

Shannon Tyree
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March 24, 2016

The Honorable LaDoris Cordell
Blue Ribbon Commission on Improving Custody Operations
County Government Center
70 West Hedding Street, 1st floor
San Jose, CA 95110

Dear Judge Cordell and Members of the Blue Ribbon Commission,

I am writing to thank you. All of you wholeheartedly stepped up to serve on this commission in the wake of my brother's death. To know that so many people are fighting for him, when he can no longer fight for himself, has been a great comfort to my family and to all of the people who loved Michael Tyree.

My brother struggled with mental illness for half of his life. What is hard for people unfamiliar with that struggle to know, is the kind of courage it took for Michael to navigate a world that his illness told him was a constant threat to him. He fought demons we couldn't fathom and his illness made him stay largely isolated and alone. He would be stunned to know how many people are with him now.

Michael would understand the kind of courage shown by public officials who have stood up and said, "we have a problem and we're going to fix it." He would be honored by the real work that is being done in his name by this commission to make not just his death, but also his life, leave a lasting change. To those of us who knew and love him still, knowing that others are picking up the mantle of his courage honors him in a way that makes his death a little easier to bear.

I know that none of this is easy, but nothing worth fighting for ever is. The changes that will need to be made in the jails and in the way the mentally ill who have been arrested are treated will take the kind of commitment that so many have expressed. Santa Clara County has an opportunity to make change that could reverberate in jails across the country. It wouldn't be the first time that California has started change that has led the Nation. Californians are very good at that.

On behalf of all of my family, I offer you our deepest gratitude.

Sincerely,


Shannon Tyree