

April 20, 2015

The Honorable Katherine B. Forrest
United States District Judge, Southern District of New York
Daniel Patrick Moynihan U.S. Courthouse
500 Pearl Street, Room 1950
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Forrest:

I am writing to tell you about my son, Bryan, and how his life was taken by heroin that was supplied by Silk Road – the scheme that was created by Ross Ulbricht.

On the morning of Monday, October [REDACTED], 2013, I received a phone call from Bryan's employer in Boston to tell me that he had just found him dead in his apartment. He believed he had died from a drug overdose. I can't accurately describe what a shock this call was. Bryan had turned 25 the week before and had come home to spend his birthday weekend with us in California. Our birthdays are only 4 days apart and we almost invariably celebrated our birthdays together. Bryan was an incredibly good athlete, a beautiful blond haired, blue eyed young man, a graduate (with honors) of the University of D [REDACTED] working at a small money management company in Boston where he had moved just two months before. He was in perfect health. When Bryan moved to Boston, his first major purchase was a bright yellow kayak. He would paddle on the Charles River for hours and, when he was done, he would carry it back to his apartment. This was no small feat: the kayak and all of its accessories weighed nearly 50 pounds and Bryan lived several blocks from the river. When Bryan's body was found in his apartment, the kayak was hanging on the wall right next to him. The weekend of his birthday we took a scenic 30 mile bike ride together. He was the last person that anyone would have expected to die from a drug overdose. When a Boston detective called me within an hour of the call from his employer to tell me that he believed Bryan had died from a heroin overdose, I told him "you either have the wrong guy or my son was murdered. He does not do drugs." I believed I had good reason to say that. It was something we had talked about within a week of his death.

I could not reconcile his death - and, in particular, the cause of his death - with the son who I was so close to, loved so deeply and thought I knew so well. In fact, it is difficult to get my mind around it as I write this to you. I began my own investigation almost immediately. I hired a lawyer in Boston who helped me navigate the process. We contracted with a forensics team to examine Bryan's computers (both work and his laptop) and his cell phone. We looked at his text messages, emails, web searching activity, etc. I also interviewed anyone I could get to talk to me: his employer, his colleagues, former employer, former

colleagues, college friends, roommates, etc. Within weeks, I had a good outline of what had taken place and a few months later, I developed a better understanding.

In sum, what I learned was that Bryan had probably tried heroin at the beginning of his senior year of college, realized what a huge mistake he had made, and spent the last two years of his life fighting off occasional urges to do it again. We will never know why he tried it. Nobody - except a small handful of people he thought were his friends knew he had done it. That's why everyone - his close friends, his family, and his relatives - was so shocked. In hindsight, it breaks our hearts to learn that he was struggling with this, but it was clearly something he was not proud of and something he thought he could handle on his own. He wanted no one to know.

He was doing very well in life despite these struggles until mid September 2013, when he discovered Silk Road. We now know that Silk Road could only be accessed by the TOR browser - a deeply encrypted software program that was originally used by the defense department. The website offered an amazon.com-like experience: a vast selection of illicit drugs (among other things) that any potential user could want, delivery to his doorstep, complete anonymity, and, perhaps best of all, everything had to be paid with Bitcoin (an untraceable cryptocurrency). The scheme was diabolical. It eliminated every obstacle that would keep serious drugs away from anyone who was tempted. Silk Road customers would avoid high-risk back alley drug deals, police detection, friends and parents finding out...all with the promise that no one would ever know. Our investigation revealed that Bryan, who was fighting off urges to try heroin again, was simply overpowered by the combination of convenience and anonymity. Bryan downloaded the TOR browser, he set up a series of fictitious email accounts as per Silk Road's instructions, he transferred money from his bank account to a Bitcoin dealer, and he ordered heroin on Silk Road. On the morning of his birthday (September 29th), the supplier called him on Skype to confirm the shipment of the product. It was delivered by USPS to his apartment (where we later found the packaging) and he was dead a few days later.

The autopsy of Bryan's body revealed that he most likely died on Friday evening (October 4th) which we can confirm from the lack of cell phone activity after 9:30 pm that night. While Bryan's dead body laid in his apartment that weekend, my daughter tried repeatedly to reach him by phone in order to share some great news with him; he was going to be an uncle. Today, my grandson will never know his Uncle Bryan and Bryan never knew of him. My daughter's wedding was on July 6th and it was a joyous occasion for our entire family. Three months later, Bryan was gone.

As you know, Ross Ulbricht was arrested on October 2, 2013. Unfortunately, that was one week too late to save Bryan. Since Ulbricht's arrest our family has been assaulted by the persistent drumbeat of his "supporters" who go as far as to proclaim him (in your courtroom) a "hero." They continue to tell anyone who will listen the narrative that Ulbricht's crimes were "victimless" and

the government's case against him was unnecessary and unjust. Suffice it to say their claims, aside from being deeply offensive, are false and absurd.

While it is true we are all born with free will that allows us to make our own choices in life, drugs that are highly addictive - like heroin - diminish or eliminate our ability to make good choices. This is exactly why these types of drugs are illegal: they offer no medicinal or therapeutic value and have addictive qualities that can lead to extremely harmful consequences for society. Clearly my son made a horrible choice in electing to try heroin in the first place, but Ross Ulbricht's Silk Road scheme removed all the natural "governors" that would otherwise prevent people like Bryan from gaining access to a drug like heroin. This is why the creation of Silk Road was so evil: Ulbricht's business plan was not simply a plot to disintermediate local drug dealers. It was Ulbricht's plan to radically expand the market for illicit drugs, and in the process, dramatically enrich himself without any regard for the lives of others or the effects on our society. This is not the behavior of an Eagle Scout - as constantly claimed by his supporters - this is the behavior of a sociopath. I have seen no sign of remorse or contrition from Ross Ulbricht for the consequences of his monstrous crimes. It is inconceivable that he did not realize that by creating Silk Road people would die because of his greed. Deaths from drug overdoses - especially heroin - are well documented. In fact, it is highly unlikely that my son was the only victim to die from drugs supplied by Ulbricht's Silk Road. I am fortunate because I had the time and resources to investigate what happened to Bryan. Other parents will have learned of the death of their child and may spend the rest of their lives wondering how it could have happened. The loss of a child leaves a parent with a deep and permanent emotional scar. Ross Ulbricht clearly did not care about the negative consequences of creating Silk Road or about the lives - like Bryan's - that would be lost while he watched his wealth grow with every drug transaction. Every time a customer engaged in the seemingly innocuous act of clicking on the "Purchase" icon on Silk Road's website, Ross Ulbricht's wealth expanded while his customer's lives were put at risk. His victims were just more Bitcoins.

Ross Ulbricht deserves the most severe sentence the law will allow. Everyone who knew Bryan feels the enormous pain of our loss. I lost my only son and my daughter lost her only sibling. We loved him more than we can describe. We know that punishing Ross Ulbricht will never bring Bryan back, but a clear message needs to be sent to Ulbricht and anyone who contemplates a similar scheme in the future.

Sincerely,



Richard [redacted]

