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4	STATE OF CALIFORNIA, BOARD OF PAROLE HEARINGS &		
5	CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS/REHABILITATION		
6	LESLIE VAN HOUTEN,)		
7	Petitioner, {		
8	v. }	MOTION TO RECALL	
9 10	THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA BOARD OF PAROLE HEARINGS,	SENTENCE PURSUANT TO PENAL CODE SECTION 1170(d)(1)	
11	Respondent.		
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13	TO: The Board of Parole Hearings ("BPH") P.O. Box 4036, Sacramento,		
14	California 95812-4036 and California Department of Corrections and		
15	Rehabilitation ("CDCR") Secretary, P.O. Box 942883, Sacramento, CA 94283:		
16	<u>INTRODUCTION</u>		
17	In June of 2018, Governor Brown signed Assembly Bill 1812, which		
18	amended Penal Code section 1170, subdivision (d)(1) to permit the BPH and/or		
19	the CDCR to, "at any time upon the recommendation of the secretary or the		
20	Board of Parole Hearings in the case of state prison inmates, or the county		
21	correctional administrator in the case of county iail inmates recall the sentence		
22	and commitment previously ordered and resentence the defendant in the same		
23	manner as if he or she had not previously been sentenced, provided the new		
24	sentence, if any, is no greater than the initial sentence."		
25	This motion respectfully requests		
26	recommend Leslie Van Houten's senter	ice be recalled by the superior court.	
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	II		

Page 1

Motion To Recall Sentence Pursuant to PC 1170(d)(1)

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MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES

THE BPH AND CDCR SHOULD RECOMMEND THE RECALL OF LESLIE VAN HOUTEN'S SENTENCE PURSUANT TO **SECTION 1170(d)(1).**

Penal Code section 1170, subdivision (d)(1) was recently amended and became effective on June 27, 2018, and now reads:

"When a defendant subject to this section or subdivision (b) of Section 1168 has been sentenced to be imprisoned in the state prison or a county jail pursuant to subdivision (h) and has been committed to the custody of the secretary or the county correctional administrator, the court may, within 120 days of the date of commitment on its own motion, or at any time upon the recommendation of the secretary or the Board of Parole Hearings in the case of state prison inmates, or the county correctional administrator in the case of county jail inmates, recall the sentence and commitment previously ordered and resentence the defendant in the same manner as if he or she had not previously been sentenced, provided the new sentence, if any, is no greater than the initial sentence. The court resentencing under this subdivision shall apply the sentencing rules of the Judicial Council so as to eliminate disparity of sentences and to promote uniformity of sentencing. The court resentencing under this paragraph may reduce a defendant's term of imprisonment and modify the judgment, including a judgment entered after a plea agreement, if it is in the interest of justice. The court may consider postconviction factors, including, but not limited to, the inmate's disciplinary record and record of rehabilitation while incarcerated, evidence that reflects whether age, time served, and diminished physical

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condition, if any, have reduced the inmate's risk for future violence, and evidence that reflects that circumstances have changed since the inmate's original sentencing so that the inmate's continued incarceration is no longer in the interest of justice. Credit shall be given for time served.

A. THE BPH AND CDCR SHOULD RECALL MS. VAN HOUTEN'S SENTENCE IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE DISPARITY OF HOW HER SENTENCE HAS BEEN APPLIED, PROMOTE UNIFORMITY OF SENTENCING, BECAUSE TO DO SO IS IN THE INTEREST OF JUSTICE.

In 1978, after three trials, Ms. Van Houten was finally convicted and sentenced to seven years to life for conspiracy and first degree murder pursuant to the felony murder rule. After spending approximately 49 years in prison as an exemplary inmate, the commitment offense was the reason why the Governor reversed her second grant of parole. Ms. Van Houten, a youthful offender who committed her crimes at the age of 19, accepted complete responsibility for her actions during the commitment offense. When she entered the house the plan was to kill the victims and she "wanted to participate in that." (R.T., p. 139.) Ms. Van Houten stated: "I take responsibility for the entire crime." (R.T., p. 172.) At the parole hearing, the commissioners found that Ms. Van Houten's testimony regarding her intent at the time of the crime, was to go into the LaBianca house "with full intent to kill those people. That was the plan. Um, and you accepted responsibility for that." (C.T. p. 287.) She not only accepted responsibility for her own actions, she accepted responsibility for letting Charles Manson "'do what he did to all of us. I allowed it.' " "I accept responsibility that I allowed [Manson] to conduct my life that way.' "(G.R., p.

[&]quot;R.T." refers to the Reporter's Transcript of Ms. Van Houten's September 6, 2017, parole suitability hearing held at the California Institute for Women. "G.R." refers to the second governor reversal of a grant of parole dated January 19, 2018.

3; R.T., pp. 172, 211-212.) The hearing Panel found that Ms. Van Houten expressed her sincere, heartfelt, and genuine remorse for the deaths of her victims. (R.T. p. 297.) Ms. Van Houten testified that: "the older I get, the harder it is to live with all of this," knowing what she did to her victims. (R.T., p. 105.) "I feel absolutely horrible about [the crime], and I have spent most of my life trying to find ways to live with it." (R.T., p. 157.)

On September 6, 2017, Ms. Van Houten was found suitable for parole for the second time. On January 19, 2018, Governor Edmund G. Brown again reversed the grant of parole, finding that Ms. Van Houten was a youthful offender, and a victim of intimate partner battering by Manson. (G.R., p. 2.)

The Governor's reversal claimed that Ms. Van Houten "shifted blame for her own actions onto Manson to some extent" and in doing so, failed to take full responsibility for her crime and minimized her role. (G.R. p. 3.)

However, it has never been disputed that Ms. Van Houten was subjected to the influence and instructions of Charles Manson. (*Manson*, at p. 205.) "Manson's position of authority was firmly acknowledged. It was understood that membership in the Family required giving up everything to Manson and never disobeying him." (*Id.* at p. 128.) Manson controlled where Family members slept, what clothing to wear, and when they would eat. (*Id.* at p. 127.) "The Family's willingness to follow Manson's directions is salient to the People's theory of the case. The establishment and retention of his position as the unquestioned leader was one of design." (*Id.* at p. 128.) Manson would administer double doses of LSD by placing the drug directly on the cult members' tongues making sure he controlled the dose. (R.T., p. 43.) The Office of the District Attorney of Los Angeles completely agreed with the power and control Manson had over the others in a brief filed with the California Supreme Court in December of 2015, in case number S230851. At Ms. Van Houten's 2017 *Franklin* hearing, it became clear that some cult members were not permitted to leave

Motion To Recall Sentence Pursuant to PC 1170(d)(1)

Manson and were threatened with torture if they did try to leave. Ms. Van Houten was not free to leave. Later in the desert, "it was very clear [the cult members] couldn't leave" Manson. (R.T., pp. 222-223.)

It would be *impossible* for Ms. Van Houten to honestly answer commissioners' questions at parole suitability hearings without casting some blame on Manson if she accurately described the environment surrounding the circumstances of her commitment offense.

The Governor cited to no evidence of a nexus between the commitment offense and a current unreasonable risk to public safety other than Ms. Van Houten recognized the power of cults, and in particular people like Manson who persuaded others to act as he so ordered. That understanding is not a risk. In fact, it enables Ms. Van Houten to remain on alert as to never being deceived in a similar manner again. This awareness is just another demonstration of the rehabilitation Ms. Van Houten continues to demonstrate over the decades. Instead, the Governor viewed understanding Manson's manipulation as blaming Manson, her abuser (while the Governor inconsistently found Ms. Van Houten suffered an intimate partner battering "at the hands of Manson"), for her criminal actions. (G.R., p. 3.)

The Governor also recognized that a superior court previously found that "it is unlikely [Van Houten] could ever find another Manson-like figure if released" (G.R., p. 4.) In the Governor's second reversal of the grant of parole, by Ms. Van Houten recognizing Manson's control, the Governor found "she still shifted blame for her own actions onto Manson to some extent," and therefore failed to take responsibility for her crime. (G.R., p. 3.) This is a Catch-22, if Ms. Van Houten fails to recognize the true facts how Manson

The panel found that Ms. Van Houten took responsibility for her crime and did not minimize that "in any way." (R.T. p. 298.)

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controlled the cult, she has no insight and remains a risk of danger because someone else might control her upon release. If she does testify to that control, she shifts some blame to Manson and does not take full responsibility, and is denied parole for that reason. The Governor cannot have it both ways.

The Governor also found that despite "strong evidence of rehabilitation and no other evidence of current dangerousness" the "aggravated nature of the crime can provide a valid basis for denying parole." (G.R., p. 2.)

While cases have mentioned in dicta that the commitment offense could be so aggravated that the crime alone would be a sufficient reason to deny parole, no published case since In re Lawrence (2008) 44 Cal.4th 1181 (Lawrence), has held that the commitment offense alone was enough to deny parole. In Lawrence, the California Supreme Court found that found that immutable circumstances such as the gravity of the commitment offense that is remote, and mitigated by circumstances indicating the conduct is unlikely to recur, do not provide "some evidence" inevitably supporting the ultimate decision that the inmate remains a "threat to public safety." (Lawrence, at p. 1191.) Under the Lawrence standard, an unreasonable risk to public safety requires a *current* risk to public safety. (Lawrence, at p. 1212.) "[T]he aggravated nature of the crime does not in and of itself provide some evidence of current dangerousness to the public unless the record also establishes that something in the prisoner's pre- or post-incarceration history, or his or her current demeanor and mental state, indicates that the implications regarding the prisoner's dangerousness that derive from his or her commission of the commitment offense remain probative to the statutory determination of a continuing threat to public safety." (Lawrence, at p. 1214, italics in original.)

When Ms. Van Houten was sentenced after being found guilty in her third trial, she had no convictions prior to the commitment offenses which occurred on August 10, 1969. Ms. Van Houten's 1971 conviction was reversed on

appeal in 1976 due to the absence of her trial counsel. (*People v. Manson* (1976) 61 Cal.App.3d 102, 217 (*Manson*).) A second trial resulted in a 30-day deadlocked jury, and a third trial convicted Ms. Van Houten of one count of conspiracy and two counts of first degree murder. The "jury in this third trial was not required to decide that she premeditated and deliberated the murder because the trial court also gave the felony-murder instructions. *Concurrent life sentences with the possibility of parole* were imposed." (*People v. Van Houten* (1980) 113 Cal.App.3d 280, 347, emphasis added (*Van Houten*).) At trial Ms. Van Houten "admitted her full participation in the LaBianca homicides. It was conceded that she did not participate in the Tate killings." Her defense was diminished capacity due to mental illness induced by Charles Manson and prolonged use of hallucinogenic drugs that Manson supplied. The sentence imposed was 7 years-to-life with the possibility of parole, with a minimum eligible parole date of August 17, 1978.

It is important to note that Ms. Van Houten's conviction was based on the felony murder rule where the homicides Ms. Van Houten assisted in committing occurred during the commission of a robbery. The prosecutor's previous two attempts to convict Ms. Van Houten of premeditated murder at trial had failed. The sentencing court gave "serious attention" to sentencing Ms. Van Houten to probation, after acknowledging that nobody ever convicted of first degree murder in California had ever been granted probation. (Exhibit F, p. 131.) Ms. Van Houten was sentenced to three, seven-years-to-life terms for the three counts, and the court ordered "[a]ll three sentences to be served concurrently." (Exhibit F, pp. 131-132.) Ms. Van Houten was given credit for having already served eight years and 120 days, making her eligible for parole at the time of sentencing, 40 years ago. No party appealed that sentence.

Additionally, prior to her third trial, Ms. Van Houten was released on bail following a hearing at which the trial judge determined that she no longer posed

an undue risk to public safety, or a risk to abscond. Ms. Van Houten conducted herself in an exemplary manner while free in the community for $6\frac{1}{2}$ months, until her conviction on July 5, 1978, at which time she was recommitted to prison.

Ms. "Van Houten returned to prison with a good attitude, which she has maintained since, as demonstrated by consistently good reports and evaluations concerning her participation and leadership in self-help, service, education, counseling, religious programs, and her work assignments." (*Van Houten* at p. 347.)

It has been conceded by all parties, including the Governor, that Ms. Van Houten has been an exemplary inmate, has not received any serious disciplinary reports throughout her almost half-century of incarceration. She earned a master's degree, received exceptional work ratings, and participated in a vast variety of rehabilitation programs. (G.R., p. 3.) Ms. Van Houten's commitment to her own rehabilitation included helping others. The record indicated there were over 100 letters from people Ms. Van Houten knew and the "recurrent theme" was the change they witnessed in Ms. Van Houten's behavior over the years, "and how [she'd been] helping everybody." Letters also came from the prison staff. That record fit with Ms. Van Houten's testimony at the parole hearing. (R.T., pp. 189-190.) 117 current inmates, who were an important part of Ms. Van Houten's life, signed a letter that described how Ms. Van Houten had been an important part of their ongoing rehabilitation. (R.T., pp. 220-221.)

The BPH psychologist's report found Ms. Van Houten was a low risk for violence if paroled. The commissioners also looked at multiple reports dating back 11 years. (R.T., p. 196.) The only negative factors were historical events that Ms. Van Houten could never change. (R.T., pp. 197-198.) The BPH clinician indicated Ms. Van Houten exhibited prosocial behaviors throughout her imprisonment and the risk assessment tools indicated Ms. Van Houten was

"well below the cutoff threshold used to identify dissocial or pathologic personalities." (R.T., p. 198; G.R., p. 3.) The clinician recognized Ms. Van Houten was "living a life of amending" by making efforts to make living amends for her crime. (R.T., p. 201.) Ms. Van Houten's remorse was sincere, her experience of living in a dysfunctional family, the abandonment by her father, the trauma of the abortion led to addiction and dependence on others and Ms. Van Houten "evidenced an understanding" of what led to the cult and the crime. (R.T., pp. 202-203.) The clinician looked at Ms. Van Houten's youthful offender status, her subsequent maturity and her elderly age mitigated any risk. (R.T., pp. 203-204.) The conclusion was that Ms. Van Houten was a low risk for future violence, and the presiding commissioner stated: "[a]gain, this is not news." (R.T., p. 205.) Ms. Van Houten had been taking complete responsibility for the crime without minimizing any of it for more than 20 years ago. (R.T., pp. 207-209.)

A factor regarding the youthful offender status was the failure to appreciate consequences. The Governor's 2016 reversal found that when growing up, Ms. Van Houten lacked real consequences. (R.T., p. 217.) While at the ranch, Ms. Van Houten was arrested and released four times without being charged with a crime. Law enforcement found stolen cars, multiple weapons that included a machine gun, and no charges were ever filed against Ms. Van Houten or any of the cult members, including Manson who was on parole. None of the Manson cult members were being charged with any crimes while many of them were being arrested on a routine basis for their ongoing illegal activities. (R.T., pp. 217-218.) There simply were no consequences at the ranch unless one displeased Manson. (R.T., pp. 217-220.)

SEPTEMBER 6, 2017, 2017 PAROLE HEARING DECISION

The hearing lasted more than six hours and the commissioners unanimously found Ms. Van Houten was again suitable for parole. (R.T. p.

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276.) The commissioners considered the "huge Central File," past and current psychological risk assessments, prior Board reports, youthful offender criteria and subsequent growth and maturity, statements submitted to the BPH from the "plethora" of people who knew Ms. Van Houten, Ms. Van Houten's testimony, the public's positive and negative comments, a letter from the Los Angeles Police Department opposing parole, Ms. Van Houten's confidential file that contained no negative information, the April 14, 2016 Parole Hearing Transcripts, the probation officer's report, progress reports, 2016 Governor's reversal, the intimate partner battering report by the BPH investigators, the Steinberg psychological report, the Hoyt interview transcripts, and appellate court opinion. (R.T. pp. 277-280, 282-284.) The commissioner wanted to address the reasons given for the first Governor reversal to "enlighten the Governor" regarding his "very difficult decision [he has] to make." (R.T. p. 283.) The commissioner appropriately pointed out that the Governor's difficulty in trying to rationalize the crime that can never be understood because "it's truly not understandable." (R.T. pp. 283-284.)

The presiding commissioner found Ms. Van Houten was "very open" about her first three years of incarceration that helped document the changes in Ms. Van Houten's growth and maturity over the decades. (R.T., pp. 280, 294.) At the parole hearing, Ms. Van Houten testified that at the time of the crime, she went into the LaBianca house "with full intent to kill those people. That was the plan. Um, and you accepted responsibility for that." (R.T. p. 287.)

The hearing Panel was educated in the science behind the adolescent brain development and its relationship to the diminished capacity of youthful offenders, and according to the law, gave great weight to that. The Panel specifically recognized youthful offenders were vulnerable and susceptible to outside pressures, and peer pressures, "there was quite a talk about peer pressures" even before Ms. Van Houten was involved with the Manson cult.

Motion To Recall Sentence Pursuant to PC 1170(d)(1)

(R.T. p. 290.) Being a "very youthful offender" was not an excuse but it gave an understanding how Ms. Van Houten could be more susceptible and become involved with the cult, and the law required great weight be given to that. (R.T. pp. 291-294.) While Manson's teachings were not real, Ms. Van Houten "believed it to be." (R.T. p. 292.) Ms. Van Houten's "great growth and maturity" demonstrated that her youthful characteristics were transitory. (R.T. pp. 295-296.)

The panel found that Ms. Van Houten took responsibility for her crime and did not minimize that "in any way." (R.T. p. 298.) The commissioners considered Ms. Van Houten's age and recognized that after the age of 50, one is less likely to recidivate. (R.T. p. 298.)

B. BECAUSE THE TERM "GREAT WEIGHT" HAS RECENTLY BEEN DEFINED WHEN USED AT A PAROLE SUITABILITY HEARING, THE INTERESTS OF JUSTICE REQUIRE A SUPERIOR COURT TO APPLY THAT NEW DEFINITION TO MS. VAN HOUTEN'S SENTENCE CONSIDERATIONS.

On September 13, 2018, a new case, *In re Palmer* (2018) 5 Cal.App.5th __[2018 WL 4356791] (*Palmer*), was published that addressed the definition and standard for review of the requirement that the Board of Parole Hearings (BPH or Board) give "great weight" to certain factors bearing on the suitability for release of a life inmate. While *Palmer* dealt with giving "great weight" to the youth factors at a youthful offender parole consideration hearing, the opinion also recognized two other areas where the BPH must give "great weight" to any information or evidence. Those other areas are the intimate partner battering (Penal Code section 4801, subdivision (b)(1)) and the Elderly Parole Program (section 3055, subdivision (c)) (*Palmer* at p. 18, fn. 6.) Ms. Van Houten qualifies under all three categories. She was 19 years old, a youthful offender at the time of the crime; she is currently 69 years old and

served 49 years in prison³; and she was battered (or intimidated) by her intimate partner, Charles Manson. The Governor claimed he gave "great weight" to the intimate partner battering and youthful offender categories, but he failed to give "great weight" to the elderly parole category. (Exhibit A)

Palmer found that in giving "great weight" to a parole suitability factor requires there must be "substantial evidence, not merely some evidence, of countervailing considerations indicating the offender is unsuitable for release." (Palmer at p. 28, italics in original, emphasis added.) Because this very issue goes to the heart of the pending petition for writ of habeas corpus, Petitioner respectfully requests this Court use the Palmer standard in deciding her pending writ petition that was filed on June 29, 2018.

Because "great weight" had never been defined in a parole context until *Palmer*, it was impossible for the Governor to use the correct evidentiary standard when he reversed Ms. Van Houten's latest grant of parole. Merely stating youthful factors were given "great weight" fails to address the "meaning of the statutory phrase 'great weight,' and treat the youth offender factors as no more significant than the regulatory and other factors it conventionally relies upon to determine whether a life prisoner is suitable for release." (*Palmer*, p. 18.)

While the Board and Governor are the sole decisionmakers that consider and weigh relevant factors, giving "great weight" to the "youth factors comes from the Legislature. The Legislature 'is thus accorded the broadest discretion possible in enacting penal statutes and in specifying punishment for crime." (*Palmer*, p. 18, quoting *In re Lynch* (1972) 8 Cal.3d 410, 414.)

Palmer did not interpret the youth offender statutes to mean that any

Penal Code section 3055, subdivision (a) requires the Elderly Parole Program apply to inmates at least 60 years old who have served a minimum of 25 years of continuous incarceration.

juvenile offender is suitable for parole simply based on his age when he committed the life crime, it only means that life prisoners who committed their controlling offense as a youthful offender are less culpable than adult offenders, and "absent 'substantial evidence of countervailing considerations,' [citation] - - should therefore be punished less harshly than otherwise comparable adult offenders." (*Palmer*, p. 22.)

Because the youthful offender changes in the law apply to sentences given to youthful offenders, the superior court should be given an opportunity to apply these legal changes to Ms. Van Houten's sentence.

CONCLUSION

As an elected official, Ms. Van Houten recognizes and appreciates the pressures placed on any governor. While Governor Brown will soon leave office, his replacement will still have the same pressures any elected official has. Therefore, recalling Ms. Van houten's sentence to let a superior court judge, who dies not have the same political pressures, who can consider the changes in the law and mitigating factors without as great a risk of a political backlash, the interests of justice require recall of sentence in this case.

Ms. Van Houten's conviction was based on the felony murder rule. The prosecutor's previous two attempts to convict Ms. Van Houten of premeditated murder at trial had failed. The sentencing court gave "serious attention" to sentencing Ms. Van Houten to probation, after acknowledging that nobody ever convicted of first degree murder in California had ever been granted probation. (Sentencing transcripts, p. 131.) Ms. Van Houten was sentenced to three, seven-years-to-life terms for the three counts, and the court ordered "[a]ll three sentences to be served concurrently." (Sentencing transcripts, pp. 131-132.) Ms. Van Houten was given credit for having already served eight years and 120 days, making her *eligible for parole at the time of sentencing*, 40 years ago.

This may be the best case for a recall of sentence when the sentencing

court apparently anticipated her imminent parole 40 years ago, coupled with the changes in the law regarding youthful offenders, elderly parole, and being a victim of intimate partner battering, all of which were not the law when Ms. Van Houten was sentenced. The BPH and Governor have had ample opportunity to do he right thing but have shown over and over again that the sentencing court needs to modify this sentence if justice is to be served.

For all of these reasons, it is respectfully requested Ms. Van Houten be recommended for a recall of her sentence and the appropriate factors be considered by the court.

Dated: September 26, 2018 Respectfully submitted,

RICH PFEIFFER Attorney for Leslie Van Houten

1 2 3 4	Rich Pfeiffer Attorney at Law State Bar No. 189416 PO Box 721 Silverado, CA 92676 highenergylaw@yahoo.com		
56	(714) 710-9149 Attorney for Leslie Van Houten		
7	DECLARATION OF SERVICE		
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	party to the cause; I am employed in, or am a resident of, the County of Orange California; where the mailing occurs; and my business address is 14931 Anderson Way, PO Box 721, Silverado, CA 92676, and my email address is highenergylaw@yahoo.com. I caused to be served the MOTION TO RECALL SENTENCE PURSUANT TO 1170(d) by placing copies thereof is a separate envelope addressed to each addressee in the attached service list. I then sealed each envelope and with the postage thereon fully prepaid, I placed each for deposit in the United States mail, at Silverado, California, on September 26, 2018. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.		
16 17	RICH PFEIFFER SERVICE LIST:		
18 19 20	California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation ("CDCR") Secretary P.O. Box 942883		
21 22 23	The Board of Parole Hearings P.O. Box 4036 Sacramento, California 95812-4036		
24 25 26	Los Angeles County District Attorney Attn: Parole Hearing Division 210 W. Temple St. Los Angeles, CA 90012		
27	Leslie Van Houten, W-13378, at current address		

Page 15

Motion To Recall Sentence Pursuant to PC 1170(d)(1)

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