



Center for Evidence-Based Corrections
Criminology, Law and Society

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May 5, 2009

Ronald L. Rodgers, Pardon Attorney
1425 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 11000
Washington, DC 20530

Re: Inmate Michael G. Santos #16377-004
Petition for Commutation of Sentence

Dear President Obama:

I am writing to support Michael Santos' Petition for executive clemency. I want to begin saying that, despite the fact that I have been a criminologist working on criminal justice issues for over 30 years, I have never written a letter supporting *any* action for *any* prisoner. I have often been asked to write such letters, but I never felt it was my place to question the decisions made by those in the justice system who probably had more information than I about an individual offender. But Mr. Santos' case is so compelling that I feel mandated to change my policy and write on his behalf.

I am quite familiar with Mr. Santos, his original crime, and how he has bettered himself while in prison. In fact, I use his materials in my class teachings to illustrate someone who has taken responsibility for his crime and made the best of his many years in prison. More importantly, I use his criminal case as an illustration of U.S. drug policy gone awry. He has simply served too long a prison term for the severity of his crime (he has already served far longer than many of those convicted of aggravated assault and manslaughter). Continued imprisonment serves no additional rehabilitation or incapacitation purpose.

As Director of RAND's Criminal Justice Program and the founder of UCI's Center for Evidence-Based Corrections, I have spent over three decades developing 'recidivism prediction' models. I can tell you, without hesitation, that Mr. Santos is an excellent risk for release. There is nothing in his background or current behavior that suggest he poses any threat to the community once released. He has an extensive support system in the community and within his family, and strives to continue teaching and writing about his criminal justice experiences. It appears that his psychological adjustment has remained intact during his lengthy incarceration.

I support Mr. Santos's commutation petition because continued imprisonment seems to serve no justice-related purpose, and in these tight economic times, it also wastes taxpayer's money. For those who can be released, without threat to the public, and who have served far too many years (relative to the severity of their conviction), justice demands a reconsideration of their case. I trust that my comments will be useful to you in your deliberations. If I can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joan Petersilia". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Joan Petersilia, Ph.D.
Professor, Criminology, Law & Society
Co-Director, Center for Evidence-Based Corrections