

## The Wisdom of Freedom

May 8, 2020

"Salon À la Mode owner Shelley Luther was sentenced to seven days in jail for criminal and civil contempt and a \$7,000 fine," the Dallas-Ft. Worth CBS affiliate reported Tuesday, "for defying Governor Greg Abbott's stay-at-home rules."

She dared to open her beauty salon . . . and tore up a county judge's related and official-looking cease and desist order.

Another judge offered to spare her jail if she would confess that her "actions were selfish" and, the judge lectured, "putting your own interest ahead of those in the community in which you live." Luther responded decisively: "Feeding my kids isn't selfish."

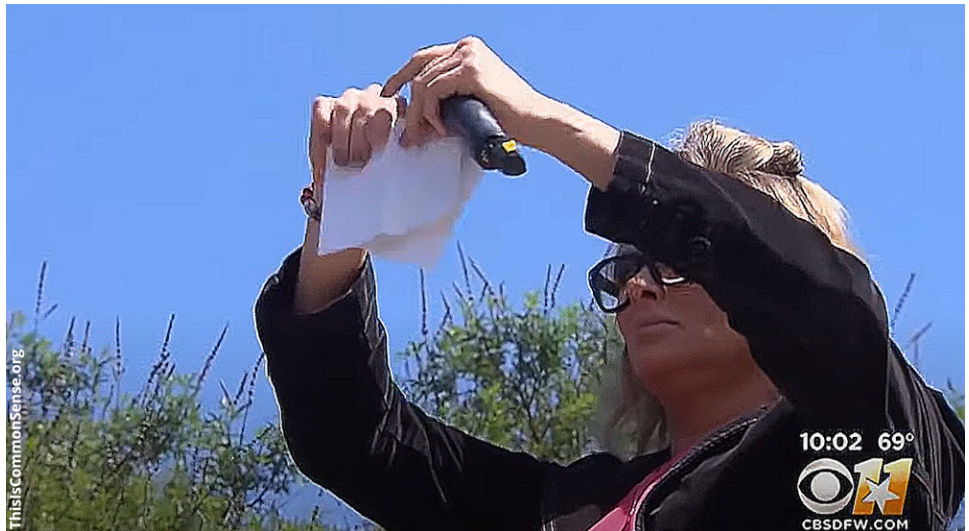
Calling for Luther's "immediate release," Attorney General Ken Paxton articulated smart policy:

**Obviously, governments can help. But best through persuasion, remembering they work for us.**

"The judge should not put people in jail like her who are just trying to make a living."

That should be written in law — *sans* the "like her" part.

The agile Governor Abbott, the rule's originator, ducked responsibility with "surely there are less



restrictive means to achieving [public safety] than jailing a Texas mother."

Then, governor, *why the command?*

"I am modifying my executive orders," Abbott declared yesterday, "to ensure confinement is not a punishment for violating an order."

The Lieutenant Governor paid her fine.

Shelley Luther was "free" — and on Fox News last night.

But have we learned anything?

Why not provide the public with the best information available and allow people to make their own decisions? No orders. Businesspeople would be free to do what they think is best. At-risk folks would be free to be very careful.

Obviously, governments can *help*. But best through persuasion, remembering *they* work for *us*.

Free people.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

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Note: In *The Wisdom of Crowds* (2004), James Surowiecki posited that "a diverse collection of independently deciding individuals" can make complex decisions better than the experts. Exactly.