

# San Quentin News



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## Federal judge issues vaccine mandate

***Prison personnel and certain incarcerated workers required to be inoculated***

By Charles Crowe  
Staff Writer

A federal judge has ordered all California prison employees entering a prison to be vaccinated against COVID-19 unless they have a medical or religious exemption. The order affects all prison workers, including correctional officers.

U.S. District Court Judge Jon Tigar's Sept. 27 ruling also affects incarcerated people, such as firefighters, who work outside prisons, and those who want in-person visits.

Mandated vaccinations were requested by J. Clark Kelso, the court-appointed federal receiver with operational control over the system's medical care. Kelso asked the judge to mandate vaccines for staff because voluntary vaccination of prison employees has failed, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

"We really have a problem of continuing major outbreaks," Kelso said in a virtual hearing held before Tigar in Oakland. The judge's ruling noted that 48 outbreaks in prisons have been traced to prison staff from August to mid-September.

News reports said about 57% of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation staff is fully vaccinated. Among custody staff, the rate is about 42%. The rate varies by prison, with one facility as low as 18%.

*CalMatters* reported that "State officials have tried cash incentives, behavioral science strategies, even one-on-one counseling to entice more of them [prison staff] to get the shots. But most resisters didn't budge.



Photo by Lt. S. Robinson, SQ Public Information Officer

A federal court order would require all prison staff, volunteers and non-inmate program facilitators to be vaccinated before entering prison grounds. Incarcerated laborers who work outside of prison facilities, including inmate firefighters, are also covered by the order.

Although more than 5,000 staff attended the one-on-one counseling sessions, a mere 262 agreed to be vaccinated. Roughly 4,300 others signed a statement of refusal."

A correctional officer at the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco told *CalMatters*, "A lot of us have already had COVID and recovered, so we don't see the point in getting the vaccine."

According to a *San Francisco Chronicle* article dated Sept. 28, "Tigar wrote that

allowing prison employees to be unvaccinated ... violated prisoners' Eighth Amendment constitutional rights. No one disputes ... that staff are the primary vector for introduction of the virus into vulnerable prison settings.

"Defendants are aware of a substantial risk ... to incarcerated persons, and, although they have taken many commend-

See **VACCINES** on page 4

## San Quentin appeals record COVID fines

San Quentin State Prison was fined \$421,880 for COVID-19 workplace violations, the *Sacramento Bee* reported.

San Quentin's penalties topped the list of roughly 200 employers fined about \$4.6 million by California's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) for COVID-related workplace violations, the June 24 story stated.

San Quentin's record fines were for numerous "serious and willful" occupational and safety citations. San Quentin filed an appeal.

"Honestly, this is the worst outbreak in a correctional setting I have ever seen," said Cal/OSHA enforcement inspector Channing Sheets.

"I've investigated a lot of outbreaks in the past 25, 30 years or so, and it had to be, hands down, one of the worst to deal with I've ever encountered ... the conditions were a perfect storm."

Sheets testified about the San Quentin outbreak during the Marin County Superior Court proceedings in May and June.

Over 300 SQ residents filed habeas corpus petitions that were joined in a class action lawsuit. They alleged "willful and deliberate indifference" resulting in violations of their Eighth Amendment rights over the institution's handling of its COVID-19 outbreak.

"There were a number of things that could have been done, some preventively, some mitigative, after the initial transfer," said Sheets. He was referring to the 122 COVID-exposed prisoners transferred into SQ in May 2020 from the California Institute for Men (CIM).

"I know because I was there ... In this situation the individuals should have nev-

See **FINES** on page 4

## Polanco family files suit over death of highly-regarded sergeant

By Joshua Strange  
Journalism Guild Writer

The family of a beloved San Quentin correctional sergeant who died of COVID-19 filed a wrongful death lawsuit against prison officials.

The federal civil rights suit claims that his death was preventable and resulted from unsafe conditions at the prison created by "intentional and deliberately indifferent" decisions.

"Officials created a COVID cesspool and then required their inmates and employees to marinate in it ...," said family attorney Julia Sherwin during a Zoom press conference.

"It's shocking and appalling that CDCR would risk not only the inmates' lives, but also their staff's lives with these completely reckless decisions."

The lawsuit, filed Aug. 24, is one of several filed against the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and San Quentin. The lawsuits blamed the COVID outbreak at San Quentin on the transfer of 122 inmates on May 30, 2020, from the California Institute for Men near Chino. Some of the transferred men had COVID.

At the time, San Quentin had no reported COVID cases. The outbreak captured national media attention and was called a "public health disaster" by the California Office of the Inspector General.

San Quentin officials had no role or control over the transfer, but did assume custody decisions upon the buses' arrival.

Sgt. Gilbert Polanco, 55, was diagnosed with COVID in June and died Aug. 9, 2020, according to the *Sacramento Bee*. Due to medical safety precautions, his family was not able to be at his bedside.

The suit alleges Polanco's constitutional rights were violated, as was the Americans With Disabilities Act, and that negligence resulted in



his death and subsequent emotional distress to his wife and children.

Polanco's family attorneys are expected to seek millions in compensation as well as reforms, reported the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

"The defendants violated the most basic legal requirements like providing their employees N95 respirators," Sherwin told the *Los Angeles Times*.

"They violated basic common sense like testing the Chino inmates before moving them to San Quentin and quarantining them from the

rest of the population upon arrival."

Co-attorney Michael Haddad added, "COVID-19 obviously has affected our entire society, but the San Quentin disaster was entirely preventable."

Polanco, an Army veteran, is remembered as a devoted family man and dedicated employee who was well-respected by colleagues and prisoners alike.

He served 34 years at San Quentin. His wife said he regarded the incarcerated community as a second family, according to the lawsuit.

The *Times* and *Chronicle* reported that, at the time of Polanco's death, then-CDCR Secretary Ralph Diaz called him "an example of the best of CDCR."

Warden Ron Bloomfield praised Polanco's "unwavering commitment and bravery as a peace officer working on the front line every day."

Incarcerated community members echoed that praise and are still lamenting his death.

"If you had a problem, you could go to him to help you, no matter what it was," said Rome Watson, a SQ resident since 1997. "His door was always open — and it didn't matter what color you was, either."

Resident JC Carr said, "Never did I think in my wildest dreams that he would die from it. It's been hard, man, losing him and two other friends to COVID-19," said Carr, who's been at SQ since 2012.

"Some officers don't care whether you live or die. Polanco wasn't like that. He treated me like a man, not a prisoner. He was the first officer to make me put my guard down."

"He always had a gentle spirit about him," said Mike Adams, who has resided in SQ since 2005.

Adams said he's still traumatized by Polanco's death. "When he died, I guess it hit me that we really are all in this together, the green and the blue. We're all human."

Watson also gets emotional talking about Polanco. "He left the office that day and said, 'Rome, I think I got that crap.'" It was the last time he saw his friend.

Along with Sgt. Polanco, 28 San Quentin prisoners died of COVID-19 during the outbreak.

"It wasn't safe. They didn't have masks at that time — the inmates were making masks,"

See **POLANCO** on page 4



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# The Q’s Chief Medical Executive looks back on the COVID outbreak of 2020

By Joe Garcia  
Staff Writer

Dr. Alison Pachynski started at SQ as a primary care provider in 2007, after a UCSF colleague saw her potential for community medicine and suggested she give the job a try.

“At the time, there was a lot of cleanup work going on as far as healthcare inside CDCR (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation) because of ongoing *Plata* litigation,” she recalls.

(*Brown v. Plata* was a U.S. Supreme Court decision holding that a court-mandated population limit was necessary to remedy a violation of prisoners’ Eighth Amendment constitutional rights.)

“There were still doctors in the system with restricted licenses, and they were in the midst of eliminating those providers.”

Pachynski’s detour into SQ turned into a career choice.

“I didn’t see working here as permanent back then, but I found my patients so compelling — so resilient,” said Pachynski. “There’s a humanity and heart that’s still alive in here. You guys are amazing.”

When she accepted the position as SQ’s Acting Chief Medical Executive in 2019, COVID-19 lurked just beyond the horizon. Dr. Pachynski would soon find herself front and center inside one of the worst viral outbreaks in prison history.

CDCR just recently awarded Dr. Pachynski a 2021 Medal of Valor and named her Health Care Professional of the Year for maintaining “a positive approach and an uplifting leadership style” throughout SQ’s COVID emergency.

Known for taking time to stop and talk freely with incarcerated community members — all of whom she considers her patients, Dr. P. agreed to sit down for a Q&A with *SQNews* and discuss the current state inside San Quentin.

**JG:** With flu season approaching and all these different variants popping up, how do you feel about where SQ’s at in terms of COVID safety right now?

**Dr. P:** I worry most about our unvaccinated patients. They probably had COVID already, but that doesn’t mean their natural immunity’s as powerful as the vaccine. We’re still learning about those kinds of factors.

Delta’s been the worst as far as being infectious, and we seem to have made it through that wave fairly well. I don’t know what’s around the corner — nobody does.

That last small outbreak had me worried. But you guys have been great — with testing and vaccination. We have tools we didn’t have back then. Availability of tests and vaccines are at the top of the list.

**JG:** You surprised a lot of us when you came into Alpine unit during that small outbreak in August. Why’d you go around to every cell answering questions and pushing to get folks vaccinated?

**Dr. P:** I just felt compelled to be there. I know if I were in your situation, with a potential new outbreak about to blow up, I’d be anxious.

It was scary. We didn’t



Photo courtesy of Raphaele Casale

Dr. Alison Pachynski has been San Quentin’s Chief Medical Executive since 2019 and was recently named Health Care Professional of the Year for her uplifting leadership and her response to the prison’s 2020 coronavirus outbreak.

know what delta would look like.

The people who aren’t vaccinated — it weighs on me. Even early vaccination starts protecting them right away.

**JG:** You think everyone who was here during the 2020 outbreak had COVID-19, regardless of whether they ever tested positive?

**Dr. P:** I don’t know how anybody could’ve escaped it, given these housing units. In our dorms, that was a completely different story. We only had three cases.

But in the “closed” dorms — Did you know that’s what the buildings with all the open bar-front cells are technically called?

Think about that. “Closed dorms.” From that starting point, you see how that changes the way of looking at things.

**JG:** Some of us avoid testing because of false positives and the threat of being housed in the AC (Adjustment Center) for 14-21 days.

That last outbreak in August, I know guys that were woken up and moved to the AC at 2 a.m. Why did it have to happen like that?

**Dr. P:** I wish I had a better solution, but we have to move people as quickly as possible into a closed-in space with solid doors.

As soon as those test results hit the electronic health record, public health alerts custody. I’m always on-call, so half the time I’ll get woken up, too.

**JG:** Have you ever sat in

one of those AC cells and thought about the solitary confinement?

**Dr. P:** Yeah, I’ve done that, but I never had the door closed. I can see how the feelings of isolation set in — day to day, and hour to hour.

You should have the same privileges, within the confines of isolation. You’re supposed to have the same privileges. Testing positive for COVID-19 shouldn’t change your level of custody.

But I don’t oversee custody.

**JG:** At some point, there’ll be an event inside SQ in recognition of the 28 people in blue who died from COVID-19. You’ve been asked to speak, and you said yes. Why is that important to you?

**Dr. P:** COVID impacted the entire institution — no matter who you are here. No one has ever been through this before.

There are things I think need to be acknowledged — mainly the strength and endurance of our community.

But it’s still so painful. How do you put that into words?

**JG:** Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently?

**Dr. P:** Oh heavens — I would have physically stood at the gates and figured out a way to block entry.

**JG:** You’re talking about blocking the buses that brought COVID into SQ?

**Dr. P:** Yeah, of course.

**JG:** What about the policy of allowing staff to work and move from unit to unit?

**Dr. P:** Cohorting staff? That’s exceptionally complicated. I’ve had so many higher level discussions about it. It boils down to a labor issue, how a place actually runs.

I’ve thought about this a fair amount with my staff — *cohorting*. It would greatly limit our ability to provide coverage everywhere.

That’s where proper use of PPE (personal protective equipment) comes in. My team, my doctors, we know the importance of taking precautions to keep our patients safe from us.

**JG:** What’s your opinion on this place going all single cell?

**Dr. P:** From a public health perspective, it certainly makes everything easier. But I understand corrections is also a business, right?

I’ve taken new medical staff into the buildings and had them climb onto an upper bunk. They need to understand. Lower bunk/upper bunk — that makes a difference in a patient’s everyday quality of life.

I’m 5’4”, and there wasn’t much room in there for me. I can’t imagine how two people function in a cell that size, day in and day out.

**JG:** Given the standards for habitable living space set by the American Correctional Association, why isn’t San Quentin single-celled completely across the board for all residents?

**Dr. P:** I don’t make those decisions. My understanding is that SQ’s population numbers are determined at headquarters (in Sacramento.) As far as who, exactly, ultimately controls that decision, I don’t know.

**JG:** When the incarcerated community criticizes SQ’s COVID response last year, both you and Warden Broomfield get vilified — especially in regards to your testimony during the Marin County hearings. Your thoughts on that?

**Dr. P:** That actually kinda hurts me to hear that. But I also understand it.

As far as medical goes, we’re very nose-to-the-grindstone. We just take care of our patients the best way we can while everything else is going on.

**JG:** How do you feel about being named Health Care Professional of the Year?

**Dr. P:** I appreciate the recognition, but it really was a team effort. We have a devoted team of doctors who all stepped up — working around the clock 24/7 during that terrible time.

I hope our patients realize how much our providers care about them.

**JG:** You seem genuinely invested in our community. What’s your vision of SQ’s future?

**Dr. P:** I’m totally all in, 100%. We braced for impact as best we could. COVID did a real number on us. It’s gonna take a lot to recover as a community.

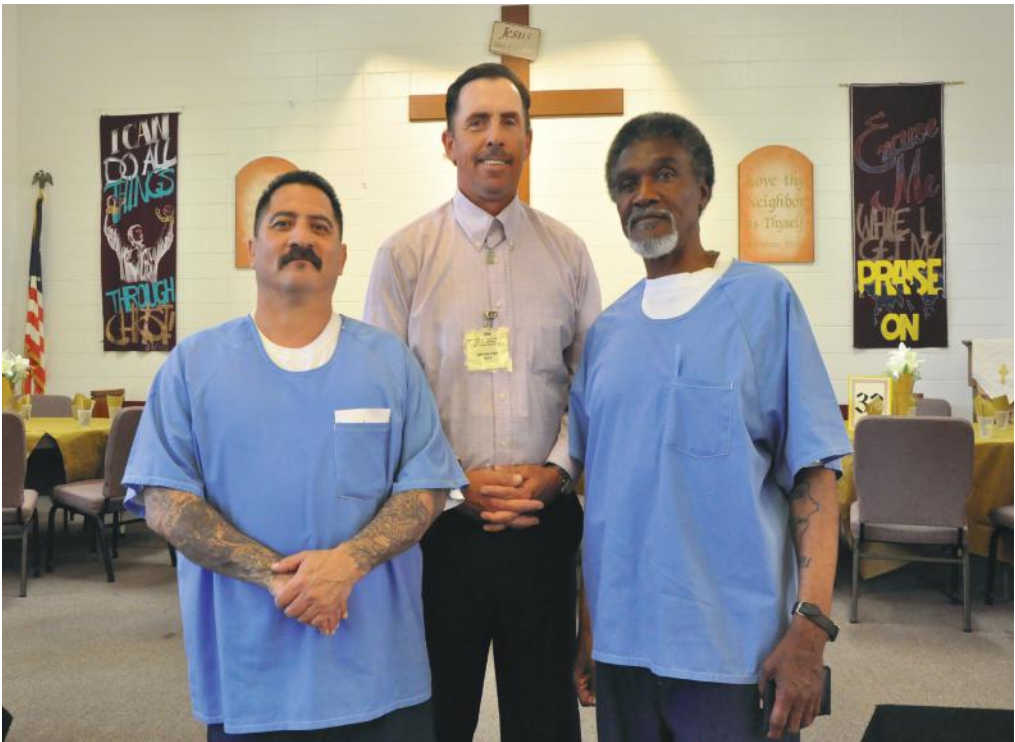
People are sicker — from the whole situation, the shutdown, the lack of physical activity. They gained weight and generally became less healthy all the way around.

But I see SQ as that phoenix rising from the fire. What do we do from here? I just feel the potential of this place.

We can lead the way.



# Remembering James Vick, man of faith



James Vick (right) with fellow incarcerated parishioner David Rodriguez and Pastor Larry of Cornerstone Church.

Javier Jimenez, SQNews

By Juan Haines  
Senior Editor

The San Quentin community will always remember James Vick as a college student with a big smile. He was born in April 1953. He died in September 2021 while being treated for cancer.

A memorial service was held on Sept. 17 in the prison’s Protestant Chapel. He was honored by about 60 friends, including several teachers from the prison’s college program, Mount Tamalpais College (MTC).

The memorial began with Mike Boutta singing “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”

MTC Chief Academic Officer Amy Jamgochian said, “I can’t imagine him not coming around with that huge smile on his face. He was such a kind man and a ray of sunshine

and a lifelong learner.”

Marvin Mutch, formerly incarcerated for 42 years, now works for MTC.

“James always let us know that he’s happy. Anyone who met James knows he has freedom on his face. Remember him often and he’ll live on,” Mutch said.

Stephen Pascascio, the chapel’s sound engineer, said, “Whenever he came to the chapel, he would always check on me with a smile. He was so humble. That was my brother and I love him. I know he went in glory.”

After the scripture reading, Vick’s friends memorialized his life, some in tears:

“James was a very, very close friend. We were once cellies,” said James Jenkins. “We sat in church, right here, and fellowshiped. He was a blessed man.”

Brother Derry Brown said, “He encouraged me without knowing it. He was a man of education.”

Leonard Walker said, “I grew up with Vick. He couldn’t read or write, but

when he went into creative writing, that connected him with God.”

Robert Barnes said, “He was always in good spirits with a big smile. I’m thankful that I got to know him. It was good to have Mr. Vick as a friend.”

Richard “Rock” Lathan read poetry: “Here Comes Another Angel.”

Derrick Holloway said, “Vick was a country boy. He’d be playing his blues in his cell. I watched his life transform as we left Solano, came to San Quentin. I watched him flourish. I watched him learn and write books.”

Rudy Moralez said, “He was always looking for us to uplift us so that we weren’t alone. He’s up there looking down on us.”

Here are some words spoken about who Vick was:

Always smiling – always happy – encouraging – a humble man – a special brother – a strong individual– very special – a ray of sunshine – inspirational – a lifelong learner – a gift of learning – his kindness – a gentle person – a perfect example.

—Richard Fernandez contributed to this story

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>> Letters to the Editor should be short, clear and to the point.

>> Please do not submit material that is offensive, racist, sexist, or derogatory toward any group, as it will not be published.

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By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

San Quentin residents who were locked down for 14 months because of COVID-19 have mixed feelings about the care they received. Nevertheless, some are in favor of mandatory vaccinations to provide protection against another outbreak.

The prison’s lockdown “was good to prevent the virus from getting to other people,” said Chor “Bolo” Lor, incarcerated 25 years at San Quentin on a life sentence. He says people should not be allowed to work if they’re not vaccinated.

Lor tested positive for COVID-19 in June 2020. He spent two months in Badger Section, which was serving as the prison’s quarantine unit at the time. He described it as a “deteriorated building.”

“I could not move on my bed,” Lor said. He said he thought he’d die there. “My breath worsened to where I could not breathe at all. When I couldn’t breathe, they [medical staff] offered cough medicine.”

He said that the conditions there “aggravated his physical and emotional problems,” which worsened until he was hospitalized.

“I was on my bed thinking, this is it, but this can’t be it after 25 years,” Lor said.

Lor received his two vaccine shots in March and April 2021. “After the second shot, I got a fever,” he said.

Another San Quentin resident, Singh, 59 years old, incarcerated for five years, believes he caught the virus from his cellmate.

Singh became ill in June 2020. He said he was very sick, lost his sense of taste and had a high fever. He was placed on a ventilator in Kaiser Hospital.

After his near-death experience, Singh says he now feels normal except for muscle aches and arthritis that has developed in his knees. Prison officials have designated him medically high-risk.

Singh says he supports federal and state lockdowns during outbreaks, as well as mandatory vaccinations.

Otto Delcid, 66, has been in prison 16 years. He has tested positive twice for COVID-19. His road to recovery included stays in Saro Hospital and Saint Francis Hospital in San Francisco. Delcid’s symptoms were flu-like. His neurolog-

## Interviews offer SQ residents chance to share stories of healing



Phoeun You, SQNews

COVID-19 was a near-death experience for Chor “Bolo” Lor, who is now vigilant about social distancing, even outdoors. “I was on my bed thinking, this is it, but this can’t be it ...” he said.

ical and respiratory functions have been damaged. “I couldn’t think straight and my right lung was not working,” he said.

“My family thought I was going to die,” Delcid said. “I was in the hospitals for three months.”

Delcid said he didn’t talk to his family until he was transferred to a temporary housing unit in the prison’s furniture factory. “The lockdown affected me psychologically. I got very depressed in the hospital because I thought the whole prison was sick and everyone was dying.”

Pablo Ramirez, 54, incarcerated for 15 years, tested positive for COVID-19 in July 2020. His symptoms lasted 20 days. He decided to be vaccinated because, “I didn’t want it to return and get me again. I was sad, thinking I could die if it hit me hard.”

He said that the virus didn’t affect his breathing, but gave him a fever, chills, sweats, and body aches.

His eyes burned and he was teary, “drops came out like oil,” he said. The nurse told Ramirez that his symptoms were not COVID-19 related.

Ramirez said that his family tried to call San Quentin to find out his status, but prison officials were not responsive to their questions. Later, he found



Phoeun You, SQNews

Harry C. Goodall, Jr. (left) interviews spanish-speaker Pablo Ramirez (center). “I was very concerned ... thinking I could die if [COVID] hit me hard,” Ramirez said.

(SQNews staffer Edwin Chavez, pictured at right, translated.)

out that prison officials told his family that they would only release information if he were hospitalized and very sick.

In July 2020, San Quentin was the COVID-19 epicenter of California. Through September 2021, the virus killed 240 prisoners in California’s 34 prisons.

Marin County Superior

Court would later rule that prison officials were “deliberately indifferent” in contributing to the “worst epidemiological disaster” in California correctional history when they transferred 122 prisoners, some of whom were infected with COVID-19, from the California Institute for Men to San Quentin.



# Family mourns loss of beloved husband, father

POLANCO

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said Polanco's widow, Patricia, according to the *San Jose Mercury News*.

"He was just working so much," she said through tears on a Zoom call with *CBS Bay Area*. "I asked him not to. Let someone else take that other shift. And he would tell me there's nobody — they have no one."

According to the lawsuit, Polanco "told his wife, 'It's my job' to protect the inmates and not let them die."

In a habeas class action lawsuit filed by over 300 SQ residents, Cal/OSHA investigator Channing Sheets recently testified.

"You can't not have (adequate) dedicated staffing," Sheets said under oath. "I understand if you're solely responsible ... but there was a whole (multi-agency) team deployed to assist them, so staffing really wasn't an excuse for me."

The Polanco family lawsuit reiterates Sheets's testimony, claiming management didn't carry out its responsibilities, despite explicit warnings and offers of help.

"Like us, he just wanted to do his time and get back to his family," recalled Adams.

"I just want them to be accountable and take

responsibility for his death," Patricia Polanco told *KTVU Fox2*. "This should have never happened."

CDCR representatives sent a statement to *KRON4* saying, in part: "As far as the Polanco case is concerned, CDCR is not pleased with the lawsuit, but we will evaluate the details and determine the next steps."

"We extend our deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Sgt. Polanco."

Polanco's survivors are not the only ones claiming his death was preventable.

"If they had handled it the way they should, he would still be living today," said Watson. "He didn't have to go."

Watson said he was reluctant to speak on record but did so anyway because of his deep respect for Polanco. "No one can ever take his place; he was one of a kind. This should have been prevented."

Carr agreed with these sentiments. "I don't want to be disrespectful, but if they didn't transfer all those people, we wouldn't of had to go through all that, and a lot of people would be alive today, including Polanco."

After his funeral, Sgt. Polanco's ashes were scattered on San Quentin grounds, where his legacy lives on in the memories of those he so faithfully served, and served with.

"God bless his family, God bless his wife," said Carr. "We always got him in our prayers."



Off-duty, Sgt. Gilbert Polanco was dedicated to his family, and enjoyed spending precious time with his wife, children and friends.

Photo courtesy of CDCR

# One-Stop Shops serve to reduce recidivism

Growing national movement emerges, hopes to expand access to resources for parolees returning to their communities

By William Earl Tolbert  
Journalism Guild Writer

A bipartisan group of members of Congress is proposing legislation to make it easier for the formerly incarcerated to reenter society.

"This bipartisan legislation would help reduce the chance that people transitioning from incarceration will reoffend by creating resource centers to coordinate access to job training, medical and mental health services, and financial counseling," said sponsoring Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., a former prosecutor in her home state.

Similar legislation passed the House in the previous session, but died in the Senate.

"Newly released offenders often aren't aware of the resources available to them and struggle to find jobs, housing and mental health services," said another sponsor, Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, a former Texas state attorney general.

Other sponsors include Reps. Karen Bass, D-Calif., and Guy Reschenthaler, R-Penn.

The sponsors believe that every newly released person

from prison faces additional challenges to obtain work, food, and shelter, *NPR* reported May 20. Those challenges make them more likely to reoffend — just to survive.

Statistics reveal that 85% of incarcerated individuals will be released back into society. "The expectation that individuals are successful and won't reoffend after being given \$10 and a bus ticket is absolutely ridiculous," Bass noted.

Justice Department grants to open reentry facilities would help formerly incarcerated people to reestablish themselves in the community, the story said.

The national recidivism rate, which is the average rate of crime after leaving incarceration, is 49.3% over an eight-year period, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

The One Stop Shop Community Reentry Program Act would help organizations open programs that assist people released from prison to obtain their Social Security card, receive job training, life skills, and other skills needed to break the cycle of recidivism.

FINES

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er been transferred," Sheets testified.

Cal/OSHA has jurisdiction to protect the safety and health of SQ employees, including California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) officers, free staff, and Prison Industry Authority (PIA) incarcerated workers.

Through April 2021, violations inside SQ ranged from insufficient training and safety protocols, irregular COVID testing, missed deadlines for notification and compliance, lack of recommended PPE (personal protective equipment), and inadequate social distancing and quarantining, Sheets reported.

The problems went beyond the initial transfer of incarcerated people from CIM to

# SQ fined \$421,880 for 'serious and willful' violations

San Quentin.

"We obviously know they were transferring inmates from housing unit to housing unit, so they were transferring the disease," said Sheets. "You don't take positive and negative inmates from different tiers and mix them together."

"That's a recipe for disaster that should have never been done."

San Quentin struggled with staffing shortages during the outbreak due to sick employees, one of whom died, and the need to have two officers accompany each incarcerated person who required outside hospital emergency care.

At the outbreak's apex, numerous remaining staff inside San Quentin worked exhausting overtime shifts.

"You can't not have ded-

icated staffing, which was a huge issue, because when you have staff take shifts in a positive unit and then take shifts in a negative unit — that's a problem," testified Sheets.

"I understand if you're solely responsible for financing, and the decision-making, and the implementation and the execution, but there was a whole (multi-agency) team deployed to assist them, so staffing really wasn't an excuse for me."

CDCR spokesperson Dana Simas said San Quentin has "made many improvements and already remedied several of the citations." That includes equipping staff and inmates with PPE and updating the aerosol transmissible diseases (ATD) control plan.

"The recommendations were made fairly early but it wasn't done — implemented

until sometime later ..." testified Sheets.

"It just took them too long," said Sheets later. "I think their risk assessment process is poor."

Sheets investigated the Legionnaire's outbreak at SQ in 2015 and warned the prison at that time about its vulnerability to respiratory pathogens and the requirement to have an ATD program with a robust "exposure control plan."

Cal/OSHA also began warning SQ and CDCR about readiness for COVID-19 as early as December 2019, according to court documents.

Research conducted by the *Sacramento Bee* revealed that the state is having a hard time collecting money from Cal/OSHA violators, including CDCR. Most employers are appealing their fines.

Such appeals can often result in settlements with vastly reduced fees and delays in compliance, the story noted.

"I believe that the settlements that result from discussions between employers and Cal/OSHA are reflective of what the actual evidence is and what the defenses are in that case," attorney Lisa Baiocchi, who represents employers appealing their citations, told the *Bee*.

Workers' rights advocates and others take a different view.

"With many months to get to a citation and many months on appeal, it can be a very long time before workers see any improvement on site," said Stephen Knight, executive director of Work-safe.

Cal/OSHA is "weighed down by an outdated law that

didn't predict these sort of shenanigans from employers and lawyers," according to Dr. David Michaels, disease specialist at George Washington University.

Sheets testified that "the [San Quentin] appeal was to slow down the abatement for the serious and willful citations."

When pressed to define the "willful" aspects of San Quentin's citations, Sheets explained to the court that, according to Cal/OSHA regulations, "If an employer was put on notice or had previous knowledge or was working with someone to address an issue and then they failed to do so, and they had knowledge and showed blatant disregard — that would be classified as willful."

—Joshua Strange  
Journalism Guild Writer

VACCINES

continued from page 1

able steps ... they have nonetheless failed to ... do what the undisputed evidence requires.

"All agree that a mandatory staff vaccination policy would lower the risk of preventable death and serious medical consequences among incarcerated persons. And no one has identified any remedy that will produce anything close to the same benefit."

The California Correctional Peace Officers Association has resisted a vaccine mandate. "We've undertaken an aggressive, voluntary vaccination program and we still believe the voluntary approach is the best way forward," said President Glen

# Correctional personnel slow to receive vaccinations

Stailey.

The guards union warned that if members refuse to be vaccinated, prisons could face staff shortages. But Rita Lomio, Prison Law Office attorney, said the union was using "scare tactics" by implying that the mandate would result in understaffed prisons, noting that the federal prison system and six other states are operating their systems under vaccine mandates.

"We are looking into our legal options to address this order," said a union statement. But Lomio doubted that the union has grounds to contest the order because there is "such a clear factual and legal basis for it."

Gov. Gavin Newsom backs the union, which contributed \$1.75 million to his defense against the September recall election. The Service Employees International Union, with about 12,000 members working in the state's prisons, also contributed \$5.5 million to the anti-recall campaign, said the *Times*. "We have no further announcement to make as it relates to whether or not we're going to mandate those vaccines," Newsom said.

The *Times* interviewed attorney Don Specter, Executive Director of the non-profit Prison Law Office, who said of the governor's support of the union: "The guards are mostly the source of infection," yet Newsom is resisting mandatory vaccinations. "Well, the guards and other unions for those in the prisons carry considerable influence. You just have to look at the donations."

Guards union lawyers say that the solution lies not with prison staff, but with the 22% of the system's prisoners who have declined the vaccine. About 76% of California's incarcerated have been vaccinated. Almost all have been offered the vaccine.

But in his order, Tigar noted that it is not just the unvaccinated among the incarcerated population that are at risk for COVID-19, but the vaccinated population as well. As of Sept. 1, 2021, 385 fully vaccinated people in CDCR custody have suffered breakthrough COVID-19 infections.

**Implementation**

Kelso and CDCR jointly submitted a proposed vaccination plan on Oct. 12. The plan called for all affected individuals to be fully vac-

nated by Nov. 29, 2021. However, CDCR subsequently withdrew its commitment to the date and as of this report no date has been established for full implementation.

Affected individuals can submit a request for accommodation to be exempted from the vaccination requirement for "sincerely-held religious belief," or for "qualifying medical reasons," according to the joint response.

If a request for accommodation is denied, the individual would then have 10 days to commence the vaccination process.

Once a full implementation deadline has been decided, earlier deadlines will be established for; submitting requests for accommodation to be exempted from the vaccination, for

first doses of two-dose vaccines, and for second doses of two-dose vaccines or a single dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Individuals affected by the order that are neither fully vaccinated nor exempted from the vaccination by the full implementation date will be subject to the following:

- Affected incarcerated people will receive "vaccine counseling" at that point. Then, if not in compliance within 14 days, they would lose eligibility for their outside job assignment and for in-person visits.
- Affected prison staff (not including health care registry, contract, or volunteer workers) would become subject to progressive discipline.
- Affected health care registry, contract, or volunteer workers may have their assignments ended.



# Former NBA player fights to end solitary confinement

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont has vetoed legislation that would have sharply cut back on solitary confinement but issued an executive order limiting the practice in state prisons.

“The bill was just not good for public safety,” said Lamont spokesman Max Reiss. He called the executive order “an unbelievably progressive approach to isolated confinement,” *Connecticut Public Radio* reported June 30.

The bill was strongly supported by former NBA player and UConn alumnus Caron Butler, *The Associated Press* reported June 7.

The bill would have required that all incarcerated in the state be allowed a minimum of 6.5 hours out of the cell and would have limited the use of certain restraints.

Opponents of the bill said that it would take away tools guards need to aid them in maintaining discipline in prisons.

“Being in those four walls and those four corners really does something to you, men-

Caron Butler, now Assistant Coach for the Miami Heat, has backed a solitary reform bill establishing certain minimum standards for the treatment of isolated prisoners.

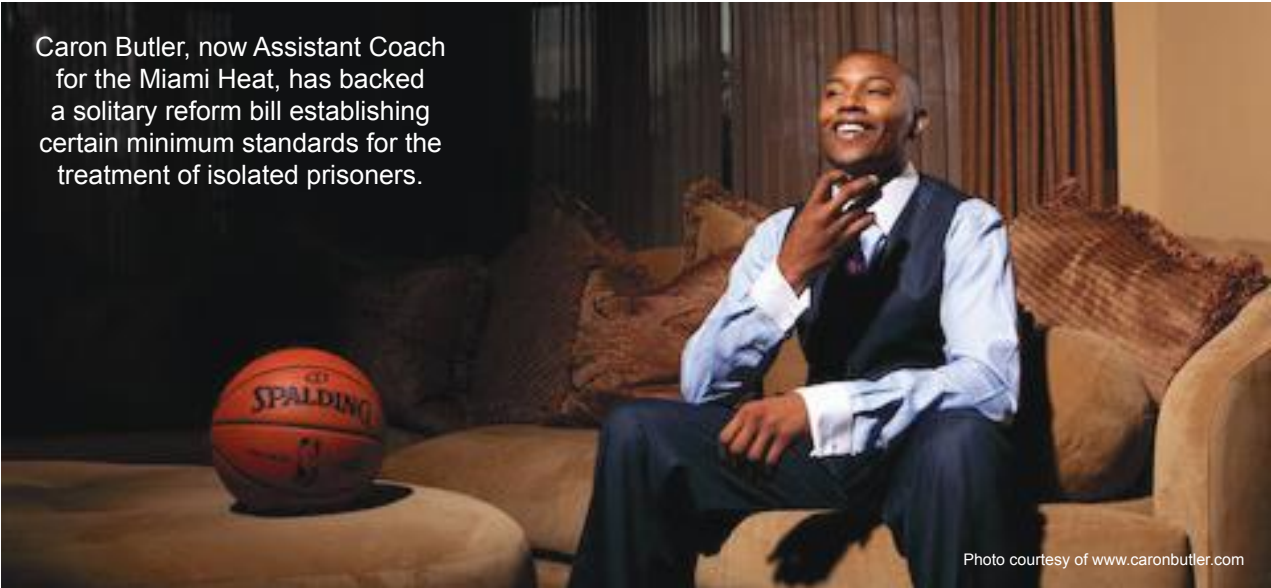


Photo courtesy of www.caronbutler.com

tally and spiritually; it takes away a lot. It dehumanizes you,” said Butler in an *AP* interview.

Butler credits his trouble-ridden past for providing him with the motivation he needed to transform his life.

“Now I look back in hindsight and I want to tell my younger self to stay hopeful. There are people out there

that care. There is going to be elected officials out there in the future that’s going to care about this community in real time. There’s going to be change on the horizon. They are going to come up with ways to rehabilitate that never dehumanize people,” said Butler.

After spending 14 seasons as an NBA player, he is now

an assistant coach for the Miami Heat. His passion for social justice started with visits to incarcerated kids at the Oak Hill Youth Detention Center in 2005.

Butler helped organize the Urban Dialogue: Stop the Violence community outreach event and sponsors the Cops-N-Kids Reading Center.

Butler also teamed up with

the Salvation Army and Wal-Mart to sponsor a program called the Bike Brigade, which has distributed more than 2,500 new bikes and helmets to youth in Racine, Wisc., and in Washington, D.C.

Butler created his own program called Caron’s Coats for Kids, which distributes coats, hats, and gloves to youth in

Racine and Washington, D.C.

In the summer of 2009, Butler organized Caron’s 3D Summer Explosion, a summer-long program that included events almost every weekend for kids.

He organized a day of service, a charity basketball game, a free basketball clinic, his annual Bike Brigade, as well as a back-to-school supply drive for kids in the area.

In July 2012 Butler continued to better his hometown of Racine by donating \$200,000 to charitable organizations.

Barbara Fair, who was the lead organizer for the Stop Solitary CAT campaign (part of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture), believes that while thousands of people have horror stories about living in solitary confinement, it’s important for someone as well-known as Butler to step forward.

“This is somebody people can connect with. That’s the biggest problem around our prison system, is that often people have a hard time connecting with the humanity of incarcerated people,” said Fair.

## Report: Solitary confinement adversely affects prisoners, staff alike

*Study exposes long-term impact of ‘social deprivation’*

By Charles Crowe  
Staff Writer

Solitary confinement has serious long-term adverse effects on incarcerated people, their families, and corrections staff, according to a report published by the Vera Institute of Justice. The practice also has a significant fiscal cost, and is applied disproportionately to people of color and those with mental illnesses.

Solitary confinement does not make institutions or communities any safer, said the April 2021 report. For all of these reasons its use is widely opposed by “advocacy and human rights groups, policymakers, health care professionals, faith-based organizations, and leaders in the field of corrections.”

The report said that research has provided “compelling reasons for corrections agencies to swiftly and safely reduce — and ultimately end — its use.” It was written by Kayla James and Elena Vanko and titled “The Impacts of Solitary Confinement.”

Solitary confinement was originally intended as a response to violent and dangerous behavior, the report states. But the practice has evolved to include punishment for minor and nonviolent rule violations as well as to segregate vulnerable populations. Its use has spread beyond jails and prisons to civil detainees in immigrant detention centers.

Psychological, neurological and physiological damages can result from the sensory deprivation and idleness caused by social and physical isolation. The effects can persist long after the confinement has ended, may worsen with the length of confinement, and can be long-lasting even after short periods of isolation, the authors noted.

issues, paranoia, obsessive thoughts, hypersensitivity, loss of identity, insomnia, psychosis, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

These effects tend to be aggravated by preexisting mental illness, and those with such conditions often end up in solitary confinement, the report notes. Symptoms of their illness can be misconstrued as misbehavior. The result is disciplinary action which, ironically, often takes the form of more time in solitary.

**Neurological**

Research on neurological effects indicates that “social deprivation experienced in solitary confinement can ‘fundamentally alter the structure of the human brain in profound and permanent ways,’” said the report. These effects are especially important for young adults in the formative stages of mental and physical development.

reduction of contact impairs successful reintegration of families upon release of the incarcerated person.

Corrections staff working in isolation units suffer from high stress levels that can affect their health and well-being. Often the conditions they work in include “frequent loud shouting and banging ... and instances of interpersonal and self-inflicted violence,” the report noted. The phrase “corrections fatigue” has been coined to describe the resulting effect.

Solitary confinement is costly. Isolation units are staff-intensive and therefore two to three times as expensive to operate. The negative effects on physical and mental health of both the incarcerated and their overseers can contribute to greater future costs for health care. And increased rates of recidivism correlated to solitary confinement can increase future costs of law enforcement.

Although solitary confinement is mostly used in jails and prisons, its use and detrimental effects also extend to immigration detention. The report said that “Despite the ‘civil’ nature of immigration detention, the use of solitary confinement ... in detention facilities is strikingly similar to how solitary is used in U.S. corrections facilities.”

A large portion of those so confined in immigration detention centers are people with mental illness. The report pointed out that the practice is “grossly overused” for detained immigrants.

The report’s authors argue that solitary confinement does not achieve its intended outcome of promoting institutional safety. Most studies have shown that it does not decrease the incidence of violence or misconduct in jails or prisons, and may actually increase criminal recidivism.

The report concludes that the use of solitary confinement should be replaced by “humane and effective strategies to achieve safe facilities for incarcerated people and staff.”

## Double bunking violates United Nations’ recommendations for prisoner treatment

By Jad Salem  
Journalism Guild Writer

Minnesota state prisons’ double-bunking may be a violation of the treatment of prisoners under the United Nations’ Standard Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela rules) and the standards defined by the American Correctional Association (ACA), according to the *Minnesota Spokesman Recorder*.

Crowding multiple people in a 7x11 cell, smaller than a normal residential bathroom, can lead to multiple problems, including health issues and safety concerns, said the June 21 article.

Double-bunking is sometimes called “crowding” (placing two incarcerated people in one cell), and can cause stress, physical and mental health problems, and suicides, according to Canada’s Union of Correctional Officers.

Prisoners may inflict self-

harm or injury to others to avoid double-bunking, according to a 2020 auditor’s report on Safety in Correctional Facilities, said the article.

The report also said that double-bunking can be a breeding ground for an increase in gang membership.

On March 21, 2021, James Francis Howard, 56, died a violent death while incarcerated in Minnesota’s Rush City prison. Fellow prisoners attributed the death to double-bunking, said the article.

C O V I D - 1 9 spread to 977 of the 1,290 incarcerated people at Stillwater, Minnesota’s oldest prison, the article said. At least 12 deaths and approximately

4,000 COVID cases were reported throughout the rest of the Minnesota prison system, reported the article.

The overcrowding in Minnesota prisons can be attributed to legislative and policy changes in harsher sentencing, such as an increase in statutory maximum and mandatory sentences, and revocation of parole, said the article.

“In 2018, two in five prison admissions were returns from supervision, and the vast majority of that group - 88% - had not committed a new crime but only violated the conditions of supervision,” reported the ACLU.

**Crowding multiple people in a 7x11 cell, smaller than a normal residential bathroom, can lead to multiple problems, including health issues and safety concerns.**

## Alternatives to mass incarceration offered

By Vincent E. O’Bannon  
Staff Writer

The Vera Institute of Justice suggests four solutions to end the billion-dollar disaster of mass incarceration in the United States.

Making fewer arrests, ending low-level prosecutions, holding legislatures accountable, and investing in communities were possible solutions for ending mass incarceration, reported Nicholas Turner, president and director of the Vera Institute of Justice.

“Mass incarceration devastates entire communities. It worsens overall health outcomes and exacerbates economic inequality,” said the Aug. 1, 2021 *Forbes* article in reference to why communities should be invested in ending it.

In making the argument for community investment, Turner points to the fact that local and state governments invest more heavily into jails and prisons than in community development and resources.

“Comprehensive health

care, affordable housing, and meaningful employment opportunities will do far more to keep people safe and help communities thrive than needless incarceration ever will,” said Turner.

According to Turner, the U.S. spends \$182 billion per year on mass incarceration. The 1,900 federal and state prisons and 3,000 county jails account for \$85 billion of that.

“Police officers make one arrest every three seconds — nearly 10 million arrests a year,” said Turner. “... Police now act as the default first responders for a range of social, economic, and health issues that would be better addressed by people like counselors and social workers.”

Inadequate and inhumane conditions within prisons and jails have led to protests in California and Department of Justice investigations in Alabama.

“Cruelly long sentencing practices also have kept too many people incarcerated for too long,” reported Turner. “Mandatory minimums that require courts to issue long

sentences for certain crimes have acted as a driver of mass incarceration...”

There were 3,278 people serving life sentences in 2013, according to a report by the American Civil Liberties Union.

“Prosecutors are among the most powerful actors in the criminal legal system, wielding immense discretion to decide who to charge and for what,” reported *Forbes* “... They can also perpetuate the racial bias inherent in our criminal legal system — or they can work to rectify it,” said the article.

The United States has nearly two million incarcerated people in its prisons and jails on any given day, reported Turner.

“Prosecutors should decline cases that criminalize poverty, substance use, and mental health, as well as those based on perpetual stops — when police stop people for a minor infraction but then seek evidence of a more serious crime,” Turner said.



# Film series examines the Black experience in America’s criminal justice system



Khalil Browder, held at Riker’s Island without trial for more than three years, took his own life in 2015. His tragic death helped inspire the “Healing Thru Freedom” short film series.

By **Jad Salem**  
Journalism Guild Writer

Four short films titled “Healing Thru Freedom” were created to document Black experiences in America’s modern criminal justice system, according to the *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News*. The films were financed by grants from the Pretrial Justice Institute, a national organization that promotes safe, fair and effective juvenile and adult pretrial justice practices. “(The Pretrial Justice Institute) was really interested in building relationships with artists to help move the culture forward to ask what

we believe in our community and how that impacts the kind of political decisions that we make,” said Leroy Bean, who made one of the four films. Bean commented that the filmmakers had the choice of “educating people on the history and where we’re at now with it or re-imagining what it could look like, such as alternatives to police and things like that.” The other creators were Mariah Johnson, Dionte Allen and Brie Hope. Bean filmed an abstract reenactment of Kalief Browder’s story. Browder was a young Black man held in Rikers Island jail without

trial from 2010 to 2013. He was charged with stealing a backpack containing valuables. Two years after his release, Browder committed suicide, the News said. Allen created a satirical analysis of the word “semantics” and how, throughout history, that word was used to criminalize Black people. Johnson turned to her family and their experience with the justice system to create her short film. Hope created a short animated film, “Alternatives to Police,” that re-imagined the justice system. Bean said, “I want them to really walk away with how they authentically feel.

I really want people to be present enough to receive all of the things they might feel that come with this project, whether it be from a personal experience, or just really being opened up to something new to understand that we are all human. “I feel like we’re in a phase of rehabilitating humanity and getting down to the real value of what life looks like. It is such a collective struggle, and it has to do with all of us. The films really highlight the highlights and reveal the issues of what our society really looks like, how we operate and how deep the disparities are in this system.”

# Study finds racial bias in AI speech recognition

By **Joshua Grant**  
Journalism Guild Writer

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being used to violate the privacy of some incarcerated people, a recent study concludes. The AI research is financed by an \$81 billion congressional spending bill, Reuters reported Aug. 9. Researchers at Stanford and Georgetown universities demonstrated the particularly high error rate when Black voices are transcribed by AI technology. The Sentencing Project estimates that Black men are six times more likely to be behind bars than White men in American jails and prisons. “This Congress should be outlawing racist policing tech ... It shouldn’t be funding it,” said Albert Fox Cahn, executive director of the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (STOP). “I think the idea that a machine can hear and understand what a person is saying, and that becomes some kind of tool in court, is ridiculous,” said Bianca Tylek, founder of the nonprofit social justice organization Worth Rises. “Speech to text technology is not in a place where it can be used to make these kinds of criminal justice decisions,” said Allison Koenecke, the lead author of the Stanford and Georgetown study.

Koenecke and her research team ascertained that Amazon’s AI speech recognition programs had twice the rate of error for Black speakers compared to White. In Oxford, Alabama, however, Chief of Police Bill Partridge said local forces have solved cold case homicides when prisoners were flagged talking about “actually committing the murder.” Partridge’s department is one of several state agencies that utilize LEO Technologies software that uses Amazon Web Services (AWS) language processing to monitor inmate calls for near

real-time analysis. Partridge said the AI technology is also helpful in preventing suicides. “I think if the federal government starts using it, they are going to prevent a lot of inmate deaths.” The chief executive officer of LEO Technologies, Scott Kernan, is a former Secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. He said AI “is saving lives both inside and outside of the correctional environments we monitor.” Kernan added, “Because we listen to all communications, we do not target a race, gender or protected group.” An AWS spokesperson said the Amazon Transcribe service is “highly accurate,” but recognized that heavy accents and poor audio can lead to variations in individual words. In 2020 STOP examined the Securus platform currently using AI voice recognition in New York state. Cahn said the system has the potential to “automate racial profiling.” Cahn said the software violates the privacy rights of prisoners and their families. People in the criminal justice system “are always turned into the subjects of experimentation for new technology systems,” he stated. University of Washington computer scientist Kentrell Owens stressed how important proper oversight is for AI systems. “Before you implement tech that can control people’s freedom, you need an independent assessment and audit of the tool to determine if the tech even helps you achieve your goals,” said Owens. Heather Boland, the fiancé of an incarcerated man in Texas, calls him three times daily. “We are never able to communicate without being under surveillance,” she told Reuters. “We are supposed to be free people; we are not incarcerated,” Boland said. “But it feels like my rights are constantly being violated.”

# UnCommon Law challenges California’s ‘broken’ parole hearing process

By **Kevin D. Sawyer**  
Associate Editor

A petition was filed in the California Court of Appeals, by the nonprofit organization UnCommon Law, to correct deficiencies with the Board of Parole Hearings (BPH). A recent media advisory from UnCommon Law reads, “The petition demonstrates that California’s parole process is broken.” It stated further that the lawyers the State appoints to represent people serving life sentences “are poorly paid, inadequately supervised, and have less than half the parole grant rate of privately retained counsel.” The case, *In Re Darryl Poole*, argues that a lower court erred when it accepted the Board’s promises to address deficiencies alleged regarding state appointed parole attorneys who represent prisoners serving life. “Data now shows that the changes have failed to improve the quality of attorney representation,” UnCommon Law wrote. “Roughly \$12 million in new funding for the BPH since 2020 to implement changes has yielded no results.” According to UnCommon Law, “the vast majority of pa-

role applicants in the state are still receiving inadequate legal representation ...” This, it added, has a direct impact on their chance for freedom. The right to counsel in parole board hearings is codified in the state Penal Code. The BPH holds thousands of hearings each year. “Nearly 90% of those hearings are for people who cannot afford to hire their own attorney,” UnCommon law reported. The appointment of parole board attorneys is managed by the BPH. “Years ago, BPH’s own task force determined that this arrangement created a conflict of interest,” UnCommon Law’s press release stated. “More recently, the Board’s Executive Officer testified that ‘it would be inappropriate for the Board to give training to inmate counsel on how to best represent their client when

they come before us.” However, the BPH continues to administer the process. Records show that from January 2018 to January 2021, there were 18,139 parole hearings scheduled. Of that number, 16,076 had state-appointed attorneys. Another 2,063 had private attorneys. “The parole grant rate for state-appointed attorneys is less than half the rate for private attorneys,” UnCommon Law reported, adding “people who are denied parole with state-appointed attorneys were ordered to wait longer for another hearing than those with private attorneys.” It was also reported that the outcome of parole board hearings was no better after the BPH made additional training available and increased the fee paid to attorneys, from \$400 to \$750 per hearing.

“In fact, the overall parole grant rate is lower now than it was before those changes, UnCommon Law stated. “On average, only 16% of scheduled hearings result in parole grants, and the grant rate has exceeded 20% only once in a 40-year span.” UnCommon Law gathered information through California’s Public Records Act and surveyed hundreds of prisoners who appeared before the Board between January 2020 and April 2021. The organization’s critical analysis of parole hearing outcomes did not make a sweeping indictment of the BPH attorneys. “Many state-appointed attorneys go above and beyond in order to better serve their clients,” said Keith Wattley, Executive Director of UnCommon Law. “Unfortunately, we have a fundamentally flawed process — rife with inequity, particularly along lines of race and wealth — that prevents parole candidates and their attorneys from being successful. This is a problem because the law says most parole hearings should result in people being released, but this system simply isn’t built for that. We need a new one.”

*We have a fundamentally flawed process — rife with inequity, particularly along lines of race and wealth — that prevents parole candidates and their attorneys from being successful.*  
—Keith Wattley  
Executive Director  
UnCommon Law

# Company introduces new ankle monitor technology

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

Supercom has created a new lightweight ankle bracelet monitoring system to replace the old clunky ankle monitors. The global security technology company has set its sights on world governments and their prison systems, according to a July 1 Benziga article. “There are really only ten companies that provide tracking devices in this space, and the incumbent technology is usually a heavy one-pieced ankle unit which looks like an oversized cell phone and requires daily charging,” said Ordan Trabelsi, president and CEO of Supercom. “What we’ve done is develop a new ankle-bracelet that is small, lightweight and utilizes our significant advancements in location technology as well as very long-term battery life.” Supercom is an Israel-based company. It has introduced proprietary, secure Internet of Things (IoT) tracking technology that led to the development of the new device. “The company’s electronic monitoring (EM) PureTag device is a lightweight, ergonomic bracelet that doesn’t have to be charged. It communicates seamlessly with a Puretrack device built on Samsung cell phone hardware, which Supercom

chose because of its technology and application program interfaces security,” the article said. Supercom was noted to benefit from the COVID-19 pandemic. This was achieved by helping police and local governments reduce their in-prison costs by allowing alternative incarceration methods. A PEW Charitable Trusts survey covering the past ten years found the number of people with ankle monitors rose 140% in the U.S. The selling point for the Supercom EM device is the lower cost: \$10 to \$55 per day that it charges for house arrest versus the \$100-\$140 per day that other systems charge. “We’re growing very quickly in the global market and have closed 30 new contracts in the past three years. Government customers clearly see the benefits of our technology. We were awarded the national EM project in Finland, after winning projects in Sweden and Denmark,” Trabelsi said. “We’re also providing complementary services to help prisoners assimilate back into society responsibly, with the overall goal of breaking the cycle of recidivism.” Supercom sales are up 64%, representing a \$5.6 million profit in 2020. The company has secured 119 technology patents.



# CDCR’s grand gesture: The pizza party apology

## State’s COVID settlement offer includes pizza party as ‘morale booster’

By Joe Garcia  
Staff Writer

Prison officials offered a series of concessions including a pizza party to a group of prisoners to settle a lawsuit about the mishandling of the COVID outbreak in San Quentin.

A few of the plaintiffs in the case received a copy of a settlement proposal dated May 11, 2021 — just days before evidentiary testimony began in Marin County Superior Court — from the Public Defender’s Office.

“It’s an insult,” said petitioner Mike Beaudette after reading the settlement offer. “It’s like spitting in an inmate’s face and then slapping them afterwards.”

More than 300 San Quentin residents filed suit against the prison and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. They alleged “cruel and unusual punish-

ment” and “deliberate indifference” for the COVID-19 conditions that ultimately caused 28 incarcerated deaths and the death of a correctional sergeant.

The original petitioner, Ivan Von Steich, won his habeas case, which included a population limit of 1,775 SQ residents — a decision later vacated on appeal.

The San Quentin community now awaits an upcoming ruling by Judge Geoffrey M. Howard, who presided over 11 days of Marin County evidentiary testimony livestreamed in and from SQ.

As outlined in the settlement proposal, CDCR “would be willing to agree to in exchange for a global resolution of all COVID-related petitions currently pending in the Marin County Superior Court” to the following package:

- Continue plans to distribute free computer tablets to every incarcerated per-

- son in CDCR;
- Continue vaccine efforts (offering shots, administering shots, etc.);
- Continue 180-day release program at SQ until a date certain (absent a settlement, program may end sooner);
- Continue 1170(d) resentencing referrals through the sole discretion of the CDCR Secretary;
- Continue to consider and make medical reprieves through the sole discretion of the governor;
- Continue to post patient

- and staff COVID-positive information on CDCR public website;
- Continue to provide medical care and pay medical bills of petitioners while they remain in CDCR custody;
- “As a morale booster, CDCR will provide a special meal at SQ (e.g., pizza party).”

And as a final concession, “CDCR would be willing to include language in the settlement acknowledging the hardships and trauma petitioners have experienced.”

The proposal also clearly stated, “In order to settle this case, every petitioner would have to agree to accept the settlement offered by CDCR.”

San Francisco Public Defender Danielle Harris opted not to discuss any settlement offer.

Petitioner Joshua Grant came to San Quentin as one of the 122 forced transfers from the California Institute for Men (CIM) that sparked the massive outbreak.

“I thought this was just a stupid rumor going around,”

Grant said after reading the settlement proposal. “I didn’t think it had any legs.

“This is worse than toilet paper. I can’t believe they’d think anyone — let alone all of us — would even think about accepting this, especially ‘cause there’s nothing on here that we’re not already getting.”

Petitioner John Mattox was also part of that ill-fated transfer group from CIM and is recognized by court documents as SQ’s Patient Zero — the first confirmed positive COVID-19 case within the facility.

“It shows that they’re acknowledging guilt,” said Mattox. “Why offer a settlement if you did nothing wrong?”

“Anytime someone offers you crumbs, they’re admitting guilt. CDCR knows they did wrong by us, but they don’t want to do the right thing.

“They never own their wrongs, but they expect us to.”

## Pizza makes it all better?

Satire / Humor

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

If you almost died during the coronavirus outbreak at San Quentin State Prison, you may be entitled to a slice of pizza.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has offered, among other things, to provide a special meal, i.e., pizza, for a botched transfer that left over 2,000 SQ residents infected with COVID-19 and 28 dead.

The offer was made just prior to May 17, 2021, when the SQ COVID-19 outbreak was put on trial in the Marin County Superior Court.

When I first heard about this, my question was, “What kind of toppings are they go-

ing to put on this pizza and is it going to be stuffed — crust with extra cheese? I got to have extra cheese,” I thought to myself. The thought of a piping hot pizza with extra cheese and other toppings really makes my mouth water.

Traditionally, prisons have a history of serving bland, tasteless and often disgusting foods as punishment for crime: foods like gruel, juke-balls, or a brownish brick called “the loaf.” Some prisons offer bread hard enough to use during a softball game and brown water or potatoes and pea soup. Pizza is certainly a treat compared to the broth-drowned rice and rubbery near-meat we often receive here at SQ.

I could see how CDCR



Stock photo

would expect a pizza party to boost the morale of its incarcerated residents. But in exchange, CDCR wants all 300 SQ petitioners to drop their claims of Eighth Amendment violations and deliberate indifference. That means they’re offering some darn good pizza!

The best food I have ever eaten in my incarcerated life was when SQ cooks caught COVID-19 and the food had to be catered by an outside company.

For two weeks in July 2020 we ate sliced melons, crescent rolls, bagels and cream cheese, real chicken, beef, turkey and cheese slices. We ate macaroni and tuna salads, casseroles, fresh vegetables, Danishes and thick, soft chocolate chip cookies. Talk about a morale booster!

Everything was cooked and seasoned to perfection. The food made me feel alive — like the man I used to be. Sadly, for many it was a sort of last meal.

For others, it led to their waistline bursting at the seams. I ate the food even when I wasn’t hungry. But it wasn’t pizza.

There have been many times when I’d walk by the officers’ booth and see a group of them eating slices of a hot delicious looking pizza and the aroma would drive me crazy. It would cause me some serious duress — the kind that could coerce a snitch to offer up information for a slice.

But at this point in my life

I have to think about my diet. Pizza parties, no matter how irresistible, are reserved for children. As much as I like pizza, it isn’t the first thing I crave after almost dying — not after being sickened and hearing of so many deaths.

My idea of a morale booster now would be a reduction in the prison population, more early releases, a single cell, an apology, fixing the \$400,000 worth of Cal/OSHA violations, and upgrades to the prison to minimize the threat of future disease outbreaks. And of course, monetary damages for my pain and suffering.

I could probably use my stimulus money to buy some pizza.

So, if I had one wish, besides extra sausage, pepperoni, and cheese, I’d like to get all the things I just mentioned above in 30 minutes or less. If I cannot have them then I’d much rather press on with a lawsuit and eat gruel in the chow hall.

## Legislative Digest

Governor Gavin Newsom recently signed a number of new measures into law aimed at criminal justice reform and the reduction of prison sentences for certain offenders in California.

**Senate Bill 81-** seeks to reduce the number of sentence enhancements in criminal cases that can double prison terms.

**Senate Bill 483-** allows the retroactive repeal of sentence enhancements for prior prison or county jail felony terms.

**Assembly Bill 333** - restricts the use of sentence enhancements for alleged gang crimes.

**Senate Bill 73** - ends mandatory prison and jail sentences for nonviolent drug offenses.

**Senate Bill 775** - Felony Murder: resentencing — allows a person convicted of murder under any theory of malice or natural and probable consequences doctrine to apply for resentencing, including attempted murder and manslaughter.

**Senate Bill 215** - DNA evidence.

**Senate Bill 317** - Competence to stand trial.

**Senate Bill 383** - Juveniles: informal supervision: deferred entry of judgment.

**Senate Bill 416** - Corrections: educational programs.

**Assembly Bill 124** - Criminal procedure.

**Assembly Bill 292** - Corrections: rehabilitative programming.

**Assembly Bill 453** - Sexual battery: nonconsensual condom removal.

**Assembly Bill 527** - Controlled substances.

**Assembly Bill 567** - Criminal procedure: resentencing.

**Assembly Bill 625** - State Public Defender: indigent defense: study.

**Assembly Bill 636** - Financial abuse of elder or dependent adults.

**Assembly Bill 764** - Contempt of court: victim intimidation.

**Assembly Bill 1171** - Rape of a spouse.

**Assembly Bill 1455** - Sexual assault by law enforcement officers: actions against public entities: statute of limitations.

**Assembly Bill 1540** - Criminal procedure: resentencing.

**Assembly Bill 990** — was vetoed: inmate visitation

For further information on these bills contact your institutional law library.

## Undocumented immigrants denied stimulus payments

By Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chairman

Millions of essential undocumented workers are being denied stimulus money, *HuffPost* reports.

“This failure by Congress underscores how our country continues to treat undocumented workers as disposable,” said Monica Ramirez, president of Justice for Migrant Women.

An estimated 9.3 million undocumented workers have been excluded from stimulus eligibility, according to the National Immigration Law Center.

“It is appalling and immoral to praise essential workers yet fail to provide them with the urgently need COVID-19 financial relief because of immigration status, especially when they serve as the backbone of this country,” Ramirez added.

The coronavirus relief package, known as the American Rescue Plan, has left immigrant workers — deemed essential — without federal aid, said the March 9 article.

Undocumented immi-

grants are ineligible for Social Security numbers and are given Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITIN). This contributes to the exclusion of coronavirus relief benefits, reported the article.

“Paying taxes was getting me ready for the opportunity to become a U.S. citizen. I worked for six years prior to my incarceration. So that I could pay taxes every year, the IRS gave me a PIN number and I felt good contributing to the country. So why should my family suffer because we’re immigrants?” said Pablo Ramirez, a San Quentin resident.

This historic relief package of \$1.9 trillion has assisted millions of Americans and legal resident immigrants with Social Security numbers. They received payments of \$1,400 for each individual who made less than \$75,000 a year or less than \$150,000 for couples with children. Illegal resident immigrants received nothing.

“I feel discarded and voiceless; it’s like we have no value in this country,” said Ramirez.

Undocumented are not given the credit or recognition that they deserve based on the jobs that they are willing to do under any conditions, compared to the average American who refuses to work in the fields or working as a dishwasher and getting paid less, *HuffPost* reported.

“We may be illegal residents, but thanks to us, the illegals, you always have vegetables at your tables,” said Jose Villanueva, a SQ resident.

Villanueva recalled how he used to work throughout the rainy seasons. It was almost impossible for him to walk in the thick muddy fields picking and packing lettuces, while the trucks got stuck in the mud.

“At 17, I came to the U.S. and life became somewhat complicated because of the language barrier,” said Rolando Tut, a San Quentin resident. “I wanted to work. Being a minor made it almost impossible.”

Tut worked part time as a dishwasher and when he turned 18 he worked in construction and landscaping. He also picked grapes under

hard conditions in the summer.

During the pandemic, the Latino and Black communities were disproportionately affected; studies have shown that they are about three times as likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 as White people and twice as likely to die, according to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention.

Tut said he was disappointed to be denied relief funds after paying taxes for nearly a decade.

In December 2020, Congress approved relief money to undocumented immigrants married to American citizens, the story reported.

Also for the first time, U.S. citizen children of undocumented parents who filed taxes with their Immigrant Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs) are now eligible, according to the article.

According to Ramirez, Tut, and Villanueva, other Americans can file for unemployment; undocumented residents don’t qualify for these benefits, and it has left them and their families without the financial support they feel they deserve.



# Honoring incarcerated Veterans

By Steve Brooks  
Staff Writer

Costly mistakes have landed an estimated 107,400 veterans in prison, according to a 2021 report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. But many say they are still proud of their service and are honored to celebrate Veteran's Day.

All military veterans, living or deceased, are honored on the "11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month" — the genesis of Veterans Day looking back to the Armistice ending World War I.

"I served on a Navy destroyer during the Vietnam War, I fired a lot of shells and did a lot of drinking to numb myself from what was going on around me," said San Quentin resident James "Shorty" Dunbar. "I lost my hearing listening to the cannon fire."

Millions of men and women have sacrificed their lives fighting and dying valiantly in the cause of freedom. Since America's founding, Americans have fought for the values that America stands for and the hopes and dreams of the American people.

SQ resident Bobby Jackson served in the U.S. Marine Corps and went to Vietnam in the late 1960s. Jackson has been incarcerated since 1982. He suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other illnesses, like many war veterans. He believes some of his ailments resulted from exposure to Agent Orange.

"I got mixed feelings about wars and I don't like the fact that all these young people are still being killed," Jackson said. "And for me, the flag is symbolic of the struggles minorities have long faced in this country. But I am hopeful that things are getting better."

The history of America is one of slavery, racism and oppression. But even so America allows people to dream and be hopeful that

freedom is real and attainable.

"I got a lot of respect for these youngsters, I respect anybody who puts their life on the line for this country," said Jackson.

SQ resident Carl Raybon served 10 years in the Marine Corps before he was honorably discharged. He served on the *USS Enterprise* during a bombing raid that took place in Lebanon. He has been imprisoned for the past 15 years.

"I treat my incarceration like being deployed on a ship. That's how I cope with being away from loved ones," he said.

Larry "Mississippi" Clemons served six years in the 42nd Bravo Division of the U.S. Army. "It was a time in my life I can be proud of," said Clemons. "For me the flag symbolizes freedom; even as an abused Black veteran it still represents something I did that was great."

Clemons has been in prison for 31 years and is now 60 years old.

The men of High Desert State Prison's Facility A wrote a letter to *San Quentin News* to share what Veteran's Day means to them. They said it's a day to also honor all the men and women who died because of COVID-19.

The High Desert men put together an anthology called the F.L.A.G. project, honoring the medical personnel treating COVID victims.

"We did this to show our unbending appreciation for our health care workers and mental health care workers, and all first responders, for keeping us safe in this era of COVID-19," wrote resident Maurice "Elijah Siddiq" Ainsworth.

"Sometimes I look at the flag and feel proud — proud that it's a symbol of the greatest nation this planet has ever known," said Marine Corps veteran Leon Smith.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs reported 19 million American military veterans in 2021. Over a million of those military vet-

erans were women. There are now transgender veterans and veterans from all ethnic backgrounds who are honored for their contributions to the safety of Americans.

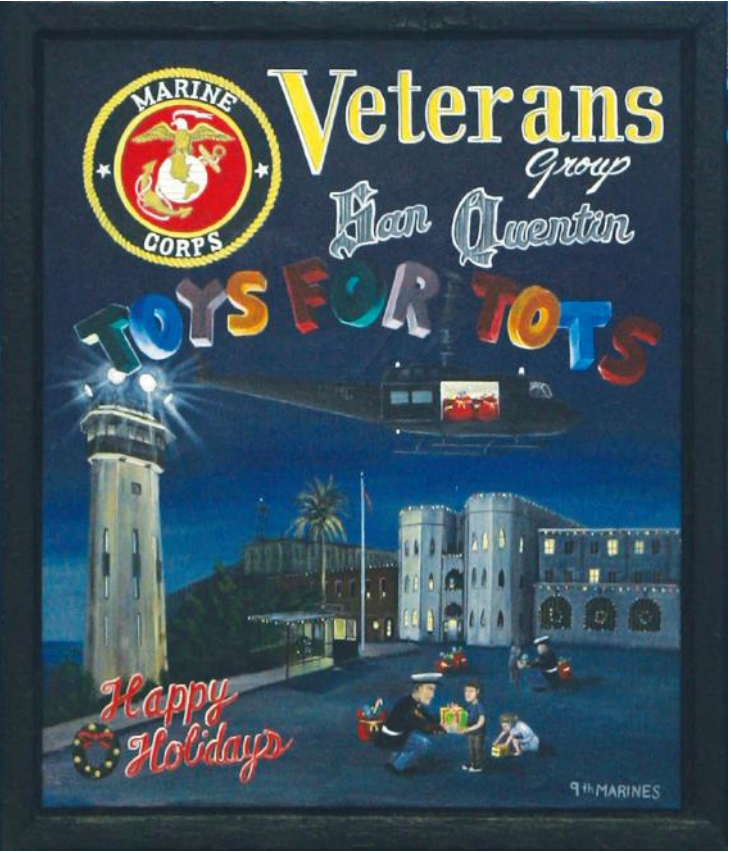
"I am hopeful that one day its colors (the flag) will reflect the beauty of all people," said resident Tommie Hall.

"I had a strong sense of pride ever since I was a child traveling to see national monuments," wrote Emil Ogg, a U.S. Navy veteran housed at High Desert. "Every time I looked at the flag, I'd say to myself, 'invisible, with liberty and justice for all.'"

The three Black military veterans interviewed and others who wrote had mixed feelings about fighting for a country that has a history of not being very hospitable to Blacks. Some saw themselves as fighting two wars — one for American freedom and the other for Black freedom.

"This country has its flaws and a history

that has not been the greatest," wrote Steven Drew Allee. "But it has evolved over time, battle-scarred, and it shows its beauty from its struggles. It is forever growing and changing. In this way it is similar to myself and many others wearing the blue CDCR uniform," Allee wrote.



**Above Right:** Isaiah Bonilla-Thompson, an incarcerated veteran who was once a resident of San Quentin, offers reflections and inspiration to a crowd of his fellow service members on Veterans Day, 2017.

**Above Left:** San Quentin's Veterans Group (VGSQ) hosts an annual toy drive for children of incarcerated parents. Incarcerated vet Tony Burch (far left) has since passed away and is greatly missed.

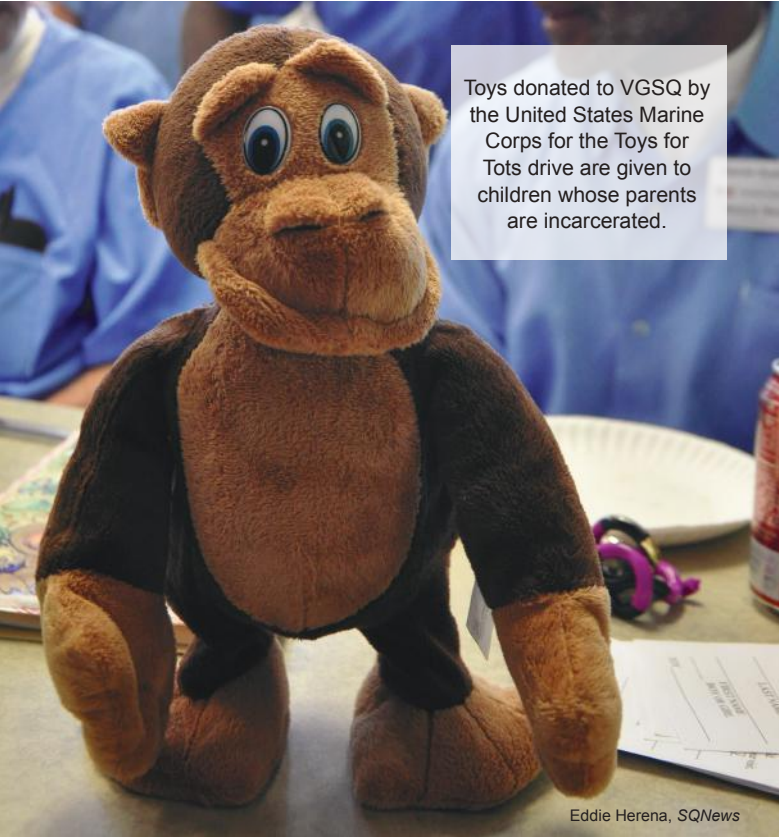
**Below:** The unfurling and unfolding of flags on the Lower Yard reflects the various branches of service represented at San Quentin, and honors the heroes who never made it home. The colors being displayed included POW-MIA, U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Coast Guard, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans Remembered, and the State of California.

Images from SQNews archive; all photos were taken pre-pandemic



San Quentin's Military Color Guard presents colors, remembering the fallen in honor of Veterans Day in 2017. Presenting the formation of colors (left to right) are USMC's Elmore, U.S. Army's S. Norfleet, U.S. Navy's C. Johnson, U.S. Army's D. Tarvan, all of whom have now moved on from San Quentin.

One prisoner's artwork (above) highlights the "Toys for Tots" toy drive put on annually by the SQ Veterans Group, with help from the United States Marine Corps. (Artist unknown.)



**Below:** Under a crystal-clear November sky, incarcerated veterans gather on the Lower Yard to salute the American flag, presented by the San Quentin Honor Guard. The POW-MIA flag is dipped to honor Prisoners of War and soldiers still Missing in Action.





# Daughter transforms hatred into healing — Part 1

By Samantha Lawlor  
Survivor

I see you. I see you as a human being. Only after I was truly able to see myself as a human being and forgive myself for all my mistakes was I able to see others as human beings, too.

I now know that “hurt people hurt people.” Therefore, I know that if you have hurt another human being, it is because YOU have been hurt — probably many times — by authorities, institutions, society, friends, and often by family members who were supposed to love and protect you.

For 13 years I hated my father for taking my mother’s life. She was going to leave him and he simply didn’t know how to handle that. At 18, I came home from work one day to find she had been strangled, raped, and left to die on our living room couch.

I vowed never to speak to him again, and I didn’t for 13 years. I wanted him to suffer because that’s what I was do-



ing. Over the years, I wished I could forgive him and move on. But I couldn’t understand how to forgive someone who caused me so much pain. It didn’t make sense to me.

My healing process was unintentionally prompted by a life-altering workshop called the Landmark Forum, which challenged life as I knew it. We aren’t responsible for what happens to us, but we’re responsible for how we respond to it. I learned about myself on a very deep level; I also learned that the way I viewed the world was based on my very specific life experiences.

Growing up, we make definitive statements about ourselves, others, and life around

us as a way of assessing life. This happens in an instant. Our minds assign meaning to situations in order to make sense of them. Although, when this happens it doesn’t occur as an assessment; it occurs as facts. While this is a perfectly natural phenomenon, the important thing to distinguish is that not all of our beliefs serve us. Which ones hold us back from peace of mind? What “facts” are we holding on to because of resentment, even though we are the ones who are suffering?

One small example is when I was 6 years old with my mom. As a child, I was pretty goofy and rambunctious. I was trying to be funny, but whatever I said must have come out the wrong way. All I remember is my mom turning to me and saying, “Sam, that really hurt me.” It was the first time in my life I was aware of a world “out there” and that my actions have an impact on people.

I loved my mom very much. The last thing I wanted to do

was hurt her. In an instant and almost unconsciously, I made that split-second interaction mean that I was a “mean” person, and vowed to be “loving” from that day forward. I didn’t actually think it would work, or that I would even remember, but I had in fact created that belief within me that very moment.

If you ask people what type of person I am, most will say “loving.” And that’s no coincidence. Ever since that day, I have been unconsciously trying to make up for the fact that “I’m mean.” And no matter how “loving” I am, somewhere in my subconscious the belief that “I am a mean person” is still at play. If I look closely enough, I can see that belief being played out during most situations of self-doubt throughout my life.

Other beliefs I created growing up are: “I’m not that smart,” “Life is hard,” “People don’t understand,” “I’m trying my best.” And I can see these beliefs pop up often whenever I am challenged. This

workshop made me realize I wasn’t the only person in the world who was suffering. It wasn’t all about me. We are all simply figuring out life as we go along, and whether it looks like it or not, we really are all doing our best with the tools we have at the time.

These beliefs I had about myself, others, and life kept me locked into certain knee-jerk reactions and emotional states. It wasn’t until I became aware of these “facts” that existed in me, and how I had bought into them, that I was able to see myself as a beautiful creature who is perfect, whole, and complete as my birthright. After that, I was able to see others as perfect, whole, and complete as their birthright. That they too have layered “facts” about themselves, others, and the world around them that dictate who they believe they are and how the world is.

I suddenly had compassion for people I had longstanding resentments towards. I reached out to those I had

hurt or deemed “bad,” “stupid” or “hurtful” and apologized for keeping people at arm’s length due to these beliefs. A true sense of personal freedom and peace of mind came to me as I took responsibility for my point of view.

A life-altering day came when I was celebrating the peace I had made with everyone, and I suddenly remembered that I hadn’t spoken to my dad in 13 years. I thought, “Why did I take this stupid workshop?!” I was torn. I didn’t know what to do. Is there a line for what is forgivable and what isn’t? Are some people worthy of compassion and some aren’t? I thought about it for another week or so, but I couldn’t deny the peace in my heart and mind I was getting from being vulnerable and brutally honest with myself about how others, just as myself, are worthy of compassion and understanding — that we are all dealing with pain, anger, resentment, fear, and the need for love and acceptance. I knew that if I was going to have compassion for humanity, then like it or not, my dad was included in that group.

By Anthony Padilla  
Project Avary

Parental incarceration is like a mass pandemic, affecting the lives of one in 14 children in the United States. About half of children with incarcerated parents are under the age of 10. I was one of those kids, and now I am doing my best to help kids who are as scared as I was.

Project Avary has been a safe haven for such children for decades. A big staple of this organization is summer camp and a special part of camps are the fire circles where we speak and listen from the heart.

These fire circles give children who have a story to tell, a platform to tell their story within a community that can relate to what they are going through. Children with parents in prison often feel isolated and keep quiet about their story. It’s critical that they are given a space to share their emotions and have them be heard by others like them.

Over time the outer structure of these fire circles has changed, but the essence and power of them to heal

## Stepping up for children of the incarcerated

and help make us feel whole and empowered has always remained the same.

When I first came to Avary, these fire circles were separated into two groups, boys and girls. The girls would go to a fire pit in camp, while the boys would line up and walk to another pit further away.

While the boys walked, we sang a song that was a rite of passage song and we screamed it as we walked. These fire circles were meant to be a judgment-free zone. It brings me so much joy seeing all the kids who do not normally talk, share their story and lean on us to support them.

At the end of the night, all the boys would get into a huddle around the fire and begin singing more songs. At the same time, we could also hear the howls of the girls in the distance. Everything that



Photo courtesy of Project Avary

Children with incarcerated parents gather around a fire to share their struggles and common experience at Project Avary’s summer camp.

we did at this fire circle was special.

We bonded as Avary brothers and sisters and provided a space for true, raw emotion to be shown and accepted. As the times changed though, we’ve adapted the

ways in which our fire circles are done.

We have gone from separating by gender to including everyone in the same circle, honoring both our distinctions and our unity and the common bond of all having

an incarcerated parent. In recent years, we have had to adapt around the current pandemic to be able to find ways to create that safe space for everyone to feel welcome and included even though we couldn’t meet in person. We started with calls on Zoom and turned into fire circles on Zoom and I still felt the support that I felt when in person at camp or on retreats.

Once we discovered that we could gather around the Avary Fire on Zoom, we saw that we could include youth from outside the Bay Area. As time went on, we began reaching out to more kids from across the United States. I am overjoyed to see these new kids from all over the country participating in fire circles, sharing their emotions and no longer feeling so alone with their experience.

We recently had a summer camp for the first time since the start of the pandemic. I was lucky enough to have at-

tended three weeks of camp. I could see that in each fire circle, with different kids each week, the passion and support were back.

I understand that having someone relate to you who knows what you’re going through, lifts the heaviest weights off you. I broke down many times in the firelight and I was constantly shown love and comfort by my peers.

I noticed and was amazed by how mature these kids are. I am shocked at how mature a 10-year-old can be about their emotions. I feel as if these circles help the kids develop skills to analyze their emotions and understand why they feel that way — and transform negativity into positivity.

You wnever understand lots of things in life, but I can say that I understand what makes these circles so great. The support and kindness that is shown is a rare sight for sore eyes.

I’ve lived through multiple years full of questions and doubt, and now it is with great pleasure that I am leading these fire circles and able to help heal and shape the minds of the future generation.

## HEALTH

Transitions Clinic Network (TCN) hosts a monthly reentry health-focused Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) column. This column is a space where we can answer questions regarding healthcare in reentry. Our goal is to provide information and empower individuals to prepare them for healthy reentry. In our last column, we talked about Medi-Cal, the public health insurance system in California. For this column, we will share some tips and tricks on applying for Medi-Cal and how to use it once released!

**How do I apply for Medi-Cal before I leave prison?**

Each CDCR institution has a team of social workers from the Transitional Case Management Program (TCMP) who should come see you when you’re 30-90 days from release. They will help sign you up for Medi-Cal. Make sure that you sign the paperwork before you leave! If you are within 30 days of release

## Simplifying Medi-Cal

and have not seen a TCMP worker yet, submit a Request for Interview (Form #22).

**Are there other types of health benefits I may be eligible for?**

People who are members of a federally recognized tribe or affiliated with the Native American community may be eligible for Indian Health Services. Veterans who served in the active military, naval, or air service may be eligible for Veterans Administration benefits. Ask the TCMP worker about your eligibility for these services. They will also offer to help you apply, if eligible.

**Why does Medi-Cal ask for an address on the application?**

Medi-Cal coverage is county specific. When you are completing an application for Medi-Cal, apply for health insurance in your county of return (where you plan to live and receive medical treatment).

Once your Medi-Cal application is approved, they will

mail a Benefits Identification Card to the address you listed on your Medi-Cal application. Bring this card with you to your medical appointment in the community because it shows proof of Medi-Cal coverage. You can also use this card to apply for a free cell phone (known as an Obama-phone in the community).

**PLEASE NOTE:** Even if your Medi-Cal is approved and you received a Benefits Identification Card while incarcerated, your Medi-Cal will not [be] active yet. (See next question.)

**I applied for Medi-Cal while incarcerated and just got released to the community. Am I good to go?**

Not quite! Medi-Cal needs to be “activated” after you are released.

Even if you got approved for Medi-Cal while incarcerated and received a Benefits Identification Card, they will not turn on (activate) your Medi-Cal until **you are physically out of the prison.** To

do this, you must call or visit your local Medi-Cal office to activate your insurance once you’re released. You may need to bring a letter of release stating that you are no longer incarcerated. Do this step as soon as you are released! Activating Medi-Cal may take some time, so you want to be sure to do it early before you run out of medications.

**Need help finding a Medi-Cal office or community health clinic near you?** You can call the TCN Reentry Health Hotline at (510) 606-6400. (We accept collect calls from CDCR.)

**My Medi-Cal application was completed in the wrong county. Now what?**

Contact the Medi-Cal office in the county where you were enrolled as soon as possible. Let them know you are out and need to transfer your Medi-Cal to another county.

If you want to be seen at a specific clinic, you can also ask the clinic staff if they have “eligibility workers” or someone who helps patients with insurance issues.

You can also contact the Medi-Cal Ombudsman office

at 888-452-8609 for assistance.

The transfer process can take up to 30 days, so it’s best to do it as soon as you find out that you’re moving or your benefits were set up in the wrong county.

**Oh no! I just found out that I’m being released soon and never got to meet with TCMP to complete an application for Medi-Cal. What should I do?**

Don’t worry. You can apply for Medi-Cal when you’re released. You can apply over the phone, on the internet, or in-person at your local Medi-Cal office. If there is a clinic you’re interested in getting care at, call the clinic and see if they [have] eligibility workers to help you with the Medi-Cal application process.

For more information on how to apply for Medi-Cal or any other questions related to healthcare and reentry, give us a call at (510) 606-6400. **We are not the Medi-Cal Office and cannot do Medi-Cal applications for you,** but we can give you more information to point you in the right direction.

We’re thrilled to be able to communicate with the incar-

cerated community. 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.

**We want to answer YOUR questions. If you have health-care-related questions about reentry, feel free to write us:**

**JPAY Email:**  
[TCNinfo@ucsf.edu](mailto:TCNinfo@ucsf.edu)

**Mailing Address:**  
Transitions Clinic Network  
2401 Keith Street  
San Francisco, CA 94124  
(510) 606-6400

We do accept collect calls from CDCR. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

TCN is a network of community health clinics that serve returning community members. TCN clinic programs are led by Community Health Workers (CHWs) with lived experience of incarceration and reentry and support people with their healthcare and reentry needs.



# Transphobia continues unabated in prison

By Cassandra Evans  
Journalism Guild Writer

Incarcerated trans women continue to be targeted for sexual assaults, physical abuse and gender discrimination while being forced to be housed in prisons for men, *CNN* reports.

Trans women are at significantly higher risk of violence and abuse than any other incarcerated group, according to academic research studies and surveys, the June 21 *CNN* story noted.

The report cited the case of Dee Farmer, reporting one experience. “He (a guard) just kept repeatedly punching me all over,” said Farmer, a plaintiff in a state Supreme Court case against an Indiana prison. “He started kicking me and I saw a knife in his tennis shoe, and it scared me so bad that I stopped resisting.”

With Farmer’s testimony, the court ruled in 1994 that the violent environment and history of assaults at the Federal Correctional Institute (FCI) in Terre Haute constituted cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the 8<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

The story included the experience of a transgender woman named Jasmine Rose Jones: “(F)or much of the last 23 years, she was incarcerated in a men’s facility, and she says she was subjected to rape, sexual assault, and abuse just because she is transgender.”

“Transgender women are not safe behind bars, period,” said

Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE). “Nobody should be in danger just because they are in government custody.”

Transgender abuse occurs at nine times the rate of general population prisoners — with abuse by corrections staff at five times the rate, an NCTE survey found.

In 2003, President George W. Bush signed into law the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

It is “still not enforced consistently enough. We need clearer and more detailed policy about exactly how to determine the housing assignment,” said Heng-Lehtinen, “and it needs to be reevaluated periodically because circumstances change.”

In 2018 the Trump administration changed the federal government’s Transgender Offender Manual to require prison officials to use an offender’s biological sex as the initial determination for housing placement.

“Activists says not much has changed,” according to *CNN*. They are now “working to change policies on both the federal and state level to allow trans prisoners to decide for themselves where they would feel safest being housed.”

“Under current policy, a transgender or intersex inmate’s own views with respect to his or her own safety must be given serious consideration

when BOP (Bureau of Prisons) makes housing and programming assignments,” the Department of Justice told *CNN*.

The federal BOP “follows and enforces PREA standards and recognizes the importance of ensuring that inmates are and feel safe while in custody,” said a U.S. Department of Justice statement.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 132 into law. Effective Jan. 1, 2021, it requires transgender, non-binary and intersex prisoners to be housed in “a correctional facility designated for men or women based on the individual’s preference.”

SB 132 also requires prison and jail staff to address prisoners by their preferred gender pronouns.

“We want people to understand that we are under no delusion that this bill will make prisons safe for anyone, including gender variant people,” said Jennifer Orthwein, a public interest attorney. “We just hope that this bill makes it possible for transgender, non-binary and intersex people to survive prison with as much of their mental and bodily integrity intact as possible.”

Orthwein has filed a lawsuit against the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) on behalf of incarcerated trans woman Syiaah Skylit and the entire class of trans prisoners.

“Defendants and the (CDCR) have repeatedly



Phoeun You, SQNews

Samantha Gordon watches the San Quentin Athletics practice from the dugout. Transgender prisoners often report experiencing physical and sexual assaults at the hands of their peers and discrimination from correctional staff and administrators. In spite of progressive attitudes in the community, trans people continue to suffer subjugation in the prison environment.

## California allocates \$7.5m in reparations for women forcibly, unknowingly sterilized

By William Earl Tolbert  
Journalism Guild Writer

California has allocated \$7.5 million for reparations to survivors who were subjected to state-sponsored sterilization or involuntary sterilization, reported the California Coalition for Women Prisoners.

“We hope this victory paves the way for other BI-POC communities to achieve additional forms of reparations in response to centuries of state-sanctioned violence and abuse,” said Aminah Elster, the coalition’s campaign and policy coordinator.

Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo, D-Los Angeles, was a key advocate in getting the allocation included in the state budget, the report said.

California has become the third state behind North Carolina and Virginia to provide monetary compensation to survivors who were sterilized under state eugenics laws.

The California Victims Compensation Board has the responsibility to create an outreach program to notify incarcerated women and trans people who have been sterilized.

Each survivor will receive approximately \$25,000.

“No amount of monetary compensation will ever remedy the wrongs committed but this bill is a step in the right direction in the state taking responsibility to rem-

edy the violence inflicted on these survivors,” said Laura Jimenez, executive director of California Latinas for Reproductive Justice.

California repealed its eugenics laws in 1979; however, the state continued to practice coerced and forced sterilization well into 2010, the coalition reported.

California began its eugenics practices in 1909; to date, there have been approximately 20,000 people unknowingly sterilized, placing the state third-highest in a nationwide report.

The report said the eugenics movement was fueled by beliefs that the burgeoning field of genetics could socially engineer away America’s “ills,” including poverty, crime and “feeble-mindedness.”

Thirty-two other states practiced sterilization, the coalition said.

The documentary film “Belly of the Beast” by Erika Cohn exposed state-sanctioned sterilization in California. Kelli Dillon was one of the main characters.

Dillon was sterilized while imprisoned at Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla. She needed surgery to treat an ovarian cyst. Unknown to her, she was given a hysterectomy at age 24.

She founded Back to the Basics, a community empowerment organization that offers education, outreach and service provider programs.

## Native Americans misclassified in COVID reporting

By Jad Salem  
Journalism Guild Writer

Native Americans are often racially misclassified when it comes to their positive COVID-19 test results and death certificates, according to *USA Today*.

In California, approximately 163 Native Americans were reported to have died from COVID-19 and nearly 9,000 were sickened from the coronavirus, according to the state public health authority, reported the Feb. 28 article.

Under state guidelines, Native Americans with a combination of any other race or ethnicity are counted as Hispanic/Latino or multiracial. The California Department of Public Health said that in recent years it has worked to decrease racial misclassification.

“The problem is in the data itself,” Virginia Hedrick, executive director of the Consortium for Urban Indian Health, told *USA Today*. “I don’t trust the state data. I haven’t ever. For me, this is a culminating event. This is historical trauma playing out in real time.”

Leticia Aguilar, 37, from the Pinoleville Pomo Nation, lives in Sacramento and lost her grandmother and her aunt to COVID-19 within 11 days of each other. Aguilar filled out their death certificates and designated each one as “Native American.”

“I’m so glad that we were able to have them counted,” said Aguilar. “It meant a lot for us as natives.”

Aguilar cut her hair in mourning and sang traditional songs and gave offerings, according to the Pinoleville Pomo Nation tradition. She lit a fire and let it burn for four days and nights for her loved ones’ year-long journey to their final resting place.

“We were born Indian and



Javier Jimenez, SQNews

Incarcerated Native Americans and outside visitors dance at SQ’s 2018 Pow Wow event. Native Americans, who often come from mixed lineage, have frequently been misclassified as ‘multiracial’ or Hispanic for COVID-19 reporting purposes.

we die White,” Hedrick said of the Consortium for Urban Indian Health. “I would argue that there are likely more Native Americans in hospital beds that are racially misclassified [than are realized].”

Tribal leaders report that some counties refused to share death and case data with them. The counties cited health privacy protection laws, according to *USA Today*. The Yurok Tribe, whose reservations are in both Del Norte and Humboldt counties, had to hire a health officer to get the information it sought.

“Basically the way we looked at it, nobody’s coming, nobody’s going to help us,” said Joseph James, Yurok Tribal Chairman. “We’re a sovereign government. There’s things we need to work on to improve our daily lives and provide for our own people.”

The Tule River Tribe in Tulare County reported it was also denied access to the COVID-19 data.

“Having access to that system would make it easier for us to identify who should be isolating based on those test results, and monitoring them for quarantine and contact tracing,” said Adam Christman, chair of the Tule River Indian Health Center and Tule River Tribe Public Health Authority.

In November 2020, California State Assemblyman James Ramos of the Serrano/Cahuilla tribes and chair of the Committee of Native Affairs held a hearing on the high rate of COVID-19 among the state’s indigenous population.

During the hearing, Ramos learned that California officials refused to allow tribal leaders access to the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange. That is where all testing entities reported their COVID-19 testing results. The state also refused to tell tribal leaders if someone on their reservations had tested positive.

Underreporting of coro-

navirus deaths in the Native American population is only part of the problem. A Center for Disease Control study in 2016 found that nationally, Native Americans were misclassified up to 40% of the time on their death certificates, reported *USA Today*.

“That only contributes to the invisibility of our people, which makes it harder for us to even access resources because we can’t prove we exist,” said Aguilar. “There is so much more meaning behind making sure we are properly counted as native people.”

“We’ve been trying to go through the motions of grieving and burying people,” said Britta Guerrero, a San Carlos Apache tribe member and Executive Director of the Sacramento Native American Health Center. “We know a lot of people are missing, and we won’t understand the gravity of that until we’re back together and we see who is gone.”



# Historical Snippets

## A Snippets Salute to vets:

**1943** Wilhelmshaven Harbor in Germany is devastated by 500 aircraft from the United States' 8th Air Force.

**1918** In Nova Scotia, the Western Union Cable Office processes a coded, top-secret message originating in Europe, declaring the November 11 end to all air, land and sea hostilities of the First World War.

**1914** Seven months after the Tampico Affair, the American military occupation of Veracruz, Mexico, ends as the United States withdraws the last of their military forces from the region.

**1910** The San Diego Army and Navy Academy is founded by Thomas A. Davis in Southern California on November 23.

**1901** The U.S. Army's War College is established.

## Answer Key To October's Puzzler

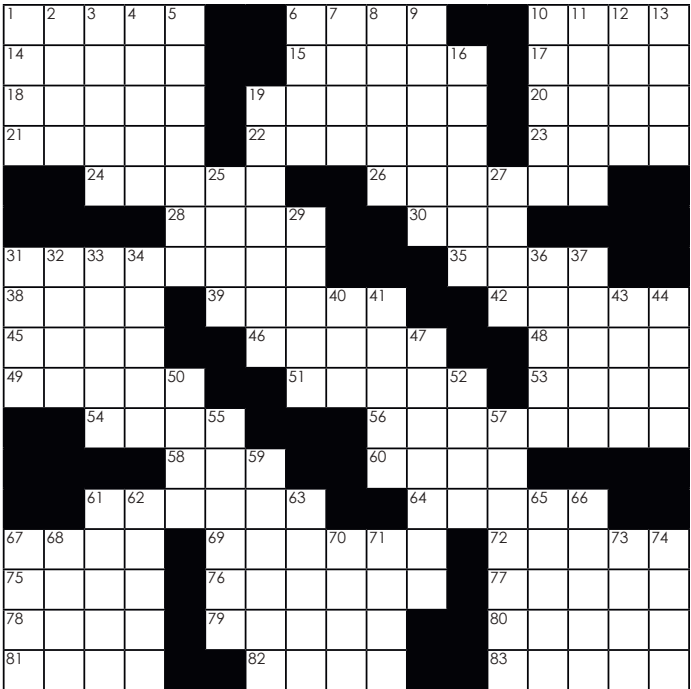
13	7	15	10	5	4	—	54
24	11	13	1	19	12	—	80
13	17	3	4	7	18	—	62
11	2	11	21	8	29	—	82
26	14	5	13	18	4	—	80
9	24	6	21	17	19	—	96
I	I	I	I	I	I		
96	75	53	70	74	86		85

# CROSSWORD

By Jonathan Chiu  
Edited by Jan Perry

- Across
1. Winter accessory
6. Man's struggle with dog
10. An exclamation when you're upset
14. Toni Braxton's sister
15. Director Ephron and Roosevelt's wife
17. Expel
18. Medical procedure that you never want
19. A king can do this to someone
20. An explosives substance and a cable network
21. Enzyme that curdles milk
22. Danny of *The Professional*
23. Jerk
24. Vehicle's advertisement
26. Logan of *Percy Jackson: The Lightning Thief*
28. Fisher of *The Wedding Crashers*
30. Prison emergency medical treatment area (Abbrev.)
31. Military higher-up
32. Mosquito disease
38. Long mark
39. Modifies
42. Starbucks drink
45. Prayer ender
46. Baggy overalls
48. Reid of *American Pie*
49. Ultimate purpose
51. The reckless years
53. Goddess of the rainbow
54. One of the Great Lakes
56. Name of this magazine
58. Dentist title
60. A '90s Lisa Loeb song
61. Rifleman in the Austrian and German armies
64. Person who is critical of president
67. Precedes son, in or up
69. Worst German name ever to name your son
72. Pepsi, Coke and RC
75. Do this before a test
76. Prayer accessory
77. Make into law
78. NASCAR's Edwards
79. Bird trap
80. Supermarket divider
81. Projection of a building at the east end of a church
82. Helper (Abbr.)
83. Hebrew prophet of the 7th century B.C.
- Down
1. Suffix with gang, trick, or rhyme
2. Senior's assistant
3. Once you do 77 Across, you can do this
4. Vegetable fiber
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Ford Coppola
6. \_\_\_\_\_ B'rith: Jewish org founded in 1843
7. Steak sauce
8. Bird's warbling sound
9. Food cooked on a spit
10. Short religious vestment
11. A kind of sentence
12. Dog in the *Thin Man* movies
13. Some war veterans are familiar with this
16. Important Will in crosswords
19. Love songs
25. Arthur \_\_\_\_\_ Stadium
27. Follows snail, junk or chain
29. Off a bit
31. To blurt out
32. Frost on a glass
33. Anoint in the last rites
34. Mr. or Sir (*Sp.*)
36. Stana of *Castle*
37. Throwback game console
40. \_\_\_\_\_ the line
41. The little girl in *The Exorcist* does this
43. Crush, ground into powder
44. The best street to be on
47. Not complete or continuous
50. Proceeds arm, kick or line
52. You do this to a dragon
55. Allen Poe and Hoover
57. Having the keenness of sight attributed to the lynx
59. Kia's family vehicle
61. Cheers and \_\_\_\_\_
62. Gwyneth Paltrow's child
63. Pioneer Parks and opera singer Ponselle
65. Region in W. Asia Minor
66. \_\_\_\_\_ of the *Titans*
67. Animal rescue org. (Abbrev.)
68. "It's a \_\_\_\_\_!"
70. \_\_\_\_\_ and the *Real Girl*
71. \_\_\_\_\_-à-Porter
73. Legal grievance org. (Abbrev.)
74. Trunk

## WHERE HAVE I BEEN BEFORE?



## Last issue's solution

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

## Last Month's Solutions

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

Difficulty: ++

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

Difficulty: ++++

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

These pics were submitted by Adam Hinds of CMC, who said:

“Just another day in the Colony! What does one part of rehabilitation look like? A couple of dudes refusing to take themselves so serious that they can't remove their shoes and jump for joy — that's what! Or cradling their faces and kicking their toes like girls at a sleep over...”

Thanks for putting smiles on our faces, fellas!

OOOPS! In the October edition of the San Quentin News, we forgot to give credit to Jeff Isom, whose painting we featured in this space. Beautiful work, Jeff!

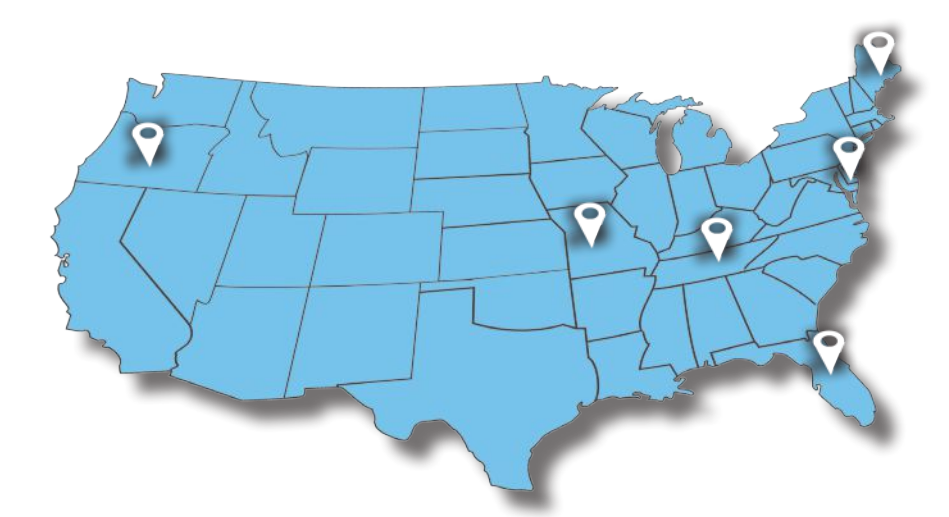




NEWS BRIEFS

**1. Missouri** — (*NBC News*) Ernest Johnson, 61, was executed Oct. 5 by lethal injection at a state prison in Bonne Terre. His lawyers claimed that he had the intellectual capacity of a child. Johnson was convicted in the murders of three convenience store employees almost three decades ago. Pope Francis, two members of Congress and former Democratic Gov. Bob Holden were among those who spoke out against the execution.

**2. Salem, OR** — (*AP*) The state’s court of appeals reversed the murder conviction and death sentence of Jesse Johnson on Oct. 6, saying his defense team failed to interview a key witness. Johnson, who is Black, did not fit the description described by



a witness who said a White person fled from the victim’s home. Johnson has repeatedly claimed innocence and refused a plea deal. Johnson’s attorney during the appeal claimed that racism and po-

lice misconduct contributed to his wrongful conviction.

**3. Tampa, FLA** — (*Tampa Bay Times*) Robert DuBoise, 56, spent 37 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. DuBoise filed a law-

suit in federal court against three former detectives, a former police sergeant and a forensic dentist for fabricating bite mark evidence that falsely implicated him in the 1983 murder of Bar-

bara Grams. In 2020, newly tested DNA evidence proved he did not commit the crime. DuBoise spent three years on Death Row before his sentence was reduced to life in prison. He was freed from prison in August 2020.

**4. Maine** — (*Portland Press Herald*) A new law that eliminates cash bail requirements for most minor charges is set to go into effect this October. Lawmakers say the new law could help ease some of the pressures on the state’s county jails caused by staffing shortages and a COVID-19 outbreak.

**5. Baltimore, MD** — (*AP*) Kirk Bloodsworth, 60, served almost nine years in prison, including two on Death Row, before it was determined that he was wrongfully convicted. He was awarded a little more than \$400,000 by the state Board of Public Works on Oct. 6

as part of a new compensation system that allows an administrative law judge to decide whether an exoneratee is eligible to receive compensation.

**6. USA** — (*Wall Street Journal*) CoreCivic and GEO Group, the prison industry’s two largest publicly traded companies, are creating new revenue by signing deals known as intergovernmental agreements with cities and counties. The agreements permit the transfer of federal prisoners from local law enforcement to private detention facilities.

**7. Nashville, TENN** — (*AP*) The state prison system now has a suicide prevention hotline so that friends and family of prisoners can call to connect with the department’s Central Communication Center. The center is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The hotline number is 1-833-421-SAVE.

BOOK REVIEW

By Juan Haines  
Senior Editor

Colum McCann’s beautiful story is based on the tragic deaths of two young girls from cultures in conflict with each other. *Apeirogon, a Novel*, (2020) is about how the girls’ fathers unite to tell their stories.

The grieving fathers, Bassam Aramin, a Palestinian, and Rami Elhanan, an Israeli, come together on a mission to find peace. “They carried their stories with them,” wrote McCann.

The narrative is driven by the disparate voices of the men. Their cultural differences are stark, but the love and grief the Palestinian feels is in sync with that of the Israeli. For the two of them, this is the force that overcomes what divides their communities.

The novel’s structure is very unusual and fascinating. One thousand short and pointed chapters are numbered from one to 500, then down again from 500 to one, and illustrated with drawings and pictures. Some strategically placed chapters contain no words at all.

Apeirogon, a Novel (2020)

By Colum McCann

Bassam, the father of Abir, and Rami, father of Smadar, pair up to talk to audiences about their daughters — their favorite colors, what they studied in school, what they liked to eat, and their lifestyles and daily routines. The descriptions of the girls and real-life, relatable events that included them, stir images of who they must have been.

Of themselves, the men offer the following: Rami Elhanan introduces himself as “the father of Smadar. I am a seventh-generation Jerusalemite. Also what you might call a graduate of the Holocaust.” Bassam comments on the warring societies they represent, “the only thing they had in common was that both sides had once wanted to kill people

“He had learned that the cure for fate was patience,” chapter 191, meaning it takes time for people to realize that one’s destiny is tied to where they’re at — which is something we also learn doing time. As many incarcerated folks say, “Do the time; don’t let the time do you.”

they did not know.”

The word “apeirogon” is not in the heavy 20-year old dictionary that sits on my desk. But McCann defines it as “a shape with countably infinite number of sides,” a concept felt throughout the novel — that in spite of the intense conflict between their respective cultures, the voices of Bassam and Rami each reflect so many perspectives, that ultimately and inevitably, common ground emerges to blend into a single narrative.

Incarcerated readers, particularly lifers, may identify with *Apeirogon*’s examination of time, endurance and hope:

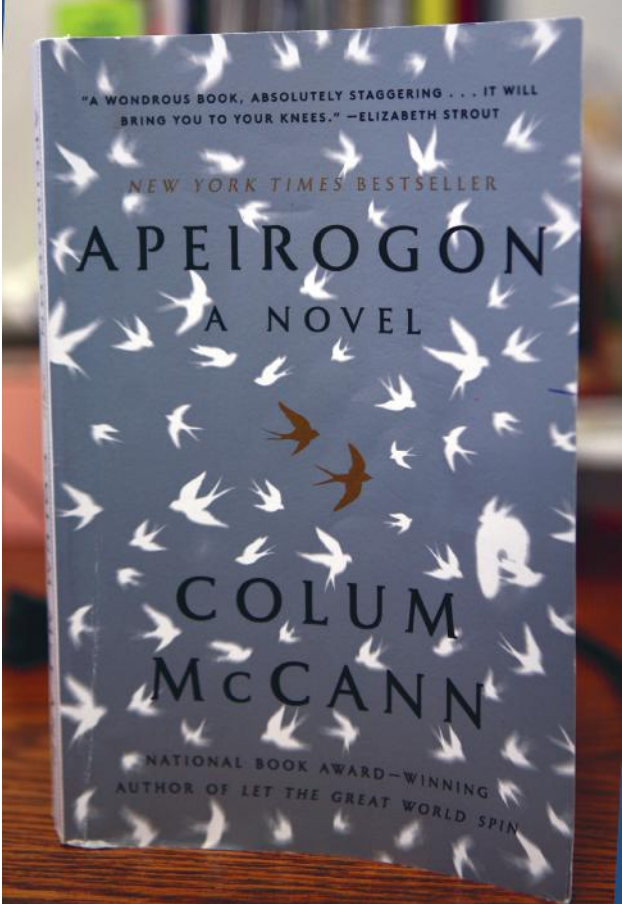
“He had learned that the

cure for fate was patience,” chapter 191, meaning it takes time for people to realize that one’s destiny is tied to where they’re at — which is something we also learn doing time. As many incarcerated folks say, “Do the time; don’t let the time do you.”

Serving long sentences also forces incarcerated people to ponder “The anatomy of boredom,” chapter 177, knowing that “Time [is] endless and hollow,” and that in prison there’s “More loneliness than rage,” Chapter 196.

Incarcerated immigrants may be able to identify with the line: “It never ceases to astound him what a difference a border can make: the arbitrary line, redrawn further along,” chapter 64.

BLM advocates know that under certain circumstances, when encountering power, it’s important to “Always he kept his hands in view. He knew never to make a sudden move,” McCann wrote of Bassam when he was stopped at an Israeli check point.



*Apeirogon* communicates a sense of comfort and hope. Although people come from different parts of the world, ultimately our common ex-

periences will bring us together, even if only in grief and mutual loss. At that time, we’ll have to find a way to live together in peace.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Spiraled Out of Control**

My life as I once knew it is gone forever. It has been replaced by a new set of rules that I have little control over. In my freedom, I took a lot for granted. I used to swim, loved driving my car or riding a motorcycle. I used to go to restaurants, take hikes in the forest and stroll up and down the beach picking up sea-shells. Can you relate to this? I used to check out concerts, play golf (it was my thing) and feel the thrill of catching fish. Even the little things: walking to the store or setting off fireworks on the 4th of July.

All that’s gone now. I miss going to sporting events, living with a woman or cutting down a real Christmas tree. And Halloween’s were the best! Now I can’t even visit with my friends and family. And the worst is not being able to go to their funerals when their time comes. I can’t even say that last goodbye. Many have passed away, and the mail is slow. I always learn of the news after the fact. My parents are currently 93 and 94 years old. I don’t even like

to think about it.

I have made some really bad decisions. I have caused a lot of pain and grief to people I know and to strangers. When you hurt people, it spreads to other people and we are all connected. It could even be a thousand people affected in my case. It is very sad. I was a selfish person. I didn’t think of anyone but myself. That’s not the way it goes. I was doing drugs. Even when you don’t plan for it, that’s what drugs eventually do. I didn’t listen when people were trying to advise me. It was like they were preaching to me. I hated it. My parents, teachers and friends all tried to tell me I was going down the wrong path. I refused to listen. Even to my best friend! I began doing drugs by myself. I would hide it from people. I spiraled out of control. Don’t make the mistakes I made. Don’t spiral out of control.

—Larry E. Mays  
CSP-Lancaster

**Prison Impacts All**

As you know from your own experiences, mass incar-

ceration has not just impacted those who sit in prison cells. You have also been impacted! Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, husbands, wives, boyfriends, girlfriends and those who are incarcerated are also affected.

Oftentimes, the taxpayers have to foot the bill. Today, through the governor’s Prison Reform plan, 10s of thousands of prisoners are returning to their families on parole.

Because of organizations listed below, our voices are no longer silenced, and together we have been successfully changing this system. Proposition 17 passed and restored the rights of our returning citizens to register and to vote while on parole. Hundreds, if not thousands of you, family members and friends of those incarcerated, came together to help collect signatures which gave Californians the option to vote for Proposition 17 this last election. Due to your incredible work and that of community members and prison reform organizations, we won! This was an extraordinary achievement.

We are just beginning to see the promise fulfilled that our governor made during his campaign. He pledged to

reduce the prison population, close prisons and end mass incarceration in California by returning incarcerated citizens home to their families and loved ones. It is extremely important that we do our part in supporting Gov. Gavin Newsom and stopping the “power grab” from non-reformist politicians and organizations.

Sincerely, your friend in the struggle,

—Jeffrey Tyson  
**California Medical Facility**  
(Special thanks to: Initiate Justice; Ella Baker Center for Human Rights; All Of Us Or None; California Prison Focus; ARC-Prison Activist Resource Center; San Francisco Bay View; The Last Mile; Root & Rebound; California Coalition for Women Prisoners; San Quentin News; and Life Support Alliance.)

**George Jackson vindicated**

Vindication is what I felt after reading the article about George Jackson in the August edition of *SQNews*. In 1986, while walking through Old Folsom’s chow hall, I picked up a book that was on the floor. When I turned the book over I noticed a Black man in

shackles. I was 19 years old. My interest was sparked immediately. Before this, I had never read a book in my life, and the only Black authors I knew about were the ones I was briefly introduced to in high school: Richard Wright & Langston Hughes.

Instead of putting the book back on the table, I took it up to my cell. I stayed up all night reading as much as I could and I was blown away by the poetic prose and proud stance taken by this author. The book was *Soledad Brother*.

It changed everything about me back then. I had no knowledge about what George did while incarcerated. I was only a fan of his prose.

As I grew, I began to foster this revolutionary idealism that actually carried me throughout my incarceration. I’ve read everything he read. From Che to Fanon...

As recent as 10 years ago, prison officials have labeled most of the Black population who were in possession of the book, or those who may have had a tattoo of George, as ‘Radicalized Prisoners,’ or prison gang associates, when in fact, most prisoners, such as myself, got interested in George’s life because he explained our cir-

cumstances in a way that no one else could. And for us, it was an eye opener. I remember reading *Soledad Brother* and just being mesmerized by what I was reading.

Administration associated my reading, and being in possession of *Soledad Brother* as an indication of agreement with what happened during the rebellion and it was nothing like that.

I feel vindicated seeing that San Quentin’s administration had the courage to allow such an article to be published in light of how many Black prisoners were validated for the ‘George association.’

I feel vindicated because although I have changed my life, I believe the George association still follows me wherever I go. College classes study George these days! This is what he has become, so to vilify him means to vilify everyone who reads about his life. *SQNews* is BIG throughout CDCR, so I’m really proud to see that you all have taken note and acknowledged the story. Any administration that vilifies George is vilifying *SQNews* (if that’s the case).

—Marlon Gray  
Calipatria State Prison



SPANISH

Por Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalist  
Guild Chair

Después de haber sobrevivido el impacto del COVID-19, prisioneros de mayor edad luchan en retener lo que han aprendido en la escuela, los grupos de autoayuda, terapia física, y en los programas de entrenamiento vocacional. Estos programas requieren un nivel de constante participación, especialmente para los prisioneros de la tercera edad.

“Como una persona que tiene una pierna amputada, necesito aprender a caminar con mi prótesis de mi pierna derecha, pero solo me han permitido asistir a mi clase de terapia física una sola vez,” dijo Leonard King, de 63 años de edad un prisionero sobreviviente de la pandemia en San Quentin.

Desde antes de la pandemia del COVID-19, CDCR hospedaba prisioneros de alto riesgo médico en San Quentin. La mayoría de estos hombres tienen 60 años o más de edad lo cual los hace más vulnerables a diferentes enfermedades debido a sus condiciones existentes.

Steve Rothschild, de 75 años también sobrevivió la pandemia en San Quentin. Rothschild ha estado en la prisión por los últimos dos años. Él estaba trabajando en la Industria de Autoridades de la Prisión (PIA) en el programa de codificación de computadoras, antes de que la prisión suspendiera todo los programas debido al coronavirus.

“Los ancianos no retienen



Manuel Flores de 75 años de edad ha estado encarcelado desde 1981. Prisioneros ancianos enfrentaron extremadas privaciones durante el brote del COVID-19, además la larga ausencia educativa, vocacional y de programas de rehabilitación, les impidió retener lo aprendido.

información de igual manera que la gente joven,” dijo Rothschild. “A mi se me ha olvidado mucho lo que ha aprendido. La práctica, práctica, práctica, no se puede sustituir, pero esto es imposible sin mi estación de trabajo,” añadió Rothschild.

Ya han pasado más de 10 meses, y Rothschild está preocupado de poder avanzar al siguiente nivel de la clase por no tener la oportunidad de reforzar su habilidad en codificación de computadoras. Esto limita su potencial de aprender una carrera técnica o de obtener una fecha más cercana a su

libertad de la prisión.

“Me examinaron 14 veces por COVID-19 y todo los resultados fueron negativos,” dijo José Hurtado, de 65 años, quien evitó ser contagio de COVID-19 durante la pandemia. “COVID-19 me ha robado la oportunidad de poder ganarme buenos créditos. No he podido participar en algún programa de autoayuda o guiado,” añadió Hurtado.

San Quentin ha permanecido cerrado rigurosamente (bajo un programa modificado) a partir de la pandemia. La educación, las vocaciones y todos los programas de re-

habilitación, incluyendo los servicios religiosos han sido suspendidos desde Marzo. “No puedo asistir a la iglesia, lo cual es algo que me ayuda a mí a mantener un espíritu saludable,” dijo Hurtado. “La falta de los servicios religiosos me deprime y me siento triste. Cuando no tenemos actividades y solo estamos sentados en nuestras celdas, nos causa depresión. Ahora me están transfiriendo a la Prisión Estatal de Corcoran y tengo miedo de que me vaya a contagiar con el COVID-19 en esta prisión,” él añadió.

Debido a la pandemia y al programa modificado, la po-

blación de reos no ha podido obtener certificados, o cronos de los programas de autoayuda, los cuales podría darles a los prisioneros créditos para ser liberados más rápidamente o para tener sus fechas de audiencias de libertad más pronto. CDCR han otorgado 84 días de “créditos meritorios por buena conducta” a todos los prisioneros del estado, según su página de internet.

La población de prisioneros mayores de edad en California ha aumentado debido a leyes como: la de los tres strikes o leyes que requieren que los prisioneros sirvan 85% de sus sentencias. La mayoría de estas leyes fueron aprobadas al comienzo de los años 90’s, y obligaron a que muchas personas estén cumpliendo sentencias de vida o largas sentencias, antes de ser considerados para obtener su libertad condicional.

“Ha sido demasiado para mí, aunque no puedo hablar por nadie más”, dijo King, quien ha estado encarcelado por 25 años bajo la ley de tres strikes. “En cuanto a mí, no puedo predecir lo que me espera en el futuro debido a mi edad y mis condiciones médicas. Esta pandemia ha añadido otra sentencia de vida así mi sentencia de tres strike,” él añadió.

Algunos prisioneros de edad avanzada se encuentran en una posición difícil, en la que ellos se ven obligados a aprender nuevas habilidades laborales que les permitan obtener trabajo. Asimismo aprender nuevas herramientas para satisfacer los requisitos de la audiencia de libertad condicional, mientras

siguen siendo clasificados de alto riesgo por sus problemas médicos. Los prisioneros de edad avanzada saben que cuando regresen a casa es probable que nadie los quiera contratar para un trabajo forzado. Rothschild a la edad de 75, él cree que el programa de codificación de computadoras le pudiera haber dado la oportunidad de ganarse la vida al salir de la prisión como un diseñador de página web. Él también dijo que había completado la clase del Control de la Ira antes de la pandemia.

King a la edad de 65 años, recibió una negación de cinco años en su audiencia de libertad condicional. Ahora, él tiene que asistir a más programas de autoayuda para satisfacer las recomendaciones de la audiencia de libertad condicional durante un tiempo en donde todos los programas están cancelados.

“Me siento derrotado. Es deprimente no poder aprender las cosas que yo necesito aprender,” dijo King. “Necesito toda la ayuda que pueda conseguir, para que cuando llegué a casa pueda conseguir un trabajo y poder ser un ciudadano productivo para mi comunidad.”

Antes de la pandemia, San Quentin era conocida como la meca de todos los programas de rehabilitación de CDCR. Debido a eso los prisioneros de todo el estado han solicitado a sus instituciones ser trasladados a San Quentin. A pesar que los casos de corona virus en la prisión disminuyen, a nivel estatal siguen aumentando. Jóvenes y adultos por igual están a la expectativa de cuáles serán los próximos pasos de CDCR.

## A pesar de COVID-19 las prisiones no cambian su sistema operacional

Por Heriberto Arredondo Jr.  
Escritor

Un futuro brote de COVID-19 puede ser inminente y las consecuencias podrían ser más mortales, reporto El Project Marshall y la Prensa Asociada.

Lauren Brinkley-Rubinstein, quien dirige el Proyecto COVID en Prisión, dijo que ella no ha visto el cambio-sistemático necesario para enfrentar la próxima pandemia.

“Lo que hemos visto en las últimas semanas y meses es un retorno real, a lo mismo de antes, y me preocupa que las prisiones y cárceles no aprendieron mucho de todo lo que paso,” dijo Brinkley-Rubinstein.

Las prisiones aún carecen de espacio para aislar a prisioneros enfermos, y de logística estructural como sistemas de ventilación actualizados. Asimismo existe una demanda de empleados y personal médico para una posible contingencia. Sin embargo, lo más efectivo es reducir drásticamente la población en las prisiones, declaró el Dr. David Sears, un especialista en enfermedades-infecciosas y asesor en salud correccional.

Cuando las prisiones están a su máxima capacidad y tienes dos personas en una celda de 2.5 x 3.2 metros (8 x 10 ft.) viviendo continuamente, es imposible crear cualquier forma de distanciamiento físico,” dijo Sears. “Nosotros tenemos que ubicar gente fuera de las prisiones para crear ese espacio.”

Aun cuando las infecciones han disminuido por el momento, la situación sigue siendo crítica debido a la propagación de las nuevas variantes del COVID-19 alrededor del mundo, dijo Dr. Sears. “Nosotros necesitamos tomar estas lecciones y asegurarnos que las cosas que hemos aprendido después de tanto sufrimiento humano, no haya sido en vano.”

Las pólizas inconsistentes de los sistemas de corrección en el país, fallaron en prevenir infecciones positivas, las cuales alcanzaron cifras de hasta 25,000 prisioneros en una sola semana a mediados de Diciembre. La estadística de El Proyecto Marshall (The Marshall Project) indica que 3 de cada 10 prisioneros fueron infectados por el virus.

La escasez de personal ha sido un inmenso problema en Nebraska, Texas y otras prisiones. En el sistema federal la escasez de personal ha obligado a que maestros y otras personas vigilen a los prisioneros, reportó el artículo.

La presión por la falta de personal y el trabajar en un ambiente de alto riesgo, orilló a algunos empleados a dejar su trabajo. Esta escasez de empleados ocasionará más problemas mientras siga aumentando la población en las prisiones, dijo Anton Andrew de La Sociedad de Prisiones de Pennsylvania.

“Ahí hubo definitivamente oficiales que estuvieron semanas sin tomar un día de descanso y algunas veces trabajando turnos de 16 horas. Eso afecta mucho tu vida en casa y tu tiempo con la familia.

Tienes un agotamiento físico y mental”. Debido a que muchos miembros del personal estuvieron enfermos durante COVID-19, los prisioneros tenían dificultades para obtener atención médica.

A pesar que en veinte estados han administrado cuando menos una dosis de la vacuna a dos-terceras partes de su población de prisiones, un nivel más alto de lo anticipado; la mayoría de los sistemas penitenciarios tienen retrasos en la vacunación de sus empleados, dijo el artículo.

La disminución semanal de infecciones en prisiones ha causado que las prisiones levanten restricciones en las visitas, movimiento de prisioneros y uso de mascarillas, regresando a una aparente normalidad. Los prisioneros han estado más de un año sin visitas familiares, programas educacionales o recreación externa, y están ansiosos por socializar y tener acceso a más actividades. Sin embargo, defensores de los encarcelados temen que las prisiones estén bajando la guardia muy rápidamente, reportó El Project Marshall y la Prensa Asociada.

Tenemos que recordar que las prisiones y cárceles fueron impactadas mucho más fuerte que las comunidades de afuera, y en muchas jurisdicciones, tardaron en proveer vacunas a gente encarcelada,” Dijo Deitch, “Hay un sentimiento de que el COVID-19 se acabó, que la pandemia es cosa del pasado y ese no es justamente el caso.”

—Editado por  
Tare Beltranchuc

## Joven muere en custodia del CPB

Por Timothy Hicks  
Escritor

Un inmigrante joven falleció mientras estaba detenido en la patrulla fronteriza de los Estados Unidos, reportó el noticiero Propublica en un artículo.

”Yo estaba un poco sorprendida que este muchacho, tan enfermo como estaba en la celda, nunca golpeó la puerta, como lo hizo su compañero de cuarto, porque tan pronto su compañero lo hizo, ellos abrieron,” dijo la Dr. Norma Jean Farley, una Doctora contratada por el gobierno del distrito.

Doctora Farley determinó que el joven falleció de la influenza del 2009 H1N1, infección respiratoria complicada por bronchopneumonia, sepsis y desorden del sistema inmune llamado hemophagocytosis, según el artículo.

Carlos Gregorio Hernández Vásquez de 16 años, originario de Guatemala soñaba con gozar de una libertad como ciudadano americano. Él y sus amigos pretendían jugar a cruzar la frontera. El artículo menciona que Vásquez siempre era el único en poder cruzar la frontera, según uno de sus amigos. Vásquez, penúltimo de sus hermanos, y su hermana mayor ahorraron una cantidad de dinero para hacer realidad sus sueños. Contrabandistas Mexicanos les cobraron para poder cruzarlos a través de El Río Grande. Desafortunadamente las esperanzas de Vásquez, su hermana y un grupo de 70 inmigrantes terminaron cuando fueron atrapados por la patrulla fronteriza al otro lado del Río en Hidalgo, Texas.

Mientras estuvo en custodia del CPB (Aduana de Protec-

ción Fronteriza) Vásquez fue separado de su hermana mayor. Posteriormente fue ubicado, por más de las 72 horas que requiere la agencia de defensa para menores, en una celda en pésimas condiciones, la cual supuestamente debería ser temporal, menciona el Artículo.

Vásquez y otros detenidos eran vigilados por una cámara de video como si fueran criminales. El video fue fundamental para determinar si la agencia obró mal.

Antes de caerse al piso y ser encontrado inconsciente, el video muestra al joven usando el retrete y acostándose incómodamente. El noticiero Propublica declaró que el CPB se negó entregar el video al público y al congreso.

“Mientras no podemos discutir información específica o detalles de la investigación”, dijo el portavoz de CPB. “Si podemos decirles que la Agencia de Seguridad Nacional (Homeland Security) y esta agencia estamos investigando todos los aspectos de este caso para asegurarnos que todos los procedimientos fueron cumplidos.”

Muchos inmigrantes han perdido sus vidas al tratar de atravesar El Río Grande. La Propublica enfatizó una foto que se hizo viral en las redes sociales, de un padre y su hija encontrados boca abajo y ahogados en la orilla del Río Grande.

En el 2018 el Jefe de Operación de la Patrulla Fronteriza, John Sanders, anticipó tragedias como estas si no se implementaban cambios para prevenirlos. Le pidió al Congreso fondos apropiados para estos cambios, según el artículo.

La Administración del Presidente Trump le pedio al Congreso \$800 millones de dólares para reformar el Centro de Proceso en McAllen, que incluyó cuidado médico, transportación y consumibles para los detenidos, pero sólo recibieron la mitad de lo solicitado, lo cual no es suficiente.

Mientras tanto, la muerte del Joven puso en cuestión por que tantas personas enfermas en algunos casos esperan tanto tiempo para reportarlo al personal de Centro.

“He descubierto que las personas que son traídos aquí”, explicó Farley “Ellos no dicen que están enfermos. Y no sé si tienen miedo decir que están enfermos por temor a ser puestos en cuarentena. Vazquez, finalmente les dijo que se encontraba enfermo, pero cuando lo hizo ya estaba muy enfermo, mas enfermo de lo que pensaba.”

Legisladores han negociado más ayuda monetaria para mejores condiciones en los centros de la Patrulla Fronteriza. Mientras el cuerpo de Vásquez fue enviado a Guatemala donde tuvo un funeral rodeado de familia y amigos. Miles de emigrantes intentan cruzar a los Estados Unidos ilegalmente y muchos niños y sus padres mueren durante el intento. Propublica dice que 1,036 familias y niños fueron capturados por agentes cuando intentaron cruzar la frontera de Juárez, México a los Estados Unidos ilegalmente. Este ha sido el grupo más numeroso que ha sido detenido en la frontera, dijo el Jefe de Estado de la Casa Blanca Mick Mulvaney y McAleen, según el artículo.

—Traducido por  
Heriberto Arredondo Jr.



SPORTS

By Juan Haines  
Senior Editor

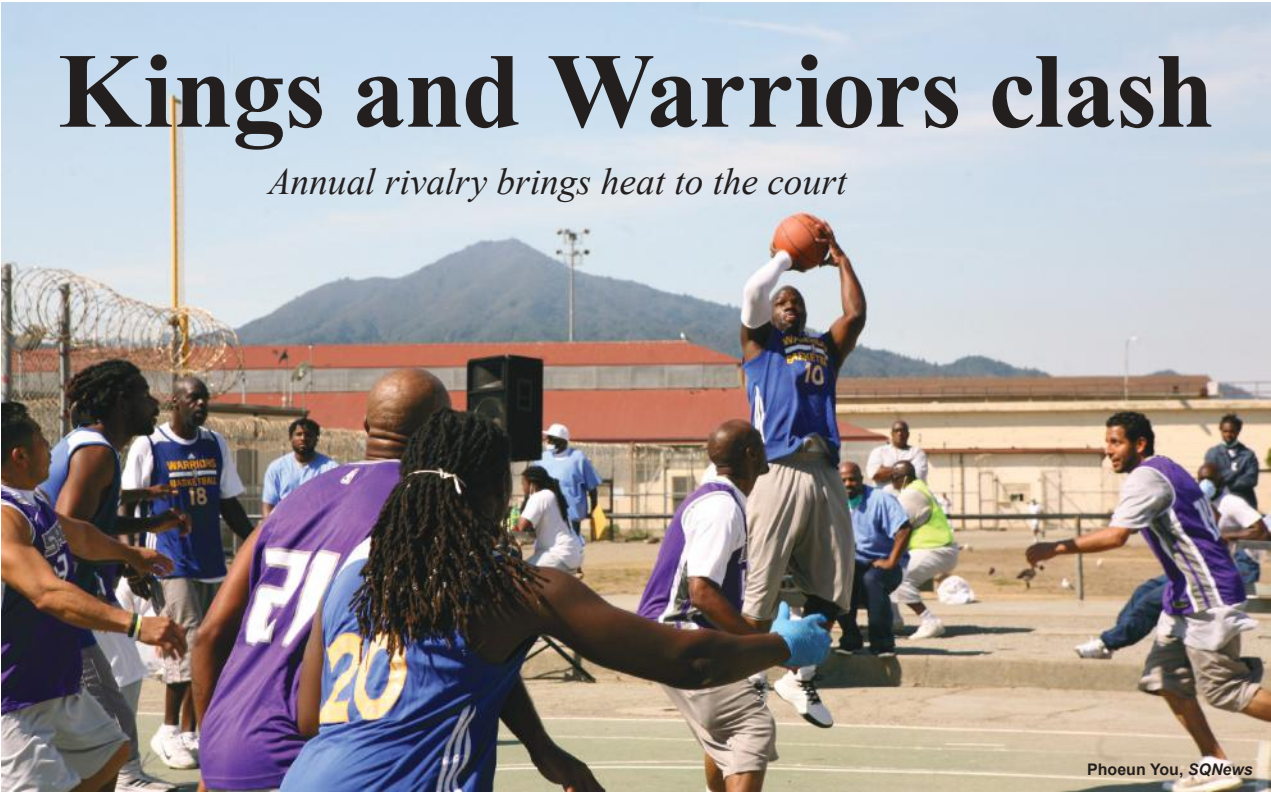
The San Quentin Warriors outscored the San Quentin Kings, 56-48, in the basketball program’s season opener. But the game was tighter than the eight-point margin of victory.

“No matter where you’re at, the court is common ground — where we can all come together as one,” said Kings veteran player Charles “Pookie” Sylvester, adding, “It felt good to be back on the court.”

Anthony “Tone” Evans, SQ Warriors coach, welcomed the new arrivals for the season opener, “This is what we do every year,” said Evans. “The program doesn’t normally look like this (due to the COVID outbreak). We would be playing the Golden State Warriors front office, but we will give you all a good game anyway.”

Jesse Ayers made his debut as play-by-play announcer with color commentator Quincy Hayes at his side.

“It feels satisfying, like a cool drink of water on a hot day,” said Ayers, who also contributes to *San Quentin News*. “With COVID, it’s like being in a desert and then finally making it to an oasis.”



Phoeun You, SQNews

The musician “Rafael” stunned the crowd with a moving rendition on violin of the National Anthem that had the feel of Jimi Hendrix’s iconic 1969 Woodstock performance.

About 100 prisoners lined courtside to cheer the good plays, heckle the bad ones and boo bad calls by the refs. “The first half was great,”

Jarrad M. Finklea said. “There was a lot of offense and lot of defense, but there was some unnecessary fouls. The people you expected to score did. A couple people surprised me.”

During halftime, referee Robert Lee and basketball General Manager Brain Asey talked about San Quentin’s self-help programs and edu-

cational opportunities. Referee Jeff Brown challenged random people in the crowd. If they made a half-court basket, they’d win a soda. No one made the shot. (I was selected. The ball went over the back board.)

“Next time, I’ll make it a little shorter,” Brown said.

The game was never in question as the Warriors led

by up to 17 points in the third quarter.

Warriors veteran player Allan “Black” McIntosh led all scorers with 16 points in the first half, finishing with 26.

Jay Strange, 46, arrived at SQ in the beginning of the pandemic. He immediately enrolled in several self-help programs, including the San

« In the distance, Mount Tamalpais stands as a silent spectator as the San Quentin Warriors emerge victorious from their yearly battle with the Kings, thanks in part to the jump-shot prowess of Montrell “MD” Vines.

Quentin News Journalism Guild and the 1000-Mile running club. He said that it’s an honor to be part of the San Quentin family.

“I see the guild and college program as opportunities to improve myself,” Strange said. “San Quentin is like the sports heaven for a prison,” Strange said. “I love being out here on the yard with three different sports going on at the same time.”

Andrew Halperin, 64, a longtime SQ basketball fan, wasn’t at the game but plans to attend the games when the outside teams come to The Q.

“I watched when the NBA Warriors, with Steve Kerr, came to San Quentin, got beat by our Warriors,” Halperin said. He added that there are “many good players” in San Quentin, “even the ones that play other sports.”

Stephen Pascascio handled the sound system.

Refs were James Humphy, Robert Lee and Jeff Brown.

—*Marcus Henderson contributed to this story*

TIER TALK

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

I was curious, probably like most San Quentin residents who may not follow the sport of soccer (or futbol, in Spanish): What are the game’s rules and what are the ways it might help a person? I got the opportunity to ask those questions of a soccer player who is passionate about the sport. Demetrious Mitchell, 50, is a resident of The Q who didn’t mind filling me in and explaining what he knows of the sport of soccer and how it helped him.

**TH:** Demetrious, how long have you been a soccer player?

## Q & A with Demetrious Mitchell, one of San Quentin’s top futbol players

**DM:** I was introduced to soccer in 1995 when I was at another penitentiary. This Hispanic guy and this Jamaican guy named George taught me the fundamentals of the game. I’ll never forget how they helped me discover my passion for the game and, since then, I fell in love with it. I developed my own style since then and I’ve been playing it ever since.

**TH:** I have to ask the obvious. You are a Black man at San Quentin playing a sport dominated by Hispanics. How did you adapt to that and have you received any flack for participation in the

game since you’ve been in prison?

**DM:** It’s an international game and many Africans play it. I just so happen to be bilingual and I can communicate with the Hispanics. Those who can’t do that may not understand it. When I was at other prisons. I did receive pushback from other Blacks and some other Hispanics. But once I explained to them the situation, they saw that I just love the game and they left me alone. So, I say that we all need to learn each other’s language.

**TH:** Yeah, I agree. The sport actually originated in

England. And I see many Africans playing the game on TV.

**DM:** I encourage everybody to learn and play it. It’s a good way to get physically fit. It’s fun and it teaches you discipline and integrity and dedication.

**TH:** What position do you play and who taught you the rules? I have a hard time following the games because I don’t know what they are.

**DM:** I learned the rules from watching the games on TV. I already knew how to defend and kick the ball downfield. Then I learned my position of striker.

## Update: track, court and field

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

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

en one team the edge to beat out the other.

On the tennis court there were balls flying across the net and guys whacking the balls with their rackets. Tennis shoes screeched and beads of sweat dripped down the faces of the tired residents.

The running club participants were out on the track gearing up for the next running competition. They stretched and pulled and ran the track with focus.

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

—*Timothy Hicks Sports Editor*

## From beginners to pros: All can find peace at the pit

Tim Fielder, 55, Freddie J. Lewis, 68, and E.Vick, 85, have almost seven decades of combined experience playing the game they all love: horseshoe pitching. They found their place of peace and became comrades at the horseshoe pit behind the San Quentin baseball diamond.

“Our location is where negativity does not happen. The COs know that we are responsible and we keep the area clean,” said three-year SQ resident Lewis, 68. He and his comrades recognize that the pit is also where diversity is welcomed, along with all ages of competitors.

“In this area, things are neutral,” said Fielder, 55. He has been enjoying the peace of the game for all his 12 years at the prison. “There’s no racial tension and we all just come here to get away from all the negative elements that happen around prison.”

The *St. Pierre Sports Official Rules* manual calls horseshoe pitching the modern sport. The trio agrees that no other sport offers a combination of skill and

E. Vick, the 85-year-old elder statesman of the horseshoe pit, is one of several SQ residents who find the sport to be an opportunity for relaxation and socialization.

healthful exercise at such a low cost. It’s a multi-racial sport designed for beginners and the pros to enjoy.

How could this activity, once considered a farmyard sport, end up becoming so popular that people such as these elders play every chance they get?

It could be its recreational style, along with its easy rules and ways to score, that has the people who love the game coming back for more.

No politics or any other iffy topics can come between these three buddies while they are enjoying their sport. Vick assured us that by respecting each other’s views, they don’t allow controversial topics to damage their bond.

They have shared over 20 years of meeting at the SQ pits, throwing the horseshoes and talking trash to each other in good humor.



Eddie Herena, SQNews (Photo taken pre-pandemic)

“I remember teaching this old guy (Tim) how to play the game. He was just a newbie,” said Vick, the elder of the crew.

“I just wanted to get good at it,” said Fielder.

These older gentlemen now consider this sport a way for them to not only en-

joy their time together, but for them to get some needed exercise.

“We play through the aches and pains we may have. I’m scheduled for a knee replacement soon, but I still get up and play the game because I love it,” Lewis said. “It’s just a re-

laxing game where you can just be yourself. It also has helped me with my sobriety.”

All three agree on the health benefits they receive from playing the game. And since none of them can play the more physical sports like baseball, basketball or

football, they don’t mind enjoying the luxury of a good horseshoe pitching competition.

“We don’t consider this to be an old man sport,” said Lewis, with a smile. “We beat some youngsters earlier.”

New to SQ for only two months, Cody Camp, 22, was one of the youngsters who competed with the elders.

“It’s quite the experience playing against the OGs,” Camp said, “It’s challenging because they are so good.”

Camp had already been playing horseshoes for five years. He recalled playing the game with his grandfather. Since he is a first term, being able to play a game that he loves has helped him cope with the many aspects of being in prison.

“Playing the game gets my mind off my past and the reason why I came to prison. It also reminds me of being with my grandfather and my family,” said Camp.

Vick shared that sentiment as he concluded, “It gives you a positive mindset and you are not doing time when you are on the horseshoe pit.”

—*Timothy Hicks Sports Editor*



ARTS

By Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chairman

Rehabilitation has no limits, as many prisoners like Douglas D. Ingham have discovered while learning to manage their time in prison. Some find various ways to express love for their families, friends and communities by being creative.

Ingham has been working with wood since 1989, while he was incarcerated at California Men's Colony (CMC) in San Luis Obispo. He befriended an old lifer who had an old "B" CDCR number; in prison when someone has an old number, they are looked up to and respected by the inside community.

"He took me under his wing," said Ingham. "He told me he was going to teach me woodworking to keep me busy and out of trouble."

Ingham, now 58 years old and incarcerated for 34 years, recalled his journey back then during the late 1980s at CMC. He explained how his then friend and mentor, the old lifer, taught him the lessons of the trade. Ingham took those lessons to heart and created many projects, including a jewelry box that he gave to his late mother for Mother's Day in 1993.

During his last year at CMC he dedicated himself to this project for his mom that took him over one year to complete. He made and designed the jewelry box that later on became known by his family members as "Mom's owl box."

Ingham proudly described the owl box during an interview as one of his most pre-

# Looking back on a legacy of woodworking

cious babies. Its solid birch construction measures 22 inches across the back, 16 inches deep, and the mirror rises 30 inches from the table top.

When asked about the benefits he gets from creating these crafts he replied. "When I am in the creative mood, it gives me a sense of peace. The whole world just goes away."

He points out that he is able to escape from the drama in prison in a constructive way. Woodworking also gives him a viable trade and the opportunity to give back to his family and friends, as well as to the communities inside and out of the walls.

Ingham has been at San Quentin State Prison for the past 29 years and during these years he continued working with wood until the woodshop was shut down in 2015.

He is also a proud U.S. Navy veteran who served his country around the world for four years prior to his incarceration, and he has been part of the veterans support groups here at San Quentin for many years. He has created and donated many of his crafts to charities in support of the U.S. veterans across the nation.

Years back, the wife of one of his friends who now has paroled asked Ingham for a prayer request box that she could put in her suitcase when she would travel across the state of California for the Catholic Church. She gave him the dimensions that she wanted, and the only other specific request she had was that box be able to be locked; this would give the prayer requesters the sense of security and privacy for their prayer requests. Other than that, she



In the late 1980's, an "old lifer" at the California Men's Colony took Douglas Ingham under his wing and taught him woodworking to keep him busy and out of trouble. The results of many years' dedication to his craft speak for themselves, including an armoire with an etched mirror (top left), a prayer box (bottom left), and a glass-fronted cabinet (right) with rose vines etched into the glass.

gave Ingham creative freedom.

The body of the box is burl walnut, the top is cherry with a tiger maple inset, and it's lined with Spanish cedar that features a hand-rubbed finish.

Ingham also was able to create a big, adult-sized tricycle out of solid oak. It measures 24" by 50" and weighs 41 pounds, with a license plate that reads "SQ 2000" on the back of the seat.

"I was able to ride my own

tricycle in prison" said Ingham. "I felt like a kid trapped in an old man's body."

During the time that the hobby shop was operating, Ingham created multiple items and many of these items — like the tricycle, a safe box and a vehicle — were auctioned to aid in the 9/11 relief effort.

The proceeds from these auctions were donated directly to Red Cross after the final approval of the warden of San Quentin.

# Ronnie Murillo transforms trash into treasures



Phoeun You, SQNews

By Aron Roy  
Contributing Writer

Ronnie "Conejo" Murillo is applying his newly acquired math skills to construct unique pieces of art.

Having been a craftsperson since his high school days, he has recently been able to level up his skills by utilizing arithmetic, measuring, and geometry techniques he learned in Ms. Lucas's Adult Basic Education class.

"Life itself is a learning experience," said the 68-year-old Murillo. "No matter how old I am, I try learn new things every day."

Murillo began creating works of art when he participated in his high school's hobby program, building small projects such as cabinets.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, he dropped out of school.

Coming from a family of nine brothers and three sis-

ters, Murillo helped his father, a farm laborer, to support his family.

They worked in the areas surrounding Los Angeles, picking crops such as onions, tomatoes, peppers, cotton, and sugar beets.

It wasn't until he was incarcerated at the Eel River fire camp in the late 1980s that he resumed creating small pieces of art.

"Back then, we were allowed to buy materials in packages like router, glue, sandpaper, paint, and clear resin," said Murillo. "We could also buy little parts to make clocks — like arms, motors, numbers, and glass."

He said he also used to utilize makeshift materials such as the wood from fallen trees.

Murillo carries on this tradition today by improvising with available materials from his environment.

"A lot of my materials could

be junk that's tossed away like trash, but with a little thinking and planning, an artist can turn those materials into something beautiful," said Murillo.

He now uses materials such as Top Ramen boxes, lunch boxes, sandpaper, glue, paint, and scraps of cloth.

"My whole work is based on geometry because everything is measured and if you mess up just a little bit, then everything won't fit together," said Murillo. "After I cut out the shapes, I just glue them together like a puzzle."

It is during the initial drafting process where Murillo finds his math skills most useful.

Using a ruler for measuring, a protractor for drawing angles, and working with mixed

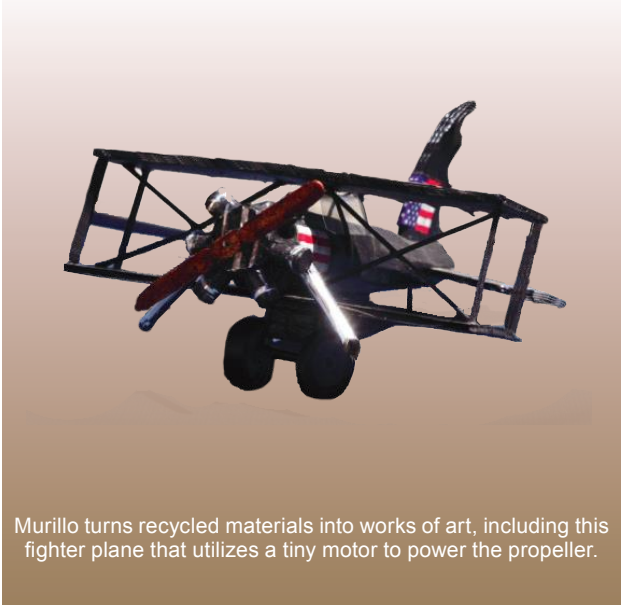
fractions are just a few of the specific skills that allow him to create the precise pieces he has in mind.

He then combines those pieces to create works of art, such as models of grand pianos and biplanes.

Most recently, he began attaching motors from old CD players, headphone wires and batteries to create spinning propellers on his model planes.

Murillo usually creates pieces for clients, who then send them home to their loved ones.

"Artwork has more meaning in the eye of the beholder once they understand the skills, dedication, and process behind the work," said Murillo. "Who knows what I'll make next?"



Murillo turns recycled materials into works of art, including this fighter plane that utilizes a tiny motor to power the propeller.

Ronnie Murillo (top left) crafts works of art that capture the imagination and inspire memories of childhood, including replicas of fighter planes and tiny pianos. All of his creations are hand-made from recycled, reclaimed and repurposed materials.



Murillo's piano in its early stages.



Murillo's piano as a finished creation.