

"WHAT DOES IT MEAN...FAMILY?"

I have struggled with the compilation of this blog for weeks now, trying to format into words what it is I truly wish to say. So much is on my mind and so much I want to express, and write about. I have said, it many times before, as a prisoner our voice can be easily extinguished by prison staff, so to have a blogsite is not something to be taking lightly. I am so honored to have this privilege bestowed upon me, so I always try to post subjects that have an impact on prison issues or society as a whole. However, lately, I have felt mentally stagnant; blah, and I have no clue how to break the funk. So I will simply talk about what I have been thinking about for these past few weeks, and sometimes it is so easy to express these thoughts mentally, but so very hard to manifest those same thoughts into words. Anyway, here goes.....

I had a conversation with a friend and she asked me what was my definition of "FAMILY?" A simple enough question on the surface, nevertheless, when I went to answer her question I found myself stuck for a proper way to reply. For so long, I thought family simply meant the family you were born into, your blood line; kinship, all that, because that was my immature interpretation of the issue. But as I contemplated the question on a constant for days, thinking back over my life and especially these past 17 years of incarceration, I now know that to be an incomplete and misinformed analogy of what family "TRULY" means. And for me besides the bond that I shared with my mama, the true interpretation of what "FAMILY" really means, for me, comes in the form of Sandra. Not my blood relative (Not biologically mine), not my kinfolk- nevertheless, she is the only family I have.

I was in segregation for almost 3 years (2007-2009) and it was some of my darkest days ever, in my entire incarceration. Prison is hard with family support and love, but with the absence of that, it is evenmore dismal. Back then, it seemed like I was at my breaking point, that I could take no more, of, any of it and I truly felt like giving up. To be in such a spot without one person to talk to, or to tell you that no matter how bad it gets I got you, and love me. The pain was almost unbearable.

And as I look back on it now, it's so easy to see it, man is not meant to live alone, to not love nor be loved. My heart was aching with the pain of loneliness and when I could take no more, I prayed and asked God to send me somebody to love and somebody that could and would love me back. Someone that would know my past, my flaws, faults, mistakes and pains; and knowing all that, regardless of all that, look into my heart and see the truth within the man. Knowing that I am worthy.

That is what I prayed for sitting in that hell hole and I kid you not not long after, Sandra, wrote me. In my darkest hour, when I was so tired of it all, my angel came into my life. I don't tell her all this, don't won't her head to get to big! (: . She is the love of my life, and not in the romantic sense of the word, but in the sense that she has accepted me for all that I was and all that I am, and will become. She tells me all the time, no matter what, I am here, and I ain't going anywhere. Not a moment since 2007, have I not felt blessed and loved by this beautiful woman/person. However, I could tell you about some of the neglect and abuse she has giving me lately, but I want air her many flaws for the world to read. SMILE. I have painted this picture of a Saint, so I shall let you all hold on to those wonderful thoughts of Sandra! (:

But seriously, this is the power of love! This is family!! We have to live and love like it is our last time. i have learned that, "You can be dollar poor but emotionally rich with one good friend". I have also, learned with, Sandra, love that the best way to see a person is not look at them.

Prisoners are not perfect, and for most people our imperfections are our perfections. You have to be willing to see a person without looking at them. for the adventurer out there reading this, don't just read our blogs, or just leave comments; pick a prisoner and befriend them. You can get a P O Box, use a fictitious last name and write them on a personal level, because as much as we might share in our blogs, there is so much more that we don't. So things are very personal and though we might not mind sharing with one, we don't wish to share with all. so pick one prisoner, that you feel you may be able to correspond with and learn each other.

It doesn't have to be about romance, you can set boundaries right out the door and you both keep it real and true, to each other. And build a friendship based on honesty, trust, loyalty and respect. (That is what I would like to have with Sandra, but she is to mean, and she always picks on, tells me I stink all the time-that ain't right! (:) I know some of you may be....NEVER! However, it takes ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Challenge yourself to be extraordinary, because anybody can be ordinary.

Before I switch subjects, let me say this; family isn't just your blood, or the family you're born into, family is what you amke it. Who loves you and whom you love. Love your family, whoever, that may be, and adobt a prisoner (:, because everybody needs friendship and companionship. How you treat a prisoner today can have serious importance on his or her future. SUBJECT SWITCH.....

Marteze Harris #161543
Waupun Correctional Institution
Post Office Box 351
Waupun, Wisconsin
53963