substance, perhaps hashish.

Barb Callahan at Grace Connections treated Ms. Gonzales-McLinn in psychotherapy for eleven sessions from 11/25/08 till 10/8/09 when she was fourteen. About half of the sessions were with her sister. Her primary themes were depression and conflict with her parents. Her reaction to broken trust was noted.

Sarah Gonzales Mc-Linn, Psychological Evaluation;

Marilyn A. Hutchinson, Ph.D. September, 2014

SOCIAL HISTORY:

Family history:

Sarah is the second natural child of her parents, Michelle Gonzales and Robert McLinn who divorced four years ago. She has one older sister, Ashley, who is three years her senior. She has three younger adopted brothers who are aged 12, 12 and 10. Her father married, divorced and remarried Tracy McLinn in the last four years. Mrs. McLinn has three adult children and one teenager. The McLinn couple have custody of the three adopted boys. Michelle Gonzales is partnered in a lesbian relationship with Gina Adams, a Topeka police officer. They have been together over four years.

Mr. McLinn is number eleven of twelve children. His mother died when he was ten. He was sexually abused by an older brother. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn describes her father as "very emotional." She said he has always been depressed and is a weak personality that let both of his wives control him. He has been employed in the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Plant for the past twelve years. Prior to that, he was employed in the construction industry. She does not have current information, though believes her father and his wife both have drinking problems.

Ms. Gonzales is the older of two children. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn said her mother has sequential passions and adopting the three boys was one of those "phases." After they were no longer little and cute, she no longer wanted to be a Mom, consequently the two older sisters had responsibility for the "parenting" of the three boys. Ms. Gonzales used physical punishment of belt-whippings on her daughters. When Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was a teenager, she recalled being hit with objects that left large bruises. Ms. Gonzales was sexually abused as a child by her step-father.

Ashley McLinn has one daughter, Avery, aged three and plans to be married this fall. Ashley is described as gullible and easily manipulated. She is supported from a trust from an inheritance from a paternal aunt and attends respiratory therapy school though struggles with academic study. The sisters are close.

One of her adopted brothers, Andrew, has fetal alcohol syndrome and was adopted at birth. He and Ms. Gonzales-McLinn were very close and their childhood plan was to live together on a farm when they became adults. Eli was adopted at age 2 after being neglected by a drug addicted mother. He has ADD and trouble in school. Ty is 10, and also has ADD, and is teased at school and fights due to the teasing.

Her maternal grandmother was described as a loving presence to the two girls. They also said she was racist and she was disapproving of her own daughters' marriage outside the Hispanic community. Her maternal uncle was described as a "pervert" and Ms. Gonzales-McLinn knew of sexually inappropriate behaviors he had.

Childhood/Adolescent history:

Prior to the adoption of the young boys, Ms. Gonzales-McLinn remembers her mother had a daycare in the home and her father worked construction. She indicated neither she nor her sister have memories of their mother from childhood except of their mother on the phone. The sisters were initially home-schooled and later switched to private school when they were in 5th and 7th grade respectively. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn said their adjustment to school was very difficult because neither of them knew how to socialize and they were very behind academically as they had spent only a couple hours a day during their home-school years involved in academic activities. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn said she caught up to the appropriate grade level by middle school but her sister never really did regain grade level.

As soon as she turned eighteen, Ashley McLinn left home for three months to live with a thirty year old cousin. This caused an estrangement between Ashley McLinn and her mother for a year. The extended family still has divisions. Ms. McLinn returned home and finished high school and quickly became involved with another man, the father of her daughter.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was raped and burned with a cigarette by an acquaintance when she was sixteen. This event was extraordinarily traumatic. She had nightmares of the attack and nightmares of herself killing the rapist by stabbing him. Shortly after her rape, she began watching violent pornography with preference for scenes that involved brutality and humiliation. She confided to her mother about the rape who told members of the extended family despite a promise to not do so. Her own humiliation was nearly unbearable. She attempted suicide, was hospitalized and prescribed anti-depressant medication. She then had panic attacks and was given anti-anxiety medication but she found drinking alcohol more helpful. At this time, her sister was pregnant and distant. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn recalls a lot of strife between her mother and herself. She made the decision she could not rely on anyone.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn reports she has never had "real friends" as she does not trust people and is not good at connecting with them. She reported some friendships in middle school but was not able to tolerate the loyalty failures that occurred and said she does not "get girls." She had male friends for a short while, but became disappointed because they always "wanted just one thing." She recalls she was seldom allowed to socialize and as a teen her only associations were with other teens who used drugs and alcohol during the day. Her favorite drug in high school was marijuana, but she also consumed a lot of alcohol. She described her pattern as binge drinking: when she started she could not stop. She recalled a phase when she did ecstasy for six months, and other periods when she had access to, and used coke or "X". She said, no matter how bad the day was it faded away when she was high and she could get lost in watching TV.

Her first exposure to substances was when she was fourteen and an eighteen year old gave her marijuana one day and alcohol the next. Three weeks later, he tried to have sex with her and hit her

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when she did not comply. Although she had bruises on her face and arms, no one commented and she did not tell. This was approximately the same time as her parents' divorce. She recalled her mother was happy about the divorce and her father was outwardly "a wreck" and took his anger out physically on the three adopted boys. She began sneaking out of the house and it did not seem to her that her parents cared.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn said her last two years of high school are a blur. Although she had been an A student previously, the last two years of high school she got C's as that was all that was required by her parents. She began working at CiCi's pizza at age fourteen and got connections that would provide her alcohol. She met Hal Sasko at this time and he volunteered to be her "father figure." He said when she graduated and left home, she could live with him. She graduated a semester early and moved in with him at age seventeen.

Young Adult history:

After high school, she worked at Office Depot. She found it stressful and continued to drink regularly to cope as a happy drunk. She smoked marijuana and drank on a daily basis with one male friend, her sister and Mr. Sasko, her roommate.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn had always believed her nose to be misshapen and the year following her mid-term graduation she had reconstructive surgery paid for by Mr. Sasko. This was to be a loan and she was making payments to him. A few months later, she agreed to go on a date with him to "shut him up" and because she felt pressure to appease him as she had no other place to live. Her sister had moved home with her mother so she knew her mother would not let her move in and she was not talking with her father. Two months later, after a few more dates, he threatened to kick her out of the house if she did not have sex with him. Although they stopped dating, whenever he was drunk, he pressured her for sex. Sometimes even when she acquiesced, he would tell her the next day that he was going to kick her out and sue her for the money she owed. She owed him over \$13,000. She tolerated their weekly sexual encounters by being drunk.

Mr. Sasko then began pressuring her to have breast implants. She convinced him she was too young (still eighteen) and he then switched it to buttocks implants. She recalled he begged her and said he would pay for the procedure. However, he set up the payment plan in her name allegedly so that she could establish a credit history. He made the payments though often threatened to stop. She had that surgery in the summer of 2013. She quit her job from embarrassment about the surgery and became very depressed. She recalled she hated herself, and him at that time, and spent the summer depressed, lying on the couch getting high. He provided her with black-market hydrocodone and supported her financially. Due to stomach distress, daily headaches and tingling fingertips, she began to have the feeling the house was poisonous and/or Mr. Sasko was poisoning her. She thought she had to kill him before he killed her.

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Ms. Gonzales-McLinn had some contact with her sister during this summer but was estranged from both of her parents. She had not spoken to her mother in over a year.

In August 2013, Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was prescribed Zoloft. The Zoloft facilitated a return of some energy and a reduction of her anxiety. She secured employment at Bed Bath and Beyond. While on the Zoloft, her sadness turned to anger, disgust, and hate. She was no longer afraid. She said she had really intense feelings, nothing wore her out physically, and in between the rages she felt nothing. She did not tell Dr. Fowler, her prescribing physician, about her rages but she punched walls and broke glass. The initial dosage was increased to address lingering anxiety and depression.

She became obsessed with the idea of killing: when she looked at people she saw what they would look like dead, she hallucinated blood on many surfaces and imagined the necks of her Mom, Dad, Step-Mom and Mr. Sasko slashed. These thoughts had started sporadically about a faceless man when she was in high school after she was raped but in the fall of 2013, they focused on the four named individuals. She recalls telling her sister and Mr. Sasko about the thoughts and both were unconcerned, saying "everybody has thoughts like that." In the fall she also killed the aforementioned rabbit as well as a guinea pig. She said the first killing made her feel stronger so she did the second. She thought she would not like the killing and that her obsessions would be satisfied. That was not the case as she had a sense of self-sufficiency that she could take care of herself. Her father, sister and Mr. Sasko knew about her rabbit kill.

She finished her prescription for Zoloft a few days before a doctors' appointment in January 2014 and experienced medication withdrawal. She was switched to Prestique several days before this incident.

CURRENT STATEMENT:

During our first meeting, Ms. Gonzales McLinn said she had thoughts of killing someone but initially not Mr. Sasko in particular. She said the feeling was so strong and had been growing for two years that it was almost an obsession to think about killing unknown men with a knife or ax.

After she moved in with Mr. Sasko, she called him "Dad" and thought he was a "good person." However, he soon told her he was in love with her and began to pressure her for a relationship. When she was watching television, he would come and sit close, put his arm around her and get an erection. One time she awoke to him lying next to her in bed without his shirt. The first time she had sex with him he provided her with shots of vodka until she agreed. She knows she was still working at Office Depot when this first started. Although she told him it had been a mistake, he continued to pressure her, criticized her body and one time raped her when she was still saying "no."

The killing of the guinea pig and the rabbit in the months before had felt "normal" as she was killing them for food. Her thoughts of wanting to kill a person eventually focused on Mr. Sasko. She reasoned

that Mr. Sasko talked about killing himself as his business was failing, he had no relationships, and he was estranged from his daughter. She said Mr. Sasko was also involved in growing marijuana, and in selling both marijuana and cocaine. She said he was disgusting as he often told her he had sex with girls who were passed out on drugs but he always asserted he never raped anyone. "If I was going to kill anyone, the least bad, was killing him." She knew he had befriended young women in the past and she wondered if he had been sexual with them also. She said she had once thought he was a real great person and then found out he was like everyone else. Whenever she tried to end the relationship with him, he would threaten to kick her out. She had nowhere to move as she was estranged from both parents. She thought she had been "used" so many times by her parents that involvement with them was too shattering. She did not think her parents even noticed she was not in contact with them. She believed she would never be "rid of him" as it would take years for her to pay off the debt for her surgeries and the rent she owed him.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn said men have always betrayed her. The first was her father who was weak during his divorce and unavailable for any assistance to her. The next betrayal was her rape at age sixteen. Although there were small betrayals with boyfriends, her next large betrayal was Mr. Sasko. She added that a young man she met in Florida had also felt like a betrayal because she thought he "saw me" and I was not pretending to be anybody else. After her arrest, he did not return phone calls.

[During the course of the evaluation, it became apparent Ms. Gonzales-McLinn is a person with multiple personality parts that are discreet and individual. Their reaction and involvement with the stabbing was very individual. Different personalities were interviewed in disparate interviews. Notations are made for the named personalities and their statements about the stabbing.]

In describing the actual stabbing incidents, the personality known as Vanessa said "it is like a fog and I remember intense moments after when I sat and looked at him. I don't know. When I actually did it, I remember myself from above." She said when she tries to recall, it is a blur, like I watched myself do it. Her current recollection of the scene of him on the floor dead is from an angle above her. She was unable to describe any detail of her actions. During the crime, she felt nothing. She said, it was "like it was a fact that it was going to happen and I just went through the motions." She said that this is similar to other times when she has become intensely angry and feels she is in a dream like state.

Personality Alyssa decided she was going to kill Mr. Sasko, as she could "not tolerate being treated like a piece of meat." She thought killing him with a gun would be "weak" on her part. She put his own sleeping pills in his beer after he had already had several drinks. She planned that her cuts would be a quick bleed out. He eventually passed out and she secured his hands and feet with the zip ties. When he spoke to her, Vanessa returned to control and attempted to untie his hands. Alyssa said "I was not having it." She said it had gone on too long, and needed to be ended. She stabbed him and then smeared the blood on the wall, feeling empowered. She said the feeling was like standing in the sun for

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the first time, like having a cage door opened and then she wrote "freedom" on the wall. When asked about her thoughts about the killing she initially replied, "we are not in the situation anymore." She thought she would not do it again but that not doing it would have had a worse outcome.

After listening to Alyssa describe the killing, Vanessa said that during the actual event, she recalled screaming (inside her head), "stop." She said she had a recent epiphany in her Bible study that love is known by its actions and she can now understand that Alyssa was acting in love. Alyssa said for the first time in years, once she made the decision to kill Mr. Sasko, she had a calm that continued for a couple of weeks. "For once in my pathetic life, I found strength and I took control...Now pain feels tolerable because deep inside this weak little girl is a powerful woman who lets no one use her."

When apprehended in Florida she had ties, duct tape and saws. Alyssa had planned on cutting him up for disposal. However, after the stabbing she said the most important thing was I just "wanted out of there. That was more important than the killing itself." She purchased the ax about seven months previous from a hardware store. The guns she had with her where Mr. Sasko's and she took them for self-protection as she did not want to kill anyone else. The ties she had purchased a year previously to secure a loose bumper on her car.

She recalled she cried during her initial interrogation because she had hurt her sister and father, labeling her actions selfish. Vanessa said although others now tell her she could have gotten away, at the time she did not believe it would be possible.

MENTAL STATUS EXAMINATION:

Sarah Gonzales-McLinn is a 21 year old Hispanic female who is housed in the Douglas County Detention Center. She is a high school graduate and has been employed in retail and food services. She reports previous attempts at treatment when she was sixteen and when she sought medication in August, 2013 for depression, anxiety, thought disorders, alcohol and drug abuse and prior sexual abuse. She was prescribed medications that appear to have complicated her fragile hold on reality.

She is 5'7" and reported a weight of 130. She is average in build with brown hair and brown eyes. She was always appropriate, neatly dressed in jail fatigues, and appeared pleased to meet the examiner. Her posture and gait were normal. She was often restless and exhibited continuous movements, although these did diminish over the course of the interviews. She was alert during the examinations and appeared moderately distressed with crying and tearfulness on many occasions. Her emotional responses were congruent with the difficult content discussed.

Her speech was normal and she evidenced no impairment in rate, quantity, quality or articulation. When asked about her emotions she usually named more than one; e.g. excited, depressed, blah and tired. She endorsed the following symptoms of depression: loss of interests, guilt, sleep disturbance,

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fatigue, and loss of sexual interest. Her sleep is described as frequent awakening, decreased hours, restlessness and early morning wakening. Her anxiety symptoms include heart palpitations, chest pain, dizziness, faintness, sweating, paresthesias, muscle aches, cold hands, GI symptoms, muscle twitching and dry mouth.

Her thought processes were logical and coherent. She said her only preoccupations were of the case and her family. She denied any compulsions. She has obsessive thoughts of death and violence. The latter, she has learned to stop. She has some visual hallucinations.

She denied any recent disturbances in her consciousness by seizures or blackouts. She said her concentration varies greatly by her mood and her self-evaluation of her memory is "really bad." She had few recollections of childhood.

She presents as having an above average intellect and she interpreted two of three proverbs correctly, demonstrating an ability to think abstractly. She said she has had undiagnosed hand shaking since the age of fourteen. Her medications are Effexor for depression and Benadryl for sleep.

She does not smoke cigarettes, and reports she drank alcohol from age 16-19. She used marijuana regularly and cocaine socially. During one period in high school she used pain pills.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn identifies herself as bi-sexual with less than five partners of each gender. She said the women were not in relationships. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn has never been pregnant, married or involved in a serious committed relationship.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn has a history of self harm including a OTC pill overdose at sixteen and wrist cutting at age fifteen.

Examination Content:

In doing the evaluation, it was often clear (after multiple interviews) which personality was talking as they had distinct points of view, affect and tonality. I was told the first interview was Vanessa until the discussion of the stabbing and then Alyssa spoke. The second and third interviews were Vanessa. No-name took the psychological testing. Alyssa presented for the fourth interview because there had been some fighting on the cell block and she had come forth to protect the others. The fifth and sixth interviews were a mix of multiple parts that sometimes came forward with intention.

Alyssa delighted in being a person who is not weak. She was disdainful of the internal allegations made by Vanessa that Alyssa had gotten them all into trouble. She replied that if Vanessa had not been so weak, she (Alyssa) would not have had to do what she did. Alyssa said, "she would lay there like a dead dog....she let him touch us....and talk her into that stupid surgery." She also said Vanessa and Myla had recently found religion and believed the Bible verse about cutting off the hand that offends should apply

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In the last meeting, Alyssa indicated she knew the "god thing" with the Jehovah Witness Bible Study was helpful to some of the others. She, however, was not a believer. Alyssa expressed defiance against the criticism by the other internal parts for being the cause of the current problem. She says "I know that nobody in their life ever done something this big to help her before." Alyssa said when Vanessa began taking the anti-depressants; she became calmer, allowing Alyssa to be able to take control of the body system. She was the one that killed the rabbit. She reasoned further that the world is coming to an end soon and there would be a time when survival skills would be essential. She recalled on the day she killed the guinea pig, she had gone to the pet store to get a toy for their dog. It had been a stressful day with many texts from Mr. Sasko and when she saw the guinea pig on sale she remembered that it is considered a reasonable food in South America so wanted to try it. She said it was not just for the killing. If she just wanted to kill something she would have gotten a rat or a mouse.

Vanessa said when she was in Florida, she was happier than any time in her life. She had the feeling "I wasn't me anymore and it was like it didn't happen." She hoped to get a job and live in Florida.

Alyssa said she could never kill a dog, horse or a woman, but that [men] are a disease on the earth. They think with their bodies; they are not human, they are animals. She said Mr. Sasko was more offensive than a pig and was everything she hated about men.

CONSULTATIONS:

Ashley McLinn described her sister as one who did not share very much and at the time of the parental divorce she withdrew even further. She remembered that prior to the time when her mother started having foster kids in their home family life was a lot better. She said her mother liked to talk on the phone with her friends, and was usually more concerned with the opinion of her friends than what would be good for her children. She was not good at consoling, or offering advice to her children. She usually would tell them to stop whining and "suck it up." She recalled her father was worse because he knew what he was doing, e.g. he would not come home until 5 in the morning and worried the family. She said he does only what is convenient for him and he allowed Ms. Gonzales-McLinn to drink at his house when she was underage. He currently has been unwilling to provide any financial support for his daughter and continues to blame his former wife for her situation.

She agreed with her sister that the transition to Catholic school had been very difficult, socially and academically. She recalled that she was actively suicidal when she was 14-15 and the issues with her parents were difficult. She also recalled a time when a friend of her boyfriend tried to rape her sister. This was different than the time she was raped and burned with the cigarette. She said her sister had hinted about being raped by someone in addition to the man who burned her. Ashley had a special relationship with a paternal aunt who died when Ashley was five.

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Ms. McLinn recalled a shed in the backyard but did not identify any neighbor with it. Ms. McLinn said the major change in her sister was the anger that started about the time of the divorce. This was the same time when Mr. McLinn was very emotional: he beat the boys and she often had to talk him out of suicide. She remembered her sister stopped talking to him during that time because she could not tolerate his emotion in addition to her own. At the time of the divorce, Ms. Gonzales-McLinn lived with their mother. When her sister returned after her three month "run away", she lived with Mr. McLinn. Ms. McLinn also recalled her mother often talked to the extended family about her daughter in derogatory ways, e.g. calling Ms. Gonzales McLinn a slut. During part of the time Ms. Gonzales-McLinn lived with her mother after the divorce they were not speaking.

Ms. McLinn said her sister initially had Mr. Sasko in her phone under "Dad." She met Mr. Sasko on a couple of occasions and he told her he was trying to get Ms. Gonzales McLinn to not drink or do drugs. She later found out he sold and provided her sister both. On one occasion when she was visiting her sister, Mr. Sasko had done cocaine and Ms. McLinn thought he was looking at her sister in a creepy way. She did not go to bed that night so she might prevent something from happening to her sister.

She said her sister had told her she had thoughts of killing someone. Ms. McLinn said, "We kinda changed subject. I didn't know what to say." McLinn also recalled a time when she encouraged her sister to leave after Mr. Sasko sent her a pornographic picture. Ms. McLinn was unaware of the surgeries Mr. Sasko urged her sister to have. She particularly found that quite surprising, as both of the women had always stated the belief they would never do augmentation surgery. Ms. McLinn did not know her sister was sexual with Mr. Sasko until after the killing. Her sister became more distant through the summer and fall, cancelling planned meetings. They did talk on the phone and she recalled her sister talked about the world coming to an end and how she was going to buy land and build a bunker and was reading about volcanoes.

Ms. McLinn said her sister had once called herself "Vanessa" when they went out and Mr. Sasko had referred to her as Vanessa.

Ms. Michelle Gonzales recalled her daughter as a wonderful toddler who was exceptionally attached to a dog they got when she was three. Shadow passed when her daughter was in 7th grade. She recalled her daughter liked to play outdoors, didn't like to wear shoes, was plagued by asthma and was hospitalized a number of times before the age of five. Ms. Gonzales said she allowed her daughter to choose if she wanted to be home-schooled, as she was home schooling Ashley because she had juvenile arthritis. The curriculum was based on classic literature: they would read novels and then watch the movie. She casually recalled her daughter did not like to "leave her clothes on and would come back in from outside in just her underwear." She recalled a crabby old man who was known as "Doc" who killed squirrels and lived next door to their home. He did have a shed in the back yard. She thought her

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husband and younger daughter were close and recalled she would hide her fathers' keys so he could not leave for work.

Her daughter loved horses and she was given riding lessons as a pre-adolescent. She remained a tom boy into early high school. Ms. Gonzales said she initially told her daughters she was divorcing Mr. McLinn because of his drinking. When he told the girls their mother left him for Ms. Adams, Ms. Gonzales corrected the history by saying he had been unfaithful and she had an affair prior to Ms. Adams while married because her husband was not at home.

After the divorce, Ms. Gonzales moved to a less prosperous part of town. The change in high schools prompted more involvement by her daughter with teens engaged in overt sexuality and drinking. During her first year after the divorce, Ms. Gonzales said she would put her young sons to bed and then leave and spend the night with Ms. Adams. She returned before they left for school in the morning. Ms. Gonzales knows that when her daughters were at their fathers' home, he drank a great deal. Ms. Gonzales said her daughters' grades dropped and her interest in going to college waned by mid-high school. When she told them that the burn on her arm was from grease at work, (not a cigarette burn when she was raped) Ms. Gonzales and Ms. Adams did not question it. Ms. Adams recalled she did take her to an ER for some kind of STD at that time.

Ms. Gonzales said she arranged counseling for her ex-husband and daughter but he stopped. She tried to engage the therapist who saw her sons but he said her daughter needed more counseling than he could provide. After she was hospitalized and started Lexipro, no additional counseling was provided. Ms. Gonzales remembered having many problems with her daughters' drinking in high school and with her close association with Mr. Sasko. She knew Sasko was to be the "perfect Dad" that her own father never was.

When Ms. Ashley McLinn lived with her mother, Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was told she could not visit her sister if she was not respectful to her mother when she came to the home. Ms. Gonzales said her daughter would not speak to her. In the fall of 2013, Ms. McLinn told her mother she thought her sister was really struggling. Ms. Gonzales recalled her response was that they needed to pray for her but she did not want to know any specific details. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn had no contact with any family at Christmas.

Ms. Gonzales expressed anger and dismay that her daughter will be nice to her when she visits her in jail but expresses anger about her mother to her sister, Ms. McLinn.

Robert McLinn

Mr. McLinn thought the difficulties his daughter had stemmed from the co-parenting problems that occurred during the marital divorce. He detailed that his former wife lied to the family and therefore his

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daughter had learned to not trust. He acknowledged he had been estranged from her for two years. He traced this to her being uncomfortable with the care he was giving to his elderly parents. He said he tried to invite her to his wedding but believed his former wife blocked her attendance.

He recalled that their early family life was "awesome." He said his younger daughter was a tom boy and was always taking her clothes off in the yard. He said they gave his younger daughter riding lessons and got her a horse but it died very quickly. She abruptly lost interest in riding for "no explainable reason." He recalled his daughter did not like for him to go to work and would hide his keys.

He recalled the elderly neighbor who had Alzheimer's and shot squirrels in the back yard. He was very emotional when I asked him about any possible sexual abuse by this neighbor and he quickly blamed his ex-wife. He recalled he did see his daughter early July but did not know she was unemployed at that time. His response to the problems with his daughter had been to "double down on my micro-parenting" with the three boys in their home.

DIAGNOSES:

AXIS I: Clinical Syndromes

Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID)

Major Depression, recurrent, moderate

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, subsequent to two or more rapes

Alcohol and Marijuana dependence, in remission subsequent to incarceration

Axis II: Personality Disorder:

Deferred

Diagnostic Discussion:

Using the SCID-D for DID, Ms. Gonzales-McLinn endorse the following diagnostic criteria to support her DID diagnosis:

Amnesia—weekly episodes of amnesia, daily episodes of losing time,
unable to remember home address

Depersonalization: observer of self on daily basis, not recognizing self in mirror,
self harm without pain; feeling separate from the body; feeling like more than one

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person at the same time; the perception that someone else was talking for oneself; speech not under personal control; episodes of feeling like someone else takes over; different smoking and drinking habits for different parts of the self

Derealization: feeling like self or things around are not real; that friends or relatives seem unknown; not knowing what is real or unreal;

Identity Confusion: an internal struggle about who you are that is usually triggered by stress and it causes distress

Identity Alteration: feeling or being told was acting like a different person or a person of a different age; used different names; felt like controlled by someone else; rapidly changing mood

Internal dialogues that seem to be between different people; simultaneous internal talking

The major internal personalities as described by Ms. Gonzales-McLinn's different personality parts:

Alyssa - She drinks alcohol; never panics; She is strong and witty and people like her. She is confident but not reliable. She is angry but that is her strength. She comes whenever the body is numb. She refused to let the other parts continue to be hurt; she became more prominent in the days before the stabbing and committed the stabbing. She did not intend to harm the other internal parts. She believes she has fulfilled the reason for her presence in the internal system. She believes she needed to be the way she has been because others allowed themselves to be abused.

Vanessa -She is depressed, anxious and described as weak. She is very suicidal. She is like a skinny miniature grey hound: nervous, anxious and breakable. She is immature and about seventeen years old. She confessed to the crime though she was not present at the time. She presents as compassionate, but it is from fear.

Myla - She is most like Sarah. She is nice, content and not angry. She likes people. She made the connection with Jason in Florida. She is feminine.

Sarah - She died at age sixteen after the rape.

No-name - no age; holds the memories of childhood sexual abuse

Alyssa said the rules for the system have always been: "Don't let anyone know."

TESTING RESULTS:

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn scored an IQ of 100, an average score on the Shipley test. It generally correlates well with the longer Wechsler system of testing. Her abstract thinking score was higher than her verbal

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score, 73 % compared to 38%. This weakness in her verbal score was not observed in the interviews and may be an artifact of the testing situation.

A key finding in Ms. Gonzales-McLinn's testing is pronounced PTSD symptomology. One measure of PTSD, the DAPS requires the identification of a specific incident and the symptoms which relate to THAT particular incident. She identified when she was raped at age sixteen as the incident that bothered her the most. The other PTSD test, the TSI measures symptoms without regard to particular stimulus. Both reported high levels of recurrent intrusive recollections, avoidance, autonomic arousal, defensive avoidance, and dissociation. These are typical profiles for persons who have been subjected to an experience in which they were harmed and experienced overwhelming emotional responses. As an aftermath, individuals are plagued by nightmares, intrusive recollections, defensive avoidance, and alterations in their day to day functioning in an attempt to control the overwhelming feelings.

The three general psychological tests concurred that Ms. Gonzales-McLinn is like others with severe mental health problems. Prominent were her high levels of depression, anxiety and alcohol/drug abuse. Characteristic descriptions would also include the following. She is likely to be generally pessimistic and dysphoric and has a potential to act out her anger in impulsive ways. She often feels her behavior is out of her control, subject to rapid mood swings, and labile emotions. As such, she can be self-destructive in spending, sex and substance use. She is likely to self-mutilate or act out suicidal plans.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn's testing indicates she possesses limited social skills and has difficulty interpreting the nuances of social relationships. In relationships, she is likely to be passive-submissive and very uncomfortable. This, along with her suspicious and mistrust of others, leaves her socially isolated. She often feels slighted in relationships and her sensitivity to these interactions leads to long held grudges. Ironically, difficulties in relationships are currently a major source of stress for her: feeling she has little support and her relationships are ridden with conflict.

She generally experiences her anxiety physiologically and has a greater than usual amount of concern about her bodily functions. She may have health concerns in neurological, GI and musculoskeletal systems. She acknowledges that in the past both alcohol and substances have caused problems in her life.

Diagnoses suggested by the testing included Schizoaffective, Major Depression, Alcohol abuse, Bi-Polar II, Schizophrenia and PTSD. Dissociative Identity Disorder is never a suggested diagnosis on standardized testing. However, a quote from the PAI interpretive report gives an ironic insight:

The configuration of the clinical scales is rather unusual.The respondent likely fluctuates between these seemingly disparate personality elements, with periods of impulsive acts followed by worry and guilt regarding the consequences of their behavior. She may see herself as incapable of controlling her acting out behavior....

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These few sentences capture the variability and often disparate parts of the personality system that have emerged with the different parts. As such, standardized testing cannot capture the contradictory and widely divergent aspects of a DID person. "Who" takes the test and how much they are willing to reflect on the beliefs and experiences of other parts of the system or even know the other parts, will change the result. For example, if a personality that did not about the childhood abuse, or the adolescent rape, they would not be able to identify it as a source of difficulty.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn scores were slightly elevated on all of the subscales of the SIMS, a screening instrument for malingering. These tests were administered prior to the identification of her diagnoses. Items that keyed her as malingering include: I see bodies covered in blood, questions regarding memory and orientation to the body, depression and headaches. In many evaluations, these items would seem quite unusual and the elevated scores would be significant. In this evaluation, they are understood in this specific unusual context and are not interpreted as reflecting a malingered evaluation.

DISCUSSION:

When identifying the etiology of Ms. Gonzales-McLinn's many mental health problems there are a number of factors to consider.

Her primary diagnosis is Dissociative Identity Disorder formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder. As delineated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual the essential feature of this diagnosis is the presence of two or more distinct identities that recurrently take control of behavior. This diagnosis reflects a failure to integrate various aspects of identity, memory and consciousness. Each personality state may be experienced as if it has a distinct personal history, self-image and identity, including a separate name. Usually there is a primary identity that is passive, dependent, guilty and depressed. Particular identities may emerge in specific circumstances....Alternate identities are experienced as taking control in sequences, one at the expense of the other, and may deny knowledge of one another, be critical of one another or appear to be in open conflict.Individuals with this disorder experience frequent gaps in memorythe passive identities tend to have more constricted memories. There may be loss of memory not only for recurrent periods of time, but also an overall loss of biographical memory for some extended period of childhood. Transitions among identities are often triggered by psychosocial stress. The time required to switch from one identity to another is usually a matter of seconds.The average time period from first symptom presentation to diagnosis is 6-7 years.

Clinically, there is wide spread agreement that this extreme lack of personality integration is only possible when a very young child has been abused. When their personal identity is not cohesive and

their perception of reality/fantasy is still fluid, the "self" that would have become a single identity is divided into parts that have varying degree of independence and separation. It is common that prior to diagnosis, the "main" personality has only a vague sense of "others" and a variety of unexplained experiences: people who remember events that she does not, clothes in the closet that she does not remember purchasing, and often vague hazy images that are more like a dream or a hallucination that encompass some piece of history. Important events are sometimes not remembered at all. Understandably, most people with this diagnosis try to explain, hide and prevent these occurrences so that they are not thought to be crazy.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn reports early abuse experiences with the neighbor that sexually assaulted her and threatened her with dead animals. When questioned by this examiner, both parents and her sister recalled the old neighbor, his proclivity for shooting squirrels, and his shed at the back of the property. He was labeled as demented. Both parents said that their daughter often came in from outside without clothes. At the time, they thought she did not like to wear them. Ms. McLinn said she liked to play inside and her younger sister often played outside. Ms. Gonzales McLinn said her mother often sent her outside to play. The personality who recalls this abuse, said it did not happen when her father was home. Both parents volunteered without prompting a recollection that their daughter used to hide her fathers' keys so he would not leave for work. Both sisters also remember when they were home with their mother, she was always on the phone. Perhaps when Mr. McLinn was home the children had some additional supervision, and/or the neighbor was more careful. While circumstantial, these seemingly unconnected recollections paint a picture that Ms. Gonzales-McLinn, when home with her mother, was often outside unsupervised and easily could have been abused by the neighbor and she returned home undressed. The foundation for dead animals and knives in her subsequent obsessions was planted.

It also appears that Ms. Gonzales-McLinn did not receive the level of parental support and nurturing that she needed to develop a more stable identity, a trust in others or the belief that others could be allies. While those would have been compromised by her sexual abuse, had strong parenting been in place, it might have mitigated the effects and likely would have been in place to intervene on her behalf or notice that something was awry. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn recalls running into the home crying after one assault; her mother was on the phone and she was sent to her room alone. That was a missed opportunity to learn what was happening.

A third factor is her home life as a teen. Adolescence provides a second trial at learning lessons about self and others. Unfortunately, at this time, Ms. Gonzales and Mr. McLinn were embattled in their divorce and their own personal emotional issues. Both were immediately involved in new relationships. Mr. McLinn was reportedly so emotional that his daughters parented him. At this same time, perhaps because of the chaos in the home, Ms. Gonzales McLinn was in a situation in which she was burned with a cigarette and raped. Following this, her rage at men began to grow. She had

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nightmares of the rape, nightmares of killing faceless men and day time fantasies of doing the same. Again, despite an over dose and some minimal attempts at counseling, Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was left to rely on Mr. Sasko, her employer.

From the reports of his family members, Mr. McLinn has struggled with his use of alcohol. If he is alcoholic, any of his children are genetically predisposed to alcohol and 50 % would likely become substance abusers. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn started at age fourteen to use substances and used throughout high school. The maturity that can be gained by sober teenagers during high school, is forfeited by teens who abuse substances to any significant degree. Maturation cannot occur when emotions are blocked by chemicals. Her chemical addictions and abuse are a fourth contributor to her mental illness.

Mr. Sasko presented himself as a good, new perfect Dad. He offered her a place to stay when she was not in communication with either parent. He offered to loan her money for nasal plastic surgery that she had wanted for several years. Quickly, he also offered her alcohol and drugs and then he began asking for what he wanted in return. He told her he was in love with her (despite being thirty years her senior) and incrementally wanted to have just one date, then more, and then sex. This weekly demand for sex was accompanied by threats and degradation. Like a battered woman, she was demeaned, controlled, and over time she felt worse and worse. Her agreement to do the buttocks implants hints at how thoroughly he had convinced her of her unattractiveness and her desperation to keep Mr. Sasko from abandoning her. But, like all deals made under duress, it back-fired. She was more depressed, more drugged, and more financially indebted. His sexual abuse was the fifth major contributor as she developed PTSD in response to his actions.

It is easy to understand with these contributors that Ms. Gonzales-McLinn was substantially depressed. In the summer of 2013, she spent her days drugged and lying on the couch. During that time she developed a number of paranoid ideas that became real to her. First, Mr. Sasko was trying to poison her or the house was poisonous. She needed an explanation for her deteriorating state. Second, the world was coming to an end and she needed to have survival skills. This was a contributor to the animal killing. Third, volcanoes became an obsession. While unclear, metaphorically this might represent the rage that was coming to the point of explosion inside of her.

Ms. Gonzales-McLinn did extricate herself enough from the depression to seek pharmaceutical help from her local mental health center. She was prescribed Lexipro, an SSRI antidepressant. Her recollection is that the medicine changed her— her depression turned to rage, she got more anxious, had periods of feeling numb and she was no longer afraid. This was most likely the trigger for the personality Alyssa to become prominent. She is triggered by numbness and she is not afraid. She is the protector. Ms. Gonzales-McLinn also developed panic attacks. The medication may have triggered anxiety that was manifested in the panic attacks and the obsessive thoughts. To control her anxiety,

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she drank more. The specific impact of her emotional changes as a result of her beginning an SSRI medication, the increase in dosages and then the change to another medication three days before cannot be completely evaluated by this examiner but should not be without consideration. SSRI medication is well-known for prompting suicidal actions in young adults. Additionally, akathisia, a high energy response to SSRI medication, is also suggested by her report that nothing tired her out after she started Prestique, three days before the event.

In summary, Ms. Gonzales-McLinn believed she was essentially a long-term captive of Mr. Sasko to whom she had to submit on a weekly basis to his drunken sexual demands. She had long held anger at men who had betrayed and abused her. That abuse included knives and dead animals and that came to be represented in her actions with the animals before the stabbing of Mr. Sasko. Buried deep in her psyche was the belief she was "learning to survive" for the impending end of the world—not an imperfect metaphor for someone who did not want to be sexually abused any more. The medication prompted some psychic changes that triggered a new configuration of her internal personalities. Alyssa formulated a plan to end the abuse and set her companion personalities free. While she intended to dismember him, (likely also a harkening back to the neighbor and his dead animals), she felt such freedom at the time of Mr. Sasko's death that she no longer needed to act out those sequences.

Certainly, nothing in this report should be taken as excusing the conduct of Ms. Gonzales-McLinn. Mr. Sasko did not deserve the death he received. The purpose of this report has been to lay out the puzzle pieces that can identify the contributing contributors to the severe mental illness that Mr. Gonzales – McLinn suffers. The crime looks like the act of someone crazed—it actually was the ill-formed action of Alyssa because she loved the other parts of herself and did not want them to be abused. Her impulse was not unlike a mother who would want to kill a person who sexually abused her daughter. Usually, that mother has the emotional maturity and ability to stop that impulse. Alyssa did not have that maturity or self-control.

Although medical records have been requested, they have not been received. They will be reviewed and a supplemental report will be provided if any of the opinions set forth in this report are changed.

CONCLUSION:

To a reasonable degree of psychological certainty, Ms. Gonzales McLinn suffers from a number of serious mental illnesses. One personality believed that to protect the others, Mr. Sasko must be killed. She could not appreciate any other choices. The combination of this belief, and the changes that occurred with her medications, prompted an increased agitation, energy, and reduced ability for the system to control the actions of the personality, Alyssa. While the Vanessa personality objected (untied his hands and screamed "no" internally), the strength of Alyssa's resolve to stop his abuse was greater. She never could have assaulted him, or even confronted him unless he was incapacitated. Like the battered woman who kills when her abuser is passed out or asleep, so did Alyssa.

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REPORT IN SUPPORT OF CLEMENCY

SARAH GONZALES-MCLINN

Submitted by Marilyn A. Hutchinson, Ph.D. Licensed Psychologist

October 10, 2022

BACKGROUND

Sarah Gonzales-McLinn (DOB: 7/9/1994) lived in a dysfunctional home as a child and was the victim of brutal childhood sexual abuse from a neighbor. Her parents divorced after they adopted three special needs boys for whom Sarah and her older sister became the primary caretakers. The two girls were home schooled which often involved watching movie classics. At age fourteen Sarah began using substances and at age sixteen was the victim of an acquaintance rape during which she was burned with a cigarette. Sarah regularly abused substances and alcohol after the rape.

After high school Sarah worked for Mr. Sasko who owned pizza parlors in Topeka and Lawrence. He offered to provide housing and be a new "father figure" as she was estranged from her own father. He offered her a place to live as his house mate. In the next years he insisted Sarah have buttocks implants, supplied her with drugs, and through threats, held her captive in his home. Evidence was found regarding his use of pornography that included visits to web sites that featured child pornography and bestiality. He required Sarah have sex with him one to four times a week. It appears that after being prescribed a psychotropic medication, Sarah was triggered into a manic state that focused on killing and blood. Killing Mr. Sasko contained some brutality that was an expression of the rage at his brutality toward her. It was also reminiscent of the sexual abuse she had as a young girl during which the neighbor require her to

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October 2022

watch him kill and skin small animals prior to his assaults on her. He threatened to kill and skin her if she told anyone of his abuse.

As a result of her early childhood abuse, Sarah developed Dissociative Identity Disorder, a condition where multiple personalities inhabit the self. They are discreet and often unknown to each other. One of Sarah's personalities decided that Mr. Sasko must die in order for her to be free. The other alternative was suicide as she could no longer tolerate the situation in which she found herself. Although Sarah has evidence of and recollections of her internal struggle NOT to hurt Mr. Sasko, the personality who was defending and protecting her at that time was strongest.

TRIAL

At the time of preparing for Sarah's trial, her attorney and I were convinced of the truth of that struggle between the personalities and the conditions she had endured. Consequently, we advanced a defense based on her mental condition. We erred in thinking in the short time available at trial that we could educate a jury about the reality and significance of Sarah's diagnosis and the conditions she had endured. Although her attorney and I both have extensive experience with Battered Woman Syndrome (I have evaluated over 300 women and teens who advanced that defense after killing an abuser) we failed to include it in our initial presentation. Sarah was sentenced to a "hard 50". An Ineffective Assistance hearing was subsequently conducted. Prior to that hearing, the prosecutor indicated an understanding of Sarah's situation and indicated a willingness to negotiate a new sentence. However, she backed away from that and was adamant that 25 years to life was the only choice she could support.

CURRENT SITUATION

Although generally not allowed due to the length of her sentence, Sarah is currently housed in the Mild-Medium Security half of the Topeka Correctional Facility. She was granted an exception based on her exceptional behavior while in the more secure portion of the facility. In the 9 years she has been incarcerated Sarah has had 6 write-ups. Five were for inappropriate touch (e.g. getting a hug on her birthday from another inmate) and one involved getting a personal bowl mixed up with another inmate's for which she received a \$5 fine. [It is notable that since there is now a female warden, it is no longer prohibited for the women to have limited touch with each other.]

Since moving to the lesser security area, Sarah has completed two on-line college courses and is registered for four more for the fall semester. She maintains a morning job at the gym and is a participant

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in the Pooches and Pals program. Although there are 40 women and only 7 dogs in the program, in August Sarah was “awarded” a new puppy for whom she will be the primary caretaker and trainer. She keeps this dog with her 24-7 and is responsible for her care and behavior. Sarah is thrilled at the responsibility and the acknowledgement of the hard work she had done in the program.

Sarah has regular contact with her mother who uses Sarah as her confidante since the death of her own mother. She has minimal contact with her father who is involved with his new family. She has irregular contact with her sister who is busy with her own five children. She also maintains contact with her younger adopted brothers.

EVALUATION

Sarah is currently very emotionally stable. She is prescribed no psychotropic medication and reports no mental health symptoms. She recalled being “broken hearted” at the time of her last hearing as she had believed she would receive some significant relief in her sentence. The hearing coincided with the death of a beloved grandmother. For over a year during the COVID lock down, she struggled with depression due to the tight living quarters in her housing unit and the drama that was present and impossible to escape. However, during that time she had no acting out and no breakdowns in functioning.

Sarah indicated she is aware of her internal personalities, but now reports they are “distant” and more like a “presence” that is comforting: “I’m not alone”. She explained that as her primary personality has become stronger, there is no need for them to come to the forefront of the personality. Sarah said she has gained that strength by enduring the difficulties of the last years. The alternate personalities have only been in conscious awareness at two times during her life: following the assault as a teenager and during the abuse by Mr. Sasko.

When queried specifically, Sarah was able to give examples of how she has learned to stand up for herself in interpersonal negotiations with roommates. Conversely, when she believes she has been treated rudely or wrongly by a guard, she is able to assess the situation rationally and walk away. This ability to act when appropriate and walk away when appropriate is the growth that Sarah will need to navigate successfully in the world at large. Importantly, it also means that Sarah’s protector personality will not be triggered to intervene.

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TESTING

Psychological testing included two general psychological functioning instruments (Minnesota Multiphase Personality and Personality Assessment Inventory), two measures of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Detailed Assessment of Post-Traumatic Stress and Trauma Symptom Inventory) and one instrument to assess malingering (Structured Inventory of Malingered Symptoms). These were administered by Correctional staff prior to my evaluation.

Sarah's scores on the SIMS were among the lowest I have seen in thirty-five years during hundreds of evaluations. She had NO significantly elevated scores on 5 of the 6 scales. She had a slight insignificant elevation of affective symptoms—anxiety and depression.

Results of the assessment of Sarah's general psychological functioning indicated a generally well-functioning individual. These tests also indicated valid and reliable responses with some indication of anxiety, particularly social anxiety because she is shy. Sarah had no elevations on behavioral acting out, impulse control, anti-social acts, or problems with authority or conflictual relationships. Sarah is socially introverted with some lingering issues of trust. She has very few lingering effects of the abuse from Mr. Sasko. Sarah recalled that when she moved to the new unit and was meeting many new inmates, she knew they knew who she was and what she had experienced and done. At that time, Sarah had several days of nightmares. Those subsided as she became integrated and accepted by peers.

The testing further indicated that Sarah has lower psychopathology and substance use than other correctional inmates AND community samples. She is atypical of correctional inmates in that she is not adventuresome or impulsive. She is not likely to be aggressive, again uncommon in inmates. She has fewer criminogenic beliefs or cognitive distortions than most inmates. She is unassertive compared to other inmates. Her warmth and dominance are average for both community and correctional norms.

Sarah's PTSD testing indicated extreme elevations on her level of distress at the time of her abuse by Mr. Sasko. She currently has very slight elevations for recurrent re-experiencing and effortful avoidance. She tries to not think about her life with Mr. Sasko.

Overall, Sarah's testing indicates an individual who has a profile similar to many people in the non-correctional community who have no inclination for aggression or criminal behavior.

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RECORD REVIEW

Sarah's medical and counseling records from Topeka Correctional Center were reviewed. At the time of her intake in September 2015, Sarah reported that she consumed seven alcoholic drinks at a time, several nights a week and smoked marijuana on a daily basis. She used oral pain pills three times a week that were provided by Mr. Sasko. This pattern of substance abuse and dependence was noted for the previous 20 months. Sarah reported a family history of substance abuse and depression. Her father and sister had both attempted suicide by over dosing. At intake, Sarah was diagnosed with Alcohol Dependence, Cannabis Dependence, and Opioid Abuse.

Sarah's medical treatment focused on ovarian cysts and, a progesterone deficiency. She made several requests to have her gluteal implants removed which was never granted.

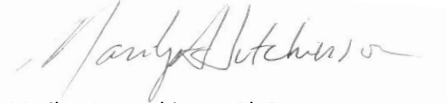
Sarah's psychological treatment goals were: (a) Learn self-calming skills; (b) Manage thoughts and feelings related to her past traumas; and (c) Develop strategies to address her shame and self-disparagement. She successfully completed her course of treatment in September 2021.

CONCLUSION

It is with a great deal of psychological certainty, I opine that Sarah Gonzales-McLinn has achieved rehabilitation and is very capable of maintaining a crime free productive life.

At the time of her arrest and trial, Sarah was a Battered Woman and deserved to have a self-defense consideration which could have ended in an acquittal for her. At the very least, she could have pleaded to a significantly lesser charge, or found guilty of a lesser charge that would have resulted in a sentence that would be nearly finished at this time.

Respectfully submitted,



Marilyn A. Hutchinson, Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist, Missouri and Kansas

Exhibit D

Supporting Facts from Evidentiary Files

Suppression of discussion of Mr. Sasko's character

During pre-trial hearings, District Court Judge Paula Martin, let Ms. McLinn's attorney know that Mr. Sasko's character flaws – whatever they may be – were not to be discussed in front the jury. Ms. McLinn's actions, she said, were on trial; Mr. Sasko's character was not.

Statement confirmed by Ms. McLinn's trial attorney.

Suspected grooming by Lawrence-area mother

The day after Mr. Sasko's body was found, a single mother of twin 16-year-old girls met with Lawrence detectives, letting them know in no uncertain terms that she had long suspected Mr. Sasko of grooming her daughters. The mother said that in the days before Mr. Sasko's death, she and the girls' high school counselor had discussed filing a no-contact order against him.

Though Mr. Sasko was a longtime family friend, the mother told him to stop referring to the twins as his daughters and encouraging them to call him Dad. She accused Mr. Sasko of persistently violating her family's boundaries.

She said that after she blocked Mr. Sasko on the girls' cell phones, he bought them new ones. He told the girls not to tell their mother.

The twins told police that Mr. Sasko had assured them that if they ever wanted to "run away" or leave their mother, they could move in with him -- he would take care of them; he would feed them; they would have money because he would give them jobs. They said he let them know he would have one rule: "His drugs would be our drugs and our drugs would be his drugs."

The girls said that when they needed money, they could text Mr. Sasko, arrange to meet him somewhere "...like at Sonic" or IHOP, and he would give them cash, undercutting their mother's authority. They said Mr. Sasko had recently given them an envelope with enough marijuana to roll a "blunt."

The mother said she was compelled to buy the girls a car after their 16th birthday because she'd learned that Mr. Sasko had promised to buy one for them. He later promised to buy them "subwoofers" (car stereo speakers), costing between \$300 and \$400, for Christmas. They'd agreed not to tell their mother.

Days before Mr. Sasko's death, he and the twins spent part of an afternoon shopping for speakers at BestBuy in Lawrence.

Please see exhibits AA, BB, CC.

Neither the mother nor the twins were called to testify.

Mr. Sasko's repeated viewing of teenage and non-consensual pornography

A "data dump" on two cell phones that belonged to Mr. Sasko showed that he had downloaded more than 300 pornographic videos and that he'd clicked on dozens of X-rated websites, some of which appeared to feature children, teens, and bestiality. *On at least 20 occasions, he returned to websites that featured men fondling or having sex with women who appeared to be sleeping or passed out.*

Ms. McLinn testified under oath that she tolerated Mr. Sasko's sexual advances by drinking herself into states of unconsciousness.

The videos are on a disc, which can be provided upon request.

The videos were not mentioned during the trial.

Unknown images from Mr. Sasko's camera

After Mr. Sasko's death, police found a camera on a desk in Ms. Sasko's bedroom/office as well as multiple flash drives in the desk drawer. A detective later said the images showed that "...McLinn and Sasko were friends and spent time together," adding that he "did not believe the photographs were of any evidentiary value."

Please see exhibit DD.

Advocates requested access to the images from the Lawrence Police Department. The request was denied.

Google search for "sex addict"

On Jan. 13, 2013, approximately three and half months after Mr. Sasko coerced Ms. McLinn into sexual intercourse, a search was made on the computer in Mr. Sasko's bedroom for the definition of a sex addict.

Please see exhibit EE.

The Google search was not mentioned during the trial.

Nephew of Mr. Sasko: Sex with "a kid" is indecent

When Ms. McLinn moved in with Mr. Sasko, he told friends and associates that she was a stepdaughter who was fleeing a troubled life in Topeka. He said he was helping her. But as the relationship evolved, he confided that it had indeed turned sexual and that they were not related.

A nephew of Mr. Sasko's who'd worked for him in the past told police that he had received an unexpected phone call from Mr. Sasko in the fall or winter of 2012. He said Mr. Sasko didn't want anyone else to know, but, yes, he and Ms. McLinn had "messed around" and that it "was the most amazing thing in the world to have an 18-year-old."

The nephew, then in his mid-30s, told police that he'd told Mr. Sasko, then 51, that a man his age having sex with "a kid" was indecent and that Mr. Sasko was "not the godly man" he'd thought he was. He said he and Mr. Sasko maintained their relationship by agreeing to disagree.

Please see exhibit FF.

A portion of the comments cited above appear only on audio disc, which will be provided upon request.

Although Sasko's nephew testified during the trial, he was not asked about his concerns that Mr. Sasko, then 51, was having sex with an 18-year-old.

"He was a very sick person:" Mr. Sasko's suicidal ideation and request for assisted suicide

Two weeks before his death, Mr. Sasko did a Google search for 'Suicide by Gun' minutes before reviewing the restaurants' financial statements.

Statements showed that Mr. Sasko was tens of thousands of dollars in debt, and that the restaurants' income streams were not covering their costs. A brother of Mr. Sasko who was familiar with his financial affairs told police that Mr. Sasko's business debts exceeded \$500,000.

Mr. Sasko's accountant told police that on the day before Mr. Sasko's death, he'd let his client know that he was "...a whisker away from losing his stores."

Please see exhibits GG & HH.

A man who considered himself to be a close friend of Mr. Sasko told police that having a conversation with Mr. Sasko him was like being "...in five or six conversations at the same time."

This comment appears on an audio disc, which will be provided upon request.

A former girlfriend of Mr. Sasko (whose daughter and son had worked at CiCi's Pizza in Lawrence) told the Kansas City Star that Mr. Sasko had told her that he wanted to die. "He was Catholic, so he didn't believe in suicide, but he asked me if I would kill him a year before his death," the woman said. "He told me how to kill him," she said, "and I'm convinced he told Sarah the same thing. He was a very sick person."

The woman, who sat through the entire trial, said she did not recognize Mr. Sasko as he was described in court.

"The jury should have heard how messed up he was, and that this was the environment Sarah was part of."

She continued, "I'm an adult woman with five children, high functioning, and he weighed me down" just listening to him.

The woman did not know Ms. McLinn but had seen her once or twice at the Lawrence restaurant.

Please see exhibit JJ.

This woman was not called to testify.

Ms. McLinn's check deposited into account controlled by Mr. Sasko

Bank records show that on Jan. 13, 2014, the day before his death, Mr. Sasko deposited Ms. McLinn's final Bed Bath & Beyond paycheck (\$265.56) into a CiCi's Pizza account that *only he had access to*.

Please see exhibit KK.

The deposit of Ms. McLinn's paycheck into an account she could not access, a potential indicator of trafficking and/or indentured labor, was not mentioned during the trial.

Mr. Sasko's illegal drug activity

Several of Mr. Sasko's friends and relatives told police that he'd admitted buying marijuana from or through a relative in Colorado and, in turn, transporting it to a dealer in Topeka who sold it and shared the proceeds with him. Mr. Sasko bought 60 black-market hydrocodone from the dealer after he had shoulder surgery in November 2013. He shared the hydrocodone with Ms. McLinn who was slow to recover from her butt augmentation surgery.

Please see exhibit FF.

Jury foreman troubled by how there "was no self-defense angle" for jurors to consider

In April 2021, the jury foreman in Ms. McLinn's murder trial told the Kansas City Star that in the years since Ms. McLinn's conviction he'd been troubled by how there "...was no self-defense angle" for jurors to consider.

"If (Ms. McLinn's defense) was presented as self-defense I could see a not guilty (verdict). That makes a lot of sense. I couldn't tell you if it would have changed the verdict then, but in today's age I'm sure it would."

The jury foreman, *then 18 years old*, said he had no idea that Ms. McLinn's conviction would result in a Hard 50 sentence. "We wanted a lax sentencing," he said. "Instead of just straight incarceration, behind bars, we wanted some sort of mental treatment."

In retrospect, he said he hoped Ms. McLinn would be given a new trial.

Please see exhibit LL.

Ms. McLinn had no criminal record

Prior to her Jan. 26, 2014, arrest, Ms. McLinn did not have a criminal record.

Lack of police questioning on nature of Ms. Linn and Mr. Sasko's relationship

Though at least seven of Mr. Sasko's friends and associates told police that his relationship with Ms. McLinn was sexual and concerning, the detectives who interviewed Ms. McLinn after she was arrested in Florida, stopped short of resolving how, on one hand, she said "...there was one point where, like, a while ago, we got drunk and we kissed, but I admit it didn't go any further than that," while, seconds later, she dismissed rumors that the relationship was sexual. Instead, she said they "...drank too much" the night they kissed, "...but it wasn't like there was a relationship."

Detectives asked her to explain a text that Mr. Sasko sent her the morning before his death. In it, he apologized “for trying to have sex with (her)” and asked if they could talk about it later that night.

Detective: What did he do? Did he – did he force himself on you or anything like that or, did he hurt you, or...

Ms. McLinn: He didn’t hurt me, but I had to tell him no a couple times.

Detective: And has he done – has that happened before?

Ms. McLinn: Yeah, I remember he got kinda really drunk.

The detectives’ questions to Ms. McLinn about the sexual nature of her relationship with Mr. Sasko lasted less than three minutes. To be clear, the detectives’ interactions with Ms. Linn were professional and above board. However, at no point during the three-hour interview did they explain what constitutes rape or ask whether Mr. Sasko had raped her.

In fact, the word ‘rape’ does not appear in the transcript of the interview.

This is not a criticism of the police. Instead, it underscores how little attention was paid the grooming and trafficking aspects of this case.

Please see exhibit MM.

Ms. McLinn coerced into “about a hundred” sexual encounters with Mr. Sasko

Two weeks after Mr. Sasko’s death, Dr. Hutchinson asked Ms. McLinn to explain how her relationship with Mr. Sasko had turned sexual. She said that after she told Mr. Sasko that she didn’t want to continue dating because she preferred to see him as “a really good friend (who) was helping me out,” he continued to “bug” her and remind her that she owed him more than \$10,000. He let her know that he was thinking about kicking her out.

Ms. McLinn said she “guilted” Mr. Sasko by reminding him that he was the one who wanted to go on dates – not her. And that he was breaking his promise to help her find a better life. She continued: “And then he would sorta...he acted like he did not want me there. We never started dating again but whenever we got drunk, he would try to have sex with me. And for the most part, I said, ‘no, and would beg and beg and beg...and the next day he would talk about how he wanted me to get out and threaten to sue me. (We) started having sex when drunk.”

Dr. Hutchinson: Did that stop him from threatening you?

Ms. McLinn: Yea.

Dr. Hutchinson: Were you conscious of what you were doing?

Ms. McLinn: Yea. I would kinda know it was going to happen, so I would get as drunk as a could.

Dr. Hutchinson: Did having sex stop the threatening?

Ms. McLinn: Yea.

During a session in July 2014, Ms. McLinn said that after the first time she and Mr. Sasko had sex, she told him it was a mistake and "...he seemed really upset about it and was cold toward me for a while. When I would confront him about it, he'd say how sorry he was and he wanted us to go back to being father-daughter...we would, and then he would drink...and I would too, and that was when he'd start pushing for it.

"And...I don't know, for a while, I just went along with it. I had to be drunk and just lay there," she said.

Dr. Hutchinson: How many times did that happen?

Ms. McLinn: Quite a few.

Dr. Hutchinson: Over or under a hundred?

Ms. McLinn: About a hundred.

Please see exhibit NN.

This segment is synopsised from Dr. Hutchinson's notes from her sessions with Ms. McLinn.

Mr. Sasko texted "obviously naked" photo to young women and underage girls

Ms. McLinn's sister, Ashley, told detectives that after visiting Ms. McLinn in the summer of 2013, Mr. Sasko texted Ashley a photo that showed the sunburn he'd gotten while on a trip to Florida. In the photo, Ashley said, Mr. Sasko was obviously naked, though it had been cropped so as not to show his groin area.

During her visit, Mr. Sasko told Ms. McLinn's sister that she and her young daughter could stay at his house if she ever needed to get away. Ms. McLinn's sister told detectives she thought the offer was "weird and a little creepy" because they did not know each other."

Please see exhibit OO.

Additionally, Mr. Sasko texted this photo to the underage twins mentioned in Section 2 of Exhibit D.

Please see exhibit CC.



Exhibit E

Petition of Support for Clemency for Sarah Gonzales-McLinn

Governor Laura Kelly
c/o Office of Clemency Attorney
Kansas Statehouse Room 241-S
300 SW 10th Ave.
Topeka, KS 66612

Dear Governor Kelly,

On behalf of Sarah Gonzales McLinn, we are humbly requesting that you grant her request for clemency. Sarah is serving a Hard 25-to-life sentence for the death of a man who had invited her to come live him.

Sarah killed Harold “Hal” Sasko on Jan. 14, 2014. At the time, he was 52, she was 19. There is ample evidence that Sarah, who had moved in with Mr. Sasko when she was 17, was groomed, sex trafficked, and sexually assaulted for almost a year.

Unfortunately, her trial focused on whether her mental condition, dissociative identity disorder, prevented her from forming criminal intent. The judge blocked Sarah’s attorney from questioning Mr. Sasko’s character. Multiple issues having to do with ‘what went on behind closed doors’ were not addressed. Sarah did not testify at her trial because her attorney truly believed she would commit suicide.

Sarah, now 28, is a survivor of sexual violence – childhood molestation by neighbor, raped at 16, groomed 17, trafficked at 18, trapped in abusive relationship at 18-19. Earlier this year, the forensic psychologist who evaluated Sarah in 2014 found that her mental health issues have been addressed, that she has long been a model inmate intent on recovery and self-improvement, and that she can be released at little or no risk to society.

We support Sarah’s clemency request and respectfully ask you to show her mercy.

Sincerely,

Shanna Carlson, registered nurse
3300 NW Hickory Ridge Ln.
Topeka, Kansas

Julie Toomay, retired registered nurse
1110 SW Randolph Ave.
Topeka, Kansas

Felicia Ramirez, registered nurse
2916 Muir Mountain Way
San Bernardino, California

Tiffani Jones, LMSW, MBA
Parole officer, Kansas Dept. of Corrections
2926 SW Randolph
Topeka, Kansas

Gina Adame, retired police officer
Sarah Gonzales-McLinn's stepmother
3424 SW Avalon Lane
Topeka, Kansas

Sherry Perez-Walker, retail clerk
2710 N Monroe St.
Hutchinson, Kansas

E. Lou Bjorgaard Probasco, attorney and
family friend
615 SW Topeka Blvd.
Topeka, Kansas

Cynthia A. Negrete, clerical administrator,
Stormont Vail Hospital
510 NE Chandler St.
Topeka, Kansas

Roxanne Merriman, formerly incarcerated woman
524 W. Cedar St.
Fulton, Kansas

Gilbert and Sherry Gonzales, retired State of
Kansas & Blue Cross Blue Shield employees
Ms. McLinn's grandparents
1804 SE Massachusetts Ave
Topeka, Kansas

Yolanda Bucia, Hallmark employee
309 E 19th Street
Lawrence, Kansas

Lisa Thulin, registered nurse
1817 SW Urish Rd
Topeka Kansas

Kelly Garcia, employee of State of Kansas
637 Wabash
Topeka, Kansas

Michelle Tinoco, family friend
2505 Sherry St.
Arlington, Texas

Gage Church, pastor of Central Congregation
United Church of Christ
205 NE Redbud Circle Apt 5
Topeka, Kansas

Rita Phelps, family friend
8000 Hampshire Ave N
Brooklyn, Minnesota

Rhonda Hamilton, distant cousin
4816 NE Lin Court
Topeka, Kansas

Chris Farmer, concerned citizen
5810 NE Olympia St.
Topeka, Kansas

Joshua Bakarich, engineer and family friend
2216 City Market Ln.
Dallas, Texas

Elijah McLinn, Ms. McLinn's brother
3727 NE Croco Rd
Topeka, Kansas

Ty McLinn, Ms. McLinn's brother
3424 SW Avalon Lane
Topeka, Kansas

James Crawford, retired attorney and family friend
15130 Sapphire Lane
Streetman, Texas

Rebeka Crawford, attorney
15130 Sapphire Lane
Streetman, Texas

Jennifer Palmer, family friend
5419 SW 28th St.
Topeka, Kansas

Windy Smith, family friend
1643 Rose Lane
Lawrence, Kansas

Erin Esser, family friend
619 NE Ohio Ave.
Topeka, Kansas

Deborah Eckhart, nurse practitioner
508 Fox Hollow Rd.
St. George, Kansas

Catherine Henderson, family friend
2933 SW Atwood
Topeka, Kansas 66614

Denise Manriquez, family friend
2221 Hardesty Ave.
Kansas City, MO

Ann Leiker, radiology technician
3836 NW 70th
Topeka, Kansas

Jennifer Gonzales
1109NE Arter
Topeka, Kansas

John Connolly, concerned citizen
714 Illinois St.
Lawrence, Kansas

Exhibit F

Individual Letters of Support for Clemency for Sarah Gonzales-McLinn

Roxanne Merriman, formerly incarcerated woman

'If you're a woman and a man does something like what he did, the shame is just so overpowering. It's like you can't move. People don't understand, but I do because I've had many of the same experiences that Sarah had.'

My name is Roxanne Merriman, I am 31 years old. I live in Bourbon County, Kansas. From 2014 to 2019, I was an inmate at the Topeka Correctional Facility (TCF). I have been off parole for more than a year. Sarah Gonzales-McLinn and I were cellmates for most of my final year at the facility.

I want people to know that Sarah has the purest heart of anyone I have ever known. A lot of women at TCF regret their crime, but they'll also brag about it. Sarah wasn't like that; she was very sorry for what she did. She was not proud of it at all.

Sarah is a very private and very shy person. She didn't share much – or go into much depth -- about her crime. But she did say that the man made her do things sexually that she did not want to do; that he abused her sexually, physically, and emotionally. She wanted out, but she didn't think there was a way out.

I just wish people would stop and think about what he must have done for her to have had that much hatred, that much anger, and that much fear in her heart. She was a young woman, barely; he was much older. He promised her a beautiful life and he broke every one of his promises. He preyed on her, he broke her, he destroyed her. All for the sake of his sickening pleasures.

When somebody does something like what Sarah did, there has to be a VERY BIG driver. It's not just because life isn't going the way you want it to. It's the trauma, the guilt, and the shame, all mixed together.

If you're a woman and a man does something like what he did, the shame is just so overpowering. It's like you can't move. People don't understand, but I do because I've had many of the same experiences that Sarah had.

I remember laying in my bunk at night, listening to Sarah cry in her sleep, sobbing. She would be thrashing and screaming 'No, no, no, stop, stop!' and she would be moaning – not like in the movies when someone is dying, more like when they're terrified and shuddering. She'd be kicking and jerking. At first, I tried to wake her up, but I couldn't. This went on night after night. I finally gave up because there just wasn't anything I could do.

Instead of people always focusing on her crime, I wish they would put just as much effort into looking into what was done to her. It had to be horrible.

If Sarah were to get clemency, she could show the world that people can heal from trauma, that their trauma doesn't have to define them for the rest of their lives or cause them to do things they will forever regret.

This is what Sarah did for me. She is the one person in my whole TCF experience who had the most positive impact on my life. I am forever indebted to her.

Sincerely,

Roxanne "Roxie" Merriman

Fulton, Kansas

Dave Ranney, retired newspaper reporter

How do we define justice for an abused individual who kills their abuser?

I am a retired newspaper reporter. Before COVID shut everything down, I was a 14-year volunteer at the Topeka Correctional Facility. Sarah Gonzales McLinn was active in the inmate-run self-help group that I helped facilitate.

I'm now active in a volunteer group that is helping Ms. McLinn apply for clemency.

In my opinion, Ms. McLinn's case is part of a much larger issue: How do we define justice for an abused individual who kills their abuser?

All of us have read news stories about women killed by their abusers who then killed themselves. And most of us, I believe, would argue that these women would have been justified if they had somehow found the wherewithal to kill their abusers first. But if they did, they likely would be charged with murder and sentenced to many years in prison.

As a volunteer at TCF, I was struck by how many of the women's crimes were coupled with deeply held beliefs that their lives were in danger. These women do not belong in prison.

Ms. McLinn believed her life was in danger, she killed her abuser, Harold "Hal" Sasko. She has been in prison almost nine years.

Dr. Marilyn Hutchinson, the forensic psychologist who evaluated Ms. McLinn, found that she fit a diagnosis for Dissociative Identity Disorder, in large part due a "demented" neighbor's sexual abuse during her early childhood, her parents' destructive divorce, and being raped at age 16. Her rapist burned her with a cigarette and threatened to kill her if she told anyone.

Ms. McLinn told Dr. Hutchinson that "Sarah" was dead; that she'd died shortly after the rape; that "Sarah" had been replaced, primarily, by personalities belonging to "Alyssa" and "Vanessa."

Vanessa wanted to escape Mr. Sasko's abuse by committing suicide. Alyssa disagreed, arguing that she would not let Vanessa kill her (Alyssa) for the sake of not killing Mr. Sasko.

In other words, the Alyssa personality killed Mr. Sasko because she truly believed her life was in danger.

* * * *

Mr. Sasko's actions contributed to his death. He was well aware of Ms. McLinn's sexual traumas, her battles with depression, her unexplained/mysterious mood changes (Vanessa vs. Alyssa), and her homicidal thoughts. Yet he continued to provide her with ready access to alcohol and drugs; he continued to rape her.

Ms. McLinn told Dr. Hutchison that Mr. Sasko's sexual advances coincided with his drinking. A few hours before his death, Ms. Sasko sent Ms. McLinn a text, asking her to put some beer in the refrigerator for him. This, Dr. Hutchinson said, caused Ms. McLinn to assume she would be raped again that night.

It is reasonable to ask whether Ms. McLinn would have killed Mr. Sasko if he had not been raping her two, three and four times a week for almost a year? The answer is no.

* * * *

Ms. McLinn used Mr. Sasko's sleeping pills to sedate him, after which she cut his throat with a large hunting knife. Authorities let it be known that she'd "almost cut his head off."

No one denies this. But it's also true that Ms. McLinn was in a psychotic state. She'd had thoughts of killing herself, her parents, and/or Mr. Sasko. She was hearing voices. She saw dead people walking around, faceless and bloody. She believed she was somehow being poisoned. She feared the world was coming to an end, that few – if any -- humans would survive.

Again, it's reasonable to ask if Ms. McLinn have been in a psychotic state if Mr. Sasko hadn't been abusing her, if he'd followed through on his promise to be a father figure for her?

No. A true father figure would not have been supplying her with nightly quantities of alcohol (vodka) and drugs (marijuana, mostly), and would have made sure she was addressing her mental health issues.

* * * *

Ms. McLinn was sentenced to at least 50 years in prison without jurors having a full understanding of 'what was going on in that house.' Her trial attorney later shared that District Court Judge Paula Martin had let it be known that Mr. Sasko's character flaws – whatever they may be – were not to be discussed in front the jury. Ms. McLinn's actions, she said, were on trial; Mr. Sasko's character was not.

That is an injustice.

Women (or men) who truly believe – rightly or wrongly – that the only way for them to survive is to kill their abusers deserve to have jurors hear their side of the story. The fact that their abuser is dead should not negate this right.

In Ms. McLinn's case, the state was allowed to portray her as a crazed killer; her attorney was not allowed to portray Mr. Sasko as a sex predator.

* * * *

During Ms. McLinn's sentencing hearing, an older brother of Mr. Sasko's shared that while Mr. Sasko had unspecified "problems" and "issues," and while he believed Ms. McLinn was poorly represented by her trial attorney, she should, nevertheless, spend the rest of her life in prison "...because once you've been institutionalized for more than ten years, you're lost."

He said releasing Ms. McLinn after 25 years "...will do society no good..."

During Ms. McLinn’s sentence modification hearing in 2021, Mr. Sasko’s daughter submitted a written statement in which she said Ms. McLinn had taken “...so much more than my father away from me. You took away irreplaceable happiness, a normal life, and years of my life (are now) filled with anger and incredible sadness.”

Sasko family members are good, caring people. They are entitled to these sentiments, certainly. But for the purpose of considering clemency, their statements should be balanced with their not having been made aware of the issues raised in interviews with police.

Dave Ranney
Lawrence, Kansas

Alice A. Lieberman, Ph.D, retired KU School of Social Welfare professor

“A normal response to a highly abnormal situation.”

I wish to add my name to the chorus of voices in support of the clemency petition filed on behalf of Sarah Gonzales-McLinn, who was convicted of first-degree murder in the death of Harold “Hal” Sasko in 2014.

Prior to my retirement in July, 2019, I was a faculty member in the School of Social Welfare at the University of Kansas. My area of specialization was child welfare and, over three decades, I was a principal investigator and/or research associate on many child welfare grants and projects.

Although much of what I learned on those projects informs the opinions I write about here, I do not speak for the School of Social Welfare, the University of Kansas, or any project sponsor or funder.

The field of child welfare has evolved considerably over the decades. One of the most astonishing developments has been rapidly growing knowledge of trauma (hereinafter called Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACES) on children, transitional-aged youth, and young adults.

ACES are defined as “potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (defined as 0- 17 years). The experiences leading to trauma include physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, emotional/physical neglect, divorce, substance abuse, and mental illness.

In turn, the sustained experiences of these traumas literally change our bodies: sustained trauma affects brain development, and can induce lasting changes to a child’s gene regulation. These complex processes cannot be explained here; the Center for Disease Control and a variety of papers readily available on the internet offer great explanations.

What does deserve attention here is the empirically supported idea that ACEs throw a child into survival mode, via the fight-or-flight response to stress. A child experiencing sustained trauma is in a near-constant state of heightened stress, which becomes toxic.

Toxic stress is induced by repeated activation of the fight-or-flight response, leading to greater risk-taking, greater impulsivity, and serves as a trigger for serious mental illness.

Although I was not in the courtroom, nor on the jury, I read extensively about the case, and the news accounts in my local newspaper. I was struck by how it appeared that no one used the language of trauma to describe Ms. McGlenn’s mental state, which was filled with trauma on a near-daily basis, and how her responses to these experiences were consistent with toxic stress.

Put another way: She was having a normal response to a highly abnormal situation.

Furthermore, although Mr. Sasko was not on trial, I was struck by the prosecution’s psychiatrist’s characterizing him as a “benefactor,” when, clearly, he was her groomer, and the perpetrator of sex crimes upon her. In

essence, Mr. Sasko continually exposed her to trauma, while systematically destroying her sense of agency and esteem. And yet, no one seemed take issue with this characterization.

Once Ms. McLinn moved to Lawrence, and into Mr. Sasko's home, they were on a collision course that produced disastrous results. Mr. Sasko lost his life.

This was a tragedy for his family and for those who loved him. However, there remains an opportunity to salvage the life of someone who has much to contribute. Ms. McLinn and her supporters have offered a compelling case for clemency. My hope is that her petition will receive a favorable review and disposition.

Sincerely,

Alice Lieberman
Lawrence, Kansas
Alicel@ku.edu

Megan Stuke, Executive Director, The Willow Domestic Violence Center

"Her act of violence was one of self-defense."

Governor Kelly,

I'm the executive director of The Willow Domestic Violence Center in Lawrence, Kansas. We serve Jefferson, Franklin, and Douglas counties in Kansas, providing advocacy, shelter, education, support, and resources for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking in our service area.

I'm writing to appeal to you regarding the case of Sarah Gonzales McLinn. Sarah was groomed by Hal Sasko at a young age. Sarah came to work for Hal as a vulnerable teen, having already suffered many forms of abuse and violence as a young woman. Hal recognized her vulnerability and preyed on it. He moved her into his home, telling her he'd be her father and take care of her.

It didn't take long for Hal to begin the process of indenturing Sarah. He paid for plastic surgeries in order to make her into his perfect girl and bragged to his friends about how amazing it was to be with a young woman. Hal created lists of debts Sarah could never repay and threatened her with homelessness and financial strife if she left. He controlled her moves, her medications, and her mind.

In my line of work, we are often asked, "Why don't they just leave?" While there are many, many reasons victims of domestic violence don't leave, chief among them is the simple belief that they can't. That there's nowhere to go, no safety to be found, no resources to obtain. Sarah was young, confused, heavily medicated, and suffering multiple mental illnesses as a result of her PTSD from past and current trauma. Over the course of Sasko's influence and grooming, Sarah came to believe she was imprisoned by him.

Sarah did not receive proper legal counsel, and it is my position that she would have been better served by a battered women's defense. She did not understand her options and her initial counsel convinced her she would be found not guilty by a jury under an insanity defense. Sarah might have been insane at the time of her crime, but it was induced by medical and psychological trauma and violence - inflicted by Hal Sasko himself. Sarah could not consent to sex with Sasko, yet he had sex with her nightly for long periods of time. She was a victim of coercive control which in this case is a form of sex trafficking. Sarah deeply and truly believed her only way out was if Hal was dead. Her act of violence was one of self-defense.

Sarah has been doing well since her imprisonment and is healthy, going to college, and has no further incidences of violence or other infractions since she's been at TCF. She doesn't deserve to pay with the rest of her life for an act of self-defense against a man more than twice her age who manipulated, terrified, controlled, and violated her.

We know better now. We understand control, trauma, trafficking, and domestic violence with much greater nuance than we did at the onset of Sarah's original trial. I've met with her many times and am confident that

she's ready to be a part of her community, give back to society, and live safely and freely. She has my support, my advocacy, and my trust.

Please pardon Sarah. It's the right thing, and it's time.

Sincerely,

*Megan Stuke, executive director
The Willow Domestic Violence Center
Lawrence, Kansas*

Michelle Gonzales, Ms. McLinn's mother

"I am asking for mercy for my daughter."

Dear Governor Kelly,

My name is Michelle Gonzales, and I am the mother of Sarah Gonzales McLinn who is presently incarcerated at Topeka Correctional Facility for Women. I am writing to you in hopes that you will consider giving Sarah clemency.

I am asking for mercy for my daughter. She is the victim of a predator, Hal Sasko, who began to groom her from the minute he met her at his pizza restaurant when she was just 15 years old. Because of his horrendous actions towards Sarah, she committed this murder. Only God knows what despair and pain caused her to commit this crime. Many people are now suffering. My family and I feel that not only did the Sasko Family lose a family member, but my family has lost Sarah as well. We grieve every day for her.

Ever since Sarah was found guilty, she has been a model prisoner. She is attending Washburn University classes through the correctional program they have, and she is also training dogs to be service animals. I believe she has so much to contribute to society.

I struggle every day, knowing that my daughter, Sarah, will be in prison for many years. My heart aches knowing that I may not be alive to see her leave the prison system due to the many years she was given. I beg you, please look into your heart, read the papers we have submitted, and consider clemency for my daughter.

Sincerely,

Michelle Gonzales
Topeka, Kansas

Ramona Pritchett, Ms. McLinn's godmother

What was going on in that house?

Dear Governor Kelly,

On May 25, 2021, I attended an ineffective-counsel hearing in Douglas County District Court, during which Sarah Gonzales McLinn's Hard 50-to-life sentence was reduced to a Hard 25-to-life sentence.

I am Sarah's godmother; her mother and I are cousins. I am writing because the ineffective-counsel arguments focused on whether her trial attorney had adequately explained an earlier "plea bargain" in which she would plead guilty to first degree murder in exchange for a Hard 25 sentence, and whether her attorney had erred by not mounting a "battered woman syndrome" defense.

Going into the hearing, the hope was that Sarah would be given a new trial and that her case would be put "on the grid." That did not happen. Instead, the two sides agreed to reinstate – *and accept* -- the Hard 25 offer.

The agreement did not address the "battered woman syndrome" issue, which, in my view, was every bit as critical an issue as whether the Hard 25 offer had been adequately explained.

In layman's terms: The agreement did not address 'what was going on in that house.'

Sarah did not testify at her trial because her attorney feared she would commit suicide. Six years after her victim's death, her mental health had stabilized, and she was able to testify during the ineffective counsel hearings. She said her victim, Harold "Hal" Sasko, had been raping her "several times a week" for almost a year.

This testimony was in keeping with what she had shared with the forensic psychologist shortly after her arrest.

It is fair and reasonable to ask whether Sarah would have killed Mr. Sasko if he hadn't been raping her? The question, however, became 'If Mr. Sasko was such a bad person, why didn't Sarah just leave?'

I would counter by asking, 'If Sarah was such a terrible person, why didn't Mr. Sasko kick her out after a month? Six months? A year? Two years?' He was 52 years old, she was 19. He'd been married four times to three different women. He was not in love with Sarah and she was not in love with him.

What was going on in that house?

A battered woman syndrome defense would have answered this question, but it was not to be.

I don't like saying this, but how can a woman who kills her abuser be sentenced to at least 25 years in prison without a clear understanding of what was going on in that house? How is this justice?

Sarah told me she agreed to the Hard 25 because, "I can't do 50 years." But the settlement only makes her eligible for parole after 25 years of incarceration: February of 2039. There are no guarantees about what happens after that.

I don't like saying this either, but for her entire life, Sarah has been dealing with no one being there to help her. She has experienced what is defined as complex trauma from an early age, experiencing sexual abuse, rape, neglect, and being raised in an alcoholic home. She was a vulnerable teenager who fell for an abuser's promises and paid a dear price.

It is obviously true that Mr. Sasko was a victim, but he was hardly innocent. I would argue that Sarah, too, was a victim. She is lucky to be alive. Mr. Sasko was not a fool; he knew the legal definition of rape. There was no way he was going to run the risk of Sarah leaving and telling friends or family members what he'd done to her. I dread the thought of where their relationship was headed.

Sarah has been incarcerated for almost nine years for killing her abuser, her rapist.

Gov. Kelly, I am asking you to correct this injustice.

Sincerely,

Ramona Pritchett
Huntington Beach, California

Denise Eckhart, domestic violence survivor

'Abuse destroys you from the inside out. Not everyone has the ability to walk away, and everyone deserves fair representation.'

Dear Gov. Kelly,

My name is Deborah Eckhart. I am writing in support of clemency for Sarah Gonzales McLinn.

I have followed her story because I worked with her mom. I am a survivor of domestic abuse. My children's father raped me for two years. I have a child from that time in my life.

My husband used my religious beliefs to keep me feeling trapped and like I had no choice but to stay. We had four children together. I believed there was no way to survive. I had been told for years that I wasn't good enough, so I stayed until I was contemplating suicide on a daily basis.

That was when I decided I wanted to live and save my children from their father.

I survived, and I have thrived. After years of therapy, I have told my story to countless people, completed my BSN and my MSN. My ex-husband has continued to hurt others; he lies and he steals. He does not pay child support and he doesn't get in trouble for it.

Abuse destroys you from the inside out. Not everyone has the ability to walk away, and everyone deserves fair representation. While I do not condone murder, I understand her desperation to be free of someone who left her soul in shreds. Sarah has already suffered lifetimes of punishment in her short time on earth, and the memories will be present in her mind for the rest of her time on this earth.

I'm asking you to give her clemency, to give her a chance for the life she should have had all along -- a life without abuse, a life surrounded by people who love and care for her, a life where she can potentially help others survive and be free of their abusers before they get to the point of choosing between life or death.

Sincerely,

Deborah Eckhart

Kerry Steuart, former business associate of Mr. Sasko's

"I will never condone her (Sarah Gonzales McLinn's) actions on that night in 2014, but I absolutely understand her thought process."

To whom it may concern:

Hello, my name is Kerry Steuart. I am a former business associate of Hal Sasko.

Shortly after Mr. Sasko's death, I realized the media was portraying him as a kindly businessman who had opened his home to a troubled teenager. I called Sarah's attorney to provide a different perspective on Mr. Sasko's character. After not hearing back from the attorney, I reached out to Sarah. My initial correspondence to her is below:

Dear Ms. McLinn:

I feel compelled to write you and hope this letter finds you as well as can be expected in your current circumstance. You see, I was quite shocked to learn of Hal's sudden death.

At one time, I had the unfortunate luck of being business partners with Hal at the CiCi's Pizza location in Grandview, Missouri, for approximately 3 years. Had I known then what kind of person Hal was and that he would come to make my life a financial and emotional nightmare, I would have never agreed to his interest in the store.

Without going into the details, I simply wanted you to know that contrary to all of the media accounts of what a caring and giving person Hal was, I personally knew a much different man. A man that was selfish and put his personal gain above all else.

Although I do not know what transpired between you and Hal, I am hopeful that the jury will have empathy and understanding for you and will realize that things are not always as they seem. Please know that even out of this tragic event, some good has come because I no longer have to fear the actions of Hal Sasko.

Best Regards,

Kerry Steuart

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Hurt people hurt people, and they do it for a variety of reasons. One is because of how they were treated, and they want others to feel the way they feel. The other is out of selfishness, they are attempting to control the

situation and being demeaning or belittling someone lowers the victim's self-esteem, and they begin to feel more powerful and better about themselves in the short term.

I always try to analyze why people are behaving in certain manners to understand the "Why?". Why do they want to hurt others? Why are they hurting? Most of the time it is because they need to feel loved and accepted.

I can only imagine the pain Mr. Sasko was feeling and from where his pain derived. Was it from childhood, or his previous marriage, or other failed relationships? Was the relationship with Sarah the one he could control and manipulate?

Unfortunately, our society has monsters that live among us and who are able to manipulate and destroy the lives of others. But while these crimes are cruel and unethical, they are not illegal or punishable, so they continue to walk among us.

Mr. Sasko was this man – *this monster* – to me on so many levels. He was truly a mass manipulator and narcissist.

I first met Mr. Sasko in 2004 when I was given a Cici's Pizza franchise in Grandview, Missouri, by a colleague. He wanted out of the business; we are still close friends today.

Since I was not authorized to be a franchisee by Cici's corporate standards, I needed a partner until I was operationally approved by a general manager. The corporate office suggested that Mr. Sasko be my partner until approval was granted.

Mr. Sasko and I agreed on a split of 15 v 85 percent until I became approved. The operating and franchise agreements had to mirror each other; we signed the documents, and I was under the impression the agreement was valid.

Mr. Sasko advised me to not deposit the revenue from the video-game machines in a bank account, or, if I did, to make sure it was a small amount so the IRS couldn't track it. He said it was money best kept "under the table." The machines, on average, generated around \$800 a week.

Mr. Sasko also advised me on how to manipulate local businesses by "guilting" them into supporting my store. He would, for example, take free pizza to a business, unannounced; then, a week later, he would call the business to ask how many pizzas they wanted...to buy. I refused to do that.

Business was going extremely well under my management. Sales increased by over 20 percent, annually; I won a national Coca-Cola promotion. It took about 18 months for me to be operationally approved, and I started the process of buying Mr. Sasko's 15 percent.

This became a major ordeal because he had surreptitiously changed the operating agreement to 51 v 49 percent split. After several discussions, coupled with his unwillingness to put a price on the 51 percent, I decided to walk away from the store. I provided my notice to him and our shared accountant. I told him he could have the store for free since it was given to me for free.

A few years later, I was notified by the IRS that Mr. Sasko had not paid any state or federal taxes. At the same time, he'd refused to sign the operating/franchise agreement that made him 100% owner of the store. This, according to the IRS, left me responsible for the unpaid taxes.

After a long and challenging battle with the IRS, it was determined that I owed \$75,000. I was forced to file bankruptcy twice because Mr. Sasko put a lien on my personal property for the business taxes that he'd not paid while he was running the Cici's Pizza in Grandview.

Since the death of this monster, I have been able to rebuild my life.

I know Sarah was in a situation where she did not see a path to enlightenment; instead, she was subjected to only control and deceit. She had no idea how toxic her relationship with Mr. Sasko and the environment he created would turn out to be. My heart goes out to her each and every day.

I want people to know that monsters like Mr. Sasko walk among us. I have been blessed to be able to mentor Sarah over the past few years. She has a greater understanding of mindfulness, meditation, self-care, journaling, healthy boundaries and how to turn conflict into resolution.

She has begun to allow herself to establish healthy boundaries that have provided her with a path of empowerment.

I will never condone her actions on that night in 2014, but I absolutely understand her thought process.

I have seen so much growth in Sarah over the past few years. I am thankful she has survived this turmoil, but I also want her to thrive. So many times, we believe that survival is the final step, but it is only a detour on the path to thriving with enlightenment. I believe in Sarah, and I believe she deserves the opportunity for a second chance to thrive.

Sincerely,

Kerry Steuart
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Will Averill, (Former) Director of Communications, Willow Domestic Violence Center

Coercive control is an integral part of the larger pattern of domestic violence.

Every morning there was a rose on the car. To the neighbors, it was sweet, like something out of a romantic comedy. For the owner of the car, it was a reminder: “I know where you live; I can find you any time.”

For someone else, it was a gun. When their abuser was unhappy, they would clean and load their gun in the living room, often looking up as if to say, “Do you see what I can do?”

Neither of these acts was physical abuse, yet both created conditions of terror and fear of future harm for individuals who eventually ended up seeking help at our domestic violence shelter.

Their abusers used coercive control, an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, intimidation, or other abuse used to harm, punish or frighten their victims. The purpose of coercive control is to make the victim utterly dependent on their abuser through isolation, depriving them of their independence and controlling their everyday behavior.

Coercive control is an integral part of the larger pattern of domestic violence. Addressing it is an essential step in solving a public health crisis that accounts for 25% of Kansas homicides and affects the lives of thousands of Kansans, their families, workplaces, faith communities and health services.

Abusive relationships seldom start with physical abuse. Some never even escalate to that point; the mere threat of violence can often be enough. Abusers establish a pattern of coercive control over months and years to impose their will upon their victims. These tactics can range from separating the abused person from family, inflicting emotional and psychological abuse (gaslighting), threatening or using children and pets, and financial and economic abuse. Often, domestic violence’s psychological effects are as devastating as the physical effects and take longer to heal.

A survivor will leave their abuser up to seven times before they can leave permanently. This may be due to this lack of resources; often, survivors will have no access to money, credit cards, even their essential ID documents. Survivors may feel they will never be worthy of being with anyone else again, having been told so often no one else likes them that they believe it. Or they may still be in love.

There are many reasons it is complicated for a survivor to leave an abusive situation. Current laws on domestic violence typically focus only on the physical act. And while it is possible to get a protection order without abuse, those orders are challenging to get.

In some states, however, legislation is beginning to recognize that coercive control is a pattern as detrimental as physical abuse. Hawaii and California currently have coercive control legislation on their books, and other states are working toward similar bills.

These laws seem, on the surface, to be a big step forward in the fight against domestic violence.

Passing more laws without addressing the root causes of domestic violence does create some troubling problems.

As with cases of physical abuse, many incidents never make it to court. Kansas is a “mandatory arrest” state, which means that if a domestic violence incident is reported, someone must be arrested. For survivors, this can increase the danger for multiple reasons. They may be arrested themselves, or they may lose necessary income if a member of the family is arrested. Their abuser may take it out on them after being released from law enforcement custody.

Abusers often control finances, and with their abuser arrested, survivors may find themselves and their children without financial resources. For survivors of color, involving law enforcement may be dangerous — Black survivors are incarcerated with their abusers at a much higher rate than white survivors, often for acts otherwise deemed self-defense.

Relying on enforcement without proper access to social services and assistance may result in lackluster attempts at enforcement because domestic violence is a cyclical and recurring pattern.

Coercive control legislation, if enforced, is an essential beginning to addressing the public health crisis of domestic violence in Kansas. However, law enforcement and the court system can create even more barriers for already disadvantaged and displaced survivors. Education, prevention, access to resources, and accountability for abusers are essential in resolving this crisis.

In the case of Sarah Gonzalez McLinn, although there was no clear evidence of physical abuse, there were clear signs that her abuser, Mr. Sasko, purposefully utilized psychological, economic, and drugs and alcohol to impose his will upon her. There are, in my opinion as an advocate of six years, clear signs both of human trafficking (survival sex and using drugs and alcohol to make Sarah unable to consent to sex), and coercive control – threatening to kick her out unless she consented to sex, gaslighting psychological abuse, and trauma-bonding. These issues were never explored in the initial case and should have played a significant role in the determination of this case.

Sincerely,

Will Averill
(Former) Director of Communications
Willow Domestic Violence Center
Dec 2016-October 2022

Phil Cauthon, advocate

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."

Dear Governor Kelly,

We've known each other since circa 2010. I'm not trying to curry favor, rather hoping to ground my letter among what must be many letters from constituents, some of whom you don't necessarily know at all. In short, I was the resident health information exchange expert at the Kansas Health Institute, and when you found out I would be leaving that post, you invited me to your office to brief you. That was welcome, to be sure. That proactive use of 30 minutes of your time on an esoteric issue that nevertheless implicates all of us made me see what a true public servant can be at their best. Anyway, I hope that context may remind you of me, in consideration of my appeal for Sarah Gonzales.

It was not so long before Sarah killed her serial abuser that Jana Mackey was killed by her serial abuser, in the same Lawrence community. Just a few years apart. I knew enough people who were devastated by Jana's case that when Sarah's case was in the headlines for weeks, and then more weeks, I couldn't help to wonder if it might be a similar situation.

I won't personally characterize either situation, because I frankly do not know enough to ultimately know. That said, I do know people I've lived most of my life trusting thoroughly to take their characterizations at face value. As I understand, in Sarah's case, her parents were going through divorce. Sarah was working at Cici's Pizza, whose owner and operator evidently interacted with his teen female employees in inappropriate — or even predatory — ways. He offered Sarah a place to stay during a difficult time. She eventually accepted. He groomed her, gave her illicit drugs, engaged in sexual acts with her — perhaps even serially raped her — paid for plastic surgery for her, assumed control of her finances and otherwise trapped her in his custody. Again, this is what I understand from secondhand accounts of her experience, but accounts I thoroughly trust to be true.

I have regrettably witnessed enough instances of injustice in the judicial system to know that even a more or less well-meaning lawyer — maybe multiple lawyers — for a given defendant might be stretched so thin, and/or so plagued by their own biases, and/or just playing the odds like a poker game, best they know how. I've also known enough public defenders who, best I can tell, don't get much sleep, certainly aren't paid what they're worth, yet do it all anyway for years and at considerable sacrifice because ... not to put too fine of a point on it, but, because difficult cases like Sarah Gonzales are pervasive.

Sarah's case happens to be one here in Kansas that you have full power to do something about.

If you're still reading — thank you, sincerely. One more thought. What if Sarah had shot him with a bullet, making her cry for freedom a bit less messy. So many people kill others with bullets and don't face a hard 50 years of their life. I tend to think things had to be so bad for Sarah, for so long, that what precipitated was

almost inevitable one way or another.

Jana Mackey died at the hands of her abuser. Sarah readily admits she killed her abuser after years of not seeing any other way out of the serial abuse perpetrated upon her. Again, as I understand, she feels haunting guilt over all that has passed.

I love our community, in part, because there have long been organizations working to prevent or be ready to assist in such regrettable cases. But fact is — without your intervention in this case — without a pardon — the life that Sarah might have had is essentially gone. Without your pardon, she will likely be in prison until she's close to the doorstep of natural death.

I don't like laying this at your doorstep. It's not nice. But a pardon feels like the most just thing I can attempt to relate to you in this case.

I see the truth — regrettably more and more, sometimes firsthand — of Bonhoeffer's words (quoted below). It's the silence or even indifference of those of us with some agency, however small, particularly those of us blessed with privilege, that — all that silence, taken together — can continue enabling the most regrettable sides of humanity, allowing lives to be lost, even while we may wish such things were not so.

It's in that spirit, and with Sarah and her family and friends in mind, that I risk speaking so bluntly on such a treacherous matter. I dislike doing so, but I am so moved .. and so I must. I must try to use my voice to perhaps help make a difference for Sarah, her family, her friends, and — god-willing — a life in her younger years, on the other side of bars. Imagine for a moment, were she to be free again, what work she might set for herself to make this life a better place for others.

I hope you might give Sarah Gonzales's case serious consideration. Thank you, Gov. Kelly.

Phil Cauthon
Vinland, Kansas

"Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act."