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CSP SAN QUENTIN

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Jody Lewen
c/o PRISON UNIVERSITY PROJECT
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Ken Rhodes
MAY 19th 2020

Dear Jody Lewen, and the entire Prison University Project

I want to thank you all for your thoughts and support. I was very happy and surprised to receive the package you all sent. It put a big smile on my face.

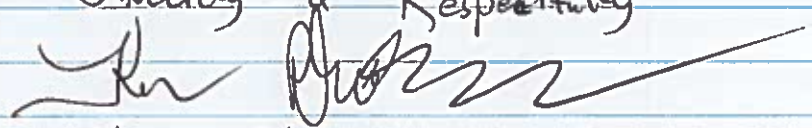
I am currently registered in the Algebra program. I can hardly wait to get back. I love being in a learning environment as opposed to hanging out on the yard or in the building. I was also happy to see that you all are advocating the release of elderly prisoners with existing health issues to help reduce the population. I am 62 years old with C.O.P.D., Sleep Apnea and Hypertension. I don't have enough years in to qualify for the (Elderly Program SB 224 Feb 13 2015). This calls for an Inmate to be 60 years or older with 25 years in. Right now I have 17 years in. Originally this bill called for inmates 50 or older with 15 years in. This was changed because of opposition in Congress. This bill was to be revisited in the future to go back to the original (50/15) but so far nothing has happened. 60 years or older with 20 years in would be more within my reach. None of this guarantees release but gets us to the Board of Prison Terms earlier, unfortunately I was struck out and received 25 years to life consecutively for each felony. The Elderly Bill is some hope to just get to go to the board that I would never see with my unconstitutional 3 Strikes Sentence.

The Coronavirus calls for social distancing that is almost impossible in ~~the~~ this prison setting. This prison's idea of social distancing is to have bunkies sleep with their heads at opposite ends of their bunks, ARE YOU KIDDING ME!!! These cells are 12' x 5' feet, this area includes a set of bunks 6½ x 3 feet, a toilet, and a sink. These cells and the cells in Folsom Prison were originally designed for one person. The only prison in California with single cells is in CMC California Men's Colony, San Quentin and Folsom the states oldest prisons were suppose to follow suit because of their design for one person. The newer (180/270) design prisons built in the 1980's are much bigger. San Quentin justifies this single cell status because of Death Row, this is the one area in San Quentin with single cell housing. I currently live in West Block. Please come see it if you haven't already. IF one person gets the virus we will all eventually get it. Single cells would not only cover social distancing but also make it more conducive to studying because there is no desk in these cells. This would also cut down stress and violence. Now is the time to push for permanent single cell housing here in San Quentin. The 3 judge panel set up dates in the past to reduce the population or risk inmates being released by the feds. Unfortunately San Quentin found loopholes. One is to put inmates on buses during audits, and bring new inmates days later. I would even be happy with one block (building) for 60 year olds and over to be permanently single celled. Worst case scenario

they should make it mandatory that inmates 60 years or over be single celled even if the whole building is not. At least this would be a step in the right direction.

Thank you so much for allowing me to reach out to you with my concerns. Any information you can send me regarding the reasons San Quentin is not single celled would be helpful. These problems are mentioned every now and then but never followed through. Now is the perfect time to implement this. A few of the jail-house lawyers want to address this issue but are afraid of being transferred if they rock the boat. The coronavirus is no joke. We are all just standing by waiting for the virus to hit us. What else can we do? I for one am writing you in hopes that you can look into this and hopefully come up with some answers or solutions.

Feel free to share my letter to whomever. Thank you again for your thoughts and gifts. I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Sincerely & Respectfully

Ken Rhodes

P.S. It is cruel and unusual punishment to be housed in a prison at almost twice the designed capacity. Death Row should not be counted. It is NOT MAINLINE.