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To the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

St.Gallen, 21st June 2007

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to you to tell you about my friendship with Rolando Ruiz, one of the most amazing men I have met in my time, urgently asking you to recommend a commutation of his capital sentence to life. I am totally convinced that Mr. Ruiz no longer poses any threat to society, and that – if granted the chance – he will go on being a blessing to his family, his friends, and anyone who meets him.

Seven years ago, my wife and I became aware of a Swiss NGO called *Lifespark* that specializes in finding pen-friends for death-row inmates in the US. When I received Mr. Ruiz' reply to my first letter, I was not only impressed with his beautiful hand-writing and his word-perfect style, but much more moved by his humour, his candour, and his courage in the face of adversity. In a very short time, our correspondence went from easy chatter to a very earnest swapping of ideas and views, and to my astonishment, I presently found myself feeling that I was the one who gained more from this friendship than my imprisoned partner. Mr. Ruiz candidly shared his life's story with me from the start, not sparing me nor himself the ugly aspects of that story, not excluding that terrible day he took someone's life. It always felt to me like the person he was talking about was somebody else, and when I first came to Texas to see him in 2003, I was blown away by this man's vigour, his open, joyful gaze, his laugh, and his general outlook on life on death-row. Again, I walked away feeling blessed more than having been blessed.

Throughout the years, Mr. Ruiz has maintained a very keen interest in my life, my projects, tours, and albums (I'm a jazz and gospel musician), and when the going got rough in my side, his view of my struggles invariably set the priorities right... His firm belief in the grace of God has always been an example for my own walk as a Christian, too. When my wife and I suffered a miscarriage last year, he went out of his way to let us know how much he hurt with us, and when my wife gave birth to our first son this January, Mr. Ruiz was beside himself with joy and pride.

Even more than we did, his family – his mother above all – have experienced his tender care and great affection. Once again, I was moved by this extraordinary man's heart when I realised that his main concern upon being given an execution date wasn't for himself, but for her and her family, even for me.

I cannot imagine a more profound change of heart and of a more radically positive growth in character than that which Mr. Ruiz has gone through since his arrest in 1992. Please afford him a chance to make good use of it in the future – thank you.

Sincerely,



Andreas Hausammann