

## BLUE & BLUE RETURNS TO SAN QUENTIN

### San Francisco Police return to SQ for talks on social justice, reform

By Joshua Strange  
Staff Writer

Top leadership of the San Francisco police department gathered with a group of criminal justice experts in San Quentin’s Garden Chapel in April to discuss ways to reduce crime and improve their policing.

The experts had earned their knowledge the hard way — by making mistakes and doing time in prison for those crimes. These “men in blue” from the outside are part of SQ News’ “Blue and Blue” law enforcement forum series.

“I’m very grateful to be able to share our knowledge like this,” said San Quentin’s Anthony Tafoya.

The immediate goal of these forums is to provide a platform for honest dialogue between the groups. Long-term, the goal is to promote true public safety for all communities, regardless of wealth, status, or race.

The first “Blue and Blue” forum was held in March 2019 and earned enthusiastic support for more meetings from the San Francisco police brass.

“We don’t get an opportunity like this very often,” said Deputy Chief David Lazar. “There is probably nothing like this going on right now in any other prison in California.”

Sgt. Brittany Lewis added, “We need better communication to build more trust and respect.”

Some of the officers were initially reluctant to come, and of the original 24 members of the force scheduled, only 12 arrived. But once there, coming together for



Prisoners at San Quentin State Prison meet with Deputy Chief David Lazar and other top brass from the San Francisco Police Department to discuss social justice as part of the prison’s law enforcement forum series.

Photo courtesy of Lt. S. Robinson, Public Information Officer

direct communication appeared to have the desired effect.

“I really like the respect that was shown today, almost like a brotherhood, with everybody dishing out information to help both sides,” Sgt. Eric Anderson said at the debriefing circle.

San Quentin’s Desmond Lewis said he “appreciated people coming together to use their highest level of intelligence to come up with solutions for problems we all see.”

Officer Roger Moore came away impressed. “It takes a lot of cour-

age to open up and share here as you have today,” Moore said. “This has been an incredible experience. I’m very appreciative for this opportunity. Everyone is very brave, and I am very humbled.”

Before the officers arrived, some of the incarcerated men in blue fidgeted nervously. “I haven’t talked to a police officer since my arrest,” said Mova Vue. “I’m still trying to get comfortable just having a conversation with regular outside folks.”

At the beginning of the event,

everyone sat in a large circle. SQ News’ Timothy Hicks served as the emcee and explained the group rules and goals of the forum.

Introducing himself, he said he was doing time for double-manslaughter, and recounted the fear he felt during his trial when facing the prospect of the death penalty.

Hicks also shared his pain from recently losing a nephew to gun violence. He emphasized the need to find solutions to the crime that plagues our cities, including his hometown of Oakland.

During the introductions, the two dozen incarcerated participants were transparent about why they were in prison, some of them saying the name of their deceased victim and choking with remorse.

The police in attendance were mostly 10- to 20-year veterans of the force, many of them from families with long traditions of working in law enforcement. Notably, one of them has a loved one who was formerly incarcerated.

As the introductions progressed, some of the officers’ faces seem to harden, their eyes staring somewhere far away. Altogether, the incarcerated men gathered in the room were serving over 1,000 years of time, with many life sentences. It seemed symbolic that such a meeting was happening in a church.

“We’re all human, we all make mistakes,” said Sgt. David Johnson later.

“I don’t think anyone is bad, people just make bad choices,” said Philippe Kelly, an incarcerated peer-mentor and actor.

After the introductions, small groups formed to tackle questions on the roots of crime, crime prevention, and improving policing and public safety.

San Quentin’s Brian Asey shared his journey to prison with the officers in his group. “The environment I grew up in — the gangs, the lack of resources, that all played a part in my crime ... but in the end, I still made choices to commit crimes.”

He added that all of his crimes

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## Changes in incarceration rates less impressive than expected

By Charles Crowe  
Managing Editor

Reductions in incarcerated populations during the COVID-19 pandemic have proven to be only temporary, new federal data shows.

Included in the reductions count are COVID deaths, early releases, and fewer new prisoners, the data notes.

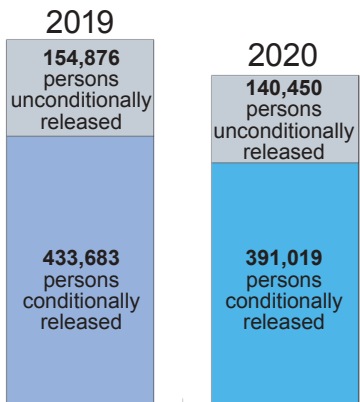
The largest reductions were in jail populations, which fell by 25%, followed by state and federal prison populations, which declined by 15% and 13%, respectively.

The Prison Policy Initiative (PPI) reviewed the data, released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The data reveals “what kind of change is possible under pressure,” said the report produced by PPI.

“But the data also show how inadequate, uneven, and unsustainable policy changes have been; most have already been reversed,” the analysis noted.

PPI’s report is titled “New data: The changes in prisons, jails, probation, and parole in the first year of the pandemic.”

The report said that the total number of incarcerated people in the nation fell by about 18.5% between 2019 and 2020, but that the decrease was the result of emergency responses to COVID-19, and incarcerated populations have already



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prisoners in 2020, Table 9

Fewer people were released from incarceration during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 than in 2019.

begun to return to pre-pandemic levels.

The incarcerated population decline is the product of slowed and delayed admissions to jails and prisons, rather than a result of releases. In fact, there were fewer people released from incarceration in 2020 than in 2019.

Meanwhile, deaths among incarcerated people increased by 46% between 2019 and 2020.

In spite of concerns raised by the pandemic about the safety of those

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## Audio journalism program holds graduation

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

An audio journalism program that trains incarcerated people in the skills necessary to work in radio upon release had its first graduation for students at San Quentin State Prison in April.

Un-cuffed, an award-winning podcast produced by the incarcerated, started at SQ three years ago. It has been expanded to Solano and seeks to reach other prisons.

“What we do at Un-cuffed is show our humanity by telling stories from an incarcerated person’s perspective,” said Edmond Richardson, one of the graduates and co-producers of the podcast.

Through the podcast, incarcerated people share intimate stories about their personal struggles and triumphs, and the heartache and forgiveness taking place within prison walls.

A handful of graduates came together with their outside volunteers in a quiet intimate setting in the SQ media center. Dressed in caps and gowns and with smiles on their faces each of the participants was photographed as they were called up to receive their certificates.

Two of the graduates whose names were called were absent due to parole: Nate McKinney and Chanthon Bun. There was no band, refreshments or extravagant event planned because of COVID-19.



Dao Ong, SQNews

Award-winning journalist and Un-cuffed graduate Greg Eskridge receives his certificate of completion from Ninna Gaensler-Debs and Andrew Stelzer as part of the program’s first-ever graduating class.

“We just wanted to capture the moment together,” said Greg Eskridge, an award-winning journalist and longtime audio journalist of the San Quentin KALW radio program. Eskridge has been in training for a decade.

The graduates were recognized for years of hard work and dedication put into the audio program started by peo-

ple behind bars in California prisons.

Andrew Stelzer is one of the outside volunteers who helped teach the program. He has been in radio since 2001.

“Being in radio doesn’t require certifications or degrees. It is all about what you can produce and how you

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# Tommy ‘Shakur’ Ross released after 36 years

By **Steve Brooks**  
**Journalism Guild Chair**

After serving 36 years and seven months in the California Prison system, Tommy “Shakur” Ross walks out of San Quentin as a free man.

In a well-fitted grey suit and three boxes of his prison legacy in hand, Ross walked proudly to a white van waiting for him in the Receiving and Release (R & R) driveway.

Prisoners who could see him departing from the nearby yard clapped, while workers in R & R hugged him and congratulated him for making it through the prison storms.

“I feel super excited, joyful, happy for what seems to be like the first time in my life” said Ross, a smile beaming from his face. He gave his last name and CDCR number to an officer for the last time.

“All the stress, all the disdain and resentment for prison is gone,” he said. “I’m experiencing bittersweet emotions, because I’m leaving behind a lot of people I developed strong relationships with who deserve a second chance just like I’m getting.”

Ross was greeted outside the prison gate by a huge entourage of family and friends. “I’m going to get a big grand slam breakfast,” he said.

When Ross arrived at San Quentin years ago, he was an angry, quiet, and reserved man full of machismo. But now he is easily moved to tears and other emotions and unafraid to show his vulnerability.

“When I arrived at San

Quentin, I attended restorative justice for the first time, and sitting in those circles witnessing truth and vulnerability changed me,” he said.

Ross went on to join countless self-help groups at San Quentin. He ended up becoming a facilitator and a peer literacy mentor and submerged himself into a community bent on rehabilitative success. He even worked with the SQ media center.

Ross graduated at the top of his class in 2019 from the Prison University Project, which is now known as Mt. Tamalpais College. He gave a moving valedictory speech at graduation where he described himself as a feminist.

Ross also graduated from the audio journalism program known as Un-cuffed. He said he developed the skills to create his own podcast.

“I have been offered a job to come back inside the prisons as a GRIP facilitator,” he said. “I also plan to become a part-time personal trainer and I have an idea for a podcast that talks about various forms of violence.”

Ross said that the audio journalism class helped him to develop his voice and improved his communication skills and interviewing skills. He also learned how to edit and navigate Pro Tools computer technology.

“I also plan to give back to the prison community,” he said. “I plan to participate in town halls, do public speaking at colleges and other organizations.”

Ross said that the secret to any parolee’s success is their support network.



Juan Haines, SQNews

Tommy Ross on the threshold of freedom after three and a half decades of incarceration.

“I have a strong support network that will be holding me accountable,” he said. “They give me confidence that I have a safety net that will be there to catch me if I stumble and fall.”

Ross plans to come back to the prison to help others

do the work to get out, and to share stories of his success in the outside world.

“I’m experiencing some survivor’s guilt, going home and leaving so many behind. I realize how I impacted so many people and it has been a rewarding experience.”

## Q&A with Diane Kahn, co-founder of HoSQ

By **Marcus Henderson**  
**Editor-in-Chief**

Before Diane Kahn co-founded Humans of San Quentin (HoSQ) with San Quentin News staffer Juan Haines, she taught a GED class at San Quentin. Her experience of teaching incarcerated people in San Quentin transformed her perspective—she says she saw all the complexities found in every person—she saw human beings.

Kahn often tells a story about why she’s so passionate about letting incarcerated people tell their own story on social media. It began, she says, after discovering Brandon Stanton’s website, Humans of New York. From there, she talked to James King, then the clerk for the prison’s college. King, however, was on his way to freedom. His prison sentence had run its course. But, he suggested that Kahn talk to Haines about her idea.

*Why is it important to have organizations like HoSQ?*

I think it’s a human right to be able to share people’s stories. It is important for everyone to be given a chance to tell their story without judgment. I think that once everybody has a chance to share their story, people will discover that there are more things that connect us than tear us apart.

*Talk about the feedback from the public.*

When we first thought about launching HoSQ, I remember sitting in the media room with Juan. He was sitting in a chair with wheels on it. I was petrified that we’d be offending victims by letting incarcerated people tell their stories on Instagram, like Brandon Stanton did with Humans of New York. I was nervous about that. But,



Photo courtesy of Diane Kahn

Juan wheels around, and he makes me look at a wall that’s decorated with the front page of every *San Quentin News* edition printed. Juan says, “Don’t worry. It works. The positive will rule out the negative. We’ll focus on people telling stories.”

A year later, we’ve been nice. Juan’s words rung out. People are reaching out from everywhere, other countries—India, Africa, Ireland. Things are uber positive. I don’t know if it’ll stay that way, but here we are.

*What are some of your goals for the organization?*

Many of the goals that Juan and I set are coming forward, tenfold. We want to produce a coffee table book that shows that humanity lives behind the walls. We’ve been in two prisons in Mexico. There prisons are quite different. I’ve interviewed women with their ba-

bies on their laps. That should come out in the spring.

*Talk about how the Covid pandemic affected the program. What have been the challenges and successes?*

HoSQ was born during the pandemic. At first, we wanted to do all the interviews in-person, inside San Quentin. And the plan was for when Juan got out of prison, we’d go to prisons around the country to get stories. But, with the Covid lockdown, we had to pivot and develop a writing prompt for people to follow. We added postcards and pre-stamped, pre-addressed envelopes to use snail mail. That seems to be working better than we thought it would. We’re in 85 prisons in 32 states. The pandemic accelerated our mission.

The number one challenge is to be able to get people to trust

us, without knowing or meeting us. We want to get people to share their story—things that they may not have shared before. Sometimes we have to correspond several times with an incarcerated person before getting something ready to publish. We have successfully communicated with more than 700 people about their story.

*Talk about the HoSQ inside team and job opportunities for formerly incarcerated. How has working with an incarcerated and formerly incarcerated staff changed your opinion about criminal justice reform?*

It is humbling to work along side incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people. I’m blown away that they’re willing to volunteer their time, simply because they believe in our mission. It’s teaching me a lot on how to deal with emotionally intelligent men and also the inner workings of a place that breeds oppression, but it’s also the substance—most of the areas that [we work on come] from sitting at a table inside a prison. One day, Alex Ross asked if HoSQ published poetry. He worked out a plan and now we have a page dedicated to poetry because Alex bought the idea to the table. We have poetry from people around the county. We also have an art page from incarcerated people. We have two staffers who are Spanish speakers for our Hispanic audience.

Working along side these men has reinforced my opinion that there are many people who have been cast away who should be given a second chance.

*What inspirational words do have for the incarcerated?*

You’re not alone. There are people outside that are thinking of you. And, have hope!

# ACT program promotes empathy, broadens perspectives

By **Juan Haines**  
Senior Editor

After serving 36 years, seven months, Tommy “Shakur” Ross counted down the last four days of serving a life sentence with the possibility of parole in San Quentin State Prison. He sat in a classroom on April 23 to talk about the 1985 murder that led him to prison.

Listening to Ross tell his story were eight members of a restorative justice program, eight law students, and their teacher, Margaret Russell, a 30-year professor at Santa Clara University Law School.

Russell said the trip was aimed at giving her students an understanding of criminal justice beyond just “reading legal theories and judges’ decisions.”

One student, Kennedy M., said she believes a criminal justice system “solely focused on punishment does not offer

an opportunity for healing.” She added, “Working towards accountability and how to make the victim whole is more important than simply incarcerating someone.”

Conducting the class was a group called Acting with Compassion and Truth (ACT). ACT is a self-help group that serves people often not accepted by the San Quentin incarcerated population.

“ACT recognizes that a whole lot of communities have been left out; LGBTQ and their family members are left out,” said ACT Director Billie Mizell. “At first, it was about language, then empathy, then educating the community who we are.”

Ross and the other eight ACT participants introduced themselves. They spoke about the harm they caused their communities as well as how many years they’d been incarcerated, which totaled almost 180 years.

After the students’ introductions, which included why they wanted to come inside a prison, ACT member Chris Marshall noted several said they came seeking a way to make a positive impact on society.

“We’re wearing blue because we’ve made a negative impact,” Marshall said, referring to the color of prison clothes.

As Ross explained his mindset as a former gang member, he included suffering from child abuse as well as feeling not cared for or seen.

“I don’t recall getting any empathy as a child,” Ross said.

He recounted the events that led up to the murder and then spoke about its aftermath: the sadness and remorse after the rival gang retaliated for what he did—they murdered his mother and brother.

Ross described the “long journey in becoming candid” about his role in the tragedy as well as his actions’ impact on the victims/survivors.

He credited the restorative justice programs at San Quentin, and the humility he gained by being of service, for finding a sense of redemption.

“I’ve facilitated a lot of groups,” Ross said. “They’ve all brought me a level of healing, including sitting here with you students.”

In addition to Ross’s crime impact statement, the two and a half hour class included talking about how people are labeled and how people self-identify. Everyone participated in an empathy building exercise.

Law student Lanna S. recognized that “restorative justice programs help to address the roots of trauma that are often ignored by society and [restorative justice] prevents crimes from being committed.”

The class explored words that adversely affect people.

ACT participant Anthony Tafoya created the following categories: disrespectful words, misogynistic terms, anti-gay expressions and racial slurs. He asked the room to chime in with words to fill each column.



SQNews archive photo

The ACT group, shown here in 2019 before the coronavirus pandemic, brings LGBTQ+ prisoners together with other members of the prison population in an effort to build empathy and understanding between seemingly-disparate groups.

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

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## Demitris Trevorus McGee: Rest in Power

By **Marcus Henderson**  
Editor-in-Chief

There are some moments in life that make you reflect on your own mortality —celebrating the life and death of Demitris “Dee” McGee is one of them. We lost Dee after only four months of freedom. I can only be grateful that at least he tasted freedom. He was able to touch his wife and family, even though briefly.

I remember when we all piled around his cell door the night before he paroled. We wished him the best and gave him our love. When someone you have spent so much time with paroles, it’s like they are taking a part of you back out to the streets. You hope for their success.

Dee had dreams to open a transitional home for teens. He was to start a job as a youth counselor at BOSS of Oakland, a transitional home for boys. Dee did the work before he was released and received more than 25 certificates.

Now, Dee, we are thumbing through your obituary and missing you. I am proud to see how many San Quentin alumni [returning citizens] attended your day of rest; that speaks volumes of the people you touched both inside and



Photo courtesy of the McGee family

Widely-loved former SQ resident Demitris “Dee” McGee enjoyed just four months of freedom before his life prematurely ended.

out.

Here are some words from family and friends:

“My Brother in Christ “CD” Cool Demitris: Words can’t express the shock that instantly turned to sorrow when my wife told me you passed away,” reflected Corey Willis, incarcerated friend. “Though we knew each other for decades, the four years we were roommates, getting on each other’s nerves, we grew close to each other. You became more like a brother than a homie. We ate together, prayed together, and shared

each other’s ambitions. I thank God for the time I did get to spend with you and trust I’m gonna do all I said I’m gonna do, Jack. Rest well, Bro. I’ll see you when I get there.”

Dee’s niece, Yo, added, “I can’t wrap my mind around how you left when I was four years old, and when you came back, we only had four months with you. Although you made sure I knew how you were doing your time away, I was excited to know you outside those walls. I’ll miss our daily ‘good morning’ texts and you calling to see how my day was going. I didn’t have the opportunity to tell you, but I appreciate those little things. I love you forever.”

Kevin Sample, Dee’s former cellmate, concluded, “Prayer to the McGee family: I pray that God would open to you the place of good memories and turn your sorrow into serenity. I pray that according to His divine purpose and plans, by His grace and goodness, in His way and His will, that God plans in you His peace and heals your pain.”

Demitris leaves his cherished wife, Tammy; his daughter, Danielle; two step-daughters and a host of grandchildren, family and friends. Rest in Power, Bro.

UNCUFFED

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sound on the mic and your editing skills,” said Stelzer. “It’s all about the story and engaging with other people.”

According to Stelzer, “Understanding where people are coming from is a key human skill.” It takes work to understand each other and appreciate each other’s diversity.

All of the graduates agreed that what they learned through Un-cuffed helped them develop the skills to communicate and engage better with people in the outside world. They learned how to navigate Pro Tools computer software and how to edit and develop stories on their own.

“This program taught me how to create a podcast from scratch, market it, turn it into employment and monetize it,” said Thanh Tran, another graduate and producer of the podcast.

Un-Cuffed won two awards in its first season from the Northern California Society of Professional Journalists in 2020. It also won an award from the San Francisco Press Journalistic Excellence Awards. It was one of the most popular podcasts produced by NPR stations in 2020.

Uncuffed Podcast’s First Graduating Class



Clockwise from top-left: Greg Eskridge, Edmond Richardson, Tommy “Shakur” Ross, and Thanh Tran. Ross and Tran recently returned to the community.

“I recommend the program to other prisoners because I believe it will help them in their rehabilitation by giving them interpersonal relationship skills,” said Richardson. “The more you get to know your sub-

ject, the more you get to know yourself.”

The men say working in podcasting forces you to look deeper into a story and ask many questions that don’t simply reveal the problem but a po-

“I recommend the program to other prisoners because I believe it will help them in their rehabilitation by giving them interpersonal relationship skills... The more you get to know your subject, the more you get to know yourself.”

—Edmond Richardson  
Uncuffed graduate

tential solution. It also leads to personal growth.

Tommy “Shakur” Ross is a graduate who is going home after 36 years and seven months of being in prison.

“It feels good to have all these skills to take back to society with me,” Ross said. “I plan to do my own podcast about un-packing various forms of violence.”

Ross said coming to SQ changed his life and made him much more transparent and human.

“As the old saying goes, ‘when you know better, you have to do better,’” said Ross. He plans to do just that.

Incarcerated population decline proves temporary

POPULATION

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incarcerated, jails continued to hold large populations of people for technical violations of parole and for low-level offenses. The number of unconvicted people held in jails was larger in 2020 than ever before, the study stated.

Some incarcerated populations benefited from pandemic policy changes more than others. The women’s jail population and incarceration rates fell more than those for men.

Jail population and jail incarceration rates of indigent people dropped by almost 35%. Incarceration of American Indian and Alaskan Natives had nearly doubled between 2000 and 2019.

The number of people under 18 held in adult prisons fell by almost half and the total number of states that now hold no such persons grew to 21.

The number of people on probation fell by more than a quarter of a million, although more than three million remain under probationary con-

trol, which PPI described as the “leading form of correctional control.” This decline contributed to most of the 11% decrease in what PPI referred to as the “footprint of correctional control.”

In an assessment of the BJS data, PPI concluded that “overall, the positive trends in 2020 are nothing to get excited about.” The changes seen in 2020 are representative of the momentum that would be required to end mass incarceration. But the changes are not expected to be lasting and are “too little, too late for the thousands of people who got sick or died in a prison or jail ravaged by COVID-19,” said PPI.

“Above all, we should not expect these trends to hold without sustained reforms, as opposed to temporary ‘emergency response’ changes,” concluded the report.

At San Quentin, the incarcerated population declined to about 2,400 by the time the prison reopened in May 2021 from a long pandemic-induced lockdown. The population has since steadily increased to about 3,000, as of mid-April 2022.

SFPD

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were committed while he was under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Many of the officers, with their breadth of experience, said the reasons for crime depend on the specific circumstances involved, which vary greatly.

“I think it’s often a simple matter of necessity sometimes — no food, no rent, maybe an addiction too,” said Sgt. Eric Solares.

Common themes that emerged included childhood trauma, parental abuse and neglect, a lack of resources, low self-esteem, broken trust, anger, drugs, gangs, and poverty. In other words, systemic problems that need solutions.

“I lacked a sense of purpose. I wasn’t given any tools to deal with the trauma I had been through,” said Tu Tran, who grew up as a foster kid in an area with gangs.

He said his thinking was, “I bet money will help me feel better, I bet some Louis Vuitton will help me feel better.” This pursuit of material things, to fill the void within, led to my crime, which was also true of all my friends.”

San Quentin’s Michael Moore added, “I’ve asked myself the last 26 years. ‘Why did this happen? For me, it all goes back to my childhood and a lack of intervention when I was young.’”

Officer Paul said everyone can agree about the importance of reaching out to youth and having successful interventions at the right age.

Candid conversations were had about the need for better policing and how to rebuild trust with communities impacted by mass incarceration and heavy-handed police tactics.

Raiveon Wooden said his trust in police was broken at an early age. He described how he was traumatized by seeing his older brother deal with aggressive cops, with jail, with invasive probation officers.

Sgt. Solares acknowledged this dynamic, “One bad experience is all it takes to create

Social justice reform forums return to San Quentin after pandemic hiatus



Photos courtesy of Lt. Sam Robinson, Public Information Officer

High-ranking members of the San Francisco Police Department’s leadership meet with prisoners at San Quentin State Prison. The purpose of the prison’s law enforcement forums is to open a dialog on criminal justice, with the goal of improving police practices and facilitating the rehabilitation of the incarcerated.

a belief that cops only want to take people to jail,” he said.

Kelly added that it’s very important that police hold themselves accountable when they break the law. “A narrative that I hear on the news, in my communities, is ‘blue protects the blue,’ no matter what,” he said in regard to the perception of an unwritten code between police officers.

Sgt. Johnson said police officers are human and make mistakes. “We see it, too,” he said of videos of police shooting unarmed people — usually young Black men suspected of crimes. “We see it and think, ‘Ah man, they messed up, they panicked.’”

He emphasized how much experience and proper training matter. “With experience, you learn to tell when someone is packing a gun or not from their movements ... but when you’re new, when you’re poorly trained, you can’t tell, you’re afraid everybody is packing ... it’s easy to panic.”

In response to a question about trying for non-lethal gun shots, Sgt. Lewis said in the heat of the moment,

in a split second, it is hard to target limbs versus the bigger target of the torso. She explained there is a greater risk of hitting someone else behind the intended target. “It’s not the calm of a shooting range,” she said.

Officer Colin Ryan said his department is challenged by “staff that are stretched thin, policies that are always changing.” He mentioned sometimes policies sound good on paper, but can cause unintended problems.

He cited body cams as an example, describing how they make having real conversations or negotiating with people more difficult. Once it clicks on, he said, everything becomes formal and by the book.

Sergio Alvarez, who has served as a pastor while incarcerated, said that despite the challenges they face, police have a “special responsibility because they have special authority. You have to set the tone first.”

Officer Chris Canning said, “Sometimes being a police officer, it’s hard to unplug from being a cop.” He

said they encourage their officers to do that, but it is difficult without opportunities for direct interactions outside of a law enforcement setting.

Experiences like the forum, he said, are the “key to unlock the door we’re trying to open. It’s helpful to see we are both from the same coin, we’re all people, we’re all dealing with stuff.”

Tran agreed, observing that, “People can’t look past a police officer, even when in their regular clothes, just like the formerly incarcerated aren’t looked past, even in street clothes.

“That’s one of the things we both have in common, we’re trying to clean up our images. What better way to do that than together?”

San Quentin’s Steve Warren added, “It’s important not to see one bad apple and judge the whole group. We don’t want that, just like the cops don’t want that.”

“Building relationships with people is key,” acknowledged Sgt. Solares. He recalled a community policing program he was involved with called March Gladness

where officers played three-on-three basketball with young people to build trust with the community. He said it made a lasting impression on him and the young people.

After the small-group discussions, everyone reconvened together to debrief about their takeaways from the day.

Deputy Chief Lazar thanked everyone for participating. He noted most of his staff in attendance were in high-ranking leadership positions with lots of influence over others in the department.

“When we make that arrest, we need to remember ... that people grow, they learn. They evolve over time, they are not the same people anymore as when they came in,” he said.

Multiple officers said they were impressed with the honesty and accountability displayed by the men of San Quentin, and the progress they had made through rehabilitative programming.

Officer Ryan noted there is a “lot of common ground in our thoughts. It all boils

down to meeting each other halfway with trust and respect.”

San Quentin’s Jesse Rose envisioned a future where he could call 911 and say, “Yes, 911, we’re having a community meeting at the park. Please send down two officers right away to represent at the table.”

Time went by too fast, and at the end of the forum, no one seemed ready to leave. After the group photograph, outside the chapel, people lingered in small groups having impassioned conversations.

Police officers were leaning in close to really hear what the men in blue on the inside had to say, and the same respect was given in return.

As Officer Moore turned to leave, his eyes were bright and full of excitement, his smile warm and genuine.

“Anytime people come together in a circle, come face-to-face and see eye-to-eye, with the intention of doing good, then something powerful is going to happen,” he said.

# Juneteenth recognized as historic holiday



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Library of Congress

Juneteenth celebrates the long-delayed freedom of slaves in Texas, two years after the signing of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

Juneteenth is now a federal holiday, one which the state of Texas has been observing for decades, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

On June 17, 2021, President Joe Biden signed a bill making Juneteenth a national holiday.

Texas was the first state to observe Juneteenth in 1980, with family gatherings and parades.

"All Americans can feel the power of this day, and learn from our history," said Biden.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln's executive order abolished slavery. The word did not reach Texas until June 19, 1865, when Major General Gordon Granger along with 1,800 troops arrived in Galveston, Texas with the news that the slaves were free.

This order enshrined a ban on slavery into the United States Constitution with the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1865.

"As it takes on a more national and global perspectives, the events of 1865 in Texas are not forgotten," said Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas.

The Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas area celebrates the holiday with a Miss Juneteenth Pageant. The pageant is an ongoing tradition that awards participants educational scholarships, reported by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Galveston celebrated the

holiday by dedicating a new 5,000-square-foot mural themed "Absolute Freedom."

The mural displays African Americans being brought to the U.S. as slaves and an image of Harriet Tubman and Abraham Lincoln with the Emancipation Proclamation in hand.

"Throughout history Juneteenth has been known by many names: Jubilee Day, Freedom Day, Liberation Day, Emancipation Day, and today a national holiday," said Vice President Kamala Harris.

The House of Representatives passed the bill unanimously with the votes of 415 to 14, said the article.

"The promise of equality is not going to be fulfilled until we become real, it becomes in our schools and out main streets and in our neighborhoods," the president said.

The holiday received national attention after protests, following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, reported the newspaper.

The holiday took effect immediately, because the first observation fell on a Saturday. Most federal employees had Friday off, the report noted.

However, The U.S. Postal Service continued its operation. "We are part of the nation's critical infrastructure, and our customers are relying on us to deliver our essential services," said Douglas Tullino, deputy postmaster general.

# Calif. closing youth prisons

By Randy Hansen  
Journalism Guild Writer

California is gearing up to make dramatic changes in its juvenile incarceration system.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed legislation in 2020 to close the state's four youth prisons by June of 2023. As a result, counties must design a new system such as camps and minimally restrictive centers, according to Marina E. Franco of *Noticias Telemundo* for *Axios Latino*.

In the past few years, many states have debated reshaping their juvenile justice system. That includes Indiana, South Dakota, Maryland and South Carolina, the March 29 story reported.

The system has been accused of excessive punishment with a higher recidivism rate than adult prisons. Newsom's new approach focuses on therapy and health services, community service and vocational education to ease re-entry into society.

Leading the changeover planning is Katherine Lucero, a former Juvenile Court judge and now a Santa Clara Superior Court judge.

"(The U.S.) has over-relied on incarceration, particularly within our Black and Brown communities, and we will challenge these disparities to disrupt the cycle," she said.

Detention centers will be managed by the state's Health Department. Juveniles still incarcerated in a state juvenile prison will be transferred when the new projects are working. The state stopped taking new juveniles last summer.

Lucero said, "In parallel with finding the least-restrictive appropriate environments, (we) will work closely with education partners because connection and a sense of belonging within the education system is critical to an individual's wellness, a protective factor that decreases involvement in the criminal justice system."

# Website matches parolees with resources, services

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

ConConnect, the first website created by a formerly incarcerated person, connects people to services after prison, according to a *CNN* article written by Alessandra Freitas.

The article centered around Andre Peart, who paroled in 2018 with just forty dollars. He spent almost six years at New York's Bare Hill Correctional Facility.

After getting out of prison, he lived in shelters and worked collecting garbage and doing maintenance in a gym. He applied for other jobs, but had no success.

"It reminded me of prison. I wanted to flourish and do more so I could get out," said Peart.

In order to be granted parole, Peart had to obtain employment and take anger management, but he did not know where to find these things, the *CNN* article noted. Peart discovered LinkedIn, but was still unable to find employment, or make the connections to services needed.

"My bachelor's degree didn't matter, my past education in journalism didn't matter, my previous experiences didn't matter, and I would get turned down the minute they knew about my time in prison," Peart said.

He then started up ConConnect in 2020, the first networking service for the formerly incarcerated, with hopes that it will lower the recidivism rate.

Over 75% of incarcerated people are re-arrested within five years, according to a 2018 study by the National Institute of Justice that examined 405,000 released prisoners. Some 44% return within their first year out of prison, and almost 70% were arrested for a different crime within three years, the article noted.

It wasn't long before ConConnect attracted financial supporters, such as Techstars, a venture capital firm, and Cox Enterprises.

"I want to offer jobs outside of the minimum wage. Leadership, high skilled, creative jobs. The stigma can't be bigger than our skills and brain," said Peart.

Techstars social Accelerator program tackles issues rooted in social injustice and systemic racism, according to the article. ConConnect has 40 employees, and offers over 50 different services. The website has 1,000 jobs listed, *CNN* reported.

Christopher Mabry was the first person supported by ConConnect. After serving six years in a New York State Prison, he struggled with mental illness and housing. He did not know how to find support.

ConConnect assisted him in finding counseling, a place to live, and a job, according to *CNN*.

"Having a platform where you can get help and support is extremely valuable, you can share your story and hear from people that went through or are going through very similar things," said Mabry.

He wants people to know about the unseen struggles of parole requirements, which often get in the way of completing the simple tasks of trying to survive.

ConConnect users can create a profile by answering questions, then they interact with people in the reentry community through social media, as they build their network, reported the article. Companies can use the platform to find candidates when they are hiring for jobs.

The platform allows businesses to filter potential candidates based on their criminal convictions—though Pert told *CNN* that he soon hopes to work with companies to



Photos courtesy of ConConnect

Andre Peart paroled after six years in a New York prison. After living in a shelter and having little success finding work, he founded ConConnect, a networking website providing more than 50 different resources and hundreds of job listings for those returning from incarceration following release from prisons and jails.

help them feel more comfortable with giving formerly incarcerated people a chance, despite their criminal convictions. This stigma only compounds the restrictive laws that bind formerly incarcerated people who are looking for work, which often keep them from getting jobs.

Peter Harper, a marketing specialist, thinks the platform can help the shortage in the la-

bor force. He is looking to use the platform to list jobs for his new home improvement franchise, the article notes.

"In a way, Andre represents all of the untapped talent that is misunderstood through our criminal justice system and that lies dormant or frustrated or buried, so to create a LinkedIn for these returning citizens... it's freaking brilliant," Harper said.

By Jad Salem  
Journalism Guild Writer

Open Campus, a nationwide media organization, has launched *College Inside* to chronicle higher education in the U.S. prison system. The newsletter reports on Pell Grant developments, state legislation, and profiles of incarcerated students. It includes investigative reporting and essays by incarcerated writers about their college experiences.

"It's important to highlight college programs inside because it's not something a lot of people who are outside the world of carceral education know about," said Charlotte West, *College Inside* editor, in a *SQNews* e-mail interview in March. "I think it's also really important to investigate where the criminal-legal and educational systems intersect, particularly from a perspective of racial equity."

The biweekly newsletter covers academic and vocational programs, including college readiness and high school education.

Scott Smallwood and Sara Hebel, veteran editors at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, founded Open Campus. A goal was to cover areas of

# New prison college publication launched

higher education not often written about by the mainstream press.

"I had faced a similar challenge — as a freelancer," said West. "I'd pitched stories on prison education but heard back from editors that while it was a good idea, it was hard to get people interested in the topic."

Open Campus has a staff of three. West focuses on prison education and the other two concentrate on rural education and diversity, equity and inclusion.

"We need to boost awareness about college-in-prison programs to increase support for them," said West. "I don't really like citing recidivism as a reason for why prison education is important, but having access to programs that build job skills and critical thinking is also important."

"I think using recidivism as the main reason to offer education leaves out a huge population of people with long and life sentences. Education is just as vital for that population, and a lot of the men and women that I've talked to in that category become mentors

to others," West added.

One challenge of the e-newsletter was to expand to a print version. The first issue was a printed-out email version and they hand-addressed envelopes to a handful of people inside. The next issue they produced a few more. But it took too much time that way, said West.

Editor Smallwood took over the layout design. Now they send out two issues once a month.

The modest newsroom group had to figure out how to receive content from the inside.

"I initially reached out to people inside who had been featured in local papers," said West. "Actually, I reached out to a few folks at San Quentin who had been interviewed by *San Quentin News*! Then word of mouth took over, and now we have a print mailing list of around 300."

The group is developing a co-reporting model where they collaborate with incarcerated journalists.

"I worked with Ryan Moser, who is a resident of the Florida Department of Corrections, on

a story on how state residency requirements were impacting aspiring students' ability to participate in Second Chance Pell programs, which allow incarcerated students to use federal Pell Grants," said West. "I did all of the outside interviews with policy folks, and he got some amazing inside interviews that I wouldn't have been able to do."

"It's a great model for collaboration because he had much more access than I ever would have gotten, even if I had been able to go inside," West added.

*College Inside* aims to provide incarcerated students and writers a place to share positive educational experiences.

"Education seems to be a topic that really strikes a chord, both in places that have college programs and in places where people desperately want education, either because it doesn't exist or because they are blocked because of the length of their sentences," West concluded.

Those interested can write to: Open Campus Media, 2460 17th Ave. #1015, Santa Cruz, CA 95062.

# James King returns on behalf of Ella Baker Center

By Timothy Hicks  
Staff Writer

James King and Emily Harris from the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights came to visit the San Quentin News for an interview in March 2022. They came to speak on political issues and to catch up on what's been going on with King since paroling recently.

"I work to pass laws that will make the legal system a little more equitable and balanced," said King in the interview.

Since King paroled from SQ in December 2019, he has been continuing his fight for justice for all those who are incarcerated at the prison and across the State as a State Campaign Manager for the Ella Baker Center.

King was introduced to the Ella Baker Center over seven years ago at a symposium he orchestrated after the implementation of proposition 57 when it passed. That's where he met the program policy director, Emily Harris. The two and the rest of their organization have been on a quest to find that balance of social equity in the prison system.

"I have been the Policy Director for the Center for over seven years," said Harris. "And what we do is try to get laws passed with people power."

The Ella Baker Center has been an intricate source for King ever since he connected with the organization. Educated through then the Prison University Project now known as, Tamalpias College, King took a communications course and mastered the style of speaking articulately.

King combined his prowess of communication to his passion to combat mass incarceration while he was at SQ, but when he paroled he was offered the position of campaign manager for the Ella



Vincent O'Bannon, SQNews

SQNews' Sports Editor Timothy Hicks (left) interviews the Ella Baker Center's State Campaign Manager, James King (center), who was previously incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison. He also interviewed Emily Harris (far right), Ella Baker's Policy Director for the Ella Baker Center. King and Harris both work to create change in California's criminal justice system.

Baker Center and that was where his combined skills had a meaningful platform to push harder for change.

"I work to address the living conditions of the incarcerated and I advocate for them. I push laws such as AB256 and SB 300 which is the fair sentencing Act," said King.

This was Kings first time coming back into the prison since paroling. To come back and see the same people he was here with was humbling

for him. Although the sky was bright and the day was beautiful, King did not miss being in prison. However, after only a short time of discharging his number, he was able to walk back into the very place that held him captive and packed inside of a small four by nine cell in the West Block building, as a free man.

King reminisced on the seven years he spent inside SQ and by his account, were

not all that pleasant. But, when adding the knowledge he obtained while here the trip was not all bad. So now, King said that he believes that all incarcerated people should educate themselves and start weighing in on the policies that may impact them.

Which is particularly needed today's narrative that's being spread media outlets about return citizens who were released from prison and committed a crime.

King and Harris both agree that that narrative is a wrong stigma to use as a blanket for all the incarcerated and formally incarcerated.

"It's a trick of a few who have a bias to take a few isolated incidents and use that as a reflection on everybody in a whole community," said King.

King was scheduled for a parole hearing in 2033. He eventually had his hearing a decade earlier.

"I know dozens of people who have gotten out early through either different laws or from a commutation that are out doing well. And there are many more who are incarcerated that need to come home," said King.

The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights work with over 8000 people in the CDCR who are locked up said Harris.

"Work for us is about ending mass incarceration."

# T.R.U.S.T. accountability program reopens, renews commitment

By Vincent E. O'Bannon  
Staff Writer

The San Quentin accountability group T.R.U.S.T. is regaining its footing with renewed commitment to program participation as COVID-19 cutbacks ease.

Teaching Responsibility Utilizing Sociological Training (T.R.U.S.T.) – helps men develop skills necessary to becoming productive, law-abiding, and self-aware, the organization's web site [www.sanquentintrust.org](http://www.sanquentintrust.org) explains.

The T.R.U.S.T. mission: assist men in becoming leaders within themselves, their families, and their community and to build a bridge of accountability between the community inside and outside of prison.

"I am deeply touched by what the men have had to go through in their lives. Their hard work is encouraging and inspiring, said Diana Kronstadt, an 11-year volunteer alum, who prefers to be called Diana.

"The process of change is life-long, and I am reminded through each class that we can always do better to be better."

The T.R.U.S.T. curriculum consists of several workshops that incorporate topics related to: self-assessment and self-esteem; emotional intelligence; childhood trauma; domestic violence; re-estab-

lishing family relationships; cultural awareness; and many others.

"During my participation in T.R.U.S.T., I've learned to turn my liabilities into assets by developing the necessary skills to be responsible, [and] I was introduced to various life skills," said former member and T.R.U.S.T. Fellow Bryan Jacko.

"The ones that stuck out the most for me were 'decision making' and 'work ethics,' which are essential for me to be successful when I return to my community (society). Prior to T.R.U.S.T., I had made inadequate decisions which only resulted in negative consequences. Today, I am thinking before I act to ensure myself that I am making good decisions. In order to have good work ethics, one must be able to make the right decisions."

T.R.U.S.T. has been a California-prisons-recognized organization program since 2003, and began with 25 incarcerated men. Today T.R.U.S.T. holds workshops with 65 men in attendance.

"T.R.U.S.T. is powerful and it empowers. Some people never realize their true power. Many people feel that they are not worth much, so the transition is amazing," said Quilly, a T.R.U.S.T. volunteer.

"It's such a moving thing to watch the transition, and to

be a part of it."

Four workshops are offered: The T.R.U.S.T. workshop is a nine-month curriculum which promotes personal insight and assessment, relationships, and prepares participants for parole board hearings.

The second workshop, Project L.A., is a nine-month reentry program for men who will be released to the Los Angeles area.

"I am the co-founder of Project L.A. and since its inception, I've witnessed guys speak highly of its success," said Earlonne Woods, former fellow and co-founder of the San Quentin Ear Hustle podcast. "Project L.A. gives individuals the space to restore dignity and humanizes one's experiences as one merges back into the community."

Anger Management is a Spanish-only workshop where 20 men meet once a week for the 12-week program (offered twice a year).

"Developing this class was virtually a dream come true since self-help classes in Spanish are so scarce, as are volunteers to teach Spanish," said co-facilitator Dr. Arnold Chavez. "The participants in this group are able to create a circle of support where they feel safe to identify the underlying issues of their anger, where they come from, and how to cope with them."

The Emotional Health and

Wellness program is a 26-week support group to help men explore and heal emotional trauma. This group provides a safe, supportive environment for 8 to 10 men.

"I joined Health and Wellness in 2015," said Hieu Nguyen, (now released) T.R.U.S.T. fellow and co-facilitator. "It is a self-help group that gives incarcerated men like me the opportunity to explore our past. In this workshop, the participants learn the roots of where their anger comes from.

"They begin to understand the unresolved trauma issues in their lives that led them to commit their crimes. It also gives the participants the tools and coping skills to deal with their triggers. As for me, I applied everything I learned from this workshop and use it in my daily life. It keeps me staying sober and prevents me [from] going back to the person I once was before."

Fellow Kevin Fuqua commented, "The workshop of Emotional Intelligence has opened my mind to new things about my masculinity. The man I am today: I utilize self-awareness for my own emotions and well-being.

"Self-management: I utilize control over my own emotions, such as impulsiveness or sadness. With relationship management, I understand that communication is helpful during conflicts

and is key to connection with others."

The workshops are facilitated by a combination of program volunteers, fellows, and outside professionals.

Each Monday afternoon, 65 men in blue and five outside volunteers gather in the Protestant Chapel. Individuals are encouraged to uncover and discover internal emotions that harbor pain, resentment and distrust, and for those who have a fear of speaking their 'truth' out loud, to be able to let go and let live.

"This program is unique in the fact that the volunteers provide a perspective that differs from mine and they have provided valuable insight and direction for me," said Anthony Caravallo.

Group Chairman Wyatt McMillan stated, "T.R.U.S.T. has helped me to have integrity and to become responsible and accountable."

McMillan has been a part of the T.R.U.S.T. family for six years.

"Being a service to the community and helping give men the tools needed to deal with issues and turning negatives into positives drives me to follow my rehabilitative path," said McMillan.

"T.R.U.S.T. has helped me with social skills that I did not have, and to be able to connect with people in ways that gave me an alternative to

violence."

Consistent attendance is required, and all participants are expected to complete assignments outside of the workshops in order to receive credit and to graduate.

T.R.U.S.T. is embarking on a new season with new workshop curriculum material being added.

The Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) and Centerforce partner with San Quentin to host the annual Health Fair event for more than 1,000 incarcerated residents.

The Asian Prisoner Support Committee (APSC) has provided financial and outside volunteer support for the Health Fair since 2019.

Health Fair volunteers have provided health education and health-related services to the incarcerated population since 2003.

The T.R.U.S.T. organization, ACPHD, Centerforce, the Bay Area Black Nurses Association (BABNA), and Larry Vitale, SF State University nursing professor, credit former community resource manager Steve Emerick and current CRM Madeleine Tenney for providing a smooth interface between the prison administration, custody officers, and volunteers.

"I was drawn to the name T.R.U.S.T. because it was something that I did not have," said Terry Winston.

# The Genesis Program helps prisoners leave the past behind

By Helaine Melnitzer  
Contributor

Most of us never bother to reflect upon the value of having an identification card or birth certificate. We board planes, open bank accounts, and apply for a job or general assistance. But the majority of California prison inmates who have completed their sentence and are ready to re-enter society are released with nothing but the same prison card used during their years of custody to identify themselves to staff.

Not one state prison in California promotes and subsidizes birth certificates for inmates upon release. Yet this is the most critical paper they would need to begin a new chapter in their lives. Instead, they are rendered virtually stateless and have to rely on a stigmatized and a socially unacceptable form of ID to reintroduce them into the work force. They then face tremendous challenges gaining employment and are more likely to re-offend and land themselves, once again, in prison.

Statewide rates of recidivism range from about 31-70%, while the rates for those placed in jobs shortly after their release range from 3-8%. In other words, for newly released inmates, time is of the essence. While parolees may apply for their birth certificate or a state ID, it can take upwards of three months to obtain one. And while employers are legally prohibited from asking about one's conviction history before making a job offer, seeking employment with a prison ID is tantamount



Birth certificates and Social Security cards are essential for former offenders rejoining their communities, especially when applying for employment and state identification/driver licenses.

File images

to publicly branding oneself an “ex-felon,” allowing employers to covertly deny them the job, and indirectly undermining the Fair Change Act and the advocacy of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commissions.

Having worked with more than 1,000 inmates over the last 10 years in rehabilitation programs, I have seen many of them do far more than the minimum court ordered sentence. I have seen them work countless hours, invested in self-help programs that direct them to look into their prior criminal tendencies. The goal of rehabilitation is to arrive at a place where these men are unrecognizable from the men that entered the gates 10, 20, 30, or even 40 years ago.

And while the scales of equality are already unbalanced and stacked against those who have been incarcerated when they get out, without their birth certi-

icates and proper ID, they are now tempted with illegal income jobs or the alternative of working in a degrading, below-minimum wage environment, being paid under the table. This makes a mockery of their years of rehabilitative programming.

In March of 2020, when COVID consumed the 35 prisons in the California Department of Corrections, all volunteer programs in San Quentin came to an abrupt halt. But surprisingly, one project began to bloom: The Genesis Project. This is an idea which had been in the making for the better part of a decade. My intention was to expedite the process for each and every inmate, while imprisoned, to receive their birth certificate. I wanted them to walk out of prison as legitimate citizens and, ultimately, to be indistinguishable from other applicants vying for employ-

ment. I wanted to give them a chance to make their freedom a redemptive experience. But after years of promoting the importance of supplying this document to inmates prior to release, the frustrating lack of results led me to abandon the program.

Then, in February of 2021, a particularly dire PBS segment aired that explored the difficulty paroled people face in obtaining a valid ID. The title of the segment read, “For men and women coming out of prison every year, one of the first steps to re-entering society can be one of the most difficult: simply getting a valid ID.” Seeing this on national television was the catalyst for me to dust off the old proposal and reintroduce it to the San Quentin administration once again. And this time, it worked.

Blessed with an incredible team of a re-entry mentor (Judith Tata of CRP), finan-

cial backers (Santhosh Daniel of Trevor TCR) and the approval and support of the San Quentin Warden (Ron Broomfield), the path was laid out and we were given the green light. Even before the prison officially opened after being locked down for 15 months, we were able to get to work in the San Quentin housing units, opening the doors to classes of 25 men at a time.

We helped them fill out their applications and subsidized the entire application fee and notary expenses, which range from \$40 to \$55. While this seems like a small sum, the average prisoner earns roughly \$.40 an hour, which is why so few apply.

Later, we sent out forms to collect data from those who had received their birth certificate and saw that what began as a pilot study has proven itself beyond our expectations. We received dozens of letters from the men expressing their gratitude. Many responded that this was the first time they’d ever seen official documentation of their birth. One wrote that he would treasure the piece of paper as he moves on to “building a positive life.” Another said that holding it in his hands gave him a “sense of identity and empowerment.”

And another had this to say: “I wept when I received my birth certificate. Why? It had my mother’s signature on it. That was the closest I had felt to her since her tragic murder when I was a small child. Something tangible. A real connection to my dear mother. They never caught the guy. Thank you so

very much for this gift. It was priceless.”

The Genesis Project has now become The Genesis Program. It promises each San Quentin inmate the chance to leave the prison walls and enter the free world as a lawful human, no longer anchored to his past and unbranded by the crime he has worn for years in his prison blues. While they are well-situated to find jobs quickly and put their years of incarceration behind them, many of the men who have been released and received their birth certificates find time to engage in charitable work, as the living memory of their criminal acts has become their personal inspiration to a dedicated lifetime of making amends.

Helaine Melnitzer has volunteered in San Quentin State Prison for ten years. She is currently an Executive Advisor for rehabilitative and re-entry programs and a local Jefferson Award recipient for the culinary program Quentin Cooks.

Since Sept 2021, the Genesis Project, partnering with California Reentry Program, has helped 128 inmates receive their birth certificates.

If you would like to help us keep this program alive, please consider lending your support by sponsoring a person in prison.

You can donate online at <https://www.ca-reentry.org/> donate or send a check to ‘California Reentry Program, P.O. Box 483, San Quentin, CA 94964’. Please specify that your contribution is for the Genesis Project. Thank you for your support.

## Obtaining mental health services in the community

**What is mental health?**  
Health includes our physical, mental, and social well-being. Like the health of our bodies, our mental health affects everything we do. “Mental illnesses” are *health conditions that change our emotions, thinking, and/or behavior*. Mental health conditions can cause stress and problems with social, work or family life. Many things can play a part in having a mental illness, like biology (your brain chemistry), a family history of mental health problems, and difficult life experiences, like trauma or abuse. There are healthy habits we can have for our own mental health, and sometimes it helps to get treatment from a professional for mental health conditions.

**Why don’t we talk about mental health more?**  
Living with mental illness is common. More than half of people in the US have a mental illness in their lifetime. At least half of people incarcerated at CDCR are getting mental health services. *So, nobody is alone in their experience*. Even so, mental health is still misunderstood and stigmatized. People may be judged by others or discriminated against in society because of their mental health. Fear of mental illness is harmful - it makes people feel more isolated and keeps people from getting help. Taking care of mental health is just as important as treating any other physical health condition like diabetes or cancer. We want you to know there are options for getting the support you need to live well.

**Can I get mental health services inside?**  
Yes, CDCR has a statewide mental health program to pro-

Transitions Clinic Network (TCN) hosts this monthly Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) column. This column is a space where we answer questions about health care and empower individuals to prepare for healthy reentry. This week we are writing about mental health and getting services in the community.

We’re thrilled to be able to communicate with the incarcerated community. We will continue writing about different health topics and, most importantly, we want to answer YOUR questions. If you have healthcare-related questions about reentry, feel free to write us at:

JPAY Email: [TCNinfo@ucsf.edu](mailto:TCNinfo@ucsf.edu)  
Mailing Address: Transitions Clinic Network, 2401 Keith Street, San Francisco, CA 94124  
Call our Reentry Health Hotline today with any healthcare reentry questions and to see if there’s a TCN program in your community of return. Our number is (510) 606-6400 and we accept collect calls from CDCR. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.



vide care inside prisons. This program provides different levels of mental health services based on what patients need to be healthy inside and to successfully release. All people are asked about mental health when coming into prison and you can always request to speak with someone about your mental health.

**What happens to prepare for release?**

Your mental health team at CDCR will help you prepare for your release. The Transitional Case Management Program (TCMP) will meet with you to enroll in health insurance (Medi-Cal) and other benefits. You may be referred to mental health services in the community, either through

the county where you are living, through your parole program, or at another community clinic. Make sure you have information about where you can go for care when you get out. Your team may be able to assist with referrals to housing or other programs to support your reentry. You will get a 30-day supply of medications at release, so you will want to be sure to follow-up with your new doctor in the community within the first month.

**What mental health services are available in the community?**

A first step to getting mental health care in the community is to call the county and activate your Medi-Cal health insurance. Medi-Cal insur-

ance covers necessary doctors visits, medications, treatment facilities, and hospitalizations to support your mental health. If you participated in mental health services inside, you may get referred to community mental health services as part of your parole or probation so you can continue your care. You may also have the option of getting care at a community clinic of your choice, so long as it takes your insurance. If you haven’t been getting mental health services inside, you can always seek them for the first time at a clinic in your community.

Sometimes clinics in the community will focus on either medical care or mental health services (also called behavioral health). Some clinics offer medical care and mental/behavioral health services under the same roof. These types of clinics can become your long-term “medical home” in the community. The Transitions Clinic Network has clinics like this across the state with Community Health Workers (CHWs) that can help you access and navigate any health care services you need. These CHWs have also experienced incarceration and reentry, so they will know what you’re going through.

Getting out of prison is a journey both long awaited and uprooting. You should expect that you will experience stress at times having to adjust to a new life outside and have a plan for how you will handle increased stress. To get the support you need, finding a medical home that cares about you as a whole person will make a difference. Caring for your mental health with self-care and medical support will help you be successful.

## Bonta pushes better prenatal care in California’s jails

By Randy Hansen  
Journalism Guild Writer

California’s top lawyer is taking steps to ensure women prisoners get appropriate reproductive health care.

“The right to be treated with dignity does not end when an individual is incarcerated,” said Attorney General Rob Bonta.

Bonta responded to allegations that county jails have been depriving prisoners of reproductive health care, such as prenatal care, as required by state and federal law, the *Fresno Bee* reported Feb. 15.

The response came after the ACLU of Northern California claimed Tulare County jails were depriving prisoners of prenatal care. It sent a letter to Sheriff Mike Boudeaux expressing, “concerns over severely inadequate and unlawful provisions of prenatal care in Tulare County jails,” the *Bee* reported.

Bonta sent a letter to all sheriffs overseeing the states county jails requesting information that will “confirm whether the counties have the required policies in place to protect the reproductive rights of incarcerated individuals.”

Similar complaints led to a \$1.5 million settlement in Orange County after a federal lawsuit alleged a woman gave birth while sitting in the infirmary cell toilet and lost the baby.

“Across the state, sheriffs and jail officials are depriving pregnant people of essential medical treatment, in violation of California law,” said ACLU attorney Elizabeth Gill. “We’ve warned that the negligent and hazardous conditions in jail like those in Tulare County have already put the health of many at risk. This



File image

danger will continue until we stop locking pregnant people in facilities where medical care is deficient.”

The ACLU reported three pregnant women were denied adequate prenatal care in Tulare County jails. One of these women, Alexandra Meza, told the *Bee* she bled for three days before jail staff took her to the hospital. She was serving a sentence for felony DUI and was pregnant at the time of the incident.

“Blood meant that I needed to see a doctor, and every time I would tell them about it, they would just brush it off,” said Meza. “They would even make me, like, pull my pants down and show them that I was actually bleeding, like I was lying or something.”

A 2020 law requires county jails to provide a pregnancy test within 72 hours from the intake process to people who could be pregnant. This legislation also requires an inmate who is pregnant to be “scheduled for pregnancy examinations” within seven days and to receive prenatal care, as well as a nutritious diet approved by a doctor,” according to the *Bee*.

The AG’s office reported multiple counties have failed to make information available on their websites detailing the new legally required prenatal policies.

NEW YORK

Bail reform not to blame for increased crime

By Jonathan Montana  
Journalism Guild Writer

New York rolled back cash bail for criminal defendants two years ago, and a new report says that has not increased recidivism, *The Associated Press* reports.

“Bail reform has been widely successful allowing our clients to stay in their communities with their families with no measureable impact on public safety,” said Marie Ndiaye, of the Legal Aid Society’s Decarceration Project. “The data on bail reform speaks for itself. The overwhelmingly majority of New Yorkers on pretrial release do not commit new crimes and return for future court appearances.”

City Controller Brad Lander said his analysis shows recidivism has “remained virtually unchanged” at around 4% since the bail reforms began in January 2020, the March 22 story reported.

Less than 1% of recidivism for violent crimes remained unchanged as well, *AP* reported.

The data does not match the fears of the reform’s critics and “it’s important that policy making follows facts rather than on fears,” stated Lander, a Democrat told the *AP*.

“New York was among the first state to eliminate bail and detention for most non-

*“The overwhelmingly majority of New Yorkers on pretrial release do not commit new crimes and return for future court appearance.”*

violent crimes, following a half-dozen states, including New Jersey and Nebraska,” according to the story.

Bail reform was a major milestone for criminal justice advocate after the tragic suicide of Kalief Browder, a 16-year-old sent to New York’s Rikers Island, whom spent three years there - two years in solitary confinement - before charges were dropped.

Browder, a low-level offender, was unable to afford bail, while wealthier defendants get released.

Part of the rollbacks would include detention measures, adopted by Gov. Kathy Hochul’s administration, which would give judges broader discretion in determining bail for defendants with criminal histories.

The data shows that bail reform is not the cause for increased rates in crime and that other policies and measures need to be put in place to keep our communities safe, concluded Lander.

A 2018 California law eliminating cash bail was blocked in 2020 by a ballot initiative sponsored by the bail bond industry.

RHODE ISLAND

‘Civil Death’ doctrine ruled unconstitutional

By Matt Sheppard  
Journalism Guild Writer

The Rhode Island Supreme Court has thrown out an old law that says anyone serving a life sentence has no civil rights.

The 1909 law said such people have a “Civil Death,” which meant they were considered dead “with respect to property rights, the bond of matrimony and other civil rights.”

The state court ruled 4-1 that the archaic law was unconstitutional.

“Today’s decision from the court affirms the basic principle of our judicial system that the doors to justice shall remain open to all,” plaintiffs attorney Sonja Deyoe said in a statement.

Plaintiffs Cody-Allen Zab and Jose Rivera filed a lawsuit claiming that they suffered injuries while incarcerated, due to the Department of Corrections negligence, *The Associated Press* reported March 2.

A Superior Court judge concluded that the Civil Death statute barred the plaintiffs’ claims; they appealed to the high court, with the support of the American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island.

“It is clear to us that the right infringed upon by the Civil Death statute is the right to seek redress for any type of injury or complaint, thereby unconstitutionally denying

the plaintiffs the very right to gain access to the courts,” said the majority opinion written by Justice Erin Lynch-Prata.

The DOC maintained that the Civil Death law was constitutional and that it furthered the goals of punishment and deterrence.

Another legal case, *Austin v. Medicis*, states: “Civil Death is a legal status with roots in ancient Greece and English common law. In ancient Greece, those criminals ‘pronounced’ infamous’ were unable to appear in court or vote in the assembly, to make public speeches, or serve in the army...”

Civil Death applies only “when it is clear...beyond all dispute, that the criminal is no longer fit to live upon the earth, but is to be exterminated as a monster and a bane to human society,” commented the late legal scholar Blackstone.

In 1968 the California Legislature loosened restrictions on prisoner rights and abolished Civil Death for prisoners serving life sentences. This led to the 1974 landmark case, *Wolff v. McDonnell*, which gave prisoners due process rights in a disciplinary hearing.

The California Legislature repealed the rest of the “ancient Civil Death provision” in 1975 and enacted the Inmates’ Bill of Rights, signed into law by then Gov. Jerry Brown.

OREGON

Prosecutors sue to block 1,000 commutations

By Jad Salem  
Journalism Guild Writer

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is being sued for allegedly unlawfully freeing almost 1,000 prisoners.

Two district attorneys and victim families claim Brown violated the clemency procedures requiring her to notify the victims.

Plaintiffs include Lane County District Attorney Patricia Perlow and Linn County District Attorney Doug Marteeny. Their lawsuit also seeks to stop convicted minors from applying for commutation, *The Associated Press* reported Jan. 20

The lawsuit claims the Democratic governor unlawfully delegated her responsibilities to state agencies and broke rules for commutation application.

“We are asking that the court compel the governor to follow the laws that are already in place,” said Monique DeSpain. She filed the lawsuit with Common Sense for Oregon and the Salem-based law firm of Kevin L. Mannix, a former chair of the Oregon Republican Party.

The 912 people whose sentences were commuted were deemed at high risk of contracting COVID-19, Brown wrote in a 2020 letter to state lawmakers. Those who were released had served half of their sentences or more,

weren’t charged with crimes against people, and had medical issues that put them at risk of COVID complications.

The governor’s spokeswoman said the governor’s office “generally does not comment on matters of pending litigation.”

In addition, the governor commuted the sentences of 41 inmate firefighters who fought Labor Day wildfires.

Those released didn’t “present an unacceptable safety, security, or compliance risk to the community,” Brown said in her letter.

State records show that three jail employees and 44 incarcerated people died since the COVID-19 pandemic started.

“This lawsuit is not personal on my part. I believe our laws put limits on (Brown’s) actions. I am working to enforce those limits,” Marteeny said in a statement.

Lewis & Clark Law School professor Aliza Kaplan helped incarcerated people prepare clemency applications. Kaplan stated that Brown’s actions were consistent with historical standards.

“She’s using it in the exact way it should be used,” Kaplan told *The Oregonian/Oregon Live*. “These people have been punished significantly, and even in a place like prison, they have managed to rehabilitate themselves, and the governor is offering them mercy.”

**1. Texas —** (*AP*) State prison officials will not adopt specific rules to govern how spiritual advisers may pray for and touch condemned prisoners during executions, the *Associated Press* reported. Rather, the state will consider condemned prisoners’ requests for prayer and physical contact with spiritual advisers on a case-by-case basis. In March, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of Death Row inmate John Ramirez that states must accommodate such requests, while suggesting that officials develop reasonable guidelines. Ramirez’ attorney, Seth Kretzer, criticized the Texas Department of Criminal Justice’s refusal to establish the suggested protocols. The department “always wants to keep it a little ambiguous so they can keep the enemy on their toes,” Kretzer said. “They always want to keep you guessing.”

**2. Maryland —** (*The Washington Post*) Classes began Feb. 14 for the first cohort of incarcerated men working toward bachelor’s degrees through Georgetown University at the Patuxent Institution in Jessup, MD. The initial group includes 25 men chosen from more than 300 applicants throughout the Maryland prison system. A \$1 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, donations, and a Department of Education Second Chance Pell experimental grant will support the in-person instruction, and officials expect 125 incarcerated students to enter the program during the next five years. The Georgetown Prison Scholars Program offers degrees in cultural humanities, interdisciplinary social science, and global intellectual history. It is “a model for how universities can bring transformative education opportunities into prison and support second chances,” according to a news

release from the Georgetown Prisons and Justice Initiative.

**3. Massachusetts —** (*AP*) One of the state’s most notorious and oldest prisons, MCI-Cedar Junction in Walpole, is set to close down in three phases over two years, the *AP* reported. The Department of Corrections cited the state’s falling incarceration rates and very high maintenance costs at the facility as reasons for the planned closure. Massachusetts’ incarcerated population is at its lowest point in 35 years. The nearly 70-year-old facility needs about \$30 million in repairs to infrastructure. Cedar Junction, which opened in 1955, houses about 525 incarcerated people and is at 68% capacity. The state’s main maximum-security prison is the more modern Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center.

**4. Mississippi —** (*Reuters*) A Justice Department investigation into the Mississippi state prison at Parchman Farm found unsafe conditions that violate the U.S. Constitution and contribute to violence among prisoners, *Reuters* reported. It is one of four prisons in the state under investigation. There were 10 killings and 12 suicides at Parchman in the last two years. The violence included a riot among prisoners that began Dec. 31, 2019, and lasted for weeks. Among the conditions cited are inadequate mental health care and solitary confinement. The department transmitted its findings to the state in a 59-page letter. Failure to respond to the finding could result in a lawsuit against the state, the department said.

**5. Alabama —** (*Sun Herald*) A former Alabama corrections sergeant will serve two-and-a-half years in prison for assaulting handcuffed prisoners in 2019 at the Elmore Correctional Facility, reported the *Sun Herald*. Two other former corrections officers and a shift command-



er failed to intervene. The assaults were punishment for suspected smuggling of contraband into the prison. “The inmates were handcuffed behind their backs, did not resist and ‘posed no threat’ during the assaults,” the *Sun Herald* reported. A news release issued by the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Alabama said that the Justice Department “will hold to account officers who brutalize incarcerated persons.”

**6. New Mexico —** (*Albuquerque Journal*) A lawsuit alleges that correctional officers subjected inmates transferring into the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility in Los Lunas to “deliberately abusive and intentionally punishing strip searches” in order to “sexually humiliate, intimidate and terrorize” the new arrivals. A “sadistic welcoming committee” received two groups transferring in from

the prison in Grant during March and April 2020, said an attorney who filed the suit. “What’s really disappointing to me sitting here today is the fact that we filed a lawsuit against them for similar conduct 10 years ago,” said Matthew Coyte, one of the attorneys representing the current and former inmates. A spokesman for the New Mexico Corrections Department said that the department has a zero-tolerance policy with respect to sexual harassment and abuse.

**7. New Hampshire —** (*AP*) Debate over what to do with the troubled 144-bed Sununu Youth Services Center is complicated by allegations of sexual abuse from nearly 450 former residents spanning more than 50 years. A criminal investigation ongoing since 2019 resulted in 11 arrests of former workers in April 2021. A proposal currently moving through New Hampshire’s

House would replace the center with a six-bed facility and restrict which crimes would justify placing children there. The state budget passed in June 2021 called for closing the center by March 2023, but the Legislature extended the deadline to June 2024, with a two-year extension if needed.

**8. Florida —** (*Tallahassee Democrat*) “Icing on a Danish pastry” on the floorboard of Miles Evora’s car, mistaken by Leon County deputies for crack cocaine, led to his wrongful arrest and forceful restraint. Deputy James Dills stopped Evora for rolling through a stop sign, which Evora testified that he did not do. After collecting some of the substance in question, the deputies forcibly restrained Evora, who protested and became physically tense. The deputies then used a Taser on Evora and forced him to the ground. A year later, the Florida Department of Law En-

forcement determined that the substance was not crack cocaine, and subsequent testing by an independent entity identified the substance as sugar. A jury subsequently awarded the 51-year-old father of six \$269,810 in damages.

**9. New York —** (*The New York Times*) New York City has failed to say how it will address the chaos that has characterized the Rikers jail complex over the last eighteen months, said U.S. Attorney Damian Williams in a letter filed in federal court. As a result, a receiver may be appointed to run the complex. More than a third of the corrections officers working at the jail are absent daily, leading to inhumane conditions for both incarcerated people and prison staff. Due to staff shortages inmates, many of whom are waiting for trial, have frequently had to go without water, food and medical care.

EXONERATION DIGEST

TENNESSEE

Pair found innocent decades later

*Couple exonerated by new evidence; one died in custody, declared innocent posthumously*

By Art Ramirez  
Journalism Guild Writer

A couple convicted in the brutal rape of a young child in the late 1980s are innocent and should have their names cleared, the prosecution and defense say.

Joyce Watkins and Charles Dunn always maintained their innocence. Dunn died in custody in 2015.

“We cannot give these people justice, but we can acknowledge what happened to them and finally clear their names,” said Jason Gichner of the Tennessee Innocence Project.

Watkins was the child’s great-aunt and Dunn was her longtime boyfriend. Neither had a previous criminal record. They both held steady jobs.

The District Attorney’s Conviction Review Unit agreed the original trial was riddled with errors that undermine the confidence of the convictions, according to the *Nashville Tennessean*.

Unfortunately, Watkins spent 27 year in prison, lost her home and her job, and can’t have children or even vote. She also had to sign up for the sex offender registry when she was finally released from prison in 2015, the Dec. 3, 2021 article reported.

Both were convicted in 1988 of child rape and murder. New evidence shows they were innocent, defense and prosecutors agree. This case was reopened in November 2021.

Dr. Adele Lewis, the state’s chief medical examiner, testi-

fied that the medical analysis used in the original trial was wrong.

“How does something like this happen?” Gichner questioned. “How did two innocent people spend 27 years in prison for something they didn’t do? The simple answer, your honor, was that no one told the truth,” Gichner said in court.

Judge Angelita Blackshear Dalton of Division II of the Davidson County Criminal Court said she would issue a written opinion on the case, and on January 12 she voided Watkins’ and Dunn’s convictions. “In short,” she wrote, “the evidence in this case supports the claim that Joyce Watkins and Charlie Dunn are innocent and were convicted of crimes they did not commit.”

INDIANA

Chicago man settles wrongful conviction lawsuit for \$7.5M

By Andrew Hardy  
Staff Writer

The city of Elkhart, Indiana, has agreed to a \$7.5 million settlement with a Chicago man wrongfully convicted of robbery on evidence fabricated by police, according to a report by the *Associated Press*.

After serving seven years of a 40-year prison sentence for a 1996 armed robbery in which a teenager was wounded by gunfire, Keith Cooper’s conviction was overturned. DNA evidence ultimately ruled out his involvement in the crime and fingered the actual perpetrator. He was released from prison in 2006.

But Cooper’s fight for justice didn’t end there. In 2009, he began his bid for a pardon because, though he had been released from prison and cleared by DNA evidence,

*In 2016, Cooper’s pardon application was declined by Indiana’s former governor, Mike Pence, despite his having the support of the state’s parole board, prosecutor, and witnesses.*

his wrongful conviction had not been overturned. In 2016, Cooper’s pardon application was declined by Indiana’s former governor, Mike Pence, even though he had the support of the state’s parole board and prosecutor, as well as witnesses. The pardon was later granted by Pence’s successor, Gov. Eric Holcomb.

In November 2017, Cooper filed suit against the city of Elkhart, along with its former chief of police and three police officers who allegedly framed him for the armed robbery.

According to the lawsuit, before his arrest, Cooper was a family man with a wife and three kids, a job, and no pre-

vious criminal history. He says his wrongful conviction by police misconduct “nearly destroyed his life.” His wife sold off what they owned and was forced to resort to living in shelters to survive.

Investigations into Cooper’s case concluded that police had indeed coerced evidence and falsified reports, lending credence to his claims that the Elkhart Police Department regularly pursued wrongful convictions, *AP* reports.

Cooper’s lawsuit “exposed the systemic pattern of police and prosecutorial misconduct that exists in Elkhart, Indiana,” said Cooper’s attorney, Elliot Slosar.

NEW YORK

Brooklyn man serves 24 years on coerced testimony, settles for \$10.5M

Based on the testimony of a single eyewitness, and with zero forensic evidence against him, Shawn Williams was convicted of a fatal 1993 shooting in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. He was sentenced to 25-years-to-life in prison. He was 19 years old at the time of his arrest.

According to an article from *TheGrio*, Williams has now been exonerated and awarded a \$10.5 million settlement. This happened after the sole witness, who testified that she’d seen him with a firearm at the scene of the shooting, recanted, claiming that her testimony was coerced by a notoriously corrupt NYC detective.

Now 47 years old, Williams had his conviction overturned and was freed from prison in 2018, after serving 24 years behind bars.

“No amount of money can give me back the years they took from me,” he said in a statement. “But I am going to keep rebuilding my

*State reaches largest-ever wrongful imprisonment settlement in NY history*

life and looking ahead to a brighter future.”

The detective at the center of the police misconduct scandal is Louis N. Scarcella, a high-profile homicide investigator whose unit handled 500-plus homicide cases per year.

Scarcella, once a highly regarded detective, retired in 1999 and fell under scrutiny in 2013, when he was accused of framing the alleged killer of a Hasidic rabbi, according to *TheGrio*.

The 2013 case was only the beginning. Since then, Brooklyn prosecutors have reinvestigated over 70 of Scarcella’s old cases, overturning more than a dozen faulty convictions and paying out millions of dollars to settle civil lawsuits brought by the wrongfully imprisoned. According to *The New York Times*, the \$10.5 million settlement reached with Shawn Williams is the largest to date.

Almost three decades have passed since Williams’ arrest and four years since his conviction was thrown out. *TheGrio* did not report whether the New York City Police Department had reopened the case, nor whether the witness who provided false testimony would face charges. *TheGrio* did, however, note that Williams’ exoneration was but one in “a series of other exonerations in New York and other states, several involving police or prosecutorial misconduct from the 1980s and 1990s.”

David B. Shanies, one of two civil rights attorneys who handled Shawn Williams’ lawsuit, said he felt gratified by the outcome. “Shawn has been through the fire for nearly 30 years,” he said. “It’s satisfying to see him come out the other side with his name cleared and some reparation for his ordeal.”

—Andrew Hardy

NATIONAL

High Court lowers bar for ‘malicious prosecution’ lawsuits



File photo

By Randy Hansen  
Journalism Guild Writer

People who sue law enforcement for malicious prosecution after they are falsely accused of a crime have a better chance in court as the Supreme Court removes a stumbling block with a 6-3 vote, *The Associated Press* reported.

The decision rejected a higher bar that said the person had to show their case ended because they were found innocent. Instead, they must only prove that the case brought against them “ended without a conviction,” according to the majority ruling written by Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

Justice Samuel Alito wrote the dissent joined by Justices

Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch. They argued the decision “has no basis in the Constitution and is almost certain to lead to confusion,” the April 4 story noted.

The case involved Brooklyn resident Larry Thompson, arrested in 2014. He sued on the basis of malicious prosecution under a federal civil rights law for his arrest that resulted from a scuffle with police, a case in which the charges were dropped.

Thompson’s sister-in-law had called the authorities on Thompson, claiming that he was sexually abusing his infant daughter. When police arrived, Thompson would not let them in without a warrant. After a scuffle with the officers, Thompson was

arrested and charged with resisting arrest and obstructing administration. After being held for two days, the charges were dropped, and Thompson was released.

At the hospital the baby was examined and was found to have diaper rash but no evidence of abuse.

The lower court ruled against Thompson, saying he had to show his case ended with “affirmative acquittal or dismissal of the charge by a judge with a statement that evidence was insufficient,” a decision with which the Supreme Court disagreed.

MacArthur Justice Center attorney Amir Ali represented Thompson. He said he was “very pleased with the court’s decision” and that it was “welcome and needed.”

IDAHO

Pharmaceutical companies want to manufacture death drugs in secret

By Bostyon Johnson  
Journalism Guild Writer

A new bill prohibiting drug supplier transparency on lethal injection drugs has reached the full Idaho Senate.

A 5-4 vote pushed the bill to the full Senate by the Senate Judiciary and Rules Committee, *The Associated Press* reported March 14.

“If this is an issue we’re going to address, we need to address it now” said Sen. Todd Lakey, committee chairman.

Some suppliers are declin-

ing to sell the lethal drugs without first receiving confidentiality provisions written into state law, according to Josh Tewalt, director of the Idaho Department of Correction. The bill would authorize retailer information be concealed, even against potential court orders.

The decision came as the state prepares to execute two Death Row inmates in the near future.

Due to the inability to purchase the chemicals they need for executions, state

officials have been known to send workers across state lines to buy the lethal chemicals with cash days before an execution, *AP* reported.

Retired U.S. District Court judge Ronald Bush, who presided over cases in which Idaho inmates fought the state’s execution policy, says this bill puts at risk the Eighth Amendment protections against cruel and unusual punishment as well as the First Amendment right that enables the public to speak freely.

MICHIGAN

Visible restraints violate right to fair trial

The Supreme Court overturns a federal appeals court decision ordering a Michigan state court to retry or release a convicted murderer because his rights were violated by being shackled during his trial.

The 6-3 decision said the appellate justices should have applied two different tests to decide if a release or retrial was indicated, according *The Associated Press*.

A state court had agreed the shackles violated Ervine Davenport’s rights but it did not affect his jury trial. The federal appeals court overturned that decision.

Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote the Supreme Court majority opinion. It said, “When a state court has ruled on the merits of a state prisoner’s claim, a federal court cannot grant relief without first applying both” tests. Those

*When a state court has ruled on the merits of a state prisoner’s claim, a federal court cannot grant relief without first applying both tests. Those tests are whether the defendant’s rights were violated, and whether that affected the jurors’ decision.*

tests are whether the defendant’s rights were violated, and whether that affected the jurors’ decision.

The ruling said Davenport’s rights were violated, but that did not affect the decision.

That reasoning was based on a law passed by Congress

in 1996, the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act.

The dissenting response from Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan, also representing the other two liberal justices, wrote, requiring both tests were “make-work” and the court had twice in recent years had said requiring the 1993 test alone is sufficient because it is “harder for a prisoner to meet.” She added requiring both tests is a “pointless demand.”

The federal appeals court had said the restraints “branded Davenport as having a violent nature” and were inherently prejudicial. So it ordered Michigan to retry or release him. The Supreme Court reversed that decision.

The case is *Brown, Acting Warden vs. Davenport*, 20-826.

—Randy Hansen

# Incarceration speeds up aging process

By Raymond Torres  
Journalism Guild Writer

Prisons cause some incarcerated people to get older faster, according to research on Black prisoners.

Time spent in jail or prison can speed up the aging process by an average of 11 months past someone’s actual age, according to DNA research by University of Iowa Professor Mark Berg and his colleagues.

Experiencing violence in prison accelerated the aging process by more than two years, according to the Berg article published in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.

“Thank God evolution gave us the tendency to be aroused and to flee,” Professor Berg said. “We still possess that, and we use it occasionally, but if it happens too much, it is very, very unhealthy.”

“To my great surprise, we found very durable effects among a sample of people who are only looking at their fourth decade of life who otherwise should be healthy,” he said.

Berg said the studies should be taken into consid-



Dao Ong, SQNews

eration during prison policy-making decisions. “And why is that?” he said. “Because these guys, basically, are leaving prison with an extended sentence.”

He said the data is “among the most extensively studied sample of adults in the United States.” The availability of data on the same subjects over time—tracking the children since they were in elementary school—allowed researchers to study the impacts of incarceration on age.

Researchers used DNA analysis to assess whether those 410 adults are biologi-

cally “older” than their calendar age. They tested for methylation levels in DNA, which can take its toll on the essential biological process of gene expression and can lead to accelerated aging and atrophy.

Accelerations to the aging process have been linked to factors in the environment like exposure to lead, air quality, drinking water and disease. So have physiological and psychological stressors, such as racial discrimination, Berg said. He referred to prison violence and a lack of privacy and autonomy as main stressors that impact the

incarcerated.

The research team tried to rule out other factors that could explain the accelerated aging such as childhood trauma and smoking. They also ruled out factors that have the opposite effect on aging, like exercise. “We controlled for all of that, and no dice,” Berg said.

Berg hopes that, if nothing else, the research findings can help make prison less violent. “If we can do anything, we can make the places safer for them, which we show could bring a pretty big net benefit to their health,” he said.

# Abuse of prisoners inhibits rehabilitation

By Bostyon Johnson  
Journalism Guild Writer

Mistreatment of prisoners interferes with rehabilitation efforts and can exacerbate crime, a new Australia-US study finds.

The research by Flinders University and Rutgers University highlights how more incentives are needed for reform.

“How the public understands ‘criminality’ or wrongdoing has implications for attitude and endorsement of criminal justice policies, which are often at odds with

what we know is needed for effective rehabilitation,” says Dr. Colleen Berryessa, an assistant professor of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University.

The study notes that the U.S. leads in incarceration. Individuals entered jails more than 10 million times in 2020, according to the Feb. 14 *Eurasia Review* article. Australia incarcerated about 65,000 persons during that same year.

“Criminologist researchers warn that indifference to the fate of offenders, both among the public and people in the

criminal justice system, could discourage a safe and gradual road to rehabilitation,” the article reports.

The story said offenders deal with large ranges of harms that are overlooked because the people working in the system and the community both have a deep-seated desire to see “bad” people suffer for what they did.

“The implication is that these types of hostile beliefs and attitudes stand in the way of efforts towards criminal justice reform,” said Dr. Melissa de Vel-Palumbo of Flinders University.

The article raises these questions: Does there need to be harsher punishment to keep people from committing crimes? Should the public turn a blind eye to the abuse and mistreatment because the people receiving the mistreatment are considered victimizers, predators, pedophiles, abusers, and rapists?

The study is titled *When bad things happen to rotten people: indifference to incidental harms in the criminal justice system (2022)*, by Drs. Vel-Palumbo and Berryessa. It was published in *Psychology, Crime and Law*.

# Report: Socially disadvantaged people face higher probability of incarceration

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

A new report from Prison Policy Initiative “Beyond the Count” verifies that sociologically impacted individuals have greater probabilities of incarceration than their counterparts.

It provides statistics and information that confirm what many people in the criminal justice system already know. Cycles of incarceration for persons in low-income families, foster care, single parent families or homeless families begin during the formidable years, between 16 and 19 years old.

The report contains a compilation of statistics by the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ Survey of Prison Inmates. The survey examined persons in state prisons during 2016, but the statistics were not released until late 2020.

“Beyond the Count” categorizes five areas of concern that contribute to the criminalization of young adults.

Those areas include:  
Family Disruption  
Homelessness  
Low Income Family  
Educational Exclusion  
Arrest As Youth  
The contributive factors reveal:

- 62% of prisoners are criminalized youth who did not complete high school
- 38% of prisoners were first arrested before age 16
- 68% of prisoners were arrested before age 19
- 42% of prisoners received public assistance before the age of 18
- 33% of prisoners had at least one parent in-

carcerated

- 19% of prisoners lived in subsidized housing or public housing before the age of 18
- 18% of prisoners lived in foster care before the age of 18
- 12% of prisoner were homeless residents before the age of 18

Other facts updated in the report include that, on average, incarcerated respondents surveyed had been arrested nine times in their life. It also reveals that the typical person in state prison is 39 years old and has a 10<sup>th</sup> grade education.

The PPI concludes the lack of education is a result of youthful confinement, which the author believes disrupts a young person’s life and schooling.

Leah Wang, the report’s author, states that half of the people in state prisons meet the criteria for substance use disorder, and 65% of state prisoners were using illicit substances when they committed the crime that led to their incarceration.

Wang suggests people other than reputed drug offenders are still victims of the country’s criminalization policies which hinder addressing health issues surrounding substance abuse. She concludes that the data shows disadvantaged people who encounter the justice system at an early age should not be incarcerated, and instead should be given the care and attention they need as young people.

“Our new report shows this country is locking up the same people it has failed,” Wang said. She believes universal health care, housing and education could improve the statistics provided by the Department of Justice — effectively slowing the revolving door.

# San Francisco’s Innocence Commission wins first exoneration for wrongful conviction

By Jerry Maleck Gearin  
Staff Writer

A San Francisco man’s murder conviction was overturned after 32 years of claiming his innocence, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Joaquin Ciria was arrested for murder on March 25, 1990. For more than three decades, he insisted he did not commit the crime.

Ciria held his ground during successive parole hearings, denying his involvement and assumed guilt in the crime. Because of this, he was continuously denied parole, the *Chronicle* reported.

“You’re not going to put yourself through all that denying, (insisting) you didn’t do it if you’re not innocent,” said Pedro Ciria, Joaquin’s son.

Lara Bazelon, the chairperson of the district attorney’s Innocence Commission, took on Ciria’s case.

Roberto Socorro swore in a declaration that he saw and heard the killer, a man he knew, reported the *Chronicle*. “I am deeply ashamed of my selfish decision to remain

silent all these years,” Socorro said in a declaration. In an interview, he said he did not come forward sooner because he did not believe in cooperating with the police.

The alleged shooter had not been charged as of the publication date, April 19, the newspaper noted.

Bazelon was convinced of Ciria’s innocence following Socorro’s testimony before the commission, said the article. “I found the story credible, I found him credible,” said Bazelon.

The judge also found Socorro’s statements compelling but did not say that Ciria was innocent.

“I am going to find that it’s reasonably likely that one juror would have changed their vote,” said Judge Brendan Conroy.

Ciria thanked the judge for the opportunity to present his case after all these years, according to the report. The district attorney said the case will not be retried.

Ciria’s son Pedro embraced loved ones, his eyes red from crying, said the *Chronicle*. “It feels good,” said Pedro, 32, who was only 6 weeks old when his father went to jail.

## NOTICE TO OUR READERS:

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and institutional quarantines, we have had to combine our June and July editions. We hope to be back on schedule as soon as possible. Thank you for your understanding.

# Fifth prison worker arrested

By George Franco  
Journalism Guild Writer

A fifth employee has been charged with sexually abusing inmates in a federal women’s prison where a former warden is also facing such charges, *The Associated Press* reports.

Food service worker Enrique Chavez faces two counts of abusive sexual contact, which carries a maximum punishment of up to two years in prison. Prosecutors say more arrests are expected, the March 23 story reported.

Chavez was arrested in Arizona, where he appeared in a Tucson court and has been on prison administrative leave for several months.

Other employees who were charged with these crimes include the prison’s former warden, Ray J. Garcia, and a chaplain. Two people arrested have already pleaded guilty.

AP was the first to expose the continuous investigations into the Bureau of Prisons. It has been under increasing scrutiny concerning employee criminal activity, shortage of personnel to respond to emergencies, old falling structures, rapid spread of

COVID-19, failure to respond to the pandemic, and dozens of escapes.

The Bureau of Prisons has been interviewing prisoners and staff to try to find ways to eliminate the culture of abuse at the prison. Eighteen senior executives have been assigned to investigate Dublin’s general conditions and facilitate conversations with the staff members and the incarcerated.

Misconduct by bureau staff “at any level, will not be tolerated, and our efforts to root it out are far from over,” Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said in a statement.

The Dublin prison arrests send a clear message that the FBI will investigate and hold accountable any and every individual who commits an act like this, regardless of their title or authority, said Craig Fair, agent in charge of the San Francisco FBI field office.

Correctional officers “have a trusted responsibility to protect those under their authority” and sexually abusing prisoners is a “betrayal of that responsibility and undermines a just penal system,” U.S. Attorney Stephanie Hinds said.

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

The students at Mt. Tamalpais College in San Quentin are preparing for their future in society by learning about the fundamentals of blockchain crypto-currency and crypto-wallet technologies.

“I am interested in this subject because of the endless possibilities this technology holds,” said student Kinning Jefferson. “I think about how it’s going to help get us closer to generational wealth.”

The idea to teach a class on blockchain came from Mt. Tam student Sherman K. Newman, who has been a member of the Coding 7370 program for the past five years.

“I decided to teach this class because I think the students should have the requisite skills for the new tokenomic financial system that’s coming,” sNewman said.

The extracurricular activity group was quickly pushed through and approved by Mt. Tam administration after inviting proposals.

“We looked for something new for curriculum and the feasibility,” Priya Kandaswamy, academic program

# Mt. Tam holds class on crypto-currency

director, said. “This stood out because it was one of the few proposals for technology.”

Blockchain technology, a decentralized ledger of all transactions across a peer-to-peer network, is relatively new. Using it, participants can confirm transactions without a need for a central clearing authority.

Two examples of blockchain are Bitcoin and Ethereum, the second biggest crypto-currency by market cap after Bitcoin. Newman has been studying blockchain for several years, reading books like *Mastering Blockchain* and *Mastering Ethereum*.

“That’s another thing that interests me,” said Jefferson. “It’s a decentralized financial system, which eliminates the gatekeepers.”

No one computer or organization can own the chain. Instead, it is a distributed ledger via nodes connected to the network. Nodes maintain copies of the blockchain and keep the network state in consensus.



Newman teaches classes Sunday nights from 6-8 p.m. There is also a long waiting list for the 12-week workshop. Daniel Alem is one of the

stay informed about modern technology,” said Alem. “Thus far I’ve learned how crypto-currency is mined and its benefits for the future.”

“I think it’s the wave of the future,” said student Malik Ali. “I’ve been seeing a lot of commercials about this. I think they renamed the Staples Center after this new technology.”

The Staples Center in Los Angeles was renamed Crypto.Com in December of last year.

Trevor Woods said he was already “dibbling and dabbling” in crypto-currency investments, so he decided to take the blockchain class.

Woods’ daughter has been helping him invest in crypto-currencies by using platforms like Robinhood and Ally investment firms. These companies act as middlemen for investments. But Woods thinks that learning about blockchain will help him eliminate the middle man.

“Blockchain could possibly eliminate banks,” Woods said. He was also talking to

Newman before the idea for the class developed.

“Sherm (Newman’s nickname) eats, sleeps, and breaths this stuff,” said Woods. “I was learning from him long before the class started.”

One of the things Woods and his classmates are learning about are crypto-wallets, used to make deals without a middle man fee.

“If I bought Ethereum through Ally, they got my keys,” said Woods. “They got control, but having my own crypto wallet means I have the keys.”

Besides Blockchain, other student-run extracurricular activity groups offered this semester include Music Theory and Prevail, a Black studies class.

Newman encourages students who are interested in financial independence and investment to get on the waiting list. For those who cannot attend Mt. Tam classes, he encourages them to study up on the new technology by reading books like *Mastering Blockchain*.

“It’s really different. I was really excited to get the proposal,” said Kandaswamy. “It is the most popular thing we offered in the last year.”

## UC Berkeley accepts first formerly incarcerated student

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

Kevin McCarthy is the first parolee applicant ever accepted to UC Berkeley.

His academic achievement inspired Gov. Gavin Newsom’s endorsement of Senate Bill 416. The bill requires all California prisons to offer college programs this year.

In addition, starting in 2023, Pell Grants will become available for incarcerated people throughout the nation.

San Francisco Chronicle reporter Nanette Asimov wrote that California’s new commitment to prison education would create an exponential increase of incarcerated applicants to four-year universities next year.

Annually, Berkeley denies 14,133 applicants who wish to transfer to its campus. Currently the campus accepts only 3,900 students each year.

McCarthy’s experience being accepted to one of the top universities in the world was paved with obstacles uncommon to most students’ struggles.

Asimov reported the unique restrictions on incarcerated students. “From inside prison without a phone, computer or pens, McCarthy went on to persuade one of the world’s best universities to let him in.”



Photo courtesy of Kevin McCarthy

McCarthy spent 14 years in prison. Nine of those years were in solitary confinement at Pelican Bay State Prison’s Security Housing Unit.

Asimov described McCarthy’s experience of solitary as a place where he was put “in a concrete closet on July 26, 2006.” Administration never told him when he might leave and some prisoners were held in solitary for more than 10 years.

McCarthy recounted to Asimov that “it was an ugly place. I forgot what human touch felt like.”

Indefinite lengths in the solitary program were outlawed after thousands of prisoners, including McCarthy, began a hunger strike known as the Short Corridor Hunger Strike.

After joining the protests — protests that started with small groups at Pelican Bay and grew statewide to 29,000 men — he committed his life to obtaining the skills to fight for the rights of the underprivileged and dis-

enfranchised.

The two-month-long statewide hunger strike contributed to the abolition of indefinite solitary confinement in the 2015 settlement in *Ashker v. California*.

This experience helped McCarthy solidify his intended major for college. He planned to pursue legal studies and criminology in preparation for law school.

McCarthy told the Chronicle that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation eliminated all college programs for inmates in solitary confinement during 2008. However, Asimov notes in her article that CDCR denies the suspension of correspondence courses.

After he started his collegiate career in 2007, McCarthy did not have access to college coursework until 2015.

Following Pelican Bay, McCarthy transferred from one end of the state to the other as he moved to Calipatria State

Prison in Imperial County. At Calipatria, McCarthy’s passion for assisting other inmates with legal strategies continued to grow.

He also enrolled in a paralegal course while taking correspondence classes through Coastline, Lassen and Feather River Colleges. McCarthy had to enroll in multiple schools as he realized not one of the correspondence school offered all the transferrable classes required by the UC system.

McCarthy’s cellmate introduced him to a program at UC Berkeley called the Underground Scholars, which is specifically designed for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students.

He also gained mentorship from prison reform lawyers Carol Strickman and Carole Travis, who inspired him to study law. “Their belief in me made me believe in myself,” said McCarthy.

McCarthy graduated in 2016 with an associate degree and

enough transferrable credits to apply to CSU and UC campuses. The question was where.

He applied to five University of California campuses and five California State University campuses with assistance from Travis. She submitted his applications online because colleges no longer accepted paper applications.

Although he was accepted to San Francisco State and the University of California campuses at Riverside, Merced and Santa Cruz, he continued to wait for his dream to come true.

In April 2017, he received news of his acceptance to UC Berkeley, something he had waited for since his transfer from Pelican Bay in 2015. During his transfer to Calipatria, McCarthy saw the San Francisco skyline and promised himself he would get back there.

McCarthy returned to San Francisco through academic rehabilitation and a COVID-19 release that allowed him to enter UC Berkeley in the fall of 2020.

He now works for Underground Scholars, where he assists other incarcerated people applying for college. He also works for Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and was recently published by the UCLA Law Review. McCarthy’s recent article opposed certain prison policies that he argued promote violence and have led to lawsuits seeking abolition of the policies.

UC Berkeley was the first step of McCarthy’s dreams. He now understands that his study of law, motivated by a desire to help others, is what led him back to becoming a “part of the democratic process.”

It is this insight that allowed him to tell the UC admissions committee that his own generosity is what saved his life. “When I supported others, I felt like I was answering a calling. I was developing a new identity and shedding an old one. I grew, matured and became a person of empathy and kindness,” he told the board of admissions.

Eric Lopez, incarcerated for 22 years, said, “McCarthy’s enrollment to UC Berkeley after his release is an inspiration to everyone. I know I will be reaching out to him and the Underground Scholars as I hope to parole this year.”

CORRECTIONS

On page 13 of our April edition, we ran a story under the headline “Report targets mandatory minimums, jury diversity.” In the story we said that “California’s passage of Assembly Bill 1245 in April 2021 allows individuals who have served at least 15 years to file petitions directly to the court for reduction of their sentences.” That statement is not correct. **California did not pass Assembly Bill 1245.**

## Libraries receive \$2M to benefit incarcerated readers

By Harry C. Goodall Jr.  
Journalism Guild Writer

A \$2 million grant has been announced to aid incarcerated people’s access to more books, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports.

The grant funds a project between the San Francisco Public Library and the American Library Association (ALA). As part of this grant, the ALA will start a national survey to identify what library models are in operation.

The San Francisco Public Library system currently has an annual budget of \$180,000 allotted to the San Francisco Library jail book program, the story published on March 20 noted.

Many incarcerated people have limited or no internet access. “Books take my mind out of here,” said Dominique West, a San Francisco jail library patron.

The grant could impact thousands of people who work in and patronize detention center libraries, the newspaper said.

“It’s very hard for people to get access to books if there’s not a dedicated budget line,” said Jeannie Austin, a San Francisco librarian aide. “A lot of prisons don’t budget for libraries. They budget for ‘programs’ and then all the programs are kind of vying for the same pot.”

Some institutions prohibit certain genres of books and monitor what information is allowed within the prisons. Prison Legal News reports books barred from entering

California prisons include: “Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party,” by Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., and “Game of Thrones,” a series by George R.R. Martin.

Some prisons refuse to accept donated used books, which on occasion were used to smuggle drugs in to inmates.

“Access to reading materials and information in general had really eroded in our detention facilities,” said Tracie Hall, ALA executive director.

The Davis Books to Prisoners program, founded by University of California Davis students, attempted to send “Solitary: Unbroke by Four Decades in Solitary Confinement,” by Albert Woodfox to an incarcerated person. According to the article, the book never made it to the requester.

“We don’t get that much sunlight,” said Joshua Soto, a federal detainee. “It’s a stressful time for us, and these books, they take away a little bit of that pain.”

The San Francisco jail book program responds to requests from incarcerated people all over California. The program also keeps up-to-date titles to send to people who request them, the article stated.

“We have a great budget from the public,” said Rachel Kinnon, Jail and Reentry Services manager. “We choose the primary-based patron request, so people are getting the books that they want to read.”

# Groups inspire healing in San Quentin’s LGBTQ+ community

By Cassandra Evans  
Journalism Guild Writer

Eight years have passed since the nation’s first LGBTQ and gender studies program began at San Quentin.

At the time there were concerns about bringing the course inside a men’s prison, but leaders believed it a critical need as San Quentin prepared to be a “hub” for transgender prisoners and a Non-Designated Programming Facility (NDPF).

Two LGBTQ residents at San Quentin approached Billie Mizell about the concept. “LGBTQ incarcerated persons and their allies brought to our attention the potential problems that could arise ... as well as a potential solution. So, like most prison programs, this one began with directly impacted persons identifying an important need, which we then took to the administration for approval to begin program development,” said Mizell, an outside volunteer who sponsors the SQ program.

“Once a new program gains approval, we usually convene a group of interested inside leaders to serve in a pilot group ... For this much-needed program, we could fortunately convene a group who



Members of ALIGHT Justice gather at the San Quentin entrance. ALIGHT was established to bring the Queer community together with non-Queer persons in the prison environment.

collectively had hundreds of hours of training in Restorative Justice, program facilitation, and academics.

“Acting with Compassion & Truth” (ACT) was the resulting pilot. ACT would be open to all, transgender and cisgender, straight, gay, and bisexual.”

Prisons are not generally on the leading edge of integrating communities, “so we spent a long, long time building a safe container before the group opened its doors to

new participants,” said Carlos Meza, a pilot-group member and facilitator.

“We had a dual goal of creating a safe space where women and LGBTQ persons in prison could find self-understanding and trauma-healing, as well as learn about the community’s history, while at the same time educating and building empathy among the majority population.

“Most of the restorative groups here will bring in survivors of violence at the end

of the program, but here we had to plan on having persons in the group who had survived anti-LGBTQ and gender violence and also persons who had caused such violence.”

Mizell added, “The needs of the LGBTQ+ community and the majority community differ ... It took a long time to develop one program to align the needs of the two different communities. To maintain the safer container, we work hard to ensure that the directly impacted folks are not constantly expected to carry the emotional labor of the program.”

ACT facilitators ensure that women and LGBTQ persons remain respected and that no one needs to re-live their trauma.

“Early on, we noticed that a number of the persons joining the program were first-time programmers ... Eventually, we understood that it was because we built an intentionally inclusive program, so people ... felt drawn to this program,” said ACT facilitator Michael Adams.

ALIGHT Justice was established to broaden opportunities for other historically marginalized communities and for those who were reluctant to join restorative and transformative rehabilitative groups, according to

ALIGHT’s website:

“As we have sought out to expand into more communities, we wanted to honor ACT as the beginning of this journey, while also acknowledging and lifting up the many other meaningful projects we have seen born from ACT ... We also wanted a name that reflects who we are ... as well as the work that brings us together. We settled on ALIGHT, a word with multiple definitions, all of which speak so clearly to who we are and the work we do ...

“All of our work strives to create safe spaces ... so that we may find healing solutions that will make the weight of trauma less heavy ... Through education, dialogue, analysis, exercises, and creative/artistic processes, we work to transform trauma into purpose ... We hope to shine brightly into the darkest corners of our systems and, through what Bryan Stevenson coined ‘the power of proximity,’ we hope to illuminate paths of communication, understanding, community, healing, and service ...”

Most ACT graduates who have gained release continue to serve the community, including Meza, who upon his release developed a program for courts to address hate crimes.

# Pride in Prison: Voices from the incarcerated Queer community



Illustration by Andrew Hardy

## EDITOR’S NOTE:

The two opinion articles appearing below and at right were written and submitted by a third-party contributor.

## Melding Pride and Juneteenth America’s first ‘drag queen’ was a former slave

By Floyd Smith  
Death Row Contributor

His name was William Dorsey Swann, but to his friends, he was known as “The Queen.”

Let’s liberate some facts in recognition of both Pride Month and Juneteenth:

In the current “Don’t say gay” climate, a journalism professor at the University of Southern California is changing the political landscape by teaching Black Queer people to be empowered by history.

When I first read Channing Gerard Joseph’s work, “The First Drag Queen Was a Former Slave,” I couldn’t wait for one of my peers — a heterosexual prisoner who considers himself an expert on Black homosexuality — to tell me there were never any gay slaves in America.

One day, like clockwork, that so-called expert began to speak against Marsha P. Johnson.

“Marsha ‘P’ is where you start your history,” he said, “because you can’t name no other Black Queer person in history that got off on the police and kicked off resistance.”

I paused and said, “William Dorsey Swann — 1887.”

He didn’t believe me.

“Come on now, you’re making stuff up, brotha,” he said. “How come I ain’t never heard about this?”

At that moment, I realized that all of our great Black educators either didn’t know — or *did* know, and chose to leave people like me out of Black history.

So I recited a report that appeared in *The Evening Star* in 1887, taken from the Library of

Congress: “A ‘drag party’ raided this morning — John Smith, Jacob Bayard, William Dorsey, who by the way was the “Queen” ... were charged in the police court with being suspicious characters. Last night, attired in handsome silks and satins, each in complete feminine costume, they indulged in a “drag,” in a quiet-looking house on the south side of “F” Street, near 12th. The “party” was raided by Lt. Amiss and the officers of the First Precinct.”

That night, when a cop ripped the Queen’s dress during the scuffle, the Queen said, “You is no gentleman.”

Channing Gerard Joseph’s research has given us historical facts we might never have known otherwise.

“William Dorsey Swann, born circa 1858, into the enslaved ownership of Ann Murray on her plantation in Hancock, Washington County, Md. On June 19, 1865, which marks the day the last enslaved Africans living in Texas were notified about the abolishment of slavery in America, Swann was about 7 years old. Swann endured racism, police surveillance, torture behind bars, and many other injustices.”

Beginning in the 1880s, Swann not only became the first American activist to lead what we would today call a Queer resistance group. In that same decade, he became the first known person to dub himself a “queen of drag,” or, in current parlance, a drag queen.

Wait, there’s more: Swann had an “intimate” friend, Pierce Lafayette, who was also born enslaved in Georgia. Lafayette was owned by the vice



Wikipedia

president of the Confederate States of America, Alexander H. Stephens.

Channing Gerard Joseph writes, “It’s interesting to note that Lafayette’s prior relationship with Felix Hall, a male slave dubbed ‘Lafayette’s negro mistress,’ is the earliest documented same-sexed romance between two enslaved men in the United States.”

Additionally, two of Swann’s younger brothers attended balls dressed in women’s clothing. The balls featured folk songs and dances, including the wildly popular “cakewalk,” so named because the best dancer was awarded a hoe cake or other confection.

House parties, dance battles, underground safe spaces, police raids, incarceration, societal rejection, and being put on blast for simply enjoying the company of the culturally kindred — sound familiar?

Yes, we are still here.

# The history of ‘homosexuality’



Wikipedia

Journalist Karl-Maria Kertbeny, who coined the term “homosexuality,” grew up with a close friend who was gay.

In an era of anti-trans laws, “Don’t Say Gay Bills,” and a growing number of physical, verbal and cyber-attacks, open displays of contempt for queer people all over the world have become a clear trend.

To avoid trying to explain how all of this lands on gay people who are incarcerated, I’d rather spend Pride 2022 and Juneteenth building the morale of our incarcerated soulsmates with a few facts that are affirming and grounded in history. These are reminders of why we all must continue to say “gay.”

“The command of self-respect and human dignity should never exist in the same company with a plea for empathy.” — *Paralaxboi*

The word “homosexual” did not come from the science community, nor did it come from the medical sector of society. And no, the word did not come from American religious institutions. The word “homosexuality” was coined by a journalist named Karl-Maria Kertbeny (Feb. 28, 1824 - Jan. 23, 1882). As a young person working as a bookseller’s apprentice in Berlin in 1868, this Austrian born Hungarian had a close friend who was gay.

This young man killed himself after being blackmailed by an extortionist. Karl said it was this tragic episode that drove him into what he called an “instinctive drive to take issue with every injustice.”

While most people focus on the word’s prefix, homo — from the Greek meaning “same” — Karl-Maria Kertbeny also knew that in *Latin*, homo also means “human.”

In 1868, Karl coined the word “homosexual,” which he would later use in a couple of pamphlets where he argued that the Prussian sodomy law violated the “rights of man.” He also advanced the classic liberal argument that consensual sex acts in private should not be subject to criminal law. Re-

calling his young friend, Karl argued that the Prussian law allowed blackmailers to extort money from homosexuals and often drove them to suicide. The word did not appear in the English language until 1892.

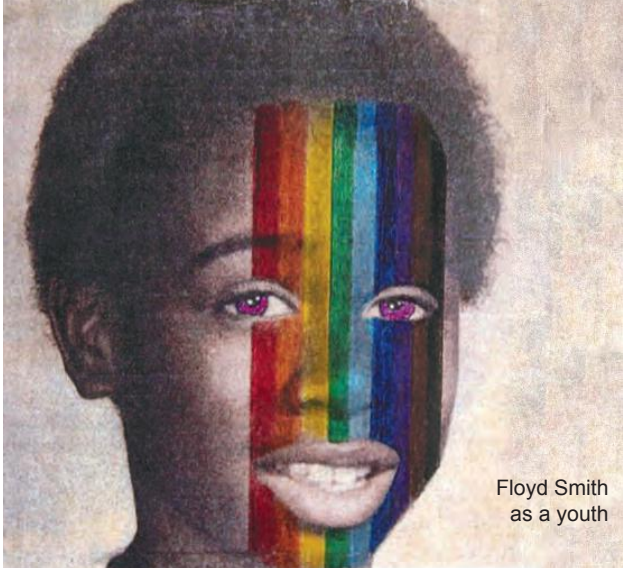
Karl-Maria Kertbeny did something else amazing. He first used the words “homosexual” and “heterosexual” in a private letter on May 8, 1868, advocating for a different system for classifying sexual types. He wanted to replace the pejorative terms “sodomite,” and “pederast,” from the German and French speaking world of his time. Just a thought to remind gay youth of today how powerful they are as they fight against the “Don’t Say Gay Bills” in America: yeah kids, hatred runs deep in history.

When we juxtapose these dates with what was going on in America at the same time, we find that Karl-Maria Kertbeny created the word “homosexual” in Germany three years after the last enslaved Africans in the State of Texas learned about the end of slavery on June 19, 1865. American enslavers did not create the word or the act.

I’ll close with yet another matter about Karl-Maria Kertbeny. Along with Heinrich Hossli and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, he was among the first writers to put before the public that many of the great heroes and sheroes of history were gay.

*Crash version* — While some people focus on the gender part and others focus on the sex part of the word “homosexual,” nobody focuses on the human aspect even though the word “homosexual” was created to confront bullies and to expose the injustices of blackmail and extortion, abuse, mistreatment, and discrimination caused by fellow humans who supremacistize themselves over others, and that is a liberated fact.

—Floyd Smith



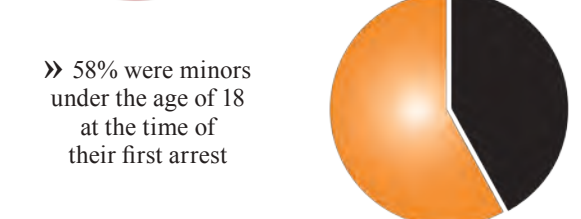
Floyd Smith as a youth

Photo courtesy of Floyd Smith

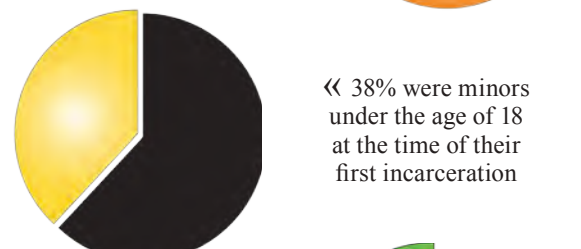
## BY THE NUMBERS: A nationwide survey of over 1,100 LGBTQ+ prisoners in 2015 revealed that:



« 71% had either been expelled from school or had dropped out prior to graduation



» 58% were minors under the age of 18 at the time of their first arrest



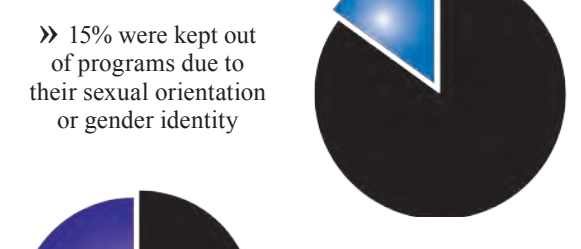
« 38% were minors under the age of 18 at the time of their first incarceration



» 18% were homeless or transient prior to being incarcerated



« 36% were unemployed prior to being incarcerated



» 15% were kept out of programs due to their sexual orientation or gender identity



« 80% had no access to Queer-oriented or LGBTQ+ books and literature

## Fighting prejudice in prison

By Andrew Hardy  
Staff Writer

Gay and transgender prisoners in California present a challenging conundrum to the state’s increasingly progressive criminal justice system, where rehabilitation programming and substance abuse treatment for offenders are the prison system’s core elements.

Over the last several years, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has implemented a sweeping policy of desegregating most prison facilities, ending the decades-old practice of separating inmates with “sensitive” case factors—including sexual orientation and/or gender identity—from the general population. Most prisoners, irrespective of their case factors, are now expected to live together in peace and harmony.

Over the last century, gay and transgender people in America have battled rampant systemic prejudice, discrimination, fear and hatred, often falling victim to harassment and violence in their slow and steady march toward freedom and equality. Gay and transgender prisoners, however, often feel such progress has been slow in coming to the carceral environment.

According to the FBI, 20% of hate crimes committed in 2021 were based on the victim’s sexual orientation, with another 3% are based on gender identity. That means almost a quarter of all hate crimes target a group that makes up less than 2% of the population.

LGBTQ+ prisoners continue to suffer physical, verbal and sexual violence at a significantly higher rate compared to those in the community. Harassment by prison staff and other prisoners is still commonplace, and slurs like “faggot” and “punk” remain popular in the prison vocabulary.

The treatment of Queer prisoners sometimes varies from one prison to another, says Elena Lopez, an IAC representative and transgender resident at San Quentin.

“Coming from a Level IV, you see more respect for the LGBTQ community. When you come down to a Level II, it’s harder for the LGBTQ community to interact with other groups and demographics because “non-designated” mainline prison yards have thrown a lot of the old politics out the window. There are no clear-cut rules on how other groups interact with the Queer community.”

What can LGBTQ+ inmates do to “rewrite” stereotypes?

“We need to show more self-respect, and respect the people we live side-by-side with,” Lopez urges. “Take pride in ourselves, respect our bodies, and hold ourselves to a higher standard. If we expect to be treated with dignity, we need to value the rights of



every other person as well... Some individuals expect—even demand—special treatment and privileges due to their gender identity. For some people, equal treatment isn’t good enough. And that has some effect on the way we are viewed by inmates and staff.”

In 2019, San Quentin hosted the Transgender Day of Remembrance, the first-ever of its kind held in a prison anywhere in America.

Prisoners gathered to share experiences, poetry, music, and a sense of community that transcended the divisions common to the incarcerated. Throughout the gathering, the faces of transgender women who’d been murdered that year flashed across the chapel’s video screens.

Straight supporters and allies came together with the prison’s LGBTQ+ community to

promote understanding, equality and an end to violence against gay and transgender people, both inside and outside of prison.

Among the attendees were Kristopher Applegate, from CDCR headquarters in Sacramento, and California Sen. Scott Wiener.

That year, Wiener authored Senate Bill 132, which established protections and protocols for the housing of transgender and

non-binary prisoners in California prisons. The bill passed the legislature and was signed by Gov. Newsom, going into effect January 1, 2020.

SB132 allows transgender prisoners to be housed at facilities of their gender identity, rather than their physical gender. It also requires prison officials to give greater weight to a transgender or non-binary prisoner’s

perception of safety when making housing assignments.

The law has had little impact at San Quentin State Prison, however.

“I don’t think most custody staff approve of or respect SB132,” said Lopez. “Due to us being incarcerated, they don’t think we’re entitled to the protections the law provides for Queer inmates.”



San Quentin’s 2019 Transgender Day of Remembrance was the first-ever of its kind anywhere in the nation, and featured guests including California Sen. Scott Wiener, a strong proponent for safety and equality for LGBTQ+ prisoners. Lisa Strawn (center photo) coordinated the event, which was attended by dozens of prisoners of all orientations and backgrounds, as well as more than 20- visitors from outside.



Photos by Javier Jimenez, SQNews

LAW & POLICY

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

A federal judge has ruled law enforcements investigators can obtain location data on all cell phones within a reasonable range of a crime. The ruling upheld geofence warrants requested by law enforcement to start and expand searches of location information gathered by Google that documents customers’ data for a specific, concentrated area. The warrants are typically generated where a crime has occurred. The warrant includes the activity of cell phone users in the area whether they are guilty or not, or regardless of whether they are even a suspect, according to a March 11 article on *reason.com*. Google tracks cell phone

# Federal judge allows sweeping collection of location data

activity from clients who automatically opt-in on their service agreements wrote legal scholar Orin S. Kerr of the University of California at Berkeley School of Law. Kerr states Google logs users location 240 times per day, and these records have become a “useful tool for law enforcement.” In the case in question, *United States v. Chatrrie*, records revealed law enforcement asked for warrants to identify every phone logged into Google within a 150-meter radius of a bank robbery in Virginia. The warrants set time and distance parameters. The original warrant requested usage of all phones 30 minutes before the robbery took place to 30 minutes after the robbery. The initial warrant compelled Google to inform law

enforcement that 19 phones fit the criteria. It also chronicled the travel patterns of the 19 phones for the hour requested. Subsequent warrants then expanded the location of the 19 phones by increasing the time window from a half-hour before and after, to an hour before and after. Kerr states this increase in time allowed the government to track the 19 phones in a detailed fashion, yet the warrant gave law enforcement no information as to who actually possessed the phones. The gist of the case raised a legal issue as to the attainment of geofence information. Kerr believes law enforcement’s warrant request of Google’s phone data should be protected against Fourth Amendment violations related to search and seizure issues. Essentially, law enforcement

can track any phone that has not opted-out of Google’s service plan. Another issue raised was the validity of the execution of a geofence warrant and how probable cause standards apply. If people voluntarily opt-in to the Google location finder, what kind of probable cause protection must be considered in the attainment of a geofence warrant? The prosecution argued Fourth Amendment protection does not apply in this case and probable cause for the 19 phones should take precedence because the phones, although considered individual, were evidence in a robbery. The government continued, stating there is no requirement for probable cause as to “each individual person’s evidence being evidence itself.” The United States cited a

legal argument asking the court to imagine when the government obtains a warrant to search a home where four people live. The government implied investigators do not need evidence that all four people were involved in the crime. Kerr believes revealing records that exist in Google’s data banks, which prove a phone was in the area around the bank robbery, should be viewed differently as a physical search of place, things or one’s own body. Deciding Judge Lauck said it could not be possible to identify every innocent person (phone) in a criminal investigation. Lauck allowed the broadness of a criminal search by stating broadness itself — the standard of probable cause — and Fourth Amendment

analysis should continue regarding the blanket sweep of phones during an investigation. The judge acknowledged his decision and its application will change over the years. He agreed the geofence warrant violated the Fourth Amendment, until the good faith exception was applied. This exception offered the judge discretion to consider the broad-based searches and the legal issues around geofence warrants — calling them “novel” in scope. Privacy laws should be more clearly defined at the legislative level, Kerr wrote. However, he said until this occurs, Lauck’s decision regarding warrants for cell phones that are located around an area where a crime occurred will continue to be executed.

## Biden seeks alternatives to detention for undocumented immigrants

By Carlos Drouaillet  
Staff Writer

The Biden administration is planning to use “alternatives to detention” for persons entering the United States illegally, *Reuters* reports. The alternatives include house arrest and the use of ankle bracelets, and monitoring via mobile phones. BI Incorporated, a subsidiary of the private prison contractor GEO Group, was chosen to administer the program, the Feb. 16 story reported. The trial program dictates immigrants remain at their place of dwelling for 12 hours a day, from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., reported *Reuters*. Many adult asylum pursuers will be included among the hundreds of immigrants participating in the house arrest experimental program, which provide COVID-19

testing facilities in Houston and Baltimore, according to an ICE memo sent to lawmakers and seen by *Reuters*. Immigrant rights supporters are not convinced of the efficacy of the use of ankle bracelets or other monitoring methods, arguing those tactics magnify the scrutiny of immigrants without considerably reducing detention. “It is a step in the right direction,” Jacinta Gonzalez, a campaign coordinator for immigrant support association Mijente, said. *Reuters* reported that BI Incorporated received a \$2.2 billion contract in 2020 to oversee such programs, according to federal contracting records. The Biden administration closed two immigrant detention facilities and instructed ICE to reduce who it aims to capture, focusing mainly on

criminals. There are 164,000 detainees in “alternative to detention programs,” according to ICE data; however the Biden’s administration is requesting Congress funding to cover up to 400,000 asylum pursuers, *Reuters* reported. “The idea was for them close down, not for them to shape shift,” concluded Gonzalez. Conservatives have been working to reverse Biden’s decision to end Title 42 on May 23, a controversial measure that quickly expelled immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Time Magazine* reported on April 25 that “Nearly 10,000 cases of violence against immigrants expelled under Title 42 have been documented since the start of the Biden Administration alone, according to Human Rights First.”

## Bill would require inmate benefit funds to be spent on rehabilitation

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

Legislation has been introduced to curb questionable spending of jails’ inmate benefit funds. AB 1782 would require that inmate benefit funds be spent “solely” rather than “primarily” for rehabilitation programs, job training and other things that directly benefit the incarcerated. The funds are to be used for prisoner phone calls and canteen purchases. The bill was authored by Assemblyman Reggie Jones-Sawyer, D-Los Angeles. It was prompted by an investigation by the *Sacramento Bee* reporting on questionable spending by the Sheriff’s Office. That included spending on building maintenance, staff salaries and lodging in resort hotels, the *Bee* reported Feb. 22. The sheriff’s department

took \$15 million for staff salaries and bought a \$1.45 million photography system, the newspaper reported. “In many county jails, incarcerated people struggle even to access books and writing materials, let alone educational opportunities, supportive programing or meaningful legal resources,” said Margot Mendelson, Prison Law Office attorney. “Hopefully this bill will get us greater responsibility and accountability of sheriffs in order to ensure a more successful reentry of incarcerated people back into our communities,” said Jones-Sawyer. The investigation disclosed how a sheriff over decades has amassed million’s of dollars in fees, paying for projects that are supposed to come from their own budgets, said the article. The county finance department said the spending was technically legal. The legislation would take

away sheriffs’ authority to continue spending leftover money from the fund, and the bill would rename it to Incarcerated Peoples’ Welfare Fund, according to the report. “When I read how they were using the money, it was almost as if they were using the money to augment budgets that they may have felt cut; it just felt wrong,” said Jones-Sawyer. In some cases nine out of every 10 dollars from the inmates’ welfare fund, has gone toward benefits, training and jail maintenance, said the article. Programs that are for incarcerated people include law library and education. A 2019 federal civil rights lawsuit said the sheriff’s department was ordered to improve treatment and in-custody programming, according to the newspaper. “Extreme isolation and horrific conditions persist,” the *Bee* reported.

## Warden Broomfield discusses Security Threat Group transfers at Town Hall

By Jerry Maleek Gearin,  
Staff Writer, and  
Kevin Sawyer,  
Contributing Writer

San Quentin Warden Ron Broomfield called a town-hall meeting April 15 in the Catholic Chapel to discuss CDCR’s plan to transfer Security Threat Groups (STGs) to programming facilities. Associate Warden Rosales and Captains Dorsey and Arnold attended the meeting along with about 40 incarcerated residents. Broomfield previously attended a wardens’ meeting in Sacramento where the transfers were a topic of discussion. That meeting prompted his call for the town hall with San Quentin residents. “The mission of the department is changing, the department wants to give everyone an opportunity to participate in rehabilitation,” said Broomfield. A CDCR memorandum dated April 11, 2022, addressed “To all incarcerated in state prison” said that the current policy that separates STGs “does not align with CDCR’s mission.” “To better support CDCR’s mission, STG status will no longer be used as the only fac-

tor in deciding where to house someone,” said the memorandum. Rosales cited the story of an incarcerated gang member who went to board with no prior disciplinary actions, but had no job skills, as an example of the problems created by segregation of STGs. A meeting attendee asked about the negative mindset of nonprogrammers and how that can affect lifers who may have to defend themselves in a fight and later explain the incident to the parole board. “You can expect that the department will be focusing on this stuff,” Broomfield said. “Inmates who demonstrate unwillingness to program through violence will ultimately be transfered to higher-security institutions.” Broomfield said that there are no transfers of STGs to San Quentin scheduled at this time. STGs will be at levels three and four. However, they will have the opportunity to transfer to San Quentin by being disciplinary free. “We are committed to your well-being, and to providing you a safe rehabilitative environment where you can serve your sentence,” concluded the Director’s memorandum.

## SQ residents not counted in Marin County census

By Daniel Chairez Jr.  
Journalism Guild Writer

Eliminating San Quentin Prison’s inmate population from Marin County’s Census totals created new district lines politically beneficial to the Latino community, KPIX reports, The lines were drawn in response to a new law that requires incarcerated people at San Quentin to be counted as residents of where they last lived. That dropped the San Rafael area population by several thousand. “And that really made District 4 under-represented,” Marin Assistant County Administrator Dan Eilerman said. “So, that’s where we really focused, and District 4 includes the (predominately Latino) Canal area,” he told KPIX. There was a lot of shifting people around after these new boundaries were drawn; their primary focus was on “communities of interest.” The Canal District registered on all points. District 4 now includes three heavily populated Latino communities: along Lincoln Avenue, part of Bret Harte, and Cal Park. The figures consider who shares things like language, economic indicators, and multi-family housing, said Eilerman.

A frontrunner for these changes was Omar Carrera, CEO of the Canal Alliance. “So that’s the major accomplishment,” said Carrera, “that now this community is going to be able to speak with a louder voice to their elected official.” Carrera spoke about how these new boundaries will be advocated by one supervisor, instead of three. The supervisor for District 4, Dennis Rodoni, believes he will have a stronger voice when speaking to the Board of Supervisors about Latino concerns. “It means we have a solid block of residents to represent in District 4,” stated Rodoni. “And now, because of that, I’m representing the majority of the Hispanics and Latinx community in Marin.” This is the result activists have been pushing for, with Latinos being more of a presence now and not simply voices upon deaf ears. “Nobody’s going to thrive in Marin County unless the Latino community is also thriving,” Carrera said. “And I think that is the message that we want to send across all levels, including the political one.” The new regional parameters were affirmed by the Board of Supervisors on December 14.

## LA County Supes vote to centralize criminal justice programs

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

Los Angeles County is moving toward major reforms in its social and criminal justice programs and structure. The Board of Supervisors voted to create a centralized home for various programs created in the last few years to support its Care First, Jails Last initiative. It will be called the Justice, Care and Opportunities Department, the Bay City News Service reported as published in the L.A. Times on March 1. The plan includes closing the men’s Main Jail, implementing an Office of Adult Programs, centralizing all prevention, and youth services, said the report. “But if we stop for a moment of critical reflection, we have to really acknowledge that process is not the same as progress, and what we need now is progress,” said Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. The county staff has three months to prepare staffing plans and information about a centralized department, location, cost, and a timeline, for implementation, noted the story. In Kuehl’s motion to the

board, she welcomed the progress that has already been made in the last eight years, but more steps are needed, she said. The supervisors asked for a different report concerning the July introduction of the Department of Youth Development, on how it will work together with the adult programs already in progress, according to the story. “This is the big picture, but I hope we all are committed as well to making sure we have the right department head for this department, and the right county employees to staff this department,” said Supervisor Janice Hahn. Supervisor Kathryn Barger opposed Kuehl’s motion, with concerns about the structure of the new agency, even though other board members supported it, reported the article. Kuehl’s motion says: “This board should establish an umbrella entity that braids together Care First, Jails Last service delivery and advisory bodies into a cohesive team that is supported by a common mission and an administrative support structure that facilitates person and equity-centric service delivery.”

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

Ketanji Brown Jackson will be the first former public defender and the first Black woman on the U.S. Supreme Court. Her confirmation marks the first time White males will be a minority on the bench.

Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall was the last person who was a defense attorney before joining the highest court in the land. According to *The Hill*, Brown Jackson’s appointment “has energized criminal justice reformers who believe it’s time for the high court to have a justice who has represented the legal system’s most vulnerable defendants.”

The March 20 story noted that the Supreme Court established the public defender system with its precedent-set-

## Justice reformers ‘energized’ by confirmation of Brown Jackson

ting decision *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963). The decision mandated that states provide counsel for criminal defendants who could not afford a lawyer.

Radhika Singh of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association told *The Hill*, “To have someone who has seen day to day how the legal system either treats or effects or even pulls people into the system because of their level of poverty is something we haven’t seen on the court and it’s a perspective that’s missing.”

Singh said the presence of a judge who practiced as a public defender can restore trust in the rule of law and the execution of the judicial system in its entirety.

The Cato Institute’s Clark Neily said that former prosecutors, and attorneys who



File photo

never represented a criminal defendant in their careers, are disproportionately represented on the bench. He believes

the imbalance has caused judicial blind spots.

Neily added, “If you have a wildly disproportionate num-

ber of people who have sought out work that involves putting human beings in cages ... it seems likely that they’ll have

sort of a greater level of comfort doing that when they get on the bench.”

Georgetown law Professor Abbe Smith described the Supreme Court as “a kind of bully pulpit, (that) can have enormous impact on the way judges in our states and localities rule in criminal cases.”

Neidig stated Justice Jackson’s appointment encourages criminal justice reformers by creating hope that she could become a catalyst from the bench that can advance their movement forward.

Smith agreed with the new hope given to criminal defendants, their families, loved ones and their communities. But they reminded America of Brown Jackson’s uphill battle to implement social reform: “Even in dissent, (Brown Jackson) can have an impact.”

## Criminal fines take toll on poor

By Harry C. Goodall Jr.  
Journalism Guild Writer

Criminal fines and fees often help fuel city revenues while harming the poor communities of color they serve, according to *Reuters*.

San Francisco was one of the first cities to confront misappropriated fines and fees by “scrapping all administrative fees in its criminal justice system in 2018,” said Anne Stuhldreher, director of the San Francisco Treasurer’s Financial Justice Project.

The city eliminated the debt of 21,000 people, a total of \$32 million, the April 1 story reported. The elimination of collected fees included ankle bracelet rentals, pre-sentencing reports, and probation fees. San Francisco also made the city jail phone calls free.

“A lot of this is ‘high pain, low gain,’” Stuhldreher said.

San Francisco has also halted suspending drivers’ licenses for unpaid traffic tickets, which prompted Washington, D.C. and 22 states to do the same.

“At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has made it even harder for Americans to pay their bills and care for their families, taking away someone’s driver’s license can make it nearly impossible to hold down a job and therefore

pay back their debts,” said Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware in a statement.

In Ferguson, a town of 21,000 people in Missouri, the Department of Justice reported more than 16,000 people had unpaid fines that had turned into warrants in late 2014.

“That report showed that when you take a poor community and try to use this method to fill budget holes, you’re trying to get money from the poorest members of the community,” said Joanna Weiss, co-director of Fines and Fees Justice Center.

“Fines and fees are a problem everywhere, and it’s remarkable ... how many places are hungry to address this problem,” she told the Thomas Reuters Foundation.

There was a lot of momentum stemming from a 2015 report generated about the killing of Michael Brown, a Black teen shot dead by a Ferguson police officer.

Another Justice Department report showed that almost a quarter of this city’s budget came from fines and fees.

It was a policy-shaping strategy that was “shaping” policing policies, said the article.

Anand Subramanian, managing director of the nonprofit PolicyLink, isn’t sure how effective some reforms will be.

“In some places it actually increases, and in some places it doesn’t. But nobody has really done a holistic assessment,” he said. Many cities and counties are ill-equipped to evaluate revenue from fines versus collection costs, he commented.

PolicyLink feels that there will always be a need for an audit system, Subramanian said. Such a system could have led to local officials being more open to re-examining fees as opposed to fines, said the article.

“Has it changed the way we think about things in St. Paul? Absolutely,” said Subramanian. “It’s a conversation all the time now.”

Paul Conley Briley spent time in a San Francisco jail a few years ago. He feels the hardest part of incarceration was not talking to his family. His goal was to spare family members the cost of his phone calls, according to the article.

“If an incarcerated person made two 15-minute a day calls, it would have cost \$300 over an average 70-day stay,” he said. “I knew they didn’t have money.”

Briley also pointed out the high cost of items like soap among other fees that can leave incarcerated member’s families with growing debt, according to the article.

## California Voters Concerned About Crime

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

California voters want a crackdown on rising crime and better accountability, a university survey reports.

Seventy-eight percent of those surveyed say crime has increased in the state, according to the UC Berkeley/*Los Angeles Times* poll. Fifty-nine percent said they would change Proposition 47, which reduced some felonies to misdemeanors.

Too few “smash and grab robberies” are solved or punished, the *Times* reported.

Republican and Democratic legislators have introduced bills to amend Proposition 47. One would lower the value of

goods stolen back to \$400 to make it a felony, noted the article.

The poll indicates 88% of conservatives want to amend Proposition 47, said the Feb. 15 *Times* story.

Property and violent crimes increased in Los Angeles, Oakland, San Diego, and San Francisco in 2021, prior to the pandemic, said the story.

More Californians are concerned about crime than they are about the coronavirus pandemic, reported the *Times*.

Another proposal would allow prosecutors to add sentence enhancements, and allow them to charge misdemeanors as felonies if a defendant has two or more prior theft convictions, according to newspaper.

“There is also active effort on the part of people who oppose criminal justice reform to push a narrative that these crimes shifts are related to criminal justice reform, said Lenore Anderson, president of Alliance for Safety and Justice.

Late last year Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed \$300 million to help law enforcement combat organize theft rings, noted the article.

Fifty-one percent of those polled said they did not like the way Newsom handles crime and public safety.

“Every candidate ... has to be tough on crime. It is the top issue in the state,” said Anne Hyde-Dunsmore, campaign manager of the failed Newsom recall campaign.

## Attica uprising documentary receives Oscar nomination

By Vincent E. O’Bannon  
Staff Writer

Legendary filmmaker and documentarian Stanley Nelson, and UC Berkeley Alum Traci A. Curry, received an Oscar nomination for “*Attica*”: their emphatic depiction of the 1971 Attica prison revolt, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports.

During the famous 1971 uprising, prisoners took 42 staff members hostage and issued a list of 30 demands over a four-day period in protest over miserable prison conditions.

“That’s what the Attica rebellion was about. They didn’t want a get-out-of-jail-free card. What they wanted, as long as they were incarcerated, was to be treated like human beings,” said Nelson.

The standoff ended when then-New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered police officers to fire into the prison courtyard dubbed “Times Square,” killing 32 prisoners and 10 hostages.

The film’s true power came from archival footage from the Library of Congress’ National Film Registry. They

also used graphic still photos and first-hand recollections of those who were there, the *Chronicle* reports.

“I could feel the tension in the air. The tension was so strong that I could basically grab it and hold on to it. Am I going to make it? Am I going to live through this? And that tension was so strong, I could touch it, I could cut it and hold it in my hand. Death was written in the air,” said Alhajji Sharif, a former Attica prisoner in the film.

The footage allowed the team to tell the Attica story very vividly, the *Chronicle* reported.

“While I don’t know if the film offers any easy answers, I do hope it inspires people to ask more questions,” Curry told the *Chronicle*. “I hope that this film can be an impetus for people to get curious about the system we actually have – not the one that exists in the public imagination and is informed by fictional portrayals of prison – but the real one that we allow to exist in our name, and then to really interrogate whether it in fact does make us safer, or is a catch-all, Band-Aid solution

for real social problems that we lack the will and imagination to really deal with.”

Nelson and Curry believe that “*Attica*” informs current social justice issues, especially in terms of criminal justice, the article noted.

“I would say that way too many people are incarcerated for way too many small crimes. The penal system just doesn’t make sense in so many ways. People still are incarcerated for marijuana – and marijuana is legal,” said Nelson. “The prison industry has become a real industry. We show that in ‘*Attica*,’ that Attica was and is a town that survived off the prison.”

Nelson made mention of the upcoming closure of the California Correctional Center in Susanville, during his interview with the *Chronicle*.

Rural towns with prisons depend on those facilities to provide employment and an influx of state and federal funding. The local economy could be devastated by the June 30 closing, proving that the for-profit economy of the prison system encourages more incarceration, Nelson said.

## Judge orders collection of race data

By William Earl Tolbert  
Journalism Guild Writer

A judge has ordered prosecutors to provide the defense with information about the race of defendants and victims in murder cases.

Superior Court Judge Tim P. Kam said the defense must prove Lorenzo Mateo Cortez, was charged with a more serious offense than persons of other ethnicity. Cortez, 26, “was born to a Black mother and a Latino father,” the de-

fense noted.

The defense seeks Solano County data in an attempt to prove that the Cortez case violates a 2020 law which says the sentencing on the basis of race, ethnicity or national origin is unlawful.

“Getting ‘raw data’ to actually file a formal motion in court is necessary,” said Thomas Kensok, defense attorney, according to the *Vacaville Reporter* on Feb. 17.

“Kim issued three orders: The DA’s Office must provide

defendants’ race information in murder cases filed between Jan. 1, 2011 and Feb. 16, 2022; arrest and detention forms about the facts of the cases; and information on the race of the victims during the 10 years period,” the newspaper reported.

Kensok and attorney Jon C. Weir has hope to prove their client suffered a charge or conviction of a more serious offense than defendants in similar cases who were of other ethnicities.

## Witnesses admit framing Ohio man

By Marcus Casillas  
Journalism Guild Writer

A wrongfully convicted Ohio man is free after serving more than 25 years after two eyewitnesses admitted to framing him.

Marvell Dixon wept when his attorney told him he was cleared, his attorney said.

“When I called him a couple days ago and said, ‘You’re going home.’ There was just silence,” Dixon’s attorney, Kort Gatterdam, told The Columbus Dispatch March 25. “He has been on pins and needles for so long.”

Dixon was 21 when he was sentenced to life in prison for shooting and killing a 17-year-

old and injuring another person.

Dixon was convicted of murdering 17-year-old Douglas Harvey of Detroit and wounding of Ervin Nixon.

He was charged after Nixon told police that Dixon shot him. A second witness strengthened Nixon’s testimony.

Nixon said that he decided to say Dixon had committed the shooting after the two men got into a confrontation in a correctional facility in 1996 due to a gang rivalry.

Ultimately, Nixon admitted he lied.

“I made a mistake as a kid, pointing him out saying that he did something that he didn’t do,” Nixon said, according to transcripts. “I thought I was

doing the right thing for a cause that wasn’t true.”

The second witness, Joe Robinson, supported Nixon’s assertion that Dixon was framed, prompting a May 2022 motion that led to Nixon’s freedom.

“Their case was the two witnesses who have both recanted under oath,” Gatterdam said. “The state has no case to pursue. The Franklin County prosecutor’s office will not retry the case.”

Nixon was convicted of perjury and sentenced to nine months in 2015. Robinson pleaded guilty to perjury and was sentenced to time served.

Dixon may be entitled to compensation under the law for wrongful imprisonment.

## Nevada reverses vaccine mandate

By Joshua Grant  
Journalism Guild Writer

Vaccinations are no longer necessary for prison staff, health workers or college students in Nevada after the Legislative Commission overruled prior emergency measures mandated by the state Board of Health.

The 6-6 vote prohibited the board from extending the 120-day emergency mandate for

masks and vaccines, according to *The Associate Press*. In order to get any permanent requirements, it would take a full vote from the Legislature, which won’t meet until 2023, according to the Dec. 22, 2021 article.

“To me, it is unfathomable that we are arguing over whether a vaccine policy is something we should support,” said Senate Majority Leader Nicole Cannizzaro.

This all came down during the 2021 rise of COVID-19 cases in Nevada, specifically rises in Omicron cases. With this came rising concern for the B2 variant that was affecting people across the world.

Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak, however, plans to continue pursuing an extension to the vaccine mandates in 2022, said Meghin Delaney, the governor’s spokesperson.

# Danny Trejo’s redemption

By Randy Hansen  
Journalism Guild Writer

Danny Trejo is a man who went from a life of crime to a life of stardom and fame.

“Be a good example,” says Trejo, who spent years in California jails and prisons, including as boxing champion of San Quentin.

In his autobiographical book, “Trejo: My Life of Crime, Redemption and Hollywood,” he says of his childhood, “There was no tenderness. I never heard a love you. I used to watch dads hug their kids, but my dad was ... the word machismo was invented for him!”

Trejo’s parents were two Mexican immigrants living in the Echo Park area of Los Angeles. Trejo was born on May 16, 1944, to Alice Rivera and Dan Trejo.

At 9 years old he tried marijuana and ventured on to heroin at 12.

Trejo then advanced to drug dealing and armed robberies which eventually landed him in San Quentin State Prison. There, in the ‘60s, he became a champion boxer. Later he also served time in Soledad and Folsom Prisons.

A documentary about his life was released in 2019 called “Inmate #1: Redemption by Danny Trejo.” He wrote, “In prison, I was involved in a fight in prison in which some people were seriously injured. I remember that I only asked God: ‘Just let me die with dignity and I will say your name every day.’”



SQNews archive photo

In the mid ‘80s he was invited to train actor Eric Roberts in a film called “*Escape by Train*” on some boxing techniques. He was noticed and offered a minor role in the movie. This started his future career in criminal roles in the cinema, according to Helen Hernandez of *Oicanadian.com*.

After several decades on movie roles, Trejo’s distant cousin, Robert Rodriguez, helped him get the starring role in “*Machete*” in 2010 and then “*Machete Kills*” in 2013.

In his career Trejo has worked with Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, Johnny Depp, Nicolas Cage, Steve Buscemi

and George Clooney. He also appeared in the blockbuster TV series “*Breaking Bad*.”

According to a study by Buzz Bingo, Trejo is considered the actor who died the most in Hollywood cinema. He knows his story is a positive influence, especially to the younger crowd. He has reached them by giving talks and attending conferences warning about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs.

“I go out and dream that I am still in prison. That wakes you up fast and is a reminder not to get off the right track,” Trejo said. “It doesn’t matter where you start, it’s where you end!”

# California Supreme Court rules on early release for violent offenders

By George Franco  
Journalism Guild Writer

The California Supreme Court has ruled that correctional officials don’t have to consider early release for violent felons, even if their primary offense is nonviolent.

The high court ruled that corrections officials acted properly in drafting regulations that exclude from early parole consideration any prisoner who is currently serving a term of incarceration for a violent felony.

“In reaching this conclusion, we find the Constitutional text (of the ballot initiative) is ambiguous,” wrote Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye on behalf of the court.

In agreement with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the justices found that “the ballot materials reveal that the voters intended to exclude any inmate currently serving a term for a violent felony from early parole consideration, regardless of whether such an inmate has also been convicted of a nonviolent felony.”

Proposition 57 permits most prisoners to attempt early parole. It is intended to motivate prisoners to participate in rehabilitation programs. A

parole board might still refuse individual releases, including just nonviolent offenders, excluding those convicted of sex crimes, *The Associated Press* reported Jan. 3.

“Nobody thought this provision would apply to anyone with a violent conviction. And to take an extremely literal view of the (ballot) language and apply it in a way that nobody on either side thought it was going to be applied would be absurd,” said Kent Scheidegger, legal director of the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation, opposing such an interpretation of the law.

The Supreme Court overturned one appeals court decision that would have nullified a corrections regulation that excludes prisoners serving time for any violent crime, even though not their primary offense.

California’s definition of violent offenses covers 23 of the most dangerous crimes, such as murder, voluntary manslaughter, attempted murder, kidnapping, assault, arson, robbery and extortion.

The case was filed for Mohammad Mohammad, who pleaded not guilty to nine second-degree robbery counts considered violent crimes, and six nonviolent felonies of

receiving stolen property.

A Los Angeles County judge stipulated as the principal crime one property offense, and said the other sentences would run accordingly, giving him a mass sentence of 29 years in prison.

Mohammad contends that subject to the plain understanding of Proposition 57, he should be considered for release after serving only three years for the property crime. The appeals court agreed.

Heather Mackay, Mohammad’s attorney, may file another appeal in county superior court, based on some questions left unresolved by Monday’s decision.

“They left open the possibility (for future court interpretation) that Mr. Mohammad and other folks with mixed offenses might become eligible for early parole after they serve the violent felony portions of their terms,” she said.

A year ago, the justices ruled that inmates convicted of nonviolent sex offenses may be eligible for parole under Proposition 57. “Here, by contract, the ballot materials provide much stronger support for the Department’s position,” wrote Cantil-Sakauye.

# Montana to end solitary confinement of mentally ill prisoners

By William Earl Tolbert  
Journalism Guild Writer

Montana has agreed to halt solitary confinement and making unrealistic expectations of seriously mentally ill prisoners, *The Associated Press* reports.

“This settlement represents huge gains for the humane treatment of inmates with severe mental illness,” said Bernadette Franks-Ongoy, executive director of Disability Rights Montana.

The change came in the settlement of a federal lawsuit filed in 2015 by Disability Rights Montana. It prohibits solitary confinement for prisoners who behave badly because of illnesses such as bipolar, schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder.

Disability Rights Montana is a federal watchdog that monitors and investigates establishments for civil rights violations of the disabled.

A Disability Rights Montana investigation revealed that mentally ill patients were placed in solitary confinement without clothing, bedding and functional toilets.

Patients were placed in such inhumane conditions based simply on behavior caused by the patient’s mental illness. Some of the patients were misdiagnosed and their medication withheld.

Under the agreement terms, the Montana State Prison must provide qualified mental health professionals who are obligated to implement a written individual treatment plan for each

patient under their care, *AP* reported March 17.

The Montana Department of Corrections has one year to complete the modifications of the facility, according to the terms of the settlement.

“We still have a long way to go to reinstate the dignity of the incarcerated individuals in Montana, but it can no longer be said that solitary confinement exists for mentally ill individuals at the Montana State Prison,” said Caitlin Borgman, executive director of the ACLU of Montana.

The department has asked Gov. Greg Gianforte for funding in his 2023-24 budget for three more licensed therapists, three more mental health technicians and two more activities coordinators.

# Jail, prison transfers facilitate spread of coronavirus

By Randy Hansen  
Journalism Guild Writer

California local jails and prisons continue to have problems controlling the spread of COVID-19 and some observers blame prison and jail transfers. Others blame the low percentage of prison staff having immunizations.

Officials are concerned that the numerous transfer of incarcerated people from jails to prisons to court and back cause much of the spread throughout the system, according to *ABC 30 Action News* in Fresno.

“We transport and receive numerous busloads of inmates coming from all across the country to our facility on a weekly basis,” said Aaron McGlothlin, Union president at Mendota Federal prison.

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—Aaron McGlothlin  
Union President  
Mendota Federal Prison

The impact of low staff shots was noted by Attorney Eric H. Schweitzer of Schweitzer and Davidian. “We know from prior and peridia research that has been done that most of the spread of COVID in a carceral or jail environment occurs because the staff brings into the jail, not because inmates spread it around.”

According to McGlothlin, Mendota is like a holding facility with many prisoners mov-

ing in and out.

“About a week ago, we received a transport from southern California and quite a few of the inmates, as soon as they came off the bus, they were positive for corona virus,” McGlothlin added.

According to courthouse sources, *Action News* reported that the number of quarantine inmates from facilities like Fresno County jail and Mendota Prison expanded, adding 400 within one week.

Prison union representatives complain that prisoners aren’t being tested before they arrive at their facilities, *ABC 30* in Fresno reported. The warden has requested that transfers be stopped during COVID-19, but prisoners keep piling in by the busload, according to union representatives.

# North Korean prisons rife with abuse

By George Franco  
Journalism Guild Writer

Korea Future—a non-profit whose mission is to investigate human rights violations in North Korea—has received hundreds of complaints of human rights violations, including physical and sexual violence, happening inside North Korean prisons.

According to the BBC, “the non-profit has identified 597 perpetrators linked to 5,181 human rights violations committed against 785 detainees in 148 penal facilities,” the report said.

“The prison system and the violence within it were being used to suppress a population of 25 million people,” Korea Future co-director in Seoul, Suyeon Yoo, told the BBC.

Lee Young-Joo is one of the 200 witnesses who contributed to this investigation. The evidence has been compiled into a database in hopes that it will eventually be used to bring the responsible parties to justice.

North Korea is currently more secluded from the world than ever before. Ruled by the Kim family for three generations, people are mandated to

show absolute devotion to the leader Kim Jong-un and his family.

Young-Joo attempted to defect from North Korea in 2007. She was caught in China and sent back. She has repeatedly tried to escape and has been physically punished for doing so. Prisons were supposed to deter people from escaping North Korea, but didn’t work on Young-Joo and her cell mates.

“The guard would ask me to come to the cell bars and put out my hands, then he started beating my hands with a king ring until [they] got all bloated and blue. I didn’t cry out of pride, these guards consider those of us who tried to leave North Korea as traitors.”

In her cell, she was ordered to sit cross-legged, both hands on her knees, not moving for 12 hours. She had limited access to water and two pieces of a corn husk to eat.

“I feel like an animal not a human,” she said of her time waiting three months to be sentenced at the Onson Detention Center in North Korea.

In the North Hamgyon Provincial Holding Centre, an interviewee witnessed a fellow detainee suffering through an

abortion. She confirmed the baby survived but was later drowned in water.

Youn-joo was sentenced to three and-a-half years in prison. “I was worried whether I would still be alive by the time I finished my sentence,” she said. “When you go to these places, you have to give up being human to endure and survive,” she says.

Saeron Yoo, who enjoys a new life in South Korea, was also in the Onson Detention Centre, and remembers receiving brutal beatings by the State security guards.

“They beat your thighs with a wooden stick. You walk in but you crawl out. I couldn’t look at other people being beaten and if I turned my head away they would make me look at it. They kill your spirit.”

The International Criminal Court of experts investigations has enough information that is admissible in court to prosecute. Saeron and Young-Joo hope this report will bring them a step closer to the justice they crave.

“If there is a way, I want them to be punished,” Saeron said, remembering her prison nightmares.

# J&J study injected prisoners with asbestos

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

Pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson has apologized for funding a study that injected incarcerated people with cancer-causing asbestos, according to *Fierce Pharma*.

In 1971 a J&J study injected 10 incarcerated men with asbestos, a key ingredient in their baby powder, said the March 8 article. The testing involved mostly Black prisoners.

“This is some pretty horrific stuff, and the plaintiffs will definitely want to use it to show J&J’s handling of its baby powder line over the years hasn’t been the

greatest,” said Carl Tobias, a University of Richmond law professor.

Dermatologist Albert Kligman’s experiment at Holmesburg Prison in Pennsylvania was public knowledge, but J&J’s involvement was not known until last year, when it came to light during two lawsuits over claims that the company’s talcum powder causes cancer.

Kligman asked 10 people from the prison to receive injections into their skin of chrysolite, causing granulomas, a bumpy inflammation of the skin, said *Fierce Pharma*.

“My use of paid prisoners as research subjects in the 1950s and 1960s was in keep-

ing with this nation’s standard protocol for conducting scientific investigations at the time,” said Kligman.

Kligman died in 2010 and never admitted that the experiments he conducted were wrong, according to the report.

“We deeply regret the conditions under which these studies were conducted, and in no way do they reflect the values or practices we employ today,” a J&J spokesperson said.

J&J has offered \$2 billion to settle tens of thousands of cases, reported the article.

The company defended the testing as accepted practice at the time, reported the article.

# California opens first prison facility specifically for incarcerated military vets

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

California has opened the nation's first prison yard designed to meet the special needs of incarcerated veterans. The yard and special housing, opened last year at Soledad Prison, now houses 1,200 vets. The 34 prisons run by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation houses about 7,000 veterans.

The aim of the Soledad facility is to offer programs designed specifically for veterans' needs.

"We really prepare people to get out of here," said incarcerated veteran Mark Wade, a veteran liaison between the vets group and administration.

Raising and lowering the flag every day and playing Reveille in the morning and Taps in the evening is just the beginning of the new yard. The new configuration now allows for camaraderie between the many incarcerated persons.

The need for a special facility can be found in formerly incarcerated Marine Corps veteran Ron Self's experience. He described how self-help groups at San Quentin State Prison lacked the empathy needed for veterans.

Self told *American Homefront* reporter Lucy Copp, "I shared probably my most significant traumatic event that culminated in me putting a bullet in one of my men's head who just got blown up with an RPG."

The non-veteran groups at San Quentin could not grasp the PTSD created when incarcerated veterans defended their country.



Photo courtesy of CDCR

Formerly incarcerated Marine Corps veteran Ron Self, center, cuts the ribbon on California Training Facility's new veteran's program last year. The program is designed to address the unique needs of incarcerated veterans in California's prison system.

Self immediately realized there needed to be a yard just for veterans — a yard where their specific traumas and issues could be addressed. However, before he could accomplish his new goal, he had to develop a program to help veterans.

That program became a reality in 2014 when he formed the "Veterans Healing Veterans Group."

After designing the group, he finished serving his sentence for attempted murder and began lobbying state and federal officials for a veterans' hub.

Self's dream became a reality when he attended the ceremony last year at Soledad to cut the ribbon.

Soledad Warden Craig Koenig told all who attended the ribbon cutting ceremony,

"Our goal with the veterans' facility is to gather incarcerated veterans into one place."

Self's program has many additional benefits besides the therapeutic remedies. Reporter Copp stated "part of preparing people to get out is speeding up the process of connecting the incarcerated veterans to their VA benefits."

She cited a scenario where veterans who seek disability benefits. These past war heroes need a comprehensive examination that is difficult to get while incarcerated. Currently the veterans must wait years to be seen by providers who have thousands of veterans in their case portfolio.

Veteran Liaison Wade told Copp, "With a centralized location now, the VA doesn't have to travel to 34 prisons. They can come to one."

According to Copp, an improved facility specifically designed to assist in the traumatic disorders of veterans, combined with a consolidated benefit program should help the incarcerated veterans transfer back to society in a smoother fashion.

Prison officials say they will be tracking the success of the program while soldiers like Wade and Self support their fellow soldiers. Continued support of these Americans and the reduction of recidivism rates will be the defining test if the new veterans hub at Soledad will be considered a success.

Copp stated improved services for veterans who live together will make it less likely they will reoffend, and will give the men a second chance at a dignified life.

# Formerly incarcerated vet to serve on Veterans' Justice Commission

By Juan Haines  
Senior Editor

A Washington DC based think-tank invited formerly incarcerated marine veteran Ron Self to serve on a commission, aimed at drawing attention to hardships that veterans face after serving the country.

The Council on Criminal Justice (CCJ) sent the invitation on Mar 18, when it established the Veterans Justice Commission (VJC).

Studies show that during their lifetime nearly 33% of the veterans undergo arrests or bookings. The rate for civilians is about 18%. Veterans make up for almost 1 of 10 incarcerated Americans.

The CCJ says, "without reforms that target racial inequalities in the justice system, disparities likely will grow: over the next 25 years, the proportion of all veterans who are people of color is projected to rise from 25% to 40%."

There is an ongoing problem — if a veteran receives an unfavorable discharge, he or she can be denied VA benefits.

The VJC is tasked to increase the understanding of criminal justice policy choices that effect veterans.

VJC objectives:

Figure out the nature and causes that lead veterans to prisons and jails, and then suggest practices that will reduce the need for incarceration.

Understand the systems that are currently in place to serve veterans when they get out of the military and propose ways to upgrade the systems.

All aspects of the justice system will be examined, "from arrest and diversion through prosecutions, incarceration, release, and community supervision—with a

particular focus on veteran's transition from active service to civilian life."

The commission consists of veterans, civil rights and community advocates, as well as members of the justice system. VJC hopes to build up the political will to implement evidence-based reforms that "enhance safety, health and justice."

Ron Self established the veteran's narrative therapy program, Veterans Healing Veterans From the Inside Out (VHV), in 2012. He currently manages a housing unit at CTF Soledad geared to serve incarcerated veterans. Meanwhile, VHV continues its mission to serve incarcerated veterans in San Quentin.

Kevin Brinkman, 57, incarcerated since 2006, has been at San Quentin since 2017.

Brinkman is the lead clerk for Veteran's Information Project. His job is to assist incarcerated veterans in obtaining upgrading discharge statues, VA benefits, military records, and in applying for transitional housing.

"I met Ron on the prison yard when I got here. He immediately signed me up for VHV," Brinkman said. "I've admired Ron's dedication to education himself on the plight of the incarcerated veterans and the ones caught up in the system before they came to prison."

A poster sized photo of Self with his hand resting on the Veteran's Wall in Washington, DC hangs in Brinkman's office.

As to the various support available to incarcerated veterans, Self said, "If it weren't for CDCR to allow us to come back in, this would not be happening."

# Autism increases likelihood of arrest in youth

By Jad Salem  
Journalism Guild Writer

A newly released study finds autistic youth interactions with the criminal justice system and police encounters are becoming more common and can be more fatal across the United States, according to *Society & Culture*.

Researchers from the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, at Drexel University, found autistic individuals encounter police at a high rate and people with disabilities disproportionately experience police violence.

The statewide survey in Pennsylvania, titled "Justice System Interactions Among Autistic Individuals: A Multiple Methods Analysis," reviewed free-text responses

and multiple-choice questions of autistic individuals and their caregivers, about their positive and negative experiences with the criminal justice system.

"These findings are impactful because they come directly from the voices of autistic individuals and their families," said the lead author of the study, Kaitlin Koffer Miller, who is also director of Policy Impact in the Policy and Analytics Center in the Autism Institute. "Understanding the type and scope of justice interaction helps to plan for and address issues that could prevent future interactions of all types."

The new study analyzed 3,902 individuals, which represents 47% of the 8,240 individuals who responded to

a 2018 Pennsylvania Autism Needs Assessment survey. Of the 3,902 that were analyzed, 839 individual respondents reported information about their criminal justice system interaction.

The study highlights autistic individuals and their caregivers both as victims and offenders, reported the article.

Other findings:

Autistic adult males were almost twice as likely to be stopped and questioned by police, arrested or charged; adult females were 32% more likely to be the victim of a crime.

Any autistic individual who also had a psychiatric co-occurring diagnosis had 2.7 times the odds of experiencing any justice interaction and 2.4 times the odds of being a victim of a crime.

Caregiving respondents reported that having a household income greater than \$40,000 was protective against being a victim of a crime.

Caregivers reported that living with a roommate or family members was protective for autistic children against being the victim of a crime.

The research team reported that having access to more home and community-based services and support can mitigate interaction between autistic individuals and the justice system.

The study could also help propel policy, expand pilot justice programs, mental health services and crisis responses. It was recently published in the journal *Crime & Delinquency*.

one of the largest in recent times, the *Journal* reported.

The panel has written sentencing guidelines for all major crimes within the criminal code to deter the disproportionate sentences handed out to defendants in federal criminal cases.

President Joe Biden has the greatest opportunity to appoint a new commission with political support for less harsh sentencing laws on the federal level, the story said.

Judge Breyer said he hopes that a new commission will be able to review the federal guidelines so that lower courts are not split on how to apply the laws.

# Restricting medical parole

By George Franco  
Journalism Guild Writer

California is implementing a new policy of only granting medical parole to those so ill they need to be hooked to ventilators in order to breathe, according to The Associated Press.

Only those on ventilators are being placed in the community, according to California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation spokesperson Dana Simas.

Quadriplegics, paraplegics and permanently incapacitated prisoners who were already granted medical parole may be sent from nursing homes back to prison.

"It'd be an awful shame if those people were returned to prison," Steve Fama, an attorney with the Prison Law Office told the AP.

California prison officials blamed the change on new federal licensing requirements for nursing homes.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services has created policies that take the position that parole officials can't impose any conditions on prisoners in community medical facilities. This includes a rule that prisoners cannot leave the nursing facility except with permission from their parole agent. Prison officials say this restriction is necessary to ensure public safety.

Federal officials say that "revoking medical parole and putting incapacitated prisoners back behind bars is not the

state's only option."

California could leave the prisoners in nursing homes with no prohibition on their leaving, or put them in facilities that aren't regulated by the federal government — assisted living or non-certified skilled facilities that a state may wish to license to serve parolees who have additional health care needs.

Simas said this would require "establishing an entirely new program to monitor and audit the care provided at these facilities," according to the AP.

The state's decision will not affect those granted compassionate releases that are approved by a court. A compassionate release is usually granted to prisoners who are deemed by medical professionals to have less than a year to live.

Assemblyman Bill Ting authored a bill that would create an easier process for placing incapacitated prisoners in community health care facilities.

The bill also creates a new medical parole board at each prison for those who require hospice care or have debilitating pain or disease. Ting wants to eliminate the regular parole board, which consists largely of law enforcement officials, from this process.

"Limiting [medical parole] to only those on ventilators is arbitrary and not based on medical science," Ting said. "Public safety is not improved by taking such an unnecessarily narrow view of this policy."

# Federal Advisory Commission Inactive

By Bostyon Johnson  
Journalism Guild Writer

The commission that advises the federal judiciary on criminal justice changes has been inactive for at least three years, the *Wall Street Journal* reports.

The seven-member body has only one confirmed member, meaning it has been unable to function for at least three years, the *Journal* noted in a March 16 story.

"Science and evidence has come forward suggesting that lengthy sentences do not nec-

essarily result in community safety," said Charles Breyer, a federal District Court judge who is the acting chair and lone member of the commission.

Since passing the First Step Act in 2018, many individuals have been released from prisons due to the overhaul in sentencing rules and to ease mandatory-minimum sentences.

Federal courts are dealing with pressing issues like eligibility for compassion release from prison, excessively long sentences, defendants receiving wildly different sentences for the same offences, and oth-

ers that warrant early release, the newspaper noted.

The commissioners also analyze sentencing policies and draft proposals for legislative changes. All federally charged persons' lives are shaped, and or determined, by this commission, said Law Professor Douglas Berman, Ohio State University.

For example, in 2014, the commission was vital in the lowering of crack cocaine sentences. In 2014, it favored guidelines that reduced the sentences of over 30,000 persons. This reduction holds as

# Aprovechando el tiempo en prisión para propia superación personal

Por Carlos Drouaillet  
Reportero

Alex Estrada de 48 años originario de San Diego, California está cumpliendo una sentencia de 16 años en San Quentin State Prison (SQSP), donde se prepara para llegar a ser un camionero comercial, como punto de partida hacia un futuro prometedor.

Para lograr esta meta él estudia aquí en prisión lo necesario para obtener la licencia de California Clase A. Este documento le permitirá ser un ciudadano productivo y trabajar como chofer transportista.

Estrada ha estado los últimos tres años en SQSP, y es un reo que ha dado un cambio de 180 grados en su vida, según sus palabras. “Ya he puesto en marcha un plan sólido para cuando salga en libertad” dice Estrada, “He participado en programas claves para mi completa rehabilitación durante los últimos años de cárcel”.

El considera que lo más triste que ha vivido durante su tiempo en la cárcel es el haber perdido a su madre por el COVID 19 hace unos meses. “Ella falleció a solo nueve meses de alcanzar mi libertad. Ella y yo teníamos planes de vivir y compartir la vida juntos.” Expresó Estrada, quien cumplirá su condena en mayo del 2022, “Ella nos llevaba a

la iglesia a mis hermanos y a mí, y nos inculcó la palabra de Dios”.

Estrada se promete a si mismo honrar la memoria de su madre al cumplir lo que le prometió, enderezar su vida y convivir bien con sus hijos.

Mientras llega el día de su salida, Estrada continua apegándose pagándose al plan de vida que deseaba seguir al lado de su madre, pero ahora enfocándose más en sus hijos. “Cumpliré lo que le prometí a mi madre aunque ella ya no esté presente físicamente en mi vida”, dice Estrada muy emocionado.

Por medio de la solicitud, Case Plan Goals, Tasks and Activities, Estrada pidió información sobre la escuela de manejo comercial y recibió el libro oficial del Departamento de Vehículos y Motores (DMV por sus siglas en inglés).

Junto con los libros también recibió información de la academia de Manejo a la cual planea asistir al salir de prisión. Estrada dice que la academia America Truck Driving School ubicada en Escondido CA 92025, es la más apropiada para él pues le quedará más cerca a su casa.

“Empezare trabajando con diferentes compañías de camionero-transportista y ahorraré para comprar mi propio camión lo más pronto posible”



Alex Estrada asistiendo en el evento de fin de año en diciembre 2021 en San Quentin.

dice Estrada, “Mi meta final es abrir mi propia agencia de mudanzas”.

El futuro y entusiasta camionero dice que son varias las razones por las cuales ha cambiado su enfoque hacia el futuro. El hace hincapié en la memoria de su madre y en lo agradecido que esta por sus consejos y por guiarlo en las cosas de Dios, expresó Estrada.

A través de los programas de rehabilitación él aprendió a cómo manejar las finanzas con el programa “Power

Group” que tomó en Avenal SP. “Antes de entrar a prisión nunca pensé en administrar mi dinero. Yo siempre sentí que si tenía dinero en mi bolsa, era para gastarlo hoy y ya mañana me las arreglaría como sea cuando llegara ese mañana” dijo Estrada, “Ahora entiendo de los gastos de una casa; como agua, luz, teléfono y otras obligaciones como la comida, el gas, y la ropa. Comprendo que las necesidades son antes que los gustos personales”.

Entusiasmado Estrada

enfatisa que sus hijos son la otra razón y una gran motivación para su cambio de mentalidad hacia el futuro. “Antes pensaba solo en mí y lo que yo quería, ahora ellos son primero en mi corazón y en mi mente y lo demás es secundario” convencido expresó Estrada, “Antes no los tomaba en cuenta, gracias a lo que he aprendido en estudios bíblicos y en la Atalaya, ahora sé que ser padre es un privilegio muy especial y he decidido ser una persona positiva por ellos”.

## SPANISH

Estrada ahora convivir con sus hijos y así recuperar el tiempo perdido. “Alexander, su hijo, tiene 28 y vive en Colorado con su novia. Mi hija Faith de 26 años sirve en las fuerzas armadas y actualmente reside en el USS Ronald Reagan Carrier Ship estacionado en Japón” comenta Estrada, “La más joven Lovely de 21, trabaja y se mantiene sola pero sé que ella es la que más me necesita en su vida”.

Para Estrada el año 2022 empezó muy bien, desafortunadamente a mediados de enero, se contagió de la variante Omicron del COVID -19 junto a otros 43 reos de su dormitorio. Él fue enviado al edificio del Gimnasio de la prisión bajo cuarentena, a pesar de ser asintomático.

Al regresar de cuarentena, el 4 de marzo recibió confirmación de empleo con una agencia local en San Diego, California. Esta compañía le permitirá usar su propio vehículo, asimismo, lo patrocinará para que pueda obtener su licencia “B” comercial, cumpliendo de esta manera su sueño de llegar a ser conductor certificado.

## Implementación de alternativas de detención

La Administracion de Biden está planeando usar “alternativas de detención” para las personas que estan entrando a los Estados Unidos ilegalmente, reporto Reuters.

Los métodos de alternativas de detención incluyen, arresto domiciliario, el uso de brazaletes digitales de tobillo, y monitoreo por medio de teléfonos celulares. Por estos medios controlaran a aquellos que sean arrestados cruzando la frontera de EE.UU.- México, manteniéndolos en su lugar habitacional dentro de los estados unidos, explica el reporte de febrero.

Los arrestados deberán permanecer en su vivienda por 12 horas al día, más específicamente de las 8 de la noche a las 8 de la mañana habitualmente, reporto Reuters.

El programa experimen-

tal será coordinado por una empresa que administre prisiones privadas, que mantendrá en arresto domiciliario a cientos de inmigrantes hasta la fecha de su cita en el tribunal de explicaciones legales, le dijo un vocero del Departamento de Seguridad Interior (DHS por sus siglas en inglés) a Reuters.

Por consiguiente, para administrar el programa se designó a la Corporación BI, que es subsidiaria de la Empresa Grupo GEO que administra prisiones privadas, reporta la historia del 16 de febrero.

Reuters reporto que la Corporación BI recibió un contrato en el año 2020 por \$2.2 billones para administrar dichos programas, de acuerdo con estadísticas de contratos federales, según el artículo.

Es muy probable, que

muchos adultos que procuran obtener asilo político, sean incluidos entre los inmigrantes que participen en este programa piloto, que cuenta con clínicas médicas para aplicar pruebas de COVID-19 en Houston y Baltimore, de acuerdo a un memorándum enviado a los legisladores y examinado por Reuters.

Los benefactores de los derechos de los inmigrantes no estan convencidos de la eficacia del uso de los brazaletes digitales de tobillo u otro método de monitorear, argumentando con esas tácticas aumentan el escrutinio y vigilancia meticulosa hacia los inmigrantes sin reducir detenciones en forma significativa. “es un paso en la dirección correcta”, dijo Jacinta González, una coordinadora de campaña de ‘Mijente’, una asociación de apoyo a inmigrantes.

La Administracion de Biden cerro dos centros de detención e instruyo a la Oficina de Inmigración y Aduanas (ICE por sus siglas en inglés) a cambiar su orientación de a quien capturan, y que se enfoquen principalmente en criminales. Ahora mismo hay 164,000 detenidos en el programa “alternativas de detención”, de acuerdo con datos de ICE; sin embargo la Administracion de Biden está pidiendo al Congreso fondos suficientes para cubrir hasta 400,000 aspirantes de asilo-político, reporto Reuters.

Aunque el Grupo GEO se negó a comentar nos refirió a ICE, escribió Reuters que de acuerdo a transcritos de reciente llamadas de conferencia, el Grupo GEO y Core-Civic estan intentando entrar al negocio de “alternativas de detención”, incluyendo monitoreo como fuente de in-

gresos perpetuados.

“La idea era de que ellos cerraran, no que le cambiaran la forma”, concluyo González.

Por otro lado, mientras las compañías que compiten por las ganancias de los contratos asociados con “alternativas de detención”, Biden se enfrenta al más alto número de inmigrantes buscando asilo mientras intenta terminar ‘Titulo 42’, que es una medida -de salud- de inmigración que permite a ICE a deportar rápidamente a cualquier inmigrante que entro en vigor al principio de la pandemia de COVID-19, evadiendo los procesos normales, de acuerdo con reporte del gobierno de estados unidos.

Encima de todo, los instigadores Republicanos anti-inmigrantes utilizan este asunto de inmigración como ventaja política para bene-

ficiarse en las elecciones de noviembre 8, de acuerdo con Time Magazine.

Mientras tanto, el futuro de miles de emigrantes que esperan en la frontera sigue impredecible, porque aunque el Centro de Control y Prevención de Enfermedades de Estados Unidos anuncio que terminaría las deportaciones a causa del ‘Titulo 42’ en mayo 23, los legisladores que estan en contra tratan de hacer permanente la medida del ‘Titulo 42’, según el artículo en Time Magazine.

“Cerca de 10,000 casos de violencia en contra de inmigrantes deportados bajo el ‘Titulo 42’ han sido documentados desde el inicio de la Administracion de Biden solamente, de acuerdo de ‘Derechos Humanos Primero’”, reporto Time Magazine, en Abril 25, 2022.

—Carlos Drouaillet

## Trabajadores internacionales autorizados son víctimas de fraude laboral

Investigación de agencias federales, especializadas en el crimen organizado internacional, culmina con el arresto en Georgia de 24 sospechosos de tráfico humano, lavado de dinero, fraude de visas, estafa postal, y otros crímenes. En dicha pesquisa Cerca de 100 inmigrantes mexicanos y centroamericanos fueron rescatados, aunque al menos dos fallecieron y otra víctima fue violada frecuentemente, Según el artículo en NBC noticias.

La “Operación Cebolla Lucrativa” (Operation Blooming Onion), que fue el nombre dado a la operación, es considerada una de las más grandes investigaciones de tráfico humano y fraude de visas, de acuerdo con el Departamento de Justicia.

Dichos miembros de la organización criminal transnacional estan siendo acusados de defraudar el programa de visas para agricultores, conocida como la H-2A, que permite traer trabajadores desde

México, Guatemala, Honduras y otros países a los Estados Unidos. Aunque el foco de operación criminal se centralizaba en Georgia, también extendieron su alcance fraudulento hasta Florida, y Texas, informó el artículo.

María Leticia Patricio de 70 años, de Nichols, Georgia, fue la primera persona acusada de entre los doce involucrados. Los cargos fueron por conjuración para cometer fraude, estafa postal, complot de obligar a otros a trabajos forzados, y conspirar en lavado de dinero. Patricio, se declaró inocente al igual que otros de los acusados, explica NBC noticias.

El proceso de investigación incluye la Oficina de Inmigración y Aduanas, (conocida como ICE por sus siglas en inglés) que por primera vez utiliza la técnica que castiga al empleador en vez de enfocarse en los afectados por su crimen, declara el reporte.

Para implementar esa nue-

va técnica el Secretario del Departamento de Seguridad Interior (DHS por sus siglas en inglés) Alejandro Mayorkas envió un comunicado ordenando a la agencia de inmigración parar las redadas masivas en el lugar de trabajo, táctica que fue usada en el pasado, redacta el artículo.

Un oficial de ICE menciona, “Queremos lograr que ellos cooperen con nosotros para castigar a esos empresarios que han abusado esta desatendida población como método para aumentar sus ganancias”.

Charles Kuck un abogado experto de inmigración en Georgia afirmo que hay muchos empresarios que siguen las reglas y hacen lo correcto, “Pero hay muchas manzanas malas afuera”.

“Pienso que es una señal de que la administración toma en serio el problema del tráfico humano y el maltrato a trabajadores que vienen con visas, y con cosas no tomadas en serio por la administración

anterior, aun cuando ellos iniciaron la investigación mencionada”, añadió Kuck.

Las autoridades continúan buscando a tres de los acusados que son considerados fugitivos. Ellos son Victoria Chávez Hernández, Jose Carmen Duque Tovar y Rodolfo Martínez Maciel, dijo el Departamento de Justicia. Los cargos que enfrentan son similares a los de la líder del grupo criminal organizado.

“Esta es una investigación en proceso”, dijo Barry Paschal, un vocero de la oficina de Abogados de Estados Unidos para el Distrito Sureste de Georgia. “Yo estoy seguro que habrá más acerca de este caso en los meses y años por venir”.

En los documentos de la corte se especifica que los acusados mantenían a sus víctimas amenazadas con entregarlos a inmigración (ICE) para que fueran deportados, castigándoles violentamente. Además les cobraban grandes cantidades de dinero,

a sus víctimas por servicios de transportación, hospedaje y comida, gastos que no podían pagar. Asimismo, les quitaban sus documentos de identificación personal, y los obligaban a trabajar a punta de pistola, según el artículo.

Esta organización criminal atrajo a inmigrantes con promesas falsas de buenos empleos, quienes al llegar a los Estados Unidos vivían en condiciones precarias. Al llegar a su destino final, los obligaban a trabajar en ranchos durante el día y a vivir amontonados en lugares pequeños y sucios, sin tener agua o comida, según el acta de la corte.

“Tener acceso a las autoridades y a la justicia es prácticamente imposible para estos trabajadores”, dijo Daniel Costa, pensador liberal y director de ley de inmigración e investigación de póliga del Instituto de Póliga Económica.

Costa explica que el alcance de las acusaciones es “evidencia de la confianza con que

los empresarios, traficantes y reclutadores, quebrantan las leyes en estos programas, pues saben que nadie supervisa lo que estan haciendo”.

En la impugnación se explica que los acusados vivían como millonarios, derrochando sus ganancias autos de lujo y despilfarrando millones de dólares en el casino y hotel Seminole Hard Rock, en Tampa, Florida, explica NBC noticias.

La administración del casino cooperó en la investigación diligentemente, “Los archivos del casino deben incluir registros financieros consistentemente” dijo el vocero del casino Gary Bitner “Este caso no fue la excepción”.

En un esfuerzo por respetar la dignidad de los individuos y garantizar las condiciones laborales del mercado americano, debemos enfocarnos en castigar a esos empresarios deshonestos y sin escrúpulos, enfatizó Mayorkas en su memorándum.

—Carlos Drouaillet

# Audiencias de libertad condicional por video-conferencia

Por Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chairman

Las audiencias de libertad condicional en persona son parte del pasado y se quedaron las audiencias vídeo.

Las miles de personas encarceladas en California que buscan obtener su libertad condicional, no podrán tener sus audiencias en persona como lo hacían antes, debido a la reciente implementación de un sistema de audio-video, reportó *Life Support Alliance* (LSA) en su boletín de febrero 2022.

En la reunión ejecutiva de febrero los Comisionados aprobaron, como una medida temporal, la realización de las audiencias de libertad condicional a través de un sistema de audio-video. Sin embargo, existe la posibilidad que esta medida llegue a ser permanente en el futuro, de acuerdo el reporte.

El departamento de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional (BPH por sus siglas en inglés) reconoce la importancia de la presencia de los abogados y traductores. Por esta razón se les seguirá permitiendo estar presentes con el recluso(a) en las audiencias.

“Cuando yo participaba en las audiencias de libertad



Vincent O'Bannon, SQNews

La pandemia del corona-virus provocó muchos cambios en la administración de las prisiones a nivel nacional. En California, la Oficina de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional serán conducidas por conferencia de video, un cambio que continuara después de la pandemia.

condicional en persona era algo más íntimo y personal,” dijo Raymond T. Estrada, de 49 años “Ahora que el sistema es diferente y he estado enfrente de una computadora siendo interrogado acerca

mi vida es una experiencia diferente, no se siente que el proceso sea íntimo o personal pues la conexión humana ya no existe.”

Prisioneros como Estrada sienten que la conexión per-

sonal y humana ya no está ahí, ya que con este nuevo sistema él se siente desconectado.

De acuerdo al artículo, los comisionados determinaran las personas con las cuales

no se pueda “establecer una comunicación efectiva” utilizando un sistema de audio-video, y se les otorgara una audiencia en persona.

La Directora Ejecutiva de (BPH) Jennifer Shaffer reconoció que este nuevo método de implementar las audiencias no ha tenido ningún efecto desfavorable en el porcentaje de aprobación de los elegibles a libertad condicional. En el 2019, antes de la implementación de las audiencias de audio-video, el porcentaje de personas elegibles fue el 34%, en el 2020 36% y en el 2021 34%. Shaffer también menciona que esta medida reduce el estrés de los reos (as), representa ahorros a la fiscalía y permite más flexibilidad para contratar comisionados.

“Yo he participado en cuatro audiencias de libertad condicional en persona y siempre me pongo nervioso,” dijo el residente de San Quentin, Sr. Jose López de 49 años, “Se me hace difícil expresarme por los nervios.” Personas como López que han estado encarcelados por décadas sufren de la ansiedad y nerviosismo cuando son interrogados por los Comisionados al tratar de explicar las razones porque cometió sus

crímenes.

Con la implementación de las audiencias por audio-video la participación de víctimas y familiares aumento en un mes a 270% comparado con el 11% y 14% en los últimos 4 años. Este incremento se debe a que las víctimas y familiares pueden participar en estas audiencias desde sus hogares.

La oficina del fiscal y la organización que representa a las víctimas (VNOK advocacy camp por sus siglas en ingles), expresaron su oposición a esta medida. Principalmente por los nuevos requisitos que exigen que los familiares de las víctimas se registren 30 días antes de la audiencia y las víctimas directas con 15 días de anterioridad. Sin embargo, las regulaciones no cambian el número de víctimas y representantes que apoyan a las víctimas para estar presentes en la audiencia. Aunque si prohíbe la grabación de la audiencia y la participación de personas u organizaciones no autorizadas, informó la LSA. A pesar que esta medida es temporal, existe la posibilidad que las audiencias a través de audio-video pudieran ser establecidas permanentes.

# La falta de inmigrantes en Oregon, contribuye a escasez de mano de obra

Por Edgar Villamarín  
Journalism Guild Writer

La inmigración en Oregon ha bajado considerablemente causando escasez de trabajadores reporto Mike Rogoway del periódico *The Oregonian*.

El número de inmigrantes en edad para trabajar se desplomo a casi una tercera parte de lo que ha sido en los últimos cinco años, lo cual representa un giro completo en el aumento gradual de las últimas décadas contribuyendo al empleo en el estado de Oregon.

Oregon cuenta con más de 200,000 trabajadores de 25 a 54 años de edad, según los datos del censo de los Estados Unidos que compi-

lo Josh Lehner de la Oficina de Análisis Económico de Oregon (conocida en inglés como Oregon Office of Economic Analysis). En el 2017 el número era 300,000.

A través de la historia cerca del 80% de los extranjeros en Oregon entre los 25 a 54 años de edad tienen empleo. Este número es parecido a la misma población del resto de los residentes en Oregon. Esto indica que hay 55,000 trabajos menos que si la inmigración hubiera continuado al mismo paso del periodo del 1997 al 2014 concluyo Lehner.

“Con cerca de 100,000 trabajos vacantes en Oregon el día de hoy, los negocios seguramente pueden hacer uso de más mano de obra para llenar

trabajos y hacer crecer sus operaciones,” aseguro Lehner en un análisis de este mes (Abril 2022).

La falta de empleo no es solamente en Oregon sino en todos los Estados Unidos, dijo Mike Rogoway autor del artículo.

Los Estados Unidos agregaron más de un millón de inmigrantes anualmente en el 2015 y en el 2016. En el 2021 la inmigración total fue cerca de 200,000 de acuerdo con el artículo en *The Oregonian*. San Quentin News entrevisto cinco residentes y tres de ellos aseguraron que la inmigración había aumentado en este mismo periodo.

Los residentes entrevistados por San Quentin News dijeron que los inmigrantes

no le quitan trabajo a los nacidos en los Estados Unidos. B. High dijo “Algunos trabajos los Americanos no los van a hacer. Pagan muy poco y no hay beneficios.” Por su parte Shawn Luhn indico que “Los Estados Unidos son una mezcla de nacionalidades. Se necesitan personas de todos los países para que este país funcione”.

La pandemia provoco la severa reducción en el 2020 y en el 2021. Pero el cambio comenzó en el año 2017 en los Estados Unidos y en Oregon. Este cambio coincide con las restricciones que impuso la administración Trump, según el artículo.

Por su parte, la administración Biden no ha cambiado estas pólizas por lo

menos hasta el momento y no hay nada que se acerque a un acuerdo de cómo manejar la inmigración ilegal en la frontera con México o del número de inmigrantes que los Estados Unidos deben aceptar cada año, reporta *The Oregonian*.

Los residentes de San Quentin State Prison Ascensión Hernández (mexicano) y Cristian Martínez (americano) coincidieron en comentar que los inmigrantes recién llegados a los Estados Unidos pueden quitarles los empleos a otros inmigrantes que han vivido en este país por muchos años.

Lo que sí es claro es que la baja en la inmigración ha impactado substancialmente a la fuerza laboral. Lehner

indica que uno de siete trabajadores en Oregon ha nacido en otro país; por eso la agricultura, las fábricas y trabajos en el área de la hospitalidad (restaurantes, hoteles, turismo) registran altos porcentajes especialmente dentro de los extranjeros. Precisamente estos sectores de la economía son los que han reportado pérdidas de empleos en los últimos meses, reporto Mike Rogoway.

“En general todas las industrias tienen trabajadores extranjeros”, aseguro Josh Lehner de la Oficina de Análisis Económico de Oregon. “No hay industria que este inmune a la reducción de migración internacional o escasez de trabajadores listos a trabajar.”

Por Carlos Drouaillet  
Reportero

Para prisioneros extranjeros el enigma del futuro que les espera al salir de la cárcel no es nada agradable pues la mayoría son deportados.

Vithea Yung, es un sobreviviente junto con su familia, de los ‘campos de muerte’ de Cambodia durante el Régimen genocida de Khmer Rouge, en la década de los 1970’s, escribió Tyche Hendricks para *kqed.org/news*.

Antes que la familia de Yung escapara de los ‘campos de la muerte de Cambodia, ya dos se sus hermanos mayores habían muerto por malnutrición, según el artículo.

Cuando la madre de Yung salió de la cárcel, como pudieron, ella y sus hijos llegaron a un campo de refugiados, donde posteriormente recibieron asilo para California, de acuerdo al artículo.

“Venimos aquí con la idea de que al haber escapado de la guerra y que nosotros ya éramos Americanos”, dijo Terry Honoré, hermana de Yung.

Ya estando en Long Beach, siendo adolescente y refugiado con una familia desintegrada, Vithea se unió a una pandilla.

Siendo pandillero le dio

# ¿Podría una rehabilitación real cambiar la decisión de ICE?

una identidad y más seguridad, pero en una persecución con una pandilla enemiga disparo una pistola matando a un individuo, escribe Tyche Hendricks.

A la edad de 16 años fue a juicio como adulto y recibió sentencia de 35 años a cadena perpetua. Mas en su afán por alcanzar su libertad algún día, Yung decidió ser una mejor persona, dice el reporte.

Por las siguientes dos décadas participo en programas de apoyo y de justicia restaurativa, adquiriendo su diploma de High School llegando a ser Asistente de Maestro y participo en equipos deportivos, de acuerdo al artículo.

“Yo trate de rehabilitarme a mí mismo” dijo Yung en una entrevista Zoom con KQED. “Tome clases, e hice todo lo que tenía que hacer para ir a mi cita con el Comité de libertad condicional. [...] hice todo antes que ellos me pidieran hacerlo”.

Al cumplir 25 años de su sentencia Yung fue aprobado a salir bajo supervisión por la California Parole Board, decisión basada en su reha-

bilitación personal y por su ayuda a los demás estudiantes reos, dice el reporte.

Al ser notificado de la aprobación, Yung se preocupaba por la posibilidad de ser deportado a Cambodia, un país del que salió como refugiado a los 3 años de edad. Sin embargo a pesar del tiempo su familia nunca lo olvido y busco apoyo legal del abogado Anoop Prasad del Consejo Asiático de Leyes, reporta *KQED noticias*.

Según el Consejo Asiático de Leyes, la prisión del estado entrega cientos de reos a ICE cada año. Los datos de la agencia reportan 2,600 transferencias entre Enero 1 del 2020 y Noviembre 30, del 2021 solamente.

“Mientras que California confió que ICE actue con decencia y compasión, nosotros tememos un problema, porque ICE tiene un record a través de su administración, de actuar con crueldad. Necesitamos una solución sistemática.” Expreso el abogado Anoop Prasad.

Mientras esperaba respuestas, Yung continuo participando en el equipo de softball. Mientras practicaba

en el 2017 sufrió un golpe en la espina dorsal quedando paralizado del cuello hacia abajo. Desde entonces requiere ayuda hasta para las funciones más básicas del diario vivir, de acuerdo al reporte.

Ese accidente y la idea de ser deportado al salir de prisión, entristecía a su familia y amigos. Ellos sabían que aunque Yung tiene ‘tarjeta verde’ de Residencia Permanente, eso no le garantizaba su estancia en Estados Unidos debido al crimen que cometió durante su adolescencia, según el artículo.

Su hermana Terry Honoré dijo que le aterrizzaba pensar que su hermano en estado cuadripléjico pudiera ser deportado a Cambodia y cuidarse el solo.

Honoré dijo que sus padres nunca entendieron que para ser en realidad residentes permanentes tenían que aplicar para ser ciudadanos naturalizados de EE.UU.

“Nadie nunca nos explicó eso a nosotros”, dijo ella. “Nuestra tarjeta dice que somos residentes legales, o sea, residentes permanentes”.

Yung ahora vive en una

clínica en el área de Los Angeles, la cual tiene contrato con el sistema carcelario estatal, según el artículo.

El abogado Prasad y la familia de Yung piensan que la salud de él empeorará si lo mandan a las clínicas del centro de detención de inmigrantes. En el pasado la agencia de ICE ha sido demandada por servicio inadecuado en esas instalaciones a gentes con discapacidades, según el artículo.

“El nivel de negligencia médica es básicamente horrenda en las ‘clínicas medicas de ICE’”, dijo Prasad, añadiendo que en su estado físico Yung no debería ser considerado como una amenaza a la sociedad.

De acuerdo al reporte, ni el abogado Prasad ni la familia de Yung sabían con exactitud qué pasaría, pues el caso dependía de las decisiones de algunos políticos.

Pues aunque, el pasado septiembre el Secretario de Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas le indico a la agencia ICE a usar discreción acerca de sus prioridades y que se enfocara en aquellos extranjeros que

representen “un riesgo actual’ a la seguridad nacional, seguridad en la frontera o a la seguridad pública. También el martes, un juez federal en Ohio bloqueó esa autorización de Mayorkas, reporta el KQED noticias.

Como algo imprevisto, para todos, el viernes un vocero de ICE les notificó que la orden de detención de inmigración contra Yung, fue cancelada hace unos meses. El vocero pidió no ser identificado pues no tenía autorización de hablar de caso de Yung, pero dijo que ICE toma las decisiones finales caso por caso, “considerando los méritos y factores de cada caso mientras se apega a las prioridades presentes de la agencia, y los mandatos legales”.

Es posible que la dedicación de Yung dentro de la cárcel, pudo ser crucial en la decisión de ICE de revocar la orden de detención; aunque las circunstancias de la decisión no son muy claras.

Por último, si el gobernador Gavin Newsom no detiene la propuesta de libertad condicional par el 12 de Abril; Vithea Yung será liberado bajo el cuidado de su familia, concluyo el artículo de *KQED* escrito por Tyche Hendricks en marzo.

SPORTS

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

On April 4, eight members of the Southern Marin Broncos football team visited The Q with their parents and went on a tour of the prison that turned out to be very informative for the youth—potentially even life changing.

“It [the tour] helped me realize how I could steer and navigate my life. It helped me see change and how I look at things now. The advice that I got from the tour guys, I’m going to share it with other people and tell them what this experience was like for me,” said S. Robinson, who is the starting powerhouse running back of the team. Robinson can recall making eight touchdowns—but his shining talent is only a fraction of what he inherited from his dad, who is the American Youth Football League president.

S. Rodriguez is the team’s kicker. He said the experience of coming into the prison has inspired him not to do bad things.

“Our organization tries to instill into our kids our model. Coaches love the players and players love each other,” said S. Robinson’s father.

Formerly incarcerated and recently released after

# Southern Marin Broncos youth football team tours SQ



Lt. Sam Robinson, Public Information Officer

serving 40 plus years at SQ, Lonnie Morris had the opportunity to see the professional side of Lt. Sam Robinson while in prison and now got to see the outside person of who coach Robinson is on the field.

“This was one of the best experiences I had since being released,” said Morris in an interview when he visited the prison to facilitate his group, No More Tears. “And to see Robinson as a coach was good, he’s really hands on and detailed with the kids. I was blessed with the opportunity to go speak

to the kids and to see Coach Robinson in action. To see the kids really listening to my message of ‘Choices,’ was great man.”

B. Alford is the offense and defensive lineman and he said that this experience has shown him that all it takes is one decision—and a bad one could change his life. He also said that he was impacted by one tour guide who said “don’t give in to peer pressure” and “be aware that the good choices you make might lose some of your friends out of your life, but you will gain more good

ones than bad ones along the way.”

“Another piece of advice that I would give the kids is to find someone to talk to when you are down,” said Chase Beniot, who is one of the SQ resident tour guides and has been doing the tours for about four years now. “It could be another kid, a teacher or the coach. But don’t keep your emotions bottled up. Sharing your problems with someone will make all the difference in the world.”

M. Zoila-Shaffer brought into the prison her daughter M. Zoila and her son Z. Shaf-

fer, who is also a running back for the team. Daughter M. Zoila said that she was not expecting to see the prison in this capacity with guys so open and honest. She said that when driving by, it looked so eerie.

“I am just grateful to have had this experience,” said the mother, M. Zoila-Shaffer. She said that she was perplexed by her emotions of empathy and gratitude for the experience.

After a brief presentation and account of the prison by the five tour guides, the group got the opportunity to go around the prison and see the Lower Yard and other parts of the prison. Running back Z. Shaffer said that he gained a great deal of respect for the men in blue and he also has a grateful outlook on life.

“This is a surreal experience for me; I realize that so many people’s lives are so hard. It [the tour] helps me realize that all my privileges can be taken away from me in a split second if I make the wrong choice. It’s not wrong to say no to people. And I know not to take things for granted,” said Z. Shaffer.

In addition to the poised tone of the kids and their stoic perception, the kids gave great conversation aligned with many great questions.

That was a good indicator of them being taught and raised by good parents and teachers. Also, the good discipline and football IQ instilled into them by their coaches was evident.

“Globally, we pour into the kids that sign up that it’s more than just football. It’s more than just the cheer of the crowd. We are trying to develop the person to strive to be better people. Football is just the foundation that leads to real lifetime values. Because it’s nothing quite like football to prepare a person for the future,” said the Sr. Robinson.

M. Deitch came on the tour with her two sons; she was hoping to give them a perspective that might teach them about consequences and what’s important in their lives. She’s known Lt. Robinson as a coach for three years now. One of her sons is 18 and is headed to college. She said that it’s him who she really wants to stay on the path, and hopefully, the tour worked.

“This has been a real eye opening experience for me,” said the 6-foot 5-inch small forward D. Deitch. He plays basketball but this experience was not just about football. “For me, seeing the worst of the worst has definitely helped keep me stay on the right path.”

## Markelle the Gazelle goes to Boston

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

Former San Quentin 1000 Mile Club runner Markelle “The Gazelle” Taylor took center stage in the first wave of runners at the Boston Marathon in April.

Stepping off the plane with his running gear at Boston’s Logan International Airport, the lean, muscular marathoner with skinny ankles celebrated completing his three years on parole. He is now truly free.

“Man, that was a beautiful feeling,” Taylor told *The New York Times*.

During the race he wore orange shorts, matching Nike Alphafly shoes and a tank top representing Mt. Tam Running Club.

Taylor set a 6:33 pace for the 26 miles and ran an impressive 2:52 to finish the race. He made it look easy, according to the *Times* story printed April 25 in the *Marin Independent Journal*.

Taylor was released on parole in 2019 from SQ after serving 18 years in prison. Since that time he has run multiple races and at least three marathons in under three hours. He ended up setting the pace for many



Eddie Herena, SQNews

professional runners in Boston and came in fifth place in his age group.

Taylor ran his first marathon in California at the Avenue of the Giants in September, where he crossed the finish line in a time of 2:56:12. He was first in his age group and fifth overall.

Taylor was the fastest runner ever to grace the track at SQ. But he was unable to break the three-hour mark while inside. His fastest SQ time was a prison record 3:10 minutes.

Taylor said that his life sentence led him to become a long-distance runner. The sport helped him choose a life of sobriety.

“Running was a form of freedom. It was my therapy,

a way of escaping,” he said in 2019. “It kept me grounded.

“Running is humbling,” he said. “Sometimes you have to start from the back, just like I’m doing now with minimum wage. It’s like trying to go up that hill after 18-plus miles; sometimes you can get cramps and stuff like that. That’s like being rejected from a job you want because they ask for your fingerprints.”

Taylor constantly has to practice the coping skills he learned while in prison. “Anger is a secondary emotion to hurt, stress and fear,” he told the *Times*.

He went from transitional housing in the Tenderloin of San Francisco, to his own one-bedroom apartment in Tiburon. “Man, you can’t beat that,” he said.

Taylor now works at a grocery store for minimum wage.

“Being Black and living with a criminal background, no matter how successful you are today, you are always haunted by the past. Just like some of those hills, society in general is very un-forgiving — unless it reaches their own backyard,” he said.

## The NBA’s first-ever female draftee

By Vincent E. O’Bannon  
Staff Writer

Hall of Fame inductee and the only woman to ever be drafted into the National Basketball Association passed away earlier this year. Lusia Mae Harris, known as one of the greatest centers to ever play women’s basketball, passed away at age 66 on January 18, according to *The New York Times*.

The 6-foot-3 Harris was drafted in the seventh round by the New Orleans Jazz in 1977. She was the 137th overall pick, but never played in a men’s NBA game.

Born in Minter City, Miss., to Ethel and Willie Harris, she attended Amanda Elzy High School in Greenwood, Miss., before attending Delta State University in Cleveland, Miss.

During her career at Delta State, Harris led the team to a 109-6 record and won three Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women national championships.

Opponents called her “unstoppable.” However, according to *Wikipedia*, that description was barely sufficient to describe her approach to the game. Under the tutelage of Hall of Fame Coach Margaret Wade, Harris recorded 2,981

Lousia Mae Harris, right, played for Delta State when she led her team in 109 victories and 6 losses during her senior year. She also won three national championships as a member of the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women.



Wikipedia

career points (25.9 ppg), 1,662 rebounds (14.4 rpg), and 15 Delta State team, single game, and career records.

She was big and relentless and dominated the court, and opposing teams couldn’t handle her, said the article. Harris played on the first U.S. women’s Olympic team and won a Silver Medal. She was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and the Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in 1992.

She graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Health, Physical Education and Recreation. She also earned a Master’s Degree in Education and attended college on a combination of academic and work-study scholarships.

“The Queen of Basketball”

was the title of a documentary about Harris that won a 2022 Academy Award in the short subject category. The film was produced by Canadian filmmaker Ben Proudfoot, with basketball greats Shaquille O’Neal and Stephen Curry as executive producers. The film was released on June 10, 2021. Harris died seven months later.

Harris was a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority. She is survived by husband George E. Stewart and four children.

Other notable women Hall of Famers for basketball:

Margaret Wade (1985); Ann Meyers (1993); Pat Head Summitt (2000); Nera D. White (1992); Nancy I. Lieberman (1996).

### TIER TALK

Tennis at The Q has helped Hung Pham and James Duff find themselves, all while building their friendship and confidence in the sport they both love.

Pham, 42, and Duff, 40, have been at The Q since exiting the prison transportation bus only months apart in 2018. I caught up with the two friends on the tennis court swinging their rackets in a two-on-two pick-up game and asked them why

they love tennis.

**TH:** Hey guys, I see that you two seem to have a competitive edge for this game when you are playing. Tell me what makes this game so interesting to you and why you like playing it.

**HP:** I like playing tennis just for the sport of it. The activity of it. It not only helps to relieve stress, but it also helps with boosting my confidence, too.

**JD:** I was introduced to it

by Hung. I have been playing ever since.

**TH:** Did you two know each other before you both started playing?

**HP:** No, we actually met each other here not even a year after being here. But, we’ve been playing tennis together ever since.

**TH:** Have you ever played tennis before whether it be in or outside of prison walls?

**HP:** I learned to play tennis in prison.

**JD:** This was my first time

too. [It is also] the first time I ever seen tennis being played inside of prison, and [the first time I have seen] different races [being able to] actually play together and enjoy playing the sport with each other.

**TH:** SQ has its own tennis club here. Have you ever tried out for the team? And did you make it?

**HP:** Yes, I tried out for the team but I didn’t make it. I plan to try out this year though. Because playing tennis helps keep me out of

trouble.

**JD:** I actually made the team last try outs. I look forward to all of the outside people that come in. We get to make some really good connections, along with all the other mental and physical benefits that come with it.

**TH:** Yeah, that true. How do you compare tennis with other self-help groups?

**JD:** Playing tennis allows me to meet guys that are not of Asian descent and are not

in my age bracket and the surprisingly, the older guys are much more skilled than some of us younger guys. I like to learn from them.

**TH:** Do you guys have any special tennis players that are your favorites?

**HP:** Yes, I like Naomi Osaka. She’s my favorite one.

**JD:** My favorite player is Serena Williams. She’s fierce and she dominates the court when she plays. I like her too because she’s real.

—Timothy Hicks

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

San Quentin’s All-Madden Football team got cracking for tryouts on April 15 and Head Coach Brian Underwood and Defensive Captain Jermaine Gurley were not making tryouts easy on the Madden hopefuls with their workout regimen.

“I’m not going to take easy on them this season,” said Underwood. “Last season I was not only the coach, I was also playing too. I had a kick back approach because I was new, but not this time.”

Underwood took over as Head Coach after then Dwight Kennedy paroled in 2021. And then, Underwood said that he intended to be not only the coach, but he intends to be the guys’ friend. He later found out that approach was not the best way to go.

“I’m going to have to make some drastic decisions and do some serious cuts if guys are not leaving their attitudes off the field. There’s a lot of talent coming out this year and I don’t want guys that will bring the team down with the negative attitudes,” said Underwood. “I realize that it’s my job to meet guys where they are at, and try to bring them up out of the negativities. One thing I won’t do is give up on my guys.”

Without outside flag football teams able to come inside the prison thus far, this season will be limited on other teams to play. That’s where guys

# ALL-MADDEN TRYOUTS TAKE THE FIELD



Phoeun You, SQNews

Players stretch in preparation for San Quentin’s demanding 2021 All-Madden football tryouts on the Lower Yard under the watchful eye of the *ForwardThis!* film crew.

inside SQ will have to rely on each other to create other teams to play such as the Intramural Football League.

Last season the football coaches developed an Intramural Football League that turned out to be a success within itself. Prior to that, the All-Madden Football team finished its season 4-2 before Coach Kennedy left. So now,

new Head Coach Underwood will have to be innovative and creative to make the season a success.

“If the outside teams can’t come in, we will just have to start the Intramural league again, but this time we will run seven on seven teams with an 11-man roster,” said Underwood.

Football tryouts are col-

liding with Basketball Intramural season that recently got underway. Guys who are playing B-Ball generally like to also play football – true all Americans. However, only time will reveal how things will play out. As it stands, almost 40 guys came out to test their football skills. But the All-Madden team roster dwindled down to just about

half that.

Basic fundamental skills such as back pedals and knowing how to pull-a-flag were some of the determining factors that Underwood used to make his cuts.

Defensive Captain Jermaine Gurley looks forward to teaching the men the fundamental skills and ethics of football I.Q. He also wants the

team to learn the system of playing football to win games.

“I want them to know that hard work beats skill and talent any day,” Gurley said. “But even though I do want to win, I want them to learn what good sportsmanship looks like, win you lose. It builds character and that’s what matters. I’ll take a good attitude over superstar talent any day.”

## SQ athletes, fitness buffs find innovative ways to stay in shape

Athletes at San Quentin are finding alternate ways to get physically fit and maintain their health while doing their time in prison. And guys miss the camaraderie that heavy lifting brings.

Some residents use just about anything they can find that holds some weight to add resistance to their workout routines. They do it to increase their training since prison authority removed real bar bells and iron weights from California prisons in the mid-90s.

“I used to work out with the weights when they had them in prison,” said true workout enthusiast D. Prince. “I remember that in order to be on the weight pile, you had to be lifting a certain amount of weight to be lifting the Olympic weights.”

Now that the incarcerated have no official weights to lift other than themselves and calisthenics, , some of them use water bags, rock bags, even recreational tables to achieve that athleticism and maintain that fitness.

Some guys have received disciplinary write-ups for using alternative ways to get fit. However, some people are trying to gain back that peace of mind and stress relief they once got by lifting heavy weights. And that forces those who do choose to bend the rules a bit, to take those risks sometimes.

“They don’t understand what they did when they took the weights from the incarcerated,” said Prince. He used to be one of those serious heavy lifters who experienced the benefits of working out with the real weights in prison.

In the old prison days the incarcerated used to get as

buff as some of the body builders that compete in the competitions around the world. And some guys miss that drive. But, for the majority of those left to figure out alternative ways to lift weights, it’s the other components that come with it that matters most.

“Health is wealth,” said V. Alexander. “Being older, you want to stay in shape. And to work out takes a group effort. We keep each other motivated, plus it brings togetherness and helps keep each other positive.”

For guys who are 200 plus pounds with muscle mass to keep up, simple calisthenics are not the best exercise for them to do. After a while the large muscles start to deteriorate if they are not used. Those who want to maintain their muscles and strength have no other choices but to use alternative methods.

It is a medically proven fact that working out provides many health benefits, strength lifting being one of them. And one resident misses not only the days of weights inside prisons, he also misses the benefits of heavy lifting.

“I remember when the weights were in prison,” said C Carter. “They [weights] were a stress reliever. It was therapeutic. The social group was on the same accord and it was all positive.”

J. Gurley is too young to remember when there were weights inside prison. However, he is smart enough to recognize the benefits that working out together brings.

“Heavy lifting involves a unified effort. People have to provide spots for each other and keep each other safe. It builds community and friendships,” said Gurley.

—Timothy Hicks

## Intramural basketball kicks off at the Q

San Quentin’s Intramural B-Ball League kicked off on a hot Sunday morning on the Lower Yard with a tight-scoring contest.

The SQ Celtics triumphed narrowly, 45-43, over the SQ Bulls, as known for their Islamic name, Deen Al-Haqq.

It was a good day, Deen al-Haqq center Rick Hall commented, coming during the celebration of Ramadan.

It was the first game of the season, with players not eating or drinking for Ramadan. But that was not the reason they lost, the big center

commented.

“You struggle with thirst but it’s a bigger meaning, much more than the physical fatigue,” said Hale,

which was his very first time practicing Ramadan. “I can honestly say that it was not that. Because the mental acuteness was there. I think that we will be alright going forward into the season.”

While other sports like baseball and tennis was happening on the Lower Yard,

the basketball court was surrounded with SQ residents cheering on their teams of choice. “Let’s go!” yelled a spectator.

There were a bunch of “Awww!” and “Ooooh’s” trickling out of the mouths of the more than 50 spectators when shots were being taken and missed. But, the entire crowd was crushed and let out a unison of a disappointed “Ooooooh!” when Joshua “JB” Burton missed a beautiful layup



## Milwaukee Bucks share trophy with prisoners

The Milwaukee Bucks, two-time NBA Championship winners, shared their Larry O’Brien Championship trophy with the incarcerated residents of the Milwaukee County House of Corrections, *USA TODAY* reports.

Just like the Golden State Warriors, who entered San Quentin to share their Championship trophy with residents in 2017, the Bucks also made the effort to share their success with the incarcerated residents of their state, giving them a sense of humanity.

Milwaukee Bucks President Peter Feigin said that after winning the trophy, one of the team’s goals was to figure out how “every one of the six million citizens in the state of Wisconsin, [could] to touch, take a picture with [it], feel [it]. And this is just one of those ways to get it into those [hands] that are incarcerated.”

The Bucks team joined together with Milwaukee County, Dream Corps and the ACLU to give residents the chance to touch the trophy, providing a sense of hope and excitement.

“I’m important,” incarcerated resident Jonathan Davis-Sayles said. “Because



Photo courtesy of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition

I thought, being in this situation, that I wasn’t important. Now that I know that I am important, that changed my whole perspective of how I’m going to continue my life when I get out of this situation.”

Most of those incarcerated at the Milwaukee County House of Corrections grew up in Milwaukee and would have never gotten the opportunity to see a Championship trophy. For Samuel Roberts Jr., 53, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

“I’ve been waiting on this for years,” said Roberts, who

has an extensive criminal background. “I’m a Milwaukee Bucks, Wisconsin Badger, cheesehead, that’s me.” He finally got his chance to touch the trophy, the *USA TODAY* reported.

Touching the trophy was not the only reason the Bucks visited the residents with the ACLU and Dream Corps. The organizations gave a presentation on voting to the men inside. Not just on large elections like the presidency, but also on the importance of voting in smaller, local elections as well.

“Last time I voted, I voted

right up under the bucket that would have tied the game at the buzzer and sent the game into overtime.

That shot by Burton was probably the highlight of the game, because both teams did not reach 50 points.

Hale humbly took the blame for the loss of the game and let his teammate off the hook. “It was my crucial two free throws that I missed that cost us the game,” said Hale. “Although we lost, it turned out to be a good first game.”

—Timothy Hicks

“One of our goals when we won the Trophy was how do we get that into the hands of, and the ability for every one of the six million citizens in the state of Wisconsin, to touch, take a picture with [it], feel [it]. And this is just one of those ways to get it into those [hands] that are incarcerated.”

—Peter Feigin  
President, Milwaukee Bucks

for Obama. I learned today that my vote matters. I didn’t take the time to look at the different judges, mayors, senators and stuff,” said incarcerated resident Davis-Sayles.

Over all, the visit from the Bucks and the ACLU had a huge impact on the guys inside the correctional facility.

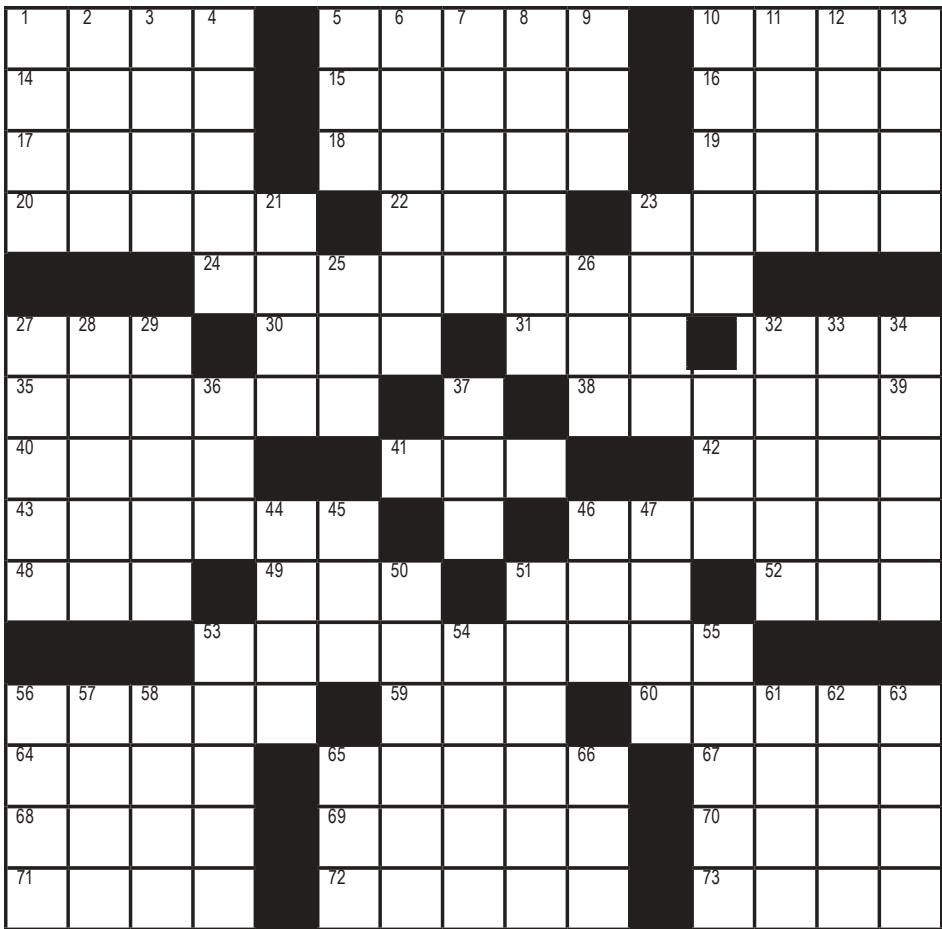
“I learned how to become a better individual and vote for my rights, my vote counts. We need better people to vote for, we need better people in our lives and better government officials,” said incarcerated resident Andre Walker.

—Timothy Hicks

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Jonathan Chiu

Edited by Jan Perry



Across

1. Michael Strahan’s new TV show (Abbrev.)  
4. New Russian intelligence network (Abbrev.)  
7. Author Amy of “The Joy Luck Club”  
10. Acronym of Tiger’s association  
13. Closed handshake  
14. Travel wait term (Abbrev.)  
15. Highway \_\_\_\_ 66  
16. Cusack of “Castle”  
17. Carrie of “Person of Interest“ and “Crowded”  
19. Custom of folkway of the Irish people  
21. Host of CNN’s “United Shades of America” W.  
23. Desert in Mongolia  
26. To happen as a consequence  
27. To draw on glass or metal with acid  
31. To begin  
33. Insect ruins picnics  
34. With speed, swiftly  
35. Song “Sweet Nothing”  
37. Religious celebration on a Sunday  
39. FM alternative  
40. Audi race car model  
41. Export/import tax  
45. Balkin country occupied by Germans in WWII  
49. Comedian Burnett  
50. Acronym for daily food values  
52. To surpass in achievement  
54. A type of cheese used for salads  
55. Thin and bony due to great age or hunger  
57. Amy Acker’s character on “Person of Interest”  
58. Confirmation of receiving items in prison  
61. Bag of products when you first arrived at a prison (Prison Slang)  
64. Iranian language related to old Persian  
68. “Honest \_\_\_\_”  
69. (Suffix) forming feminine Names or titles  
70. Abbrev. for Latin Legum Baccalaureus  
71. Acronym of group that supports American military families  
72. Acronym of synthetic drug similar to LSD  
73. Electrified fish  
74. Weep aloud  
75. Network of Terry Gross’ show “Fresh Air”

JUNE CROSSWORD CLUES

Down

1. Acronym of the a country’s annual output  
2. Spoil or disfigure  
3. A gibbon  
4. Cheese made by Greeks  
5. Medical term for mouth like opening (Suffix)  
6. Crazy or eccentric  
7. Force payment through bribery  
8. What many prison yards lack (two words)  
9. Astronaut Armstrong  
10. Used to express disgust or disbelief  
11. Acronym for Axl Rose and Slash’s band  
12. Football movie “\_\_\_\_ Given Sunday”  
18. A whirring sound  
20. Last thing we did last night  
22. Acronym for American branch military SEALs  
23. Lexus car model  
24. Asian classification in prison (Abbrev.)  
25. Sheep’s cry  
28. Country duo Maddie &\_\_  
29. Acronym of folk band with John Fogerty  
30. Cartoon character \_\_\_\_-Man  
32. Path for hiking or biking  
34. “Jetsons” Cartoon dog  
36. Acronym for global bank  
38. Goddess personifying criminal folly  
41. “She so high” singer \_\_\_\_ Bachman  
42. Land Unit in metric system  
43. Brandon of “Superman Returns”  
44. Irregular line formed on iInfinite number of irregular sections  
45. Beach footwear  
46. Homer’s boss Mr.  
47. OJ’s trial judge  
48. Gone by  
49. Truckers’ radio (Abbrev.)  
51. Obviously  
53. Result of even score basketball game

55. Slyness and cunning in dealing with others  
56. “Talking Bodies” singer  
59. Late Merle Haggard’s song “\_\_\_\_ From Muskokee”  
60. Economist Beatrice Potter  
61. Skinny jeans or parachute pants are types of  
62. Apple’s former competitor  
63. Game, \_\_\_\_, Match  
65. Large cask for wine  
66. C.O.’s weapon  
67. And not, or not, and not either

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

By Joy DeGruy, PhD

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

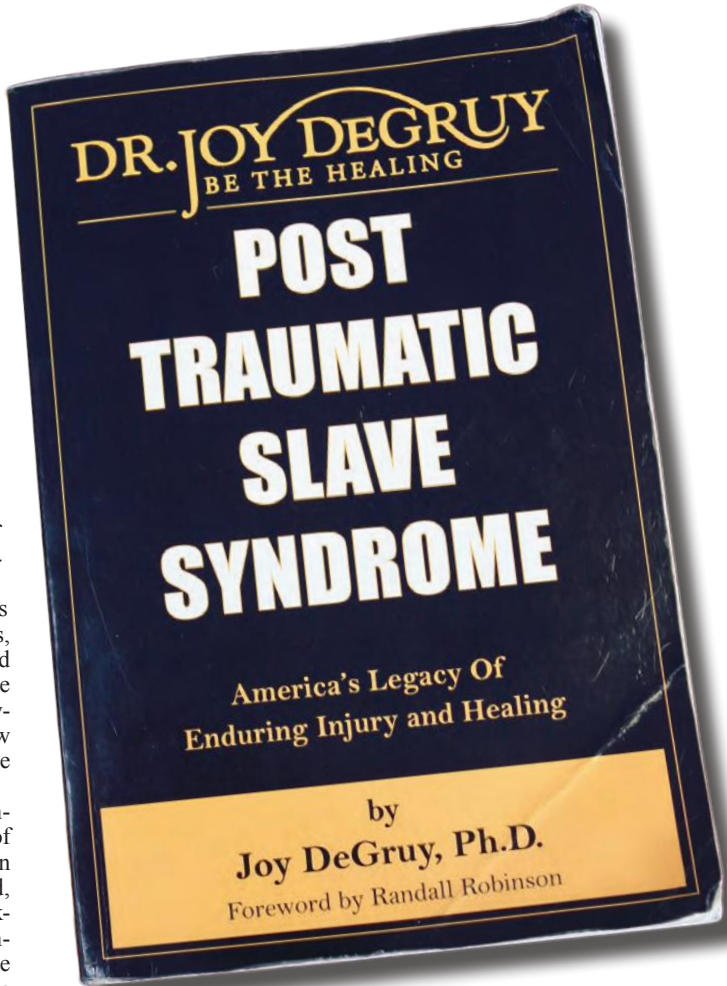
Dr. Joy DeGruy’s book *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrom: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* focuses on how the traumatic experiences of slavery have affected African Americans’ lives, which entails trauma that is a direct result of slaves being hunted, tortured, and forced into labor.

According to the book, the syndrome exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of oppression and institutionalized racism.

The book mentions various types of traumatic syndromes, such as suspicion, anger, and low self-esteem. They are intricately woven into psychological perceptions, how African Americans perceive themselves and others.

Dr. DeGruy gives personal accounts of the effects of PTSS. For example, her son was playing in the front yard, when she noticed a boy looking at him strangely. She immediately went outside to see what the problem was. She asked the boy why he was looking at her son that way; the boy replied, “Why is he looking at me?” She then said, “He might want to play video games with you, but just does not know how to ask.” There seemed to be a preconceived assumption, with the belief that her son imposed a threat, when he did not.

The author and some friends went to a walk-in theater, and some unruly people were throwing popcorn over their heads, at people in the row below them. The popcorn hit her in the face, and her 6-foot-2, 250-pound male friend got upset. She saw a distinct change of rage in his face; he got up and began to address the situation. She gen-



BOOK  
REVIEW

tly touched his arm, and said it was only popcorn, defusing the situation. Why was he so angry? What problem was he attempting to solve, by creat-

ing one?  
The book also addresses low self-esteem, the evaluation of self-worth. It says this evaluation, sometimes considered as low or high perception of self, is an indication of how people do not perceive themselves in a good way. One particular perception is how adults perceive their children. “We know that our children

receive most of their attitudes, life skills and approaches to life from their parents,” Dr. DeGruy wrote.

The author’s personal experience with PTSS is what makes this book very interesting. Dr. DeGruy does not just tell the reader about her views, she explains her personal experience. What can be more inspirational than experience with the subject matter? *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* is a book of healing, understanding the particulars of traumatic experiences.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DELAWARE PRISONER OFFERS UPDATE ON GTL TABLETS

Dear San Quentin News:  
I am writing with some postage I owe for the past installment of the best paper out there as far as I'm concerned.

Also, we have had those GTL tablets here in Delaware for a while now. Let's just say it's a work in progress. It has gotten better as time has moved on. We pay 3 cents a minute for a "promotional" part and 5 cents a minute for the "standard" part. We have about one tablet per 3-5 inmates, depending on where you are housed. The phones used to have an echo or feedback effect for our people on their end, and I believe they have that fixed. We do have a few administrative things we can do like file a grievance, sick calls (for a while), snitch lines, counselor, etc. Recently, they took the sick call aspect off of it. We believe it was to conceal an electronic trail to cover their you-know-whats. Now, we are back to paper and you know how paper conveniently goes missing.

I thought the medical was bad in California until I did time here. This is the worst medical provider I've ever seen. I'm sure there are worse, but anyway...

Keep up the great work and never quit fighting the good fight!

Oh, I don't know if it will affect my getting your paper or not, but as of April 4 we are going to the digital mail crap via Las Vegas. I don't believe it will affect you all, but I'll let ya know if it does. I'm sure going to miss what I call the smell of "not-here," my people's perfume, etc.

Oh well, times are a changing my friends.

—Derek Brown  
James T. Vaughn Corr. Ctr.  
Smyrna, Delaware

NEW YORKER SEEKS SUBSCRIPTION INFO

Dear San Quentin News:

I am an incarcerated individual at the Bedford Correctional Facility in New York. I am interested in receiving the San Quentin News. I would like to make a donation perhaps so I can subscribe. Can you include prices or the amount—I wish to give back.

I am so blessed that Humans of San Quentin has my bio posted on their website, along with three of my poems! How awesome!

You guys are doing great work, and making fantastic strides. I am so thankful to be a part of it.

Keep up the awesome work! I love San Quentin!

Bless you and your population! Can't wait to hear back from you. All the best, praying for you all.

—Lovette R. Din  
Bedford Hills Corr. Facility  
Bedford, New York

Hey, Lovette! Thanks for your interest and support.

Generous grants and donations fund the printing and bulk shipping of 33,000 copies of our newspaper each month to all California state prisons, juvenile facilities, and a few jails—at no cost to those incarcerated readers. We offer a discounted rate (to cover postage) for any incarcerated reader who wants to receive an individually-mailed copy.

For the latest issue, you can send four forever stamps to the address on the bottom of page 3. To receive the newspaper and magazine for a year, you can mail an institutional check for \$25 to the address on the top of page two. Alternatively, if you have an outside supporter, they can send a check or donate \$25 on our website and provide your mailing address.

—Ed.

A QUICK NOTE OF THANKS FROM THE FEDS

Dear San Quentin News:

Thank you for sending me the San Quentin News. I really enjoy it.

I am from Wilmington California doing time in a Security Housing Unit at a federal prison.

Thank you!  
—Ruben Barrera  
United States Penitentiary  
Thomson, Illinois

HIGH DESERT DESPERATE FOR REHABILITATIVE PROGRAMMING

Dear San Quentin News,

The reason for this mis-sive is to shine light on the non-program we inmates here at High Desert continue to receive.

We are confined to our cells for the larger portion on a daily basis.

We are also not being afforded self-help groups or programs to assist us in our rehabilitation efforts.

We need help on all platforms with all these new laws passing giving us hope to get out early. These changing laws are asking for inmates to earn certificates of program completion, vocational trades, etc., all of which we are not being afforded an opportunity to earn.

There are a lot of men here who wants to change for the better and want to be given tools they can carry into the real world, but can't due to no opportunities.

CDCR is supposed to be all for transforming us to be better men, getting us rehabilitated and ready for re-entry, but how can we do that when we are locked down most of the time?

—Christopher King  
High Desert State Prison  
Susanville, California

SQN OFFERS HOPE FOR REDEMPTION AT PLEASANT VALLEY

I want to take this opportunity to give you all a long-overdue thanks for the hard work and dedicated effort you put into every issue.

Every new issue I read contains glimmers of hope that one day there will be a new law that will allow myself and others like me to have our sentences recalled so that I can receive a fair sentence proportionate to the crimes I committed, considering my background and mitigating circumstances.

Currently I'm a victim of the archaic, Draconian three strikes law; as a result, I'm serving 50-years-to-life for two counts of bank robbery with a demand note. A written note should never be interpreted as a weapon, and yet

our current penal code deems what I did as violent. As such, I was sentenced by a judge to a term that would be more appropriate for an unrepentant homicidal psychopath.

Could any rational-minded California voter say with sincerity that justice was served in my case?

So to reiterate my point and the reason for writing, after reading the San Quentin News, I came away feeling like better days are on the horizon. As Bob Dylan says, "Change is a coming," and it makes me feel like a chance for redemption is possible in my future.

Your newspaper is the only source for criminal justice-related news I come across in this depressing black hole of a prison. So whenever I happen to find a new issue floating around, my heart is filled with gladness because I know that there are uplifting articles contained within.

Thanks again for your dedication to this much-needed and much-appreciated service to all the inmates here in California and others locked up across the country.

Stay safe up there!  
—Jared Herdt  
Pleasant Valley State Prison  
Coalinga, California

"STANDING OVATION" FROM CMC-WEST

Dear San Quentin News:

Hello, my name is Albert Sanchez.

I am writing to give you guys a standing ovation for the work you do.

And for all you mentors and facilitators across the country, your words do matter and our next generation is depending on us to figure out our route.

Just remember that it's easier to "roll over" than to "climb over," but never give up.

Thank you once again for your dedication in reaching us through your newspaper.

—Albert Anthony Sanchez  
California Mens Colony  
San Luis Obispo, California

COVID SLOWS REHABILITATION AT CMC-WEST

Dear San Quentin News:

My name is Abraham Cruz. I am presently incarcerated at the California Men's Colony West.

This COVID-19 has put a damper on the rehabilitative efforts for those that are on the path of change, myself being one of the many

Self-help groups are at an almost non-existent stage. The usual groups are still there, but the waiting period is long.

What is needed here is an injection of fresh new concepts to help with rehabilitation of all the souls here who are striving to become a productive member of society.

I am a fan of the San Quentin News. While reading the latest issue, I came upon articles concerning new prison projects aimed at helping individuals understand the traumatic events in their childhoods—events that we struggled with, but did not understand. This project is a very much-needed tool for those here trying to understand the whys.

I also observed another group called G.R.I.P. (Guiding Rage Into Power). I be-

EDITORIAL

Honor and Pride: Remembering my uncle Ferdia



Photo courtesy of Brian Williams

From left: Ferdia Anderson, with sister Ever, sister Irma, and brother John

By Marcus Henderson  
Editor in Chief

Oh yeah, I know I'm going to be bombarded on the yard and with letters to the editor about why there are so many stories about LGBTQ and transgender people in the June paper, celebrating Pride Month. I understand that the number of LGBTQ prisoners who are out is a small community compared to the whole general prison population.

And no, San Quentin News is not trying to make people in outside society think everybody in prison is gay. However, transgender and other LGBTQ people have always been part of the prison landscape, just as they have been in ancient societies around the world.

The difference is that they have been marginalized enough that we act like we don't see them. There are PREA [Prison Rape Elimination Act] policies in prisons nationwide for a reason. Trans people, as well as gay men and women, have suffered physical and sexual assaults from both prisoners and correctional guards alike. This trauma only compounds the childhood suffering that led them to prison in the first place.

Personally, I was groomed in that hyper-masculine ideology that says you are not supposed to care about anybody, no matter who they are—and don't you dare be soft. I adopted this mindset until I started going through my transforma-

tional work, self-help groups and my spirituality. Transformation is more than a few buzz words about triggers and empathy. I actually had to reflect on my own biases.

One day, I walked into the prison clinic. I greeted everybody there except for a trans woman standing alone in a corner. I was shocked to my core at my own behavior. Why didn't I speak? Did I emotionally harm that person by not speaking? I had to ask myself: who the hell am I to shun someone and not to see them for who they are? I made sure that the next time I saw that person, I spoke.

The incident made me flash back to my childhood, thinking about my uncle Ferdia, who was gay. I didn't know anything about sexual orientation; I just knew my uncle had a boyfriend named James. Though gay marriage was not yet legal, as far as their love was concerned, James was his husband.

My uncle was one of the major male figures in my life before he passed away. He was more than his sexuality to me. He gave me money, took me places, was a shoulder to cry on and he protected me whenever I needed it. Even when I came to prison he didn't shun me, he comforted me and said everything will be alright.

My uncle meant the world to me. If I would have told him about the clinic incident he still would not have judged me. Just like in society, prison is

changing. People in prison are debating the use of pronouns for trans women in particular at the same time as many in the outside world have expanded the number of pronouns to describe different gender identities. We have some volunteers who come in that identify as "they." It's a new world and some of us have been incarcerated for decades, so for many it's about processing a new emotional intelligence.

I even had to go through a workshop on pronouns to make sure we respect how someone "shows up" and presents themselves. I want to make sure I know the proper way to cover them in the newspaper. While I understand some people's concerns with the way that the conversation around LGBTQ issues is changing, I'm not blind to what goes on around me while in prison.

I see the drama of real and sometimes questionable accusations of sexual harassment, domestic violence in relationships and those who are struggling with their sexuality.

I also see some of those in the incarcerated LGBTQ community holding support groups and advocating for social and criminal justice reform. There are a lot of things going on in prison that not everybody is a part of—be it productive or destructive.

So with that said, I may not celebrate the month like those who it truly affects, but I will celebrate and take PRIDE in honoring my uncle Ferdia.

lied these programs are much needed here. So I am writing asking for assistance in getting in touch with the program founders to perhaps become the little brother of San Quentin's success in being established as a facility with good rehabilitative programs, with greater success in helping others change their lives.

In order to help people change, we must all come together at one time because only by coming together can change truly happen.

—Abraham Cruz  
California Men's Colony  
San Luis Obispo, California

POETRY SUBMISSION FROM NORTH KERN

Dear San Quentin News:

I came across your article not so long ago and the poetry section sparked my interest.

I am sending you some of my work in hope of having it published. I am currently at North Kern and serving a life term. I have read your section of poets with the experience that they overcame and I would like to share my

message, "We all make mistakes but we all have the free will to make any situation into what we choose." My choice is growth and to better myself so someday my loved ones know what they mean to me and to inspire a mind so they'll find their balance.

Thank you for your time reading this letter and I hope to receive a response from you.

—Guadalupe Aibarran  
CSP-North Kern  
Delano, California

"Behind the Line" by Guadalupe Aibarran  
I'm segregated behind these prison walls without a place to call my home. I wonder when they'll come for me. Behind the line...I'm waiting for you.

It's been some time since I've been home and I wonder what I'll find. Will it all be the same or will a few things change? I can't remember of the last laugh that we might have had but the memory of who we were will forever last. I promise that somehow I'll make it back and hopeful we can restart in a brand new day because the love for you hasn't gone away...

It's been some time since

I've been home...

Behind the Line...I'm waiting for you.

I've been living my days around these stone walls and all I think about is the life that could've been but someday I hope to have the chance to reclaim the life that was once mine, because I understand that a second chance is hard to come by and I don't plan to allow it to slip away...

It's been some time since I've been home...

I'm segregated behind these prison walls without a place to call my home. I wonder when they'll come for me.

Behind the line...I'm waiting for you.

THANKS FROM JAMESTOWN

Dear San Quentin News:

I just finished reading my December 2021 newspaper, and I'm flabbergasted by the wealth of information your team continues to provide us readers.

Thank you!

—Dominic Carter  
Sierra Conservation Center  
Jamestown, California

ARTS

# Erick Maciel sees inspiration everywhere he looks



*“I wanted Zombie Girl » to stand out because she is a magical creature. I like creating fantasy characters that do not exist in the real world.”*

*Lower right: “Brando” is the artist’s rendition of another magical creature he finds inspirational.*

*« “Water Color Witch” captures the fading of its subject’s energy.*

By Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism Guild

Art is a way for incarcerated people to sooth the mind and soul in a positive way. It provides a healthy escape from the depression that often accompanies life in prison. In the SQNews art back page edition, we intend to showcase the hidden talents of many incarcerated people, so that they can be appreciated and enjoyed by others across the prison system.

“I like creating fantasy characters that do not exist in the real world,” said Erick Maciel, “I usually will be watching TV in my cell or looking at a magazine and I get this feeling I have to draw it or make a sketch.”

Maciel is inspired by many other artists and television shows. He also skims through tattoo magazines, and is motivated by the talented artists he finds there.

He uses magazines and his television to learn new techniques as his imagination runs wild. Art allows him to create an imagined place

where he can grow; a magical and underground world of his own domain.

He considers art a form of self-fulfillment and a coping tool. The subject matter and the colors he chooses to work with bring him happiness, and art allows him to do something positive and temporarily escape the realities of prison.

One piece that stands out the most for the artist is titled “Zombie Girl.” Hot pink elements contrast against the zombie’s gray skin color, which makes the piece stand out.

“I wanted for Zombie Girl to stand out because she is a magical creature,” said Maciel.

He described seeing a lipstick tattoo in a tattoo magazine, and says he liked the way the artist put a white outline around the lipstick to make it stand out against the background. So he decided to try this technique in his own project.

The way that Maciel mixes colors sets his art apart from the work of other incarcerated artists.

The artist came down to the

SQNews room to display a small gallery of his paintings. He also brought a piece titled “Frosty the Donut,” in colored pencil. The donut has two eyes, eyelashes, and a bluish tongue sticking out. He refers to it as “happy donut.”

“I made this donut because I like drawing cartoons and I wanted to create a cartoon character out of a donut,” said Maciel.

He used a green background to give the piece a zany feeling, showcasing its personality. “In the front when I was doing the squiggles [it was] therapeutic, and [also added] texture” he said.

The watercolor witch is a figure of a young woman surrounded by magical shapes against the moon. He used a green filigree pattern to show the energy and dynamics of her strength.

In this particular drawing, he used the soft quality of watercolor to illustrate how the witch’s energy is fading away as the magic is being used.

He also brought a painting of a



Photos by Edwin E. Chavez, SQNews



majestic-looking deer named Brando, a magical that is meant to bring inspiration.

“I put the word Muse on his face, a Nod to people with face tattoos, because I think they are cool,” said Maciel “Also to throw something random at the deer’s body to create disorder.”

He is enthusiastic about creating future art projects, and plans to pitch artwork to Wall City Magazine, a project that is published by SQNews.

“I hope that whoever looks at my artwork, it will bring them a sense of joy, magic, and wonder,” Maciel said.

San Quentin resident Reginald Yates embraces his ancestral roots by reviving some of the old traits of African tribal art.

Some may dismiss this as misguided attention to an extinct culture — but not Yates, who refuses to let this hidden treasure vanish.

“I just get a pleasure (out) of exposing this art to people who may never saw it,” said Yates, referring to a bird sitting on a stand and looking back, while reflecting on his experiences.

He named this bird Sam Kofa Bird, which symbolizes learning from experience, referring back to what the bird know about its past. Yates points out that when you know about your past, you will know what your future is going to be.

The artist’s creativity goes beyond subtitles or names.

He told SQNews about one canvas on which he painted multiple figurines, each with a different meaning.

At the top is an All Seeing Eye, which means that God is watching over us. Clockwise to the right, he points out a red tribal mask and describes how these ancestors were head hunters; they came from Bakuba, Zaire, on the continent of Africa.

In the same picture, he portrays other items such as a sword named Goldsword Hilt, which comes from Ghana, Africa. In the middle of the painting, Yates sketched out a map of the African continent, giving it the national colors

## Reggie Yates traces his African ancestry through his art



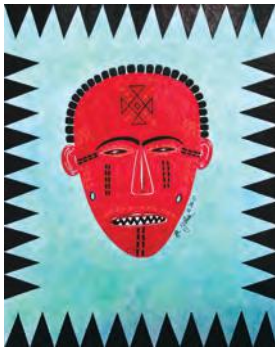
Photos by Dao Ong, SQNews



Reginald Yates enjoys creating art that introduces people to new concepts and ideas, especially relating to African cultural history.

Above right: “Sam Kofa Bird” represents learning from past experiences.

Above left: Multiple faces and figures on the canvas, topped by the All-Seeing Eye, expresses the omniscience of God.



“Red is for the blood we shed, black is for the Black people, and green is for the land they took from our ancestors,” said Yates.

Painting gives him a voice and through it he tries to bring new generations an awareness of the importance of the African roots and tribal culture he thinks are rarely recognized in comparison to his school years.

At the bottom is the All Seeing Eye. Yates also included two black hands in the “hands up!” position, in reference to what is going on across the world.

“Black lives matter,” said Yates.

Finally, this canvas has a scarification representing the Batshioko tribe, in Zaire.

The artist shared with SQNews that it took him about three days to com-

plete this project. “I wouldn’t change it for nothing. I love my work,” said Yates.

His style is based on the idea that this kind of art is not being promoted or displayed, compared to other arts across the globe.

“I enjoy the art because it connects me with my historical and ancestral attachment,” said Yates. “I am able

to capture this diverse ethnic art and share it through my drawings.”

According to the artist, the vast majority of African art is wooden sculptures and masks. In prison, Yates has used canvas as his medium.

He explained the symbolism of these elaborate masks or sculptures that the ancestors made and possessed, and

how he fabricates his own pieces. He believes that most of the essential information is lost or is stored in museums and publications.

As an artist he is dedicated to drawing the attention of his audience and to designing different styles of masks, giving them their unique identity.

He pointed out to SQNews a brown, eared mask with scarification on its forehead that represents the ancestral religion. It’s called Cihongo Mask and is inspired by the Tshokwe Ciwandawanda in Zaire. This scarification is part of their identity, taking viewers back over hundreds of years to their cultural ancestors.

The red mask, Bobo Mask, is vertical and has a plant-like structure springing from the top of a human or animal head; this kind of mask is found across a wide belt of sub-Saharan savanna region, from Mali and Upper Volta down into the northern Ivory Coast and Ghana areas.

Yates emphasized how many of these masks appear to be connected with the Do Society; they are worn in funerary rituals for important members. Yates believes they have been used in performances intended to cleanse villages of mystically dangerous and disruptive forces.

Yates is currently working on his next project, an Egyptian Bird Horus, centering the bird on the canvas. He thinks diving into one’s roots can be the perfect remedy for the depression and confinements of San Quentin.

—Edwin E. Chavez