

# San Quentin News

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## SQ SUFFERS ANOTHER OUTBREAK

By Andrew Hardy  
Staff Writer

Two months after a local court ruled that the COVID-19 emergency at San Quentin State Prison had passed, the entire California prison system has gone back on lockdown as the virus' omicron variant spreads rapidly through the state's correctional institutions, with hundreds infected at San Quentin alone.

In November, a Marin County Superior Court judge issued his final ruling on the habeas corpus petitions of approximately 270 San Quentin residents who filed for relief during the prison's 2020 COVID-19 outbreak.

Judge Geoffrey Howard found that corrections officials had acted with deliberate indifference and violated the prisoners' Eighth Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment, but that high vaccination rates among the incarcerated had effectively nullified the unconstitutional conditions which led to the outbreak that killed 28 residents and one guard and infected 2,600 more.

Two months after the ruling was issued, the prison is back on lockdown and suffering another outbreak as the omicron variant spreads through the facility, infecting staff and prisoners alike amid conditions of confinement which remain largely unchanged after the first outbreak.

Prisoner rights advocates and community leaders point to low vaccination rates among California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) staff as the primary cause of the current outbreak, according to a Jan. 20, 2022 Huffington Post article.

"It is evident that the California State Prison outbreak is being fueled largely by resistance to vaccinations by CDCR staff," said



Lt. Sam Robinson, Public Information Officer

Portable toilets and showers could once again be found in the prison's Chapel Garden. Prisoners who tested positive or exhibited COVID-like symptoms were quarantined in makeshift dormitories in the chapels during the latest coronavirus outbreak in January-February 2022.

James King, campaign manager for the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights.

"The cost of staff's refusal to comply with reasonable safety measures is devastating for incar-

cerated people, who are once again experiencing mass outbreaks, 24-hour lockdowns, separation from loved ones, loss of access to programming, and serious consequences to their physical and men-

tal health."

According to the HuffPost article, nearly a quarter of San Quentin's staff remains unvaccinated. At other prisons, including Pelican Bay State Prison in Del Norte

County, more than half of the facility's employees have so far refused to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

"No one challenges the serious risks that COVID-19 poses to incarcerated persons," said federal Judge Jon Tigar in a 2021 order for all CDCR staff to be vaccinated or show proof of legitimate exemption. "No one disputes that it is difficult to control the virus once it has been introduced into a prison setting. No one contests that staff are the primary vector for introduction... All agree that a mandatory staff vaccination policy would lower the risk of preventable death and serious medical consequences among incarcerated persons," the judge wrote.

His order was to have gone into effect in January 2022, in line with Gov. Gavin Newsom's initial stance on mandatory vaccinations for all California state employees.

Later Newsom reversed his position, appealing the court's order and siding with the California Correctional Peace Officers' Association, which according to the HuffPost article contributed \$1.75 million to the governor's anti-recall effort last year.

An appellate court has temporarily stayed the vaccine mandate, but no ruling was made in time to prevent the current COVID-19 crisis.

CDCR reported 52 confirmed cases of the coronavirus the week of Dec. 12, 2021, the HuffPost article said; less than a month later, that number had risen exponentially, to over 4,000 statewide. San Quentin alone accounted for nearly 10% of that figure, with more than 260 COVID-19-positive prisoners as of Jan. 10.

In response to this new wave of COVID-19 infections, department officials instituted a statewide 15-day "modified program" on Jan. 9,

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## Mt. Tamalpais College gets computers for students

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

San Quentin's college students have been provided with access to laptop computers, aiming to help them learn technology they will encounter on release.

The upgrade is for Mt. Tamalpais College students who pass a computer assessment test, the college staff reports.

"For the past 25 years, students have not had access to technology or computers during their studies," wrote Mt. Tam staff in June 2021. "They have written work and conducted research using printouts and course readers sourced by faculty members and a limited collection of books."

According to a "Letter of Agreement" between Mt. Tam and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), 35 Windows laptops, one charging cart, and a printer were provided for the initial rollout. More laptops and printers will be provided later, the staff reported.

"Very few programs at SQ have been allowed to bring any technology or equipment inside the prison, resulting in a marked technology gap among incarcerated people upon their release," wrote staff.

The computers are accessible in a computer lab set up in the B building education area. Mt. Tam students who



Phoeun You, SQNews

College students at MTC get introduced to new technology, including laptop computers with productivity software.

have completed a computer assessment test will have access to these laptops.

A schedule for accessing the lab was posted for signups and computer lab assistants will be included.

"I really appreciate the opportunity to not have to live in a separate universe from the rest of society," said Mt. Tam student Dennis Jefferson.

Jefferson grew up in a home that had a computer but said he never really saw the value in having one. He didn't use a computer at work and

when he did use one, it was simply to access games and music.

Jefferson took a computer literacy course in prison that helped prepare him for the assessment test.

"What I like most is the convenience of the laptops," he said. "I normally use the law library to do manual research for my college papers. Now, I look forward to having research capabilities at my fingertips."

The laptops will have limited inter-

See **LAPTOPS** on Page 4

## 'Christmas miracle' for kids in SQ

By David Ditto  
Associate Editor

San Quentin's veterans received an unexpected gift when Toys-for-Tots, their annual toy giveaway, was green-lighted for Dec. 24 and 25.

Holiday spirit flowed through the visiting rooms as SQ residents who served in the military gave hundreds of toys to families with children visiting their incarcerated loved ones.

The annual Christmas event, a 31-year-long tradition, was cancelled in 2020 because of the pandemic.

The toy giveaway was also cancelled for 2021 until just days before Christmas, when Marine Corps veteran Carl Raybon, chair of the Veterans Group at San Quentin (VGSQ), got a call from SQ Community Resources Manager Madeline Tenney.

"We got toys!" Madeline told me," said Raybon. "I was really happy to learn the veterans would once again bring so much joy to kids at Christmas."

At noon on Christmas Eve, the first group of visitors entering the prison found tables filled with toys in the children's room.

"Oh, my God, I'm super excited!" said 8-year-old Jesselyn, who picked out a couple of teddy bears to take home. "Presents are the best part of Christmas."

Smiling with her mom, Lupita,

Jesselyn expressed gratitude for being able to visit her dad, Thanh Tran, in person. They all thanked the San Quentin veterans for the toys.

Glistening gold, red and green garlands with big red bows adorned the visiting room windows and walls. Lights strung alongside glowed in holiday colors.

"This is beautiful," said Bo Gentry, picking out toys with his wife of 42 years, Evie, for their four grandchildren for the first time.

"To be able to be here with my wife, 'shopping' for Christmas toys for our grandchildren is very, very nice."

Gentry has been cutting hair in California prisons for 35 years, including as a resident barber in The Q's West Block for the last decade.

There were so many toys, the veterans offered them to all families with children whether the kids were with them or not.

"We're going to give them all away on Christmas," said Lt. D. Campbell. "The kids can have anything they want."

Football, soccer balls and a basketball went quickly.

Campbell said the donated toys that could not be brought inside were being given to visiting children on their way out of the prison, including

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# Drug program holds gym carnival



Phoenix You, SQNews

A participant in the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment program plays a game of ring-toss at the gym's improvised carnival.

**By Juan Haines,  
Edwin E. Chavez,  
and Richard Fernandez**

Last year, the Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT) program converted San Quentin's gym to a place to learn life skills and get drug treatment. On Dec. 21, the gym was converted once more to become the site of a carnival.

The carnival offered an alternative to the classroom setting common in life skills and drug treatment programs, said Correctional Counselor III C. Collins, who heads ISUDT.

"They're allowed to have fun. However, the contests have a therapeutic aspect too," Collins said. "The question and answer games give our participants an understanding of addiction and recovery."

Collins emphasized the community atmosphere the program aims for. "We don't differentiate between blue and green in this program."

Todd Winkler, 54, is an incarcerated program mentor. "The carnival is about letting the participants know that we recognize the efforts they are taking to better their lives," he said. "My job is to facilitate groups, which is about being a good listener and making it comfortable for people to talk about uncomfortable things."

Mark Kinney has been in the program about six months. He has a parole hearing coming up in June. Kinney said he knows that he must address criminal thinking, as well as drug and alcohol abuse.

"Some parts are extremely difficult because you have to dig into your past," Kinney said. "You may feel vulnerable to a group, yet others are experiencing what

you have."

Kinney said participation in role-playing and live skits "has been very helpful to me because it deals with concepts and communication."

Some of the topics addressed included how to act non-violently, homicide, sex crimes, domestic violence, alcohol and drugs. "Though the topic may not be your crime, you still learn," Kinney said.

Miguel De La Cruz recommended ISUDT "to anyone who may have issues within themselves such as substance or alcohol abuse."

"I have gained the understanding and coping skills that I feel will serve me when I'm released back to society," De La Cruz said.

Staffer B. Brown has more than 30 years of experience in social services. She often asks those she serves, "What are your risks? Why do you take risks?"

"I don't want to know or hear what you did," said Brown. "All I want to know is what you are going to do from this point on."

She relocated to California after serving the incarcerated population at Riker's Island in New York.

"The games are to reinforce positive change that we teach in our curriculums," Brown said. "It gives them a chance to have fun with their peers and to [practice] teamwork and cooperation."

Team Apple Cider showed that they got the idea of cooperating as a team. Alex Sinigur, Sincere Carter, Ismael Valencia and Joaoclaudio Neves won four of the 11 contests.

SQ resident Angel Cabanillas, 30, facilitated Criminal Gangs Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups. Within months of getting to San Quentin, he became the second youngest

ISUDT mentor.

"I just wanted to make a difference," Cabanillas said. "It's the best way that I know to honor the victims of my crime and to help my community."

Some ISUDT participants are resistant. Andrew Hildreth, 46, said he did not sign up for the program.

"I was one day away from completing my reentry program, so I was resistant to coming. I didn't want to be here, but I kept an open mind."

Hildreth said that after a while he began enjoying the camaraderie and ability to talk about serious issues among people he could relate to.

Nevertheless, he said he could have used his time more wisely. But he had to admit that "no group on the outside could replace these groups. I'm the token White guy in my group, but they are my brothers and I love them. I will miss them."

Alejandro Estrada, 48, has less than a year left on a 10-year sentence. He hoped the program would help him learn to control his impulsive nature. And he did find something that worked for him: STARS (Stop Think Act Review Skills).

"I don't want to come back to prison," Estrada said. "Using STARS teaches me patience—to think clearly and think about outcomes."

Estrada said that the program helped him become a better communicator, especially with his son and daughter.

"It taught me how to be a better listener. Being in group lets me know that I'm not the only person going through things. It's helped me all around—being around other incarcerated people, I'm not as hot-headed."

"The counselors help me be myself and relax and be normal and be around everyone—to try."

Many of those enrolled in the program say that there are tremendous benefits of ISUDT. Michael Sperling spoke about his life experiences.

"As a child I grew up in a hostile environment. My father kept me and my family hostage with fear. Nothing satisfied my dad. The end results were severe beatings," Sperling said. By age 12, he began experimenting with drugs, and then he turned to the streets.

"That's where I joined a gang. This family would show me love that I never received at home," Sperling said. "All the hurt and rage that I had built up inside, I would release it on anyone that got in my way in the only way I knew how, through violence."

For the next 30 years, Sperling said he struggled with a heroin addiction that nearly killed him seven times with overdoses.

"I would remain in and out of prison all my teenage and adult life for crimes that benefited my gang, and crimes that fed my drug addiction," Sperling said.

After an overdose in 2020, Sperling said he took a good look at his life. "I became disgusted, disgusted at how I treated myself, my family, my friends and my community," Sperling said. "The ISUDT program has been a blessing in disguise."

"The facilitators and mentors do everything they can every day to help all of us with our recoveries. From skills, mapping, family roles, breathing techniques, and more. I am now 13 months clean of heroin and ISUDT has been a huge reason why."

# Mixed reactions to 'pay-to-stay' jails in SoCal

By Charles Crowe  
Managing Editor

*Some detainees pay \$200 or more per day for creature comforts*

In Southern California, "pay-to-stay" jails offer large private cells with various amenities to those who can afford to pay for them, according to a report by *The Marshall Project* produced in collaboration with the *Los Angeles Times*.

At least 26 pay-to-stay facilities are concentrated in Los Angeles and Orange counties. City jails in communities including Seal Beach, Pasadena, Huntington Beach, and Fullerton offer the cells at rents ranging from \$45 to over \$200 per day.

Initially pay-to-stay jails arose in response to overcrowding in the area's county jails, which are rife with gang activity and violence, said the report.

*The Prison Legal News* (PLN) cites a *Michigan Law Review* article that said of

the Los Angeles County jails, "about 21,000 detainees are held in filthy cells so overcrowded ... inmates must stay in their bunks at all times because there is not enough room for them to stand."

In comparison, pay-to-stay jails offer solitude and reduced risk of exposure to violence and disease. Among the amenities found in some cells are flat-screen TVs, private phones, laptops, gym access, full-size refrigerators, work-release programs, upgraded beds, and food brought in by family or friends, according to PLN.

Because of the relative comfort and safety of pay-to-stay, it has evolved into the incarceration alternative of choice for celebrities and wealthy offenders who don't

want to live in regular county jails.

Crime victims, some in law enforcement, and others take offense at the relative advantages afforded by pay-to-stay.

"What a terrible idea. What a slap in the face for the concept of equal justice for all," said Peter Eliasberg, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California.

PLN Editor Paul Wright said of pay-to-stay, "It really exemplifies the two-tier nature of the American criminal justice system ... one system of justice for the poor ... and another system for the wealthy and politically connected."

But pay-to-stay has its advocates. One is Correctional Systems Inc. (CSI), which at one time ran the pay-to-

stay programs for the cities of Alhambra, Baldwin Park, Montebello and Seal Beach.

CSI spokeswoman Christine Parker said of the facilities, "The benefits are that you are isolated and don't have to expose yourself to the traditional county system. You can avoid gang issues. You are restricted in the number of people you are encountering and they are of a similar persuasion to you."

Cities providing pay-to-stay promote the concept. A website for the City of Huntington Beach announced the following enticement: "Pay-to-Stay inmates are housed separately from all other inmates and will have minimal contact with non-sentenced inmates."

The first day in Huntington Beach's pay-to-stay

costs \$150 and subsequent days are \$100 each. Interested parties fill out an application form and a medical questionnaire in order to ensure "that we are able to meet the inmate's needs."

Other cities have marketed their programs with less subtlety. Pasadena distributed a pamphlet that said, "Serve your time in our clean, safe secure facility! ... We are the finest jail in Southern California."

Pasadena began promoting its pay-to-stay program in the early 1990s. "Our sales pitch at that time was, 'Bad things happen to good people,'" said Police Department spokesperson Janet Givens. "People ... might have had a lapse in judgment and do not want to go to county jail," said Givens.

One Southern California

attorney offers assistance to those seeking an alternative to county jail. Attorney Peter Liss of Vista Criminal Law advertises online that "... these programs aren't cheap and aren't available to everyone ... If a judge does not believe you can afford to stay in a pay-to-stay facility, he may not approve you to do so."

The original purpose of pay-to-stay was to house non-violent, first-time, misdemeanor offenders sentenced to one year or less, the report said.

In practice however, it is not uncommon for repeat felony offenders to end up in the city pay-to-stay facilities, often in counties other than the site of their offense, because judges have discretionary control over their placement.

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- >> 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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## Federal prison system director resigns

By William Earl Tolbert  
Journalism Guild Writer

The director of the U.S. Bureau of Prisons will resign after less than two years in the bureau's top position in the wake of corruption and mismanagement charges, the *Washington Post* reported.

Allegations of employee misconduct, together with COVID-19-induced issues, combined to create pressure for the resignation of Michael Carvajal, the Jan. 5 story said. "It's clear that there is much going wrong in our federal prisons, and we urgently need to fix it," said Sen. Richard J. Durbin, D-Ill.

The *Washington Post* and *The Associated Press* conducted separate investigations in June 2021 that exposed abuse, graft, and corruption in federal prisons.

The *AP* concluded in its investigation that the federal

prisons were rife with problems. Alleged employee misconduct ranged from accepting bribes to smuggling drugs and weapons into a federal prison.

At one prison, a warden was charged with sexual assault; at another, a warden was charged with murder.

The dual investigations got the attention of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which expressed concern over the agency's banking policy.

The *Post's* website reported that inmates in federal prisons were keeping \$100 million in accounts overseen by the bureau and the bureau shielded inmate money from being seized to satisfy alimony and court-ordered debts.

The report stated that one inmate had \$250,000 in his account, while another 19 inmates had approximately \$3 million in their combined accounts. The bureau has consistently declined to adopt an

anti-money-laundering policy, the report said.

The *AP's* report also claimed Carvajal's office mishandled COVID-19-induced issues during the entire pandemic. Bureau of Prisons data stated one in three federal prisoners have tested positive for the virus, a rate almost double that of the general population.

A November 2021 *Post* report said Sen. Durbin expressed the view that Carvajal was incapable of preventing recurrence of sexual assaults, drug smuggling, and money laundering in federal prisons. Durbin subsequently pressed Attorney General Merrick Garland to remove Carvajal from his position. Durbin told the *Post* that Carvajal's resignation was an opportunity for new reform-minded leadership at the bureau.

Persistent problems under Carvajal's leadership also

caught the attention of the Biden administration, which contemplated firing Carvajal for months, the stories said.

Bureau spokesperson Kristie Breshears told the *Post* that Carvajal's retirement will follow 30 years of service. He started his career in criminal justice in 1992 and rose to the director of the bureau in 2020. He will remain in his current position until someone else is appointed, the stories said.

Justice Department spokesperson Anthony Cooley said of Carvajal, "We are very appreciative of Director Carvajal's service to the department over the last three decades. His operational experience and intimate knowledge of the Bureau of Prisons — the department's largest component — helped steer it during critical times, including during this historic pandemic."

## Mt. Tamalpais College unveils inspirational banner

By Juan Haines  
and Edwin E. Chavez

The changing nature of COVID-19 keeps prison programs in limbo. The latest change comes from a new variant, Omicron. It stopped San Quentin's college program from holding its Christmas Eve open mic event.

The last open mic held by Mount Tamalpais College (MTC) was 2019. Then, it was known as Patten University.

The long-standing annual event has featured incarcerated students telling stories, reading poetry, performing spoken word. There's dancing and singing—like a community talent show where everyone is a winner.

It was under those circumstances that MTC president Jody Lewen found a way for students and teachers to come together safely and celebrate the holiday season.

On Dec. 21, two small ceremonies took place in the prison's education department. Masked students and teachers wrote messages on a large banner designed by San Quentin artist Bruce Fowler.

Lewen wrote, "Beloved MTC students: May you one

day realize the incredible blessing that you are to everyone around you. With mad love and respect, Jody."

MTC clerks Arthur Jackson and Carl Raybon handed out MTC bracelets and stickers. News briefs about MTC students were also passed out.

Richard "Rock" Lathan, who'd performed at numerous open mic events, sat quietly and worked on new poetry for old friends, while history teacher Ian Sethre and MTC Chief Academic Officer Amy Jamgochian mingled with students.

"This is a holiday celebration for the end of the first semester back," Jamgochian said. Later, she wrote on the banner, "We love you MTC students! See you in the New Year, Amy J."

MTC administrator Kirsten Pickering watched as a student meticulously highlighted a fish on a banner the size of a large beach towel.

"These are the colors of a fish when it eats lots of plastic," the artist would say to folks who'd watch him fill in the colors.

Camille Buchanan, a math tutor with MTC since 2019, socialized with other teachers and students. Her spe-

cialty is tutoring those with learning disabilities.

"I have to figure out how to teach them — many of the incarcerated students fall into this category, while some have anxiety about math itself. That's common," Buchanan said. "As a tutor, I can understand their learning patterns in ways they didn't understand before."

Buchanan commented that San Quentin students seek their education and want to be in school, in contrast to students in the free world who are forced to go to school.

"To come to an environment where people choose to learn is special," Buchanan said.

Kai Bannon, 40, said that San Quentin is unlike any other prison he's been housed at before.

"There's a real belief that rehabilitation is happening here," Bannon said. He recognized the value of interacting with students in a classroom setting.

"So much of college is in conversations with other people," Bannon said. "With education, there comes resiliency. It allows you to relate your life to others."

Bannon is on the MTC

“So much of college is in conversations with other people. With education, there comes resiliency. It allows you to relate your life to others... You can't look at the banner without feeling something about the people who went through it.”

— Kai Bannon  
Mt. Tamalpais Student

waiting list. He said he came to decorate the banner and read some of the messages.

"They were moving," Bannon said. He wasn't at San Quentin during the pandemic lockdown, but said, "You can't look at the banner without feeling something about the people who went through it."

—Michael Moore  
contributed to this story.

## TOYS

*San Quentin veterans distribute gifts at annual Toys for Tots event**Continued from page 1*

tennis rackets, baseball bats, a big dollhouse, a skateboard, perfume and cologne.

"I got one of everything," said 14-year-old Zavien Denard. "I don't get to see my dad that much, so this feels great. A Christmas hug is a very special moment."

"This is a merry Christmas...I picked out cards, board games and Disney toys," said Zyyhon, Zavien's 11-year-old brother. "And I love spending time with my family."

"Next year we'll all be home for Christmas," said Leelanee, the boys' mother.

"I'm really looking forward to that — holidays without these confinements," said Leelanee's husband, Anthony Denard.

Pandemic-related requirements, including face masks, physical distancing, vaccinations and negative COVID testing, further restricted the limited contact normally allowed during the prison visits.

A brief hug at the beginning and end, as well as for a Christmas photo keepsake was the only contact allowed. Capacity was reduced to about half, and time to just two hours. Children younger than two were not allowed to visit.

Yet the spirit of Christmas giving warmed many a heart during the holiday event.

"I'm overwhelmed by the generosity of the local people who donated all these toys," said Army veteran Kevin Brinkman. "God bless their hearts for digging deep and honoring over three decades of tradition."

"It's our privilege as veterans to give Christmas joy to fellow inmates and their children," said Brinkman, who has volunteered with veterans groups throughout his six years in The Q.

Wearing a red-and-green hat with elf ears and a white fluffy ball on the tip, he said he was

pleased that half the veterans who volunteered for Toys-for-Tots last time had since paroled and were home this Christmas.

"Everyone deserves humanity," said Brinkman's fellow veteran, Raybon, wearing his blue VGSQ hat.

"Bringing holiday festivities to other people with their loved ones is really something special. It always feels good."

Raybon said the annual veterans' toy giveaway is the only time he gets the visiting experience because his own family lives more than a thousand miles away.

"Have a holly-jolly Christmas, It's the best time of the year," sang the children's-room television with a yuletide log burning in the fireplace on the screen. "Oh, by golly, have a holly-jolly Christmas this year."

The sudden, unexpected development of this year's event shortened the giveaway, which usually takes place over several weekends leading up to Christmas.

The result was a fast-paced, two-day snowstorm of toys for tots.

SQ veterans Raybon, Brinkman and Earl Orr stuffed dozens of bags full of toys on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for about 200 children with incarcerated loved ones, including some on Death Row.

"We have ginormous bags of toys...it's exciting for the kids!" said CRM Office Technician A. Torres, describing the various donations from the local community. She helped Tenney coordinate the giveaway.

"Madeline goes above and beyond to get these events done," said Torres.

The generous donations of toys came from local community groups including USMC in Monterey coordinated by formerly incarcerated veteran Ron Self, and Man 2 Man Urban Youth Advocate coordinated by Executive Director Stewart Perrilliat, according to Tenney.

"I'm so glad Community Re-

sources reached out for the toys and came through to make this Christmas miracle possible," said Raybon.

"This was a wonderful holiday surprise. We heard there wouldn't be any toys this year," said Floyd Collins, visiting with his wife Vanessa and their 5-year-old grandson Adrian. "Thank you, veterans."

"This is so exciting," said Adrian.

Like most inmate-led groups at The Q, VGSQ has not been able to resume its regular activities since the coronavirus outbreak in 2020. In previous years, VGSQ veterans held fundraisers to benefit a local Marines Toys-for-Tots program and coordinated the annual giveaway with the Marines' donations of toys.

Even when it seemed there would be no toys for children visiting San Quentin this Christmas, a team of incarcerated veterans still volunteered to decorate the visiting room.

"I wanted to get in the Christmas spirit," said retired Air Force Capt. John Krueger, who served 20 years in the reserves.

Krueger said this was his first time decorating for Christmas during his 12 years of incarceration. His job was to get the lights working, replacing missing and broken bulbs. He enjoyed bringing the old strings of lights back to life.

"It was fun to brighten up the room for the kids. It felt like Christmas. And when we were done, it looked like Christmas."

Krueger said his fellow veterans are a good group of people to work with. Pedro decorated the Christmas tree beautifully. Shorty was a big help living up the rest of the room.

In one early-December day, five veterans transformed the SQ visiting room into a festive Christmas wonderland with snowflakes, stockings and shining stars, reviving 32 years of community-service tradition.



Photos by Phoeun You, SQNews

Veterans at San Quentin State Prison (above) put out toys and gifts ahead of the event. A young visitor (below) has his pick of toys in the visiting room.

"This is awesome! It's a real blessing," said Gordon Kimbrough and his girlfriend, Paula Espinosa, picking out toys for their nieces and nephew.

"We're so grateful for this whole Christmas experience."

SQ resident John James was visited both days by his wife, Bianca James, and their 9-year-old son, Ant.

"Getting a soccer ball was fun," said Ant. When asked what the best part of Christmas is, he replied, "Being with my dad."

In-person visits with loved ones are the highlight of the holiday season for the incarcerated who are fortunate enough to get them. Of more than 3,000 residents currently in San Quentin State Prison, a couple hundred received visitors during this two-day event.

"I'll be home for Christmas..." crooned the television with the crackling fireplace on the screen as the visitors left their loved ones in prison. "If only in my dreams."



## LAPTOPS

*Mount Tamalpais College debuts new laptops and software for students**Continued from page 1*

net access only to sites pre-approved by CDCR. Students will have access to common office software, Windows operating system, source material, LexisNexis, articles, books, and educational videos on a student portal called Canvas. Students will be able to prepare, print, and save documents they create, create presentations and do spreadsheets.

Student Michael Moore, 61, said this is his first time using the computers. "I came to prison before there were any laptops. I've never touched a computer. I've never taken a computer literacy course," he said.

Moore said that the first thing

he noticed was how heavy the computers are. But he is excited to start learning how to use them.

"I'm really glad that we're able to experience this technology. I feel a little bit more connected to the world learning about it," he said.

The assessment test takes about an hour and a half. Students are familiarized with the device and then are asked to perform several different tasks. They then get to develop their own user name, password, and learn how to store the devices in the charging cart.

"Ultimately, we hope that students will have access to the laptops during lockdowns or quarantines and be able to en-

gage in synchronous and asynchronous remote instruction as needed," wrote Mt. Tam staff.

They anticipate students will eventually be able to use the laptops in their living areas and be able to turn in assignments online to their instructors when necessary.

According to CDCR, offender-use laptops were scheduled to be distributed to all California prisons starting in January 2022.

A memorandum from the Superintendent of Correctional Education's Division of Rehabilitation Programs (DRP), states that the laptops will be distributed one prison at a time. By 2023, all CDCR offenders assigned to an education pro-

gram will have access.

CDCR has received funding to provide rehabilitation courses through a secured cloud inmate network, called DRP Learning Network. Rehabilitation curriculum and software will be available on the laptops for Adult Basic Education, GED and high school diplomas, Peer Literacy Mentor Program, cognitive behavioral interventions, E-Learning and Career Technical Education.

The laptops are designed to supplement in-person learning, according to CDCR.

"I think it's important that we get integrated into the new universe instead of being trapped in this parallel universe without technology," said Jefferson.



Richard Richardson, Mount Tamalpais College

Mt. Tamalpais students are beginning to enjoy limited access to the same technology used in the community. Students will be able to prepare, print, and save documents, and to create presentations and spreadsheets.

## OUTBREAK

*Omicron variant forces San Quentin back into quarantine lockdown**Continued from page 1*

suspending all in-person educational, vocational, and rehabilitative programming, as well as in-person visitation.

Access to telephones, showers, and sunlight varies from one facility to the next, the article reported. San Quentin's West Block residents average 90 minutes per day out of cells, four days out of every five.

CDCR officials later extended the modified program until at least Feb. 17.

In addition to halting in-person programming, San Quentin administrators have

once again re-structured prisoner housing, as reflected in the prison's official Daily Population Reports.

On Jan. 18, the prison's gymnasium was full to capacity with 108 COVID-19-positive residents assigned to bunks on the gym floor. A week later, that number had dropped to just 13, with over two dozen more sleeping in the prison chapel, where portable toilets and showers had been trucked in and placed outside. Prison officials also cut H-Unit's dormitory housing capacity by almost half.

Yet the prison's population continues to exceed its de-

*"It is evident that the California State Prison outbreak is being fueled largely by resistance to vaccinations by CDCR staff... The cost of staff's refusal to comply with reasonable safety measures is devastating for incarcerated people, who are once again experiencing mass outbreaks."*

—James King  
Campaign Manager  
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

sign capacity of 3,082, with H-Units' dormitory housing units exceeding their new, lower capacity by nearly 70

as of Jan. 25.

The prison has taken steps to isolate and quarantine residents who either tested

positive for COVID-19 or displayed symptoms, but no measures had been taken to reduce the prison's overall count. North and West Block housing units remained densely populated, with more than three-quarters of all cells double-bunked in spite of an outpouring of warnings from public health officials during the prison's last outbreak.

"It seems like CDCR started stuffing people back into San Quentin as fast as they could," said San Quentin resident Noe Bahena, who arrived in November 2021, referring to once the last lockdown was over. "Nobody cares that [overcrowding] is what made the last outbreak so deadly."

Overcrowding is only part of what the Marin court cited in its "Tentative Ruling," dated Oct. 15, 2021. The court also noted "exceedingly poor ventilation," and that "San Quentin's architecture, population density, testing protocols, and inability to socially distance inmates exacerbated [their] risk."

The prison's refusal to require staff vaccinations and numerous Cal/OSHA violations were also discussed in the Tentative Ruling.

# Local economics playing role in prison closures

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

The city of Susanville's attempt to stop the closure of the California Correctional Center (CCC) is one of a growing number of communities resisting prison shutdowns because of their ties to the local economy.

"CCC is the second-largest employer in our town, so it's devastating," Susanville Mayor Mendy Schuster told the *Epoch Times*. "It's devastating to our families and to these people who have worked here. We have generations who have worked here at CCC."

The prison employs about 1,080 people and makes up more than 45% of Susanville's employment. One of the people employed there was the mayor's husband, who worked at the prison for three decades, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

"A decision such as this is going to have such a tremendous impact, basically cripple our economy, limit our ability to provide our own public safety services," City Administrator Dan Newton told the *Times*.

In April the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) announced that it will close CCC by June 30, 2022. The Service Employees International

Union (SEIU) is also protesting the closure.

CDCR stated that closing the prison could save \$122 million tax payer dollars per year, the *Times* reported.

"The significant decrease in the state's incarcerated population over the past year is allowing CDCR to move forward with these prison closures in a thoughtful manner that does not impact public safety, and that focuses on the successful reentry of people into communities once they release from our custody," said Kathleen Allison, CDCR Secretary, in a press release.

CDCR said it gave the prison's workers an option to relocate to other facilities.

But Congressman Doug LaMalfa of California's first district saw things differently: "This decision comes as California is seeing significant increases in crime due to poor policy decisions that has resulted in early releases of felons and high recidivism," he said in April.

According to LaMalfa, the local jails will be overrun with criminals without CCC. The city economy will crumble and the city will be in greater fire danger without its incarcerated workforce.

Similar concerns about prison closures were raised by the mayor of Tracy, California, in regards to the clo-

sure of the Deuel Vocational Institute (DVI) in September. Mayor Robert Rickman and county officials said they were disappointed at the state's decision to close DVI, and expressed worry over what will happen to the city and county residents who work at the facility, according to *Recordnet*.

Rickman also expressed concern over the loss of millions of dollars in revenue per year for San Joaquin General Hospital, which serves DVI and the Stockton California Health Care Facility that provides medical and mental health treatment to prisoners. DVI housed 1,500 prisoners and employed 1,100 staff members, *Recordnet* reported.

But the situation at DVI is different from the one at CCC. CDCR said that the shutdown of the DVI facility is only a "warm shutdown," according to the Legislative Analyst's Office. The plumbing, electricity, and water treatment plant is still active and some staff are still on hand in case of emergency," a CDCR spokesperson told the *Times*.

"Deactivating a prison is not the same thing as closing one; the state must take bolder action," Luz Maria Flores told the *Davis Vanguard*. Flores is the Statewide Policy Coordinator for Californians Unit-



Photo courtesy of CDCR

California Correctional Center (CCC) lies in the background behind High Desert State Prison in Susanville, California. CCC was slated for closure this year.

ed for a Responsible Budget (CURB). It is estimated that the state could save over \$150 million a year by closing DVI.

"What is happening at DVI and with Susanville's unincarcerated residents is representative of the complicated relationship between rural economies and mass incarceration," Sofia Andrade wrote in July for *Slate*.

Earlier this year President Joe Biden ordered the shutdown of a 770-bed detention center in San Diego. But the for-profit facility negotiated an extension of its contract with the U.S. Marshalls to stay open to house immigrants, according to a Sept. 22, 2021 *San Diego Tribune* article.

A for-profit facility in Kansas is using the same loophole of housing ICE detainees to keep getting government money even after Biden or-

dered that the facility be shut down, according to a *CNN* report in November.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul also faced backlash after her decision close six prisons. Corrections unions and local politicians objected because the prisons bring jobs and boost the local economy. Hochul said there are more guards than prisoners at these facilities due to decreasing populations, according to a Nov. 8, 2021 article in *Corrections News*.

Many San Quentin residents believe that there are solutions to reducing mass incarceration and the need for prisons.

"Maybe Susanville residents can't go back to mining and logging, but they can move into infrastructure building, new green jobs that help save the planet and com-

puter technology sectors," said SQ resident E. "Phil" Phillips.

Earnest Woods agrees. "They are putting their economy above human rights," he said. "The solution for the people of Susanville is to get into new job sectors creating energy from solar and wind, building new roads and bridges."

President Biden signed a massive infrastructure bill in November that could very well provide some relief to Susanville residents.

"Instead of Tesla moving to Texas, maybe the company should move to Susanville," said Rahsaan Thomas. "Instead of using incarcerated firefighters, who get paid a dollar an hour, Susanville residents should demand training and a livable wage to fight their own forest fires."

# Abuse allegations lead to increased use of prison body cameras

By Randy Hansen  
Journalism Guild Writer

Several America state prison systems are introducing body-worn cameras on some guards, even in environments already covered by thousands of stationary cameras, according to *The Associated Press*.

After allegations of abuse of prisoners with disabilities, a judge ordered body-worn cameras for guards in a San Diego state prison. California later expanded this to five other prisons.

Following California's lead, the death of an inmate during a scuffle with guards in an Ohio prison triggered a pilot program at the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC).

Ohio's 28-prison system already has about 6,000 cameras in place. In some areas with stationary cameras, blind spots exist; there are also situations in which a body camera could clarify the action between guards and inmates and help get to the truth of whether inmate(s) or guard(s) are at fault, said Annette Chambers-Smith, director of the ODRC.

"When you have cameras that are filming an incident, you don't have to rely on memory or perhaps that tunnel vision that someone gets when they're recounting an incident," she said. "You can just see the totality of it."

Sometimes stationary cameras cannot show the entire event, and they don't have audio. Body-worn cameras, in addition to providing an audio record, can add new camera angles.

The Ohio union representing prison employees is skeptical of the cameras. Christopher Mabe, president of the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association, says the money could be better spent on hiring more guards.

"Right now we're fighting to keep people employed in the department of corrections because of the tight job market. Should we be putting more money into retention of officers and hiring of officers and hiring of staff, as opposed to allocating money for technology that is just redundant?"

The Ohio chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union has a few questions about the plan, including the circumstances under which guards are allowed to deactivate the cameras and how long the prison system will retain the video, according to Gary Daniels, the chapter's top Ohio lobbyist. This last question is important, given the state's two-year window for filing civil liberties lawsuits, he said.

The Georgia Bureau of Prisons piloted this type of concept in 2020 and planned to outfit guards in two prisons in 2021 and another two in 2022.

Since October 2020 Florida uses them in some prisons and has equipped specially trained officers at its 35 prisons with body cameras that automatically turn on when those officers activate stun guns.

New York state began piloting body-worn cameras as far back as 2016 and expanded the test with a \$835,000 federal grant. This system, which costs \$4.2 million, utilizes about 2,500 body-worn cameras in eight prisons, including the three women's prisons, with plans to expand.

Virginia is also looking to

expand body-worn cameras to supervisors at high-security facilities, some members of teams who enter cells to extract inmates, and handlers of patrol and drug-sniffing dogs.

Wisconsin began outfitting officers at its six maximum-security prisons and one juvenile facility in 2017 after the Legislature provided the agency with an initial \$591,400, hoping to reduce staff and inmate assaults.

The agency now deploys about 200 body-worn cameras in the six prisons and about 100 in the Lincoln Hills & Copper Lake Schools juvenile facility, at a cost of about \$895 per camera. Prisons spokesperson John Beard

said that one downside is the view is sometimes obscured during close-up interactions with an inmate, but the audio is easily heard.

Just as widespread use of body-worn cameras by police officers hasn't reduced instances of use of force, body-worn cameras in prison are unlikely to have a big impact, especially with the presence of so many stationary cameras, said criminal justice analyst and research scientist for CNA Corp., Bryce Peterson.

Peterson said nearly all prison incidents are already recorded, and blind spots aren't typically in places where a guard will be present to record illicit activity, including drug sales or a fight. In some prisons, body cameras will have an impact because it's "a new intervention...sort of a shock to the system," he said. "But I don't think it's a long-term cure for these issues."

*"When you have cameras that are filming an incident, you don't have to rely on memory or perhaps that tunnel vision that someone gets when they're recounting an incident."*

—Annette Chambers-Smith  
Director, Ohio Dept. of Rehabilitation and Correction

By Vincent E. O'Bannon  
Staff Writer

The U.S. Treasury Department has announced that states can garnish third-round stimulus money paid to prisoners and apply the seized amounts to restitution and other obligations, reported *The Hill*.

Under the Trump administration, federal and state prisoners were allowed full stimulus payments without garnishment, the May 3 story reported.

The majority of Americans, including incarcerated people, were eligible to receive the Economic Impact Payment Program, also known as the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES).

"We strongly support state efforts to seize criminals' Economic Impact Payments and to ensure that these payments benefit families victimized by crime rather than incarcerated criminals," said Sens. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., in a letter to the Treasury.

# Treasury: States can garnish prisoners' stimulus money

According to the senators, the law that created the stimulus relief package allowed for the garnishment of the first round of payments, but not the second round.

"We think that's money that should go to victims, not to inmates who have not been financially impacted at all by the pandemic," said Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall (R) to local WKRG radio station.

Stimulus checks to prisoners may be subject to garnishment for the following: Court ordered payments to local and state government offices, payments to private creditors, fines related to crime, administrative court fees, restitution, and other court-ordered debts, reported *The Hill*.

To inquire whether a check has been lost, stolen, destroyed, cashed, or sent out, payees or family members can request a payment trace

as follows:

Mail a completed Form 3911 to the following address:  
**Department of the Treasury  
Internal Revenue Service  
Austin, TX 73301-0052**

When using Form 3911, make sure you: Write EIP1 (first-round payment) or EIP2 (second-round payment) or EIP3 (third-round payment) on the top of the form to identify which payment you want to trace

Complete the form answering all refund questions as they relate to your stimulus payment

When completing item 7 under Section I, check the box for "Individual" as the type of return, enter "2020" as the tax period; don't write anything for the date filed

Sign the form (if you file a joint tax return, both spouses must sign the form).

Don't send anything other than Form 3911.

# Federal BOP workers protest vaccine mandates

The union representing federal prison workers in Hawaii planned to join protests in October against President Joe Biden's executive order for mandatory vaccines for federal workers due to the COVID pandemic.

The order does allow exceptions for legitimate medical or religious issues.

Michael Meserve, president of Local 1218 of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Council of Prison Locals (CPL), brought attention to staffing shortages, safety concerns, and alternatives to the vaccine mandate for all federal workers, both locally and countrywide, said Peter Boylan of the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*.

Meserve said, "Several

unvaccinated staff have approached me with serious concerns about being disciplined and/or removed from service by the Agency. Some of those employees are talking about retiring earlier than planned, or resigning if retirement isn't an option."

Staff shortages were forcing non-officer employees, including cooks, teachers and nurses, to serve as correctional officers under a process called augmentation, according to the AFGE, Local 1218, CPL.

Workers with the AFGE planned to picket in Honolulu.

The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) did not respond to the *Star-Advertiser's* inquiries about the protest, whether or not staffing in Hawaii was sufficient, or correctional

officer recruitment issues. BOP operates 122 correctional institutions, including the Federal Detention Center in Honolulu.

BOP maintained that everyone who works in a federal facility is a trained, sworn correctional worker, no matter what their position or job title. When they are hired they are expected to perform law enforcement functions, even teachers and counselors, according to *The Associated Press*.

Less than 14,000 of the 20,446 correctional officers positions budgeted for 2021 were filled and the conditions were "endangering the lives of employees and [made] it harder to safely manage inmates," according to the AFGE.

—Randy Hansen

### Donald "Don" King >> (1931-Present)

By Marcus Henderson Editor-in-Chief

"Only in America" became the famed boxing promoter Don King's catch phrase, along with his trademark wild Afro-style hairdo. In 1967, King served more than three years at the Marion Correctional Institution in Ohio for manslaughter (second degree murder).

He was convicted of stomping to death one of his gambling house employees. While incarcerated, King said he began to self-educate by reading everything in the prison library. King was also charged prior, in 1954, for killing a man who attempted to rob one of his gambling stacks. The case was ruled a justifiable homicide. In 1983, King was pardoned by Ohio governor Jim Rhodes.

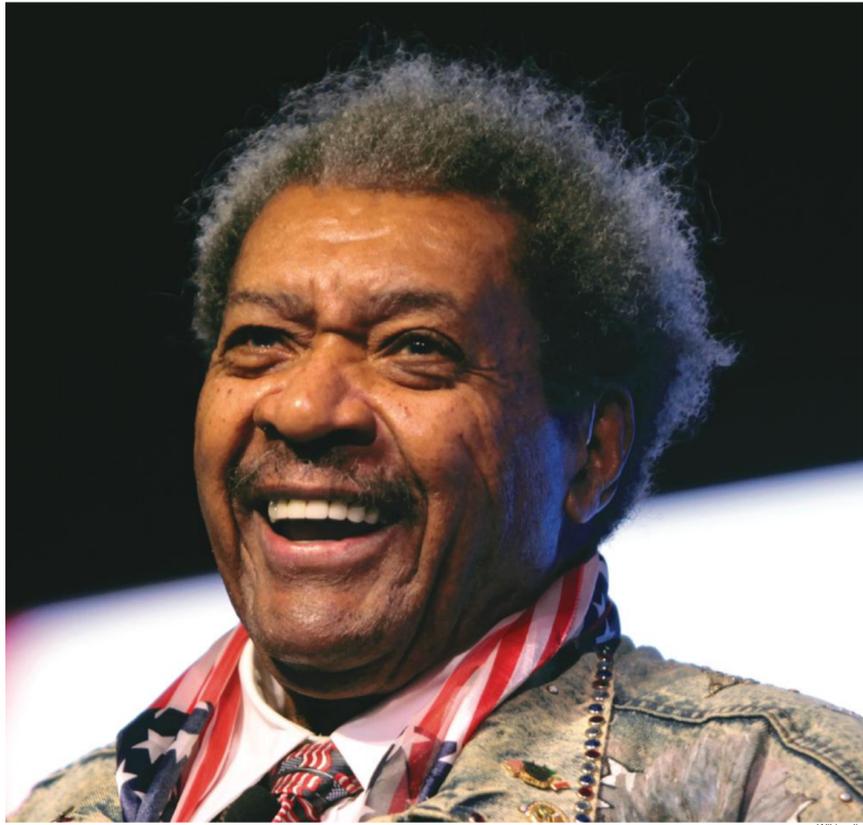
King gained fame by promoting some of the highly acclaimed 1970s heavyweight championship fights, such as "The Rumble in the Jungle" between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman and the "Thrilla in Manila" fight that featured Ali vs. Joe Frazier. King was able to secure a \$10 million fight purse for "The Rumble in the Jungle," a record payday at the time. King built a boxing empire under his Don King Productions banner with a stable of prominent fighters that included Mike Tyson, Larry Holmes, Julio Cesar Chavez, Roberto

Duran and Evander Holyfield among many others. King faced many lawsuits from some of these boxers alleging dishonest business practices; most of the cases were settled out of court.

He expanded outside of boxing and promoted the Jacksons' 1984 Victory Tour. He purchased the *Call and Post*, a Cleveland, Ohio-based African-American weekly newspaper, which he was still publishing as of 2011.

King became the Teflon Don, possibly before former President Donald Trump. In 1992, when King was being investigated for possible connection to organized crime, he invoked the Fifth Amendment during a Senate hearing when questioned about his connection to mobster John Gotti, according to Wikipedia. He also was not indicted for racketeering in 1999 with International Boxing Federation (IBF) president Robert "Bobby" Lee Sr. as a co-conspirator. King did not testify against Lee.

In 2008, King was inducted into the Gaming Hall of Fame. He received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree from Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. King overcame a life of crime, prison, lawsuits and governmental investigations to become a successful businessman, although controversial. In his own words, "Only in America."



Wikipedia

# ONLY IN AMERICA:

The faces of those who have moved mountains in

# BLACK HISTORY



Wikipedia

### << Sister Souljah (Lisa Williamson) (1964-Present)

Sister Souljah is an American author, activist, musician and film producer. Souljah was an outspoken Black activist in the late '80s and early '90s. She was the only female rapper for the hip-hop group Public Enemy. She released her only solo album, *360 Degrees of Power*, in 1992.

In 1994, Souljah published *No Disrespect*, her memoir. In 1999, she pioneered the new Black novel renaissance with her first book, *The Coldest Winter Ever*. The book open up the doors to what has become known as "street literature" (Urban novels). Souljah said "I'm a college graduate, and if I read something like *Romeo and Juliet*, I'm reading about young love, young sex, longing. I'm reading the same themes that I'm writing in my books. So if somebody comes along and says, 'Yours is street literature'—what was Shakespeare?"

**"If somebody comes along and says 'Yours is street literature'—what was Shakespeare?"**

—Sister Souljah

incarcerated man struggling to reclaim his innocence and find his identity while in prison. The book became popular with prisoners and spawned a book series by Souljah with *Midnight: A Gangster Love Story*, *Midnight and the Meaning of Love*, and *A Deeper Love Inside: The Porsche Santiago Story*, a spinoff. Her latest sequel is *Life After Death* (2021).

Souljah developed the African Youth Survival Camp, a six-week summer camp for the children of homeless families. She organized youth events with hip-hop artists such as Lauryn Hill, Sean "Diddy" Combs and others. She was the executive director for Combs' Daddy's House Social Program Inc., which educates and prepares youth ages 10–16. Souljah protested racial discrimination, police brutality and the lack of proper education for urban youth. Souljah pioneered the urban novel craze, but organized the hip-hop community to get involved with social issues.

### X-Clan (Hip-hop group from '90s-Present)

X Clan is a pro-Afrocentric rap group from Brooklyn, New York. The group picked up where rap legends Public Enemy left off with hard-hitting revolutionary music that rivaled "gangster rap." The nationalist cry of "The Red, the Black and the Green," the colors of the Black unity flag created by Marcus Garvey, blasted from the speakers of urban youths' cars. The group debuted *To the East, Blackwards* (1990) and followed it with *Xodus* (1992). Both albums ranked at #11 on Billboard's Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums chart at the time.

The group created the catch phrase "Vanglorious" and their hit song "Grand Verbalizer" even had street youth wearing red, black and green African medallions. The goal of the music was to introduce the Hip-Hop generation to the Black Nationalist Movement without preaching, according to its members. The songs blended club dance music with its "conscious" lyrics, a rarity at the time.

The group's original members consisted of Sugar Shaft, Brother J, Professor X, Isis and Queen Mother Rage. The crew was the cornerstone of the Blackwatch movement, a collective of Afrocentric activism and Egyptian Science. Isis released *Rebel Soul* (1990); Queen Mother Rage debuted her *Vanglorious Law* (1991); and Professor X released "Years of the 9, on the Blackhand Side" (1991).

Sadly, like most successful groups, the crew broke up and some members met with tragedy. In 1994, Brother J formed Dark Sun Riders, a new group, and released *Seeds of Evolution*. Sugar Shaft died from AIDS complications in 1995 and Professor X died

from spinal meningitis in 2006. In 2007, X Clan reunited and released *Return from Mecca and Mainstream Outlawz* (2009). The group was founded by Lumumba Carson and Professor X. A mark of the crew's success was that they even made "gangsters" dance to "conscious" music.

The group's message remains intact. *Wikipedia* quotes their group statement: "Black Nationalism is basically aimed at improving the Black environment. We're

not meant to be a prejudiced circle; it's just we want to improve our environment. Because if we're not crackheads, we're drug dealers. You know, the whole stereotype of the Black existence was so backward... We wanted to improve that by showing some indigenous knowledge with music... Usually when a positive record comes on, everything stops and everybody gets tight in the ass and doesn't know what to do. We were trying to break that."



Wikipedia

### The Hidden History of Slavery in California

Story and photo courtesy of the ACLU of Northern California

#### From Enslaved to Entrepreneur

Born enslaved in Georgia, Bridget "Biddy" Mason walked more than 2,000 miles through rugged terrain to California, where she eventually won her freedom in a landmark court case and became a celebrated philanthropist.

Mason was forced to travel West with Robert and Rebecca Smith, slaveholders who had joined the Mormon migration to Utah. The Smiths eventually took Mason and her three children to San Bernardino in California. While California was supposedly a "free state," Smith continued to hold them captive. Mason and her children befriended free blacks who alerted the local sheriff when the Smiths made plans to take Biddy and her daughters to Texas with them. The sheriff took Mason and her family into protective custody under a writ of habeas corpus.

Judge Benjamin Hayes circumvented racist testimony laws that prevented blacks from testifying against whites by interviewing Mason in his chambers. There,



Bridget "Biddy" Mason (Died 1891)

she said that she did not want to go back to the South with the Smiths. As a result, in 1856, Hayes ruled that Mason and her children were "free forever." Mason became a doctor's assistant and ran a midwifery business. She accumulated a fortune worth about \$7.5 million in today's dollars, making her one of the richest women in Los Angeles. She established a homestead in what became downtown Los Angeles. Ma-

son used her wealth to establish a daycare center for working parents and created an account at a store where families who lost their homes in flooding could get supplies. She also co-founded and financed the First African Methodist Episcopal (FAME) Church, which is still going strong. Known as Grandma Mason, she died in 1891 and is honored through the Biddy Mason monument in downtown Los Angeles.

### BOOK REVIEW

By David Ditto Associate Editor

For over 400 years, Black slavery and oppression have been an egregious hypocrisy in America, "the land of freedom."

In his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, civil rights leader W.E.B. Du Bois wrote that the injustice of unattainable American ideals — liberty and equality — for African Americans "has wrought sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten-thousand-thousand people."

Du Bois, a founder of the NAACP and the first Black person to receive a doctorate from Harvard University, called for direct action to end political, economic, and social oppression of Black Americans, which was progressive among the leading early-20th century activists' voices.

In his book, Du Bois outlined his plan for voices without violence, criticism without contempt.

In his strategy for racial justice that remains as effective and necessary today as when he wrote it in 1903, Du Bois called for Black and White solidarity against oppression of African Americans by a racist White society.

Through heartfelt accounts of personal and historical struggle, he provided overwhelming evidence of centuries of abuse of Black people by a White-nationalist society.

Du Bois, noting the plight of those who experienced the villainies of slavery, wrote, "few men ever worshiped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries."

But emancipation did not end rampant racist oppression. "Yet the swarthy specter sits... our vastest social problem..." continued the author. "The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land."

Nor did gaining the vote prevent White-supremist political abuse. "And the Nation echoed... 'Away with the Black man's ballot, by force or by fraud — and behold the suicide of a race!'" wrote Du Bois.

Du Bois detailed the destructive social effects of continuing racial discrimination: "The very soul of the toiling, sweating Black man is darkened by the shadow of a vast despair. Men call the shadow prejudice."

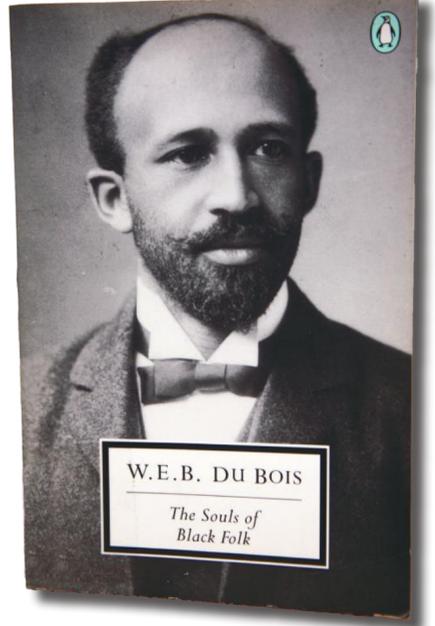
The fight against widespread oppression through the turn of the 20th century was weary, burdensome work.

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois argued that Black Americans should battle against their oppression by rising above the racial hatred and by remaining true models of American and Black ideals. He called for more political action toward racial justice than other Black civil rights leaders.

America's constitutional democracy's highest goals are written in its founding documents. To that, Du Bois declared, "there are today no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes."

"We need... above all, the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts," Du Bois wrote.

Education is the path to the pinnacle of African American self-consciousness and self-respect, ideals he said must be achieved to obtain equality. Although some social activists promote anger, hatred, and violent protest against White tyranny, Du Bois argued that such contemptuous acts perpetuate the divisive cycle of



### The Souls of Black Folk

By W.E.B. Du Bois

prejudice and repression. Instead, he recommended, "striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic."

Du Bois called for Black and White solidarity in the fight for racial justice, writing, "in order that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack."

He ended the first chapter of his book with an invitation to all Americans to take an important step in that fight "in the name of human opportunity... listen to the striving in the souls of Black folk."

The reader of *Souls* learns that listening to the yearning voices of the oppressed struggling for equality leads to deeper understanding, empathy, and healing.

Rising above the racial hatred unifies a larger coalition to fight for civil rights in America. Individuals can stay true to their personal values while advancing liberty and justice for a stronger America.

Du Bois' strategy of Black and White solidarity in political action built momentum toward equality for Black Americans in the last century, but the struggle continues today.

Du Bois' invitation to all Americans is still the solution.

We must listen. Simply listen. We must listen to the Black voices whose family members are dying disproportionately from the coronavirus. Americans must listen to the Black students and workers who are losing their schools and jobs at a higher rate.

We the people must listen to the stories of Black families suffering from disproportionate policing, persecution, and imprisonment.

When we hear their voices, we will naturally join to end the injustice.

Americans will support civil rights protections when we vote, through our representatives, with our pocketbooks, pens, voices, political campaigns, and social movements.

We must rise now in solidarity to achieve the 21st-century racial justice that a truer, freer America demands.

## SPANISH

## Lenta Distribución de Tabletas GTL

Por Steve Brooks  
Journalist Guild Chair

Prisioneros de California recibirán tabletas para conectarse a la red (Connect Network Tablets) por parte de la compañía Global Tel Link (GTL) para ayudarlos a comunicarse con el mundo exterior.

El Departamento de Rehabilitación y Correccionales de California (CDCR) se ha asociado con el Departamento de Tecnología para acordar con GTL ampliar la comunicación de los presos.

“El plan de aumentar la comunicación tiene como meta fortalecer los lazos entre las personas encarceladas con sus familias y la comunidad”, escribió el vocero del CDCR.

De acuerdo al CDCR, “Las Tabletas no tendrán ningún costo para los encarcelados o sus familias, aunque ciertos servicios como música al momento (streaming music) puede tener un costo.”

Los servicios de las Tabletas GTL incluyen, mensajes, libros y tarjeta electrónicas (E-Cards and E-books), audiolibros y podcast, noticias y deportes, video llamadas y una video llamada de 15 minutos gratis cada dos semanas. Las llamadas por teléfono incluyen una llamada de 15 minutos gratis cada dos semanas, además de música, películas y juegos.

Las tabletas también están siendo consideradas para usarse como un método para presentar quejas institucionales (filing institutional grievances), comprar alimentos en la tienda (buying commissary items), tener acceso a la biblioteca de derecho (Law Library), cursos de auto-ayuda, e incluso para asistir a la universidad en línea (On-line College).

“No puedo esperar”, dijo Mark Jarosik, un residente de San Quentin. Tener otro medio para mantenernos en contacto con nuestras familias nos ayudará emocionalmente. Nuestro nivel de estrés bajará. Mientras más rápido lleguen las tabletas mejor para nosotros.”

GTL dice que sus tabletas reducirán la reincidencia, el estrés, harán personas responsables, mejorará el comportamiento de los presos, la seguridad, el control, y el funcionamiento operacional.

“Pienso que las tabletas gratuitas serán de beneficio porque algunas personas no tienen los medios para comprarlas”, dijo Maurice Reed. También creo que es bueno porque las familias de algunas personas viven muy lejos para venir a visitarlos.

Las tabletas pueden impedir que las personas se metan en problemas, ‘mente ociosa solo piensa en maldades’.”

“Me preocupa que las personas las abran y lo arruinen para todos”. Me preocupa que haya un aumento en la revisión de celdas debido a las tabletas, lo cual siempre es una molestia”, dijo Reed.

Las tabletas serán transparentes para facilitar la inspección de contrabando por parte de los guardias. Amigos y familiares tendrán que depositar dinero en una cuenta Getting Out. Ellos pueden bajar la aplicación móvil Getting Out.

Algunos de estos servicios son accesibles con una mensualidad inicial de \$0.75 centavos.

Donald Thompson ha estado encarcelado por 26 años. Él considera la nueva tableta GTL como una oportunidad para que los presos de mayor edad aprendan a utilizar la tecnología moderna.

“Estaba encerrado cuando eran llamados teléfonos móviles y eran del tamaño de un ladrillo”, dijo Thompson. “Mi inquietud es si el CDCR nos permitirá comunicarnos con las personas que están aprobadas para visitarnos. Tengo familiares y amigos a quienes no se les permite el acceso físico a la prisión, pero deberían permitirme comunicarme con ellos a través de la tableta”, dijo Thompson.

En abril el CDCR empezó a proveer las tabletas gratuitas GTL a personas encarceladas en la Prisión de Valley State (VSP).

Daniel Henson escribió una carta al Periódico de San Quentin (SQNews) para decirnos que su tableta no estaba funcionando apropiadamente. Henson dijo que su familia y amigos han estado teniendo problemas para registrarse para enviar mensajes en la aplicación Getting Out.

“Algunos de los problemas que han estado surgiendo en esta etapa de desarrollo incluye: las llamadas se desconectan, las conexiones telefónicas son interrumpidas, las películas se detienen por varios segundos. La conexión es lenta, las aplicaciones se cierran o no responden”, escribió Henson.

Henson dijo que el teclado [de las tabletas] de los presos se han estado borrando. Los presos que se han metido a cambiar la configuración (setting) para alterar el color del teclado o apagar el sonido perdieron el teclado de sus tabletas.

“Mi teclado desapareció”,



Tablet

Global Tel\*Link

Global Tel\*Link

Henson escribió. GTL supuestamente le enviaría una tableta nueva.

La Iniciativa de Ley de la Prisión (The Prison Policy Initiative) realizó un estudio en el año 2019 y concluyó: “estas tabletas gratuitas no son como los iPads que puedes comprar en la tienda. Están fabricadas con material barato y no tienen acceso al internet”.

A pesar de lo defectuoso que son estos aparatos, los presos dicen que se necesitan las tabletas.

“San Quentin está sobre poblado”, dijo Rahsaan Thomas, un residente [de esta prisión]. “A veces la línea para apuntarse para llamar por teléfono son muy largas. No hay espacios suficientes para que los visitantes puedan registrarse en los días de visita. Existen 40 espacios para una población de más de 2,000 personas”.

Thomas dijo que las tabletas ayudarían a reducir las líneas de teléfono en los edificios y abrirían más espacios para las visitas. Aunque algunos presos tienen dudas sobre las nuevas tabletas.

“Yo pienso que hay un plan oculto detrás de las tabletas”, dijo Jesse Blue. “Yo creo que quieren eliminar las visitas de contacto. Ellos quieren evitar la molestia. Es muy conveniente realizar face time, especialmente durante



los cierres de la institución (lockdown)”.

GTL provee servicio telefónico a todas las prisiones del CDCR. GTL también brinda servicios de mensajes y correo electrónico. La compañía provee el software para realizar citas para las visitas y también las visitas en persona del CDCR.

Están colocando Kioscos en todas las prisiones estatales para aumentar los servicios del GTL.

GTL también se ha asociado con Sesame Street para proporcionar material educativo para los hijos de los presos.

De acuerdo al Prison Legal News (PLN), GTL ha

tenido que pagar millones de dólares para saldar demandas a través de los años por presuntas violaciones a la Ley de Protección al Usuario de Teléfono de 1991 (Telephone Consumer Protection Act).

En octubre 2020, un juez de New Jersey aprobó un convenio de 25 millones de dólares entre GTL y presos de New Jersey, quienes pagaron hasta 100 veces más la tarifa de teléfono actual entre el 2006 y el 2016, según el PLN.

GTL también ha sido demandado por cobrar ilegalmente precios altos en las llamadas por cobrar realizadas por presos a través de los

Estados Unidos.

En Washington D.C. una demanda supuso que GTL y otros participaron en proyectos ilegales para aumentar sus ganancias a costa de otras personas.

“A pesar de todo, todavía deseo tener una tableta gratis”, explicó Thomas. “Debemos tener acceso a la nueva tecnología para prepararnos a reincorporarnos [a la sociedad] y para prepararnos para el cierre [de la institución] debido a la siguiente pandemia. Los presos solo tienen que seguir demandando hasta que GTL nos trate con derecho”.

—Traducido por  
Tare Beltranchuc

## El sueño de un emigrante persistente

Por: Daniel López  
Escritor

El sueño Americano se convirtió en pesadilla para Ramiro Quezada de 52 años de edad, originario de Guadalupe Jalisco, México, quien trabajó de sol a sol cargando bultos en una central de abastos para pagar su viaje a los Estados Unidos.

Quezada viajó a la frontera de Nogales, Sonora, donde le pagó a un coyote para que lo ayudara a cruzar la línea fronteriza de los Estados Unidos. Quezada tuvo suerte y a los cuatro días ya estaba en San Francisco, CA. Él trabajó por 6 meses en una carnicería, pero su patrona se rehusó a pagarle su salario. “La señora me

dijo que yo solo trabajaba por la comida”, Quezada añadió “La tuve que demandar y el juez le ordenó que me pagara \$3,500 dólares”.

Después trabajó como palettero, donde ganaba el 50% de la venta e incluía un lugar donde dormir. Cada mañana a las 7 a.m. llegaba a la palettería para cargar su carrito de paletas y después su patrón lo llevaba a él y a otros paletteros a diferentes ciudades como: San Mateo, San Francisco, y Oakland.

“Arrempujando mi carrito de paletas recorría las escuelas, parques e iglesias; me la pasaba para ya y para acá”, dijo Quezada.

Un viernes mientras Quezada se encontraba descansando en el parque, la

“Cuando me trasladaron de la prisión hacia la corte tenía temor. Pensaba que me darían más tiempo”

—Ramiro Quezada

policía lo arrestó y terminó en la cárcel del condado acusado de robo con violencia.

“En la ida a corte me ofrecieron 3 años de prisión

si me declaraba culpable. En mi ignorancia pensé que en un juicio el jurado me encontraría inocente”, dijo Quezada.

“El jurado me encontró culpable y me sentenciaron a 23 años de prisión. El día de la sentencia no me contenía de llorar. Me sentí solo y abandonado como que nadie creía en mí, 23 años de prisión me parecía una eternidad”, dijo Quezada.

Después de perder el juicio, a los dos años le negaron la apelación.

El nunca se rindió y le escribió al Proyecto de Inocencia. Le respondieron que solo admitían casos serios. “Un amigo que sabía de leyes me ayudó a mandar una petición. Me respond-

ieron que si tenía un testigo que digiera que yo estaba en el parque, ellos podrían abrir el caso”. Dijo Quezada.

Desafortunadamente, él no pudo confirmar lo que le pedían pero siguió perseverando y llenó un formulario para solicitar el perdón al gobernador más nunca recibió contestación. Sin embargo, después de sobrevivir el coronavirus. El CDCR lo recomendó para reducción de sentencia.

“Cuando me trasladaron de la prisión hacia la corte tenía temor. Pensaba que me darían más tiempo” dijo Quezada. En su defensa su abogado presentó expedientes médicos que demostraban su vulnerabilidad por tener cáncer, además de

presentar cartas que comprobaban su buena conducta y desempeño laboral. Posteriormente, el juez redujo su sentencia.

Él regresó feliz de la corte porque en seis meses se iría a su casa. “Sentí como si me quitaran un carga de encima. Ahora tengo una esperanza”, expresó Quezada.

“Viéndolo bien estoy agradecido con Dios porque si no fuera por la prisión no estuviera vivo. Aquí me han tratado de la hepatitis-C y me están operando de un tumor-canceroso en el hígado y me están dando quimioterapia. Tan pronto termine el tratamiento, saldré en libertad gracias a Dios”, concluyó Quezada.

# The rich history of San Quentin baseball

SPORTS

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

San Quentin baseball dates almost to the beginning of the prison's 167-year existence. During that long history, a laundry list of great pitchers have hurled on the Field of Dreams. One of those was Blackie Schwamb, one of "the greatest pitchers in prison history," according to *Crooks Tour.com*.

Blackie Schwamb was a Los Angeles native who became enmeshed in a life of crime and ended up at San Quentin. As he grew up, he sprouted in height to a long 6'5", towering over most of the people around him.

According to the article, Schwamb was a volatile drinker. He joined the Navy during WWII, but spent the majority of his time in the brig for going AWOL.

After the war, he worked as an enforcer for the notorious mobster Mickey Cohen, while he pitched semi-pro on the side. His pitching skills were good enough to attract the attention of a talent scout, and not long after that he was picked up by the St.

Louis Browns.

Schwamb's major-league career was sunk by his addiction to alcohol. The Browns cut him loose, and he went back to Los Angeles where he reconnected with a life of crime. Eventually Schwamb was sentenced to life in prison for a beating that led to a death.

While doing his life sentence at San Quentin, Schwamb became the prison's number one pitcher with 100-mph fastballs and wicked curve balls.

In his 10-year pitching career, Schwamb accumulated a record of 131 wins with only 35 losses. Most of the record was against professional competition. He even pitched no-hitters against a team that had five major leaguers on it.

Schwamb made parole in 1960 and had a short run with two baseball teams until the smoke in his arm faded, ending his pitching career.

After Schwamb, other pitchers graced San Quentin's Field of Dreams. The baseball field was refurbished by the San Francisco Giants more than 20 years



Sam Hearn, SQNews

The San Quentin Athletics and San Quentin Giants stand for the National Anthem before a rival game.

ago, providing a stage for more recent fast-batters to throw some no-hitters and strikes across home plate.

The prison has three official teams: the San Quentin Giants, the San Quentin

A's and the San Quentin Hardtimers. They competed against outside teams until COVID hit.

At the present time, the great pitchers of San Quentin's baseball teams are not

getting the practice that will keep the smoke in their pitching arms.

Recent greats tossing heat across home plate at The Q include Gary Townsend, Carrington "The Natural"

Russelle, John James, Anthony "T-Tone" Denard, Jeffery "Dewey" Dumont, Mark "Solo" Wiley, Chris "Max" Hickson, Royce "Gator" Rose, and Michael "StoneyBoy" Stone.

## TIER TALK

Controversial NBA player Kyrie Irvin has been adamant about not getting vaccinated and it has caused him to get sidelined in his career as a professional basketball player with the NBA. He has made many millions of dollars, so it won't affect his lifestyle financially, but he also lost many endorsements.

The big concern, however, is how his decision might cause the many fans who follow him to also decide not to get inoculated. Because he's a leader and superstar in the NBA, media outlets say that he should be a role model, lead by example, and not turn the minds of those who are already on the fence about getting vaccinated. Some athletes at The

## To vaccinate or not to vaccinate?

*Delvon Adams talks about professional athletes and the controversial decision not to get the COVID vaccine*

Q share Irvin's sentiments and are not getting vaccinated. Delvon Adams, 32, SQ Warriors' basketball power forward and quarterback of the Silver Backs intramural football team, is also not vaccinated. He shares his perspective on the subject.

TH: Since you are a sports star at The Q and you yourself are not vaccinated, what are your thoughts on the Kyrie Irvin situation?

DA: When I first heard about it, I understood what he was saying because I didn't take it myself. I agree with him.

TH: What did you understand about his decision, and

why didn't you take the shot?

DA: When they first brought out them shots, I thought about the past experiences, like the Tuskegee experience. And I compared the medicine then to what we have now, and I thought about the government conspiracy.

TH: I can understand your distrust of the government and I'm pretty sure that many other Black Americans share your point of view and Kyrie's concern. But the medicine these days, mixed with the science, is much more sophisticated than it was back in those old eras. But being that Kyrie Irvin is a superstar with many

followers, how would you have handled it if you were in his shoes?

DA: I would of took the shot if I was papered up like him and had followers like he got.

TH: So, are you saying that it's about the money to you? If somebody would have paid you to get vaccinated, you would have?

DA: When I think about it, I would say no. Because it's bigger than the money. But if I was in his shoes and already had a lot of money, I would have.

TH: Yeah, *ABC News* did a survey and it concluded that 94% did not support Irvin's decision, only 5% did,

and 1% were unsure. That sentiment of "being vaccinated could stop the virus" is more believable than not. Moreover, he did not only let down his fans, he also let down his teammates. What do you say to that?

DA: The word *sportsmanship* is sports discipline. It means unity. It's how you get on one accord with each other. Now, because of that, his team might not make it to the Championship because he's not here to contribute. But, if they do, he going to be left behind. And being left behind don't feel good. I don't know how he feel, but for me, I wouldn't feel good about it. I wouldn't feel good

about not being able to play sports.

TH: That's a good point right there. When you play basketball, how does it make you feel?

DA: When I play basketball, it helps me get my problems solved; it's my outlet. Playing sports, period, helps relieve me of the stress of being in prison.

TH: Let me ask you this last question. If Kyrie Irvin would have gotten vaccinated, would you have also?

DA: Although I'm a fan of his and I believe in him standing up for his belief, I don't see me getting the shot just because he did. A lot come with that. I still don't trust the doctors yet, and that the vaccine really works. Because every time you look at the news, you see that a new variant have come and it penetrates the vaccines. So it seems useless to me.

—Timothy Hicks

## Finding dreams through the comfort of futbol

The American dream for some people is to connect with family, live life in the simple manner, buy a house, keep a job, get a dog, and raise kids. But for San Quentin resident Francisco Legorreta, he found his dream through the sport of futbol (soccer in Spanish).

"I hope my daughter takes this great opportunity seriously," Legorreta said. "Seeing my kids living the opportunity I had, makes me feel a portion of the American dream."

Not only did Legorreta's daughter take after him by adapting his love for the sport, she is being trained by professionals.

Legorreta always wanted to be a soccer star since the age of 12; however, his dreams were cut short when he came to prison. Fortunately, the apple did not fall too far from the tree. Twenty-three years later he is able to live out his dream of being a soccer star vicariously through his daughter.

Life took an unfortunate turn for many soccer athletes like Legorreta when the pan-

demio hit SQ. His American soccer dream in prison was put to a halt.

For Legorreta, when the program was paused it took away his imaginary fashion of how he bonds with his daughter.

"Being that my dreams faded away from being locked up, playing soccer in prison reminds me of my daughter," said Legorreta.

That same bonding sentiment Legorreta feels is common for other soccer athletes in SQ. Family is their motivation but futbol is a way they rehabilitate themselves.

Refugio Juarez, 50, is the SQ Earthquakes' field coach. He has been serving an eight-year sentence and says soccer is his best form of rehabilitation.

"Soccer and running are the most appropriate tools to maintain my physical condition, and helping with the soccer program gives me the privilege to serve the community. I believe in serving because by serving others, I help myself," said Juarez.

When the program was suspended, it was like being dead, said Juarez. Since programs have opened up and futbol players are able to get out on a warm day and scrimmage together on the field, futbol players have experienced physical and mental benefits.

"During the lockdown my thoughts were about playing soccer; unfortunately, I couldn't do it in my cell," SQ resident Rolando Tut, 36, said. "But now that I'm able to come outside, my first thought was to practice my favorite sport, futbol. During the lockdown I had opposing thoughts [mental challenges]. However, now playing futbol I feel liberated mentally and physically. The Soccer Team Program, which is very well organized, helps me to clear up my mind and to feel a level of freedom, even here in SQ."

Tut plays with the SQ Earthquakes and has been at SQ since 2017. He has been attending a variety of self-help programs. However, he said that none were on his mind



Eddie Herena, SQNews

The SQ futbol team faces off with a team from outside the prison.

during the lockdown as much as futbol.

New arrival Dada Taye, 28, stood balancing the soccer ball and breathed a winded

sigh after warming up for a practice.

"It's really cool to come out and do what I like to do, which is practice soccer despite be-

ing in prison. This sport helps me to feel free," said Taye.

—Timothy Hicks, with Carlos Drouaillet contributing

# DIY credit calculator

By Joshua Strange  
and James Duff

On May 1, 2021, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) increased the percentages for Good Conduct Credit (GCC) under Proposition 57.

In its May 7 memo detailing this emergency regulation, CDCR stated the purpose was to inspire eligible people to stay on a positive path of good behavior.

The incarcerated population welcomed the news but it has also been accompanied by confusion and concern over how to properly calculate updated Earliest Possible Release Dates (EPRD) or Minimum Eligible Parole Dates (MEPD). While this confusion could have been eased by making the credit retroactive, CDCR did not extend the new percentages to before May 1, 2021.

CDCR is in the process of officially updating EPRDs and MEPDs, but many incarcerated people are understandably eager to calculate and verify their new dates for themselves. If CDCR has already calculated your new date, then you can consult with your counselor about your "calculation worksheet" (CDCR 1897-u) to see the methods used.

Alternatively, you can use our Do-It-Yourself (DIY) programming credit calculator at your convenience to follow the same steps as CDCR to arrive at your new, albeit unofficial, date. To illustrate the steps, we have assumed an example of someone starting their term after May 1, 2021. All that is needed to complete the calculation is the start date of your CDCR custody and your original Maximum Date and some basic math skills.

## DIY Good Conduct Credit Calculator

New Prop. 57 Credit Calculation:

**Step 1** – The difference between 5/1/2021 and your Max. Date converted to # of days. First subtract any awarded credits from your Max. Date.

**Step 2** – # of Days x GCC% (either 0.333, 0.50, or 1.00) = Projected New-Prop. 57 GCC in days.

## Combined GCC, Programming Credits, and New Dates:

**Step 1** – Add the # of days for each relevant type of GCC credit together = Total days of GCC. The types could include Pre-Prop. 57 credit and/or Pre-5/1/2021 Prop. 57 credit as applicable, in addition to your New Prop. 57 credit.

**Step 2** – Subtract your total days of GCC from your original Max. Date = Your new EPRD or MEPD.

**Step 3** – Finally, to estimate your best case, unofficial release date or parole eligibility date, subtract from your new EPRD or MEPD any other in-progress or projected Milestone, Rehabilitation, or Educational credits anticipated during your term to get your best case date.

## CREDIT EARNING CATEGORIES

### Section 3043.2 — Good Conduct Credit (GCC):

"Award of GCC shall advance an inmate's release date if sentenced to determinate term or advance an inmate's initial parole hearing date... if sentenced to indeterminate sentence with the possibility of parole."

"Good Conduct" means compliance with regulations and rules, and performing assigned duties.

Good Conduct Credits can be forfeited for serious rule violations.

Starting on 5/1/2017 with the passage of Proposition 57, credit earning rate increased from 15% to 20% of time served for violent felonies (as defined under subdivision © of subsection 667.5 of the CA Penal Code), and to 33% for non-violent felonies and 50% for firefighters and other minimum custody circumstances.

Credit earning rate increased on 5/1/2021 to 33% for violent felonies, 50% for non-violent second and third strike offenses, and 30 days of credit for 30 days served (i.e., 100%) for Work Groups M (Minimum Custody) and F (Firefighting and Non-Firefighting Camp Placement).

### Section 3043.3 — Milestone Completion Credit (MCC):

MCC earned at rate of approximately 1 week credit for 1 month participation

in approved education class or milestone program upon completion.

Capped at 12 weeks (84 days) of MCC per year with rollover of excess credits to the following year allowed. Calculation schedule based on "credit anniversary date" defined as the date of completion of first milestone credit.

Subject to forfeiture for serious rule violations.

### Section 3043.4 — Rehabilitation Achievement Credit (RAC):

RAC earned at a rate of 10 days credit for 52 hours of participation in approved self-help classes and RAC programs (as of 5/1/2019, previously 7 days per 52 hours).

Capped at 40 days credit per year with rollover of excess credit to the following year allowed.

Credit anniversary based on date of award of first RAC.

Subject to forfeiture for serious rule violations.

### Section 4043.5 — Educational Merit Credit (EMC):

180 days credit (6 months) earned for each of the following degrees: GED, Associates, Bachelors, Post-Graduate, and professional certification as Alcohol and Drug counselor.

Must complete at least 50% of degree class credits during current prison term with sanction of the local prison's education department.

EMC awarded after receipt of degree from "regionally accredited institution" for colleges.

GED credit increased from 90 days to 180 days on 5/1/2019.

Not subject to forfeiture.

### Section 3043.6 — Extraordinary Conduct Credit (ECC):

Up to 12 months credit awarded for "heroic act in life-threatening situation" or "providing extraordinary assistance in maintaining the safety and security of a prison".

Not subject to forfeiture. Used to award 12 weeks (84 days) ECC credit during pandemic in 2020 for all eligible inmates for following COVID safety protocols.

# Positive TB case prompts testing at federal facility in San Diego

By Randy Hansen  
Journalism Guild Writer

A tuberculosis case was reported at the federal Metropolitan Correctional Center in San Diego, prompting officials to notify and offer tests to all people who may have been exposed over a five-month window, according to news reports on Nov. 2, 2021.

"Testing is recommended for people who were exposed to assure they are not infected, since initial infection usually has no symptoms," said San Diego County public health officer Dr. Wilma Wooten, according to the *City News Service*. "For any infected individuals, early diagnosis and prompt treatment can prevent the infectious form of the disease."

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacteria that targets the lungs. It transmits through tiny infectious droplets coughed or sneezed into the air in similar fashion as COVID. Most people exposed to TB, however, do not become infected and it often requires prolonged exposure with an infected individual to develop the disease, according to reporting by the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

TB symptoms include persistent coughing, fever, night sweats, and weight loss. It can be treated and cured with antibiotics, according to health officials, although permanent damage can result from serious, untreated infections.

Health officials noted that a negative TB test typically means that a person is not in-

fect. However, since it may take eight to ten weeks after an infectious exposure for a test to be positive, retesting may be needed. TB is not uncommon in southern California, but reported cases have been generally declining since the early 1990s, according to *City News Service*.

Federal prisons guidelines specify that all newly arrived detainees be screened and tested for TB, according to reporting by the *Union-Tribune*. Medical staff at California state prisons screen new arrivals and test incarcerated people annually for TB.

Incarcerated persons with TB-like or COVID-like symptoms should submit a 7362 form to be seen by a medical provider.

# Biden plan would resolve backlog of green cards, work visas

By George Franco  
Journalism Guild Writer

President Joe Biden has unveiled a social policy and climate change bill that includes an immigration provision that could help millions of families and foreign workers stay in the country.

"The proposal would free up hundreds of thousands of green cards that various administrations failed to use over several decades, making them available for immigrants who are currently caught up in the backlog," according to the *New York Times*.

Biden's proposal would also provide protection from deportation for millions of undocumented immigrants who are long-time residents of the country and will require the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to efficiently process immigrant applications.

"I am certainly supportive of clearing the visa backlog," said Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., who previously expressed concern about supporting an immigration proposal "for businesses" without providing a pathway to citizenship.

This latest proposal would keep skilled workers and their immediate family members and other relatives in the United States.

"I got 15 years in the U.S and I'm still considered a visa holder or alien," said Dr. Pranav Singh, who returned to India last summer after years of waiting for the visa. "How long can you stand that level of abuse?"

Singh spent 10 years treating people with respiratory issues, then realized how the green card backlog forced him to leave his family and job in Iowa. If his employment changed, he could lose his visa.

The U.S. has limited each country to a number of green cards per year, so countries like India where many people applied to work in the U.S. must wait many years.

The number of green cards available for foreign employees is typically 140,000 while there are usually roughly 226,000 visa cards available for relatives hoping to join families in the United States.

Hundreds of thousands of cards, neglected and unused over decades by different administrations, would be available to immigrants in the waiting list.

The Trump administration suspended travel from some African and Muslim countries and suspended visa processing during the pandemic.

Elizabeth MacDonough of the Senate Parliament has repeatedly shot down any ef-

orts to include immigration provisions in Biden's pending social package, the newspaper reported.

But Democrats argue that things are different now because they are only asking for previously approved green cards and visas to be reapproved. It won't raise the debt ceiling or widen the scope of the immigrant population, they say.

Ritchie Torres, D-N.Y., is contacting Senate colleges trying to overrule the parliamentarian, because they believe she has no intent to support any immigration proposal.

The unused green cards would be recaptured and available to applicants; those on the waiting list could pay higher fees to move up in line for the legal status under the new provisions.

This proposal comes when Democrats are pushing to make good on the president's pledge to restore the immigration system, the story said.

California Democrat Zoe Lofgren said the backlog for families and employment-based visas is growing steadily, from 8.7 million petitions in 2018 to more than 9 million in 2021.

"Extremely well-educated individuals are now being poached by our economic competitors," Lofgren said.

# Gov. Newsom resists mandatory vaccination of state prison guards

State officials have urged a federal judge to order all California prison guards to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

"We do really have a problem of continuing major outbreaks," said J. Clark Kelso, the court-appointed medical receiver in charge of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

Kelso told U.S. District Court Judge Jon Tigar the virus has been spread repeatedly from staff to the incarcerated, the *Los Angeles Times* reported Sept. 25.

The prison guards union opposed mandatory inoculation, warning it could lead to a staff shortage by vaccination opponents.

Gov. Gavin Newsom's office released a statement saying the governor "led California to the lowest transmission rate and highest vaccinations in the nation by following scientific consensus and public

health guidelines." But he recently opposed mandates for prison staff.

The statement added, "Additionally, California also led the nation in providing early access to vaccines for incarcerated people. Currently, 76% of the incarcerated population has been fully vaccinated, with 56% of staff vaccinated and another 4% having received at least one dose."

Prison guards attorney Gregg Adam argued the state was not indifferent to the pandemic and had offered vaccines to 99% of the incarcerated population — although almost a quarter of them refused.

Kelso said he believed the spread of COVID-19 mostly came from prison staff — causing more than 50,000 inmate infections and over 20,000 employees to test positive.

He reported COVID-19

infections resulted in 240 incarcerated deaths statewide and 39 staff deaths as of late September.

Don Spector, of the Prison Law Office, is one of the lead attorneys representing prisoners in a law suit against the state for overcrowding. He said, "The guards are mostly the source of infection."

Spector also said the guards and other unions have considerable influence on the prisons.

In July 2021, the California Correctional Peace Officers Assn. donated \$1.75 million to Newsom's recall defense fund.

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which represents about 12,000 prison staff, contributed \$5.5 million toward Newsom's anti-recall campaign.

Some 1,607 prison employees tested positive for the virus in August.

— Randy Hansen

# AZ prison settlement agreement tossed

By Ray Torres  
Journalism Guild Writer

A settlement agreement to improve the quality of health care in Arizona prisons was thrown out after six years of the state showing little interest in making improvements, according to *The Associated Press*.

Judge Roslyn Silver concluded that a trial will proceed after contempt of court fines totaling \$2.5 million for noncompliance couldn't motivate the state to comply, the Oct. 30, 2021 *AP* story said.

The judge found that the state made erroneous excuses and baseless legal arguments, which led to prisoners suffering and death.

"So much of the death and suffering that our experts found was completely preventable," said Corene Kendrick, one of the attorneys for the prisoners.

"And if there had been interventions earlier, we wouldn't have people suffering permanent injury and

death, including death by suicide and death by medical conditions that were ignored for all too long."

The state failed to meet the basic requirements for providing adequate care for incarcerated residents, the lawsuit said. Prisoner complaints of undetected cancer and being told to pray to be cured after begging for treatment is included in the complaint.

Failure to diagnose a metastasized cancer and another prisoner waiting two years for a biopsy were also documented in the lawsuit, according to *The AP*.

Lawyers for the prisoners are asking the court to take over the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry health care system and to appoint an official to oversee its operations.

Arizona governor Doug Ducey has stated in the past that he wants state agency directors — not judges — running state agencies.

But lawyers complain

that staff shortages, underfunding, and privatization of health care are creating barriers to improving prison medical and mental health care. They also say that the use of isolation cells for those who suffer severe mental illness contributes to an even greater health crisis.

Prisoners are routinely denied access to some necessary medications, *The AP* said. End-stage cancer patients are not receiving adequate pain management medication and even minimal mental health care standards are not being met, according to attorneys.

The lawsuit has cost the state \$20 million, plus \$10 million for prison officials' defense and another \$8.1 million for prisoners' attorneys, according to records.

The Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry declined a request to comment on the trial. The case will be decided by Judge Silver, not by a jury.

# NM governor proposes reversal of bail reforms



Official Photo

By **Bruce Bowman**  
Journalism Guild writer

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's new public safety initiative could roll back bail reform laws and lead to jail overcrowding and excessive use of force by police, according to a New Mexico safety coalition called SAFE.

The SAFE group includes criminal defense lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, and the New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The Democratic governor has proposed spending \$100

million to hire an additional 1,000 new "community oriented" law enforcement officers statewide and create new standards for pretrial release among people accused of certain crimes who are presumed to be dangerous, according to the *Las Cruces Sun-News*.

"Those proposals could increase the number of people held in county jails who are prone to coronavirus contagion, and might initiate or exacerbate over-policing of minority communities," SAFE members told a panel of legislatures.

This proposal comes at a

time when Albuquerque's police force is in the midst of sweeping reforms aimed at reining in police brutality with guidance from the U.S. Department of Justice and court oversight, under a consent decree initiated in 2014.

In 2016 voters approved a constitutional amendment that did away with money-based bail for indigent defendants.

Kim Chavez Cook, an appellate attorney for the state Public Defender, urged legislators to be wary of any proposed "rebuttable presumption" of dangerousness for people charged with certain

crimes.

She warned that a rollback of bail reforms might flout the state Constitution and could put more people behind bars before conviction and expose them to COVID-19, according to the Nov. 9, 2021 article.

"It's a tool that we want to use sparingly and only when necessary," Chavez Cook said.

On proposals to vastly expand police forces, Barron Jones of the ACLU cautioned legislators to avoid any regression to policing practices that lead to excessive force, or that might disproportion-

ately target minority communities.

Jones spoke highly about a pilot program that leaves Albuquerque police out of some emergency responses for mental health emergencies.

"Figure out ways to set up law enforcement for success and reduce some of those roles," Jones said.

Complete details on the governor's proposals are not yet available but the upcoming 2022 legislative cycle promises to include some new alternative policing strategies that could hinder progress, according to the SAFE coalition.

## States circumventing qualified immunity laws

By **William Earl Tolbert**  
Journalism Guild Writer

Colorado and New Mexico have found promising ways to hold rogue police officers accountable and circumvent one of the biggest barriers — the legal defense of qualified immunity, *USA Today* reports.

These states passed laws that give people who were subjected to excessive use of force an avenue to sue in state court and bypass federal immunity doctrines.

"If more states were to follow New Mexico and Colorado's lead, good police officers could regain the trust and confidence that law enforcement so desperately needs," said an editorial written by *USA Today's* editorial board.

The Supreme Court developed qualified immunity as part of its interpretation of the Civil Rights Act of 1871 (also known as the Ku Klux Klan Act) and its codified cause of action at Section 1983.

The statute provides a cause of action for "the

### *New Mexico, Colorado pass new laws to hold officers accountable for using excessive force*

deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws" by a person acting "under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any State or Territory."

Police officers who are charged with egregious use of force ending in the death of a person will commonly not be held for criminal prosecution, the editorial said.

A police officer in California allegedly stole \$225,000 while executing a search warrant. Federal judges granted the officer qualified immunity, ruling it wasn't "clearly established" that the theft violates the Constitution.

Both Colorado and New Mexico passed new legislation to ban the use of qualified immunity in state courts. New Mexico allows all public officials to be sued under state law.

Colorado and New York

make individual officers personally liable, mandating they pay for at least part of civil rights violations. Colorado makes officers pay either \$25,000 or 5% of any damages. This is a departure from police departments generally paying damage awards.

Recently, lawmakers in at least 25 states have introduced legislation to circumvent major constraints to police accountability in liability litigations, reported *USA Today* on Aug. 6, 2021. Many of these attempts have failed.

California's civil rights law faced fierce opposition from California law enforcement groups. The proposals passed the state Senate in May with its important improvements intact.

An opposing view was put forth by Jason Johnson, president of the Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund: "Without protections, law enforcement officers

could hesitate to make tough and often life or death decisions to avoid potential litigation."

When government agencies are mandated to pay damages for their officers' conduct, the cost is passed on to the taxpayer. All police officers are subject to disciplinary action for illegal and unethical behavior while on duty.

Law enforcement groups insist that laws like those of New York, Colorado, and New Mexico will cause officers to quit and discourage others from seeking law enforcement careers.

"When police are out of line with the law, their training or applicable policy, they should face appropriate remedial action," wrote Johnson. "But ending qualified immunity for police won't recruit another good cop, fire a bad one, boost morale or improve training. But it could well cost lives and livelihoods."

## Gerrymandering and mass incarceration

By **Daniel Chairez**  
Journalism Guild Writer

As lawmakers draw lines for congressional, state legislative districts, and local governmental agencies, many people worry that mass incarceration will unfairly shift the balance of political power to rural White communities.

There are 2.3 million people incarcerated in America's jails and prisons and most of them are from Black and Latino communities, but they are housed in rural White communities — places where their vote doesn't count but their body counts for purposes of representation.

"This is very reminiscent of the Three-Fifths Compromise, of how Black and Brown bodies are still being used to this day in most places around the United States to advantage White votes and White political influence," Brianna Remster told the *Washington Post*. Remster is an associate professor in Villanova University's Department of Sociology and Criminology.

The Three-fifths Compromise is where framers of the U.S. Constitution agreed to count enslaved Black people, who had no political power, as three-fifths of a person for the purposes of determining the number of congressional seats allocated to Southern states.

Remster and her colleague Rory Kramer worked together to study the effects of prison gerrymandering on political power in Pennsylvania.

Kramer told the *Post* that prison gerrymandering strips power from entire communities because it deprives them of the full voting power they are entitled to under the doctrine of one-person, one-vote.

"It's not just about them or their families," Kramer added. "It's the person down the street; it's the victim of their crime who lives in the same

neighborhood; it's grandma down the street who's just lived in that neighborhood for 70 years. It's actually harming all their political power."

Since 1850 the Census Bureau has counted prisoners as residents of the communities where they are imprisoned, instead of the communities where they hail from and probably will return to after they serve their sentence. It's because of the bureau's "usual residence rule," which defines a person's residence as the place where they usually eat and sleep, according to the *Post*.

There are 12 states that now count prisoners as residents of their home communities for the purposes of political representation, according to the Prison Gerrymandering Project, part of the nonprofit Prison Policy Initiative.

Nevada is among the growing number of states that are now required to count prisoners based on their last known address. This is because of a 2019 law banning "prison gerrymandering."

However, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) attorneys are threatening to sue because Nevada prison officials say they only have usable addresses for 6,275 people out of the 12,214 counted in the 2020 census, or about 51%, according to *The Associated Press*.

"The State Demographer is obligated to not use information that it knows is inaccurate, and the Legislature and other governmental entities are obligated to not reapportion representation based upon the inaccurate population estimates," ACLU attorneys Holly Welborn and Chris Peterson wrote.

Almost 40 states still use the practice of prison gerrymandering, including states with high incarceration rates like Texas and Florida, the report said.

## SF District Attorney unveils new online dashboard

### *Website bridges information gap between arrest and prosecution*

By **Jad Salem**  
Journalism Guild Writer

A new website portal was created by the San Francisco District Attorney's Office to track arrests and prosecutions.

The new site, called "SFDA Prosecutions of SFPD Incidents & Arrests", will provide data on the San Francisco Police Department arrests and those prosecuted by the SFDA, according to CBS SF.

"For example, say a member of the public is interest-

ed in learning how many robbery cases law enforcement presented to the SFDA in 2021 and how the SFDA responded to those cases," read a SFDA statement. "By selecting the appropriate filters, a public user of this dashboard could learn that in 2021 law enforcement presented the SFDA with 280 cases in which robbery was the most serious charge. Of those, the SFDA filed new charges in 71.79% of them and took action on 84.64% of them."

Users can also find data

on the kind of crimes occurring in the city and how the SFDA's office handles them. The site allows the public access to detailed criminal justice information such as incidents, arrests, prosecutions, and the roles and legal process between the SFPD and the district attorney's office, reported the article.

"The San Francisco DA's updated data dashboard is a leap forward in the transparency race that every district attorney in the nation should be running in to improve the criminal justice system," said

Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig.

The SFDA office under head District Attorney Chesa Boudin was the first DA office to provide its prosecution data to the public, in 2019. Currently, Boudin is facing a possible recall election, but his campaign is still dedicated to his office transparency, noted the article.

"My office is committed to transparency and data-driven policies and these new dashboards promote increased public access to criminal justice data," said Boudin.

By **Randy Hansen**  
Journalism Guild Writer

Federal sentencing guidelines are vague and ambiguous, due to differences in U.S. Supreme Court opinions and the U.S. Sentencing Commission's judicial rules of court, according to *The Hill* opinion contributor Dawinder Sidhu.

The Supreme Court has refused to resolve conflicts between federal appeals courts regarding court rules. It deferred those duties to the Sentencing Commission, which has not had a quorum in the past three years, Sidhu reported in a Dec. 1, 2021 opinion article for *The Hill*.

"Anyone interested in coher-

## SCOTUS dodges ambiguous sentencing

ence and consistency in criminal justice should be troubled by the court's refusal to review conflicts involving the federal sentencing guidelines," said Sidhu. "It is one thing to be discerning in case selection; it is another to step aside altogether from guideline cases that implicate the fair and uniform administration of justice."

The Supreme Court has a primary role that requires it to resolve questions of conflicting law and disagreements by the federal appeal courts.

"The problem" said Sidhu "...is that the court has refused

to hear all guideline conflicts, not just those the commission is actively addressing. In adapting this broad position, the court has ceded its role of ironing out judicial conflicts to the commission."

The commission, even at its full capacity, lacks the capacity to take on many of the conflicting cases, according to *The Hill* article.

In cases where there has been judicial conflict, the Supreme Court has regularly abstained from interfering with the parallel administration or state proceedings of law, re-

ported Sidhu.

Since 1987, more than 1.9 million individuals have been sentenced under federal sentencing guidelines. Disagreements about the meaning of the guidelines has led to sentencing disparities that range from "fixed terms" to a "life sentence."

Supreme Court Justices Neil Gorsuch and Sonia Sotomayor have opined that the court should not hear a sentencing guideline case. They reasoned that the U.S. Sentencing Commission should "address the issue in the first instance."

However, according to Sidhu, the Supreme Court did take a case to resolve a conflict in 1991. At issue was the question of whether a stipulation must be contained in the formal plea agreement instructions if the stipulation did not establish a higher offense.

The Supreme Court held that regardless of whether the stipulation had to be in the form of a plea agreement, the substance did not establish a higher offense, according to the article.

In the court's action it also added language to the disposition of the case. The court added that "because the commission possessed authority to amend the guidelines in response to interpretive conflicts,

the court should be 'more restrained and circumspect in ... resolving such conflicts,'" said Sidhu.

This posture of the Supreme Court refusing to hear all guideline conflicts is a broad position that now has ceded its role of ironing out judicial conflicts, leaving the commission with no clear answer.

Justice Samuel Alito wrote, "No other federal agency — in any branch — has ever performed a role anything like it."

Sidhu added, "Indeed, the court does not forgo consideration of a case when Congress or an administrative agency may one day amend a statute or regulation producing conflict."

# Second annual 'Dream Big' workshop graduates 23

By Timothy Hicks  
Staff Writer

The second annual graduating Dream Big class of bestselling author Bob Goff received its certificates for participating in a class that embodies spirituality, hope and ambition on Dec. 14.

All the classmates were draped in their graduation gowns and wore caps with tassels as their faces beamed while listening to Goff on stage.

"I'm learning from you guys," Goff said while pointing into the crowd. "And one thing I learned is to find a big ambition and go for it. Coming to see you guys is one of my greatest ambitions"

Chapel B was half full of incarcerated residents and three guests brought in by Goff. Jody Luke is a returning attendee who has had the Dream Big experience. Two new guys came with Bob as well; one was named Kevin Williams and the other was called "Bo". Both were new to the prison experience.

After Goff introduced them and gave a brief testimony of how he reunited with his sister after 35 months, he asked Williams to speak about his life. Williams is the franchise owner of a Chick Filet in Atlanta.

Williams shared how he enjoys building relationships with those who work in the restaurant. He also shared how much caring for others really means to him and how it's most important to help someone in need.

"I'm humbled to be here with the incarcerated," Williams said. "Bob changed my life. He changed the way I think. I see the human in everybody now. I look for the purpose. We all just need somebody to believe in us."

Believing in yourself and someone else were some of

the spiritual principles that Goff taught in the class. But it was Goff's humorous way of addressing the crowd about how to be audacious when pursuing their goals that was the basis of the course.

"Bob gave us the permission to dream big again," said class facilitator Carrington Russelle. "By being in prison, a lot of us have lost that passion to dream or to aspire to be great and even have a big dream. Bob showed us how to have absurd expectations and accomplishments. He encouraged guys to be something beyond these prison walls."

The course that Goff teaches is immersed in spiritual principles and kindness, wrapped around a message of love — the same sentiments that are in his novel, *Love Does*, and in Williams' novel, *Irrational Kindness*.

It's that same kindness that Sergio Alvaraz, Kolby Southwood and Anthony Graham want to share with the world as humanitarians and preachers.

"My dream is become a preacher," Graham said. "I want to build homeless shelters for the homeless and create some drug rehabs."

Donald Thompson aspires to be a chef when he's released and open a bakery so that he can connect to people.

Glen Harder wants to own a trucking company. Other graduates aspire to become something bigger than what they see themselves as now, while in prison.

Reginald Thorpe said he wants to write about his personal story. He wants to share a story about his upbringing and his experience of having parents who were drug abusers.

"I want to share my story because it might help somebody else. I also want to generate some generational

wealth because I believe that that is the way we can save a lot of families from falling victim to the crisis happening in urban communities," Thorpe said.

Kenny Rogers (not the singer) wants to be an inventor and help his grandfather's solar power invention reach its potential. All 23 graduates shared their aspirations and ambitions and what the class meant to them.

After receiving their certificates from veterans Brandon Riddle Terrell and Sergio Alvaraz, and after Goff sang the graduation theme song, creating a melodious atmosphere, all the graduates turned their tassels to the side and threw their caps in the air to celebrate the victory.

Some of the graduates yelled out, "Opa!" Goff said that Opa is a nickname and term of endearment that his grandkids gave him. He said that it's a name from a Greek wedding.

"I am so glad that I got the opportunity to meet guys of your caliber," Goff said in parting words.

"I want to share my story because it might help somebody else. I also want to generate some generational

wealth because I believe that that is the way we can save a lot of families from falling victim to the crisis happening in urban communities," Thorpe said.

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Above: Celebrated inspirational speaker Bob Goff gives his "Dream Big" presentation in the SQ Protestant Chapel.

Below: Goff takes the pitcher's mound on the SQ Field of Dreams.

## Dream Big Graduates:

Mike Palito  
George Yacoub  
Rahsaan Thomas  
Thanh Tran  
Carlos Robinson  
Steve Pacascio  
Glen Harder  
Kenny Vernon

Edmond Richardson  
Jesse Aires  
Jesse Rose  
Jerry Welch  
Anthony Graham  
Shawn Rankin  
Rasheed Zinnamon

Reginald Thorpe  
Jerry Brown  
Don Thompson  
Chris Rigspy  
Brian Asey  
Calvin Stevens  
Kolby Southwood  
Maurice Reed



Phoeun You, SQNews

## WOMEN'S REENTRY

By Bruce Bowman  
Journalism Guild Writer

An apartment complex in San Francisco is now home to formerly incarcerated women who were released from prison after having killed their abusers.

HomeFree is a transitional housing reentry program started by Five Keys Schools and Programs, on the former Naval base of Treasure Island. The nonprofit organization provides education, vocational training, therapeutic programs and housing for newly released women.

"We are committed to making a vibrant, dignified and safe home, a place that says you're worthy," said Sunny Schwartz, the founder of Five Keys.

Five Keys also helps abused women retroactively introduce evidence of their abuse to state parole boards or to the courts.

Rosemary Dyer, 69, is one of the fortunate formerly incarcerated people who found housing at HomeFree after her release. It was thanks to the effort of Five Keys that Gov. Gavin Newsom commuted Dyer's

# Formerly incarcerated survivors find transitional housing, support through HomeFree women's program

er's sentence in 2020. In 1998, Dyer was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Dyer's husband of eight years was the victim. He had abused and tortured her.

Dyer is a cancer survivor with congestive heart failure and now uses a wheelchair after injuring her hip. In an interview, she talked about why she now lived in such colorful surroundings.

"We wanted color, never wanting to see prison gray again."

Brenda Clubine, an advocate for HomeFree, is a survivor of spousal abuse and was a former police detective. Clubine's intense retelling of her story led to a prison group that got passed on to legislators and governors and then led to public hearings and a 2009 documentary "Sin by silence," which motivated a change in California laws, according to the *New York Times*.

Clubine and Dyer continue a friendship they started at California Women's Prison.

California state Treasurer Fiona Ma, former member of

the state Assembly, co-founded HomeFree. It was Ma's legislation, signed by then Gov. Jerry Brown in 2012, that allowed women convicted of violent crimes to have their cases reheard.

The legislation allowed women who suffered past abuse by husbands to present the defense of battered Women's Syndrome at trial. It also paved the way for evidence of "intimate partner battering" to be presented to the parole board. The law applies to cases before August 1996, according to the article.

"The exact number nationally of 'Rosemary Dyers' still in prison is unknown," said Debbie Mukamal, the executive director of the Stanford Criminal Justice Center at Stanford Law School. The number is estimated to be at least 12,000.

A 1999 report by the U.S. Department of Justice showed that a quarter to a third of imprisoned women had been abused as juveniles and a quarter to half of women had been abused as adults.

Colby Lenz survived abuse and said she was pun-



Five Keys Schools and Programs

The Five Keys HomeFree program provides six two-bedroom units for the reentry needs of women being released from prison.

ished for it.

"By far the most common reason women who have been abused by intimate partners wind up in prison is the so-called accomplice laws, a victim is coerced into being at the

scene of an abuser's violence, driving the getaway car," she said.

Tammy Cooper Garvin is an example of the accomplice laws. She was imprisoned for 28 years for being in a car

while her pimp murdered a client, according to the Oct. 8, 2021 article. She is now a residential coordinator for HomeFree, after having her sentence commuted by the governor.