

In football, when all else has failed, the offense will run a play called The Hail Mary. Often the last play of the game, it requires player skill but its success depends on as much prayer as it does on play. In criminal law, The Hail Mary is a Petition for the Governor to grant clemency, which can reduce the punishment for a crime or excuse that it ever was committed in the first place.

As the attorney, I filed for clemency for my client Marlon D'Souza and I am proud to announce that Governor Northam has granted D'Souza a Simple Pardon for a misdemeanor marijuana conviction.

Marlon's conviction resulted in a manifest injustice. Born overseas but raised almost entirely in the Richmond area, Marlon graduated from Benedictine Military Academy and attended VCU. But he did not realize that, as a non-citizen, a simple misdemeanor conviction for possessing marijuana could create a barrier to his re-entering the United States. And after Marlon went to India in 2013 to spend time with his grandmother his application to return to the United States was denied, and has been denied ever since. For the past several years, Marlon has been separated from his parents and his sister and the life he knew in Virginia.

I was hired by Marlon's family in June of 2019 to petition the Governor for Clemency and I submitted my petition in October. Governor Northam granted the Simple Pardon on May 29, 2020. Marlon now will apply to the State Department for the necessary credentials to return home.

Over the past 24 years, I have represented many different people and governments as an attorney, and I always tried to ensure that I was helping to accomplish good things for deserving people. I am especially proud to have been able to assist Marlon D'Souza and his loved ones with this significant step towards reuniting their family.

Knowing my own limitations makes it easy to give credit where credit is due. I was aided in our efforts by Senator Kaine and Father James W. Arsenault, of the St. Elizabeth Catholic Church on 2nd Street in Richmond. There was other help, of course. Here is the actual Hail Mary Prayer:

Hail Mary,
Full of Grace,
The Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit
of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary,
Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now,
and at the hour of our death.

Amen.