

San Quentin News

THE PULSE OF SAN QUENTIN

VOL. 2009 NO. 2

FEBRUARY 26, 2009

SAN QUENTIN, CALIFORNIA 94964

POPULATION: 5,192

Change Comes To San Quentin

Acting Warden R. K. Wong

By **KENNETH R. BRYDON**,
Editor-in-Chief
and
MICHAEL R. HARRIS,
Managing Editor

R. K. Wong, San Quentin's new acting warden, says he is making a thorough review of all of the prison's inmate programs with the goal of improving security, eliminating duplication and strengthening activities overall.

Wong, who took control of the prison Dec. 31, shared some of the details of his professional history, his current position and his vision for S.Q. during our one-hour interview with him Jan. 13. Wong agreed to the interview with the S.Q. News, and present were Editors Kenneth R. Brydon and Michael R. Harris, as well as S.Q. News volunteer adviser and retired journalist John Eagan and Wong's administrative assistant, Lt. R. Luna.

S.Q. News asked the new warden what changes may be

expected under his guidance. "I haven't really made any changes as of yet," Wong responded. "I've spent a lot of time observing and seeing what types of programs are going on." Wong continued, "Do I plan on making any changes? I'm sure there will be some."

Wong begins his tenure here in the warden's office looking at the overall operation of the institution and how the wide variety of programs at S.Q. is working. Wong says that he is looking at the volunteer programs, and that his immediate intentions are to assess what kinds of programs are actually benefiting the prison population at S.Q. "I know that there was a rumor that Wong was going to suspend them," he said. "No, I'm not suspending programs. What I'm trying to do is to get a handle on the programs that we have. Which ones are evidence-based, and which ones are actually benefiting the inmate population."

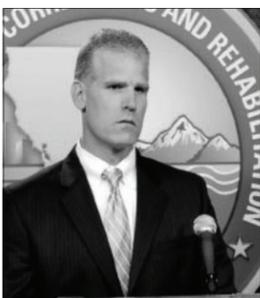
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State Officials Get Lesson in S.Q. Ethics

By **ALY TAMBOURA**

Twice in the last 30 days, officials who help shape prison policy have come to take a look at the work of the Prison University Project at San Quentin State Prison.

Politics and prisons are intrinsically linked in California, so when officials from the state come to visit, prisoners take notice. The buzz of possible release of prisoners, ordered earlier this month by federal judges, heightened the anxiety of the men who were surprised by the visitors.



Matthew Cate
CDCR Secretary

Steve Meinrath and Jerry McGuire, counsel to the Senate Public Safety Committee, were the first to visit. They seated themselves among a mixed group of prisoners taking an ethics class at San Quentin. Escorted by Sam Robinson, public information officer, and Jody Lewen, director of Patten University at San Quentin, the visitors got a first-hand look at students and one of their

instructors, Helene Silverburg, in the midst of an engaged discussion on the difference between Kantism and Utilitarianism. The topic of discussion seemed to intrigue the visitors. As they left, they graciously thanked the instructor, as well as the men in the class, for allowing them to sit in.

The most significant visit came a week later when an entourage of officials converged on the same ethics class, the highest ranking being Matthew Cate, Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Cate was accompanied by Elizabeth Siggins, his senior

policy adviser, and Lee Seale, deputy chief of staff. Also present were San Quentin officials including: Acting Warden R.K. Wong, Administrative Assistant R. Luna, Chief Deputy Warden Vince Cullen and Public Information officer Sam Robinson and out going, CDW Max Lemon.

See **Ethics Lesson** Page 4



One of many prison gymnasiums across the state crowded with prisoners

Feds Order Massive Prisoner Release

By **DAVID MARSH**

In a landmark federal court ruling intended to resolve the issues of overcrowding and inadequate medical and mental health care in California's prisons, a special three-judge panel has issued a tentative ruling calling for the early release of tens of thousands of prisoners over the next two to three years.

Through its unprecedented ruling, the panel of judges voiced its finding that chronic overcrowding is indeed at the root of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) well documented inability to deliver to its prisoners constitutionally mandated minimum levels of health care, and that massive prisoner

releases are the only viable resolution.

"The evidence is compelling that there is no relief other than a prisoner release order that will remedy the unconstitutional prison conditions," said the judges in a 10 page ruling, led by 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Steven Reinhardt of Los Angeles. The judges said the ruling is meant "To give the parties notice of the likely nature of that final opinion, and to allow them to plan accordingly."

Though the ruling stopped short of assigning a firm figure to the planned reduction of prisoners, the judges nonetheless clearly indicated what lies ahead. "It is our intention to adopt an order requiring the

state to develop a plan to reduce the prison population to 120 percent of the prison's designed capacity....within a period of two or three years."

According to figures released by the state, as of the end of January, California's prisons held more than 157,000 prisoners in its in-state prisons and satellite facilities, or 188 percent of the designed capacity of 84,000 inmates. A reduction to 120 percent of design capacity would require the release of approximately 57,000 prisoners. Another 6,000 of California's prisoners are housed in out-of-state facilities, and it is still unclear how the ruling might affect them.

See **Prisoner Release** Page 2

'Jailhouse Lawyer' Paroles After 23 Years

John Dannenberg composed countless writs, motions and legal briefs for himself and a great many of his peers during his more than 23 years behind bars.

His list of accomplishments through the courts brought him a well-deserved reputation throughout the state, both in and out of prisons, as one of the preeminent and most prolific legal minds among "jailhouse" lawyers. In the minds of some, Dannenberg was the best.

Whatever his legacy in the Lifer community, his diligence and perseverance paid off when the San Jose based 6th District Court of Appeal, for the second time in two years, ordered his release on parole. And this time, Dannenberg went home.

The former Los Altos businessman, who arrived at San Quentin from Vacaville in 1996, was serving a sentence of 15-years-to-life for a second

degree murder conviction in the 1985 death of his wife, Linda.

His bid for freedom propelled his case to the California Supreme Court and resulted in a major ruling, which was overturned three years later, that



Recently released lifer & prison law clerk
John Dannenberg

used "the elements of an offense" to lengthen the time spent in prison for many Lifers.

The "elements of an offense" ruling allowed the governor or parole board to deny parole in cases in which the elements of the crime were determined to be more heinous than those of a similar offense.

Dannenberg was determined by the parole board to be suitable for parole in 2005, but Gov. Schwarzenegger overturned their decision, citing the "egregious" nature of Dannenberg's offense.

Ultimately, it was a Supreme Court ruling in the landmark case of Sandra Lawrence that was to pave the way for Dannenberg's release on parole. In the *Lawrence* decision, the court ruled that "public safety" and an inmate's "current dangerousness" are the relevant factors in determining suitability for parole.

See **Jailhouse Lawyer** Page 2

Prisoner Release

Continued from Page 1

The judges strongly urged the state to meet with the prisoner's attorneys in an attempt to hammer out an agreement, and they offered the services of a court appointed settlement referee to aid in their discussions. They indicated that they would hold more hearings before issuing a final ruling in the case.

The state's reaction

California Attorney General Jerry Brown has said the state will appeal the case to the U.S. Supreme Court once the ruling becomes final. Brown, who represented the state in the recent trial, said the court "does not recognize the imperatives of public safety, nor the challenges of incarcerating criminals, many of whom are deeply dis-

eventually converted into a class action lawsuit and, 19 years ago, assigned to the court of U.S. District Judge Lawrence Karlton of Sacramento.

Subsequent additional inmates' lawsuits challenging both medical and mental health care were also morphed into class action lawsuits and assigned to the courtrooms of Senior U.S. District Judge Thelton Henderson of San Francisco, and U.S. 9th Circuit Judge Stephen R. Reinhardt, of Los Angeles.

Each judge was to rule in their respective cases that prisoners were being provided with unconstitutionally substandard health care. Karlton ruled in 1995 that the state's prison mental health system violated the Constitution's 8th Amendment protections on cruel and unusual punishment.

inmates to bring lawsuits and to limit the power of federal judges to order remedies in purported cases of abuse. The Act prevents a federal judge from acting alone in such cases, and instead requires the formation of a three-judge special panel in order to proceed.

Henderson, Karlton and Reinhardt were appointed to form such a panel by the chief judge of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, of which Reinhardt is a member. Each of the three jurists is widely considered as among the most liberal judges in the nine-state appellate circuit. Any ruling by the liberal panel would bypass the normal avenues of appeal and go directly to the U.S. Supreme Court, which is dominated by conservatives. The Supreme Court can overturn, modify or uphold the panel's

leased their tentative ruling on Mon., Feb. 9.

Causes leading to overcrowding

The judges, state officials and policy makers credit a variety of factors for causing the overcrowding in California's prisons. Critics point to the 41,284 prisoners serving time under the 13 year-old three strikes law. Others blame California's decades long "tough-on-crime" political philosophy and a general reluctance to parole term-to-life prisoners. In addition, over 70,000 parolees are returned to the prisons each year, most for relatively short terms for minor offenses such as failing a drug test.

Plaintiff's reaction

Prisoner's attorney Donald Specter of the Prison Law Office said, "We're thrilled. We think the court made the right decision under the law. The state has known for many years that crowding is out of control and is crippling the prison system."

Steve Fama, an attorney representing inmates said, "It's just a matter of finding the ones that would create the least risk if released a couple of months early."

Lawyers for the inmates agree that the ruling could have national significance on prison reform in other states where inmates could seek population caps on overcrowded facilities.

What happens next

The plaintiff's lawyers have speculated that the judges may move cautiously in imposing federal mandates upon the state for fear of reversal on appeal, preferring instead to apply pressure to the state to devise its own plan to alleviate the overcrowding.

Kara P. Dansky, a Stanford Law School lecturer, said, "This is one area that the law is unclear on because we've never seen a case like this."

The Supreme Court is expected to look closely at the 11th Amendment, and a state's sovereign rights versus the 8th Amendment's protection to individuals against cruel and unusual punishment. Any decision to release inmates must first, according to the FPLA, consider the implications to public safety that such an action might have.

If the state refuses to negotiate, the panel could order a variety of reforms, such as parole reforms, shortened sentences, diversion of non-violent offenders to county programs, etc.. Followed, ultimately, by an appeal to the Supreme Court.

"It's a pretty comprehensive victory for us," said Michael Bien, a San Francisco attorney who has represented mentally ill prisoners. "It was a message, a very loud, clear message, that it's time that the public officials in California took responsibility for their own criminal justice system."

Jail House Lawyer

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The court, in ordering Dannenberg's immediate release effective Jan. 25, cited his 23 years of disciplinary-free behavior and extensive record of involvement in numerous programs aimed at self-improvement. The governor's office decided not to press the case further, and Saturday, Jan. 31, he walked out the gates.

"The future is bright for so many others who find themselves in my same shoes, thanks to the decision in *Lawrence*," said Dannenberg. "I encourage everyone to file in the courts for their release under this ruling, comparing themselves to *Lawrence*."

He predicts that many Lifers throughout the state will gain their release through the courts as a direct result of the *Lawrence* decision, perhaps signaling an end to the state's long-running practice of denying parole for term-to-life prisoners.

Dannenberg has been a prolific contributing writer for *Prison Legal News* (PLN), with over 950 articles on prison-related issues published in the monthly legal publication since 2000.

"The work I did for PLN helped to bring the issues of imprisonment out into the public view for prisoners and non-prisoners alike," he said. His work covered areas such as medical issues relating to prisoners, legal decisions and explaining case law for non-legal readers.

Dannenberg was directly responsible for having 12 cases published in law books over the years, though not all of them were published under his name.

His accomplishments have included participation in the Alternatives to Violence program, Breaking Barriers, Restorative Justice, New Leaf On Life, the Men's Advisory Council and considerable time spent as a law librarian. He was also active in the S.Q. Jewish temple.

Dannenberg says that his immediate plans are to restart the business that he once owned which installed energy conservation systems. At one time his business, located in Santa Clara County, employed 30 people.

He also intends to campaign as a strong advocate for prison reform, focusing on what he perceives as the inadequacy of the entire prison system. "It lacks direction," said Dannenberg, who has already received offers for a number of speaking engagements.

Asked to sum up what his release means to him, he said, "It's a beautiful thing after all these years," with a smile that lit the room.

—DAVID MARSH



Incarcerated women at California Institute for Women

turbed."

Matthew Cate, secretary of the CDCR, expressed disappointment with the judge's decision and said the administration is reviewing the tentative ruling before deciding on what steps to take.

"Obviously the governor and I strongly disagree with the panel's conclusions and our response will be based on how best to protect the public from a court-ordered release of inmates," Cate said in a statement. "This is not about overcrowding. We are providing a constitutional level of care now; so we have the right to keep these inmates in prison."

Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco said that early releases can be done without necessarily endangering public safety. "I know there is a percentage of inmates who are in for less serious offenses who would not endanger the public directly," said Ma, who is a member of the Assembly Safety Committee.

History of the lawsuit

The civil rights case began in a Sacramento federal court more than 21 years ago when Jay Lee Gates, an inmate at the Calif. Medical Facility in Vacaville, filed a lawsuit protesting the poor quality of his health care. The case was taken over by prisoner's rights lawyers and

Henderson made a similar 2005 ruling regarding prison medical care, and he appointed a federal receiver to take over the medical system. In his 2005 ruling, Henderson found that an inmate was dying unnecessarily every six to seven days as a direct result of poor quality health care.

Panel's formation under 1995 Prison Litigation Reform Act

Few could have foreseen the course these separate but similar civil rights cases were destined to travel. Or that the three cases would become joined for landmark litigation and that from them would come historically unprecedented rulings with potentially profound national impact. Rulings that would forever redefine the issue of a state's sovereign rights versus the rights of prisoners to receive constitutionally mandated levels of health care.

The stage was set when a decision was reached to bind the three cases together, and, for the first time, hold a trial under the auspices of the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA). Previous cases under the Act in other states have resulted in settlements before trials became necessary.

Ironically the Act, which took effect in 1996, was intended to make it harder for

decision, or refuse to hear the case entirely.

The trial

Following months of trial preparation and evidentiary rulings, the trial opened Nov. 14, 2008 in a San Francisco courtroom and lasted for 14 days.

The trial featured numerous prison and health care experts from both sides. The state presented evidence of massive increases in spending for prison health care and strenuously denied that overcrowding itself was the cause of poor health care. Lawyers for the state pointed out that California currently spends approximately \$13,778 annually per inmate on medical care, versus the federal spending of \$4,413 per inmate. The average cost of health care coverage for a person in California in 2008 was \$4,906.

Prisoner's attorneys responded with testimony from a variety of prison administrators, including Jeanne Woodford, the former acting director of the CDCR and warden at San Quentin, who testified that the majority of California's prisons are far too large and overcrowded to be effectively managed on all levels.

The case concluded on Feb. 4 after two days of closing arguments, and the judges re-

Acting Warden

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The new acting warden is trying to get a handle on just how many volunteers are actually coming into S.Q. He stated, "It ranges from hundreds to thousands." Wong says that his intentions are to tighten up the security processes and develop more accountability for where these people are going. "We have a responsibility to know where they're at," Wong explained.

Wong realizes that the multitude of programs compete for a limited amount of space at S.Q., and he figures to evaluate what might better accommodate the needs of the prisoners and where the sharing of space might help to achieve that end.

"Right now I'm meeting with the Community Partnership manager," Wong says. "Every program manager is getting on my calendar, and I'm having a one-on-one discussion." Wong is seeking to determine what counties these programs are coming from and directed to, and exactly how the various programs are being funded.

He is questioning each group as to their purpose, who specifically among the inmate population they are targeting and the barriers that they are facing. Wong used "San Quentin's Utilization of Inmates' Resources, Experiences and Studies" (S.Q.U.I.R.E.S.) as an example, a program he remembered from his early days at S.Q.. He recognizes the program's benefits to the public and the youth that it serves as having a significant value and purpose.

There is a possibility of some programs being expanded, while those being duplicated are likely to be cut back. Wong is not say-

ing that one group is better than another. "I'm asking the volunteers to come in," he said. "You're telling me that your program's the best, but I'm hearing that from every other volunteer program, too."

SQ News asked acting Warden Wong if he was expecting the programs to conduct their own evidence-based surveys. "Yes," he stated, "I'm looking at evidence-based programs." With AB900 mandating certain expectations, he is searching out those programs that will meet those qualifications. "How many people have completed these programs," he stated, in looking to the specifics of what the program is doing. "We need the data; is this program successful?" he questions.

Wong points out the many possible reasons that programs are either succeeding or failing. He spoke of possible conflicts with work hours and yard schedules, as well as if they are being held during institutional count. The new acting warden asks: "Are we getting the full potential of the programs we're offering?"

Looking more at the difficulties, he states: "I see that this program is not going to work if we have this program going on at a particular time of the day when the majority of those people are on the job assignment."

SQ News asked if he was looking at the various vocational programs here at S.Q. "I'm walking around looking at every vocation," he said. He spoke of how AB900 will impact many of the programs throughout the state and possibly programs associated with S.Q. Recidivism and re-entry are at the core of the new law enacted by the legislators that sets aside funds for implementation of various train-

ing programs. "What are some of the things they're going to need to assist them so they can get viable skills," Wong said.

Acting Warden Wong went on to speak of his previous position at Solano State Prison, and how it was one of the pilot programs that came about through AB900. Comparing S.Q. with Solano, he is asked if perhaps more updated skills would better serve those in re-entry. Looking over the current programs, Wong considers what might better serve parolees. "What about programs that will make the inmates competitive with skills that bring them up to the standard with the 21st Century," he replied. His specific goal for participants in the programs is to be competitive in the outside markets upon their release from prison.

SQ News asked about the possible creation of vocational programs involving "Green Technology." Seeing that as realistic, Wong stated, "When someone wants to offer such a program, there's a process one has to go through."

He indicated that the program still had to fit with the availability of funding and the hiring of instructors, but saw the training to be within the vision he has for S.Q.

With his sights set on community involvement, Acting Warden R.K. Wong is searching for what he feels is most important for the future of S.Q. as his vision and the vision of previous wardens is realized. Through S.Q.'s location near an urban center, Wong sees many valuable opportunities for networking in the community while increasing the success of rehabilitation in S.Q., while adding meaning to the "R" in CDCR.

More on the interview in the next edition of the SQ News

Health and Wellness Corner

The San Quentin News "Health and Wellness Corner" column runs every month. A University of California, San Francisco health professional student will answer questions that you submit about health issues. Inquiries will be answered in the next month's paper. Feel free to ask us questions about any medical concern that you have, and it may be answered so that everyone can benefit. If you have a question, put it in a U-Save-Em envelope addressed to: "Health and Wellness Corner," UCSF Doctors (Dr. Shira Shavit) – Medical Box. If you include your name and number, they will be kept confidential. Note that this column is for general medical questions.

We would like to thank you for your submissions. This edition, we will address the following question:

How does eating Ramen affect blood pressure?

What is it in Ramen that can affect your blood pressure? Salt!

Each Ramen soup comes with a flavor packet that contains salt and other spices. These flavor packets contain about 1500 milligrams (mg) of salt (Roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a teaspoon of salt. You should have no more than **1.5 teaspoons of salt in 1 day**). For your comparison, other foods such as one slice of lunch meat might have only 13% of your daily salt needs.

How does salt affect your blood pressure?

Blood vessels carry blood to important parts of our body, like our hearts and brains. Too much salt causes more fluid to be in your blood vessels and increases the pressure inside them. This would be like pumping too much air into a bicycle tire and making the pressure inside very high. This is dangerous because high blood pressure can lead to heart attacks or strokes.

Most people in the U.S. eat too much salt every day, but not everyone who does will have high blood pressure. The people who should be most careful about how much salt they eat are those who have high blood pressure or borderline high blood pressure.

Some suggestions that we have for you:

1. Limit the number of Ramen packets that you eat- maybe just one a day.
2. Use only $\frac{1}{2}$ of the flavor packet and add your own spices to help improve the flavor.
3. Do not add extra salt to your food if you can.
4. Know your blood pressure and have it checked regularly.
5. Pay attention to the amount of salt that is in all of the foods that you eat- foods like preserved meats (tuna, mackerel, meat logs) can have a lot of salt too!

If you do not feel well or have an URGENT medical concern, fill out a 7362 request for services form to see your housing unit medical staff.

Our Take On It

By SQ NEWS STAFF
An Editorial Opinion

We get asked by our peers, on a daily basis, "What does all this overcrowding business mean to me? How much shorter will my time be?" And the answer truly is, I sincerely wish that we knew what to tell them. Because they want to hear *something!*

But we don't know, no one does, or can. Because although the whole scenario is picking up momentum at a dizzying pace now, there are still so many variables left to play out.

Will the politicians in our cash-strapped state do the expedient and humane thing and allow the feds to crack the gates just a bit and empty out a few bunks of those who fit the criteria of being low risk for early release? Only those politicians in our governor's inner circle could really say, and obviously, for political reasons, they're not saying.

Will the state continue to play hardball with the panel of

judges and force the case to be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court? And what would the conservative judges on the Supreme Court rule? It's just too early to call.

There will be early releases of some sort to some extent, and the best guess at this point is that we here at S.Q. will see some sort of movement toward the exits in late summer or early fall. That is a pretty safe bet at this point.

We at the SQ News recognize our responsibility to you, our readers, to follow this story as closely as anyone can, and to report to you what we see as promptly as we are able, and in a responsible manner.

As witnessed by the depth of our feature story on overcrowding in this edition of our paper, we are on top of the story for you, our readers. And we will continue to keep you abreast of late breaking events, as well as how they will affect us, and when. Thank-you for your trust in us, and we will continue to do our best for you.

Wong's Rise To The Top

By KENNETH R. BRYDON,
Editor-in-Chief
and
MICHAEL R. HARRIS,
Managing Editor

With a smile, R.K. Wong recalled his first prison job out of the correctional officer academy 26 years ago – working San Quentin Tower #4 on the graveyard shift. He said he thought, "What did I do to deserve this?"

In December 2008, he returned to his roots, this time as the new acting warden at S.Q..

His first two years on the job were assignments in virtually all areas of San Quentin, from the dining hall to the lock-up units. In September 1985, he was transferred to CSP-Solano, "At the start of the California prison



Acting Warden R. K. Wong

and acting Custody Captain. His last assignments at Solano were that of gang investigations coordinator and Investigative Services Lt.

In 2001, Wong was promoted to Investigative Services Unit

warden prior to the arrival in July 2006 of Warden Robert Ayers, Jr. from CSP-Los Angeles (Lancaster). "And we switched," said Wong. "I became the acting warden at Lancaster."

In February 2007 Wong went back to High Desert as an associate warden. In July 2008 he was promoted to chief deputy warden at Solano State Prison. On Dec. 31, 2008 he was officially assigned as the acting warden of S.Q., and he is now awaiting confirmation as warden. "Here I am, kinda coming full-circle," Wong said. "I began my career here, and I'm hoping to end my career here."

"I began my career here, and I'm hoping to end my career here."

boom," acting Warden Wong said in an interview Jan. 13.

For the next 16 years, Wong worked his way up the ranks and held a variety of positions. After promoting to first sergeant, and then lieutenant, he served as a correctional counselor (CC) I, CCII, acting Facility Captain

(ISU) captain at the Level IV prison at High Desert. He said he enjoyed working at High Desert, where he also served as associate warden.

Wong transferred back to S.Q. in 2006, where he briefly served as acting chief deputy warden and then briefly as the acting

Visitors Getting Involved in San Quentin

By INMATE FAMILY COUNCIL

The Inmate Family Council (IFC) is an opportunity for visitors to have a voice concerning institutional policies that affect family relationships. The IFC consists of 10 family members and friends of inmates who meet with correctional staff, including the visiting lieutenant and warden, on a regular basis to discuss these issues. The goal of the IFC is to establish mutual understanding between the visitors and the institution. The IFC at San Quentin was formed at the request of the state and the first meeting was held on Aug. 1, 2003.

Since its inception the accomplishments of the IFC include the development of the San Quentin visitors' information brochure and the "Visiting Report Card" survey to provide a vehicle for visitors to express their concerns through the IFC. Other improvements put in place by San Quentin as a result of IFC efforts include installation of door hooks and a mirror in the processing area

bathrooms, an increase in the amount of money a visitor could bring in, installation of bulletin boards to disseminate IFC information and the development of a visual guide to inform visitors of clothing policies. The IFC has also had input concerning institutional food quality and the quality of institutional medical care.

There are currently openings for additional IFC members. An attempt is made to place members who visit inmates in a variety of housing areas and there is currently a particular need for additional members for the Main and H-Unit visiting areas. Applicants must be able to commit to a term of two years, attending meetings on the third Friday of each month from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and to be able to work with staff and fellow IFC members. If you are a regular visitor who wants to have a voice in what goes on, now is your chance to do so. To become a member, please contact Visiting Room Lt. K. Evans (415-454-1460 Ext. 5205). Please consider becoming a member.

H-Unit Men's Advisory Council Meeting

By DAVID MARSH

Present for the Administration: Capt. M.D. Thompson, Sgt. Taylor

Time/Location: H-Unit Conference Room, Friday, Jan. 16, 2009

Topics of Discussion: Change of command (Thompson replacing Dorsey as Captain in H-Unit, council informed what to expect)

• Medical issues, slow pace of pill call causing tardiness to work (nurses are being encouraged to begin passing out meds at 5:30, nurses are still delayed on occasion due to time-consuming medication prep.

• Phones not working (improvements are already noted, all lines are to be replaced by early February)

• Canteen issues, spending old money (computer refreshes allowable balance once per month)

• Yard not opening in the evenings until late, if at all (Thompson says this is no longer an issue)

• Issue of gloves revisited (inmates cannot wear workout

gloves while walking the track, only while working out, recommend against purchasing brown gloves thru packages)

• Issue of 2nd watch property searches being conducted without inmates present, and no property receipts are being left (Thompson says staff has undergone additional training to encourage compliance)

• Personal clothing being taken during laundry searches (only laundry is to be taken during laundry searches, laundry is not to be hung above wall level)

• Possibility of extra Dorm 1 privileges discussed (Thompson says side yard will be opened following 4:00 p.m. count as long as inmates make it to chow on time)

• Late stragglers to meals (will no longer be permitted)

• Institutional transfers discussed (Thompson says anyone dissatisfied with life at SQ – see him!)

The next H-Unit Men's Advisory Council meeting will be held March 13.

'The American Negro'

In celebration of Black History Month

By R.E. CALIX
Contributing writer

By observation, the American of African descent is a very odd mixture of tragedy and triumphs of human life, and with a persistent spirit that is able to free itself from the disorder of the world. In the Bible, the pious must find their place in a sinful world; the evil doer can only gain redemption through love. Here the sinner is a symbol of all that interferes, all that goes against our humanity, and the pious symbolize the triumph of the human spirit over the disorder in the world.

Although the "Negro" is not considered a Hebrew, and the conditions of enslavement were different, still their struggles, disappointments and setbacks are the same and thus must be recognized for what they are and preserved. The "Negro" experience is so much a part of American life, with all of the struggles in nationhood and civil wars, which goes beyond the color line and race relations, and looking at the very essence of the human spirit.

It is well worth the time to commemorate Black History, in February, by recognizing what is enduring and abiding in the Negro American, especially those human traits which they have fostered despite, and in rejection of, the barriers and mean-spiritedness imposed upon them. This month is dedicated for the social good in America, to work toward preserving in words those human values, which may last when struggling for change.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the "Negro" situation is changing ever so fast, but so much, which they have gotten

through the trials and testing of Negro American life is much too good to be forgotten. The faith, the perseverance, the laughter, the ability to harmonize in rhythm, the steely sense of life and the way of sharing it

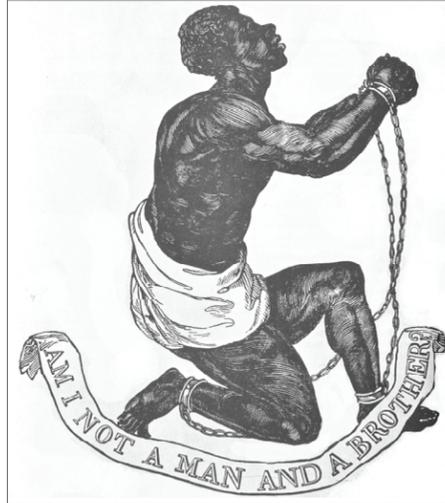
turbulent South, comes the spirit which strengthened them in the same old timeless push toward equality.

The 44th president, Barack Obama, who launched his campaign for president just blocks from where the blood was spilled in Springfield, possessed the same sense of history, in that he dared not fail to adapt to the changing conditions lest he and his supporters fail.

One hundred years after the Springfield riots, the NAACP is able to celebrate its 100th anniversary, and America installs in office its first Black president.

Good and bad, all, which is of value in "Negro" life, is a truly unique American experience, and as such it should be harvested. Black History month is a celebration of life, even when it is

tragic and filled with misery. President Obama won because he and his supporters believed in the power of democracy, they each believed in the dream of the founders.



John Greenleaf Whittier's poem "My Countrymen in Chains!" was published in 1835 with this drawing

which all go to shape the American Negro.

Times change, but these treasured values must endure forever—not only because they define the "Negro" as a

One hundred years after the Springfield riots, the NAACP is able to celebrate its 100th anniversary, and America installs in office its first Black president.

group, but because they represent a story of man's triumph over disorder. From the brave souls who participated in the 1908 Springfield, Ill., race riots that led to the deaths of seven people, but gave us the birth of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the fear of those civil rights protesters who faced the barking police dogs and water hoses in the

Like them, and many others who wear the title as Americans, they believe in diversity, and it is possible that the end of these United States shall come when they stop believing in each other as a people.

Indeed, what was witnessed by the world in the 2008 U.S. election was a tenderly dignified unity of democratic divergences peacefully coming into life.

Ethics Lesson

Continued from Page 1

Secretary Cate introduced himself to the class and stated: "Yes, I'm the guy who was on television this morning telling people not to let prisoners out early." He was making reference to the media coverage of the CDCR's response to the recent court ruling ordering the early release of some 57,000 California prisoners over the next three years.

His comments sparked a roar of laughter from the students in the class, as well as from a few of the guests. After the officials made their introductions they sat down and listened to the instructor, Ben Boudreaux, outlining the tenets of ethical relativism to the class. There was an air of unease among those in attendance, the prisoners not knowing why the officials

were there and the officials not knowing what to expect of a college class full of incarcerated men.

A student in the class, Tung Nguyen, asked: "What about the Tarzan effect. I mean how do men raised by animals (lacking morals that lead to ethics) learn proper

"Yes, I'm the guy who was on television this morning telling people not to let prisoners out early."

ethical behavior?" Nguyen's comments to the instructor gained a chuckle from the crowd, loosening the tension in the room. The rest of the classroom discussion served as an instrument, letting state officials know that the prisoners at San Quentin are very serious about obtaining an education in their rehabilitation, while the prisoners received the message that prison officials are taking notice of the significance of

offering college educational opportunities to prisoners and the important role that the education of prisoners plays in the realm of public safety.

Patten University is the only on-site higher education program in all of California's 33 prisons. Patten offers AA degrees to prisoners and has been running at San Quentin for more than 10 years. The program is privately funded by donations from individuals, private foundations, and corporations. Classes are taught by volunteers, most of whom are graduate students and faculty from UC Berkeley, San Francisco State University, University of San Francisco, Stanford University, and St. Mary's College. For more information on Patten University or if you would like to enroll, send a request for interview via institutional mail to Jennifer Scaife.

Information is also available @ www.prisuniversityproject.org

Arts & Entertainment

Poetry

Death Row Reality Check

This is a world of a different kind of life, a change in reality, a world real tight. You enter this world through cast iron gates; you can sense all the pressure and feel all the hate. They're unloading the bus, the man's laying down the rules; they're taking away your rights and giving you your blues.

The next gate is opening you feel tense down inside, a new world revealed, you hope to survive. All eyes are watching as you're escorted to your cell, then it all hits you, you messed up, you've just entered hell. Now they're all going to be watching how you're going to act; you lay out your program and always watch your back.

Outside worries must be left behind, it's all about survival and I'm going to tell you why. Your tears turn into anger; your happiness into hate, not being on guard is a feeling you soon will relate. My hell is heartache of steel and stone, and I'm here all alone.

My place of hell is one small cell that no one wants to own; my body cramps from the cold and damp that chills me to the bone. For my crimes I pay with time, no jungle holds more danger, and everyday that comes my way each man remains a stranger.

They came today and took away the man who lived next door, to end his time, he took his life, he couldn't take no more. It's quiet here on my tier, cruel death has claimed another; each day wondering who will be next, and hoping it's not my other neighbor. I hear the screams, the metal rings of keys and metal locks, the scrape of feet on the concrete as the prison guard patrols his/her block.

I watch my back for there is a lack of men who can be trusted; I just chill, I have the will before it is me who gets dusted. A secret I should tell you now, but do not tell another: in order to survive in here, a man must wear his cover. You do not know and will not know what lies within his heart, for he walked the walk and talks the talk and always plays the part.

But here's the secret of the frightened man inside... if something fatal should come my way, should an occurrence take my life, please tell my wife I'm grateful for everything we've shared, and for me all she's done. And though I'm gone one thing lives on, "My love eternally." My one desire should I expire, is that no one cries for me. Just gather around the love of my life and tell her, "I'm finally free."

By **JOHNNY LEO CAPISTRANO**

The one Percent Rule

*Calculating prophets
Manipulate equations
suborning reasons
for greedy imbeciles;*

*Panderers who pimp
Phobic philosophies
Transmute all meanings
to confuse the consumed.*

*Mean inheritors
of liberty's martyrs
Crunch on the carcass
of America's poor.*

By **JOHN NEBLETT**

Reflection

*What do you see when looking into a mirror
Your reflection; past or present
What do I see when looking into the mirror
My reflection; past and present
I close my eyes and it's still there
I can't escape, I can't change it
Since it always, always catches up with you
Stop, and change direction
Open your eyes and see your new reflection*

By **BA Douglas**

Snippets

Originating in China around 1498, the toothbrush was constructed using neck hairs from Siberian boars, which were attached to a bamboo or bone handle.

Butterflies are known to cannibalize their own.

America's first college, bookstore and newspaper were founded by the Puritans.

Men, on average, use 2,000 words a day. Woman on the other hand utter 7,000.

Antarctica is the only continent where owls don't live.

Assassin is from the Arabic word hashshash, meaning one who smokes hash. During the Crusades a Muslim order called the Assassins secretly murdered invading Christians while under the influence of hashish.

New-fledged means having just acquired feathers.

Depressive realism is a theory proposing that depressed people see the world more accurately.

Hawaii is the only place in the United States that grows coffee.

Ole, the Spanish exclamation commonly shouted at bull fights, comes from Allah, meaning "praise be to God."

President Lyndon B. Johnson's favorite soda was Fresca. He enjoyed it so much that he had a soda tap installed in the White House.

E, T, A, O, I, N, S, H, R, D, L, U, C, M, F, G, Y, P, W, B, V, K, X, J, Q, Z: represent the alphabet in order of frequency of use in written English.

LAST MONTH'S SUDOKU SOLUTION

3	1	9	2	8	4	6	5	7
4	8	7	6	5	3	2	1	9
2	5	6	7	1	9	3	4	8
9	7	2	1	3	5	4	8	6
5	4	3	8	9	6	1	7	2
1	6	8	4	7	2	9	3	5
7	3	4	9	2	8	5	6	1
6	2	1	5	4	7	8	9	3
8	9	5	3	6	1	7	2	4

Anne Frank Center Diary Project

By PEN America Center

In an effort to reach out to prisoners and educate people on both sides of the "wall," the Anne Frank Center USA, in partnership with PEN American Center, has launched a Prison Diary Program for men and women in American prisons using the Diary of Anne Frank as an inspirational tool. Anne Frank herself was "imprisoned" for two years while in hiding and then was literally imprisoned in concentration camps during the last seven months of her life simply because she was Jewish.

The Anne Frank Center's diary-writing program provides writers involved with PEN's Prison Writing Program a blank journal, a pamphlet on diary writing, and a copy of A Diary of a Young Girl. Participants agree to keep their own diaries, writing about their lives and thoughts. When they finish filling their diary, they return the journals to The Anne Frank Center for possible publication on the internet and in print. If you wish to be a part of this program, write to: Anne Frank Prison Diary Project, 38 Crosby Street 5th Floor, New York, NY 10013.



Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow. - Melody Beattie

SUDOKU PUZZLE

By **GEORGE LOWE**

		6	4			9		
	4			3			8	
2					7			1
		3	1					5
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5					9	2		
1			6					3
	8			7			5	
		9			4	7		

RELIGION

Religious Diets Made Available for Muslims

By ALY TAMBOURA

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) is in the process of changing the California Code of Regulations (CCR) to include religious diets for Muslim prisoners.

The code change will allow Muslim and other prisoners, with religious dietary obligations, to apply for and receive halal meat in their daily meals. Currently the CDCR has two options to alternative diets outside of the normal food it serves to prisoners: vegetarian and Jewish kosher. The code change will add a third diet: halal meat alternative.

Eating halal food, with an emphasis on specific meat preparation, is a tenet of Islamic faith. According to Islamic law animals slaughtered for consumption must be dispatched humanely. The humane slaughter is performed by a Muslim (person of the

book) using a sharp instrument to cut the animals vessels in the neck or upper part of the chest allowing for the blood to drain and reciting the name of Allah at the time of slaughter.

The proposed change to the CDCR regulations comes amid a growing number of law-suits filed by Muslim prisoners who claim that they have the right to practice their religion while incarcerated, which includes conforming to a halal diet. The law-suits are based on the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (RLUIPA). The state asserts that RLUIPA "does not include religious dietary accommodations specifically for Muslim inmates." The petitioners in the law suites claim otherwise. The CDCR regulation change on its face is meant to quell the expenditures to answer the law-suits.

"The purpose of this action is to avoid future costly liti-

gating and unnecessary expense to the taxpayers of the State of California," is written in the notice of regulation change.

According to the regulation change, the halal meat program will be available in all CDCR adult facilities state-wide. Participation in the program will be open to Muslims and other prisoners with religious needs to consume halal meat. Prisoners will have to apply for the program by filling out a CDCR 3030 form (Request for Religious Diet) and submitting it to the institutional Muslim chaplain who will determine eligibility.

The proposed regulation change is in the public hearing stage. There is dialog about the difference between providing halal meat and providing an actual halal meal to Muslims, which needs to be worked out. The implementation of the new religious dietary program is pending.

AA's Prison History

By KENNETH R. BRYDON
Editor-in-Chief

When documenting the greatest inventions of the 21st Century, Time Magazine included the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program in the top five. Its "12 Steps" have been the model for almost every subsequent addiction recovery program ranging from sex to gambling.

In June of 1935 there were two alcoholics who had found themselves facing a disease they were both convinced would slowly destroy them. Both wanted desperately to end what was eventually described in the Big Book of AA as: "Pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization."

The idea of one alcoholic helping another to end their own compulsion was not well known before then. By 1941 AA had gained a good deal of attention, including that of Jack Alexander. This investigative reporter was famous for writing scathing stories of the frauds he

found. One can assume that he intended the same treatment for AA. Yet, the story published in the Saturday Evening Post spoke of his surprise at the honesty with which alcoholics helped each other while not focusing attention and fame on any one individual.

A likely reader of that story was San Quentin's Warden Clinton Duffy, who was searching for ways of dealing with 80 percent of his prisoners re-offending with alcohol playing a part.

That same year Duffy invited the AA program into San Quentin and it has been here ever since. With the help of a single prisoner, meetings began and very quickly the program showed its worth by drastically reducing the return of parolees who had attended inside meetings.

When AA members of two different groups, from Oakland and San Francisco, showed up on the same night, the issue of who would bring in the meeting was settled with a fist fight in

the San Quentin parking lot – fellow AA members can laugh about such.

What eventually came from those bruises was a committee titled "Northern California Hospitals and Institutions (H&I)." Another tradition born was the "Pink Can," where outside AA meetings began donating money to purchase the program's literature for prisoners. AA quickly spread through prisons in California, all over the country and then the world.

AA continues to remain strong here at San Quentin where it all began. Meetings are held in H-Unit as well as in Education for North Block prisoners.

H&I currently brings 39,000 meetings a year to the 22 California prisons they cover. From the Northern California H&I came committees started in Southern California and the rest of the country. Last year the Pink Can collected over a half-million dollars for prison literature for Northern California.

exist.

In addressing faith, distinguished author Dr. Emmet Fox once said, "God is infinite life. God is boundless love. God is Unfathomable Wisdom. God is Unspeakable Beauty. God is the Unchanging Principle of Perfect Good. God is the Soul of man."

The mercy and grace of God has allowed the vehicle of faith to become a time-tested recipe for refining and teaching how one can enjoy happiness, health peace, poise, power, prosperity, success and truth, by consistently allowing Him to reign in your life today.

The Asatru Religion

By ROCKY COTÉ
Contributing Writer

What does it mean to study Asatru? In terms, it means to study a Northern (Heathen) neo-pagan tradition, or the Viking Religion. It also means the study of our Celtic and/or Northern ancestral traditions.

Being an Odinist, we stay away from hate, or hateful people. Our religion teaches us that our kindred celebrate life's joys and share its sorrows. Most Asatru are kindred and their activities are family oriented.

Today's modern pagans, and Asatru, are interested in working with other people, and with natural energies, *not* in manipulating or controlling other people.

This religion is not for everyone for two reasons. First, to study Asatru means you have ancestors' who are or were Vikings, or of Northern European origin, and second, Asatru is where we pray to at least nine or more Gods, both men and

women, all having different responsibilities. We also have a prayer for each of the seven days of the week.

Our religion does not pass a collection basket around to ask for help. However, our kindred (family) know when we need help, and all come together for the betterment of our ways. Asatru does not put any other religion down for their beliefs, no matter what!

However, San Quentin has yet to recognize us. In asking the question of why, we recognize that we have our bad apples as does every other religion. It's our hope that *all* religions can be recognized, the Asatru is seeking to practice and study in peace.

The most important thing to remember is that there is a fine line between cultural pride and racism. Legitimate Asatrus do not cross it.

North Block Contact Information, Rocky Coté 1N40, Scott Stetler 3N63, Donny Croghan 4N31. *North Block*

Day of Mindfulness

By MICHAEL GALLARDO
Contributing Writer

On Monday, Feb. 16, '09, amidst heavy rain and strong wind, the fifth annual "Day of Mindfulness" was held in the Buddhadharma Sangha at San Quentin State Prison in California.

Inside the 50-by-20 foot room located at the Garden Chapel area on the prison grounds, 14 inmates and 14 visitors from the "Community of Mindful Living" of Northern California celebrated the day with sitting meditation, walking meditation and Dharma talks (Buddhist teachings).

The event was made possible by the coordinated efforts of the members of the "Community of Mindful Living" and the inmates of the Buddhadharma Sangha.

The group shared a mindful lunch together, eating in silence, while sitting on chairs, *zafu* (sitting cushions) and *Zabuton* (meditation mats). Inmate Lindsey, from the prison Sangha, solemnly walked to the altar, offered the Buddha a portion of his lunch and later said to the group, "I am completely overwhelmed. Today is a very beautiful day."

Mindful living, the practice of complete awareness, is based from the teaching of Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, who has founded several 'Mindful Living' communities located around the world.

"Mindfulness gives us the tools to live our lives in peace in the midst of prison chaos," inmate Russo said about the practice. "Although this event was a Buddhist Religious program, the corner stone of our practice has always been, 'we

are here for anyone, of any belief,'" Russo added.

Most of the visitors are involved in Mindfulness and Meditation programs in various jails, prisons or community centers in Northern California. They are proactive in their practice which radiates into the community.

The Buddhadharma Sangha, was established almost 10 years ago. Five inmates spent a year, rain or shine, sitting in meditation on the lower-yard. On Sept. 5, 1999, in the midst of a partial lock-down in the prison, the Sangha held its first service under Zen Priest, Roshi Seido Lee de Barros, from Green Gulch Farm in Marin County.

The prison Sangha, with volunteers from San Francisco Zen Center, Berkeley Zen Center, Green Gulch Farm and about 30 inmates, meet on Sundays at 5:20 to 8:00 p.m., practicing and studying the Buddha's teachings in the Soto Zen tradition. It also offers, from its library, a wide selection of books on all Buddhist traditions.

The Sangha held a *Jukai* (lay ordination) ceremony last year and in 2006 had completed the first intensive Zen training period held in an institutional setting with one inmate selected as *Shuso* (head student/monk).

At the end of the day, as the rain and gusty wind momentarily subsided, the group gathered in a circle and shared in a song together amid tears and the feeling of gratitude experienced throughout the day. "I fully understand now why you all come here," said inmate Thao, on his second day with the Sangha, as he walked back to the housing units with the other inmates.

FAITH

By DARRELL C. HARTLEY
Staff Writer

The New Year began with fabulous proclamations of commitment and re-dedication to spirituality, healthful living, education and other important items of interest.

Unfortunately, the best laid plans have many accepting what was viewed as symbolic to their lives as misfortune.

It is only appropriate for one

to attempt to reverse this trend by being introduced to something that they may have indeed overlooked: faith. It is defined as confidence or trust in a person or thing; loyalty or fidelity; a system of religious belief or in God. Of the three definitions, the latter garners the most interest. Faith is the one entity that can immediately bring results to your life. It is tantamount to the presence of God. Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of the realities we do not see. In other words, just because you don't see Him, doesn't mean that He does not

SPORTS

The Challenge (Sports Commentary)

By DAVID MARSHALL

Once, long ago we all were young and anxious, waiting for winter to end and spring to come because the American pastime is coming! Yes, baseball will be here at S.Q. and there are those who can't wait and those who would rather see something else. But those of us that still believe that we are capable of throwing a ball, catching a fly, or making contact with their bat believe that this game is the greatest and are thankful for those who brought this game back to life here at S.Q.

The San Quentin Giants have had their ups and downs, but have managed through it all to never have a losing season since reinstatement. The challenge comes to those who know how to play, and want to play, but believe they don't have a chance because the team is already chosen. That, guys, isn't true.

The truth is that everyone

must try out, and, if your skills are more so than others, then you may get the call or you may not. What matters is that you give your all, and do what you are supposed to do and your chances increase.

I treated people poorly at times because it was who I was. It sometimes seemed my strength. I always came to play, and came to win. I would try ways to sometimes fit in with those who weren't to my liking and that their demeanor wasn't best. I'm still that competitor.

Now, here I am over 50; one who knows how to win and having that same intention of wanting to be the best, and that comes with consequences. As with a lot of my failures and a lot of other things, baseball has always been my passion and will remain, as I feel fortunate that I can still play!

I always want to give back to this game I love; it's this game that I was challenged to play at an early age and can think on how it began.



San Quentin Giants Baseball Club 2008

Let's Play Ball

By JEFF BROOKS

Once again the baseball season is nearly upon us.

On Saturday Feb. 28, and March 7, the San Quentin Gi-

ants baseball team will conduct try outs at 9 a.m. on the yard. All positions are available.

This year Kevin Laughlin will be the new manager at the helm of the San Quentin Giants.

All baseball players are welcome to come try out.

Bring your "A" game, impress the coach and you could be playing baseball with "The Boys of Summer."

SPORTS TRIVIA

By DARRELL HARTLEY

Who was the first black tennis player to win at Wimbledon?

- A. Venus Williams
- B. Zina Garrison
- C. Althea Gibson
- D. Serena Williams

Answer: C. Althea Gibson in 1957.

Which former NFL player was known for his white cleats?

- A. Tony Dorsett
- B. Billy Johnson
- C. Earl Campbell
- D. Franco Harris

Answer: B. Billy "White Shoes" Johnson wore light colored cleats because "they made him run faster".

How many Super Bowl titles have the Dallas Cowboys won?

- 1
- 3
- 5
- 6

Answer: 5. Defeated The Miami Dolphins (1972) Denver Broncos (1978) Buffalo Bills (1993) Buffalo Bills (1994) Pittsburgh Steelers (1996).

OPINION

\$200 For Parolees Doesn't Make It

By JUAN M. HAYNES
Contributing writer

In 1974, the state of California began providing funds for newly released prisoners in the amount of \$200. Thirty-five years later, in spite of inflation, an explosive rise in housing costs, and a state cost of living which is one of the highest in the nation, that \$200 figure is as fixed as the granite walls of San Quentin State Prison.

According to the cost of living index, better known as the consumer price index (the most common measure of inflation), the price for goods totaling \$200 in 1975 would have inflated to about \$570 for those same goods in 2007.

It is not difficult to understand why newly released inmates step into financial dire straits on day one of their parole. The inflationary squeeze, coupled with the scantiness in housing and employment, brings the realization that the value of the 1974 \$200, in 2009 times, is greatly diminished in its original conceptual purpose, listed in section 2713 of the California Penal Code, which was implemented to assist the reintegration of the newly released prisoner into society.

In 2003 while 160,000

men were incarcerated in California prisons, a mere 7,500 of those released had opportunity to take advantage of drug treatment programs. Recently, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, along with the state, have intensified their concept of drug treatment through pre-release, with links to residential treatment and housing assistance, which is encouraging.

Expanding this concept, with an emphasis on employment, would assist many more prisoners by providing treatment, housing and the jobs they desperately need for a successful parole.

The 1974 California Legislature's noble aim to aid the reintegration of prisoners into society, by providing \$200, fell short of its goal then and continues to fail to offer realistic financial support to prisoners being paroled now.

Most parolees want to be drug free with a stable home and steady employment. Providing a cohesive financial plan to men released from prison would be one step towards ending California's dismal 71 percent recidivism rate, and a concept that, if implemented, will help the reintegration into society of formerly incarcerated citizens.

The U.S. Justice System, Moving Towards 18th Century France

A punitive justice system and social disparity bequeath U.S. with the largest incarceration in the history of the world.

By KAMAL SEFELDEEN
Contributing writer

According to the National Criminal Justice Commission, the U.S. has engaged in the largest imprisonment buildup of any country in the history of the world. Americans in prisons and jails have quadrupled to 2.3 million. Minority groups rate of incarceration increased tenfold. African Americans are incarcerated at a rate six times that of whites.

According to Bruce Western's study on Reentry, communities with few resources are facing additional social pressures by absorbing 700,000 returning prisoners each year. This disparity exists because African Americans are inclined to be arrested at higher rates than whites due to a police practice of racial profiling, and due to media depiction of African Americans and minorities in gangsters' images.

"Basic human equality is associated with full membership in a community," says the British sociologist, T.H. Marshall. Bruce Western writes, "The penal system was used to manage many of the byproducts of persistent poverty: untreated drug addiction and mental illness, homelessness, chronic idleness among young men, and

social disorder. It was the management of these social problems, which fueled incarceration rates for drug users, public-order offenders, and parole violators." This analysis may explain the shift in American attitude from a moderate social conscious society to fearful and vengeful.

"It's an unjust system that one person gets life in prison for stealing a pizza, while a Wall Street Ponzi defrauds investors of \$50 billion, ends up with a slap on the wrist," says L. McBroom.

The Council on Crime in America presented a study that tends to vindicate the rising cost of victimized citizens. It claims that direct costs to victims which occurred six months or more after the crime is more important than the fiscal cost of incarceration.

Fear has been used as a tool in enacting politically motivated laws. Supporting such a theory, columnist Ben Wattenberg writes, "A thug in prison can't shoot your sister."

Nixon launched the war on crime with a plan to criminalize anti-Vietnam War demonstrators.

Reagan's war-on-drugs justified U.S. black-ops in Central America. Politicizing the U.S. Supreme Court ignited manda-

tory minimum prison sentences and gave birth to Three Strikes Laws in many states.

Clinton's Anti Terrorist, and Prison Litigation Reform Acts launched the largest prison construction projects in U.S. history.

Post 9/11, fear of foreign terrorism was a key in enacting the Patriot Act Legislation, notwithstanding, calls for imprisoning forever any terror-suspect without trial. A reminder of 18th century France where French citizens who were deemed abhorrent to the crown was arrested by secret warrants called *lettres-de-cachet* and imprisoned indefinitely in the Bastille fortress in Paris.

The climbing costs of maintaining the penal industry has strained many states' budgets and diverted funds from schools and social programs to penal maintenance.

In New Mexico, prisoners rioted due to overcrowding and poor nutrition; it costed the state \$38 million to clean up and repair the problem.

Overcrowding in Alabama state prisons led to the release of 222 inmates under federal court order on July 25, 1981. Similar action took place in Maryland, Delaware, Michigan, Illinois and New York.

See Justice System Page 8

Justice System

Continued from Page 7

In California, the correction's budget reached \$7.6 billion. During 2006's visit to San Quentin, a law enforcement German Delegation noted that California's Correctional budget is more than the annual gross domestic products of five African nations combined: Mali, Niger, Chad, Togo and Sierra Leone.

With 33 prisons operating over 200 percent over normal capacity, the cost of inmate medical care increased from \$345 million in 1995 to \$2.2 billion in 2007. The federal

court had to place the prison's health care system under federal receivership. California is facing ongoing federal litigation about overcrowding.

The National Crime Victimization Survey, released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics showed violent crime in the United States is up 5.6 percent. These facts indicate that mass imprisonment and a punitive justice system did not deter offenders or protect society from harm, because "...that method failed to address the core of the social disparity," says Bruce Western.

'N' Word a Big Negative

By THE CONCERNED

One of the saddest scenes in San Quentin is a group of young black inmates laughing and calling each other by the "N" word.

The history of the "N" word alone is enough reason why no black person should ever want to use it. Some people claim its use will desensitize the word, as though it is a term of endearment.

Racists created this word and used it to put down an entire race. In the late 1960s and early '70s, there were a few years of black pride.

Black pride diminished greatly during the '80s, about the time of governments infiltrating black revolutionary groups and the

killing and imprisonment of their leaders.

Now black communities are flooded with "crack" and blacks are killing each other over dope and colors. Some entertainers (rappers, comics) popularize the "N" word, to everyone's detriment.

Racists smile and love it when they see or hear blacks calling each other by the "N" word. They don't have to say it behind our backs any more; we do it for them.

We are not just a lost generation with no self-pride or dignity. It is time to re-establish pride in the black race as well as in the black male as a whole. America now has a black president, for the first time in history. It's time we get our black pride back.

We Want To H From You!

The San Quentin News welcomes and encourages inmates, free staff, custody staff, volunteers and people and entities outside of the institution to submit articles for this publication.

Please use the following criteria when submitting:

- Please limit your submitted articles to no more than 350 words.
- Articles may be edited for content and length.
- The newspaper is not a medium to file grievances. Use the prison appeals process.

However, we do encourage

submitting stories and/or articles which are newsworthy and encompass issues that will have an impact on the prison populace.

- Please do not use offensive language in your submissions.
- Art work is welcomed (i.e. poems, songs, cartoons, drawings).
- Letters to the editor should be short and to the point.

Send Submissions to:
Education Dept. / SQ News
San Quentin, CA 94964
www.cdcr.ca.gov/Visitors/
San_Quentin_News/SQ_Newsletter.html

San Quentin News

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'Life and Times of Frederick Douglas'

Feb. 1818- Feb.1895

By R.E. CALIX
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HARRIS
Managing Editor



Frederick Douglass was born into slavery and self educated, learning to read and write despite the barriers against slave education. As a fugitive slave, Frederick was able to compose the best-known slave narrative in the history of world slavery while on the lam. Fugitive slave laws forbade the aiding and abetting of a runaway, and these laws were strictly enforced. His writings became a most powerful tool to be used in the fight against the institution of slavery in the U.S., as well as throughout the rest of the world.

He described the brutality of the practice of human bondage, describing his childhood separation from his mother, the brutal beatings he witnessed and received, and his determination to be free, while expressing his own humanity and the inhumanity of the system that kept him

and his brothers and sisters as slaves.

Douglass willed himself into becoming more than an object of exploitation. He developed into a great African American hero and leader. He played a leading role in 19th century reform as an adviser to President Abraham Lincoln, and in other areas of government. Slavery played such a dominating role in American politics, succumbing into the nation's only civil war, which eventually ended the system of slavery. Douglass was a leader for all Americans. Steadfast in the struggle for women's

rights and African American suffrage, he spent his life working toward integration and civil rights. His autobiography was an international bestseller. On a world speaking tour, he was able to exemplify the best in the human spirit, and the ability to transcend any manmade boundary.

His special gift to America lives on in the works of African American literature during and after the

"New Negro" Harlem Renaissance; and in the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution which together gave black people the right to vote. The struggle to overcome the evil of the slave system has created many stars and heroes in American democracy, even as the inequalities continue to evade justice. Douglass is the standard-bearer for liberty and the pursuit of happiness in this, the most free of lands. We applaud and celebrate this symbol of the "North Star". To freedom, we march on!

Administration Answers Ad/Seg Concerns

By KENNETH BRYDON
Editor-in-Chief

In the Jan. 2009 Edition of the S.Q. News, the article "Administrative Segregation: One Giant Leap Backward," was printed. The article focused on the reported conditions which North Block prisoners encountered.

On Monday, Feb. 22, 09, an interview was conducted with the warden's administrative assistant, Correctional Lt. R. Luna. The following questions were posed to Luna. He provided the subsequent answers:

Q: What is the policy for approval of the S.Q. News? A: The story is submitted and reviewed for content. Q: What content are you looking for? A: Making sure the facts are correct. The whole reason we have S.Q. News is rehabilitation. It helps Vocational Printing and building job skills. Q: What problems did you observe in the article printed?

A: It was one-sided. I cannot speak to inaccuracies in that it hasn't been investigated. This was the opinion of four individuals when the unit houses 400.

The use of slang, "The Hole" wasn't accurate: it is Administrative Segregation, and individuals only go there when it's determined that the inmate may either be a threat to others or is threatened by others. Q: What is the official position concerning the conditions in Ad/Seg? A: We meet the standards of housing an Ad/Seg unit.

Lt. Luna then stated: "Inmates are not there to live the 'good life.' Ad/Seg is a management tool meant to be an incentive to program. They have a chance to understand that they have opportunities. When an inmate does have privileges, they should appreciate what they have. What I got from this was these Lifers were accustomed to a more comfortable living standard, and they were then exposed to a situation that took them out of their comfort zone.

"We were privileged to have a warden who gave us back this paper. By no means did the S.Q. News try to glorify or degrade anyone. This is a neutral newspaper with the goal of professional journalism. What they want to do is report what is important, and to give the inmate

population information that they are starving for. This information is not just for S.Q., but also for the rest of the institutions and all over the U.S. This is the best prison newspaper in the country."

A following interview was conducted with Facility Capt. B. Grundy, who supervises the Ad/Seg unit. His statement is as follows: "I take full responsibility for the unit, staff, as well as the inmate population. I realize it is a difficult situation we're in, trying to find a balance between the population and providing all the security and the required services at the same time. I feel that the S.Q. News is a good thing.

"However, the article in question here, gave the appearance that it was being utilized as a conduit for airing grievances, and there are already plenty of forms in which we can do that (602, verbal, written letters). Everyone can use that forum in full. We do not need to utilize the S.Q. News for a medium to duke it out. My hope is that S.Q. News can continue in the spirit which former Warden Ayers intended."

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