

# **Witness** **Statements**

## STATEMENT OF MICAH OPESSA

### Defendant – Petitioner

1           My name is Micah Opessa. I am a 17-year-old with a lot of dreams and ambitions. Those  
2   dreams and ambitions were almost taken from me when I was wrongly accused and convicted of  
3   murdering a person who I loved and cared for dearly, Haumea Robins. That's not to say that  
4   Haumea and I didn't have problems in the past or that I have always been a perfect person. Like  
5   everyone else I struggle, and I have made mistakes, many of them in fact, but murder is absolutely  
6   not one of them. I love Haumea and I would never do anything to hurt them, not in a million years.  
7   I know we are here to talk about Haumea's murder, but let me start by telling you about myself  
8   and about my relationship with Haumea. Then, of course the night that brought me here today—  
9   the night that I replay in my head all the time, the night I lost my best friend.

10           My past might tell you that I can be a troublemaker and I guess that's true, but I am also a  
11   person with a great heart and love for others. I grew up in Seattle, Washington but then moved to  
12   Harmony in third grade. My dream has always been to become a physical therapist. Growing up,  
13   my family and I were involved in a car accident. I always accompanied my mom to her physical  
14   therapies and saw how much her therapist helped her. I want to help people recover from injuries  
15   or any other conditions. I also love music and was in a band for a couple years. Music always gave  
16   me an escape and was my second passion. Something about pouring my heart and soul into a new  
17   song always makes me feel better. I guess it's like an outlet for all the things I can't say. There is  
18   much more to me than my mistakes, things I am not proud of, but regardless I did them and I guess  
19   now would be a good time to talk about them.

20           When I was younger, I hung out with my brother's friends, I followed my brother around  
21   everywhere, even when he didn't invite me. I thought his friends were cool and as my mother  
22   would say I wanted to grow up too fast. Sure enough, that led me to some trouble. When I was 14,

23 my brother and his friends would smoke weed at a park almost every day after school. I didn't  
24 smoke with them, I just hung around and listened to their conversations pretending to know what  
25 they were talking about. I smoked once, maybe the first time I hung out with them, but never did  
26 after that. I never did anything like that at school, but my brother's friends would sometimes smoke  
27 at school.

28         One Wednesday afternoon, I was by the school lockers with my brother's friends when the  
29 school resource officer approached us. I guess someone noticed that my brother and his friends  
30 were smoking the day before and told the officer. When the officer was getting closer, my brother's  
31 friend gave me his weed and told me to hide it. I froze and didn't know what to do or say. When  
32 the officer asked me if the weed was mine, I said yes. I didn't want my brother's friends to get in  
33 trouble or to stop talking to my brother because I snitched. So, I took the fall. I don't know why I  
34 did it, it happened so fast. I didn't have that many friends, so I guess I just wanted to fit in. I ended  
35 up getting charged with possession of marijuana. Luckily, I was only required to serve 30 hours  
36 of community service because it was a very small amount of marijuana.

37         The next time I got in trouble was truly my fault. I can't really say it any other way; I made  
38 a mistake. Again, I was trying to fit in with the wrong crowd and got myself into trouble. When I  
39 was 16 a new 18 and over club opened in Harmony. Everyone I knew, well maybe not everyone,  
40 but it felt that way, wanted to go. Most of my friends knew they couldn't get in and left it at that,  
41 I wish I would have done the same. I had some older friends who were planning to go and told me  
42 about this lady that sold fake IDs. It seemed simple enough, provide this lady with a picture of  
43 myself and pay her \$40, and I would have an ID that showed that I was 18. Sure enough, it was  
44 that simple. The ID looked real to me; I didn't think more of it. That weekend I met up with some  
45 of my friends and we headed out to the club. Well to make the story short, I got caught along with  
46 a bunch of other underage kids and we were charged with forgery for purchasing and using a fake  
47 ID.

48           Like I said, I've made my share of mistakes, some to fit in, others because I didn't think  
49 things through, but I am still a good person. I know plenty of good people who have made mistakes.  
50 I know that doesn't justify what I did, but I just want people to know that I am still a good person,  
51 and that I would never hurt anyone. I definitely would never kill anyone, ever, especially not a  
52 friend, not my best friend Haumea. It's hard for me to talk about Haumea, maybe that's why I have  
53 been rambling about myself, but I do want you to know about my relationship with Haumea.

54           I met Haumea when I was in third grade. My family and I had just moved to Harmony, so  
55 I did not know anyone when I first started school. Since the first day Haumea was nice to me. They  
56 showed me around the school and introduced me to a few new friends. Haumea and I had a lot in  
57 common, including our love for music and sports. It wasn't very long until Haumea and I started  
58 hanging out more often after of school. Haumea was my best friend through elementary and middle  
59 school. We planned on going to the same high school and taking the same classes. Luckily, we got  
60 into the same high school and, although we did not have all the same classes, we at least had half  
61 together.

62           On the days that I didn't hang out with my brother and his friends, I hung out at Haumea's  
63 house. I did not feel welcomed by Haumea's parent, Kai Robins, but Haumea always assured me  
64 that their parent would come around. I guess Kai had become a little overprotective since  
65 Haumea's other parent died in a freak accident. Anyway, Kai heard from other parents that I was  
66 a troublemaker and found out that I got in trouble for possession and again for buying a fake ID.  
67 Kai did not want me around Haumea because they thought I would push Haumea to get in trouble,  
68 but that was never a problem. Haumea never got in trouble and always did the right thing. Haumea  
69 was always one of those people who liked school and was really good at it, but they liked to have  
70 fun too. I'm not sure why Kai didn't want me around Haumea, even before I got in trouble. Kai  
71 never liked me and made sure I knew it. Regardless, my relationship with Haumea growing up

72 was great. But, Haumea changed the last years I knew them. I believe it was because of their  
73 relationship with Scout Firat.

74 We met Scout our last year of middle school. Scout moved to our school and didn't really  
75 know anyone. Haumea started talking to Scout and soon enough we all became friends. Haumea  
76 always made it their mission to include and welcome new students, like they once did with me.  
77 Scout and I would go over to Haumea's house at least twice a week. Right away I noticed that Kai  
78 treated Scout differently. Scout was also good at school but had gotten into trouble a couple times,  
79 just like I had. I didn't understand Kai's attitude! I asked Haumea and they assured me that Kai  
80 liked me but I had reservations. Scout signed up for all the same high school classes as Haumea,  
81 so we all had similar classes. At times Haumea and Scout would hang out alone for class projects  
82 or to study, on those days I would hang out with my brother and his friends.

83 I started to notice that Haumea and Scout began to hang out more, like going to the movies  
84 or bowling, without inviting me. At first, I was really upset about it. Haumea and I always hung  
85 out together and were best friends, so I was not sure why they excluded me. A couple months  
86 before, I finally confessed to Haumea that I had feelings for them. I wanted to be more than friends.  
87 Haumea told me that they didn't want to ruin our friendship and would prefer to just stay friends.  
88 Haumea also told me they didn't have feelings for me. While I was upset, I understood, and did  
89 not want to lose Haumea.

90 A few months later though, Haumea told me that they liked Scout and that Scout felt the  
91 same way. I didn't know what to make of it or how our friendship would change. I knew I wanted  
92 Haumea to be happy, but I always thought Scout was not the best for them. Plus, although I agreed  
93 to only be friends, I still liked Haumea. It was kind of a slap in the face when Haumea gave me a  
94 whole speech about not wanting to ruin a friendship only to turn around and date a different friend.  
95 Not too long before Scout told Haumea they liked them, Scout was in another relationship at the

196 time, so I was really not sure how to feel about Scout's intentions. It seemed wrong to me that  
197 Scout would be trying to start a relationship with Haumea at the same time they were seeing  
198 someone else! I expressed my concerns to Haumea and sadly we ended up distancing from each  
199 other. In the past we had fights before, not crazy fights or arguments, but just the normal teenager  
200 stuff. This time was different. Haumea changed, and I was not sure how I fit into their life anymore.

201 Not long after my falling out with Haumea, Scout began to spread rumors about me at  
202 school and even told lies about me to Kai. I felt betrayed by Haumea because they didn't defend  
203 me or tell Scout to stop. Instead Haumea just pushed me further away. This made me extremely  
204 upset as I had practically known Haumea my entire life and they knew those rumors were lies.  
205 Instead of defending me, Haumea continued their relationship with Scout. I honestly don't know  
206 why Scout had issues with me, but it was very clear that Scout did not like me. Haumea and I  
207 didn't talk for a month prior to the day of their murder. This is my biggest regret of life. I let all  
208 the drama and arguments get in the way of our friendship. I should have fought harder for our  
209 friendship.

210 I remember on one occasion I was so upset with Haumea that I sent them messages that  
211 were just mean, and I instantly regretted doing so. I called Haumea a liar and a backstabber and I  
212 was pretty harsh about their relationship with Scout. I really let my emotions get the best of me. I  
213 was hurt. I hope people understand I was hurt, I felt betrayed, but that does not mean I killed or  
214 ever hurt Haumea. I wanted to fix things with them, I loved Haumea, I just wanted my friend back.

215 The day Haumea was shot, August 31, 2019, I reached out to them via text. I told them I  
216 wanted to talk and fix things. I realized our friendship was bigger than any fight. At this point we  
217 hadn't talked for over a month and I just wanted my friend back. I asked Haumea to meet me in  
218 downtown Harmony at our favorite food truck to talk about our friendship and to apologize for the  
219 messages I sent them. Haumea agreed to meet me at 7:00pm. We bought our favorite sliders and

120 sat down to talk. Haumea and I talked for about thirty minutes, and while we both knew we had  
121 more work to do to fix our relationship, it was a good starting point. At some point, I remember  
122 Haumea dropped their glasses, as they always did. I picked them up, and we both laughed as we  
123 joked about the ridiculous number of times Haumea drops their glasses every day. I gave Haumea  
124 a hug and told them I wanted our friendship back. Haumea said they had to leave, and that maybe  
125 in the future we could talk and continue working on our friendship. I walked away happy and  
126 hopeful. At this point it was around 7:30 p.m. If I had known what was going to happen after I left,  
127 I would have never asked Haumea to meet me in the first place.

128 I left and headed to the park where my brother and his friends hung out. I liked going to  
129 the park when I needed to clear my head. There was a pond where you could feed the ducks and I  
130 always found that relaxing. I had some left-over bread I saved from my sliders, so I stayed at the  
131 park for a while listening to music, feeding the ducks, and thinking about my talk with Haumea. I  
132 did not hear from Haumea again that night, but I figured they were just taking some time to think  
133 things through. Eventually I left the park and went home, hopeful that Haumea and I could fix our  
134 friendship. I did not text or call them because I wanted to give them time to think about our  
135 conversation and maybe find it in their heart to forgive me and move on.

136 On September 3, 2019, just a few days after my conversation with Haumea, the police  
137 contacted me and asked me to go to the police station. I was really confused, but thought it maybe  
138 had something to do with my brother and his friends. I never thought, not for a second, that this  
139 conversation would be about Haumea. When I arrived and started answering questions, I realized  
140 that this had nothing to do with my brother or his friends, but instead it was about my relationship  
141 and last conversation with Haumea. I was really confused and offered to call Haumea to clear  
142 things up, that's when the detectives told me Haumea was dead. I could not believe it. I have never  
143 lost anyone close; I still can't explain this horrible feeling. I lost any possibilities of repairing my  
144 relationship with my best friend. I was and still am completely devastated. The detective asked me

145 about my whereabouts. I told them that I had seen Haumea that evening but left downtown a little  
146 after 8pm. and I hadn't seen Haumea since probably 7:30 that night.

147 For the next few days, I was devastated and confused, I did not understand why someone  
148 would do this to Haumea. I had so many thoughts running through my head. I was literally sick  
149 over Haumea's death and couldn't fully grasp what was happening. I was also scared because I  
150 was likely the last person to see Haumea. I have no idea what happened that night after I left  
151 Haumea but after my conversation with the detectives, I couldn't help but think that I was going  
152 to be blamed for killing them. It's a truly awful feeling to struggle with coming to grips with the  
153 death of your best friend while also worrying you might go to jail. I was hopeful that the detective  
154 would believe that I cared for Haumea and would never hurt them. Sadly, that did not happen. A  
155 week later I was arrested.

156 Everything that happened after my arrest was a whirlwind. I had a hearing where the judge  
157 decided to move forward with my case, but they wouldn't let me out on bail. To be honest, I didn't  
158 really know what that meant other than I wasn't allowed to go home. My attorney Freddie Styx  
159 asked the prosecutor about a plea deal to save me the agony of a trial. Prosecutor Okafor offered  
160 me a 30-year sentence if I would plead guilty to second degree murder. I couldn't accept the deal,  
161 no way, I was and am innocent so why would I do that? 30 years? No way. I told Attorney Styx  
162 that I declined the plea deal.

163 About a month passed by and I became very anxious and nervous about this whole  
164 situation. I was there with Haumea on the night they were murdered but I certainly did not shoot  
165 Haumea. Sometime in early October my anxiety only got worse when Attorney Styx advised me  
166 that someone identified me as the shooter. An eyewitness said that they saw me running from the  
167 parking lot with a gun after supposedly shooting Haumea. I could not believe what was happening!  
168 I would NEVER hurt Haumea. Based on this information and because I saw Haumea shortly before



169 this incident, I felt that everything incriminated me. I did not see a way out. A few days later  
170 Attorney Styx told me that the prosecutor offered a new plea deal of voluntary manslaughter and  
171 5 years in prison. I took the deal. I did not know what to do. For someone to say they saw me and  
172 then testify that they recognize me as the shooter, that doesn't look good and I didn't really know  
173 how to get around it. Of course I was there earlier that night, so maybe someone was mistaken but  
174 Attorney Styx said the police report made note that the ID was strong. I was at a loss. I told  
175 Attorney Styx I accepted the deal.

176 On October 15, I entered my guilty plea and began serving time. I did not want to say or  
177 even think that I was guilty of such a crime, but I did not see another way out. Almost a year later,  
178 I received a call from Attorney Styx saying that the eyewitness was not sure they correctly  
179 identified me as the shooter. I was shocked. Why didn't they say this before? The reason I pleaded  
180 guilty was because of the eyewitness' testimony. I talked with my parents and Attorney Styx about  
181 what to do next. Attorney Styx told me he would file for post-conviction relief because the  
182 eyewitness had tried to express their doubts to the prosecutor about their testimony. I do not  
183 understand all the legal stuff, but I trust Attorney Styx, and know that justice will be served. I did  
184 not hurt Haumea, ever, and I certainly did not shoot or kill, or attempt to kill Haumea. As I said, I  
185 loved Haumea.

## STATEMENT OF CHARLIE NGUYEN

### Private Investigator – Defense

1 My name is Charlie Nguyen. I have been a licensed private investigator and sole  
2 proprietor of Nguyen Investigations, Inc. for going on ten years now. Prior to opening my own  
3 private investigation business, I was a police officer with the Buckeye Police Department – BPD  
4 for short – for 15 years. I started as a patrol officer with the BPD. As a patrol officer, it was my  
5 job to respond to citizens' calls for police assistance and to do routine traffic patrol. I knew I  
6 wanted to be a Detective, so I attended several classes and training seminars on criminal  
7 investigations, as well as collecting and analyzing different types of evidence. I completed  
8 specific training on collecting fingerprints and learned about how fingerprint evidence is  
9 analyzed. I completed a similar course on DNA collection and analysis. The criminal  
10 investigation courses taught the fundamentals of interviewing witnesses and suspects, the  
11 importance of keeping an open mind and the importance of following up on tips and other  
12 information as it comes in.

13 I completed enough training that I was able to become a certified evidence technician  
14 with the BPD. When a crime occurred in BPD's jurisdiction and there was evidence to be  
15 collected, the responding officer or the detective would call on one of our certified evidence  
16 technicians to collect that evidence. An evidence technician may dust for fingerprints, swab for  
17 DNA, collect hair or fibers, retrieve surveillance video, take measurements and create sketches  
18 of the crime scene – it really depended on the specifics of any particular call.

19 On October 2, 2019, I was contacted by attorney Freddie Styx. Freddie was representing  
20 a young kid named Micah Opressa in a murder case and wanted to hire me to investigate some  
21 things. It is very common for lawyers to hire investigators to help them out with different aspects  
22 of cases they're working on. In criminal cases, an investigator might go the scene of the crime,

review any physical evidence that has been collected or analyzed, talk to witnesses or try to find new ones. In my nearly ten years as a private investigator, I have been involved in over 100 cases. In this particular case, Freddie wanted me to take a look at the evidence that had been disclosed by the State and talk to the prosecution witnesses that had been identified. Freddie offered to pay me double my normal fee, so I agreed to take on the job and immediately got to work.

I reviewed a copy of the discovery that had been turned over by the State so I could get a big picture view of what the evidence was in the case. According to the police reports, the evidence included: (1) Micah's partial fingerprints on the victim's glasses, (2) a footprint at the scene that was consistent with Micah's shoe size and shoe type, (3) posts on Micah's social media that talked about toughness and betrayal and (4) angry text messages from Micah to Haumea (5) blue nylon fibers from the scene that were consistent with a jacket that Micah had been seen wearing. There was also a witness named Corey Abrams who identified Micah as the individual they saw running away from the scene holding a gun.

On October 4, 2019, I attempted to make contact with Corey Abrams to talk to them about what they saw and how sure they were about the identification. In my training and experience, eyewitness identifications can be problematic, especially when the eyewitness is identifying someone they saw only briefly from some distance and who is a stranger to them, not to mention the fact that ten days had passed between Corey's brief observation and the photo lineup. Corey did not answer the phone when I called, so I left a voicemail asking them to call me back. I said in the message that I was a private investigator but didn't say anything else. I didn't want to scare Corey or somehow taint their recollection of the event by offering any details on the voicemail.

I was really hoping to talk to Corey because I was especially concerned that Micah was identified from a five-pack photo lineup, which is where the police officer places a photo of a suspect and of four other individuals who are supposed to share the similar physical characteristics, such as hair color and style, eye color, age range, weight, skin color, and wearing glasses or not on the same sheet of paper. All five of the photos should have similar backgrounds, lighting and distance from the camera to the person in the photograph. The use of these types of lineups has been shown to be problematic time and again. Subconsciously, it has been shown that witnesses want to satisfy the police by picking an individual from the five-pack. Witnesses also tend to believe the perpetrator of the crime is one of the individuals included in the photo lineup that has been presented to them, so there is pressure to select a person even if the person selected only somewhat resembles the person they saw. Corey never did call me back, which is too bad. Like I said, I really wanted to talk to them.

I next focused my attention on the partial fingerprint found on the victim's glasses. Fingerprint analysis has been used to identify suspects and help solve crimes for more than 100 years; it is still a tool that is heavily utilized to this day. No two people have exactly the same fingerprints. Even identical twins, who have identical DNA, have different fingerprints. Isn't that fascinating? Fingerprints are unique patterns made by friction ridges (which are raised) and furrows (which are recessed) that appear on the pads of our fingers and thumbs. You can also get prints from palms, toes, and feet but those are not used nearly as often. A person's friction ridge patterns do not change over their lifetime.

If you press your finger into an ink pad and then press your inked finger onto a piece of paper, you'll see the friction ridges on that particular finger. Friction ridge patterns are grouped into three different types – loops, whorls and arches. Each type has a unique variation, depending on the shape and orientation of the ridges. A loop print is one that recurves back on itself to form a loop shape. A whorl print is one that forms circular or spiral patterns. Finally, an arch print

creates a waive-like pattern and includes different types of arches. Arches are the rarest type of print, making up only about five percent of all pattern types. According to the laboratory report provided to Freddie Styx, the partial fingerprint recovered from the arm of the victim's glasses was an arch print, which is consistent with Micah's friction ridge pattern. While only about five percent of people worldwide have arch patterns, about seven percent of Buckeye's population has arch prints.

In forensic science, a partial fingerprint lifted from a surface is called a latent fingerprint. A latent fingerprint is invisible to the naked eye and are often fragmentary. Because they are not clearly visible, their detection may require chemical development through powder dusting, or spraying, fuming or soaking with specific chemicals. Forensic scientists and evidence technicians use different methods for porous surfaces, such as paper, and nonporous surfaces, such as glass, metal, or plastic. A nonporous surface requires the technician to utilize the dusting process, where fine powder and a brush are used to make the print visible, followed by the application of transparent tape to lift the latent fingerprint off the surface. Given that this latent print was on the victim's glasses, the powder/tape technique was the most suitable and most likely followed by the technician.

After a crime scene is processed and evidence is collected, the investigating law enforcement agency sends the evidence to the crime laboratory where it is analyzed by the appropriate section in the lab. Firearms go to a certified firearms examiner for analysis, suspected drug substances go to chemists with the crime lab for them analyze, etc. Fingerprints go to fingerprint examiners for comparison.

Fingerprint examiners carry out a visual comparison of fingerprints collected from law enforcement at the scene of a crime, for example, and prints from a known individual. Most fingerprint examiners use a comparison methodology called "ACE-V," which is an acronym that

refers to the sequence of steps taken by a fingerprint examiner. First, an examiner **Analyzes** the fingerprint. The purpose of this initial analysis is to assess the quantity and quality of the fingerprint. In this stage, the expert tries to assess the evidentiary value of the fingerprint – is there sufficient ridge detail for comparison? If the fingerprint passes the first step, the examiner moves onto the second step which is to **Compare** the fingerprint to a known fingerprint. The comparison is a side by side comparison of images. For a match to be found, features found in one image should be found in the other image, in the same relative position, orientation and number of intervening ridges. The examiner requires a minimum number of points in agreement – without discrepancies – between a fingerprint collected at a crime scene and the fingerprint exemplar from a known individual. Some crime laboratories require a 12-point match to a suspect’s prints, though there is no standard requirement as to how many points of identification are needed in the United States. There are as many as 150 points in the average fingerprint, so there is a lot to work with in the examination.

Having compared the images, the examiner **Evaluates** what they have seen and comes to one of three general conclusions about the print: identification (often more simply stated as the prints “matching”), exclusion or inconclusive. The final stage of the examiner’s process is **Verification** by one or more additional examiners. A second examiner will repeat the ACE steps above as a sort of cross-check to make sure the first examiner got it right. Because the comparison process is subjective, the verification process is a quality assurance mechanism that is critically important.

I reviewed the report of the fingerprint examiner and I was shocked to learn that the examiner came to the conclusion that they could identify Micah Opressa from the partial fingerprint that was collected. The examiner only found 7 points of similarity between Micah’s known fingerprints and the fingerprint collected from the victim’s glasses. I understand that a partial print doesn’t give you the full 150 points of comparison but finding only 7 points of

120 similarity is below the standard that I always followed. When I was an evidence technician, our  
121 fingerprint examiner wouldn't accept anything less than 12 points of similarity to confirm an  
122 identification! Even more incredibly, the fingerprint examiner didn't have their conclusion  
123 verified by a second examiner. As I said earlier, that verification step is crucial to ensure that an  
124 examiner got it right because the comparison process is so subjective. I bet a second examiner  
125 would never have allowed the report to go out saying they could identify Micah based on 7  
126 points of similarity.

127         Next, I turned my attention to the shoeprint that was found at the scene. From my training  
128 and experience, I know that shoeprints – also called footwear impressions – can be left on almost  
129 any surface. Shoeprints are divided into three types: visible, plastic and latent. A visible print is a  
130 transfer of material from the shoe to the surface. This type can be seen by the naked eye without  
131 additional aids. A common example of a visible shoeprint is a bloody shoeprint left on a tile  
132 floor. A plastic shoeprint is a three-dimensional impression left on a soft surface. This would  
133 include a shoeprint left in sand, mud or snow. A latent print is one that is not readily invisible to  
134 the naked eye. This type is created through static charges between the sole and the surface. Like  
135 latent fingerprints, examiners use powders, chemicals or alternative light sources to find these  
136 shoeprints. The shoeprint found at the scene in this case was a visible shoeprint; it was left as a  
137 result of someone stepping in motor oil and transferring that oil to the area of the parking lot  
138 where Haumea Robins's body was found.

139         Since it is not possible to cut out the section of the parking lot where the shoeprint was  
140 found, the crime scene technicians followed the traditional steps of preserving this evidence. The  
141 shoeprint was photographed and measured. It is critical that the shoeprint is properly  
142 photographed. Since there is only a slight difference between different shoe sizes, if the  
143 photographs are not taken at a 90° angle to the impression, a true shoe size cannot be produced to  
144 compare to the actual shoe. I cannot tell with certainty whether the crime scene technicians

145 followed this critical step, as that information is missing from the report. The photographs were  
146 high resolution to provide as much detail as possible as to the tread and wear pattern left behind  
147 in the shoeprint, which is appropriate.

148         Once the photographs are taken, similar to fingerprints, the next step is to lift the  
149 shoeprint so that it may be preserved for analysis. For porous surfaces, such as parking lots, the  
150 proper technique to lift the shoeprint is to use a gelatin lifter. A gelatin lifter is a sheet of rubber  
151 with a low-adhesive gelatin layer on one side that can lift prints from nearly any surface. This  
152 was most likely the technique used by the crime scene technician in this case.

153         The laboratory results indicated that the shoeprint left was consistent with Converse  
154 brand sneakers. Given the length of the shoeprint, the laboratory concluded that a size 9 shoe left  
155 the impression in the parking lot. In doing my own investigation, I learned that Micah does wear  
156 a size 9 shoe and owns several pairs of Converse brand shoes. In my opinion, that doesn't mean a  
157 whole lot – Converse shoes are very popular with people in Harmony. I see them all the time!

158         The last piece of physical evidence I looked at were blue nylon fibers found at the scene.  
159 While these fibers are consistent with a blue-nylon bomber jacket that Micah was seen wearing,  
160 they would also be consistent with countless other clothing items sold today. In fact, nylon is one  
161 of the most common fabrics and is found in a broad range of clothing and accessory items.  
162 Frankly, I am not remotely surprised the crime scene technicians found nylon fibers at the crime  
163 scene.

164         The important thing to remember when looking at all of this physical evidence – the  
165 fingerprint, the shoeprint and the nylon fibers – is that while all of it was at the crime scene,  
166 nobody know exactly *when* those things got there. The fingerprint on Haumea's glasses could  
167 have been deposited at any point in the past, depending upon how often and thoroughly Haumea  
168 cleaned their glasses. Who knows when someone wearing size 9 Converse sneakers stepped in



169 oil and walked on that particular spot in the parking lot, leaving their shoeprint behind? It could  
170 have been the day of the murder or the week before. Oil stays on pavement for a long time  
171 because it can't be easily washed away so it is not possible to tell when it happened. Likewise,  
172 when were the blue nylon fibers that were recovered left on or transferred to Haumea's clothing?  
173 Anyone who had physical contact with Haumea while they were wearing that clothing could  
174 have left those fibers behind. Even a simple hug could have been enough to transfer the nylon  
175 fibers to Haumea's clothing. No crime scene technician or expert in the world would ever be able  
176 to conclusively answer those questions.

## STATEMENT OF COREY ABRAMS

### Eyewitness – Defense

1           My name is Corey Abrams. I've lived in Harmony for the past 22 years since my family  
2 moved here when I was a kid. Harmony is a great place to grow up and a great place to live. I'm  
3 proud to be on the cutting edge of Harmony's international food scene with my pride and joy—  
4 my food truck specializing in Israeli street food, Corey's Kebabs. I've been running the truck for  
5 the past five years and I have a loyal following in downtown Harmony. I serve the familiar  
6 standards like falafel and shawarma, and obviously kebabs, but I especially love broadening  
7 Harmony's horizons with less familiar but delicious sandwiches like sabich and boureka.

8           All the food trucks park in the same area downtown, at the corner of First and Green. We've  
9 got The Muffin Man serving breakfast in the mornings. You can imagine what Wrap Battle  
10 specializes in. And the same person (with the same terrible sense of humor) owns two trucks that  
11 park there, Bread Pitt and Egg Sheeran. So, I'm in good company at First and Green, and we look  
12 out for each other even though I guess we're competing for customers.

13           I didn't start out meaning to own a food truck, actually. I majored in political science at  
14 Harmony Community College. I spent a summer studying abroad in Israel and I guess you could  
15 say my life was changed by their street food scene. When my semester ended, I couldn't find  
16 anyone back in Harmony cooking good Israeli food and I didn't want to stop eating it, so I started  
17 trying to recreate the great food I ate. One thing led to another and I bought a truck on Craigslist,  
18 perfected my menu, and here we are. I had always planned to go to law school, but I feel like I got  
19 plenty of legal education just from filling out all the paperwork it takes to open a business.

20           On August 31st of 2019—I remember because that was the Saturday of Labor Day  
21 weekend—I was parked in my normal spot downtown at First and Green. While I was closing  
22 down, around 8:30 p.m., I heard what sounded like gunshots, but I assumed it was just a truck  
23 backfiring. I had been scrubbing down my grill, so I wasn't looking out the window to see what

24 actually caused the sound. But I was startled enough that I looked out the window as soon as I  
25 heard the noise, and I saw someone running away from the parking lot that's right behind my  
26 parking spot. They ran by maybe 20 yards from me and I could see them for about 10 seconds, so  
27 I thought I got a pretty good look. But it was 8:30 at night in late August, so the light wasn't perfect  
28 or anything. They were running parallel to my truck so I mostly got a side profile. But I yelled  
29 "Hey, what's going on?" And they looked my way, so I saw their face, too. They were wearing a  
30 blue jacket with a zipper up the front. I think they call the style a bomber jacket. I did notice they  
31 were holding a gun, so I didn't try to follow them or say anything else.

32         Once it hit me that what I heard was actually gunshots and not a truck, I called 9-1-1 right  
33 away. They told me they were sending someone over, so I said they could find me in my truck  
34 because I still needed to finish scrubbing down my grill. You really have to do that while it's still  
35 warm. Otherwise, that grime just won't come off ever and it really shortens the grill's lifespan. An  
36 officer came up before long and asked me if I'd seen anything. They said their name was Detective  
37 River Foley. I told them what I'd seen and gave them my phone number. They said they'd be in  
38 touch so, I just finished cleaning up and didn't think about it too much more.

39         The next thing I heard about what I'd seen that night was on September 2nd, Labor Day. I  
40 got a call from Detective Foley asking me to come into the station to look at a photo lineup and  
41 see if I could identify the person I had seen running away. Apparently they were a suspect in a  
42 murder case! I had no idea someone had actually gotten hurt that night. I told Detective Foley I  
43 couldn't come to the station because I was at a food truck convention in Chicago all week, but I  
44 would be more than happy to help when I got back.

45         The convention was awesome. I went with a few other food truck owners and we had a  
46 great time. We visited a ton of vendors' booths and I got a great discount on a new under-the-  
47 counter refrigerator I've had my eye on for months. Plus, we saw a ton of great food truck concepts  
48 and I met a few other Israeli street food specialists, and that inspired me to tweak my menu some.

49 It's not fun to lose business when you close up for something like that, but it was an investment in  
50 the future, and I think I came out ahead. But even though I was having a blast and learning a lot, I  
51 couldn't stop thinking about the situation back in Harmony. Who was killed? And why? Would  
52 I be able to help?

53         The convention ended on September 9th. I got back into Harmony on the 10th, and I went  
54 down to the station to see Detective Foley right away. They gave me the photo lineup. It had five  
55 photos of people who looked roughly similar. I took my time looking at them. It was a little difficult  
56 because it had been more than a week since I had seen the person, but I also had a pretty good  
57 memory of the event because it was so unusual to hear gunshots downtown and I talked to  
58 Detective Foley about it right afterwards. I have a pretty good memory for faces, too. That's helpful  
59 for owning a food truck. People love it when you remember them after they've only been there  
60 once or twice. That's how you turn a repeat customer into a regular. So I get lots of practice  
61 remembering faces and details.

62         Anyway, I picked out the photo that I thought was the person I had seen running away. The  
63 photo of the person I selected seemed to be a little brighter than the others and Detective Foley  
64 seemed to watch me closely while I examined it. I took that as a good sign, but I wasn't totally  
65 sure it was the same person, and I said so. But the face definitely looked familiar, and I did my  
66 best and took my time looking at the photo lineup. Detective Foley reassured me that that was all  
67 I could do, and they were sure I had a good memory. They seemed sort of relieved that I had picked  
68 that photo as the person who I saw running away so that made me feel better, like I did a good job.  
69 Detective Foley said they would take my identification into account with the rest of their evidence  
70 as they investigated the murder. They said the person whose photo I had picked out was named  
71 Micah Opessa.

72         Close to a month went by and I didn't think too much more about the murder. I was  
73 rebranding my truck based on some really inspiring truck designs I had seen at the food truck

74 convention and designing that took up most of my time when I wasn't running the truck. On  
75 October 6th, I was kicking back to relax and watch TV when I saw a news story about a recent  
76 murder in Harmony. It turned out it was the same one—the one in the parking lot behind my truck.  
77 They said Micah Opressa—the person I identified—had been arrested for the murder and their trial  
78 was set to start the next day. The news story included a video shot of Micah walking down the  
79 sidewalk, maybe going to the courthouse or something.

80         My heart sank straight into my stomach. Now that I saw a video of Micah, walking around  
81 in broad daylight, I was sure I had picked the wrong photo from the lineup. Micah wasn't the  
82 person I had seen on August 31st. The person I saw running away was taller and had a bigger build  
83 than Micah. In fact, the more I thought about it, the more I was pretty sure Micah's face just looked  
84 familiar because I had seen them ordering at another food truck that evening—not because they  
85 were the person running away from the gunshots. I picked up the phone right away and called  
86 Detective Foley. I told them, "I've seen this kid on the news. That is not who I saw! They look so  
87 different from that photo." Detective Foley thanked me for calling, and that was it. I never heard  
88 from them or anyone from the police department again.

89         After my call to the detective, I decided to let it go for a little bit. I had already contacted  
90 Detective Foley and told them it was not Micah who I saw running away from the crime scene, so  
91 what else could I do? But two days went by and I hadn't heard anything. I knew Micah's trial was  
92 supposed to be coming up and I felt really unsettled about the whole thing, so I googled the number  
93 for the Cardinal County Prosecutor's Office and called them directly instead of going through  
94 Detective Foley. I got through to a law clerk for the office, and I asked her why no one had ever  
95 called me about my change of heart on identifying Micah. She didn't really answer my question,  
96 but she did take my statement and said she would add a note to the case file for the prosecutor to  
97 review. I asked the clerk if the prosecutor would be calling me to follow up and she said she wasn't  
98 sure.

I assumed they would just drop the case after that because I never did hear from the prosecutor. It turns out that is not at all what happened. I saw on the news a little while later that Micah Opressa pleaded guilty and was going to prison. I wasn't sure what to think about that. I hope they didn't think I would testify against them, because I definitely would not have said under oath that Micah was the person I had seen running away from the parking lot with a gun. I tried to follow up with the prosecutor's office but when I called, the clerk who I originally talked to was no longer there. The only information I could get was that the case was closed, and I didn't need to worry about it anymore.

Well, almost a year passed after that. It was a rough year. I'm not exaggerating when I say I lost a lot of sleep over the whole thing. Some nights I'd just lay awake and think about Micah sleeping in some prison and wonder if they were okay. Some days I'd catch myself staring off into space out of my truck window, looking at the place where I had seen someone—someone who wasn't Micah—running away. Eventually I had to stop parking there and find a new place, and not all of my regulars made the move with me. It sounds kind of dramatic when I say it out loud, but that kind of thing sticks with you. Honestly, I think “anguish” would be the right word for it. It really got to me when I realized that if Micah didn't commit the murder, then that's an injustice for *two* people—for Micah, who is in prison for a crime they didn't commit, and for the victim, whose murderer is still out there walking around. And it's all my fault.

I finally decided I couldn't keep living with this guilt, so I sent Micah's lawyer a letter explaining the whole thing. I offered to help in any way I could. I sent that letter on September 10, 2020, just a little bit over a year after the shooting. I guess that's why we ended up here today. I hope Micah finally gets justice. And I hope the murder victim does, too.

One last thing. I heard that apparently an investigator who worked for Micah's lawyer had called me way back in October 2019, before Micah pleaded guilty. I bet I'm not alone in getting lots of spam calls trying to sell me quadruple-glazed windows or the new big thing in gutter

124 cleaning or whatever. All of those have just gotten me out of the habit of answering my phone if  
125 there's a call from a number I don't know. And I guess I figure they'll leave a message or stop by  
126 the truck if they need to get in touch with me. I don't remember getting any messages from an  
127 investigator, so if they called me, I probably just didn't pick up the phone. If they left a message,  
128 I didn't notice. An unfortunate consequence of attending a big convention like I did is that your  
129 name and phone number gets placed on a lot of spam lists. It isn't unusual for me to get messages  
130 asking me to wire money to a family member in "urgent need" or to a Nigerian prince or  
131 something. I wish I would have noticed the call way back then but I'm doing the best I can now to  
132 make the situation right.

## STATEMENT OF JUSTICE OKAFOR

### Prosecutor

1           My name is Justice Okafor and I am an Assistant County Prosecutor for Cardinal County.  
2   I graduated from Buckeye State DeHaan School of Law School in 2010 and began working as a  
3   prosecutor right after I passed the bar. In fact, while I was studying for the bar exam, I worked for  
4   the Cardinal Prosecutor's Office as a law clerk. Those months as a law clerk helped prepare me to  
5   hit the ground running when I was finally assigned cases to handle. Although, law clerk work was  
6   not particularly interesting. I did a lot of filing and legal research, and sometimes helped  
7   prosecutors get witnesses and evidence prepared for trial. Ever since I can remember, I've wanted  
8   to be a prosecutor. I love being in court and trying dozens of cases a year in front of juries. Now  
9   that I'm an Assistant Prosecutor I definitely appreciate having law clerks to help with the trial prep  
10   work.

11           I'm currently in the General Division of the Cardinal Prosecutor's Office. My active  
12   docket is usually anywhere between 60-80 cases. All are adult felonies. I'd say my caseload is  
13   pretty average for the office, and to be honest, it is often stressful to manage. There are a lot of  
14   deadlines to juggle. For example, it can be frustrating to get witnesses to show up in court, despite  
15   having subpoena power. Then there are the witnesses that change their story or have significant  
16   rap sheets of their own. And while balancing all of this, it's crucial to stay on the judges' and  
17   bailiffs' good sides! On the other hand, there's also a lot of "hurry up and wait" in this work, too.  
18   It's definitely not as fast-paced and intense as you see on some of those crime dramas on TV.  
19   Witnesses are uncooperative, defense attorneys might have difficulty with what we call "client  
20   control," or the court's docket gets rearranged to accommodate another case. This leads to a lot of  
21   sitting around in judge's conference rooms and court hallways. During all of this sitting around,  
22   the prosecutors, cops, defense attorneys, probation officers, etc. get to know each other pretty well.  
23   I enjoy that part of the job as well, because it feels a bit like a big extended family. Although it's



true that the courthouse can be as gossipy and cliquey as high school. The only thing missing are the rows of lockers.

I definitely don't want to give the impression that I don't like being a prosecutor, though. I remember when I was a kid, having dinner at my best friend Ricky's house. His father was a Detective and his mother was a court reporter. His father told these incredible stories at the dinner table, about crime rings he'd broken up, and how he pieced cases together using clues and evidence. That guy could talk for days about his work, and you could tell he loved it. That whole scene at Ricky's house could not have been more different from my house growing up. I was stuck with parents who were professors of Philosophy at Buckeye University. *Philosophy*. Do you know how boring it is to be a ten-year old kid at dinner with parents who are inclined to discuss the meaning of life for hours on end? But I feel like my work makes a difference. Society needs law and order, to keep everyone in check.

We're here about the Opressa case, so let me take you through the background. I was assigned the case file in September of 2019. On first glance, it's a fact pattern that makes up probably 90% of adult felony cases. Typically, violence erupts over one of two things: love or money. Usually the victim knows the perp for some time before the violent act. The patterns you notice after doing this job for some time are pretty interesting. Want to know what months have the highest violent crime rates? July and August. Why? It's hot. More people are outside. Tempers flare. After you've seen enough of these case files, not much surprises you anymore. This is part of the reason why I want to be a United States Attorney eventually, to get into some really interesting high-stakes cases!

So, like I was saying, the Opressa file landed on my desk and I did a thorough review of the contents a day or two later. Usually, when I get a new file, I have a little routine I go through. I familiarize myself with the case and see if there are any red flags. A case file usually contains a lot of summaries: the case facts, witness statements, identification made during a line up, evidence,

etc. The summaries are written by the cops who handled the case, and I go through and make sure the information in the summaries lines up with the actual witness statements, for example. I don't want any surprises with details popping up at trial that weren't included in the cops' summaries.

The Opessa file contained a summary of the crime scene evidence, including Micah Opessa's partial prints found on Haumea's glasses, a shoeprint found at the scene, some fibers matching Opessa's jacket, Micah's social media posts, and angry text messages from Micah to the victim. It also contained Detective Foley's narrative about Corey Abrams' identification of Opessa in a photo lineup on September 10, 2019. There were notes in the file from Detective Foley describing Kai Robins' account of the tumultuous relationship between Opessa, Haumea Robins, and a third individual named Scout Firat. It sounded like a love triangle, which is frequently a motive for violence. When you consider the ample physical evidence along with the information pointing to a motive, it was clear that the charges against Opessa were appropriate and that this was a case I wanted to bring to trial.

When the preliminary hearing concluded on September 20, 2019 Opessa's defense attorney, Freddie Styx, stopped me in the hallway and we chatted for a while about other cases. Surprisingly, just as I thought our conversation was ending, Styx asked whether there would be a plea offer on the Opessa case. It's a little unusual to have plea negotiation before discovery, but I figured if Styx's client was interested and a plea would potentially free up space in my schedule for one of the other 70 cases to move forward, then fine by me. I told Styx that the evidence against Opessa was considerable, and I offered Murder 2 and 30 years served.

Many people don't realize this but a lot of criminal cases these days end in a plea deal rather than going to trial. In the Cardinal Prosecutor's Office, the Assistant County Prosecutors have pretty much full discretion about when and what plea deal to offer. It would have to be a pretty complicated high-profile case, such as something involving human trafficking or gang activity, before the County Prosecutor would take a look at a plea deal. I know prosecutors who

74 plead out almost every single one of their cases. Those are usually the ones at the very bottom of  
75 the office's end-of-the-year trial count ranking! I enjoy trials, and it's true that I probably don't  
76 offer plea deals as frequently as others in the office.

77 Styx discussed the plea offer with Opressa and they turned it down on September  
78 23, 2019. My understanding is that Opressa was firmly opposed to a plea deal and adamant about  
79 their innocence. I've worked with Styx a little bit over the years. Styx generally seemed to be a  
80 reasonable defense attorney, though I had only seen them in court a handful of times. When the  
81 plea deal was turned down, I marked my calendar for the October 7, 2019 trial date and filed for  
82 initial discovery. Then I put the Opressa file on the shelf and got to work on one of the other 70  
83 cases I had on my docket. Over the next 11 months I tried 15 cases! Thankfully the office had  
84 some great law clerks because there's no way I could have handled all of the document review,  
85 phone calls from witnesses and cops, and all of the rest of it on my own. Even with the help, it  
86 turned out to not be my strongest year though. Of the 15 trials, 5 ended with defense verdicts and  
87 one with a hung jury. There was a long article in the *Buckeye Herald* about one of the trials, some  
88 nonsense printed about trumped-up charges and criminal justice reform. I was quoted a couple of  
89 times, just my standard statements about the allegations and the pursuit of justice. Every now and  
90 then the press seems to like to stir up the public with accounts of prosecutors allegedly abusing  
91 their power. It gets frustrating to read. As a prosecutor, when I stand up in court, I am representing  
92 my county and the entire state of Buckeye. My job is to enforce the law, and the citizens are  
93 counting on me.

94 By the time the Opressa trial came around, I was playing catch up on lots of cases  
95 that had lingered while I'd been in trial so frequently. I also had around 15 new case files stacked  
96 on my desk, several of them needing immediate attention because they'd stagnated on some semi-  
97 retired cop's desk for a few months and we were up against some deadlines. On the day of trial, I  
98 requested a continuance, which is not something I often do. After spending some time with the

case in preparation for trial and the more I thought about it, I decided to offer Opressa another plea. Given my full case load I wanted to take some time to make sure I got all the details in order before going back to Styx with the offer which is why I requested the continuance.

I chose to offer a second plea because when I was reviewing for trial I was looking at the case with fresh eyes, and it occurred to me that the case wasn't without factors that chipped away at what was, overall, a solid case resting on the physical evidence alone. Probably the biggest factor was Opressa's relatively minor criminal history. A couple of my trials over the past year had been with Styx, and I'd been impressed by their courtroom skills. It seemed likely that Styx would effectively use testimony from their private investigator, Opressa's scant rap sheet, and details about Opressa to raise doubt and sympathy in a jury.

While I was at the courthouse requesting the continuance, I ran into Detective Foley. It was nice to see Foley - great law enforcement officer, Gulf War veteran, has a kid in the police academy right now. Foley had a heart attack at a crime scene last year, tough recovery. Foley seemed a little jumpy and paranoid since then, like the stress is too much. I think Foley's got an eye on retirement soon, deservedly. Anyway, we passed each other in the hallway, and they recalled Opressa was scheduled for trial. Foley made a comment about checking in on Abrams, the eyewitness, because Abrams was having reservations about their ID of the defendant. Later that afternoon I asked one of the law clerks at the office to follow up with Abrams and add any pertinent information to the case file so I could look it over before calling Styx with the new plea offer.

When I reviewed the notes it seemed like Opressa was nervous about testifying because they weren't totally sure Opressa was the person they saw the night of Haumea's. At the end of the day, having an eyewitness change their testimony, though certainly not helpful, is generally not detrimental to a case. Eyewitness testimony is basically the least reliable evidence to put in front of a jury. On top of that, it's not as if an eyewitness is a secret -- Abrams' name was disclosed to Styx in our initial discovery, weeks ago. Styx had plenty of time to follow up on Abrams'

124 testimony, multiple times, if they wanted to. After reading the clerks notes on Abrams' possible  
125 change of heart, I made a judgement call that it didn't affect the case, so I called Styx and offered  
126 the new plea: voluntary manslaughter with 10 years served. Styx called me back the next morning  
127 to let me know Opressa accepted. We went to court, they entered the plea and started serving their  
128 sentence, simple as that.

129         This is the first time I've been involved with a motion for a plea withdrawal in my ten years  
130 in practice. Overall, the allegations against the prosecutor's office are unfounded, and there is a lot  
131 of time and expense going into this hearing that should be spent on things like Buckeye's soaring  
132 crime rate and overloaded criminal court dockets. The plea offer Opressa accepted was absolutely  
133 fair in light of the serious charges supported by physical evidence and a spurned-lover motive  
134 which was strengthened by the defendant's own social media posts and text messages. Those  
135 elements of the case would have more than made up for a lack of photo ID. Styx is trying to make  
136 a mountain out of a molehill with this motion, and after his client got a deal of a lifetime!

## STATEMENT OF KAI ROBINS

### Victim's Parent – Prosecution

1  
2 My name is Kai Robins and Haumea Robins was my child. My Haumea was only sixteen  
3 years old when Micah Opressa killed them. Haumea was my only child and I loved them more  
4 than anything. My partner Carey, Haumea's other parent, passed away a few weeks after  
5 Haumea's fifteenth birthday. Carey worked at the Harmony Zoo and was killed in a tragic tiger-  
6 related accident. Carey's sudden death was hard on all of us, even more so than under "normal"  
7 circumstances because the accident was so public. It was so hard being a single parent, but I still  
8 considered myself lucky. A few weeks before Carey died, we had just updated our life insurance  
9 policy, and the payout from insurance made it so I only had to work part-time. I work retail jobs  
10 mostly. Right now, I have a job with Macy's in their shoe department which is pretty nice. With  
11 my flexible schedule, it meant I could focus most of my energy on my darling Haumea.

12 It was nice to have all the extra time with Haumea. We were best friends. We never  
13 fought and Haumea would tell me everything about their life and I would listen. I was very  
14 involved in Haumea's life. I would volunteer frequently for class field trips and was a member of  
15 the PTA. I made sure Haumea went to school on time, ate healthy, and got good grades. Haumea  
16 was an active and well-rounded kid. They were a member of their school's basketball team and  
17 the captain of their school's debate team. I was a very proud parent. Haumea had a bright future  
18 ahead of them, and I didn't want anything to mess that up.

19 After Carey passed away, Haumea was all I had. I wanted to do everything I could to  
20 protect them. As Haumea was so active, I liked to keep a close eye on them and their  
21 whereabouts while still allowing them to have some freedom. I did this in a few ways. One way  
22 was through this nifty little tracker app I found out about on one of the parenting forums I like,  
23 ParentAmI.com. When I found out about it and realized it already exists on most phones, I just  
24 had to use it. I had recently gotten Haumea a new phone for their sixteenth birthday and it came

with the FindMyFamily app that allows you to sync your phone with your friends and family so you can see where they are. On my parenting forum a lot of people said their college age kids use the app with their friends when they take ride shares so they can make sure everyone gets home safely. What a great idea! When I gave Haumea the new phone we synced it with mine so we could both use the FindMyFamily app. That way whenever I was worried, I could pull up the tracker and see what Haumea was up to, and that they were safe. Looking back now, I feel stupid for ever thinking that worthless little tracker app would keep my child safe.

Another way I would try to keep track of Haumea is by always encouraging them to bring their friends over to our apartment. Haumea's basketball teammates would sometimes come over to shoot hoops in the apartment complex's recreation area. Haumea's two best friends, before all the dating drama happened, were Scout Firat and Micah Opessa. Those two were always over, either studying or watching movies. The three of them, Scout, Haumea, and Micah, have been friends for a while. Haumea and Micah became friends in elementary school. They both became friends with Scout sometime in middle school. They used to be such darling little things. It's hard to imagine that Micah would grow up to be such a monster.

Micah used to be a good kid. Used to be. After they all started high school Micah began to change. They began to dress differently, wearing all black clothes most of the time. Micah used to be very talkative with me when they were at our apartment, but suddenly they stopped. It was hard to just get a few words out of Micah, and when Micah did talk, almost every word out of their mouth would be a lie.

I remember a particularly frustrating incident with Micah. The three of them, Haumea, Micah, and Scout, came to our house one day to hang out and do homework. I knew that in a few days they had a field trip to a local art museum, and they needed permission slips signed from parents to attend. As I was going to be chaperoning, I had volunteered to make the permission

slip, and had already signed Haumea's. I reminded Micah and Scout that they needed to get theirs signed. Scout said that theirs was signed and turned in, typical responsible Scout.

Micah, on the other hand, said they had lost their permission slip and asked me if I had another one. I did have another one and gave it to Micah. I reminded Micah that they needed to keep better track of important things like this. Micah said "Whatever," rudely, and then proceeded to take the slip and sign their parent's name right in front of me! Immediately, I asked Micah what the heck they were doing. Micah rolled their eyes and said their parents always let them sign their own permission slips. I let it go right then, but I didn't believe Micah. A few months ago, when Micah started acting strange, I had asked them for their parent's phone number, you know, for safety purposes. I decided to call that number later that night to verify that what Micah was telling me was true. When I dialed the number though, it wasn't Micah's parents! Micah had given me the number to a local pizza place! I was furious. I confronted Micah about this the next time I saw them. He said his mother worked there. That was also a lie. I happened to know that both of Micah's parents are healthcare workers as I had met them before at a PTA meeting.

This was not the first time Micah had acted out. I remember an incident a few years prior, when Haumea was about 14, where Micah got into trouble with the police. That day, Haumea came in from school in a panic, worrying because Micah had gotten in trouble. Apparently, the school resource officer discovered that Micah had drugs on their person and Haumea saw the whole thing! Micah had been taken in by the police and Haumea was scared that Micah would be expelled, or even worse, be sent to jail. I tried to comfort Haumea. I told Haumea that Micah likely wouldn't go to jail, but I really didn't know. What I did know was that Micah was headed down the wrong path and it might be better for my child not to hang out with them so much.

That wasn't the last time I heard about Micah getting in trouble. Haumea confided in me not long before the two started fighting, that Micah, once again, had a run in with the police. This



74 time it was for forging a fake ID to go to some dance club. Given Micah's recent attitude change  
75 and new, all black attire, it seemed odd that they would want to go to a club, so I had a feeling  
76 the fake ID was for something worse than dancing. Scout more or less confirmed my suspicions  
77 when they told me Micah was the go-to source around Trillium for buying alcohol.

78         Of course, when I heard about these incidents, my first concern was for Haumea. I didn't  
79 want Haumea to mimic any of Micah's behaviors. I was thinking about Micah's behavior one  
80 day and it triggered me to go onto one of my parent forums to ask for advice. The parents  
81 encouraged me to get Haumea away from Micah, which I wholeheartedly agreed. I know high  
82 school is a rough time for kids and they can get caught up in all kinds of things, but it seemed,  
83 out of all of Haumea's friends, Micah was the only one struggling. Despite having more reason  
84 than most to struggle, Haumea was doing great as ever, and Scout seemed to be really  
85 blossoming in high school.

86         Scout had always been a great kid and still is. I don't blame them for any of this  
87 happening. In fact, it's probably mostly my fault. You see, Scout is a very sweet and kind person.  
88 They're smart as a whip too. Scout was on the debate team with Haumea, and when I went to  
89 watch the rounds, it was clear Scout was the brightest one in the room. Also, teens have a  
90 tendency to, you know, get a little awkward looking in high school, but not Scout. I swear that  
91 child has one of the most beautiful smiles and the self-confidence to go with it.

92         Anyway, one day I was scrolling through one of my ParentAmI forums (I like to give  
93 advice as well as get it) and saw a post about a father whose daughter had started dating this  
94 awful boy. He was asking the forum advice on how to break them up. Immediately, I thought of  
95 Haumea. What if they were to get in that situation? What if Haumea were to date someone not  
96 worthy of their affections? As a parent, I had to intervene. So, I started to, sort of, plant the idea  
97 in Haumea's head that they should start dating Scout. I'd always try to remind Haumea of how  
98 great Scout was and would mention how cute the two of them would be together.

99           A few months prior to Haumea's death, Haumea came to me to talk about dating Scout. I  
100 was elated. Haumea told me that they really liked Scout, but they were afraid to lose their  
101 friendship if it didn't work out. Haumea also said that they had gotten the feeling that Micah had  
102 a crush on them, and that dating Scout would only complicate that friendship. The thought that  
103 Micah had a crush on Haumea concerned me, quite frankly. It seemed that Haumea didn't  
104 reciprocate those feelings, which was good, but I did not like the idea of my child and that  
105 disrespectful little troublemaker being together. I told Haumea to follow their heart and if they  
106 were all actually good friends it would work out regardless of any jealousies. Haumea took my  
107 advice, and they and Scout started dating. I was so happy that they finally got together. As an  
108 added benefit, I could tell Micah did not like being the third wheel and I hoped they would  
109 eventually go off to find some other friends because of this.

110           I was wrong. All this did was agitate Micah. A few weeks after Scout and Haumea started  
111 dating, the three were at our apartment. I was sitting at the kitchen table, looking through my  
112 forums, and Micah, Scout, and Haumea were in the living room. I couldn't see them, but I could  
113 hear them as the conversation got louder. Sometime during the evening I heard Haumea raise  
114 their voice a little bit, not yelling, but I could tell they were frustrated, and say "I don't see what  
115 you're so upset about?". Then I heard a thump, like something heavy being thrown on the floor.  
116 Then I heard Micah yell "You're gonna' pay for treating me like this!" I got up to see what the  
117 heck was going on. I saw Micah storm out of the front door, slamming it on their way out. I  
118 walked into the living room and there was a textbook, as well as some papers thrown on the  
119 floor. I figured Micah threw them there before they stormed out. I asked Haumea and Scout what  
120 this was all about. Haumea told me that Micah thought they were being excluded after Haumea  
121 and Scout started dating and got overly upset about it. Which was music to my ears honestly.  
122 When Micah stormed out, I thought 'good riddance'. I wrote to the other parents on the forum  
123 about how happy I was. Unfortunately, that wasn't the end of it.

124 I noticed that, despite seeming happy with Scout, Haumea was clearly stressed out and I  
125 assumed Micah's little outburst had something to do with it. A tell-tale sign that Haumea was  
126 upset was how often they cleaned their glasses. I know it sounds silly, but Haumea was never  
127 one to bite their nails or anything like that. Instead, when Haumea was stressed out, they would  
128 obsessively clean their glasses. They even carried one of those little cleaning cloths around all  
129 the time. In the days after Micah stormed out of our apartment Haumea's stress escalated. I don't  
130 think their glasses had ever been cleaner! I truly felt bad for Haumea because I could tell the  
131 Micah situation was really bothering them, but I was happy that Micah wasn't coming around  
132 anymore. I figured with some time and space, the situation would work itself out. I could not  
133 have been more wrong.

134 August 31, 2019 was the worst night of my life. It started out normal. Scout and Haumea  
135 were studying inside because it had been raining for most of the day. I was cleaning up the  
136 kitchen. Just before 7:00 p.m. Haumea walked in the kitchen and said they were craving some  
137 shawarma and wanted to walk to an Israeli food truck that was typically parked not too far from  
138 our house. This was a little weird as we had already eaten dinner. Haumea also seemed a little  
139 nervous asking me about it. I asked Haumea if they'd like me to make them a snack and told  
140 them I didn't like the idea of them walking alone after dark. I wasn't even sure if the food truck  
141 would be open still. Haumea said they would be fine and that they really wanted this specific  
142 food and some fresh air since it had finally stopped raining. I said fine, it wasn't that far, and I  
143 still had my tracker app on my phone to keep an eye on things. Scout was still in the living room  
144 making flash cards while Haumea ran out to get the food.

145 Haumea never came back. The truck was usually parked about a ten-minute walk away. I  
146 figured the whole trip would take Haumea about a half hour. Around 8:30, I got worried and  
147 checked the tracker app. Haumea was still near the food truck, I assumed the food truck was just  
148 busy, or the service was slow. Around 8:40 I walked into the living room to ask Scout if they'd

149 heard from Haumea. Scout started crying, which I didn't expect. Scout said that they had just  
150 been trying to call Haumea but they wouldn't pick up. Scout said they were scared something  
151 had happened to Haumea, something bad. I am in full on panic mode by now. I asked Scout why  
152 on earth they would think that. Scout explained that Haumea had received a few very mean text  
153 messages from Micah previously, and Haumea was actually planning to meet Micah at the food  
154 truck tonight. Haumea took screenshots of the mean texts and sent them to Scout, to ask for  
155 advice on the situation. Scout showed them to me, and they were not just mean but threatening! I  
156 was upset that Haumea didn't share them with me before.

157 I tried calling Haumea's phone. When I called it, someone else picked up. They said they  
158 were with the police department and asked for my address. Later, an officer showed up and my  
159 greatest fear was confirmed. Haumea was dead. The detective didn't say who killed Haumea, but  
160 I knew. There was no doubt in my mind that it was Micah Opressa.

161 Scout had sent me the text message screen shots, so I showed them to the police. I also  
162 told them about my forum posts and the tracker app. Eventually, they put together that Micah did  
163 this. The detective and the prosecutor assured me that the evidence clearly pointed to Micah.  
164 Now, Micah is saying they did not do this, that the food truck vendor is lying. It is Micah who is  
165 the real liar. Micah admitted they did it by pleading guilty! Why would someone lie about that? I  
166 thought I could try to cope with this all after Micah was brought to justice. But here I am again,  
167 reliving it. I just want this all to be over.

## STATEMENT OF RIVER FOLEY

### Harmony Detective – Prosecution

1           My name is River Foley. I am a detective with the Harmony Police Department and have  
2   been a police officer for the past 24 years. After returning from my time in the Gulf War, I  
3   wasn't sure what to do with myself. I didn't feel like the traditional college path was right for  
4   me. Being in the service gave me a whole new perspective on life and I knew I wanted to do  
5   something that would help people. After a few years of working odd jobs and talking to some  
6   friends on the force, I decided being a police officer was exactly what I was looking for. I  
7   completed my initial training and I was hired as a police officer in November of 1996. Once I  
8   graduated from the Buckeye Peace Officers Training Academy, I began my career as a  
9   patrolman. Then in late 2000 I was selected for a promotion and was able to attend state  
10   investigator training for three months. As an officer, I have completed over 300 hours training.  
11   As a result, I was able to earn the Master Evidence Technician Award in 2002. In May of 2003 I  
12   began working as a detective for the department. I was assigned to the homicide unit. I have  
13   worked on over 400 cases and have served as a lead detective on over a dozen cases. In May  
14   2005 I was able to complete four months of advanced criminology training on forensic science  
15   with the FBI. The material covered in this training included bloodstain evidence, crime scene  
16   photography, death investigation, basic fingerprint classification, fingerprint comparison  
17   techniques, among various other topics. During these courses, I learned the proper techniques for  
18   collecting and preserving trace evidence e.g. fingerprints, blood samples, shoeprints, fabric and  
19   material fibers, etc.

20           I first learned of Haumea Robins' death on August 31, 2019 when the incident was  
21   reported. I was one of the detectives who responded to the scene. I remember getting the call  
22   about the homicide sometime after 8:30 pm because I was in the middle of watching The Great

23 Harmony Bake-Off which started at 8:30 pm. As soon as I got the call I headed straight to the  
24 scene of the crime. The incident occurred in a parking lot at the corner of First and Green. This  
25 area was familiar to me because it's where all of Harmony's best food trucks were located. I am  
26 guilty of being a regular at Bacon Me Crazy, despite my doctor's recommendation about eating a  
27 healthier diet. When I approached the scene, I noticed Corey Adams, the owner of Corey's  
28 Kebabs, was still closing down for the night. I recognized Corey because I had eaten at their  
29 truck a couple of times, but only when Bacon Me Crazy was closed or parked in a different  
30 location. Given where their truck was parked, I thought they might be a potential witness to the  
31 murder, so I walked over to talk with them.

32 I began interviewing Corey Abrams asking them to tell me about what had happened.  
33 Abrams described how they were closing shop when they heard what sounded like gunshots. At  
34 first, they thought the sound was a truck backfiring but then Abrams noticed an individual  
35 running away from the parking lot carrying a gun. They told me because it was getting dark and  
36 everything had happened so fast they were not able to get a great look at the individual running  
37 away. They did manage to briefly see the person's face and they got a profile view as well. I was  
38 able to obtain a general description of the individual seen running away with a gun. They  
39 mentioned that the individual was wearing what appeared to be a blue shirt or jacket of some  
40 sort, black skinny jeans, and a pair of black and white high-top shoes.

41 After talking with Abrams, I walked back towards where the homicide had occurred. By  
42 this time, the coroner had removed the body but Makoto Hayami, one of the crime scene  
43 investigators (CSI) was still collecting potential evidence. She explained how she had collected  
44 several partial prints from some of the deceased's belongings, including a partial print from their  
45 glasses. Additionally, she handed me a log of other evidence already collected, which included  
46 several shoeprints, clothing fibers, and blood samples.

47           It can sometimes be difficult to create a timeline with evidence, but we caught a break  
48 with this case. Harmony had experienced heavy rain and thunderstorms most of the week leading  
49 up to Haumea's murder, including heavy rainfall into the early evening on August 31. Rain can  
50 be detrimental to a crime scene, but it actually worked in our favor this time around. Because the  
51 rain was so heavy for most of the day, we had a high degree of confidence that much of the  
52 physical evidence collected from the crime scene was placed there shortly before or during  
53 Haumea's murder. Anything that was at the scene before the murder would have been washed  
54 away in the rainstorm so this led us to conclude that the print and other evidence was recent and  
55 linked to the scene.

56           Due to the holiday weekend and a backlog at the lab, the evidence collected was not  
57 processed until September 3, 2019. All the blood samples came back as the victim's blood, but  
58 we did get other, usable evidence. The lab reports showed that of numerous sets of prints  
59 collected a few came back with matches in our system. One of the partial prints we pulled from  
60 Haumea's glasses was an arch print which is the rarest type of fingerprint representing only a  
61 small percentage of people. This rare pattern type helped the analyst narrow down possible  
62 matches. From there, the analyst identified several points of match between the partial print  
63 found on Haumea's glasses and a print in our database. The matching print belonged to Micah  
64 Opressa. This was not the first time I have seen Micah involved in a criminal investigation.

65           A few years ago, when a new 18+ club opened I remember helping with several reported  
66 incidents of fake IDs being used at the club. One of the individuals who was arrested was Micah  
67 Opressa. I remember interviewing them and several other youths to see if we could catch the  
68 individual who was providing them with the fake IDs. Not long after the fake ID incident, Micah  
69 was brought into the station after a school resource officer caught them with marijuana. They  
70 were booked for possession which is why Micah's fingerprints were already in our system.

I made note of the partial print match and continued to review the remaining evidence. It's important not to get caught in the trap of latching on to a suspect too soon so I make it a point to review each piece of evidence with fresh eyes before I start to put together a narrative. In this case, the other evidence collected throughout this investigation also connected Micah to the crime. One of the footprints collected at the scene came from a size 9 Converse high top sneaker. Fibers from a Taylor Stich blue nylon bomber-jacket were found on Haumea's clothing. These items both matched the description of the clothing worn by the individual Corey Abrams saw running away from scene that evening. Throughout the investigation we continued to question the owners from some of the other food trucks to see if they remembered seeing an individual matching Micah's description near the area of the murder. I later came to learn from the owner of Mini Morsels, a food truck specializing in bite size street food, that an individual wearing a pair of Converse high tops and a blue Taylor Stich bomber jacket bought some sliders from their truck on the evening of August 31st. At some point later in the investigation I was able to confirm that Micah was wearing a blue bomber jacket and a pair of high top sneakers on August 31<sup>st</sup>.

Once Micah became a person of interest, I began looking into them more to see if there were any other indications that they could have killed Haumea. I did some digging online and found Micah's posts on several social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram. The posts contained your typical teenage content such as selfies, pictures of food and cats, silly memes, and a few posts referencing the 10-year challenge. However, there were a few specific posts that caught my eye. I was expecting your typical teen angst, which was definitely present in Micah's social media, but there were also some dark messages about betrayal and revenge. The posts came across as more insidious than normal teenage drama with Micah trying very hard to make it clear that they were tough and not to be messed with.



Based on the evidence collected at the scene I decided to bring Micah Opressa in for questioning. Micah and their parents came to the police station on September 3, 2019. I began the interview around 10 am. I started by gathering some basic information to try to determine if they were involved in the murder of Haumea Robins, or had any other information which could help us determine who the killer was. Micah told me how they had gone to meet Haumea around 7:00 p.m. When asked about the clothes they were wearing that evening, Micah responded that they could not remember exactly, but that they were probably wearing jeans, and a t-shirt. They also mentioned that they were wearing a blue bomber jacket and their favorite pair of Converse high top sneakers. Micah seemed more certain about this detail and even said "I wear both of those things everywhere!" I later checked these details with Micah's parents, and they confirmed that Micah owns and often wears a blue bomber jacket and high top sneakers.

Since it appeared Micah matched the description of the individual seen fleeing the night of August 31<sup>st</sup>, I began to ask them some questions to learn more about their relationship with Haumea. I learned Micah and Haumea had been friends since they were kids and hung around each other quite often. Micah also told me how the two had a falling out of sorts when Haumea started paying more attention to Scout Firat and less attention to them. When Micah told me about this, I could tell the subject upset them. The volume of their voice raised, and their face had a cross look on it. Micah mentioned something about how Haumea knew Micah had a crush on them but started dating Scout anyway. When I asked Micah if this bothered them, they said it did at first, but they had gotten over it. Micah said it was just a dumb teenage crush and I was making a bigger deal out of it than it was. While most people might have brushed this off as teenage drama, as a detective we are trained to analyze every statement and see if it somehow could be connected to the investigation. Working on the homicide unit, I have been involved in several homicides that were the result love-triangles and jealous lovers. As a result, I thought this

119 “dumb teenage crush” could have been Micah’s motive for killing Haumea, especially when you  
120 consider Micah’s social media posts in conjunction with their testimony during the interview.

121 I did not want to rush the interview, so I began asking Micah to tell me about the events  
122 of August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. Micah mentioned on the day of Haumea’s death, the two met up that  
123 evening at the corner of First and Green to try and repair their relationship. Micah told me how  
124 the two had gotten food from one of the local food trucks and sat down to talk. After mentioning  
125 this, Micah became visibly uneasy. They crossed their arms and began to fidget in their chair. I  
126 wasn’t sure where Micah was going with their story, but I decided to turn up the heat to see if  
127 Micah would confess to killing Haumea.

128 As I continued the interview I asked if they wanted to get back at Haumea for dating  
129 Scout even though Haumea knew Micah liked them. When asked this question Micah became  
130 extremely emotional. Their voice got even louder and they pounded the table with their fist.  
131 They said “I cannot believe you think I would want to hurt Haumea. I wanted to fix our  
132 friendship not kill them!” Once Micah finally calmed down, I informed them how we had an  
133 eyewitness who saw someone matching their description fleeing the scene of the crime with a  
134 gun. They told me that wasn’t possible because once Haumea said they would think about being  
135 friends with Micah again, Micah gave Haumea a hug and left them alive and well. At this point,  
136 Micah turned away from me and asked if they could go home. Seeing as I had gained quite a bit  
137 of useful information but needed to follow up on some other leads, I told them they were free to  
138 go. After the interview, Micah left with their parents.

139 That same day I interviewed Kai Robins, the parent of Haumea, to see if anyone would  
140 have a reason for hurting their child. During the interview I learned how Micah and Haumea had  
141 been friends for a long time but recently had a falling out. Kai was understandably upset during  
142 our interview which only seemed to get worse as they talked about Micah. Kai knew Micah from

143 all the time Haumea and Micah spent together at the Robins' apartment. It was clear to me that  
144 Kai did not like or trust Micah, so much so that Kai was convinced Micah was the murderer  
145 before ever hearing about the evidence we had. Kai said they had text messages to prove it. They  
146 proceeded to show me screenshots of threatening text messages that Micah had sent to Haumea.  
147 We took the text messages as evidence and continued with the investigation.

148         After interviewing Kai, I wanted to get Corey Abrams down to the station to see if they  
149 could identify Micah as the person they saw fleeing that night. I tried to have Abrams come  
150 down to the police station a few days later for a photo lineup and a formal statement. However,  
151 because Abrams was attending a food truck convention in Chicago, they were not able to come  
152 to the station until September 10. Abrams returned from the convention late on September 9 and  
153 came to the station the next day at 10:00 am. I collected a formal statement from Abrams and  
154 showed them a photo lineup to see if they could identify the person, they saw that night. The  
155 lineup consisted of five photographs of individuals who fit the description, one of whom was  
156 Micah Opressa. After looking at the lineup Abrams identified Micah as the individual they saw at  
157 the scene holding a gun the night of the shooting. I checked again with Abrams to make sure  
158 they were certain that the individual in the photo was the same person they saw on August 31 at  
159 fleeing the parking lot where Haumea was murdered. After pausing for a moment, Abrams  
160 assured me the photo of Micah was the same individual they saw that night.

161         I did my best to make sure Abrams was certain, but eyewitness testimony tends to be  
162 unreliable. However, in the investigative part of the process it can help link physical evidence  
163 with an individual and enable the police to narrow down their list of suspects. In this case,  
164 Abrams' identification was able to reinforce what the other evidence already indicated, that  
165 Micah was the main person of interest in this case. When you're investigating, you do the best  
166 with the evidence you have and follow the information to the logical conclusion. In this case, all  
167 the information pointed to Micah Opressa even before Abrams' identification.

168           Once Abrams made the identification, I obtained an arrest warrant for Micah Opessa and  
169   proceeded to take Micah into custody. Micah was arrested at 3:00 pm that same day and charged  
170   with aggravated murder. Over the next couple of weeks I learned that Micah's case was given a  
171   trial date and the prosecutor assigned to the case was Justice Okafor, an assistant prosecutor. I  
172   spoke with Okafor and they advised me the case was going to trial and asked me to turn over the  
173   case file so they could prepare for trial. I gave Okafor all of the documents and notes I had  
174   regarding the case and told them to let me know if I could do anything else to help.

175           After Micah was in custody I had not heard much about the case until about a month  
176   later. On October 6, 2019 Corey Abrams called me. They told me that they were unsure about  
177   their initial identification of Micah as the perpetrator. Abrams explained when they saw a news  
178   story about the upcoming trial and they were able to see Micah in the daylight, they were having  
179   doubts that Micah was the person they saw fleeing the crime scene with a gun. I thought perhaps  
180   Abrams was just getting cold feet about what they saw that night and did not want to feel  
181   responsible for sending a kid to jail. However, in the interest of justice and making sure we got  
182   the right person, I took note of Abrams concern.

183           The next day I was at the courthouse providing testimony for another homicide I had  
184   been working on when I bumped into Justice Okafor. They appeared to be in a rush, but I  
185   stopped them to tell them about Abrams. I mentioned to them how Abrams was having  
186   reservations about their identification and that they should follow up with them to clear things  
187   up. I knew Abrams was one of the witnesses Okafor would likely be calling to testify and wanted  
188   to ensure they were prepared for trial. Okafor nodded at me, and then continued their way. I just  
189   wanted to be sure they got justice for Haumea and that their killer did not go unpunished.