

24 July 2017

Dear Jimmy

A note to say that I had shaken off a liver cancer for several years after the doctors at Boston Medical Center did some cutting then burning then a number of chemotherapy sessions. But the cancer named Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HHC) has now metastasized to the Lymph Nodes. As I might have written to you in the past, I contracted Hepatitis-C during one of the visits to the prison's dental infirmary. I wrote an editorial about the dentist not sterilizing the instruments under the headline "Dangerous Tools" which led officials to fire me as editor of the inmate newspaper. It was too late for me, but I probably saved the lives of many inmates. At Boston Medical Center Oncologist Kaven Hartshorn says I have no more than three years to live even if I respond to the current chemotherapy treatment. On page five of his report, Hartshorn says, "Overall poor prognosis due to advance HHC with estimated survival, assuming response to treatment, at 3 years." There are a number of clinical drug trials taking place in the cancer research space, but, because I am a prisoner, I cannot participate in these new drug trials. Under state and federal law, researchers and pharmaceutical companies are prohibited from using inmates as subjects - laws that stem from the medical profession's abuses of the past, most notably the Tuskegee experiments in which negroes were injected the syphilis and other viruses then not offered medical intervention. Jimmy, the state has taken not only my health but thirty five years. I would like you to write a letter of support to the parole board. I cannot imagine you would allow me to die in a cold prison infirmary, weighing 80 pounds, under six wool blankets. You once intimated that you would write a letter to the parole board when we met and shook hands in the prison's visiting room - when I was visiting with Bob Terk and you had a client whom you had to visit. When I came up for parole in 1998 I only saw an uncommonly nasty opposition from the public prosecutor's office. It seems as if the public prosecutor's office has played every card in the deck

not only to keep me in prison but to protect your career. But the hour is far too late for that conversation. I only wish to surround myself with family and some very good friends who I have met and who I believe love me. Jimmy, I ain't no different today than I was when our paths first crossed. The essence of my spirit remains the same despite experiencing a life in which the sun seldom came out. I have had to maneuver and run through life's obstacle course like a blind man, by instincts and wit and sensibility as well as having faith and believing that my father's deity was protecting me. If I am blessed today with a healthy spirit, so many men (I imagine women too) deteriorate in prison after only a short number of years, I owe that healthiness to my spirituality. Jimmy, I am living every moment. I am not dreaming of a future that may never come. Nor am I living in the past, replaying what better routes I might have taken in my journey home. I am living present in this very moment, this moment and no other past or future. I did not choose to live this life of incarceration. But I have extracted every piece of goodness this life has offered me, cast away all that is bad and decaying, and made this best I could. There is a Persian proverb: If a man is asleep someone can wake him up. If a man is only pretending to be asleep, then nobody can wake him up. I believe that many in the public prosecutor's office have long pretended to be asleep. Be well, Jimmy. Keep me in your prayers.

In brotherhood,

Benjie