

EXHIBIT A

12/21/2023

To The Honorable Judge Bates,

My name is Michelle Banja, I am an Auto Body Collision Damage Estimator and divorced single mother of 2 biological children (14yo boy and 16yo girl) from my first marriage and 1 non related bonus child (18yo girl) from my second marriage. My second marriage was very toxic and abusive but I was lucky enough to get my children and myself out of the situation. We all sustained varying degrees of emotional and physical abuse that left us very traumatized. Due to this, I suffer from Compound Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, social anxiety, and panic disorder. Needless to say, my experience has left me on guard and skeptical of men.

I met Zachariah (Zach) in May of 2023. The first thing I noticed about him is he was a very genuine, patient, and kind man that respected my boundaries without question or offense. He had a wonderfully calm and warm personality which to my surprise, made me feel safe and respected. I could see that he is a hard worker, goal oriented, driven, empathetic, compassionate, and loving. He went out of his way to connect with my children and provide the same patience and care with them. After a few weeks of getting to know him, I quickly realized that he was the kind of man that I wanted in our lives.

As a single mother, despite the fact that I have a good job; I struggle to make rent, feed my kids and pay my bills. I have no help from my children's fathers. Zach immediately stepped up and provided financial support when I could not make ends meet. I have been having problems with an aggressive male neighbor; to the point where I no longer felt safe living at my rental property. Due to this neighbor and his escalating aggression, Zach allowed me to move into his home rent free so that I could feel safe and get my head above water financially. As a single man that was always on the road for work, his home was not prepared for me or my children. He went out of his way to purchase the material and took the time to build a room in his basement so that my 16yo daughter could have a comfortable private space to herself where she could feel safe. Zach immediately hit it off with my 14yo son. He has been teaching my son what it is to be a healthy healed man, guiding him on how to handle the trauma of his past, and showing him how to turn his focus on self improvement instead of self destruction. He has even offered to pay to send him to a young adult male self improvement camp this summer.

Not long after I met Zach, he introduced me to his friend (who calls him brother) Frank Santos. Frank has had a hard life and battles some mental health issues as well. Frank would tell you that Zach has helped him through some very dark times and saved him from taking his own life on several occasions. Zach has been a saving grace and beacon of hope for many people. I am in constant awe of him on a daily basis. He is constantly working on himself to be a better man and he is committed to being the best he can be.

The day he found out about his warrant, he immediately contacted me and told me we needed to talk about something important. I could tell he was not looking forward to having the conversation, and he was very upset and remorseful. What surprised me the most was he started the conversation off by sending me a copy of the warrant and immediately accepted responsibility for making a poor decision. I could tell he was embarrassed and disappointed in himself. He allowed me to read through the warrant and gave me an open forum to ask questions before he ever tried to defend himself. He went out of his way to provide me with all the information and allowed me time to process. He knew what I had been through with my prior relationship and he was giving me an easy out. That was the day I fell in love with him. I asked him what he was going to do and without hesitation he said, "accept the consequences of a poor decision." It took him some time to figure out how to navigate his next steps. There is no training manual on how to handle a scenario like this and he really didn't know what to do. He didn't want this to cause a negative impact on my children and I or his family, and he didn't want to burden me or his family with his problems or cause us any financial strain. He immediately got to work trying to tie up loose ends in his life and seeking guidance on what he needed to do to reconcile the situation and accept the consequences to make things right.

I can tell that he understands what he did was wrong and he lives with regret and remorse every day. It is unfortunate that he is in this situation.

I am writing this letter to defend Zachariah, because he is committed to accepting responsibility for his actions and making things right. He is a very respectable man and a wonderful example of what and how a man should be. No one is perfect, we all make poor decisions and stupid mistakes. I hope this gives you some insight on the type of man he is.

Respectfully, I ask this court to take this testimony and Zach's prior commitment to protect and serve our country into consideration when passing judgment on him.

Yours truly,
Michelle Banja