

My visit with PP Jalil A. Muntaqim

October 22, 2017

My Sunday morning wake-up call was set to 5am. I hopped in a taxi to JFK to pick up the rental. The drive to Sullivan Correctional Facility was a little less than 2 hours. Jalil had asked Mogadishu & I to pick up the remainder of his monthly food allowance, 17lbs. So once I arrived, the officer asked me "First time?". I said yes so he instructed me to place all the items on the counter after I completed the package drop-off slip. When he read the name he says "Oh. Bottom. Is Jalil his middle name? I've never seen that name before." I told him yeah & continued with my drop-off. I wasn't aware that some items had to be hermetically sealed so the bread & the cookies were returned to me. Once I was escorted to the visiting room area & assigned a table with chairs, D3, I waited patiently for Jalil. He arrived close to 20 minutes later (although it seemed way longer than that). He walks up to the table & we exchange greetings of Asalaamu Alaikum. He says "Get up, give me a hug" so I comply, with a smile of course. He wonders about Mogadishu and thanks me for traveling by myself to see him. It was our first time meeting so our conversations were everywhere. I talked to him about my Saturday night, waiting up for my children to return home from hanging out with friends. I told him it was my son's 1st time going to a party with friends. Jalil asked his age & then "Is he a late bloomer? I was partying at age 12!!!" I Laughed Out Loud!!! 😊 Jalil shared personal stories about his youth, his mom, stepdad, his biological father, sisters, brothers & his great-grandfather, who had the same love of science as Jalil has. Jalil talked about specific experiences and events which led him to embark on the journey to discover his path & eventually led to his spiritual growth & development. I shared stories of my childhood, growing up in a culturally & spiritually rich environment, thanks to my mom. We talked about my tomorrows (my children), my challenges, growth, the constant joys and pains of Mommyhood. He talked about his daughter, who was in the womb when he was captured, her children & her grandchildren. We grabbed a few items from the vending machines, some real brain food and started our work session. In between us bouncing ideas off of one another and Jalil breaking down the particulars of the U.N. International Jurist Campaign proposal, we found time to crack a few jokes, shed a few tears and to acknowledge the inspirational spirit & energy that we felt in our space. At 3 p.m. on the dot, the officer shouts "Time to go, visiting hours are over" with all the callousness he could muster. We hugged and he kissed my forehead, like a father would his daughter. I gathered my things, picked up my visitor's form and waited to be escorted back to the reception area. I looked over at Jalil, I said ASA, he gave me the greetings back, touched his heart and I touched mine. I can't begin to describe or verbalize how I felt leaving him behind. Jalil put me to work, assigned us a "to-do list" and I gladly accepted because I'm committed to doing all that I can, in any and every way that I can, to see the gates open for Jalil & all of our Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War. His dream of "spending a day with my daughter, outside of these walls..." has to become a reality and with the power of the people, we'll make it happen. FREE'EM ALL!!!

***"Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity."***

***— Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth***

Valerie Haynes, NEPPC