

FAMILY V. RELATIVES

There are some experiences in life that will make you evaluate how you view things. Incarceration obviously has placed such a permanent impression on my mind that I'll never think as I once did. Losses, pain and maturity contributes as well to me analyzing everything to minute details. Prison robs you of the luxury of making mistakes or having bad judgment. A free person may make a mistake and it will be determined to be just that, however if a prisoner makes a mistake its categorized as a pattern. I tell people that I used all my mistakes up prior to coming to prison. Now I have to strive to live life as close to perfection as humanly possible. However my recent evaluation had nothing to do with my doing. I was completely humbled by all of you who've signed petitions and brought shirts supporting my release. The numbers boggled my mind and touched my heart sincerely. I thank all of you and I'll forever live my life honoring your belief in me deserving my freedom. What also inspired much thought was the petitions noticeably missing. I had to ponder on the reason and question what haven't I done thus far that would encourage support. The answer I came up with was its not about me as much as its about what category people place me in. I realize now I was being presumptuous in my thinking when I was included some people, in my campaign for freedom. I did this predicated strictly on them being relatives. Once I started categorizing the relationships I shared with some of these people, I concluded there is a distinct difference between **FAMILY** and **RELATIVES**! I know this concept seems foreign to many of you but bare with me for a minute. A relative is anybody who is related to you by blood or affinity/marriage. There is no other factor that could make a person a relative. Family takes on a much stronger and deeper meaning. Yes, some relatives can also be your family but gone for me is the notion that all relatives are your family. That form of thinking would undermine all of you who support me. My family has grown exponentially. Family obviously refers to those that share your blood, however the true binding factor is being united by certain convictions and common affiliations. This is why we can feel so close to friends and mates we choose to be in our lives over relatives that we had no say in the matter. Please don't take this as an indictment on all relatives, to the contrary its a call to appreciate and celebrate the relatives that fulfill the requirements of being family as well. Time and ink precludes me from listing those of you who I know are my family, respect for my Grandmother prevents me from saying anything about those I now know only as relatives. She always said, "If you can't say anything good don't say anything at all." This revelation leaves me forever silent on that topic.

To those who I love I say another year has disappeared leaving all to wonder about twelve months of previous affairs. Adding up accomplishments and noting what was left undone. Celebrating births and mourning the passing of loved ones. Finding comfort in memories as they keep us secured to our past, while fighting some thoughts as certain pains forever last. The beginning of the year is a starting point to do things different, prepare yourself for a change. No matter how good your thought last year was its foolish not wanting to broaden your range. Push yourself and I give you my word I'll