

San Quentin News



WRITTEN BY THE INCARCERATED – ADVANCING SOCIAL JUSTICE



VOL. 2021 NO. 7

SEPTEMBER 2021 Edition 138

SAN QUENTIN, CALIFORNIA 94964

www.sanquentinnews.com

POPULATION 2,700

Mt. Tam College classes resume

By David Ditto
Staff Writer

A year and a half after cancelling all classes due to the pandemic, Mount Tamalpais College (MTC) reopened in-person instruction inside San Quentin September 14.

Twenty classes are now starting for some 300 students, more than 20 of whom are new college students this Fall 2021 semester.

"It feels so empowering to be back in class," said Floyd Ray Jr., a student in the College Program since 2013.

"I really missed raising my hand and asking that question about the topic on hand."

One and a half years ago, MTC suspended the College Program mid-semester "to reduce exposure to students, especially given that the coronavirus has spread quickly in prisons internationally," said their letter to students on March 12, 2020.

San Quentin residents were quarantined two days later, and all programs stopped.

"At first I didn't think it was a big deal because I thought the shutdown might only last a week," said MTC student Jesse Blue, an *SQNews* staff member. "But a week turned into a month, then a year."

"Now I realize that when the College Program shut down, I shut down. My communication with all the people I'm close with stopped."

"It's a bummer that we couldn't finish, but even though I didn't get a grade, I got an understanding. It's not a failure—just an inconvenience."

Ray Jr. said, "I understand why they shut it down, and appreciate the steps they took." He was in the middle of a math course when



Phoeun You, *SQNews*

Priya Kandaswamy, MTC's new Academic Program Director, administers a math assessment for new students, all of whom must be fully masked and maintain social distance while in the classroom.

classes were cancelled. "Putting our health first meant a lot to me."

Bill Smoot, an instructor teaching inside The Q for nine years, said, "I regretted all aspects of the national crisis, but none more acutely than not being able to teach my MTC students in person."

Even while shut out of the prison, the College Program continued to support increased access to higher education for incarcerated people.

"We completed three courses from the Spring 2020 semester through correspondence in the fall," said Chief Academic Officer Amy Jamgochian.

Because their students were locked in their cells 23 hours a day during the pandemic, Jamgochian and other MTC staff also coordinated Spring and Summer 2021 semesters during which MTC faculty taught dozens of one-credit correspondence courses.

"The correspondence coursework helped me stay grounded," said Ray Jr. "It was a refreshing lifeline given me during a time of uncertainty."

Other students, however, reported their inability to complete courses due to difficulty concentrating, anxiety and health issues during the deadly coronavirus

See *MT. TAM* on page 4

San Quentin COVID-19 response goes on trial

By Joe Garcia
Journalism Guild Chairperson

For the first time ever, public court hearings live-streamed via Zoom inside San Quentin. Incarcerated residents convened daily in the chapel to watch fellow prisoners, corrections officials and medical experts testify about SQ's COVID-19 outbreak.

More than 300 SQ petitioners alleged claims of "deliberate indifference" and "cruel and unusual punishment" in the historic class-action lawsuit that places overcrowding of mass incarceration at issue.

"We weren't deliberately indifferent," said corrections Lt. Sam Robinson, SQ's public information officer. "It's a high bar to prove. We believe the outcome will be in favor of the state."

Spanning 11 days of testimony May 20 to June 4, petitioners' attorneys highlighted administrative actions, and in some instances failures to act, that they argued contributed to the outbreak.

Petitioners originally filed the suit seeking immediate release from the COVID-19 conditions at San Quentin.

Since then, as the immediate crisis of the outbreak has passed, attorneys representing the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) argued petitioners' claims hold no merit because prisoners were no longer in danger.

See *COURT* on page 4

\$1170 Resentencing Pilot Program receives funding

By Harry C. Goodall Jr.
Journalism Guild Writer

California has adopted and funded a program aimed at correcting inappropriate prison sentences.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the Resentencing Pilot Program into law in the 2021-22 budget. It will begin Sept. 1.

There are currently nine counties that will be involved in the initial pilot program: Contra Costa, Los Angeles, Riverside, Yolo, Humboldt, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Merced, reported the *Davis Vanguard*.

"The diversity of these counties is intentional – not only in geography, but in voter base, prosecutor leadership, reentry resources, prison population, and incarceration rates," said a For The People press release according to the July 22 article. For The People is a national non-profit that works with prosecutors to remedy unjust sentences.

"It will allow for the Legislature to evaluate impact across a wide range of participants. Potential impacts include cost savings to the state, reinvestment in community resources, economic stimulation through workplace reentry, and more," the press release added.

California's Legislature passed AB 2942 in 2018. The bill amended the previous Penal Code §§1170 (d) (1) and allowed district attorneys to revisit past sentences to determine which sentences were no longer in the



Archive Photo

Nine counties across California to begin reviewing cases for possible resentencing; releases could correct generations of racial inequities in criminal sentencing and ease decades of prison over-crowding.

Above, two correctional officers stand watch over San Quentin's lower yard.

"interest of justice," according to the *Vanguard*.

"When I first conceptualized this law, I never imagined that California would invest millions of dollars in its

implementation," said For the People's founder and executive director, Hillary Blout.

"After almost three years of working very closely with DAs and com-

munity leaders across the state, I am more confident than ever that this collaborative approach will allow us to safely bring more people home from prison. I'm thrilled that California is

once again at the forefront of criminal justice reform, and we are eager to get to work."

The funding will help the implementation of Prosecutor-Initiated Resentencing (PIR). PIR is a process first developed by For The People.

"Since its inception, For The People has worked in partnership with community leaders, elected prosecutors, and public defenders to implement PIR. Now, as budget sponsors of the pilot, For The People is supporting the adoption of this process on a larger scale to reunite more families and restore communities," a For The People press release stated.

Los Angeles County DA George Gascón will also receive funding from this new pilot funding program. Gascón has an aggressive resentencing policy already in place.

"The sentences we impose in this country, in this state, and in Los Angeles County are far too long," he said in December. He's proposing "judicial resentencing hearings after 15 years of imprisonment for all convicted people."

Gascón argues: "Justice demands that the thousands of people currently serving prison terms imposed in Los Angeles County under earlier, outdated policies, are also entitled to benefits of these new policies."

"Many of these people have been incarcerated for decades or are serving a 'virtual life sentence' designed

See *SENTENCING* on pg. 4

The *San Quentin News* is written and produced by prisoners. We are supported by grants and donations from the outside community. To make a tax-deductible donation, please visit our website at:

sanquentinnews.com
or send a check or money order payable to:
Social Good Fund
"Friends of San Quentin News"
P.O. Box 494
San Quentin, CA 94964

THE
REVA & DAVID LOGAN
FOUNDATION



THE NATHAN
CUMMINGS
FOUNDATION

THE
SAN
FRANCISCO
FOUNDATION

FORD FOUNDATION



Rotary Club of Mission San Rafael
Rotary Club of Novato
Rotary Club of Oakland

FoSQN
Friends of San Quentin News

Journalism Child



Thank you for your
support and generosity

Gabriel Loiederman becomes Senior Librarian

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Staff Writer

Gabriel Loiederman was promoted from Assistant to Senior Librarian this May, replacing Douglas Jeffries who had worked at San Quentin since the mid 1980s.

“Jeffries will be remembered as a man who improved prisoner’s rights relating to standards of library and legal law access. He made the standards what they are now,” said Loiederman. Jeffries initiated the use of the library paging system that provides additional access to library material for prisoners on Death Row.

The library reopened on May 5, the first time its workers were together since the COVID-19 lockdown began last March.

“Covid did a number on the library. We have to rebuild everything,” Loiederman said. “Having zero workers for 416 days, and on occasion two to three workers, caused neglect of library materials in the units and on shelves.”

The library has an estimated 25,000 books, magazines, law books, periodicals, and other items.

“It does not surprise me that San Quentin has the largest and busiest library in CDCR,” Loiederman said. “San Quentin Library is unique as a regular library. The overall culture is different than most prisons.”

Loiederman said the library inventory and catalog resources were diminished during the Covid lockdown. He established a partnership with Mt. Tamalpais College to get source material.



Eddie Herena, SQNews

Loiederman, above, aims to rebuild library inventory and make SQ a distribution center for other prison libraries.

He calls the relationship with Mt. Tamalpais “magnificent,” and pledges to support all teachers and students in education. He also wants to integrate support for programs like Shakespeare and Creative Writing.

Most of the library’s resources come from donations. The challenge, he said, is processing and disseminating the material.

With donations at an all-time high, a new goal is to

become a distribution center for prisons with fewer resources.

“We ship out a ton of books. After they cycle here we ship them to other prisons,” said Loiederman. “The old primary function of the library was circulation. Now, shifting to high-demand valuable items for circulation, donating excess items to inmates in other prisons will be tough; the logistics, security, but we will get it done. This library has a

saturation point as to the building’s storage. It’s difficult and inconvenient to service regularly and there’s a huge need [in] smaller prisons.”

Projects include converting challenges to opportunities. “We call them challenges,” said Loiederman.

Loiederman recognizes that programming and education at San Quentin exceed all other prisons. When Kern County’s Librarian toured the facility, “she was in awe, taken aback by the amount of programming,” said Loiederman.

The new supervisor complimented the strengths of the library’s staff.

“We have accomplished more than I expected or anticipated in the first 90 days. Mr. Richards improved legal standards and disseminated knowledge of LexisNexis (new laws, legal research, etc.). John Cornell is the main point person for up to two dozen inquiries that the community requests daily—from 22 Forms to search requests to notes on paper, he does it all.

“A third member of my staff is John Erdman, who is on medical leave. He was a visionary and will return soon as a volunteer.

“And of course, incarcerated people do most of the work. I will supply them everything to do their jobs and improve in the future. I strive to get incarcerated people trained in best practices to assist the end users; we never forget our staff is the front lines.”

The library is open during second watch, Monday through Friday, and has a current social distancing capacity of 15.

San Quentin residents training to become Peer Literacy Mentors



Phoeun You, SQNews

Tommy “Shakur” Ross (seated) and George “Mesro” Coles-EI work together building a roster of PLMP students.

By Charles Crowe
Staff Writer

Paulo Freire said, “Education does not change the world. Education changes people. People change the world.” The Peer Literacy Mentor Program (PLMP) at San Quentin aims to put Freire’s philosophy into practice.

The purpose of the program is to provide support for incarcerated students not currently enrolled in school, and those in Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, CTE Vocational, college classes and self-help groups.

To this end, a group of mentor-tutors are training to serve their peers. The current class of 15 was selected from about 40 applicants.

An interview panel made up of staff educators and previously trained PLMP mentors screened the applicants. Each candidate presented a ten-minute sample lesson plan to the panel, responded to interview questions, and completed a 20-minute basic math assessment.

Some applicants are high school graduates, and others hold college degrees. All are free of disciplinary problems.

Most importantly, candidates demonstrate to the selection panel that they see those they will mentor as human beings, and that they have a desire to help others learn and progress.

On a white board in the classroom where the mentors train, a James Baldwin quote reinforces the emphasis on respect for those they will serve, “You cannot be taught by someone who despises you.”

The values of the program are in the forefront of the training. Anita Kaur Sufi, the Literacy Teacher working with the group, stresses equity, community, and seminar over lecturing. The Literacy Teacher’s role is to guide the mentors with techniques, motivational interviews, curriculum building, interactional activities, and lesson plans. But instruction and leadership of the group are shared.

Full participation in the training activities is encouraged. Sufi describes this vigorous participation as “taking up space.” Participants are challenged to hear, see and feel the activities.

In addition to the classroom training, which occurs five days per week and spans several months, substantial outside reading is required. For example, each man carries a copy of *Facilitating Learning with the Adult Brain in Mind* by Taylor Marienau, and *Peer Tutoring Training and Facilitation Guide* by Jesse Pirini.

A typical training day finds men in small circles around the edges of the large classroom for their morning check-in. Afterwards they gather around a large table in the center of the room. The arrangement conveys a sense of community and equity

as they delve into their morning session. They are creating the culture and perfecting the tools they will employ as mentors and tutors.

At a glance the tutoring aspect of their work may seem most important. But a previously trained member, Freddie Cole, reminds everyone, “You’re not just a tutor, you’re a mentor. It’s a lot more than tutoring.”

Serving as a mentor can be a new and challenging experience for some of the men. For example, San Quentin resident Don Evans brings very strong math skills to the group. As to the prospect of also serving as a mentor, “It takes me out of my comfort zone,” he said. But he also indicated that he is very glad for the experience.

The educational approach the men will practice is “holistic,” said Sufi. As mentor-tutors they seek to understand factors that may have hindered a student’s learning in the past. Then “scaffolding” is built to aid the student’s progress toward the program’s high academic standards. “We need to care for the person in front of us before we get into the academics,” explained Sufi.

The classroom currently serving as the training ground will also serve as a “Lab” for the tutoring. Additional meeting space will be available in the San Quentin Education Department’s Building B.

A list of prospective students is already being compiled. Although a recent COVID-19 lockdown at San Quentin interrupted training, Sufi hopes that the new class of mentors will be in action by November.

Rodney “Pit” Baylis, an experienced mentor assisting with the training, is feeling good about the current class, “We’ve got a pretty good group of guys,” he said.

By Steve Brooks
Staff Writer

Ending slave labor in California prisons

Incarcerated workers may soon have a reason to celebrate Labor Day as lawmakers work to remove the last vestiges of slavery from California’s Constitution.

Assembly Constitution-al Amendment 3 (ACA 3), if placed on the November 2022 ballot, would remove a clause in the State’s Constitution that allows criminal punishment to include involuntary servitude.

The new measure was proposed by Assembly member Sydney Kamlager (D-Los Angeles).

“By removing this language from our constitution, we are moving our state into the 21st century and taking steps to ensure that no Californian is ever put in a position of involuntary servitude again,” Kamlager said in a press release.

California law currently requires “every able-bodied person” committed to the custody of the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations (CDCR) to work. Failure to work can result in progressive disciplinary action including loss

of privileges, parole denials, and delayed release dates.

“We’re our own worst enemies,” said San Quentin resident Michael Moore. “We just accept whatever they give us.” Moore said that if he had a choice he wouldn’t work because it only benefits the system. “I [would] rather go to school. That benefits me.”

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, incarcerated people are paid between 8 and 37 cents per hour for support service jobs and 35 cents to \$1 per hour for Prison Industry Authority jobs.

“I know what I do is slave labor but I feel better when I’m working,” said Michael Mathis. “Being trapped in a small cell most of the day, especially with another person, is a strong psychological inducement to work.”

Mathis is a cook in the main kitchen and makes .24 cents per hour.

Mathis doesn’t believe an incarcerated worker will ever make minimum wage. But he believes he should make at

least .35 to .50 cents per hour for his labor.

During the pandemic incarcerated workers were subjected to conditions not seen since the Industrial Revolution.

Many of them worked in factories making masks and hand sanitizers, toilet paper, protective gowns, license plates, furniture, and sewing clothes. Some work 12-16 hour shifts. In some cases there was a lack of fresh air and sanitation, proper ventilation, or personal protective equipment to combat COVID-19.

SQ kitchen workers are only allowed to be paid for 150 hours per month. They often exceeded those hours during the pandemic. At that point they were working without pay.

For some job positions, like yard crew worker and building porters, only the lead person is paid.

Workers who owe restitution, court fines, or fees have fifty-five percent of their wages taken.

“I been working on the yard crew for three years and I have never been paid for my labor,” said SQ resident Gary Green.

Green helps maintain the lower yard at SQ. He picks up trash, pulls weeds, waters grass, shovels dirt, rakes goose droppings, cleans bathroom facilities, and whatever else is needed to maintain the grounds.

“I don’t mind working but I’d like to get paid for my labor,” said Green.

Building porters at SQ had to sanitize cells, and pick up soiled linen and trash possibly infected with COVID-19.

Many incarcerated workers caught COVID-19.

Ironically, while California prisons still use forced labor, CDCR no longer uses the word “punishment” to reflect its mission.

“The goal of CDCR is to facilitate the successful reintegration of the individuals in our care back to their communities equipped with the tools to be drug-free, healthy, and employable members of society by providing education, treatment, rehabilitative, and restorative justice programs, all in a safe and humane environment,” according to CDCR’s mission statement.

As of March 2021, CDCR had canceled activities that benefit prisoners, like rehabilitation programs, education classes, religious services and visits with loved ones to slow COVID-19. But work was still required for those considered “critical” workers.

SQ residents were threatened with disciplinary action if they refused to work due to COVID-19 fears. Staff told workers that they would write 115 Rule Violation Reports, terminate workers, encourage parole denials, and prevent early releases in response to work refusals, reported some incarcerated workers.

Colorado, Nebraska, and Utah have already outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude in their prisons, according to the Abolish Slavery Network. Twelve states have similar legislation or ballot measures in-progress.

“If I have to work I should get minimum wage for my labor,” said Moore. “I should be taught financial literacy and how to be independent in the outside world.”



Phoeun You, SQNews

An incarcerated worker collects trash at San Quentin, exposing himself to potential hazards for little or no pay. Current law requires most prisoners who have attained a high school diploma or GED to perform menial, sometimes dangerous jobs with limited training and no expectation of compensation.

San Quentin News

San Quentin News Staff

Marcus Henderson, *Editor-in-Chief*
Juan Haines, *Senior Editor*
Kevin D. Sawyer, *Associate Editor*
Joe Garcia, *Journalism Guild Chairperson*
Nathan McKinney, *Managing Editor*
Timothy Hicks, *Sports Editor*
David Ditto, *Circulation Manager*
Anthony Carvalho, *Staff Writer*
Richard Fernandez, *Staff Writer*
Charles Crowe, *Staff Writer*
Heriberto Arredondo Jr., *Spanish Guild Chairman*
Edwin E. Chavez, *Staff Writer*
Vincent O'Bannon, *Staff Writer*
Jesse Blue, *Staff Writer*
Steve Brooks, *Staff Writer*
A.J. Hardy, *Layout Designer*
Richard Lindsey, *Researcher*
Phoeun You, *Layout Designer / Photographer*

Staff Administrative Review

Lt. S. Robinson, *Warden's Office, PIO*
Sgt. J. Graves, *Warden's Office*
Joe Orlando, *CDCR Information Officer 1*
Krissi Khokhobashvili, *Deputy Chief CDCR Office of External Affairs*
Linda Xiques, *Adviser*
William Drummond, *Adviser*
Jan Perry, *Adviser*
Joan Lisetor, *Adviser*
Stuart Wagner, *Adviser*
Steve McNamara, *Adviser*
John C. Eagan, *Adviser*
Jon Spurlock, *Adviser*
Susanne Karch, *Adviser*
Nikki Meredith, *Adviser*
Monica Campbell, *Adviser*
Lourdes Cárdenas, *Editora*

San Quentin News Contributing Staff

Aly Tamboura, *Alumnus*
Wayne Boatwright, *Alumnus*
Kenny Brydon, *Alumnus*
Eddie Herena, *Alumnus*
David Lé, *Alumnus*
Jesse Vasquez, *Alumnus*
Javier Jimenez, *Alumnus*
Jonathan Chiu, *Alumnus*
Richard Richardson, *Alumnus*

Current and past stories of the *San Quentin News* are posted online at:

www.sanquentinnews.com

Follow us on Twitter @SanQuentinNews

Permission is granted to reprint articles appearing in the *San Quentin News* provided credit is given to the author and this publication, except for articles reprinted herein from other publications.

We Want To Hear From You!

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

Guidelines for submission:

- Articles should be no more than 350 words and will be edited for content and length.
- Articles should be newsworthy and pertain to the prison populace and/or the criminal justice system.
- Please do not submit material that is offensive, racist, sexist, or derogatory toward anyone, as it will not be published.

Send Submissions to:
San Quentin News
1 Main Street
San Quentin, CA 94964

To receive a copy of the *San Quentin News* in the mail, send \$1.61 worth of stamps for postage to the above address. The process can be repeated every month if you want to receive the latest newspaper.



The *San Quentin News* is printed by Marin Sun Printing

Paying it forward in the “Comm-Unity”

By Timothy Hicks
Staff Writer

A group of formerly incarcerated people joined community members and organizations to provide food and cleaning supplies to needy families in the Oakland area.

The *Oakland Post* reported in June the men recently paroled from San Quentin aimed to give back to their community, calling their effort “Comm-Unity.”

Richard Johnson coined the slogan “Comm-Unity,” which means common unity, a phrase that he describes as being unified for a common cause. No matter what part of the town you are from or what religious belief you have, Johnson wants people to come together to commemorate June 5 as “A Day of Giving.”

“When I got out, I had made a promise to Paul Cobb that I would change the youth,” said Johnson. “I wanted to give back to the community I took so much from and make it better. So, when I got my medical COVID parole on Jan. 29, I got right on it. I’m now working, I’m off my ankle bracelet as of March 30 and I was actually found suitable just recently. So, now the sky’s the limit.”

Many turned up to support the effort and partake in the day. Bay Area rapper Mr. Fab, along with over 200 volunteers from all walks of life and foundations, showed up to pass out what was described as a huge number of boxes of food. According to Johnson, it all weighed 300 tons, so the needy had plenty to carry.

Hygiene and cleaning supplies were also distributed to

nearly a two-mile long line of folks in waiting cars.

Johnson and several other ex-felons and people from the community met at Ralph Bunche School and de Fremery Park in West Oakland from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to handle the giving.

“What was remarkable was the participation of those who were formerly incarcerated,” said Johnson. The outstanding gesture the group made was not only giving away food to the needy present, but they also delivered to the elderly nearby who did not have transportation. They also gave the leftover boxes of food and supplies to nonprofits that serviced the needy.

The needy chose their own items out of 52 selections that included Cheez-Its, granola bars, Ritz crackers, fruits, veggies and meats. People were able to take away groceries that would sustain them for at least a month, said the article.

“I was moved by the tears and shouts of joy from some families with their children when they were showered with boxes of food and cleaning supplies that literally loaded down their vehicles,” said Johnson.

“I met with a lot of people and I plan to work with them and do a lot more things like this for the community. A lot of the guys who paroled and myself are planning to continue on this path of giving and create some things to curb the violence out here in Oakland. And for guys who haven’t made it out yet, just know that if you can dream it, you can do it. It’s a lot of opportunity, just seize the time,” said Johnson.



Photo courtesy of Richard Johnson

Richard Johnson at his graduation from the Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP) program

There was a vaccination clinic on site as well, provided by Interfaith Council of Alameda County (ICAC) and the Rev. Ken Chambers.

Other volunteers mentioned were:

- Oakland Post Newspaper Group
- Trybe
- Deeply Rooted
- Ronald Muhammad
- Ear Hustle’s John “YaYa” Johnson
- Missy Percy
- Jamil Wilson
- Attorney Anne Wells
- ROC’S Richard Corral
- Lee Oliveres
- Jesus P. Peruero
- Ricky “Styles” Ricardo
- Paul Redd
- Savior Charles
- Arnold Torres

- Gabe Zuniga
- Rudy Yanez
- Rolando Coffman
- Janelle Marie Charles of Epsilon Phi Zeta
- Mrs. Marsha Woodfork of Zeta Amicae of the Epsilon Phi Zeta
- The Black Firefighters Association
- Felicia Bryant
- Mr. Fab’s Dope Era Clothing Store
- Cesar Cruz’s Homie’s Empowerment
- The Oakland Gumbo Cultural Group
- Amina Nicole
- Queen Johnson
- Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
- Several elected officials including District 3 Councilmember Carroll Fife.



Phoeun You, SQNews

Mount Tamalpais College students will soon be able to access laptop computers and a CDCR-approved intranet to complete their coursework. The technological expansion is part of a special pilot program intended to make higher education more accessible to the incarcerated population.

MTC offers higher education with new tech upgrades

MT. TAMALPAIS

Continued from page 1

outbreak inside San Quentin.

In April and again in August 2020, the College Program sent care packages to The Q. “Thanks to support from the new warden, Ron Broomfield, we’ll be sending one to all 4,000 residents of San Quentin,” read the “Dear friends” letter accompanying the bags of educational information, hygiene products and snacks.

“The beef jerky was delightful,” said Blue. “It’s the first jerky I’ve had in 12 years of incarceration.”

MTC also sent care packages to the incarcerated communities of Avenal, CIM, CIW, Old Folsom, CRC and Lancaster before the year’s end.

“It brought tears to my eyes,” said Ray Jr. “Getting care packages was the most compassion I’ve experienced in a long time.”

One new development for students this school year is laptop computers. Thirty-five laptops will be available for use in a computer laboratory during certain classes.

Students will complete and turn in assignments with access to CDCR’s Wi-Fi and intranet, according to MTC consultant Ethan Annis.

Annis managed a 70-computer laboratory at Dominican University of California in San Rafael for thousands of student-users for eight years. He is now coordinating the rollout of MTC’s laptop pilot program inside San Quentin.

He described the College Program’s vision of expanding the in-class program to in-cell and remote instruction for all students in the future.

“Synchronous instruction (with live video conversation) and asynchronous instruction (with prerecorded video lectures) can work together to create endless educational opportunities,” Annis said.

Jamgochian said that SQ Warden Ron Broomfield and Director of the Division of Rehabilitative Programs Brant Choate were instrumental in implementation of the laptop program. She said remote instruction could eventually allow high quality interactive education to continue inside prisons, even during any future shutdowns or pandemics.

“We have great plans for the future,” said Jamgochian. “Students are so ready. Faculty and staff couldn’t wait to get back, and we have many wonderful new staff.”

More than 10 new staff began working with MTC since just before the pandemic. Three of them, Academic Program Director Priya Kandaswamy, Research and Program Fellow Kirsten Pickering and Math Coordinator Anila Vadavalli, administered math assessments inside the newly renovated classrooms in San Quentin’s B-Building on September 1.

“We’re really excited to be back inside. This is where we want to be,” said Pickering. “All of us who work at Mount Tam get a lot out of working with the students.”

“We were bummed that the delta variant surge shut the prison down again, and were worried that the semester would be delayed a lot longer.”

All programs inside The Q were suspended on August 14 for a couple weeks due to a few positive COVID-19 tests. The shutdown delayed the return of MTC’s in-person classes another week.

“We are all thrilled to be finally starting classes up again this month, said MTC President Jody Lewen.

“We also know that for the foreseeable future we’re likely to encounter all kinds of challenges—things like new

COVID outbreaks, staffing shortages, wildfire smoke, who knows what else. For this reason we’re trying to prepare to roll with whatever comes.”

“This is going to be a great semester,” said Arthur Jackson, a student since 2016 and program clerk for MTC since just before the pandemic. “The faculty and staff are wonderful to work with.”

The MTC faculty are volunteer instructors who teach a class inside The Q up to three times each week. Most are faculty or graduate students at Bay Area colleges and universities.

Returning instructor Randal Pendleton hopes “to do justice to an exciting, committed learning community.” He looks forward to completing the chemistry course he began teaching pre-pandemic to “a class of equally motivated students,” although it is smaller.

MTC policy currently caps classes at 15 students and requires masks and social distancing in all classrooms. They report that all their staff and faculty have received the full COVID-19 vaccination and strongly urge students to do the same.

“It’s so nice to hear the teachers’ voices as they begin to teach again,” said Blue. He plans to earn his first college degree with MTC before leaving prison, and to attend U.C. Berkeley upon parole.

COURT

Continued from page 1

“They want to stand up for CDCR and make it about the conditions *now*,” said petitioner Duane Gillespie after hearing respondents’ opening arguments. “But we couldn’t be in court back then when it happened. I’m a little upset about it.”

Stemming from the transfer of 122 prisoners from the California Institute for Men (CIM) on May 30, 2020, the spread of COVID-19 infections led to 28 incarcerated deaths as well as the death of one CDCR sergeant in San Quentin.

One year later, prisoners attended the Zoom hearings and listened to petitioner after petitioner testify about the treatment they incurred during the COVID-19 shutdown and subsequent outbreak.

Orlando Harris experienced the rapid spread of COVID-19 firsthand in SQ’s North Block. He took a front row seat in the chapel every day.

“It’s all backwards with these people,” said Harris. “When we go in front of the parole board, all we ask is that they look at who we are today — not who we were 20 years ago, 30 years ago.

“But in this case, they only want to talk about right now, today. They don’t want to be held accountable for the mistakes they made last year. How crazy is that?”

The incarcerated audience packed the chapel May 25 and 26 to see Acting Warden Ron Broomfield face questioning

Hearing: Multiple experts recommend drastic reduction in San Quentin population

from prisoners’ rights attorney Charles Carbone.

“Warden Broomfield is indeed either a respondent or *the* respondent,” stated Carbone in requesting the court’s permission to treat Broomfield as if under cross-examination.

Named acting warden in February 2020, Broomfield suddenly found himself and SQ administration in late May preparing to accept busloads of transfers from the COVID-19 viral hotspot of CIM — with only three days’ notice.

Court documents and independent prison oversight reports by the Office of Inspector General clearly demonstrated that Broomfield had no say in CDCR’s emergency decision to transfer 122 medically vulnerable prisoners from CIM to San Quentin.

Questioned by Carbone under subpoena, Broomfield defended the prison’s COVID-19 Mitigation and Surge Plan in the aftermath of the ensuing outbreak.

When asked under oath if, as warden, he is responsible for the health and safety of every San Quentin prisoner, Broomfield answered “Yes.”

Attorney Khari Tillery continued to question Broomfield the next day on SQ’s staffing procedures, quarantine housing protocols, and other administrative decisions.

“They think because it happened to us, it makes it less illegal,” said petitioner Michael Calvin Holmes. “If it had hap-

pened to a bunch of college students in a middle class neighborhood, they would have lost their shirts already.”

The incarcerated community’s reaction to his testimony did not sit well with Broomfield.

“It hurts me to hear those things,” the warden later told SQNews. “I understand the anger from the population. I’m angry, too. And I knew when I took a leadership position, that I’d have to deal with the heat when things go wrong.

“There’s only one of me and 3,000 of you. I want you guys to know that I’m a sincere leader.”

On the stand, Broomfield would not concede that San Quentin’s population needs to be reduced by 50% to protect its incarcerated residents from the threat of airborne transmissible infectious disease.

Expert after expert gave detailed testimony about the effects of overcrowded conditions where two prisoners live in 4’x11’x8’ cells in five-tiered housing units with windows welded shut.

The medical and science experts described what they observed inside SQ as “foreboding” and “the worst outbreak in a correctional setting I’ve ever seen.”

The only way to effectively mitigate any viral danger is by drastically reducing SQ’s population, testified UCSF’s Dr. David Sears, epidemiology specialist Dr. Meghan Morris and infectious disease researcher Dr. Daniel Parker.

In the context of the overall effectiveness of SQ’s COVID-19 safety protocols during the outbreak, petitioner attorneys asked, “What would the end result have been if San Quentin had simply done nothing at all?”

Sears, Parker and Cal/OSHA investigator Channing Sheets each said the outcome would have been virtually the same. SQ’s physical architecture and poor ventilation render mask wearing and isolated quarantining all but pointless, given the grossly compacted living conditions.

Aside from prisoners’ claims, Cal/OSHA cited San Quentin for numerous “willful” violations of workplace safety regulations.

A California appeals court decision in October ordered the SQ population be reduced down to 1,775, but that ruling has since been appealed and vacated.

SQ’s total occupancy is currently approaching 2,700 as weekly new arrivals are increasing the population.

“CDCR’s gonna do what they want,” said petitioner Larry Williams, who testified about being an incarcerated critical worker exposed to cell after cell and tier upon tier of his infected peers.

“Hopefully this case will bring about some real prison reform — where they actually do something, not just say they gonna do something.”



Lt. S. Robinson, Public Information Officer

Judge Geoffrey M. Howard (on screen) presides over an evidentiary hearing looking into the causes of San Quentin’s deadly coronavirus outbreak in 2020.

Respondents presented infectious disease expert Dr. Jeffrey Klausner of USC. He testified that SQ has developed sufficient herd immunity for maximum occupancy, due to its 80% incarcerated vaccination rate.

When questioned about SQ staff’s 50% vaccination rate at the time, Klausner stated that officers don’t interact enough with prisoners to meet the scientific criteria for “exposure.”

In an official response to this article, CDCR stated: “there is still no mention of the measures the institution took when they reported an increase in cases.”

According to CDCR, measures included: alternative care sites and isolation/quarantine housing, a 220-bed medical triage area on SQ grounds, tens of thousands of personal pro-

TECTIVE equipment, N95 respirators, emergency catered food services, mandatory weekly testing for staff and the population, and hundreds of additional custody and health care staff.

Furthermore, “Since July 2020, CDCR implemented one of the largest prison population reductions in state history, with more than 10,000 persons having their release date expedited under COVID-19 precautions.”

CDCR’s San Quentin Response Efforts webpage:

<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/covid19/san-quentin-state-prison-response/>

Since the livestreamed Marin County hearings, four “breakthrough” positive cases of fully vaccinated new arrivals at SQ led to an official declaration of another COVID-19 outbreak in August 2021.

SENTENCING

Continued from page 1

to imprison them for life. The vast majority of incarcerated people are members of groups long disadvantaged under earlier systems of justice: Black people, people of color, young people, people who suffer from mental illness, and peo-

Resentencing Pilot Program gets funding to begin case review process

ple who are poor. While resentencing alone cannot correct all inequities inherent in our system of justice, it should at least be consistent with policies designed to remedy those inequities.”

Contra Costa County DA Diana Becton believes the funding allows better processing of potentially eligible

applicants. It will allow an evaluation of a collaborative approach to conduct resentencing requests, according to the CCDA’s office.

“I was proud to support AB 2942 and this funding further strengthens my office’s ability to process these requests in a timely manner. Excessive sentences under-

mine our ability to hold the most violent accountable for serious crimes in our community. The strain on the state prison and criminal justice system is immense from these failed policies of our past,” said Becton.

The Public Defender Offices in the pilot program will also receive funding.

Public Defender’s Offices will be “required to direct all funding to the exclusive purpose of supporting resentencing of individuals pursuant to the pilot, including, but not limited to, ensuring adequate staffing of deputy public defenders and other support staff to represent incarcerated persons under

consideration for PIR,” said the article.

Two preliminary reports and one final evaluation and assessment will be provided to the California Legislature during the duration of the Pilot program. The reports will include a comparison between the Pilot jurisdictions.

By **Juan Haines**
Senior Editor

Valerie Kiebala went from working with the late Jim Ridgeway at Solitary Watch to Straight Ahead! It's a Pennsylvania-based organization and lobbying arm of the Abolitionist Law Center. It supports bills for medical and geriatric parole as well as past legislation that would provide people serving life sentences the opportunity to be reviewed for parole.

Pennsylvania law currently allows no chance for parole for people over the age of 18 convicted of first- or second-degree murder. Elderly people are one of the fastest-growing incarcerated populations in the U.S. Currently, 2,600 of the 5,447 incarcerated individuals serving a life sentence in Pennsylvania are 50 years and older.

JH: *What advantage do you have working in your current position than you've previously had?*

VK: I previously worked at Solitary Watch as a staff writer and editorial manager. At SW, we were able to uplift and amplify the voices of incarcerated people in the media, especially those who have been subjected to the torture of solitary confinement. SW being a journalistic organization, we had to

Voices of change: Q&A with Valerie Kiebala



carefully toe this line between journalism and advocacy in order to uphold our credibility and funding. As the person who managed the correspondence with people inside, I would find myself wanting to jump over that line and directly advocate to get people out of solitary or call out the abuse from correctional officers. Now, at this job, I can do that.

Now that I'm at Straight Ahead!, I collaborate with people inside to ground our campaign and empower them in the fight for freedom. Reporting the truth from inside is key to strengthening public awareness and knowledge, and now I am positioned to take it a step further in actively building pressure against those in positions of power to change that reality.

JH: *What drives you to work in criminal justice reform?*

VK: My humanity is what drives me to work to change the system of incarceration in our country. Once you know the truth, you can't unlearn it. I work to counter the bias in our media, discourse, society, and laws against incarcerated people because it's based

on falsehoods and myths. I'm driven to this work because my own liberation is undeniably tied to the liberation of all people. The lifelong friendships and relationships I've formed with people in prison have taught me invaluable lessons about myself, about life, about community, and about justice. These connections propel my work and keep my work in perspective every day.

JH: *Describe successful reform.*

VK: Automatic life without parole sentences for second-degree murder upholds a long legacy of mandatory, indefinite prison sentences, often in torturous conditions, always meant to end in death. Replacing this destructive practice with second chances will bring people home with valuable experiences, wisdom, and lead-

ership back to their communities. And it will also decrease the number of people subjected to torturous conditions behind the prison walls. Success is liberation, one step at a time, one person at a time.

Successful reform frees people and creates new interlaced practices and systems that acknowledge the humanity of people behind bars. This means not only addressing the clear violations of people's basic human rights, but also attacking the root of the punitive prison culture that wreaks destruction on our communities.

You could release all the prisoners on nonviolent and drug offenses today in America, and you're still going to have mass incarceration because the majority of prisoners who are in prison — and I know a lot of advocacy orga-

nizations don't like to hear this but it's the reality — the majority of people who are in prison in the United States and who are on supervision are there because of serious and violent offenses. And we have to address that because if we don't, we're never going to end mass incarceration.

JH: *Talk about specific problems that you'd like to solve.*

VK: Solitary confinement has to be uprooted from the core. The practice is a military torture technique that desecrates international standards. Locking humans in a bathroom-sized concrete cell for any amount of time — let alone months, years, and decades — has proven time and time again to serve no penological purpose and to deeply and permanently affect people's psychological and physical health. Yet, upwards of 60,000 people in the U.S. are subjected to this practice on a daily basis. And when our nation hit a public health crisis, that number jumped to 300,000. The torture needs to stop.

As of 2020, according to the Sentencing Project, 8,242

people are sentenced to die in prison in Pennsylvania — whether by life sentence, life without parole sentence, or sentences that add up to a lifetime. In California, that number is over 40,000. This practice is another infliction of cruelty — separating people from their families, exploiting their labor for the rest of their lives, and depriving people of medical and mental health care. Across the country, we need to end this practice of banishing humans and throwing away their lives.

Ending solitary confinement and eradicating death by incarceration sentences are just two of the many injustices that need to be changed in our criminal legal system.

JH: *Is there anything else you would like to share about Straight Ahead?*

VK: We support second chances for incarcerated people from coast to coast. From Pennsylvania, we send a message of solidarity to our comrades in California serving life sentences, excessive sentences, subjected to solitary confinement, and facing abusive conditions inside prison. Though our campaign is based in Pennsylvania, we stand with you in the fight for liberation.

Straight Ahead!

The other epidemic: Food poisoning in American prisons

By **A.J. Hardy**
Staff Writer

U.S. prisoners are about six times more likely to suffer food poisoning than the public, according to a finding by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reported the *Atlantic* magazine. The study examined confirmed outbreaks of food-borne illness over a 17-year period 1998-2014.

It found that, in correctional institutions across the nation, infected workers, coupled with inadequate cleaning and food sanitation practices, created a "hidden public health crisis."

"I can tell you one thing ... Nobody has food safety training," said Ernest Rich, who served almost two decades in California and worked in prison kitchens. "You've got people coming in there all the time who know nothing about cooking. They're learning as they go. They don't know nothing about what you should do, what you should not do."

News articles and prisoners' lawsuits are bringing the issue to greater public awareness. The *Detroit Free Press*

and *USA Today* have covered stories of maggots, rancid beef and chicken, rotten potatoes, and food partially fed upon by rodents.

Shoddy equipment, lack of oversight and under-staffing have contributed to prison kitchens' challenges, the study finds. In addition, there is no universal food safety manual, which leaves state and local facilities to create their own guidelines.

The federal prison system uses the Food Service Manual, similar to the FDA's Food Code for restaurants. However, its manual lacks rules for when a kitchen worker can return to work after being sick, the study finds.

"Oversight and regulation of correctional institutions can vary by state and institution," said Mariel A. Marlow, the study's co-author, "so to pull out certain factors is a little difficult."

Also there is no uniform nationwide inspection process, said Joseph Montgomery, who oversaw an Illinois correctional facility food operation for 23 years. The state inspectors inspect state facilities and the

county health inspectors inspect the county jails, which can lead to violations easily falling through the cracks, the study states.

If an inspector does find a violation, the penalties can be from mild to nonexistent, because it's highly unlikely one state agency would heavily fine another state-run agency or shut down a prison kitchen altogether, noted Montgomery.

He also blames prisoners for some of the outbreaks and sickness due to food smuggling.

"We have a population who will steal food from the general kitchen in various ways you probably wouldn't want to try printing," said Montgomery. "They will steal that product from the kitchen and take it back to their cell house. Their only way to have a refrigerator is if they put it in a container with a little bit of ice, but nine times out of 10 they don't have ice. In the summertime, it's going to sit on a windowsill or in a drawer so nobody sees it for two, four, six, eight hours."

Prison-made wine, called "pruno," is also cited as a cause of foodborne outbreaks.



Eddie Herena, SQNews

Contaminated poultry accounts for the majority of all food poisoning outbreaks in prisons, according to the CDC. A single infected worker on a food service line like this one can potentially cause widespread foodborne illness.

The substance can breed virulent bacteria that can cause paralysis or death, according to the CDC.

To combat food illness outbreaks, prisoner workforce training programs and food-handling certification could be offered nationwide, suggested some prison advocates.

"If they tried to train you, they trained people properly, they could use these skills,"

said Ernest Rich, formerly incarcerated and working with L.A. Kitchen, a non-profit job-training program. "But the way they're training people now in culinary, it's not going to do you no good when you get out of here."

"They're not training you in these prisons how to become a culinary cook. They're just using a body to serve the food," he added.

The CDC Study by the Numbers:

Prisoners make up less than 1% of the U.S. population, but account for 6% of all outbreaks of foodborne illnesses. For every 100,000 people, the general public averages seven cases of foodborne illness each year, compared to 45 cases in correctional settings.

Confirmed outbreaks' "contributing factors" were identified only 38% of the time.

- 26% involved an infected person handling and contaminating the food being served.
- 24% involved inadequate sanitation of food processing tools and equipment.
- 37% involved food left at room temperature for extended periods.

Of the 200 confirmed outbreaks reported since 1998, the specific food product responsible was only identified 41% of the time. Those identified included:

- Most outbreaks were caused by contaminated poultry.
- Illicitly-obtained or -prepared food.
- Four out of 16 were tied to inmate-manufactured alcohol.
- Salmonella and Clostridium perfringens were identified as the most responsible for causing illness among prisoners.

The study was published in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

By **Kevin D. Sawyer**
Associate Editor

A study done by the non-profit Prison Policy Initiative (PPI) demonstrates why it recommends the 25-year-old Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) should be repealed.

The PLRA makes federal civil rights lawsuits filed by prisoners more difficult, according to PPI. It was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996.

"For two-and-a-half decades, the legislation has created a double standard that limits incarcerated people's access to the courts at all stages," the PPI study states. "It requires courts to dismiss civil rights cases from incarcerated people for minor technical reasons before even reaching the case merits, requires incarcerated people to pay filing fees that low-income people on the outside are exempt from, makes it hard to find representation by sharply

Repealing the Prison Litigation Reform Act after 25 years

capping attorney fees, creates high barriers to settlement, and weakens the ability of courts to order changes to prison and jail policies."

According to the PPI study, "the PLRA hinders court access for incarcerated people who are trying to file civil cases—which tend to be mostly civil rights cases. It does this by making these cases harder to bring, harder to win, and harder to settle."

Examples of these difficulties are rules such as "exhaustion," which requires prisoners to navigate through a jail or prison's administrative grievance procedures, prior to filing a lawsuit in court. Prisoners in California must exhaust administrative remedies using an Inmate/Parolee Appeal (CDCR Form 602).

"Working through these administrative processes can be

complicated, require meeting difficult deadlines, and often prove fruitless," PPI stated.

In March 2020, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation filed an "emergency Notice of Change to Regulations" on appeals as the COVID-19 pandemic began spreading. The Office of Administrative Law approved the emergency filing in June of that year, which changed, renumbered and repealed regulations. No known published copy of the new regulations has been distributed to prisoners at San Quentin.

There is also, for example, the Three Strikes Rule for indigent inmates, which according to PPI states in part, "...after filing three claims that a judge decides are frivolous, malicious, or do not state a proper claim, incarcerated plaintiffs

can be required to pay fees upfront with few exceptions."

The study also cited reasons why prisoners' cases are hard to win under the PLRA. For example, under the physical injury requirement, "Incarcerated people are allowed to sue over unlawfully inflicted physical injury, but the PLRA restricts the remedies available in cases where people are alleging only mental or emotional harm."

The PLRA also undermines settlements because it limits a court's ability to enforce the terms of some settlement agreements, according to PPI. The law also discourages skilled lawyers from representing plaintiffs in civil rights cases because "It caps recoverable attorneys' fees at a below-market rate..."

The study makes known that when supporters of the law discussed it, there were claims of

too many prisoners who filed "frivolous" lawsuits. However, according to PPI, "incarcerated people are not particularly litigious." Instead, it detailed how people in carceral environments face regularly "harsh, discriminatory, and unlawful conditions of confinement." And because of their mistreatment they seek redress from the courts, which has been limited under the PLRA so violations do not fall under public scrutiny.

"Vexatious Litigant" is how some inmates can be defined in California, according to the Definitions in the California Code of Regulations, Title 15. It is the longest description in the codified regulation.

"The PLRA should be repealed," the PPI study states. "It was bad policy in the 1990s — an era full of unfair, punitive, and racist criminal justice laws

— and allowing it to continue today is even worse policy."

The PPI study revealed that civil rights litigation in federal court dropped immediately after the PLRA was passed. But more importantly, when the law was passed, such lawsuits were already falling from their peak in the late 1970s.

"It is time for Congress to repeal the Prison Litigation Reform Act," PPI recommended. "Incarcerated people do not lose all of their rights at the prison or jail door. Yet all too often, their basic freedoms are violated inside these massive and expensive public institutions, which operate largely outside of public view and with little oversight."

PPI is a non-partisan organization founded in 2001. Its undertaking is to expose "the broader harm of mass criminalization and spark advocacy campaigns to create a more just society." Its reports bring attention to unfamiliar effects of mass incarceration.

AB 2147 paves the way for expungement

By **Jad Salem**
Journalism Guild Writer

Da’Ton Harris, out of Victorville, appeared before a judge in San Bernardino County for the second time in months, hoping the judge would expunge his criminal record so he could have a chance to become a firefighter.

Harris showed up to court prepared with proof that he had battled wildfires while in prison and has become a certified emergency medical responder, only to have the judge turn him away, said the *Los Angeles Times* in a story by Erika D. Smith. In April, the judge delayed the proceedings to research the law. The judge had never heard of the law and this week Harris was turned away for the second time so the state can confirm his eligibility.

“They pretty much tried to deny me from the jump,” said Harris.

The new law, Assembly Bill 2147, was written by Assemblywoman Eloise Reyes (D-Grand Terrace) and was signed into law last year by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

Many saw this law as a solution to the long running injus-

Formerly incarcerated firefighters may petition the courts for expungement of felony records, pursue professional certification

tice of not letting prisoners, most of whom are Black and Latino, get firefighting jobs with proper pay and benefits upon their release. These men and woman did the back-breaking work at fire camps by clearing brush and digging fire lines for prison wages.

Harris hired Attorney Giovanni Pesce, with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, to get the judge to expunge his record so he can qualify to obtain his emergency medical technician license. Harris hopes to serve the community by landing a job with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Harris is convinced that without Pesce, his case would have been thrown out, the *Times* reports.

Many judges have never heard of the new law. The Judicial Council of California hasn’t yet provided judges with the proper forms for AB 2147 expungement. Thousands of Californians have been able to

petition to have their felony records expunged under AB 2147.

Chris Tracy was released early from prison, as part of the state’s safety precaution for COVID-19, according to the *Times*. He’s preparing to go before the judge with a petition for expungement. He’s worried that because of how the AB 2147 law is written, it won’t allow the court to do away with his previous felonies for auto theft. Without the expungement, Tracy won’t be able to qualify to earn his EMT license, which is necessary to be a fully certified firefighter.

“It’s a good bill,” Tracy said. “It’s meant well, but I think it’s written poorly because it’s not expansive enough for [all of] us to be able to get an EMT cert, which a lot of these fire stations are asking for. It kind of defeats the purpose.”

“Clearly, it’s not going to be perfect in its implementation because the judges and the attorneys and even the advocates are just learning about it,” said Reyes. “I think it’s important

that we give grace in that regard.”

Harris is not giving up. He managed to find work as a firefighter with Cal Fire, despite a system that has kept so many hardworking aspiring firefighters out. Harris wants to work for a fire station in Victorville, close to home so he can be near his family and “get that real money.” He strives to continue to be a public servant.

Some newly released firefighters resort to looking for work with private companies that hire firefighters.

The state is ravaged by drought and California desperately needs trained firefighters. Men and women who gained experience battling wildfires while incarcerated shouldn’t face so many challenges to become certified firefighters upon their release, said the *Times*. Judges should recognize the men and woman who come out of prison and desire to become public servants, battle wildfire, protect our lives and property.



Photo courtesy of CDCR

Under AB 2147, former felons who risked their lives fighting California’s wildfires may qualify to have their felony records expunged, making them eligible to become certified firefighters and EMTs following their return to society.

By **Alfred King**
Journalism Guild Writer

Across the country 600,000 prisoners are released annually from prisons. Many face obstacles in obtaining housing, food and medical services.

Prisoners are more likely to go without food than the general population; one out of five have difficulty obtaining meals. A 2013 survey of 100 prisoners revealed that of those released, 90% were food insecure and 37% went without eating anything for a whole day the previous month, according to an article in *The Conversation*.

Reentry barriers plague new parolees, inhibit successful reintegration

One of the problems facing those released from prison is access to programs designed to provide a safety net, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) and Temporary Aid To Needy Families (TANF).

In 1996 Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which bans anyone convicted of a drug felony from receiving

food stamps or cash through (TANF). Senator Phil Gramm (R, Texas) explained, “If we are serious about our drug laws, we ought not to give people welfare benefits who are violating the nation’s drug laws.”

Banning drug felons from public assistance started with the push to reform welfare in the ’90s. People were characterized as being lazy and living from handouts in public

housing. The term “welfare queen” was popularized.

Then-Senator Joe Biden was responsible for the passage of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act in 1994, which led to the era of mass incarceration.

In 2020 about 20% of the 2.3 million people in custody had drug convictions. A large number of women were included in this statistic.

Several states have opted out of the ban, but 27 remain. Some require people with drug convictions to submit to drug testing in order to receive benefits.

President Biden’s announced \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan has a provision to help those returning to society, re-establishing SNAP benefits.

Research shows that allowing formerly incarcerated

people access to SNAP reduces by 30% the likelihood of them being food insecure, improves health, and lowers healthcare costs.

Black Americans are disproportionately represented in the population banned from receiving SNAP benefits. Targeted in the War On Drugs, they are five times as likely to be convicted and sent to prison as White Americans.

The lifelong ban on benefits for those convicted of a drug felony, even if it is revoked at the federal level, will not eliminate all food insecurities, but one less barrier would stand in the way of those hoping to reintegrate into society.

City sues Gov. Newsom following prison closure announcement



Eddie Herena, SQNews

Gov. Gavin Newsom has made prison closures part of his efforts to rein in runaway prison spending in California. Residents of Susanville, California, fear the economic impact of a prison closure in the area.

By **Amir Shabazz**
Journalism Guild Writer

The citizens and the local government of Susanville are suing Gov. Gavin Newsom over the imminent closure of the prison, California Correctional Center, that is located in their city, according to the *Sacramento Bee*.

In sticking with his plan to close several prisons over the next few years, the Governor and his administration are taking a lot of heat. The push-back from local communities has been strong, and they have concerns about how the

closure would devastate their economy.

“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 custody,” said CDCR Secretary Kathleen Allison in an April statement.

“While these decisions are never easy, they are opening the door for the Department to increase efficiencies as Cal-

ifornia continues to focus on reentry and rehabilitation effort.”

The prison’s campsite has for many years been the main training area for prisoners to learn how to fight fires.

“Some residents fear that losing such a large employer could mean ripple effects in other local economic sectors,” the *Bee* reported. Once the state’s announcement became official, some residents started putting their houses on the market.

In the Susanville area, only High Desert prison will remain. The city is asking for a study from the state, and posing a lot of questions about why this is happening to them.

Dan Newton, Susanville’s interim City Administrator, thinks the study is something that should be considered, the *Bee* reported.

But in their statement, CDCR officials referred to the California penal code as supporting the decision to close CCC.

“The department shall prioritize closure of prisons with relatively high operational costs or costly infrastructure needs compared to inmate capacity, flexible housing assignment capacity, and long-term operational value,” the California penal code reads in part. The code also provides that operating costs, workforce impacts, long-term investment and viable solutions to overcrowding issues should be considered.

By **Harry C. Goodall Jr.**
Journalism Guild Writer

During his 26th year of incarceration, Joel Castón was elected to public office in Washington D.C., according to the *Washington Post*. He is believed to be the first incarcerated person to win elective office in the nation’s capital, the *Post* noted.

“I feel presidential,” Castón said in a Zoom interview. “But it’s not about you, it’s about the work you do.”

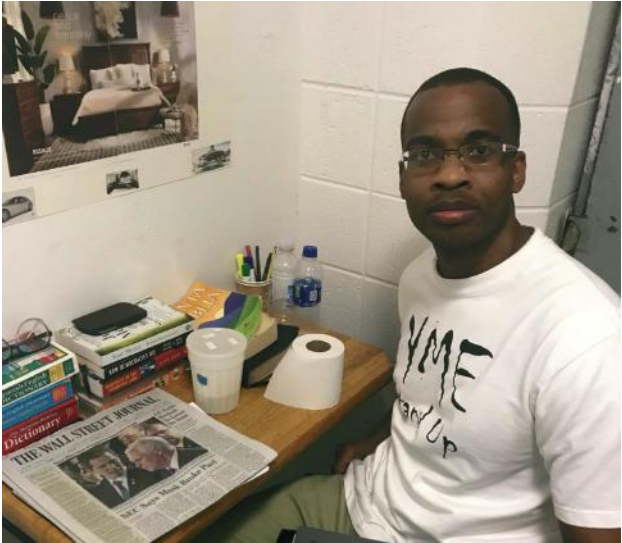
Castón, a Washington D.C. native, won an Advisory Neighborhood Commission seat that has been vacant since 2013, according to a June 17 article. His position represents the Hill East neighborhood, which includes the jail where he is incarcerated. It also includes the Harriet Tubman Women’s Shelter and recently opened luxury apartments.

D.C. was redistricted in 2013 and during this process the ANC seat now held by Castón was created. Before the new apartments were built in this area, the only residents in this district were women at the shelter or people incarcerated in the jail.

In 2020, D.C. began allowing incarcerated people to vote. Neighbors for Justice began a campaign to spearhead a search for an ANC candidate from the local jail. At the conclusion of their search, five candidates qualified for the position. Neighbors for Justice founder Julie Johnson said Castón won about a third of the vote.

“It’s not just about a historic election, with a first-ever ANC

D.C. prisoner elected to public office



Archive photo

Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Joel Castón in his cell.

commissioner who is incarcerated. It’s about giving a voice and visibility to a population that is unseen,” said Johnson.

As a commissioner, Castón will advise and provide recommendations on neighborhood issues to the D.C. council and other relevant government entities.

“My goal is to be a voice for the voiceless, and to listen and listen well,” Castón said. “People are feeling like, ‘If he can do it, I can do it.’ I can be an asset to the community.”

Castón doesn’t let his past cloud his future. He was convicted when he was 18 years

old of shooting a man in a D.C. parking lot. During his incarceration he began meditating and doing yoga in his cell. He helped develop and is a founding member of the Young Men Emerging program. He has learned Arabic and Mandarin and published a memoir. He has become a financial literacy instructor and served as a Christian workshop leader.

Castón will be given a tablet or laptop, along with an email account. In addition, he will be provided a workspace in the jail to perform his ANC duties.

By A.J. Hardy
Staff Writer

Capital punishment is declining in America, but some states and the federal government continue to execute prisoners, according to a study by *The Marshall Project*.

“More than five years of immersion in the death penalty allowed us to unearth new truths about the criminal justice system and the erratic ways it metes out punishment,” said the study’s authors.

The report, called *The Next to Die*, examined the 120 state and federal executions conducted between August 2015 and February 2021.

Capital punishment remains legal in 27 states, though only 11 actually carried out executions during the period studied. Four other states — Arizona, South Carolina, Nevada and Oklahoma — saw scheduled executions postponed or reversed by the courts.

“While there can be long stretches in individual states between executions, when you look at the country as a whole, capital punishment is far from extinct,” the study said. “One reason the death penalty endures is because some states —

Marshall Project issues *The Next to Die* report



Stock photo

South Carolina's electric chair quietly awaits the state's next execution.

mostly in the South — pursue it with particular fervor.”

Texas, for example, carried out 570 total executions since the U.S. reinstated capital punishment in 1976 — more than the other top seven states combined. Texas continues to lead the nation with 43 executions carried out during the period studied, while Georgia, in second place, had about half that many.

In the final year of former President Donald Trump’s ad-

ministration, the federal government put 13 people to death, ending a years-long hiatus.

But *The Next to Die* report did more than simply track death statistics; the authors sought to humanize both the condemned and their victims.

“We wanted to tell the stories of the people facing death and the lives lost in the crimes for which they were convicted,” said the report. “In the process, we hoped to better understand how our courts and prisons dispense their most severe punishment.”

Indeed, the death penalty in America is evolving. Legal battles, appeals, and a series of federal Supreme Court decisions have narrowed who can be sentenced to death, excluding the very young, mentally ill, intellectually disabled, and cases of apparent racial bias.

Systemic racism has lately gained the consideration of courts and lawmakers alike, according to the study. About one-third of those put to death were Black Americans, a disparate number given that Black Americans make up about 13% of the population.

On its downward slide in popularity, capital punishment has recently been abolished in such states as Virginia and Colorado, with the condemned having their sentences commuted to life without parole. Other states, including California and Pennsylvania, have placed moratoriums on executions, the study says.

Pharmaceutical companies have also refused to provide drugs used in lethal injections. Some states have had to speed up their execution schedules before their inventory of death drugs expired, or have had to borrow unexpired drugs from other states. In response, Nebraska has turned to fentanyl for at least one execution, and South Carolina recently brought back the firing squad as a means of carrying out death sentences.

“Lethal injection appears to us to be impossible from a practical point of view today,” said Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, blaming the drug shortage for his state’s unofficial suspension of the death penalty.

Some victims and survivors find the decline in executions frustrating, says Ohio Representative Bill Seitz.

“In their minds, justice is being delayed and delayed,” Seitz said.

Tracing prosecutorial mistakes

By William Earl Tolbert
Journalism Guild Writer

Thousands of people have been prosecuted and convicted in the past 32 years of crimes they did not commit, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports.

“The damage caused by these wrongful convictions is immeasurable,” the May 19 story stated. “Lives have been crushed, families ruined, millions upon millions of dollars in compensation paid out. Often the real culprit is never pursued.”

“There have been at least 2,770 exonerations in the United States since 1989 and more than 25,000 years lost by incarcerated prisoners who were ultimately exonerated,” the article said.

Attorneys general aligned with these cases did not eval-

Growing movement among district attorneys to establish Conviction Integrity Units, examine thousands of cases of wrongful imprisonment

uate wrongfulness on the part of their subordinates..

The story reports that the Northern California Innocence Project and Karyn Sinunu-Towery, a retired prosecutor, fought for the exoneration of Rick Walker and Jeremy Puckett.

Both men had a witness give false testimony in exchange for governmental benefits. In both cases there were governmental errors and faulty medical evidence never investigated.

Walker spent 12 years in prison and Puckett spent 19 years in prison. Both men were Bay Area residents falsely convicted of murder.

Sinunu-Towery stated that faulty medical data, unread-

able identification and underhanded deals with a witness convicted an innocent man.

Sacramento and other California counties have refused to publicly and internally dissect wrongful convictions, the story said.

The Northern California Innocence Project has assisted in many exonerated cases over the past few decades. Its work has inspired a few elected prosecutors to open conviction integrity units.

Conviction integrity units are similar to innocence project organizations. Their agenda is to examine false imprisonment allegations transparently.

Judge rejects credit challenge

By Vincent E. O’Bannon
Staff Writer

A California judge ruled against a challenge made by 44 district attorneys against the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). The DAs are contesting the implementation of new CDCR credit earnings awarded to state prisoners.

Superior Court Judge Shama H. Mesiwala denied a request by the DAs for a preliminary injunction against the CDCR. It would have overturned changes to good conduct earning credits, reported the *Sacramento Bee*.

“If you have to do 66% of your time, and you have a 50-year sentence, what difference does it make? What are they challenging? I still have to do the majority of my time — which means that I’m not going home tomorrow,” said *SQNews* staffer Steve Brooks.

Under the new credit earning guidelines, prisoners are now given an increase of credits (violent offenders 80% down to 66% and non-violent offenders 66% down to 50-33%) leading to a reduction in the prison population and providing many with a pathway home, said the July 7 article.

“The new credit earnings would really only benefit those who are coming into prison now,” said SQ resident Troy Dunmoore. “It doesn’t benefit those of us who have been incarcerated for over 25 years. It isn’t retroactive.”

CDCR adopted the emergency rules allowing for the credit earnings during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The DAs contend in their lawsuit that CDCR implemented the emergency regulations without public input.

“We became aware of CDCR releasing inmates significantly

shorter than their court-ordered sentence time, sometimes after serving less than 50% of their time, when those individuals were re-arrested while our records showed they should be in prison,” said Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert.

“District Attorney’s Offices across the state have also seen a disturbing trend of individuals given parole consideration long before their court-ordered sentence time,” she added.

In support of her position, Schubert cites the 2017 case of a prisoner released early who caused the death of a California Highway Patrol officer.

“CDCR argued that the emergency rules enhance public safety and make inmates more amenable to good behavior because they know they can win release sooner under the new system,” reported the *Bee*.

By Heriberto Arredondo Jr.
Spanish Journalism Guild Chairman

Prisons nationwide haven’t made permanent changes to prevent illnesses or death from the coronavirus, news sources report.

Measures taken to deal with the chaos and deadly circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic weren’t substantial or permanent, according to a report by *The Marshall Project* and *The Associated Press*.

“What we’re seeing over the past couple weeks and months is a real return to status quo, which makes me worry that prisons and jails didn’t learn much at all,” said Lauren Brinkley-Rubinstein, who leads the COVID Prison Project. She noted that she hasn’t seen the systemic change needed to address the next pandemic.

Prisons still lack space to isolate sick prisoners. They also haven’t upgraded ventilation systems or created surge capacity for staff and health workers.

The most effective approach is to drastically reduce prison populations, said Dr. David Sears, an infectious disease specialist and correctional health consultant.

Prison environment inherently unhealthy

Experts report coronavirus pandemic produced little effect, no lasting changes in correctional facilities

“When you’re filled to the max and you have two people in an 8-by-10 cell right next to two more people in an 8-by-10 cell and on and on, it’s impossible to create any form of physical distancing,” said Sears. “We have to get people out of prisons so we have that space.”

Infections are now lower, but new variants are spreading around the world, he said. “We need to take these lessons and make sure that the things we’ve learned after a lot of real human suffering are not in vain.”

The inconsistent policies of corrections systems around the country failed to prevent infections that reached a high of 25,000 prisoners in a single week in mid-December. *The Marshall Project* data shows that three in 10 state and federal prisoners were infected with the virus.

Staff shortages have also become a major problem in a number of prisons. In the federal system, staffing levels have become so critically low

that teachers and others have been forced to guard prisoners, reported the article.

The strains of understaffing and working in a high-risk environment have led to some staff leaving their jobs. These staffing shortages will have long-term consequences, especially as prison populations rise, said Anton Andrew of the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

“There were definitely officers who went weeks without a day off and sometimes working all 16-hour shifts. It takes a toll on you, your home life, (and) your time with family, your mental and physical exhaustion,” he said. “Because so many staff members were out sick during COVID-19, what we found was people had an even harder time getting access to medical care.”

Most systems have seen staff vaccination rates lagging behind, though 20 states have administered at least one dose of the vaccine to two-thirds of their prison population, a higher rate than anticipated, reported the article.

The lessening of infections in prisons every week has caused prisons to ease restrictions for visiting, prisoner movements, and mask wearing. Many prisoners have gone more than a year without family visits, educational programs or outdoor recreation, and prisoners are eager to socialize and have access to more activities. However, advocates for the incarcerated fear that prisons are letting their guard down too quickly, the report said.

There is a troubling sign that prisons are moving beyond the pandemic prematurely, said Michele Deitch, a law professor at the University of Texas at Austin.

“There’s a sense that COVID is over, that the pandemic is behind us, and that is just not the case,” said Deitch. “We have to remember that prisons and jails were hit so much harder than the outside communities were, and in many jurisdictions, they were late to provide vaccinations to incarcerated people.”



Juan Haines, SQNews

San Quentin's South Block housing unit, where two-person cells are just 4ft 10in wide and ventilation systems are woefully outdated.

ISUDT drug treatment program hosts first concert on the Lower Yard since pandemic

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho and
Carlos Drouaillet
Staff Writers

The incarcerated population filled San Quentin's Lower Yard awaiting the first concert since the COVID-19 pandemic shut programs down for more than 15 months.

The concert, sponsored by the prison's drug treatment program, provided a forum to give the incarcerated population information about the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment program (ISUDT). The program is touted as the largest in-prison medically assisted treatment program in the nation.

Local public health officials expressed concern about a large gathering inside San Quentin.

"We assured them the incarcerated at San Quentin would act responsibly," said the event organizer, Correctional Counselor III C. Collins. "I believe the concert will break up the monotony of any other Saturday at San Quentin."

Collins, assisted by several staffers, wanted to let the incarcerated population know there is support available to them before they are released.

"I did not like SAP (Substance Abuse Programs) at first," said Yvonne Tate, who was released from prison in 2019.

Tate says SAP changed her life. She talked about her transition from addict and criminal to living sober, saying she now walks with integrity and avoids slipping up by "walking the walk."

Assistant Warden Oak Smith said, "We are here to support the program and let inmates know we care about them." Smith encourages the incarcerated population to participate in programs conducive to their release.

San Quentin's substance abuse program is integrated — participants' mental health and medical concerns are addressed along with transitional housing and parole issues.

"We are here to support ISUDT in any way we can," said Dr. Ponath, a staff psychologist.

Nurse Melanie Strickland said getting into the program is a medical decision and there is a "natural hesitancy" by some participants.

"I was against recovery, believing my life was over. But ISUDT and MAT helped focus me on success through rehabilitation," said program participant Saddiq.

Correctional Counselor II D. Farez took the stage to introduce previously incarcerated persons Yvonne Tate and Watson Allison.

"Two stars of the day, Yvonne Tate and Watson Allison, are people in recovery who are now returned citizens," Farez said.

Farez talked about Allison's completion of rigorous drug counseling courses at Solano State Prison. Allison currently is a drug counselor at a methadone clinic in San Francisco's Tenderloin district. He also works in a homeless shelter.

Counselor Farez said that Allison is a man who stared execution down while sitting on Death Row.

"Watson never complained about Death Row," said Farez. "I still do not know where he received his enlightenment."

After his death sentence was overturned, Allison took advantage of programs and discovered how important it is to get help from other incarcerated people.

Allison said going through the drug treatment programs helped him so much that he couldn't put it in words. "I now do recovery 24/7," he said.

"SAP made me learn about myself. It was my turning point. After committing to

recovery I finished the certification program at Solano and became an OMCP candidate and mentor."

Referring to his first time back inside the prison, Allison said, "I am glad to be here as my return brings it all full circle."

Allison joked about eating "a lot of burgers," and that he still has lots of "oysters and Sriracha."

My journey is about giving back, because I know this is reality. Tell everyone keep their heads up, stay strong and keep pushing forward."

Live Music on San Quentin's Lower Yard

The event included a performance by the band Treasures out of Darkness. Bass player Ryan Wallace said the concert helped to ease tensions created by COVID.

The band performed rock by Santana. A rap trio performed original creations. Pan de Vida (Bread of Life) performed traditional Latin music.

ISUDT Counselor Brown joined in as a vocalist. "For every action there's a reaction, so make it positive, the choice is yours," she said.

Clyde Childress, professional musician turned ISUDT recovery counselor, joined the jam sessions on guitar.

Pan de Vida guitarist Gerardo Sanchez-Muratalla said, "I am grateful for this opportunity. Thank God for the celebration today. Our own recovery means being able to say no to the abuse of any drug."

Treasures out of Darkness bandleader David Rodriguez talked about the importance of the day. "It meant a lot to me

because music soothes everyone. People start to feel good and it gives residents piece of mind for a couple of hours."

All of us are refining ourselves to become better people, so we need to celebrate recovery every day."

"The day on the yard exemplified miracles in recovery," said Collins.

INTERESTED IN ISUDT?

Your Correctional Counselor and Classification Committee can't assign you to these programs, so those interested in the ISUDT program are encouraged to open a dialogue with their medical team.

Submit a Form 7362 "Sick Call" slip (marked MEDICAL) to be evaluated by medical staff. Your primary care physician will refer you to a social worker, who will evaluate you for Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), group therapy, and/or Cognitive Behavioral Intervention (CBI). For those appropriately referred to CBI programming, please note that placement is for a minimum of 90 days and is not voluntary. Individuals who have had a relapse in their addiction, or have used substances within the last 90 days, will be given priority placement.

The enrollment process takes approximately one month from the day you submit the 7362. The wait, however, is well worth it. The ISUDT program treats substance use disorders, and falls under the supervision of the medical treatment team. These programs provide continuity of care for those who are paroling, and allow you to continue your recovery as you return to society.



Watson Allison spent more than three decades on Death Row and returned to tell his story at the ISUDT yard show.



CCIII Collins, who heads the ISUDT program, said the yard show was almost cancelled due to concerns about the Delta Variant.



All photos by Phoenix You, SQNews

Yvonne Tate, a former lifer who officers predicted would never be released, inspired the crowd with her honesty and integrity.



Michael Mackey and bandmates face the crowd at the first gathering on the Lower Yard since COVID-19 brought all programs and group functions to a halt in 2020.

Special thanks to the day's musical performers: Eleazar Alcántar, JD, Raul Higgins, Lee Jaspar, Gordon Kimble, Mark Kinney, Michael Mackey, Bernardo Marroquin, Gerardo Sanchez-Muratalla, David Rodriguez, Ryan Wallace, and Timothy Young.



David Rodriguez, frontman for Treasures Out of Darkness, ISUDT's lead band.



Group participants and audience members had to be fully masked during the yard show. Coronavirus concerns limited the extent of the celebration, but could not limit the enthusiasm of the crowd.



An entire team of ISUDT Ambassadors, including Correctional Counselors, nursing staff, and a staff psychologist, roamed the yard, interacting with potential participants, answering questions, and encouraging attendees to sign up for the substance abuse treatment.



Ms. Brown (left) wowed the audience with her vocals while professional musician and recovery counselor Clyde Childress electrified the crowd with his guitar riffs. "You have a chance to make a choice," Brown said.

RE-STORE

SURVIVORS

Submitted by Jane Survivor

It’s hard to describe the impact of what being assaulted and raped had on my life because it changed my life completely. For years I thought my life had been destroyed. I worked really hard to rebuild everything. I had to re-create who I was and who I wanted to be because the person I had been was gone. I felt broken after I was raped. It was as if my sense of identity

had been splintered and I didn’t know how to reconnect. I lived in fear and was permanently on the defensive, in survival mode, constantly looking to where the next attack was coming from... I couldn’t trust anyone. I assumed that everyone in my life was going to let me down, so I drove everyone away. I didn’t think I was worthy of relationships. I began to use drugs and alcohol to hide. I couldn’t handle the person I had become. Because I was so badly injured

Survivor finds strength to heal

‘I’m able to handle my fears in a way that builds strength’

during the assault, I was in constant pain, taking too many painkillers, and it took the doctors four years to figure out that the ruptured discs in my neck were slowly severing my spinal cord. When this was discovered, I needed urgent surgery and the surgery set me back in my healing once again. The trauma on my body awakened the trauma from the rape and I lived on high alert, using the painkillers to create artificial balance. I wasn’t able to cope and ended up in the hospital. My depression held me prisoner and I needed help desperately. The six-year relationship I had been in at the time of the rape had fallen apart and we split up not long before I had the surgery. My friendship with my best friend disintegrated and although we were able to reconnect years later, I missed her wedding and other important milestones and will forever be saddened by this. My life was unmanageable and I needed to move from Los Angeles. I was still trying to pursue my acting career, going through the motions of auditions but my heart wasn’t in it anymore and I had developed a lot of fear around putting myself out there as an actor. I had lived with the dream of being an actor my entire life and moving from Los Angeles was likely going to be an end to that dream. My heart still yearns to be back in that world. It’s one loss I’ve struggled to accept. Even all these years later, I find myself thinking back to that day I was beaten and raped and remember what could have been. Lost dreams often don’t heal. Although I have been through a lot, I’ve worked really hard to create a new life for myself, including new dreams.

I’ve moved to another country and am working to create a career in public speaking so I can share my story of resilience and healing. I look back at the days when I hated who I was and I see someone that was forced to change too fast. I see strength in my healing and am grateful that I’ve made it this far. I don’t walk around with clenched fists anymore with my fingernails gripping so tightly they leave marks. I’m still frightened if someone appears too close to my car, but the scare doesn’t sideline me for days like it once did. I’m able to handle my fears in a way that builds strength. There was a time I thought being beaten and raped had ended everything for me. I had even wanted to end my life. But now I understand that I am a stronger woman for having experienced what I did and I am grateful I had the inner strength to heal as I have. My

life definitely changed forever that day and I will always remember what could have been, but I have found a new place of peace. For many years before the man that raped me was caught, I rarely thought of him. I felt like survivors of earthquakes must feel. They are traumatized by the horror of the event but they don’t focus on the earthquake itself, they just focus on rebuilding. He was a force of destruction in my life and that was it; it was difficult to have feelings about him. He wasn’t human to me. But then he was caught and I had to rethink my views. He was a man. Just a man, a violent man. It was important to me to see him now as a human being but I still struggle with understanding how and why he could do what he did to me. I hope one day I will know. I hope one day he might tell me.

Ask a doctor: Health questions answered by professionals

Welcome to *Advancing Health Equity*, Transitions Clinic Network’s (TCN) monthly health-focused column for the *San Quentin News*. Each month, our team of doctors, public health professionals and formerly incarcerated community health workers will be answering your health and wellness-related reentry questions.

We hope to use this column as a vehicle to empower individuals and prepare future returning community members for a healthy reentry.

For our first column, we wanted to start with the basics:

Why should healthcare be a part of your reentry plan?

How often do you hear people on the yard talking about where to get a physical exam when they get out? Most people, understandably, are thinking about getting a job, securing a place to live, and restoring relationships. But very few people think about where they will get healthcare services.

To do any of the things you want to do in freedom, you need to be healthy. The reality is that **most people** in state prison have at least one chronic health condition. Chronic conditions include hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, cancer, substance use disorder, or mental health conditions.

HEALTH

These conditions all require some sort of ongoing care, whether that is medications, healthy diet and/or regular visits to a medical provider.

Many individuals are first diagnosed or develop medical conditions while incarcerated, so they may not have had any experience with healthcare in the community. Also, many people have had bad experiences with healthcare while incarcerated or prior to incarceration. To those individuals, we ask you to trust those of us who have also walked your path and found a medical home in the community that cares about returning community members and treats us with humanity. TCN clinics have services specially tailored for returning community members.

What are some first steps to addressing healthcare in my reentry plans?

Request Important Medical Records: When you’re about 90 days from your estimated release date, request a copy of your medical records. **CDCR will charge you for medical records per page.** Because of this cost, we recommend requesting **specific**, important records such as operations you’ve

had, your chronic conditions, most recent doctor visit, a list of medications you’re taking, and diagnostic imaging studies such as X-rays or MRIs. To request medical records, complete Form 7632.

Complete Medi-Cal enrollment paperwork with Transitional Case Management Program (TCMP) staff: Each CDCR institution has a team of social workers who should come see you when you’re 30-90 days from release. They will sign you up for Medi-Cal, Social Security, and disability benefits (SSI/SSDI), if eligible. Medi-Cal is **FREE** health insurance for people in the community who make less than \$17,131 per year. Almost everyone who is coming home from prison should be able to get Medi-Cal. It pays for physical and behavioral health services, including medications and doctor visits. Make sure that you sign the paperwork before you leave. You can submit a Request for Interview (Form #22) if you are within 30 days of release and have not seen a TCMP social worker. We will be talking more about the exciting world of Medi-Cal (health insurance) in our next column, so stay tuned!

Know what medications you’re on: If you don’t know what medications you’re taking, or what the amount or dose of each medication is,

request a copy of your most up-to-date medication list. If you are able to, reach out to your healthcare providers to learn what the medications are for. Please note that you will be given a 30-day supply of medications when you’re released.

Sign up to receive your California ID (CAL-ID): To apply for anything in the community (Medi-Cal, benefits, etc.), you need some form of identification. CDCR has the California Identification Card (CAL-ID) Program, which provides a valid CAL-ID to eligible individuals. If you are unable to get this CAL-ID, **be sure to bring your prison ID home** so that you have some form of identification in the community.

Is there anything different that lifers, or those who go before the board, can do to prepare?

When you’re transitioning back to the community, it’s important to show the parole board that you’re thinking ahead and taking charge of your own medical care. Reach out to the TCN Reentry Health Hotline and we can help you with writing a letter of support to include a TCN clinic in your reentry plans.

How can TCN help me with my medical needs in reentry?

Here are some of the things that TCN can help you with:

- Finding a clinic near you in your county of return to see a doctor
 - Learning how to get health insurance or prescriptions refilled
 - Talking to another returning community member who has been in your shoes and had to navigate reentry
- We’re thrilled to be able to communicate with the incarcerated population. We will be

talking about many different topics, such as health insurance, MAT (medication assisted treatment), prevention and treatment for Hepatitis C, HIV, defining and finding gender-affirming care, managing chronic conditions, and much more.

But most importantly, we want to answer YOUR questions. If you have healthcare-related questions about reentry, feel free to contact us.

Transitions Clinic Network

TCN is a network of community health clinics that serve returning community members. Our clinics employ a Community Health Worker (CHW) who has lived the experience of incarceration and reentry, and can connect you to medical services.

If you have any healthcare reentry questions, call our Reentry Health Hotline and see if there’s a TCN program in the community you’re returning to. We accept collect calls from CDCR, and we’re open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

Transitions Clinic Network
2401 Keith Street
San Francisco, CA 94124
JPAY Email: TCNinfo@ucsf.edu
Telephone: (510) 606-6400

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Associate Editor

Death rate among prisoners on the rise

Prisons are becoming more dangerous as the number of inmates dying in custody is on the rise, a recent report by the Prison Policy Initiative concludes.

The report indicates causes for the upsurge in deaths are from major and unnamed illnesses, along with unnatural causes such as suicide, homicide, alcohol and drugs.

“The answer isn’t just because there are more incarcerated people,” PPI reported. “The very slight net change in the state prison population since 2001 pales in comparison to the increase in overall deaths occurring in these facilities.”

In nearly every category, there is a record-setting number of deaths, according to PPI. State prison records from

2018 reported 4,135 deaths — excluding executions. It was the highest number of deaths on record reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), which began keeping these records in 2001.

“Between 2016 and 2018, the prison mortality rate jumped from 303 to a record 344 per 100,000 people, a shameful superlative,” the report stated.

One of the stark features of the PPI report was the number of deaths from drug overdose and alcohol. Beginning in 2001, “no manner of death has spiked more,” although the BJS does not differentiate between one or the other.

Numbers show drug or alcohol intoxication has increased by 611% since 2001.

Homicide increased by 208%, accidents increased by 95%, suicide by 85% and illness 27%. The 2020 mortality data will not be released for two years, the report stated. Then COVID-19 deaths will be incorporated.

“In 2018, state prisons saw the highest number of suicides (340) since BJS began collecting this data 20 years ago,” PPI reported. “Compared to the 1% net growth of state prison populations since 2001, suicides have increased by a shocking 85%.”

The PPI report noted that suicide is a common issue in the U.S., in general, but stated it has always been higher inside of state prisons. It said the BJS did not allow comparison of sentence lengths to death

rates, “but it’s hard to ignore the possibility that longer sentences are contributing to a sense of hopelessness...”

“Not only does a longer incarceration increase the sheer probability of having a mental health crisis inside, but it also creates the conditions for this to happen,” PPI reported. “With longer periods of separation from loved ones, and a rapidly changing outside world, people serving long sentences are isolated and deprived of purpose.”

The report called attention to when an inmate is in crisis, “correctional officers are supposed to act swiftly to prevent suicide and self-harm.” However, some officers fail regularly to identify warning signs and have been

found to “encourage” self-harm.

In 2018, homicides reached “a record high” of 120 in state prisons. “The rate of homicide in state prison is 2.5 times greater than in the U.S. population, when adjusted for age, sex and race/ethnicity,” it was reported.

PPI found that older inmates were more at risk of homicide “and all other causes of death, except for accidents.” And inmates 55 years and older died from homicide at the highest rate and “... were twice as likely to die by homicide as anyone aged 25 to 44.”

“Incarceration can add 10 or 15 years to someone’s physiology, and take two years off of their life expect-

tancy per year served,” PPI reported. However, it recommended several ways in which prisons can reduce the risk of death:

Reduce prison populations through parole hearing approval rates and compassionate release

Provide “high-quality” treatment for substance use disorders

Reduce drug smuggling by staff with stricter security and “enduring consequences”

Make changes in sentencing policies

Improve healthcare services

Improve prison conditions of confinement

The report concluded that, “Had states taken these actions years ago to reduce other dangers in prisons, we might not have seen record mortality in 2018 — or for that matter, in 2020” (from COVID-19).

Por Carlos Drouaillet
Reportero en Español

El mes de septiembre de 1821 es sinónimo de libertad e independencia tanto para La Nueva España (actualmente México), como para las provincias de Centro América que integraban la Capitanía General de Guatemala en 1821, (que incluían a Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras y Costa Rica), quienes estaban bajo el dominio-opresor de La Corona Española.

Independencia de México y El Grito de Dolores.

El inicio de la guerra por la independencia de México inicio en el pueblo de Dolores, México, cuando Jose Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara motivó al padre de la iglesia Católica Romana, don Miguel Hidalgo a darle su apoyo en el conflicto, reporto Wikipedia.

Asimismo, reconociendo el peligro de la situación, Hidalgo le pidió a su hermano Mauricio que consiguiera presos que apoyaran la independencia. Por consiguiente la noche del 15 de septiembre de 1810 el padre Hidalgo repicó las campanas de la capilla para informar los feligreses del plan de liberar la Nueva España del control Español. Como resultado esa madrugada del 16 de septiembre el padre Hidalgo protegido por Ignacio Allende, Juan Aldama y más 80 ex presidiarios armados, habló a la multitud instigándoles a la lucha. Su mensaje es recordado como “El Grito de Dolores”.

La guerra por la independencia duró once años, durante la cual, multitud de insurgentes fueron encarcelados y ejecutados. Sin embargo también surgieron

Mexicanos y Centro Americanos celebran su Independencia



El Padre Miguel Hidalgo levantando el estandarte que representa la Virgen de Guadalupe, Patrona de Mexico.

Archive photo

El “Grito de Dolores” se repitió por primera vez en Huichapan, Hidalgo en septiembre 16 de 1812 y desde entonces se efectúa cada 15 de Septiembre, en Palacio de Gobierno de la Ciudad de México y municipalidades en todo el territorio Mexicano además de Embajadas de México en el extranjero, reporto Wikipedia.

La versión recitada por el Presidente de México es: ¡Mexicanos! ¡Vivan los héroes! ¡Viva Hidalgo! ¡Viva Morelos! ¡Viva Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez! ¡Viva Allende! ¡Viva Aldama y Matamoros! ¡Viva la Independencia! ¡Viva México! ¡Viva México! ¡Viva México!

Acta de Independencia de Centro América

El Acta de Independencia de Centro América fue ratificada el 15 de septiembre de 1821 en la Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador. Jose Cecilio del Valle la redactó y la firmaron 13 representantes de la Capitanía General de Guatemala. Reporta Wikipedia.

El principal motivo del Acta de Independencia de Centro América fue anunciar la separación del Imperio Español y formar un nuevo estado Centro Americano.

En 1821 La Capitanía General de Guatemala representaba los intereses de las regiones que ahora son Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica y Guatemala, y tenía oficinas centrales en la Ciudad de Guatemala. Ciudad con la única universidad en Centro América.

Entre los eventos históricos que motivaron a los Centro Americanos a independizarse, están la destitución de Fernando VII del trono de España, la guerra Peninsular y la creación de la Constitución Española en 1812, y el regreso de Fernando VII al poder en 1814, Extraído de Wikipedia.

Como resultado, el sentimiento de separación tomó impulso culminando en 1821 cuando el concilio provincial de Guatemala comenzó a discutir abiertamente una declaración de independencia y autonomía.

La decisión por autonomía se redactó y fue debatido en el consejo, culminando con la declaración de Independencia. La Junta del Consejo del 15 de septiembre de 1821 fué presidida por Gabino Gainza y el texto fué escrito por el Hondureño José Cecilio del Valle y firmado por representantes de las provincias Centro Americanas, incluyendo José Matías Delgado, Jose Lorenzo de Romaña y Jose Domingo Deeguez y esa Junta se efectuó en El Palacio Nacional de la Ciudad de Guatemala.

Los países Centro Americanos de Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica y Guatemala juntamente con México fueron influenciados durante el dominio Español y se refleja no solo en su lenguaje, tradiciones y su religión; sino también durante la celebración de sus Fiestas de Independencia. Las celebraciones no solo se efectúan en territorio Mexicano y Centro Americano sino también a través de las fronteras a nivel mundial donde haya comunidades hispanoparlantes patriotas a sus respectivos países.

GTL ofrece llamadas internacionales gratuitas

Por Daniel López
Escritor Contribuyente

Por aligerar las dificultades financieras causadas por la pandemia GTL está ofreciendo 15 minutos de tiempo gratis de teléfono cada dos semanas. Empezando el 4 de julio de 2021 todos los individuos encarcelados que están recibiendo 15 minutos de llamadas gratuitas podrán usar esos minutos, exceptos de cargos, también en llamadas internacionales, en adición a las llamadas nacionales. Siempre considerando que en algunos países podrían no estar disponibles debido a las restricciones de las empresas telefónicas o de los gobiernos, de acuerdo con el memorándum de GTL

Hugo Cabrera de 36 años comenta que es feliz de poder llamar usando el nuevo programa de GTL. “Derechito hablo hasta Guatemala con mi madre, recuerdo que la primera vez que le hable se puso a llorar de felicidad aunque después le dio tristeza de saber que le hablaba de una la prisión. Pero ya se le paso”, dijo Cabrera y añadió, “Cada vez que hablo con mi familia me siento muy feliz”.

Peterson William Fontes de Brasil de 44 años dice, “Durante el 1 año y 4 meses que tengo en Prison y por no hablar con mi familia ellos pensaron que había muerto. Más gracias a las llamadas internacionales gratuitas pude

comunicarme con ellos. En mi familia son mi esposa mis hijos y mis padres. Durante la primera llamada, al escuchar mi voz, mi madre lloro por la gran emoción y después se llenó de alegría. La comunicación con la familia me transmite afecto, esperanza y amor. Ahora, mi hijo menor espera mis llamadas todos los sábados.” dijo Peterson

Carlos Sánchez, de El Salvador, de 26 años y con 2 años y medio en prisión, comentó “Llamar para El Salvador fue para mí un alivio muy grande porque ahora tengo comunicación directa con mi familia. Antes me comunicaba por carta pero no es lo mismo, ahora me siento bendecido de poder escuchar la voz de mis padres cada semana.” Además añadió, “Una llamada les quita la preocupación a mis padres y a mí me deja tranquilo de saber que estén bien.”

Rolando Tut, de México, de 36 años, y cumpliendo ya 13 años encarcelado, expreso, “Para mi es una gran bendición poder hablar a México, sobre todo en estos tiempos de pandemia. Cuando sé que mis padres están bien de salud me siento en paz” dijo Tut.

Algunos códigos telefónicos internacionales usados por los entrevistados son:

México 11-52+ lada + teléfono. Brasil 11-55 + lada + teléfono.

Guatemala 11-502 + teléfono. El Salvador 11-503 + teléfono.

Por Heriberto Arredondo Jr.
Reportero en Español

Julie Chávez Rodríguez nieta de Cesar Chávez, construyó un gran currículo y un legado propio, a través de su arduo trabajo y dedicación representando las minorías, reporto Darlene Superville del Washington (AP). (Prensa Asociada)

Rodríguez tiene 43 años de edad y nació en Delano, Calif. Ella es la hija de Linda y Arturo Rodríguez. Los abuelos de Julie fueron voluntarios de la organización de Agricultores Unidos de América y ella con frecuencia iba a las manifestaciones laborales y ayudó con los programas de alcance a la comunidad con ellos.

“Julie creció durante el movimiento de trabajadores del campo y fue muy activa en campañas,” dijo su tío Paul Chávez. “Ella participo en boicots, se paro en líneas de huelga, se unió a las marchas y atendió juntas sindicales. Cuando ella estaba en escuela primaria, ella iba a las oficinas a ofrecer su ayuda. Ella era encantadora y curiosa, con un nivel de madurez muy por encima de su edad,” él recordó.

Rodríguez se graduó de la Universidad de Berkeley en California, en el 2000 con un título en estudios Latino Americanos. Ella trabajo entonces para la fundación nombrada en honor a su abuelo, y después fue voluntaria en la campaña presidencial de Obama en el 2008.

Julie estaba trabajando en el Departamento del Interior en una iniciativa para jóvenes cuando Valerie Jarrett la recluto para trabajar para el programa de alcance Latino e Inmigración en la Casa Blanca. “Julie tenía una extraordinaria

Julie Chávez Rodríguez construyó un gran currículo y un legado propio



Archive photo

Julie Chavez Rodriguez, Directora de Asuntos Intergubernamentales en la Administración de Biden.

reputación por excelencia, trabajo arduo, competencia y no enfocarse en ella, pero en como podíamos atraer tantas voces como fuera posible,” dijo Jarrett.

Rodríguez llevo a ser asistente principal de Jarrett, trabajando en alcanzar a veteranos, Asiáticos Americanos e Isleños del Pacifico. Ella también trabajo con grupos enfocados en la prevención de violencia con armas. Poco antes que terminara el mandato de Obama en Enero del 2017, Rodríguez fue nombrada directora estatal para la entonces –Senadora Kamala Harris de California. Después se unió a la campaña presidencial de Harris 2020 como directora

en política y Jefa de Personal ambulante.

Después que Harris abandono su campaña, Rodríguez se unió a la campaña de Joe Biden para ayudar a supervisar el alcance Latino. Biden escogió a Rodríguez a dirigir la oficina de Asuntos Intergubernamentales, encargada de trabajar con los gobiernos estatales, locales y de tribus de Puerto Rico y otros territorios de Estados Unidos—ella distribuyo ayuda del gobierno federal de los \$1.9 trillones del plan de asistencia del coronavirus.

La anterior supervisora de Asuntos Intergubernamentales Cecilia Munoz,

quien dirigió la oficina por cinco años bajo Obama, dijo de Julie, Rodriguez tiene el trabajo porque ella es “Julie” –y no porque es una Chavez. “Ser una Chavez es parte de quien ella es, pero ella esta ahí porque ella es muy preparada y tiene una integridad profunda.”

Julie, quien amorosamente se referia a su abuelo como “Tata,” tenía la esperanza de emular su profundo sentido de activismo comunitario, y se sintió muy alagada y emocionada al mirar por primera vez el busto de su abuelo Cesar en la Oficina Oval.

Ella está ahora sirviendo en la Casa Blanca y aconsejando a Biden en asuntos que van desde comunicaciones hasta póliza. Rodriguez esta entre un grupo de Latinas buscando alcanzar votantes que no ven que la campana presidencial de Biden este haciendo suficiente.

La Primera Dama Jill Biden volo a California para la Marzo 31 conmemoración del nacimiento de Cesar Chavez, y visito la propiedad del la familia Cuarenta Acres, cerca de la ciudad de Delano. Que fue la primer oficina central permanente del Sindicato de Agricultores Unidos de América.

“Su presencia (de Julie) y su persona es algo poderoso para la gente que no ha tenido muchas oportunidades,” dijo su tío Paul. “Especialmente (para) aquellos que han sido dejados fuera de los asuntos civiles y políticos de nuestras comunidades.”

1792 The September Massacres were a series of killings of prisoners in Paris, France, that occurred from September 2 through 6, during the French Revolution. They lasted from Sunday afternoon until Thursday evening, by which time half the prison population of Paris had been summarily executed.

1. Saltwater-loving reptile (Abbr.)
2. Type of sandwich
3. Work citation
4. BBQ side
5. Asian app
6. Extra
7. Buzz
8. Department store
9. Model Hosk
10. Hook
11. Titans' state (Abbr.)
14. Actress Ortiz
15. Nonexistent place
21. ____ hee
22. '90s electronic item
25. Stages
26. Collection
27. Mashers
28. One-time nickname
for Michael Jackson
29. Expression for contempt
30. Snappish dog
31. Virtue (Greek)
32. Hills
37. Dog accessory
38. Balances
39. Christmas tree
40. AARP members
46. R&B artist
47. "Better Call Saul" network
48. Summer treats
49. Brits
50. High level web
programming language
51. Biblical son
52. Italian wine growing region
53. Drunkard
54. War god
55. Apiece
56. Tennis's Arthur
57. Catspeak

1	2	3	4		5	6	7			8	9	10	11	
12					13			14	15		16			
17					18						19			
20					21					22				
			23					24						
25	26	27					28	29				30	31	32
33							34					35		
36					37	38	39				40			
41					42						43			
44					45					46	47			
			48					49						
50	51	52				53	54					55	56	57
58					59						60			
61					62						63			
64							65				66			

Last Issue's Solution

S	T	A	B			A	M	D		L	O	B	O	
T	I	N	E		A	D	I	E	U		O	R	A	N
A	N	T	E		G	O	R	S	E		R	E	N	E
R	A	I	N	C	A	T	S	A	N	D	D	O	G	S
			T	H	I	S			O	R	E			
	L	O	H	A	N		R	A	R	E		S	P	A
H	A	S	E	K		F	O	N	T		S	A	I	N
A	S	T	R	A	W	I	N	T	H	E	W	I	N	D
S	K	E	E		A	N	A	S		V	I	N	N	Y
P	I	O		I	T	E	N		S	A	N	T	A	
			S	T	E			S	A	N	G			
A	N	Y	P	O	R	T	I	N	A	S	T	O	R	M
M	A	M	A		D	E	C	A	L		O	A	H	U
E	M	I	T		O	S	A	G	E		W	H	O	M
S	E	R	E		G	S	N				N	E	S	S

[illegible]

ACE
ACT
ADO
FLY
LEE
NOW
ORE
SOB

EVEN
FLAT
GAGE
GEAR
IRON
ONCE
SKIT
SOAR
YEAR
YETI

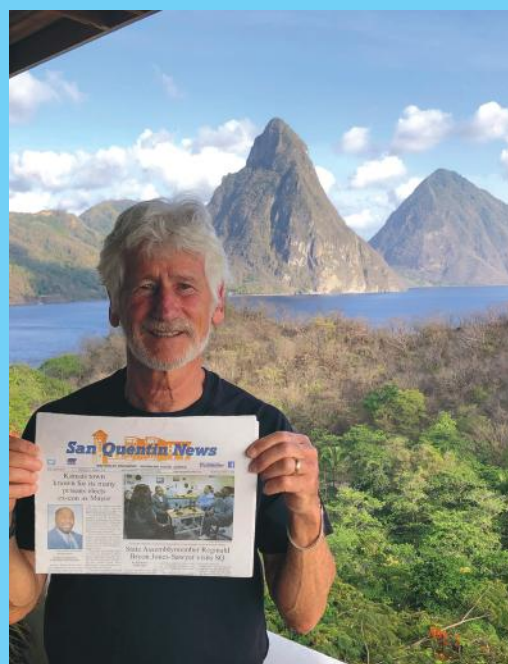
ABOUT
APPLE
BATON

BLAST
CHEEK
DIRTY
EVERY
GREEN
KAZOO
RIDGE
WATER

ANGORA
COBALT
EASTER
GOLDEN
INDIGO
OBLIGE
PADDED
SIZZLE

OBSERVE
READING
SCENERY
TADPOLE
TICKETS

Traveling? Take a photo of yourself holding up an edition of the *San Quentin News* and we'll publish it!



Andy Alpine shows his support in St. Lucia in 2019.

THE SQUARE:
3 balls are needed to complete the square.

WORD PROBLEM:
10 $\frac{5}{18}$ haystacks

3	+	26	x	2	=	58
+		/		x		
17	+	13	-	5	=	25
+		+		-		
22	x	2	+	8	=	52
=		=		=		
42		4		2		

Difficulty: ★★★★★

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

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

(Last month's solutions)

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

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

NEWS BRIEFS

Detroit, Mich. — Mubarez Ahmed was wrongfully convicted for a double murder in 2002. He spent 17 years incarcerated before the convictions were overturned. He was awarded \$9.95 million on July 26 for time he spent in prison, the *Detroit News* reported.

South Carolina — A survey shows that South Carolina has one of the lowest rates of recidivism in the country. The survey found that about 21.9% of prisoners released from the state’s correctional institutions return to prison within three years.

Oklahoma City, Ok. — A federal appeals court has upheld a federal judge’s reversal of the 1984 kidnapping and murder conviction of Karl Fontenot, 56, whose case was featured in the book and television series “The Innocent Man.” The decision was based on newly discovered evidence that was withheld by prosecutors at the time, *The Associated Press* reported.



Hartford, Conn. — Last July, state lawmakers could not override Gov. Ned Lamont’s veto of a bill that limited when isolated confinement or seclusion is used in the state’s prisons, the *AP* reported.

Philadelphia, Penn. — A real-time dashboard of the state’s prison and parole populations shows strides have been made to reduce racial

inequity, but Black and Latino residents are still overrepresented in prisons and on parole, the *AP* reported.

Massachusetts — Prisoners are allegedly being sent to solitary confinement, losing visitation privileges, or facing other punishments for failing drug tests, *Vice* reported. The prisoners allege that the tests are giving

false positives after screening prisoners’ legal mail for the synthetic cannabinoid K2, according to a lawsuit filed against the state’s prison system. Some prisoners are now refusing any mail, which forces attorneys to drive long distances to hand-deliver court documents and other important communications to their clients.

Philadelphia, Penn. — Curtis Crosland spent 34 years — more than half his life — in prison for a crime he did not commit. No physical evidence connected Crosland to the killing of a South Philadelphia grocery store owner. The district attorney’s Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) launched an investigation into the case, which exonerated Crosland of the crime, the *Washington Post* reported. He was released from prison in June.

Kansas City, Mo. — Ricky Kidd spent 23 years in prison for a double murder he did not commit, the *Kansas City Star* reported. He filed a civil lawsuit in federal court last August, seeking restitution for the time he lost while wrongfully incarcerated. The lawsuit seeks accountability for those responsible for his wrongful conviction, which allowed the true killers to walk free.

Washington, DC — The U.S. Justice Department asked a judge last August to deny early release to four low-level federal inmates un-

der a new criminal justice reform law that shortens prison terms if prisoners participate in recidivism-reduction programs. Justice Department officials say the prisoners failed to complete programs. At issue is a provision from the 2018 First Step Act, which aims to ease harsh sentencing for non-violent offenders and reduce recidivism, *Reuters* reported.

Chalmette, La. — Jarvis Ballard and Darvin Castro Santos were exonerated last August for crimes they did not commit, reported the Innocence Project New Orleans, which represented both men, according to the *Times-Picayune/New Orleans Advocate*.

Chicago, Ill. — Terrill Swift was exonerated after spending more than a decade behind bars for a crime he did not commit, *USA Today* reported. He was 17 years old when Chicago police officers asked him to come down to the station and lied to him during an interrogation, accusing him of raping and murdering a woman with three other teens he didn’t know.

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Associate Editor

Attica (ăť' ī-kə) *n.* An ancient region of east-central Greece around Athens. According to Greek legend, the four Attic tribes were unified into a single state by the Athenian king Theseus.

Today the word Attica is almost instructional. Two words — “fight back” — have supplanted its meaning. Fifty years ago this month, that’s what the incarcerated men in Attica State Prison in the state of New York did in an attempt to call attention to their grievances.

A five-day seizure of the prison by unarmed inmates led to what is by far the most egregiously planned state-sponsored massacre of prisoners in U.S. history.

Blood in the Water (2016), by Heather Ann Thompson, portrays a plain truth: “that many men at Attica went to bed hungry.” As one correctional officer stated, “...if you can spend an extra dollar on feeding, it would solve a lot of our problems.”

Core demands made by inmates at Attica are much like those in today’s prison industrial complex. Thompson outlines some basic demands, such as for the state to establish an inmate grievance system, stop mistreatment, to be paid a minimum wage, and “stop slave labor.” And, they wanted to end all censorship of newspapers and magazines.

As the decade of the 1960s turned, Thompson describes how “...the profile of the average prisoner coming to Attica had changed.” No surprise,

Blood in the Water:
The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy
By Heather Ann Thompson

BOOK REVIEW

“Many more prisoners were young, politically aware, and determined to speak out when they saw injustices in the facility. These were Black and Brown youth who had been deeply impacted by the civil rights struggles of this period...”

Thompson does a superb job exposing the treacherous circumstances that steered the prisoners’ rebellion and developed from a work stoppage, to taking hostages, negotiations, and the take back of the prison by guards who used extreme violence and deadly force.

There is no protagonist in *Blood in the Water*, but a more subtle inference that draws a connection between George Jackson’s killing at San Quentin, three weeks earlier, social conditions and the prisoners’ uprising at Attica. Readers who have insightful knowledge about prison may conclude not much has changed, and that the powers that be continue to transgress.

As one prisoner at Attica said before the 1971 rebellion, “...if there are any lives lost in here, and if a massacre takes place...in the final analysis the world will know that the animals were not in here, but outside running the system and the government.”

The 50th anniversary of the Attica uprising coincides with the 10th anniversary of the 2011 prisoner-led hunger strike in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to end long-term isolation in Security Housing Units.

Thompson’s descriptions of events center readers’ attention on the incredible world of incarcerated men who are at the mercy of overwhelming totalitarian state power, and its willingness to exact vengeance upon the downtrodden held in its care. What follows is the concealment of additional crimes committed by state officials in the aftermath.

Each chapter details a remarkable account of history, beginning with the siege of the prison on Sept. 9, 1971 and ending in violence on Sept. 13. “Ultimately,” Thompson writes, “the human cost of the retaking was staggeringly high: 128 men were shot — some of them multiple times.”

More importantly, nine hostages were killed by prison guards and law enforcement that provided mutual aid. Twenty-nine prisoners were fatally wounded too. Many of the deaths, both hostages and prisoners, were caused by “the scatter of buckshot... others resulted from the devastating impact of unjacketed bullets.”

Who did what? One might ask. Thompson’s research plac-

es accountability on “The New York State Police, the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, and Attica’s correction officers and correction officials from as far away as the Great Meadow Correctional Facility in Comstock.”

No prisoners had firearms, yet “...a total of 33 rifles had been sent to Attica in preparation for the retaking, and 217 shotguns had been passed out to the troopers from various troop supply trucks,” Thompson writes. “There were also uncounted numbers of personal weapons.”

No details are spared, including the great lengths the author says the state went to hide evidence and the truth, to avoid accepting responsibility, or more importantly, civil liability for the carnage left in the wake of its crimes.

The takeaway underscores a point many prisoners understand only too well. That is, if prison officials settle a suit, it is tantamount to an apology, or tacit admission of unlawful activity. The state, as Thompson shows, refuses to admit any wrongdoing.

I had the good fortune to meet Thompson shortly after the publication of *Blood in the Water*. At the time, she said it took her about 13 years to research and write her book. The 578 pages are indexed and backed by end notes that direct scholars and naysayers to court

transcripts, legal briefs, personal interviews, websites, news stories and other documents. This is where at least some truth is revealed.

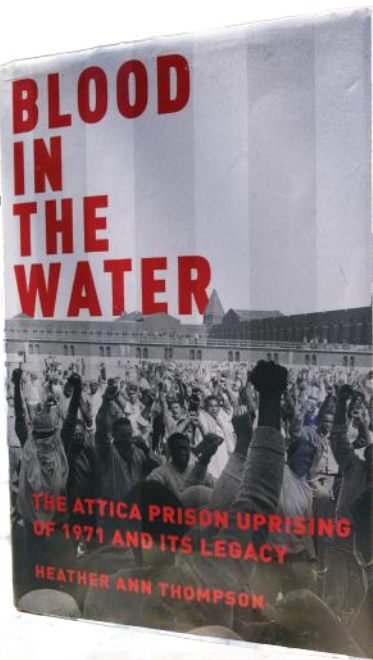
No stone is left unturned. From President Richard Nixon to New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, down to prosecutors and rank-and-file guards, Thompson illustrates that the state was complicit in the demise of dozens of lives — including some of its own.

To be sure, *Blood in the Water* is also a survivors’ story where we learn about the Forgotten Victims of Attica (FVOA), families of slain officers who waited decades to receive compensation for the deaths and injuries of their loved ones at the prison.

Everyone was expendable, as Thompson makes clear: “New York’s Attica prosecutors had far more evidence to work with than the lack of law enforcement indictments implied, even for some of the most high-profile prisoner killings,” but the state failed or refused to do what it asks of its prisoners, and that is to accept responsibility.

Throughout the book, Thompson uses clear details and facts to keep readers engaged, cover to cover, in what feels like a page-turning novel where the roles of heroes and villains are reversed. Yet, readers feel comfortable learning the naked truth.

In the end, some FVOA “...saw that the prisoners and (correctional officers) had both



been sacrificed by the state and thus that they weren’t each other’s enemies.”

In terms of state failure, today the word Attica could be supplanted with COVID. Not much has changed, but hopefully reading books such as *Blood in the Water* may spark change in the trajectory of current calamities in America’s penal colonies and produce improved results 50 years from now.

“And let it here be noted that men are either to be kindly treated, or utterly crushed, since they can revenge lighter injuries, but not graver. Wherefore the injury we do to a man should be of a sort to leave no fear of reprisals.”

—The Prince
Niccolo Machiavelli

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

San Quentin News. I’ve been comparing the way we (offenders) do time down here in Texas to the way offenders are doing time in California, and to be honest with you – I’m kind of jealous. It seems to me that that the prisons in Cali are overflowing with opportunity. So, I’m hoping that I can get a few pointers from the San Quentin News to maybe better the functioning of the Texas prison system. I have enclosed stamps for your next issue of the San Quentin News – to see what you penitentiary playas are talking about. If you can provide me with some infor-

mation I can capitalize on, I will surely return. Thank you for your time and understanding. Word.

Sincerely,
Donyelle Eugene Ardie
Coffield Unit
Tennessee Colony, Texas

Today our jails and prisons are overflowing. The violence in our streets is rampant. There is an approach that is so simple but would dramatically decrease crime rates in our nation. It would require bravery of ordinary citizens and it’s so daring that few would ever think it possible or would

agree to try it themselves. The solutions are the application of love.

I did not say to love. Love must be applied. Crime is preventable when you focus on the people not the crime. The majority of criminals were victims themselves. Many of their abuses began in childhood. The inability to deal with trauma led to addiction, acting out and eventually crime. The best way to stamp out crime is to prevent it from ever happening. The solution is to [be] active in society, aware of the needs of others, and willing to act for the benefit of others. Everyone

from children to adults, poor to the wealthy, single people to parents can play a role in crime prevention.

Adults, if you want to reduce the revolving rate of recidivism, consider what the community can do to provide

“Crime is preventable when you focus on the people, not the crime.”
—Dorothy Maraglino

other options than crime. For decades, felons have been prevented from finding gainful employment, restricted housing options and shunned from taking an active role in leadership roles. Why should felons who paid their debt to society continue to be marginalized for the rest of their lives?

Opportunities to succeed must be extended to felons. If you want to reduce recidivism, try hiring a felon to work at your company, encourage co-workers who are putting crime behind them, and support

anyone who is trying to better their lives.

Dorothy Maraglino
Chowchilla, CA

Dear San Quentin News:

I hope when this letter reaches you it finds you in the best of spirits and sound health. I heard ya’ll on the radio two weeks ago. The guy was interviewing inmates that are progressive here in the State of Jim Crow (FLA). They, the F.D.O.C., don’t want to implement programs. The only thing they believe in is solitary confinement, which the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation at Pelican Bay halted.

In Solidarity,
Eric L. Wilridge
Florida State Prison

Correctional Training Facility creates hub for veterans

By CDCR Press Office

Soledad – On May 28, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony at Correctional Training Facility (CTF) for the first Veterans Hub in the nation with the capacity to eventually house some 1,200 incarcerated Veterans, the largest program of its kind. The facility will offer programs and services to better coordinate delivery of VA benefits for eligible veterans serving sentences in state prison, as well as provide targeted rehabilitative programs.

“Our collective focus and goal in CDCR is to promote rehabilitation and ensure the incarcerated population has the services, resources and tools they need while they’re serving their time, but more importantly, when they are released in our communities,” said CDCR Secretary Kathleen Allison. “I appreciate our veterans for their services, and I am very proud of this effort, and of the dedication and commitment of our staff and our partners.”

Eligible veterans will be housed with and be offered an array of programming including some unique to the unit: veteran mentorship, support groups and the new Canine Life Program, which teaches and

places highly educated service dogs with veterans and first responders suffering from PTSD.

“We strive to reinvigorate those characteristics by reminding the men of their past accomplishments,” said CTF Warden Craig Koenig. “The program is not just about access to the men by outside stakeholders interested in giving the men their veteran benefits, which is incredibly important. We are striving to give the men back their lives.”

U.S. Congressman Jimmy Panetta was in attendance. The raising of the colors was done by the CTF Veterans Hub Honor Guard, and the National Anthem was sung by CTF Veteran Derrek Holmes. Additionally, the invocation was done by CTF Veteran Tom Daniels, the Veterans Hub Chaplain.

The facility is comprised of five housing units that can house more than 200 individuals per building. Each building will be a purposed unit within the prison. The improvements were paid for through a partnership with Veterans Healing Veterans from The Inside Out and other charitable organizations (<http://veteranshealingveterans.com/index.html>).

The veteran-focused facility is the realization of a vision that began in 2019. CTF partnered with VHV Founder and Execu-

Innovative facility is first in nation for incarcerated vets, will provide targeted programs and support



Photo courtesy of CDCR

Members of the CTF Honor Guard assemble at the facility's ribbon cutting ceremony on May 28.

tive Director Ron Self, a highly decorated Marine veteran who earned a Ph.D. in behavioral studies from Quantico while in the Marines and was honorably discharged in 1997. He later served time in prison, where he founded Veterans Healing Veterans from The Inside Out

(VHV-FTIO) and paroled in 2017. Since his parole in 2017, Self has been an essential supporter of the Veterans Yard and worked closely with CDCR on veteran programs.

“The realization of a program like this, where we are able to assist the veterans who

have served this country, as well as their families, and have better access to the benefits they have earned, is long overdue,” Self said. “We are also working hand in hand with the VA and CDCR in navigating the logistics of onsite exams that require specific equipment

and instruments. These exams and programs are tailored specifically to the incarcerated veterans. In so doing, this enables the returning veteran to become a productive member of society once again, already having these benefits in place upon release.”

Those who volunteer for the veterans program must have served in the United States Armed Forces. All veterans, regardless of their type of discharge, shall be afforded the opportunity to participate in the program pending verification of an embossed DD-214. They must also sustain good behavior while serving their time. Participants will be able to apply for and receive benefits associated with military service, while also working with outside veteran agencies and community entities to address all rehabilitative needs.

Veterans currently housed in the facility have already begun to create an environment that nurtures personal growth, positive programming, and rehabilitation. The CTF veteran specific yard will foster an environment for veterans to enhance their well-being, build self-care skills, counteract compassion fatigue and burnout and promote collaboration, success and sustainability.

A group previously known as a radical Black Supremacist gang is now recognized as a spiritual group in California prisons.

The Nation of Gods and Earths (NGE) will now receive the same rights as all religious groups in facilities operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). The change results from a lawsuit by the group, also known as the Five Percenters.

With the settlement agreement finalized May 27, CDCR will allow NGE to have an approved spiritual leader to help lead its services. NGE members can assist the chaplain in leading activities on a rotating basis.

The agreement extends to those housed in Death Row at San Quentin and to the general population.

“Thanks to the San Quentin prison staff for welcoming the Nation of Gods and Earths

CDCR acknowledges Nation of Gods and Earths as spiritual group

into the SQ community,” wrote Death Row resident Darren C. Stanley, in a letter to the San Quentin News.

Stanley, who goes by the spiritual name Knowledge Born God Allah, filed a civil rights complaint against the San Quentin warden and other CDCR employees. The lawsuit was filed in April 2019 in federal court.

The suit alleged violations of the U.S. Constitution and the infringement of freedoms afforded under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA).

Historically, prison officials across the United States have treated NGE as a security threat group. The Five Percenter Nation has been described as a violence-prone street gang, a Black Supremacist prison gang, and a

Black militant group. But in his letter to the newspaper, Stanley wrote, “Love is our greatest weapon.”

“This is long overdue,” said Malik Ali, a 51-year-old SQ resident and Five Percenter, who goes by the spiritual attribute Malik Xtra Smart God Allah. “I am very grateful and appreciative,” he said, explaining that the number 51 is symbolic for knowledge and power.

Ali is a native of New York who has been a practicing Five Percenter since 1986. While in CDCR custody he was only able to participate in the Nation of Islam and other Islamic services but not NGE services. He describes NGE as cultural and spiritual, but not religious.

“It’s for anyone who believes in God. It’s not about being pro-

Black or pro-White; it’s about being pro-righteous,” said Ali.

The Five Percenter Nation (NGE) was founded around 1964 in the Harlem section of New York City by Clarence Edwards Smith. Ali said Smith left the Nation of Islam and became a student of Malcolm X. He eventually changed his name to Clarence 13X and to Allah The Father.

Allah The Father taught his followers that the Black man is God personified, and that each Black man can cultivate and eventually realize his godliness through meditation, study, spiritual and physical fitness.

The term “Five Percenter” was derived from the belief that 10 percent of the people of the world know the truth of existence and those elites opt to keep 85 percent of the world in

ignorance and under their control. The remaining percentage are those who know the truth and are determined to enlighten the rest. They are the Five Percenter Nation.

Clarence 13X (Allah The Father) was murdered in a Harlem housing project in 1969. His teachings have been integrated into the Hip Hop culture. Rap groups like Poor Righteous Teachers, Brand Nubian, Wu Tang Clan, and Busta Rhymes have continued to spread the knowledge of NGE. Rappers, like JAY-Z, have been spotted wearing the emblem with an eight-point nautical star with the number seven inside, a crescent and another star close by, which is the symbol for the Five Percenter Nation.

“We teach through Supreme Mathematics, Su-

preme Alphabets, the 120s and prove, through much more, that the Black man is God and his proper name is ALLAH!” Stanley wrote to SQ News.

Spiritual services for NGE members are anticipated to begin at SQ in September. “I’m in the process of speaking with the Islamic clergy to set up a meeting time to welcome all those interested in our services,” said Ali.

Those interested may contact Malik Ali, who currently lives in West Block.

Any community volunteers interested in leading NGE services are encouraged to submit an application to the San Quentin Community Resource Manager.

— **Steve Brooks**

**By Steve Brooks
Staff Writer**

Whether it’s wildfires or pandemics, the San Quentin (SQ) 1000 Mile Club faces challenges getting its running events back on track.

“A lot of us caught COVID and we were worried about how the virus would affect our lungs, so our training got off to a slow start,” said club President Tommy Wickerd.

However, for the second year in a row, the club will have to cancel its annual marathon in November due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Club normally begins its running season in January with a speedy one mile race. They then gradually build to a 26.2 mile marathon in November by holding monthly races.

This year the club will begin in September with a three mile race.

Thousand Mile Club members say that not having running events is like not having access to other rehabilitation programs and running teaches some of the same tools as other self-help groups. They also say it has helped save their lives.

San Quentin’s 1000 Mile Club *Members anticipate challenges in the wake of COVID*



Raphy Casales, CDCR

Wildfire smoke and COVID infections have frustrated SQ’s resident runners in recent years, often hindering their sport for months on end.

Member John Levin hated running before he joined the 1000 Mile Club five years ago.

“My running career began after suffering a near fatal heart attack in May 2012,”

said Levin. “After waking up from a triple bypass surgery, I made the appropriate

lifestyle changes, which included running.” Levin has participated in several SQ marathons and he believes running helped him survive COVID-19.

Other members who are passionate about the Club have run marathons and persevered to get to the finish line. They have walked, limped, and crawled just to complete the race. However, Club members do have some concerns about the new COVID-19 variant and what it might cause.

“I’m a little concerned about the Delta variant and this place blowing up again as our population increases,” said Troy Dunmore. “A couple years ago it was the wildfires, now this.”

Club member Fidelio Marin has been dealing with serious medical issues since the outbreak of COVID-19. However, he had a third place finish in 2019 behind the Club’s fastest runner, Markelle “The Gazelle” Taylor, who had an impressive marathon time of 3:18:24. Marin trots along the track several times a week at a much slower pace.

The virus did not affect everyone the same. Before

COVID, Club member Steve Reitz shaved an impressive 14 minutes off his 2018 Marathon time when he clocked in at 3:41:53 in 2019. Since then Reitz maintains his workout and he tries to keep in shape. He anticipates when he can test his skills again.

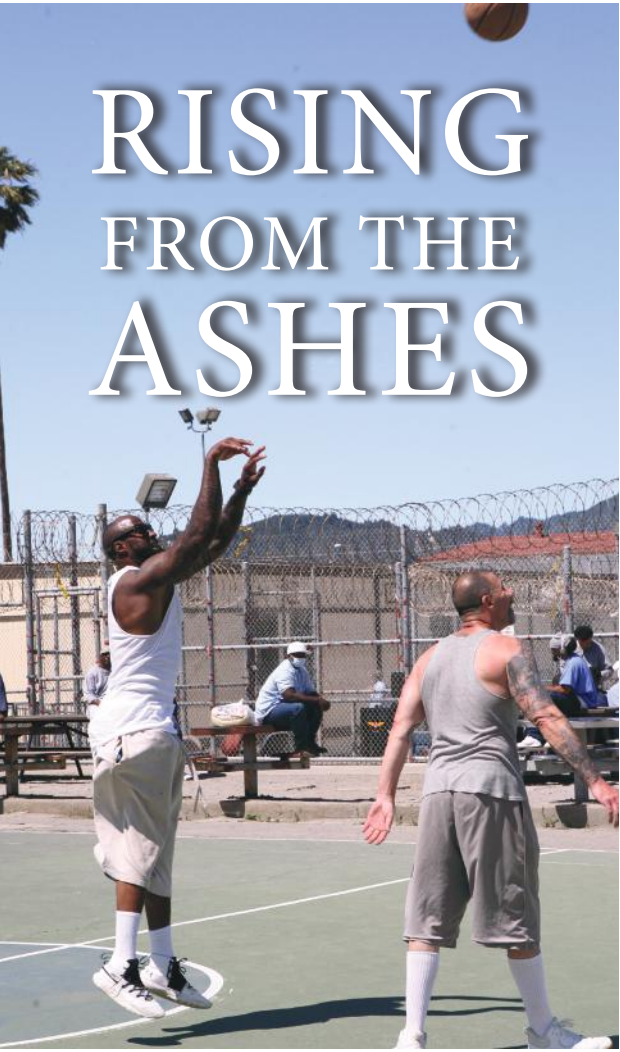
“I just hope I’m still in shape and not injured when we finally get a chance to run again,” said Reitz. “It’s hard to stay focused without the monthly races.”

Club member Mark Jarosik came in second place to Markelle Taylor in 2019 with a time of 3:16:38. Jarosik is the reigning SQ marathon champion. But he is currently dealing with an ankle injury. Doctors recommended that he not run or walk for three months.

“That’s disappointing news,” said Jarosik. “It’s hard to go three months without running.”

Jarosik looks forward to finally getting his shot at breaking the SQ marathon record of 3:10:42 set by Taylor.

“I just want to get healthy enough to have one more chance to beat Markelle’s record here at San Quentin and I’ll be satisfied,” said Jarosik.



Phoeun You, SQNews

Two-time Super Bowl cornerback Brandon Browner finds prison humbling, shares insights he has gained from his experience.

Brandon Browner’s fall from fame and fortune and the hard life lessons he’s taken from it

SPORTS

By Timothy Hicks
Sports Editor

Football legend, Pro Bowler, two time Super Bowl Champ, star cornerback and member of the hard-hitting defensive backs called the “Legion of Boom” is now SQ resident Brandon Browner.

San Quentin Prison houses another great star who was once at the height of his career. Now Pro Bowler Brandon Browner wakes up in the confines of a four by nine prison cell like all other SQ residents.

“Being in that small cell, with no room to even stretch out your arm, bumping into the locker,” Browner said, “make you not wanna ever come back to prison.”

Browner said that it’s a humbling experience to go from having everything that he wanted to now sitting on the game tables on a prison yard.

The legendary cornerback was observing the draft of the San Quentin IBL (Intramural Basketball League) and taking in the bright Saturday sun.

“It’s cool to see that they (prison officials) got something like this for us to do,” said

Browner. “It’s cool to see good talent out here for us to enjoy.”

With his head phones draped on his neck, Browner appeared to be in awe of his surroundings. Browner is in prison for the first time in his life, for attempted murder. He declined to talk about his case — which is understandable in this new environment of strangers.

“As I’m looking at this draft, it kinda reminds me of the drafts I seen over the years,” Browner said. “I’ve seen the new guys get excited and I think of all the things they have to look forward to when they come into all that money.”

Browner was signed to the Denver Broncos in 2005 as a free agent. He got his first multi-million dollar contract when he was in his early 20s. He went from watching his idol, Champ Bailey, on TV to attending parties together, achieving celebrity status, receiving red carpet treatment and meeting lots of women. All at the young age of 22.

Browner later went on to join Pete Carroll’s Seattle Seahawks, where he linked up with former famed Seattle secondaries Richard Sherman, Kam Chancellor, Earl Thomas, and Byron Maxwell and formed the world renowned hard-hitting squad known as the “Legion

of Boom.” Attending weddings and parties together and being a bad boy wasn’t always his way.

Browner came from humble beginnings, growing up in Southern California’s San Fernando Valley. Raised by a strict single mother with 17 brothers and sisters and a dad in the prison system, Browner was the first in his family to ever receive fame and financial wealth — which can account for some of his irresponsible behaviors, he said.

The retired football star’s down to earth aura and his approachable demeanor shows up when he jokes with the men he allowed into his small circle of incarcerated friends. One of those newfound friends is the co-host of the world renowned podcast Ear Hustle, Rahsaan “New York” Thomas.

“He in prison like all of us here who made some bad choices,” said Thomas. “He been through trauma but, now he making some better choices. Since we don’t have no programs open yet because of COVID restrictions, he’s still doing a lot of reading and working on himself and coping with his issues. I’m just another person that helps him do what he already know to do but struggles with. I’m just his conscience.”

Browner went to the New England Patriots and then to the New Orleans Saints, where he began to feel the effects of aging.

“I noticed my life start to spiral downward. I saw the turning point in my career. I got older and the younger cats in the league started to take a toll on me. It started to have a mental effect on me too.”

The instant wealth, along with the mental imbalances, gave him a sense of unrestrained arrogance that led to him taking for granted some of those he truly loved. Particularly his significant other.

“You don’t realize the good in your life until it crash or fall away,” Browner said. “My significant other experienced the worst side of me. I didn’t realize the damage I was causing her because I used to pacify her with things — with money, gifts and credit cards for shopping sprees. But a person get tired of being mistreated.”

The two share kids together and at the mention of his kids, he drops his head and lets out a disparaged sigh.

“My focus is on them. I do it all for them. I just want to do what I have to do so I can get home as quick as possible.”

Doing “what he has to do,” meaning taking as many programs as he possibly can so that he can earn the positive programming credits that would reduce his sentence.

Passing the torch to new All-Madden coach

SQ resident Bryant Underwood, 36, is the new All-Madden Football head coach. He is taking over the position that long-term resident Dwight King, 47, held for three years until he recently became eligible for parole.

“I’m passing the torch to a younger guy to create a platform for younger men to have the opportunity to build community relations with other people and for Bryant to be an example for young men to see what good conduct looks like,” said King.

The All-Madden team had a 4-2 record pre-COVID. Not only did the guys have fun playing the sport they loved, but playing football gave them the opportunity to become better men, new

head coach Underwood said. When he played, not only did he learn football, he also learned some life skills.

“During some hard times, playing football allowed me to see a different outlook on life,” Underwood said. “I learned some conflict resolution tactics and I also learned how to display empathy for others.” Underwood participated in self-help groups and programs at the prison but said that rehabilitation and transformation do not come easy. That’s why he plans to continue being a positive role model for the men he will manage.

“I will expect a team of positive programming, but I will be focused on building relationships with the guys, being able to be there for them

and talk to them as a friend and not just a head coach.”

During the time when he was a player for the team, King was Underwood’s mentor. Little did he know, but Underwood was being groomed to be the best head coach for the team. His integrity and his conduct were being scrutinized.

“I became known by my walk,” King said. “Integrity is a big characteristic to have.”

With the 2021 NFL football season happening, it’s a good time for some football inside of prison. No outside teams have come inside to play the men yet, but the men are having fun challenging other teams made up from other coaches from inside the prison.

— Timothy Hicks

Spring tryouts commence for SQ Kings and Warriors

Tryouts for the SQ Warriors and the Kings got underway in June and through July with a mixture of talent that coaches have to choose from.

Young and older residents scrimmaged against each other and the game revealed those who may make it and those who may not.

“We’re looking for desire, passion and some new guys to step up and show me that they really want it,” said Coach Jeremiah “JB” Brown.

Veteran players were up against some new fresh legs and the competition for positions was a tough battle. Running up and down the court wasn’t easy after COVID but guys gave it their all to push through it. On day one of the tryouts coach Anthony “Tone” Evans, along with the other four assistant coaches, had to make some

tough choices in cutting the 30 guys who tried out down to 20. Over a series of games, coaches had to reevaluate their choices and make some adjustments because they quickly found out that there was more talent to choose from than they originally thought.

“Out of all this talent, I just need guys to be on time, here early and ready to play,” said Evans, while he addressed the guys on being committed and being accountable. A lot of the guys were also players on the intramural league teams, so they had head starts on the others.

In another SQ Warriors and Kings scrimmage game, where tension was flaring and guys were balling passionately, coaches were observing the attitudes of the guys and determining if they would

make the cut. All the coaches stressed continually that making the team depends on not just talent, but also attitude. In the game, the 40-and-older Kings team struggled against the more youthful squad of the Warriors. Greg “G-dog” Eskridge ran circles around Kings players with his offensive board grabs and defense blocked shots.

“The trip part is that I was the guy they didn’t pick for the team, but I showed up and done the most,” said Eskridge.

Although the referees missed some crucial calls, that would not have made a difference nor would it have helped the Kings’ low-scoring quarters. Five points in the first, only one in the second and six in the third. Kings lost 48-22.

— Timothy Hicks

Tier Talk with San Quentin A’s veteran pitcher

I talked to the San Quentin A’s pitcher Gary “Cool Aid” Townes about him being compared to one of the old-time greats and oldest pitcher to ever pitch baseball in the Negro League, Satchel Paige. Townes has been with the SQ A’s since 2012 and he is the oldest pitcher on the team.

TH: Let’s get right into this. You are one of the SQ A’s main pitchers right?

GT: Yes, it’s like three of us but I’m the oldest of them all.

TH: How old are you?

GT: I’m 56 years old.

TH: Wow, that is impressive to still be throwing fast balls at that age. You have coaches, players and other people calling you the Satchel Paige of SQ. How did you get that comparison and how does it make you feel?

GT: Well, it’s an honor to be compared to one of the greatest pitchers to ever play the game. The trip part is that it was a CO

who called me that first. Then it moved on to the players and coaches and it stuck with me.

TH: That’s great. You were with the team when they went 38 and 2 last season before COVID hit the prison. The record was amazing, almost a perfect season. How did you guys lose those two games?

GT: I pitched 11 of those games and I was responsible for the loss of one of those two losses. Being one of the primary pitchers, I can just recall me having a bad game that day. I know I could’ve done better.

TH: We all have bad days. But athletes press on for the love of the game. When did you fall in love with baseball?

GT: I learned the game from my Grandpa. He taught me the game. He played in the Negro League. That inspired me. My Grandpa was real special to me. Baseball has always been like family to me. I just love the game.

TH: Why do you say it’s like family?

GT: Since being on the A’s, I grew to love these guys like family. When I was going through some personal issues they rallied around me and supported me with love. My niece had got killed in 2006 by a guy and it hit me real hard. They was there for me through it all.

TH: Hard times hit Satchel Paige, too. I can imagine all of the racism he had to face in those times and I can imagine his team rallying around him, too. You ever pitched a no hitter before and do you have a special pitch you like to throw?

GT: I never pitched a no hitter before but I did go six innings no hitter before, though. All my pitches are special to me. I have no special one. I throw sliders, curve balls, etc. I like to keep the batter off balance. They don’t know what to expect.

TH: When COVID hit the season and the game you love had to stop play right after a 38-2 winning season, how did you feel when COVID hit? And do you think the team will get a record like that again? If so, how are y’all preparing for the next season?

GT: There’s not a team in SQ history that done what we did before. But when COVID hit I was depressed. It took away the one thing that kept us being active. It felt like it took an old flame away from me. (Laughs) I’m optimistic about the next season, though — or if we even gonna have one. However, I’m preparing myself, just in case we have a season. We working out and having inner player games. All the veterans are minding our conduct and showing the newcomers our leadership roles. But that winning season was because of all the coaches.

— Timothy Hicks



Eddie Herena, SQNews

Gary “Cool Aid” Townes channels famed Negro League pitcher Satchel Paige.

Remembering Ronnie Goodman: Painter, champion runner, friend

ARTS

By Steve Brooks
Staff Writer

Former San Quentin resident Ronnie Goodman successfully made it onto the national stage as an artist before passing away at the age of 60.

Goodman was preparing to fly to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City for the opening of an exhibit featuring nine of his paintings depicting life at SQ. He suddenly passed away at his homeless encampment in San Francisco in August 2020.

Goodman's paintings were displayed at the museum as part of an exhibit entitled "Marking Time Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration." The exhibit was curated by University of Rutgers Professor Nicole R. Fleetwood.

"Ronnie was brilliant and, whatever his struggles, there was a light that emanated from him," Fleetwood told the *San Francisco Chronicle* in a Sept. 25, 2020 article. "He drew people to him."

Fleetwood discovered Goodman's art in the mid-2000s while researching art for her book of the same name released in April 2020. She was particularly impressed by art Goodman did while serving time at SQ.

Goodman's SQ artwork was also featured in a show done by Precita Eyes in 2010. Much of his work was donated to the William James Foundation.

"I hired Ronnie to help us do some wall art around the prison," said Scott McKinstry, SQ resident and artist. "He was really good."

Goodman did charcoal portraits of fellow SQ residents, oil paintings of the yard, and incarcerated people living through desperate times. He did linocuts of baseball in Folsom, jazz in SQ and light streaming through the bullet holes in the roof of a building at SQ. He was also known for painting murals around the prison.

"He honed his skills as a portrait artist in prison," photographer Joseph Johnston, a friend of Goodman's, wrote in an email.

When Goodman was released from prison, he began painting the walls and streets of San Francisco.

Goodman was born in Los Angeles but moved to San Francisco as a baby. "He says he probably became an artist because many of the people he hung out with were artists," Johnston wrote. Goodman lived in a hospital-green high-rise apartment building on Laguna Street and played in Jefferson Park as a child.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed met Goodman when she was director of the African American Art & Culture Complex. "I liked his work a lot. And I don't like everybody's work. I'm pretty particular," Breed told the *Chronicle*.

Over the years Breed helped arrange places for Goodman to live and exhibited some of Goodman's paintings in her office at City Hall.



Photos courtesy of Frank Ruona

Living on the streets of San Francisco, Ronnie Goodman was never "homeless," for his heart was ever at home in his art. "I am inspired by the beauty of this city and its diversity, balanced with the struggles of human despair," he wrote before he died. "With my brush, I try to capture these raw emotions."

Frank Ruona met Goodman in 2005 when Ruona was coach of the SQ 1000 Mile Running Club. Ruona knew him as a long-distance runner.

He said he and Ronnie often ran and worked out at SQ. "He was the best runner in the club and he held many of the club records for the various races that we'd run at SQ."

Goodman and Ruona worked together to help create the first SQ Marathon. In 2008 and 2009 Goodman finished the marathon in first place, before he paroled in 2010.

"From 2010 until 2015, Ronnie ran in six Dipsea races, several half marathons and various other races" said Ruona.

After Goodman paroled, he helped raise awareness and money for different causes, according to Ruona.

"He raised a significant amount of money for Hospitality House while running the San Francisco Half Marathon in 2014," said Ruona.

That same year, Goodman's son was stabbed to death near 24th and Capp Streets. "I'm taking this pretty tough, here," he told Johnston. Goodman

stopped running and that's when Coach Ruona said he began to deteriorate. "I believe that Ronnie started using drugs after moving into the Redstone Building," said Ruona.

Ruona and other 1000 Mile Club coaches took Goodman out to lunch and tried to set him up in a hotel. Ruona told Goodman he'd have to follow the hotels rules.

"Ronnie got up from the table and was very belligerent! He told me that I was not his parole officer and I was not going to tell him how to live his life. That was the last time I saw Ronnie."

Goodman died at his encampment on 16th and Capp Streets near a makeshift sign he created that said "Art For Food."

"Unfortunately, he had his demons, and I believe that his addiction to crack cocaine was his downfall," said Ruona.

Regardless of his struggles, Goodman still saw beauty in life, as he wrote before his death:

"I am inspired by the beauty of this city and its diversity, balanced with the struggles of human despair. With my brush, I try to capture these raw emotions."

Jerry Welsh finds therapeutic benefit in his intricate beadwork



Photo courtesy of Gerald Welsh

51-year-old Cherokee bead artist Jerry Welsh says beadwork is part of his journey of self-discovery.

Edwin E. Chavez
Staff Writer

Gerald Welsh, 51, who has been incarcerated for 16 years, said he creates bead crafts for therapeutic reasons.

"I find peace of mind and it is also a part of my religious belief," said Welsh.

Doing beadwork sent him on a "whole different journey," he said, as it has taken him through self-discovery and helped him to embrace his roots. Welsh is one quarter Cherokee Indian.

"I started to learn about my native heritage," he said. "Learning how to pray and use traditional medicines and songs made me realize how much I've missed about my roots."

Welsh said that doing beadwork not only supports him in prison, he's also able to donate to various charities such as St. Jude's Children's Hospital through the assistance of PATH (Prison Art Touching Hearts).

Many of Welsh's crafts have been exhibited within San Quentin and he's gotten numerous compliments from the inside community as well as the free world.

When asked which item has been most significant, he said, "The rosette, which is a tribal eagle wrapped around a turquoise rock," and added that the eagle represents that one can "get closer to heaven without passing over to heaven." He said the rosette could be interpreted as a collaboration between his native and Christian ways.

He said his biggest project took 36 hours.

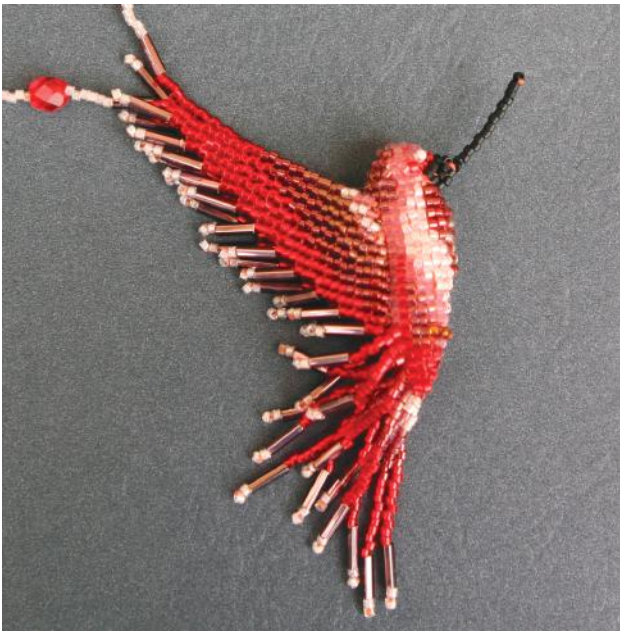
Creating the Wounded Warrior belt buckle was "very complicated," he said, but he was inspired and "amazed" by all the positive feedback when the final product showed a soldier holding an M-16 rifle with the American flag waving in the background.

He's currently working on a purse dedicated to his mother,



Photos by Phoeun You, SQNews

One of Welsh's most complicated projects was a Wounded Warrior belt buckle (above left), showing a soldier with rifle on an American flag background. A rosette (above right) centers a piece of turquoise as a sunburst with an eagle surrounding it. Welsh's creations also include colorful hummingbirds (below).



who passed away on January 24, 2009. Its straps have fire colors. There are four pink hearts on its leather body to represent her

four children. It will be given to his sister, who keeps his beadwork for display on "Tjsoncofa-kind Beadwork Facebook."