

TRULINCS 55487056 - MASON, FREDERICK - Unit: TCP-B-B

FROM: 55487056
TO: USP/SPC Unicor/Programa Unicor
SUBJECT: ***Request to Staff*** MASON, FREDERICK, Reg# 55487056, TCP-B-B
DATE: 01/30/2020 10:59:47 AM

To: unicor
Inmate Work Assignment: nil

Even Inmates Care
(In Memory of Kobe Bryant)

I was in my cell, on Sunday, when I heard the very sad news...

Kobe Bryant, former Laker, died in a helicopter crash.

For a moment, I didn't want to believe it. At the time, I was writing an essay on something Christian/Inspirational, and didn't want to stop to check out the news. My cellie had just come in and said, "Apparently, they just said that Kobe Bryant just died in a helicopter crash".

I was stunned... what could I do? I sat there in disbelief for a second, but I had to finish the essay. I overheard another inmate outside say, "He's gone..."

Immediately after finishing, I got up to check out the news. In our dorm here at USP Tucson, each dorm has 7 televisions, each usually on something different. There's a "black" television, a "Pisa" television, a "Native American Television", a "sports" television and so on. There were several televisions on the news, all saying the same thing...

Kobe Bryant... dead in a helicopter crash.

I sat there in my chair, in absolute disbelief at what I was watching. Shock went through me as I listened to the news, trying to figure things out. But there was no mistake. This news was shockingly true.

I listened to the news for another 5 or 10 minutes, and said to myself, "enough," and walked away. I could not take anymore. Others continued to watch, getting all the info they could. I had heard more than enough. Kobe Bryant, and others on that helicopter, were all pronounced dead.

For the life of me, I didn't know what to do. I am a Laker fan, and have been since the 80's, with Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Magic Johnson and the rest of that group. I've always been a Laker fan, through thick and thin, especially since I used to live in Watts, Los Angeles. But this hits close to home... to close.

I wanted to grieve; I wanted to cry, but I could not. Something refused to let me grieve that way, even though everyone around the sports world was doing just that. Many athletes broke down, showing the human side of the loss of a loved one. Why couldn't I do the same?

I saw no one here in the prison cry for Kobe, but there was no question at all; we were all grieving. Every person here that was a sports fan, or a human being, was deeply touched in what has just happened, and we were all captive to the news, and prisoner to the saddest news we've all heard in a long time.

Yet, why could we not cry? Is it because prison robs you of that part of humanity? Could it be true, that after continual abuse by prison staff, being seen as the "lowest of the low", after being persecuted by USP Tucson on every small incident, even if the fault lies with the prison itself, could all this factor in some way in the fact that we could not do what everyone else in the world was doing... grieve?

We all know that people grieve in different ways; and some show it more openly than others. But no matter which way we grieve, it is part of human nature. No inmate lost that right when we were sentenced, but no one tells society that while you are incarcerated, especially at Federal prisons, that there is a slow numbing of the human senses, one of which being the ability to mourn.

I could not cry, maybe it was because I didn't want to show that form of "weakness" which is typical of prisons. Maybe many of the guys here that did not cry possibly did so in the privacy of their cells. Yet even there, there isn't as much privacy as you'd

think. Why was it that I could not cry?

Could it be because my heart is hardened through the psychological abuse we take when officers and staff come to work hating every single inmate, and abusing their authority against us? Could it be some of the female officers who take particular pleasure flaunting their supreme authority over the men at a male penitentiary, daring any male to even look at them the wrong way, even if they're wearing skin-tight jeans?

Could it be the way the mailroom steals our magazines, or "loses" our legal work, keeping us from getting back to court for a rehearing? Could it be how they served us, quite literally, "bones" for the Super bowl last year, which didn't even qualify as a meal? Could it be how they turned off our phones on Christmas, preventing us from calling our loved ones on a holiday.

Could it be that prison is robbing us of our humanity?

I can't grieve for Kobe the way everyone else does... something is wrong with that. We cannot mourn like the rest of the country... something is wrong with that. And there is nothing in place in prisons to deal with the loss of a loved one. Sometimes when we lose a loved one, and the family calls the prison, they refuse to tell us that our loved one has called. It has happened before.

I stood in the shower just today, thinking about Kobe Bryant, and his family, and the others that died. This is a tragedy we cannot put in words, but it troubled me that as an inmate, I am still a human, and I cannot let these people rob me of that. I have to find some way to let the world know that the inmates here miss Kobe too.

We watch sports just as much as others. I've seen many guys here argue who's better; Kobe or Michael, or Kobe or LeBron. I saw the last game Kobe played, and absolutely amazed at how a man could, at the end of his career, knock down 60. One guy tried to say that the other team "let" him do it. I countered, "but he still had to make the shots".

There is not enough space, not enough time, and not enough creativity to share the value Kobe brought to every sports fan, and people in general. As a Laker fan, I am deeply hurt by his loss, but equally as a human being. And I do not take lightly the loss of the others; without doubt, every life loss is absolutely tragic. We must grieve for every person lost, and it appears that the world is doing their best to do that.

And so, I must do the same, while at the same time, sharing with the world that there are human beings here in prison who feel the same loss as they do. We loved Kobe Bryant too, and send out best wishes to all those affected. We'll get through, we have to, because life has to go on.

In this, I have to keep my personal resolve to maintain my humanity, and grieve with the world, even if prison hardens a person's heart. I will not give in to that, and will fight for my humanity. In doing so, I, in a way, will honor Kobe Bryant, a man who proved what a champion he was on the court, and off. Those qualities I will adopt, and continually bear with me, as I continue to share my experiences in prison.

Rest in peace Kobe Bryant; you are immortal.