

HAL DAVIDSON

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Circuit Judge Steven Redding
Morgan County Courthouse
77 Fairfax Street, Berkeley Springs, WV 25411

August 20, 2018

RE: Character witness to Erick Shute, Case # 17-F-18

Your Honor,

My name is Hal Davidson, resident of Maryland. I am a close friend of Erick Shute. He was recently convicted of six counts 3x - Murder 1, 1 attempted murder, 1 wanton endangerment and 1 use of firearm in felony... sentenced to life in prison without mercy.

I knew Erick for more than 3 years when this tragedy occurred on Monday, June 13, 2016. The reason for this letter is to provide some character background that I feel should weigh on this brutal verdict.

I know Erick's personality from working with him sometimes daily over years, mainly over phone and email and can tell you this verdict does not seem to reflect any action the man I know was capable of. In my 63 years, I have never known a kinder, more considerate and sensitive man. He is the last person prone to any kind of violence.

He was poor, living in West Virginia assisting his mother, the two of them just surviving financially trying to make a better life there. I worked with Erick, him trying to help me find funding for music festival projects. He never raised his voice or used an angry tone with me. He was not capable of fighting anyone, it was not in him. He was a lover, not a hater and his ability to find a high quality girlfriend was easy. Erick did not drink alcohol or do drugs at all.

His mother moved the two of them some years ago from New Jersey for her to retire seeking a free and relaxed life. If she had known of the reality of rural WV, she most probably would have not moved there. Modern West Virginia is now known nationally as the No. 1 state for opioid use and therefore pervasive crime and specifically theft and violence. The living conditions in many parts of rural WV are severe, wreaking of toxic behavior. The circumstances were ripe for that terrible June day in 2016 to erupt more than two years ago. In my eyes, Erick was a victim of circumstances.

Erick was the most principled man I have known. I remember him telling me of some posts people made of him when he was the singer in a band. He logically wrote to the site's administrator looking for a mediated resolution, and although he was frustrated, he never showed any anger, unlike how I would have reacted, and did, for him.

We experienced other people who were not professional operators, to put it gently, and Erick basically had the attitude, let's move on. His greatest attribute was that he could warm up to people well and engage them in a business conversation. He made introductions easily. When he made mistakes, he would pause, take a big breath and say he was sorry. No one does that. Just about anyone else would find excuses.

So when I heard what happened on Monday June 13, 2016 I was, like everyone that I knew him shocked. The thought of Erick in jail the rest of his life is a terrible waste to his community, who loves him. His mother needs him. I respectfully request you set aside the verdict and claim self-defense. Erick should be released on time served.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Hal Davidson
Hal Davidson

WITNESS OF SIGNATURE

On this 14th day of September, 2018, before me, the undersigned, notary public, personally appeared Hal Davidson, known to me through satisfactory evidence of identification, which was Driver's License to be the person whose name is signed on the foregoing instrument and who acknowledged to me the contents thereof.

Diana Enola Bill
Notary Signature and Seal of Notary

My Commission Expires 12/19/2019

DIANA ENOLA BILL
NOTARY PUBLIC
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
MARYLAND
My Commission Expires 12/19/2019