

**AN APPLICATION  
FOR EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY  
FOR KENNETH WILSON**

**Scheduled to be executed on  
Tuesday, November 17, 1998**

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November 10, 1998

David Botkins, spokesman for the Department of Corrections said recently,

What gets lost in all the last-minute public relations ploys by the death penalty opponents and the defense, is the toll and trauma it takes on the victims and their families.<sup>1</sup>

The same is painfully true of executions. What gets lost in the zeal to execute a man is the toll it takes on his family. In this case, that toll would be unacceptable. By allowing the execution of Kenny Wilson to proceed, the Governor will deprive Mr. Wilson's two children, DeShawn, age thirteen, and Tyrone,<sup>†</sup> age 6, of the only parent in their lives, the only man in their lives, their primary source of guidance and their confidant.<sup>††</sup> The difference to the criminal justice system between allowing Kenny Wilson to serve the remainder of his natural life in prison and killing him is insignificant compared to the difference allowing him to live would make in the lives of these children. We therefore ask the Governor to commute Kenny Wilson's sentence to life without parole.

*"Whether fathers live in prisons or in neighborhoods, in households with or separated from their children, they have key roles in fostering their children's well-being. Children need their fathers, and fathers need their children."<sup>2</sup>*

*-Creasia Finney Hairston, Ph.D.  
Dean, Jane Addams School of Social Work  
and leading authority on incarcerated parents*

The idea that fathers can and should continue to parent their children from behind bars enjoys wide support in the scholarly literature on the subject. When fathers are incarcerated, they do not surrender their hopes, dreams, worries, and concerns about their children. According to Dr. James Garbarino, fathers who are physically separated from their children can still play a vital role in their children's development:

Research on fathers separated from their children indicates that it is possible for physically separated fathers to be a vital force in the lives of their children. To accomplish this, a father needs to be "psychologically present" in the life of his children. This is done through the child receiving repeated messages that their

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<sup>†</sup> The children's names have been changed in this petition and the supporting materials in order to protect the children from the detrimental effects of publicity to the greatest extent possible.

<sup>††</sup> Primary source for information about family appears on videotape to be submitted separately.

father thinks of them, cares about them, and is concerned about their behavior. Separated fathers do this through remembering birthdays and holidays and communicating with their children on these special days. They do it by providing feedback on their children's day to day lives, perhaps offering guidance and advice in light of the father's own experience.<sup>3</sup>

Kenny Wilson does these things for his children and so much more. Kenny has always been a very involved and affectionate father. Before Kenny was incarcerated, he always made time to do things with his children. DeShawn remembers his father taking him places -- to the store or out to play. Kenny was the parent who signed DeShawn's homework and report cards. Kenny encouraged DeShawn to do well in school, and he did. Kenny also was sure to make time to be with his youngest son, Tyrone. Had it been up to Tyrone, the two would have played all night. Tyrone is very attached to his father, and as a toddler he cried anytime Kenny left the house.

Since his incarceration, Kenny has done all in his power to remain a father to his children. DeShawn and Tyrone speak to their father on the phone almost daily. Family members take the boys to visit Kenny at least every other month. Kenny and the boys exchange letters frequently. The boys often compete for the phone to talk to Kenny, both in the visiting room at the prison and at home.

Kenny and his children talk about everyday things, as well as major life lessons. Not long after Kenny's arrest, for example, DeShawn began having trouble in school. He was acting out and his grades dropped. It was Kenny who intervened and gave his son the encouragement and support to get through this traumatic time. He and DeShawn had long discussions about the importance of staying off drugs and staying off the streets. They talked about the importance of setting goals and finishing school. With his father's help, DeShawn was able to get back on track. He talks to them about the importance of self-esteem, and helps DeShawn to be a role model for his little brother. Relatives always consult Kenny regarding how to discipline the children because the children have always minded Kenny -- both when he was out and since he has been in prison.

Kenny Wilson's caliber of parenting is, for several reasons, highly unusual for an incarcerated father. There are numerous obstacles to an inmate's ability to be a father. Collect phone calls are expensive. Visitation, when it is possible, is often conducted in prison phone booths, or in glass rooms where privacy is unavailable. The security procedures required to enter a prison are often a discouragement to visitors including children and their custodians.<sup>4</sup> As a result of these and other factors, most imprisoned fathers do not see their children at all, and fewer than one-third of incarcerated fathers see their children on a regular basis.<sup>5</sup> Few incarcerated parents are able to achieve the level of parenting Kenny has.

Experts point out that the fact of incarceration, and even the fact of having engaged in

criminal activity, does not automatically render a father a bad parent in the eyes of the child and the family.<sup>6</sup> Kenny Wilson is still the man that these children know and love as their father. He is the person they heed, and the person in whom they confide. This bond cannot easily be undone, and cannot ever be replaced.

*"The death of a parent is the biggest loss a child can suffer."<sup>7</sup>*

*-Dr. James Garbarino, Ph.D.*

*Co-director, Family Life Development Center and  
Professor of Human Development, Cornell University*

The death of a parent is a deeply painful experience at any stage of life. The loss of a parent early in life can have particularly devastating effects, including difficulty achieving and sustaining intimacy and loss of ability to express anger. The violent death of a parent, which occurs when a parent is killed by a non-accidental force, such as murder or execution, is particularly traumatic. Children are more vulnerable to injury from such trauma than adults, because their limited experience has not allowed them to become accustomed to the presence of violence in their worlds and lives.<sup>8</sup>

The effects on a child of the violent death of a parent include,

\*sleep disturbances

\*nightmares

\*phobic behavior

\*difficulties with separation

\*aggression

\*increased tension states

\*regressions, such as enuresis, sucking and mouthing objects

\*confusion

\*worry

\*symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder

\*obsessive-compulsive behavior

\*depression, and

\*loss of self-esteem.<sup>9</sup>

Long term effects of the traumatic death of a parent include:

\*impaired social functioning

\*lack of confidence

\*mental health disruptions, and

\*somatic and realized health problems.<sup>10</sup>

There is, of course, always the looming specter of substance abuse, particularly for DeShawn, now age 13.

When an individual is in severe emotional pain, there is often the desire to avoid that pain by "numbing out." Unfortunately, drugs and alcohol are readily available to most teens and the use of these chemicals can become particularly attractive while grieving.<sup>11</sup>

***"Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies."***

***-Edna St. Vincent Millay***

Even more troubling than the easily quantifiable effects of the death of a parent listed above, is the entire change in world view that the traumatic loss of a parent causes. Our culture views childhood as a special, protected time, and in fact, a child's sense of safety is key to his development.<sup>12</sup> The violent death of a parent robs the child of his innocence. The child is hopeless and in despair.<sup>13</sup> He is apprehensive about growing up and skeptical about the future.<sup>14</sup> His basic trust in humanity is undermined.<sup>15</sup>

***"The child in these circumstances will have to lean even more heavily on the support of the surviving parent for help in facing the loss, to grieve, and mourn..."***

***-Sol Altschul, M.D.***

According to the experts, the well-being of a child following the death of a parent is closely correlated with the emotional availability of the surviving parent.<sup>16</sup> The death of one parent is the kind of event that makes a child turn to his surviving parent for comfort, guidance, and support.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the surviving parent of Kenny Wilson's children will not be

able to play that role. Shortly after Kenny was incarcerated, the boys' mother began abusing crack cocaine and alcohol. As a result she began neglecting and physically abusing her children. Her behavior greatly surprised Kenny. She was ultimately incarcerated, and has had very little contact with the children since. The children's separation from their mother makes the likelihood of a healthy and successful grieving process should their father be killed highly unlikely. Without modeling and aiding the grieving process, children are likely to erect inappropriate defense mechanisms which can in turn lead to aggressive behavior and arrest.<sup>18</sup>

The absence of the boys' mother is crucial in another respect. Research indicates that children who can withstand some trauma become less and less able to do so as the number of obstacles to their development increases.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the execution of DeShawn and Tyrell's father will add to the already existing stresses in their lives:

- \*growing up in a neighborhood where drugs and violence are omnipresent,
- \*growing up poor, and
- \*neglect, abuse, and abandonment by their mother.

As Dr. Garbarino describes, Kenny Wilson has remained one of the few constant sources of support for these children.

Kenny Wilson's children are faced with numerous challenges to their development, a pattern of accumulating risk factors. Some of these are indicated in the case history -- e.g. family history of criminality, incapacitation of their mother due to substance abuse, disruption of relationships, low-income, etc. In the face of these accumulating risk factors, we must ask, "what are the potential sources of resilience in their lives?" There are precious few. Their relationship with their father is first and foremost on the list.<sup>20</sup>

Losing a parent to execution is different than losing a parent another way. When a parent dies from illness or even homicide, sympathy and community support for the children of the deceased abounds. Not so with the children of a person who is executed. DeShawn and Tyrone know, or will one day know, that the rage and hatred of the community toward their father was so deep and pervasive, that the community saw fit to end his life. These children will suffer from the stigma of their father's execution, and internalize the community's animosity. These factors would be devastating to the children given that research shows that a child may perceive the death of a parent as a response to his value as a person.<sup>21</sup>

To have their father killed by the State of Virginia would be an

extremely damaging message to DeShawn and Tyrone, a message which, in the larger context of their lives, could prove decisive in a negative way, being the proverbial "straw that breaks the camel's back." The rage, sadness, and social isolation it could provoke might well push them into anti-social behavior in the years to come. In contrast, a decision to spare their father's life so that he might be a positive influence upon them might well be the decisive, positive influence needed to direct them in a positive direction.<sup>22</sup>

DeShawn is now in the eighth grade. He is involved in sports and is getting A's and B's in school. He is now part of the "Achievable Dream" program, through which he can get assistance paying for college if he stays in school. DeShawn says it was his father who helped him find the motivation to do so well in school. He sends copies of his report cards to his father in prison. While DeShawn is doing well, he is a very quiet child. His family worries about the pain he carries inside already, and how much more he can take.

Tyrone has just started the first grade. Much more outspoken than his big brother, he recently began getting in trouble for talking back to his teachers. Kenny has been having many talks with Tyrone about the importance of behaving in school, and his behavior has improved. Tyrone is nevertheless doing well with his school work and has been able to impress his father with all the words he can spell.

It is clear to everyone how much the boys depend upon their father's attention, encouragement and support. All agree that there will be no replacement for Kenny in the lives of DeShawn and Tyrone.

*"My role is to protect those people who are most frail in society and cannot necessarily protect themselves."*

*-Governor Jim Gilmore*

As the governor is well aware, the crime of which Mr. Wilson was convicted took the life of a young girl's mother, and involved harm to the girl herself. She may have suffered many of the things described in this petition following the death of her mother. The Governor is now in the unique position to protect two more children from suffering, by commuting Mr. Wilson's sentence to life without parole.

The Governor's choice not to commute Mr. Wilson's sentence will send the unmistakable message to these children that they do not deserve the Governor's protection. Executing Kenny Wilson in spite of the obvious damage it will do to his children demonstrates an indifference to DeShawn and Tyrone that can only have negative effects.

If a child's map of the world depicts people and places as hostile, and the child as an insignificant speck relegated to one small corner, we must expect

troubled development of one sort or another: a life of suspicion, low self-esteem, self-denigration, and perhaps violence and rage. We can also expect a diminution of cognitive development and impediments to academic achievement and in-school behavior.<sup>23</sup>

In the words of Dr. Garbarino,

...the execution of Kenny Wilson would be an extremely damaging threat to the development of his two children, truly punishing the sons for the sins of the father. It would be a grievous violation of the human rights of the children and an act likely to rebound negatively on society in the years to come.<sup>24</sup>

Unless the Governor intervenes, on November 17th, the Commonwealth will execute Kenny Wilson. The cold, harsh reality of Kenny Wilson's execution is that it will have devastating effects on Kenny's two young sons, Tyrone and Deshawn.

DeShawn and Tyrone are children at risk -- like their father they are growing up poor, surrounded by crime. However DeShawn and Tyrone are children with hopes and dreams -- hopes and dreams instilled in them, for the most part, by their father, Kenny Wilson. In spite of his own circumstances, Kenny Wilson has remained a consistent and positive presence in the lives of his two sons. Determined to ensure that his children not suffer his fate, Kenny has strived to keep in constant contact with his now motherless children -- offering them the love, support, encouragement, and guidance they need to navigate their way through what Kenny knows will be a most difficult journey to adulthood.

The legal process by which Kenny's death sentence was imposed and affirmed did not consider the effects that sentence would have on these two small boys. It could not: our court system must be concerned only with justice -- whether the sentence comports with the law. In the interest of fairness, our justice system strives to be unencumbered by human passions and prejudices. The wheels of justice cannot stop to consider its impact on the fate of two little boys who were not witnesses, or victims or otherwise "relevant" to those proceedings.<sup>†††</sup>

Our Governor's clemency power is different. In considering a petition for clemency, our Governor can consider what the courts could not -- the impact that Kenny Wilson's death will have on two innocent children, DeShawn and Tyrone. Sparing Kenny Wilson's life for the sake of his children will ensure that justice is served, while mitigating its effects on those who are innocent:

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<sup>†††</sup>Under Virginia law, evidence of the impact of defendant's punishment on relative is not relevant to the jury's sentencing decision and therefore not admissible at the penalty phase of a capital trial. *Coppola v. Commonwealth*, 257 S.E.2d 797, 804 (Va. 1979); *Shifflett v. Commonwealth*, 484 S.E.2d 134, 136-7 (Va.App. 1997).

\* A sentence of life without parole will satisfy the Commonwealth's need for retribution, as it ensures Kenny Wilson will spend the rest of his natural life in prison. In most places in the world, the harshest possible punishment.

\* A sentence of life without parole for Kenny Wilson will protect the citizens of the Commonwealth, as it ensures Kenny Wilson will never leave prison.

\* A sentence of life without parole for Kenny Wilson will spare his two children the needless pain and trauma they will suffer if their father is taken from them when they need him most.

\* A sentence of life without parole for Kenny Wilson will send a message to DeShawn, Tyrone, and their community that protecting the welfare of these two children when we have the opportunity to do so is more important to us as a society than carrying out one more execution, because we can.

This simple act of mercy will do nothing to undermine the Commonwealth's need to ensure that justice is done. This simple act of mercy will mean everything to these two young boys, DeShawn and Tyrone.

Respectfully submitted,

KENNETH L. WILSON

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November 10, 1998

## ENDNOTES

1. "Virginia Executes Murderer for Killing as a Juvenile," New York Times (October 15, 1998), p. A18.
2. Finney-Hairston, Creasie, Ph.D., "The Forgotten Parent: Understanding the Forces that Influence Incarcerated Fathers' Relationships with their Children," Child Welfare, Sept/Oct. 1998, 617-639 at p. 636.
3. A mini-biography of Dr. James Garbarino appears with his statement which appears as Appendix 1 to this petition.
4. Finney-Hairston, Creasie, Ph.D. "How Correctional Policies Impact Father-Child Relationships, 8 Family and Corrections Network Report, No. 1, p. 3.
5. Finney-Hairston, in Child Welfare at 621.
6. Id.
7. Appendix 1.
8. Garbarino, James, Ph.D., et. al., Children in Danger, Jossey-Bass Publishers (San Francisco: 1988), p. 5.
9. Samuels, Arnold, M.D., "Parental Death in Childhood," Childhood Bereavement and its Aftermath, Information Universities Press, 1988, p. 22; Garbarino, James, Ph.D., et. al., Children in Danger, p. 58; Finkelstein, Harris, "The Long Term Effects of Early Parent Death: A Review," 44 Jnl. of Clinical Psychology 3 (Jan. 1988), pp. 4-6; Nader, Kathleen Olympia, "Children's Exposure to Traumatic Experience," Handbook of Childhood Death and Bereavement, Charles A. & Donna M. Corr, eds., Springer Publishing Company (1996), pp. 202-03.
10. Nader, at 203; Samuels at 22-23.
11. TeenAge Grief, Inc., on the internet.
12. Garbarino at 1.
13. Garbarino at 58.
14. Samuels at 22-23.
15. Garbarino at 69.
16. Finklestein at 6; Samuels at 25.

17. Altschul, Sol, M.D., "Trauma, Mourning, and Adaptation: A Dynamic Point of View," Childhood Bereavement and its Aftermath, Information Universities Press, 1988, p. 11.

18. Altschul, at 11.

19. Garbarino at 2; Appendix 1.

20. Appendix 1.

21. Finklestein at 6.

22. Appendix 1.

23. Garbarino at 10.

24. Appendix 1.

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November 7, 1998

TO: Marta Kahn,  
Virginia Capital Representation Resource Center

FROM: James Garbarino, PhD  
Co-Director, Family Life Development Center,  
Professor of Human Development,  
Cornell University



RE: Clemency Petition for Kenny Wilson

I have reviewed the materials you provided concerning Kenny Wilson's children and their relationship with him. I am prepared to offer an assessment based upon that material and my expertise as a developmental psychologist with 25 years of experience studying children, youth, and families--including a focus on the impact of violence and trauma on development. (A one page bio is appended for background purposes.)

Child development research (e.g. that conducted by Arnold Sameroff and by Carl Dunst) demonstrates that to understand the developmental prospects of children it is necessary to understand the accumulation of risk factors and resilience factors in the child's life. As risk accumulates, resilience becomes increasingly important. I have outlined the implications of this research in my 1995 book *Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers) and in my forthcoming book on the developmental pathways leading to adolescent violence, *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them* (NY: The Free Press, 1999).

Kenny Wilson's children are faced with numerous challenges to their development, a pattern of accumulating risk factors. Some of these are indicated in the case history-- e.g. family history of criminality, incapacitation of their mother due to substance abuse, disruption of relationships, low-income, etc. In the face of these accumulating risk factors, we must ask, "what are the potential sources of resilience in their lives?" There are precious few. Their relationship with their father is first and foremost on the list. Let me elaborate.

Research on fathers separated from their children indicates that it is possible for physically separated fathers to be a vital force in the lives of their children. To accomplish this, a father needs to be "psychologically present" in the life of his children. This is done through the child receiving repeated messages that

their father thinks of them, cares about them, and is concerned about their behavior. Separated fathers do this through remembering birthdays and holidays and communicating with their children on these special days. They do it by providing feedback on their children's day-to-day lives, perhaps offering guidance and advice in light of the father's own experience. On the basis of the material presented, I believe Kenny Wilson is capable of and motivated to be this kind of "psychologically present although physically absent" father.

This role is all the more important in the case of Deshawn\* and Tyrone\*, since their mother appears to be both psychologically and physically absent. I should point out that I have witnessed this process of an incarcerated father being psychologically present although physically absent in other cases of incarcerated men with whom I am familiar. For the last three years I have been involved in a project interviewing incarcerated young men (including men on death row or serving life sentences). One of the common themes in these interviews is the critical importance some of these men attach to their role as father in the life of their children. Often, this relationship is the basis for their willingness and ability to decide that life in prison is preferable to death. I have heard from several men that the only reason they wish to continue living (when faced with life imprisonment) is to be alive and available to their children. This is a positive powerful motivation.

The death of a parent is the biggest loss a child can suffer. It lets loose extremely powerful feelings and psychological forces (as is evident in the "victim impact" statements made in court by the offspring of murder victims). To have their father killed by the State of Virginia would be an extremely damaging message to Deshawn and Tyrone, a message which, in the larger context of their lives, could prove decisive in a negative way, being the proverbial "straw that breaks the camel's back." The rage, sadness, and social isolation it could provoke might well push them into anti-social behavior in the years to come. In contrast, a decision to spare their father's life so that he might be a positive influence upon them might well be the decisive positive influence needed to direct them in a positive direction.

In my professional opinion, the execution of Kenny Wilson would be an extremely damaging threat to the development of his two children, truly punishing the sons for the sins of the father. It would be a grievous violation of the human rights of the children and an act likely to rebound negatively on society in the years to come.

\*Note: At the request of Mr. Wilson's lawyer, I have changed the names of the children to protect their privacy.

### Biographical Sketch

**JAMES GARBARINO, Ph.D.**  
Co-Director, Family Life Development Center  
Professor, Human Development  
Cornell University

James Garbarino served as President of the Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development from 1985 - 1994. He earned his B.A. from St. Lawrence University in 1968, and his Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies from Cornell University in 1973.

Dr. Garbarino has served as consultant or advisor to a wide range of organizations including the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, the National Institute for Mental Health, the American Medical Association, the National Black Child Development Institute, the National Science Foundation, the National Resource Center for Children in Poverty, Childwatch International Research Network and the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. In 1991 he undertook missions for UNICEF to assess the impact of the Gulf War upon children in Kuwait and Iraq, and has served as a consultant for programs serving Bosnian and Croatian children. Books he has authored or edited include: Protecting Children From Abuse and Neglect (1980); Understanding Abusive Families (1980; Second Edition, 1997); Successful Schools and Competent Students (1981); Children and Families in the Social Environment, Second edition (1992); Social Support Networks (1983); Adolescent Development: An Ecological Perspective (1985); Troubled Youth, Troubled Families (1986); The Psychologically Battered Child (1986); Special Children/Special Risks: The Maltreatment of Children with Disabilities (1987); What Children Can Tell Us (1989); No Place To Be A Child: Growing Up In A War Zone (1991); Saving Children: A Guide to Injury Prevention (1991); Towards A Sustainable Society: An Economic, Social, and Environmental Agenda for our Children's Future (1992); Children in Danger: Coping With The Consequences of Community Violence (1992); for children, Let's Talk About Living in a World with Violence (1993), Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment (1995), and Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them (in press).

Dr. Garbarino has been a consultant to television, magazine, and newspaper reports on children and families, and in 1981, received the Silver Award at the International Film and Television Festival of New York for co-authoring "Don't Get Stuck There: A Film on Adolescent Abuse." In 1985, he collaborated with John Merrow to produce "Assault on the Psyche," a videotaped program dealing with psychological abuse. He has served as a scientific expert witness in criminal and civil cases involving issues of violence and children.

The National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect honored Dr. Garbarino in 1985 with its first C. Henry Kempe Award, in recognition of his efforts on behalf of abused and neglected children. In 1975, Dr. Garbarino was named a Spencer Fellow by the National Academy of Education and, in 1981, named a National Fellow by the Kellogg Foundation. In 1979, and again in 1981, he received the Mitchell Prize from the Woodlands Conference on Sustainable Societies. In 1987, he was elected President of the American Psychological Association's Division on Child, Youth and Family Services. In 1988, he received the American Humane Association's Vincent De Francis Award for nationally significant contributions to child protection. In 1989, he received the American Psychological Association's Award for Distinguished Professional Contributions to Public Service. In 1992, he received the Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues prize for research on child abuse. In 1993, he received the Brandt F. Steele Award from the Kempe National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. In 1994 the American Psychological Association's Division on Child, Youth and Family Services presented him with its Nicholas Hobbs Award. Also in 1994, he received the Dale Richmond Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics Section on Behavioral and Developmental Pediatrics. In 1995, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by St. Lawrence University.

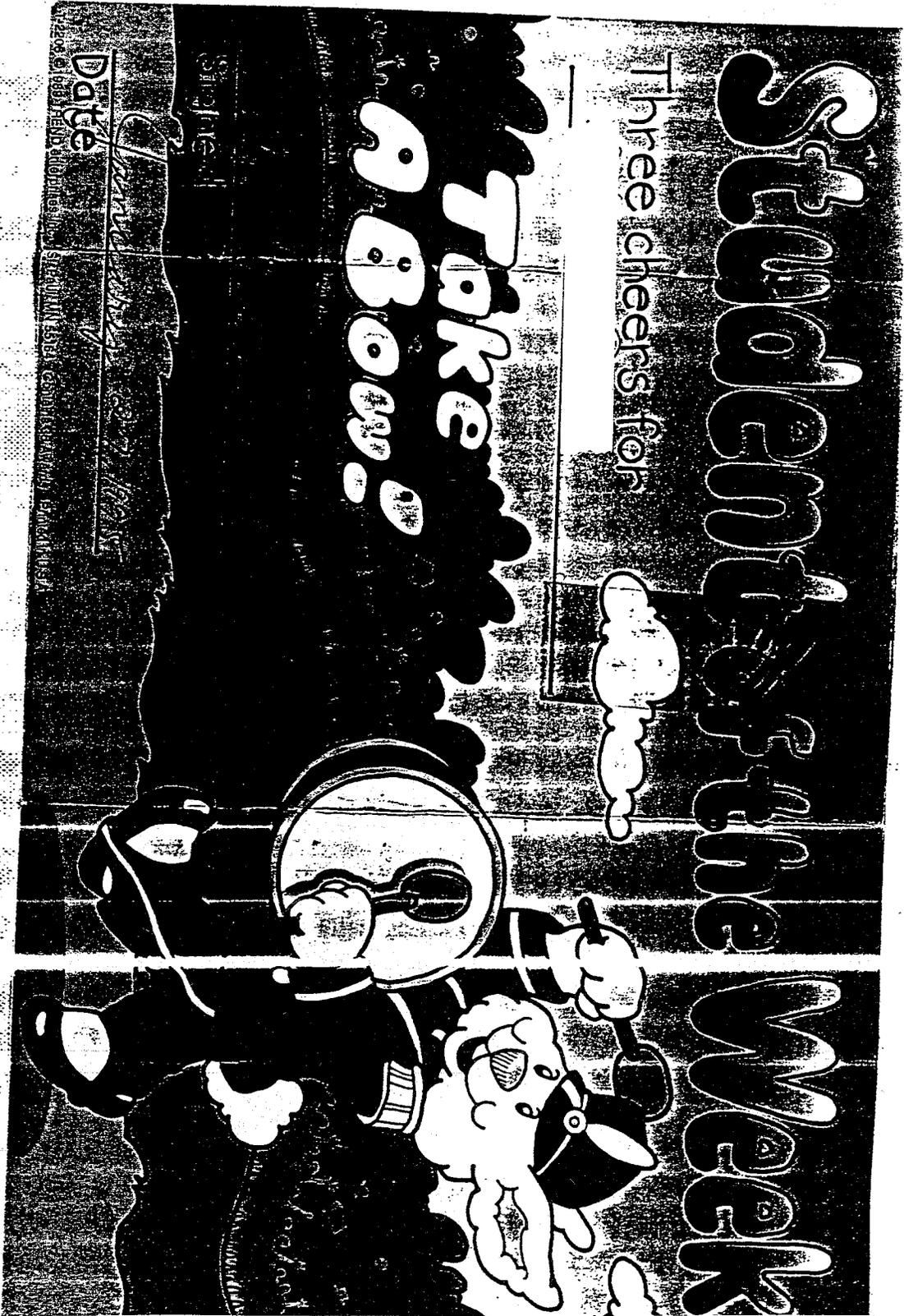
## **SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE CHILDREN TO KENNY WILSON**

\*Copies of these materials which have been made available to the Governor's staff include the children's names. Counsel respectfully requests that these not be made public. Redacted copies of the letters will be available to interested parties outside the Governor's office.

Hi dad . How are you doing. I love you so much. My brother said hello, and he love you.

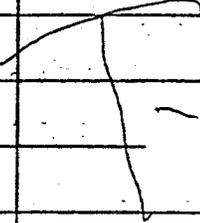
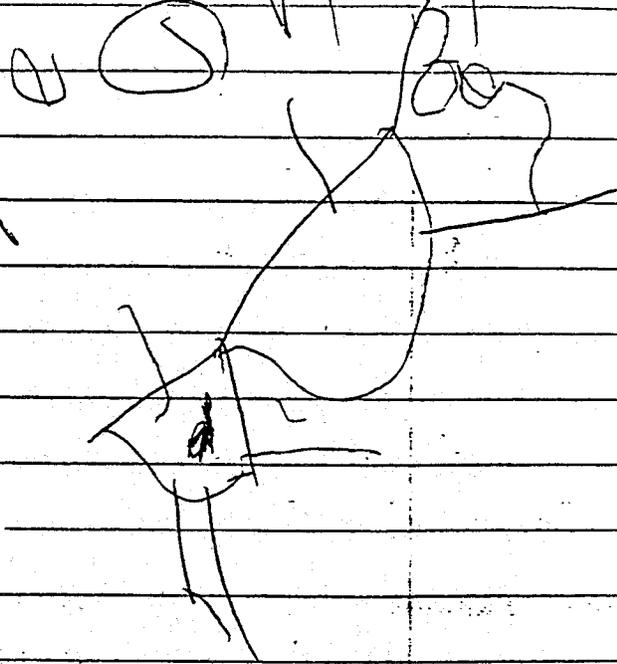
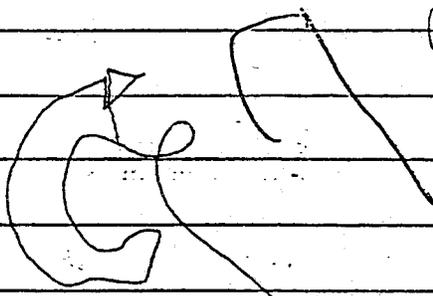
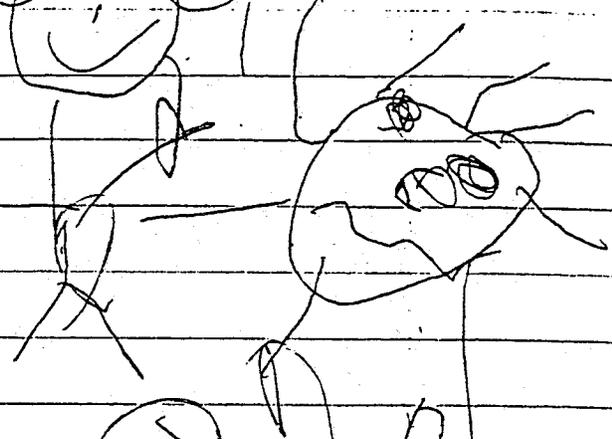
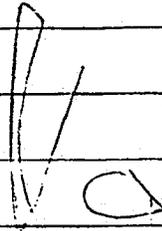
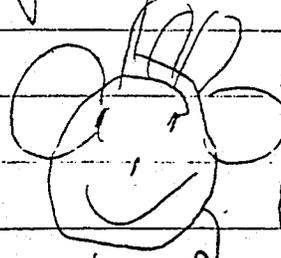
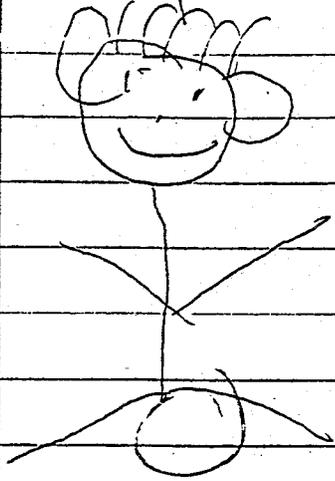
I made the student of the week. I been ok so far. when you write me back tell me when you are going to call because I will know when to talk to you.

(Love)



HAPPY

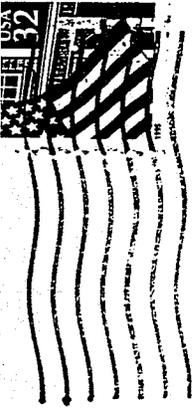
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WYLL

Valentina

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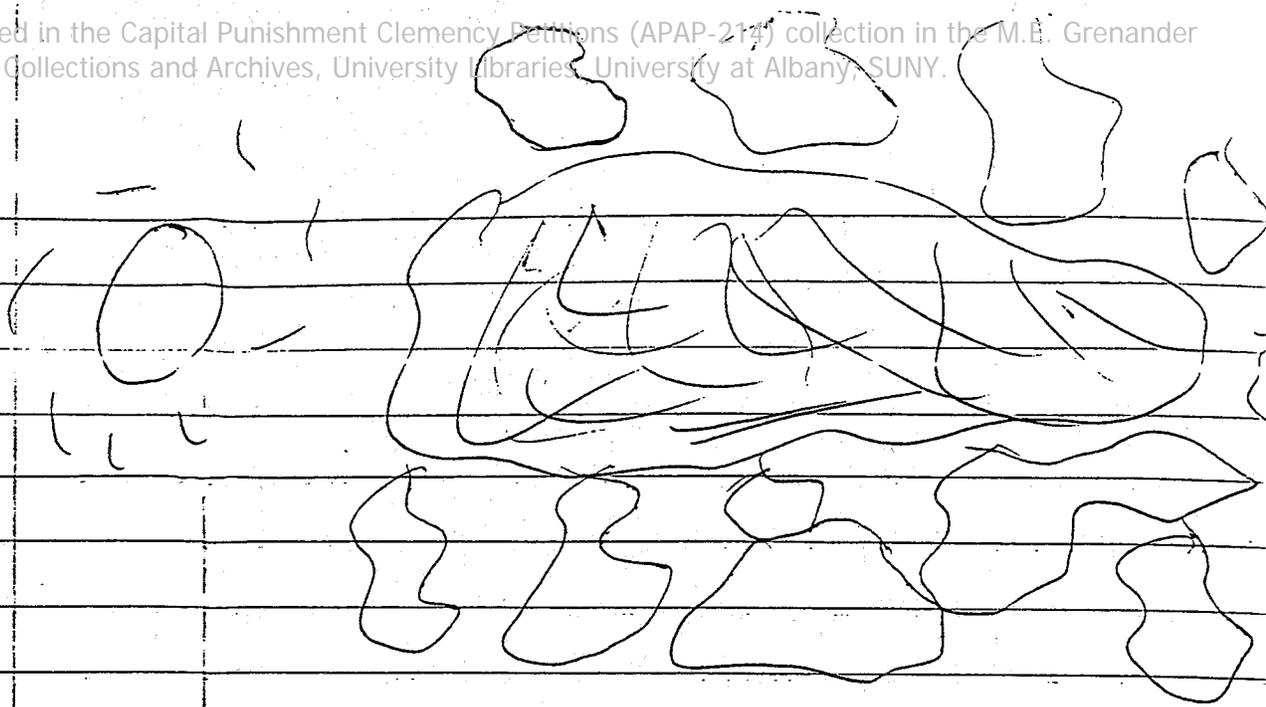
Mr. Kenneth Wilson  
Mecklenburg Correctional Center



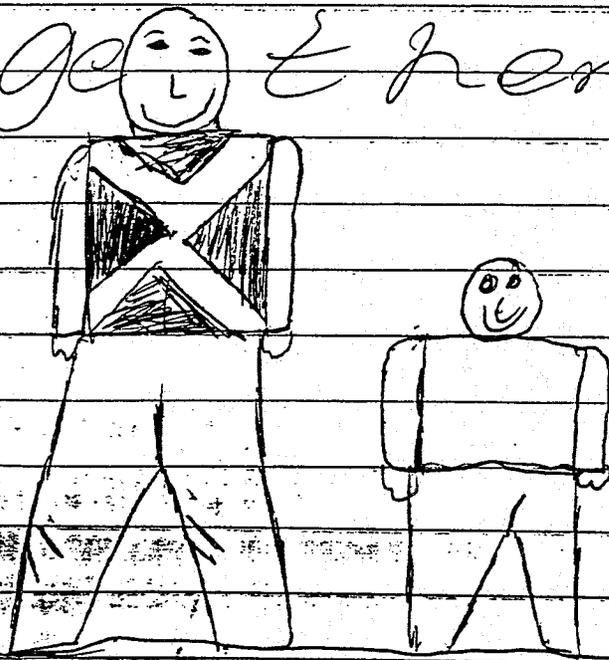
Dear daddy

How are you doing today kind I hope. I am having fun today. I am in a program that help me be a better person. Tyde is still beening bad like always. When the summer comes I can not go to Herberts house. I wish you can go to the pool and do all the other things we use to do. I learned how to swim now.

I Love You!!



Me and you  
together

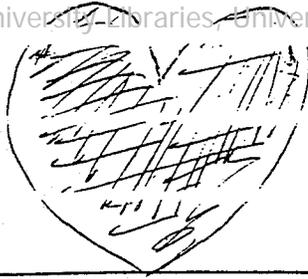


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P.O. Box 500  
Burdett Va. 23917



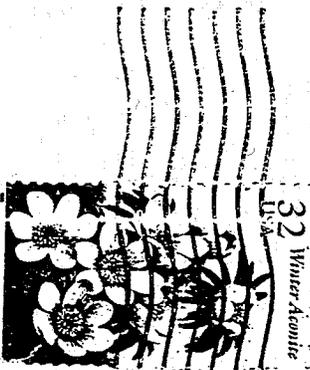
9-28-96

Dear Daddy

How are you doing fine I hope. Me  
 and [unclear] is about to go with  
 Grammy to the Family Reunion to North  
 Carolina. She said that we might stay  
 for two days. I hope that it is going  
 to be fun. When is you getting out of  
 jail. Ty told me to tell you hi.  
 Also told me to tell you that he is going  
 to ~~back~~ school this year. Tia said "I should  
 write him but I ain't got time." Bull  
 dad. Remember that WE LOVE YOU!  
 that

WE LOVE YOU

2306 Jefferson Ave  
Newport News, Va.  
23607



1-A-215

Mr. Kenneth Wilson #1443 817

Rocklebury Correctional  
Center

P. O. Box 500

Rocklebury, Va. 23917

Sunday 9/7

Dear Daddy

How are you doing, fine I hope. As for me I am doing fine, I have been doing a lot lately. Just last week we went to aunt Rose funeral. For the weekend my brother Dayane spent the time of his life while with me. Did anybody tell you that just a few days ago the glass on the stereo bust all over the place when tia was about to hit Tva. The only one that the glass hit was Tva. Since then I have been scared to go up stairs, out to the back yard and in the pantre by my self. Granny said when she saw aunt Rose that see wasn't scared. If I was her I would have. Gemini said at night it seems like some one is walking back and forth in the dinning room Well thats all.

Sencere ly

Yback

Thank you for the birthday  
Card you sent me for my  
birthday. I really enjoyed what  
it said.

I hope you had a good  
time and that you enjoyed  
the card. I hope you  
enjoyed the card.

I hope you had a good  
time and that you enjoyed  
the card. I hope you  
enjoyed the card.

I hope you had a good  
time and that you enjoyed  
the card. I hope you  
enjoyed the card.

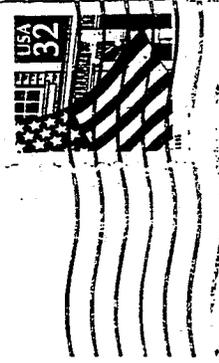
I hope you had a good  
time and that you enjoyed  
the card. I hope you  
enjoyed the card.

I hope you had a good  
time and that you enjoyed  
the card. I hope you  
enjoyed the card.

I hope you had a good  
time and that you enjoyed  
the card. I hope you  
enjoyed the card.

I hope you had a good  
time and that you enjoyed  
the card. I hope you  
enjoyed the card.

2  
2



1255-26<sup>st</sup> St  
Newport News VA  
23607

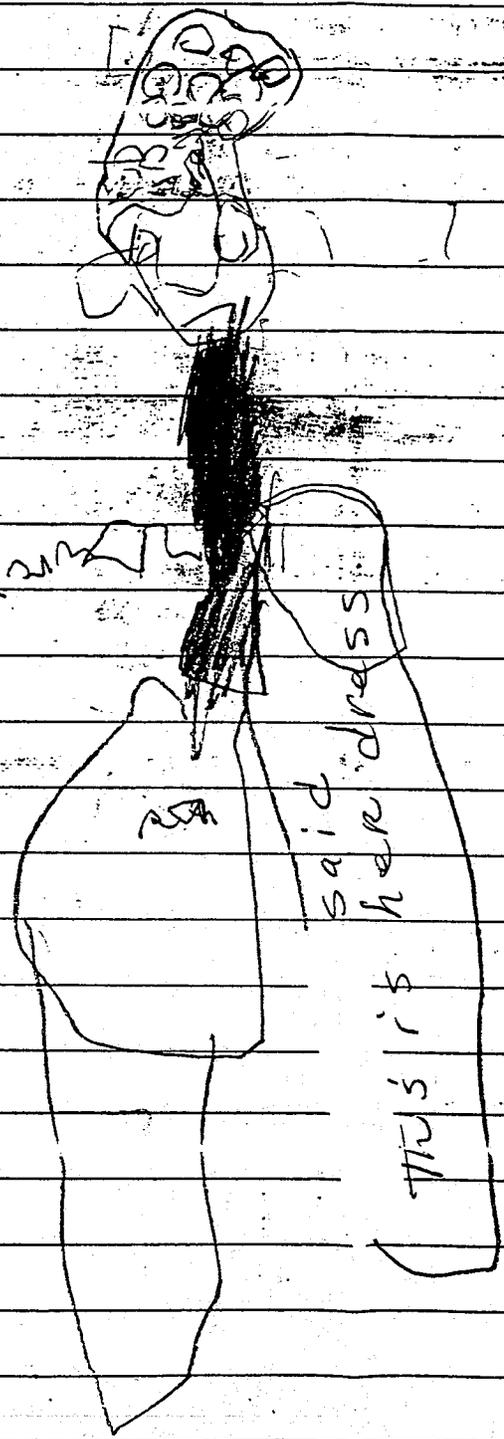
V-C-582

Mr. Kenneth Wilson # 144387  
Mechlenburg Correctional Center  
P.O. Box 500

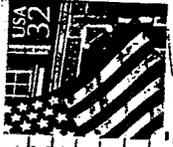
Boydton VA 23917

BRANDY

BRANDY



I LOVE YOU DADDY  
LOVE



Newport News, Va  
23607

1-C-69R

Mrs. Kenneth Wilson #144387

Mecklenburg Correctional Center

P.O. Box 500

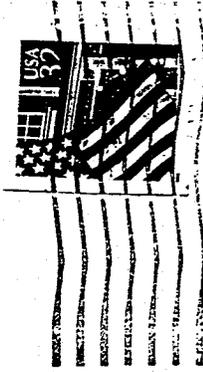
Boydton Hill, Va, 23917.

5/30/97

Dear daddy

How are you doing, fine I hope as for myself  
fine I am doing fine in school I hope that I got to  
the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Around the house we always have to  
clean up. I don't even be messing up. I go to  
school from 8:00 to 4:30. When I get home it is  
time to clean up. That's why I can't wait till  
I am 18 so that I can get my own house. I  
wouldn't have to clean up all the time because I  
am not going to have people mess up around  
the house. have been bad. Grammy always  
think that we don't do nothing. I can't and  
can't do anything. I don't never  
get to go any where during may they promised  
us that we will go to gam fest '97. If we  
got the house cleaned up when it was time  
to go every body heard that it will be to  
many people there. That's the same way they  
do about the skating rink. We can't even go  
we can't even look at it. U. Peace out,  
Love I love you and your family.

Sincerely



Report + News  
33607

1-C-69K

PO Box 144381

Sheehlerburg Correctional

PO Box 144381

Dear Daddy

How are you doing today, I am doing fine. The only thing that I have been doing is sitting down in the shade of in the house because we can't go to the pool have been fighting a lot I passed to the sixth grade this school year and I'm still in achievable dream. Since I have been out of school it have been hot with nothing to do. I can't wait till I grow up because I can go anywhere I want to go. I am going to go to the pool every day. I am sorry that I didn't get you a Father's day card. I didn't get you one because I didn't have any money. Well anyway

**HAPPY FATHERS DAY.**

Sincerely

2306-Stephenson and  
McDonald Mason, DA,  
23607

Money Order

Check

Cash (returned)

25

Photos

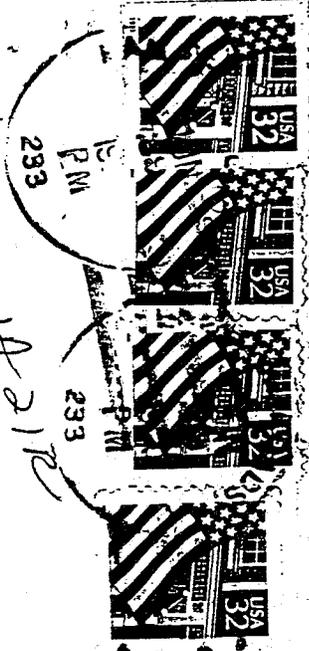
Stamps (returned)

MCC MAIL ROOM

Prisoners Correctional Center

P.O. Box 500

R. 171 110 73917



Kenneth Wilson # 199389



3301A Zirkham Ave  
Newport News, VA 23607  
August 18, 1994

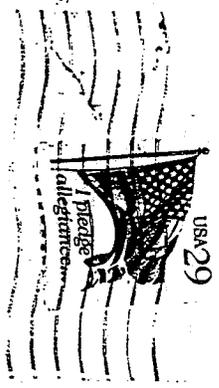
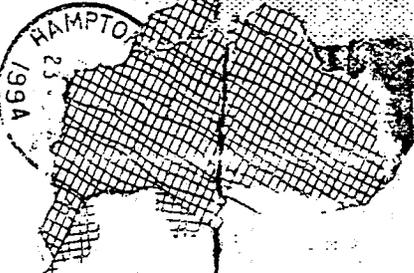
Dear Daddy,

Hello how are you doing. I am doing fine. I wish that you was out here with us. I am doing fine in Achievable Dream. We go on Field Trips every Friday. On August 19, 1994 I will be going to Busch Gardens. I hope that I don't miss the bus. My mother said that she loves you. Me and said that we love you too. I hope you get out soon. Good Buy. Remember I love you.

3501A Williams Ave  
Newport News, VA 23607

1A21R

R



Kenneth Wilson #144381  
Macklenburg Corr Ctr  
P.O. Box 500  
Boydton, VA 23917

April

Dear Daddii

How are you doing, fine I hope. As for me I'm doing fine. Granny said she got the copies you sent her but she just can't get around to writing you. I have improved in my grades. I made all B's and one C. I have been spending most of my time at Siemens Automotive Plant. They make fuel injectors that gose in your car. There they deal with a lot of machenery. I learned that the tiniest piece of dirt can make the car catch on fire. Now let me get to the family. is so bad. He called granny ballheaded. I think that you need to be out here to get him. Did you get the vaster cards we sent you? I just can't wait till the last day of school. We is having a school dance. For now it's just another boring night walking around bagging and talking back to. Well see you later.

Sonnen III

AK

Granny is sending you  
50.00 in money order  
in this letter

We saw the weekend

he said Tell you hello

And he will send you

some money in A couple

of weeks; And said tell

you Hello;

Love VA."

Dear Daddy  
I love you  
H

Handwritten scribbles and marks at the bottom of the page.

Newport News, Va.

50100 Money Order 3607

Check

Cash (returned)

Photos

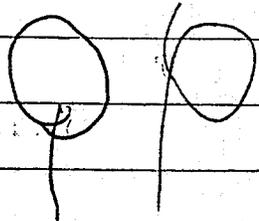
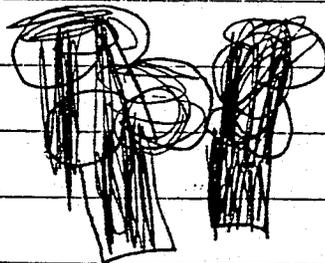
APAP Kenneth S. Wilson # 144387  
MCC MAIL ROOM

Wesley L. Lumberg, Counselor  
Center

1-C-69R



MORNING 1 MS220022.2  
I LOVE YOU



I LOVE YOU d add x

Newport News, Va.  
23609



J BDD Mr. Kenneth Wilson #144387  
Mechlenburg Correctional Center  
P.O. Box 580  
Boudlers, Va 23017 917

5/10/94

Hello dad. How are you doing.

On Saturday I got me a new bike. I got me a eight teen speed. I like rideing

it. On Monday my bike was tying and I road overy some glass my wheels got

flat and I was mad.

I got an A on my math-  
test. My brother keep

knocking my bike down.  
I love you.

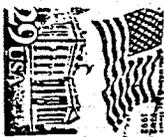
~~From~~

From  
To Kenny

3501-A Wickham Ave  
N.W. Va. 23807

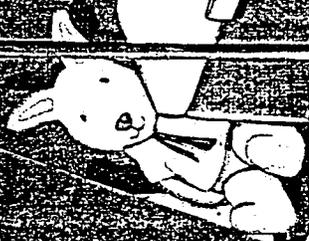
Kenny Wilson #144387  
Mecklenburg Corr. Ctr  
P.O. Box 500  
Boydton VA 23914

1 A 21R





Some kids  
have all  
the luck...



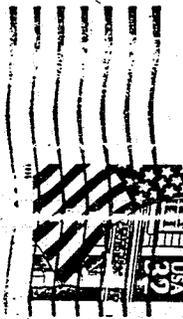
EAST

Like us  
having you  
for our  
daddy!

Happy Father's Day



Newport News, Va. 23607



Mr. Kenneth Wilson # 144387  
Mecklenburg Correctional Center

P.O. Box 500

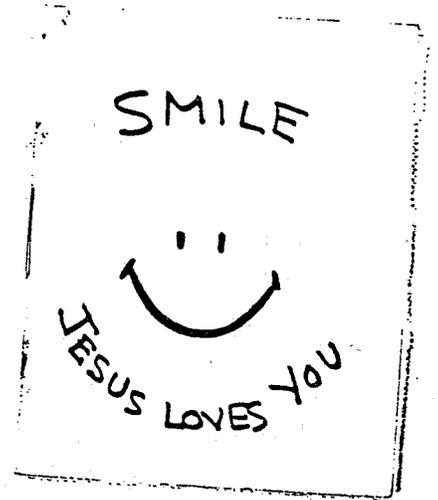
Wb3P

Boydston Va 23917

MORNING  
TODAY  
IS WE  
to you

MORNING  
TODAY  
IS WE  
to you

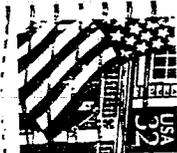
to you  
a b p p a b p p a d d g g p p a d e l o b b c  
n g i d d a p p a a a l o p p a b d d a n c  
a b d a a f e p a p a s y r i b e l o i  
p m a a l o p p m m m b p i  
3 d p a p p b i o p u e p p p 2 1 a d f



Newport News, Va.  
23607

23607

Mr. Kenneth Wilson # 144387  
Mechlenburg Correctional Center  
P.O. Box 500  
Franklin, Va 23917



Dear Daddy

How are you doing  
Fine I hope. Well how do  
you like it at the new place.  
Well I have been going  
to school to go to pre-algebra.  
Did you hear about Troy and  
what happen. I know you did.  
Well his funeral was ~~big~~.  
Well it's almost time for us  
to go ~~on~~ to the family reunion.  
Tyrell said hello and that  
he love you he said that  
he can't wait to see  
you again. Tyrell is so grown  
that if he is doing something  
and then get mad he will  
go snitch.

said hey. is  
around her fusing out.  
is in South Carolina or  
Philadelphia.

Sincerely,

GOOD DADDY  
I LOVE MY DADDY  
DO YOU TALK  
TO MY MOM  
I AM GOOD

---

HOWA GOOD DAY



# REPORT CARD. KINDERGARTEN

Newport News Public Schools  
Newport News, Virginia

246-3801

|    |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|
|    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1  | S | S |   |   |
| 2  | S | S |   |   |
| 3  | S | S |   |   |
| 4  | S | S |   |   |
| 5  | S | S |   |   |
| 6  | S | S |   |   |
| 7  | S | S |   |   |
| 8  | S | S |   |   |
| 9  | S | S |   |   |
| 10 | S | S |   |   |

## THINGS I CAN DO: Check (✓) indicates accomplishes successfully

- Say my full name
- Put on and fasten my clothes
- Tie my shoe laces
- Know my age
- Know my address , phone number
- Know the color names
- Know the names of shapes
- Write my first  last name

COMMENTS: Tyrell is very well behaved in class. However, he must concentrate on improving his writing skills and letter recognition.

Tyrell is doing grade-level work. He has been progressing nicely. Please continue to help him with his sight word drills and cursive writing.  
2/3/98

### PHYSICAL GROWTH

|    |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|
|    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1  | S | S |   |   |
| 2  | S | S |   |   |
| 3  | S | S |   |   |
| 4  | S | S |   |   |
| 5  | S | S |   |   |
| 6  | S | S |   |   |
| 7  | S | S |   |   |
| 8  | S | S |   |   |
| 9  | S | S |   |   |
| 10 | S | S |   |   |

### PS

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | S | S |   |   |
| 2 | S | S |   |   |
| 3 | S | S |   |   |
| 4 | S | S |   |   |

|    |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|
|    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1  | / | S |   |   |
| 2  | S | S |   |   |
| 3  | S | S |   |   |
| 4  | / | S |   |   |
| 5  | / | / |   |   |
| 6  | / | S |   |   |
| 7  | / | / |   |   |
| 8  | / | / |   |   |
| 9  | / | / |   |   |
| 10 | / | / |   |   |

### MATH/ART/

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 1 | S | S |   |   |
| 2 | S | S |   |   |
| 3 | S | S |   |   |

| ATTENDANCE   | 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | Year |
|--------------|-----|----|---|---|------|
| Entry Date   | 4/3 |    |   |   |      |
| Days on Roll | 46  | 40 |   |   |      |
| Days Absent  | 1   | 7  |   |   |      |
| Days Tardy   | 0   | 0  |   |   |      |

| CONFERENCES |      |
|-------------|------|
| Scheduled   | Held |
| Date        |      |
| Date        |      |
| Date        |      |
| Date        |      |

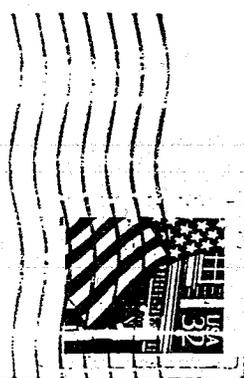
**PUPIL ASSIGNMENT**  
Your child will be placed in Grade \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_ school year.

Newport News, Va.  
23607

Mr. Kenneth Wilson #144387

Mecklenburg Correctional Center  
21339R

P.O. Box 500  
Rm. 111



РАОД КОББ ИРРЪ СВО  
И 8 ЕЕ 12Н  
БМ ППДР?  
ДА ВОТ Р  
ДА О ВР Д З Н  
ПК

LOOK ~~HE~~

hva

306

DEAR

D A DOR

MORNING

---

U

Newport News, Va.  
23607



2-B-30L



Mr Kenneth Wilson #144387

Mecklenburg Correctional Center

P.O. Box 580

Boyd ~~Atty~~ ~~Atty~~, Va. 23617

Dear Daddy

How are you doing

I wrote you to tell you  
Happy Fathers Day. I hope  
that you have enjoyed being  
a father for 13 years.

I'm sorry that you can't  
be out her with me and  
Tyrell to share this day.

But over all I am sorry

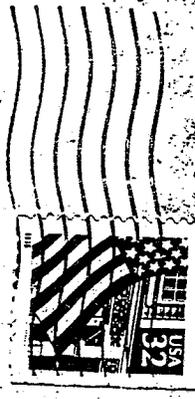
~~that I didn't write you in~~  
a long time. I wish that  
they will find out the truth  
and let you out and next fathers  
day you will be out here to  
celebrate it with us. Well

1<sup>st</sup> grade me and children  
get our report card yet but if  
we passed, we will be in the  
8<sup>th</sup> grade. Well that's all write you  
soon

Sincerely!!!

Newport News, VA  
 Mess U/A  
 236071

Mr. Kenneth Wilson #144387  
 Mecklenburg Correctional Center  
 P.O. Box 500  
 7/29/67



Dear

Daddy

I love you

And miss you

so much. I go

to school. I know

how to spell

My name

Handwritten header text in a cursive script, possibly containing a name or title.

Main body of handwritten text in a cursive script, consisting of approximately 20 lines of dense, flowing handwriting.

This document is housed in the Capital Punishment Clemency Petitions (APAP-214) collection in the M.E. Grenander Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, SUNY.

**HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor  
New York, New York 10118-3299  
Telephone: 212.216.1245  
Facsimile: 212.736.1300  
E-mail: [bochenm@hrw.org](mailto:bochenm@hrw.org)

Website: <http://www.hrw.org>

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Michele Alexander  
*Development Director*  
Carol Rogert  
*Communications Director*  
Reed Brody  
*Advocacy Director*  
Cynthia Brown  
*Program Director*  
Barbara Guglielmo  
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*General Counsel*

Lotte Leicht  
*Brussels Office Director*

Joanna Weschler  
*United Nations Representative*

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November 16, 1998

The Honorable James S. Gilmore III  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia  
Office of the Governor  
State Capitol, 3rd Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

By facsimile: (804) 371-2655

Dear Governor Gilmore:

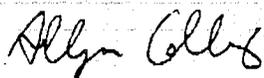
We are writing to urge you to commute the death sentence of Kenneth Wilson. Mr. Wilson is scheduled to be executed on Tuesday, November 17.

In this case, we are particularly disturbed by the devastating effect that Mr. Wilson's execution would have on the lives of his two young sons, DeShawn and Tyrone. (The children's names have been changed to protect their privacy.) Mr. Wilson's clemency petition documents the depth of his relationship with his children, one that is exceptionally strong for an incarcerated parent. In considering Mr. Wilson's clemency petition, you may consider what the jury and the courts could not: the impact of Mr. Wilson's death on his two children.

Human Rights Watch is the largest U.S.-based international human rights organization. We oppose capital punishment in all circumstances because of its inherent cruelty. We believe that executions are often carried out in an arbitrary and discriminatory manner, inflicted primarily on the most vulnerable—the poor, minorities, and mentally ill or retarded persons. The intrinsic fallibility of all criminal justice systems ensures that even when full due process of law is respected, innocent persons are sometimes executed. Therefore, we oppose all executions under law whenever and wherever carried out, irrespective of the crime and the legal process leading to their implementation.

We urge you to grant clemency for Kenneth Wilson.

Sincerely,



Allyson Collins  
Senior Researcher



# **The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents**

---

November 12, 1998

The Honorable James S. Gilmore III  
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia  
State Capitol, Third Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Gilmore:

The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents requests that you consider the following information in making a decision regarding clemency for Kenneth L. Wilson. Mr. Wilson is scheduled to be executed on November 17, 1998. In the interests of his children, who have committed no crime but who will experience sustained punishment as the result of his execution, the Center asks that you commute Mr. Wilson's sentence to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

Parents do not cease to be parents when they commit crimes or are incarcerated. Children of criminal offenders, while indirectly victimized by parental conduct and its consequences, continue to love and need the love of their parents. The Commonwealth of Virginia has an exemplary history of consideration of the needs of child victims, including children of prisoners. In 1993, the Commonwealth passed legislation recognizing these children as a special population and authorizing a variety of research and service interventions on their behalf. In 1994, this Center collaborated with the Commonwealth's Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services on a training manual for Virginia human services professionals working with children of incarcerated parents.

Mr. Wilson's execution would be powerfully traumatic for his children. Based on a review of the literature on childhood bereavement and nine years of experience with over 6500 children of criminal offenders, the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents has identified nine predictors of pathologic reactions to parental death. All children who experience parental execution meet five of these criteria:

- 1. Parental death occurs by violence and by human agency.**
- 2. Parental death follows extended parent-child separation.**  
The average time spent on Death Row is about 10 years; minor children of executed persons have spent most of their childhood with a parent on Death Row.
- 3. Parental death occurs when the child has ambivalent feelings about the parent.**  
By definition, victims die blameless deaths and their children have no conflicts to resolve related to a murdered parent's behavior. Children of perpetrators, however, must not only struggle with the loss of a parent to incarceration, but also with conflicts created by their parent's offenses. Resolution of such conflicts may take

WILSON - Page 2

place over time and is facilitated by the participation of the parent in the resolution process. More typically, these issues remain unresolved among children of criminal offenders and may be significant contributors to the high rates of juvenile and adult offending by these children. When a parent is executed for criminal behavior, resolution of important emotional and developmental issues—including an acceptance of the parent by the child, and therefore the child's acceptance of him/herself—is unlikely to occur.

4. **The child experiences distortions of communication about the parent's death and/or the circumstances surrounding parental death are not articulated.**

Children, and especially young children, need to talk freely about traumatic events in order to get over them. Parental offending is typically accompanied by a variety of circumstances—including forced silences and caregiver shame—that prevent children from acknowledging their experiences with and feelings about their parents. Parental execution is even more likely to keep children from expressing their emotional reactions to loss.

5. **Parental death occurs in the absence of an appropriate grief environment and support from family and/or community.**

The well-documented stigma, shame and social isolation associated with parental incarceration are significant contributors to the emotional and behavioral reactions seen among children of prisoners. There is likely to be an even greater loss of family/community support for children following parental execution.

Since the majority of state-executed persons have a history of criminal offending and prior incarcerations, most children who experience parental execution meet three additional criteria:

6. **The child has witnessed family or community violence prior to the parent's death.**

Domestic violence has been found by a variety of investigators to occur in more than nine out of ten families of criminal offenders. Our studies have found that a majority of children of criminal offenders have also witnessed some form of community violence.

7. **The child receives inadequate or unstable care following parental death.**

8. **The child does not receive adequate intervention following parental death.**

Two of the three characteristics which distinguish children of criminal offenders from their peers are a lack of emotional support and an inadequate quality of care. As a group, they are the least likely of children to receive adequate care and intervention following any type of parental death, including parental execution.

Early parental loss in and of itself is strongly associated with negative long-term outcomes including depression, mental illness and suicide. Parental crime, arrest and incarceration are strongly associated with juvenile and adult offending. In the interests of all children and their communities, the combination of these experiences in parental execution should be avoided.

WILSON - Page 3

Following his execution, Mr. Wilson will be dead and no longer subject to punishment but his children will live and continue to experience the above effects for the rest of their lives. In the interests of these children, the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents appeals to you as the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia to consider commuting the sentence of Mr. Wilson to life without parole.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about this letter at 626-397-1396. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Denise Johnston, M.D.

Director

Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents

This document is housed in the Capital Punishment Clemency Petitions (APAP-214) collection in the M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, SUNY.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT CHICAGO

Office of the Dean (MC 309)  
Jane Addams College of Social Work  
1040 West Harrison Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60607-7134

November 17, 1998

James S. Gilmore III  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia  
State Capitol, Third Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Gilmore:

I am writing regarding Kenny Wilson who is scheduled for execution by the state of Virginia. I do not know Mr. Wilson, nor his family. Sources close to his family have told me, however, that he is and always has been close to his children, and has been a father to them even while in prison. They also note how much Mr. Wilson's children and other family members love and care about him and speak of the pain and difficulties the family is experiencing as they deal with his crime, incarceration, and death sentence.

As a university professor I have spent years studying crime and justice and the impact of social responses to crime on children and families. The findings of my research are published in major journals and textbooks; are often cited by television journalists and newspaper reporters covering stories on prisoners, victims, and families; and have been the basis for the development of family-oriented programs in prisons, including some in Virginia. My research, as well as that of other social scientists, has consistently demonstrated that policies designed to punish criminals often have devastating, though avoidable, impacts on their children and families. This research also demonstrates that when there is a political will, most policies and practices can minimize undue pain and suffering for families while simultaneously meting out punishment, protecting community safety, and assuring a restorative focus for victims.

Sometimes it is difficult, despite research and logic, to understand how a person who has been convicted of a violent crime or a prisoner facing a long prison term can be a good parent and have a positive influence on his children. Studies of children who grow up in father absent homes report, for example, high rates of school failure, delinquency, drug use, and adult criminality for children so affected. A closer look at parent-child relationships reveal, however, that children who maintain ongoing, regular contact and emotional closeness with the absent parent and are nurtured and protected from traumatic incidents have far fewer negative consequences than other children.

**UIC**

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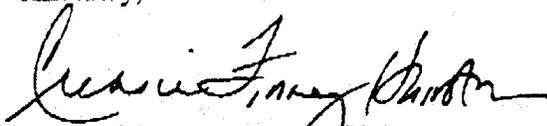
While it may be difficult at first glance to understand positive parenting behaviors among prisoners, it is not so difficult to discern, even in the absence of research, how experiencing the State's planned death of one's kin, particularly the parent of a young child, would have a long term, irreversible negative family and community impact. I, therefore, have several well grounded scientific reasons as well as logical and humane ones to ask you to consider how Kenny Wilson's execution will affect his children. Would not an alternative, such as a life sentence, also serve the goals of justice?

Frequently, when I am interviewing research participants or working with program clients, they respond to a question I ask with a question of their own. Typically, that question is of the nature of "Well, what would you do if....." In this particular instance, there is a body of research more substantial than my own plus years of practical experience which say that the goals of justice can best be served by measures other than the death penalty. When the ultimate decision regarding life and death lies in the hands of one individual, however, that individual must move beyond scientific studies, practical experience, cries for vengeance, and political expediency. The what "if question" that is often posed to me in my work comes to mind.....

What would you want, instead of execution, if it were your son and your grandchildren?  
What would you decide if it were your son and your grandchildren?

I hope my comments are helpful to you during this very difficult time and in addressing this very complex social, emotional and political issue.

Sincerely,



Creasie Finney Hairston, Ph.D.

Dean and Professor

CFH/bt



## PRISON FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES, INC.

(Formerly Prison Visitation Project)

1 North Fifth Street • Suite 400 • Richmond, VA 23219 • (804) 643-2401

November 9, 1998

The Honorable James S. Gilmore, III  
Governor of the Commonwealth  
of Virginia  
State Capitol, Third Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Gilmore:

I am the Executive Director of Prison Family Support Services in Richmond. I have spent eight years working with the families of incarcerated men and women.

A father, even an incarcerated father, is crucial to the development of young boys, especially ones that have no other meaningful male role model. Fathers, despite their confinement, can offer crucial ongoing communication with their children which includes guidance, discipline, nurturing, and love. In my experience, bringing a child to visit his parent in prison allows the child to experience these things in a concrete way. It has also been my experience that incarcerated fathers are able to make a powerful example of themselves, showing their children that they have made a mistake and that they are paying the price -- at the same time remaining a living example of this lesson and being a constant source of encouragement to their children not to take the same path.

Fathers like Kenny Wilson can constantly remind their children that they can be better, and do more. This is especially important where the children are from backgrounds in which they get little community support, and often receive damaging messages from others regarding their parent's status. From what I have learned about DeShawn and Tyrone, this is exactly the kind of encouragement they receive from their father, not only through their visits, but also through their phone calls and letters.

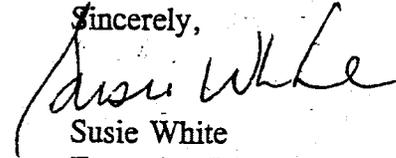
While it is sometimes hard for adults to remember, a child's father, no matter what his circumstances or background, is still his father. In my experience, what is most important to a child is to know that their father loves them and that he is safe. The execution of their father will be extremely traumatic for DeShawn and Tyrone, although it is likely to affect them in different ways. Young children, like Tyrone, are aware of the loss, but often do not have the maturity to handle the grieving process. The sudden separation, however, especially, as in this case, where there has also been maternal separation can be devastating to later development. Older children, like DeShawn, often manifest their grief in



aggressive behavior. This would be a tragic turn in the successful course DeShawn appears to be following at this point.

I respectfully request that you take into consideration the irreplaceable role that Kenny Wilson plays in his sons' lives and the likely effect his execution will have on them when you decide whether to grant clemency. Your decision to grant clemency will protect these children and let the cycle of violence end here.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susie White". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Susie White  
Executive Director

November 10, 1998

Honorable James S. Gilmore, III  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia  
State Capitol, Third Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Gilmore:

I am a physician specializing in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine. A short description of my qualifications is appended to this letter. I have had extensive experience researching and treating the effects of trauma on children and adolescents. I was asked to assess the likely psychiatric and emotional effects that the execution of Kenny Wilson will have on his children, DeShawn, age 13, and Tyrone, age 6<sup>1</sup>.

The loss of a parent is a significant traumatic event in any child's life. The death of Kenny Wilson at the hands of the state, compounded by the abandonment of the children by the boys's mother will be particularly traumatic for DeShawn and Tyrone. The impact of such a loss will have long lasting consequences on the cognitive, emotional and psychological development of these two young boys.

It is well documented that children that suffer this type of traumatic event may express an array of cognitive problems which lead to difficulties in school, including poor academic performance and the inability to succeed in a regular class room. In this respect, the death of Kenny Wilson will have a particularly profound effect on his sons, as it is my understanding that Mr. Wilson continually encourages the children to stay in school, and stresses education as means to avoid his situation.

In addition, it appears that Kenny Wilson has been a stable and involved figure in the lives of the two boys. The children rely on their father to help them develop self-esteem, make critical life choices and assess the consequences of their actions. The loss of their

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<sup>1</sup>Mr. Wilson's counsel asked that I use these names in order to protect the children's identity.

father at this crucial time may impact the children's ability to form important attachments later in life with others who may be important in their development -- including family members, teachers, and peers. If this were to occur, it would affect their global development and put them at risk for abuse, neglect, substance abuse, delinquency and psychological problems.

These children will also be significantly more vulnerable to psychiatric problems including, attentional problems, disruptive behavioral problems, depression, suicide, substance abuse and conduct disorder, all of which will require medical and/or psychiatric treatment.

Overall the trauma of the execution of their father will undermine the self defenses, self identity, and self value of these very young and vulnerable children. The already strained emotional and financial resources of other family members make it more likely these children will not get the support services they need. It is my professional opinion that the impact of this traumatic event will have a negative impact and cause damaging effects which may later result in their involvement with the Juvenile Justice System.

I urge you take into consideration the devastating and long lasting effects Kenny Wilson's execution will have on his children in your review of Mr. Wilson's petition for executive clemency.

Sincerely,



Zakee Matthews, M.D.

Professional Background of Zakee Matthews, M.D.

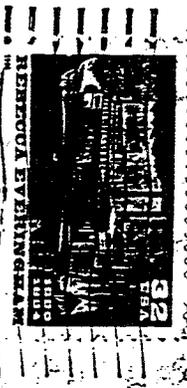
I am a physician licensed to practice in the state of California and specialize in the field of psychiatry. I am currently the Medical Director of the Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Treatment Center Program at Stanford University School of Medicine in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Division of Child Psychiatry and Child Development, where I have also served as a clinical instructor since 1994. In addition to my role as medical director and my academic appointment, I currently serve as a consultant to the California Youth Authority (CYA), O.H. Close School in Stockton, California, where I am responsible for the medication clinic which provides services to over 300 wards as well as assessments of various psychiatric problems.

From 1994-1996, I was the Medical Director of the Comprehensive Partial Hospitalization Program at Lucille Slater Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford University. I have worked as the Director of Stanford's Child Psychiatry Fellows School Consultations to the Palo Alto School District. I have also served as a consulting psychiatrist to Community Companions in Santa Clara Mental Health in San Jose, California, Bay View Hunter's Point Community mental health in San Francisco, California and Haight Ashbury Detox Clinic in East Oakland, California.

I received my M.D. degree from the University of Missouri School of Medicine in Columbia, Missouri in 1988. I completed a rotating internship with the California-Langley Porter Psychiatric Institute in San Francisco, California from 1988-1989, and completed my residency in psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco from 1989 to 1992. Thereafter, I was appointed in 1992-1994 as a Fellow in Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science, Division of Child Psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine.

I am currently a member of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. In 1993, I was the recipient of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry's Presidential Scholar Award. I am also involved in a research project designed to identify the psychological and psycho-social correlates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in juvenile delinquents at the California Youth Authority (CYA), O.H. Close school. The study evaluates individual personality traits, assesses adjustment and defenses, and identifies adaptive style based on an interaction of self reported distress and restraint. The purpose of such research is to develop the tools that will allow us to more accurately identify and characterize the incidence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in incarcerated juveniles. This in turn can better equip rehabilitation facilities like the CYA to address the necessary issues confronted by their population. It is our belief that the trauma-specific programs can better address the mental health issues of at least a third of their population of children and juveniles placed at such facilities. At Stanford, I have served as Chief of our Trauma Clinic designed to provide comprehensive evaluation and treatment of children and adolescent patients exposed to various types of traumatic events.

Hampton News, Va.  
23607



Mr. Kenneth Wilson #144387

Mecklenburg Correctional Center

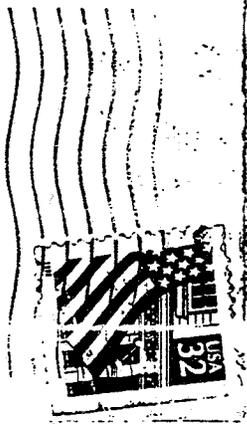
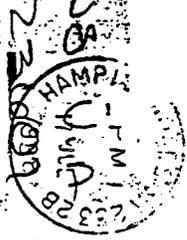
P.O. Box 5002/A2/A

Boydton, Va. 23917

Dear Dacian

How are you doing. Fine  
I hope as for myself, fine  
How have you been since  
the last time we seen you  
how me and go to  
Church. Granny said that  
we are coming up there

Newport News



1-14387

Kenneth Wilson

Mechlenburg Correctional Center

P.O. Box 500, 14632

Bozeman, Va. 23919

Dear daddy

he is good I like me  
What you doing Fin  
aunt Louise and  
uncle W. This here they  
said hello

I Love you

J love

L  
O  
U  
I  
S  
E

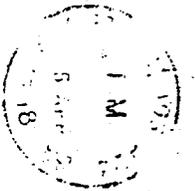
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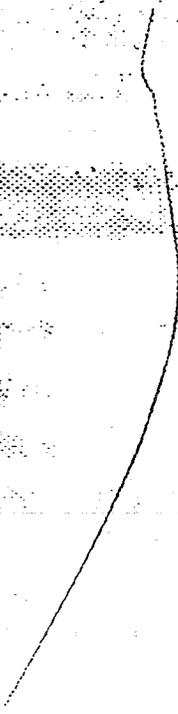
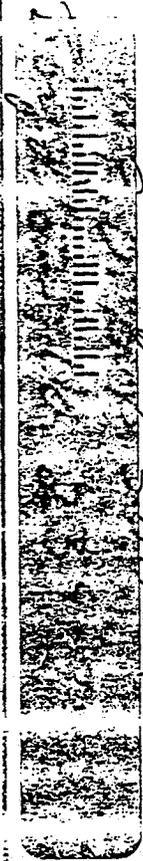
118701  
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Loverly

Newport News, Va  
23607



Mr. Kenneth Wilson #144387  
Meklenburg Correctional Center  
11603P



Hi daddy

How are you

today FINE I

hope we all  
are doing fine

I will be glad

when I go

Back To School I

want

~~to~~ come see you

I love you  
daddy

EVERYONE  
LOVE  
one &

said Hello

Dear Daddy

How are you doing

Fine I hope. How are things doing in there. Well if you had cabel would you be happy.

Well I guess not. Well I wish you were here to go one the family reunion. Well do

you eat worst or better than

you ate when you were at the other place. Do you have

any friends there. Well the only

thing I've been doing is going to summer school and playing

Tennis. We went to <sup>water</sup> Country

and I got on mad rides such

as the Malibu Pipeline, Lemon Drop, Peppermint Twist, Surfers Bay

and Atomic Breaker. We rode to

Bush Gardens and saw Alpengist

(a roller coaster) and Pirate (a

4-D movie). Well that's about

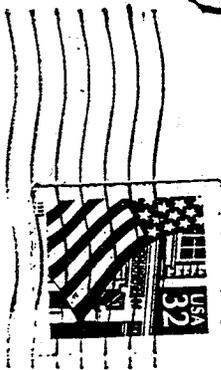
all.

Sincerely

Newport News  
VA  
23607



1cc 58L



Mr. Kenneth Wilson  
Mechlenburg Correctional Center

PO Box 500  
Boydton, VA 23397

# **CORRESPONDENCE IN SUPPORT OF CLEMENCY**

# *The Patrick Crusade*

People Aligned  
to Replace Injustice and Cruelty  
with Knowledge

Linda Chiancone  
10315 Longest Road  
Glen Allen, Virginia 23059

November 9, 1998

Governor James S. Gilmore, III  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
State Capitol, Third Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23204-0506

Re: Kenny Wilson Execution

Dear Governor Gilmore:

I am writing to you as a concerned citizen of the Commonwealth of Virginia and as a PATRICK Crusade member regarding the scheduled execution of Mr. Kenny Wilson.

While I am not disputing the fact that the crime for which Mr. Wilson has been convicted is a heinous crime, I am asking you to consider what Mr. Wilson has done with his life since the conviction. I am referring mainly to the impact he has had on his own two sons, DeShawn and Tyrone. These two young boys have maintained a strong tie to their father despite his incarceration and he has had a profound effect on their young lives. He has used his circumstances to educate them so that they would not follow the path that led to Mr. Wilson's end. The boys can visit with their father, speak with him by phone and communicate via letters. He encourages them to do well in school and be active in sports which are all positive things for these young boys. He is involved in their discipline and is consulted by family members regarding decisions that need to be made about the boys. They love and respect him.

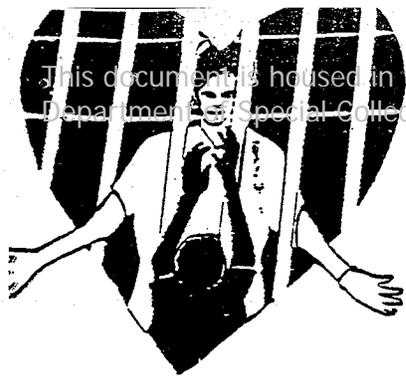
The loss of a parent is devastating for any child. The loss that will take place for DeShawn and Tyrone will be even more devastating because of the way Mr. Wilson will die, at the hands of the state. What kind of message will we be sending to these children? Will this execution destroy all the effort and hard work Mr. Wilson has put into raising his sons to follow the right path?

I have believed you to be a fair and just man. That is why I voted for you. I have friends who know you personally and speak highly of you. I hope that I will see the fair and just man show his face when he looks at the case of Mr. Wilson and I hope that you will consider the lives of these two young boys. We do not want two more young lives destroyed because we need vindication for a crime that cannot be taken back. I strongly urge you to commute Mr. Wilson's sentence to life in prison without the possibility of parole so that he can continue to have the effect he has been having on his two young sons. This would be true justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linda L. Chiancone". The signature is written in dark ink and extends across the width of the name.

Linda L. Chiancone



**FAMILIES WITH A FUTURE**

100 McAllister Street  
San Francisco, California 94102  
415/255-7036, Ext. 320  
e-mail: [lspc@igc.org](mailto:lspc@igc.org)

November 4, 1998

To: James S. Yelmore III  
Governor of the Commonwealth  
of Virginia  
State Capitol, Third Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

My name is Iida Murray, project director of Families With a Future. We here at Families With a Future work with children whose parents are incarcerated. One, whose father is on Death Row in California,

for the sake of the children whose untold pain is tremendous we urge you NOT to execute Kenny Wilson.

Sincerely

Iida Murray

100 McAlister Street  
San Francisco, California 94102  
415/255-7036  
FAX: 415/552-3150  
e-mail: [ispc@igc.apc.org](mailto:ispc@igc.apc.org)



November 9, 1998

*Staff*

*Ellen M. Barry*  
Founding Director  
*Lauren Leslie*  
Litigation Coordinator  
*Thom Mewe*  
Staff Attorney  
*Dorsey Nunn*  
Program Director  
*Cassie Pierson*  
Staff Attorney  
*Karen Shain*  
Administrative Director  
*Donna Willmott*  
Litigation Coordinator

James S. Gilmore, III  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia  
State Capitol, Third Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Gilmore:

Our office, established in 1978, was one of the first legal organizations in the country to focus on prisoners and their children. We are first hand witnesses to the impact even incarcerated parents can have on their children.

We have learned that Kenny Wilson is extremely involved in the lives of his children. He teaches the older son basic lessons about avoiding drugs and staying in school, and helps teach the younger son about how to behave in school and treat his elders. More than that, he has been able to hold himself out as a living example of what paths to avoid, and a constant reminder of the situation that results from taking the wrong path. Most importantly, however, he appears to be an unusually constant, consistent source of love and support for his children.

In our work we have seen time and time again the benefits that fathers like Kenny can have on their families. As a result, we work diligently to encourage the maintenance of family relationships when a parent is incarcerated. We encourage incarcerated parents to remain that constant and consistent source of love and support for their children as Kenny Wilson has been. Losing a parent to prison is an indescribable trauma for a child. This trauma would be magnified exponentially if a parent's life were to be taken by the state.

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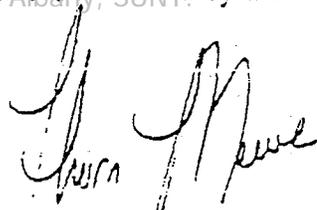
*Ellen M. Barry*  
*Maria Ferrehoenf*  
*Dana L. Wood*  
*Joyce Miller*  
*Doris Mitchell*  
*Dorsey Nunn*  
*Dale Rice*  
*J.D. Sadler*  
*Demetrius Shelton*  
*James Simmons*

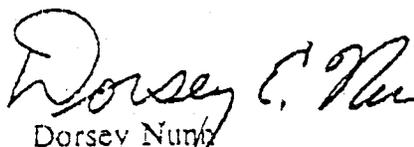
We request that you commute Mr. Wilson's sentence to life without parole in order that his children may be guided by their loving father's hand.

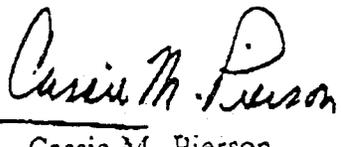
Sincerely,

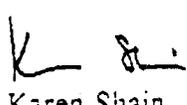
  
Ellen M. Barry  
Founding Director

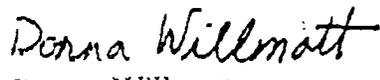
  
Lauren Leslie  
Litigation Coordinator

  
Thorn Mewe  
Staff Attorney

  
Dorsey Nunn  
Program Director

  
Cassie M. Pierson  
Staff Attorney

  
Karen Shain  
Administrative Director

  
Donna Willmott  
Litigation Coordinator



*Copy is  
mailed to  
the VA  
11/15/98*

November 12, 1998

James S. Gilmore III  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia  
State Capitol, Third Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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Dear Governor Gilmore:

Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation is a national organization with over 4,000 members. We are the only victims' organization that includes both families homicide victims and of executed persons. Many are surprised that this unique mix of members have so much in common. Actually, both groups have lost a loved one to violence. The effects of those losses are very similar.

We are concerned about the impending execution of Kenny Wilson and how it will affect his children. One of our members who lost her father to execution as a young child tells us how, when she was old enough to understand how her father died, it diminished her view of her own worth. Another member whose father was executed has needed years of intense therapy and still functions in society at a minimal level.

Kenny's boys are 13 and 6; crucial years in their development. Since their mother's incarceration they have lived with Kenny's mother. Their father has been a positive influence even from behind bars. To deprive them of their father will be devastating. Kenny's sons are doing very well now. This preventable loss will deeply wound them and set them back so far they may never be able to overcome the damage that will be done. When children feel powerless and victimized, they feel rage at those who have caused their pain. Just as the children of murder victims focus anger on those who murdered a parent, children of executed persons focus their anger on the state. The result is that often children of offenders end up committing violence themselves.

These children deserve better. They and all Virginians will benefit if Kenny Wilson's life is spared. The example we would set for his children, and for all children, is that violence has no place in our lives. I urge you to consider the effects the execution of Kenny Wilson will have and not punish innocent children for the crimes of their father.

Sincerely,

Executive Director  
Pat Bane

Office  
P.O. Box 208  
Atlantic, VA 23303

757 824 0948 phone & fax

Pat Bane  
Executive Director