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Concerned Citizen for Tonya Wherry

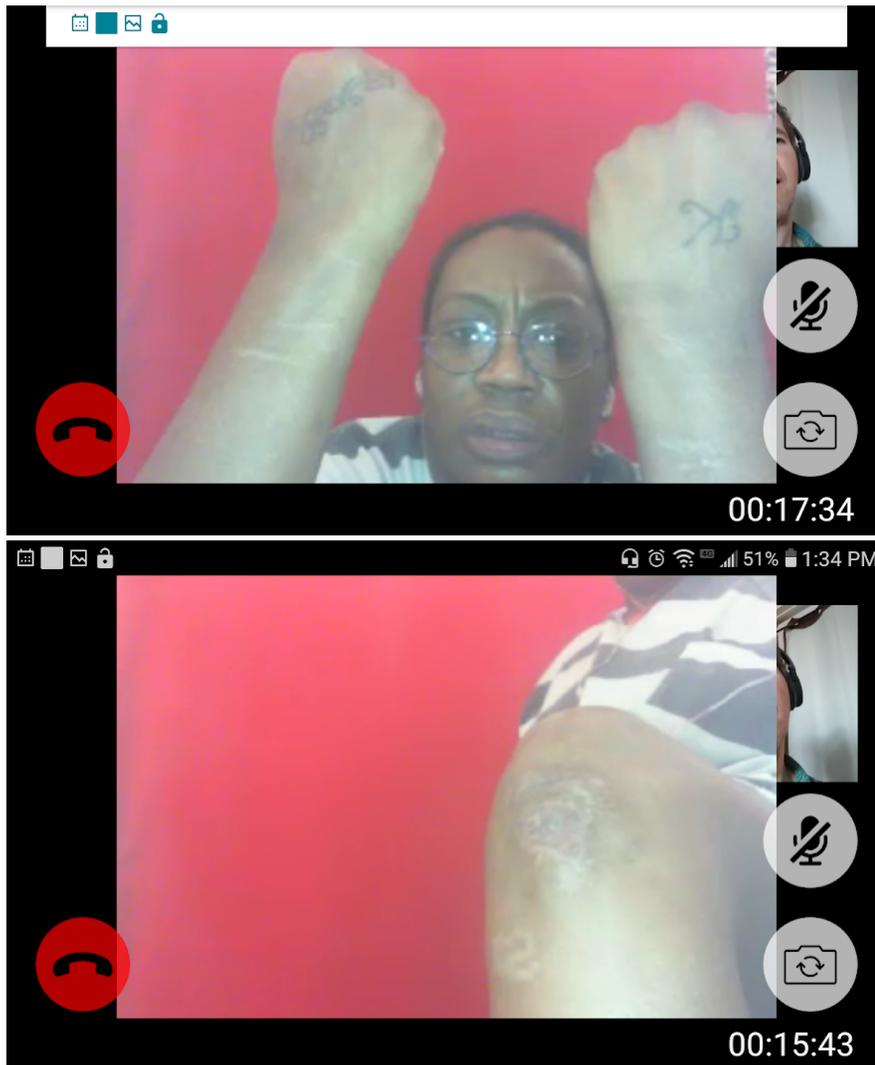
Mathew Haupt <mathewdhaupt@gmail.com>
To: Attorney@cochise.az.gov

Wed, Oct 14, 2020 at 11:37 AM

Cochise County Attorney Brian McIntyre,

A few weeks ago, I contacted Krist-Anah Watkins with the Cochise County Grace Program trying to help a woman my wife met in County Jail. I was told that you would contact me, but I have waited weeks to hear from you. As a concerned citizen, I wanted to know what could be done to help Tonya Wherry. Tonya was a candidate for the GRACE Program, but was arrested by Sierra Vista Police Department one day after being released from jail. When I initially inquired as to her case, she was facing new charges and a plea agreement that would put her in prison. How does an individual go from being a candidate for the GRACE program to prison after being released for one day?

Tonya shared her story with my wife and me. You can see the images we captured of the scars she sustained to her wrists and knee while being violently arrested.



She had been held in jail since before the pandemic, riots, and peaceful BLM protests when she was released on July 10, 2020. She shared her experience being a black woman with mental health issues released into a world where everyone is wearing masks and violence against black americans and riots were in the news. Can you even imagine the terror this

poor woman must have felt? As a candidate for the GRACE program, which helps people with mental illness, she was released on July 10. The next day she was back in jail with new charges.

On July 11, Tonya experienced a full-blown panic attack while sitting in a car at a gas station in Sierra Vista. She was sitting there alone with thoughts of what was going on in the news and seeing masked people all around her. Her greatest fear in that moment manifested... the police came. The police report even recognizes that police presence exacerbated the situation, but it was not de-escalated. The cops pressed until things got crazy and Tonya was again in custody. The county had already recognized Tonya as deserving of help for mental health, so perhaps this situation was incorrectly handled by authorities? I believe Tonya deserved help, not what came to her.

Tonya is again incarcerated. To quickly handle her new charges, Cochise County entered into a Plea Agreement with a woman previously recognized by the county as being in need of mental health assistance. An agreement that puts her in prison for needing help. This is not justice.

You may not have even heard about this case prosecuted by your Office and I'm fairly certain that you never heard her side of the story. Having experienced the cruel criminal "justice" system of Cochise County, my heart goes out to all souls going through it. As I was sitting in the courtroom waiting for my own sentence, I saw on the monitor many sad perplexed faces of handcuffed prisoners desperate for help and an opportunity to live their lives freely. Our nation needs criminal justice and police reform, not just Cochise County. By providence Tonya was able to share her story with someone willing to speak out. I ask that you review this case with compassion. Like many others, Tonya deserves help, not incarceration.

Please, share your understanding of her case and what can be done to treat her fairly. I would like to share her story with others.

Sincerely,

Mathew Haupt

<https://mathew4ussenateaz.org/>