

February 29, 2016

HONORABLE JOHN A. MENDEZ
United States District Court
501 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Vera Kuzmenko

Dear Honorable Judge Mendez,

Vera's conviction by jury has been a shock to the community as she is known for her generosity and honesty. Many of the members of the community have expressed their concern and offered prayers.

The Kuzmenko family emigrated from Estonia fleeing the Soviet Communist regime seeking a better life and freedom to practice their religious beliefs. I have known the large Kuzmenko family for approximately 40 years. They are hard working people and open to lending a helping hand to those in need. Vera specifically has been an asset to the community. She is generous in giving to the poor and her honesty and professionalism has made her stand out in the community in her tax business. Vera is a kind and approachable woman.

I have counseled Vera about her choice of being with Edward Shevtsov and I am familiar with the difficulties that Vera has endured being in that relationship. Edward is not a good person. He is manipulative and controlling. I know the family has been praying for his salvation as he is not a religious man.

We are so grateful to the citizens of the United States that they welcomed us here by opening their hearts with so much love and warmth, showed us hospitality for which we are indebted and are thankful from the bottom of our hearts.

It is not my intent to justify Vera because the measurement of her guilt is a competence of the Court. We know your Honor that your job is extremely difficult, but we come to you knowing that you will apply the law in the most just way, yet we rely on the mercy of the Court to please be magnanimous in your decision.

God bless You!

Sincerely,



Adam Bondaruk
Bishop of the Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith of America

From Mihail and Nina Kuzmenko

Dear Honorable Judge John Mendez,


We, parents, of Vera Kuzmenko are asking you to show mercy toward our daughter and consider all facts that were not presented during trial. Vera is 2nd oldest in our family. From childhood she was independent, self sustained and a little shy. She was always very kind, merciful and attentive. Vera always avoided conflicts, had her own opinion but never forced her opinion on others. She never liked being an organizer, was very quiet when there were more than 3 people around. From childhood, she was prosecuted for her faith by school personnel and students and given lower grades in school as a result of her beliefs. For not joining the communist party, Vera was regularly taken out of the line up and made fun of by the entire school by calling her names such as: uncivilized, dumb. Also, the teachers followed her to evening church gatherings and next morning, chastised her publically. Vera was a talented and a good student but her grades were lowered because she refused to join the communist party because she had religious views in an atheist country. She cried often but stood strong and continued to go to school facing being laughed at on a daily basis. We, parents, always worried and promised our children we would run away to a free, fair country- The United States of America. This opportunity was presented to us in 1988. America became our home, our blessing and our comfort. Vera worked various jobs where she was respected and trusted by coworkers. Short while later, she became interested in preparing income tax returns and started out by helping her relatives and friends for free. At a later time, she opened her office but always lowered her fees (\$15-\$20 per tax return) and was embarrassed to charge the poor so she did theirs for free. She always donated to the poor to orphanages in Mexico and other countries from what little she had. Vera is very giving and sharing and not greedy. She loved people and was loved in return and people came to her with all their problems. She is very open, straight forward and always honest. And also, she was always true to her beliefs and never had premarital relations with men. In 2000, her life was turned upside down after meeting Edward Shevtsov. She became closed up, often sat quietly, was deep in thought about something, seemed worried and cried. To our inquiries, she responded that everything is fine and went to her room. Edward was a long distance truck driver and Vera out of hospitality offered him to stay over and sleep on the couch. Considering our strict views on premarital relations, we were against him staying and sneaking into her room of which we started noticing. And, once she cried back and said, "talk to him, what can I do? He needs me to dispatch for him." We decided to talk to Edward and he replied that he never intended to marry Vera since they were too incompatible and she is simply helping him find loads for his trucking business. We were shocked by his response and asked him not to come by the house anymore. He took his clothes and left. She became hysterical and we really worried about her. Turns out, Vera was already pregnant at that time but we did not know about it. Edward decided to return and have a dinner to announce them joining together to avoid shame of having a child out of wedlock. But their relationship never improved. Edward became more and more verbally abusive towards her and was not ashamed to use curse words in front of us. They had moved out to live in Natomas area, but she often came to stay with us saying she had a fight with Edward. We never use curse words in our house and it was very painful to hear Edward using such language with Vera. When the whole house buying and selling began, she was very worried and asked Edward not to involve her in his doing. When she asked him what he was doing. His response was "don't stick your nose where the dog doesn't stick its tail or not your business." She worried that she did not know what was going on and that everything seemed too secretive. Edwards came to her office and met in separate room behind

closed doors with other men who also dealt with homes. He often instructed her to print some letters and email them. From the brief review, she could tell it had something to do with home buying or selling. When she refused to do as he said, she faced drama and threats later that day. Once when Vera decided she wanted to leave him, Edward told her in our presence that he has enough evidence gathered against her that she will spend the rest of her life in prison. We thought he was bluffing or he was doing something illegal behind her back using her name to set her up. Vera was very afraid of him and looked for ways to get out of the relationship. After her surgery in May of 2007, she moved to our house and lived there for a long time until she moved out to live on Brace Rd without Edward. We also witnessed Edward using foul language with their daughter, Jessica. He told Jessica she is as dumb as her mom and will never become anything. Jessica did not want to talk with him when he called and came back in tears when Edward dropped her off at our house after basketball practice. He made a habit of putting her down in front of her peers and cousins. Jessica looked for excuses not to be around Edward. We tried talking to him, but he just told us not to get into his business.

Dear Judge Mendez, please consider all of the above when you decide how to punish our daughter Vera.

Sincerely,

Mihail and Nina Kuzmenko



HONORABLE JOHN A. MENDEZ
United States District Court
501 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Vera Kuzmenko

Dear Judge Mendez:

My name is Pavel Bondaruk and I have known Vera all of my life. We attended the same church and youth group in Estonia. Vera has always been the shy one in the group and never an organizer. She is an easy going person, very positive and a hard worker. Vera comes from a large family and being the oldest, has taught her to be a role model for her siblings. I have also been working as a legal assistant out of the same office where Vera's tax business was initially located in South Sacramento. I interact largely with the Slavic community through my work as well as being one of the pastors of the largest Slavic church in Sacramento. Along with her family, Vera was among the first to immigrate to US in the late 1980s. Vera's family housed a lot of immigrant families upon their arrival as they did not have any relatives in the US. Vera often helped translate and get those families situated with some sort of temporary assistance. People came with various questions and papers so Vera could translate for them. She never charged them. Vera is a giving person and notices the poor and those in need. Vera progressed to becoming the first income tax preparer in the community. People trusted her for her honesty and professionalism. I witnessed Vera being fair and honest, never suggesting any fraud or wrong doing to her clients. I have also observed Vera's interaction with Edward Shevtsov. He came by the office in the evenings to collect the money she had earned from doing taxes all day. He was very negative and would always find ways to put her down. He was verbally abusive to Vera and she has always been afraid of him and did what he demanded of her.

I am aware of Vera's current legal situation and her conviction by jury. Vera is not the person she was made out to be. Vera is a trustworthy person, never took advantage of anyone or victimizes anyone. Vera's tax business has been preparing taxes for my family and for a lot of my relatives and people of our community. Members of the community have expressed their support and prayers for Vera. I am in shock and disbelief of the outcome of this case. I understand Vera was convicted by a jury and stands to be punished. Please allow for leniency.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

Sincerely,



Pavel Bondaruk
[Phone Number Redacted]

February 26, 2016

HONORABLE JOHN A. MENDEZ
United States District Court
501 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Vera Kuzmenko

Dear Honorable Judge Mendez,

To date, over 3 million of Ukrainian citizens have immigrated to the US and made this country their home. The majority of those immigrants were Christian families fleeing from the prosecution and constant denial of basic civil rights they suffered under the Soviet Communist regime.

When I heard about Vera Kuzmenko's case, I made immediate plans to travel from Ukraine to Sacramento, CA. I am a leader of the Ukrainian political party Spravedlyva Ukraina, which represents the interests of Ukrainians living abroad. Though Vera was not born in Ukraine, her ancestors are of Ukrainian descent. Since 2005, we have been working diligently to bridge the economic, political and cultural gap between US and the Ukraine. Furthermore, we have been working toward achieving Ukraine's acceptance into the membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

As party leader, I feel it is my duty to write to you on behalf of the Kuzmenko family. This case has been and continues to be closely watched not only by the Slavic community in Sacramento, but also by the political community in the Ukraine. Many of the Ukrainian immigrants who arrived during 1990-2000 decade were imprisoned for their religious beliefs, denied education and unjustly persecuted for their non-conformist political views of the Communist Party. It is my sincere hope that Ukrainian immigrants residing in Sacramento do not lose confidence in the American judicial system as a result of this or any other criminal matter.

Vera is a hard working business woman who is generous and very trusting. She has done a lot of good for the community and is respected for her professionalism and honesty. It is hard to digest that such a good person has been convicted of such horrible crime. I can only ask for leniency. I would like to thank your Honor in advance for rendering a fair and just decision, which will strengthen our community's trust in the fairness of the judicial process in the US.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anatoliy F. Pehotin".

Anatoliy F. Pehotin
Party Leader

Spravedlyva Ukraina ("Fair Ukraine") Party, Kiev, Ukraine

My name is Pavel Bondaruk, I am the older brother of Pyotr Bondaruk. We have grown up together; I am only two years older than him. We were raised in a very religious home, attended school, church and all family events together. When he was 18 years of age, we immigrated to the United States. Within two years, I got married, but we remained close. At one point, we worked for the same company for two years. Peter is a hard working man, and has never rejected anyone's need, helped everyone he could. He was our family mechanic; helped with all our cars. At the time when Pyotr moved in with Olga Palamarchuk, his girlfriend, she prevented him from seeing his family. She seemed to have a lot of influence on his behavior, mainly because she knew that our father and the whole family did not approve Pyotr's decision; according to our faith, moving in without getting married is considered a sin. So for the next 7 or 8 years we have seen him less.

Sometime in 2006, he has made another wrong decision. At the time of his crime, I noticed that he was going through depression and drank a lot. My personal opinion was that it was because of issues in their relationship and her negative influence on him. A few years later, they went through a breakup and since he did not have a place to stay, he returned to his father's house. For the past few years I have seen a lot of positive changes in him. He began attending church almost every day, and while the church was going through remodeling he always volunteered for physical labor without pay. He also began attending our family reunions and events. Pyotr is a very likable guy, and it wasn't hard for him to return into the family function; he has shown dedication to his family.

As a family we continue praying for him, and wish that he resolves his past issues so he can begin a new life without baggage.