

Section 3: Convictions For Which Clemency Is Requested

Case #1 (Oldest Case)

		Official Use Only. Do not complete this Section.	
Date of Incident:	Offense(s):	Sentence(s):	Grading:
<u>01 / 18 / 2002</u>	1. <u>Theft by unlawful taking-Movable prop</u> 2. <u>Theft by deception-False Impression</u> 3. <u>Receiving stolen property</u> <u>Criminal conspiracy engaging-</u> 4. <u>Theft by unlawful taking-Movable prop</u> 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____		
OTN Number: <u>H 465360 - 0</u>			

Describe the incident and how you were involved. Where were you, what exactly did you do, and how were you caught?

In January 2002 I was working along with my best friend Shayla Coleman (Shayla) for her cousin in law Wilson Lambert Jr's (Wilson) agricultural trucking company. At the time of the incident I had been working for the company for about five months. My job duties consisted of data entry (entering the load tickets that the truckers turned in and taking orders for materials from customers) and other basic clerical task. Shayla's role was office manager and she did payroll. On Friday January 18, 2002, Wilson came into the office and started going through the books with Shayla. He came across payments that belonged to both me and Shayla for amounts that he felt were out of the ordinary. After Shayla explained why our pay was what it was, Wilson was still unhappy with that and felt that we had stolen money from him. Wilson called the police that night and pressed charges once the officer got to the office. Sometime in February, Shayla and I were told by Caln police that we had to turn ourselves in, and we did so. The charges were held over for trial and I was found guilty. I was sentenced to seven years of probation (which due to staying out of trouble had the supervision ended early) and had to pay restitution (which has been paid in full). I have also apologized to Wilson which allowed us to put the situation behind us and later work together at Cheyney University.

Check this box if you are attaching a Section 3 supplemental page.

Official Use Only. Do not complete this Section.

Plea/Verdict: _____ County: _____
 Plea/Verdict Date: _____ Sentence Date: _____
 Docket Number: _____ Financial Obligations Satisfied: Yes No Balance \$ _____

Section 5: OPTIONAL Personal Statement

If you decide to include a personal statement, it **may** include:

- ✓ A summary of how your life or circumstances have changed since your last arrest
- ✓ Reasons you seek clemency
- ✓ Reasons you feel you are a good candidate for consideration
- ✓ Information you feel supports your request

PAGE 1

I think most people would look at me like I was crazy if I told them, that I look at my being convicted of a crime as a gift and a curse, but that is exactly how I see it. Life after my conviction has been a complete whirlwind for me, and as strange as it sounds, in some ways, I am thankful for that whirlwind. However, that does not take away from the heartbreaks and let downs that I have endured.

A couple of months before my trial started, I had applied to Cheyney University of Pennsylvania and was accepted. My first semester started about a month before my trial; and, even with the anxiety of the unknown, I made sure I put my all into my education. Even after my trial and the guilty verdict, I determined that I started strong and I was going to finish strong, so I continued with my studies while waiting for my sentencing. It was because of that work ethic, that Judge Sanchez did not give me jail time. I had just received my midterm grades (all A's) a few days before my hearing and shared them with the judge. He saw that I was attempting to make the best of my situation and wanted to give me a chance to do something positive. The moment he was lenient with me, was the moment I decided that failure was not an option.

After my first semester, I was inducted into the Keystone Honors Society and received a full academic scholarship, which was a goal that I set for myself when I first started. Another goal that I set was to graduate from this four-year university in three years; and, I achieved that goal as well. All during undergrad I made the Dean's List every semester—some semesters carrying a twenty-two-credit workload while working at the campus bookstore and volunteering as a student coach and trainer. It was a challenge. Most days I would leave my room before 8:00 a.m. and not return until after 10:00 p.m., but it was worth it. I wanted to be sure that I capitalized on the second chance at life that Judge Sanchez granted me, and I was well on my way—or, so I thought. After graduating summa cum laude and third in my class, I thought that I would have had lots of job offers, but that was not the case.

Although I attended job fairs, filled out numerous applications and went on interviews, once they found out about my record I would be turned down. I could probably make a book out of all the rejection letters/calls that I got. There were so many times a prospective employer would look at my portfolio and sing my praises; but, as soon as they looked closer at the application and saw the "convicted felon" box was checked, their tune soon changed. Some would ask me to explain what happened, while others' whole mood would change, and the interview would pretty much be over. It seemed as if no one was willing to take a chance on me, or so I thought.

A few months post-graduation I received a call from a local Wendy's franchise owner that I met while at a job fair. She wanted to offer me the opportunity to go through their managerial training; and, after that was completed, I would run my own store. Of course, I still had to go through the hiring process and interview with her partners; and while doing so my record was brought up. Learning from previous interviews, this time I gave them a copy of my court docket, along with my resume, so they could see exactly what my charges were. The meeting went really well and before it ended I was told that my record did not affect their decision; and, they offered me the job. My training began and I thought— "finally, I'm on my way". The manager who was training me expressed how quickly I picked up on things and how she believed I would do a great job running my own store. Near the end of my training I was given the assignment of what store I would oversee; and, I was getting more and more excited. But, my excitement was short lived. A couple of weeks before I was to take over the store, I was called into the office, was told they received the results of my background check, and they would have to rescind their offer. At that moment I was confused, sad and angry—all in one; but, that seemed to become my norm.

(Please see 3 supplemental pages)

Check this box if you are attaching a Section 5 supplemental page.

Section 5: OPTIONAL Personal Statement (Supplement)

If you decide to include a personal statement, it **may** include:

- ✓ A summary of how your life or circumstances have changed since your last arrest
- ✓ Reasons you seek clemency
- ✓ Reasons you feel you are a good candidate for consideration
- ✓ Information you feel supports your request

If I was not turned down immediately after they found out I had a record, I would get hired, begin working then get let go after a few weeks after the official background check came back. Although I would always be upfront about my record from the very beginning, they still would terminate my employment. Not only did it happen with Wendy's, but it happened with companies such as Aramark and most recently Sources4Teachers, as well, just to name a few. The sad part is it is not just employment that my record has hindered. It has held me back in other ways, as well.

I don't know why I thought that things would be any different, but I thought that if I earned a master's degree employers may be a bit more inclined to hire me. Not so. I just ended up in debt! Once again, I applied to a school, this time in Maryland and was accepted. I figured maybe I could get a fresh start in a new location. So, armed with a renewed outlook on life, I relocated, with the help of my family, only for "my reality" to set in. Once again, I was doing well in school, but due to my not gaining employment because of my record I could not afford to stay in school. Losing hope, I moved back home to Pennsylvania and tried to figure things out. By this time, it had been about six years since my conviction, and I did not see how things would possibly turn around for me. However, I did get a little glimmer of hope when I attended a pardon workshop and ended up with a job interview to be a van driver.

At the end of the workshop, I got a chance to chat with one of the speakers and shared with her a little of my history. During the conversation I mentioned that I had my commercial driver's license, and she told me that the company she worked for was looking for a van driver. After giving me her contact information, she told me to reach out to the company and apply. The very next day I did as she suggested and was offered the job. The position was part-time, but I was thankful for it and loved it. It was a program for at risk teenagers who were trying to get their GED, job placement or both. My job was to take them to and from the program; and, if they had job interviews or orientations for school, I would take them there as well. While driving the van I got a chance to know the kids—kids who weren't too trusting of adults, but they took a liking to me. They realized that they could confide in me and that I was a cheerleader for their greatness. They got comfortable enough that they started to share their hidden talents with me, which led me to create Talent Tuesday. It was kind of like an open mic and an art showcase on wheels. I enjoyed helping the kids; so, during my off hours I volunteered to stay and help them to fill out resumes, college applications or study for their exams. It felt good helping these young people along in their quest to become positive citizens of society. Unfortunately, with it being a County program, it lost its funding and I lost my job. However, although I was disappointed this time because I was without work once again and the kids were without a program, it kind of restored my hope. It reminded me what it was that I wanted to do before I incurred a criminal record and that was to be a positive role model for those younger than me.

I made it a point to never stop looking for employment even though I had to face a lot of rejection and to show those around me to never give up. Because of my persistence my sister-in-law admired my resilience and put me in contact with the Superintendent of our school district. She was a member of the School Board and let him know I was looking for work. I interviewed with him, went through all the proper paperwork and was offered a seasonal clerical position. Once that position ended, they liked my work ethic so much that they offered me a permanent part-time position in another department. I liked my job and my colleagues. The best part was I could walk to work and get exercise. I was truly thankful to have my little slice of pie. After a year of working for the school district, my happiness ended abruptly. The Superintendent who hired me resigned amid criminal charges.

Check this box if you are attaching a Section 5 supplemental page.

Section 5: OPTIONAL Personal Statement (Supplement)

If you decide to include a personal statement, it **may** include:

- ✓ A summary of how your life or circumstances have changed since your last arrest
- ✓ Reasons you seek clemency
- ✓ Reasons you feel you are a good candidate for consideration
- ✓ Information you feel supports your request

At a Board meeting my name was brought up in connection with his hiring me, which led to my record being made public, and the past that I tried so hard to rebuild, got torn down again. I was let go once again. My name was mentioned in articles written about him, saying I was hired due to nepotism; but, if anyone looked at my credentials, they would know that I earned my position. I was more than qualified.

Even while going through my own life's journey I always made it a point to be there for the youth in my community. I was able to do this by volunteering at my church and its school that offered grades kindergarten to fifth. At church, I was a Sunday school teacher, as well as a choir director who many of the kids looked up to. A lot of them keep in contact with me and thank me for the role that I played in their lives. And, if I see them "going left", I try to help them get back on the right path. I believe you must take care of home first. So, I also made it a point to spend as much time as possible with my nieces and nephews, who affectionately call me Ant Agge. From teaching them how to read and write, to riding a bike, I make sure I am active in their lives. Some of these young people that I speak of (and always call "My Babies") have become adults and are a huge reason why I am requesting a pardon.

With these trying times in the world now, I want to be the change that I want to see. Using myself as an example, it is my goal to show those I come in contact with that if they have wronged someone, own up to their wrongdoings and do whatever is deemed necessary to fix it. I want to show them that sometimes in life you may make a mistake, but that mistake should not define you. Most importantly, I want them to be the best version of themselves in life, that they can be—someone who others look to for help and guidance, a bright light in their community. Those are the personal qualities my role models taught me about, but I did not adhere to them until later in life. Hopefully, my failures and accomplishments can be used as life lessons. These are the things that I hope the people in my life—if they don't take anything else away from what I've gone through—will take and utilize; and, they will be alright. Then and only then will I know that my journey is not in vain.

Another reason that I want and need a pardon is because, although my situation has brought me closer to family, in ways it also separates me from them at the same time. I can be in a room full of people who love me and still I feel alone and feel like I'm a burden. They have never made me feel this way and have always been so supportive, but I cannot help feeling that way. I find myself having a mental and emotional battle. There are times that my loved ones may need monetary help, and because of my situation I am not in the position to help them. This has caused me to withdraw and question my reason of existence. The way I look at it is people work so they can do their share of taking care of their family and I have been hindered from doing so. I have even contemplated taking my own life, feeling like my family would be better off with me not being here and thinking it would be easier for them if they no longer had to carry me financially or emotionally. However, each time a thought like that pops in my head someone who I have helped or encouraged along the way seems to come from out of nowhere and express how I helped them or made their day. I do not even think they realized that they encouraged me to go on by showing me that although I may be going through my storms, they won't last always. I have had my ups and downs for the past eighteen years, but last year, in 2019, it seemed as if the sun started to shine on me.

Check this box if you are attaching a Section 5 supplemental page.

Section 5: OPTIONAL Personal Statement (Supplement)

If you decide to include a personal statement, it **may** include:

- ✓ A summary of how your life or circumstances have changed since your last arrest
- ✓ Reasons you seek clemency
- ✓ Reasons you feel you are a good candidate for consideration
- ✓ Information you feel supports your request

While sitting at home one day I received a phone call from a person who seemed to know a lot about me, but I had no idea who this individual was. He introduced himself at the beginning of the conversation, but I still did not know who he was. I soon found out. He let me know he was the Director of a program called Uplift Workforce Solutions, and he received a letter from my mother on my behalf. The program was put in place to teach life skills to individuals recently paroled from prison or those who have a criminal history. During the six-week program you also get trained for certain positions and at the end of successfully completing the program you are guaranteed job placement. Typically, it is for those who are residents in the Philadelphia area, but after he heard a little of my story the Director offered me an opportunity to be a part of the program. We received a stipend of one hundred dollars at the end of each week, all of which went into my gas tank and to tolls. I made a one-way, 45-minute trip to Philadelphia each day. I would leave my house at the crack of dawn to make sure I was never late, but it was all worth it. When I finished the program and started working, the staff from Uplift asked me to be the Class Speaker at graduation, and, although I was nervous and hesitant, I let them know it would be an honor to do so.

Never did I think that I, Adrienne Shaw, would ever be on a stage in front of a group of over two hundred people giving a motivational speech; but, I did it. It felt so good to accomplish that! The tools that the program's instructors equipped us with and the support from those at Uplift, will continue to carry me through life. It has also opened doors and brought about possibilities that I never thought I would have. It is there where I regained faith in myself and hope in life. Things are slowly starting to look up for me, but there is one thing that still has a stronghold and that is my criminal record.

It has been over 17 years since I made a stupid decision that has altered my life; and, I can truly say that I learned my lesson. Although the road has been rough, it was something I brought on myself. Even with things starting to look up for me, I am still held back from living up to my fullest potential. I have so much more to offer society and would love the chance to do so. The only thing that stands in my way is my record; and, if I am granted a pardon, I will not waste another second to strive for greatness. I will not disappoint those who fought for me, those who believe in me, or those who need me. I will not disappoint myself. If I am granted a pardon, I will be forever grateful, never taking anything for granted. Even if I am not granted a pardon, I have made a vow to myself and those I love that I will never give up. I will not give up on working to create a better life for myself. I will not give up on being the best version of me for them, and I will never give up on me.

Check this box if you are attaching a Section 5 supplemental page.