

P.O. Box 589
Lakeville, CT 06039

April 16, 2015

The Honorable Katherine B. Forrest
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York
United States Courthouse
500 Pearl Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Judge Forrest,

I am Ross Ulbricht's mother. I write to entreat you to give my son the shortest possible sentence, which is still very long. I ask this not simply because I love Ross dearly or that his arrest and incarceration have shattered our family. I sincerely ask because I am certain that Ross does not require a severely long sentence to be corrected and learn to abide by the law. In fact I am confident that if Ross were released today he would obey the law for the rest of his life. He is an intelligent person and a fast learner. He has learned some terribly hard lessons, and learned them well. He is not someone who would be prone to repeat his behavior in any way. I know he regrets his actions very deeply, not only for the severe consequences he is suffering and the terrible grief and hardship he has caused his family, but for any harm he may have caused others.

Despite his conviction, it is telling that Ross has no prior arrests or offenses. He has lived most of his life well within the law and has never been known to threaten or endanger anyone. There is not a violent or cruel bone in his body. Quite the contrary, he is known to be philanthropic, honest and compassionate. He has never been motivated by greed, money or power. Rather, when he created Silk Road, Ross was a young idealist who was passionate about the concept of personal and economic freedom. He wanted to convince others of the ideas he was caught up in. To that end he created an open, free market website with few restrictions. This was a rebellious act and I don't justify it. Nor would I ever defend Silk Road. I simply ask that you consider his young age and his motivations, which I believe were political and, from his immature view, humanitarian.

We all know that young people can be foolishly reckless and often blind to the destructive ramifications of their choices. They are often influenced by ideas and impulses that, once older and more mature, they would never consider. Parents hope that their children grow past those foolhardy years without hurting themselves or others. In the normal course of events they mature and move on unscathed. In some cases their choices lead to disastrous results. I think this was true in Ross' case. I believe he allowed his rash, youthful idealism and zeal to take him into areas and choices he shouldn't have made, and normally wouldn't have, and it got out of hand. Again, this not to excuse Ross of any crimes he has been convicted of, but to say that, now 31 and chastened by his imprisonment, he has matured and will continue to do so. Growing older and learning hard lessons have a way of doing that.

You had the opportunity to sit across the courtroom from Ross for almost a month. You know that the entire time, even when the devastating verdict was read, he conducted himself with dignity and equilibrium. He was unerringly respectful to the court and the people handling him. This is not an incorrigible criminal. This is someone who is civilized, ready to cooperate and endure what he must in the hopes of returning to society as a law abiding citizen. It is someone who can be corrected within the least amount of time allowed. More than that is far greater than necessary.

My son Ross has been a joy to raise and a blessing to friends, family and strangers. As his mother, he has been a son to be proud of. I have been told countless times of his compassion, integrity and commitment to truth and good deeds. His former housemate tells of how, while out walking with him, Ross suddenly dashed off to help an old homeless woman cross the street. He bought flowers for the flower lady on the corner, because he figured nobody did that for her. When he went to a sophisticated New York party he told me he spent most of it outside talking to a homeless man. It is so typical of Ross to help the helpless, encourage the outcast, reach out to people.

In prison Ross has been a great boon to fellow inmates. Now at MCC, he's tutoring some of them in math and science. He tutored his cellmate for his GED in the evenings after trial. At MDC he led a physics class and a yoga class. His former cellmate (now released) wrote me to say what a positive influence Ross had been on him. An MDC guard took me aside and literally gushed about what a wonderful person Ross is and what an asset he was to the environment there.

Through this ordeal Ross has had the unwavering support of friends and family – the people who actually know him. Many of them, although not wealthy, pledged their homes, life savings and other assets for his bail without hesitation. Seventeen offered to co-sign the bond. This was because they know Ross is trustworthy and because they love him. A reporter said that he was struggling to find anyone to say anything negative about Ross. Not one person who knows him has reported anything unfavorable about him or anything that would imply violent or criminal behavior.

Despite his recent conviction, Ross Ulbricht is an exceptionally kind, generous, caring and high minded individual. I am not saying he hasn't made grievous mistakes. I am saying that he has already well learned to never repeat them. I am certain that any thinking in Ross that led him to break the law has been corrected. The job of rehabilitation is accomplished. The job of punishment is up to the court. When deciding what this will be, I implore you to consider his fundamental character as conveyed in letters from those who have known him for years, some his entire life. Please also consider Ross' age; his personal history; his repentant attitude; and what he can contribute if allowed to do so.

Even with the shortest possible sentence, Ross will lose what are the most productive, rewarding and important years of his life. I beseech you to make his sentence no longer than necessary and give Ross the chance to rectify his mistakes. Please allow him time to re-join society as a reformed and chastened individual, who still has much to offer to his community.

Sincerely yours,



Lyn Ulbricht



LETTER 2

PO Box 163602
Austin, Texas 78716

April 19, 2015

The Honorable Katherine B. Forrest
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York
United States Courthouse
500 Pearl Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Judge Forrest,

I'm Ross Ulbricht's father. I was a home builder in Austin Texas for many years. Before that I worked for a US Industries subsidiary, Diversicon, as a project engineer. We built freeways in Florida. Now I own and operate a vacation rental home business in Costa Rica with my wife, Lyn Ulbricht, Ross' mother.

In my research of the sentencing phase of the judicial process, I have read that judges always want to know "why did the guilty individual commit the crime?". I believe I know what motivated Ross to do what he did, and I hope I can shed some light on that issue for you. I also hope to give you a fuller picture of the character of the young man you will be sentencing.

Ross has always been a thoughtful and inquisitive person. When he was a toddler, we noticed that he was never the type of child who would do foolish things, like running out into the street. He was measured in his actions, and mindful of their consequences. At first he seemed timid to me, but then I came to understand that he was thoughtful beyond his years.

As his character developed, he became what I can only describe as a "good" child. He was never in trouble in school. He was always obedient and willing to help at home. He was unselfish and kind to other kids.

Ross is an Eagle Scout, and so am I. There was an incident while he was a boy scout which illuminates Ross character. One of the kids in the troop was almost completely blind. He could only see dim shapes, and walked with a cane with the help of someone at his arm. He was being mainstreamed in school and in scouts. He and his parents wanted him to do everything the other kids did, and he was able to do almost everything, as long as he had another person at his side. There were a few of the kids who were always helping out as his companion. Ross was one of them, even though Ross was younger.

When our troop went to Philmont Scout Ranch for summer camp in the Pecos Wilderness, the blind boy, I'll call him Bill, went with us. Bill's dad came too. The challenge was for the 25 boys and five adults to hike 50 miles of rough Rocky Mountain trails, carrying all their food and camping gear for six days on their backs. Since Bill couldn't see the ground except vaguely, and he had a 30-pound pack, he was at a severe disadvantage. Even though he had a scout in front of him and his dad behind, on the first day he fell down hard five times. We all loved Bill and his dad, and wanted him to succeed, but that night I was sure he would have to give up.

The next day, some other scouts joined him as his trail companions. The boys would rotate in and out of being Bill's trail companion several times a day. It meant leaving early, arriving late, and hiking at Bills slow pace instead of hiking with the leaders of the main group, but there was a group of five boys who did it. Ross was one of them. Bill never made it through a day without falling at least twice, but he never gave up. His trail mates kept him from any more bad falls after the first day.

As we were walking into base camp on the sixth day, I walked a few hundred yards in front of

Bill, so he couldn't hear me kicking the loose rocks off the trail in front of him. Ross joined me, and we walked along kicking rocks aside with tears of pride and joy falling down our faces. Bill was going to complete the hike with the rest of his buddies. At the closing campfire that night, our troop's scoutmaster got up to tell of Bill's accomplishment. During the week, word of what was happening in our troop had spread throughout the other 500 scouts who were on their own difficult 50-mile hikes. When the whole group stood and roared out their approval of Bill's accomplishment there wasn't a dry eye in the crowd. Ross never got or sought any particular praise for his part in Bill's triumph, but that's the kind of guy he is, compassionate and selfless.

Ross did well in math and science in high school, and earned a full scholarship to the University of Texas. He majored in physics, and worked on the development of new materials for use in solar cells. When he graduated from UT with a Bachelor's in physics, he had earned a full scholarship to Penn State. While there, he continued to work on the development of new thin film materials with novel uses, and got his Masters degree in Material Science.

During his college years, Ross had developed a strong desire to use his talents to make a positive difference in the world. He rightly felt that he had the potential to do something good for mankind. He was offered a scholarship to continue his work on thin film materials at Cornell University while seeking a PhD.

Ross was at a significant turning point in his life. Along the way, he had become more interested in economic theory and free markets than he was in material science. He felt that a move to Cornell and a PhD in Material Science would take him away from economics and leave him with limited employment opportunities. Material Science PhD's have one principle job opportunity, to work in academia. He chose to become an entrepreneur, and planned to market a couple of ideas he had developed.

The first idea was to solicit donations of unwanted books that people typically have on their shelves. Ross formed a company with another budding entrepreneur to collect and then sell these books. Ten percent of profits would go to charity. Books would also be donated to prison libraries. The company operated at a small profit. When the entire stock of over 20,000 books on interconnecting shelving tragically collapsed, the venture was abandoned and sold.

While in college, Ross had played several mass-participant internet games. Some of these games have millions of clients and are complex enough to include virtual economies. Ross had noticed that these virtual economies did not function properly and were a bone of contention with the game participants. He had an idea that he could fix this problem by using a free market based economic model. He proceeded to create a program which would change the economy of some of the biggest internet virtual games from a Keynesian to an Austrian economic model. This was a large undertaking, and consumed Ross' energy for a couple of years. The result was a plug in type generic program that could be inserted into an existing mass-participant virtual reality game. The object was to show the games' owners how a free market economy would make the game more exciting, compelling, and end the persistent problems.

Then he began to look for a buyer for his product. Unfortunately, Ross was never able to convince any of the major game operators that the added value of his economic program would be worth the effort and expense to change the existing games' entire economy. He came close, but in the end his efforts came to naught. Interestingly, today, the most successful of those games use free market economic models, exactly as Ross had envisioned.

And so, Judge Forrest, given the frustration of the book business, and failed attempt to market his game economy program, plus his drive to succeed, the stage was set for the creation of the Silk Road. With some readily available information about bitcoin and the Tor Network, Ross was able to shift from a program that ran the economy of a virtual game to a program that ran a free market on the

internet.

It was a terrible decision. I would give anything I have to be able to go back in time and have the opportunity to counsel Ross on the inevitable outcome of his decision. Please Judge Forrest, consider that he was only 26 when he started the project to create Silk Road. He was a young idealistic man who was driven to succeed and to do good works. When he was in his early twenties he was either in college doing theoretical work for the betterment of mankind or working a book-selling business with a significant charitable component. His study of economic theory was done with the intention of using his knowledge to better the common condition of all of us. His idealism led him to implement a free market website. His naiveté and the folly of youth blinded him to the consequences.

The Silk Road was created in the hopes that something good would come of it. As history has shown, it quickly spiraled out of control. I know Ross regrets the decision to launch and operate the website. He has told me that in our visits to him in prison. I have seen a very pronounced change in his attitude toward life in general, and in particular to the law, and the consequences of breaking the law. He is a very different person now than he was before his arrest. The experience of a year and a half in prison has matured him more than 15 years of life on the outside would have.

Judge Forrest, please consider that the illegal aspects of Ross' Silk Road experiment represents a complete departure from the trajectory of his life. Please consider that Ross shared an old house and lived like a grad student when he was arrested. He didn't start the Silk Road out of greed. Money was never a motivating factor for him. He did it because he had an idealistic vision of freedom for all of us. Just as the French Revolution was born of an idealistic idea of freedom, and then became a nightmare that consumed its founders, so reads the story of the Silk Road.

Please consider the potential that Ross still has to contribute to society. His desire to contribute still exists. It is tempered with a respect for the law that this experience has added to his character. He can still be a good citizen of the United States. He can still be a contributor to the benefit of us all. Please give him the shortest sentence possible. His life as well as his potential to contribute is in your hands.

Respectfully,



Kirk Ulbricht
[REDACTED]

LETTER 3

16/166-172 Arden Street
Coogee, NSW, Australia, 2034

April 21, 2015

The Honorable Katherine B. Forrest
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York,
United States Courthouse
500 Pearl Street, New York, New York 10007

Dear Judge Forrest,

I am Ross' sister and I work for a medical equipment company as a Territory Sales Manager in Sydney, Australia. I'm writing on behalf of my brother, to beg you to apply the minimum sentence, which in itself will be most of his productive life. Through visits and phone conversations I can tell my brother is already a changed man. I truly believe he was idealistic, with an unrealistic view of how the world works. He felt he was offering an opportunity that had never existed before. His mindset and ideals have drastically shifted, as he has had time to think about his actions in the past 19 months. He is truly sorry, and I know will never go against the law again.

Our family is extremely close, and Ross is seeing the suffering this is causing us. Many friends and family travelled across country, and I from Australia, to support Ross through the trial. He would never intentionally hurt us, and I know he would do anything to reverse what he did. Please give him a chance to have at least some life once this nightmare ends.

Following are examples of who my brother is as a person, and why I implore you to apply the least amount of years to his sentence.

Compassion: Growing up we always had pets: dogs, cats, fish, hamsters. If stray dogs appeared in the neighbourhood, Ross and I would always take them in, care for them and find their owners. More than one unwanted dog became beloved family pets.

Accepting: Ross' qualities of empathy and compassion have extended to people throughout his life. He has always accepted everyone, no matter their race, station in life or status. One example is his membership in an African drum group in grad school. He was the only white person in the group, but he was instantly welcomed. That is because Ross sees people for who they are, not what's on the outside. He cares about people and wants to help improve their lives, be it through music, philosophy discussions or acts of kindness. Even as a child Ross especially felt for the underdogs, the kids who did not have many friends. His sympathetic nature reached out to them, so they felt wanted and part of the group. This continued into adulthood.

Caring and considerate: Ross' gentle nature as a child only blossomed when he was older. Several of his girlfriends (whom I have met) have told me what a gentleman Ross is, bringing flowers and chocolates, always opening doors for them. One time, when we were out with our cousins, it was relentlessly raining and we were stranded, waiting to get the car. Without a word Ross dashed out and ran through the rainstorm to get the car, getting soaked to the bone. Ross is a gentleman through and through.

A recent example of his generosity and caring occurred at MCC when, after exhausting days at trial, Ross tutored his cell mate in the evenings to help him pass his GED. He is the man other inmates come to when they've placed a bet, to measure their opponent's push-ups and ensure the other person does not cheat. Ross is known to be an honest man, even in jail.

A prison guard at MDC went out of her way to tell my parents what a wonderful man she thinks Ross is. During visiting hours, another inmate told my mother that Ross "is a good man and I'm watching out for him." Even in the lowest and worst situations, my brother focuses on the positive and aims to make the environment around him a better space. He will continue to do this once out of prison, too. He was raised to be a kind and sweet man. He would never intentionally hurt anyone. I know people can change, but I don't believe their core values do.

Positive upbringing: We grew up in a very peaceful, loving household, with no computer/video games or cable TV. Instead we played with neighborhood friends, making-up games, climbing trees, riding bikes. Ross was always such an easy-going child that he would befriend everyone and we had a great group of friends. We are still in touch with them, and you will receive several letters attesting to Ross' character from them as well.

Team player: Growing-up Ross was a boy scout and achieved Eagle. Becoming an Eagle Scout is not an easy task. To that end he gave up personal time, which is very important to high school students. This shows that even then he was committed to learning, growing and spending time with our father. When most young men are testing their masculinity, Ross was never in any fights in or out of school. He learned how to take care of himself in a peaceful manner. My father and Ross spent many camping trips and weekends with the troop. Unfortunately, many boys are not lucky enough to spend so much time with their fathers, learning about survival but also learning how to be a good man. He also grew up being part of a soccer team, which teaches you how to work together, how to take care of your teammates and be a part of a community.

Philanthropic: We were raised in an entrepreneurial household, and after grad school Ross created a business that also gave back. In addition to other charities, Good Wagon Books ironically supported libraries in jails to help give prisoners an opportunity to learn. Ross worked hard at this company and wanted it to succeed to continue to help the community.

Humble: My brother is a brilliant man, but you would never know it meeting him. He won scholarships to put himself through both undergrad and graduate school, in physics and material science. Yet Ross is down to earth and easy to talk to, never condescending to anyone. Again, he gets along with everyone. He's social and has many friends, all of whom vouch for his character and have stood by him through this ordeal.

Frugal: We were raised in a middle-class, safe, nice neighbourhood and home. We were taught to always pay your debts and never spend beyond your means. Once he left home, my brother wore the same clothes that were handed down from his older cousins for years. He cooked at home, his favorite dish being sausages with frozen veggies. He has always been happy with a simple life.

Open-minded: Ross is always open to hearing other points of view, another person's feelings and opinions. He truly listens and takes it in. He would express his viewpoint as well, but he was always respectful. It was

sure to be an enlightening discussion because Ross is so smart, yet open to hearing what other people have to say.

Spiritual: Ross has become more religious since his arrest. In the past, because he thinks scientifically, unless God's existence could be proven he expressed doubt, although was always respectful of others' religious beliefs. I believe this experience has humbled Ross. He now prays to God, asking for forgiveness, guidance and mercy. He is truly repentant.

My brother is a good man. His criminal convictions do not represent who Ross truly is. I respectfully and eagerly request that you give Ross the shortest sentence possible. Please leave him some time to live as a reformed man with his family and loved ones. Please allow him to come back to his family and be a part of our lives again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cally Ulbricht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cally Ulbricht

LETTER 4

P.O. Box 163597
Sacramento, California 95811

March 29, 2015

The Honorable Katherine B. Forrest
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York, U S Courthouse
500 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Forrest,

My name is Travis Ulbricht, I am Ross Ulbricht's older brother. I am currently semi-retired from running a business in the information technology field, and live in Sacramento, California. I have known Ross his whole life, although we were raised apart as we have different mothers. I think I can speak to his character and give you an idea of who he is as a person.

I have known Ross to be a bright, curious, hardworking, family loving young man who more often than not put others before himself. He is also a thinker, giving much of his life to thinking about philosophical questions regarding the relationship of human beings with society and freedom in general. One was always assured a stimulating conversation when speaking with Ross. You were also always assured of being listened to and your ideas respected as well.

As Ross's older brother I had the opportunity to watch him make some impressive choices growing up. Ross followed our Dad in becoming an Eagle Scout. This is not an easy task for a teen while many of his peers were "partying." Instead Ross gave up much of that time to finishing what he had started and became an Eagle Scout before graduating high school.

Ross also was a gifted student, with a near perfect math score on the SAT. He was accepted at a good engineering program at UT Dallas with a full scholarship and eventually completed his Masters at Penn State.

Ross also did something I would not have imagined in college. At a young age he purchased a multi-bedroom home and spent a considerable time doing all the repairs necessary to then rent it to fellow students. In all my college years I can't recall anyone doing anything that "adult" and constructive.

While it's hard to sum up a person's life, there is something I heard about Ross that really "fits" who he truly is. Ross started up a yoga group in jail, to help ease the stress of his fellow inmates, and of himself as well. I had never heard of anyone ever doing that in jail. Jail is not a place where one wants to stand out. I believe Ross started the yoga group there because it was a bit of good that he could do in his surroundings and for the people around him.

That gesture of compassion is who my brother is. It is how he has been in most situations in his life. He is always looking for how he might improve the world and the lives of those around him, even if it's in a small way.

How you are known is often by the little things. The fires you don't stoke, the peace you make during upsets, the helping hand that wasn't asked for, the small kindnesses. While there are many things that I am proud of about Ross, it's not one specific thing that means the most to me. People like Ross add little things to every moment you're with them, which adds up to so much more. For instance, no one would have missed the yoga group if it hadn't been in the jail. But because it was, I imagine it helped a number of people who were hurting. That's who Ross is.

I have accepted that Ross will spend time in prison, and more important I know Ross has accepted it as well. When I think about what he faces I feel afraid for him. When I think of the men in prison they stand in stark contrast to who Ross is. Ross has no tattoos, no tear drops on his cheeks, no spider webs on his elbows. No scars given to him by anyone in anger, or by himself. Ross is not dark, brooding, violent or angry at the world. Ross has never been a cynic. He has no priors, so no recidivism. Rather, Ross is an idealist, a thinker, philosophically minded and peaceful. A lover of nature.

My hope for Ross is that the good he has in him to give the world is not torn from him during his experience in prison; that the parts that would seek truth, be curious and helpful would not be crushed into nonexistence. I hope that, after the punishment phase, he has the possibility of a future where his natural inclination to help could be of benefit. I have no doubt he would do what he could to help others if he were given a chance. That is simply who I know Ross to be.

The world is a rapidly changing place where so many things are digital and open. Much like children, people are exploring where the boundaries and cliffs are, what this new technological world means for our society. For many young people it's like finding fire for the first time and reaching out to touch it. Many will be burned. But they are young and not yet wise. Please your honor, take Ross' young age and youthful tendencies into account.

What I hope, and what I so humbly ask of you, is to please consider giving Ross a sentence that would give him a chance to still have a positive impact on the world in his future. It would be such a loss to not have his intelligence and light in the world.

Thank you for your time and letting me express the love I have for my brother with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Travis Ulbricht". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "T" and "U".

Travis Ulbricht