

Essay #2

No more Buddhist Group Services

I am a Zen Buddhist who has been the leader of the Buddhist Group religious services here at the Jameson Annex of the South Dakota State Penitentiary for the past few years.

Buddhists practice peace and seek wisdom. Buddhism teaches us to not discriminate against anyone, to practice compassion and love for all beings and non-violence. It is a very positive way of life.

Why is it that I was told by the cultural coordinator Tammy Mertens-Jones that the Buddhist Group is canceled from now on because "You are the only one going." This ~~is~~ is a clear violation of my 1st and 14th Amendment rights under the U.S. Constitution and retaliation for me exercising my Constitutional and federal right to file a civil rights lawsuit.

The Jameson Buddhist Group has dwindled in its numbers for a number of reasons including new rules made up by prison officials.

First, the prison said that A/O prisoners can no longer attend the Buddhist Group. These are prisoners that are just coming to prison and it resulted in a large drop in the Buddhist Group attendance.
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The next thing prison officials did is to mess ~~up~~ with our 2 yearly religious feast meals. The prison made a rule that all religious meals had to go through prison food service provider and no longer could we get fresh fruit trays and stir-fry from Hy-Vee store.

The result is that our feast consisted of prison food on prison trays for Buddhist Group members, family, ~~and~~ friends and other guests. But the prison food wasn't enough, the prison then priced gouged us by charging up to \$9.75 per tray per person. These trays are really only about a dollar or less to make. The result, as you might expect is more prisoners stopped coming to the Buddhist Group.

Then there are the false rumors that were spread that the religious ~~the~~ feast meals were changed because of the Buddhist Group Leader who is me. This is false, but still people here love to believe rumors and blame me.

Then there is the on-going problems of prisoners signing up to go to the Buddhist Group services and correctional officers not opening their cell doors for the Buddhist service. ~~then~~

If the prisoner misses 2 ~~the~~ religious services 2 times in a row then they are banned from going to that religious service for 30 days. This makes it impossible for prisoners to go when their cell doors don't open and they are marked absent

twice on the religious attendance sheet.

Now that I have been going to the Buddhist Group Service by myself the past few weeks, the prison is using this opportunity to "cancel" the Buddhist Group indefinitely.

This is clearly a violation of my constitutional rights as well as ~~a~~ all the other Buddhists or prisoners who want to learn about the teachings of the Buddha.

I am a simple peaceful Buddhist who wants to help others learn about the peaceful religion of Buddhism. I cannot do that because the Buddhist Group no longer exists as part of retaliation towards me for exercising my civil rights and filing 2 federal lawsuits against prison officials and filing legitimate prison grievances.

I will not be deterred by this action, it only strengthens my resolve to peacefully practice Buddhism, exercise my Constitutional rights and help others. One must lead by example, even if others lack the courage to follow. I'm doing a life sentence and have nothing to lose. Why are prison officials allowed to ignore the United States Constitution, the Supreme law of the land?