



Governor J. B. Pritzker  
100 West Randolph Street  
Chicago, IL 60601

January 16, 2020

Dear Governor Pritzker:

On behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois, we ask you to grant clemency and immediate release to Tewkunzi Green, a Black mother who was convicted of a murder committed in self-defense when she stabbed her abusive boyfriend, who was choking her as she held their infant son.

The UU Prison Ministry of Illinois has more than 700 members and over 100 volunteers, affiliated with Unitarian Universalist churches throughout the state. We host talking circles inside prisons including Logan Correctional Center, to support the spiritual growth and transformation of the women there, almost all of whom have survived domestic abuse as children and as adult women. Our ministry is grounded in the First Principle of the Unitarian Universalist Association: respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We also base our programs in our Fourth Principle, a free and responsible search for truth and meaning, and our circle process engages participants in that search.

As you probably know, an average of three women die at the hands of their abusive partners in the U.S. every day. It is very common that intimate personal violence increases when the woman in the relationship gets pregnant, and jealousy of the mother's relationship with her baby is a pattern in abusive relationships. Tewkunzi tried to leave the relationship, and she was not able to accomplish her escape. When the woman tries to leave an abuser, this is often the point when she is faced with the deadliest violence. It is outrageous that evidence of bruising at Tewkunzi Green's neck and throat was disregarded. It is grossly unjust that the her only legal option, the only way she would not be charged with a crime, was if she allowed him to kill her, and leave her son unprotected and motherless.

During an event, we had the honor of hearing from Tewkunzi's mother, who misses her terribly and wants her to come home. She is caring for Tewkunzi's son, who is now 13 years old. The mother-child separation is an additional punishment not only for Tewkunzi, but for her son. Mother-child separation caused by incarceration is classified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as an Adverse Childhood Event, which puts youth at risk for lifelong negative mental health and physical health consequences. Tewkunzi's son deeply misses her and needs her to be at home with him. He is at a critical stage as he enters his teen years. The family deserves to be together to heal now, before he gets any older.

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Justice requires that Tewkunzi Green be granted clemency, that her sentence be commuted, and that she be released from prison. She has demonstrated deep sorrow and remorse for the death of her boyfriend. She was acting in the moment to protect her baby and herself from her boyfriend's escalating violence and from his threat to kill her. No one should be forced to choose to die rather than act in self-defense. She poses no threat to the community, and she should not be further punished by more time in prison. Only you have the power to reduce the injustice she and her family have suffered by granting clemency and immediate release.

Please use your power of clemency and commute Tewkunzi Green's sentence so that she can come home to her family and end this long cycle of punishment. Thank you for considering this request.

Very truly yours,

*Reverend Allison Farnum*

Rev. Allison Farnum  
Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois  
1250 S Michigan, Unit 2606  
Chicago, IL 60605-2890