

Recognizing incarcerated veterans

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Approximately 200,000 men and women leave the U.S. armed forces every year and return to civilian life. November is the month in which we honor our veterans by recognizing their service and courage to protect our freedoms.

A mindset geared toward service resonates with many veterans at San Quentin. Through service to their incarcerated community, they find purpose, brotherhood, camaraderie, and honor. Whether in Veterans Healing Veterans, Veterans Group SQ, Color Guard, Veterans Information Program, or in other self-help groups or church, being of service provides veterans with a sense of self-worth and value despite being incarcerated.

Resident Damou Evans, a veteran incarcerated at The Q, said the stigma of incarceration can be especially hard for veterans because there is often a view that they should be held to a higher standard, that they should have known better than to commit a crime.

For Evans, serving and defending his country was to honor family members who served before him. Now he serves his incarcerated community by volunteering in the church.

"I was always raised, 'God, family, and country,'" Evans said of his priorities.

Growing up in a rough and violent neighborhood, resident Louis Sâle credited the Army for instilling in him discipline, integrity, and principles, values that he did not have while growing up. Two active duty deployments gave him a sense of brotherhood and a purpose to "have their backs."

"I can be of service still to the veteran community and ... to my country," Sâle said. "Today, a sense of service for me has evolved into giving back to the recovery community."

One third of America's veterans report being arrested at least once, according to the Council on Criminal Justice. Various programs are designed to help veterans who have encountered the criminal justice system, but the programs

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Photos by Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

NINTH ANNUAL BATTLE OF THE WARRIORS

By Timothy Hicks
Sports Editor

The Golden State Warriors organization visited San Quentin on Sept. 27 for the annual Warriors vs. Warriors basketball game. Highlighting those in attendance were one of the "splash brothers," guard Klay Thompson, along with legendary point guard Chris "CP3" Paul.

The future Hall of Famers watched their team — comprised of front office and training staff, including several former NBA players — battle on the Lower Yard's court with the San Quentin Warriors team.

The SQ Warriors rose to challenge this time and beat the organization with four NBA championships, 85–80, in a full-court matchup complete with an NBA referee. The prison's marquee basketball team avenged their loss to GS from last season.

"To see Klay, Chris Paul, and the Warriors was exciting to me," said Tyler "Drizzy" Cooper, the SQ Warriors' 6'5" center. "I never been that close to stars before in my life. For them to come down here and show us all that love is a blessing and it gives us hope."

A host of other GS Warriors players, coaches, and staff were also courtside enjoying the performances both teams put on in the



Top: Klay Thompson poses with the San Quentin and Golden State Warriors teams. Above: All star Klay Thompson and future hall of famer Chris Paul focus intently on a game of chess with residents.

epic basketball battle on a sunny Wednesday morning.

GS Warriors General Manager Mike Dunleavy, guard Moses Mooney, and newly drafted rookies Brandin Podziemski and Trayce Jackson-Davis were courtside watching the SQ

Dubbs grind out a victory, thanks in part to all the blocked shots by Cooper.

Wearing a suit matching the Warrior colors, Acting Warden Oak Smith stood by the bench

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Alameda County D.A. forum sheds new light on resentencing

By Joshua Strange
Senior Editor

The Alameda District Attorney's office and the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights hosted a town hall-style meeting at San Quentin to inform residents about legal pathways for resentencing under a slate of new California laws.

SQNews's Timothy Hicks emceed the event for residents who gathered in the prison's Garden Chapel on October 10 to hear presentations about resentencing laws (1172.5 and 1172.7) that allow CDCR or prosecutors to initiate proceedings.

"Step one of being resentenced is ... learning what to do and what not to do," explained Kwixuan Maloof of the Alameda DA's office.

Besides resentencing under 1172.5, incarcerated people can get legal relief from bias in conviction and sentencing through the groundbreaking Racial Justice Act, which expands eligibility starting Jan. 1, 2024.

"We've found some evidence of pretty rampant bias in how charging decisions were being made," said Cynthia Chandler, policy chief for DA Pamela Price. She said the previous administration had a systematic practice of being "hyper-coercive" by charging every single possible enhancement and charge.

Chandler noted there was resistance initially from judges for these initiatives because

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Bay Area nonprofit teams up with San Quentin News to host nine-county forum on prosecutor-initiated resentencing

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

On October 12, 2023 SQNews teamed up with For The People, a nonprofit organization that advocates for prosecutor-initiated resentencing, to host a group of district attorneys for candid discussions with residents in the Garden Chapel.

The goal of the historic gathering was to discuss post-conviction rehabilitation, accountability, and ways to improve the resentencing process. It was perhaps the first time DAs have come into a prison for such discussions with the incarcerated.

"I anticipated a rift. A clear divide. Like a mini trial," said resident David Rodriguez. He noted that leading up to the forum, he was nervous about how the prosecutors would regard him.

After talking with prosecutors and hearing their perspectives, Rodriguez said that he had more insight into what prosecutors are looking for when they see someone's file.

"I felt included, like my insights matter. I hope they received [from this forum] the

insight that they were looking for to assist those people who are deserving of consideration for resentencing," Rodriguez said.

The prosecutors were from the nine counties that are part of a \$26 million pilot project funded by Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration to expand resentencing efforts for selected incarcerated people.

Joshua Strange, SQNews's senior editor, emceed the event with Hillary Blout, For The People's founder and executive director, and Thanh Tran, a policy advocate who was formerly incarcerated at The Q.

Another resident who participated was Steven Warren, a facilitator of several rehabilitative groups and an ardent advocate for social justice. He noted that the forum was a great opportunity to collaborate toward promoting change, growth, and public safety.

"This is the basis of transformation — coming together in a community to collaborate. I hope that those who are enlightened here today take

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Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

For The People Founder and Executive Director Hillary Blout begin her introductions.

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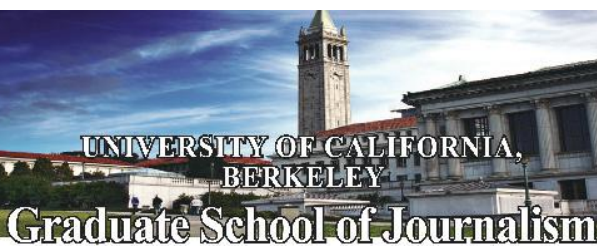
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PROFILE

ALY TAMBOURA: FROM INCARCERATED JOURNALIST TO POWERHOUSE OF JUSTICE REFORM

San Quentin News played pivotal role at 'the heart of the Tamboura transformation'

By Liu Xinxiang
Contributing Writer

San Quentin State Prison is California's oldest prison and one of the best-known penitentiaries in the world. San Quentin News, written, edited, and published inside the prison, has earned a reputation of distinction and is a leader in the prison journalism movement.

I am a Chinese student who graduated from a British university, and I participated in a two-week seminar in July and August taught by Professor William Drummond from UC Berkeley. The class examined how prison journalism has affected the way people see the issue of incarceration. Specifically, we were asked to look at what an individual writer's published work taught us about prison life.

From the array of former San Quentin News writers, I picked Aly Tamboura, who after leaving prison dedicated himself to the pursuit of criminal justice reform. I selected Tamboura not just for his academic achievements while incarcerated, but also because he demonstrates the link between rehabilitation and mastering the art of communication. This mastery lies at the heart of his success.

Tamboura, born in the United States to a family from Mali, in west Africa, was an owner of a geotechnical company when he was sentenced to 14 years in prison for assault. During his incarceration, he discovered the transformative power of media communication by working with the San Quentin News and by participating in The Last Mile program. After 12 years behind bars, he was paroled and emerged with a new purpose, ultimately becoming the strategic adviser of the Justice Accelerator Fund. His inspiring progress highlights the intricate interplay between rehabilitation, media communication, and personal growth.

From my perspective, the pivotal juncture in Tamboura's destiny was his involvement with The Last Mile. This



Courtesy Aly Tamboura

Aly Tamboura played a huge part in the early years of the SQNews in 2008 and powered through many obstacles during incarceration. He later emerge with renew purpose in the field of criminal justice reform.

pioneering program offers computer coding and other technical training within correctional facilities, coupled with post-incarceration mentorship. This nonprofit organization aims to curtail recidivism by imparting marketable skills to incarcerated people, thus enabling them to secure meaningful employment opportunities upon release.

The Last Mile program maintains an extensive online presence through its comprehensive website, which serves as a central hub for news, updates, and resources related to its activities. The organization effectively utilizes social media platforms and well-crafted news releases to engage with the media and

the public. Success stories of rehabilitated individuals are prominently featured, showcasing their accomplishments. The program consistently garners media attention from reputable outlets and actively participates in events and webinars to share information openly and effectively.

This program and the incarcerated people involved exemplify the fusion of media communication and rehabilitation, serving as a model for effecting positive societal change. Tamboura himself mastered Java script and other web languages, which enabled him to "have enough money to rent an apartment, buy clothes to go on interviews, and do things to get back on your feet." This made Tamboura reborn from the ashes like a phoenix, completing his personal rehabilitation.

From the perspective of a Chinese individual with limited knowledge of the U.S. prison system, the heart of the Tamboura transformation lies with the San Quentin News, where Tamboura began working in 2008 when the paper returned from its decades-long hiatus. This paper casts a spotlight on the lives and circumstances of San Quentin residents. This amplified awareness paves the way for residents to enhance various facets of their lives. San Quentin News bridges the gap between incarcerated individuals and the public. By showcasing their redemption narratives, achievements, and challenges, the wider world could gradually come to comprehend and even empathize with them, potentially leading to heightened support. These dynamics contribute to the advancement of incarcerated people's rehabilitation.

In the convergence of rehabilitation and media communication, exemplified by San Quentin News and Tamboura, emerges a transformative narrative of personal growth and societal change. Their journey underscores the profound impact of communication in shaping perceptions, bridging gaps, and fostering rehabilitation.

Exoneration expert Justin Brooks expounds on the complexity of wrongful convictions

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

The co-founder of the California Innocence Project says the toughest part of his job is rejecting someone he believes is wrongly convicted when he cannot prove it.

The project has secured freedom for 38 people since San Diego attorney Justin Brooks launched the organization in 1999. They had collectively spent 570 years in prison, Brooks told the San Diego Union-Tribune.

The National Registry of Exonerations lists about 3,300 wrongly convicted people as having regained their freedom, saving them from a staggering 29,101 years in prison since 1989, according to the article. Compared to the nationwide prison population of 1.2 million, exoneration numbers remain small. In 2022 the registry recorded 234 cases, a record for a single year, the Tribune article by John Wilkens noted.

Brooks regularly rejects cases for which his team sees no way of winning in court. The road to reversals is often steep — a majority of wrongful convictions remain undetected and intact because of a lack of admissible proof of innocence.

"That's what burns me out more than anything," Brooks said in the article. "It's horrible saying 'no' to people, and I say 'no' to people all the time."

No one plea bargains her way to Death Row, Brooks thought while reading about Marilyn Mulero, a woman in Illinois awaiting execution. Brooks visited Mulero in prison. She declared her innocence to Brooks and explained to him that her lawyer had persuaded her to plead guilty in a murder case. Mulero's guilty plea took 27 years to unwind before she was exonerated.

Mulero's case set Brooks on a course of pursuing innocence cases by co-founding the California Innocence Project, located at the California Western School of Law in San Diego.



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

San Diego attorney Justin Brooks says the toughest part of his job is rejecting applicants whose wrongful convictions he cannot prove.

"People don't think about the fact that it is our collective criminal justice system, and we're all responsible for how good it is, or how bad it is," Brooks said. "Every time somebody goes to prison, it's in my name and your name. It's in everyone's name. We're paying the taxes, electing the people who are making these decisions. The criminal justice system is designed to protect and serve us. So how's it doing?"

From poor legal work by trial lawyers to shoddy science, false confessions, and simple bad luck, Brooks has seen it all.

"When you represent an innocent person and you don't win, it stays with you forever because you'll just

be thinking, 'What did I do wrong?'" Brooks said.

Some recent legislative changes have benefitted exoneration work. California used to have the country's toughest standard required to overturn convictions. Any new evidence needed totally to undermine the prosecution's case and unerringly point to innocence, Brooks noted.

Lobbying efforts by the California Innocence Project have aligned California standards with the rest of the country. New evidence must now demonstrate only the likelihood that if a jury had heard it, they probably would have acquitted the defendant.

The 57-year-old Brooks hopes for further reforms outlined in his new book, "You Might Go to Prison, Even Though You're Innocent." The book features the Mulero case and many similar cases with which Brooks has dealt.

A chapter about mistaken identification features an exonerate later freed by DNA evidence. "I write about identifications a lot in the book because they are the leading cause of wrongful convictions," Brooks said.

Former federal Judge Lee Sarokin called the book "a litany of examples of how our criminal justice system makes wrongful convictions so easy and setting them aside so difficult."

Born in the Bronx, NY, to a British mother and an Australian father, Brooks earned a bachelor's degree in business and went to law school aiming to work as a corporate attorney.

A professor of Brooks' at the Washington College of Law in D.C. took his class to a prison to meet incarcerated persons, which changed Brooks' life.

"Thinking about all the old cases, thinking about the students who worked on them, thinking about the legislation we got passed — that was a good feeling, a good retrospective ... that I've done some good things with my law degree," Brooks said.

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PROGRAM



ERASING THE PAST

*Tattoo removal
program debuts
at San Quentin*

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

First thing in the morning on the first day of September, Daniel Garcia lined up on San Quentin's Lower Yard with 39 others, ready to get rid of tattoos he has had for decades.

For some, their tattoos were outward displays of previous criminal activity or gang affiliations. All were striving to transform into their true selves and show their change from within. Garcia was ready to take another step toward leaving behind his former life.

"I want to show who I am on the inside today to reflect on the outside as well," he shared.

Growing up in Compton, California, Garcia received his first tattoo at age 15; his last was inspired by the song "En Estos Dias," a Spanish corrido (Mexican story-telling ballad) about the prison experience, which he said resonated with him at that time in his life. His

values, however, have changed substantially since then. With a parole suitability hearing scheduled for March, he wants to do everything in his power to provide examples of his progress.

Fellow resident Shann Sevier also got his first tattoo at 15. Now, he and Garcia are both in their early 40s and working every day to reform themselves.

Sevier has had tattoos removed from his hands, wrists, and neck and would have done more had it been allowed. Garcia has ink all over his body, he said.

"I want to prove through my actions that I'm willing to have the change be reflected on the outside from [what] is being done on the inside," said Garcia.

Sevier is a former gang member. Now 43, he decided that he didn't want to keep ruining his body or be perceived by the public as that "old gang member," because he is different today.

The tattoos "kept me attached to a dysfunctional lifestyle that I am trying to separate myself from. Today, I would like people to see me as a caring and respectful human being, not who I used to be," Sevier said.

The Mobile Tattoo Removal unit includes Chris Bendinelli, a registered ER nurse, and laser technician Travis Cole. Since



Photos by Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

Top Left: SQ Resident shows his tattoo after the first treatment. Above: Daniel Garcia takes his turn for tattoo removal.

2018, they been travelling to all 32 California state prisons, some federal facilities, and a few fire camps. They remove tattoos from the elbow down and the neck up for incarcerated people close to being released.

"This is much more fulfilling. I get to see guys crying for joy," Bendinelli said about coming inside prisons and working with the incarcerated population.

He added he would advise others to take this step too. "Give yourself an opportunity to allow others to see you as God created you," he concluded.

Correctional Officer M. Vesely stood by as upwards of 40 men lined up for the free service. "I think it will help them with finding employment when they get out," Vesely said.

Tattoo removal coordinator Kemiko Tolon discussed the

impact tattoos have on those getting out of prison.

"The tattoo removal program was created for incarcerated people to assist them with removing tattoos that are highly visible because we don't want them being judged," she said.

Garcia said he would like to wear long sleeves and feels "this is an amazing program, what CDCR is doing for us."

In an interview with SQNews, Steve F. said he tried to get his tattoos removed 15 years ago for his children, but once he was off parole, he couldn't afford it.

"This is a huge opportunity to get it removed for free because I'm a different person," said Steve, who did not want to give his full name. Asked to describe what removing a tattoo feels like, he said, "It felt like hot bee stings."

Change Your Mind seminar arrives at SQ

Randy C. Thompson
Staff Writer

During the first weekend of October, instructors from NeuroChangeSolutions came to San Quentin to teach residents their Change Your Mind curriculum, created by best-selling author Dr. Joe Dispenza.

NeuroChangeSolutions was started to teach personal-change seminars with a basis in neurology to companies and organizations. This was the first time the renowned curriculum was taught at a prison in the United States. The goal of the Change Your Mind curriculum is to teach people how to recondition their minds and bodies in an effort to make permanent, positive change in their lives.

The nonprofit Give to Give brought the seminar to San Quentin. It was taught in two seven-hour sessions over one weekend.

"We are here and invested because everyone here has an open heart and can change," said Rose Caiola, chairperson for Give to Give. "When we teach this, one person who is impacted can go on to make impacts on other people. What we are doing can impact the entire community."

The curriculum began by saying that 95% of who a person is is formed by habitual thoughts. It also explained that 90% of a person's daily thoughts are the same thoughts as the previous days. Such habitual thinking results in the same choices, the same experiences, and the same feelings, which creates a self-reinforcing cycle of thought and action. Therefore, to change their lives, people must break those habits to have purposeful thoughts, make better choices, create new experiences, and feel better.

The tools taught at the seminar are aimed at recondition the body (habits) to a new mind (thinking) in order to reach permanent change. The tools include breathing to center yourself, exchanging negative thoughts for their positive counterparts, stopping yourself in the moment, and mentally rehearsing who/what you want to be.

Sonia Pena, the primary speaker of the seminar, frequently offered the summary: "In order to change, you will have to think greater than the body, time, and the environment. In the end, what you want is to be in charge."

Before joining the Give to Give team, Pena worked in marketing. She came to the program at a point in her life when she realized that it is not normal to feel stress and anger every day. She tried yoga and running without significant change, until she came across Dr. Dispenza's book and attended his program.

At that moment, she made a commitment. She quit her job and made her mission to spread the program. She has done so for seven years now, entering prisons to teach the seminar, first in Mexico and now in the United States.

"For me, this work started as a personal change and that path helped me to apply these tools so that it became transforming," Pena said. "What really makes the difference is that [the Change Your Mind curriculum] is based on science. We were never taught how our brain and body works together."

Dr. Dispenza, international lecturer and author of four best-selling books, based his curriculum on the science of how the brain and body work together. He created the course for corporations, but seeing the effect it had on people, decided to tweak



Dante D. Jones // SQNews

Participants answer prompts in their "Change Your Mind" books.

it so it could be offered for other communities.

In 2021, it was introduced to schools, foundations, and prisons. The seminar was conducted in four prisons in and around México City.

To spread his work, Dr. Dispenza created NeuroChangeSolutions and began training people to teach the curriculum. Administrators at CDCR reached out to learn more after hearing about the program's potential. As a result, Give to Give was asked to come to SQ.

Residents who attended seemed to appreciate the seminar as most returned the next day for the second session, despite Sunday NFL football being on TV.

"I thought it was informative and an exciting opportunity to learn about change and how the brain works," said Maxx Robison, who attended both sessions in the front row. "I feel like I've gained quite a bit of knowledge and

will be able to put the tools and knowledge towards making some changes with the habits I've been stuck with in my life."

When asked how the seminar compares to other programs at SQ, one attendee pointed out that most programs center on the past, such as childhood traumas and how they make you feel. The Change Your Mind seminar, addressed ways to move forward, focusing on the future one wants.

Caiola asked the participants to make a promise to themselves to follow through with their individual practices, noting that Give to Give would return at the end of October for a follow-up session to see who had stuck with the plan by practicing the tools for 30 days.

"For me, if you are able to help one person to create a positive change in their life and recognize those changes, it helps them feel better about who they are and go back into society as someone different with new agenda and new opportunity," Caiola said.

ALAMEDA

Continued from page 1

a lot of them are former prosecutors who were upset with the paradigm shift. Now they are warming up to these concepts as they see the benefits, as well as the professionalism of Price's team.

The lead attorney for Alameda's resentencing unit, Demarese Evans, said the big question in resentencing consideration is whether someone has undergone a genuine internal transformation that has moved them beyond being an "unreasonable risk" for committing another crime.

Evans described her frustration with her previous work as a public defender, where she would win cases only to see former clients return to jail on new charges after only six months to a year.

In contrast, she felt more satisfaction from collaborative court work, such as resentencing, because she saw how a non-adversarial approach facilitated accountability and transformation among her clients, which kept them from coming back to jail.

"I felt more fulfilled seeing people involved in internal transformation," Evans said. "That's one of the most important things that we look for when considering resentencing someone's case."

Chandler said their goal in collaborating with the incarcerated community is to find ways to curb violence, especially gun violence.

"[Pursuing] change in terms of how we can create a less violent world is something that we all can work together doing," Chandler said.

She said they are working with formerly incarcerated people to reduce fears among some members in the community about public safety as incarcerated people come home early due to resentencing.

"How do we build spaces of healing where people build better lives for themselves and their communities?" she asked.

Chandler said her office has been making efforts to improve services for those who have been harmed by crime, as well as for witnesses. She noted that when "people

SQ learns how to get resentenced

who are harmed are disrespected and not taken care of, then it pushes them towards radicalization" and support for mass incarceration.

"Our goal is to one day have it where in Alameda who has been harmed can participate in restorative [justice] programs," she said.

Chandler emphasized the need for those who are resentenced to give back by being role models.

"As you move forward in your journey, you're not only representing yourself, you're representing everyone that comes after." She added that each person who gets out and goes on to success and helps create thriving communities will pave the way for five or 10 others to do the same. They can also be positive examples for other counties and states.

One of those formerly incarcerated people is Philippe Kelly, who triumphantly returned to San Quentin for the first time since he paroled earlier this year after 23 years of incarceration.

Now working as a youth organizer for the Ella Baker Center, Kelly spoke about his promise to help those he left behind to get their day of freedom. "It's awesome out there. Take advantage of this. These are lifelines."

He emphasized the importance of having a good reentry plan, including specifics for the first days, weeks, and months.

"Make sure you got it together! Put that work in," advised Kelly. "Build your support system while you are still here."

He talked about the value of having people who are personally invested in your success, such as The Last Mile program was for him.

Raymond Landry, a reentry specialist with Alameda, agreed. He said for incarcerated people to show through letters of support that they have a mentor, someone to whom they can talk in order to work through problems.

Landry also advised contacting programs and transition houses early through your public defender, who can also talk with parole to make sure everything is in order, such as paying for transitional

housing. He said the homeless situation is "10 times worse than on TV," and they do not want to resentence people and have them end up homeless.

This includes plans for a job. "Jobs are plentiful out there," Landry said, "training for jobs is plentiful out there."

Besides a support system and reentry plans, they said that resentencing packets should include a remorse statement and a statement of accountability. The packet should also have an in-prison misconduct statement and certificates and chronos. It should include a résumé, a statement of faith or religion, and a "journey letter" that describes the person's life arc, complete with contributing factors and positive accomplishments. Finally, the packet should contain a detailed relapse prevention plan that shows how to handle triggers and strategies on how to stay healthy and happy.

Simelia Rogers, coordinator of the Ella Baker Center's Pathway to Freedom Project, helps people to prepare their resentencing packets.

She explained that for CDCR-initiated resentencing, the list of who has been selected is public. Due to a flaw in the process, incarcerated persons will not be notified if you are on the list although they may be contacted by their public defender's office once it goes to court.

Rogers emphasized that resentencing is not guaranteed because the court has discretion to decide. Candidates for resentencing still need to convince the judge that they are no longer a danger. She said to have materials on hand to help with expediting the process.

For DA-initiated resentencing there are two pathways: 1) "pilot project" counties that receive state money; and, 2) "open process" counties in which incarcerated persons must initiate resentencing with private resources.

In pilot counties — San Diego, Los Angeles, Riverside, Merced, Santa Clara, San Francisco, Contra Costa, Yolo, and Humboldt — the DA's office



Photos by Dante D. Jones // SQNews

is proactively looking and selecting. Rogers said that incarcerated persons who are selected will get letter from their DA. She advised talking to an assigned public defender before sending materials to the DA as anything in their possession can potentially be used as evidence for further prosecution.

By contrast, in open process counties, people have to raise awareness about their cases and suitability, through either their families or other third parties. Not every DA has the structure or staff to do resentencing. Alameda is a notable exception given that they have already resentenced 25 people in 2023 alone. The decision of whether to move forward is solely up to the DA.

Rogers said the key is putting together a quality packet with documentation that "garners their attention."

Only about 40 residents attended the town hall even though the chapel has a seating capacity of well over 300. More residents may have attended, but the open call was not properly communicated to the various guard



From top down: Residents took the opportunity for direct discussions with the visitors. Representatives of Alameda District Attorney's Office and staff from Ella Baker Center for Human Rights outside SQ's Garden Chapel.

posts.

However, the residents who attended walked away impressed. "This was really powerful," said resident Michael Keyes.

Derick Morgan of the Ella Baker Center, summarized his organization's role. "We change laws and then tell people how to use the laws. We open doors and then tell

people how to walk through those doors."

EBC has a resentencing toolkit as well as an RJA toolkit available via mail at 1419 34th Ave., Suite 202, Oakland, CA 94601. The group advised San Quentin residents to send a short, concise letter summarizing their case with bullet points and to remain patient.

PEOPLE

Continued from page 1

these solutions to others and continue to grow," Warren said. "Hope and change are on the way."

Resident Henok Rufael said that he is open to the possibilities that can come from discussions between prosecutors and incarcerated people. "I hope that they see the value in working with the incarcerated," he said.

Rufael encouraged others who are incarcerated to, "Stay open and don't allow the stigma [of incarceration] to cloud your space."

He also advised putting in the work to become productive members and successfully return to society, whether through resentencing or parole. "Learn to be accountable for your behavior. That is the one thing that you have control over," he said.

Tran noted that his journey is a testament to putting in that work as he was resentenced and paroled and is now successful serving his community. He emphasized that truth and accountability need to be a top priority.

After opening remarks, a microphone was passed around for attendees to introduce themselves. Residents shared some of that accountability

Residents share with district attorneys what rehabilitation looks like, what it doesn't



Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

District Attorneys from various California counties and staff from For The People pose outside the Garden Chapel after meeting with residents.

and truth with the prosecutors in the room by stating their names, their crimes, and their sentence lengths — many of them naming their victims. A moment of silence was held for all victims of crime.

After this, attendees gathered into small groups for discussions centered on

rehabilitative programs and what sparked transformation for the incarcerated participants.

Prosecutors were also able to share what they wanted for people to know about their jobs. They engaged in discussions with incarcerated persons whose responses could

help them with their task of safely resentencing people.

Each small group consisted of prosecutors for the nine counties, staff from For The People, San Quentin residents, and an incarcerated facilitator.

The groups shared eye-opening reflections and insightful experiences of

transformation.

Resident Nathan Venagas described his experience as a great opportunity to have open conversation with district attorneys and prosecutors. His expectation is that they will see incarcerated people in a different light.

"I felt that from them

At the closing circle, moderator Strange shared his takeaway from the forum: "True justice means having real, honest conversations about difficult topics. In this way, we can find solutions together. I am humbled and honored to be a part of that today."

VETERANS

A history of the Veterans Information Program

Program links incarcerated veterans to support services

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

San Quentin's Veteran's Information Program connects incarcerated veterans to veterans groups within the walls and with available resources outside the prison.

In April 2002, after identifying the need in California prisons, VIP was founded with the vision of supporting all incarcerated veterans with valuable information.

Before VIP, the application for veteran benefits was only obtainable through each county's veteran's office. Those application forms were difficult to obtain and geared for non-incarcerated veterans.

VIP provides a bridge between incarcerated veterans and support services through positive communication. Further offerings help veterans with the transition back into society after prison. They aim to reduce recidivism for former members of the Armed Forces.

"I want to reach vets to illuminate that the criteria for benefits and services for veterans have progressed. What precluded you in the past has changed," said VIP coordinator and SQ resident Kevin Brinkman. "Veterans' programs in other prisons need to know a source of information exists."

There are more than 5,000 incarcerated veterans in California's prison system, according to the California Senate Veterans Affairs committee.

Many veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder contend with feelings of shame, which can cause depression and isolation. In addition, some veterans find themselves without a sense of purpose, often feeling disconnected from both their military and civilian communities.

Hoping to change these mindsets upon arrival at The Q, VIP provides a welcome packet for veterans. Included in the packet are a resource book, a guidebook for the incarcerated, release forms for medical records, and release forms pertaining to military

records. The focus is on disability benefits, health care, housing, and other services accessible to veterans upon release from prison.

The welcome packet ensures that each person who identifies as a veteran has helpful information while incarcerated. Because many incarcerated veterans suffer from the intense stigmatization of having committed a crime, not all identify as vets within the prison community.

At SQ, there are approximately 140 self-identified veterans. The VIP office wants veterans here and across California to know receiving assistance from the Veterans Administration, such as healthcare registration and disability benefits, is more accessible than before the office was created.

VIP informs incarcerated veterans of changes to the resources available to them as they occur. The office maintains positive and constructive relationships with Swords to Plowshares and the Cal-Vet Department of Veterans Affairs. The Cal-Vet liaison is in communication to ensure that changes are communicated to incarcerated veterans.

Even veterans without an honorable discharge can qualify for benefits. Additionally, incarcerated veterans can now request a discharge upgrade. There are certain requirements to receiving the upgrade, but it would allow incarcerated veterans to qualify for a higher level of benefits.

"We have a lot of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who have their own unique issues like the health concerns from the burn pits," Brinkman said. "Within the last 20 years of the war on terror, the VA department is transitioning to a more inclusive and diverse population."

In Monterey, the Veterans Transition Center offers assistance with rent, benefits, counseling, emergency food, clothing, toiletries, household goods, and phone and computer access.

Incarcerated people who contact the VIP office at San Quentin will receive information for correspondence work and resources for all 58 counties. Statewide programs like Swords to Plowshares, Cal-Vet Department of Veterans Affairs, and Cal-Vet liaison connect with VIP to supply information and logistical support for interested parties.

ATTENTION ALL VETERANS

The Veterans Information Project of San Quentin is here to serve you!

Created in April 2002 after a Senate White Paper and DD53/01 Dissemination of Information Regarding Veterans Benefits, the goal of the Veterans Information Project is to be of service to all incarcerated veterans.

VETERANS INFORMATION PROJECT
SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON
Education Dept.
1 Main Street
San Quentin, CA 94964



THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
SERVICE

Cal-Vet is your point of contact for benefits, including VA forms, reentry resources, transitional housing, and resource information for all 58 counties in California. We pride ourselves on meeting the veterans where they are. Help is available, with information on:

- TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
- HEALTH CARE REGISTRATION
- DISABILITY BENEFITS
- GENERAL VETERAN ASSISTANCE

TRUE COLORS

San Quentin's color guard of incarcerated veterans stands proud, true, and ready to serve

Raul Higgins
Journalism Guild Writer

The San Quentin Color Guard is a group of incarcerated veterans who serve their community by presenting the national, state, and military colors before events and ceremonies at The Q. When it comes time to representing peace, honor, and commitment, they stand in solidarity together.

Representing the Color Guard is much more than carrying around a bunch of flags. It is about heart, dedication, practice, and teamwork, according to its members. The SQ Color Guard is a devoted unit that practices regularly to present the colors.

"For me, it's inspirational ... to show the military and the whole facility here, we are the armed forces," said resident Noah Winchester, a former Marine sergeant. "We like to think of the honor for all the [military] service people, and it's a proud moment to be able to show all that."

The Color Guard dates



Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

Incarcerated veterans from San Quentin's Color Guard stand at parade rest ahead of a graduation at the Garden Chapel.

back to the Revolutionary War when young men carried the nation's colors into battle. The Guard still represents that duty by escorting and protecting our nation's colors and ensuring that proper respect is shown for the ceremonial flags.

The military's Color Guard is involved in the

wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery for The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. They also display the ceremonial flags at White House arrivals for dignitaries, 9/11 memorials, and funerals for military service members.

The members of the Veterans Group of the SQ

Color Guard are Army Spc. Larry Whyte, Air Force Airman Gary Gorgei, Marine 1st Lt. Bobby Davis, Army Pfc. Tobie Guffie, Navy Chief Petty Officer Steve Joyner, Marine Staff Sgt. August Perez, and Air Force Lt. Col. Ray Melberg along with Winchester.

Winchester's first experience with the Color Guard began as a member of a unit in the U.S. Marine Corps. "It has been an honor to resurrect the [San Quentin] Color Guard and bring the men together and show people what we can do for our community here in San Quentin," Winchester said.

Recognizing the 22 veterans lost each day to suicide, the SQ Color Guard presented the colors during the prison's Mental Wellness week. The Veteran Group of San Quentin recognizes fallen soldiers and all veterans suffering from mental illnesses.

Among the flags flown are the American flag, "Old Glory," and the California state flag. The other colors posted are the five military service flags: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard.

Melberg, who served as a leader of the Color Guard at California State Prison-Chino, said, "I love to see the flag represented on the yard and I wanted to make sure that it would be a success." Melberg added that veterans have "a chance to show our support for our country, for its principles and for the veterans who serve to maintain our freedom."

VETERANS

Continued from page 1

vary considerably across jurisdictions, leading to many veterans falling through the cracks.

Over 90% of veterans are proud of their service, according to the Combat Wounded organization. Many veterans say the public has "little awareness" of the challenges and problems they face after returning home.

For incarcerated veterans, a comprehensive roadmap for navigating the return to civilian life from prison would be an improvement over their experience transitioning from service duty. In recent years, the Veterans Administration has enhanced its initiatives and programs to better prepare them for transitioning back to society, further providing support in navigating this big change.

"We are prosecuting and imprisoning veterans while denying them the care and consideration they need and deserve — despite the fact that their criminal justice involvement is often due, at least in part, to

Incarcerated veterans remain proud of service, even while facing common challenges

their willingness to fight for their country," said former U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel in an article by the Council on Criminal Justice. "As a result, we are not only doing a disservice to veterans, but also jeopardizing the safety of the public they once fought to protect."

SQ resident Anthony Barnett described how serving in the Army showed him how to take pride in his country. His service started as a means to stay out of trouble but evolved into a civic duty.

After he went to prison, he immediately looked for a veteran's group to help him gain insight and a better understanding of his path in life. He now knows how to put aside his pride and ask for help.

"We are brothers, no matter what branch. We understand pains, aches, and have persevered," Barnett said. "We served our country and we deserve the help."

Resident Tobie Guffie's journey into the Army started as a job but evolved into a privilege and honor.

"Serving my country was the smartest thing I did not mean to do, but the best thing I have done in my life," Guffie said.

He now serves his community through reaching out to veterans who are struggling with mental health. "I encourage other veterans to plug into what is available in the community here and to stay positive," he said.

For resident Josh Burbank, a Navy veteran of the Iraq and Afghan wars, serving his country was a path laid out early. Coming from a family of service members, he took part in several veteran programs in high school and does the same today at The Q.

To be of service to his community, he spreads words of inspiration to move past the feelings of shame and to provide a sense of worth. "You are not alone and do not need to hide out in the background," Burbank said. "[We] do not need to fear proclaiming we are veterans because we are all humans and make mistakes."

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF SERVICE MEMBERS' SACRIFICE:

Our military veterans are facing unprecedented challenges as a result of their service to our nation. Their dedication in protecting our freedoms by going undeterred into hostile environments, cannot be overlooked, especially when they return home. Some of the statistics about long-term residual effects of military service can be staggering:

More than 2,000,000 combat veterans served in Iraq and Afghanistan.



About 30% of them have been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Over 48,000 vets are homeless or at risk.



About one-third of all veterans who need mental health care actually seek treatment.

Since 2002, more than 200,000 service members have suffered traumatic brain injuries.

71% of Americans say they don't understand the problems faced by veterans who have served since Sept. 11.

Everyday, 22 veterans commit suicide — that's approximately one death every 65 minutes.

Sources: IAVA, The George W. Bush Institute, Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families, United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and Disabled American Veterans
Illustrations by Andrew Hardy // SQNews

PROGRAMS

PEERS TEACHING PEERS: Peer Literacy Mentor Program provides needed lessons

By Stuart Clarke
Journalism Guild Writer

The Peer Literacy Mentor Program at San Quentin profoundly transforms the lives of incarcerated individuals who need assistance with their reading skills.

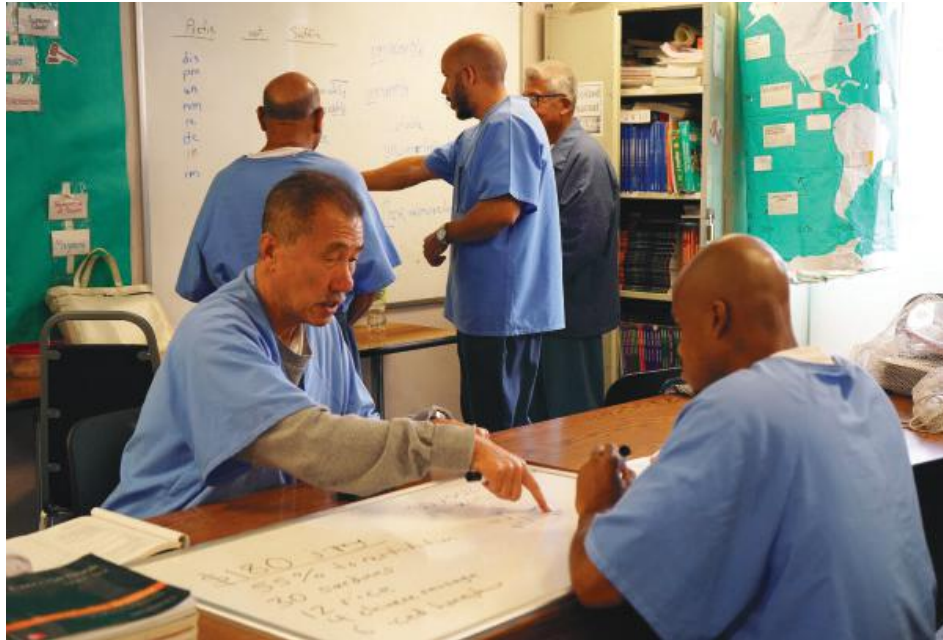
The illiteracy rate among SQ residents is an alarming 70%, according to PLMP. The reading proficiency of the average resident is below the fourth grade level. This is considered functionally illiterate and increases the risk of coming back to prison.

Peer literacy mentors are SQ residents who are trained on how the brain works and how to assess people's educational needs. They are advocates of adult learning, motivated to teach literacy and empower students to pursue education, in order to disrupt the cycle of incarceration. They get to know their students and, beside academics, assist them with basic life skills, navigating the medical system, and preparation for the Board of Parole Hearings.

"I think the program is a necessary part of rehabilitation. It is a place for peers to make better choices through education and a place to find information," said mentor John Czub. "Peers help peers without administration's power dynamic. It is a safe place to make mistakes while learning without fear of repercussion."

A process of "motivational interviewing" is used to assess a student's needs before commencing personalized instruction. This method asks open-ended questions and strives to guide individuals to figure out their own solutions to a problem.

The students also begin the program with a personalized literacy assessment through books with varied



reading levels. The number of mistakes made in the assessment determines their levels. Mentors will work with students up to the sixth grade reading level, during which time the students are free to choose any books they want to read.

Once they obtain a sixth-grade reading level, students begin work on academic subjects such as social studies, science, language development, and math. This is in preparation for earning a General Equivalency Degree. A score of 70-75% is required on a pre-GED test to be recommended for the GED exam.

"There is quantified evidence of a marked increase in GED graduates resulting from this program," said Czub.

Mentors also benefit from their participation in the program. Their leadership roles teach social skills, such as compassion and empathy. They learn to view all people as individuals worthy of non-judgmental inclusion.

They practice emotional intelligence and encourage self-rehabilitation.

Alex Ross is a mentor-in-training who was once functionally illiterate, making it easy for him to empathize with the program's students.

"I know what it feels like to be behind, so I learned to live with it," he said. "The program allows me a space where I can do what's right. And I can help people who are going through what I went through."

Ross said that what satisfies him the most is "when I see their faces and know that they got it. I see that the person lights up and is hungry to learn more. They get more comfortable with themselves and their abilities."

Ross has been impressed with the way A. Sufi, the main instructor, brings "the mentor group together where we all respect each other's space and all our energy is focused on helping the mentees."

Sufi emphasizes two main philosophical methods of

instruction. One is "agency," which gives mentors the ability to maintain control over their job duties for meeting the educational needs of the participants. The other is "ownership" by allowing mentors to control the methods of their personalized instruction of their students without micromanagement.

Sufi gives the mentor group autonomy to run the program in the best interests of the students through a process of community-based decision making. The group is responsible for its own behavior and is accountable within the program.

"I think that this is the direction that education should go," Sufi said. "It also gives those who have [college] degrees the opportunities to use them in constructive ways and share their knowledge and expertise with others."

The program, which is expanding statewide, is restorative not punitive. It is about inspiring others



Photos by Dao Ong // SQNews

Mentors from PLMP program work with their assigned students during a normal busy day.

with hope and empowering participants.

"One great thing about PLMP is we're trying to give power back to the students. This is space where students can open up minds and be part of conversation in a community way," said mentor-in-training Jay Kim.

Not only is literacy taught, which begins the climb to a GED, but the program also assists students navigate the prison community in safer and more informed ways.

Mentors have a minimum of four students who they teach with a holistic approach. This method incorporates the entirety of the students' needs. This is accomplished through affirmation, reflection, and summary, which helps keep students focused and engaged. It empowers them to solve their own problems.

Kim explained that, "PLMP fosters leadership among the mentors and students in order to become change agents in the future communities they enter." He

added that he loves it when he sees students laughing and enjoy the learning process, and when they start to understand how smart they really are.

"They discover their own strength and learn their own potential," Kim said.

Rodney "Pit" Baylis is one of the founding mentors of the program. In 2017, he was in a professional development workshop where he submitted a proposal for a mentorship program aimed at youth offenders. His idea was designed to incorporate assistance in all areas, which evolved into the PLMP, which has since expanded to other prisons.

"We are serving the community well. Without this program it would be chaos because there are not enough GED programs to serve everyone," Baylis said. "To see them get their GED and graduate with their families present [satisfies me]. Some guys say they just want to be able to read a book to their daughter."

Television personality W. Kamau Bell visits SQ to collaborate with new program

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Television personality W. Kamau Bell came to San Quentin this summer to collaborate on a new program called, *Back to the Start: Reflections Behind Bars*. The program conducts a narrative writing workshop centered on the impact of adverse childhood experiences on development and incarceration.

Bell spoke to the group about ways to package their childhood stories for an outside audience in video or audio. Bell is the well-known host and producer of the hit CNN show, "The United Shades of America." One episode features San Quentin's rehabilitative programs and its media center.

Bell said that he felt encouraged by the accomplishments of the writing workshop so far. "Storytelling is what I do, and I look forward to collaborating with them and sharing their stories with the world," Bell told SQNews. "I'm excited to be welcomed by Dr. Espinoza and the men from *Back to the Start*."

Bell's experience with documentaries was appealing to Dr. Jenny Espinoza, executive director of the program, and the group's incarcerated facilitators. In Dr. Espinoza's previous job, she provided healthcare to residents at San Quentin, but felt she could more effectively "move the needle" on the school-to-prison pipeline by providing

the incarcerated community with an opportunity to tell their stories.

Dr. Espinoza said she was moved by the stories she heard in the prison, and the ways in which they make clear that upstream interventions are needed to support children and families before their lives are unraveled through abuse, poverty, and crime.

The goal of *Back to the Start* is to produce these stories through anthologies, videos, or podcasts and get them out to the public. Dr. Espinoza says that the group also wants to put their stories in front of politicians and policymakers to encourage systemic-policy change that will benefit families and children.

"When I first asked the incarcerated co-leads of *Back to the Start* who we should reach out to in the media to help us strategize about who to produce our stories for maximum impact, Kamau Bell immediately came to mind," said Dr. Espinoza. "They explained that he has a genuine interest in the population at San Quentin."

During the meeting at the media center, some of the cohort's participants and facilitators spoke with Bell about the positive impact the program has had on them, as well as their reasons for joining.

They shared excerpts from their written narratives, which were developed through a series of thought



Photos by Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

Top: W. Kamau Bell meets with Dr. Jenny Espinoza and volunteer facilitators of *Back to the Start* at SQ's Media Center.

Right: TV personality W. Kamau Bell (right) and Edwin Chavez, an incarcerated facilitator for *Back to the Start*.

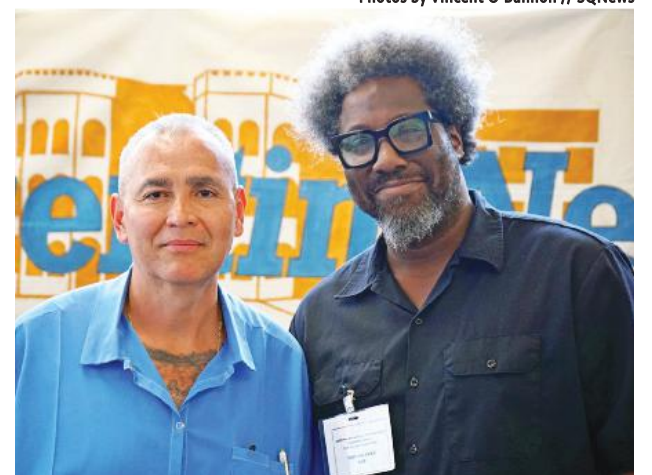
provoking writing prompts — from describing their home environment to their most traumatic childhood experience to what brought them joy and happiness as a child.

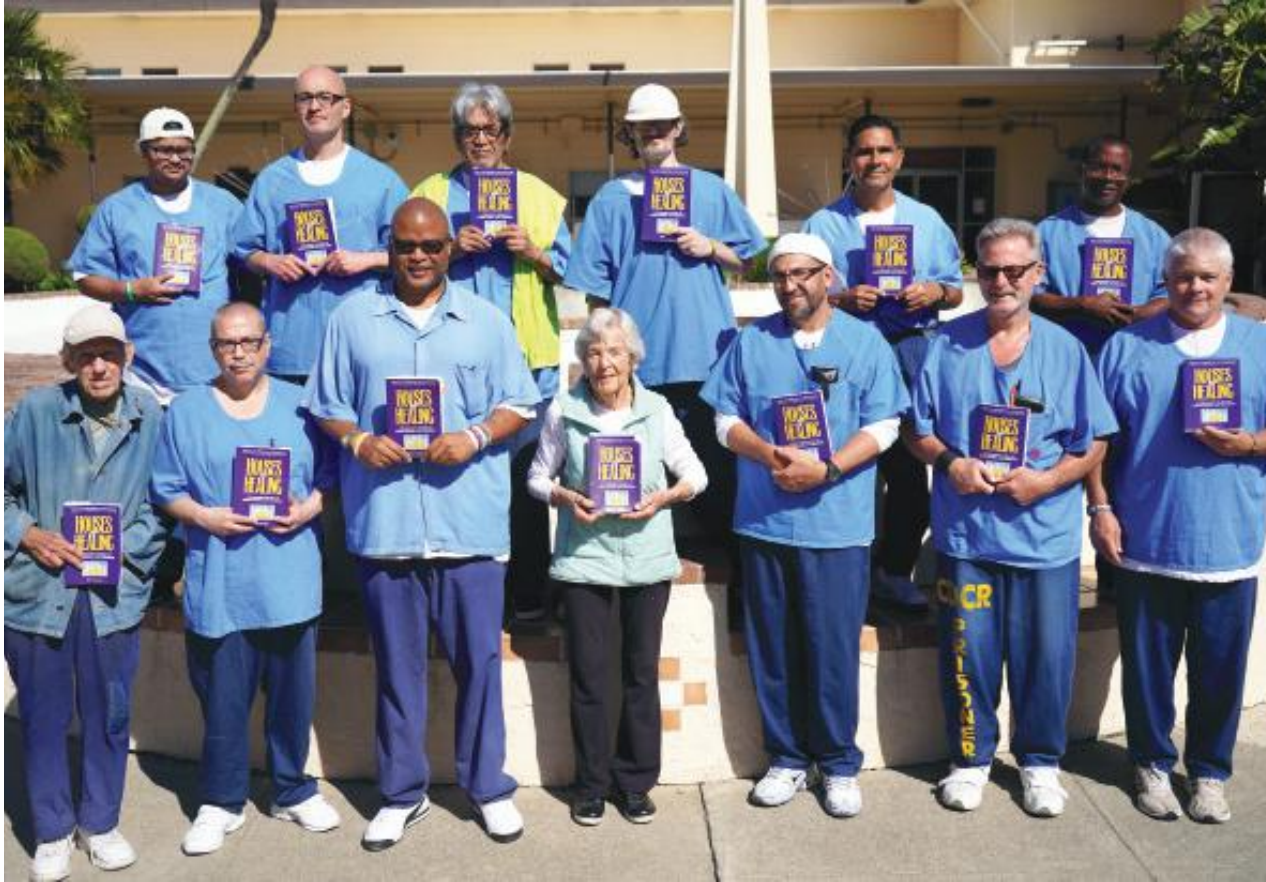
Participant Donald Thompson appreciated that Bell took the time to meet with them. Prior to the visit, Thompson went to the Media

Center to record some of his stories in audio, which he shared with Bell in podcast form.

"It gives value to my stories, and there is a hope that it will impact other's lives in a beneficial way," Thompson said.

Senior Editor Joshua Strange contributed to this story. He is also a facilitator for *Back to the Start*.





Photos by Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

Above: Graduates stand with pride after their graduation from Houses of Healing on October 11 outside the Garden Chapel. Below: resident facilitator Dennis Jefferson give a lesson on empathy and forgiveness.

Houses of Healing celebrates graduates finding healing

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

On Oct. 11, a program known as Houses of Healing graduated 11 San Quentin residents.

The program is structured around Robin Casarjian's book, "Houses of Healing," and focuses on teaching emotional literacy and emotional healing. The book guides reader through introspection and self-forgiveness. Casarjian's premise is that prisons can be transformed into houses of healing.

"Houses of Healing helped me to focus on the inner person," said graduate Arsenio Leyva. "It helps me to focus on the positive core of myself and others from a perspective of not judging, to focus on their positive traits, and not their character defects"

The course offers guidance on how to manage stress and transform the anger and frustration that comes with prison life. Participants can find direction to start recognizing and healing the emotional wounds that fueled their addictions, violence, or criminal behavior.

The book provides new insights and awareness on everything from childhood trauma, to anger and

resentment, to forgiveness and restoring dignity, and to guilt and the impact of crime.

Houses of Healing teaches that part of the growth process of healthy personality development includes cultivating and identifying with sub-personalities. The focus is on recognition of the emotions we feel, the acts or roles we adopt, and the beliefs that we hold.

For graduate Carlos Alas, such recognition helped him understand healthy emotional development.

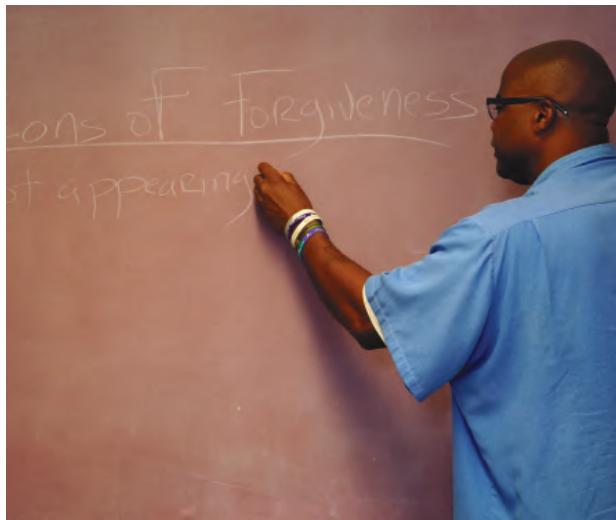
"I used to focus on my old personality and I lost my inner self," Alas said. "I got to my core self through this course."

For graduate Greg Ward, Houses of Healing was spiritually uplifting. He appreciated the trust that was established within the group.

"We were able to talk and peel the layers of hurt and distrust off," Ward said. "We learned empathy and forgiveness."

The group shared how outside facilitator Kathleen Jackson and inside facilitator Dennis Jefferson established a circle of trust. Because of this trust, participants who had little self-help experience were able to open up, which brought everybody closer.

"What caught my attention



with Kathleen was her selflessness and how she always has a positive spirit," Leyva said. "Dennis is all about service, he is always reaching out to me, whenever I see him. He encourages us to heal."

The program provides many exercises to inspire a positive turning point in one's life, as well as how to maintain that change. Some of the exercises include "pause and reflect, sky awareness, writing to inner child, forgiveness visualization, meditation awareness, a look into your future, and seed thoughts." These seed thoughts can inspire insight

and mindfulness, according to the program.

Graduate Darren Settlemyer shared with SQNews how his favorite exercise was writing to his "inner child." He said that the best part of that exercise for him was being challenged to write with both hands. While he has meditated before, sky awareness is now part of his daily routine.

"We start the healing process one way, but Houses of Healing helped me put into words my feelings," Settlemyer said. "My inner child is indestructible and it is good to get back to my core self."

Program creates spiritual leaders

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Staff Writer

The Urban Ministry Institute's mission is to have incarcerated participants obtain the skills and dedication needed to help plant new churches around the world. The program, known as TUMI, accomplishes this goal through courses that equip future church leaders to advance the Protestant faith among the urban poor.

"[Incarcerated] men are relegated to being regarded as trash and yet we receive hope in spiritual readings, which turn us into treasures used for the Master," said San Quentin resident Amos Carter Jr., a first-year student at TUMI.

Another resident, Amman Shinti, who started his TUMI courses five years ago at Ironwood State Prison, said, "Anyone wanting a life change through the truth and teachings of the Bible should attend TUMI. The biblical and theological material provided is college level. I recommend it to Bible scholars."

Incarcerated Pastor Sergio Alvarez said the program's outside volunteers, Minister Bill Barnes and Pastor Ray Rombrey, have been a blessing.

"Throughout the years, I grew in knowledge and wisdom of my Lord Jesus Christ. My favorite part of TUMI is the fellowship of the brethren and the relationship with our faithful sponsors," Alvarez said.

Minister Barnes has guided San Quentin's TUMI fellowship for the last five years and emphasized the growth of the men through the program.

"TUMI has been one of the most transformative experiences of my life. As demanding as TUMI is, each module is extended because of the authentic fellowship that happens within the class. To be involved so intimately with what God is doing at San Quentin has been an enormous privilege and one I am deeply thankful for," Barnes said.

Incarcerated Pastor Trent Woodmore, an SQ resident for 10 years, spoke of the importance of growing the

church from the inside out.

"TUMI has kept me challenged theologically and has taught me how to rationally address the many issues that come with serving the ministry. The 'dogged preparedness' of TUMI allows me to enjoy Christ with fellow Christians every Monday night," Woodmore said.

Anthony Ray Graham Jr. gave praise to Dr. Ron Davis, the Executive Director of TUMI, and the entire TUMI community.

"God the Father, through the grace of Jesus Christ, allows me to become a minister in the Kingdom of Heaven. TUMI is the catalyst of my growth of knowledge in the doctrine of Christianity," said Graham Jr., who has participated in TUMI for two years.

Prior to becoming the executive director, Dr. Davis completed undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Wheaton College with an emphasis in Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology.

Resident Roland Cardiel, a newcomer to TUMI, exemplifies Dr. Davis' vision for continual growth through the ministry.

"My first TUMI [session] seemed overwhelming. Now, I look forward to attending class each week as each lesson gives me more understanding of the Bible. I apply God's principles to life, and I have met men here I call brothers," said Cardiel, who has been incarcerated for 15 years.

TUMI meets every Monday night at SQ's Garden Chapel. Participants receive theological insight and witness the immense dedication required as they prepare to lead a church on the outside.

The program combines 18 modules into a course that introduces spiritual preparation for incarcerated Christians. The curriculum is a rigorous regimen of biblical training that combines exegetical research, ministerial papers, book reports, quizzes, and memory verses while challenging the future generation of Christian leadership to excellence.

TUMI believes it prepares future church leaders to fight the good fight on behalf of Christ.

Catholic Chapel demonstrates healing power of silence in 'Days of Silence'

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

San Quentin's Catholic Chapel has resumed its "Days of Silence" to provide residents with a space to enjoy silence and solitude twice a week — everything from meditating and praying, to reading and studying.

Such conditions seem rare in prison because unlike on the outside, incarcerated persons can rarely isolate themselves to get away from all the noise and commotion.

"Days of Silence are an oasis of peacefulness," said Father Williams, one of the prison's Catholic chaplains.

During his 30-year service of the incarcerated community, Williams always noticed a lot of noise around the prison and in the housing units. Recognizing a need, he wanted to provide a gift of silence to residents of The Q.

"I wanted to give them a moment of peace for the rest of the week," Father Williams said.

The service is not necessarily for religious purposes and is open to everyone twice per week. The only requirement is silence.

"Without all the noise and chaos, the silence allows me to hear God's voice which lets me to be honest with myself," said longtime resident Gary Green.

Green has attended Days of Silence since Williams introduced the program in 2014 and again now that it has resumed. He appreciated the opportunity right from the start because it reminded him of his time on the road as a truck driver. Green shared that he would stop at Catholic churches across the country to pray and meditate.

Reflecting back Green shared how the experience was surreal for prison,

recalling how many would fall asleep because the silence was so relaxing. He expressed how blessed he feels that free-staff Mike Bonell re-established the program once Covid restrictions were lifted.

A recent study by the National Academy of Sciences used sonic illusions to show that there is more to silence. The results led to a realization that silence is actually something heard, not just an interpretation of an absence of sound, according to the New York Times.

Rui Zhe Goh is a cognitive science and philosophy graduate from Johns Hopkins University who conducted the study. He described silence as "the experience of time passing; an auditory experience of real time."

The study suggested that silence represents a unique type of sound, not just a break between noises. Further

expanding how the mind treats silence in the same way as sound, scientists tested series of sound illusions with people they recruited online, noted the Times article.

The first experiment paralleled two short sounds with a single long sound. During the same amount of time, both long and short sounds lapsed, but listeners perceived the single sound as longer than the two shorter ones.

Knowing that the periods of silence were the same, Goh experienced that one silence was longer than two during his test. "When I heard it the first time, I was like, 'Wow, it works,'" Goh said.

Supposing silence is a form of sound, then the moments of silence would be subject to the same illusion effect as sounds.

The researcher's applied this illusion by creating moments of silence that

diverged into sounds using ordinary noises such as trains, playgrounds, restaurants, and busy marketplaces.

Another author of the study, Chaz Firestone, declared sonic illusions were as dominant with silences as they were with sounds.

Goh proposed that "silence is a real experience," reinforcing the idea that the brain reacts in the same way to silence as it does to noise.

At San Quentin, Bonell has volunteered to preside over the "Days of Silence" for nearly ten of his twenty years of service.

When asked how the silence of the "Days of Silence" space may benefit residents, Bonell replied, "In comparison, it is a quiet place in a rather chaotic environment. The noise in their heads may be going, but they do not have the noise of everyone else in their head."

Resident Tony Gomez

shared the importance of leaving the noise and bustle in the housing units to recharge in quietude. "I have never experienced total silence, but the chapel space is the closest to complete silence I have been able to experience," Gomez said, adding that he spends his quiet time there reading, thinking, and writing letters.

The prospect of taking time to escape the chaos of prison was fascinating for resident Lukas Healy. He appreciated the idea that he could choose to detach and take time to reflect.

Unfortunately, these chances come so infrequent in prison that silence can seem unattainable. Healy shared that the opportunity for silence at the space allows him to slow down and helps him process things.

"Silence for incarcerated people could be considered a rare treasure," Healy said.

LOUISIANA

Minors to adult prisons?

Advocates file suit after 70 adolescents moved to Angola Prison

By Roland C. Cardiel
Journalism Guild Writer

Louisiana minors are being locked up in a maximum-security prison and advocates for them are fighting back, according to The Washington Post.

The Louisiana State Prison Angola holds over 70 minors in an area that was once "Death Row." The American Civil Liberties Union, along with other advocates, filed an emergency lawsuit against Gov. John Bel Edwards and Louisiana's Office of Juvenile Justice.

The lawsuit documents the experiences of adolescents in the prison. It also highlights the state's action in housing the teens in an adult prison.

The minors were moved to the prison temporarily so that the state could renovate one of their juvenile facilities. The estimated timeline for the completion of the renovation has been greatly exceeded.

Craig Haney, a professor specializing in psychological data, said the prison had "inappropriate and dangerous conditions" that placed the kids "at significant risk of serious harm."

"The state's treatment of kids in Angola has been a series of broken promises," said David Utter, lead counsel and executive director of the Fair Fight Initiative.

The children housed at Angola are not receiving the services they normally would, such as education, substance abuse treatment, and medical and mental health services. Instead, the children are being subjected to a much harsher environment, the July 21, 2023 article said.

One of the minors, Charles C., stated that he suffered post-traumatic stress disorder from being shot when he was 13 years old. In addition, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and ADHD before his incarceration. He claimed that the services that help to cope with his conditions do not exist at Angola, according to the Post.

"Advocates and youth justice experts predicted the trauma and harm ... and it's devastating to see those predictions coming true," said Antonio Travis, a youth organizer for Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children.

MISSISSIPPI

Indigent defendants must be provided legal representation

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

The Mississippi Supreme Court has ruled that poor defendants must be provided with legal representation throughout their arrest and indictment, according to The Marshall Project.

The April 2023 ruling is intended to eliminate a period of non-representation known as the "dead zone." That is the time when poor defendants sit in jail while prosecutors decide when to file charges.

"You owe an indigent defendant effective representation under the Constitution. You are not nominally their lawyer. You are their lawyer, and you have duties and obligations to them," said

Justin Cook, former leader of Mississippi's Public Defender Association.

Legal scholar Pam Metzger said Mississippi allows prosecutors unrestricted time to charge a person after they have been arrested. It is among the few states where defendants can be jailed indeterminately as they await arraignment, The Marshall Project reported.

"Mississippi is among the worst of the worst on this issue," Metzger said.

The article reported that implementing the change will be difficult and complicated.

A study conducted by the Daily Journal and ProPublica revealed that some local court officials were not aware of the new rule, according to the article. Other courts were

unsure how to implement the mandate.

Some officials recommended that their existing practice of assigning attorneys for only limited purposes would suffice, even when such attorneys do little beyond the early legal proceedings.

Lee County Judge Chuck Hopkins in north eastern Mississippi fears that if officials do not come up with a plan, lawsuits will follow.

"There's really not a plan," Hopkins said.

André de Gruy, the current leader of Mississippi's Office of the Public Defender, is known as an expert on impoverished defendants. He said that after four of the state's 23 circuit localities reached out to him for advice,

he developed a process model that they could use.

After a person is detained for a felony, they will make an initial court appearance. The judge advises the detainee of the crimes against them, explains the requirements for release, and then appoints a lawyer if one cannot afford legal representation, reported The Marshall Project.

In many courts, the defense attorney only shows up at the initial court appearance. There is an option to appear at preliminary hearings when evidence is presented; otherwise the lawyer exits the case, the story stated.

The court ruling states that a lawyer cannot withdraw from an active case pending indictment until another has been appointed.

OHIO

Ruling: Incarcerated can be held beyond their minimum sentence for misbehavior

By William Burley
Journalism Guild Writer

The Ohio Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of a law that allows prisons to keep incarcerated people locked up beyond their minimum sentence for bad behavior.

The 2019 law allows the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to present arguments to the parole board to keep some people incarcerated beyond their minimum sentence range for misbehavior or for showing

signs of a lack of rehabilitation, according to The Associated Press.

Plaintiffs Christopher Hacker and Danan Simmons Jr. argued that the law violates the constitutionally mandated separation of power between the judicial branch and the prison department, the July 26, 2023 article noted.

They further argued that the statute failed to give adequate notice of the criteria that would prompt the time extension and so infringed on their constitutional right to a fair trial.

In a five-two decision, Justice Joseph Deters, writing for the Ohio Supreme Court's conservative majority, disagreed. He claimed that the law does not violate any separation of powers since the ODRC is still required to operate within the bounds of a maximum range set by the courts.

The court also ruled that the men did not prove that the law could never be fairly applied under any circumstances. However, the AP article says that Deters left open the possibility for the law to be challenged if it is found to be

applied in an unconstitutional manner in specific cases.

Writing for the court's minority, Justice Jennifer Brunner agreed with the plaintiff's argument, saying that the statute allows prison officials to act as prosecutors, judges, and juries when, under Ohio's Constitution, those responsibilities belong to the judicial branch.

She further asserted that incarcerated people are left with little or no means to challenge allegations of misbehavior by the prisons department, said the article.

1. Oregon — (The Associated Press) Oregon prosecutors dropped attempts to retry Jesse Johnson two years after Oregon's court of appeals reversed his murder conviction. He had already served 25 years. His appeal was handled by Steve Wax of the Oregon Innocence Project who said "For 25 years, the State of Oregon has fought to defend their deeply flawed case against our former client." Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum noted that "The Marion County District Attorney's office made the decision not to retry this case due to the passage of time and loss of witnesses. We respect their decision."

2. Texas — (Axios Austin) Winners of the Literacy Insider Prize in Austin Texas will not be able to attend the award ceremony because the writers are incarcerated. Adam Soto is an editor who oversees the contest. He said "For the interested reader and writer, the Insider Prize provides a small but meaningful moment of shared experience—of our shaken, complex and difficult but permanent humanity." English professor Tommy Mouton noted that the prize "gives incarcerated people an opportunity to dream through their words, to dream beyond the walls," he said.

3. Minn. — (Associated Press) Around 100 residents in a Minnesota prison claim "brown-colored drinking water, excessive heat, lack of air conditioning and limited access to showers and ice during on and off lockdowns over the past two months" sparked an impromptu act of "self-preservation" on Sept. 3. Department of Corrections stated claims of "a lack of clean water in the facility are patently false." A statement released by the department later in the week said they were going to provide bottled water for residents and staff until water testing is completed.



NEWS BRIEFS

By BOSTYON JOHNSON
MANAGING EDITOR

4. Louisiana — (The Washington Post) A Federal judge ordered that teens in Angola State Penitentiary be released after the court ordered that solitary confinement violates constitutional rights of minors. The Office of Juvenile Justice released a statement noting "while we disagree with the court's ruling ... we will continue to explore every option available to us that ensures the safety of staff, community members, and youth in our care." Antonio Travis from an advocacy group said "This decision is long overdue and it's shameful that it has taken a lawsuit and federal intervention to try to make the

5. Louisiana — (CBS News) Juveniles incarcerated at Travis Hill School in New Orleans received recognition for addressing mental health challenges in their video submission to a nationwide competition. Byron Goodwin, director of the school, attended the event on behalf of the students. "They've been told so long that they can't be educated, they can't be learned, they'll never be nothing," he said. The competition allowed high schoolers to discuss solutions about domestic issues, and the incarcerated juveniles were up against 18 other groups. One student at Travis Hill said, "And this is not even the best thing we could do. We can do greater than that."

6. Florida — (Frontline Documentaries) A man receives life in prison for attempted carjacking. "My sentence is life without the possibility of parole. So I'm in here till I die," said Mark

Jones in a Frontline documentary titled "Two Strikes." The Florida law allows prosecutors to invoke mandatory maximum sentences for people who commit felonies within three years of their release, but some oppose the sentencing including Jones' crime survivor who, after hearing his sentence, "reached out to the prosecutor to complain, saying, 'No, this is too much! He's a young man!'"

7. New York — (Democrat and Chronicle) Measures for Justice, an organization that collects data to pinpoint inequities and other problems within the criminal justice system aims to work closely with district attorneys to increase the number of diversion treatment courts for low-level defendants. Other goals include a determined policy plan, drug treatment courts, and

addressing underlying addiction. "Allowing non-violent, low-level defendants to earn their way to a more favorable outcome is called 'diversion,'" Monroe County DA Sandra Doorley said in a statement. "By enhancing accountability, while directing participation in treatment, counseling, and other proven strategies, we believe we can further reduce crime in our County."

8. Maryland — (ABC News Channels 33 and 40) A 11-year-old who allegedly stole over a dozen cars is safe from facing allegations due to the Juvenile Justice Reform Act, which limits the age of individuals being charged with crimes of violence to those 13 and older. Constituents in Wicomico County noted that "accountability is a necessary component to living in a civilized society." Haven Shoemaker,

Carroll County State's Attorney, said that he's been contacted by several victims who were fearful of juveniles charged with violent crimes and then released from custody. He added that people in the community are failed by the lack of consequences.

9. Connecticut — (The Associated Press) After spending decades in prison, two men will receive financial retribution after the state's attorney general agreed to a \$25.2 million settlement in an evidence fabrication case. "We are pleased to have reached an agreement in principle to resolve these matters in the best interest of all parties," said a statement from the attorney general's office. The scientist in charge of conducting the blood tests in the case was forensic scientist Henry Lee, who was also a consultant in the 2004 Scott Peterson case.

ALABAMA

From Death Row to freedom and published author

By Richard Blanchard
Journalism Guild Writer

Anthony Ray Hinton, formerly incarcerated on Death Row and author of "The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row," is now an impassioned advocate for criminal justice.

Hinton served over 25 years on Alabama's Death Row before his release in 2015. Wrongfully convicted of murder, Hinton has been engaged in criminal justice reform since his release, according to an article in the Campbell University News.

Hinton now tours around the world to spread his story of finding life and freedom on Death Row. He also works as an educator through the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit founded by attorney and social justice activist Bryan Stevenson.

"Race, poverty, inadequate legal assistance and prosecutorial indifference to innocence conspired to create a textbook example of injustice," Stevenson said in a quote on the Equal Justice Initiative's website. "I can't think of a case that more urgently dramatizes the need for reform than what has happened to Anthony Ray Hinton."

Hinton's diligence in exposing the flaws in the carceral system is enlightening. As an educator, Hinton is a powerful advocate for trying to eliminate the death penalty. The nonprofit's website states that he is dedicated



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons // SlowKing4

Criminal justice advocate Anthony Ray Hinton.

to exposing the injustice of wrongful convictions and racial bias in the legal system.

Hinton visited the Campbell Law School community and spoke to students, faculty, staff, alumni on August 30 about his journey.

As part of a project, Campbell Law School engages its students in dialogue about the specifics

of case studies — how the violation happened, why it occurred, and its resulting findings. The project aims to create understanding of how people were hurt because of crime and it seeks to help resolve and repair the damage that has been done, reported Campbell University News.

Since its founding in 1976, Campbell Law School has

developed lawyers who possess moral conviction, social compassion, and professional competence, according to Campbell University News.

Hinton was one of 152 prisoners released from Death Row since 1983. He was one of the longest-serving death row prisoners in Alabama history. According to Hinton, one in every 10 people on Death Row is innocent.

CHICAGO

Program unites incarcerated mothers with children

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

Children who are separated from their incarcerated mothers are put at great risk of developmental problems and are susceptible to abuse and displacement, according to an article by The Associated Press.

"That bond between mothers and children is so strong. And without seeing their moms, very often kids are in vulnerable positions with nobody to turn to," said Alexis Mansfield of Reunification Ride, an initiative of the Women's Justice Institute, that provides free transportation to children who visit their incarcerated mothers.

Some children disclose that they are being abused or facing challenges at school, Mansfield said in the June 4 story.

Reunification Ride, based in Chicago, provides families with transportation to the

Logan Correctional Facility, Illinois' largest prison that houses women, according to the AP.

At 7 a.m., children and their guardians wait outside a store on the South Side of Chicago. Some are excited and some are sleepy as they prepare for the ride to Logan Correctional Facility. Reunification Ride staff provide refreshments, games, and coloring materials for the drive, which can take up to three hours.

The incarcerated mothers decorate the prison's gymnasium in preparation for the reunification visits. They design vibrant paper flowers, butterflies, and handmade picture frames containing family photos. Family members are prohibited from bringing anything inside the prison for the visit except for essentials such as diapers.

Crystal Martinez's 4-year-old daughter arrives all dressed up in ruffled sleeves and a colorful tulle tutu. She gives her mother

a rainbow-colored bouquet of flowers made out of tissue paper. Martinez smiles with joy and happiness, pulling her daughter close.

"I want you! I don't want the flowers," Martinez said, holding her daughter tight.

Black and Hispanic women incarcerated at a higher rate than are White women are, causing disproportionate harm due to family separation from incarceration, according to the AP.

"There is no way to punish the parent and not punish the child," said Erika Ray, who is serving a 42-year-sentence for armed robbery and murder.

Ray's daughter, Jada Lesure, was seven years old when her mother was charged. Her daughter is now 23 and brings her 4-year-old son to visit his grandmother.

Lesure said that even as an adult, "I need my mom. Everybody needs their mom."

"I thank God that it is at least once a month. Some people don't get to see their

kids at all," said Joshlyn Allen. The program helped her visit with her 5- and 3-year-old children.

The reunification program offers families a welcoming alternative to the strict guidelines of visiting behind glass. The program also provides a larger space rather than small areas where children often struggle to keep still, said the article.

Women imprisoned at Logan said the program, a crucial lifeline designed to keep families together, is underfunded.

The Reunification Ride program has received public money in the past, but the funds dried up during a 2015 Illinois budget debate. The program depends on volunteer participation to keep the service running; each trip costs anywhere between \$3,000 to \$3,500, noted the story.

"We realized that this was just too important to stop," Mansfield said.

MISSISSIPPI

Never part of society

Lifetime voting bans make certain formerly incarcerated can never fully return as citizens

By William Burley
Journalism Guild Writer

The lifetime voting ban for convicted felons in Mississippi has been ruled unconstitutional, according to an article in Mississippi Today.

In a 2-1 ruling, a three-judge panel of the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals declared the ban to be in violation of the Eighth Amendment's cruel and unusual punishment clause.

"By severing former offenders from the body politic forever, Section 241 [the lifetime ban provision of the state's Constitution] ensures that they will never be fully rehabilitated, continues to punish them beyond the terms their culpability requires, and serves no protective function to society. It is thus a cruel and unusual punishment," wrote the panel's majority.

The panel sent the case back to U.S. District Judge Daniel Jordan III with instructions to find the state's lifetime ban on voting rights to be unconstitutional, the Aug. 4, 2023 story noted.

In June 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a case to find Mississippi's lifetime voting ban unconstitutional under the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution. The case claimed that the ban was adopted as part of Mississippi's 1890 Constitution in an attempt to prevent the state's Black population from voting.

The majority opinion was written by Circuit Judge James Dennis and joined by Judge Carolyn Dineen King. They point out that at the time of the 1974 Supreme Court ruling, many more states had lifetime voting bans. Currently, Mississippi is one of only a small minority that still do.

"In so excluding former offenders from a basic aspect of democratic life, often long after their sentences have been served, Mississippi inflicts a disproportionate punishment that has been rejected by a majority of the states and, in the independent judgment of this court informed by our precedents, is at odds with society's evolving standards of decency," wrote the majority.

In the dissenting opinion, Fifth Circuit Judge Edith Jones wrote, "The consequences of committing a felony rarely ends at the prison walls. Completing a prison sentence does not entitle felons to all the rights they previously possessed."

She argued that a 1974 U.S. Supreme Court decision ruled that such lifetime bans were allowed and did not violate the equal protection clause.

The article points out that although the Supreme Court has previously ruled on lifetime voting bans relative to the equal protection clause, they did not rule whether it was cruel and unusual punishment.

The lawsuit was filed by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Simpson Thacher and Bartlett LLP, and others on behalf of Mississippians who have lost their voting rights. Brad Heard, head of voting rights for the SPLC, said, "We are overjoyed with the ruling and with the prospect of tens of thousands of Mississippians regaining their right to vote. We absolutely agree with the court that permanent disenfranchisement is cruel and unusual punishment under the Eight Amendment of the U.S. Constitution."

The Office of state Attorney General Lynn Fitch opposed the lawsuit on behalf of Mississippi.

WISCONSIN

Program offers mentorship for women pursuing career in criminal justice

By Jad Salem
Journalism Guild Writer

A Wisconsin university program is providing guidance and mentors for women pursuing a criminal justice career.

Such guidance is essential in encouraging women to enter the male-dominated field, according to Beth Tremelling, who developed the idea for the program, reported an Insight Into Diversity article.

The program was launched in the fall of 2022 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Jolene Las was starting her criminal justice journey at University of Wisconsin-Platteville and discovered the Women in Criminal Justice Mentoring Program.

The program connects students with mentors from local, state, and federal agencies. Participants include the UW-Madison Police Department, the Dane County Sheriff's Office, the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services System, the Wisconsin Division of Hearing and Appeals, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

This year, 38 professionals from 26 agencies mentored 54 women, according to the July 5 article.

Las paired up with a female

state patrol officer. They began communicating via email, leading to an informative police ride-along experience. Their mentorship continued through regular phone conversations.

"Having that [early] guidance and support and that encouragement, especially from another [woman] in a mostly male-dominated field, was very, very helpful," Las said.

Las is a recent graduate with dual majors in criminal justice and political science, plus a minor in forensic investigation. She aims to enter federal law enforcement.

The program aligns with the 30x30 Initiative, which aims to improve women's representation and experiences in law enforcement. It brings together police leaders, researchers, and professional organizations to promote affordable actions. Currently, women make up only 12% of sworn officers and 3% of police leadership nationwide, according to the article.

The 30x30 Initiative highlights the benefits of women in policing, citing research that shows that they use less force, generate fewer complaints and lawsuits, are perceived as honest and compassionate, achieve better outcome for victims, and make fewer discretionary arrests.

INTERNATIONAL - THE NETHERLANDS

Criminal justice reform in The Netherlands proves successful

By Randy Hansen
Journalism Guild Writer

People in the Netherlands feel safer than Americans when it comes to crime, according to an article by Jennifer Rubin in The Washington Post.

The United States has 163 times the number of incarcerated persons as the Netherlands, according to the article. If adjusted for the difference in population size, the United States has eight times as many incarcerated individuals per 100,000 persons as the Netherlands.

The United States spends nearly \$300 billion annually

on incarceration, according to a 2020 report by the American Action Forum cited by Rubin.

Despite these facts, Americans do not feel safer than the Dutch. Rubin attributes this disparity to the differing choices the two countries have made in their criminal justice systems.

The article noted that gun ownership amounts to 2.6 guns per 100 persons in the Netherlands compared to more than 120 guns per 100 persons in the United States. A study by the Pew Research Center reported 48,830 people died of gun-related injuries in 2021 in the United

States.

By contrast, the Netherlands had only 27 gun homicides a year. The United States has more than 1,777 times the gun homicides of the Netherlands with only 20 times the population.

The Dutch also do not incarcerate people for drug addiction, which greatly decreases their overall incarceration rate. Rubin noted that the Netherlands have shut down 23 prisons since 2014, transforming them into asylum centers, housing, and hotels.

The state of incarceration looks very different in the United States. A report by

the Prison Policy Initiative found that "drug offenses still account for the incarceration of over 350,000 people, and drug convictions remain a defining feature of the federal prison system. And until the pandemic hit ... police were still making over one million drug-possession arrests each year, many of which lead to prison sentences."

Such numbers compound criminal records, which increases the likelihood of people living in over-policed communities ending up with longer sentences for future offenses that hurts their chances at employment, the article added.

FAITH

Kairos returns to The Q for annual spiritual retreat

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Staff Writer

On Labor Day Weekend, Kairos celebrated its thirty-fourth year holding spiritual retreats for residents of San Quentin. The slogan for the Kairos 56th retreat was "Love Never Fails."

Outside volunteers who belong to Kairos' global Christian community sponsor San Quentin Kairos, which is one of the longest running programs at the prison. A correctional officer employed at the prison and a chaplain who was a survivor of a shooting started the biannual retreats in 1989.

"You allowed me to experience the greatest weekend in my life," said H-unit resident William "Dean" Parks — a huge man in his own right — as he bear hugged two incarcerated "server" leaders.

Kairos teaches and practices a form of spiritual love called agape in Greek, and they point to the unconditional love practiced by Christ as the example to follow. Kairos 56 showed how love never fails by putting this agape into action. For new members like Parks, this can help inspire many life-changing insights and experiences during the four-day retreat.

The spiritual retreat serves as an initiation into the Kairos community and has helped to introduce interdenominational faith to over 2,384 incarcerated people at the prison over the years.

The initiation retreat happens twice a year — on President's Day weekend in spring and on Labor Day in autumn. Leadership from SQ's Catholic and Protestant churches select forty-two residents to attend from the numerous applicants on a first-come basis.

Sixteen previous participants were selected to be "servants" at the retreat. They also supported the



Above: Participants and volunteers gather outside SQ's Garden Chapel.
Right: Outside volunteers provide music during the 43-hour retreat.

outside leadership team, which consisted of 47 community volunteers — 13 core apostles, 27 clergy leaders, and seven "angels."

Co-lead Servant Loren Mears spoke of the trials and tribulations of planning the biannual event.

"My co-partner and myself assisted the new brothers into Kairos. It was wonderful to see the participants discover the importance of improving their own relationship with God and family. The service team overcame sinful obstacles, and in return assisted all new members without a glitch," Mears said.

The team of volunteer Apostles featured Kevin Sykes as the outside rector and Kairos 56 leader, Glenn Wakefield as head servant, Patrick Hall as advising



Photos by Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

leader, Deacon Jim Carr as spirit leader, and Trisha Dacany as the head of the angels. They were among the many volunteers who worked to prepare the Kairos 56 retreat for seven months.

Sykes, who was formerly incarcerated, challenged the new graduates. "If a fire has been lit inside of you, it must never go out. There is room on the spiritual mountaintop for all of us. I just know that

He is so pleased with you right now," he said.

Wakefield's praise for the server team he supervised encapsulated the energy of the weekend.

"Man, we persevered with all the last minute changes, which are typical during the retreat, but this was the best Kairos ever," Wakefield said. "I and the server leaders coordinated all the last-minute changes behind the

scenes and we now understand the old Kairos adage, 'Once you learn everything, the weekend is over.'"

During the 43-hour retreat, the new members received continuous prayers from Kairos throughout the world who had volunteered for prayer time slots. The global prayers gave participants an enduring sense of love and support. For some, it is the first time they

have been truly accepted anywhere.

After the retreat, some of the incarcerated participants talked about the influence of the retreat on their lives.

Graduate Luis "Max" Lopez said, "I was very skeptical when I signed up, but my life changed forever this weekend. I learned what unconditional love is all about and I hope and pray Father Williams allows me to serve at Kairos 57."

Server Donald Edge said, "I have wanted to serve since the day I came to Kairos, and I am blessed to help Loren and Anthony who did a great job. This is what service is all about."

Graduate Damou Evans shared his experience of Kairos 56. "This weekend was unbelievable! Kairos allowed me to view the entire Christian brotherhood at San Quentin. I now understand why the event remains secretive to newcomers as a tradition, but, yes, I did cry," admitted Evans.

"Wow, I had no idea what this weekend would do to renew my commitment to God," said graduate Manuel Mena.

Catholic Chapel Clerk Marlon Melendez was excited to become a part of the Kairos family.

"What our inside server brothers of the event did for four days — to serve us unconditionally, to pray with us — it was the most amazing experience anyone can have in prison," Melendez said.

Max Dreyer, who is scheduled to be Kairos 57's leader, thanked everyone who made Kairos 56 possible.

As part of the graduation ceremony, the new graduates were honored by 170 volunteers and alumni residents who filled the Garden Chapel to welcome the new, lifelong Kairos members.

Kairos 56 showed why Love Never Fails!

— Editor's note: The author is a member of Kairos.

Sister Mary visits SQ to meet PREP facilitators, discusses new courses

By Richard Fernandez
Staff Writer

Sister Mary Sean Hodges is a former Catholic school teacher and the founder of Partnership for Re-Entry Program or PREP. The restorative justice program is a ministry of the Los Angeles Archdiocese.

When she walked into the Catholic Chapel on Saturday, Sept. 9, she received a standing ovation from the San Quentin PREP facilitators. The long awaited visit from Sister Mary had finally come to pass.

Sister Mary, now 82, was celebrating PREP's twentieth year. Her in-person visit to San Quentin followed a restorative justice/reentry conference the day before at the Catholic Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption in San Francisco.

Father George Williams, San Quentin's Catholic chaplain who also joined the meeting, said, "Over the years I have been very impressed with the hard work men at San Quentin have put into the PREP self-study program. I know PREP has helped hundreds of men get a date at parole hearings. Sister Mary is a rock star!"

Sister Mary's visit began with PREP facilitators introducing themselves, followed by a question and answer

session.

At an earlier celebration that honored Sister Mary and the PREP Program's 20th anniversary, Sister Mary talked to a crowd of about 200 at St. Basil's Catholic Church in Los Angeles. "It's been a beautiful, beautiful journey. It's just not one person; it's the team that makes us who we are," Sister Mary said.

PREP provides in-prison coaching and self-development through mail-in courses. It has reached an estimated 40,000 incarcerated people in 25 states. The Los Angeles office receives on an average of 400 to 500 letters a day, many from incarcerated people serving life sentences.

Sister Mary said, "Our goal with the in-person visit is to meet our facilitators that do so much to assist us. Many facilitators have served for many years. We are grateful for their devoted service and dedication, especially throughout the Covid pandemic. At that time residents were confined to their cells and PREP kept them engaged in continuing to be proactive in their rehabilitation."

"Meeting the facilitators at San Quentin has always been a goal of ours to be pre-emptive in better serving the facilitators and participants."

Sister Mary added, "The new course we are working on, Building Relationships,



Photos by Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews



Above: Inside PREP facilitators pose with Sister Mary outside the Garden Chapel.
Left: Sister Mary discusses new courses that will be available soon.

is developing the concept of family and community, groups to whom we belong. May we each continue to grow in these values.

"I strongly advise you go to a transitional housing first. You need time to take the prison out of you, come

into the way of living on the outside. Building relationships requires conversation, conversation, conversation."

"Those of you going to the BPH soon," she continued, "don't postpone. Go to the board. 'Do I ever feel ready?' Most likely not. Find out

what the BPH has to say you need to work on. That's how you'll be better prepared."

The facilitators had an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers that would enhance their skills in assisting participants. In addition, information to streamline the mail-in process was presented.

The PREP mission statement states that the program "seeks ways of improving the successful reintegration

PREP correspondence courses are available in English and Spanish. These include Anger Management (AM), Centering Yourself: Cell Phones in Prison (CPP), Confronting Criminal Thinking (CCT), Denial Management (DM), Domestic Violence (DV), Financial Literacy (FL), Gang Awareness and Recovery (GAR), Insight and Parenting (PAR), Recovering From Racism (RFR), Breaking the Silence: Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse (SRV), Turning Point (TP I & TP II), Victim Awareness (VA), Victim Impact (VI), and Wellness and Recovery (W&R).

PREP/Please write course abbreviations
P.O. Box 77850
Los Angeles,
CA 90007

of parolees back into the community by providing incarcerated people with prerelease self-help modular correspondence courses."

Sister Mary said that as a nonprofit ministry, PREP gives "thanks to you for your support that enables us to empower our ministry of healing and transforming lives. We are not here to get you out of prison; we are here to help you heal."

PRISONS

Prison canteen markups addressed in Basic Act

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter Staff Writer

Artillery fire in the sky above Ukraine may seem like an event far away that does not concern the average incarcerated person in San Quentin. In reality, everyone feels the effects every time one looks at a canteen order sheet.

Wheat, the chief export of the nation called "Europe's breadbasket," counts as a basic staple in the western diet and Ukraine's inability to export at full potential has created shortages worldwide. This scarcity has increased prices of anything that contains wheat, such as ramen soups, a basic staple in many prisons.

In addition to inflation, canteen prices are elevated because of markups on wholesale prices. Canteens, like any business, stay in business because they produce a profit.

"A 2020 audit by the Inmate Welfare Fund found that canteen items were marked up an average of 65% of the price paid to the vendor, which contributed significantly to economic burdens suffered by both the incarcerated individuals and their family members," wrote Gennady Sheyner in a Sept. 18 Palo Alto Weekly article. Sheyner said that recent studies showed markups of more than 200% for some items at prison canteens.

State Sen. Josh Becker believed such markups "cruel and egregious" and he took action by introducing Senate Bill 474, also known as the "Basic Act." The legislation will limit markups at prison canteens to 35% until 2028 with potential further price reductions thereafter, according to the LexisNexis Law Library.

With support from more than 2,000 persons and many advocacy groups focused on prison reform and social justice, the bill easily passed the formal legislative process, according to the article.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the Basic Act into law on Oct. 8, 2023.

In testimony for the legislation, the Ella Baker Center for

Human Rights added its voice to the debate. Isa Borgeson, a campaign manager for the center, was quoted in the article saying, "It is unacceptable for incarcerated people and their loved ones to fund the Department of Corrections' operating expenses and staffing costs through high markups on essential goods."

According to the article, Borgeson said that the issue has racial and gender components because the financial burden for support of incarcerated persons falls disproportionately on Black and Brown women. As evidence for her claim, Borgeson read a letter from San Quentin resident Steve Warren, whom she quoted as having said, "Overpriced canteen items force me to become a financial burden to my family."

An Impact Justice report from 2020 that surveyed 250 formerly incarcerated persons and 230 friends and family members of incarcerated persons confirmed the unaffordability of prison canteens. Some 60% of incarcerated respondents said that they could not afford canteen items.

The article quoted the report as saying, "We heard stories of people so desperate for palatable food that they would trade sex for commissary items, form romantic relationships with others who could afford to shop at the commissary, or get involved in gang activity when commissary items were a reward."

Online reaction to Sheyner's article was mixed and appeared more critical than supportive. The website of the Palo Alto Weekly listed nine comments by six readers.

Palo Alto Weekly registered online reader Alice Schaffer Smith said, "Another abuse of prisoners is California prison workers do not get paid the minimum wage for their work performed for others while in prison, the equivalent of slave labor. It is important to make a constitutional amendment to remove 'involuntary servitude' in the State of California and ensure that a minimum wage applies to all workers."

San Quentin Mainline Price List September 2023. Table with columns for item name, price, and category. Includes sections for Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner, and various snacks.

File image // SQNews

San Quentin monthly canteen price list.

Smith added that she would "wholeheartedly support Senator Becker's sensitive and important protection against price-gouging of our incarcerated prisoners."

Another registered website reader who identified only as "Jennifer," felt less generously inclined toward incarcerated persons: "They eat for free at the taxpayers' expense. They don't need to be munching on chips and snacking on candy. Are they smoking weed all day? Fruits and vegetables are healthier even though they do have plenty of time for exercise."

"My compassion is for the victims of crime, not the perp. If and when they get out of prison, the slimmer the better. They're not 'vulnerable.' They're hardened criminals. The 'cruelty?' When he held

a gun to he/she? Give me a break."

Registered Palo Alto Weekly reader "Mondoman" from Green Acres espoused a zero-sum solution grounded in the principles of economic neoliberalism that would "institute a prison 'normal/living' minimum wage, then deduct meals, clothing, lodging expenses, etc. That way everything is fair and more transparent, even though the monetary end result would be similar to the current situation."

State Senator Becker's position is clear. "We have a \$15 billion prison budget in this state. It is time we stopped profiting off the sale of basic necessities to one of our state's most vulnerable populations," he said.

Unaudited canteen funds misused for years

San Diego County's Inmate Welfare Fund used for jail expenses rather than educational programs

By Jerry Maleek Gearin Journalism Guild Chair

Millions of dollars earmarked for correctional educational programs in San Diego County jails are instead being used for jail and staff expenses, a grand jury found.

The San Diego County sheriff's department generates millions of dollars from jail commissary that is earmarked to go the incarcerated persons welfare fund. A grand jury found that this public money has not been audited for years and is being used to pay for staff wages, to service patrol vehicles, and to purchase office supplies, according to a June 2, 2023 article in the San Diego Union-Tribune.

The San Diego County grand jury specified that the sheriff's department should reform how it manages the money generated by detainees.

"While [incarcerated persons] welfare funds were originally intended to pay for correctional programs that benefited or educated incarcerated individuals, these funds have more recently been used as reserves to pay for unexpected costs associated with the normal costs of county jail operations," stated the grand jury report.

A person who was previously incarcerated at the county's Las Colinas women's facility said commissary prices are excessively high and deputies made it difficult to apply for jail programs.

"We sit in our cells all day for the most part," the woman told the Tribune. "All anybody wants is something to do, a class, anything."

The department defended its use of the money, saying state law gives them authority

on how the money is spent. However, the grand jury said there should be more strict guidelines of how the money is used.

In 1993, a law increased flexibility in the use of the fund, saying the money could be used "primarily" and not "solely" for the benefit of people in custody. This spending can also include salaries and maintenance on department vehicles, noted the story.

The grand jury recommended that county supervisors should lobby state officials to change the law so that canteen profits, which come from the incarcerated and their families, can only be used for the "benefit, education and welfare" of those in custody.

In 2019, officials from the sheriff's department reported that the fund generated \$4 million a year, including a reserve of \$13 million that was triple the legally required reserve amount.

"We have begun spending down the available fund balance on new program contracts," said Christine Brown-Taylor, manager of reentry services, at the time. "And [we] will be spending more fund balance this fiscal year on expanding vocational programs and vocational equipment needs."

It is unclear how much of the fund the sheriff's department has been spending toward programs because details were not yet released under a pending a California Public Records Act request by the Tribune.

Eleven recommendations were made by the grand jury to improve the handling of the jails' welfare fund program, noted the story, although they are not binding.

TRANSFORMATION

66 days of nonviolence

Residents at Valley State pledged to transform their violence

"It takes 66 days to form a habit, so let's get in the habit of being our better selves."

—Fritzi Horstman, founder of Compassion Prison Project

By Steve Brooks Editor-in-Chief

At California's Valley State Prison, incarcerated people pledged to go 66 days without committing any acts of violence, starting September 1.

Over 650 residents of VSP signed the agreement. "It takes 66 days to form a habit, so let's get in the habit of being our better selves," said Fritzi Horstman, founder of the Compassion Prison Project.

CPP is a grassroots organization that tours various prisons to teach incarcerated people how to identify and process trauma. The organization's mission is to create a more compassionate world.

According to a 2009 study published in the European Journal of Social Psychology,

it takes 66 days on average for a new behavior to become habitual. The range varies from 18 to 254 days, depending on the particular habit.

Horstman said that after the initial 66 days, VSP residents intend to go for 299 more days to complete a full year. The idea is to get people in the habit of nonviolence, a method used by Ghandi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to demonstrate the power of love.

"In a culture where violence is normalized, normalizing nonviolence must become a deliberate and conscious act," said Horstman. "We can make nonviolence our default setting. Practice makes perfect."

According to Horstman, studies show that as one becomes aware of one's reactivity and negative

impulses, the tendency to use violence eventually subsides and the influence of the brain's amygdala shift to one's prefrontal cortex.

"It is in our cortex where we create and find solutions, have empathy and imagine a positive and cooperative world," she said.

Time will tell whether this nonviolence pledge will be a success. If succeeds, Horstman believes such demonstrations can spread across California and throughout the country. She hopes to recreate this pledge at other prisons beginning in February of 2024.

"I truly think if we can be nonviolent in prison, we can show the world what is possible," she said. "The men and women in blue can be a beacon of light and transformation for our society."



Above: Residents of Valley State Prison discuss their adverse childhood traumas and the feelings associated with them.



Right: Three men share a moment of compassion during the class.

Courtesy Fritzi Horstman // CPP

GRADUATIONS



Photos by Simeon Alexander // SQNews

San Quentin Cooks grads get gold stars

By Joshua Strange
Senior Editor

Aspiring chefs prepared a gourmet banquet for a group of nearly 50 important guests at their restaurant, hoping to impress them and show the world what they can do with their newly honed culinary skills. No detail was overlooked in preparing the three-course meal — from the savory appetizer to the sumptuous desert, only the best quality ingredients were used.

These “chefs,” however, are incarcerated at San Quentin Prison, and their “restaurant” was one of the historic prison’s cafeterias. The banquet was the graduation dinner for San Quentin Cooks, a nonprofit delivering a five-star culinary experience with the goal of providing vocational training to the incarcerated.

Helaine “Lainy” Melnitzer, the founder of San Quentin Cooks, believes that learning culinary skills can not only lead to good jobs after people return to their communities, it can also build character and communication skills.

SQ Capt. Robberecht, who attended with his wife, agreed, saying, “I worked in restaurants all through college — everything from busboy to waiter — and learned the importance [of] teamwork. There is so much involved in making a luxury dining event, it takes everyone.” Robberecht said those lessons helped him with his career tremendously.

Also in attendance were several restaurant owners and regional managers from Chefs’ Warehouse, a specialty wholesale food distributor for restaurants that donates to the program.

The restaurateurs joked that they were fighting over who would get to hire the graduates. They said the sauces were so good they should be bottled and sold.

Andy of the Chefs’ Warehouse said there is a massive need for skilled labor in kitchens, especially since Covid. He said that if they showed up every day with a good attitude, the program’s graduates could start as busboys or prep cooks and get promoted within six months.

Graduate Jezrell Crawford is planning on making a job for himself. “I can’t wait till I’m ready to do this on the street with a catering truck,” he said.

The program’s students and volunteer chefs — Adelaar, Rich, and Hannah — worked all day to prepare the meal with over 30 items on the prep list. The budding chefs took charge of the serving plan and coordinated among themselves to make sure the food was beautiful and served on time.



Volunteer chef Rich said he was proud of the graduates and how they came together. “They sat apart at first, and now weeks later they are a close team,” he said.

Leading up to the event, graduate Raymoan Powe said he was “one big ball of energy; I just want them to be happy.”

After washing down appetizers with plum and basil spritzers, guests were treated to a first course of scallop crudo with passion fruit, avocado, Cape gooseberry, and Fresno chilies. This was quickly followed by a peach and tomato salad with purslane greens over a bed of hand-ground pepitas, roasted onions, garlic, and habanero peppers.

The main course was New York stripsteak, plated on a bed of grilled broccolini and escarole greens, with a sweet, pureed parsnip sauce. A vegan option was also available, featuring grilled artichoke hearts and vegetables.

One of the favorite dishes of the night was the desert — New Orleans-style fried puffed pastries, coated in powdered sugar called beignets, served with lemon curd and fresh strawberries.

Oak Smith, San Quentin’s acting warden, said it was one of the program’s top two or three best meals so far. He is a huge supporter of San Quentin Cooks and said he has missed only one banquet since the program started in 2015.

“I was making sure I made eye contact and gave them a nice smile,” said Powe, with pride. “The warden gave me a dap and said, ‘This is delicious.’”

After the meal, Lainy thanked the volunteer chefs and San Quentin’s administration. “Remember you were served tonight, not by waiters, but by aspiring chefs,” she said. She described how the program’s future was in jeopardy after a long hiatus due to Covid-19 starting in 2020, but that Chefs’ Warehouse and volunteer head chef Adelaar stepped up to help bring back the program.

“We did it, we’re back,” she said proudly.

After Lainy spoke, graduates were presented with their ServeSafe certifications, chronos, diplomas, and work

From top: The graduates of the San Quentin Cooks program gather with volunteer chef Rich; one of the dishes prepared for the event was scallops with avocado and citrus; graduates Vinh Chung (left) and Matthew Hamm receive guidance from volunteer chef Hannah; grads receive a standing ovation from event attendees, including restaurant owners and regional managers from program sponsor, Chefs’ Warehouse.



contacts to help them with job placement after their release. Some shared words about what the program meant to them.

“It was a great experience for me,” said Matthew Hamm, who is Deaf, through an interpreter. “At first, I was shunned in prison. But being able to get in the kitchen again helped me find my way back to who I am.”

Another graduate, Willy Alarcón, said he was never fully appreciative of the process it takes to cook a meal. “I know my wife is waiting for me to come home and cook,” he said.

Graduate Steven Warren, who looked like he could be

a contestant in the television show, Next Level Chef, shared a spoken-word piece titled, “Some Day.” Guests and participants listened closely as he spoke, “I want my babies proud of me, so their babies are proud of them.”

Graduate Jim Tiraterra thanked the “men in green” for the positive changes they are making at San Quentin. He said that this program represents an example that can be replicated around the state.

“I think you can make this place just incredible to where the people that come out won’t come back again,” Tiraterra said. “I’m really excited at the way this prison is turning positive.”



TRANSFORMATIVE M

Conflict resolution program empowers graduates to resolve disputes through dia

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

Transformative Mediation is a new program at San Quentin that provides conflict resolution services to residents and staff of the prison, including team building, listening circles, and facilitated mediations.

The self-help program graduated its first cohort of mediators in a ceremony held at San Quentin’s chapel on Sept. 21. The program is sponsored by the Transformative Justice Institute, a nonprofit based in Marin County.

“It’s all about conflict resolution,” said Judy Bornstein, a community volunteer who helps facilitate the

program. “Any place I can go where people want to develop the skills to address conflict is a place I want to

Approximately 50 family members and guests were present to support 19 graduates of the program, who are now trained mediators. The graduates waited, wondering where the graduates were until rhythmic stomping of feet marching into the chapel from the courtyard.

Led by director of ceremony Melanie Demore, the graduates entered into the chapel dressed in caps and gowns. Each person had a wooden staff with an African “K” cloth tied to the shaft.

When the graduates came

San Quentin's first Am

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Incarcerated-le

On October 10, more than a hundred guests gathered in San Quentin’s Garden Chapel to recognize 31 graduates of the prison’s first ever American Sign Language class.

The 32-week course is taught by two of the prison’s residents and helps to bridge the communication gap between San Quentin’s deaf community and the rest of the population by teaching residents ASL.

Instead of clapping, the ASL sign of “a waving of hands” was used by both residents and their guests as the graduates walked to the stage and whenever congratulations were in order.

“We are breaking down communication barriers and showing diversity in prison,” said Tommy Wickerd, one of the teachers. “It is an honor to be with you guys, everyone here is stepping up for the deaf community.”

Wickerd’s long, arduous journey to get an ASL class in a CDCR prison started at Lancaster. After 14 years, his vision of being of service to the deaf community came to fruition at San Quentin.

During the ceremony, Wickerd shared how he grew up with a deaf brother and wished that he had been there for him more when they were young. This motivated him to help bring more attention to the deaf community within the walls of San Quentin by teaching ASL to residents.

Mariam, Wickerd’s wife, signed to the audience, “This is my husband Tommy, his dream has come true. Thank you everyone for helping make this happen.”

In attendance to celebrate the monumental event were Acting Warden Oak Smith and lieutenants Gardea and Berry, along with other SQ administration and staff.

Acting Associate Warden Eric Patao emphasized to SQNews the importance of the ASL class and its



contributions to the culture of re

habilitative programming at the prison. “We have the best program in the state and it is possible because of the volunteers donating their free time,” Patao said. “The population here is taking advantage of these opportunities; [they] see the mission as one of the staff. The culture is different here, that is what makes San Quentin a unique place.”

Co-teacher and deaf resident Albert Campos played a huge



Clockwise from far left:

The first-ever graduating class of mediators from Transformative Mediation gather at the Chapel Garden;

Graduate AdeAjai Johnson is overcome with emotion as he listens to his wife speak;

Ceremony director Melanie Demore addresses new mediators;

Adan Arriaga speaks to fellow grads while Director Rochelle Edwards looks on.

Supporter Lorenzo Jones gives a proud thumbs-up.

Photos by Dante D. Jones // SQNews

"Today what you see is a group of men who call each other brother," Demery said. "Men who have made the conscious decision to look beyond race, religion, affiliation, and every other divisive issue in order to complete a noble mission."

"We have committed ourselves to nonviolent conflict resolution, committed ourselves to not only transforming this community, but also to transforming the greater community when we return to it."

Another graduate added to Demery's idea.

"When you see Black guys and White guys in a circle listening, and the people on the outside hear what's going on in here [with the program], they want to be a part of that," said Jereal Lafrance Nelson.

Graduate Michael Callahan presented a certificate of appreciation to Edwards.

"Thank you Rochelle for introducing Transformative Mediation to San Quentin, to work on something as important as conflict resolution," he said. "We appreciate learning the tools, where we can be of service to our community."

Toward the end of the event, some family members expressed their feelings.

"You should always tap into your emotions," said a graduate's mother. "Stay true to yourself and understand everybody has problems. Share love and peace. I advocate for peace."

To close the ceremony before enjoying a meal together, Edwards asked everyone to say one word about the experience. Love, peace, and family were mentioned, while the word connected was the most frequently shared.

The next cohort of mediators will begin training in January 2024. To sign-up for the program, SQ residents should fill out a "program add form" and send it to the Community Resources Office, drop it off at the Education Department, or attend an informational meeting Jan. 11, 2024 at 6 p.m. in Chapel A.

The TJJ organization's website — www.tjjinstitute.org — has more information about transformative justice.

MEDIATION HOLDS FIRST GRADUATION EVENT

stop in the chapel aisle, their feet kept stomping as they tapped the staffs against the chapel's floor. Accompanied by the rhythmic tapping, Demore began to sing "This Little Light of Mine" as the graduates and guests joined their voices with hers.

Demore explained that the wooden staff came from the "Gullah" tradition, which was formed by African people of various tribes who were stolen from their homeland, enslaved and disconnected from their families, and, ultimately, disconnected from their authentic selves. The Gullah tradition empowered them by allowing them to recreate a common language and sense of shared identity.

"When you have a common language, you can tell your story to each other," Demore said. "People who know your story can bring you back

to who you were. A part of your own responsibility is to create your own community."

Throughout Demore's introduction, the graduates kept tapping their staffs on the floor. An additional wooden staff was placed horizontally at the top of the aisle. As a symbol of crossing over to something new, each graduate was invited to step over the staff. Once the first graduate crossed over, he turned and faced the next graduate, inviting him to do the same.

After the last man had crossed over, the graduates took their seats facing the audience in two parallel rows. Rochelle Edwards, the program's founder and director of TJJ, spoke next.

"We established a new language here at San Quentin," Edwards said. "A gem cannot be polished without friction. You are my sons and you are the

ones that have been polished."

Edwards thanked Acting Warden Oak Smith and Community Resource Manager Lt. R. Gardea for allowing the event to happen, along with Management Specialist Tech A. Torres.

She also thanked the eight families present, the volunteers, and her husband, Lorenzo Jones.

"When you honor yourself, you stand for yourself. Be proud of yourself," Jones said. "Thank you for arriving at this moment."

Edwards then asked some graduates to say a few words about their experience with the program.

"We are conflict mediators, we help teams resolve conflict," said graduate Joshua Strange. "When you are vulnerable and people do not take advantage of that, it builds trust and true

restoration, bringing back justice to you."

Next up was graduate Patrick Demery, who shared from his heart.

"It is a blessing to stand before you honored guests representing my brothers in the Transformative Mediation program today," he said in his speech.

He told the audience that the graduates have collectively served several hundred years of incarceration and had largely been written off as unworthy of returning to society.

For more than a year, Demery said that he had engaged with his brothers in understanding how to introduce nonviolent solutions to conflicts. In prison, it is often difficult for racial and ethnic groups to come together peacefully. Transformative Mediation works to transcend such social divides.

American Sign Language class honors 31 grads, deaf community

and program a labor of love several years in the making for residents Tommy Wickerd, Albert Campos, Jr.



Clockwise from far left:

Deaf co-facilitator Albert Campos, Jr., speaks to the gathered crowd. Campos will soon be offering an advanced American Sign Language course;

Jamie "happy" Paredes shows some love as grads file into the chapel;

Facilitator Tommy Wickerd, who created the program, translates for his wife, Marion;

The grandest of gestures: One graduate, Maxx Robison, took the moment to propose to the love of his life;

The entire ASL class together with family and friends, the Deaf community, and supporters.



Photos by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

in the success of the class. Moving forward, he will be the teacher of the first advanced sign language class at SQ. He thanked all of the graduates for putting in the effort to learn ASL.

"It means the world to me. I believe in breaking down barriers where we can," Campos signed.

Mariam extended her gratitude to CDCR and the Prison Law Office for supporting the deaf community and showing that they are seen and that their needs matter.

She also shared the story of how ASL resurrected her life. A year after her former husband died, ASL was the first language she learned, bringing her back from grief. Wickerd and Mariam, who had been friends, bonded by spending Sundays in Lancaster State Prison's visiting room studying sign language together.

"Those of you learning ASL are showing the deaf community that they matter," Wickerd said.

As part of the graduation program,

Campos and Jamie "Happy" Paredes shared deaf jokes before SQ's resident deaf rapper, Saelia "Westbird" Kaomoang, performed his signature rap song.

Graduate Maxx Robison used the moment to dedicate his love for his partner Laura by getting down on one knee and asking for her hand in marriage, which she accepted.

Wickerd's longtime friend Ken Hartman talked about how Wickerd began teaching ASL when they

were in Lancaster together, before he paroled. Hartman said Wickerd's caring heart for others motivated him to introduce sign language in prison.

He also shared some words of encouragement with the graduates. "When you see people in need you help them," Hartman said. "To change the world, you have to change yourself, then go out and help make the world a better place."

Former SQ resident Rashaan "New York" Thomas, who paroled earlier

this year, expressed how moved he was by the event.

"This is what inclusion looks like. When you feel excluded, you feel like you are not a part of it, so to be included is how we feel like we are a part of society," Thomas said.

Class valedictorian Estaban Lopez spoke on how he wants to be a bridge of communication for the deaf within the SQ community. Despite the difficulty of learning a new language, he said, "In the end we all learned a valuable life skill and are helping the deaf community make new friends."

Before certificates were presented, a documentary produced by Friendly Signs that told the Wickerd family story was shown. Graduates signed handmade thank you cards expressing their gratitude and appreciation to Wickerd and Campos, along with boxes of prison-craft flowers. Mariam generously contributed pizza, cookies, and cupcakes.

"Despite all that prison puts us through, all of us have a light that shines through us and that we can shine on others," said graduate Gabriel Orendain. "When we speak with our hands we can illuminate the dark room they find themselves in."

TECH

CAN WEB 3.0 RESUSCITATE CRYPTO?

TECH BLOCK 42

By Sherman K. Newman
Contributing Writer

A “crypto winter” still looms over crypto digital currency investment enthusiasts after devaluation, scandal, and market instability. While crypto chills, a new tech star that will influence the investment technology landscape has taken crypto’s shine: artificial intelligence.

The rise of AI does not mean the technology on which crypto is based — decentralized finance (defi) or decentralized distributed ledger technology — has gone away or is no longer relevant. However, there are issues with crypto that need upgrades to make it easier for widespread use.

Primary among these are the limitations of digital wallets, such as the requirement to remember the twelve or twenty-four-word mnemonic passwords of traditional crypto wallets.

One potential solution may arrive with the next iteration of the internet, known as Web 3.0 or Web3. So far, the web has seen multiple iterations. This included Web 1.0 that was focused on static



content delivery, as well Web 2.0 that proffered more connectivity and helped produce the content creator economy.

Next is Web 3.0, or the “Semantic Web,” which aims to enhance the web experience through artificial intelligence mechanisms. Sometimes, the terms Web 3.0 and Web3 are used interchangeably, but the two are actually different platforms.

The term Web3 was created in 2014 by Dr. Gavin Wood, co-founder of Polkadot blockchain and Ethereum blockchain. Web3 is a

decentralized internet ecosystem based on blockchain technology and programmable (smart contract) crypto-currency/token-based economics.

The idea behind Web3 is to give its users the ability to conduct their business online without an intermediary. This means that data generated from social and business activities are the property of users. This data is stored on an immutable blockchain and users can “self-custody” their crypto-currency/tokens (i.e., money) on the applications

they use.

Upgrades to wallet creation under Web3 will authorize account assignment at contract initiation when the account is first created. New users no longer have to manage traditional crypto wallets with their cumbersome passwords. Web3-designed wallets validate user authorization in-app, which is a huge improvement.

Understanding digital wallets is vital to effectively using Web3 applications, particularly self-custody wallets, where users control and

manage their own money as if they are the bank.

This also makes it easier for developers to create applications that have wallets built-in while still allowing users to transfer and trade in-app with other wallet applications.

Web3 decentralized applications, called dApps, look and function like regular websites. The difference is that instead of storing data and account information in a cloud database, transactions are stored on a blockchain. Proponents of Web3 technology tout greatly improved security and financial autonomy as the core reasons that individuals and businesses will opt-in to this technology.

Aside from these coming upgrades to the technological underpinnings that operate crypto systems, the industry is also fraught with dishonest developers and exchange platforms. Ensuring the integrity of these platforms, educating the public, and reducing the cost of doing business must be paramount concerns as the world moves into mass adoption.

One may ask why this is important. What benefit does this give a user over the traditional way of creating businesses and storing value?

Upon paroling, formerly incarcerated people face certain legal restrictions. A felony conviction potentially inhibits access to certain jobs and careers. Having an alternative means of creating businesses and legal income can level the playing field for formerly incarcerated people in pursuit of financial freedom.

Formerly incarcerated person may not be allowed to have jobs where they have access to other people’s personal information. With Web3 applications, there is no need for a developer/app creator to have such personal information. Data is encoded, encrypted, and protected by strong cryptography.

Understanding these technological systems can also provide the confidence to compete in society as a returned citizen. Most interactions and jobs involve the use of computers. Having the skills to use them have become a necessity, including emerging technologies such as blockchains.

Tech Block 42 encourages all incarcerated people to learn fundamental computer skills as a hedge against being out-of-sync with society upon release. Go to the library, enroll in school, and use resources such as books and tutorials.



By Pheng Ly
Staff Writer

Youth offenders gave inspirational answers to seasoned incarcerated men during their interviews with the hope of gaining membership into San Quentin’s Kid CAT group on September 21, 2023.

Kid CAT is a group comprised of incarcerated men coming together to create self-awareness. Kid CAT’s session began as usual on this day with member check-ins, group updates, open discussions, and a curriculum exercise. However, this time there were two young men in guest attendance. Youth offenders Darius S. Poole and Eliazar Guerra were invited for membership interviews and they brought awareness to Kid CAT’s sitting members with their eloquent discussion about their outlook on life.

During their interviews, Kid CAT members asked two questions: Why did they want to join the group and what were their goals and expectations? At the conclusion of the interview, the young men were asked to step outside while Kid CAT members deliberated the merits of the pair’s admission for membership.

“I was very impressed with how well both Elias and Darius articulated themselves and their level of self-awareness,” said Kenneth Vernon, Kid CAT president. “I feel honored to have both these young men as fellow Kid CAT members and am excited to watch them grow as they help others as well.”

Poole was just 19 years old



Vincent E. O’Bannon // SQNews

Two new members inspire Kid CAT

when he committed his life crime of murder. According to Poole, it was kill or be killed. Despite having committed an atrocious violent act, he told himself that when he got to San Quentin he needed to get into as many groups as possible. However, there were obstacles standing in his way. Poole had to make an important decision: stay the same or make a change. Thankfully, for himself and others, he chose the latter.

Two months ago, he followed through with his promise to himself. After taking initiative, Poole is now participating in the California Reentry Institute, HEART, Uncuffed, and KALW Radio, Free to Succeed, Spirituality, Houses of Healing, and The Beat Within.

“I was mad at the world. I felt like shooting people will solve my problems,” Poole said when asked why he committed his life crime. “But now, I’m lost for words because I took someone’s life and I can’t take it back.”

Poole credited his mother for motivating his change, his rehabilitative efforts, and his understanding of the level of harm he caused to society.

He added that while growing

up, he believed in surviving, no matter what. Since then, he has learned that there is always a choice.

Eliazar Guerra was 23 years old when he committed his life crime of murder. Now 26 years old, Guerra said that he had committed his crime because he was concerned with how others would view him if he did not get involved, rather than thinking about the consequences of committing the crime.

When he first arrived at San Quentin, many things were weighing on his mind. The most important of them was what he was going to do and who he could communicate with to get involved in programs and ministry.

“I felt relieved that CDCR chose to override me and sent me to San Quentin rather than having to go to Level-III and/or Level-IV facilities,” Guerra said. “I felt grateful and determined.”

When asked when he decided to take rehabilitation seriously, Guerra said that he had started taking things seriously in county jail, and had gotten involved with anger management and parenting classes. For Guerra, rehabilitation

starts when someone wants it, not when they get to the right facility.

Miko Valdez, a vocational instructor in Office Services and Related Technology and a staff sponsor for Kid CAT, has interacted with both of these young men. When asked about her opinion, Valdez said the two were very positive.

“Darius and Elias are both in my Computer and Related Technology class and their positive energy and eagerness to learn light up the classroom,” Valdez said. “Therefore, it was no surprise to me that when they interviewed for Kid CAT their determination to better themselves and help others shined through. They are both inspirational young men who proved through their captivating responses that they are going to do what it takes to effect change among their peers.”

Another person who interacts with both young men is vocational instructor Darius K. Sutton. “Darius [Poole] is a natural leader and is ready for whatever comes his way. And Eliazar is very driven, extremely well spoken, smart, and easy to talk to,” Sutton said.

Resident at distant facility requests material to teach Kid CAT course

By Pheng Ly
Staff Writer

Dear Mr. Luis Martinez,

Greetings from Kid CAT at San Quentin State Prison. We are happy to inform you that we have received your letter voicing your interest in creating a study group based on Kid CAT’s curriculum.

We want to congratulate and commend you for striving for positivity and a better today for a brighter future. Thank you for sharing your story with us.

In response to your request, we do currently have in-prison study curriculums. There are several other self-help groups in operation that are directly tied to Kid CAT (The First Step and the Juvenile Life Support Group).

However, in keeping with our goals of bettering ourselves, holding ourselves accountable to be positive contributors to society and stop our past faulty thinking and belief systems, we are not able to send you a copy of our group’s by-laws and curriculums. There are procedures, rules, and regulations in place to conduct ourselves as law-abiding citizens.

The appropriate way to get copies of our self-help (Inmate Leisure Time Activity Group) curriculums will be for you to reach out to your institution’s Community Resource Manager. Inform them of your intentions of creating a positive environment there and have him/her contact the acting CRM here at SQ, Correctional Lieutenant R. Gardea, and request a copy of the above mentioned group’s by-laws and curriculums.

On another note, we are not aware of how many self-help groups and Inmate Leisure Time Activity Groups are available where you are. You can also write to the Partnership in Re-Entry Program, called PREP, and inquire about their numerous correspondence courses that are recognized by the California Board of Parole Hearings. There is quite a long waiting list, but it is worth the wait. Their mailing address is:

PREP
P.O. Box 77850,
Los Angeles, CA 90007.

We regret that we are not able to send copies of them directly to you, as it would be inappropriate. We truly appreciate your readership and we hope that you understand.

—Sincerely, Kid CAT

Kid CAT (Creating Awareness Together) is a group of men who committed their crimes in their teens and were sentenced as adults to life terms. The group’s mission is to inspire humanity through education, mentorship, and restorative practices. Kid CAT Speaks wants to hear from all the juvenile lifers, educators, and policymakers concerning juvenile justice issues and rehabilitation. Contact us at San Quentin News, Attn: Kid CAT Speaks, 1 Main Street, San Quentin, CA 94964

LAW & POLICY

Resentencing LWOPs

SB 94 would give judges power to resentence certain people given Life Without Parole

By Stuart Clarke
Journalism Guild Writer

A former judge is urging approval of pending legislation that would allow judges to consider resentencing people sentenced to life in prison without parole.

The legislation, Senate Bill 94, would allow judges in California to consider resentencing individuals with LWOP terms who were sentenced during the 1970s and 1980s.

"I strongly support the passage of SB 94 that would allow those sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, before June 5, 1990, and who have served at least 25 years in custody to seek resentencing and possible release," retired judge LaDoris Cordell wrote in an opinion article in The Mercury News.

If passed, SB 94 would be implemented in three steps. Public safety would be top priority in each step, according to the article. Approximately 550 people, ranging in age from 53 to 87, would be eligible for review under this legislation. Exclusions include those convicted of murder of a member of law enforcement, the murder of three or more persons, or those convicted of a sexual crime committed in the course of a homicide.

The first step would require the person seeking relief to petition a judge for a review. This petition should include a summary of their rehabilitative efforts and other mitigating factors such as "whether the person was a victim of childhood trauma or sexual violence, was under the age of 26 at the time of the offense, or currently suffers from a mental and/or physical illness," noted the article.

A satisfactory petition gives the judge an option to resentence the person to life with the possibility of parole.

Step two would require the incarcerated individual to apply to the Board of Parole Hearings for parole suitability. The Board is "known for approving barely 16% of applications for release," according to the article.

If the Board recommends release, step three is the governor's review with "sole authority to order the rehabilitated person released under supervised parole."

An important goal of California's prison system is rehabilitation. However, "there are incarcerated individuals who are completely rehabilitated but continue to be warehoused in our prisons for decades and counting," noted

Cordell.

Many Californians believe that rehabilitation of some incarcerated individuals can be accomplished.

Opponents of SB 94 claim that the passage of this legislation "will create unjustifiable risks to public safety."

"Nothing could be further from the truth," Cordell wrote. "Research indicates that the propensity of the incarcerated to commit serious or violent crimes decreases significantly as they age into their 30s and older."

There is a 0% recidivism rate among those who had their LWOP sentences commuted by former Gov. Jerry Brown and Gov. Gavin Newsom, according to data from CDCR cited in the article.

"The continued incarceration of elderly [people] who fit the criteria of SB 94 is nonsensical," declared Cordell.

The annual cost to incarcerate a person in CDCR is approximately \$100,000. According to the Legislative Analysts Office, that cost is up to three times greater for elderly people because of their need for increased healthcare and special housing.

"It defies logic for taxpayers to spend \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year to house an elderly [incarcerated person] who poses no threat to the public. SB 94 is a win-win: It will protect the public, and it makes good fiscal sense," Cordell wrote.

There has been a shift in California's tough-on-crime mentality to one that recognizes and values the fact that rehabilitation can lead to redemption, the article stated. SB 94 incorporates this belief and incentivizes individuals to pursue rehabilitative programs.

The article quotes an unnamed incarcerated person as saying, "I still wake up every day with hope that change one day will happen. Being incarcerated for 37 years, I'm getting older by the day, and tired. But if I can stop one person from going down that path, that's why I continue to get up. SB 94 is everything to me. It opens the door of hope."

Cordell was a trial court judge from 1982-2001. She was a Santa Clara County Superior Court judge and the first female African-American judge to serve on both the Municipal and Superior Court circuits in Northern California.

Cordell concludes the article with this comment, "SB 94 gives meaning to the adage that we are, each of us, better than the worst thing that we have ever done."

Gov. Newsom vetoes bill aimed at stopping deportations after prison

By Randy Hansen
Journalism Guild Writer

The California Legislature passed a bill that would have restricted state prisons from turning rehabilitated people who were born in foreign countries or who are without lawful residency over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for deportation after release from incarceration.

However, Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed the legislation on Sept. 22.

Assembly Bill 1306, also known as the HOME Act, would have ended CDCR's policy of turning over non-citizens who have completed their prison sentences to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The legislation, introduced by Assembly member Wendy Carillo (D-Los Angeles), would have prohibited "California prisons from facilitating ICE detention of immigrants who are released under broadly supported criminal justice reform."

According to the ACLU and others supporting the legislation, the goal was to end the "unjust double punishment" of incarceration plus deportation. The state prison system has gone "out of its way" to report people to ICE, according to an opinion piece in the Los Angeles Times by former Bay Area Superior Court Judge LaDoris H. Cordell.

Cordell, author of "Her Honor: My Life on the Bench ... What Works,

What's Broken, and How to Change It," urged lawmakers and the governor to pass the landmark legislation in her LA Times op ed.

"The Senate should pass and the governor should sign this new bill to ensure that the state stops unjustly denying second chances to rehabilitated immigrants who have paid their debt to society," Cordell wrote.

Cordell described the case of one former incarcerated man, Simon Liu, who in 1998 at the age of 16 was convicted of burglary and sentenced as an adult to 26 years in prison. He had entered the U.S. when he was a child from China.

After serving 17 years of his sentence, he has turned his life around in prison by learning to read and write English, earning his GED, completing training programs, and gaining various new skills.

Regardless, ICE detained him upon his release and informed him that he was slated for deportation to China, where he had no family and only faint memories of living there as a young boy.

Gov. Newsom pardoned Liu, halting the deportation process. Gov. Newsom said Liu "is living an upright life and has demonstrated his fitness for restoration of civic rights and responsibilities." Today, Liu lives in the Bay Area as a productive individual able to help himself and his community.

In another case, Cordell wrote

about a second-degree murder in 2002 wherein Sandra Castañeda was driving a van to a Taco Bell in South-Central L.A. with a group of friends. A passenger in her van fired a gun out the window, killing a teenager. The shooter was never arrested. However, Castañeda was sentenced to 40-years-to-life for the crime even though she was 20 years old at the time and had no criminal record.

When the state Legislature narrowed the felony murder law 16 years later, a state judge vacated Castañeda's conviction and she was released from prison. Prison officials transferred Castañeda to ICE custody even though she was a legal resident and had lived in the U.S. since she was nine years old. She then spent another year in an immigration detention facility in Georgia until an immigration judge finally freed her.

In an interview with KQED, Castañeda recalled the ordeal. "You're already dealing with the roller coaster emotions of coming home. And then they tell you, 'Oh, never mind, you're going to go to ICE.' So now I've got to go sit at this place wondering if I'm going to get deported.... And being in the detention center, you hear about these people committing suicide because they don't want to go back to their country."

Supporters are considering their next steps after the governor's rejection of AB 1306.

Legislation plans to curb solitary confinement

By Simeon Alexander
Journalism Guild Writer

A bill aimed at sharply curbing solitary confinement in federal prisons has been introduced in the House of Representatives, according to an article in The Hill.

"Solitary confinement is torture, and torture should have no place in our society," said Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich. "It takes a devastating toll on mental health, heightens the risk of self-harm and suicide, increases recidivism and can lead to severe psychological trauma."

"We need to lead with restorative justice and recognize the human dignity of incarcerated people by abolishing this dehumanizing practice one and for all."

Introduced by Rep. Cori Bush, D-Mo., the measure would impose a four-hour limit on the amount of time an incarcerated person could be alone in isolation, and staff would be required to meet with those in custody within one hour.

It would also require those confined to have 14 hours of time out of their cell, with seven hours being set for programming with the purpose of addressing mental health, substance



Stock image

abuse, and violence prevention, according to the article.

The advocacy organization Prison Policy Initiative reports that people in solitary confinement make up only 6% to 8% of the total prison population, but they account for nearly half of those who die by suicide.

The global community also recognizes the inhumane nature of solitary confinement, which brought forth condemnation by the United Nations, the July 27, 2023 article noted.

"Someday, we will look back and ask why we ever subjected people to prolonged solitary confinement and expected anything other than trauma, violence, and death as a response," Bush said.

In 2015, the UN issued the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as the Nelson Mandela Rules, targeting extended isolation. In 2020, a UN human rights expert expressed concern specifically about the U.S.'s "excessive use" of solitary confinement in correctional facilities, the story reported.

The Unlock the Box Campaign reported that 500 bills in 44 states have been introduced over the last five years to curb the use of solitary confinement. Some of these bills aimed to end the practice in its entirety and others at ending solitary confinement for young people, pregnant women, and people living with physical and mental disabilities, The Hill noted.

"We know the clear, irreversible harm that solitary confinement causes to individuals, yet we continue to use this form of torture across the American criminal justice system," said Rep. Adriano Espaillat, D-N.Y.

New bills expands First Step Act's resentencing laws

By Cainen Chambers
Contributing Writer

Three new bills have been introduced to Congress to expand the criminal justice reforms enacted by the First Step Act of 2018.

The bills aim to reform sentencing laws and provide opportunities for successful reentry, said Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley in his newsletter published April 20, 2023.

Grassley worked with U.S. Senate Majority Whip, Dick Durban, D-Ill., to introduce the First Step Implementation Act, the Safer Detention Act, and the Terry Technical Corrections Act.

"Criminals need to face just penalties, and our system should seek to prevent recidivism," Grassley commented. "The programs we are bolstering aim to help make [incarcerated people] productive citizens when they reenter society, and not fall back into a life of crime."

Durban said, "In order to keep making our justice system fairer, and our communities safer, we must continue reforming our antiquated and outdated sentencing laws and

"The programs we are bolstering aim to help make [incarcerated people] productive citizens when they reenter society, and not fall back into a life of crime."
—Sen. Chuck Grassley

providing opportunities for those who are incarcerated to prepare to reenter society successfully."

The newsletter stated that the First Step Implementation Act seeks to advance the 2018 First Step Act by allowing courts to apply sentencing reform provisions retroactively. It also allows courts to sentence below a mandatory minimum, depending on the defendant's criminal record and chances for recidivism.

Juvenile offenders with at least 20 years of incarceration may see their sentences reduced. The First Step Implementation Act would also seal and expunge records for nonviolent juvenile offenses and would establish procedures for accuracy in criminal records for employment purposes, according to the newsletter.

The Safer Detentions Act would reform programs that deal with the elderly when it relates to compassionate release programs. It would increase base eligibility for the program on a percentage of one's sentence, including good conduct credits. It would also broaden eligibility for the program to nonviolent offenders with at least 50% sentence completion.

The reform would make nonviolent "D.C. Code offenders" eligible for home detention and make federal incarcerated persons sentenced before Nov. 1, 1987 eligible for compassionate release. Lastly, it would subject decisions for elderly home detention to judicial review.

The newsletter also reported on the Terry Technical Corrections Act, which would make people sentenced before 2010 retroactively eligible for sentence reductions.

While the proposed legislation has a large number of co-sponsors, mostly senators from Eastern states, no California senators have co-sponsored any of the bills. A long list of organizations have also endorsed the legislation.

Police in Calif. no longer immune to misconduct lawsuits

By Simeon Alexander
Journalism Guild Writer

A California Supreme Court ruling in June has paved the way to allow officers to be held accountable for their misconduct.

State law previously protected police from being sued, even if they acted "maliciously and without probable cause." Now, officers are no longer immune from liability when there is misconduct during an investigation, according to The Associated Press.

"This should have a positive impact on police reform, because now the law has spoken," said John Burris, a civil rights attorney who has represented more than 1,000 victims of police misconduct across the country.

The case spring-boarded from a 2017 incident involving Riverside County deputy sheriffs. The deputies improperly handled the body of Jose Leon, who was found dead as a result of gunshot wounds. Deputies arrived on the scene and dragged Leon's body behind a police

vehicle, causing his pants to fall and exposing his genitals, according to the June 23, 2023 AP report. Leon's body was left lying in that condition for eight hours.

The deceased's wife, Dora Leon, sued the county for negligence and emotional distress, but lower courts ruled that state law renders the officers immune for misconduct during an investigation.

The Supreme Court reinstated Mrs. Leon's lawsuit and Justice Leondra Kruger informed the lower courts that their decision was wrong because "police investigations cannot be interpreted as part of the prosecution process."

Law enforcement representatives maintained that officers are protected from damage during an investigation.

Although California laws still provide immunity protections for certain aspects of police investigations, the recent ruling helps to remove an obstacle for victims seeking damages from police misconduct, according to Richard Antognini, the widow's attorney.

EDUCATION

STUDENT LOAN DEBT IS A 'MASSIVE REENTRY ISSUE'



By Charlotte West
Contributing Writer

Student loan debt is a "massive reentry issue"

With only two weeks before she had to report to federal prison in 2019, Ashley Furst scrambled to get her affairs in order. Top of the list: what to do about the nearly \$50K in student loan debt she had taken on to earn her master's degree? Furst called her loan provider. She learned that forbearance — a temporary suspension of payments — was her only option. But, interest would continue accruing. Her life was about to be put on hold. Her balance would continue to grow.

That number didn't tick up quite as quickly as it could have. In March 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic shutdown the world, the government suspended both interest and payments for most student loan borrowers, including Furst. The payment pause gave her some breathing room when she was released in 2021. "The fact that I did not have student loan payments for the first couple of years I was back was huge for me," she said. "I have had to completely rebuild my life from scratch."

And she has. After working her way through a few entry-level positions, she was recently hired as the marketing director for Breakthrough, a Denver based nonprofit focused on job readiness, entrepreneurship, and reentry. Furst recognizes that with a graduate degree and a well-paying job, she's in a different position than many formerly incarcerated borrowers. That doesn't mean it's been easy.

Her hopes of receiving some student debt relief were dashed in June when the Supreme Court struck down President Biden's proposal to cancel up to \$20,000 for some borrowers. Furst is considering getting a part-time job to help pay down her debt,

especially as both interest and payments will resume in the coming weeks.

Before she was incarcerated, she was paying \$750 a month, which barely made a dent in her balance even after four years of payments. When she first got out, "that payment amount would have been a whole paycheck for me." She's hoping that the new income-driven SAVE plan — which increases the number of people who will pay \$0 a month and stops any monthly interest not covered by the borrower's payment — will help lower her monthly amount.

Furst also has to pay 15% of her net income in restitution. "A lot of people when they reenter society, not only do they have trouble finding a job that pays a living wage, but they have fines and fees that they have to pay," she said.

Managing loans before, during and after incarceration

Furst's story illustrates the importance of figuring out ways to help people in prison manage their loans before, during, and after prison. "I was very lucky that I had two weeks to prepare, but the vast majority of people get taken away right at sentencing," she

said.

Currently, most borrowers entering prison end up going into default because they are unable to make payments or even contact their servicer about available options. In fact, a recent analysis from the Student Borrower Protection Center found that nearly 100% of incarcerated student loan borrowers were in default. That's an issue that Ryan Moser and I reported on last year, when the Education Department launched Fresh Start, a program that allows defaulted borrowers to bring their loans into good standing. Getting out of default restores Pell Grant eligibility and the default is removed from credit reports.

There are a few ways to enroll in Fresh Start, including filling out a FAFSA and enrolling in a Pell-eligible prison education program, entering into an income-driven repayment plan, or contacting the Education Department online, via phone, or by USPS. Fresh Start has been an important tool for getting incarcerated students out of default quickly so they can access financial aid, but it's a temporary fix. Borrowers can only take advantage of it once, so they also have to

stay on top of managing their loans to avoid going into default again.

And, while colleges have been able to use it to help many of their students access Pell Grants, it's been difficult to get information about the program to people who are at facilities that don't have college programs. Fresh Start expires next year on Oct 1, 2024. So what happens then? And what can be done to continue to address student loan default and the ongoing informational and logistical barriers that exist for formerly and currently incarcerated borrowers?

In August, Ryan and I were invited to be on a panel organized by Formerly Incarcerated College Graduates Network hoping to answer some of those questions. We were joined by Sheila Meiman, prison education specialist at the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators; Persis Yu, executive director of the Student Borrower Protection Center; and Aaron Smith, cofounder of Savi.

Meiman framed student loan default as "a massive reentry issue" beyond just educational access. She highlighted how debt impacts

credit scores, which in turn impacts access to housing, transportation, and more. She emphasized the need to "tenaciously" pursue solutions while people are incarcerated, not after release, so they are in a better position to reenter society.

The need for information sooner, rather than later

This is an issue that affects not only prospective students but also anyone with student debt. And it's not just about getting people out of default, it's about finding ways to prevent people from defaulting in the first place.

While things like Fresh Start can help, "even programs that are specifically designed for incarcerated folks are not communicated to the borrowers who could benefit from them," as Yu put it. For example, the Education Department has another process for people with sentences of 10 years or more to have their loan balances written off by the government.

That stops loan servicers from trying to collect, although it doesn't restore eligibility for federal financial aid, which can be a problem if someone wants to continue their education. As a result, it may not be the best option for

everybody. But many people don't even know the program exists, Yu said.

Yu said that people like public defenders who work with people at the beginning of their incarceration need to know more about this issue. "There's so much they have to do, and this is one more thing, but I think it really is [critical to get] this information to people right when they start their sentence," Yu said.

Similarly, reentry counselors need more education about student loans as they work with folks in the months leading up to their release. Furst saw firsthand how that could work. Before she went to prison, she did a presentence report with her pretrial probation officer that went through her work history and financial debts. "They knew I had student loans," she said.

"Why can't there be someone to facilitate the process for someone who's going to be incarcerated when you have your first intake meeting? If you have student loans, make that an action item."

Are you an incarcerated student loan borrower? Open Campus wants to hear from you.

- Tell us about yourself and your educational background. When and where did you attend college prior to incarceration, and did you finish your degree? Have you been able to continue your education?

- Were you able to manage your student loans from prisons?

- Have you been able to apply for Fresh Start? How did the process work for you?

- What is your perspective on your student loan debt? Do you believe your college education was worth it?

- What questions do you still have about student loans?

- In your response, please let us know whether or not you are OK with being quoted and named in a story. Please email charlotte@opencampusmedia.org or write to Open Campus Media, 2460 17th Avenue #1015, Santa Cruz, CA 95062.



Photo illustration // Shutterstock

Incarcerated College Students Left in Limbo

When prisons close, incarcerated students are left with unfinished college courses

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

The closing and downsizing of California prisons has created unforeseen problems for incarcerated persons pursuing an education, CalMatters reported.

The state's prison population dropped from 160,000 in 2011 to 96,000 by May 2023, according to the article by Adam Echelman. This decline, in part, has prompted the closure of state prisons in Tracy and Susanville. Last December, CDCR officials announced they would also close the Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe, cancel the contract with a nearby private prison in California City, and close parts of six other prisons.

Such closures complicate the education of many of the more than 1,500 incarcerated persons taking college classes at these facilities, according to CalMatters.

A statement by CDCR said that it remains committed to preventing transfers in the middle of semesters,

according to the article. The statement also said that time-off credits for completing college classes would be transferred by CDCR, while the transfer of academic credits is up to the colleges.

After seven years of incarceration, David Zemp earned early release from his 12-year sentence. He also earned several college degrees, according to the article. At the time of his departure from the California Correctional Facility in Tehachapi, he said that its D-Yard looked more like a college campus than a prison.

"It was falling apart, but the people who were investing in it were in love with it," said Zemp, describing the prison yard. It featured a mural of the evolutionary March of Progress in which a monkey turns into a human wearing a graduation ceremony cap and gown.

Cerro Coso Community College held more than 35 mostly in-person classes at D-Yard before the Covid-19 pandemic. By December of last year, higher education there ceased as CDCR

announced that D-Yard would close last summer along with the California City Correctional Center, another one of Cerro Coso's locations.

The article said that over 400 of Cerro Coso's students at those two facilities transferred before they could finish their semester. Of those, 126 paroled and the rest dispersed across the other 27 California prisons.

Besides Cerro Coso, other community colleges such as Palo Verde Community College and Lassen College could lose a significant percentage of their students and millions in tuition revenue due to planned prison closures, the story noted. Colleges that offer correspondence-based courses, such as Palo Verde, are more resilient because it is easier for them to gain students from other facilities or retain students transferred by CDCR.

Since Cerro Coso holds most of its classes in-person, it will be more impacted, said the article. Students who transfer to another prison at which the school has no

presence would typically be unable to complete their classes, resulting in a withdrawal or an "incomplete" instead of a grade and an academic credit. The article said that not all Cerro Coso professors let incarcerated students who transfer finish their classes by mail.

Even if so, the "quality is not the same," said a Cerro Coso administrator about correspondence-based courses, noting that neither students nor faculty preferred them. "Correspondence success rates are extremely low, about 68% compared to face-to-face, which was about 81.6%," another administrator said.

Don Wallace, president of Palo Verde Community College, was concerned about the effect of interruptions on the educational outcomes for incarcerated students. "It's a stop-out point," he said. "Even among people that are not incarcerated, when they have to change from one college to another or they move from a community college to a four-year university, those are points where people quit."

Rock band Metallica provides criminal justice students with opportunities for higher education

By Randy Hansen
Journalism Guild Writer

The heavy metal rock band Metallica has been providing scholarship funds so that criminal justice students across the country can attend college.

The band, which helped put "metal mania" music on the map, has been providing scholarship grants for the last five years for students in selected institutions nationwide, according to NBC affiliate KSNB.

One of the community colleges that received funding from the band was Central Community College in Nebraska. The director of the criminal justice department, Michael David, said the grants help the entire criminal justice department, per KSNB.

"It provides funding mostly for scholarships for criminal justice students," David said. "There are also some extra funds in there to help us with

Over
6,000 students have benefited and furthered their careers with these scholarship grants

materials, forensic supplies, and a couple of field trips. We have been able to mainly direct it towards students."

David noted that students' "eyes light up" when they learn they have been selected for a Metallica scholarship.

"It's prestigious, we got these cool shirts, and people known who the Metallica scholars are," David said. "They have become leaders in our program. They are at our events. They serve as ambassadors and role models to the other students."

Metallica has helped over 6,000 students to further their careers with this project so far, according to KSNB.

HEALTH

STUDY: EIGHT LIFESTYLE ADAPTATIONS ADD YEARS TO A PERSON'S LIFE

By Harry C. Goodall Jr.
Journalism Guild Writer

In middle age, one can make changes that will add years to one's lives. A recent study of eight lifestyle adaptations was presented at Nutrition 2023, the annual meeting of the American Society for Nutrition.

"Men who followed all eight practices by age 40 were predicted to add an average of 24 years to their lives. Women who did the same added 21 years to their lives," the study's author, Xuan-Mai T. Nguyen, said in a statement to the Epoch Times. Nguyen is a health sciences specialist at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Inactivity, opioid use, and smoking were the most significant contributors to shortening lifespan, according to the research," the article noted.

The research suggests that lifestyle changes can significantly increase a person's lifespan.

Be physically active

We can prolong healthy living by engaging in "150 minutes per week of moderate activity, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, along with muscle strengthening exercises twice a week."

"I believe that the science is correct," said San Quentin resident R. Esquivel. "I have an hour of physical activity five days a week. I enjoy running and working out."

Avoid opioids

The study notes that opioids can harm the liver and kidneys if taken repeatedly and they often worsen chronic pain. They are also highly addictive.

Don't binge drink

Binge drinking is defined as four or more drinks for women and five

or more for men on one occasion. The study says binge drinking can lead to liver damage, cardiovascular disease, and several types of cancer.

"I am a recovering alcoholic and I am lucky I never got the disease," Esquivel said. "I quit drinking because I told my daughter I was doing life. It really hurt her. I promised to never do drugs or drink again. That was 11 years ago."

Don't smoke

The Center for Disease Control says tobacco causes 1,300 deaths in the U.S. every day. The article also notes that smoking weakens the immune system and increases the risk of numerous diseases, such as heart disease.

"Hell, yeah, it's a health crisis," said San Quentin resident Marcus Casillas. "My dad smoked all of his life. My dad had three cancers, partly as a result of smoking. It could have been attributed to tobacco, and it could have paid for his death."

Eat a healthy diet

A nutritious diet full of whole foods has the potential to help us live longer, the study reported.

"Minimally processed foods ensure the body gets all the vitamins, mineral, and fiber it requires," said Emily Feivor, a registered dietitian at Long Island Jewish Forest Hills, Queens, New York, per the Epoch Times.

"I feel [I am] vitamin deficient due to the lack of vitamins in the daily food I get or purchase. I think ... a healthier diet changes the chances of us developing cancers or malnutrition," Casillas said.

Manage Stress

Chronic stress increases blood pressure and decreases health over time. High blood pressure contributes to heart disease, diabetes,

sleep issues, and pain, the article reported.

"It's true, you have to take care of your body and your body will take care of you. I commit to daily self-inventory to de-stress. I let go of ... what's going to hold me down mentally, in order to keep sane," noted Casillas.

Practice good sleep

"[Poor sleep] can also increase inflammation in the body, which can lead to various chronic diseases, including heart disease," Dr. Thomas Kilkenny, sleep medicine director of Staten Island University Hospital, told the Epoch Times.

Casillas said that when he sleeps, "I feel that my body and mind resets from the daily stresses from the day before. Sleep allows the body to heal from all the damage done. Sleep is vital."

Maintain positive social relationships

Positive social relationships are linked with reduced stress, lower risk of chronic illness, increased immunity and lifespan, the article noted. A recent meta-analysis of 90 studies on the subject found that socially isolated people have a 32% higher risk of death than those with healthy social ties. The meta-analysis, which included over 2 million people who were observed for up to 25 years, found that those who said they were lonely had a 14% higher risk of premature death than those who did not.

"I feel that having healthy relationships are a critical part of my daily life," Casillas said. "Having a support network can make a huge difference. Interpersonal relationships can allow someone to feel as if they are not alone. I don't have all the answers, and I have learned to ask for help when I need it."

Substance abuse treatment in prisons found lacking

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

Substance use disorders are common among incarcerated people, yet treatments are not always available or successful, according to an article in MedCity News.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, there is insufficient drug treatment support in prisons and further difficulties are often encountered when paroling. Over 80% of people in detention have an active substance use disorder or were incarcerated for a crime involving drugs, yet only 15–20% of them receive proper treatment while in prison, according to the article.

"We have the largest prison population per capita in the world," said Haner Hernández, a former prison resident and drug treatment specialist, per MedCity News. "In terms of formal treatment — counseling, groups, utilizing evidence-based models and that sort of thing — we are nowhere near where we need to be in terms of providing access to those clinical services to people who are incarcerated in the U.S."

During his incarceration, Hernández sought help to gain release from prison early and in sobriety. He was approved for parole to enter a substance abuse program and later became a substance abuse recovery expert.

Hernández said treatment helped him, and he noted that everyone's approach is different. There are "multiple pathways of recovery," he told MedCity News, including spiritual-based recovery and holistic methods that include self-reflection and medications.

"One of the mistakes that we make is we build something for men, and we assume that it's going to work for women," said Meghann Perry, the

founder of a recovery support company. "We also have to consider trauma. We cannot have a conversation about substance use and incarceration without talking about trauma. Incarceration in and of itself is traumatic."

Perry has experienced substance use and mental health challenges, and was incarcerated during her addiction. She now observes abstinence-based therapy, primarily because this was the only thing available during her troubles with drugs, the story reported.

According to Perry, women struggle to receive healthcare concerning addiction. There are fewer incarcerated women than men, so there are fewer programs available for women serving time. If support is available, it is not always effective.

Hernández and Perry are on the same path in term of options within treatment, including continuous help once released from prison. Perry concluded that there should be more focus on treatment than punishment for incarcerated people who struggle with addiction.

Like CDCR, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has a medication-assisted treatment program for opioid use disorder, according to MedCity News. There is also a customized outpatient program, which includes two hours per week for 12 weeks with a treatment specialist. In addition, there is a residential drug abuse program that requires 500 hours of in-person therapy time over the course of nearly a year.

"I really think we discount the suffering that happens for people when they are dependent on a substance and are incarcerated, and the agony of the physical withdrawal, the mental and psychological withdrawal from a substance while incarcerated without adequate support. It's really so inhumane," Perry said.

How climate change affects the incarcerated and how to prepare

Transitions Clinic Network is a network of community health clinics that serve returning community members. TCN clinics are led by Community Health Workers with lived experience of incarceration who support people with their healthcare and reentry. TCN hosts a monthly Frequently Asked Questions column. This column is a space where we answer questions about health care and empower individuals to prepare for healthy reentry. This month we are writing about climate change and its impact on health. The data in this column comes from a report titled, "Hidden Hazards: The Impacts of Climate Change on Incarcerated People in California State Prisons," produced by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights.

What is climate change like in California?

Climate change is the worldwide change in the temperature, rainfall, and weather patterns that is caused by human impact on the earth. During 2023, climate emergency events have increased in how often they occur and how severe they are, creating health concerns for everyone. California has experienced four major types of climate events — extreme heat, wildfires, flooding, and extreme cold. Eight of the 10 warmest years in California have occurred between the years of 2012 and 2022. This past winter, California experienced extreme flooding events across the state and Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a State of Emergency.

California's incarcerated people are at risk due to climate change. Two California prisons are at high risk for flooding, including San Quentin State Prison. Eighteen of California's prisons are at risk of extreme heat, and this will become more common of a problem. The report includes a map that shows the locations of prisons that will be most impacted by extreme heat in the future. It is important to know how your health may be impacted. Beyond extreme heat, 24 prisons in California are currently within five miles of fire hazard zones. This summer Pelican Bay State Prison lost electricity due to wildfires and people inside had to wear masks to protect themselves from smoke.

What does climate change have to do with my health?

If you are living with a chronic health condition like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, or a mental health condition, extreme climate events may worsen your conditions. For example, if you have asthma and are living through a wildfire, the smoke may irritate your lungs and make breathing harder. Emergencies can also make it harder to access and take the medications you need. Even if you don't have health issues, these events can impact your living conditions. Flooding may cause mold to form in living areas and create unhealthy living conditions, or an extreme heat event can cause heatstroke. In a survey of over 600 people living in California prisons, 41% of incarcerated people experienced an intense climate event while in prison. It is important to know about how these events may affect you and your health so you can best be prepared.

What should I know about climate change while I am in prison?

If you live with chronic health conditions, you may be at higher risk for the impacts of climate change. It's important to know your own risks. Taking some medications for mental health — such as some anti-anxiety medications, anti-depressants, or antipsychotics — can make you more sensitive to heat. Other populations that are sensitive to heat include people over 50, pregnant people, people with asthma or lung diseases, people with any disability, people on heart medications, people who work outside, and people unable to engage in prolonged physical activity. CDCR has a Heat Illness Prevention Plan to keep these populations safe during extreme heat. If your institution is impacted by poor air quality due to pollution or smoke, you may want to wear a mask to protect your lungs, especially if you have lung diseases like asthma or COPD. Talk with medical staff if you have questions or concerns.

If you have a disability, CDCR is required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. In the event of an evacuation for a climate emergency event,



people with disabilities must be accommodated with accessible amenities in accordance with the ADA.

What should I know for when I leave prison?

California has many climate disaster preparedness plans in place. When you leave prison, it is important to inform yourself about what climate events might happen where you are living and prepare yourself for those events. You can create an emergency evacuation kit that has food, water, first aid supplies, and important personal documents. If you take medications, you want to make sure you bring those with you in case of an emergency evacuation. Local community food banks may be able to help you stock your emergency kit with food supplies. If you have lung issues, pay attention to local air quality alerts, especially during wildfire season, and wear a high-quality mask or avoid going outside. Pay attention to the news if storms or flooding occurs because authorities may tell you to stay in place, evacuate, or move to high ground.

If you would like to read the full report that this article is based on, send Ella Baker Center a letter requesting "Hidden Hazards: The Impacts of Climate Change on Incarcerated People in California State Prisons" at their address: Ella Baker Center, 1419 34th Ave. Suite 202, Oakland, CA 94601.

If you have healthcare related questions about reentry, feel free to write us at: Transitions Clinic Network, 2403 Keith Street, San Francisco, CA 94124. Or call our Reentry Health Hotline today at (510) 606-6400 to speak with a Community Health Workers and to see if there's a TCN program in your community of return. We are open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Hysterectomies performed secretly

By Roland Cardiel
Journalism Guild Writer

An incarcerated woman sought a medical procedure from a prison doctor. Unknowingly, she was medically sterilized instead. The woman, Moonlight Pulido, was one of many who have suffered the same fate in what she claims was a bait-and-switch.

In the early 2000s, a California prison doctor named Dr. James Heinrich performed a procedure on Pulido to remove possible cancerous growths on her uterus. By the time the surgery was over, the doctor had performed a hysterectomy without the patient's consent.

Moonlight Pulido's story was documented by journalist Clara Canning from The Marshall Project.

Pulido said Heinrich asked whether she wanted to go through with the growth removals, to which she agreed. She was sent to Madera Community hospital, where she underwent the process of intake for surgery. She claims that just before having anesthesia, she was given papers to sign.

When she woke up, Pulido asked the medical staff about the procedure and was informed that she had received a hysterectomy. The medical records department confirmed she had indeed been sterilized.

"What did you do to me?" Pulido asked the prison doctor several days later.

Pulido claims that Heinrich said he was tired of pretty women of color becoming incarcerated and getting out only to get pregnant and return to prison.

"You have these kids, and taxpayers have to take care of them," Pulido quoted as Heinrich saying.

After Pulido paroled, she immediately contacted the California Coalition for Women Prisoners. Through the CCWP, she saw a list of other women like herself, some of whom she knew, who had been sterilized. With help from the CCWP, she began the process of applying for compensation through a state fund set up for victims of forced sterilization in the state's prisons.

The state's Forced or Involuntary Sterilization Compensation Program fund paid \$15,000 dollars after approving her claim.

"It made it all feel real and like it had finally been acknowledged," said Pulido. "This doctor took so much from us. He stole our ability to create and give life, and played God by deciding who was suitable to have children."

Although Pulido received compensation, many victims do not. According to the program's records, only 51 out of 320 applicants have been approved. The reason for disapproval is often lack of documentation, according to The Marshall Project article.

Any victims of forced sterilization can still apply for compensation from the program through the California Victim Compensation Board. More information is available at www.ca.gov/fisp. The application deadline is December 31.

ESPAÑOL

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

La Semana de Sanidad y Salud Mental en San Quentin cerró con un gran evento, trayendo mucha música, competencia, obsequios e información para los residentes, este septiembre 15.

Una de las presentaciones más llamativas, se realizó en la cancha del patio recreativo, donde instalaron un estanque de agua portátil.

Los residentes se divirtieron con la oportunidad de tirar bolas de softball a una palanca, causando que los representantes administrativos cayeran al agua. Varios miembros de la administración, valientemente se prestaron para esperar ser mojados.

Primero en línea fue el Asistente al Director de la prisión (Assistant Warden, en inglés) Knight, inmediatamente siguió el Sr. Kevin Healy, luego el Dr. Burton, seguido por la Dra. Mehta.

"Eventos como este ayudan a la gente, porque la salud mental es importante para el bien de la persona", comentó Ismael Partida, proveniente de Guadalajara Jalisco. "Mucha gente comete suicidio o cae en depresión, porque no tienen con quien hablar, ni apoyo".

Entre los varios eventos hubo una rifa, en la cual el residente Randy Alvarez ganó una bolsa de tortillas y un paquete de galletas. Él nos comentó, "este evento nos ayuda a todos y nos hace sentir que hay ayuda disponible y que la prevención del suicidio es un trabajo en conjunto".

Noah Winchester, miembro del grupo Veteranos de SQ,

El evento anual de la semana de salud mental trajo música y eventos para que los residentes conozcan de programas en SQ



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Los residentes tuvieron la oportunidad de remojar al personal de salud mental, dentro del estanque portátil que se trajo al patio recreativo para el evento.

nos compartió como su grupo ayudó a organizar este evento, "Para nosotros es importante traer a luz el problema del suicidio, porque 22 veteranos se suicidan al día".

A cada visitante a la mesa de información se le retó a completar 22 pechadas – en reconocimiento de los fallidos – para recibir una banda conmemorativa.

El Sr. Winchester dijo, "Nosotros nos orgullecemos en devolverle a la comunidad, participando en lo que se pueda: acarreado sillas, mesas, etc. También proveemos información acerca del suicidio".

Los latinos participaron en varias actividades celebratorias, como sus aportaciones en el "Club de 1000 millas". Los señores Ricardo Quisquina, Elvis Martinez y

Carlos Ruiz Camaal fueron reconocidos por participar, corriendo cinco millas – consistiendo de 12 vueltas a la yarda deportiva.

"Primero me gustaría darle gracias a los que hacen posible organizar este evento de prevención del suicidio", compartió Quisquina, originario de Guatemala y quien participó en la carrera. "Este evento nos ayuda a mantenernos con los espíritus altos y nos ayuda evitar una depresión".

La semana de salud mental concluyó cerrando con el broche de oro en el patio recreativo, donde residentes de SQ se unieron en unanimidad.

El grupo Los Amigos De Rancho, cantaron la canción, "No más este rey" y Armando "el tejano" Romayor, nos comentó, "Este evento que

tenemos hoy, es de salud mental". Y concluyó dando gracias a la doctora Anderson por organizar este evento.

Tony Haro nos dijo, "[Esta es] mi primera experiencia, que se siente lo más cercano de la libertad. Espero que le echemos ganas a la vida porque es valiosa y cada quien es importante en este planeta".

El señor Gerry Muratalla y los integrantes de la banda Esperanza, nos compartieron, "Esta es una gran experiencia y una gran oportunidad para expresar nuestros sentimientos a través de la música". Ellos cantaron "Cruz de olvido" y "El columpio".

El residente de SQ, Patricio Piceno tomó el escenario y cantó una canción romántica. La canción habla



"Eventos como este ayudan a la gente, porque la salud mental es importante para el bien de la persona"

— Ismael Partida

del sentimiento que surge cuando uno conoce a alguien y se enamora. Cuando esto pasa, no se necesitan drogas, ni nada; uno se siente como nuevo otra vez.

"Es muy importante – si miramos a nuestros compañeros que están tristes, con depresión o cualquier cambio de humor – hablar con ellos y no quedarnos callados, porque el porcentaje de suicidios está muy alto ahorita", nos expresó Moisés Ramos, miembro del comité de salud mental. "Tenemos que dar luz a eso".

La Dra. E. Anderson, organizadora del evento, nos compartió, "Es un honor hacer mi semana de salud mental y me siento con suerte de que este año sea más inclusivo con la comunidad hispanohablante. Esta es la semana nacional de prevención del suicidio y como una coordinadora de este evento, es un placer."

El Sr. Camaal compartió, "agradezco a los voluntarios

que nos regalan su tiempo para hacernos sentir con esperanza y nos da alegría que hay personas que se preocupan por nuestra salud mental".

También participaron los integrantes del grupo de auto ayuda, Light Keepers, entrenados por la patrocinadora, Dra. Anderson.

"El grupo está diseñado con el espíritu para ayudar a los residentes de SQ, que no se atreven a buscar ayuda profesional", compartió Pablo Salinas, residente de SQ, y miembro del grupo. "Allí es donde entra este grupo, para asistir en cualquier crisis".

"Mueren muchos, no solamente en la prisión, pero en todo el mundo" compartió Martínez. "Apoyo esta causa porque en la unión esta la fuerza y trabajando duro podemos combatir el suicidio".

— Idalio Villagrán
Escritor Contribuyente

Por Aristeo Sampablo
y Arsenio Leyva
Spanish Journalism
Guild Writers

Participantes de Criminales y Pandilleros Anónimos se gradúan con orgullo y esperanza para el futuro

Más de veinticinco residentes reformados de San Quentin celebraron la graduación de Criminales y pandilleros anónimos (CGA, por sus siglas en inglés), enfocándose en sus nuevos futuros.

Chapel B, el epicentro de toda graduación en San Quentin. Todos llegaron con alegría para dar paso a la ceremonia.

El programa consiste de 12 pasos que les ayuda a los participantes a comprender las raíces criminales y los factores causantes — que desde la niñez les condujo a cometer sus ofensas criminales.

Los participantes del programa examinan las conductas adictivas basadas en las creencias que promovieron sus actividades ilegales, tomando en cuenta los daños sociales del pasado.

Las tres fases de CGA consisten en el ciclo de la adicción se identifican como:

La Obsesión: La idea persistente irresistible, deseo o emoción de hacer algo hasta que nos convencemos nosotros mismos a actuar.

La Compulsión: Actuar en la idea persistente, deseo o emoción, repitiendo el acto una y otra vez, y justificando la acción con la fuerza continúa de una obsesión continua.

La Progresión: Entre más repetimos el acto, lo más que el ciclo se sale fuera de control y se empeora.

El programa promueve la responsabilidad y el impacto de las acciones de sus participantes, y un entendimiento



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Los integrantes del grupo CGA se presentaron para celebrar su finalización con la graduación y reconocimiento en la capilla B, el 25 de Agosto de este año. Oligario Ambriz, residente de San Quentin, con mucho orgullo nos muestra su certificado de finalización del programa CGA.

de conductas destructivas y los sistemas de creencias que condujeron a una vida de crímenes y de pandillas.

El enfoque es en el impacto que el crimen tuvo en sus víctimas, en las familias de las víctimas, y el impacto negativo a lo ancho de la comunidad.

Logran romper el ciclo de la adicción que promovió la violencia. Marcy Ginsburg voluntaria para CGA, exclamó, "ustedes me inspiran a venir, porque con CGA, el cambio es posible".

Frank Briseño facilitador de CGA nos compartió, "tenemos el material de estudio en

español, pero no hay suficientes participantes hispanos, quienes podrían contar con facilitadores".

Carlos "el coach" Smith, un recluso de SQ, participante y coordinador de la sección de CGA dentro esta prisión, inició con la 'oración de serenidad' y leyó la declaración de la misión del grupo.

Miguel Sifuentes, otro reo de SQ, facilitador del programa, antes de la graduación comentó del logro de los graduados, "[ellos] están asiendo su parte para la seguridad pública y un mejor futuro para ellos y sus familias". Luego al tomar el podio, compartió

con los graduados las felicitaciones comentando, "estamos orgullosos de su trabajo y por darnos este momento de éxito".

El residente Corey Willis presentó el video "La cruel realidad de ser afiliado", tratándose de los testimonios de dos prisioneros de San Quentin. Destacando que la afiliación con pandillas los trajo a la prisión – uno de ellos fue el mismo presentador, Willis.

"Yo encontré libertad por medio del programa CGA", dijo Willis. "Como ya pronto me voy a casa, nunca me olvidaré del trabajo que tuve

otra manera cómo sobrevivir. Otros grupos con 12 pasos eran buenos, pero con CGA todo cobró sentido. Él se identificó con las historias de los otros residentes: la comprensión, los traumas y el dolor de ellos.

Durante la ceremonia, el Sr. Alcantara compartió que con la ayuda de CGA, logró abrir los ojos por primera vez. "Me ayudó ver mi vida pasada y eso me asustó, dejé un desorden", solemnemente describió Alcantara. "CGA me dio la oportunidad de repagar la ayuda que recibí, ayudando gratuitamente a otros".

"Esta ceremonia solo marca el inicio para todos ustedes", dijo Marcy Ginsburg voluntaria para CGA. Ella animó a los participantes a tener una nueva manera de vida y nuevas maneras de pensar. Les confortó en pensar sobre quienes son hoy quienes quieren ser mañana.

Recalcando esos sentimientos Ginsburg concluyó, "[yo] vengo porque los veo, los escucho y creo en ustedes — todos ustedes han tomado la oportunidad de ser mejores".

El impacto de este programa fue aplaudido por el graduado Raymond Juare, diciendo "Viví toda una vida de violencia por el pandillerismo".

Pero lo que se escribió en sureconocimiento, después de completar el curso, le tocó el corazón y tuvo un efecto profundo para él, "Nadie antes había hablado tan bien de mí", añadió el.



que hacer para lograr estar al otro lado de estas paredes...".

En seguida tomó el estrado el graduado Milton "Tone" Alcantara. Su trasfondo familiar es de varias generaciones de pandilleros, por lo cual adoptó este tipo de vida con brazos abiertos. Desde su niñez recuerda que sus pláticas solo eran de como la vida dentro de la prisión sería.

Compartió como su complejo era machista sin conocer

La Sra. Jennifer Schaffer habla con SQ acerca de la disponibilidad

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

San Quentin celebra una semana de actividades promoviendo la salud mental de la población. Este acontecimiento estuvo disponible para toda la comunidad de San Quentin.

El evento anual fue patrocinado por el departamento de salud mental de SQ e incluyó la presencia de la directora de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional (Board of Parole Hearings (BPH)), en inglés.

"Vengo aquí para poder hablar sobre la salud mental y como está conectada con la posibilidad de ser liberados bajo supervisión," dijo la directora Jennifer Schaffer, de BPH. "Una de las razones porque una persona recae y regresa a la prisión, es el abuso de sustancias".

Schaffer, habló sobre los requisitos para poder ser otorgados la libertad condicional después de participar en las audiencias, específicamente para muchos Vidales.

Según la directora, por ley – prisioneros tienen el derecho de ser otorgados la libertad, a menos que los comisionarios concluyan que las personas todavía representan un riesgo a la seguridad pública.

Otro punto que ella compartió, es la decisión de la corte suprema prohibiendo la negación de libertad condicional por la oposición de las familias o sobrevivientes de crímenes, explicando que es contra la ley negarle la libertad a alguien por sus apasionadas.

Parte del proceso en las audiencias, son los reportes de evaluación comprensiva de riesgos psicológicos, determinando lo que pasó en las vidas de los ofensores cuando cometieron sus crímenes.

Nos aclaró que para estas audiencias, es importante que los candidatos evalúen los problemas de rechazos, impulsividad, ira, culpabilidad y la vergüenza de ofensas criminales, etc.

Otros factores incluyen: el comportamiento de los candidatos y su participación en programas.

Los grupos de auto ayuda son muy importante para poder determinar que es mitigante y moderante cuando alguien es



Jennifer Schaffer

negado la libertad condicional.

En este evento, la comunidad de habla hispana estuvo presente, con la ayuda de SQnews y participó en el dialogo expresando la preocupación de esta comunidad que, no solo lucha por su libertad, pero cómo poder participar en grupos de auto ayudas en su propio idioma.

En SQ tenemos aproximadamente 40 grupos de auto ayuda en inglés y solamente seis o siete en español. Así se crea una pared dentro de otra pared, en lo que se refiere al idioma. ¿Qué está haciendo BPH, en términos de implementar programas adicionales en español?

La Sra. Schaffer respondió diciendo, "Completamente identifico con todo eso. Y yo creo... que, quiero decir, hemos tenido conversaciones con la división de la institución de adultos y el de Programas del Departamento de Rehabilitación (DRP, en inglés)... de hacer disponibles programas o por lo menos tener disponibles las traducciones".

"Si no sabes que fue lo que te condujo a la prisión, no sabrás como poder salir libre. Así que es en parte, aprender del remordimiento y la responsabilidad, y la empatía", explicó a SQNews.

"Es tener la oportunidad de aprender sobre lo que los condujo a los traumas de la niñez y porqué estás en la prisión, y la razón porqué cometiste el crimen".

Schaffer aconsejó que toda persona que busca transformarse, lo logre por medio de cualquier programa de auto ayuda, sea por correspondencia o de alguna otra forma – asumiendo que la persona pueda leer en español.

El consejo es entonces, que

consigan cualquier material que sea disponible en su idioma para su rehabilitación, asimilando su auto ayuda.

Planes de liberación

Según la directora, no tienes que tener una carta de aceptación para algún programa de reintegro. Si eres hallado disponible para libertad condicional, es porque tienes tu abuso de substancia y tu ira bajo control.

Ella reconoció que para los reclusos que han estado encarcelados por décadas, les es difícil reintegrar a las comunidades. Y por estas razones, los programas de reintegración son imperativos y están a la disposición.

"Si tú todavía estas usando drogas aquí, eso quiere decir que todavía estas involucrado [en actividades ilícitas]", Schaffer compartió de la adicción dentro de las prisiones. "Tenemos ojos; todo se descubre y si no pides ayuda, estarás en la misma situación cinco años después".

Cuando los candidatos pueden explicar a los comisionarios porque ellos/as se comportaron de esa manera, en el momento que recibieron sus infracciones (por mal comportamiento) y pueden elaborar sobre lo que pasaba por sus mentes (cuando rompieron las reglas dentro de la prisión) – no solo demuestra que ellos entienden las causas de su comportamiento negativo, pero saben lo que los condujo a ese momento.

"Hemos puesto en libertad a más de 1,300 prisioneros con sentencias de por vida", declaró Schaffer. "Menos de un por ciento (5%) han vuelto a re-ofender con violencia". El 2017 fue el año con la mayor cantidad de Vidales puestos en libertad desde los 1970, cuando los ofensores a largo plazo eran activos.

Según la directora, de los 20 comisionarios que presentemente están dirigiendo las audiencias, seis o siete, son bilingües y se pueden comunicar efectivamente en español.

Al final, la directora nos informó que las estadísticas demuestran que un alto porcentaje de personas de origen Latino cancelaron, o estipularon sus citas de audiencias de libertad condicional.

Estas estipulaciones pueden ser la razón porque las personas están envejeciendo en las prisiones de California.

Estudiante hispano haya éxito en los exámenes de GED en español

Por Manuel Dorado
Spanish Journalism
Guild Writer

El recluso Felipe Naranjo García (46); llegó a San Quentin, el 18 de octubre, 2022 desde la Prisión Estatal de Susanville. Con una meta, que era la de comprender bien el inglés (leerlo, escribirlo, y hablarlo); incluso si no se pudiera quedar en los EE.UU. y fuera deportado a México.

Después de estudiar con tres maestros, fue asignado a la instructora Sufi, que al principio no vio su potencial como un candidato para el GED en español porque sólo le quedaban menos de 40 días para lograrlo, ya que su fecha de partida se aproximaba.

Pero García, sin pensar mucho, empezó a prepararse, aunque parecía no haber suficiente tiempo para lograr su meta. Según los tutores, la mayoría de los alumnos tarda de tres a seis meses para prepararse y aun así fallan.

Sin embargo los otros maestros vieron la posibilidad de que él lo pudiera lograr y se lo recomendaron de nuevo a la instructora Sufi, la cual le asignó varios tutores, que trabajaron diligentemente con él.

Así fue que él puso todo su

esfuerzo para estudiar para los cuatro exámenes de preparación que son estudios sociales, lenguaje, ciencias y matemáticas.

Uno de sus mejores porristas fue su amigo Cesar, residente de SQ y tutor de GED en español, que le animaba constantemente.

"Lo bueno que tenía ese muchacho, fue que sin ambición de crédito [disminución de sentencia] solo quería aprender" dijo el tutor Cesar en una entrevista. "Para nosotros esto fue una inspiración y un reto. Ahora hay doce alumnos que se están preparando para obtener sus GEDs".

Milton (Ton), otro de los tres tutores tiene otro recuerdo, "Después de aceptar a García como alumno, yo vi su potencial y lo respalde en el proceso.

Él ha llegado a ser una inspiración para todos los demás reclusos que hoy están en este programa piloto en español para obtener su GED; un programa en que la Prisión Estatal de San Quentin es la primera de todas las prisiones en California, para implementarlo".

La última pieza del rompecabezas fue Wally (Steve Joyner), uno de los tutores en matemáticas. Él fue paciente en ayudarlo con la asignatura más difícil para García, la cual era el álgebra.

Para concluir esta historia, García aprobó ambos de los primeros dos exámenes que pensaba que reprobaría, antes de combatir con los cuatro exámenes estatales, que aprobó con calificaciones excelentes.

El hizo todo esto en menos de 30 días.

"Yo no creía que pudiera lograrlo, pero le ore a Dios que si era Su voluntad, Él me ayudara a pasarlos", fueron las palabras de García, quien adoptó una cita bíblica.

La cual fue la inspiración de su éxito: "Si alguno de vosotros tiene falta de sabiduría, pídale a Dios, El cual da a todos abundantemente y sin reproche, y le será dada" (Santiago 1:5).

García recibió su diploma en el día de su cumpleaños. Que mejor regalo, cumplir un año más de vida, obtener su diploma, y lograr su libertad dos días después.

En sus propias palabras García hace una paráfrasis del Salmo 91:14, "Por cuanto en Jehová he puesto mi amor, Él también me librará y me pondrá en lo alto, por cuanto he conocido Su nombre. Todo esto fue para la honra y gloria del Señor Jesucristo, Amen".

Los tutores proclaman al unísono, si García lo hizo, "Si se puede".



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Asamblea tratando las necesidades de la comunidad hispana

Por Carlos Drouillet,
Contributing Writer
Manuel Dorado,
Spanish Journalism Guild Writer

Personas del comité del nuevo modelo para San Quentin, se reunieron con un grupo de prisioneros de habla hispana – este comité fue creado por el gobernador de California, dándole especial atención a la transformación de "prisión" a "Centro de Rehabilitación".

Rompiendo las barreras del lenguaje, el foro del miércoles 16 de agosto de este año, expresó las necesidades de los hispanos, dándole la oportunidad a la comunidad de ser incluida y escuchada sobre las necesidades que pueden ser de beneficio, no solo en SQ, pero en todas las prisiones.

El evento fue organizado por el director de FoSQ (Amigos de San Quentin, en inglés), el Sr. Jesse Vásquez previo reo de SQ, quien en un tiempo estuvo sentenciado a cadena perpetua.

Este comité consistió de las siguientes personas; Francis Beavers, Lillian Tran, and Bianca Jiménez Rivera y escucharon las recomendaciones e ideas de los once representantes de la comunidad.

Algunos de los puntos fundamentales hablados fueron:

La libertad condicional,
La necesidad de facilitadores que hablen español

Las visitas regulares y familiares
Eliminar la segregación entre reos

Expansión de la yarda deportiva
Las barreras del idioma

La educación para las personas que no hablan el inglés

La provisión de literatura en español

Los miembros del comité preguntaron acerca del proceso de las Audiencias de Libertad Condicional.

Miguel Sifuentes, un reo y recién graduado del periodismo en español, citó un punto ejemplar de individuos deportados, que hoy trabajan en el extranjero, poniendo en práctica lo aprendido en la prisión como ciudadanos exitosos – nombrando al ex recluso, Taré Beltranchuc, un ejemplo viviente de esta transformación.

También compartió la falta y necesidad de facilitadores en los programas en español, sirviendo a esta comunidad desatendida, incluyendo la discapacidad en la preparación para la Audiencia de Libertad Condicional.

Lillian Tran preguntó: ¿Cuáles son los programas en español que existen? De entre los reclusos, el director del periodismo de la prisión en español, Edwin E. Chavez, contestó: Existen algunos cursos dirigidos por prisioneros que no están registrados con la administración de la prisión.

Estos programas son asistidos únicamente por reos voluntarios en un intento de desarrollar el inglés y satisfacer la escasez, como el reo Jorge Franco. El dirige una clase enseñando el inglés, sin ser acreditada en SOMS (Strategic Offender Management System, en inglés)

Resaltando el tema de la educación, Idalio Villagrán un reo y tutor de la educación básica, añadió su experiencia cuando fue estudiante tomando su GED dentro de la cárcel, "Batallé mucho porque [solo] hablaba español y me gustaría evitarle ese sufrimiento a los nuevos estudiantes".

Otro reo Aristeo Sampablo, reciente graduado del periodismo en español señaló que sería muy positivo dar un certificado de preparación a los facilitadores, algo que compruebe su habilidad o reconocimiento de enseñanza en la prisión.

Chavez enfatizó: "Aun si nosotros hacemos el trabajo, con nuestras propias ideas, todavía necesitaríamos ser acreditados por un patrocinador o voluntario".

El nuevo alumno del periodismo, Arsenio Leyva, también añadió la necesidad de tener asistentes bilingües dentro del departamento de recursos comunitarios. Así se reduciría el volumen de solicitudes para ingresar a los programas de auto-ayuda, que se atrasan en procesar.

Con respecto a las visitas familiares, Chavez aclaró que estas visitas son un privilegio ganado pero, "Yo sé por experiencia propia, que no hay suficientes cuartos para las visitas familiares y se toma como cuatro meses para ser aprobado".

¿"Que se necesita para mejorar las visitas"?, preguntó Francis Beavers. Edwin concluyó que se necesitan construir más casas modulares.

Según Vásquez, el asunto se trató de arreglar proveyendo un autobús gratis para las familias que vienen desde lejos. Lamentablemente, aunque ahorran en gasolina, todavía rentan hotel, compran comida, y hay otras inconveniencias que siguen afectando.

Residentes como Adán Arriaga, reflexionó y recomendó que la administración se enfoque en nuevas normas eliminando la segregación entre prisioneros, entrenando a los oficiales e implementarlas – para que la comunidad en general, sea unida.

Sifuentes recomendó la expansión del patio multiuso deportivo hacia el área de educación, moviendo las oficinas modulares al fondo.

Luciano Borjas, un conserje del gimnasio, invitó hacer disponible toda literatura en español. Mencionó como necesario: el título 15, todo anuncio de programa por escrito, menús de las comidas, formularios que llenar, y libros en español dentro de la biblioteca.

También añadió que se deben dar clases de primaria y secundaria en español, como método para poder superar y equiparse obteniendo mejores oportunidades de empleo.

Algo que en este nuevo modelo se debe tomar en cuenta, son reclusos de la tercera edad. Tranquillano Figueroa, fue invitado para describir su armaga experiencia como reo y limitación de idioma.

Con gran emoción y detalles, explicó que su compañero de celda – que no hablaba español, lo atacó físicamente hasta que se desmayó. Cuando quiso reportarlo, los oficiales no hicieron nada.

Continuó, que no fue hasta que trató de ahorcarlo momentos después, que los guardias se dispusieron ayudarlo.

"Más tarde me llevaron al hospital, ya con mis costillas lastimadas y con los oídos sangrando". Derramando lágrimas relató, "Después, cuando me interrogó el doctor y yo no lo pude oír, me tuvieron que dar el sistema audífono que ahora tengo."

Se aclaró que esta tragedia nunca hubiera sucedido, si existieran intérpretes asignados en cada edificio escolar, de residencia, y clínica médica de la prisión.

¿"Como te hubiera gustado que te ayudaran mejor los oficiales?", preguntó Chavez.

"Si los oficiales me hubieran ayudado desde el principio cuando les pedí que lo movieran, esa persona no me hubiera lastimado tanto, ni me hubiera tratado de matar", exclamó Figueroa. "Deben de tener más cuidado al asignar a un hombre de edad mayor, con un joven y ser conscientes de las barreras del idioma".

SPORTS

WARRIORS

Continued from page 1

of the SQ Dubs and watched the game with his wife, Michelle, and Public Information Officer Lt. G. Berry. In addition to those three, Community Resource Manager R. Gardea and Recreational Coordinator K. Bhatt were among those out supporting the home team.

The dynamic game saw the SQ Dubs hold the lead for almost the entire four quarters.

Even though the Dubs lost, the Dubs still won. "Ain't no losers when the Warriors win," said Aaron "Showtime" Taylor, who served time at The Q. He was in his element at the scorers' table, providing play-by-play announcing and color commentary on the exhilarating game.

Many of the residents in attendance had a chance to stand and engage with superstar players Klay Thompson and CP3. Residents were so into the event, they were practically seeping onto the court.

The SQ Warriors team was eagerly waiting on their GS Warriors rivals to come into the prison to play in the latest installment of the much anticipated, unadulterated, and never duplicated, ongoing, decade-long battle. After losing the matchup last year, the SQ Dubs put in some serious work to make sure it did not happen again.

"We've been working hard all season long," said Head Coach Jeremiah "JB" Brown after being doused with ice water by his players in celebration of their hard won victory. "I knew what we are capable of; just glad everyone got a chance to see it. This win does a lot for our confidence — going against two ex-NBA players, Division I players, and for me, coaching against Coach Kenny Atkinson. We're blessed."

The performances of the SQ Warriors starting five — #15 Tyler "Drizzy" Cooper, #18 Darius Poole, #1 Donell "JR" Pimpton, #2 Ryan "Hero" Mason, and #5 Keyshawn "Steez" Strickland — made an impression on splash brother Klay Thompson. He was on the sideline with a look of thrill on his face every time he saw an extraordinary shot from one of the starting five.

"Steez kind of reminds me of myself out there. These guys are really good," Thompson said. "This was a great time. These guys are real hoopers with real experience."

Thompson had said that he heard how good the Ryan "Hero" Mason was before he came to the prison. He said he was glad to see it firsthand for himself.

Thompson's praise for Strickland and Mason made an impression on the youngsters.

"To get recognized by a future hall of famer and to receive praises from one of my favorite players in the league is awesome. I'm stoked," Mason said.

Those sentiments reached the ears of Strickland, too. "I'm glad we won and I'm proud of my team. We all did it and made it happen," he said. "But to hear how Klay compared me to him, really boosted my ego and my confidence. That's big. I'm a carry that with me for the rest of my life."

Thompson walked through the sea of SQ residents, stopping to sign autographs without any hesitation. There was a frenzy of people expressing their love for Thompson for showing up to the prison for the first time. He and all of the GS Warrior staff were very much at ease.

This included Chris Paul who played several games of dominos at the tables next to the basketball court. It's possible Paul's own relative had once sat there too after doing time at The Q.

Paul said he was grateful "to come here, see the game, kick it with y'all, play some

Thompson, CP3 inspire residents

dominos with y'all." He reminisced on how Draymond Green had also played dominos when visiting the prison in the past. Paul heard how Draymond lost and said he had to avenge Draymond's domino drubbing.

After losing the first domino game against SQ resident Reginald Thorpe, Paul said he won the next two out of three games to earn redemption for him and Draymond.

After Paul was forced to dig in the "bone yard" and exchanged some traditional trash-talking banter back and forth with Thorpe, CP3 said, "Seemed like Reg was continually drawing domino 6-4 [for 10 points]."

Thorpe also challenged Klay Thompson to a game of chess and came away with memories of a lifetime.

"To play in front of a living legend and one of the best three-point shooters in NBA history was amazing for me to see how he was not fazed by stigmas of the incarcerated," Thorpe said. "Just to take time to spend time with us, gives us value. I had a feeling of what it feel like to be a regular human being besides my circumstance."

Moses Moody returned to SQ after visiting last year and matching wits with a resident in a game of chess. However, for several GS Warriors it was their first time joining in on the humanizing experience that the organization has been providing since first visiting the prison in 2012.

GS Warriors Owner Joe Lacob's sons, Kirk and Kent Lacob, brought several rookies and new players with them to experience what they have been enjoying for several years now.

Kirk shared his observations about this year's SQ Dubs team. "San Quentin looks more together. A lot of new talent, good players and good athletes, a lot better than last year. And it's killing me that I can't play [due to ankle injury], but I'm excited to be back."

Kirk was sitting near the scoreboard assisting GS Coach Kenny Atkinson as his brother Kent led their players on the court. But this time the SQ Dubs brought the fire, nothing like how they played the last time the two teams met.

"They just have a better squad [this year], they are on another level of hard," Coach Atkinson said.

Long-time volunteers and supporters of San Quentin's basketball program — Bill Epling, Don Smith, and Jenny Waters — beamed proudly at the performance of the SQ Warriors along with the program's general manager, resident Brian Asey.

During last year's game, the GS Dubs' breakout player was Hannah Heiring, who impressed with her long range shooting. This time her game was shutdown by the pressure of the SQ Dubs' defense.

"You guys had a scouting report on me this time," Heiring said. "This year's team is completely different. The energy was different. People were like, 'You are not getting a shot off.' I will remember this and come back. It was truly an incredible experience."

Klay Thompson was prophetic when he surprisingly bet against his GS Dubs on the court. "I got my money on the San Quentin Dubs," Thompson said.

GM Dunleavy noted that although he was here to enjoy the day and support his team, he was also keeping an eye out for talent. "I'm also here working," he said.

His words were not merely in jest. In the past, the GS organization has provided employment opportunities for some former SQ residents once they paroled.

The record for the legendary series now stands in the GS Dubs' favor by only one game, 5-4.

9TH ANNUAL



- 1 - Klay Thompson praying with SQ Warriors before the game.
- 2 - Head Coach Jeremiah Brown counsels his team during the break between the first and second quarter.
- 3 - Keyshawn Strickland putting up a layup.
- 4 - Mike Dunleavy, General Manager of the Golden State Warriors.
- 5 - Chris Paul finds a holding cage in SQ's medical department not so cozy.
- 6 - Mason Ryan puts up a 3-pointer.
- 7 - Klay Thompson meets SQ Acting Warden Oak Smith.



"They just have a better squad this year, they are on another level of hard." — Warriors assistant coach Kenny Atkinson



THROWBACK

Since 2012, The Golden State Warriors organization, personnel, players, and coaches have visited San Quentin to participate in an annual basketball game with their counterpart SQ Warriors. Through the years, stars such as Draymond Green, Kevin Durant, former GM Bob Myers, coach Steve Kerr and many more have toured San Quentin and spent time hanging out with residents.



Warriors versus Warriors quarter-by-quarter breakdown

By Randy Thompson
Staff Writer

FIRST QUARTER: The San Quentin Warriors started the game strong with Tyler "Drizzy" Cooper blocking a shot and Keyshawn "Steez" Strickland making a two-pointer for the first score of the game. They built on their lead after Mason "The Hero" Ryan put up a vicious lay-up with a foul, earning three points, and Strickland came through again, this time sinking a 3-pointer. With SQW leading 8-0, a layup from the Golden State Warriors' David "Just Dave" Fatoki ended that run. Fatoki followed that up with a 3-pointer and one, bringing his team back into the game. The two teams spent the rest of the quarter sizing each other up, looking for weaknesses. Slowly, Golden State began finding holes in SQW's defense and shaved the lead down. When the home team huddled up at the end of the quarter, "splash brother" Klay Thompson joined them and listened in as Coach Jeremiah "JB" Brown gave instructions. First Quarter ended, 22-20, with SQW on top.

SECOND QUARTER: During the break, Coach Brown spoke to his team, "We are losing our lead because y'all aren't blocking. Find your man! Play defense!" SQW stayed with their strong offense though, quickly reacting when Golden State tied the game. Ryan made good use of a steal by passing to teammate Donell "JR" Pimpton for two points, followed by Strickland putting up yet another 3-pointer. The SQW's lightning and thunder duo with Ryan's leadership at point guard and Strickland's Viking-like assault on the rim pushed SQW's lead to 31-23. The quarter concluded in spectacular fashion with Strickland banking in a 3-pointer with eight seconds remaining. Second quarter ended 44-36.

THIRD QUARTER: The third quarter began with a shootout. Pimpton nailed a 3-pointer and Golden State returned the favor. The two teams fought hard. Taioisi "Shaka" Matangi was diving for loose balls and snatching it right out of people's hands when they weren't careful enough. Pimpton was jumping higher than he has any right to at his height, getting much-needed rebounds. Cooper was pushing his weight around under the rim, blocking shots and snagging rebounds. Even with all that, Golden State staged a third quarter comeback, much like their NBA players do in the playoffs. They managed to take the lead for the first time by a single point. However, SQW battled to steal back to the lead. Third Quarter ended 66-64.

FOURTH QUARTER: Both Warriors teams came out swinging for the decisive final quarter. Neither gave up the lead by more than two points. During a timeout with five minutes left, Coach Brown yelled at his team, "We need stops! We gotta win this game! We gonna win this game! I know it hurts, but suck it up!" Meanwhile, Coach Atkins of Golden State paced the sideline as if it was Game 7 of the NBA finals. SQW held the lead, first by three points and then by five. Cooper made two blocks in the paint during back-to-back plays, following his coach's command to the letter. With just a minute left, Golden State put up a layup, bringing the score to 79-77, SQW. Golden State tried to extend the game with fouls, but the hometown Warriors responded by not missing a single foul shot. All hopes of a Golden State comeback ended during a final inbound pass when Strickland managed to steal the ball. As the clock expired, Coach Brown had ice water dumped on him as his team celebrated their victory.

San Quentin Warriors win 85 - 80

SQ Dubs' Starting Five:

- Keyshawn "Steez" Strickland: 24 - points
- Mason "Hero" Ryan: 21 - points
- Donell "JR" Pimpton: 18 - points
- Tyler "Drizzy" Cooper: 13 - points and 7 block shots
- Darius "DP" Poole: 2 - points

Bench players:

- Taioisi "Shaka" Matangi
- David Rodriguez
- Ryan "Taz" Matlock
- Jamaal "Do it All" Harrison
- Greg "defense" Eskridge
- Delvy Adams
- Robert Belfield
- Stan "LS" Tillman
- Navion "Smooth" Starks

GS Dubs' Line-up:

- Bracey Wright had: 30 - points
- Christopher Demarco had: 13 - points
- David Fatoki, had: 9 - points
- Andre Mattson had: 8 - points
- Noel "Jesus Shuttleworth" Hightower had: 8 - points
- Kent "K-Swizzle" Lacob had: 5 - points
- Everett Dayton had: 5 - points
- Charles "Chuck" Hayes
- Hannah "Long Range" Heiring
- Seth Tarver
- Kirk Lacob

SQ Coach and Referee:
Ref, Jeffery Brown
Coach, Jeremiah Brown

NBA Coach and Referee:
Ref, Larone Smith
Warriors assistant coach, Kenny Atkinson



Illustration by Dao Ong // SQNews



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



Illustration by Dao Ong // SQNews

SQ Warriors speedster discusses playing on cloud nine

By Timothy Hicks
Sports Editor

TIER TALK

When the Golden State warriors came to the prison on September 27 and challenged the San Quentin Warriors in their annual matchup, they did not expect to run into Shooting Guard Donnie "JR" Pimpton, AKA "Sonic."

The fastest man on the court that day was recognized by future Hall of Famers Klay Thompson and Chris "CP3" Paul. And since it was Pimpton's first time getting the opportunity to play against the four-time Champs G-League and front office players, I wanted to get his perspective of that day and what it meant to him.

Donnie Pimpton: When I was told that the Warriors was coming to the prison my heart started beating fast and I had made up my mind that I was going to ball out. And I have never been in front of a big crowd before.

Timothy Hicks: What was it like for getting the

opportunity to play against the GSW? What did you have to tell coach JB to make him let you start?

DP: I told the coach that I'll give him my all. I told him about my energy and he seen my track record since joining the team a year ago. And I must admit that I never played with a group of guys like this before. I love my team. They are my family now.

TH: What was it like for you to meet the star GSW players?

DP: Meeting Chris Paul good and I was excited to meet Klay Thompson. I felt blessed and a warmth came over me to meet a NBA legend. I was humbled and I will never forget this moment. It was hard to focus on the game after that, but I kept it in mind that I did not want to lose, so I had to keep my composure.

TH: What were some of the best times of that day for

you?

DP: In the beginning of the game when I met the GSW General manager Mike Dunleavy and meeting all the rookies plus, matching up against the G-league players was the best times for me. Also taking a pic with rookie Brandin Podziemski was a highlight of the day too.

TH: When you were in the game it was moving at a fast pace. You were all over the court on defense and offense. The SQW basically held the lead for the entire game up until the late quarter where your team almost lost the game. What happened?

DP: It was Keyshawn "Steez," Strickland, Mason "The Hero" Ryan, Darius "DP," Poole and Stan "LS" Tillman who saved the game. I don't see any weakness in them. "Steez" got that clutch steal which led to that crucial three-pointer from "Ryan" that ended the game.

TH: What did being able



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

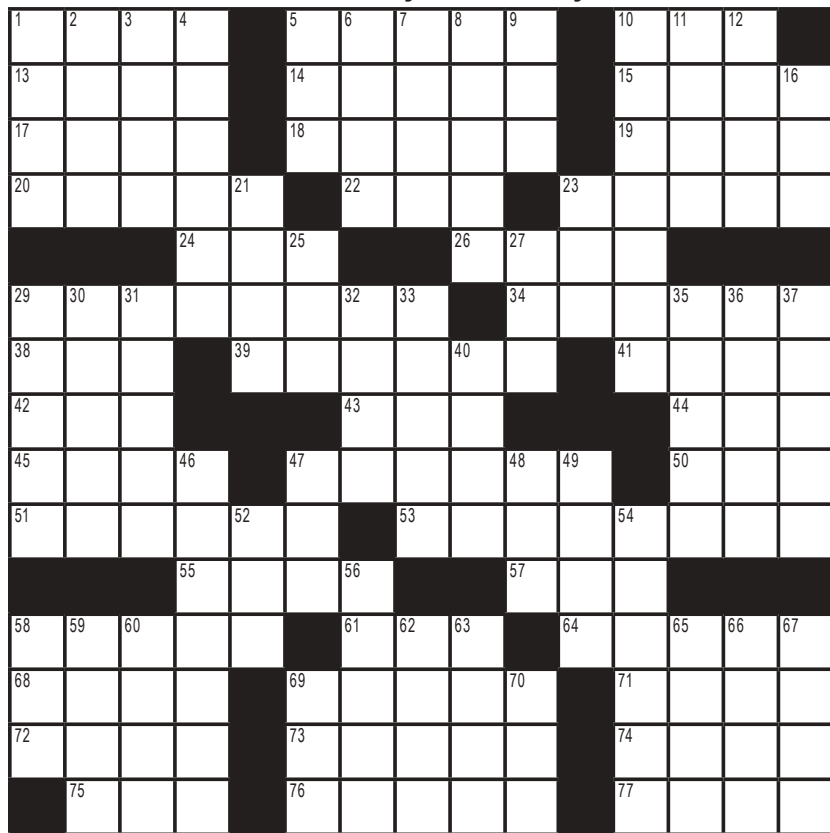
to play against and meet the players and members of the four-time Championship Warrior team organization mean to you?

DP: It brought out hope for me. I used to have doubts about things in life, but since meeting them guys, that brought out for my life. I got to talk to those guys. And when I found out that the majority of the guys were speaking highly on it felt great.

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Jonathan Chiu

Edited by Jan Perry



Across

- 1. Stride
5. Tower entries
10. Jail (slang)
13. My Name is ___
14. Icky drain clogger
15. Not written
17. Operatic solo
18. Van Bismarck and Warburg
19. Hawaiian island site of Pearl Harbor
20. Former LA Chinese theater name
22. Double-pronged Japanese
23. Mogul emperor in the late 1500s
24. ___ Hustle
26. Tractor-trailer
29. Motherboard, USB, or power adapter
34. Most camping gear on a SUV (2wds)
38. Doctor's org (abbr.)
39. Mount in Northern California
41. Whey, in Latin
42. Real estate parcel
43. Prison medical clinic (abbr.)
44. Payroll company
45. Original Star Wars actor: ___ Guinness
47. ___ nothing here
50. Soviet financial system instituted by Lenin in 1921 (abbr.)
51. Type of children's street
53. IOS, Windows, or Linux
55. Ant Man actor: Michael ___
57. Iron oxide (abbr.)
58. Succession
61. A Gibson, but not a Les Paul
64. 90s connection to AOL
68. Designer Jacobs
69. Apprehensive
71. Not truth
72. Inflated
73. City in NY on the Mohawk River
74. Panache
75. Baby formula ingredient (abbr.)
76. Data unit
77. Loch ___

Down

- 1. Fabric line
2. Actress Reid
3. NFL host: ___ Andrews
4. Smoothed a 2x4, e.g.
5. Viet cuisine
6. Athlete cuisine
7. Actress: ___ Moreno
8. 2000s movie that spawned Pandora's Box and The Escort
9. U.S. Armed Forces conscription service (abbr.)
10. Data packet tracker
11. Type of Spring
12. Capital port city on Okinawa island
16. Scandinavian S-shaped bronze trumpet
21. The horror movies featuring main character jigsaw
23. Metro Boomin/ASAP Rocky/Roisee song: ___ Dreamin (2wds)
25. Cheerleader repeater
27. Good to know at the airport
29. Footballer known as Papa Bear: George ___
30. Native Mexican plant whose roots are used as detergent
31. Evaluates
32. Mountain in Antarctica
33. Blue Bloods actor: Will ___
35. Country singer: ___ Carter
36. Command
37. Side-stepped strata (geol)
40. Asian plant used for dessert
46. Spam thwarter
47. Bo Derek movie
48. F@#k
49. School curriculum
52. The constant song of the selfish
54. Like many cooking spoons
56. Friendship
58. Disapproval (abbr.)
59. Squared
60. !!!!
62. Produce
63. Scalp parasite
65. Driver: ___ Earnhardt
66. Periods
67. Type of Warehouse
69. House amenity
70. WWII submarine warfare film: ___ Boot

BOOK REVIEW

THE TIME OUT TRILOGY

DADDY'S TIME OUT, MAMA'S TIME OUT, AND PEANUT'S TIME OUT.

By Rachel Nee Hall

By Bostyon Johnson Managing Editor

The title, "Daddy's Time Out," jumped out to me in a series of books known as the Time Out trilogy. They are written by Rachel Nee Hall to explain to children how a parent or sibling is being taken away to jail or prison and how such children are not alone in their experience.

The books are about adult consequences, transformation, and redemption told in a way young children can understand. They help to show how the impact of mass incarceration not only punishes the parents by removing them from their children, but also punishes the children left behind.

The two other books in the Time Out trilogy are "Mama's Time Out" and "Peanut's Time Out." Together, they explain clearly and with sensitivity why a family member is no longer in the home.

"Daddy's Time Out" helps provide language an adult can use to communicate with small children about incarceration, helping them understand that family separation is not their fault, and they are not the cause of a parent or sibling leaving.

The series gave me clarification and insight, because I have a seven-year-old daughter to whom I have not spoken since she was three. I have wondered what a conversation with her about my incarceration would look like, or how I would even start one. Talking to my daughter about my bad choices, the mistakes I've made, and being away from her for all these years is one of my biggest fears.

The books help parents to communicate with young children by offering ways to process their feelings about a family member going to prison. Personally, I know that feeling all too well because I did not know my biological father until I was 18 years old. I remember how anxious and frustrated I felt as a young man after learning the secret that the man who raised me all those years was not my biological father.

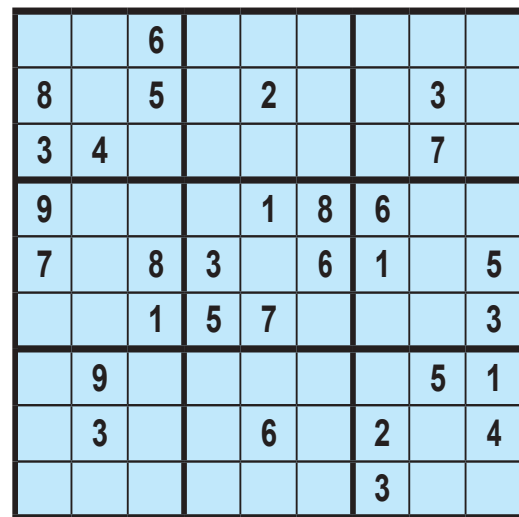
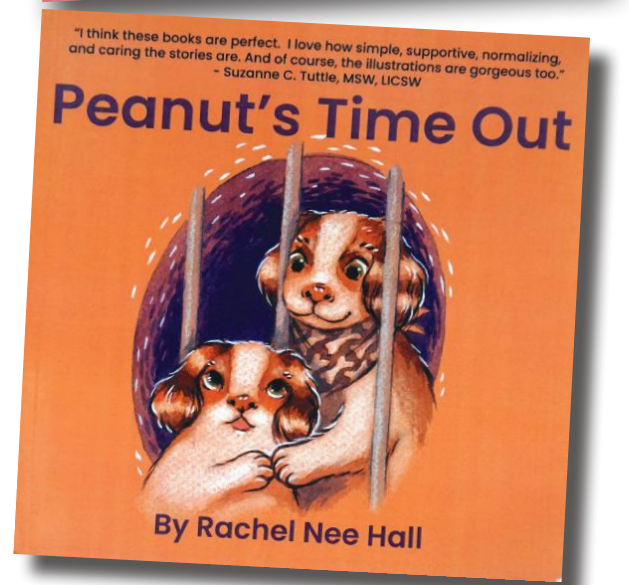
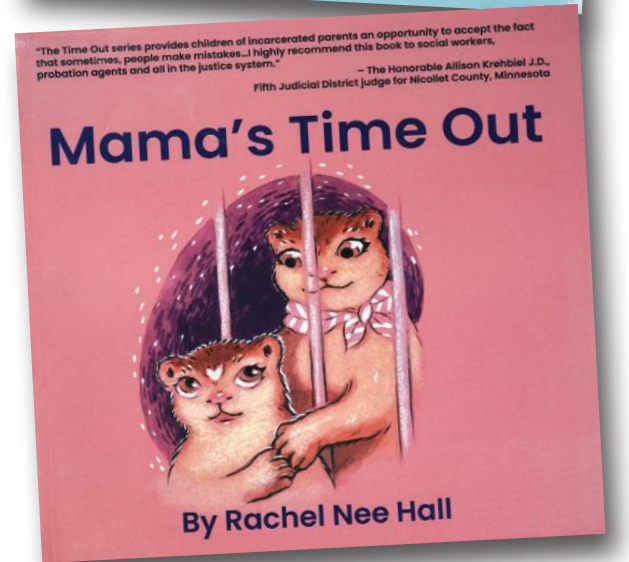
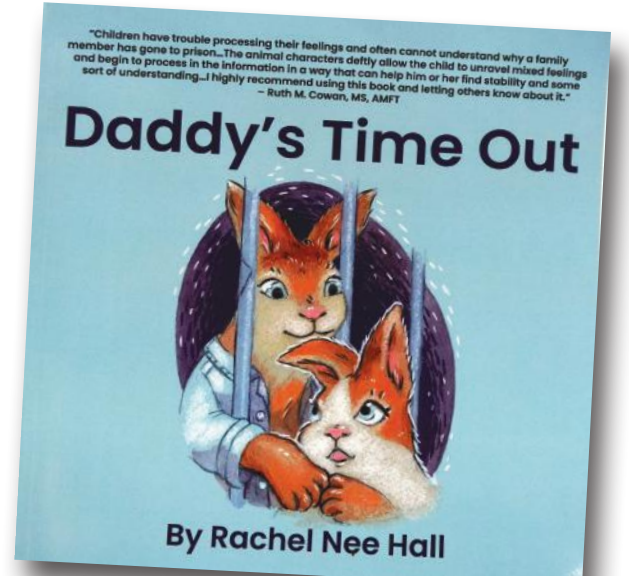
The author of the trilogy, Rachel Nee Hall, wrote about what research reveals about children with incarcerated parents.

"Studies show children with incarcerated parents are twice as likely as their peers [without a parent in prison] to develop behavioral or mental health problems, including increased aggression, depression, and anxiety," according to Hall.

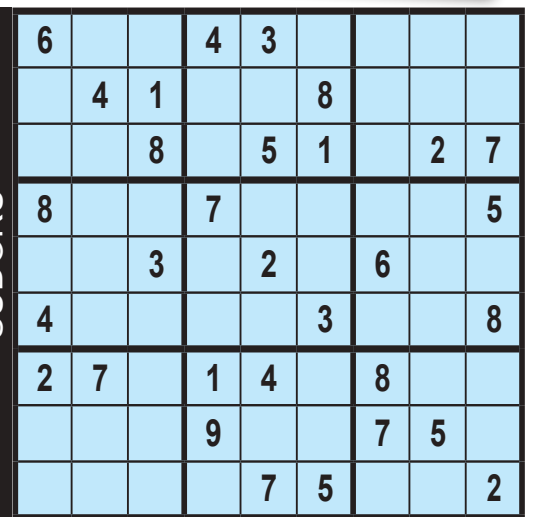
I remember developing these problems during my younger years when I learned about the man who raised me. I used to look for my biological father at bus stops and on subways, peering into the faces of men to find similarities or recognizable traits, to no avail.

The goal of these books is to educate children about incarceration and to open lines of communication for children to be less fearful, confused, or ashamed of the new world to which they have to adapt.

This series spoke to me, and I recommend it to anyone wanting to learn ways to speak to a child about incarceration.



SUDOKU



SNOWTOS word search grid with the word SNOWTOS highlighted in a large font at the top.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



MULE CREEK MAN SETS SIGHTS ON BRIGHTER FUTURE

Dear SQNews,

Hello SQNEWS my name is Hugo Campos 31 years of age serving a 15 to life sentence for 2nd degree murder. I am a resident of Level III Mule Creek State Prison. Just made it off close custody for 18 months of positive programming and rehabilitation. I have known what remorse is and take full accountability and responsibility for my action that gave me this life sentence.

I went to my bi-annual got 23 points, no RVR's and went to committee, I asked if I can please be sent to San Quentin as my first choice, the second choice is here Level II. I have almost graduated every group C-yard offers, I am interested in the CNC machinist with Titan and seen the marathon and all the cool groups. All the VOC's and how SQ is a good place for positive programming. I saw on the state channel and heard great things about your prison.

I hope I get blessed and I am endorsed to SQ. I am from the East Bay so I would be closer to my three daughters. Thanks a lot for the positivity, peace, and power posted in the SQNews.

Hugo Campos
Mule Creek State Prison
Ione, California

LA RESIDENT ON SQNEWS ASSISTANCE

Dear SQNews,

My name is Ivan Castillo, I am currently housed in the North County Correctional Facility in Santa Clarita also known as Wayside.

Due to the lack of reading material available we are deprived of current news. Incarcerated who are waiting trial are not aware of the current events happening in Prisons that may affect them. I came across an SQNews issue someone had and was intrigued and amazed by the news it contained. It sheds light on what may be waiting for us in the future if we have to serve a prison sentence.

I am asking for your organization to provide the jail or

the school program with a monthly issue. This would be a great exchange of information between jails and prisons to further the advance of social justice which should be the cause for both institutions.

Ivan Castillo
Terminal Annex
Los Angeles, California

CONGRATS FOR JOURNALISM GUILD GRATUATES

Dear Adviser John Eagan,

Congratulations to those who were honored in the Graduation ceremony.

The story in the August '23 was a real joy to read. You and your great staff from the Journalism Guild have done great work with each issue of the SQNews. I am so pleased of their getting CNPA Awards.

The men at the SQNews have surely produced some of the best publications ever. Congrats and good luck.

Jeff Craemer

APPRECIATION FROM NORCO

Dear SQNews,

My name is Adrian Gutierrez and I was wondering if I could please receive a copy of the newspaper.

On another note, I along with a few other people want to congratulate you on the first rate paper, that all of you put out on a monthly basis. Keep up the good work.

Adrian Gutierrez
CA Rehabilitation Center
Norco, California

REQUEST FOR TRUCK DRIVING COURSE

Dear SQNews,

Hello I hope you are doing well. I am writing in regards to your article in the SQNews about the truck driving course being taught there.

I am up for re-sentencing and because of the new laws people like you help us with. The attorney may petition the court for possible release, after 27 years I am ready for a second chance at a new life. I am 59 years old and if I can show I am being trained by correspondence for truck driving it would be a very positive thing to show the

court.

Is there any way I can enroll in this course at this time where I am? Can you forward my request to the person Miss Autumn O'Bannon.

I am drug free since 2019 and I do not want to do anything that will put me back in here. I am done and ready to start a new life.

Luis Gonzalez
CMC-State Prison
California

ANOTHER REQUEST TO JOIN SQRC

Dear SQNews,

My name is Craig Shiple T-72290 and I am housed at Mill Creek State Prison. I am currently assigned as the MAC Chairman for our yard.

I am writing to ask about the programs at San Quentin and I am curious about when the prison will be actually renaming itself for the new model based on how Norway prisons operate.

I see on the institutional channel that you all have all types of programs and classes. Where I am hardly has any rehabilitation... and it is a Level I.

Myself would like to come to San Quentin. I have been in prison since 2009, and am due to be released in 2025. I want to come to San Quentin so I can get into groups and to just get to a prison where there is a vibe of transformation and success... people are doing things at San Quentin to help inmates to be successful and I want a part of it and I need it. I would like to know about what programs are offered at San Quentin and maybe a little about the podcast, as well as any other positive things going on.

Thank you for your time and help. I will program and participate in groups and classes if I get the chance to come to San Quentin.

Please help me get to San Quentin if you can... it is kind of funny like almost begging to come to a prison. I just know it would be a great opportunity for me... to just surround myself with some positivity and success.

Craig Shiple
Mule Creek-SP
Ione, California

EDITORIAL



Gregory Eskridge // Uncuffed

NEW REPORT PROVIDES GUIDANCE

The People in Blue releases, "Implementation of the California Model: A Four Part Manual by the incarcerated to Transform CDCR's Culture"

By Steve Brooks
Editor-in-Chief

A new report put out by The People in Blue proposes cultural change as part of the new California Model. TPIB is a group of incarcerated people dedicated to changing the culture in prison. I serve as the vice president of TPIB.

This September, we put out our preliminary report titled, "Implementation of the California Model: A Four Part Manual by the Incarcerated to Transform CDCR's Culture." Our report is a reflection of a diverse group of incarcerated people with over 200 years of lived carceral experience.

This first-of-its kind report is designed to sow seeds of positive change, rehabilitation, transformation, accountability, and culture-shifting inside California's prison system. The report is put forth as a lived-experience guideline for Gov. Newsom's California Model. It describes the problems and proposes solutions for ending toxic prison culture — a culture which we incarcerated people know fundamentally jeopardizes public safety. Our proposals are also in lock-step with Secretary Macomber and CDCR's plans to change the culture one conversation at a time.

There are four main proposals in this report.

The first proposal includes a comprehensive plan for scaling up rehabilitation programs — which includes an intensive financial literacy program — and a participation mandate for every individual who enters prison gates.

The second proposal seeks to improve the relationship between those who live and work in California prisons. An improved relationship would create a safer, more humane environment for both staff and the incarcerated.

The third proposal provides ways to protect the health of the incarcerated by providing healthier foods through the institution's culinary system.

The last proposal highlights the benefits of bringing back weightlifting programs, developing food co-ops and gardens, and increasing healthy food resources through new food vendor access.

We hope that all California prisons will create a chapter of TPIB in response to this report. We encourage all incarcerated stakeholders to use their voice to help change the toxic culture and legacy that has developed

over the years between people in green (officers) and people in blue (the incarcerated). We believe that people who live and work inside of the prisons must buy in to the California model in order for the system to change. Our goal is to provide a successful model of rehabilitation and education that emulates the model many of us have come to know and utilize in our own personal development.

While preparing this report, we have been working in cooperation with many members of the Governor's advisory council, including co-chair Ron Broomfield, Alison Pachynski, Billy Mizell, Jody Lewen, and Jesse Vasquez. Some of our members have also been in talks with Chris Redlitz of The Last Mile and Scott Budnick of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition. We also enjoy the support of Gov. Newsom's IDEO Inc. consultancy firm as well as people living and working inside SQ.

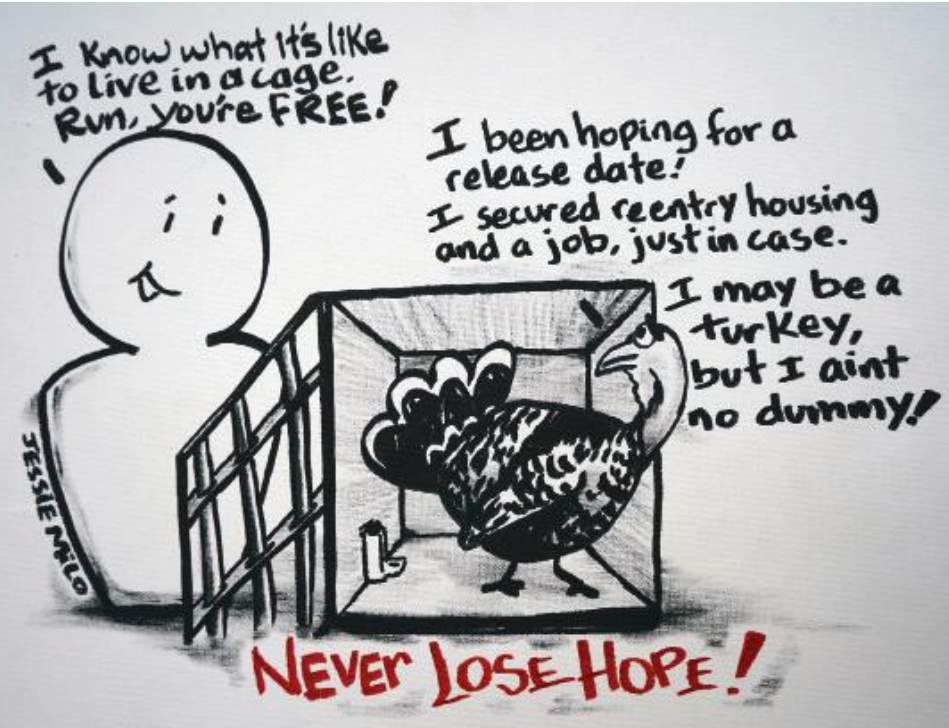
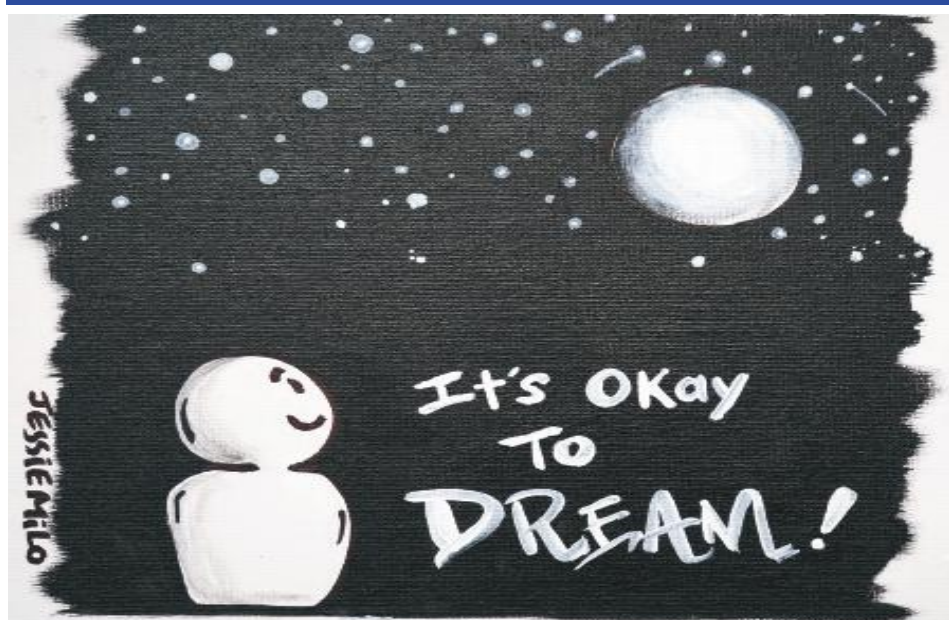
We have helped to inspire much of what will be proposed by the firm moving forward. We have been approached by architects and designers of the \$380 million dollar building project for Building 38 at SQ. They are specifically seeking ideas from the incarcerated population and other community members for the building design.

We are honored to participate in this process as true stakeholders for real prison reform in California. We hope that we will be accepted by more experts on the outside who are working to create this new model for those living and working inside. TPIB aspires to be trailblazers for incarcerated people throughout the state to become changemakers who advocate for public safety, uplifting and rebuilding communities for the better.

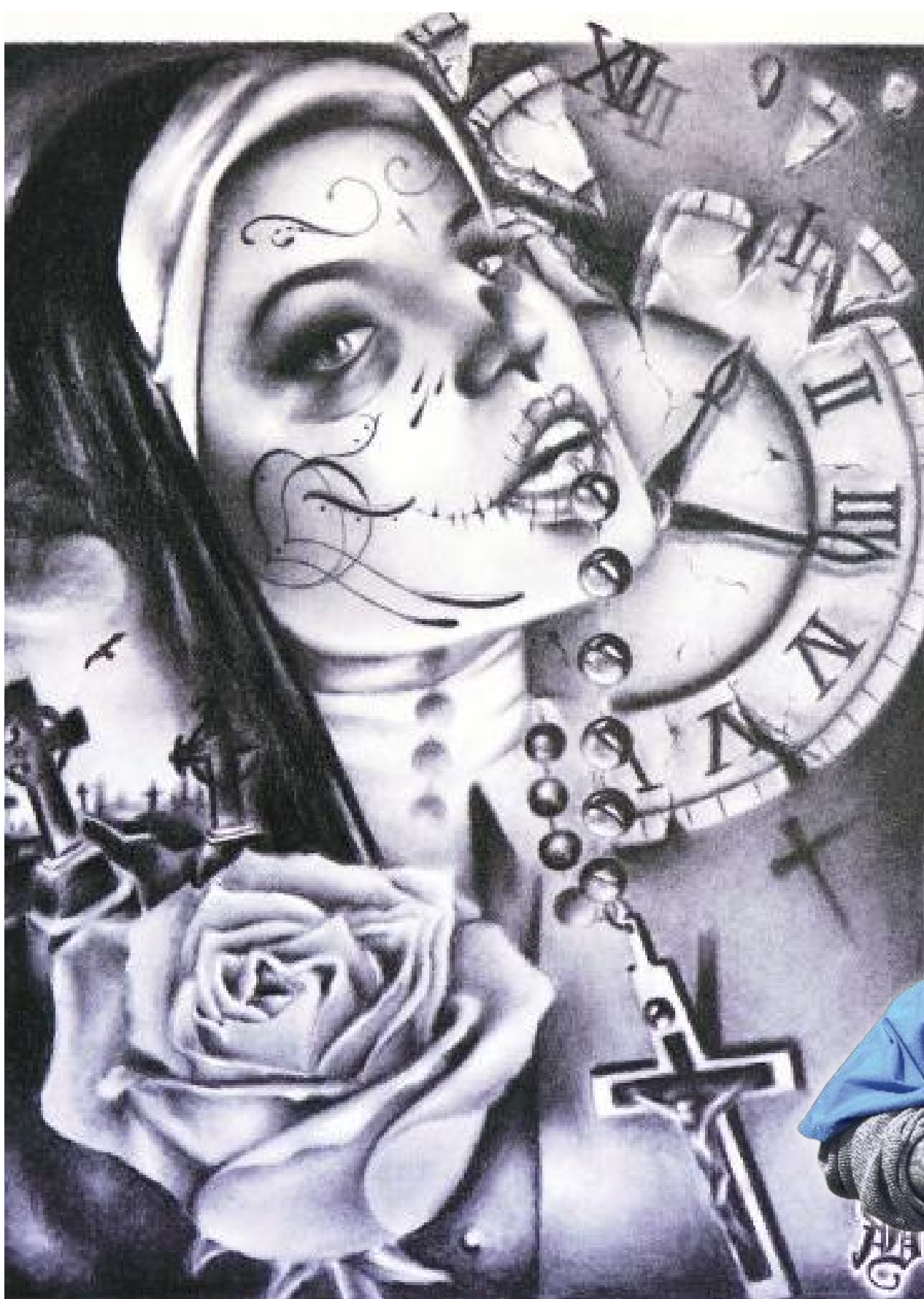
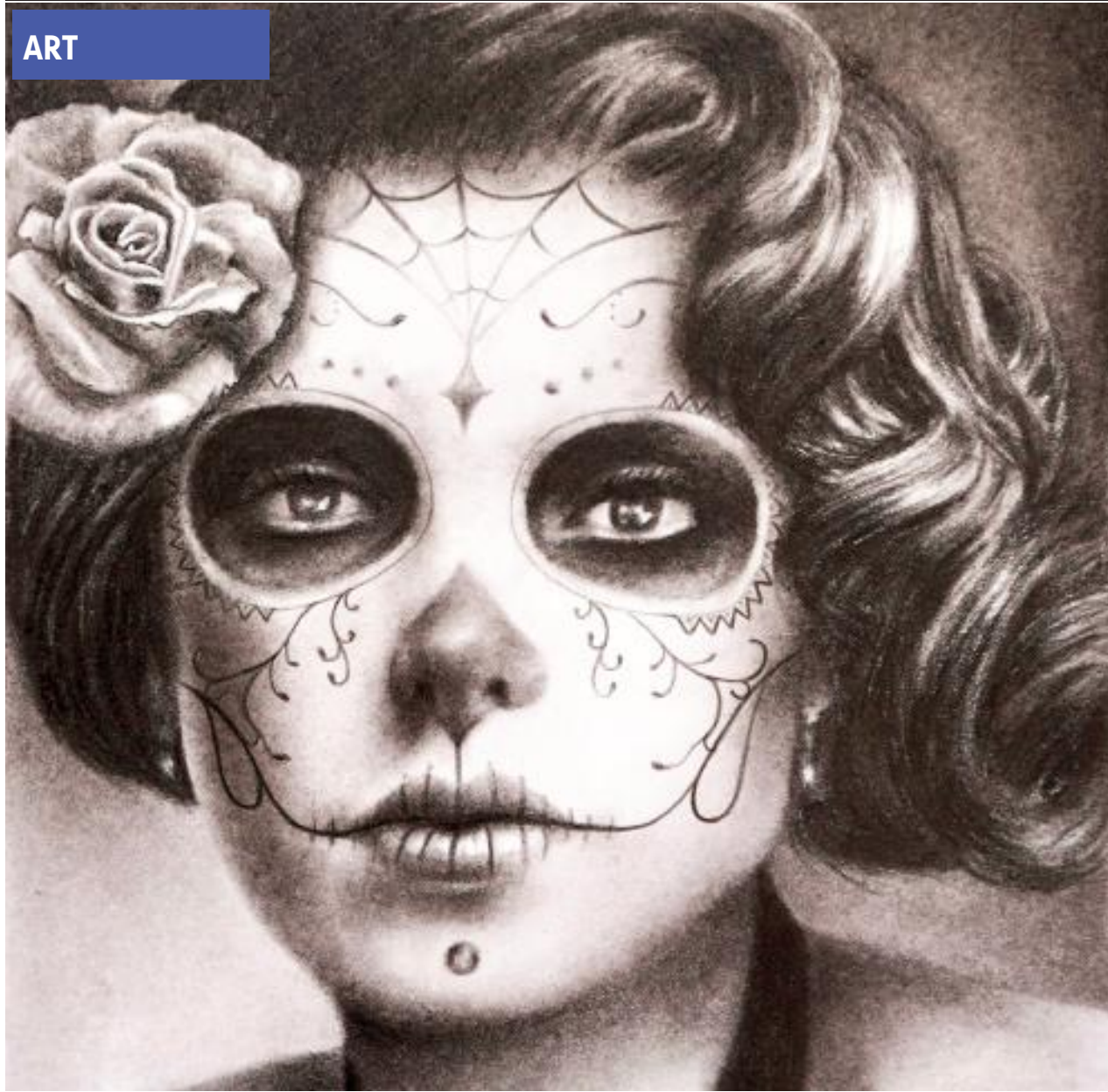
We hope that Gov. Newsom will continue to close prisons and reduce the incarcerated population in a safe and responsible manner. We also believe that climate change and future pandemics demand prison population reductions. We see many of the proposals made in the state's Reparations Task Force report released in July as necessary components of this new California Model.

We anticipate releasing our final report in January 2024. In that report, more voices from men and women who live and work inside the prisons will be included. Our ultimate goal is to help implement real solutions that increase public safety and advance humane treatment inside of prisons. We believe proposing and implementing real solutions to real problems will create safe communities and help reduce recidivism.

SAN QUEN-TOONS BY JESSIE MILO (2023)



ART



Rostros del pasado

Ruiz encuentra inspiración de sus antepasados, dedica su arte a su madre

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Chair

La arte no tiene barreras o lenguaje que la divida. En esta edición especial en español, tenemos la oportunidad de conectarnos con artistas que han desarrollado y descubierto sus talentos en la prisión.

Reflexionando en la cultura del Día de los muertos, este artista nos da unos ejemplares llenos no solo de tradición.

Pero por medio de su imaginación creativa también nos conecta con nuestros antepasados: los abuelitos, tatarabuelos, y las generaciones desconocidas historias que solo son aprendidas por los cuentos de nuestros seres queridos.

El Día de los muertos, celebra las memorias de nuestros antepasados con dulces, bebidas, fotos, y con las historias que encienden la imaginación. ¿Quién no quisiera haber poder estado alrededor de esos seres queridos?

El artista Ruiz, comparte su talento y dedica el arte a su madre, honrando así sus ascendentes.

El despegue del encarcelamiento fue la motivación que le dio vida y creatividad al arte del Sr. Ruiz.

"No quería pensar tanto sobre mi caso y deprimirme; así fue como comencé a dibujar. Y descubrí que podía dibujar," dijo Brallan Ruiz, 28 residente de SQ. "Así fue como supe que mis dibujos hacían feliz a mi familia, y eso me hace feliz a mí."

Recordando las raíces de su arte, Ruiz empezó a dibujar caricaturas para su hija Skylynn. La autenticidad llegó a sus manos con la caricatura de la famosa Mini-Mouse, que siempre le mandaba a su hija. Desde entonces su arte creció.

Su talento lo ha elevado a crear hasta cuadros pintados de personas célebres, como la famosa Frida Khalo una artista Mexicana, quien ya más de medio siglo, ha sido muy reconocida por sus retratos.

Ruiz, dibujó la imagen más famosa de Khalo: ella sentada en una silla mecedora, fumando un cigarro, y con su pelo decorado con dos flores blancas.

Aun así, Ruiz reconoce que él ha cometido errores en su vida y considera que él no ha sido el mejor de los hijos.

Con este retrato de Frida, él quería decirle a su madre lo mucho que la quiere y lo importante que ella es para él. El amor de hijo a su madre, es la inspiración que le ayuda a seguir adelante en su vida.

"Lo que me motivó de hacer el retrato de Frida, es que cuando era un niño, me recordaba mirar muchas fotos de ella alrededor de la casa", dijo Ruiz. "Quería mandar algo a mi madre para agradecer todo lo que ella ha hecho por mí, sabiendo que Frida siempre ha sido una de sus favoritas".

El talento de este artista no es limitado. El derrama su imaginación y estilo con lápices de carbón, y pinceles en las manos. Busca su libertad mental, alejándose del mundo oscuro y solitario. Con un toque final, el artista sella sus dibujos con sellador de cera de piso, dándoles brillo y protección.

El Día de los muertos es muy reconocido a apreciado en la cultura Mexicana, representado por un retrato de una bella mujer maquillada, símbolo del Día de los muertos. Atrás de ella, la imagen de un reloj quebrado significando el tiempo que los prisioneros perdemos detrás de las rejas.

Como fiel católico, Ruiz añadió unas tumbas en honor de todos los fallecidos. Esta bella mujer sostiene un rosario en sus labios, como una plegaria a Dios. Una flor blanca, nos representa la inocencia del alma que descansa eternamente.

Desafortunadamente, no todo los dibujos que Ruiz ha hecho para su familia, les han llegado. Misteriosamente han desaparecido por el correo. Pero él no se da por vencido, sigue dibujando arte que traspasa las barreras e idiomas.

