

Victim Statement—Jennifer Pickett 5/29/19

I do not believe that you deserve a single word from me, however, I will not allow you to stand in this courtroom without hearing this message. It is impossible to put into words how our lives have changed since you murdered Jake. But this I can say confidently...I wholeheartedly agree with the plea agreement of life in prison without parole for many reasons. First of all, I have a core belief that no human being has the right to take another human being's life. This belief alone separates me from you. Secondly, I will not allow this single, selfish action to define Jake's life, my life, or the lives of our children. That shot you knowingly turned and fired that stole Jake from us is only one horrific, traumatic part of our story, but it will not be the whole story. When I think of our children's future and the future that you stole from them, I will not allow you to take up any more of their lives with a death sentence that will drag on for 20-30 years with frequent hearings that will constantly reopen the wound you created. My boys deserve better. I deserve better. And you do not deserve one more minute of our time or energy.

You have stolen a future that was promised to us. You have stolen a father from two little boys. We promised to be a family to them and in one selfish act, you robbed them of a lifetime of happiness with their daddy. You have stolen their innocence. They now believe this world is full of evil murderers like you. Daily routines such as car rides to sporting events and bedtimes include conversations I should never have to have with children who recall graphic details of their father's death...details that include images of the bandage around Jake's head, the bruising of his eyes, and the stillness of his body in the hospital bed as he laid there on life support. We talk through nightmares about bad guys shooting at the house and at them. We talk through the fear they have that our dear friends who work in law enforcement will be shot and killed like their daddy. I now answer questions like "How many times was Daddy shot?" and "Mommy, will you keep me safe so no one shoots me?" I am left trying to understand when my

little boy says he doesn't like Jesus and God because Jesus and God get to be with the Daddy he desperately wants to spend time with. You see, not only was my best friend, my husband, and the father of my children killed that day but for those 2 boys, their sense of safety was shattered. You have robbed them of the freedom to be children who believe the world is safe.

The last year of our lives has been consumed with a grief that sometimes feels unbearable. I attend counseling to try to process something I cannot really even begin to understand. And now I am both mom and dad and walk this parenting path alone. I am the one who is left to guide my boys on a journey none of us should even be on.

Your cowardly, impulsive action took years away from a man who deserved so many more. You took away family vacations. You took away playing catch in the backyard. You took away driving lessons and father/son trips and the feeling they would have had on graduation day looking out at a man who believed from the beginning they would succeed. You took away the opportunity for Jake to teach them how to ride their bikes. You took away the opportunity for Jake to teach his sons how to treat others, how to be a gentleman and how to be a good husband. Your action created a domino effect that has forever changed the trajectory of the lives of two little boys who now seem to be experiencing an alternate timeline.

But here is what you can never take from them. You cannot take their ability to rise up...and they will. They will succeed. They will move through the tragedy and heartache you created and will do so with courage and grace. They will carry these "should've beens" and move forward alongside a fierce mama who regretfully has accepted a challenge no mother wants to accept. I will guarantee my children have every opportunity to move forward, always remembering the man Jake was and would have been. Jacob selflessly loved others, served

others and cared for others. We will live the way Jake taught us because you cannot steal his legacy.