



CAMPAIGN TO FREE KHALFANI MALIK KHALDUN

(A Message to my Family & Extended Family)

2011

FRIENDSHIP MESSAGE

From the desk of Khalfani Malik Khaldun

“There are friends who pretend to be friends, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a Brother.”

In today's society, a true friendship is a blessing from God – to be nurtured and treasured as the rare and wonderful gift it is. A true friendship has to include God, he is the Third Strand of the Cord. Having someone with whom to share your joys and your sorrows, your hopes and your dreams – this is the value of friendship. But the highest rewards of friendship are attained when two people come together to serve God and do his work. When this happens nothing is impossible and great things can be accomplished.

Friends will grow to need or lean on each other from time to time. There will be things you share with your friend you can't share with your mate, siblings, or parents. Be it some advice or a helping hand, or someone to pray with. Our friends sometimes know us well enough to know what exactly to say or do to assist us.

Friendship requires time and commitments. A friend is not someone who is simply there for us when it's beneficial. Real friendship involves compromise and acceptance. Developing the trust that any meaningful relationship requires takes time. We must be patient with our friends, but it is equally important that we be honest with ourselves and others with whom we are blessed to build quality friendships.

We have to watch whom we entangle ourselves with in the name of friendship, we can't underestimate the effect negative people have on our lives. It's extremely important to surround yourself with positive people. It may mean going from ten fake friends to one genuinely Good Friend. We must be clear on this: “To have a friend, you've got to be a friend.”

Here's a few Positive Reminders:

(1.) A real friend will tell you when you're doing wrong, because a real friend has your best interest at heart. You should always count on your friends to encourage you on what's right also.

(2.) A real friend is there when you need him/her even though you may only see that person from time to time.

(3.) A real friend accepts you the way you are. They don't care about your job title, the car you drive, your social status, or your bank account. They love and embrace you for who you are – your spirit and your essence.

There will be times when friends disappoint, and do things to us we never thought they would. In any relationship, I have had to learn where our heart is a factor, we're made vulnerable. After all, when we give someone permission to love us, we also give them power to hurt us. Real friendship is about trust, support, and forgiveness, we need to understand that real friendships are to be cherished and protected when you find someone you can endure all of life's challenges with, hold onto that person at all cost. The friendship will not always be easy, but it will be worth it. Friendship, like love, will always find a way.

True beauty and charisma come from inside. Like a sweet virus, they affect everyone they come in contact with. All of us know people who aren't considered physically attractive by society's standards, but they light up a room. They're never at a loss for companions and admirers. These people know what we wear on the inside is what others wear on the outside. They joyfully let their inner light shine.

Intrinsic beauty can only come from knowing who you are and knowing a higher power. When our souls are right, we build friendships based on mutual respect rather than on physical attraction. We learn to love the total being rather than just the way someone looks or makes us feel. Looks fade, but genuineness endures.

"Friendship Prayer"

Almighty God, you have blessed me so very much with hearts and souls like mine. Those you have brought into my life have been a gift; I pray that I might be a blessing to them too. I may not have all the friends I want, but I thank you for the ones I do have. I pray that you might continue to reveal to me the true meaning of friendship. Let my heart, my words, and deeds reflect your light. Protect us God from the darkest of human emotions, keep jealousy, envy, and impatience at bay.

Teach me God how to love as you love us...

without judging, without malice, without reservation.

I know that with your help, I will draw those into my life who support and love me, and I will be offered by you as a gift to those souls waiting for my love as well.

Thank You. Amen.

"Two are better than one; because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But, pity the man who falls and has no one to pick him up! ...Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10

You may write to me with comments, advice, or criticisms,

(Thank You); to:

Bro. Khalfani Malik Khaldun,

(Leonard McQuay) #874304,

A-120 (SCU)

P.O. Box 1111,

Carlisle, IN. 47838

(www.myspace.com/freeKhalfani)

■ Message to the Shakespearean Students ■

“THE FOUR GREAT TRAGEDIES”

By: Bro. Khalfani Malik Khaldun
(Leonard McQuay)
Graduate & Group Leader

“ONE WHO EXCELS AT WARFARE COMPELS MEN AND IS NOT COMPELLED BY OTHERS”.
(- Sun Tsu -)

Having unceasingly endured 23 years of prison, I have in my later years come to realize and to value and appreciate rehabilitation programs that now include William Shakespeare and his “Four Great Tragedies”. For much of my early years, the prisons across Indiana were devoid of any meaningful or conducive programmings. Such programs usually were meant to deter crime or persuade youngsters from coming to prison such as “The Scared Straight” programs, are no longer effective. Then, educational and higher learning programs were slowly being cut due to State funding problems. When there are non-conductive programs available on the outside or inside prisons, many times ones' idle mind causes us to be pulled into all sorts of un-healthy and non-beneficial activities.

But, when we become fed up with being consumed by and associated with these negative descriptive identities placed on us by society, we act on our own determination which encourages us to show the world we are not our own mistakes, but that we can be and are better than what society makes us out to be portrayed as.

My initial introduction to the writings of Shakespeare was in 2003, when I first arrived inside the Special Confinement Unit; other comrades and fellow convict elements then engaged in a lengthy discussion on whether we should get involved. Several men immediately signed on, then, it was called (“Shakespeare in the S.H.U.”). I declined to sign on then because for one, I was battling a 60-year murder conviction; nothing more to me was more important than that! Secondly, I felt Shakespeare wasn't going to help me get back in court. And thirdly, I felt that it was “uncharted waters” for a Black Man from the Ghettoes of urban Amerika, to be studying that. But, I wasn't thinking about the potential of trying something new, and having that something new change my life.

Several years passed, (5) to be exact, after declining participation in the first Shakespeare Class with Professor Bates, I then joined their group, enjoying the entire experience, and I actually found “The Four Tragedies” to be really refreshing. In trying to get a better grasp of the plays, I was able to understand them more by relating the characters to people around me, and also, just seeing those same tragedies occurring in everyday life around the world. What happened then is happening right now.

HELPING the SHAKESPEAREAN STUDENT ENJOY THE PLAYS

New students when reading the plays, you'll see yourselves in many of the characters because there is an element of good and bad in all of us. What's extremely crucial in these plays is not to get discouraged by the long reading periods, relating to the characters in most cases will keep you motivated. The language can discourage you also, so be sure to go to the dictionary for words you don't know the definitions for; not doing so could result in not having the intended message understood. Another good thing about the way Professor Bates runs her class on the (S.C.U.) is she allows you to use your own creative expression to convey your perception of what each character is saying. There's really no wrong or right translation, the objective here is to you the Shakespearean Student the opportunity to discover and learn from these “Four Tragedies”, so that you will not repeat them again. There are some benefits in all of this; I will endeavor to high-light just some to help to open your eyes.

- You'll be coming out of your cell once a week to engage in group studies, breaking the cycle of isolation in your cell all day.
- You'll have a weekly Structured Study Lesson to get you through the week if you have a problem with boredom throughout the week.
- This program will give you a voice to relate with scenes and episodes in the plays that you may come to understand why you act or respond to life's ills as you do.
- Doing something positive can help you channel your anger and confusion in more meaningful and peaceful ways.
- This program can help you with the challenges of the daily warfare to your mind that will help you believe in yourself and think more creatively.
- This program can cause you to outgrow your environment where you can transcend beyond these walls, bars, fears, or our personal insecurities.
- You will receive a Certificate of Completion when you are done. You can show those you love or the Court System you've done something positive with your time and energy.

WHAT DID I GET OUT OF THE PROGRAM?

I'm always trying to enhance my knowledge of new things and the possibility of greater sources of empowerment. So, in my heart, I knew I could tackle this Shakespeare Program, to grow and learn from it. As I read the plays and studied the characters closely, I came to realize I saw myself in many of the characters. I did at times get weary with some of the acts and scenes that were long, so I took short breaks and never allowed myself to become discouraged.

There are emotions of envy, jealousy, power plays, moments of extreme manipulation, murder, love, romance, all of which I know all too well. Being able to engage in group dialogue with my classmates, I realized that I liked these plays a lot. But, to think back to 2003, when it all first began, I didn't sign on, I now regret doing so because it was a great opportunity to learn and teach, and also to grow and expand my mind. A mind at work stays actively alive, but a mind at rest and idle, is aimless, and easy to decay into nothingness. Here's a few highlights of how the program impacted and benefited me as a student:

- Developed a greater thirst for challenging my self to embrace new things.
- Gave me an additional structure to what studies and work I do daily to stay focused and mentally sane.
- The program got me out to interact socially once a week, breaking up the effects of too much isolation in these cells.
- The class' dialogue helped me keep mentally and intellectually sharp and on my toes, so the verbal exchanges helped me renew my oratorical skills.
- It helped me channel and release my anger by constantly being actively trying to grasp the language of those times.
- The studies helped me think more positive about people who I always think the worst about at first meeting.
- It enabled me to re-write the plays in my own way, or that the clearest articulated versions of them made me appreciate the writing all the more.
- The satisfaction of earning my Certificate of Completion for the program, and graduating to become a Group Leader and now Shakespearean Assistant.

DID SHAKESPEARE FREE ME?

Imagine that. I once had said that Shakespeare wasn't going to get me out of prison, so why should get involved? Well, listen to this dear student...and I hope you over-stand my vision about this, because this is how I see this; but yes – I am still physically in a prison.

However, on 10/1/09, Professor Bates, the Facilitator of the Shakespeare Program, and a Media Group from California, conducted video interviews of (4) graduates of the program, for the purpose of making a documentary-type film or movie about the Shakespeare Program, with the intent of encouraging further participation, being able to let my voice be heard beyond these hallowed white prison walls. This symbolically signified to me that somehow Shakespeare had freed me from the SCU and prison. My voice, my words, my ideas, is out there, while I still am yet here sitting in this unit, my face and words are in the hands of some good people who can give my expression freedom. The other men may feel the exact same way now that their voices have been set free, to touch the souls, hearts, and minds of future Shakespearean students.

I am glad that the opportunity was given to me now, because every time that the video is viewed somewhere I will be out there among the living; I am humbled by this experience.

CAN SHAKESPEARE SAVE A LIFE?

This environment can be very depressing and brings many to the point of suicide, while at the same time, the antagonism between guards and prisoners can spark uncontrollable rage. A rage that could lead unfortunately to someone losing their life, this program, if embraced wholeheartedly, can be used to combat idleness or relieve the many environmental problems that permeate these places.

Yes, Shakespeare can help you to save your life, the life of another, or prevent you from going over the edge and/or off the deep end and kill another. Honestly though, Shakespeare will not affect everybody the exact same way. Everybody cannot or will not be saved, there are even those who don't want to be; so we will leave that to God who we all surrender to.

MY REDEMPTION CAME

Why did I prepare this message? Being a servant of the common and the uncommon, I wanted to give something back for what has been given me, a small, yet heartfelt contribution in dedication to and for a program I have grown to admire. This is the least that I could do. My redemption has come, and I will continue to use it whenever and wherever the opportunity arises to contribute something positive; I am hoping that this message wasn't constructed all in vain. Those of you who come into contact with this, please share it with your friends or potential students, and may you embrace Shakespeare as I have; and enjoy the learning.

"Opposition to the truth is inevitable, especially if it takes the form of a new idea, but the degree of resistance can be diminished by giving thought not only to the aim but to the method of approach. Avoid a frontal attack on a long-established position, instead, seek to turn it by flank movement, so that a more penetrable side is exposed to thrust the truth."

(B.H. Liddell Hart – 1895- 1970)

Bro. Khalfani Malik Khaldun,
#874304, (Leonard McQuay), B-104, (SCU),
P.O. 1111, - W.V.C.F.,
Carlisle, IN. 47838

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