

Prison University Project
Post Office 492
San Quentin, Ca. 94964

April 28, 2020

Dear Prison University Project Staff:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful donation package; it's a great surprise; and hopefully a signal of society's changing attitude towards prisoners.

When I arrived here in 1988 the treatment of prisoners was somewhat better than currently; thereafter, for many years treatment of prisoners degenerated into one of "extreme-punishment;" which was supreme to all else. I.e., in 1988 the Chaplain was still permitted to give all SQSP prisoners something for Christmas. We received bags of nuts and chocolates. Chaplains obtained See's Candy which was donated by the company due to imperfections, such as breakage. However, within a few years all those little Christmas gifts stopped. When I asked: "Why the Christmas donation packets stopped?" I was told that the Warden didn't want prisoners to have those items; that we were here for punishment, not to get Christmas presents, even if donated.

I hope your kind donation signals a mind-set change in attitude by prison administrators generally. For the last 32-years I have watched with great interest the politics of prisons; and in recent years I have noticed a trend towards "less-harshness" in treatment of prisoners. Perhaps it's a realization of the fact that we are sent to prison "as punishment; and not for punishment." Generally speaking, the sentence "to a specific period of time that a prisoner is sentenced to separated from society--is the punishment; and it shouldn't be subject to harsher impositions or deprivations which different wardens or officers arbitrarily decide should be imposed on a group of prisoners, or on an individual prisoner. Such disparate treatments violate the 14th Amendment's Equal Protection Clause.

Condemned prisoners shouldn't be more harshly treated than any others; their sentence is the only punishment they are sentenced to; and LWOP prisoners are sentenced to LWOP; and not some bullying by a small minority of officers whom seek to punish LWOP and or condemned--more harshly than they were sentenced.

I will continue watching and waiting for a more enlightened society to demand less harshness towards prisoners across California. (Yes, you can share my letter.)

Sincerely,


Lee Max Barnett

#E-03100

(2-E.BAY-72)

San Quentin State Prison, Ca. 94974