

DEATH

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PRISON

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At about 1400 hundred hours [6.24.95], death overcame the life of a black prisoner known to me only as "Peanut". While playing basketball in a tournament game/s/ in what had to be the hottest day of ^{The} ~~this~~ year. Peanut suffered what was initially and unofficially called a massive heartattack. It was later reported that he suffered a heat stroke. After word reached the yard that Peanut had died after he ^{having} ~~had~~ passed out on the basketball court, black prisoners began to congregate in large numbers. It appeared as if blacks were grouping up for a ~~race~~ riot [anxious whites and mexicans were hanging out of the windows and doors watching-with tensed faces]; ~~then,~~ ^{then} I noticed three high-ranking prison guards, as my two students and I approached. We were told that we [the entire group-assembled] would be allowed to remain on the yard during count [of which was fifteen minutes away] and be allowed to view the body before the coroner took Peanut away. While there were low-level murmuring that the guards & medical staff had allowed Peanut to lay on the ground and had provided negligent to inadequate medical treatment, the majority of the group seemed to be calm. In my entire tenure as a captive (P.O.W.) never have I witnessed such compassion demonstrated by prison officials over the death of a prisoner, black or white. Obviously, the staff feared a riot. The Chaplain came along and attempted to get this large group [close to 80% of the black prison population] to interact with him, to say something.

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After the first hour of standing under the blazing Arizona sun, the solemn mood of the men began to turn restless and irritable, a potential for violence. I recalled as a child hearing older blacks accuse whites [doctors and nurses] of deliberately allowing a black person in their care to unnecessarily die, due to ~~mal~~ ^{NEGLIGENT AND} ~~treatment~~ ^{MALPRACTICE}. Their Gross Negligents AND MALPRACTICE

While the body was being brought out, the Chaplain was saying whatever it is, religious people say when they walk in front of a procession carrying a dead body. When a prisoner stopped the proceedings along with about half of the guys and began to kneel down and pray out loud, The Chaplain, ^{was} visibly caught off guard, stopped talking, watched and listened and so did my group. After the praying was over and the body was put in the corner's little car, the Chaplain advised us that the Warden had authorized a special service at the Chapel. As the Chaplain's clerk, I went along to open up the chapel. More than a few prisoners had something to say, I spoke a few philosophical words, but, I was well aware that this group of tearful guys wanted ^{APPEASMENT} comfort and not ^{emphatic} words of ^{cold} truth. Amazing, even in prison among harden, abandoned human beings, the advent of death is still a Commanding Performance.

by Brother Achim