

Happy Holidays!

San Quentin News

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Folsom women join Journalism Guild

SQNews' Journalism Guild expands to Folsom Women's Facility, aiming to bring new voices to the forefront of prison journalism



Professor Lisa Armstrong, of UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism, provides instruction for the Journalism Guild's first official class at Folsom Women's Facility.

Photo courtesy of CDCR

By Charles Crowe
Staff Writer

In a history-making move, the San Quentin News Journalism Guild established its first satellite newsroom at the Folsom Women's Facility (FWF) on Nov. 1. Students in the program will receive journalism training that will provide

them with the skills to bring the voices of incarcerated women to the newspaper on a regular basis.

"The unique partnership will offer FWF incarcerated people journalism training, professional development and mentoring, with the goal of establishing a newsroom staff at FWF that regularly contributes content to the *San Quentin*

News," said a joint press release from Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and Friends of San Quentin News.

The first news stories written by the Folsom women are expected to be seen in *SQNews* early in the New Year.

See **GUILD** on page 4

Experts question role of victims, survivors in parole hearings

By Vincent E. O'Bannon
Staff Writer

Years after a conviction, prisoners still face the same scrutiny at parole board hearings they did during their jury trial — when facing prosecutors, crime victims or the victim's family.

Statements by prosecutors, victims of crime and their family members at a Board of Parole Hearing (BPH) could mean a parole denial for a rehabilitated person, according to a *Powell (Wyoming) Tribune* Op-Ed by Ronald Fraser published Feb. 11, 2021.

"To what extent will parole boards allow victim influence to override the concerns for the inmate?" asked Kathryn Morgan and Brent L. Smith in a 2005 article in *Criminology & Public Policy* quoted by Fraser. "Is it fair to further punish an inmate who presents a low risk of recidivism for future criminal behavior because victims show up at a hearing to protest the release?"

The purpose of a parole hearing is to determine an incarcerated person's current readiness for release. Hearings should not be contaminated by outdated information that was the basis for the underlying conviction or plea, said the Prison Policy Initiative (PPI) in a 2018 study, reported Fraser, who writes for the *DKT Liberty Project*, a Washington, D.C.-based civil liberties organization.

"Crime survivors have little evidence as to whether an individual has changed, having not seen them for years," the study added.

Parole board hearings can be a re-traumatizing event for victims and family members, and their testimony can also undo a prisoner's

See **HEARINGS** on page 4

Local politics play role in CA resentencing

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Staff Writer

Recent legislation has created new opportunities for prisoners to have their sentences recalled by the court. But there are also new political barriers to obstruct inmate access to the court when they file a Petition for Recall of Sentence.

Under Penal Code section 1170(d)(1), there are four ways in which a state prisoner may have a court review a petition for recall of a sentence: 1) by the court itself, if it is within 120 days of the original sentence; 2) a referral by law enforcement; 3) a referral by the secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR); and 4) a referral by the district attorney from the county where a petitioner was convicted.

One obstacle is created by some district attorneys who maintain a hands-off policy for certain cases, based on internal criteria. Because of the nature of some offenses, some prosecutors will not entertain reviewing a Petition for Recall of Sentence.

In 2018, Assembly Bill 2942 was passed and signed into law by then-Gov. Jerry Brown. It broadened the use of the 1170 statute. The law states, in part: "This bill would allow the court to also recall and resentence a defendant upon the recommendation of the district attorney of the county in which the defendant was sentenced."

Some county district attorneys use the non-profit, third-party organization For the People to screen out petitions for recall of sentence before, if ever, a DA's office sees them.

See **SENTENCING** on page 4

CSU-LA graduates more than two dozen incarcerated students at Lancaster prison

By Steve Brooks
Journalism Guild Chair

For the first time in California history, 25 incarcerated men received their Bachelor of Arts degrees from a California university during a commencement ceremony held inside of a prison.

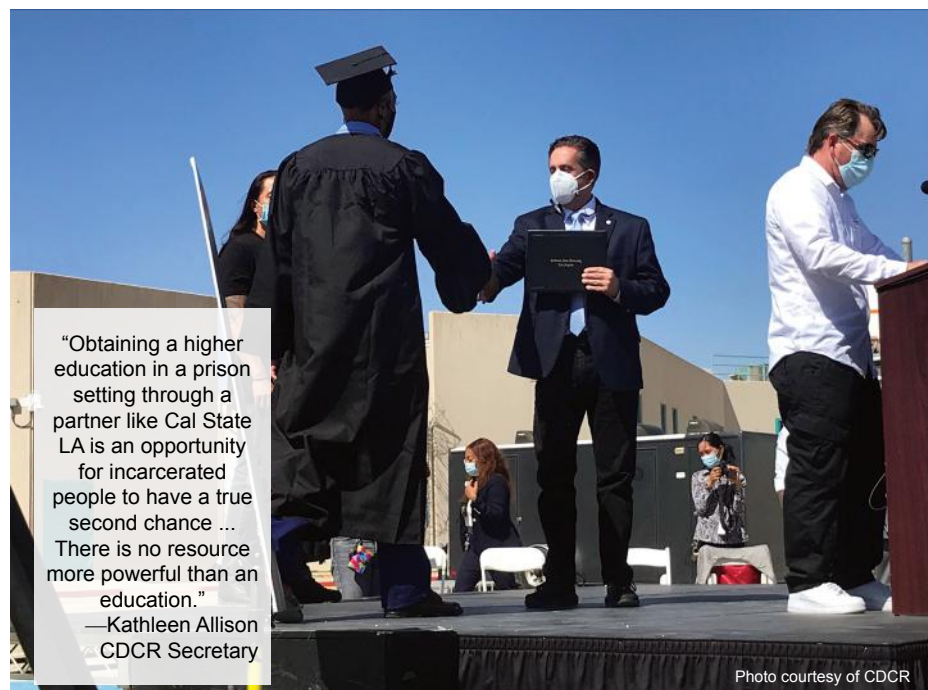
The graduates wore black caps and gowns as they walked across a makeshift stage at the Lancaster prison to receive their degrees in communications. The California State University of Los Angeles is also the first university to offer a communications degree to incarcerated people.

"Cal State LA is proud of you, the graduates, in our prison education program," said Jose A. Gomez, provost and executive vice president. "They have demonstrated the power of education to transform lives," the *Antelope Valley Times* reported.

The Graduation Initiative is the first in-person bachelor's degree completion program for incarcerated students in California. It was started in 2016 with support from President Barack Obama's Second Chance Pell Federal Pilot Program. It is also supported by the Andrew Mellon Foundation.

The men received face-to-face instruction through video lessons where students can interact live with faculty, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

"Obtaining a higher education in a prison setting through a partner like Cal State LA is an opportunity for incarcerated people to have a true second chance," said CDCR Secretary Kathleen Allison. "There is no resource more powerful than an education, where people can



"Obtaining a higher education in a prison setting through a partner like Cal State LA is an opportunity for incarcerated people to have a true second chance ... There is no resource more powerful than an education."
—Kathleen Allison
CDCR Secretary

Photo courtesy of CDCR

gain new skills and learn new perspectives."

California now leads the nation in post-secondary education for justice-involved people, according to a report from Stanford Law School's Criminal Justice Center and the Opportunity Institute's Corrections to College Program, a project that morphed into the Rising Scholars Network.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 417 which requires that post-secondary

opportunities be provided to all Californians, including those who are justice-involved. The Rising Scholar Network will provide greater support to California community colleges to provide academic instruction and support services for justice-involved students.

The legislation allocates \$10 million for the state's community colleges to increase access

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Remembering Tony Holzhauser

**OBITUARY
Anthony Joseph Holzhauser
1933-2021**

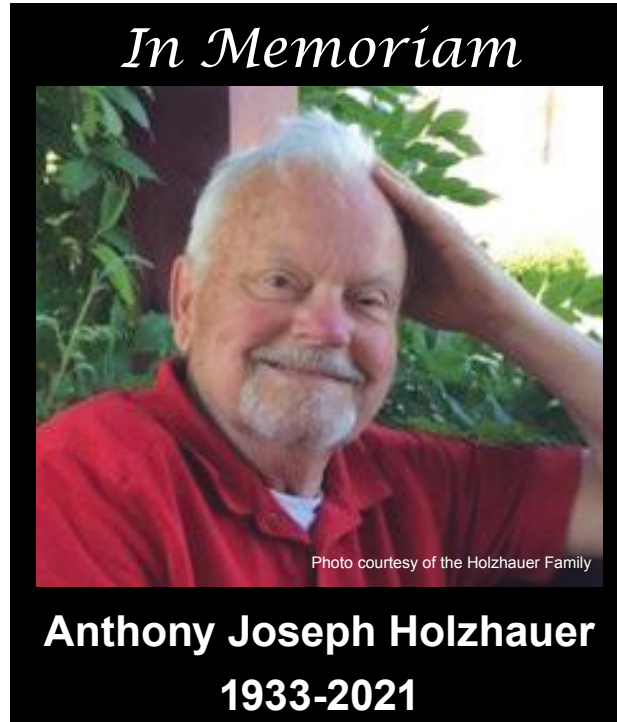
Tony Holzhauser was a long-time volunteer in service to the residents of San Quentin. He showed up every Thursday night for 15 years to participate in the Restorative Justice program. He also served in the Kairos Prison Ministry. Tony had deep respect and compassion for the men inside. He sat with them, listened, and honored them in the moment, said his obituary in the *Napa Valley Register*. Tony would tell you that he got more than he gave. But he was a legend to the incarcerated men; a man with a big heart.

"He was a good man," said Rahsaan Thomas, SQ resident and former Restorative Justice participant. "He made it a point to come in the prison as much as he could. Most people in society don't take the time to care about us or understand that they also need emotional intelligence. I think Tony came in to heal just as much as he was helping us to heal."

"What is amazing — even in his death he remembered us," Thomas added.

One of Tony's last wishes was for his family and friends to donate to *San Quentin News* or the NV Farmworker Fund (an account dedicated to the needs of Napa Valley migrant farmworkers and Napa County farmworker housing). Tony's call for support for *SQNews* raised more than \$4,000.

Over the course of Tony's 88 years, he provided a lifetime of service. He served as



a St. Helena Planning Commissioner and was elected to the St. Helena City Council. He also served two years as a Grand Juror, according to his obituary. In 2002, Tony was awarded Commissioner of the Year for the Northern District. He served 11 years on the Napa County Planning Commission. Tony was an advocate for affordable housing and for preservation of the rural nature of Napa Valley.

He graduated from Stanford University and was a Captain in the United States Marine Corps. He earned a living selling paper, stocks, and real estate, but what made him rich

was all of his other work, according to his loved ones.

"Tony was a sweet soul who greeted you with twinkly eyes and a smile that caused a boomerang effect. Tony was a voracious reader of history and lover of comic strips, a terrible driver who preferred a road trip, a bonsai gardener, a questionable dresser, a man who hated swimming but was joyful in the ocean," read his memorial.

"A guest who was delighted by each home cooked meal placed in front of him, a clever punster, and, a champion for the underdog. Tony loved all things musical despite his lack

of rhythm or ability to remember a lyric. He had an indelible dance move that he picked up at one of the many Scottish Games that he dragged his family to," his family and friends told the *Register* with love.

Tony was affectionately known as Tojo by his grandchildren. He was born in Johnson City, Tennessee, on July 14 1933, where he spent his days on Ripshin Mountain looking for adventure. In 1948, his family moved across the country to Rancho Santa Fe, California. He attended San Dieguito High. As a youth, he spent his summers working at the Del Mar Racetrack and as a lifeguard at Del Mar Beach, said his memorial.

Tony died suddenly in Hawaii after a beachside lunch with some special friends. He is survived by his wife of 36 years, his children and grandchildren. The service was held Nov. 5 at St. Helena Catholic Church.

"Tony was free — an outside volunteer — but to the incarcerated he was one of us. He saw past our prison blues. He shared the healing circle with us. He gave as we gave. We will miss his smile, caring spirit, and love. Thanks for being our "Brother," said *SQNews* Editor in Chief, Marcus Henderson.

"We send our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends. In the spirit of Tony, we will continue the work of healing and empathy."

Sincerely,

—All of your family at *SQNews*

By Steve Brooks
Journalism Guild Chair

Dr. Noel Amherd will soon be moving out of the Bay Area after eight years of being the spiritual leader for members of the Ifá (pronounced e-fa) religion at San Quentin State Prison.

"I will miss all these beautiful souls I have come to know so well," said Amherd. "These are some of the best people I've come to know inside or out of prison. They push me to be better."

The Ifá faith's presence at SQ was an outgrowth of the restorative justice program. Amherd is a restorative justice practitioner, trained to bring victims and offenders together to promote healing.

"One day while I was inside for restorative justice the brothers asked me to say a prayer in Yorúbá. I have been a part of the community ever since," said Amherd.

The 8,000-year-old religion is one of the oldest indigenous practices in the world. It was started by the Yorúbá people in the West African region of Nigeria.

Through ritualistic practices devotees access their deities' wisdom and counsel. Incantations, prayers, and divination are believed to summon these deities — or the ancestors of the petitioners.

Devotees may speak to ancestors in dreams, by audible sounds, or even have conversations during what appears to be in-person visits with the spirits.

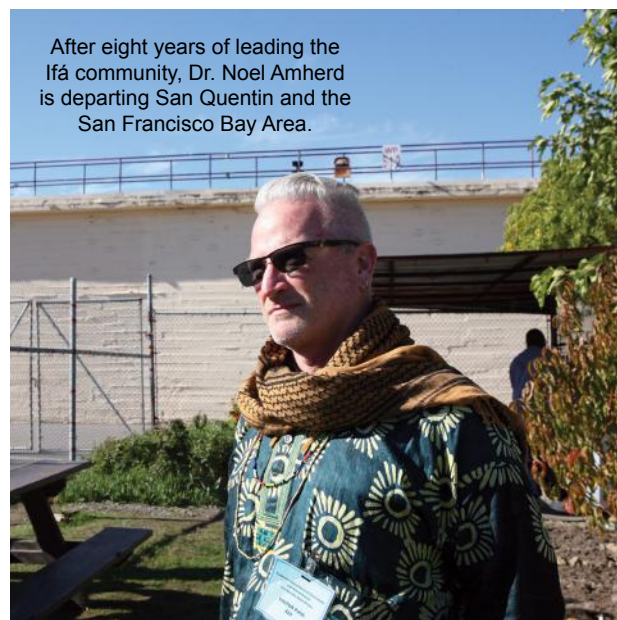
Ifá does not rely on a person having miraculous power but rather on a system of signs that are interpreted by the Babaláwo.

The term Babaláwo, interpreted as the father of secrets, is Amherd's official title. His spiritual name is Eni Orisan ni joba.

"The people of Ifá do not discuss their faith using their government names," he said.

On the day of our interview, Amherd was preparing the dev-

Ifá community losing respected leader



otees for "Ógún Wiwè," which means the washing of ógún, — the Órisha of Iron.

The sound of Djembe drums and chanting could be heard in the background. The drums invite a celebratory atmosphere.

The ceremonial practice is called "Egúngún," which means the annual festival for the ancestors. It is a time when the dead come back to visit the living. "Egúngún" literally translated is "the ancestors," according to Amherd.

Many of the words in the Yorúbá language are sung rather than spoken. Music, song and dance are means of communication for the Yorúbá people.

"There is a tone and melody to the language that must be captured in order for words to be translated correctly," according to Amherd.

"The function of the Ógún Wiwè ceremony is to recognize that our souls become entwined when we harm each other, causing both souls pain until we can make amends.

"This is done in order to heal and create a medicine that will spread between the living and the dead."

Amherd said that this is a time when the forefathers and foremothers return temporarily to see the descendants to remind them to make the world better.

Ifá is not a proselytizing religion. Its core practice is "Iwá" which means "character."

"There is both a moral and spiritual dimension. Every devotee is tasked with developing 'Iwa Rere' which translates as 'good character,'" said Amherd.

"These are people working on the spiritual practice of building good character," he said.

Jesse Blue has been part of the religion for the past four years. He participated in the celebration and referred to it as a cleansing ceremony.

"It keeps me in a balance between the spiritual and physical realm," he said.

Christopher "Tre" Huggins

has been part of the religion for almost four years. "When I step on the grounds and sit with Babaláwo, I feel a spiritual connection," said Huggins.

"I grew up Christian and I never got to choose my religious belief. When I became a man, I made a choice. I feel a connection to the ancestors that goes back for generations and generations."

The devotees are granted a space on the prison grounds that they use to hold their sacred ceremonies. "Everything is sacred; the environment, ecology, plants, birds, the air we breathe, all of creation," said Amherd.

Ifá is a polytheistic religion. Its supreme creative figure, Olodumare, shares power with an uncountable number of subsidiary deities. Each represents elements of life or nature, fire, rebirth, agriculture, or the arts, and each serves as an intercessor between humans and the creator.

The word itself refers to the mystical figure "Ifá" or "Orúnmílá," regarded by the Yorúbá as the deity of wisdom and intellectual development.

Amherd began practicing this religion in 1991. He traveled to Nigeria in 1995 and went through an initiation and was instructed by Ifá and his elders how to be a Babaláwo.

Amherd did his PhD research on the indigenous Yorúbá culture.

He also wrote a book titled "Reciting Ifá," which was published in 2010 by Africa World Press. He maintains an ongoing relationship with the teachers and elders in Nigeria.

When asked what his religious devotees would do without him, Amherd said the devotees will have to find another Babaláwo.

"The important thing is about passing on self-sufficiency," he concluded.

Prison Yoga Project goes international, expands into Europe

By Timothy Hicks
Staff Writer

The founder of the Prison Yoga Project (PYP) in San Quentin and other U.S. prisons has expanded his reach into Europe.

"The demand to have yoga in Europe was high," James Fox said in an interview with *SQNews* on Nov. 9. "Europeans understand the value that yoga has for the person, just like Americans do."

Fox had just wrapped up one of the many yoga classes he holds in SQ's ARC building, where he teaches his students how to do downward dog and tree poses. He has been making the trip inside the prison to share his unique yoga skills with the SQ residents since 2002, only two years after receiving his certification to teach.

Thirty-four years of practicing yoga outside and inside of prison has been more than fulfilling to Fox, but he had to share the benefits of yoga with the world, he said.

"Yoga is an in-depth path to peace," Fox said. "U.S. yogis

call it the karma effect of yoga service. It's about taking the benefit of yoga and the tools of it and applying it to others. The personal rewards are the benefit of service," said Fox.

Fox is determined to share the benefits of yoga with any and all who desire to learn it. However, his teachings are geared more toward incarcerated individuals. Moreover, he said that for the past 10 years, he's noticed that yoga is being more recognized by those in the health care field.

"Yoga deals with people's symptoms related to trauma, and we realize that incarcerated people deal with a multitude of traumas. It takes an embodiment practice to deal with trauma," said Fox.

There is a distinction between the circumstances that European and American PYP teachers face: European PYP teachers are dealing with refugees. Their issues are a bit more complex, Fox said. They suffer from war and trauma beyond American prisoners' ordeals.

"Although, the European PYP practices are for the



Photo courtesy of James Fox

overall wellbeing of the incarcerated refugee person and their approach is the same as PYP practice in the States," Fox said. "The entire focus is to provide the skills and practices to calm the nervous system of all who are dealing with trauma."

Fox's overseas venture got started when the benefits of

teaching yoga in prison became widely recognized in the States.

In 2011 Fox started a teacher training program for people who wanted to teach yoga in prison. A friend of his took the course and relocated to France, which ultimately led to having the Prison Yoga Project there.

Once Fox's counterparts

in Europe recognized the potential of having the PYP organization there, Fox took a three-week trip to Europe this fall to fulfill the demand and launched Europe's first Prison Yoga Project.

To date, Fox has his organization in France, the Netherlands, Sweden and 19 states in the U.S. With up to 75 active

teachers in the U.S. and 12 based overseas, he is looking to expand to even more places.

The overseas project is managed by a friend of Fox's named Josefin Wikström, who is the European program director.

"While I'm away, we have staff that take care of things and keep the organization going," Fox said.

During the program's expansion, a former correctional officer from an English prison who became a physical education teacher asked Fox for training. Fox said that is the audience he wants to train one day in America.

"We really want to get to a place where we get to share our practices with staff in the prisons so that they can understand what we do and that the CDCR could see the benefit of it," said Fox.

He commented that his work in Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service was quite an experience for him. He also mentioned that Swedish public service television is doing a story on his organization.

San Quentin News

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The *San Quentin News* encourages inmates, free staff, custody staff, volunteers and others outside the institution to submit articles, poetry and artwork. All submissions become property of the *San Quentin News*.

Guidelines for submission:

- >> Articles should be limited to 350 words and may be edited for content, clarity and length.
- >> Articles should be newsworthy and pertain to the prison populace and/or the criminal justice system.
- >> Letters to the Editor should be short, clear and to the point.
- >> Please do not submit material that is offensive, racist, sexist, or derogatory toward any group, as it will not be published.

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By Steve Brooks
Journalism Guild Chair

A group of men learned how to abandon their history of violence in an intensive workshop in San Quentin Prison.

"It's been a long journey but we finally got here," said Maurice Reed, one of the group's facilitators. "Class of 2020! No more guns, no more violence, no more hiding, no more tears!" he shouted.

Two years ago, 80 participants embarked on what was supposed to be 12 weeks of "No More Tears" (NMT) workshops. Sixteen made it through the pandemic and emerged as graduates.

NMT is a violence-prevention program founded in 2002 by incarcerated men at San Quentin State Prison and concerned citizens. It conducts workshops to help men examine their belief systems, learn de-escalation tactics, and develop alternatives to a life of violence and crime.

Reed has been incarcerated 12 years. He graduated in 2015. He has been a part of the group ever since. He is also scheduled to be paroled soon.

"This group taught me to stay calm during potentially violent situations, not to overreact, and to give people the benefit of the doubt," he said.

Reed plans to continue working with the organization in San Quentin upon his release. "Definitely coming back to help the program. It's not just group work, it's a lifestyle. The work we do is needed at schools, jobs, everywhere."

It was the height of a hot afternoon in a program trailer on the Lower Yard. The atmosphere was vibrant and welcoming. There was an opening invocation and prayer, some spoken words, poetry, and words of wisdom.

Mia Ritzenberg-Crary, one of the group's sponsors, asked the crowd for a moment of silence for all the members and non-members who passed away from COVID-19.

"I'm proud of you guys for doing the work every day in here," she said. "It's not happening on the outside as much as in here." She reminded the participants that violence is taking place in outside communities and that they now have the tools to help stop it.

"I never thought about being a part of my commu-

No More Tears grads embrace accountability, heal history of violence



Phoeun You, SQNews

nity," said graduate Edwin E. Chavez. "I never thought of myself as terrorizing my community before I took this group. This class took me from being a perpetrator to a peacemaker, able to be of service to my community."

Anthony Pier graduated from the group in 2015. He decided to take it again in 2019 to remind himself of things he may have forgotten. "What really stuck out the most to me were the words 'Thingify' and 'personify,'" he said. "I learned to stop treating people like they're objects and start treating them like human beings."

Robert Lee also started participating in the group in 2019, but he received a Penal Code Section 1170 recall of sentence before the graduation took place. He sent this message to his group members: "There is value in change. Don't give up your faith."

Sponsor Cori Thomas delayed a plane trip when she heard the graduation was going to take place. "What I've witnessed here since I've been coming is true strength and bravery. The rough and tough exterior comes off. I learned something. I leave here better,

stronger, and braver because of these workshops," she said.

Cofounder Lonnie Morris served more than 40 years in prison before he was paroled. This is the first graduation in which he is no longer incarcerated. But he continues to do the work from the outside.

Thousands have graduated from the NMT workshops over the years. Eighty-five percent have not returned to prison, according to group facilitators.

"I am so proud of each and every one of you," guest speaker Anthony Williams said. "I have never witnessed this type of honesty, vulnerability, and kindness from men in my entire life."

Sponsor Cheri McNaulty is anticipating starting a domestic violence prevention program at SQ. McNaulty often shares her story as a survivor of domestic violence with the group's participants. She hopes her new program will help supplement the NMT curriculum.

There were smiles, laughter, hugs and cheers as the participants heard their names being called and they walked down a line of facilitators and sponsors to receive their cer-

tificates.

Three additional certificates were awarded to those who stood out during the workshops. Satnam Singh was awarded for his perseverance despite having a language barrier. Reggie Thorpe received an additional certificate for being an outstanding student.

James Humphrey received his additional certificate for being a standout participant, actively asking questions, providing insight, and supporting others during the workshops.

"This group helped me understand how my violence affected the victim. It also helped me become more aware of who I am as a person," said Humphrey. "Now I am able to put myself in other people's shoes — to stop and think."

Graduates will be invited to attend future healing circles and restorative justice circles. They'll have the opportunity to be trained as facilitators and youth mentors with the leadership skills to help rebuild their communities.

"We're committed to stopping the violence! We're committed to stopping the tears!" the graduates shouted during a ceremonial chant.

GUILD

Folsom women join SQN's Journalism Guild

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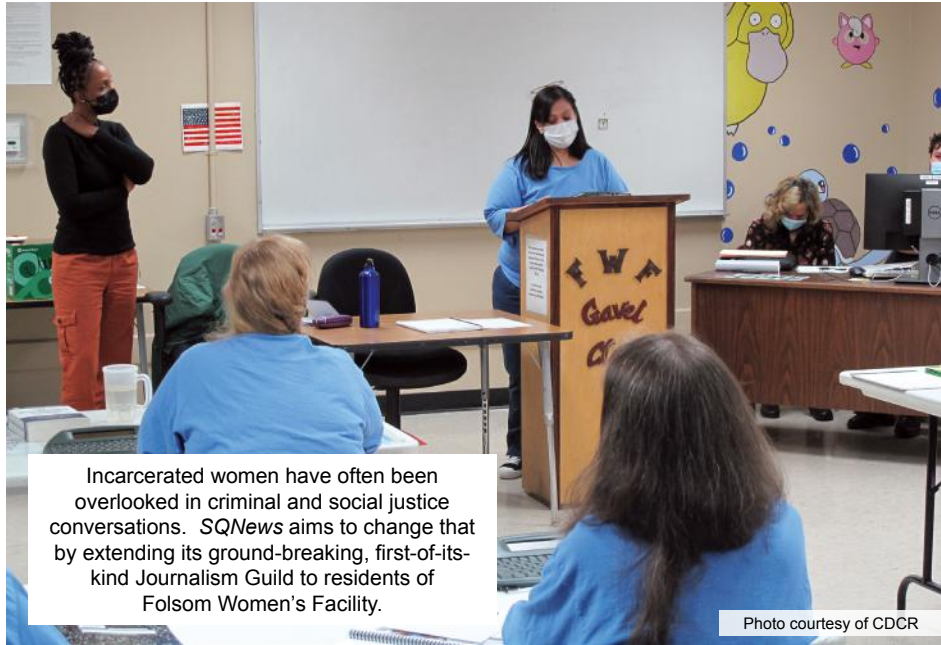
Former SQNews Editor-in-Chief Jesse Vasquez, now Development Director for the organization Friends of San Quentin News, helped facilitate the Journalism Guild's expansion to the women's facility.

"We're thrilled to bring San Quentin's transformative Journalism Guild to the people at Folsom Women's Facility," he said. "I'm eager to see the impact the women at Folsom will make through the program."

FWF Public Information Officer Valencia, Facility Capt. Geis, Associate Warden Caraballo, and the facility's Community Resource Manager were all instrumental in making the program possible and enabling access for the volunteers.

"We support the value of bringing this program to FWF to teach the population important journalism skills that will enable them to share their unique challenges and rehabilitation experiences in a female institution with a wider audience," said Folsom State Prison and FWF Warden Rick Hill.

The Folsom Guild classes meet 6-8 p.m. on Mondays. Ten students attended the first session. The class is taught by



Incarcerated women have often been overlooked in criminal and social justice conversations. SQNews aims to change that by extending its ground-breaking, first-of-its-kind Journalism Guild to residents of Folsom Women's Facility.

Photo courtesy of CDCR

Lisa Armstrong, University of California Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism professor and award-winning journalist.

The 26-week course will include instruction in interviewing and research, writing techniques, and *The Associated Press* style of news writing.

Folsom's aspiring journalists will have access to resources and research equal to that pro-

vided to their colleagues at San Quentin. They will compose their stories on NEOs (portable word processors). Their work will then be uploaded to a computer and sent to SQNews for publishing.

Some of the first topics the student journalists will write about include their experiences with COVID-19, prison diet and food waste, limits on visitation,

detainers that restrict access to programming, and the psychological impact of incarceration on parents.

Armstrong will be assisted by Cal graduate Madeline "Maddie" Scott, along with other Cal graduate students. Scott will serve the group as a volunteer coordinator and researcher.

"I honestly had no idea what to expect at the Folsom Wom-

en's Facility. Any anxiety I felt ... vanished after just spending a few minutes talking to the women and hearing their excitement to be involved in the Journalism Guild," said Scott.

"Many of the women ... (told) us why they wanted to be involved in this project — to have their voices heard through storytelling and explore ideas they are passionate about.

"After visiting the San Quentin Prison newsroom and talking to some of the men there ... I hope that the women at FWF can find a similar passion for journalism ..."

Mary Palomera is one of the Folsom Guild students: "Hearing the stories of success from members of the Guild at San Quentin, specifically how the program makes them feel that they are getting their voices heard, has made me eager to join the Guild at Folsom," she said.

Virginia Cervantes is another member of Armstrong's Folsom class: "I'm looking forward to seeing how my words may promote social justice and inform those outside about the important issues faced by incarcerated women," she said.

SQNews encourages incarcerated Californians to write and strives to include their many diverse voices.

Vasquez, Armstrong and Scott will make the 105-mile, two-hour commute from the Bay Area to Folsom each week to provide instruction and facilitate the connection between the emerging writers and the San Quentin newsroom.

In an interview with *CBSN Bay Area Channel 5 KPIX*, Vasquez said that the Folsom writers' guild is a test pilot. Friends of San Quentin News envisions similar expansions nationwide.

"Ideally we would want to see at least one prison newspaper in every state with high incarceration rates so that the incarcerated have a voice and are able [to] speak to the issues that are relevant in their communities to dismantle those stereotypes and biases," said Vasquez.

Charitable contributions fund the printing, distribution, and outside operations of the *San Quentin News*. Generous support is received from The Reva and David Logan Foundation. The foundation's president, Richard Logan, said, "The new program at Folsom is a seminal part of *San Quentin News*' strategic expansion. Our hope is that many other foundations, corporations and individuals will recognize the importance of their work and join us in supporting it."

DEGREES

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to justice-involved students. AB 417 authorizes 50 new California colleges to join the Rising Scholar Network.

Newsom also signed Senate Bill 416, which requires CDCR to make college programs available for the benefit of incarcerated people who already have a general education development certificate or equivalent or a high school diploma.

This bill requires that college programs be provided by the California community college system, the California State University system, the University of California sys-

25 Lancaster prisoners graduate from CSU - LA

tem, or other regionally-accredited, nonprofit colleges or universities.

AB 416 further requires that any student enrolled in a full-time college program consisting of 12 semester units or the equivalent thereof leading to an associate or bachelor's degree be deemed by the department to be assigned to a full-time work or training assignment.

"I am grateful that Newsom saw the necessity in us having access to higher education in prison," said Jerry Gearin, a student at Mt. Tamalpais Col-

lege at San Quentin, who is finishing up his Associate's degree. "A lot of people in here are still learning how to think and that's what education does; it teaches people how to think and make good choices in life."

The Department of Education will also expand the Second Chance Pell Grant experiment in 2022-23. The initiative will allow incarcerated people at certain federal and state prisons to receive need-based Pell grants for college education. The award is worth up to \$6,495 for the upcoming school year.

Lawmakers ended a 1994 ban on providing federal financial aid to people in prison in December 2020, according to the Vera Institute of Justice.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports secondary education programs help lower recidivism. Incarcerated people who obtain their associate's degree only have a 14% recidivism rate. Those who earn a bachelor's degree have a 5.6% rate of recidivism and those who earn their master's degree have a 0% rate of recidivism.

"This is the best thing that's happened since peanut butter and jelly," said Earnest "Ben-Shua" Woods. "People need education like peanut butter needs jelly," he said, smiling.

Experts question relevance of victims' testimony in parole consideration hearings

HEARINGS

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remorse and rehabilitative efforts.

"Dragging the victim and their families into parole board hearings is akin to re-traumatizing them," said a San Quentin resident who wished to remain anonymous due to an upcoming board hearing. "And what purpose does it serve to have them there 15-20-25-years after the crime occurred? They haven't been a part of my rehabilitative process.

"They don't know the struggles I endured to reach a place of true remorse. So how can the state expect them to have a say in paroling me, to judge me today, if they [victim/family] have not gotten healing themselves?" the person added.

A victim's testimony can include details of life-changing mental and emotional injuries they suffered by the offender. A victim can also testify whether or not they support the incarcerated person's release.

"The problem here is that victims' testimony at parole hearings are largely irrelevant to the task at hand — an objective, fact-based assessment of the inmate's future risk of criminal behavior," said Fraser.

The anonymous SQ resident added, "I'm not saying they shouldn't be a part of the process, but I believe that they should at least have gone through self-healing groups, because how can the state (BPH and district attorney) expect someone to come judge me after years of incarceration, if they have not healed themselves?"

Victims of crimes, however, have a right to be heard during and after a trial has been concluded, said the article.

"Nearly every jurisdiction in the United States, guarantees victims a constitutional and/or statutory right to be heard in connection with parole and

other release-related proceedings," said the National Crime Victim Law Institute at Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland, Ore., reported Fraser.

Sixteen states have abolished early release hearings. In the remaining 34, including New York, offenders receive "indeterminate" sentences ranging from a minimum term to a maximum term, the article reported.

In 2018, the *Prison Policy Initiative* studied how state parole boards conduct their hearings. The report, "Grading State Parole Systems," says parole boards "are in the business of giving every incarcerated person ample opportunity to earn release and to have a fair process for deciding whether to grant it to them," said the article.

The system of allowing early release by hearing committee was first adopted in New York State in 1907 as reformers moved to shift from punishment to rehabilitation in state-run prisons. However, many California prisoners express concern in having to enter into a process that should be as simple as showing that they have changed.

"I think it's scary, intimidating and fueled by absolute anxiety going in that board room," said SQ resident John James. "Especially for a person who doesn't talk good in front of people. If the stories I've heard were more about a fair hearing process and judgment was based on our own merits, I don't believe it would be such a terrifying experience."

The SQNews asked James how he viewed his future board appearance. James, who has yet to appear before a BPH committee, responded, "I'm expecting a three-year denial."

James believes that because he targeted a gang member and instead killed an innocent bystander, the BPH and the victim's family may not view his being incarcerated for 10 years as a long enough period for rehabilitation.

SENTENCING

continued from page 1

"Because AB 2942 is a discretionary law, it allows district attorneys to determine their office's specific criteria for resentencing," Christina Svenson, spokesperson of For The People, wrote in an email for this story. "As such, every office identifies cases to be resentenced based on different factors."

Questioned specifically about Contra Costa County, Svenson wrote "We're not able to share specifics..." Adding, the first two cases resentenced under AB 2942 in that county "happen to be burglaries, and both were people who served more than 10 years of their respective sentences."

In the California Penal Code, a stand-alone burglary carries a sentence that varies from 16 months, four years or six years.

"Many California district attorneys agree and believe that DAs should 'look back' at prior sentences and provide redress," the For The People website states. "However, until AB 2942, there were no legal vehicles that would allow a prosecuting agency to revisit prior sentences and recommend a reduced sentence."

"At this time, For The People is only working on cases that have been identified by district attorneys as well as cases that are in counties where we have a resentencing partnership," Svenson wrote in her email.

In California, Svenson

The many political hurdles of Calif. resentencing laws

wrote, For The People has a partnership with DAs in the following counties: Contra Costa, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Merced, Napa, Riverside, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, and Yolo.

"There is definitely a variation from county to county in resentencing criteria," Svenson wrote. "Some counties begin with non [violent], non [serious], non [sexual] cases and expand over time."

Earlier this year, the state budget approved funding for nine district attorneys to implement AB 2942. They'll each receive a share of \$18 million to identify prisoners deemed no longer a public safety risk.

"Most prosecutors agree that if a person has transformed their life and there's no justification for having them incarcerated, then they should be out," KQED quoted Hillary Blout, executive director of For The People.

A major obstruction to the 1170 statute was created by the CDCR, in a proposed Notice of Change to Regulations (NCR 21-04). It was originally filed as an "emergency," and later received at least two 60-day extensions. The emergency language allows speedy implementation of changes to the California Code of Regulations, Title 15.

"[T]he emergency adoption

of the regulations would significantly incentivize inmates to participate in rehabilitative and other programming offered in CDCR institutions," the NCR states. It states further "... CDCR proposes to use Penal Code Section 1170(d) to its full potential..."

The newly proposed regulation also reads, in part: "... inmates who meet the following criteria shall be excluded from consideration..." The text list seven exclusions, such as "Indeterminately sentenced inmates...scheduled for a parole hearing within the next 18 months..." will not be considered.

According to the CDCR, "These regulations establish a major expansion of the process to recommend inmates to their sentencing court for recall of commitment and resentencing, pursuant to Penal Code section 1170(d)(1)."

Previous language in Title 15's recall regulation did not use the word *exclude*. It read, in part: "For inmates meeting one or more of the recall eligibility requirements...the Classification and Parole Representative, shall consider..." an inmate's petition.

The state Penal Code gives the CDCR rulemaking authority to adopt, amend or repeal sections of Title 15. However, the state Government Code reads: "In order for a regulation

to be valid, it must be (1) consistent with and not in conflict with the enabling statute and (2) reasonably necessary to effectuate the purpose of the statute."

In 2018, Assembly Bill 1812 was signed into law by then-Gov. Jerry Brown. The law was written to allow a court to recall an inmate's sentence if they have exhibited good conduct and rehabilitation during their incarceration.

AB 1812 states, in part: "... at any time upon the recommendation of the (CDCR) secretary or the Board of Parole Hearings..." a court "may reduce a defendant's term of imprisonment..." The law was written, ostensibly, to broaden the use of Penal Code section 1170(d)(1).

"The court may consider post-conviction factors, including, but not limited to, the inmate's disciplinary record and record of rehabilitation while incarcerated, evidence that reflects whether age, time served, and diminished physical condition...reduced the inmate's risk for future violence..." AB 1812 reads, in part.

After the CDCR wrote conflicting regulations, following the passing of Proposition 57 (also written for early release) by voters in 2016, California's Court of Appeal applied its standard of review on the contradictory regulations. Two inmates who challenged the regulations were both granted relief by the court. The cases on habeas corpus were *In re Mohammad* and *In re Edwards*.

By Randy Hansen
Journalism Guild Writer

Aerial dance addresses mass incarceration

An aerial dance show that addresses mass incarceration was brought to the public to raise the awareness of life behind bars and the parallels of the Jewish experience.

“Meet Us Quickly with Your Mercy” was performed on an outdoor stage in downtown San Francisco. Dancers perform in and around cages suspended from the facades of the CounterPulse art center and the Dahlia Hotel, according to *The Jewish News of Northern California*.

The location was chosen because of its closeness to a halfway house for formerly incarcerated people to watch from across the street.

“I think that there are Jews who don’t necessarily think about mass incarceration in America as connected to their own experience,” said Choreographer Jo Kreiter and producer of the show to *Jewish News*. “If there’s anything this piece does, I want it to bring that connection forward.”

Kreiter makes it clear that she is not comparing Black and Jewish suffering with her installment.

The show was presented in partnership with Bend the Arc Jewish Action, the Museum

of the African Diaspora and Prison Renaissance. The Oct. 14 to 17 shows were free.

“We created this piece amidst a triumvirate of obstacles that I don’t wish on any artist,” said Kreiter. “I’m so grateful to my cast and crew for hanging in there and persisting in their creativity despite so much discomfort and fear.”

The production had to endure major disruptions such as: the pandemic, smoke from the wildfires, and one dancer dropped out over health concerns. Jewlia Eisenberg, the late musician who worked on the score for the show, passed away. Also, rehearsing at a Mission studio with the doors open was a challenge — trying to adhere to the COVID precautions were difficult, noted the article.

“Meet Us Quickly with Your Mercy” is Kreiter’s second installment of her “Decarceration Trilogy.” It was written in collaboration with San Quentin resident Rahsaan Thomas, a co-host of the popular “Ear Hustle” podcast, which is broadcast from San Quentin.

There are three separate

Aerial performer Megan Lowe flies weightlessly through the air in “Meet Us Quickly With Your Mercy,” a dance series bringing attention to mass incarceration.



Photo courtesy of RJ Muna

sections in “Mercy,” each inviting viewers to further research and reflect. The first section, “Pushed and Shoved,” intertwines with Thomas’ story “Why I Run in Prison,” which Thomas read over the phone from San Quentin to Kreiter. The recording was overlaid on the score by Eisenberg.

“I try to outrun my past,” said Thomas about why he runs.

The second part of “Mercy” is called “Trogn (Carrying).” It has two Yiddish songs that mix with another of Thomas’ stories. Kreiter calls it “the ancestral memory” of the holocaust capture.

The final part is “Chasing Freedom.” It has the most athletic aerial features. It adds quotes from Bay Area 1960s Black Panther revolutionaries, professor and activist Angela Davis and social justice ad-

vocate Eric Ward. The quotes are laid over music and urge listeners to “be a partner in the struggle for civil rights.” It also links anti-Semitism with “violence that targets people of color.”

In addition, artwork created by incarcerated men at San Quentin was on display at the “Mercy” showing.

Before she passed, Eisenberg selected and performed two Yiddish songs for the

sound score. One is about non-Jewish Europeans that hid Jewish children in their homes during the Holocaust, and the other speaks to the plight of migrants at the southern U.S. border.

“That’s a choice that Jewlia made, and I wish she was around to talk about it,” said Kreiter, about Eisenberg song selections.

“The Wait Room,” was Kreiter’s first episode in the trilogy. It focused on the struggles of women with loved ones in prison. Kreiter’s husband also served six years in federal prison. He is now a “returned citizen,” said the article. “Mercy” builds on the personal narratives of being caged or trapped that link the Black and Jewish histories. The final production in the trilogy is “The Decarceration Trilogy: Dismantling the Prison Industrial Complex One Dance at a Time” — set to premiere in 2022.

“Meet Us Quickly with Your Mercy” presents a new view of mass incarceration through dance. Kreiter quotes the Bible Psalm 79:8 to bring clarity to her work: “Don’t hold the iniquities of our forefathers against us. Let your tender mercies speedily meet us, for we are in desperate need.”

Virginia denies breast surgery for trans man housed in women’s prison

A transgender man in a Virginia women’s prison has sued the state for denying him breast removal surgery, the *Associated Press* reported.

Jason Yoakam claimed in the federal suit that he suffers from panic attacks, sleep and appetite disturbance, anxiety and depression due to his gender dysphoria while incarcerated.

“The only thing I am asking is to be treated fairly and have access to the same standard of health care that other incarcerated people receive,” said the 42-year-old Yoakam.

The lawsuit alleges that Virginia’s State Department of Corrections violated his 8th Amendment constitutional protections against cruel and unusual punishment, the Aug. 27 story reports. Yoakam also claimed he was denied mental health care.

He said he began binding his chest as a pre-teen, which has consistently caused him

bleeding, scarring and pain.

Yoakam was diagnosed with gender dysphoria by the prison system in 2017 and is currently serving sentences for murder, conspiracy to commit murder and a firearm offense.

As part of his treatment while in prison, he received hormone therapy and continues to bind his own chest.

“Treatment decisions are made on a case-by-case basis,” said prisons spokesperson Lisa Kinney. “In addition to medical treatment, individual and group therapy is also available. We follow the community standard of care.”

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported two medical personnel said chest surgery is a medically necessary treatment for gender dysphoria.

Inside San Quentin, trans woman Harmony Moore reacted to hearing about Yoakam’s situation in Virginia.

“The only thing I am asking is to be treated fairly and have access to the same standard of health care that other incarcerated people receive.”

—Jason Yoakam
Trans prisoner

“The surgery seems medically necessary from my perspective,” said Moore. “When you’re prevented from being your authentic self, that messes with all other aspects of your life — especially in prison.”

“How can you be in good health with all these barriers stopping you from being comfortable in your own skin? That sounds horrible, doesn’t it? I feel for the brother.”

—Randy Hansen
Journalism Guild Writer

Executives, corporations step up to provide video visits for prisoners

By Rickey Goins
Journalism Guild Writer

A new nonprofit corporation called Ameelio is working to establish free video conferencing between the incarcerated and their families, *Bloomberg* reports.

Thanks to donated funds, Ameelio has signed contracts with Colorado and Iowa for pilots of the new program.

The effort comes in response to expensive telephone calls between prisoners and their loved ones. In-state calls can cost \$1 a minute using the \$1.4 billion prison telecommunications corporations Securus, Global Tel Link, and ICSolutions.

Ameelio reported it received more than \$2.5 million in donations from Twitter Inc. Chief Executive Officer Jack Dorsey, venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, former Ebay Inc. CEO Devin Wenig, and the Shuttleworth and Robin Hood foundations.

The extreme costs have caused lawmakers to attempt reform through regulations, while activists are looking to create free-of-charge alternatives, *Bloomberg* reported Sept. 8.

Studies show that contact with loved ones reduces stress from being locked up, and leads to positive results after release, the story noted.

“Maintaining family contact is a huge benefit to people behind the walls; it should not be a fanciful goal,” said Colorado corrections chief Dean Williams.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, in-person visits became restricted and remote technology emerged as a way to stay connected and engaged.

According to Worth Rises, a nonprofit advocating against prison exploitation, some telecom companies increased cash flow due to the pandemic, as families spent more to reach their loved ones. Yet high telecommunication fees

also created financial burdens for families. *Bloomberg* noted that “high fees disproportionately harm Black, Brown, and poor residents — with women bearing the greatest brunt ... One in three families...in a 2015 report say they went into debt to stay connected.”

As of Oct. 26, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) imposed a rate cap on out-of-state and international calls at 12 cents a minute for prisons and 14 cents for jails. An August 2020 letter from a coalition of senators read, “Now, as many facilities have suspended in-person visits and families face layoffs, furloughs and evictions due to the pandemic, these calls are more necessary — and cost-prohibitive — than ever.”

Ameelio co-founder Uzoma Orchingwa said, “These companies know they’re the only game in town...It made sense to try to just disrupt the industry by building a free alternative.”

Invisible warriors: Author shines light on California’s incarcerated female firefighters

By Joshua Grant
Journalism Guild Writer

Risking their lives for minimal pay, incarcerated female firefighters in California work to save residential neighborhoods and national parks.

Incarcerated women and men currently account for up to 30% of California’s wildland firefighting crews, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported August 1, 2021.

“Arguably, inmate crews are working the hardest, most dangerous job in California right now,” wrote Jamie Lowe, author of *Breathing Fire: Female Inmate Firefighters on the Front Lines of California’s Wildfires*.

“They are a literal army, fighting to save the state from a climate catastrophe.”

Incarcerated firefighters first hit Lowe’s radar after she read an article about Shawna Lynn Jones — who died battling a 10-acre flare up in 2016.

Lowe told *The Los Angeles*

Times that Jones’ story captured her attention for two reasons: First, Jones was part of a small California percentage of female firefighters. More significantly, Jones fought fires as a prisoner.

Lowe would spend the next five years documenting the lives of the women of the Conservation Camp program and writing *Breathing Fire*. The July 27, 2021 *Times* story described it as “gritty outdoor journalism.”

“Our carceral state is so broken that ‘choosing’ to risk one’s life is often described as a privilege, because it is — it’s paradise compared to county jails or state prisons,” wrote Lowe.

While hiking through the Mesa Peak Motorway, Matt Jaffe of the *Chronicle* came across the Malibu Conservation Camp #13, on which Lowe’s story is based.

“I rounded a bend along the crest and came upon a fire crew,” said Jaffe. “...Someone shouted ‘Hiker!’ and I noticed that the orange-clad team was



Photo courtesy of CDCR

In recent years, California’s wildfire season has become one of the greatest challenges facing the state’s population. Nearly one-third of the people risking their lives to fight these deadly fires are incarcerated, many of them women, including Amita Mota (center), shown here in July, 2013.

made up entirely of women.

“Usually when you meet firefighters working in the mountains, there are friendly greetings and maybe a bit of

banter,” he continued. “But the members of this crew all avoided eye contact.”

But then Jaffe saw the “CDCR PRISONER” on their

clothes and figured out why.

California has depended on prison labor for years.

“They may not realize it, but when Californians place those ‘Thank You Firefighters!’ signs on overpasses and in front yards, they’re thanking prisoners,” said Jaffe.

He further noted how — when one drives Highway One along the coastal forest areas and also many roads into the Sierra and Yosemite National Forest — these scenic opportunities were made by an incarcerated workforce.

Besides offering prisoners a bit more comfort than the normal penitentiary existence, Lowe said fire camps allow them to see their families in “a nice place — a respectable place.”

Lowe’s book details the tough physical training and rigorous work firefighting entails. Incarcerated fire crews face grueling injuries and insufficient care, often sustaining life-

long injuries.

“Your feet are hot and tired and have a pulse of their own,” said an incarcerated firefighter named Marquet. “You feel like you can’t breathe, but you’re breathing. Your face feels like it’s about to melt off, but it’s there.”

Lowe addressed the huge catch to all of the hard work incarcerated firefighters go through. When they finally get released, they often can’t put their skills to use because of a criminal record.

California Assembly Bill 2147, signed last September, may help by allowing for expungement of criminal records.

Former firefighters can apply for expungements, but district attorneys can challenge them and judges can deny them.

“For many of these women, firefighting, despite its dangers and physical demands, is a source of pride and hope,” said Jaffe.

By Jad Salem
Journalism Guild Writer

ACLU: Prosecutorial accountability 'critical' to criminal justice reform

California prosecutors with too much power and too little oversight fuel excessive prison sentences and prison overcrowding, the American Civil Liberties Union says.

"District attorneys are a major drivers of mass incarceration and have been operating with unchecked power for far too long," said Abdi Soltani, executive director of the ACLU of Northern California. "Accountability at the district attorney level is critical to criminal justice reform, which is why this continues to be a major focus of our criminal justice work."

The Summer 2021 issue of the *ACLU News* noted that district attorneys decide what charges to bring against a person, who gets charged with a crime and what punishment they should receive, including the death penalty.

Prosecutors have been shielded from public scrutiny when it comes to their tough on crime policies and their refusal to bring charges against police officers who are accused of killing unarmed Black and Brown people, the newsletter said.

There are 58 California county DAs, who are elected every four years.

Fifty-six of California's 58 DAs will be up for election in 2022, while San Francisco is scheduled for 2023 if its progressive DA, Chesa Boudin, survives a recall election. Los Angeles will vote in 2024 for its DA.

In March, the ACLU of Northern California, released a two-year research report on Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O'Malley's office titled *In(Justice) in Alameda County: A Case for Reform and Accountability*. The report was in partnership with the Urban Peace Movement. The Alameda data showed that for 10 years, six out of 10 charges the DA's office filed against adults for low-level offenses did not merit a criminal charge or defendants may have been better suited for a diversion program, reported the article.

Under the O'Malley office, only five percent of people



Mass incarceration is largely a product of prosecutors' unchecked power, says the ACLU of Northern California. A two-year study of the Alameda County District Attorney's office indicated that about 60% of charges filed for low-level offenses were unworthy of prosecution.

charged with a crime were sent to a diversion program. People of color were more likely to be incarcerated than Whites, noted the article. O'Malley announced in May that she would not run for re-

election.

In 2010, the ACLU NorCal also launched "What a Difference a DA Makes," a campaign to educate the public about their local prosecutor's policies and the impact they

have on their communities. The organization said it does not oppose or endorse candidates.

"The two big indicators of our success are that we were able to help lay the ground-

work for a much broader range of candidates, like Boudin, to come in and win," said Yoel Haile, director of the Criminal Justice Program of the ACLU NorCal. "And that conversation has totally shifted to talking about what is the role of DAs in mass incarceration. And to holding police accountable."

Holding prosecutors accountable continues to be a challenge, said the report. In April, a state audit determined that the State Bar allowed attorneys to continue their practice even though they were under investigation for serious instances of misconduct. The organization plans to promote a new campaign and file complaints with the State Bar against DAs who withhold exculpatory evidence from the defense, according to the article.

"The goal of this new campaign is to highlight the myriad of abuses and violations by prosecutors across the state," wrote Tammerlin Drummond, author of the newsletter and a communications strategist for the ACLU NorCal. "We are not just talking about a few bad apples, but rather a system wide problem that is fueling mass incarceration."

Defendants seeking resentencing entitled to court-appointed attorneys

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Writer

Prisoners who were convicted of murder but didn't kill anyone have been granted the right to legal representation when they challenge their conviction.

The California Supreme Court ruled unanimously in July that inmates whose claims meet the basic standards of the law are entitled to an attorney to prepare and argue their case in Superior Courts. This "further the purpose of the law," Justice Joshua Groban said in the 7-0 ruling.

Senate Bill 1437 by Sen. Nancy Skinner, D-Berkeley, took effect in 2019. It says that a murder conviction is only allowed if the defendant intended the killing and directly aided in it, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported July 26.

This ruling applied retroactively, which allowed prisoners to challenge their

murder conviction. But until the July ruling, most of California's appellate courts have refused to require that an attorney be appointed before a local judge holds the initial hearing.

Now, incarcerated people who want to challenge their life sentences will be represented at an early stage in the case by a court-appointed attorney. The attorney can help the prisoners, who often do not understand the process of law, to navigate the appeal process.

Sen. Skinner had joined prisoners' rights advocates in urging the court to require the early appointment of legal counsel.

"Many people in our prisons cannot read. Many people in our prison system have a limited education. Many people in our prisons have limited English comprehension. Many people in our prisons have intellectual disabilities or have

been diagnosed with mental disorder," said Skinner.

"The Legislature designed (SB1437) to give it as broad application as possible, to identify people who should be serving sentences for lesser crimes that they actually committed and not for murders that someone else committed. Too many courts made it unreasonably hard for them to get in the courthouse door," said attorney Robert Bacon.

Bacon represents Vince E. Lewis, a Los Angeles man challenging his murder conviction. Lewis, a gang member, was sitting in the car when another gang member fatally shot Darsy Noriega, allegedly a member of the same gang.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta's office had argued, along with county prosecutors, to uphold Lewis's conviction. After the July ruling, the AG's office declined to comment.

Guilty or not, defendants plead out to avoid lengthy incarceration

By David Oranje
Journalism Guild Writer

Some people are pleading guilty to crimes they did not commit because prosecutors promise leniency, a group of researchers reports.

Pleading guilty to avoid further incarceration might be the best option for some criminal defendants — guilty or not — especially considering the promise of freedom, seeing their children or taking care of sick family members, said the report in *The Conversation*.

In the United States, more than 94% of criminal convictions came from guilty pleas and not jury verdicts, an Aug. 2 story reported.

Prosecutors often have the upper hand on the bargaining table and will entice criminal defendants with lower sentences — with the threat of penalizing them with harsher sentences if they're found

guilty at trial.

"Given the lack of reliable data, it is extremely difficult to estimate what proportion of pleas are from innocent defendants," said the article. "However, many researchers believe the proportion is significant."

"A lot of people plead guilty just to get out," said San Quentin resident Marcus Butler. He reported that in a jail where he was held, people "were accepting whatever they offer just to go home right now."

COVID-19 shutdowns abruptly impacted everyone within the criminal justice system. Courts continue struggling to get back in line with time constraints and pre-pandemic standards. *The Conversation* examined some of the causative effects across multiple demographics.

Studies cited by *The Conversation* confirmed that the larger the sentence gap between the plea offer and the

potential trial sentence, the higher the likelihood for defendants to plead guilty.

Another SQ resident, Olegario, said, "Because of COVID-19, I was taken from being close to my family in Southern California and allegedly transferred to this facility for my own protection."

"I can no longer see my loved ones and it causes me a lot of fear and anxiety."

"Coercion is a big factor. In the past a lot of us pled guilty, not realizing the effect it would have on our lives in the future."

The Conversation is a non-profit news site dedicated to sharing ideas from academic experts. The article was written by Shi Yan, Arizona State University; David M. Zimmerman, Missouri State University; Kelly T. Sutherland, University of Massachusetts Lowell, and Miko M. Wilford, University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Examining disparities in crack cocaine sentencing

By Amir Shabazz
Journalism Guild Writer

After years of fighting for fair federal sentencing reform for those convicted of selling crack cocaine, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt third-time low-level drug offenders a further blow.

In *Terry vs. United States*, the Justices ruled 9-0 and upheld Tarahrick Terry's 15-year prison sentence because he was convicted for his third offense for selling crack cocaine. The amounts he sold were small, reported the *Los Angeles Times*. Terry argued that prisoners like him should be included in The First Step Act, signed by former President Donald Trump in 2018.

The First Step Act made the 2010 Fair Sentencing Act retroactive. The law's intent was to reduce the disparities in sentencing for powder cocaine and crack cocaine convictions.

"While the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010 and The First Step Act of 2018 bought us a

Powder cocaine offenses given lighter sentences compared to 'rock' cocaine

long way toward eradicating the vestiges of the 100-to-1 crack-to-powder disparity, some people have been left behind," said Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who supported the ruling, but regretted that Congress has not changed the sentencing guidelines for "career offenders," reported the *Times*.

Given the small amount of crack that Terry possessed, the sentencing guidelines range from three to four years, Sotomayor added. But Terry was sentenced as a career offender. He possessed only 3.9 grams of crack, but he had two prior drug convictions as a teenager. The enhancement placed his sentence in the 15 to 20 year range.

Justice Clarence Thomas said Congress has not repealed the longer terms for three-time offenders, according to the article.

"Before 2010, the statutory penalties for that offense were 0 to 20 years, up to \$1 million fine, or both. After 2010, those statutory penalties remain exactly the same," wrote Thomas, about the ruling.

The First Step Act did not cover three-time offenders because they were not sentenced under mandatory-minimum guidelines, said the *Times*.

In 1986, at the height of the "crack epidemic," Congress imposed mandatory five-year prison terms for those who possessed 5 grams of crack or 500 grams of powder cocaine. A 10-year mandatory-minimum was set for those who sold 50 grams of crack or 5 kilograms of powder cocaine. This is what triggered the racial disparity in sentencing, said the *Times*.

Black defendants were more likely to face crack

cocaine charges than White defendants, who were more apt to face powder cocaine charges, according to a June 2021 *Reuters* article.

Terry, now 33, who is Black, pleaded guilty in Florida in 2008 to possessing a small amount of crack. He was sentenced to the maximum term of 15-1/2 years in prison.

According to the Bureau of Prisons, last year more than 2,500 higher-level crack offenders were released under the First Step Act. Thousands more have been released under other provisions of the First Step Act, reported *Reuters*.

The Justice Department said that there is no definitive number of how many people would have been affected if Terry won his case, but it estimated that the number might be "in the low three figures," noted the *Reuters* article.

"This is no small injustice," wrote Sotomayor, calling on Congress to amend the law.

9th Circuit won't end CA's moratorium on executions

By Timothy Hicks
Staff Writer

A federal appeals court dismissed a lawsuit seeking to force California to resume the executions of almost 700 men and women on Death Row.

The 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals officially ended the 2015 lawsuit after Gov. Gavin Newsom's 2019 order banning executions during his four-year office term.

The suit was brought by Bradley Winchell and former pro football athlete Kermit Alexander, who spent ten years in the NFL, including a stint with the San Francisco 49ers.

In August 1984, Alexander endured a horrific family loss in a home invasion in Los Angeles. He later gave public interviews detailing how he went on a manhunt for the killers until the city's mayor called him off, said the Oct. 24 article by the *Bay Area News Group*.

Winchell also lost a family member who was murdered in

another incident. The family was seeking to re-establish the death penalty because of these tragic incidents.

Since the death penalty has been active, its most recent executions by California were Clarence Ray Allen in 2006 and Stanley "Tookie" Williams in 2004.

When Gov. Newsom officially halted executions shortly after taking office, he said the death penalty was a failure "by any measure."

"It has provided no public safety benefit or value as a deterrent," Newsom said. "It has wasted billions of taxpayer dollars. But most of all, the death penalty is absolute, irreversible and irreparable in the event of a human error."

In recent years, California has seen a drastic criminal reform shift of more progressive district attorneys taking office and vocally opposing the death penalty, including in major metropolitan counties like San Francisco and Los Angeles, said the article.

Fletcher freed after 37 years

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Staff Writer

Patrick Fletcher, 57, appeared before the Board of Parole Hearings a half dozen times before he was found suitable for release this fall. Ten years into his sentence he had an epiphany, but in total it took him 37 years of incarceration before he found freedom.

“Fletch,” as he is known to many, was smiling before he left San Quentin. He was simply ready to go. Asked about doing another interview, he said, “Go ahead and write what you want.”

Four years ago, Fletcher was interviewed for a story about his sojourn from “The Town” to prison. *The Prodigal Son*, was written about the Oakland, Calif. native, and ap-

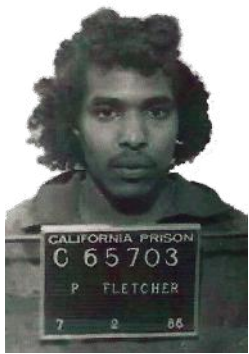


Photo courtesy of CDCR

Patrick Fletcher in 1986.

pears only on the *San Quentin News* website.

Excerpts from that story are used to conclude the carceral chapter of Fletcher’s life; a story about the redemption of a 19-year-old who committed murder in West Oakland in 1984.

Fletcher, a third-generation Oaklander, survived the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak at San Quentin. Before prison, he navigated around the city’s Falcon Boys, AC Mob, Broadway Hustlers, 69 VILLE, Acorn Projects and Sobrante Park — now distant memories.

Gone too is “the code” of the streets where hidden rules apply. Like so many young Black males growing up in America, Fletcher did not envision opportunities or a pro-

ductive future. Admittedly, he squandered them before he realized they existed.

“At the end of the day, even though these were codes, the thoughts in my mind were amplified by who I thought I was,” said Fletcher.

The cycle of violence continued in his absence. “My own son was killed,” said Fletcher. “Thirty years later, 18 days apart” from his victim. “While I’m in prison raising everyone else’s sons who were coming to prison, I couldn’t even be there for my own son.” Both young men were Black, and from Oakland.

When Fletcher was arrested, Jerry Brown was leaving the governor’s office the first time. Back then Apple’s personal computer had just debuted. The Internet wasn’t commercially viable, and cellphones were the size of a brick. But technology and “the code” marched on without him.

If a 19-year-old follows in Fletcher’s footsteps today, he will not see freedom again until the year 2058.

Fletcher described “sobriety” in the context of “not living by the code.” Instead, he turned to his early teachings. “I didn’t attach myself to values and principles until I matured,” he said. “By then I was in prison for about 10 years.”

Part of Fletcher’s rehabilitation came when he earned his GED, learned Microsoft, carpentry, electronics, welding, janitorial work, and how to drive a forklift. In addition to work in self-help programs, he was also a peer health educator.

“I watched him evolve,” said Timothy Hicks, 50, who is also from Oakland. “We arrived at San Quentin about a week apart.” The two met years earlier at California State Prison Solano.

“I remember seeing Fletch taking advantage of the opportunities here,” said Hicks. “He told me out of his own mouth that he’s going home ... that he’s ‘going to parole from San Quentin’ and he did it.”

Patrick Fletcher now works and lives with his wife in northern California.

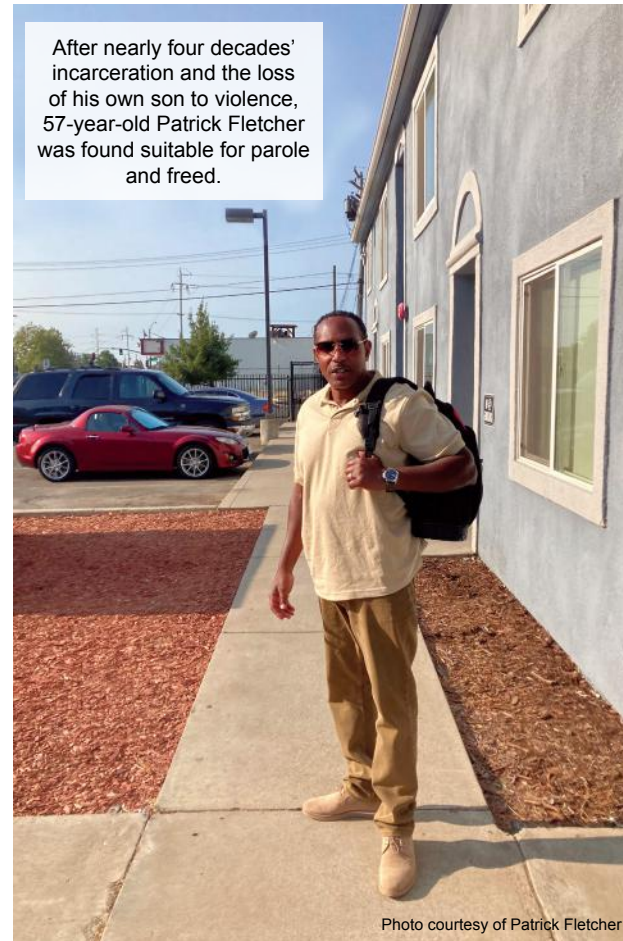


Photo courtesy of Patrick Fletcher

Parole Board implements no changes despite millions in new funding

By UnCommon Law

On Aug. 30, 2021, UnCommon Law filed a petition in California’s First District Court of Appeal in the case *In re Darryl Poole*. The petition demonstrates that California’s parole process is broken. Roughly 40,000 people in California need approval from the parole board to get out of prison, but the lawyers the State appoints to represent them are poorly paid, inadequately supervised, and have less than half the parole grant rate of privately retained counsel. UnCommon Law argues that replacing this process could prevent thousands of people from languishing in prison unnecessarily.

The Poole litigation was stalled in July 2020, when a lower court accepted the Board of Parole Hearings’ (BPH) promises to address any alleged deficiencies in the attorney appointment process. This week’s petition in the case argues that the lower court was wrong to accept those promises without seeing any of the changes in practice.

Data now shows that the changes have failed to improve the quality of attorney representation. Roughly \$12 million in new funding for the BPH since 2020 to implement changes has yielded no results: **the vast majority of parole applicants in the state are still receiving inadequate legal representation that directly impacts their shot at freedom.** The Court of Appeal now has 60 days to decide whether to direct the parole board to respond to the petition.

Each year, California conducts thousands of parole hearings to determine whether to release from prison those who received long sentences for serious crimes. Nearly 90% of those hearings are for people who cannot afford to hire their own attorneys and are represented by attorneys appointed by BPH(1).

This appointment process is managed by BPH itself, rather than an independent body. Years ago, BPH’s own task force determined that this arrangement created a conflict of interest(2).

More recently, the Board’s Executive Officer testified that “it would be inappropriate for the Board to give training to inmate counsel on how to best

represent their client when they come before us.”

Yet BPH continues to oversee a process that consistently yields dismal results for people seeking their freedom: **the parole grant rate for state-appointed attorneys is less than half the rate for private attorneys,** and people who are denied parole with state-appointed attorneys were ordered to wait longer for another hearing than those with private attorneys.

These differences showed up at both higher security prisons and lower security prisons. Furthermore, these outcomes did not improve when the parole board increased the fee paid to attorneys (a flat rate per hearing) from \$400 to \$750 and made additional training available. **In fact, the overall parole grant rate is lower now than it was before those changes.**

UnCommon Law is a non-profit organization that provides trauma-informed counseling and legal assistance to people serving long prison sentences for serious crimes. This data comes to light following their extensive investigation to determine whether the attorney appointment process is partly responsible for the state’s failure — for the past 40 years — to comply with the law requiring that parole hearings “normally” result in parole grants.

On average, only 16% of scheduled hearings result in parole grants, and the grant rate has exceeded 20% only once in that 40-year span.

UnCommon Law’s findings (both from a large Public Re-

ports Act request and a survey of hundreds of people who had hearings between January 2020 and April 2021) include:

Parole applicants represented by private attorneys have much higher parole grant rates than those represented by appointed attorneys, both before and after the 2020 policies were put in place.

- Between January 2018 and January 2021, the average parole grant rate for applicants represented by private attorneys was 36.3%, while those represented by appointed attorneys averaged a grant rate of just 17.8%.

- Parole applicants with appointed attorneys were denied for longer periods of time than those with privately retained attorneys, both before and after the Board implemented changes in 2020

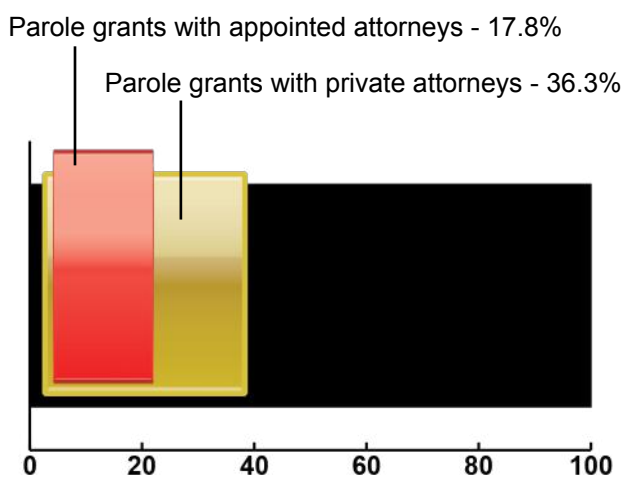
Appointed attorneys are failing to meet the minimal expectations outlined in the Board’s new 2020 policies (including meeting with clients at least twice, and at least once for one to two hours within 30 days of the appointment, as well as reviewing a client’s Central File prior to the first meeting).

- Only 24% of respondents said they met with their appointed attorney for at least one hour and more than once.

- Just 8% of respondents confirmed their appointed attorney had met all the expectations outlined in the 2020 policies.

Appointed attorneys are failing to meet their statutory duty to help clients prepare for their parole hearings.

Source: UnCommon Law



Learning the hard way

Lifer violates parole, shares the hard lessons he learned with others

By Carlos Drouaillet
Staff Writer

Not everyone who gets parole makes a success of their life. Some men like Brad Ware need to keep working at solving the problems that surround them.

In 1990, Ware was sentenced to 18-years-to-life in prison. He served 29 years and was found suitable for parole on his second appearance before the Board; he was released from San Quentin State Prison on July 25, 2019. He enjoyed freedom with his family members, friends and sponsors for two years, until his support network collapsed. He returned to San Quentin on September 23, 2021, on a parole violation.

His return to prison has given him a chance to examine what led up to his relapse.

After settling down in a drug- and alcohol-free transitional home, Ware spent his first days adjusting to freedom. He lived with a roommate before moving in with his sister. There, he visited shopping centers and parks. He rode the BART system to get around the community. Using a cell phone was a challenge.

Ware says even though he had the tools to make it in the outside community and to be a productive member of society, conditions changed so drastically that his plans for success were affected.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Ware says he suffered the impact before adjusting to it.

“Most employers, including my boss, went into isolation and I didn’t have a job anymore, because everything was shut down,” said Ware.

Ware’s support network included his sister, brother, and spiritual adviser, a man named Brown.

He spent 10 months with Brown visiting county jails and talked about his prison experience to the detainees. He also went to hospitals to tell his story.

Ware stopped going on speaking engagements after Brown moved to Texas to take care of family members. At the same time, Ware moved out of his sister’s house.

“When my support network disappeared, my world collapsed and I didn’t have anybody to turn to,” Ware said. Several days later, he suffered a relapse and was arrested for possession of drugs.

“To me, the hardest part of being incarcerated is having freedom and to end up coming back to the same institution I was paroled from,” said Ware. “Unfortunately, I broke my parole and landed here. I don’t know what I was thinking. I got busted with 3.5 ounces of crack.”

Because Ware originally received a life sentence, he must go in front of the parole board again to gain his freedom.

“It is important to know that old places or hangouts can be just as dangerous as old friends that continue to use,” said Ware.

Now Ware says he wants to get in a drug program and find out where he went wrong so he can avoid repeating it.

“I am working very seriously on getting into programs like ISUDT (Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment), Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and any other program recommended to me that I haven’t already taken,” Ware said.

Ware says he is sharing his story so that his mistakes won’t become someone else’s future.

“So the imprisoned youngsters who read it, pay attention to the decisions they make now or whenever they receive the opportunity for parole,” Ware said. “Now I realize that actually getting caught was in my benefit. When my sister reported me she was doing what she knew was good for me; however, at the time I felt that she did it to hurt me.”

Another person in Brad’s life is his sister-in-law. She continues to encourage him to stay sober and to continue to do the work he did when Brown invited him to hospitals and detention institutions.

“I need to continue working on my rehabilitation and build a new Relapse Prevention Plan,” Ware said. “I strongly believe I can achieve it through the ISUDT program.”

—Daniel Lopez
contributed to this article.



SILENT SOLIDARITY

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Guild

On a Friday afternoon, an event dubbed Mourning Our Losses was held on San Quentin's Lower Yard. It brought together about 200 people to pay tribute to the many lives lost during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Nov. 5 event was organized by Mourning Our Losses co-founder Kirsten Pickering and hosted by San

Quentin resident Arthur Jackson. According to the organization's website, Mourning Our Losses is a Texas-based nonprofit created to track and highlight the moral cost of mass incarceration nationwide, and honor all those who have died while living or working behind bars.

The event began with incarcerated people, along with volunteers and staff members, walking "a lap of silence," on the Lower Yard in solidari-

ty and in remembrance. The walkers held up photographs and sketches of 25 of the people lost to the coronavirus at San Quentin.

Bands performed, and speakers addressed attendees, to encourage and inspire survivors and to reminiscence about the trials endured by San Quentin survivors of the outbreak. Some residents read poems in honor of fallen friends and to relate their personal experiences during the

coronavirus outbreak.

"Darryl loved the Lord. He was always putting others before himself," said SQ resident Warren Corley, reading a poem he wrote about his dear friend, Darryl Gault, who was one of those being mourned. "It made his pain go away." Before falling victim to COVID, Gault was a 25-year cancer survivor.

Michael Moore shared a composition describing his pandemic experience.

"There are 13 bars, three inches apart, that allow for air to circulate into our cells ...," reflected Moore. "People were dying all around me, literally from COVID wafting through the bars and into our lungs. I had to just sit and wait my turn."

Alarms in the units repeatedly made Tony de Trinidad aware that someone was in pain, or placed on a gurney by emergency responders. He read "Invacuate-19" a poem

in honor of his friend Eric Warner, who died from the virus.

"Every time an alarm went off I would wonder who was dying now," said de Trinidad, "Who else is in pain?"

Hector Frank Heredia, Native American chaplain, spoke about the dead and how to remember them in our hearts, because they are our people.

"To all our relations we come in a good place to pray for those who have passed



This and facing page: Dozens of silent and somber prisoners at San Quentin State Prison march with photographs and home-made drawings of precious lives lost to the deadly coronavirus. Mourning Our Losses volunteers work tirelessly to memorialize not only the hundreds of incarcerated lives cut short in California prisons, but those who lived and died in prison communities nationwide.

Photos on this spread by Phoeun You, SQNews

Mourning Our Losses remembers lives lost to COVID-19

on," said Heredia. "Most of those brothers that passed, I knew them on [Death] Row. They are not forgotten; we don't leave anyone behind."

Reflecting on how dealing with the deaths of others can be difficult for many, Imam Mohamed, Muslim chaplain, said that the reality of death can weigh us down if we deny it; therefore, it is important to ask God to bring us together as one.

In tribute to the lives lost, "a moment of silence" was accompanied by the sounds of bells rung 27 times from a band member's electronic keyboard, a number that represents infinity in the Buddhist religion.

Pickering talked about the origin and history of Mourning Our Losses.

"By April 2020, many could see the political leaders were not going to act, or [were] not [acting] quickly enough," said Pickering. "So a

group of us came together — people formerly and currently incarcerated, people who had worked or volunteered inside — to create a way to remember the lives of the people we were losing around the country, and to mourn and celebrate them together."

Mourning Our Losses was founded by Kelsey Kauffman, formerly a warden of a women's prison in Indiana. Later she advocated for the incarcerated. Perceiving that politicians and officials were not moving fast enough to address prison overcrowding, she worked for decarceration.

"Kauffman has helped out her students who were incarcerated at the women's prisons and some of her students became Ph.D. graduates," Pickering said.

Pickering also remembers Darryl Gault, who was a student in her philosophy class. "I think of him often; he

is one of my students who I taught here at San Quentin," said Pickering. "He had a heart attack while I was tutoring him. He had it in my presence." A few family members of San Quentin's COVID vic-

tims heard about the Nov. 5 event. They were moved to send in words of love and gratitude directed to the people in blue and all of the other attendees at the event. The Mourning Our Loss-

es inside team included SQNews staffer Juan Haines and Brian Asey, SQTV producer. The outside team members were Tom Lapinski and Pickering. Haines, Asey and Pickering read messages received from family members of victims. The messages expressed appreciation for the event memorializing their loved ones.

San Quentin medical staff also addressed the crowd, reflecting on the losses being memorialized, and the overall impact and the trauma San Quentin residents endured during the pandemic.

Dr. Alison Pachynski, San Quentin chief medical officer, reminded the gathering how important it is to pause and reach out to someone during this time of mourning.

Dr. E. Anderson, Psy.D., San Quentin suicide prevention coordinator, introduced Brothers Keepers, a support group run by prisoners. The

group offers counseling to prisoners going through crises due to loss of loved ones, illness, board denials, and other concerns.

Antwan "Banks" Williams, a well-known voice of *Ear Hustle* before paroling from San Quentin, closed out the event with an inspirational rap song. His moving lyric summed up the event well.

"I never really felt like somebody — until somebody told me I could be somebody — now I'm somebody — who just wants to tell somebody — that you're somebody — you're somebody to me," rapped Williams.

The volunteers serving Mourning Our Losses come from California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia. Others come from prisons in Georgia and from the Yale Undergraduate Prison Project.

Submit memorial submissions to:

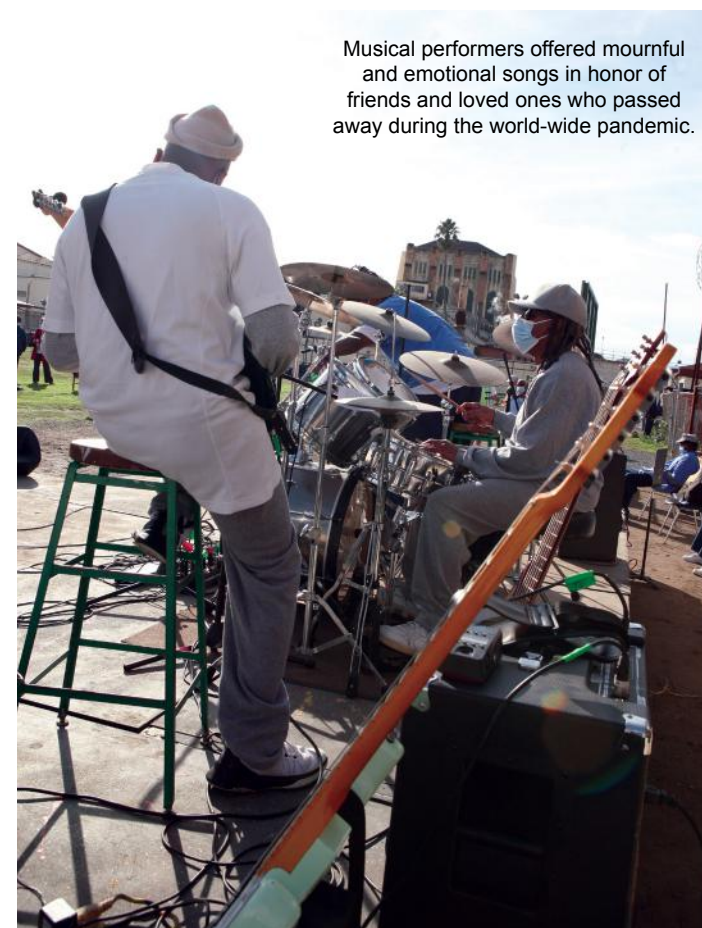
Mourning Our Losses
PO Box 4430
Sunland, CA 91041

Mourning Our Losses
C/O Texas After Violence Project
PO Box 15005
Austin, TX 78761

Website: MourningOurLosses.com
Email: MourningOurLosses@gmail.com



A large crowd, fully masked and socially distanced, gathers on the Lower Yard to commemorate the many victims of COVID-19



Musical performers offered mournful and emotional songs in honor of friends and loved ones who passed away during the world-wide pandemic.



SQNews Throwbacks: December 5, 1980

Post-Holiday Show In North Dining Hall

By Steven Mack

Approximately 300 SQ cons attended a post-Thanksgiving variety show held in the north dining hall last Friday. The show was set to start at 11 a.m. but due to lunch, the doors were opened at 12 noon.



BROTHERS OF SOUL sing and dance in north dining hall.

As the crowd began to drift in, the first group, Canadian Trio, was setting up backstage for their debut.

This group consisted of Allen "Squirrel" Ware, keyboards; Jerome Herron, drums, and Darrell Green on bass.

Emceeding the show was B.J., co-activities coordinator for San Quentin.

As the curtains were being drawn back the Canadian Trio fell into "Always There," followed by a Herbie Hancock tune that seemed to spark the crowd.

Next to take the stage were five talented musicians known as the Jazz Group, featuring



Lee Morgan, drums; George "Birdman" Burbage, string bass; Allen Ware, keyboards; Matthew Wolff, guitar and Walter Brock, vocalist.

Swinging into "Bags Groove", and sounding real mellow, halfway through the song Brock scatted his way to the mood of the tune, leaving some enthusiastic jazz fans hollering for more.

They followed with a few

Continued on page 4



SOUTH WIND sings country-blues during post-Thanksgiving show in north dining hall.

San Quentin News

THE PULSE OF SAN QUENTIN

Vol. 1, No. 40

TAMAL, CALIFORNIA 94964

Friday, Dec. 5, 1980

East Block Fracas Halted by Shot

A warning shot was fired Tuesday afternoon in the east block yardside to halt a disturbance, according to Mike Madding, prison information officer.

The 2:20 p.m. incident occurred when an east block officer found four men in a cell. He pulled the bar and told them to step out. Two of the cons

started to get rowdy, reports Madding, and they were handcuffed.

At that time one of the handcuffed prisoners complained that the cuffs were too tight. When the correctional officer started to loosen them the convict reportedly got one hand free and struck the officer in the mouth.

The officer reacted by punching the prisoner back. A shot was fired and the altercation stopped, said Madding.

Both the officer and the convict received cut lips in the fracas and were treated and released from the hospital.

Two cons were locked in administrative segregation.

No-Tomorrow Syndrome Leaves Convicts No Hope

(Reprint from CSC, "Let's Talk")

"They have to be given hope — The Correctional Service should offer some hope for early release to inmates sentenced to long prison terms," said Inger Hansen.

lifers pose a serious problem for us," said Johnson at the National Conference of CSC psychologists held in Ottawa, Sept. 23-26.

The conference, organized by

relate to a sentence of 25 years."

According to Malcolm Johnson, "When inmates think about their 25-year sentence, they feel life is finished. They have nothing to

Across

- 1. ___ Quentin News
- 4. Pixar movie ___ Story
- 7. Base unit of area in the Metric System
- 10. 2 Broke Girls Actress Dennings
- 13. A poem of praise
- 14. Iron origin
- 15. PBS Show
- 16. Diamonds, slang
- 17. Recreational activities
- 19. To deteriorated, Adj.
- 21. Qualifying employees shares of company stock, Abbrev.
- 23. Hadrons Collider location
- 24. Actor Bruce or Laura
- 27. The nasal passages
- 29. TV Show VEEP Actor Tony ___
- 33. Flour product
- 35. Efficient light source, Abbrev.
- 36. Pixar movie about a robot
- 37. City in N. France on the Somme River
- 39. Cultural heritage or nationality, Adj.
- 41. "Elastic Heart" song artist

CROSSWORD

By Jonathan Chiu Edited by Jan Perry

CLUE: 70-month anniversary of what?

- 42. List of book's chapter, Abbrev.
- 43. People who work with concrete, stone, & brick
- 46. Crystalline mineral that is the chief ore of lead
- 49. Province in China
- 50. Generation
- 52. Forest fire starter
- 54. Bible garden
- 55. Cocktail lounge instrument
- 57. Devours or destroys
- 58. Emissions caused by burning this
- 60. Unsealed or unwrapped
- 62. Name of package company for inmates
- 65. To place in a grave, bury
- 69. Debra Messing 90's TV show ___ & Stacy
- 70. Make in small qty., Abbrev.
- 72. 18 Down Movement that encourages inmate expression through ___
- 73. The Tell-Tell Heart author Edgar Allen
- 74. Computer platform using disks
- 75. Boat equipment
- 76. Chinese philosopher
- 77. Military HUMVEE's worry

Down

- 1. Universal Distress
- 2. A nucleotide that is converted to ATP, Abbrev.
- 3. Matric Character
- 4. VGSQ's Toys for ___
- 5. War of the Worlds author Wells
- 6. Plural of you
- 7. News Organization
- 8. Flowers for Valentine's Day
- 9. Drew Barrymore movie ___After.
- 10. SQ News Column ___ C.A.T. Speaks
- 11. Perfect tennis serve
- 12. Movie about a talking bear

- 18. Movement involving incarcerated artists: "Prison ___"
- 20. A harsher sentence due to the nature of a crime
- 22. Inmate Friends
- 23. Surrender formally
- 24. Robber ___ Cooper
- 25. Baseball player stat
- 26. Dreaming stage of sleep
- 28. Prefix meaning returning to a previous state
- 30. Boxer Muhammad ___
- 31. A type of company
- 32. Recipient of a specific action
- 34. Football Hall of Famer ___ Sanders
- 36. Bruce Willis comedy The ___ 9 Yards
- 40. Indian flat bread
- 43. McConaughey & Witherspoon movie
- 44. Word for "One" (Scottish origin)
- 45. Rock song by AWOL Nation
- 46. Former Jets QB ___ Smith
- 47. Golden State is part of this association
- 48. Aged a specific amount of years, Abbrev.
- 49. 2nd lightest periodical chemical element, Abbrev.
- 51. The state of the original Walking Dead setting, Abbrev.
- 53. Monetary unit for India, Abbrev.
- 55. Flour product
- 56. A play with an aria
- 59. Capital of Norway
- 61. Within or inner
- 62. Me, Myself, ___ I
- 63. Zuckerberg's position at Facebook
- 64. Music medium (Plural)
- 66. Ron Howard's name on the Andy Griffith's show
- 67. Homer Simpson's bartender
- 68. Origin word of a sleeping hollow in the ground
- 71. Hospital worker Title, Abbrev.
- 72. Monetary unit of Laos

Difficulty: ++

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Last issue's solutions

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BOOK REVIEW

Conversations with Great Teachers

by Bill Smoot

By Timothy Hicks
Staff Writer

To learn something in life, or anything for that matter, you must have help from a teacher. So says Bill Smoot, 74, author of a must-read book titled *Conversations with Great Teachers*. The book is a treasure-trove of information about teaching and learning.

Smoot presents the shared knowledge and wisdom of 51 teachers. Each of them gives him a firsthand account of what it takes to be a great educator. Through an extensive interview process he explores their knowledge of the dynamics of instruction and the benefits of learning.

Each of these gurus describes the process of acquiring the knowledge that made them experts in their specialty. They show that no matter the subject, the role of teachers is vital.

Smoot's interviewees represent a range of educational environments including prep schools, middle schools, high schools, special education

classrooms, the FBI academy, schools of divinity and Zen, and jail and prison meditation and yoga instruction, to name just a few. The diverse subjects they teach range from plumbing to theology and philosophy to ballet.

Smoot probes his interview subjects to jog their memories of favorite students and different teaching styles they experimented with in search of effective modes of instruction. As his questioning unveils the character of the educators he meets, the reader sees that all of them share a common core value — they care.

Smoot is a teacher of philosophy in practice and at heart. He also exhibits the value of caring that he found common to his interview subjects. However, he did not aspire to teaching early in life. In his college days he wanted to become an electrical engineer.

But at Purdue he encountered a great teacher of philosophy, William Gass. He lost in-

terest in electrical engineering and became a philosophy major, ultimately going into teaching as a profession. His chosen profession in turn led him to pen this book, *Conversations with Great Teachers*, a book of guidance for teachers.

Smoot was only 22 when he walked into his first classroom as a teacher's assistant more than 50 years ago. Along with philosophy, he eventually also taught courses in history and English.

Smoot fell in love with philosophy at Purdue but his first appreciation and love for teaching arose from examples set by his mother, whom he describes as a great teacher.

Today Smoot volunteers as an instructor with the Mt. Tamalpais College program at San Quentin, where he teaches philosophy. He was inspired to volunteer by Rodessa Jones, a teacher who serves the incarcerated population at the San Francisco jail. Smoot has been coming to San Quentin to teach

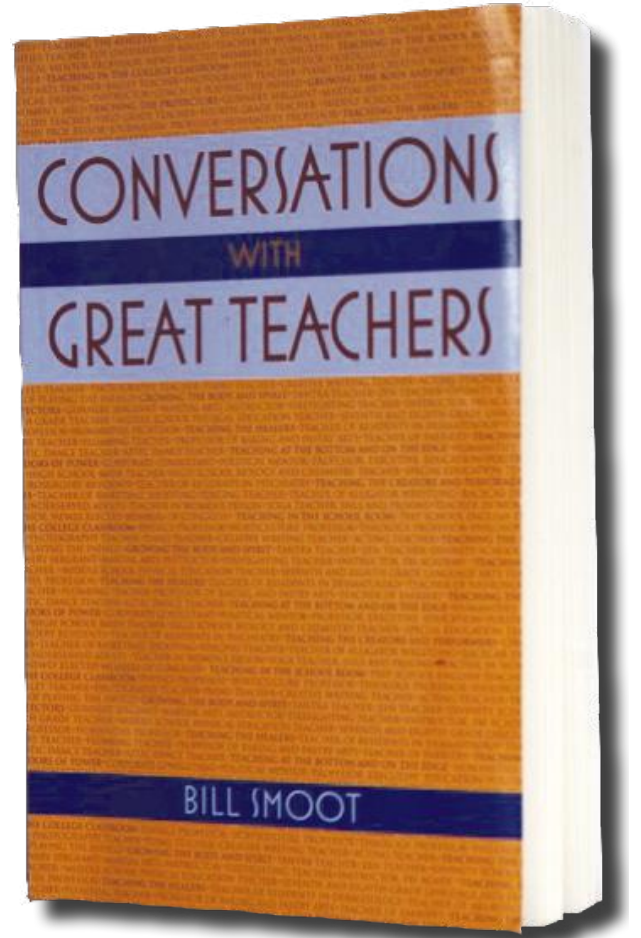
philosophy for nine years.

In the book teachers talk about the techniques they use to inspire their students to learn. A good example is Doug Butler, a teacher with credentials as the 155th Fellow of the Worshipful Company of Farriers (FWCF), a group that dates back to the 14th century. A farrier is an expert on horseshoes.

Butler has also been inducted into the International Horseshoeing Hall of Fame at the Kentucky Derby Museum.

He offers the following advice to teachers: "If you create an atmosphere of excellence, those who want to be excellent will rise to it. If you set a standard and they reach for that, they will get good."

If you take the time to read *Conversations with Great Teachers*, you will gain an increased depth of knowledge and wisdom, and a deeper understanding of the mind of a teacher — and what makes great teachers great.



NEWS BRIEFS

1. New York — (*Press Release*) Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a package of criminal justice reforms Oct. 22 that give formerly incarcerated New Yorkers a second chance. Individuals previously convicted of a felony can serve as fiduciary of an estate or perform bona fide work without violating parole. The reforms also allow certificates of good behavior upon early discharge, and allow workers under supervised release to protest work-related labor conditions.

2. North Carolina — (*NC Policy Watch*) The UNC School of Government's Criminal Justice Innovation Lab released two reports in October detailing pretrial procedure reform pilots. The reforms standardize pretrial conditions historically determined on a case-by-case basis. The purpose is to en-



sure that magistrates comply with constitutional and statutory requirements in setting bail and bond. State law requires magistrates to consider an unsecured bond unless defendants are considered unlikely to appear,

pose a danger to another person, destroy evidence, commit perjury, or intimidate witnesses.

3. Harrisburg, Pa. — (*AP*) A state Senate Judiciary Committee voted Oct. 19 to overhaul how probation

is managed. The bill would limit probation periods and probation violations that can result in jail time. Federal statistics show that Pennsylvania has some of the highest rates of people under community super-

vision. Under the bill, probation review conferences would be required, within a prescribed time, to adopt a presumption that probation must end unless the defendant poses a threat to public safety, has not completed required treatments, or in some cases, has not paid restitution. Judges also would have discretion to end probation.

4. Atmore, Ala. — (*AP*) An Alabama man who avoided execution in February was put to death in November for the 1991 killing of a woman who was abducted during a robbery and then shot in a cemetery. Willie B. Smith III, 52, received a lethal injection at a prison in southwest Alabama. The execution went forward after the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a request for a stay. His lawyers argued the execution should be blocked on grounds that Smith had an intellectual disability meriting further scrutiny by the courts. Smith was

convicted of kidnapping and murdering 22-year-old Sharma Ruth Johnson in Birmingham.

5. Kansas — (*The Kansas City Star* Editorial Board) A Sentencing Project report said that Black Kansans are six times more likely to be in prison than Whites. One in 60 Black residents is behind prison bars in the Sunflower State. The incarceration rate for White Kansans wasn't even close — about one in 377. The report, titled "Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons," examined incarceration rates for White, Black and Latino people across the country. Kansas' Black incarceration rate ranked 11th in the nation and its rate of locking up Black residents was higher than the national average, according to the report. Black people comprised a little over 6% of the state's population in 2019, the year used in the study, but about 27% of Kansas' prison inmates were Black.

Editor:

One of the hardest, most challenging and difficult aspects of being incarcerated at Valley State Prison (VSP) in Chowchilla, California has been attempting to place a collect call from one of the four phones located in the dayroom of a building packed with 256 inmates, which is designed for 256. It isn't just the overcrowding that makes it so frustrating to call someone; it's the lack of consistent programming. Between lockdowns, staff shortages and program shutdowns, it's a near impossible nightmare to call someone who cares. All of that changed in August 2021 when Global Tel-Link (GTL) distributed 8" tablets to the entire population of roughly 3,000 prisoners over a two day period. The thick, heavy, durable tablets came with a bright yellow pair of ear buds that include an in-line microphone to pick up sound. The tablets allow a secure connection to a cloud service. This enables users to access a range of content and services without storing anything on the device itself. For example, GTL has placed educational content such as math tutorials (videos), science, physics, etc., as well as Podcasts ranging from talk shows to tiny desk concerts. There's a music streaming app

with an impressive selection. A large selection of movies and some television series like the Big Bang Theory and Two and a Half Men. There is a law library section where you can access current bills being considered, and a religious app with lots to choose from. As for communications from the tablet, a user can place calls and message at USP from 6am to 11pm. The messaging service is from GettingOut.com. Anyone can log onto the website or download the app and sign up to message any incarcerated person. The service enables messages, photos to be sent and 30 second videos. Services cost senders 5 cent each. There are also seven face-time consoles in the dayroom that allow face-time to those signed up on GettingOut.com. Face-time is - 20¢ per min.

—Daniel Henson
Valley State Prison

Dear SQNews:

I am writing to say how much I have enjoyed reading your paper. I'm always interested in the stories whether they are of prisoners, staff or famous folks. I'm also writing regarding the elderly prisoners. I am 70-years of age. Incarcerated 26-years. I'm told that I'm not sick enough to be 'medically unassigned.' I'm tired! I

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

program five days a week, and there's no retirement. It's sad. Some elderly jokes or stories would be great to read...to make our day. Also, if you discover any new bills or laws, or pending items of interest to us elderly, it would be greatly appreciated. Can't the elderly be put on ankle-monitoring bracelets? Can we get a movement? Do you have any information to share about us from your prison?

Thank you.

—Donna Lee
CCWF

San Quentin News:

What's up people? I've been incarcerated in California Prison CCC-Susanville Level III for three years, and every year during the winter, the roof leak water from the rain and the snow, into the cells and dayrooms. The ventilation/vents inside the cells are caked with dust and lint from not being cleaned in years. When addressing these issues to the maintenance staff, it seems to fall on deaf ears. The 602 appeal (grievance) process is taken as a joke. Also because of the (Dixie) fire, CCC had no power or lights in the cells

for well over a month. CCC staff responded by saying that the fire burnt down the power poles. CCC has Level I, II, and III yards. But for some reason, the Levels I and II yards had power, but not the Level III. How can there be separation of power grids between three yards that are in the same facility? The adjacent facility, High Desert, which is directly across the street, had power. Even the town of Susanville (that we are housed in), had power. But we were told that the Level III facility is on a different power grid. Wow! There is no logical reason why this Level III yard did not have power. One of the fundamental attributes of adequate shelter is required by the 8th amendment. Therefore, thank you Mr. Governor Gavin Newsom for choosing to close CCC down, because we don't know where the \$122 Million is going annually.

Scratching my head!

—Marty Rojas
CCC-Susanville

Dear staff:

God bless you all, as well as every other incarcerated prisoner. I want to thank you with all my heart and soul, because

I am soon to be released after 21 years. I didn't know that a bar fight would carry a sentence of 59 years. But thanks to your newspaper and the impact you have had over many laws changing, I will come home soon. Over the years, a lot of my family have faded away. The word "freedom" looks very haunted to me now. Everything is backwards. It seems like we need gun towers on the streets, but I look forward to being a positive example of never coming back to prison and never forgetting those I am leaving behind.

—Tony Haro
CSP-Susanville

Editor:

Inmates housed on Facility B of CCI-Tehachapi find themselves wedged between clashing cultures. As a level 4, 180 design, housing California's maximum-security inmates, it is often a place filled with violence and self-destructive behaviors. However, it also a place to plant productive seeds of positive energy, as men such as Kevin Walsh, Cory Belcher, Barrett Fadden and I (William Jones) have done, by seeking out and taking advantage of various programs and rehabilitative opportunities provided by CCI, along with being of service to others during our

journey forward, we have utilized education and self-help programs to further our personal rehabilitative goals. We took on leadership roles in various programs to allow ourselves to rise like phoenix's, above our negative environmental conditions. Thanks to Cpt. E. Garcia of Facility B, who mentored us and was instrumental in guiding us towards our rehabilitative goals, we have all made it to the Progressive Program Facility (PPF) here on C-Yard. While the last of us arrived only in July of this year, Kevin has earned two AA degrees and paroles at the end of this year. Cory and Barrett each have earned AA degrees and have been accepted into the Offender Mentor Certification Program (OMCP), and I am continuing as a Peer Literacy Mentor with over a dozen mentees and adding more weekly. I am currently training to become a senior inside Organizer for Initiate Justice, and I am only a few classes shy of obtaining my Master's Degree in Counseling with Therapist Certification. C-Yard offers a variety of opportunities and all you have to do is apply yourself to reap the benefits. Consider taking your own journey forward.

—William J. Jones
CCI-Tehachapi

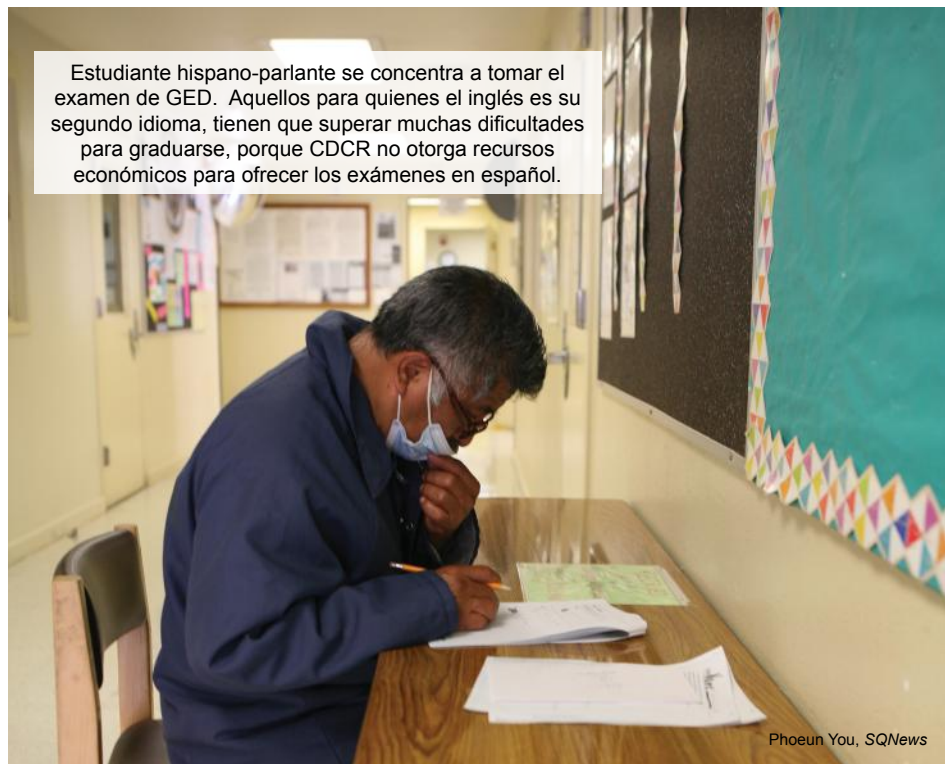
Las regulaciones de CDCR afectan a estudiantes hispanos a obtener el GED

Por Daniel López
Estudiante escritor

Obtener el Certificado de Bachillerato (GED) es una tarea complicada para muchos hispanos. Especialmente para aquellos que no dominan el idioma inglés. La barrera del idioma puede ser la diferencia entre obtener el bachillerato en unos meses o en unas décadas.

Francisco Legorreta de 38 años de edad, residente de la Prisión de San Quentin, obtuvo su certificado de bachillerato en tan solo cuatro meses. "Fuí muy afortunado de que en el Condado de San Mateo California me dieran la oportunidad de tomar las clases en español para obtener mi bachillerato," dijo Legorreta. Él atribuye éste logro en parte a que los exámenes fueron en su idioma natal, español. "Si no me hubieran dado la oportunidad de tomar el examen en español, no solo hubiera sido más difícil en inglés, sino que también me hubiera tomado más tiempo."

Andrés Osorio de 53 años de edad, residente de la Prisión de San Quentin, le tomó 30 años en obtener su



certificado de bachillerato por no dominar el idioma inglés. "Si hubiera tomado los exámenes en Español, estoy seguro que hubiera terminado mi bachillerato en menos

tiempo," dijo, Osorio.

Obtener el certificado de bachillerato no fue cosa fácil. Legorreta enfatizó, "Estaba muy estresado por mi caso peroafortunadamente había

tutores que me ayudaban a estudiar las materias. Él añadió, "Además en la cárcel tenía suficiente tiempo para estudiar."

Al llegar a la Prisión de San

Quentin, Legorreta fue con el Director de Educación a solicitar que le otorgan los 180 días de créditos que el CDCR otorgan a sus estudiantes al graduarse del bachillerato. Pero le informaron que no podía obtener esos créditos según la Sección 3043.2 (c) del Título 15 (Title 15), ya que se había graduado en la educación del condado y no en la prisión.

De acuerdo a Legorreta, el hecho que el CDCR no permita que sus prisioneros hispanos obtengan su certificado de bachillerato en español es una gran desventaja. Él añadió, "Creo que a la comunidad hispana se le está limitando la oportunidad de rehabilitarse a través de la educación por no dominar el idioma inglés."

Legorreta dijo, "El haber obtenido mi certificado de bachillerato me ha abierto más oportunidades." Ahora él tiene la oportunidad no solo de tomar clases en las distintas vocaciones dentro de la prisión, sino también de asistir a la universidad.

SQNews entrevistó, al Sr. Martín Griffin, Asistente del Superintendente de Currículo

los Educativos de Sacramento, respecto a las razones por las cuales CDCR no ofrece el Bachillerato en español a los reclusos. El Sr. Griffin compartió que una de las razones principales es el fondo limitado en comparación con las cárceles locales. El Sr. Griffin, mencionó que su departamento en Sacramento está trabajando en posibles opciones.

Guillermo S. Valencia, hispano de 51 años, es otro ejemplo de las ventajas de tomar el examen del bachillerato en español. Durante los tres años que Valencia estuvo compareciendo su caso en la Cárcel del Condado de Alameda, él pudo aprobar los exámenes de lenguaje, escritura, ciencias, ciencias sociales, solo le faltó tomar el examen de matemáticas. Al llegar a la prisión contactó al Director de Educación y logró finalizar su Bachillerato. "Cuando aprobé mi último examen, sentí una tremenda satisfacción por lograr graduarme del bachillerato," Valencia finalmente añadió, "Abrir las puertas a la educación, cierra las puertas de la prisión."

Mientras el CDCR aprueba la propuesta del Señor Griffin, de ofrecer las clases de Bachillerato en español, la comunidad hispana sigue teniendo dificultades para obtener el Certificado de Bachillerato debido a la barrera del idioma Inglés.

Por Carlos Drouaillet
Reportero

Louisiana lidera en población de prisioneros "per cápita" en la nación con porcentaje del 1% en Nueva Orleans, de acuerdo con un reciente análisis, reportó Katy Reckdahi del *Washington Post*.

En Louisiana el número de reos ha disminuido según las estadísticas, de 35,000 a 26,517 desde el año 2017, gracias a reformas bipartidistas y al grupo Primeras 72+.

Los administradores de leyes expresaron su preocupación al gobernador John Bel Edwards [D] sobre quien apoyaría a los reos que serían liberados, el respondió, el grupo Primeras 72+ estará disponible.

El grupo Primeras 72+ fue fundado y es operado por ex convictos y su lema es "nosotros ayudando a nosotros", el nombre de esta agencia de reincorporación significa que en 72 horas se determina quien reincidirá o no.

"Cuando los liberados en Nueva Orleans salen, van directos a esta agencia; que es un lugar de consejo y asisten-

cia donde los liberados reciben transporte, comida, cama o ropa", comentó Katy Reckdahi en su reporte.

Los miembros de este programa se alegran cada vez que llegan los recién liberados, ya integrados son parte de una hermandad sólida y esperan nunca regresar al presidio.

Desde que la Corte Suprema consideró los veredictos divididos en Louisiana como inconstitucionales, el grupo aumento su capacidad, según el artículo.

"Mucha gente ha sido liberada últimamente", dijo Troy Rhodes 52, miembro de esta agencia él siempre recibe a los recién llegados con "¿Que necesitas?" Y les da lentes, fruta fresca, uniformes, etcétera.

Rhodes guarda copias de documentos vitales por si alguno pierde su cartera, que usualmente pasa al menos una

vez. También en el grupo Primeras 72+ se registran para votar. "Eso afirma su lugar en la comunidad," afirmó Rhodes, "Yo no pensé que los votos fueran importantes entonces, ahora lo miro como algo más grande que yo". Rhodes nunca voto.

Ben Smith, quien es uno de los fundadores de esta agencia, quien hizo 13 años en Angola por condena de drogas, vivió en una de las dos casas de transición y trabajó haciendo cientos de viajes a Angola a levantar los hombres recién liberados.

Para ayudar los desempleados, Smith contrato docenas de hombres a trabajar en su negocio propio para vender hamburguesas y sándwiches en festivales.

En 1974, Raymond Girtley de 17 años se puso una máscara, agarro una pistola y com-

etió robo y fue a prisión por los próximos 37 años.

Cuando Girtley llegó a Angola, casi a diario, alguien sería apuñaleado de seriedad. "Era tragedia todo el día", dijo Girtley.

Girtley no estudió en la cárcel pues en aquel tiempo las clases eran para la gente con menos de cinco años para salir. "Perdí el interés en la educación," añadió Girtley, "Tenía 65 años frescos enfrente de mí, yo estaba tratando de sobrevivir."

Finalmente Girtley regreso a casa en 2012, pero recayó en menos de un año y el juez lo mandó a prisión por otros cinco años.

Girtley es parte del 42% de los que salen y reinciden dentro de cinco años, siendo las estadísticas similares a nivel nacional.

En 2019 Girtley salió libre, mas ésta vez vivió en una casa

de Primeras 72+.

Orgullosamente los registros de la agencia indican que de 176 que han vivido en sus casas en los últimos seis años ninguno regreso a prisión, un logro que captó la atención del estado, según el artículo.

Girtley, ahora de 65 años, regresa regularmente a las oficinas de Primeras 72+, para ayudar a su nueva hermandad. "Mi amistad con ellos es lo que me mantiene libre", dice Girtley, "Si yo no me conecto con ellos no la haría en las calles".

Él se siente limitado en lo que puede hacer pero continua dedicándose en apoyar a las próximas generaciones que regresan a la comunidad.

"El concepto nosotros ayudando a nosotros está ganando aplausos", dijo Rebecca Ikner "Ellos hacen el apoyo social y de conexión muy bien."

Rebecca Ikner, administradora del programa de regresar a la comunidad de Louisiana y coordinar de los casos de libertad condicional o bajo palabra. Expreso como ella estaba impresionada por la camaradería que observo en el grupo.

"La historia nos enseña que somos mejor enfrentando nuestros desafíos o retos, unidos con aquellos quienes estuvieron en la lucha antes de nosotros", dijo Boutte, "Aquellos de nosotros que estuvimos ahí, podemos percibir cuando alguien está diciendo excusas".

Boutte, es uno de los fundadores de Primeras 72+.

Desde que agencias de gobierno y de fundaciones niegan los empleos a ex reos, especialmente los de crímenes violentos, algunos han perdido sus empleos. Haki Sejou, 70, fue despedido a pesar de trabajar para el proyecto de AmeriCorps, que venera el reentrar a la sociedad en una oficina local de Caridades Católicas, reporto el artículo.

La directora, co-ejecutiva en la organización Primeras 72+ Kelly Orians, comento que recientemente el grupo ha perdido fondos afectando a la organización en obtener seriedad por accidentes, por tener en la mesa directiva gente con antecedentes criminales, de acuerdo con el artículo de *Washington Post*.

El grupo First 72+ ofrece asistencia para ex-reclusos

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chairman

Millones de trabajadores esenciales indocumentados siguen sin recibir el estímulo financiero, reportó HuffPost.

"Esta falla del congreso enfatiza como nuestro país sigue ignorando y tratando a nuestros trabajadores indocumentados haciéndolos a un lado, dijo Mónica Ramírez, presidenta de Justicia Para Mujeres Inmigrantes.

Se estima que 9.3 millones de trabajadores indocumentados han sido excluidos de la elegibilidad de los estímulos económicos, de acuerdo al Centro de Leyes Nacionales de Inmigrantes.

"Es terrible e inhumano que exaltemos los trabajadores esenciales y no le ofrezcamos la ayuda económica urgente que necesitan por el COVID-19 debido a sus estatutos migratorios, cuando ellos son la fuente principal de este país," dijo Ramírez.

Este paquete de ayuda por el coronavirus, conocido como el Plan de Rescate Americano, ha dejado a trabajadores inmigrantes considerados esenciales – sin la ayuda federal, dijo el artículo del 9 de Marzo.

Los inmigrantes indocumentados no son elegibles para un Número de Seguro Social pero si son elegibles para un número de impuestos de identificación individual conocido como (ITINs), el cual les permite declarar sus impuestos. La falta de Seguro Social, contribuye a que los inmigrantes no puedan recibir la ayuda por el coronavirus, de acuerdo al reporte.

"El pagar impuestos me estaba dando la oportunidad de llegar a ser un ciudadano americano. Antes de mi en-

carcelación trabajé por seis años y para que pudiera pagar mis impuestos cada año, Hacienda (IRS) me dió un PIN (Numero Personal de Identificación). Me sentí bien contribuyendo al país, pero no entiendo porque debe sufrir mi familia solo por ser inmigrantes?" dijo Pablo Ramírez, un residente de San Quentin.

Este paquete histórico de ayuda económica de un trillón punto nueve a ayudando a millones de americanos y a inmigrantes que son residentes legales con números de Seguro Social. Ellos recibieron pagos de \$1,400 dólares si ganaron menos de \$75,000 al año o menos de \$150,000 por parejas, y por cada hijos o hijas. Los inmigrantes indocumentados no recibieron nada.

"Me siento desechado y

sin voz, y es como si no tuviéramos ningún valor en este país", añadió Ramírez.

Los indocumentados no reciben el crédito ni el reconocimiento que se merecen; ellos están dispuestos a trabajar en cualquier tipo de condiciones, comparado con el americano promedio que se niega a trabajar en los campos o como lavaplatos debido a los salarios bajos, reportó el HuffPost. "Nosotros podremos ser residentes ilegales, pero gracias a nosotros los ilegales, ustedes siempre han tenido verduras en sus mesas", dijo Jose Villanueva, un residente de San Quentin.

Villanueva recuerda como él hacia su trabajo durante la temporada de la lluvia; siendo casi imposible caminar en los campos lodosos, cosechando

las lechugas, mientras las camionetas se atascaban en el lodo.

"Tenía 17 años de edad cuando vine a los estados unidos. Mi vida fue algo complicada a causa de la barrera del idioma inglés", dijo Rolando Tut. "Yo quería trabajar pero como era menor de edad era casi imposible".

Tut trabajó medio tiempo como lavaplatos, y cuando cumplió 18 años trabajó en construcción y jardinería. También cosechó uvas bajo condiciones muy difíciles en el verano.

Durante la pandemia las comunidades de Latinos y Afroamericanos fueron afectadas desproporcionadamente; estudios han demostrado que ellos son tres veces más probables de ser hospitalizados

por el COVID-19 y dos veces más probables de morir en comparación con la población anglosajona, según el reporte del Centro de Control y Prevención de Enfermedades.

En diciembre del 2020, el congreso aprobó la ayuda económica para ciudadanos americanos quienes están casados con inmigrantes indocumentados, reportó la historia.

También por primera vez los ciudadanos americanos con padres indocumentados quienes han pagado impuestos usando sus ITINs ahora son elegibles para recibir los cheques de ayuda económica, según el artículo.

Según Ramírez, Tut y Villanueva, el resto de los americanos y residentes legales pueden pedir ayuda por desempleo. En cambio los residentes indocumentados no califican para estos beneficios económicos, y los han dejado a ellos y a sus familiares sin la ayuda económica que ellos piensan que merecen.

Trabajadores esenciales indocumentados son excluidos del estímulo económico

By Timothy Hicks
Sports Editor

Sports film director Liam Hughes visits SQ

Local sports film director Liam Hughes visited San Quentin on Oct. 1 to get a sense of how it feels being inside of prison, for a documentary he is planning.

"Thoughts of darkness and the challenges they might face inside of prison were my thoughts, so I wanted to see what it is actually like," said Hughes in an interview held at the SQ media lab.

A former resident of Marin City near SQ, the director said that he always wanted to know what it was like for the people inside of prison and he always wanted to see for himself.

The young director was inspired by a production in the making about an ex-SQ resident athlete, Austin Thurman, who played baseball for the San Quentin Athletics when he was incarcerated. Thurman now plays baseball in Mexico.

The all-incarcerated film crew of *Forward This* is doing

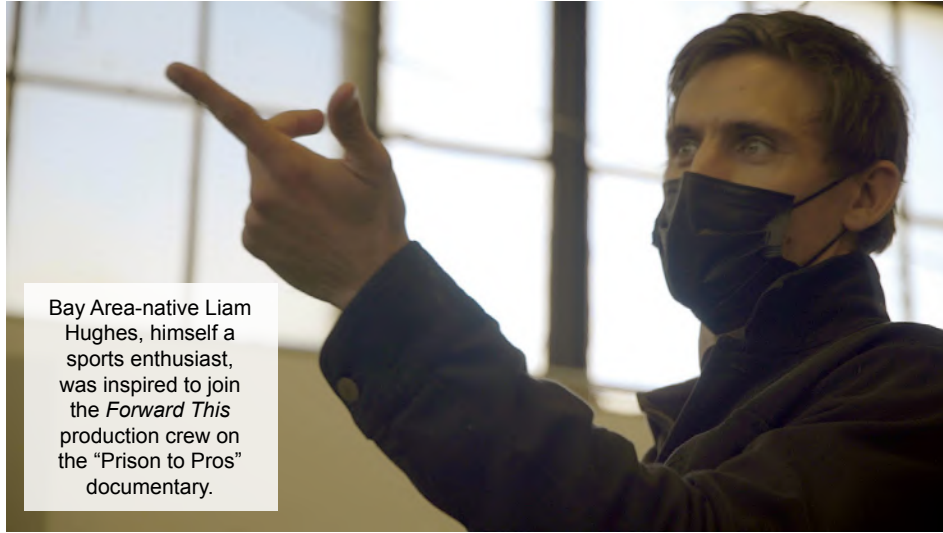
a documentary on the future pro hopeful, titled "Prison to Pros."

Being an ardent sports enthusiast himself, the director was thrilled when the film crew reached out to his production company, "Religion of Sports," to be a part of the creation.

"Brandon (a *Forward This* crew member) reached out to me and I liked the idea. I thought that it would be a cool idea to change the people's perspective of the incarcerated," said Hughes.

Perspective is something outside volunteer and longtime baseball Head Coach Steve Reichardt has had since he started frequenting the prison in 2008.

"Since I love baseball and people, if I can put a smile on the guys faces for a couple hours, it's all worth it to me," said Reichardt.



Bay Area-native Liam Hughes, himself a sports enthusiast, was inspired to join the *Forward This* production crew on the "Prison to Pros" documentary.

Photo courtesy of *Forward This*

He is a San Francisco resident who has no kids of his own, but said the men inside the prison are like his kids, es-

pecially Thurman. Reichardt took a special interest in Thurman after noticing his skill set. "I made it my job to try and

bridge the gap for him from the inside to the outside, to give him an opportunity to play some outside baseball," said

Reichardt.

Outside people are quick to recognize the unique potential that comes from behind prison walls. In 2017 ex-Golden State Warrior Kevin Durant and other sports film directors came inside the prison and produced an Espy-nominated documentary called *Q Ball* (Quentin Ball).

That basketball film highlighted a few guys' stories on the inside who have since paroled and gone on to have productive lives.

Many celebrities and sports stars have frequented the prison, including San Francisco 49er great Ronnie Lott, the San Francisco Warriors General Manager Bob Myers, and many others from soccer, tennis and track.

"I think it's a really inspiring story of a returned citizen, that they can dream big and do big things," said Hughes.

Bidding 'farewell' to Chucky

Longtime Raiders Head Coach Jon Gruden, affectionately known as "Chucky," has resigned from the Raiders, and fans around The Q have mixed emotions about the reasons why.

The Super Bowl-winning head coach wrote some emails between 2010 and 2018 that were leaked in October. The emails contained language that was racist, homophobic and misogynistic, reported a local news station. The language in the emails is what led to Gruden's resignation.

He has since apologized publicly for his actions.

"I do not have a racist bone in my body," Gruden said in an interview on a local TV station.

However, residents around The Q are seeing Gruden in a different light, as opposed to how they once saw him.

The head coach of the SQ All Madden football team, Bryant Underwood, understands how important it is for someone in a leadership position to conduct themselves properly.

"As a coach, he should know

Raiders' head coach calls it quits as leaked emails create controversy

how to keep it professional with individuals and with players," said Underwood. "Being in management, he ought to know that he is always under a microscope and everything you do or say will be scrutinized."

Someone else who has been scrutinizing this issue, and who has been a Raiders super fan ever since he was a little kid, is Charles "Pookie" Sylvester. After hearing about what took place with his favorite head coach in the league, he was disappointed.

"It was a slap in the face and it was very shocking to me," said Sylvester. "I know he is human, but to be on a platform like this and having little kids looking up to you, you are supposed to be on a higher standard."

Just like every other true die-hard Raiders fan, Sylvester rationalized in his heart to forgive the head coach for his mistake.

"He may not have even meant it to be harmful," Sylvester said. "He was probably joking. The emails were from long ago and I think he didn't mean anything by them."

Sylvester raises a point that, when thought about, might make a true Raider fan ask these very questions.

"Why were the emails leaked from so long ago?" Sylvester asked. "Why wait so late to put them out there?"

Sylvester concluded, "I just hate to see good people go down by doing something stupid. I don't think that he should have resigned. Because if every piece of dirt comes out about everybody, the whole world would be canceled out in this cancel culture we live in. Because nowadays, anything we say can be taken out of proportion."

—Timothy Hicks

SQ WINTER SPORTS UPDATE

After delays, athletics programs gaining traction

- On Sept. 18, the San Quentin Prison exercise yard was shining bright with the sun and its resident athletes at 10 a.m. Games were happening in just about every corner and on every field of play. There was a hardcore scrimmage game of basketball underway and the guys were balling hard. That game ended in a close score with one team winning 62-60.

- On the other end of the yard, since there was no baseball game going on the baseball field, a competitive game of flag football was going down. The guys were making plays and scores while dirt from the field mushroomed in the air, giving the guys nostril fills. Nevertheless that did not stop the game, but it may have given one team the edge to beat out the other.

- On the tennis court there were balls flying across the net and guys whacking the balls with their rackets. Tennis shoes screeched and beads of sweat

dripped down the faces of the tired residents.

- 1000 Mile Running Club participants were out on the track gearing up for the next running competition. They stretched and pulled and ran the track with focus.

- At the gym's back wall a handball enthusiast was slapping the tiny rubber ball against the wall, and you could hear the loud smack echoing down the alley when it hit.

UPDATES

- So far, scrimmage games have been going on and coaches have been improvising and coming up with ways to keep the love of the game marching on.

- The basketball intramural league has started its playoff sessions after ending the regular season in July, and seven teams have advanced thus far.

- The SQ Kings and Warriors have not been able to start up a season this year due to the pandemic. However, the

coaches put together a couple good scrimmages with the players that were very exciting for the residents.

- The football intramural league has started; the SQ All-Madden football coaches put together battles against other made-up teams just to get some football going. And it has a group of teams that are ready to rumble.

- After taking some tough lockdowns and delays, the softball scrimmages have gotten underway and batters are ready to swing for the education buildings again. The SQ A's top pitchers have been throwing out their own teammates with fastball strikes, keeping baseball thriving at the Q.

- Although the prison is not allowing outside teams to enter the prison yet, these prison athletes and coaches have not allowed any hurdles to dissuade them from the love of the sport. Talk about perseverance.

—Timothy Hicks

Jamal versus Jamaal: Intramural basketball goes into double overtime

Finally, after a long on-again off-again season due to COVID shut downs, the Intramural Basketball League held its championship game, and team Cookies won the "ring" over team Planet of the Apes 69 – 65.

In a close game that went to double-overtime, team Cookies' triumph was in doubt, but its shooters stepped up in clutch times.

The road to the championship was a long one for team Cookies, even though they had some of the best players in the league. Three of them dominated on the court, including MVP Alan "Black" McCintosh, Abdul "Yahya" Malik, and Jamal "Dr. J" Green. Their game point averages (GPA) were 29.3, 9.0, and 8.3 respectively.

For Green, 46, the victory was long in coming. It took him more than nine years to finally get the win he wanted most.

"For the last four years my team had always come up short," Green said. "I been chasing this ring for a long time and I finally got it."

His face showed how pleased he was with the win.

He spoke of having a championship "ring" as if he really had the most coveted ring in the NBA.

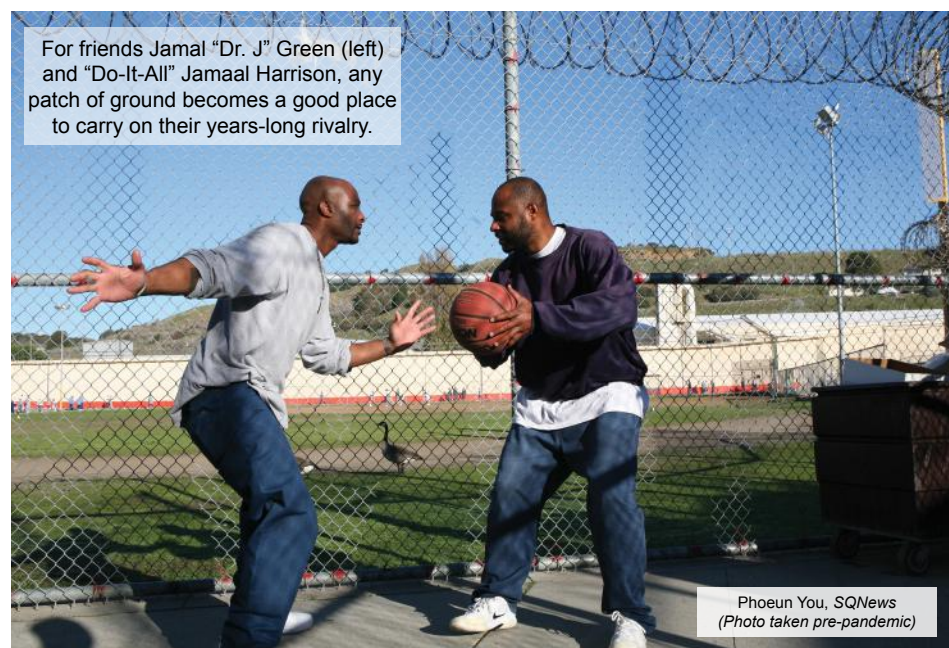
The six-foot power forward stood out in the game with his rebounding and defensive pressure. Green was coming off a meniscus surgery, but did not allow that to stop him from contributing to his team's win.

The game started at a fast pace. Team Planet of the Apes was leading almost the entire first half. Commissioner Ish Freelon watched Planet of the Apes go up by over twenty points when nine minutes remained in the half.

The series was tied coming into the third game. Team Planet of the Apes held their space on the court, letting team Cookies know that they were there to win the title too.

Compared to team Cookies' near perfect record, team Planet of the Apes was in last place. Miraculously, they fought their way through some of the better teams and earned their shot at the title.

Some of the dominate players for Planet of the Apes were; Byrant Underwood (GPA 18), Trevor "Dubbs"



Phoeun You, SQNews
(Photo taken pre-pandemic)

Woods (GPA 1), a last minute walk-on whose defensive presence was felt, and point guard Jamaal "Do it all" Harrison (GPA 4.6).

"Our team just went on one. We fought and found our chemistry when we picked up Trevor 'Bad Back' Woods," said Jamaal Harrison.

Harrison credits his facilitating skills for contributing to the design his team used for keeping his team in the lead.

"We played zone," Harrison said. "We were trying to isolate their shooters with our two-three zone and play the middle. I barely scored

because I was focused on my assist."

Eventually, the game became a battle due to the three-pointers that Jamal Green put up near the buzzer, ultimately sending the game into overtime and then double-overtime. Harrison said that his team Planet of the

Apes' coach miscalculated a substitution that team Cookies took advantage of.

But for both Green and Harrison, competing against each other in the sport that they bonded over was more than just a Championship game to them.

"I met Maal years ago," Green said. "We from two different parts of California. He from Oakland and I'm from Inglewood. But, we became real good friends. So, to play in the Championship against him, to me was special."

The two bonded while playing against each other when their teams, the SQ Warriors and the SQ Kings, would square off on the court over the course of a few years.

Harrison said it's a struggle for him to compete against his friend in a game that is so important to both of them.

"It's a challenge for me to play against my bro. Because even though he play fair, he's also competitive," Harrison said. "And I don't mind that we lost. Because if anybody deserve the win, he do."

—Timothy Hicks

Hardtimers issue 35-to-8 beatdown, maintain champion title

By David Oranje
Journalism Guild Writer

The SQ Hardtimers clobbered the Hardhitters 35-8 in a crushing contest to let the older team know that they are still the softball champs of The Q.

It was a warm sunny Friday morning on the field of dreams where the two teams were uniformed and warming up for the last game of the softball season. In the middle of the field the teams were in a huddle and the equipment manager, Mike Palito, gave a speech on the importance of having a good attitude.

Palito's speech was right in line with the overall purpose of what Hardtimers Coach Chase had in mind for the day.

"The purpose of the game was for both teams to have fun and give everyone a chance to experience the feeling of playing in uniform after a whole season of scrimmages," said Chase.

Before the national anthem, Correctional Lieutenant Sam Robinson, the prison's public information officer, was presented with his own personal Hardtimers jersey.

"It's good to get something that's yours for something you care about. I am honored," said

Robinson.

Both teams lined up in "V" formation for the national anthem that was played on violin by Rafael, who has been playing for five years.

"I am honored to play for the game and do not take it lightly. We can all do something," said the violinist.

As the game got underway, the Hardtimers took to the field while the Hardhitters team was up to bat.

"They are ready," said #17 Pookie. "The new Hitters squad will take out the OGs."

First batter of the day, #16, gets on base, which led to three batters following with three quick outs, allowing the OGs to take to the plate.

The Hardtimers' first batter banged it down the middle to shortstop, who gloved it but dropped it, sending Kenny to second, starting a dominating game for the Timers. Duane, #17, nailed the first homerun and brought everyone on base home, giving the Timers an early lead, 4-0.

In addition to competition, there were laughing and smiles on the field — especially after seeing both equipment managers, Chris for the Hardtimers

and Mike for the Hardhitters, run a lap around the bases for every homerun hit by each team. Both of the men were out of breath and smiling after the runs.

When asked approximately how much running he would be doing, Palito answered, "We have a few good hitters, so about 15."

That turned out to be an understatement. Points for the OGs stacked fast. It was 5-0 top of the second when Southwood nailed one to right field, bringing three runners home and stretching the lead even more.

By the bottom of the fourth the score was 15-0 and the Hardtimers were absolutely dominating the diamond. One of the Hardhitters coaches was optimistic for the compromised team. "The Hardhitters is a put-together team and not everyone is on the roster," said the coach. "The game plan is to be patient, don't swing at everything, and get on base."

Numerous dropped balls in the outfield and missed plays on bases caused the Hardtimers to easily stack runners and extend their lead. The youngest player on the Timers, Izaac #15, said that he is learning teamwork and

hard work from his team's older players. In turn, the oldest player on the team, with 50 years of grace and experience, appreciates inspiring the youth.

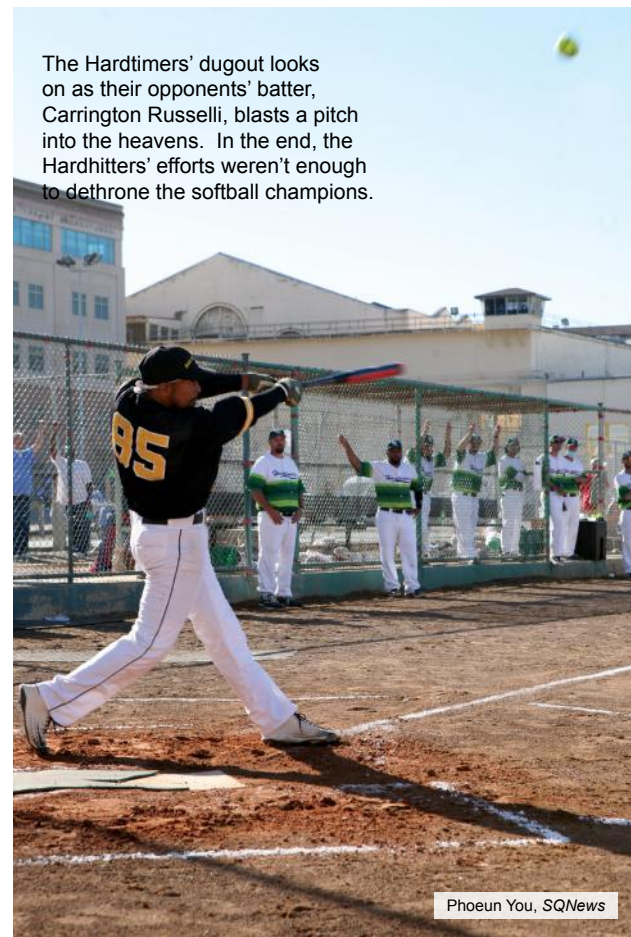
"Love giving the youngsters something to strive for every day," said the veteran.

Hardhitters could not gain any momentum on the field. Confusion, dropped balls, and all around discouragement caused the team to stay deep in the hole. Finally, in the seventh, the Hitters got a run on the board.

With the game winding down, Samantha, the only transgender player on the field, expressed how she feels about playing softball.

"People that were standoffish at first have accepted me and we are a family now. If more trans stand up and believe in themselves and want to play, they can. You just gotta love the game."

The Hardtimers took the game with a landslide win but without gloating or rubbing it in the faces of the other team. Tremendous sportsmanship, handshakes and shouting encouragement with some heartfelt advice was how the Hardtimers ended the game.



The Hardtimers' dugout looks on as their opponents' batter, Carrington Russell, blasts a pitch into the heavens. In the end, the Hardhitters' efforts weren't enough to dethrone the softball champions.

Phoeyun You, SQNews

San Quentin Giants and Athletics face off in exhibition game

All fun and games on the baseball diamond

By Timothy Hicks
Sports Editor

On October 15, one day after the S.F. Giants lost to the L.A. Dodgers, the SQ Giants and the SQ A's held their last exhibition game of the 2021 baseball season, 8-4 A's.

Adorned in their uniforms, both teams made an impressive appearance on the SQ field of dreams. Under the illuminating sun, the guys warmed up. Media coverage was in full attendance. SQ TV, SQNews, SQ Radio and Fast Forward Video were conducting interviews.

Scattered around the Lower Yard, baseball fans had their eyes glued to their favorite players and waited for the game to start. After the photo ops, the men gathered around the pitcher's mound and had a brief prayer.

Oscar "Gordo" Acosta (A's) and Mark "Solo" Wiley (Giants) received nods as the starting pitchers for each team and for their perseverance throughout the year.

The A's held the Giants to a scoreless top of the first inning thanks to star first baseman, Anthony "T-Tone" Denard. He made an acrobatic catch for the third out, sending the Giants to the outfield.

On the mound, Wiley had a shaky beginning but settled down quickly. He pitched three innings with one run. The crafty left-hander struck out four and walked one while only giving up one hit in his impressive stint.

For three straight innings the game was scoreless. Due to the many alarms and emergency medical halts, the game was continually placed on hold.

To keep the crowd entertained, Jamaal Harrison and Steve Pachacio were on the PA system with plenty of good jokes and music.

Eventually both teams were able to get some points on the board, but it didn't really matter to the teams because the day was simply just a celebration.

1000 Mile Club hosts six-mile race

By Steve Brooks
Journalism Guild Chair

The 1000 Mile Club runners once again leaned into the starting line on the first Friday of October for a six-mile race.

J. Strange did not get out hard and fast this time. But he did not disappoint. He did just enough to win the race in a time of 41 minutes and 26 seconds.

"I took it easy this time because my knee has been bothering me and I didn't want to injure myself," said Strange.

Mark Jarosik, the team's fastest runner, was still nursing an injured ankle but showed his support as a lap counter. Club President Tommy Wickerd started running early and alone.

"I had to go to a visit so I needed to get my run out of the way early," Wickerd said.

Strange kept a close social distance to Steve Reitz for the entire race. Reitz ran a smooth, methodical race and in the end captured second place with a time of 41 minutes and 56 seconds. Mike Ybarra chased both men to capture third place with a time of 45 minutes and 2 seconds.

Despite not having their

volunteer coaches and enough lap counters for all the runners, the club appeared to have a lot of morale. Twenty men lined up, bathed in sunshine and full of enthusiasm. There was no breeze. It was gearing up to be a hot day.

Luckily, the race began at 9:10 a.m. and there were no security alarms. But since a softball game was also underway, there were wayward balls flying around and the track looked annoyingly crowded. In fact, the entire yard was packed with people out on the nice day.

Cones and chalk marks revealing the lines were a good reminder for nonparticipants to keep the track clear, along with volunteer Tone Evans. He could be heard screaming for 45 minutes, "Clear the lane! Runners on the track!"

He was perched on a small concrete balcony near the gauntlet, a tight squeeze between a chain link fence and concrete wall where traffic gets thick.

A second event was planned to take place on Sunday morning because there weren't enough lap counters — another sign of how much this team misses its coaches.

Getting yo' money

Fitness buffs find their strength with bodyweight workouts

San Quentin's athlete today is more than just a football, basketball, soccer, or baseball player. He is a guy who spends his free time at the work-out pile, "getting money."

SQ athletes are on the free bars, doing pull-ups, or hitting pushups on the hot concrete and running the track under the grueling sun; sweating while burning carbs.

"Generally, when someone thinks about getting money they think about making money for a reason. Reasons like paying bills, etc. But for me, it's a motivational term I use to inspire myself to work out and better myself physically for my health benefits," said SQ resident Jessie Rose, 24.

Rose plays for the SQ intramural football team "All Business." He has been an athlete since High school and played all sports. But when there are no games or practices going on, he spends his time doing push-ups, pull-ups, squats and lunges to keep in shape.

What Rose is talking about is known as "getting money." It means getting out on the yard and getting in an

intensified work out, with drive, with a methodical routine persistence, and with multiple reps.

When no sports are being played, "getting money" is a constructive way to stay in shape and maintain health.

For new comer Isaiah Hernandez, 33, working out is how he finds his strength. "Working out makes my day go by easier and it makes my day better," He said. "It makes me stronger."

Hernandez enjoys hitting his pull-ups and "getting his money" on the daily. He is from Southern California, where he spent most of his time working out and playing all of the sports.

Football is his favorite team sport, but he also enjoys playing baseball, running track, and boxing. He has been working out on the bars, and maintaining his athleticism that way.

If you visit SQ's Lower Yard on a hot day you will see the entire yard filled with guys getting it in and "getting their money."

The determination of the resident athletes to work is evident.

—Timothy Hicks

TIER TALK

Q&A with SQ's biggest baseball fan

It was a sad day in Mudville (San Quentin) when Mighty Casey (the San Francisco Giants) struck out in the playoffs (against the Los Angeles Dodgers).

At least that was the commentary of diehard Giants fan Brandon Riddle-Terrell after the Dodgers ended the Giants' spectacular season in the Division Playoff game.

Here are Riddle-Terrell's words leading up to that season of mourning:

TH: Brandon, so the Giants clinched the West when

they beat out the Dodgers, something that you predicted. You seem to be pretty good at your Giant predictions so far. How long have you been a Giants fan?

BRT: I've always been a Giants fan for as long as I can remember. Ever since I was young.

TH: Did you used to play baseball when you was little?

BRT: Yeah, that's my favorite sport, although I play them all. But I played Little League when I was around four or five years old. When I was in high school I played

short stop and pitcher.

TH: Did you have a favorite player on the Giants when you was young?

BRT: Yeah, Barry Bonds. But, I had a few others too. Matt Williams, Shaun Dunston and Bumgarner. I also like some guys on the Dodgers too: Mookie Betts and Corey Seagar.

TH: Yeah, I like the Dodgers too. My first team is the A's though. Even though we did not make it this year. The Giants is my second and then the Dodgers. You ever wanted to take your talents to the pros?

that 2010-2014 era. In order for them to do that they had to have some synergy in the locker room. The young players had to get along with the old ones but, the coaching matters, too. It feels the same as then. They just having fun and playing the game. Plus, they don't have no big names like A-Rod on the team distracting them. Don't get me wrong, Posey is a stud, but he's no A-Rod. (Laughs.)

TH: You right about that. They do have some big names on their team, though. But I agree.

BRT: The other thing that is good for them is that they switch up pitchers every day. It's never the same one.

TH: Who's your favorite player today?

BRT: My favorite player today is the pitcher, Cameala Duval. He throws 100-plus effortlessly. I like his 100 mph sliders. It's very exciting to watch him pitch.

TH: Do you look forward to playing again whenever COVID restrictions lift up in the prison?

BRT: Yes, I do. I look forward to it. COVID did shut us down for now and we missed a whole season, but we still plan to push forward when we are allowed to. I just hope the Giants get to bring the trophy up here and celebrate with us. (Laughs.)

—Timothy Hicks

RE:STORE JUSTICE

Daughter transforms hatred into healing — Part 2

By Samantha Lawlor
Survivor

For the first time in 13 years, I visited my father in prison. He had been transferred to a hospital and was literally on his deathbed. I was only allowed 10 minutes with him accompanied by a sergeant. Yet, when I walked into the hospital room, my life changed once again.

I saw a shell of a man who looked to be 103 years old. If it wasn't for his mugshot on the hospital room door, I would have never recognized him. He was bald, using a breathing tube, positioned to face a blank wall, and had bedsores

that reached the bone. He had endured multiple strokes and was dying from severe malnourishment and AIDS.

All four of his limbs had contracted up to his torso and decomposed so much that he was literally 3-4 feet long under his blanket, and he was handcuffed to the hospital bed. I wanted him to suffer for so long, but that day I got to see what suffering looked like.

I got to see what judgment looked like when you're up close and in its face. I saw that he was suffering just as much as I was. And that it wasn't helping either of us. I saw a father and a husband instead of the monster I had made him out to be in my head. And most importantly, I got to see a man who quite simply made a mistake. A big mistake, granted, but a mistake nonetheless. A mistake based on

his own view of himself, others, and life around him.

He, too, was figuring out life the best he knew with the tools he had. I was able to see just how much fear he had to have been in for murder to not only sound good, but like a solution! I saw his actions and his point of view as separate from the human being he was.

Developing compassion for him is what allowed forgiveness to become available to me in that moment. I didn't have to search for it any more. It simply presented itself to me in the wake of compassion. Yet, it all started with my ability to have compassion and understanding for myself first. Before that, I didn't have the capacity to care about others who were hurting, least of all him.

I had so much pain for myself and my life that there wasn't any room for love and understanding towards another, especially one who had

hurt me. When I walked out of that hospital room, I walked out on 13 years of hate, anger, resentment, and hopelessness. Those 10 minutes of compassion and understanding were stronger and more effective than all those years of hate and anger. It set me free.

Allow yourself to have compassion for yourself, for all the times you weren't sure what to do, say or feel. Understand you didn't get a handbook for life, just as no one else got one either. See if you can uncover some of the "facts" you created about yourself that are disempowering and no longer serving you.

Even if you truly believe they might be true, play around with the idea that everything we know are beliefs we hold, and a belief can be changed. Try to imagine that others are struggling just as much as you are, in different ways perhaps, but struggling

nonetheless. See if you can have compassion for those who have hurt you, just as you can have compassion for yourself. Ask yourself what's more important, being right or having peace in your heart. Forgive yourself for all the judgments you may press upon yourself on a daily basis.

Then see if the love you can develop for yourself can extend out to others. Think about who you can make peace with in your life. Regardless of how they respond, taking accountability for your part, your beliefs, and your view of the world can often give you back your power instead of allowing others to hold it over you. Likewise, that level of authenticity can give people the opportunity to see that they can perhaps take control of their suffering as well.

I know that when I'm able to be vulnerable with myself, I can see that the "hurt peo-

ple" who hurt other people are going through the same lack of self-worth, disguised as anger and superiority, that I know all too well in myself. And when I see others as mean and hurtful, there's usually some belief that I'm holding onto that is just trying to protect my own self-worth, a belief that says, "I'm right — they're wrong" or "I'm good — they're bad."

There's a beautiful quote that says, "If you are willing to look at another person's behavior towards you as a reflection of the state of their relationship with themselves rather than a statement about your value as a person, then you will, over a period of time, cease to react at all." — Yogi Bhanjan.

When we truly love ourselves, we're no longer interested in withholding love from others. We're able to do both.



By Ahtziri Rivera
Project Avary

I was a 16-year-old volunteer for Project Avary's summer camp in 2017. Project Avary is a nonprofit organization that provides children of incarcerated parents with a community of individuals who understand and support them. Project Avary helps children develop leadership skills while engaging in a variety of activities in nature.

Every summer, Project Avary has a camp for children to come together and enjoy different activities. You could see all the exciting faces and smiles from returning campers as they got off the bus. You could also see the timid, shy faces from new kids that

would soon be filled with joy.

My first year at summer camp, I was a volunteer in their kitchen. My job was to help prep the dining hall, serve food during meals, and clean up after each meal. In between, I had a lot of free time so I'd go do the activities my cabin was doing. There was art, poetry, dance, yoga, drum lessons and nature explorations all throughout the day.

Seeing the kids' faces light up when they would unwrap their tie dye was amusing. The kids would confidently hit the drum to the beat of the instructor and you could see the determination in their faces trying to get it right. These kids made any activity entertaining, and they encouraged each other to do their best.



The youth of Project Avary find common ground around a campfire at a summer camp especially for children whose parents are incarcerated.

Photo courtesy of Project Avary

What makes that place so special is not just art and dance. There is a special fire circle dedicated to the youth where they get to open up

and become vulnerable with one another. They get to share their stories or just listen, but the energy in the environment is just so heartwarming. You

could feel the Avary love in the circle. I felt a sense of belonging when I had my first fire circle. Seeing these youth get comfortable and share

their trauma with the circle just made me see how courageous they all were.

Project Avary has given these youth so many new experiences they would normally not get. Some of them had never even been to a camp, including me. Being in a place like this would have helped me so much as a child, but I'm glad I found it when I did. Even though I joined at an older age, they still helped me heal through past trauma. I am now an associate counselor at Project Avary where I go on weekend outings and retreats with youth around the Bay Area.

Avary has given me many new experiences and opportunities I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else and for that I am so grateful to be a part of the community.



Healthcare in the community versus in prison

*Transitions Clinic Network (TCN) hosts a monthly reentry health-focused Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) column. This column answers questions regarding healthcare in reentry. Our goal is to provide information and empower individuals to prepare them for healthy reentry. In our last column, we talked about how to apply for Medi-Cal (health insurance). But that's just the first step to getting the care you need and deserve. This month we will talk about how community healthcare is different from prison healthcare.

How is healthcare in prison different from healthcare in the community?

There is so much you give up in your life inside, one of which is to take charge of your own healthcare decisions. For example, ducats are sent, medications are at the pill window or dropped off to you at your cell, or someone will escort you when it's time for your appointment.

In the community, the healthcare system assumes you are independent and that means you are responsible for setting up your own healthcare. You get to choose who your doctor is, when you want to see them, which clinic to go

to, and much more. You will have a voice in choosing your medical treatment.

Healthcare is not a one size fits all. There are different types of healthcare under private insurance and even under Medi-Cal. And not everything is under one roof anymore. You may go to one place for your primary care while your eye doctor and dental are located in different parts of the community.

Unlike prison, no one will come find you if you miss your appointment or run out of medications. You alone will be responsible of keeping track of your care. Reminder: your Parole Agent is not part of your care team and does not have access to health records and therefore will not help you with your medical appointments.

You are also in charge of your diet and what you eat. No one will be giving you a limit on the food you can buy or how it affects your health. You will also get to choose when you exercise. There is no set time for "yard" and the amount of exercise is contingent on work, errands and family and friends. You will have to develop a new exercise routine and keeping healthy is about making time for your new workout routine.

How do I refill my medications in the community?

You will need to see a doc-

tor first and then they can write a prescription for that medication for you. The doctor will send the prescription to a pharmacy and then you'll have to go to the pharmacy to pick up the medications.

On the morning of your release when you sit in R&R, the discharge nurse will provide you with 30 days of your medications. Once you're released, it is up to you to refill those medications.

It's important that you see a doctor and get a prescription before you run out of the medications you were released with. Establishing care in the community takes time along with getting your health records from CDCR. There is no time limit like inside where they have to see you within two weeks. It is not as simple as putting in a sick call slip (7362).

Remember, your doctor now not only serves formerly incarcerated people, but the entire community population. The faster you can establish care, the better you will be in your transition. Your health is not a waiting game anymore.

How I can schedule an appointment to a primary care doctor in the community?

- Call or visit the local social service office in your county to make sure your Medi-Cal insurance is active
- Find a clinic that will take

Medi-Cal. Even though there might be clinics down the street from your residence, some clinics will only take private insurance. If you need assistance locating one in your community, reach out to us on the TCN Reentry Health Hotline at 510-606-6400. Once you find the clinic that accepts Medi-Cal, call them to schedule a new patient appointment to see a primary care physician.

• After you schedule the appointment over the phone, ask the receptionist if there are any documents you need to bring in preparation for your appointment (photo ID, insurance card, etc.)

• Ask them what other services they offer at the clinic. If you are in need of other services, they may offer it or will give you a referral to what you may need, e.g. dental, optometry, mental health services, and/or MAT.

Ok! I made an appointment to see the doctor. Is there anything I should do to prepare?

- Here are a few helpful tips:
 - Write out your concerns. Sometimes it's easy to forget things when you're overwhelmed or stressed. Before your appointment, sit down and write out what your concerns are and bring that list with you to the appointment.
 - Bring your release paperwork, ID, paperwork re-

lating to Medi-Cal, medical records, list of medications, or any pill bottles you have. Medi-Cal is not active until you are back in the community; therefore, the enrollment department may not have you in their system yet. You are establishing healthcare as a new patient and therefore need to supply the clinic with much information about yourself and your medical history. Doctors in the community usually do not have access to your medical records from prison. It is important to bring any information you have to your appointment as this helps the your doctor understand your current health conditions and how to continue your treatments and medications.

• Make a plan for how to get to your appointment (bus, car, family, friends, etc). Give yourself enough time to arrive at your appointment ahead of time. Most clinics have a late policy and if you arrive after that time, they may not be able to see you.

• Check-in with the front desk when you arrive at the clinic on the day of your appointment. Clinic staff will not automatically know who you are when you walk through the doors, so it's important to check-in and inform the staff who you are and that you have arrived for your medical appointment.

• Waiting rooms can be

emotional and triggering; sitting in the clinic's waiting room can be emotional. Inside, waiting rooms are often a cage or a bigger cell. In most clinics in the community, it is often just a large room filled with lots of everyday people and children. It can be overwhelming to be in such a loud and bustling environment.

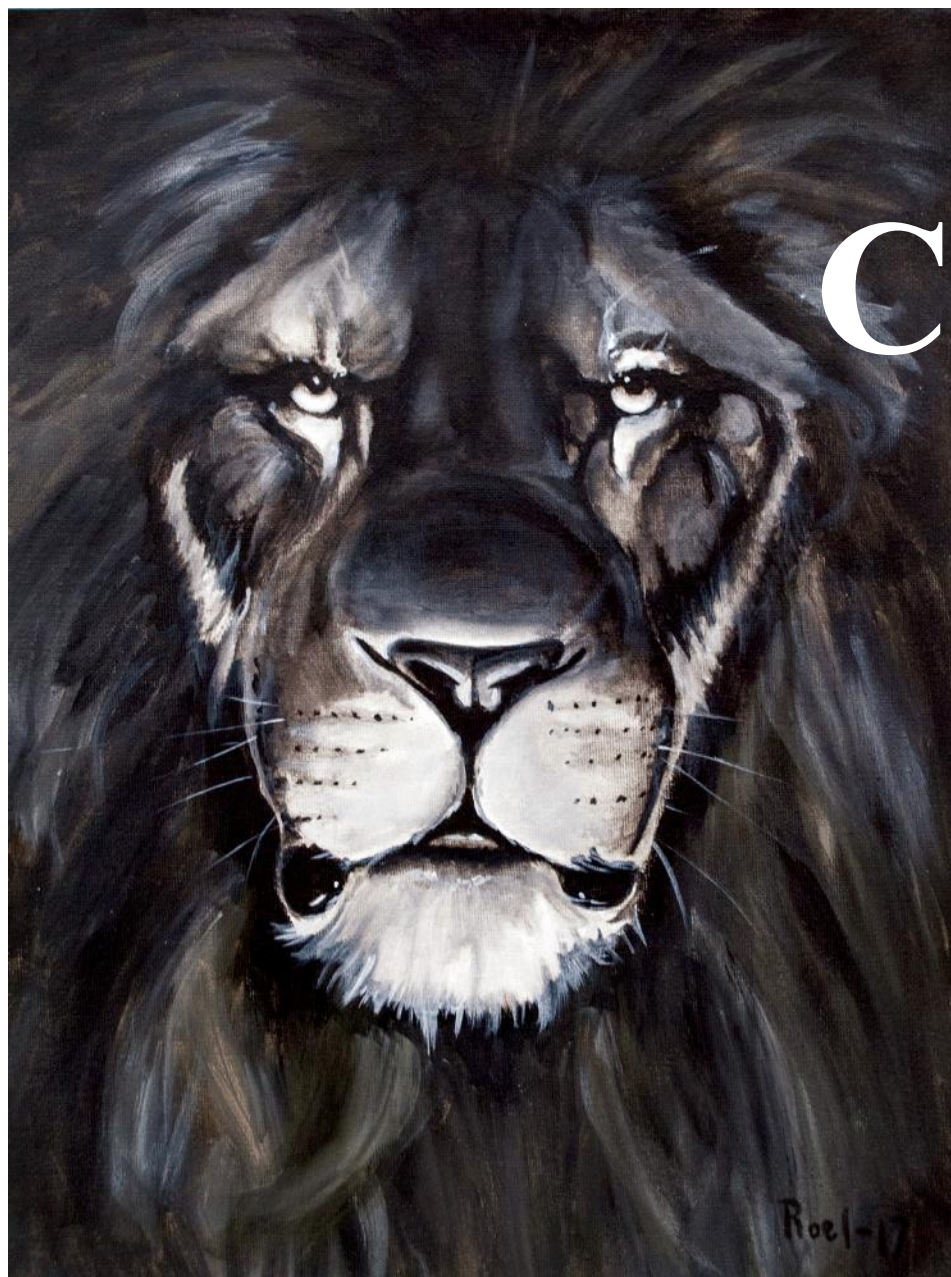
As a heads up, some clinics may have deputies or security officers on site. It can be triggering to see these officers, but do not be thrown off by them! They are often present for the safety of everyone in the clinic rather than being present because of you. They will not be in your visit with the physician.

I just got released and I'm feeling really overwhelmed. What should my first step be?

Call our TCN Reentry Health Hotline at 510-606-6400 to speak with a formerly incarcerated community health worker who has been in your shoes and can answer all your questions about how to get medical care in the community.

JPAY Email:
TCNinfo@ucsf.edu
Mailing Address:
Transitions Clinic Network
2401 Keith Street
San Francisco, CA 94124

We accept collect calls from CDCR. Open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.



Photos this page courtesy of the Prison Arts Collective (PAC).

Prison ARTS Collective

Program offers incarcerated artists a platform for self-healing

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
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Prisoners at California Institute for Women gather to create an interactive mandala circle in 2016.

The universal language of art is being used to transform incarcerated men and women by giving them the tools for self-discovery, self-reflection and a process of healing.

The Prison Arts Collective (PAC) is administered by San Diego State University and its program is available to prisons run by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

The program was founded to support incarcerated artists. It provides imprisoned artists a platform to share their talents and serves to inspire, educate, and nurture creative communities inside prisons.

“Being an alumna of the program, I have seen the program from both sides,” said Wendy Staggs, in an email interview with *SQNews*. “As a participant, I have watched individuals stop their repeated residencies in suicide watch. [I] have seen them stop using substances, and so much more, just from the act of producing art.

“I realized then that the arts have the power to transform lives in ways I never thought possible. I indulged and healed and grew,” Staggs added.

PAC has partnered with CSU Fullerton, CSU Los Angeles, CSU San Bernardino, and Humboldt State University.

The program conducts Art Facilitator Training for those incarcerated. It is a 60-hour program followed by a three-month apprenticeship. Upon completion, students become teachers and can facilitate classes inside their prisons.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the PAC teams provided weekly classes in art history, theory, and creative practice, and reflection in at least 13 state prisons. The organization had to adjust to prison programming closures as the coronavirus raged throughout the state and the jail system.

PAC packaged its curriculum and started a correspondence course. It established Outside: Inside Productions, a project that created instructional videos in art, yoga and a podcast that featured stories of incarcerated artists, writers and musicians.

“Like everything else around the world, COVID has had a big impact on our program. But it changed how we do our work more than what we do,” said SDSU Professor Annie Buckley, founder of PAC. “We are still dedicated to expanding the transformative power of the arts to people who are incarcerated. We have just had to find new ways to do that since we can’t go inside the prisons.

“We are starting to go back into some in-person classes, but not very many. The main thing that we did was create distance learning packets, similar to programs across the country,” Buckley added.

The correspondence packets were created with the support of the PAC team of faculty, students, and staff from across their university chapters, said Buckley.

Multidisciplinary art classes, facilitator training and a guest artist program are a few workshops offered by PAC. Also, Project Alice was created to support individuals reentering society.

“After my release, I became a volunteer, a teacher,” said Staggs. “I wanted to help others discover themselves, just as I had. Challenges are

everywhere in everything, and they will remain. We do our best to overcome them.

“However, the successes are so organic, so natural,” Staggs stated.

Mark Taylor, another formerly incarcerated volunteer, added, “While I was incarcerated at Ironwood State Prison, all the men in PAC classes really enjoyed them, me included.

“With the guidance of PAC staff, I was able to create an amends-focused creative writing curriculum that helped me with deep introspection and transformation.

“I believe in this program so much that I continued to volunteer with them once I was released,” said Taylor.

Some of the PAC programs were designed from within the prison walls. Its Peer Leaders program was started at the California Institution for Men, where the incarcerated participants developed by-laws, help monitor supplies, and assisted teachers in classes.

The Arts Facilitator Training program was created in Ironwood State Prison.

“I don’t go into the prisons, but I am always inspired hearing the stories and reading the feedback from current and past Arts in Corrections participants,” said Arts in Corrections program manager Mariana Moscoso. “From my perspective, art is the portal to our collective liberation — it is the space where we can imagine and experience other possibilities for ourselves and our world.

“Since art can serve as a portal, I believe it is essential to healing because the creator can create and control the conditions of their imagination. They can imagine a version of themselves that is joyful, healed, or in community. Imagination is the beginning of all human endeavor,” Moscoso added.

PAC advocates for the immense power of creativity despite the limitations of incarceration.

“Art has the capacity to change hearts and minds by opening us up to who we are and giving us empathy to understand others,” said Buckley. “I believe the unique and creative way that art allows us to connect to ourselves and others is vital to all people and, for those experiencing difficult times it can be a lifeline.

“I think for people experiencing incarceration, the way that art invites rather than commands — to make something new or see another perspective... it helps people locate aspects of their identity apart from the fact that they are in prison,” she added.

Being vulnerable in prison can be challenging, but art can offer a kind of freedom of mind and heart. However, some may question art as a form of rehabilitation.

“People who have never been incarcerated or affected by the system see the incarcerated community as criminals,” said Staggs. “They can’t fathom that those [who] volunteer would want to offer [the incarcerated] programs such as art, nor do they see how they are deserving of such a privilege.

“Up to 90% of incarcerated people will come back into your community. Wouldn’t it be better to help these people heal and give them some necessary outlets to work through their traumas that occurred before their incarceration? We need to see every human with eyes of love,” Staggs concluded.



“Lion-Rabit” by Roel Escobar of Lancaster (2017). Media: Acrylic painting on canvas, 12 by 16 inches

“Untitled” by T. Ramirez of Ironwood State Prison (2015). Media: Coffee on paper

“Walk of Life” by W. Nguyen of California Institute for Men (2018). Media: Watercolor on paper, 11-by-18 inches



A 2016 exhibit at the California Institute for Men brings incarcerated artists together with a university program to support their artistic expressions.



San Quentin 2022



Photo courtesy of Bo Kovitz

January							February							March							April						
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