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Dear American Prison Writing Archive;

Here is another essay for your perusal. I am not sure you have received this before, since I have written so much, but hopefully this is new to you. I sent essays and journals to many different blog sites and organizations, sometimes I lose count. Hope to hear from you soon.

The Death Of One Of Us

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How does one handle the death of an inmate while time? There are many ways one could handle it, but often times these reasons are cloaked by the machismo that every inmate is supposed to have. We have had, since I've been here at USP Tucson, three deaths, but I want to concentrate on the death of a more recent inmate, Steve Green.

I did not know him personally, but I knew of him. He lived in our dorm, B2, for a time. He then went to the SHU (Special Housing Unit), came back to our dorm for a short stint, moved to another dorm, then to the Challenge Program, then got into altercations with Muslims concerning his Catholic faith. I don't know much more about him, nor heard much more until I heard that on either Feb. 15th or the 14th, he took his life.



How do we handle the death of an inmate we have seen? How SHOULD we handle the death of an inmate. I ponder this, wondering if I even have an answer to it, but what I might suggest is far more kind than what I witnessed.

I can never claim to be perfect, but even as an inmate I have values and morals that I feel must always be respected. One of the main ones is that when a person dies... you at least try to respect that person's life. That courtesy I did not see here at USP Tucson, and it distresses me.

When I first heard of Steve Green's death, by suicide, I overheard one inmate say, "What took so long?". I was enraged that somebody could say something like that. Was Steve Green popular, or well-liked? Perhaps not, but does anyone deserve to be talked about like that?

Later in my cell, about 5 of us were talking, and someone brought up Steve Green's death, to which one guy said, "Good!", and another "he deserved it", and "he was a waste of life". I sat in the midst of this hatred, feeling my skin almost burn with anger. Again, I am not painting myself as a saint, but by NO means did I believe that even suicide of an inmate ought to be spoken so wickedly. Regardless of what people thought of Steve Green, he did not deserve this.

"I hope he burns in hell" said one inmate beside me in the cell, as the guys continued to speak evil of guy that is



no longer with us. Fed up, I said, "And yet, nobody has anything GOOD to say about him?" This was met by more vicious words, and I tried to counter, "Judge not, lest ye be judged".

They then defended themselves, saying, "I ain't judging him, but..." and ironically continued to judge him. They continued to talk about his problems, second-guessing why he was so "wicked" in their eyes. I got sick of their talk, and had to create a jestful joke to excuse myself. I was so angry I was almost trembling with rage. One of the guys claims to be a Christian, the other an older man who indeed knew scriptures, but neither was saying anything God-like.

There is a scripture, in I John 3:15 that goes, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murdered has eternal life abiding in him." I John 4:8 says "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love". I John 2:9 says "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now".

Scriptures tell us that if we do not love, then God is not in us. I saw nothing of God in that room- only hatred and every form of evil.

How can an inmate honor a deceased inmate? This is complicated by how the inmate lived while here in prison, and sadly, how he died. Steve Green wasn't very popular, and the fact that he committed suicide made it worse, in the eyes of



his "judges". How do I handle it? My heart pours out greatly to guess how much stress and depression this man had to have been going through... either detected, and ignored by staff and inmate alike, or brilliantly shaded under false visages.

All I know, is that Steve Green is dead...

And very few people miss him or mourn him. I DO mourn his death, and am embarrassed at the lack of sympathy of people, some who claim to be Christians, but clearly are not, had for him.

Ironically, a pagan-worshipping inmate here, who does not believe in God, showed MORE sympathy for Steve Green, who was a Catholic, than the two heartless people in my cell. Not every inmate is cold-hearted, and ironically some of the warmest thoughts of sorrow came from the most unlikely people... proving that even the "least" of us can have a heart. But sadly, it also shows, to my embarrassment, that compassion for the deceased isn't shown in nearly the volume as I thought it should be.

Steve Green will be missed by some; his death affects us all, but I am glad for his sake that he didn't have to hear the heartless words of people who have no heart.

Until next time...

JM