

## San Francisco Giants mental health team visits SQ



Vincent O'Bannon / SQNews

By Timothy Hicks  
Staff Writer

Mental health was the topic of a recent panel discussion of sports figures inside and outside of San Quentin State Prison.

Panelists included former major league baseball player Drew Robinson, San Francisco Giants Director of Mental Health Dr. Shana A., and Clinical Psychologist Dr. Emily P. The audience included San Quentin A's players and coaches.

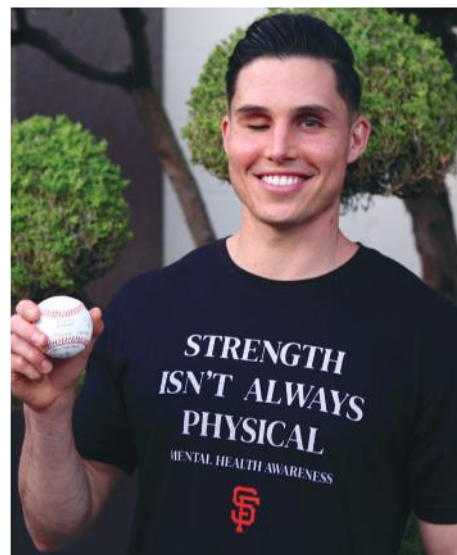
The guests were able to reach deep inside the A's players with their professional knowledge, experience and personal testimonies.

"I know the feeling of no hope and the feeling of not wanting to be here," Robinson said at the Oct. 17 event in the Catholic Chapel. "I have experienced those things. I survived 20 hours after I attempted suicide by gunshot."

Robinson played for the Texas Rangers from 2010 to 2018, the St. Louis Cardinals in 2019 and the SF Giants in 2020 and 2021. He is now a mental health advocate.

Robinson boldly displayed his wound with no eye patch to cover it. Dr. Shana A. and Dr. Emily P. proudly stood by his side in

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## TransMetro offers free transportation to prisoner families

By SQNews Staff

Families of incarcerated people in California are now receiving free transportation services to attend in-person visits.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has formed a partnership with TransMetro to provide transportation to all adult corrections facilities.

They provide free transportation for families and loved ones of the incarcerated persons housed within CDCR's 34 institutions.

"Our goal is to provide regularly scheduled transportation services to family members of the incarcerated persons serving sentences at designated CDCR institutions. We do this at no cost to the incarcerated person or the family member," CDCR reported.

Buses will depart Fridays, Saturdays, and/or Sundays from four California regions: Central California, Southern California, Northern California, and the Bay Area. Each region schedules service to all institutions on a rotating basis. All trips are subject to change and based on demand and health and safety factors.

Central California pickup areas will include Riverside, Pasadena and Lancaster. Southern region pickups include San Diego, Long Beach and Bakersfield. Northern region pickups include Redding, Chico, Sacramento and Stockton. Bay Area pickups include Richmond, Oakland, San Leandro and San Jose.

Riders are allowed to pack meals and snacks for the ride, and water will be provided by TransMetro. Buses will stop at a restaurant along the route for dinner, so riders who want to buy food should bring cash. Up to five approved visitors per incarcerated person are permitted to ride the bus at one time. Minors must be accompanied by an adult who is an approved visitor of the person the minor is visiting. Alcohol and illegal drugs are prohibited.

Trips with travel time that exceed 24 hours will require lodging. Riders will be responsible for the cost of lodging. TransMetro will designate a hotel for overnight lodging and will attempt to secure a discounted rate for riders.

Register for services at [cder@transmetro.org](mailto:cder@transmetro.org) up to three weeks before the planned visit or call (415) 259-4746 Monday-Friday from 9AM to 5PM. Project Coordinator is Yolanda C. (se habla español). Mailing address is 295 San Bruno Ave., San Francisco CA 94103.

## Newsom signs bill expanding free phone calls

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

California prisoners will be able to make free phone calls to family and friends effective Jan. 1, 2023.

That is thanks to SB 1008, the Keep Families Connected Act, signed into law Sept. 29 by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

California families spend an estimated \$68.2 million every year for phone calls with the incarcerated, said *Worth Rises*, a nonprofit working to dismantle the prison industry.

"The ability to call your partner, children or friends to instantly share your joys or sadness is something most of us take for granted," said the author of the bill, Sen. Josh Becker (D-Peninsula). Phone contact is strictly controlled and expensive, he added.

Becker visited San Quentin's Garden Chapel in August to share his new bill with graduates of the Guiding Rage into Power group, a program that helps prisoners put its name into practice.

"Now that you've done your job, I need to do my job," Becker told the SQ audience. "I have a bill this year to have free prison phone calls. We should not be charging you by the minute, by the picture, by the email, by the video calls."

This bill is designed to prohibit a county, city, or state agency from receiving revenue for the provision

See *CALLS* on page 4



North Block's phone booths may soon get even more crowded. The passage of SB 1008 will provide incarcerated persons statewide with expanded free access to telephone calls.

SQN archive photo

## Victim Offender Education Group back in business

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

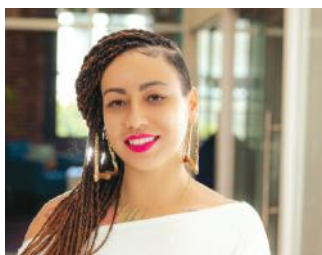
A self-help group aimed at unearthing the harm caused by crime has returned to San Quentin after a 26-month lull.

The program, called Victim Offender Education Group (VOEG, pronounced "vogue"), is looking to train new residents as facilitators, according to the Insight Prison Project.

VOEG was originally for adult incarcerated men, but it has expanded to youth, women, Spanish speakers, and parolees. It has been duplicated in Colorado, Massachusetts, and Nebraska, staff of the Project has said.

In March 2020, Covid restrictions halted VOEG's 52-week course just five months into the program. San Quentin's continuing medical restrictions may mean that the current program will take longer than normal to complete, said VOEG participant Jereal

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◀ **PROFILE:** INITIATE JUSTICE CO-FOUNDER TAINA VARGAS TO RUN ORGANIZATION'S POLITICAL ADVOCACY ARM

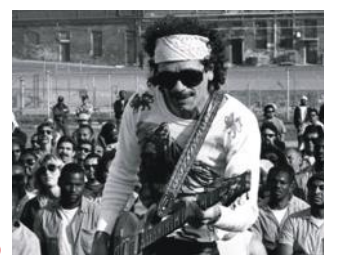
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**PROFILE**

**Initiate Justice restructures leadership roles**

By **Marcus Henderson**  
Editor in Chief

Initiate Justice, a prison reform and abolitionist advocacy group, is in the process of a leadership transition, according to the *Inside Journal*, the organization's newsletter. Taina Vargas, the long-time executive director of the organization, will transition to head Initiate Justice Action, the group's 501(c4) organization.

"Thank you to everyone who has supported Initiate Justice and myself as a leader. I am forever committed to this movement," Vargas said in the newsletter, "and will continue to serve on our Board of Directors moving forward. I cannot wait to see what Initiate Justice does in the future—in this political moment in particular."

Antoinette Ratcliffe will become Initiate Justice interim executive director. Ratcliffe joined the organization in 2019. She was a participant in the Institute of Impacted Leaders. She became an institute facilitator and the director of organizing.

"I joined the Initiate Justice's Institute of Impacted Leaders program with the desire to learn how I could advocate for my three brothers who were each serving 20-plus years for decisions made in their youth," said Ratcliffe. "Under the mentorship of our Co-Founder, Taina, and with the support of an entire community of impacted people, I learned not only about the necessity of advocating for my loved ones, and how to advocate for their rights and freedom—but also realized just how critical and urgent it is that all impacted people work collectively in our fight for freedom," she added.

Vargas co-founded Initiate Justice from a prison visiting room with her then-husband. The organization has grown to 45,000 inside members and 287 outside organizers, reported the newsletter. Vargas has been instrumental in building an organization that has changed some of California's laws.

"In the last almost six years, we have helped pass bills and ballot propositions, trained hun-

dreds of system-impacted people in policy advocacy, and built a membership of tens of thousands of people," said Vargas. "I am proud of the work we have done."

Initiate Justice and both woman leaders are firmly committed to political change affecting system-impacted people.

"As a dedicated advocate, I will continue to uphold our mission, empower leaders among our community, and ensure that the experience of people currently and formerly incarcerated, and their loved ones, inform our policy campaigns," said Ratcliffe.

For the past three years Ratcliffe developed her leadership skills and has inspired lasting change in policy reform and ultimately prison abolition.

"I have empowered others to use their political power in my role as an Initiate Justice Outside Organizer ... and the Director of Organizing," said Ratcliffe. "I have witnessed hope being restored for countless people who had given up their fight, myself and brothers included, and have experienced the transformative power of impacted people as leaders."

The organization is finding new creative ways to expand and invest in their inside and outside staff. The group has launched the Art Gallery, which can be viewed on its website. The artwork will be used to support the movement for its newsletter, social media and fundraising efforts.

"We will continue to equip impacted people with the knowledge and tools necessary to make policy change both inside and outside of prisons," said Ratcliffe. "We will continue to organize from an abolitionist, intersectional lens, and we will continue to be courageous in our pursuit of freedom for all people," she added.

As these two powerful leaders settle into their new positions, Initiate Justice is continuing to strengthen their course of building a new society based on its goal of true justice.

"It is so important that people directly impacted by incarceration continue to organize and make our voices heard," Vargas concluded.



Photos courtesy of Initiate Justice

**Taina Vargas**, above, is the co-founder and longtime executive director of Initiate Justice. She will now head the group's political action wing, Initiate Justice Action. **Antoinette Ratcliffe**, below, will step in as interim executive director.



*Initiate Justice does not give legal advice, review personal cases, court transcripts or legal papers. But for legal and policy updates you can write in to receive the Inside Journal newsletter.*

**Initiate Justice  
PO Box 15836  
Los Angeles, CA 90015**

**CCWP welcomes new Membership Organizer**

Formerly incarcerated women continue to raise the bar in advocacy work. Elizabeth "Leesa" Nomura is the new membership organizer for the California Coalition for Women Prisoners.

Nomura is formerly incarcerated and a strong advocate for justice-involved women and system-impacted families. She created "Freedom Looks Good on Us," a Facebook page supporting more than 1,700 justice-involved people. The page offers participants an open space for communication, according to the *Fire Inside*, the coalition's newsletter.

"When I was in prison, I thought [the Coalition] was an organization that supports mostly women over 40 serving life sentences," Nomura said to *Fire Inside*. "Since my parole in January 2020, I learned just how much it does in support of our whole community on both sides of the prison walls."

The coalition's advocacy includes a DROP LWOP campaign, Writing Warriors (a letter writing program) and support of legislation like the Vision Act to stop California's ICE prison transfers.

"CCWP is a place of empowerment," said Nomura, "and with a spirit of resilience we move toward our goal of dismantling the [prison industrial complex], ending mass incarceration and the patriarchal system behind it all."

The coalition fights systemic

barriers with its Participatory Defense support and Fire on the Outside Reentry Community program.

"Incarceration does not negate your ability to advocate and neither does age, ethnicity, gender, economic status, or background," said Nomura. "CCWP is me, CCWP is you, CCWP is us."

Nomura brings skill and energy to her new position. She is a board member of the Orange County Community Action Partnerships alliance, an organization that fosters partnerships for people with reentry needs. She is a Project Rebound scholar studying Human Services at Cal State Fullerton. She co-chaired a planning committee for the coalition's First Annual Freedom Fest in October 2021. The event celebrated the accomplishments of the coalition's women beyond incarceration.

"CCWP does more than just print a quarterly newsletter and help lifers with [Board of Parole Hearings] support. Is it any wonder that I would want to join the CCWP team?" said Nomura. "I am honored to serve the justice-involved and system-impacted community as Membership Organizer and I am extending an invitation to you all, inside and outside the prison walls."

The coalition is thrilled to have Nomura on staff, the newsletter said.

—**Marcus Henderson**



Photo courtesy of California Coalition for Women Prisoners

Formerly incarcerated Elizabeth "Leesa" Nomura (above) now works on behalf of other women in the penal system as the new membership organizer for the California Coalition for Women Prisoners.

# STARS BEHIND BARS: North Carolina nonprofit visits San Quentin, aims to improve reentry opportunities in NC

By Juan Haines  
Senior Editor

A mentor of incarcerated people in North Carolina said that a recent visit to San Quentin's Media Center opened his eyes for ways to improve the reentry program where he volunteers.

"The rest of the country needs to take note," said Jerry Campbell, executive director of Stars Behind Bars.

Stars Behind Bars offers incarcerated people who meet clear-cut criteria a "taste of freedom" by temporarily taking them out of prison. While out of prison, participants and mentors visit libraries and go to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, religious services or similar community-based activities.

"The library was really cool because it has a conference room," Campbell said in an interview Sept. 23. "We could shut the door and just talk. We'd get a measure of peace —

find out what needs attention."

The passes include having lunch at a local restaurant to give participants a sense of normality. Campbell likes to take mentees to Bahamas Breeze, where he knows the general manager.

"He understands what's going on," Campbell said. "[Other] people don't know what we're doing. We just chillin' and blending in."

The program has served 477 incarcerated people by assisting them to write plans for their future. Participants are matched with mentors and are assisted in getting driver's licenses.

Campbell said he wants Stars Behind Bars to be a well-known program among North Carolina prisoners as well as prison staff at the Franklin Correctional Facility in Raleigh.

Participants who finished their sentences and got out of prison have stayed out. "We have a 0% recidivism rate and

it's documented," Campbell said.

He said he wants to bring a program like the San Quentin Media Center to North Carolina to highlight Stars Behind Bars' reentry work.

"I'm trying to find out how to do programs the best — so I watch a lot of your videos." Referring to the Media Center, he added, "It's going to revolutionize the criminal justice system from within. It's the men that're making it happen."



People serving sentences in North Carolina are given a "Map Program," which is a list of requirements the a person must complete to get out of prison. Campbell explained that prisoners work to earn lesser custody levels to qualify for the Stars Behind Bars program. Campbell noted that even lifers qualify for the program, but it's determined on a case-by-case basis. Many of the people he's taken on passes were once serving life sentences.

Typically, he said those in the last quarter of their sentence are eligible to participate.

"The programs in North Carolina are geared at finding leaders and connecting them with resources in the community," Campbell said.



Campbell was asked if he's been impacted by the criminal justice system.



Tony Singh / SQNews

Stars Behind Bars Executive Director Jerry Campbell, left, sits beside longtime SQNews Adviser Amanda Weitman. Campbell has worked with hundreds of current and formerly incarcerated individuals to provide tools and mentorship for those returning to the community. His program boasts a documented zero-percent recidivism rate, he said.

"I'm definitely impacted, but I've never done prison time," Campbell said.

He talked about how divine intervention prevented him from going to prison, which changed the trajectory of his life.

"I was at a space in my mind to say, this didn't happen for no reason. I got something that I wanna do — I didn't know all the terms or lingo. All I knew is I wanted to help the men behind the wall. That's all I knew," Campbell said.

"If I mess up and do the wrong thing, they got a cell down there in Raleigh, North Carolina, that will fit me. They got a cot that'll fit me. They got a size 13 slipper — they might give me a 15, they might give me a 12 — but they gonna put me in something. They gotta jumpsuit for me. I think about that every time I come in prison. I'm not comfortable. Prison is very real."

He talked about how youngsters in the community are paying attention to what

he's doing. "I think about that in everything that I do," Campbell said. "So, am I impacted by prison? Yes I am."

He hopes to bring the Stars Behind Bars program to the Wake Correctional Facility, which he said is two minutes from his house. He bought the house, he said, to be close to the prison and to work with prison officials dedicated to making reentry services available for the incarcerated population.

## San Quentin News

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## Journalism Guild alum Forrest Jones returns to SQ

By Dante D. Jones  
Staff Writer

The secret to success inside or outside of prison is to take advantage of every opportunity you are given, a former prisoner told the San Quentin News Journalism Guild.

That was the advice from Forrest Jones, a former Guild student on his first return to San Quentin since his parole in 2018.

Jones, a Black man with dark skin, soft and curly hair and glasses, walked into the room with a strong confident stature and a welcoming presence.

"I am so honored to be back here for the first time—as a free man—to talk to you guys," Jones said at the Aug. 12 visit. "Please understand that everything that I've accomplished thus far has been through hard work, persistence, and a dogged effort to take advantage of every opportunity I was given throughout my time at San Quentin, which allowed me to gain my freedom."

He was sentenced in 1995 under California's draconian Three Strikes Law, for theft of a \$400 video cassette recorder. Jones served 24 years of a 25 years-to-life sentence.

Jones, 58, was raised in Hanford, California. His involvement with the criminal justice system started at the age of 16. Like many teenagers and young adults growing up in the early '80s, he became drug-addicted, leading to a life of crime—stealing whatever he could to feed his addiction. Juvenile Hall, drug rehabs and county jail stints soon followed. Between 1985 and 1995 three burglary convictions resulted in his being "struck out."

After 10 years of hard time and deep soul searching, Jones

said he began to realize that he needed to take control of his life if he ever wanted to regain his freedom.

During the eight years he resided at SQ, he focused on educating himself and others about prison law/reform.

Among the stories he wrote for the *San Quentin News* was one entitled "The Striking Report." Published in 2012, it focused on California's Three Strikes Law—at a time when the law was on the ballot to be reformed. (See *The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, vol. 23, no.2 (2014))

In January 2018, Jones was paroled from The Q. He now lives across the bay in Alameda. Since his release, his grind and work ethic has been nonstop.

For employment, Jones began working for Caltrans through a temp agency called Center for Employment Opportunity. He earned \$100 a day cleaning highways. After about three years, he purchased three cars and recently secured his own apartment.

Currently he is employed with Five Keys Schools and Programs. Founded by the San Francisco Sheriff's Department in 2003, Five Keys—which serves formerly incarcerated individuals and people currently or formerly experiencing homelessness—hires people directly into their transition employment positions.

The visitor said that he is an "Ambassador" at the company's Oakland site. His primary responsibilities are to the company's homeless clients. He compares his duties to that of a correctional officer and/or a counselor.

He said he helps them with day-to-day things such as finding employment or enrolling in self-help programs. "I also have a key to the hotel rooms they are given. I make sure

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The secret to  
success inside  
or outside of  
prison is to take  
advantage of  
every opportunity  
you are given.

—Forrest Jones



Tony Singh / SQNews

they are in or out of the room at the required times," he said.

"You know, it's funny. I now have a new respect for the struggles prison staff go through with some of the guys on the inside. I mean, when you are dealing with people who have lost their way, they can be very difficult at times. But all in all, I love what I do because having been in similar situations, I have a broader perspective of what they're going through. I can relate, so it helps me help them get through it, ya know?"

Jones said he faced many obstacles when he was first released from prison. He told an amusing story about how he couldn't figure out how the self-checkout line at the grocery store worked because when he went in, they didn't exist.

"I'm standing there looking crazy, waiting for a cashier to show up and check me out, when the lady behind me had to explain to me the whole process. I was so embarrassed," he said.

Jones is now an undergraduate student at Cal State, East Bay, where he's working toward a major in sociology.

Additionally, he is part of a program at Cal State, East Bay, called Project Rebound. It provides students services organized around two principles: peer support and holistic advising. It provides financial aid, career and goal planning, legal/social services, and guidance on balancing academic and personal life.

Jones said his role at Project Rebound is to develop, access, recruit and retain programs that make the transition process easier for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people who plan to attend Cal State, East Bay.

"Please understand that this (journalism) class is a great opportunity that you've been given. Make it count. Never give up on your goals or your mission to get out of here, because as you can see, I'm proof that you can regain your freedom and succeed," he said.



Vincent O'Bannon / SQNews



Members of the San Francisco Giants' medical team met with San Quentin residents for a discussion of mental health issues. Some of SQ's baseball players autographed baseballs to show their appreciation (inset).

## GIANTS

Continued from page 1

solidarity and full support.

"Risk is really hard to predict," said Dr. Shana A. She said that Robinson's case was one of the most extreme cases she has had to face since working for the team. However, him being willing to talk about his situation helps her spread the message of suicide prevention and his story does a lot to help others.

The three were flanked by outside coaches of the SQ A's, Capt. Steve Rhineheart and Mike Kremer. SQ Warden Ron Broomfield, Lt. Sam Robinson (now Capt. Robinson), and Lt. Berry were also in the pews with the 20-plus SQ A's players.

Dr. Shana A. and Dr. Emily P. are in-house psychologists for the Giants, unique positions they have enjoyed for part of the more than 15 years they have been practicing mental health care. They were inspired to spread their expertise to the incarcerated after meeting formerly incarcerated SQ A's shortstop Brandon Riddle-Terrell. The mental health team arrived with invaluable knowledge that sparked emotional responses from the players.

"So much is a social connection. Having a teammate stay with the team during practices and other team events can keep them in the right state of mind to continue on," said Dr. Emily P.

After briefly mentioning how the support of family, friends and childhood traumas could possibly change the trajectory of

## Ex-Giants player connects with SQ residents, opens up about his mental health struggles

a tragedy, Dr. Shana A.'s message hit the personal emotions of the players and the coaches.

"I got some amazing teammates," said SQ A's Captain Anthony Denard, "and inside and outside coaches. Being out on that field with them has built me up and helped me so much that I would not trade it in for anything."

Denard had the opportunity to be drafted into professional baseball and he took responsibility for allowing himself to make decisions that prevented him from continuing to play the game he loves on a professional level.

During the forum, Denard's teammates expressed how they too have experienced childhood traumas that altered their life. Carrington Russelle talked about how his 17-year-old son suffered an injury while playing sports and contemplated quitting just as Denard did.

"My mom told me you don't quit something you start," said Denard. "I felt hopeless in my heart, because when I cried for help, when I needed it, that cry for help went unheard. What does one do when that cry goes unheard?" The tears flowed as Denard described his upbringing and struggles. "My ignorance and stupidity snatched a good opportunity from my life."

Once Denard finishing relating his experience, his teammates showed their support for him with hugs and empathy.

Teammate Kolby Southwood shared a clip of his childhood upbringing. "I had a head injury as a kid and it was hard to connect with other kids," said Southwood. "But, through sports, it helps me find a way to connect with other kids. When you are on a team, the expectations could be a challenge though."

The three panelists engaged the crowd while administering their professional expertise and advice wisely. "You have to remember to be grounded off the field, too. Because the body holds on to trauma and it shows up in life. So, hold on to staying grounded," Dr. Shana A. said. "Be thankful for the small things."

Dr. Emily P. advised the men to be grateful for something, even if it's just breathing.

SQ A's head coach Richard Williams spoke with heartfelt emotion. The forum struck a chord of remembrance for him. He has been the team's in-house therapist for the entire time that he has been the coach. He understands their emotional needs and he takes pleasure in being their mentor.

"I talk to the players and help get them through their issues," Coach Williams said. "I listen and let them know that I am here for them." He thanked the guests for coming and sharing their knowledge with the players and said that therapy in sports was long overdue and especially needed for the gen-

eral population. "It's not only needed for those in blue, but it's also needed for the staff as well. Stress and anxiety is everywhere."

Warden Broomfield asked the guests, "Are there any other tools that the guys can take away?"

"Meditation works," suggested Robinson. "Managing expectations and show some love to yourself." Robinson's black T-shirt read "Strength isn't always physical."

Dr. Shana A. said to read a cognitive workbook and she suggested using the power of the breath and to take control of the parts of your body. "Control the strong parts and the wounded parts," she said. Emily P. agreed.

Coach K. Bhatt is the recreation manager of the prison. He thanked the guests and the guys. "I commend all of you guys," said Bhatt. "I have watched all of you guys support one another." He said that it is good that the Giants care about their team's mental health and it is a great benefit for the players to have an in-house therapist like that. "It's a great idea for a team to have that service. Because men hide their emotions."

"It is inspiring to see others open up. And it's OK to be able to search for help and not allow your machismo to overpower you," said Oscar Acosta, pitcher of the SQ A's.

— *Bostyon Johnson*  
contributed to this story.

## VOEG

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Lafrance Nelson.

"We're happy to bring the VOEG program back. Now that we have a group on Tuesday and Thursday, we want to bring back our Monday group as well," said Executive Director Leonard Rubio. "If you want to learn the tools to live your daily life—in prison or on parole—in this program you will address things the Board of Prison Hearings wants to hear about," said Rubio.

Rubio became the project leader in 2018. He was incarcerated at San Quentin from 1994 until he paroled in 2010. During his time inside, Rubio was involved in numerous San Quentin programs. He started the Restorative Justice Inter-

faith Roundtable, and the prison yoga class.

VOEG began at San Quentin in 2004, originally developed by Rochelle Edwards. The foundation of the course was based on the work of David Doerfler's program Concentric Journeys, incorporating elements of restorative justice and healing from trauma. The program's activities are facilitated by peer support.

After it was initially developed, VOEG graduates assisted in expanding the curriculum. The goal is to gain deeper insight into the harm inflicted by incarcerated people, and assist healing and restoring lives.

The program seeks to support people who have survived crimes that are similar to the

ones that the group's participants have committed. It also seeks to create a space where the family members of people who were murdered can share their experiences.

"Qualifications for new facilitators include: they must be accountable for their crime, and [have] a desire to give back just what they received from the program. They need to have the skill to guide new participants in accountability and empathy on their journey to understanding insight," said John Gillies, a group facilitator.

Gillies says he is excited about the program starting back up, so the students can continue to do the hard work that VOEG offers.

## UNCUFFED PODCAST EARNS RECOGNITION

By Anthony Manuel Carvalho  
Staff Writer

A podcast produced at San Quentin about the parole process has won a national award.

The podcast was produced by *UnCuffed*, a program at San Quentin's Media Center that teaches original production of a podcast to the incarcerated, and first aired in 2021.

Called "*Nate's Going Home*," the first-place winning episode highlighted Nathan McKinney's parole process, including prior denials and his continued persistence that allowed him to finally obtain a release date. McKinney paroled from San Quentin earlier this year.

"McKinney earned his freedom," said *UnCuffed* facilitator Greg Eskridge.

The award was given by the Public Media Journalists Association to *UnCuffed* and its broadcast affiliate, KALW Radio.

Eskridge gave credit to *UnCuffed* incarcerated staff and volunteer Ninna Gaensler-Debs. "The crew is phenomenal. As facilitator, I surrounded myself with brilliant people," said Eskridge.

Besides Eskridge, collaborators on the project included McKinney, Than Tran, Chanton Bun, Tommy Shakur Ross, and Edmund Richardson.

Gaensler-Debs said, "This deserved recognition is great for the incarcerated men who work countless hours getting their voices out to the public. And it was really great seeing Nathan's story actually winning that award."

Eskridge added, "Our award shows us what we can do as far as teaching the outside world. The national accolades allow us to put our voices out where we can serve the underrepresented."

*UnCuffed* podcasts are available for download from standard podcast outlets like Spotify and can be heard in the Bay Area on KALW 91.7 FM on its *Cross Currents* program.



## Calif. expands free calls

### CALLS

Continued from page 1

of communication services to persons in its custody. The state will foot the bill for any contracted service provider of phone calls in prison. It is not yet clear how cities or counties will respond to Becker's bill.

According to the senator, "predatory phone companies make an estimated \$1.4 billion in the prison telecom industry."

Worth Rises estimates one in three families fall into debt trying to remain in contact with loved ones. Eighty-seven percent of the burden falls on women, particularly women of color, according to the nonprofit.

"The fact is, most people are going to get out and we want them to be connected with their loved ones," Becker told the rehabilitation group's graduates and the *Daily Journal*. "We want to maintain these bonds so when they get out they have that support network and they are less likely to go back into our prisons, go back into our jails."

California has the highest number of prisoners serving life sentences in the country, three times as many as Texas, though Texas is 25% larger geographically, Becker said.

As of August 2022, there are 25,381 prisoners serving life sentences in California, according to CDCR's Office of Research.

This bill requires the Public Utilities Commission to establish service quality standards for calling services provided to incarcerated persons. Such standards are to be adhered to by communication service providers rendering services to state or local correctional or detention facilities.

California is now the second state to make phone calls free in prisons. Connecticut was the first to do so in July 2022.

New York became the first major U.S. city to provide free phone calls for incarcerated people, followed by San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles.

Massachusetts and Kentucky are now pushing for the same legislation. Other states are starting to follow suit. There is also a similar bill in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The success of this bill, according to Becker, was largely due to impacted families and community members and people who suffered from isolation while in state prison.

Becker's visit to San Quentin was to make clear he wanted to provide free family communication to anyone participating in rehabilitation programs and doing the right thing while in prison.

"Why am I here?" Becker stood up and asked the San Quentin program's graduates while talking about his new bill. "I'm here because of all of you. And I know it wasn't easy; this is tough work. But as Nelson Mandela use to say, 'It seems impossible until it's done.'"

## FAITH-BASED PROGRAMMING

# Thy Kingdom Come: Gospel-themed opera comes to San Quentin

By Joshua Strange  
Staff Writer

Residents of San Quentin were treated to the high culture of a gospel-themed opera performance by a husband and wife duo trained at London's prestigious Conservatory of Music.

The event took place in SQ's Garden Chapel on Oct. 14 and was billed as "Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done! A Classical Music Experience to Remember." The performance featured vocals by Henry "HenLove" Sinour and Spanelly Sinour along with accompaniment from a professional pianist and, at times, incarcerated musicians on piano, viola, cello, and drums.

The performance was well attended with over 120 people watching the performers with rapt attention.

The show opened with an instrumental prelude called *Life and Passion*, played by the incarcerated musicians of SQ's classical band led by John Zeretzke on violin.

As for HenLove and Spanelly, their talent was undeniable and apparent from their first notes, as was their commanding stage presence and passion for redemption.

"There is nothing you can do that will stop God from loving you," they proclaimed during their opening remarks.

HenLove cast an impressive figure on stage with his striking Caribbean features and dapper suit that looked as if it was freshly tailored from London's Savile Row. His booming baritone voice



Henry "HenLove" Sinour and Spanelly Sinour, a husband and wife duo from the London Conservatory of Music, along with other professionals and incarcerated musicians blessed SQ residents with one of their opera performances.

Vincent O'Bannon / SQNews

hit all the notes with expert precision while his expressive hands seemed to be conducting the music to the audience.

Born in Saint Martinique to parents from Trinidad, HenLove said his father ran 25 churches throughout the Caribbean while his mother raised five children. HenLove's prodigy-like musical career began when he was 7 and by 10 he had dedicated himself to music.

"It's funny. I remember my father was never home and that is why I decided not to take over his churches. Ironically, my music has become my ministry," HenLove said.

HenLove gained distinction by becoming the first Black

person to graduate from the Conservatory of Music's opera program, which he did in double time while overcoming numerous obstacles.

Spanelly, who is also Black, is in the final year of the same program. She said she has been singing for most of her life, but only sang opera for the first time when she started the program six years ago.

Spanelly dazzled the audience with her pale-blue ballroom-style dress covered with sparkling sequins as if she was a fairy godmother come to bless those in attendance. Her powerful voice displayed tremendous range as she hit bass notes and piercing yet smooth high notes accented

with vibrato flourishes and soaring runs. The emotion of the songs poured through her voice as she connected with the audience with her searching eyes and reaching hands.

Before each song, Spanelly discussed its history and the emotional connection she had to each selection. On a song about a woman overcoming the threat of death after false accusations of witchcraft, she said she felt sympathy for the women's plight. The song reminded her of the importance of being thankful for life's blessings, including being delivered from difficult circumstances.

As she talked, her richly accented British English —

with hints of other mysterious influences — was strikingly apparent. She explained later that her accent comes mainly from living in London but also that her family speaks a diversity of languages, including French and Spanish.

Spanelly's diverse language skills were put to the test during two songs during which she sang in Italian, showcasing classical opera from the height of its glory days.

Excerpts from the New Testament were read aloud between some songs. This included incarcerated pastor Lee Smothers' sharing Apostle Paul's words from *First Corinthians 13*, "...If I

have not love, I am nothing."

SQ staffer Tammy Andrews read Jesus's classic comments from *Matthew 25*, "I was in prison and you came to me."

HenLove mentioned that the way the concert came together was evidence of Divine providence. The London-based duo work professionally as traveling contract nurses, which is what brought them to Northern California. HenLove ended up working at San Quentin due to the pandemic and word of his musical talents got around among the staff. From there, lab supervisor Julie Sampson-Troche helped to arrange the performance with support from the SQ administration.

HenLove said the event reflects God's message and was His inspiration. At first, HenLove said he told God no to doing the show because he didn't have the time, but the Lord's calling — and the urging of his colleagues — became too strong.

"He titled the show, wrote the show, selected the music and supported me daily after I surrendered" to God's wishes, HenLove said, adding that he hopes everyone attending the concert will apply the scriptures to their daily lives.

Other highlights from the performance included a rendition of *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* with SQ's Mike Adams holding his own with HenLove and Spanelly on vocals, a stunningly beautiful violin solo by John Zeretzke, and the song *Amazing Grace*, during which Spanelly encouraged everyone to sing along.

## Opportunities abound at SQ for faith-based transformation

*Incarcerated San Quentans find purpose, healing in the prison's diverse religious offerings*

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

San Quentin State Prison's residents often find rehabilitation through faith and religion, seeking spiritual development in faith-based groups.

The belief in something that enables self-improvement, often found in faith, can be crucial for prison residents. Religion becomes a primary source of self-help, changing the lives of those who are focused on reform through self-discipline and service to the community.

"I used to victimize others. Odinism and Islam have helped me change from that; I've learned to show respect and kindness through prayer, fasting and charitable giving," said Christopher Granman of San Quentin Media TV.

Teacher's assistant Darryl Farris echoes this sentiment. "Faith has everything to do with my rehabilitation because, as an African American, I'm more apt not to believe in man, but to believe in God. I can't ask Darryl to forgive me, I can't ask man to forgive me, because they don't have to," he said.

Despite recent changes in the prison's Protestant Chapel and recreation programs, San Quentin residents have shown perseverance. To stay connected to their faith, some moved temporarily to the Lower Yard for worship. The group has since moved the meetings to the Catholic Chapel.

"Our faith-based rehabilitation continued in fellow-

*"My faith is the founding rehabilitation with God. He knows what my actions are and what's in my heart.*

*Transformation is more than self-help. Transformation is going from shame to remorse and accountability."*

—Facilitator Robert Barnes  
Guiding Rage Into Power

ship on the Lower Yard with service on the weekend and Wednesday Bible study as a result of the changes," said resident Richard Fernandez.

SQ residents find it easy to worship at the prison compared to other places where access to chapels is limited.

"I was very limited in the county jail because I was confined to my cell. At San Quentin I can walk into the chapel and worship as I please," said Steven Warren.

San Quentin also offers a wide range of religious programming that makes faith-based rehabilitation accessible to those who might otherwise be excluded. For example, having a higher power that does not discriminate is significant on the path towards rehabilitation for LGBTQ communities.

"Because of my relationship with God, I ask Him to help me forgive," said Adriel

Ramirez, a member of New Hope Congregation — a congregation that gives members of the LGBTQ community a safe place to worship. "Having a close relation with God, and understanding who He is, I am able to love."

"At San Quentin Prison, the rabbi is more accessible. At other prisons, the spiritual leaders' presence is not always frequent," said Tony Tafoya, chapel library clerk. "Faith teaches me to have compassion for myself and others, and to be humble and not always think of myself."

Residents say they find faith at the base of their transformation, which directs them towards understanding, empathy, and responsibility.

"My faith is the founding rehabilitation with God. He knows what my actions are and what's in my heart," said Robert Barnes, a Guiding Rage Into Power facilitator. "Transformation is more than self-help. Transformation is going from shame to remorse and accountability."

People even find faith in non-traditional ways. One San Quentin resident found his calling by watching a movie that guided him toward changing his life.

"I watched the movie *The Message*, about Prophet Muhammad's life. This was the turning point. I started to practice what I preached, and Islam carried me for 27 years," said Tony Scott.

When people go to prison, they often find or renew their religion, which helps them cope with the environment.

## Kairos retreats coming back to SQ

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

The popular religious weekend called Kairos is being reactivated in San Quentin after shutdowns due to the COVID pandemic.

The next event will be Presidents Day weekend in February. Another happening is scheduled for Labor Day weekend in September to complete the annual recruitment of new Kairos members.

Activities will include honoring the late Dan Takeuchi, outside leader of Kairos 51 and 52 for San Quentin's Chapter of the Celebratory Christian ministry. Takeuchi passed away on July 11, 2022. He was 62 years old.

"Dan represented the love of Kairos like no other. He led quietly but enthusiastically and helped me heal tremendously," said resident Kenny Rogers. "Dan and I were together since my Kairos class number 42."

Rogers added, "Dan loved to sing with the choir."

"Dan told people to do things then he'd sit back and laugh—just a jokester. It's a bittersweet day, because he's no longer with us. There's no doubt he's in heaven with the Father right now," said Rogers.

"The best words describing Dan are love, family and Kairos. He is Kairos to many of us," said San Quentin resident and Kairos member Lauren Mears.

Resident Steven Piscascio first met Takeuchi in Kairos group 39. "The brothers wanted to organize the weekend initiation this past Labor Day weekend, but administration here and the outside team decided to account for every active alumni here at the prison first. Currently we have 241

alumni, so we expect them to give back to this great community," said Piscascio.

Piscascio, the incarcerated leader of Kairos, added the next couple of monthly reunions will allow all alumni who were touched by Dan an opportunity to say goodbye.

Before the next weekend, Kairos members inside and outside of San Quentin are requesting all graduates gather for the monthly reunions. "The number of men attending monthly reunions declined to



SQNews Archive / Arts in Corrections

embarrassingly low turnouts before the pandemic; outside men actually outnumbered the San Quentin participants," said alum Armando Gonzalez. "We owe it to Dan and all 53 classes of past Kairos graduates that have been celebrated here over the past 25-plus years to attend."

"Dan meant a lot to improving of our relationships with God," said incarcerated Kairos member Kevin Fuqua. "Losing Kairos to COVID-19 and hearing of Dan's loss was almost insurmountable. He taught everyone how a person should love. Today, my wife Stacie attends Kairos Outside to enhance our family's relationship with God."

Kairos is an interdenominational blend of spiritually trained teams — including men and women from Northern California. The initiation weekend is described by incarcerated persons as a life-changing, rejuvenating weekend of embracing Christianity.

Kairos was established through the Catholic Church, but now all prison chaplains will select the 45 residents who will attend.

Outside of prisons the weekend is known as *Curcio*. It includes rituals and celebrations for attendees throughout the world, with millions of Christians who pray at the same times throughout the weekend.

Kairos Outside is a weekend designed for wives, girlfriends, daughters and sisters of incarcerated men, allowing family members to get closer to God. It will not restart until San Quentin Kairos is rebooted.

Restarting Kairos means recruiting again. "It won't be hard to get new members," said Father Manny Chivara. "We just wanted to make sure our foundation was reset before we blessed others with the chance to participate."

The Jesuit priest added, "Kairos can change your thinking about God and love. You may even see how to view this chaotic world a little differently."

Survivors of Takeuchi include his sister Karen, his brother Darren and Darren's wife Virginia, and his brother Michael and Michael's wife Sheila. Other survivors include his nephew Lee, his niece Helena and her husband Dominic and daughter Josephine, and nieces Lies and Maelynn. Finally, he is survived by more than 400 Kairos members he helped get initiated at San Quentin.

If you are interested in joining Kairos in February talk to Kairos leaders as follows: in North Block; Steven Piscascio, Wyatt Mc Millian and Michael Adams; in South Block; Louis Figuera and Anthony Carvalho; and in West Block, Ray Smith.

## ARTS &amp; REFORM

# North Carolina art show supports the incarcerated

By George Mesro Coles-El  
Journalism Guild Writer

The artistic voices of the incarcerated were displayed in North Carolina recently, giving thanks to community organizations that support and advocate for prisoners' successful reentry into society, according to *The Raleigh (N.C.) News and Observer*.

An exhibit called "Something to Say" featured art from men in Orange Correctional Center, a minimum security prison. It was held at The Margaret Lane Gallery in Hillsborough, N.C. The gallery is two miles from the prison.

Other community organizations in the area were available to talk about their work in support of returning citizens. That included Step Up Durham, Reentry House Plus, Darkness RISING, and Wounded Healers.

"To me, this event meant visible evidence of change, and chances for those who are struggling because of life circumstances," Charles Collins told the newspaper. Collins was recently released from OCC. "Look how they took chances and turned that failure into success!"

The artwork included black and white pencil sketches, Jackson Pollock-esque splat-

ters and a neon purple horse done in pastel. OCC resident David Bishop submitted a piece depicting a black and white dog with its tongue sticking out.

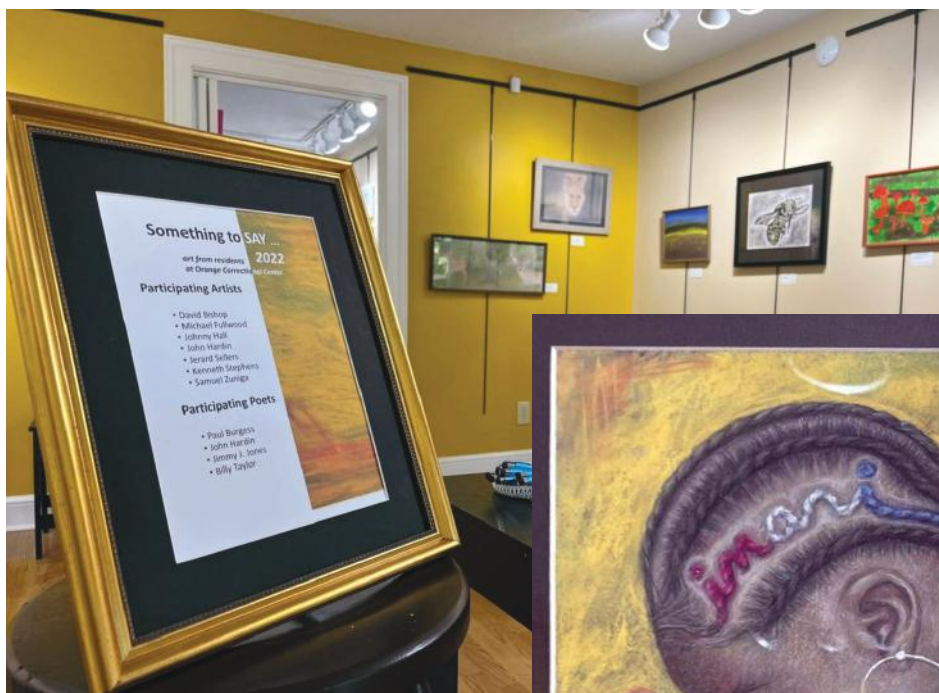
"I called the piece 'Tasting Life,'" said Bishop. "Spending so much time with dogs helped me see the world from their perspective. You have to make the moment count, and that's what the message of my piece is."

The "Something to Say" exhibit started in 2021 as a platform for incarcerated artists to have their work seen.

The gallery owners and operators, Mary and David Knox, don't seek to profit from the exhibit. The art is returned to the artists or shipped to loved-ones for a fee after the show ends. Some of the art is hung in the OCC's Peace Center until the artist's release.

Xavier Knox, Mary and David's son, professionally frames each piece using left-over material. He owns the Yesterday and Today Frame Shop. He framed 15 pieces this year at a cost of about \$150 per piece, reported the article.

"The cost for framing this artwork is coming from my own pocket, but I think the message is important enough," said the younger



Kimberly Cataudella / Margaret Lane Gallery

Above: Margaret Lane Gallery in Hillsborough, NC, hosts an art exhibit called "Something to Say," featuring arts by formerly incarcerated artists.

Knox. "I believe it's important to have a person's artistic voice able to be heard."

Formerly incarcerated people, along with the Orange County Reentry Council, collaborated on the July 30 event with the Human Kindness Foundation and Eno Friends

Meeting of Hillsborough. These organizations provide art materials to incarcerated people at OCC and work closely with them for successful reentry.

"Too many times, we hear unsuccessful stories, recid-

ivism, returning to lives of crime. The success isn't spoken about enough," said Demorris "Tuck" Tucker, who was released from OCC in 2017

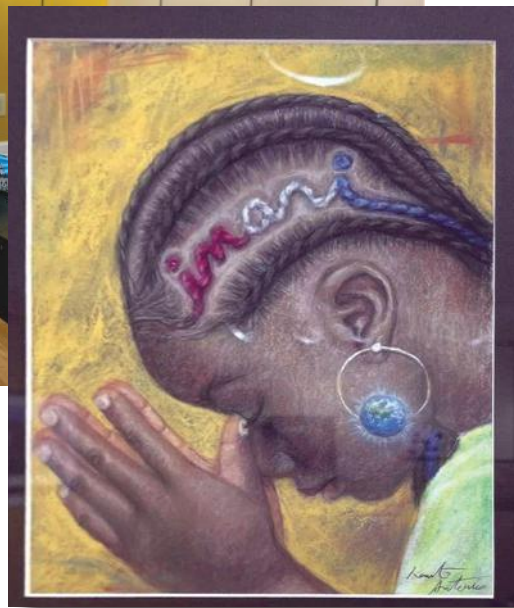
and spoke to the crowd at the gallery. "But your support, you coming today, gets this message out there."

According to the Aug. 2 article, the best way to get involved as a volunteer or advocate for incarcerated community members is to search for local reentry organizations. Sally Freeman, an Eno Friends member and long-time OCC volunteer, said this is a better method than reaching out to prisons directly.

"We're hoping this event made them feel like a part of the community, and we want to keep their connections alive," said Freeman. "That's where all of this comes from — volunteers go into prisons and realize there's so much humanity in there."

"They're waiting for connection in a system that completely

dehumanizes them. When volunteers come in, there's an amazing experience of having your humanity reflected," she added.



## Runa Ray partners with SQ artists

By Juan Haines  
Senior Editor

A fashion designer/environmentalist returned to San Quentin in order to include the prison's incarcerated population in the design of a gigantic flag to be displayed at the United Nations.

"I'm extremely honored to be on these grounds of San Quentin," said Runa Ray at the Aug. 15 event aimed at bringing attention to climate change, justice and peace. "I've met some incredibly talented artists with stories."

About a dozen incarcerated men gathered in a bungalow on the prison's Lower Yard to write messages and draw patterns on 12"x12" recycled blue shirts. The individual squares will be combined with different designs made in 193 countries to create the peace flag.

The flag has so far gathered over 6,000 submissions — from incarcerated people, students, refugees, terminally ill patients and artists who endorse a just and equitable world.

Ray created "The Peace Flag Project" through the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals as a way to combat the harmful effect that fashion has on the environment and to ease climate change.

"The plan at San Quentin is to get some incarcerated voices in the goal for peace, as we all want to have peace," said Carol Newborg, who escorted Ray into the prison.

Newborg is a Prison Arts project manager for the William James Association, a nonprofit that supports arts in corrections.

"I think that we should have more workshops that are random," Newborg said. "They're so peaceful."

On a 12"x12" square, Robert Kuikahi, 44 wrote, "Breathe." Underneath it, he drew a smiling angel-like figure.

"I chose 'Breathe' because it's something positive," Kui-



Tony Singh / SQNews

kahi said. "If everyone just took a second and breathed, the world would be a better place — peaceful and not so chaotic."

Kuikahi sat at a table with three other incarcerated men, each working on a pattern.

Freddy Huante, 30, is 11 years into serving a life sentence. He drew a wooden arched door with words and phrases written all around it.

"I created this door because lots of people think that people who have a life sentence has the door shut on them. And, sometimes, I feel like I have the door shut on me," Huante said. "But, there's a key in the door and the door's never closed as long as we have hope — hope at finding the key."

Jeff Isom, 58, wrote, "No more cruel and unusual punishment in prisons" on the square.

"I did that because of the current situation here; there's cruel and unusual punishment on so many levels, like because of the COVID-19 pandemic," Isom said. "On top of that, it's the mental part where we're locked down for a long time with no program."

Ruben Martinez, 44, drew a globe with "Peace" written below it.

"I wanted people to get the message right away and get what I was trying to say with the art without explaining it," Martinez said. "So, the globe on top and graffiti look gives it a kind of urban-style look —

even people in the hood want world peace."

Ray said that the incarcerated men she talked to were transparent about "their past, without hiding anything, and have made changes in the present."

While observing the artists, Ray added, "I'm honored to be in the midst of humanity that is translated into world peace. It's the voice of the unheard that the world can see."

At dusk, the workshop participants completed their last brush strokes.

"Coming into San Quentin has helped me embrace life to the fullest and realize that we're all human," Ray said. "And, art is the only and the greatest equalizer."

## New Norway-inspired legislation took aim at California recidivism rate

By SQNews Staff

California lawmakers recently considered a bill to create a different type of jobs-training program for incarcerated people who would live in a communal setting — similar to prisons in Norway.

"It's almost as if you're part of a dorm, and you're working with other folks to help each other," Stockton Assemblymember Carlos Villapudua told *KQED* in an interview a day ahead of bringing the bill before fellow lawmakers.

Villapudua proposed the measure, AB 2730, after learning about Norway's prison system.

"We need to get out of institutional life and make it more of a community and give those folks that have made a mistake in their lives, you know, give them a second chance, a third chance at life so they can be part of society again," Villapudua said in the interview.

The measure aims to curb California's reported 50% recidivism rate.

Norway reported a recidivism rate reduction from 70% to 20% after reforms took place in the 1990s.

Last June, former San Quentin resident Isiah Daniels flew to Oslo, Norway for a firsthand look at Norway prisons while attending the first-ever international Prison Radio conference.

Daniels is an adviser to *Uncuffed* — a podcast produced by incarcerated Californians in partnership with Bay Area radio station *KALW* and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

*KQED* interviewed Daniels on June 28. Here are some selected questions and answers.

***KQED*:** As part of this visit, were you able to speak with incarcerated people or correctional officers?

***Daniels*:** Yes, we had a correctional officer, who was more of a guide than an officer. What she mainly did was

get us from one point to another. What I was doing was walking out onto the yard, look around and see who was out there, and then mosey this way a little bit and just introduce myself.

***KQED*:** What's a conversation that stands out to you?

***Daniels*:** I think the one that stood out the most to me was their perception of the guards. They called them friends. They called them help. One of them called him "little brother."

***KQED*:** Wow. "Little brother" in Norwegian, I'm going to assume.

***Daniels*:** One guy was kind of interpreting something from the guy. He said they're just like family. He said, "These guards, they care about me. They care about us. They care about our education. They care about our success. They even care about our families."

***KQED*:** This obviously sounds very nice and very ideal, but what did you hear about the challenges facing Norway's prisons?

***Daniels*:** So we went to a part of the prison where they actually have their family visits. This is where they bring men to teach them how to become fathers. They let the kids come in, the wives, and they learn to be fathers. [But] they closed it. That was one of the things that caught my attention.

***KQED*:** It seems like you would be the perfect person to answer this question because I know California is not the only state looking at Norway-style prison reform: Is this the way to go in the United States?

***Daniels*:** We could have already done it. It's amazing how we can fly this far across the country to a place to look at a model of a prison system that we could have already done ourselves — if we wanted to. And I say, "If we wanted to" because what it takes to get our prisons [to be] like their prisons, is people just doing it.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

# 'Blue and Blue' returns for second symposium

## SF Police forums gain momentum, energy

By Joshua Strange  
Staff Writer

The forum is called *Blue and Blue*, an ongoing series of conversations between San Francisco police officers and residents of San Quentin.

"It's really important for us to bridge the gap between us enforcing the law and arresting people on the streets, versus coming in here and meeting you," said police Lt. Felix Gasanyan. "We want to understand how you came to be here and what we can do."

It was the latest in a series of forums arranged by the *San Quentin News*. Forums have included police officers, judges, politicians and teachers.

The forums feature candid conversations with the visitors and incarcerated residents.

The latest event was held Aug. 26 in SQ's Garden Chapel. The incarcerated people in attendance represented an estimated 1,300 years of sentences combined.

As participants sat in a large circle waiting for the event to start, soft murmurs of conversation could be heard between the incarcerated men — dressed in their blue prison uniforms — and the men and women of the police department who had left their blue uniforms outside.

Emcee Vincent Turner started the event by acknowledging that many people had been harmed by the crimes of the incarcerated. A reverent moment of silence was held in their honor.

After individual introductions, Turner set the table for the small group discussions to follow and addressed the importance of people's ability to change for the better.

"When you look around this room you see a lot of people dressed in blue," said Turner, a resident of SQ for the last five



Lt. G. Berry / Public Information Officer

years. "We're all human, we all make mistakes. But a lot of the guys here have earned college degrees and have facilitated some really important groups. We help show change is possible and that barriers can be broken. That's what we're doing today — the arrest isn't the end result, it's just a step in the process."

This theme was also expressed by Officer Brian Donohue who said he'd "never seen the other side of the cycle from start to finish." He recounted dropping people off at the county jail but then wondering what went on inside and what would happen during the rest of their journey. The forum was his first time stepping inside a prison.

For the incarcerated, there was curiosity as to what the journey was like for those in blue on the other side.

"I came today because in my city [of Oakland] there is a lot going on," said SQ resident Eric "Marquiz" Sherouse. "And some people I know have been murdered by police ... So I'm trying to have a dialogue and understand how it got to this point where there is so much animosity."

Sgt. Laura Colin, who works in a crime prevention unit, spoke to her reasons for coming. "When I heard about

this program, it was especially important for me because when I was little girl my father was incarcerated. So it's a lot more personal for me."

The police present expressed insight and compassion towards those behind bars.

"How do we see each other as humans?" asked Officer Thomas Mora, who is a hostage negotiator. "We have a

*"We're all human, we all make mistakes. But a lot of the guys here have earned college degrees and have facilitated some really important groups. We help show change is possible and that barriers can be broken. That's what we're doing today — the arrest isn't the end result, it's just a step in the process."*  
—Vincent Turner  
SQ resident

family at home. You all are not your crime, and you have families too."

Sgt. Colin said her father wasn't a bad man; he just made some bad decisions. "Anyone of us could be one step away from being in here," she said.

Lt. Gasanyan described growing up in the rough Tenderloin district of San Francisco and how easily he could have ended up in prison.

"I've always heard that if you want change, you have to be the change and not part of the problem," he said. "As a foot patrol officer, I get out of the car and really get to interact with people. I know it can be a fine line between becoming an incarcerated person and being a cop, so I'm trying to understand what brought you all here."

Brian Asey, facilitator of one of the five small discussion groups, spoke about the childhood traumas that often underlie the reasons a person commits crimes and becomes incarcerated.

He shared about his tumultuous childhood growing up with a single mom and an abusive step-dad who was a dealer, which he said contributed to his eventual addictions and crime. At the time he didn't realize how his home life was affecting him or that it wasn't normal. He told the group, "Through taking groups here at San Quentin, I understand now that trauma and its effects."

When Asey asked the police in his group what the toughest parts of their jobs were, their answering was revealing.

Sgt. Eric Mahoney said having your family not know whether you were going to come home alive each day was tough, on top of the other sac-

rifices that come with the job. He also noted the importance of being aware of your own traumas and not letting them control you at work.

Officer Donohue said the worst part for him was getting yelled at and cussed out at big arrests. "You try to shake it off, but later it stings," he said.

Officer Mora explained that seeing the trauma of crime is really tough, including what led people to commit crime. He said it was hard knowing that making an arrest was likely just a Band-Aid and that more comprehensive solutions are needed.

Sgt. Colin talked about working crime scene investigation and being exposed to some horrific murder scenes that are "hard to get out of your head." Officer Mahoney agreed but added that having a grieving relative at the crime scene to console for hours is even worse.

In response to these candid admissions from the police, Sherouse reflected on his own crime, saying, "You guys are human too. We all experience trauma. I realize now that some first responder had to deal with my crime scene, had to deal with a body and blood on the ground."

After the small group discussions, participants came together in a circle for final reflections on the day.

Lt. Gasanyan said he didn't know what to expect having never been inside a prison, but he was grateful for the opportunity to have dialogue with incarcerated people in this setting and not just when enforcing the law on the streets.

SQ resident Marcus Eugene came away impressed. "There was mutual empathy on both parts — blue and blue. At one time I thought all police officers were bad, but now I realize there's a lot of new ones trying to help the community," he said. "We are not our crime, they are not their uniform — we're all human."

Allison Maxie, a public relations employee of the police department, said, "Honestly, I was a little intimidated ... I am impressed how everyone has taken accountability." She said that she was surprised by how many incarcerated people thought policing was an important profession that plays a vital role in society. "I just wish more officers could come along," she said.

SQ resident Greg Eskridge said the youth need good role models, including the formerly incarcerated who can show them that police officers are also part of our communities. He spoke to the need for a program on the outside where formerly incarcerated people can have dialogues with police like at the forum. "At the end of the day, we all want our communities to be safe," Eskridge said.

Turner closed the event with words of inspiration and a question for all to ponder. "We are men that are committed to rehabilitation and restorative justice," he said. "Please keep spreading the word ... It's beneficial to us and beneficial to you. And remember we will be getting out some day, so how do you want us to come out?"

After these parting words from the emcee, participants gathered outside in the courtyard halfway between the memorial to fallen correctional officers and the chapel where the incarcerated come to have their prayers heard. They all stood together shoulder to shoulder for a group photo — men and women, the blue and the blue.

## Angel Tree brings Christmas to children of incarcerated parents

By Daniel Chairez  
Journalism Guild Writer

Every year The Prison Fellowship Program provides incarcerated people with applications to send Christmas gifts to their children through the Angel Tree program.

Kevin Almestica recalls a Christmas 22 years ago, when he got his favorite GI Joe action heroes as a gift. Enclosed with the gift was a note from his mother, who was away at New York's Ryker's Island serving a prison sentence.

"That brought me great joy thinking that she was thinking of me," said Almestica. He is now a 27-year-old photographer living in Florida.

Almestica was one of many fortunate children whose parents participated in the Angel Tree program of Prison Fellowship. The fellowship is a non-profit that works with local churches and other volunteers who participate in toy drives and help deliver toys to children.

Children receive toys listed on an order form that is filled out by their incarcerated parent. The purpose is for parents and their children to feel closer to each other

during the Christmas Season and to let them know they are not forgotten.

Almestica says that the gift his mother set in motion for him when he was five years old helped him feel connected to her.

"When I got the gift, it kind of restored that hope that my mom still loved me," said Almestica.

Almestica's mother didn't have anyone to take care of him when she was incarcerated, and fearing he would be thrown in foster care, she asked a prison fellowship volunteer if they could raise him, said Almestica. When he became an adult he started sponsoring children through the same program.

The original Angel Tree was founded in the early 80s by Mary Kay Beard, who was doing time for bank robbery in Alabama. She noticed that incarcerated people purchased items from canteen to give to their children as Christmas presents.

"She realized that if she could find some volunteers on the outside who would purchase and deliver Christmas gifts to her children and the children of her colleagues in prison that she could cre-



SQNews archive photo

*"That brought me great joy thinking that she was thinking of me... When I got the gift, it kind of restored that hope that my mom still loved me."*

— Kevin Almestica  
Angel Tree recipient

ate a very wonderful experience," said James Ackerman, president and CEO of Prison Fellowship. The program is now nationwide.

Prison Fellowship works with chaplains at prisons to provide prisoners with applications to request gifts for their children.

The wish lists are dispersed to thousands of churches which receive the gifts as donations. The gifts are then combined with greetings from the child's parents.

"We read these notes and they're like, 'Merry Christmas, sweetie, I love you so much. I miss you. I know I will see you soon. And don't forget to brush your teeth every night,'" Ackerman said.

The charitable organiza-

tions also provide Bibles and applications for attendance at Christian summer camps.

"The program can be crucial for parents," said Johnna Hose, a former prisoner volunteering with Angel Tree.

"While I was incarcerated, it was a great feeling knowing that my kids ... knew that they weren't alone, knowing that there is this inspiration and learning about God," said Hose.

"Any kid wants to know that their parent is thinking about them at Christmas time," she said.

Jessica Lopez-Hermantin often thought about speaking to her father upon his release. Angel Tree provided "an affirmation of my dad's love, my dad's constant thinking of me," she said.

Lopez-Hermantin believes that the presents help to build and maintain bonds between parents and their children. She reflects on the interaction that she had with her father and how his reaching out to her through these gifts or cards reinforced their relationship.

"Little things like that make a difference," she said. "The Angel Tree gift is just the icing on the cake."

NATIONAL

# ‘E-carceration’ monitoring reduces recidivism rates

By Jerry Malek Gearin  
Staff Writer

Legislation now allows more home confinement sentences as the federal Bureau of Prisons releases thousands of low-risk offenders, according to an article by Greg Newburn of the Niskanen Center.

In March 2020 Congress passed the CARES Act, allowing some prisoners to serve time in home confinement rather than federal prisons.

Emerging data shows that this alternative to incarceration will not compromise public safety, signaling that lawmakers should consider expansion of home confinement, according to the Nov. 6 article by the Niskanen Center. The center describes itself as a nonpartisan think-tank working to promote political, cultural and social change.

Home confinement eligibility factors include a person’s age, history of disciplinary action, and what type of crime was committed.

The story notes that a 2016 report said that only 17 of 11,000 people, or 0.15%, who were serving home confinement sentences had been charged with new crimes. In contrast, the report noted that 27% of incarcerated people not serving home confine-

ment were rearrested within two years of release.

The data and the success of home confinement suggest that lawmakers should consider electronic monitoring as a permanent alternative for low-risk offenders, according to the article.

Norway has reported that electronic monitoring reduced reoffending in that country by 10%; Australia reports a reduction of 16%, and Argentina also reported a drop in recidivism by serious offenders.

Some reformists oppose electronic monitoring, calling it “e-carceration,” and argue that home confinement is the same as imprisonment.

The goal of imprisonment is to separate those who are likely to hurt other people, but prison can be isolating, cruel, and deadly, according to the Niskanen Center. The article argues that incarcerated people deserve a choice of less restrictive confinement.

The story noted that the use of home confinement raises questions including: Should drug and alcohol testing be included in the program? Should the program be offered or mandated?

The CARES Act only applies to about 7% of federal prisons’ populations, the story reports.

SOUTH CAROLINA

# Female prisoners heal through art

*Mural project allows women to process abuse, trauma*

By Harry C. Goodall Jr.  
Journalism Guild Writer

Incarcerated women in a South Carolina prison are learning to heal by using art to process past traumas, a recent story reports.

Inside the Leath Correctional Institution in Greenwood visiting room, a mural of butterflies has been painted on the wall. The mural tells the story of women who are survivors of trauma.

Just Detention International, an organization focused on ending sexual abuse in detention, helped to fund and create the mural, noted the story by Kelly Duncan of the *Index-Journal*. The story was reprinted Sept. 18 by *The Associated Press*.

“This is just a way for them to express themselves from the inside out — to express the trauma they’ve been through,” said Michele Carter, Leath’s associate warden of programs.

Just Detention worked with the Leath and Camille correctional institutions to create #PrisonersToo, modeled after the #MeToo movement. The hash tag is used to allow women to share their stories within and without

prison walls, according to the article.

“One inmate did her drawing and I told her I was proud of her. Nobody had ever told her they were proud of her. It’s all about bringing the positivity back into them and letting them know they’re worth it — it’s not looking at your shortcomings, but looking at what you’re doing to get better,” said Carter.

The illustrations depict butterflies being released. Tamika, Lisa, and Carman were the artists. These three women reflected on their past trauma, and saw this artistic celebration as a form of relief, sharing, and healing.

Tamika’s portion of the drawing represented a time of her life when she felt broken. Expressing herself through art has helped her become a stronger person, said the article.

“We’re just grateful that someone wants to hear our story,” Carman said.

“When it comes to releasing something, it’s a matter of choice. You take something from the inside out and get it out of you, learn how to control your emotions and not give anything or anyone control over you,” Carter said.

ILLINOIS

# Accidental overdoses trigger murder charges for dealers in 23 states

By Bostyon Johnson  
Staff Writer

Accidental drug overdose deaths should not trigger a murder charge, a *USA Today* opinion column says.

Those prosecutions “involve charging individuals with homicide when they supply drugs that result in a fatal overdose, even if there was no specific intent to kill,” the Aug. 2 article by Laura Conover notes. Conover is a county attorney in Arizona.

The article cites the case of a man who was convicted of drug-induced homicide in 2018 after supplying his sister with the heroin that resulted in her fatal overdose in McHenry County, Ill.

The drug-induced homicide laws created in the 1980s expanded to 23 states, Washington, D.C. and the federal system, the article notes.

Advocates argue that the laws are meant to “target high-level distributors, hold drug manufacturers accountable and deter trafficking.”

However, prosecutors of the laws have strayed from the statutes that originally intended to hold drug dealers accountable.

Over 107,000 Americans died of a drug overdose in 2021, more than car crash and gunshot fatalities combined, the article notes.

**More than 107,000 Americans died of a drug overdose in 2021, more than car crash and gunshot fatalities combined.**

Washington, D.C. and 47 states have Good Samaritan laws, which grant immunity to people who call for assistance in an overdose emergency, but they do not protect individuals from facing drug-induced homicide because the protection only covers low-level drug charges like possession, the article says. They are also not always retroactive.

Elected officials have the option to create a different model when it comes to harm reduction approaches like medical-assisted treatment and overdose prevention sites. Some even choose a more public health-based response by not prosecuting possession or distribution of lifesaving medications.

The report concludes that punitive drug laws have an adverse effect on people struggling with substance abuse, creating more harm than good and costing taxpayers millions of dollars.

Graphic: SQNews

**1. California** — (*The Guardian*) A report derived from state data tracking racial profiling revealed that drivers of color are stopped more frequently than white motorists, according to a report issued by the group Reimagining Community Safety in California. In the state’s capital, police stopped Black drivers almost five times as often as their white counterparts. More pronounced disparities were apparent when the purpose of the stop was administrative or equipment related. Such stops were typically for defective lights and outdated registrations. The report also concluded that police generally spent more time making stops than responding to calls for service.

**2. Colorado** — (*Denver Post*) A photographer injured by police as he documented George Floyd protests in Denver has accepted settlements totaling \$485,000 to compensate for his injury, say his attorneys. Police shot Trevor Hughes with a less-lethal projectile that nearly severed his finger during the 2020 protests. Hughes sued the Denver Police Department and three neighboring counties that aided the Denver police response to the protests. The Denver City Council authorized a \$350,000 payment, while Golden, Arvada and Jefferson County paid \$45,000 each to Hughes.

**3. Texas** — (*AP*) A Death Row inmate who fought successfully to have his spiritual adviser pray for him and touch him during his ex-



## NEWS BRIEFS

ecution was put to death in Huntsville Oct. 5. John Henry Ramirez, 38, was condemned for the 2004 murder of Pablo Castro. Ramirez’s spiritual adviser, Dana Moore, held his hand to Ramirez’s chest during the execution. The U.S. Supreme Court issued the precedent-setting ruling in March. It provided that states must allow faith leaders to be present to pray and to touch the condemned in the execution chamber. The ruling resulted in the delays of a number of executions, including Ramirez’s.

**4. Alabama** — (*AP*) In October, more than 200 people rallied outside

the Alabama state Capitol in Montgomery to protest prison conditions and the state’s parole process. The protestors placed tombstones representing men who had died in the prisons from overdoses, murders and suicides on the white marble steps of the Capitol building, reported the *AP*. The protest came after three weeks of prisoner work stoppages in the prisons aimed at changing sentencing and parole parameters. The U.S. Department of Justice has sued Alabama over what it says is failure to prevent inmate-on-inmate violence and use of excessive force by guards. The state con-

cedes that there are problems but does not acknowledge that conditions violate constitutional standards.

**5. Georgia** — (*CNN*) Clayton County sheriff Victor Hill has been convicted on six counts of violating the civil rights of people in his custody, according to court documents. The charges stemmed from incidents in which Hill ordered that incarcerated people be strapped into restraint chairs for hours. Hill’s tenure as sheriff has been controversial, with critics accusing him of abusing his power. After being elected for the first time in 2004, Hill fired 27 deputies

on his first day in office in 2005. *CNN* affiliate *WSB-TV* reported that Hill had the deputies escorted out of their station house with snipers stationed outside. The fired deputies later regained their positions. In 2013, Hill faced more than two dozen charges of using his office for personal gain. Those charges ended with an acquittal.

**6. Florida** — (*NPR*) Keri Blakinger, author of “Corrections in Ink,” a memoir about her time in jail, recently learned that her book has been temporarily banned from Florida prisons as “dangerously inflammatory.” “Honestly, I AM

SO PROUD,” responded Blakinger. The book will remain impounded until the Florida Department of Corrections’ Literature Review Committee decides its fate. Florida has one of the largest lists of banned books in the country, according to Blakinger. As for “Corrections in Ink,” Blakinger says “While I am not happy it is impounded, impoundment for being ‘dangerously inflammatory’ is pretty dope. But the idea it poses a threat to security or to the ‘rehabilitative’ goals of prison is LAUGHABLE... My book is more rehabilitative than Florida prisons have ever been.”



## ALABAMA

## Incarcerated workers statewide go on strike

By Jad Salem  
Journalism Guild Writer

Incarcerated people in Alabama prisons have stopped participating in work assignments to protest inhumane conditions, according to *The Associated Press* and *Insider*.

Swift Justice, who is incarcerated at the Fountain Correctional Facility in Atmore, alleges that the Alabama Department of Corrections does not rehabilitate incarcerated people as it ought to.

"I'm just a slave. I'm inside the prison system," Justice said.

As the Marshall Project reports, incarcerated people can be required to cook, clean and do laundry. They can also be required to work non-prison related positions like call centers.

Alabama's prisons are characterized by trying conditions and overcrowding, according to *Insider*. Recently thousands of detainees at the state's 15 prisons have stopped working in response to conditions and policies, *Insider* reported Oct. 2.

Since Sept. 26, prison staff has had to perform work for-

merly done by the incarcerated, the story said.

Detainees are requesting that sentencing and parole measures be reexamined—including invalidating habitual offender regulations, and laying out and keeping up with fair parole rules. Both Sides of the Wall, a prison reform organization, coordinated the strike and recently held protests over current conditions at Alabama prisons.

Swift says their demands could ease the burden on the system by releasing those who have served their time. According to the ACLU, approximately 90% of parole requests are denied in Alabama, as the arrival of new inmates worsens poor conditions in the already crowded prisons.

"Those who participated in this historical event are tired of being treated as less than animals and are demanding their humanity back," Swift told *Insider*.

Doing time in Alabama's prison system is akin to capital punishment, according to Christina McGee, whose spouse is imprisoned in the

state.

"These people have no chance of rehabilitation," McGee told *Insider*. She also alleged that detainees are more likely to "wind up in a body bag," than be released. "Because Alabama Department of Corrections, no matter what your sentence is, has become a death sentence automatically. These people have no chance of doing anything and they've given up hope."

Diyawn Caldwell, another coordinator of the strike whose spouse is imprisoned, sent recordings to *Insider* allegedly showing conditions in state prisons. One video showed guards pursuing and beating a cuffed prisoner at the St. Clair Remedial Facility in Springville. Another showed a flooding cell at St. Clair with a prisoner saying, "second day my shit been like this, man. Goddamn pipe bust."

According to Justice, Alabama prisoners have faced retaliation for striking, including Justice's mentor, Kinetic Justice, who had been beaten by officers and sent to solitary confinement for his involvement with the strike

and detainees, reported *Insider*.

Justice also said that prisoners in his prison are being "bird fed" two meals per day, with both meals amounting to less than 1,000 calories.

The Department of Justice filed a lawsuit in 2020 against the State of Alabama and the Alabama Department of Corrections, alleging constitutional violations, including infringement of the Eighth Amendment's protection against cruel and unusual punishment, *AP* noted Sept. 29.

The DOJ deemed the prison system overcrowded at 182% capacity, with a high incidence of rapes and killings. A representative for Gov. Kay Ivey's office said the detainees' requests "are absurd and would absolutely not be invited in Alabama."

Strike coordinators say they see no foreseeable endgame. "Their constitutional rights are being violated daily and no one's doing anything about it. We're standing up and we're letting them know. They're standing up and letting them know 'We will no longer tolerate the system as it is,'" Caldwell said.

## FLORIDA

## Family visit bans fail to stem flow of contraband

By Bostyon Johnson  
Staff Writer

Banning family visits does not stop drugs from being smuggled into Florida prisons, the *Miami Herald* reported Aug. 17.

The newspaper conducted a study during the COVID-19 pandemic using publicly available data maintained by the Florida Department of Corrections.

Prior to the pandemic, prison officials held that friends and family members of the incarcerated were catalysts for drugs and contraband entering the prison.

But according to the *Herald*, during the early days of the pandemic when Florida had banned friends and family from visiting, the prison experienced an influx of drugs that was 40% greater than that of the preceding two years.

Correctional officers face high living costs with low pay in the state, which is a problem for the agency as a whole, according to Ron McAndrew, a former Florida prison warden. Aiding or ignoring contraband and smuggling helps the younger guards make quick cash, the newspaper said.

This phenomenon is not isolated to Florida. In California, a former San Quentin State Prison corrections officer and three associates pled guilty to charges of conspiring to smuggle cell phones to a Death Row resident in December 2019 and May 2020, according to a report in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Michelle Gladly, spokesperson for the Florida Department of Corrections, said the state's prisons have a "zero tolerance for staff who violate

*Florida prisons seized about 135 pounds of illegal drugs in 2020, including heroin, fentanyl, methamphetamine, suboxone, and the deadly synthetic marijuana, called 'K2.'*

the law and our procedures." She also said that a very low percentage of contraband enters Florida's prisons via staff.

"Florida Department of Corrections and the Office of Inspector General have a strong record of ensuring individuals who introduce contraband are arrested," Gladly said.

The *Miami Herald* reports that 60,500 grams — about 135 pounds — of drugs were seized at Florida prisons in 2020. The seizures included heroin, cocaine, fentanyl, oxycodone, methamphetamine, illegal prescription drugs, narcotic pills, suboxone, and the deadly synthetic marijuana called K2.

K2 is occasionally laced with rat poison or a bug spray. Some individuals using K2 have experienced heart attacks; others walk around like zombies. Others may "fall out" and experience seizures, including muscle spasms, twitching and foaming from the mouth. The worst outcome is death, the article said.

"In the streets people make mistakes and the treatment is strong, but there [in prison] you just get thrown into a cage," said Christine, the partner of someone incarcerated at a prison in Avon Park in Florida.

## OKLAHOMA

## Oklahoma Republicans support criminal justice reform

By Randy Hansen  
Journalism Guild Writer

A strong majority of Oklahoma citizens favor criminal justice reform, a recent survey concludes.

Nearly three-fourths of Oklahomans (73%) favor reducing prison and jail populations, *The Oklahoman* reported Sept. 25.

The survey also said Oklahoma citizens would support a candidate who favors criminal justice reform by a 5:1 margin.

The number of violent crimes in the state is declining and Oklahoma's recidivism rate is the lowest in the nation, said the article.

"Common-sense improvements have reduced the state prison population, increased community safety and saved taxpayer dollars," wrote David Safavian, author of the story. Safavian is general counsel of Conservative Political Action Coalition.

Polls show that 35% of Oklahoma voters support more funding for addiction treatment and that 32% support more spending on education. Less than 3% favor building new prisons and jails.

Seventy-four percent of Oklahoma Republican voters and 61% of those identified as "very conservative," support shorter sentences for less serious crimes, according to the story.

## MICHIGAN

## Sixth Circuit allows ADA disability claim to proceed

By Rahan Asaan  
Journalism Guild Writer

A man can proceed with his claim against prison officials who confiscated his medically necessary orthopedic shoes, a federal appeals court has ruled.

The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals held Aug. 2 that Leon Douglas, a Michigan prisoner, can proceed with his claim under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act.

A reasonable jury could find that the officials failed to accommodate Leon Douglas' disability in violation of both statutes, the court said in an unpublished opinion.

Douglas, who has been incarcerated for about 50 years, wears medically necessary orthopedic shoes to manage pain from a lifelong foot condition, according to court records. His accommodation was listed as "permanent" in his 2003 Special Accommodation Notice, and he also has had annual screenings to affirm his treatment.

Douglas' shoes were confiscated for 45 days in 2012 based on a change in prison policy that he was not made aware existed. Not having his shoes curtailed his visits and prevented him from walking to the chow hall, religious services, and recreational activities, according to the suit.

The court's decision goes contrary to other circuit courts that have held that a "discriminatory intent" finding is required, rather than deliberate indifference, for compensatory damages.

Because he "can show he was denied access to prison services when his reasonable accommodation was denied, he has established facts sufficient to proceed with his lawsuit," the court said.

## FEDERAL

## BOP ignored asbestos complaints

Asbestos and mold make California's Dublin federal prison a dangerous place, and complaints have been ignored by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, *The Associated Press* reported in April.

"Management's failure to address unsafe and dangerous working conditions at FCI [Federal Correctional Institution] Dublin has put the health and safety of both employees and inmates at considerable risk," said Edward Canales, Dublin union president.

A federal watchdog reported a "substantial likelihood" that the Bureau of Prisons ignored complaints and failed to act to correct the problems, *AP* stated.

The complaints were filed by Dublin union officials. The U.S. Office of Special Counsel asked Attorney General Garland to submit a report within 60 days.

"We look forward to the outcome of this investigation, which we hope will result in the unsafe conditions being remedied ..." said Canales.

Repeated requests and concerns of workplace contamination from correctional officers, prison workers and inmates were all ignored, *AP* reported.

A newly created task force of 18 senior BOP executives visited the prison in March and is working to reform the facility while the BOP said staff is doing weekly inspections and encouraging staff to report unsafe or unhealthy conditions at the facility.

The Dublin prison is also the focus of an investigation into reported sexual abuse of female inmates.

—Bostyon Johnson

## NORTH CAROLINA

## Prison suicide rate hits three-decade high

Suicides of incarcerated people in North Carolina prisons are at their highest in 30 years, reported the *Charlotte Observer*.

The state Department of Public Safety reported nine suicides in the first nine months. Meanwhile, almost 40% of state correctional officer positions were empty, said officials.

"The department takes this issue seriously and our mental health, medical and security staff make extensive efforts to assist offenders with mental health and self-harm issues," said spokesperson John Bull.

"This is an alarm. It's got to be a wakeup call," said Susan Pollit of the non-profit Disability Rights North Carolina.

One suicide was Didier J. Carias Jr., a 29-year-old with long-standing issues of schizophrenia and paranoia incarcerated at the Piedmont Correctional Institution in Salis-

bury. On August 25 he hit an officer and was placed in solitary for punishment.

According to his parents he could not receive visits or make phone calls during this time. After 32 days in prison, he hung himself.

"Being alone for 30 days is a long time. Even a normal person would go crazy ... He needed help," said his mother, Judy Carias.

His father, Didier Carias Sr., had been told by other prisoners of many suicides. Since 2008 there have been eight suicides in Piedmont alone, the *Observer* reported Oct. 3.

"We wanted to know why they haven't done anything about it," the father said.

Of 30,000 incarcerated in North Carolina prisons, about 2,500 are in solitary confinement. During the pandemic, many more prisoners were locked in cells for 23 hours a day to try to stop the spread

of COVID-19. This compounded with lack of personnel made mental health issues even worse.

Kerwin Pittman, policy and program director of Durham-based civil rights group Emancipate NC, spoke about extreme effects of isolation, "It just leads to a state of despair and depression. It forces them to stew with the reality that they are in a cage."

Responses to mental health issues by North Carolina prisons have included a 2017 suicide prevention training program offered to the prison's behavioral health staff, and formation of a suicide prevention group to study solutions in 2018, according to Bull.

"They simply can't safely and securely keep as many people in cages as they are now," said Dawn Blagrove, executive director of Emancipate NC.

—Randy Hansen

## NATIONAL

## Americans support voting rights restoration

A majority of voting Americans support restoring voting rights to all citizens, even those with felony convictions, a recent survey concludes.

The survey revealed that 54% agree that "All citizens, regardless of if they have a felony conviction in the past, should be eligible to vote."

The *Lake Research Partners* conducted the survey July 11-17, 2022 among 1,000 prospective general election voters. With inclusion of the words "completing their sentence," 53% of independents remained in support, along with 55% of White voters and 50% of voters over 50 years of age, the Aug. 9 article said.

The story reported 34% opposed full restoration of voting rights.

Additional samples of 200 were polled in states with ongoing efforts

to restore rights for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, including Illinois, New York, Nevada, Oregon, and North Carolina.

Both the national and the state-specific polls indicated "... especially high [support] among younger voters, Black and Latino voters, voters who have a work connection (either themselves or a family member) to the criminal legal system, and voters who have a personal connection (either themselves or a family member) to being involved in the criminal legal system," said the story.

A third of voters surveyed (34%) were not aware of their state's law governing incarcerated people and their ability to vote. An additional third of voters (33%) were unaware of laws regarding individuals with

felony convictions, the article said.

The polling was on behalf of The Sentencing Project, Common Cause, Stand Up America, and State Innovation Exchange. The margin of error was +/-3.1% and larger for subgroups.

"In conclusion, voters in the United States are ready for all citizens of this country to be eligible to vote, no matter their relationship with the criminal justice system, and including language about felony convictions does not deter voters. Even though many voters admit to not being fully aware of the laws in their states around voting rights, there is a belief across the nation that every citizen should be eligible for and have the right to vote," said the report.

—Bostyon Johnson

# Group offers crucial support to San Quentin library

By SQNews Staff

San Quentin's recreational library is filled with highly sought-after books thanks to outside support from the Friends of San Quentin Library, which has brought over 300 new books to the prison since May of 2022.

SQNews interviewed Kristi Kenney of the Friends of San Quentin Library via email.

**SQN:** Why is reading and having a prison library important to rehabilitation?

**KK:** Books are such a great source of insight and connection. They can open up whole new worlds for us and help us learn about topics we might never actually experience in our own lives, or aid us in unpacking, understanding, and recovering from things we have experienced. Books are part of independent study and are important for entertainment.

In terms of rehabilitation, reading can help incarcerated folks educate themselves, facilitate empathy and insight, and also be a constructive type of entertainment. I feel like even when I read just a super-fun graphic novel, I am expanding my mind, you know?

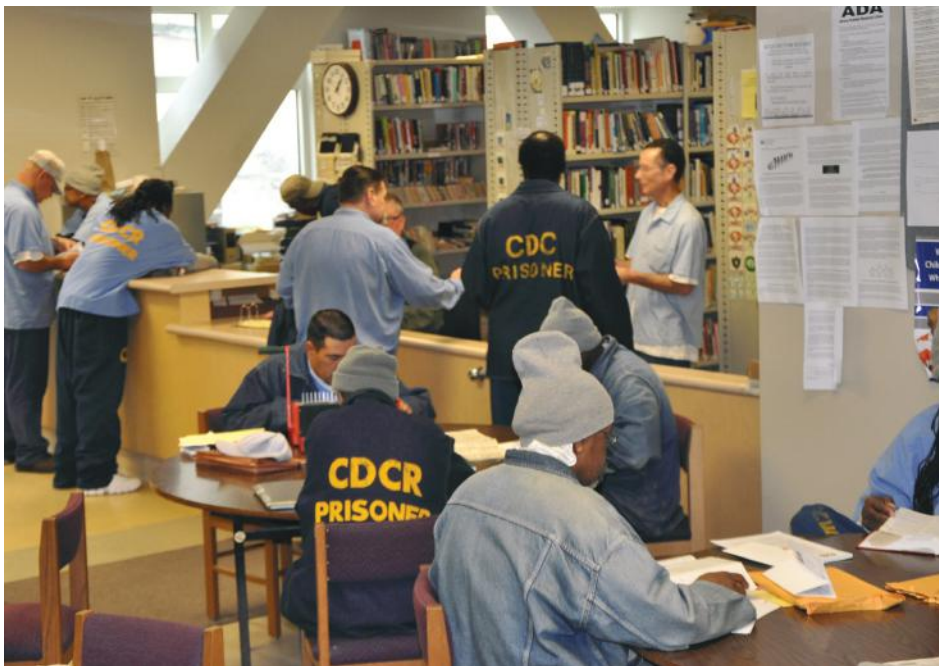
**SQN:** Why is it important to have an organization like Friends of San Quentin Library?

**KK:** Most public libraries have "Friends" groups that support them financially to

some degree. They most often do this by having Friends of the Library bookstores that sell donated books from the community to raise funds. At the Berkeley Friends, where I also volunteer, we financially support most of the community programs that happen at the Berkeley Public Library. We thought this would be a good model, though of course we don't have a bookstore ... and we are doing more "basic" needs acquisitions like books and equipment needs.

**SQN:** Please describe how you get books and get them cleared for the prison.

**KK:** We've mostly been working with the closest bookstore to San Quentin, Copperfield's Larkspur location, using their online wish-list option to keep a list of what books are needed and wanted at the library (beyond what [the prison] gets from their annual order through state funds). The "free staff" librarians update the online wish list, and we've been promoting the wish list through social media and our website. We just finished up a Banned Books Week promotion, where we even got to have an in-store display. We are [also] getting a matching grant for up to \$1,000 based on the books we sold from a family foundation that supports prisoner advocacy issues. All wish-list items are reviewed for inclusion by prison staff and administrators. Afterwards, all approved items are



SQNews archive photo

delivered to the San Quentin receiving warehouse where they are inspected before being brought inside the prison and delivered to the library.

**SQN:** What does your staff take away from working inside with the incarcerated population? What have been the challenges and successes?

**KK:** We are a very new and small organization that just started up this May. So far, I have been meeting about once a month with San Quentin library staff. I enjoy hearing from the staff about how the library is run, what challenges they face, what

needs there are, and how we can collaborate to get some of those needs met. A few times we've had larger meetings where we talk about some of the challenges of day-to-day operations. I'm a later-in-life library student, so for me the information needs and access issues are interesting and are something that is key in the library field.

**SQN:** What are some of the successes?

**KK:** A few authors have been in touch and want to do book talks or writing workshops, too. This kind of community connection is ex-

citing, and I hope we can figure out how to benefit the SQ Library and its patrons with these outside connections.

**SQN:** How has the COVID pandemic affected the program?

**KK:** We have not felt COVID issues as much as more established programs that suddenly had to stop their programs. The main issue for us is that some of the most involved inmate library staff have had to miss meetings because their housing unit is on Covid lockdown.

**SQN:** What should the incarcerated understand about

your program?

**KK:** Everyone deserves access to good books, and we want to help prison libraries get all the resources they need to provide books to their patrons. This is especially important since incarcerated people don't have access to the internet. Books are an extra-important gateway to information. Also, we want to hear from patrons and incarcerated staff their ideas and what their library and information needs are.

**SQN:** Any future plans or goals for the program?

**KK:** Yes, we've got lots of ideas, but things tend to move slowly! There is interest from staff in rearranging the patron space at the SQ Library to be more comfortable and user friendly. So, we are trying to help with funding and resources for that. We are also looking into procuring things like barcode scanners and other equipment. It's not just about books!

I'd like to see us help with author visits and book club needs and maybe collaborate with local public libraries to answer reentry-related reference questions. Part of our long-term goal is to help other California state prisons, especially those in isolated areas, by using the name and locale of San Quentin to access resources. I'd really like to see that happen in the future.

**SQN:** Thank you for your time and service to the San Quentin community.

## Our Lady of the Rosary's Megan O'Brien shares her voice with San Quentin News

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

San Quentin is known for world-class volunteers who share visions of social reform and philanthropy. Volunteers are often academics and social justice advocates, but some are known for their angelic voices.

One of them is Megan O'Brien, director of San Quentin's Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Chapel Choir. She celebrated her return to the prison recently by performing songs at the media center.

Choir member Alan Brown said of O'Brien, "... a true superhero; mother of five, who sings and speaks in five languages and has travelled the world singing for the Church ... and she picks San Quentin to teach music to five parishioners."

O'Brien is currently a voice teacher at a local music school, where she provides lessons to students of all ages. Her expertise spans several styles and genres. She donates two days each week to teach and lead San Quentin's Catholic Choir.

"Like a voice from the heavens. How a world-class singer can come in weekly to practice and perform with four to eight inmates is a miracle in and of itself," said SQ resident Louie Light.

Her music ministry included stops as a cantor and soprano soloist for the Archdioceses of Baltimore and New York before her family relocated to the West Coast.

O'Brien served in choral capacities for the Archdiocese of San Francisco before she found her way to San Quentin.

"Megan's choral leadership provided me with the confidence I needed to improve all



Rhashiyd Zinnamon / Ear Hustle

aspects of my rehabilitation," said ex-choir member John Krueger. "She is the shining star of the Catholic Church."

O'Brien joined San Quentin's volunteer ensemble right before the pandemic of 2020. "A volunteer and fellow parishioner, Jean Ramirez, mentioned to Father George Williams that I was interested in volunteering with prison ministry. Father George happened to be looking for a choir director at the time and things evolved from there," she said.

O'Brien's church volunteerism started at a very young age. "My parents were and continue to be volunteers at the Franciscan Center in Baltimore. They were role models to my sisters and me regarding the importance of actively helping in our communities. When my children were very small, I delivered Meals on Wheels in our downtown Baltimore neighborhood. They often accom-

panied me, and hopefully they also learned the importance of helping neighbors," she said.

"I was so nervous," said O'Brien about being recorded and interviewing at the San Quentin media center. But once she started singing, she was able to relax.

Steve Brooks, San Quentin News' Journalism Guild chair, interviewed O'Brien. He spoke of how impressed he was with her singing. "She is a world-class soprano; there's no doubt about that. We hope to record more sessions with her."

In her interview O'Brien acknowledged the "amazing longevity of service," of other volunteers at the Catholic Church.

"From Vic and Judy Perrella at 32 years each, to Dr. Tom and Mary Dixon with 30 years apiece, to Willis and Linda Rice with 30 years individually, to Walter Mallory, Brian Cahill, Brian Gagan

“  
We hope Megan becomes a lifer at the church. Her gift to this congregation is, without question, one of the greatest gifts Father George left our community.”

—Vic Perrella  
Volunteer

and all the other volunteer parishioners ... I am honored to be the newest member of the Church," said O'Brien.

"We hope Megan stays for as long as our other volunteers," said Jesuit Priest Father Manuel Chivara. He praised her for the improved performance of his choir on Sundays and the amount of time O'Brien spends practicing with the choir.

"We hope Megan becomes a lifer at the church," joked senior volunteer Vic Perrella. "Her gift to this congregation is, without question, one of the greatest gifts Father George left our community."

**The Catholic Choir is always looking for incarcerated residents who would like to perform. To arrange an interview or to be placed on the waiting list, stop in and sign-up with one of Father Chivara's clerks.**

## Musical men in blues

By Joshua Strange  
Staff Writer

San Quentin has a rich history of talented musicians performing inside its walls. The list includes BB King, Johnny Cash, Santana, Metallica, Michael Franti, Common and many more.

Yet the majority of San Quentin's musicians never had a visitor's pass. They wore blues, performing for friends on the yard or in worship bands. Whatever instruments they played, they all relied on music to stay positive through their incarceration and promote their rehabilitation.

One of these musical men-in-blue was Paul McClafferty, who before his parole played nightly on the H-Unit yard with his acoustic guitar, singing original songs and leading fellow guitarists. His guitar skills stood out immediately, and like all polished musicians, he made it look easy.

McClafferty was quick with a wisecrack and satirical lyrics, and equally quick to notice a string out of tune or to share helpful tips on technique.

He said it would "really suck" if he couldn't play music in prison, noting his guitar was the first package item he ordered.

"It's so awesome they let us have instruments in here. My guitar has helped me get through some tough days," he said. "A lot of it is the people you get to play with too. It brings people together."

McClafferty joked they could stick him in solitary and he'd be fine — as long as he had his guitar and writing supplies.

He started playing at 13. One day he noticed his dad's old guitar in the garage covered with dust and with only

three strings. But his dad said he could have it. He never looked back, learning one string at a time.

"I played *Smoke on the Water* until everyone got sick of it," said McClafferty, grinning at the memory.

An early influence was Matchbox 20 and its singer Rob Thomas. McClafferty liked the band's unique sound and the broad appeal of their lyrics.



Vincent O'Bannon / SQNews

A song that particularly spoke to McClafferty was *3 AM*, about Rob Thomas's mom dying of cancer. McClafferty lost his own mom at 12. His guitar became a refuge from grief and uncertainty, giving him "a different world to live in."

"When you're learning something new, it's exciting; it gives you energy," he said.

McClafferty played rhythm guitar in a reggae beach band, playing a mix of covers and originals. The group was inspired by reggae greats like Bob Marley, Iration, and Re-bolution.

McClafferty's sound is a mix of folk, rock and country,

*Continued, next page*

## INCARCERATED WOMEN

# MAKING TRACKS: Grammy winning rap artist Lecrae produces CCWF prisoner's original hip-hop track

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

A woman incarcerated at the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla is the first female to record and release an original hip hop track from inside a prison.

Carmela Tautinoga Mose, a.k.a. GOOD, won Securix Technologies' first ever "Original Hip-Hop Track Contest" with her original song "I Think," *Newsy* reported in September.

Grammy award-winning Rapper Lecrae chose Carmela as the winner out of hundreds who participated across the country. Lecrae then visited the prison to record the song inside.

"Recording this track with Carmela onsite at a maximum security prison facility, which houses many other inspiring women, was an absolutely life-changing experience for me," Lecrae said. "I'm proud to be part of a campaign that invests in those who often feel forgotten, and hopefully this contest will open doors



Photo courtesy of CBN News

for other creative campaigns to reach the incredible talent behind bars."

Lecrae visited the prison in July and recorded the song under Carmela's artist name "GOOD." The song was then mastered by Lecrae's label Reach Records. It's been released on streaming platforms, with the proceeds going to

help incarcerated people.

"Being given the opportunity to be supported, and listened to, by so many talented visionaries has been a truly humbling experience," Carmela said. "As I sat there recording my track, I felt a stark contrast between the me who was rapping into that mic, and the old me that was sitting on

a bus on the way to prison."

Carmela has been incarcerated for more than 20 years. She is originally from Long Beach California, according to *Newsy*.

Carmela grew up in a broken home where she faced violence and abuse. She left that abusive environment at a young age, but became home-

less. Carmela suffered from mental health issues, and battled addiction to methamphetamines. Her hardships led her into a life of crime.

"The reality is that there are people behind those walls who are family members of folks like you and me. At the end of the day they are still human beings and they have a voice and often times their voice is not heard," Lecrae told *Newsy*.

In her song, Carmela highlights the drug and mental health crisis affecting young people of color with lyrics such as "we all California dreaming in a state of mental illness" and "stress fractures apparent in the chronic gazes of our children." Carmela also talks about how communities of color are decimated by war, prisons, and crack cocaine.

"She's talking about things

in her lyrics, you know, from the submissions we saw, she was talking about such profound things and ingenious things in a creative way that I was like 'wow how in the world has this voice not been heard,'" said Lecrae. "To get the opportunity to give her a voice to speak to the world is actually a gift to me."

The Prison Fellowship Program helped organize Lecrae's visit to the women's facility, and proceeds from the song will benefit the organization. The fellowship program has been around since 1976. For more than 40 years the program has been "working to bring hope and restoration to the incarcerated, their families, and communities impacted by crime and incarceration," according to the article.

Carmela said she is now focused on rehabilitation at the corrections facility.

"Thank you so very much to all the folks at Securix, Reach Records, and Lecrae for lifting me up and getting me started on my amends," said Carmela, reported *CBN News*.

## Formerly incarcerated moms face numerous hurdles during reentry

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

Incarcerated women returning to society find little support, and life is especially difficult for returning mothers, said a story by *KQED*.

Available help is usually fragmented among various nonprofits and governmental agencies, and is difficult to find, the June 11 story reported.

The report included interviews with a number of women who encountered such difficulties.

"A lot of us who leave our children and go to prison come from broken cycles. We don't know how to put

the pieces together and so we really need support before coming out of prison," said formerly-incarcerated interviewee, Lisa Wood.

When Wood left prison in 1988 she had a 4-year-old son and a 2-year-old daughter that she cared for while struggling with drug addiction, reported the article.

Wood has been in and out of prison for 12 years. Her son was incarcerated at age 14 and released when he was 25.

"My son kind of followed me in that pattern that I was in with gangs and drugs," said Wood.

Her daughter was in the same struggle during the years Wood was absent. To-

day her daughter resents Wood's struggles with mental health and substance use disorder, *KQED* reported.

"I had my daughter in prison; she went home three days later," said Wood.

Each year, an estimated 58,000 women are pregnant when they enter prison, and they are faced with rekindling family relationships after they're released, according to a Prison Policy Initiative report.

Separation of a parent and their child puts a strain on their relationship, and it can be difficult to repair.

Studies have shown that there can be a strong negative effect on children when their

parents are incarcerated, and that such children are more likely to become involved with the justice system themselves, said the report.

For children of women who give birth while incarcerated, the generational impacts can start when they are separated shortly after birth. Prison policies dictate how much time new mothers spend with their children after giving birth, according to the story.

Wood was arrested a third time and faced an 18-year prison sentence, under the California's Three Strikes Law, reported the article.

"So I said to the judge, you know I've actually been a junkie my whole life and

no one's ever asked me, 'Can I give you any treatment or help?'" said Wood.

The judge gave Wood a choice to complete a drug program with the Delancey Street foundation in San Francisco or return to prison.

"I was thinking of leaving and going back to hustling and the whole drug scene," said Wood.

Wood committed to stay in the program for six years, and eventually started working in the intake department mentoring other residents.

Seeking Safety, a group facilitated by Lisa Wood, is a San Francisco Bayview project that provides support for women in recovery from

substance use disorder and for the formerly incarcerated. In the group, most women Wood sees are from the Black and Latinx communities. She is trying to make connections with women whose needs are like hers, knowing that success is not guaranteed, reported *KQED*.

"We can see the potential in them, but they can't see it themselves, until they're able to see it, it doesn't matter," said Wood.

The success of formerly incarcerated people reentering society depends on the networks available to them, and how many obstacles they have to overcome, said the article.

### MCCLAFFERTY

Continued

but can jump to spot-on covers of Rebelution or Sublime. While he loves to play covers, a big passion is song writing — the challenge of creating a unique sound.

"When you sit down and write a song and play it, it's an amazing feeling," he said. "Just remember the old musician's advice — make sure you only write stuff you're willing to sing for the rest of your life."

McClafferty led songwriting sessions on the H-Unit yard, molding others' lyrics into legit songs, bringing their creativity to life before their eyes — and ears.

He explained that playing guitar and writing songs has helped him to grow and learn. "One thing that would benefit a lot of people here would be a huge music program," he said. "Music helps people more than they know."

He encourages aspiring musicians to never give up. "I didn't think I'd ever be able to play, but I stuck with it," he said. "Just remember, some days you'll feel like it's never going to work, but keep at it."

McClafferty was looking forward to getting a nice electric guitar after his release — maybe even a Gibson Les Paul — and is excited to see what the next chapter of his musical life will bring.

## Collaboration offers incarcerated women free subscriptions to *Ms.* magazine

By Clark Gerhartsreiter  
Contributing Writer

Feminist icon Gloria Steinem says women and girls are the fastest growing incarcerated population in the United States, and this needs to be dramatically changed.

"About 60% have been convicted of non-violent crimes, like possessing or selling illegal drugs. And many of the women convicted of so-called murder actually killed a violent partner in self-defense," Steinem wrote in the Oct. 12 *Ms.* magazine.

"In four decades women's state prison populations have grown more than 834% — more than doubling the rate of growth in men's prisons," she wrote.

She also reported she started the *Ms.* magazine Prison and Domestic Violence Shelter Program to help protect women.

Women face serious isolation in prison, and Steinem wrote that she is working to get them subscriptions to *Ms.*

The program sends copies of *Ms.* to 5,418 incarcerated women, funded by charitable contributions. "That's a fraction of the total, but it's a number we're proud of and hope to keep growing," Steinem wrote. The *Ms.* website features a link for community members to buy gift subscriptions for incarcerated women and women in domestic violence shelters.

The program, the 88-year-old ac-

tivist wrote, "lets women on the inside know they are not alone. Every American should be ashamed that this country puts a greater proportion of its citizens in prison than any other nation on earth, because of racism, sexism, and also because in many states, the prison industrial complex allows corporations to build and run prisons for profit."

A co-founder of *Ms.*, Steinem called herself "a writer, speaker, and organizer" active with the Women's Media Center, with Equality Now, and with Donor Direct Action. *Ms.*, a magazine wholly owned by the Feminist Majority Foundation, acts as a de facto organ for grassroots feminist justice.

The article listed statistics about incarcerated women, including: In prison, 58% of women have children (the number rises to 80% in jails) and about 5% give birth in prison. Steinem wrote that 23 states do not have anti-shackling laws, which requires incarcerated pregnant women to give birth in chains.

Steinem blamed such laws for the explosive 834% growth of incarceration of women in state prisons since the early 1980s, double the growth rate for men. "The incarceration rates for women of color outpace their white counterparts by 100 percent," according to the article.

*Ms.* has previously reported on the cash bail system as a dominant driving force of such vast increases. Steinem said that 66% of jailed women

who cannot afford bail "are mothers of minor children, and the majority are primary caregivers for their families. They remain locked up because they cannot afford to pay bail (at a median bail of \$11,700)," according to the article.

Steinem called the cash bail system a contemporary version of 19th century debtor's prison. She wrote that data has shown that women who cannot afford bail are more likely to end up convicted and given a longer sentence. Steinem added, "Many women also tend not to benefit from plea-bargaining simply because they cannot afford a lawyer."

Incarcerated women find themselves subjected to "higher rates of sexual victimization and violence by staff assigned to protect them," Steinem continued, while mental and physical health of incarcerated women often deteriorate and most basic women's hygiene and reproductive needs remain ignored.

Steinem believed that reading individual subscriptions to *Ms.* would provide incarcerated women with a viable alternative to reading "books and magazines they must share with hundreds of other women." She added that "Women in prison often spend 17 hours a day isolated in their cells, with no reading material except [a] Bible."

"Nothing can replace systematic remedies, and nothing can replace reaching out to women in prisons and shelters right now," Steinem said.

### CORRECTION

In our October 2022 edition, page 5, we ran a story covering San Quentin's recent Musicambia event. The article misidentified the acoustic guitarist. The actual performer was Raul Aguayo, who performed two original songs, "A Piece of Heaven" and "How to Breathe Underwater." Special thanks to Daniel Le for catching our error, and to Raul Aguayo and his fellow musicians, whose seamless performance deserves appropriate credit.



SQNews archive photo



SQNews



SQNews archive photo

Johnny Cash, the Man in Black himself, was one of the most famous faces to ever appear on the San Quentin stage (above), though the lyrics of one of his songs proclaimed, "San Quentin, I hate everything about you."

Epic singer Eartha Kitt (above right) also graced the prison grounds in the 1960s, wrapped regally in furs and representing musical royalty.

Merle Haggard (left), himself a San Quentin alumnus, returned to perform with his low-key outlaw stylings.

Phyliss Diller (below left) kept her entire audience in stitches with her antics. Every face behind her is plastered with a smile, some laughing right out loud.



SQNews archive photo

# San Quentin's heritage of HARMONY



SQNews archive photo

Bay Area rockers Metallica blew the roof off North Block (left), packing the tiers in 2003 while filming for their *St. Anger* album. So inspired was SQ resident Paul "Irish" Kerwn that he penciled a phenomenal likeness of James Hetfield, Metallica's lead singer/guitarist, with his signature Gibson Explorer electric guitar. Check it out on our 2023 calendar on page 24!

The legendary Bonnie Raitt (above, center) posed with the men back when SQ residents still called themselves "cons" and "inmates."

Carlos Santana (below) rocks the Lower Yard with his unmistakable Latin flavor, courtesy of a double-cutaway Paul Reed Smith six-string. Historians take note of the old San Quentin hospital and ancient brickwork in the background, all now long-gone.



SQNews archive photo

photo by Danny Clinch

## CALIFORNIA POLICY

## Global Tel Link to resume tablet distribution



Stock Image

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

Global Tel Link Corporation has received the go-ahead to speed up tablet distribution “free of charge” to all incarcerated people in California prisons after a bitter court battle.

The rollout was slowed because of a lawsuit filed in a Sacramento court in September 2021 by Securus/JPay over a bidding dispute, according to *Prison Legal News*.

The court had set aside an award by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation of a contract with GTL for telecommunications services to prisoners.

“In the end, CDCR got its way and awarded the contract to GTL/ViaPath,” said the ar-

ticle. Securus’ pilot programs ended June 30, when the CDCR website promised the lawsuit’s victor would “distribute tablets free of charge to all incarcerated people.”

The battle was waged over a lucrative market for prisoner gaming, reading and listening material delivered via the tablets, which are also used to make audio and video calls.

According to *Prison Legal News*, in August 2020 CDCR and the Department of Technology solicited bids by way of a Request for Proposals followed by negotiations pursuant to the Public Contract Code. The bids were to be evaluated under a system assigning each a maximum of 2,000 points, 30% of which was allocated to costs.

The following warning

appeared under the “Costs” section: “The state has established a not-to-exceed (NTE) for this procurement. Bidders’ rates for calls must not exceed \$.05 per minute. Bidders may propose rates lower than the NTE identified.” Bids were to apply to all calls, including video and voice calls.

After a search under the Public Records Act, Securus alleged in a complaint that GTL was given an unfair advantage during the bidding process in violation of Public Contract Code.

Due to the choice of GTL over Securus, prisoners and their families “now pay over \$12 million more per year for video calling than they would under Securus,” the complaint stated. It also alleged that the state did not investigate GTL’s

Rollout of tablets to California prisoners was slowed due to a lawsuit filed in Sacramento County in September 2021 by Securus. Due to the choice of GTL over Securus, prisoners and their families “now pay over \$12 million more per year for video calling than they would under Securus,” the complaint stated.

misrepresentations regarding its experience in providing the services sought by the Request for Proposals.

The court ultimately found that the Department of Technology held Securus alone to the not-to-exceed provisions while allowing GTL to exceed it for video calls and international telephone calls. It stated that, “Respondents granted GTL an unfair advantage the California law proscribes.”

The court granted a writ of mandate for failure to impose the not-to-exceed provisions on GTL and set aside the contract. But it allowed the state to continue to employ GTL to provide contracted services on one or more interim arrangements reached independently of the contract.

“The ruling disrupted GTL’s rollout of new tablets to state prisoners under the contract, which in turn had stuck a dagger in the heart of a tablet rollout underway by competitor Securus Technologies/JPay, expanding on a pilot program launched at five state prisons in 2017,” the *Prison Legal News* said.

## Jenkins to charge fentanyl dealers with murder for overdoses

By Rahan Asaan  
Journalism Guild Writer

Fentanyl drug dealers will be charged with second-degree murder when a customer dies of overdose, San Francisco’s new district attorney says.

Recently elected DA Brooke Jenkins said the decision is aimed at combating the escalating fatal overdoses of the especially dangerous drug fentanyl. A second-degree murder conviction carries a prison term of 15-years-to-life, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported Sept. 28.

“Since 2020, nearly 1,700 people [in San Francisco] have died of drug overdose, mostly from fentanyl, in part because dealers have been allowed to operate with impunity for over two years,” Jenkins said in a statement.

Jenkins told the *Chronicle* that fentanyl has been a central focus of her office since she was appointed by Mayor London Breed to replace recalled DA Chesa Boudin in July.

Previously, drug dealers received a diversion program or little to no jail time for a nonviolent offense.

Public Defender Anita Nabha criticized Jenkins’ new policies and asserts that they are “a continuation of the failed war on drugs.” Nabha called the policy an attempt to jail and imprison those suffering from a public health crisis. “It’s not a solution,” she added. Prosecutors have a burden

to demonstrate clear and convincing evidence of malice or “implied malice,” wherein the accused dealer deliberately wanted the victim to die or exhibited a conscious disregard for human life, the newspaper reported.

Other aspects of the new fentanyl-related policy are also confusing some judges, said the story. In recent detention motions for seven accused fentanyl dealers, judges ultimately denied all of the motions. Judges are bound by the California Supreme Court to impose effective but least restrictive pre-trial terms, the article reported.

However, Jenkins has garnered support from Mothers Against Drug Deaths, a group comprised of family members of addicts and recovering addicts who have been known to protest open air drug areas in the city’s Tenderloin district.

The group’s co-founder, Gina McDonald, reported she absolutely believes fentanyl dealers should be charged with murder and supports the new policy.

“The lethality of fentanyl presents new and unprecedented risks to our community, and we must do everything in our power to hold dealers accountable to help save lives,” Jenkins said. “We have to send a strong message in the community and the courtroom that we will not stand by and allow dealers to kill innocent people and those suffering from addiction.”

## Transgender housing battle looming

By Cassandra Evans  
Journalism Guild Writer

A legal battle is brewing, seeking to nullify a California law that requires transgender prisoners be housed in a female facility if they claim female identity, *The Hill* reports.

At issue is a law passed in 2020. It requires the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to allow transgender and non-binary prisoners to be housed in prisons according to their gender identity instead of the gender they were assigned at birth.

In addition, the law requires the state to consider transgender and non-binary prisoners’ own perception of safety in all housing assignments, the May 10 story noted.

In May a motion was filed to intervene on behalf of four incarcerated transgender women and the Transgender Gender-Variant and Intersex Justice Project. The group included Lambda Legal, the Transgender Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Southern California, and pro-bono co-counsel O’Melveny and Myers.

In November 2021 the law was challenged by a self-described “radical feminist” organization called the Women’s Liberation Front, representing four incarcerated women and California nonprofit Woman II Woman. The organization’s lawsuit claims that the law is being exploited by “hundreds of men” who seek to transfer to women’s facilities, and that this has increased sexual violence.

The suit alleges that the law puts cisgender women (those who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth) in danger, and seeks a permanent injunction to stop implementation.

“[The law] cannot be applied in any manner that avoids violating the federal and state constitutional rights of plaintiffs,” including

the right to be safe from sexual assault or harassment, the lawsuit said.

The filing also claims that incarcerated women are coerced into “using speech that reflects a belief to which a woman does not subscribe ... in the form of pronouns that are self-selected by a person claiming a gender identity.” In addition, the group claims that the law violates a woman’s “sincerely held religious beliefs” by forcing her to live with or undress before men other than a spouse or immediate family member.

According to the motion, two of the prisoners the groups represent are currently housed in CDCR facilities designated for men and they regularly face sexual violence — from prisoners and staff alike — based on their gender identity.

The coalition argues that the organization’s lawsuit is intentionally misleading on the issue of gender identity, rehashing “sensationalist and debunked claims about transgender women supposedly perpetrating violence.” They also believe CDCR is unlikely to “vigorously” defend the law.

“[I]t is a law that they not only refuse to fully implement, but regularly violate,” the motion said. “These women ... are entitled to have their voices heard in this litigation to preserve their rights, and the protections afforded under California law.”

Tremayne Carroll is one of the transgender women represented by the coalition. She is currently housed in a women’s prison and fears what will happen if the organization’s lawsuit succeeds.

“If these plaintiffs get what they want, I’ll be sent back to a men’s prison, where I would face relentless sexual harassment and the constant threat of rape,” Carroll said in a statement. “That was my reality for years, and I am terrified to go back. I am a woman, and I don’t belong in a men’s prison.”

## OIG REPORT: Sanctions for staff misconduct too lenient

California prison officials have been strongly criticized for their internal investigations and disciplinary actions against correctional officers.

The Office of the Inspector General’s report gave the California prison system an overall “poor” rating when conducting internal investigations and issuing adequate employee disciplinary actions in the first six months of 2022.

The report exposed flaws in the investigative process of alleged state prison employee misconduct. Nevertheless, the report concluded that accusations were “usually taken seriously and investigated properly in the first half of this year,” the *Sacramento Bee* reported Oct. 1.

The Inspector General has the specific responsibility to monitor discipline of California prisons and has been very critical of the prison system’s method of conducting internal investigations and meting out discipline to prison staff, according to the office’s 35th semiannual report.

For the first half of this year, the office reviewed 147 cases and issued “satisfactory” ratings in 99 cases, “poor” in 47 cases, with one case receiving a “superior” rating.

Major issues of concern were timeliness, penalties that were too lenient, and not following OIG recommendations for termination.

In one report, an unidentified correctional officer allegedly assaulted his spouse with a knife, threatened her with a firearm, and then bit his own son.

A warden rejected the OIG’s recommendation of termination and instead reduced the officer’s pay by 10% for two years.

Corrections department Spokesperson Dana Simas said in an email that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation requires the highest standard of conduct from its employees and prioritizes thoroughness in its investigations of wrongdoing.

“And while we understand the OIG’s concern on timeliness, the reality is that every case is different and should be treated by its individual factors,” Simas stated.

She also reported that new procedures aimed at improving investigations of alleged staff misconduct had begun in early 2022.

—Rahan Asaan

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## SAN QUENTIN HISTORY

## Tales from the cemetery: The rancher and the mobster

By Don Chaddock  
Editor, *Inside CDCR Newsletter*  
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The San Quentin cemetery overlooks the prison. At left is rancher JQ Ackerman, sentenced to San Quentin, and Howard Abbey, at Folsom.

San Quentin and Folsom prisons each have a cemetery where many incarcerated people were buried, marked only with their inmate numbers. Using state records and published newspaper accounts, *Inside CDCR* is unlocking stories of those buried in the prison cemeteries. In early 1958, a change in policy ended the practice of burying people at state prisons.

#### ■ Money dispute leads to rancher's incarceration in 1925

The first name appearing on the San Quentin alphabetically organized list is John Q. Ackerman, 41409, of Canyon Creek.

According to news accounts, while arguing over money, the 70-year-old rancher shot O.C. "Tex" Pierson on July 16, 1925, at Canyon Creek. Pierson was shot in the side, the bullet passing through and lodging in his arm.

After shooting Pierson, Ackerman walked back to his home. When the sheriff knocked on his door a few hours later, Ackerman was "sitting at a table reading." He offered no resistance and willingly left his home, accompanying the sheriff to Weaverville, where he was jailed.

Unable to raise \$2,500 to post bail, Ackerman spent nearly four months in county jail.

The victim recovered after spending a few weeks in the hospital.

In October, his weeklong trial ended with a jury finding him guilty of assault with a deadly weapon. They spent over 12 hours debating,

finally settling on finding him guilty of an assault charge, but not with the intent to kill. In today's terms, he could have been found guilty of attempted murder, but the jury went with a lesser crime. On October 26, he was sentenced to 1-to-10 years at San Quentin.

He was received at the prison on October 29. His stay was cut short when he passed away November 16 following an operation and was buried in the San Quentin cemetery.

#### ■ Extortion lands 32-year-old in Folsom—and eventually in the prison cemetery

The first name appearing on the list for the Folsom State Prison cemetery is Howard Abbey, 17768, also known as Eddie Hayes and Edward Ferguson. Born around 1899, he was in and out of prison, including a 10-year stint at San Quentin from 1921 to 1931 under the number 35380.

Abbey, an aspiring San Diego mobster, was involved in underworld dealings in Southern California. When he threatened James Crofton, president of the Agua Caliente Jockey Club, he wasn't expecting so much resistance. Abbey demanded \$7,500 from Crofton and his club, or they would face the consequences. Crofton reported it to police and Abbey was arrested. Two days before his trial, Crofton received a letter threatening violence if he didn't drop the charges.

"We will take care of you no matter how many guards you've got," the letter warned. "We will soon be in power in San Diego and we have plenty of money so you had better act wisely."

According to Crofton, Abbey said he was backed by muscle out of Chicago. Abbey was tried, convicted and then sent to Folsom. He was received April 6, 1932, on an indeterminate



Photos courtesy of CDCR

LEFT: John Ackerman, 41409, served just 18 days at San Quentin in 1925 before dying after undergoing a medical operation.

RIGHT: Howard J. Abbey, 17768, arrived at Folsom in 1932, and died two years later after falling from his cell block's fifth tier.

sentence of at least five years. While serving his time in Folsom, he was also questioned by San Diego police regarding the murder of a bootlegger.

On April 14, San Diego County Sheriff Ed Cooper revealed a letter had been sent to Wirt Bowman, president of the Agua Caliente corporation. The business had many holdings, including a hotel in addition to the jockey club. The letter demanded \$50,000. It also noted that since Crofton didn't drop the charges, he was marked for death. If the money wasn't paid, the

same would happen to Bowman and his family.

According to those serving time with Abbey, he was becoming worried "about his health." What those worries were exactly, no one knows.

On March 30, 1934, Abbey reportedly climbed over the railing of the fifth tier and jumped 40 feet to the concrete floor below. He died 90 minutes later from a skull fracture, according to Warden Court Smith. Abbey never regained consciousness and did not leave a suicide note. He was buried in the Folsom Prison cemetery.

## Study: LA County ground zero for most California prisoners

By Kevin D. Sawyer  
Contributing Writer

The majority of prisoners sent to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation come from Los Angeles County, according to a recent study by the Prison Policy Initiative.

The study documents the highest rate of imprisonment is concentrated in Los Angeles' neighborhoods located in the South Central region of the city.

"Counties that contain urban or more densely populated areas—like Los Angeles County (which is home to more than 10 million Californians) and the nearby counties of Riverside, San Bernardino, and Orange—tend to send the most people to prison," the group's research shows.

The incarceration rate in state prison per 100,000 residents in South Central L.A. is 773 – 1,093, the study shows. The city of Compton is in this region.

"Compton's demographics are not the result of coincidence, but rather design," the study's authors reported. "In the 1950s, the city was one of the starkest examples of 'blockbusting' in the country. Blockbusting was a state-sanctioned predatory real estate practice, in which brokers 'intentionally stoked fears of racial integration and declining property values to push white homeowners to sell at a loss,' and then resold the properties to Black families at above-market rates."

Overall, "Los Angeles County has an imprisonment rate of 402 per 100,000," said the report. And, at the time of the 2020 Census, "more than 40,000 people in California state prisons called Los Angeles County home."

In the city of Inglewood, 585 people per 100,000 are imprisoned. In the city of Lancaster the rate is 691 per 100,000. Both cities are located in Los Angeles County.

Additionally, the report stated that "Los Angeles has a long history of racist policing and divesting from its communities of color." The study noted that Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately policed and imprisoned throughout the county.

The Prison Policy Initiative found people incarcerated in CDCR prisons also came from some of the state's largest cities, such as San Diego, Sacramento, and Fresno.

Less populated, rural counties such as Kings, Shasta, Tehama, and

Yuba—and smaller cities like Avon, Red Bluff, Corcoran, and Sonoma—have high rates of incarceration too.

For example, the study found that Del Norte, Siskiyou, Shasta, Lake, Tehama, Tulare, and Kings Counties all have an imprisonment rate of 451-666 per 100,000.

"Around the country, high imprisonment rates are correlated with other community issues related to poverty, employment, education, and health," the group reported.

Not surprisingly, "San Francisco has one of the state's lowest city imprisonment rates," said the report. "But some communities have rates far above the city average."

Take, for example, San Francisco neighborhoods such as Hayes Valley, Bayview, Hunters Point, Silver Terrace and Sunnydale. There, state prison incarceration rates per 100,000 neighborhood residents is 226 – 358, according to the report.

"The city wide imprisonment rate of 118 per 100,000 people in San Francisco is about three times lower than that of Los Angeles. But residence data show that some San Francisco communities—particularly Black communities—are disproportionately affected by mass incarceration."

According to the study, San Francisco is only 5% Black, yet 38% of those arrested by the police in the city are Black. Statistics show that Blacks were stopped at a rate "more than five and a half times that of white people in the city and were ten times as likely to be searched as white people."

The study cited San Francisco's stark example of historic redlining, one of the highest in the country. In the 1930s, for example, "the federal government rated the 'riskiness' of real estate investment in different neighborhoods, resulting in rating non-white neighborhoods as 'hazardous' and beginning a cycle of disinvestment in these predominately Black and immigrant neighborhoods."

The report stated that the large number of adults removed from communities that have relatively small geographical areas has a direct impact on the health and stability of families left behind.

"It specifically impacts women and gender non-conforming people, where 1 in 4 women, and 1 in 2 Black women, have an incarcerated loved one," said the report.

## TRADING PLACES: Marin County puts criminal justice professionals in shoes of those they serve

By Alex N. Gecan  
Marin Independent Journal  
Reprinted with permission

About 60 Marin County employees, non-profit staffers and health specialists got a taste of the other ends of their jobs Wednesday. They stepped into the shoes of the people who come through their doors every day, trying to stay free.

The exercise, organized by the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services and carried out at the Marin Center Exhibit Hall, was designed to show the participants – probation officers, jailers, mental health professionals, substance abuse experts – what it's like to try to rejoin society after being locked up.

The stakes may have been imaginary but the participant said the frustration, confusion and shame they felt butting up against bureaucratic obstacles were very real.

"It's very challenging," said Carol Mangilit, a county staffer who portrayed a character named "Andrew." Spending the morning acting as a former inmate "makes me want to be more patient," Mangilit said.

Each participant was assigned a character of a recently released prisoner and had to perform tasks such as obtaining identification, shopping for food, getting jobs, checking in with probation workers, undergoing

*"I know there's little things that we can do each day with the people that we work with, something tiny to help them put one foot in front of the other."*

—Rebekah Batcharie Reali  
Social Worker

drug treatment and going to court.

Some made tough calls – opting to stay homeless for the purpose of the exercise because they could not afford rent, or simply committing new crimes to stay solvent.

"We're stressed out," said Karl Smith, a caseworker at the Ritter Center. His character, "Ross," waited his first simulated week in line to get identification. He still wasn't able to, meaning he couldn't do anything else and would have to start his second week back in line.

Danielle Knots, who works in the county's probation office, said there simply wasn't enough time in the simulated week to complete every task. Her character in the exercise, "Wabin," tested positive for drugs.

"So I couldn't work, so I lost my home," she said.

Frank Starks, a Ritter Center manager, played a judge during the exercise. Eight case managers at the San Rafael nonprofit are responsible for helping 93 clients stay housed.

Small missteps for those on the

fringes, like loitering or a drug offense, can mean winding up in jail, he said.

Kyle Hara, a crisis specialist who works with former prisoners reentering society, said many of them don't have the organizational or problem-solving skills necessary to keep them on track. Many prisoners, he said, are "severely mentally ill."

During the exercise, Hara acted as a discount medical care provider which, despite the name, ate up much of the participants' budget and frequently returned results they could not understand or explain, like positive drug tests.

The organizers of the exercise hope agency workers will [learn] to show a little more patience, thus giving former prisoners a better chance of finding productive lives.

"I know there's little things that we can do each day with the people that we work with," said Rebekah Batcharie Reali, a county social worker. It doesn't have to be much, she said – a smile, a little help looking up a piece of information, "something tiny to help them put one foot in front of the other."

Michael Lamorte, a counselor in San Rafael, said that the repeated roadblocks and bureaucratic hurdles can be too much for those trying to get their lives back together.

"It's so much easier to give up and go to jail," he said.

## Newsom appoints new BPH commissioner

*Six current commissioners also reappointed to Parole Board*

By Cainen Chambers  
Staff Writer

Gov. Gavin Newsom has reappointed six members of the adult Board of Parole Hearings, which rules on prison parole applications. He also appointed one new member and reappointed a member of the Board of Juvenile Hearings.

The appointees require confirmation by the state Senate.

The Board's function is to determine an incarcerated person's suitability for reentry into society.

Their positions range in pay from \$170,064 to \$192,407 annually.

The new appointee is Jack Weiss, age 57, of Los Angeles. He served as chairperson for the Public Safety Committee on the Los Angeles City Council from 2001-2010. He was an assistant U.S. attorney 1994-2000, a litigation associate 1993-1994, and a District Court law clerk 1992-1993. He is a graduate of the UCLA Law School.

The adult reappointments were:  
• Patricia Cassidy, 70, of Concord. She is a Democrat who has been on the Board since 2016.  
• Teal Kozel, 46, of Yuba City. She is a Democrat who was appointed earlier this year.

• William Muniz, 58, of Marina. He is a Republican who was appointed earlier this year.  
• Lawrence Nwajeri, 61, of Los Angeles. He is a Democrat who has been on the Board since 2021.  
• Michael Ruff, 58, of Sacramento. He is a Democrat who has been on the Board since 2017.  
• Mary Thorton, 58, of Fresno. She has registered to vote without a party preference and has been a Board member since 2019.  
The juvenile reappointment was Gilbert Infantre Jr., 38, of Elk Grove. He is a Democrat who has been on the Board since 2017.

## REENTRY

# Parolees face housing barriers despite justice reforms

By **Bostyon Johnson**  
Journalism Guild Writer

Leaving prison opens the door to a daunting array of potential problems, including finding a place to live and a job to support a life of freedom, the *Los Angeles Times* reports.

A result is that many newly released people become homeless, the Aug. 2 story notes.

"This is a population that we can all agree is vulnerable to falling into the streets. And it's a population who has paid their debt to society. So the only alternative is to keep everybody incarcerated forever. And we have tried that before," said Assemblymember Isaac Bryan, D- Los Angeles.

Knowing that he has somewhere to sleep at the end of the day has "been a breath of fresh air," said Donald Jones, a recently-released Californian who is living in a transitional housing program until he can find a stable home for himself—a milestone that will bring him a feeling that he has "accomplished something," Jones said.

However, many people are not lucky enough to find permanent housing after incarceration. Assemblymember

Bryan introduced AB1816 in an effort to allocate \$200 million to strengthen long-term housing options for formerly incarcerated people. But when California's budget was finalized, it did not include money for AB 1816, even with the state's record-high surplus of more than \$100 billion.

Gov. Gavin Newsom is pushing criminal justice reform, prison closures, shortened sentences, and calling to abolish Death Row, all of which could ease overcrowding in prisons, the *Times* noted. But what happens to people with a criminal record once they're released back into society? Some have nowhere to go upon release.

A study by the Prison Policy Initiative in 2018 found that formerly incarcerated people are up to 10 times more likely to experience homelessness than other populations.

Beyond time-limited transitional housing programs and vouchers for individuals reentering the community, many returning citizens face homelessness and barriers to housing. Effectively they suffer continued punishment even after serving their prison sentences, and their circumstances contribute to the crisis of homelessness, according to

the *Times*.

Formerly incarcerated tenants are at the mercy of property owners, who have the power and right to conduct background checks on criminal history. Regulations say that anyone convicted of certain crimes, including sex offenses or drug charges, can be restricted from accessing federally subsidized housing.

A 2020 law bans property owners from discriminating against people who used a housing voucher for rent payments, which is often the only option for someone who has left incarceration.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has a large number of resources for community-based programs that assist with substance use treatment, family reunification, education and employment training, the story noted. It also offers housing and reentry programs that people can take advantage of at the end of their sentences. However, these programs are usually time-limited.

But housing barriers are just "another form of redlining," according to Emily Harris, a policy director at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in Oakland.

"As we're leaning away

from a 'lock them up' mentality in California, we need to provide more infrastructure that supports them when they're coming out. In terms of the budget priorities of the state, we can invest in imprisonment, which is incredibly costly, or we can invest in other forms of community safety like stable housing, which is much cheaper and has a much better long-term impact on people," said Harris.

In June, Newsom and lawmakers proposed that millions of dollars be directed to expanding transitional housing and reentry programs in an effort to help "prepare incarcerated individuals to successfully reenter their communities following their release from prison," according to the state budget proposal.

To this end, legislation introduced last year proposed to reroute the money saved from prison closures to provide new housing and work training opportunities for the people recently incarcerated. This request failed in a key fiscal committee, the story noted.

According to a California Health Policy Strategies analysis, 70% of unsheltered homeless people report having spent time incarcerated, the report notes.

## Community health workers and reentry healthcare resources are available

*Transitions Clinic Network (TCN) hosts a 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. We interviewed Joe Calderon, who is a returning community member and a community health worker (CHW) for the Transitions Clinic Network (TCN). He works with clinics in California to train CHWs to work with returning community members. He also has experience working with patients in a clinic in San Francisco.*

### What is the Transitions Clinic Network? How did Joe get connected to the organization?

TCN has a network of health clinics around California to serve people coming home from prison. TCN helps connect returning community members to CHWs with lived experience of incarceration who can support their reentry. For Joe, "TCN in a nutshell is community, community, community."

Joe first found TCN as a patient. While in prison, his father died of a massive heart attack and his grandfather from a stroke. Joe was then diagnosed with high blood pressure at 29. All this raised his awareness about his health. With his family history, he was concerned, and nobody ever sat him down to speak with him about "the silent killer: high blood pressure." When he got out and got connected to a TCN CHW for his health needs, he was inspired by the fact that TCN CHWs are returning community members who have been involved in the "injustice system." Joe had always been interested in a healthcare job. Previously, he thought he would be an X-ray technician. Instead, he applied for a CHW job 2 years later.

### What is a CHW? What does Joe do for patients every day?

As Joe explains, "Community health workers [have] been around since the beginning of time, but [with] different names. At its core, it is someone from the community." They use their knowledge and experience to help others improve their health. Joe, after training countless CHWs for years, would tell you that great CHWs are passionate, empowering, strong advocates, and humble.

Joe has a 40-hour work week: 20 hours in clinic, 20 hours in community. In the community, he focuses on outreach. He looks for new patients and builds new relationships with partners, such as clinics, parole/probation officers, transitional homes, hospitals, and emergency rooms. Joe says, "From the streets to the prisons, I go. That's what outreach looks like."

In the clinic, Joe sends reminder calls to anyone who has an upcoming appointment. He helps patients sort out anything that might be a barrier to care, like transportation or insurance issues. He makes sure patients can reach him if they need help. For example, anyone could call if they need a medication refill or if they are having an anxiety attack. He fills pantry bags for anyone who needs food, which helps people get through the week or month. Some patients come to the clinic for food every week, or Joe even brings food out to

## TRANSITIONS



patients' houses. CHWs meet needs and provide social support.

### What drew Joe to the work of a CHW?

In prison, Joe learned accountability for his actions by processing what he did and what he took away from society. In this time, he was also able to understand how he was damaged by the system. Joe explains, "I learned in prison that the United States did not seem to be for the people or by the people. It did not seem to be for people like us." Coming home, Joe had a new understanding of society and what part he wanted to play in the solving poverty and inequality. Joe says, "My lack of knowledge of my potential allowed me to settle for quite less. My definition of life was more about survival than living. As I grew up and processed, I understood that I wanted to be part of the solution."

Joe now finds his position as a CHW for TCN rewarding. He helps men and women from his community as they come home get what they need to address their health and other social needs that can impact health.

### What positive impact do CHWs have on healthcare?

Joe explains, "CHWs are interpreters: they bring the clinic to the community, and they bring the community to the clinic." They help people understand their resources and their rights, and they advocate for them when necessary. CHWs are bridges across barriers and biases in the community.

According to Joe, "CHWs help enlighten a community that historically hasn't utilized medical services. They add quality to life." CHWs do this by building trusting relationships with patients who may not trust the system, which encourages people to stay in care. Joe says, "Today, I do what I do to continue to give a voice to those who historically don't have a voice on this side of the fence, and as an amends to a community that I have taken a lot from."

### If there was one thing Joe wanted people inside to know about reentry, what would it be?

In Joe's words: "Healthcare is reentry. We have many competing priorities going on in our heads and in our plans: Where are we [going to] live and work, who are we [going to] date. Have a plan, and make sure healthcare is involved in that plan. If you're not healthy, how are you going to work? How are you going to invest in that relationship? How are you going to chase your kids around? Everything centers from health, including reentry."

*We love to communicate with the incarcerated community. If you have health-care-related questions about reentry, write to us at: Transitions Clinic Network, 2403 Keith Street, San Francisco, CA 94124. Or call our hotline Monday through Friday, 9am - 5pm. Our number is (510) 606-6400, and we accept collect calls from CDCR.*



## RELEASE FUNDS

As you prepare for release, you'll be asked to choose how to receive your release funds. Your options are a debit card or a paper check.

### DEBIT CARDS

- Can be used at a card reader to purchase train or bus tickets.
- Can be converted to an ATM card and loaded with additional funds for future use.
- Replacable if lost, via communication with the vendor.
- Convenient and accepted at most establishments.
- Easy to use.

### PAPER CHECKS

- Must be cashed before purchasing any items, including train or bus tickets.
- Requires a Driver's License or other state or federal ID or existing bank account to cash or deposit.
- Fees may be required at some check cashing locations.
- Some locations may only have terminals/kiosks and no cashiers - cash payments may not be accepted.
- If the check is lost or stolen, it may take longer to replace.

**Please be ready to make this decision at your Release Program Study (RPS) interview or the Institution Classification Committee (ICC) review.**

**If no choice is made, a check will be issued.**





## EDUCATION

# Mt. Tam College announces first winners of MTC Alumni Scholarship Program

By Corey McNeil  
Contributing Writer

The Mount Tamalpais College Alumni Scholarship Program was created to help former Mount Tam College students who have been paroled continue their education in trade schools, community colleges, 4-year colleges, and graduate schools. In 2022, a scholarship awarded its recipients \$10,000 each to assist with their education expenses. Amounts in future years may increase based on available funds.

To ensure the process of picking the scholarship winners was fair and equitable Mount Tamalpais College enlisted the help of 10,000 Degrees, which is an organization that administers scholarships and provides college advising. Their mission is to achieve educational equity and support students from low-income backgrounds to and through college to impact their communities and the world positively.

At present, all students who have completed at least six full courses with Mount Tamalpais College (formerly Patten College at San Quentin, Patten University at San Quentin, or the Prison University Project) are eligible to apply.

Mount Tam would like to introduce the first winners of this scholarship; James “JC” Cavitt, John Lam, and Somdeng Danny Thongsy.

Having spent over two decades of his life incarcerated, James Cavitt brings his firsthand experience with the criminal justice system and carceral education system to the California State University System.

Much of JC’s career has been dedicated to working with incarcerated trauma survivors and changing the narratives about imprisoned individuals. In addition, JC is a member of the UnCommon Law Clinical Support Team, where he provides trauma-informed training to staff and counseling support to incarcerated individuals.

“I feel privileged and humbled to have received this award, which will help me achieve my educational goal of getting my Ph.D.,” Cavitt shared.

JC is currently completing his Doctoral degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at Hope International University, Long Beach, in 2022. In addition, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology, with honors, from California State University Fullerton and his Associate of Arts degree from Mount Tamalpais College in San Quentin. He is an Alpha Sigma Lambda honoree, Bickerstaff Graduate Fellow and a Golden Key Honor Society member. Beyond his education is the heart of a volunteer, mediator, social justice advocate and therapist.

JC has been featured in numerous publications, articles, podcasts, and on various media platforms, including a *TED Talk* with John Legend, *TEDx: San Quentin, Now This News, Post-Traumatic Thriving TV* series, and *CORE IQ* educational training videos.

When people experience trauma or severe life stressors it is not uncommon for their lives to unravel. JC’s greatest passion is to help people, make a difference in the world and help change lives for the better.

John Lam is another Mount Tam Alumni Scholarship winner and a first-generation Chinese-American born and raised in Sacramento. At 17, he was sentenced to serve 26 years to life. After 14 years of incarceration his life sentence was commuted by Governor Brown. In 2019, after 15 years of imprisonment, he was paroled to Los Angeles.

He is currently an undergraduate at UC Berkeley majoring in Political Science and attributes his success in getting into Cal to Mount Tamalpais College, which taught him critical thinking skills, reading, and writing — and importantly, instilling a sense of belief he is good enough.

He currently works as a Community Engagement Fellow at the Possibility Lab at the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley, conducting research and assisting voter registration at the Santa Rita county jail.

As a formerly incarcerated person, he is passionate about utilizing technology and policy to address criminal justice reform. He understands the importance of having people with carceral experiences creating Apps and offering insight at the intersection of policy and technology around housing, employment, education, and access to healthcare. He volunteers with nonprofits from the Bay Area and Southern California to assist formerly incarcerated people in reintegrating into society.

Upon completing his degree, he plans to pursue a Master’s in Public Policy. As a returning citizen in the privileged space of higher education, he deeply appreciates the

support of Mt. Tamalpais’ generous scholarship to pay for his education. Without this, John would have had to work multiple jobs to pay for school and incur student loans that would severely hamper his economic well-being for years after graduation.

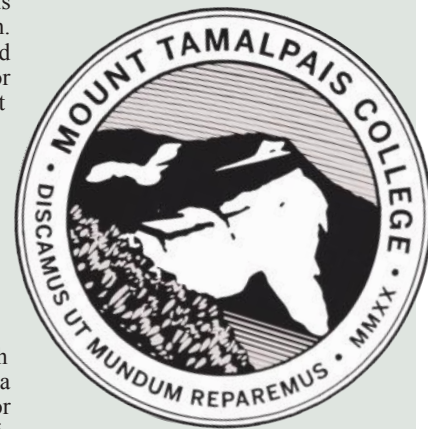
Scholarship winner Somdeng Danny Thongsy is a formerly incarcerated, low-income and first-generation college student at UC Berkeley majoring in Sociology. He served [nearly] 20 years out of a prison life sentence as a youth offender. Outside of school he is a community advocate fighting for criminal justice reform and immigrant rights.

He was sentenced as a youth offender to serve 27 years to life. However, due to California law changing for youth offenders, after serving 19 years, he was granted parole, but because of his immigration status Danny was transferred to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in August 2017, where he faced deportation.

Danny was released from the custody of ICE in February 2018, after which he was accepted into a transitional/reentry house in Concord, called Rowland’s House, run by the California Reentry Institute.

“Being a low-income, first-generation college student and a formerly incarcerated person of color, this scholarship provides the holistic support I need to help navigate my academic studies,” said Thongsy.

He believes this significant scholarship can help formerly incarcerated and low-income people. Sharing



information about this scholarship in the *San Quentin News* or Mount Tam’s website and newsletter can help spread the word.

Without support, transitioning back into society after being incarcerated can be very challenging. The trauma of incarceration is another challenge. Then you have family reunification, old habits, old friends, old neighborhoods, technology support, financial literacy, relationships, and the need to stay focused and accountable. Thongsy was fortunate to have peer support and community in his reentry, like Asian Prisoners Support Committee, Asian Law Caucus, Bonafide, California Reentry Institute, Laney ROC, and Mount Tamalpais College.

“I appreciate the scholarship and reentry support,” said Thongsy. “With this, I am humbled and appreciative.”

By Nick Hacheny and  
Tomas Keen  
Reprinted by permission  
from College Inside

## An Educator’s Guide to Prison

Open Campus



What should educators know before walking into a prison? The landscape may look vaguely familiar, Nick Hacheny and Tomas Keen write, but don’t be fooled. There’s a lot outsiders can’t see, and need to understand.

As prison education programs are poised to expand, the two incarcerated writers offer a guide for working with students like them in this strange land. (Also a shout out to incarcerated artist Daniel Longan for the illustrations!)

If given the opportunity to teach abroad, say in Papua New Guinea or France, you’d likely head to a bookstore and purchase a guide on the region’s culture. You’d study the history of the place and how significant events shaped the things you were about to see.

But nobody buys a guide before entering a prison.

As prison-based education programs slowly return, many newly inspired educators are unknowingly about to walk into a foreign land. Few will get a guide on what being in prison is really like. And even if they do take the time to scour the growing tome of prison-centered writing, they’ll find little has been said about the ways in which outsiders should approach this place.

This guide aims to fix that. Arriving at the prison gates, you’ll find what you first expected: high walls, glistening razor wire, imposing towers with armed guards. Stepping inside you’ll see polished “Programming Center” signs adorning buildings with neatly configured tables and chairs, inspirational quotes, and hastily-scratched-upon whiteboards. It may seem for a moment very reminiscent of any other site of academia.

Because the setting is what

you expected, the people look familiar, and the language is one you can understand, you might assume you know this culture. You couldn’t be more wrong.

Like all tourist traps, you’re experiencing what prison administrators want you to. You’re not seeing the cramped and dirty living units; you’re not hearing the nonstop shrieking of amplified loud-speakers, you’re not feeling the soul-twisting desperation to be somewhere, anywhere, other than this place. Despite a keen eye and keyed up senses, you’re not experiencing what this place really is.

You’ve undoubtedly come intending to do some good. Yet that requires understanding something of the place you are in and the people you are with. Here are five cultural foundations that you should know about:

### The population

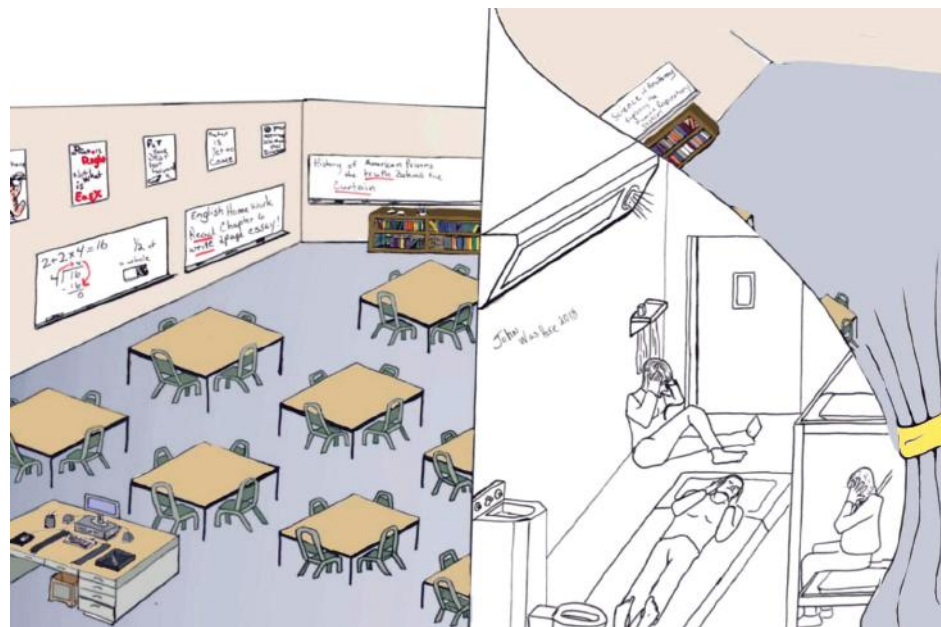
Almost all prisoners have experienced trauma—there are disproportionate numbers of people of color who have been subjected to racist systems, victims of violence, graduates of the foster-care system, people suffering from mental illness, and people who turned to substances to suppress pain. In no other place will you find these specific demographics in these sizable concentrations.

### Power

Prisons create a culture that responds to power as a reflex, like a flinch. Prisoners understand that anyone who has power over them has the ability to hurt them—enemy and friend alike. The natural reaction is to distance yourself as far as possible: what you don’t have cannot be taken from you, what you don’t love cannot break your heart.

### Trust

Prisoners have trust issues. We have experienced



Daniel Longan / College Inside

extreme oppression from our custodians, been betrayed by our fellow captives, and been abandoned by some of our advocates. This leads to a truncated ability to give and receive trust, making it a measured commodity offered and taken only in the quantity we can afford.

### Agency

The prison environment is one shockingly scarce in choices. We don’t choose where we live or who we live with, what time we will wake up, eat our meals, or even use the toilet. The choices that are left to us are guarded fiercely.

### Animosity

Education programs become baby carrots that barely grow in the shadow of monstrous sticks. An ever-present threat of having valuable things taken away spawns toxic selfishness and narcissism. In short, prisons are mean spaces with inadequate resources and a culture of survival.

It’s wrong to walk into prison and think that terms like equity, fairness, and anti-discrimination are going to mean the same thing here that they do outside. Prison educators need to identify more closely with Harriet Tubman than John Harvard. You need to read the words of Michelle Alexander and look for modern day underground railroads.

Here are 12 tips to help you navigate this new land:

### Travel tips

1. Leave your culture and assumptions at the door.
2. Take the time to learn this culture. Sit with prisoners who live here and are doing the work day in and day out.
3. Understand that when you come to a visiting room or a prison classroom you are in a tourist trap. You will hear stories and have a better idea than most, but you will not see us in our cages or experience the violence and madness that are part of our daily lives.

4. Give up on the idea that your set of values will fix this place.

5. Become an agent of empowerment.

6. Don’t spread yourself so thin that you end up helping no one by trying to help everyone.

7. Say no to the temptation to take risks that will endanger the whole community and deprive them of resources. Something that feels as innocent as bringing in a magazine or pictures of your vacation can get a program shut down.

8. An educator should never become a prison guard. A student comes into class frazzled and aggressive. But what you might not know is that he was stopped on the way to class and harassed by an officer for not having his shirt tucked in. Give your students the benefit of the doubt.

9. Don’t get sidetracked by the loudest or most disenfranchised or most manipulative.

10. Take a marathoner’s ap-

proach. Commit to long-term solutions that are sustainable instead of short-term fixes that make you feel good.

11. Understand that if you do not take care of yourself, you will become another advocate who did their prison tour and left.

12. Accept the fact that prison has a pretty messed up culture filled with broken people.

Prison education is hard work. But it matters in ways that few other things can compare. It empowers transformation, prevents future victimization, and breaks cycles of incarceration, poverty, abuse, and disenfranchisement. It’s rarely fun and only sometimes rewarding—but it’s absolutely vital.

Don’t forget to send us a postcard!

*Nick Hacheny is incarcerated at the Washington Corrections Center and is a longtime advocate for environmental and educational programs in prison. He has been previously published in The Economist’s 1843 Magazine, BioCyle, and Filter and presented a TedX talk on the environmental program he started in prison.*

*Tomas Keen is a writer from Washington State, where he’s been incarcerated since 2010. His work prioritizes issues of social justice and legal reform and has been published in The Crime Report, The Appeal, Inquest, and The Economist’s 1843 Magazine.*

*Daniel Longan is serving a 40-year sentence in Washington State. His art has been featured in the LeMay Car Museum in Tacoma and in a video for JSTOR Access in Prison. You can follow him on Twitter at @DanLonganArt.*

## SPANISH

# Mexicano liberado de cadena perpetua

Por Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chairman

Estamos viendo que aquellos que se dan la oportunidad de cambiar sus comportamientos y manera de pensar están siendo liberados de cadena perpetua.

Rolando Tut, 37, es uno de los afortunados quien encontró la luz al fin de su túnel oscuro; nunca se dio por vencido porque su familia era su motivación.

Tut comentó que cuando él estaba en los niveles cuatro no había actividades porque siempre estaba encerrado en su celda. Pero, con la excusa de salirse de su celda el empezó atender al grupo de Narcóticos Anónimos. Empezó a participar y a poner atención a los testimonios de otros reclusos que ya tenían años encarcelados. Entonces, fue cuando él vio los cambios propios de estas personas.

Así fue como se dio cuenta que el programa Narcóticos sí trabajó y esto le dió la esperanza de salir adelante.

Tut se presentó a su audiencia de libertad condicional un proceso que duró dos horas. El compartió con SQNews que él estaba preparado que le negaran lo mínimo de tres años. Aunque estaba preparado para esa posibilidad el



Vincent O'Bannon / SQNews

La sonrisa de un hombre que fue liberado de su oscuro pasado.

continuaba progresando y fue a su audiencia, el fruto de su rehabilitación le otorgó la libertad.

“El 6 de junio 2022, es mi otro cumpleaños nací de nuevo cuando las comisionadas vieron y creyeron en mi cambio”, dijo Tut, “Cuando cambias tu corazón y la

manera de pensar las puertas se abren”.

Tut reconoce que su encarcelamiento ha sido de altas y bajas, reflexionando en una sentencia de cadena perpetua de 17 años a vida.

Durante su encarcelamiento el observó cómo algunos se dieron por vencidos y per-

diendo la esperanza que algún día serán liberados. Pero el siguió con sus programas pidiendo ayuda y apoyo de sus mentores.

Se dió el compromiso con él mismo y con su familia de cambiar su vida — de ser una persona mejor. Porque lo único que él pensaba era en su

“  
La libertad no es  
una lotería en  
termino de ganarte  
la, si quieres ser  
libre dale con ganas  
y veras tu cambio.

—Rolando Tut

familia y el daño que él causó a su víctimas.

Poco a poco empezó a reconocer todo el mal que causó pero más que todo aprendió sobre lo que es la empatía y el respeto para la vida de otro seres humanos.

Su expectativa de su audiencia era que las comisionadas lo iban hacer pedacito. Por esa razón, él se preparó y trabajó por sus planes de libertad así que las comisionadas vieron que su dedicación era real.

“La libertad no es una lotería en termino de ganártela”, dijo Tut “Si quieres ser libre dale con ganas y veras tu cambio.”

Él se considera que estaba dedicado en los programas de rehabilitación. Con el tiempo el aprendió y su perspectiva cambió. Esta transformación le tomó años dándose la oportunidad en crecer.

Su transformación valió la pena.

Tut fue liberado en el 26 de octubre de este año, y será deportado a México con el deseo de tener un trabajo estable en su país natal.

Distinto de los EE.UU., México no tiene programas de transición para gente que están siendo deportadas después de haber estado encarcelados por 14 años.

Su deseo es ir con su familia y hacer su transición con ellos.

El piensa estudiar una carrera y poder titularse en ser un consejero y ayudar con la rehabilitación de personas que sufren de adicciones con alcohol, drogas y violencia doméstica.

“Lo que me llevo de esta experiencia es que si realmente nosotros trabajamos en cambiar nuestras vidas y mentalidad la posibilidades de salir de este lugar se hacen más real”, dijo Rolando Tut.

## Dos mexicanos y veteranos de la guerra de Vietnam enfrentan deportación

Por Daniel Chairez Jr.  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Writer

Durante sus experiencias en la Guerra de Vietnam, Valente Valenzuela, un soldado de ascendencia mexicana que hizo su vida en Estados Unidos, nunca se imaginó que algún día sería deportado de EE. UU., el país que tanto sirvió en batalla.

Durante su servicio militar desempeño trabajos inauditos, que el cumplió diligentemente. En varias ocasiones, recupero partes de los cuerpos de sus compañeros muertos en batalla y los movió a un espacio de más dignidad y respeto, de acuerdo con el documental de PBS “American Exile”

Para él, la guerra fue aterradoras pues su vida dependía de las decisiones que tomaba en fracción de segundos. En una ocasión para salvar su propia vida tuvo que decapitar a un terrorizado enemigo.

Por otra parte su hermano Manuel un veterano del Cuerpo de la Marina quien también estuvo activo en la Guerra de Vietnam, también recibió la notificación, que la nación que representaron en la guerra, los quería deportar.

“La frase ‘Gracias por su servicio’ de verdad suena vacía cuando miras como Los Estados Unidos ha tratado a estos veteranos”, dijo Jan Ruhman, veterano del Cuerpo de la Marina y activista. “Ellos fueron desechados”.

Cuando Valente recibió la noticia se sintió muy derrotado. “No hay palabras para explicar cómo nos sentimos. Lo último que pensamos antes de irnos a la cama es ‘estamos en proceso de deportación’”, dijo Valente. “Y lo primero que pensamos cada mañana es que ‘estamos en proceso de deportación’”. En el video acerca de él y de la situación de otros veteranos, que se subió al ‘aire’ el martes en PBS, el

llama la situación, “Vergonzosa para América”, reporta Raúl A. Reyes.

Los hermanos Valenzuela no podían creer; que décadas después de la Guerra de Vietnam en un documental llamado “Exiliado Americano” que muestra la pelea legal de los veteranos de guerra; que después de servir en las fuerzas armadas, quisieran deportar a ellos y sus familias.

Actualmente los dos veteranos siguen luchando por conseguir la ciudadanía por naturalización, en el único país que han conocido. Valente pidió asilo en México, mas sin embargo Manuel se convirtió en activista por su causa, narra el documental de PBS.

“Por la mayoría de la historia de EE.UU., nosotros nunca deportamos veteranos de Guerra, aunque extranjeros sirvieron en las fuerzas armadas desde La Guerra de Revolución”, dijo John J. Valdez director del video en PBS, ‘Exilio Americano’. “Los veteranos siempre han tenido una posición especial.”

En el video Valente es captado lleno de frustración tirando sus medallas en el Rio Grande.

Mientras tanto Manuel viaja por todo los EE.UU. promoviendo el caso de veteranos deportados, y los que lo han escuchado se sorprenden que así sea.

“Esta ley causo más crímenes incluyendo los relativamente menores, como robos de almacenes y posesión de marihuana haciéndolos elegibles a la deportación”, dijo la abogada Mariela Sagastume. “Eso obstruye la discreción de los jueces para considerar el servicio militar, ni la comunidad, ni la familia y otros factores de otros casos de deportación... por crímenes que cometieron en otras décadas.”

Esto afecto a los hermanos Valenzuela, pues cuando regresaron de la Guerra en

“  
La frase  
‘Gracias por su  
servicio de  
verdad suena vacía’  
—Jan Ruhman

Vietnam, ajustarse a la vida normal no fue fácil. Valente admitió ser culpable por varios crímenes pequeños, incluyendo asalto y robo.

Mas no todo está perdido pues en Julio del 2021 el Presidente Biden dió un orden al Departamento de Seguridad Interior (DHS por sus siglas en ingles) de que inicien el proceso, de que los veteranos nacidos en otros países, cuales fueron deportados, regresen a EE.UU.

“El Departamento de Seguridad Interior reconoce el profundo compromiso y sacrificio que los miembros de servicio y también sus familias han tuvo que hacer a los estados unidos, ‘palabras de Alejandro Mayorkas, secretario de DHS. ‘Juntos con El Departamento para Asuntos de Veteranos, estamos comprometidos para regresar a los militares veteranos, y sus parientes que fueron rechazados injustamente...asegurándoles... beneficios a los cuales son elegibles”

“A sido un privilegio conocer a estos hombres. Ellos son como familia; yo los considero héroes”, dijo Sagastume de sus clientes, “Yo seguiré peleando por ellos y hablando de esto hasta que cada veterano deportado sea traído de regreso”.

## Recluso sobreviviendo la diálisis

Por Daniel Lopez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Writer

Para un residente de la prisión de San Quentin la vida le cambió drásticamente. El señor Daniel Arciniega de 56 años fue diagnosticado con un problema de riñón, considerado médicamente como ‘insuficiencia renal aguda’.

“Yo sólo vivo como los alcohólicos, un día a la vez, o sea 24 horas a la vez”, exaltó Arciniega dándose ánimo, añadiendo, “el mexicano hace gracias [¿gracia?] de su desgracia”.

En la clínica de la prisión le explicaron a Arciniega lo que es esta condición de la ‘insuficiencia renal aguda’.

“Esto significa que repentinamente sus riñones han dejado de funcionar. Los riñones eliminan residuos del cuerpo. Cuando dejan de funcionar los residuos se pueden acumular. Los riñones también balancean el agua y las sales del cuerpo. Si sus riñones no pueden hacer esto, puede haber problemas muy serios incluso podrían resultar mortales”. Toda la información anterior se le dió a Arciniega en el reporte médico del Departamento de Emergencias del Centro Medico ‘Marín Health’.

En comparación a otro reclusos quienes disfrutaban sus desayunos cada mañana él busca la puerta del hospital para poder recibir su tratamiento que le ayuda a estar vivo. La rutina diaria se convirtió en idas al médico. Ahora sus días inician diferente, pues cada dos días a las 6:00 am los oficiales anuncian su nombre por la bocina del edificio para que se presente en el hospital de la prisión. El tratamiento de diálisis tiene lugar cuatro veces por semana.

Según Arciniega, el procedimiento para limpiar su sangre empieza en la báscula, continuando con la revisión de signos vitales, incluyendo



Phoen You / SQNews

Daniel Arciniega, en acción como alumnó de la clase de periodismo de SQNews.

la presión arterial. En seguida el doctor limpia la entrada de los dos catéteres [mangueras], uno que tiene temporal colocado en el pecho que conecta en la arteria principal del corazón; y otro en su brazo izquierdo. Así es como conectan las mangueras de la máquina de diálisis en su cuerpo.

Su sangre corre por los catéteres y entra a la máquina de diálisis pasando por los filtros para así remover y eliminar desechos sanguíneos, regresando la sangre limpia al cuerpo de Arciniega. Este procedimiento es alrededor de tres horas y cada minuto es importante, porque es lo que él necesita para mantener su sangre limpia y continuar viviendo.

“La conexión es dolorosa” dice Daniel. “Después de la diálisis me siento fatigado y con sueño”.

Según el informativo de DAVITA Kidney Care, perderse un tratamiento duplica las posibilidades de morir.

“Las enfermeras me dicen que soy un chico fuerte por soportar el dolor” comenta Arciniega, mientras muestra la abertura en su brazo izquierdo donde le introdujeron dos catéteres, que permiten acceso rápido para su tratamiento.

“El apoyo de mi familia me ha ayudado en este duro proceso y mi fe en Dios me hace creer que mi vida está en sus

manos”, concluyó Daniel.

Según Arciniega los doctores lo tienen en una dieta muy rigurosa y confusa. Un día comió dos plátanos, pero cuando el doctor lo examinó le sugirió no hacerlo más, pues en su condición médica, el potasio no es muy beneficioso.

Adaptarse a su nueva norma de vida es un gran desafío pues tiene que evitar ciertos alimentos, y hasta tener cuidado con la cantidad de agua que bebe. Su tratamiento continúa fuera del hospital e implica ingerir 21 pastillas al día, someterse a exámenes médicos especializados, y además pasar 9 horas por semana conectado a la máquina de diálisis.

“Hoy y siempre, en las buenas o en las malas, mi agradecimiento es para mi Dios desde el principio hasta el final del día”, expresó Daniel Arciniega, lleno de emoción. “También doy gracias al equipo médico, así como a los oficiales que día a día están conmigo en el Hospital de la prisión de San Quentin, por tener una buena actitud para mí en todo momento, en vez de quejarse...Gracias”, concluyó.

Arciniega, quien sirve una sentencia de 6 años reflexiona en sus bendiciones y rechaza darse por vencido. Su trayectoria sigue un día a la vez en lo que el presente y el futuro le dan.

# Aumenta la reincidencia de delincuentes en Nueva York

Por Carlos Drouaillet  
Staff Writer

De acuerdo a miembros de la administración de la ciudad de Nueva York, la reincidencia va en aumento en el sistema carcelario local.

Eric Adams, quien es el alcalde de NYC, y el comisionado de policía Keechant L. Sewell hicieron pública la lista de reincidentes más notorios. Ellos consideran que se necesitan reformas en el sistema, para que se les permita a los jueces detener a los acusados considerados como un riesgo a la sociedad, de acuerdo a la gravedad del delito y el record personal de reincidencia, según el artículo del departamento de policía de la ciudad de Nueva York.

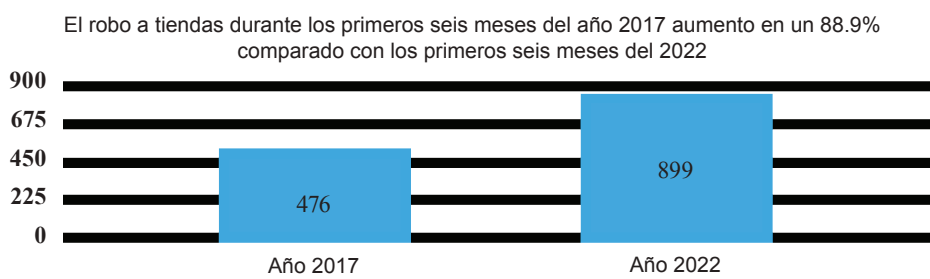
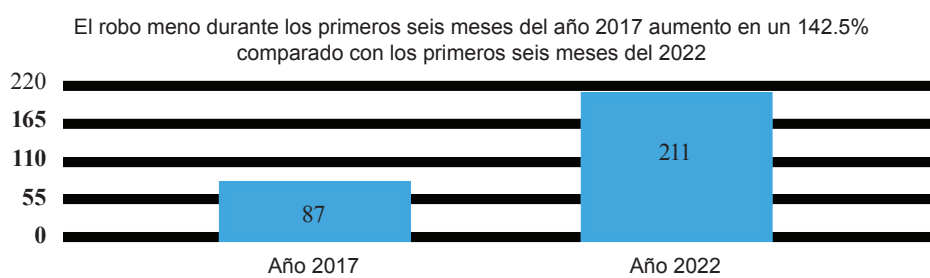
“Los hombres y las mujeres trabajadores de la policía de Nueva York están haciendo el trabajo, pero el sistema en general les está fallando a los neoyorquinos al permitir que los reincidentes vuelvan a las calles una y otra vez”, dijo el alcalde Adams. “Una y otra vez, nuestros oficiales de policía arrestan a alguien que tiene múltiples cargos, pero no importa cuántas veces esta persona haya sido arrestada antes, a menudo está libre horas después.... Necesitamos objetivos, estratégicos, arreglos inteligentes a nuestras leyes.... Debemos detener esta puerta giratoria de injusticia”.

Como al alcalde y al comisionado les preocupa la seguridad de los neoyorquinos, ellos insisten en que unas nuevas reformas, en las cuales están en común acuerdo, son primordiales para incrementar la seguridad y para que los neoyorquinos estén más seguros. También acentúan que en el estado de Nueva York un juez no está autorizado a reflexionar en lo peligroso que es un criminal cuando establece o no la fianza, según el reporte.

“Seamos claros: los delincuentes no violentos que cometen delitos por primera



Stock photo



Fuente: Estadísticas tomadas del reporte del Departamento de policía de la ciudad de Nueva York con fecha del 3 de agosto de 2022

vez merecen una segunda oportunidad, como lo prevé el espíritu de las reformas de justicia penal del estado de 2020”, dijo el comisionado de policía Sewell. “Sin embargo, los jueces deben tener

la capacidad de mantener en custodia a los criminales violentos y de carrera en espera de juicio. Necesitamos mantener las reformas en las que todos estamos de acuerdo y, al mismo tiempo, unirnos para

evitar que los neoyorquinos sufran daños. Nuestro enfoque colectivo debe estar en las víctimas del crimen”.

Para probar que la reincidencia se ha disparado en años recientes, los dos rep-

resentantes de la comunidad añaden que en reincidencias en algunas categorías de crimen, los aumentos son más significativos.

Y mencionan que el número de personas que han sido

procesadas tres o más veces en el transcurso de seis meses por delitos de robo, allanamiento de morada, y hurto mayor incrementó durante el primer semestre del 2022 si se compara con el número de violaciones durante los años anteriores a la pandemia de COVID-19.

Algunos residentes de SQSP opinan en el fenómeno de la reincidencia basados en experiencias personales.

“Para un ladrón la vida se hace difícil afuera porque están tan acostumbrados a vivir de lo que roban y trabajar no es de lo de ellos”, dijo Elvis Martínez (35) residente de SQ. “Uno también sale y entra porque pertenece a pandillas”. Muchos no se quieren enfrentar a la vida diaria afuera porque aquí hay los tres alimentos gratis y te estás de ocioso todo el día”, concluyó Martínez.

“Aunque la jaula sea de oro no deja de ser prisión”, dijo Herminio Quiñones (80), quien no ha experimentado reincidencia porque lleva más de 20 años en prisión. “Yo me quedaría allá afuera, pues prefiero comer mis frijolititos humildemente en libertad que encerrado, la comida del estado”.

Narra Quiñones que recuerda a un compañero de celda que salió de la cárcel y cuando llegó a su casa como a la 5 de la tarde se puso a tomar con amigos para celebrar; ya borracho no escuchó consejo de su madre de irse a dormir, y continuó tomando sin imaginarse que el oficial de libertad condicional fue notificado y esa noche regresó a la cárcel por violar su libertad condicional.

De acuerdo con el alcalde Eric Adams y el comisionado de policía Keechant L. Sewell, con el reporte se intenta borrar la errónea percepción entre delincuentes “de que no hay consecuencias significativas para el crimen y restaurar el enfoque del gobierno en las víctimas del crimen y el desorden”.

(Arriba) El alcalde de Nueva York, Eric Adams debatiendo la importancia de disminuir la reincidencia y procura reformas específicas para mejor protección de los neoyorquinos

## La Corte Suprema de Justicia niegan fianza a los inmigrantes

Por Edgar Villamarín  
Spanish Journalism Guild  
Writer

La Corte Suprema de Justicia (conocida en inglés como The Supreme Court of the United States) dictó en contra de los inmigrantes que quieren evitar largos periodos de detención y tener su libertad mientras pelean sus órdenes de deportación, dice el artículo.

De igual manera los jueces fallaron 6-3 para no permitir que los inmigrantes se presentaran en grupo ante un tribunal. Esto le preocupa a la Magistrada de Justicia Sonia Sotomayor, ya que ella opina que esta decisión “dejara a muchos no ciudadanos vulnerables sin poder proteger sus derechos”.

En un par de casos que se decidieron ayer, la corte dijo que los inmigrantes quienes temen ser perseguidos en sus países, no tienen derechos bajo la ley federal, a tener una audiencia en el tribunal para solicitar su libertad bajo fianza, en el cual ellos podrían discutir su caso sin importar cuanto tiempo permanezcan detenidos. Esos inmigrantes que demandaron para obtener audiencia bajo fianza se arriesgan a continuar detenidos por

meses e incluso años antes de que sus casos sean resueltos, según el reporte en *The Daily Journal*.

La Corte Suprema decidió estudiar ciertos casos de inmigrantes de México y El Salvador más a fondo ya que ellos lograron convencer al Departamento de Seguridad Interior de los Estados Unidos (conocida en inglés como Department of Homeland Security DHS) del peligro que corren si regresaran a sus países.

Los abogados dicen que los demandantes deberían tener una audiencia ante un juez de inmigración para determinar si ellos deben de ser soltados. Los factores a considerar son, si los inmigrantes representarían un peligro a la comunidad o si desaparecerían al obtener su libertad.

“Por un momento, parecía que la corte iba a ceder un poco. En casos extremos, interpretaría por ley, permitir cuanta revisión judicial como sea posible” dijo Nicole Hallet, directora de la clínica de derechos de inmigrantes de la escuela de leyes de la Universidad de Chicago. “Claramente ahora, la corte ya no está dispuesta a hacer eso”, según el periódico *The Daily Journal/Local Nation/June 14, 2022*.

## Reforma juvenil en Maryland establece nuevas reglas en sentenciar a los adolescentes

Aun después de 7 años que su hijo fue puesto en libertad en Maryland, Keisha Hogan continúa apoyando la legislación de una nueva ley para que otros jóvenes encarcelados sean tratados mejor que su hijo dentro del sistema de detención juvenil del estado de Maryland.

Su hijo era apenas un adolescente de 13 años cuando robó un teléfono celular, siendo su primera ofensa. Aunque se le recomendó al juez que el delito ameritaba sólo pedir perdón por escrito y recibir consejería, el magistrado optó por privarlo de su libertad por 90 días enviándolo al programa ‘Wilderness’ o ser retirado de todo contacto público según el artículo.

Al no mejorar su carácter, el joven recibió otra sentencia y otra más hasta acumular más de dos años como preso en el Centro de Detención Juvenil de Maryland, reportan Lea Skene and Darcy Costello para el *Baltimore Sun*.

“Cuando finalmente vino a casa, fue como dejar a un animal salir de la jaula”, dijo Hogan. “Él se perdió cosas que nadie puede regresarle.”

Como era de esperarse meses después el joven reincidió y fue enviado en esa

oportunidad a la prisión para adultos, reporta el *Baltimore Sun*. De todas maneras, su madre, la señora Hogan, persistió en procurar un cambio permanente en la legislación que afecta a los ofensores jóvenes.

“Yo podría decir absolutamente que el sistema legal juvenil de Maryland ha creado a un criminal,” expresó Hogan en una entrevista esta semana. “Si usted quiere saber cómo crear un animal, vaya a entrevistar a mi hijo.”

El esfuerzo de la señora Hogan dio frutos unos años después. La senadora Jill P. Carter, una demócrata de Baltimore, propuso una ley para la consideración de los legisladores estatales. Dicha ley reformará el sistema de justicia juvenil en Maryland, estableciendo nuevas reglas para sentenciar a los adolescentes. La senadora Carter incluye en su llamada “ley de omnibus” lo siguiente: no confinamiento por delitos menores por primeras ofensas a menos que el crimen sea perpetrado con arma de fuego, indicó el reporte.

Otra propuesta de ley por la misma senadora requerirá que los padres sean notificados y también que les permitan a los adolescentes hablar

con abogados antes de ser interrogados. Ambas propuestas de ley fueron aprobadas por el Senado y van en camino al voto final en la Cámara de los Representantes, reportan Lea Skene and Darcy Costello para el *Baltimore Sun*.

“Este es un gran éxito” dijo Jenny Egan quien supervisa la división juvenil de Baltimore para la Oficina del Defensor Público. “Tenemos que dejar de usar jaulas como apoyo para corregir siempre que el sistema les falla a nuestros niños”.

Como toda ley, siempre habrá opositores y en esta ocasión fue el asistente del abogado estatal William Katcef, quien testificó en contra de la ley de omnibus. Katcef argumenta que la propuesta permite a los delincuentes jóvenes a evadir cargos en crímenes serios. El habló en representación de la Asociación de Abogados del Estado de Maryland, de acuerdo con el *Baltimore Sun*.

“Existen un número de ofensas menores que son muy serias”, explicó Katcef refiriéndose a los límites de encarcelación. “Yo simplemente no pienso que lo que contiene esta propuesta... realmente tenga ningún sen-

tido.”

Por otra parte, Carter definiendo su propuesta argumentando que la meta principal es la seguridad pública.

Además, ella piensa que invertir en los pequeños y recompensarlos con mejores oportunidades podría motivarlos a tomar un camino alejado del crimen, dando mejores resultados en el futuro, de acuerdo al artículo.

“Los niños son diferentes que los adultos. Mas aunque es una verdad obvia, en nuestro sistema de justicia juvenil, ellos son tratados como si fueran pequeños adultos”, dijo Carter frente al comité de audiencias acerca de la ley que ella misma propuso. “La corte juvenil nunca fue diseñada para ser mediadora en altercados en ‘el patio de recreo’, ni para castigar errores infantiles.”

Melissa Goemann, representante del National Juvenile Justice Network, explica que la gente joven, como tiene su cerebro en desarrollo, puede tener menos control de sus impulsos y está más propensa a tomar riesgos, más susceptible a recompensas inmediatas y más dócil a obedecer la autoridad, según el reporte del *Baltimore Sun*.

—Carlos Drouaillet

## SPORTS

# All-Stars hand A's first loss of season

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

The San Quentin A's baseball team ended its 2022 season with a loss in the All-Star game.

The outside All-Star team included players from the San Francisco Mission, the Barons, and the Rockies. The 11-7 loss Oct. 14 was the A's first defeat of the season.

"This was our last chance to get some get-back at the A's," said outside Coach Mike Kremer. He brought his dad and wife to watch the game and join in on the good vibes he has been experiencing with the residents since he started coming in to San Quentin seven years ago.

"Our All-Star team is playing some good offense and some good defense," he said.

It took a collective effort by the outside team to get its first win since the SQ A's 2019 winning season.

At the start of the game, the A's were winning, but appeared sluggish.

"We just came out flat," said Anthony Denard, veteran first baseman of the A's. "We take our losses the same way we take our wins. We win happy

and we lose just as happy."

Star pitcher Everett Wiley threw out his arm while on the mound, which proved to be a devastating loss to the team. Despite the injury, the game was an exciting one for both SQ residents and the outside coaches.

Residents crowded around the baseball diamond in the Lower Yard. Outside volunteers were excited to be able to come into the prison and spend time with the residents after spending so much time away during the pandemic. And they were looking forward to a potential victory.

"I'm just happy to finally have a lead," outside manager Frank DeRosa of the Barons said after his All-Star team took the lead in the fifth inning.

"I have a great appreciation to come in here to play y'all. It's a privilege. I appreciate the crowd. It's a great field. If we can stay away from the errors and the walks, we would be OK," said DeRosa. His team held the lead for the rest of the game and was victorious. After the game, both teams huddled around the mound and shared speeches and well wishes until the next season.

The SQ Athletics baseball team (below, at bat) suffered an 11-7 loss against the outside All-Star team at the season closer.



Eddie Herena/SQNews archive photo



Eddie Herena / SQNews archive photo

## SHOWDOWN: San Quentin A's victorious comeback against San Francisco Mission

The San Quentin A's came out in full uniforms to play the San Francisco Mission Baseball team on the beautiful Wednesday evening Sept. 07. The Mission was hoping to get some get-back from that loss that they took from the A's on Aug. 20, but they ended up losing, 9-5.

The Mission was up in the third inning and leading the A's, 5-3. "T-Tone" Denard was next up to bat and he knocked a ground ball past the shortstop. Denard seized the opportunity and stole not only second base, but he stole third too. His large leads and his quickness created the easy stretch for the rest of the way for his steals.

Brandon Terrell got up to bat after the Missions pitcher had struck out one of the A's players. He hit another base

hit up the middle of center field that led to a RBI, bringing Denard home and giving the team within one run to tie.

The teams' last meeting was a devastating loss for the Mission. They held on to their lead, but A's pitcher #20 Everett Wiley and the A's defense held them from scoring any more runs. Even with two men on base and one of their best sub-players at bat, A's pitcher Wiley's curve ball had the batter fishing at the plate. The line drive down third was caught, making it three outs.

Bottom of the fourth, Ryan Pagan at bat, "OK, ball's in play," said volunteer Coach Steve Rhineheart, who still makes his way into the prison to continue being a part of the SQ A's after decades of dedication and despite his ailing condition of kidney failure.

**"These guys are my family and there is no other place I'd rather be other than here. No matter what my outcome will be."**

—Steve  
Volunteer Coach

"These guys are my family and there is no other place I'd rather be other than here. No matter what my outcome will be," Steve said at an earlier interview.

Ryan waited patiently for his pitch. The Missions pitch-

er threw a fast ball straight down the middle and Ryan struck out. "Oohs and awes were echoed from the bullpens and spectators.

When back on defense the SQ A's continued to hold down the mound and secure the outfield which led to them overtaking the Mission. Although the Mission tried to inch their way back into the fight and they did have a shot at the game if they would have held the lead for any longer in the later innings. But, they had no chance of a comeback after an SQ A's batter sealed their fate with a rip to center field bringing in the final two runs. Out of a show of sportsmanship, the two teams continue to play the game for fun until it was time to leave.

—Timothy Hicks

## TIER TALK

## Prof. William Drummond on second chances for Draymond



Eddie Herena / SQNews

Warriors super star player Draymond Green has been in the news for throwing a punch at one of his own teammates, Jordan Poole. And, he has also been on the news dialing back and apologizing for his actions. Does he deserve a second chance? Should he be punished by the league? These were a few of the lingering

questions that I got the opportunity to speak with Professor William J. Drummond about, who is a long time sports fan, and get some of his thoughts about the matter.

**Timothy Hicks:** Professor Drummond, it's good to see you after this quarantine stuff.

**William Drummond:** It's good to see you too, Tim. I wanted to talk to you about

the Draymond incident.

**TH:** Yeah I saw that. It raised some concerns for me, too. I like the guy's passion for the game, but this incident raised an eyebrow. Tell me your thoughts about it.

**WD:** Well, Tim, I graduated from McClymonds High School six years after Bill Russell was there. And I grew up watching him play basketball at all the high levels. That's where I learned that that's how a professional NBA player is supposed to conduct himself—a professional athlete of any kind, for that matter.

**TH:** I did a story on him. He has many accolades for his professionalism and was known as a standup guy. Rest his soul.

**WD:** Yes, Bill Russell always held his composure while in public. Even while times were stressful for people of color in the '60s, he went and stood in solidarity with the struggle at the Malcolm X funeral.

**TH:** Knowing how profes-

sional athletes are supposed to act in public, how did you feel when you saw what Draymond did?

**WD:** When I saw the news and saw what Draymond did to his own teammate, I was distressed.

**TH:** Why?

**WD:** I saw when Draymond came up here to the prison and when he was sitting at the table with the SQ residents playing dominos. I observed the residents idolizing him. So, for him to display an act of violence like that to his teammate, I can imagine how that might have affected someone who looked up to him. He has a big responsibility to uphold in being a good role model. And he should know how to behave as a role model when you've got people looking up to you.

**TH:** Yeah, I was one of those residents who was amazed at how he acclimated himself so comfortably when he was here. I also was inspired that he portrayed that "bad boy" image like he came

from the struggles that a lot of us come from in here and represented that bad boy image but doing something with his life and made it out the struggle.

**WD:** Another thing he should be aware of is the violent element that is going around these days. People are out there killing people for less than that and he doesn't know how Jordan Poole might be accepting that. Back in my day I remember going to a house party and someone had an altercation and a gun was fired. I was in a panic. I never liked violence then and I don't like it now.

**TH:** I agree. Violence is more prevalent these days more than ever. And these professional athletes should be more mindful of their actions because regular people do look to them as examples in life.

**WD:** Exactly. Just like that coach of the Boston Celtics who got caught cheating with one of his co-workers. African Americans are portrayed

in the news for scandals at a higher rate than other races are. So, it is extremely important for the athletes to watch what they do.

**TH:** Yeah, I would have never cheated on Nia Long. (Laughs) We all have seen Draymond get into scuffles on the court. We all knew that he had an edge on him. That's just his character. How do you think he should deal with that and do you think that he deserves a second chance?

**WD:** Even though I didn't expect that action coming from Draymond and especially towards his own teammates, I still believe that he deserves a second chance. He did something stupid, so he has to figure out how could he get back to that positive side. I think he needs to make a very public show of doing a consistent act of non-violence. And for his anger problem, maybe he should come back up to the prison and take some anger management classes with the residents here. (Laughs)

—Timothy Hicks

# REBRANDING: San Quentin's All-Madden flag football program to be overhauled by head coach

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

The San Quentin All-Madden flag football team is getting a name change. Included with that name change is a re-vamp and overhaul of the team, including new rules for the players to abide by.

Head Coach Bryant Underwood is changing the name of the SQ All-Madden football team to the San Quentin 49ers, "paying homage to the only (pro) football team left that represents the Bay Area," he said.

"Before I took over the football team, I got the opportunity to be mentored by the team's former head coach, Dwight Kennedy, before he paroled," said Underwood. "He asked me, 'What is your vision for the program?' I had no response at first. But then, Dwight told me that it was my chance to make a difference in the program."

After conversing with several of the football program's veterans, the mission for the program became evident to Underwood: to "create a new-found respect for the football program."

The All-Madden football team was inspired by the late multiple Super Bowl-winning head coach and legendary commentator, John Madden.



Eddie Herena / SQNews archive photo

The SQ All-Madden team has helped shape some of the players into better men. Coach Underwood understands the core essence and significance of the "Madden" name, and still intends to keep the name for the intramural football leagues. However, he believes that changing the name of the actual team to the

Niners is the right move to make to push the new ethics and standards in the program.

"I intend to create a football academy for the program, but my main goal is to have this avenue for the rehabilitation of the participants," Underwood said. "I found that organized football practices and games as an avenue could help offer

guidance and mentorship to our participants in the program the same way that I did."

Underwood outlined a series of requirements and by-laws that he expects all players and coaches to follow. Included are requirements to be involved in a self-help group, to be involved in an education program, and to hold a

job assignment.

Veteran G. "June-Bey" Macdonald was informed by the coach of the changes and was initially shocked but eventually said that he agreed and supported all of the changes.

Coach Underwood is setting the bar high for the participants, and the expectations

are to develop the participants into the leaders he hopes they could be. For the inaugural season of the SQ Niners Academy, Coach Underwood will narrow the team to around 30 participants. He expects them to all show discipline and respect while demonstrating confidence, leadership and fellowship.

## San Quentin Kings end losing streak

*Thirteen-point victory over Green Team closes out slump*

The San Quentin Kings beat the outside Green team 67-54, rising out of their losing slump to the outside team. Although the Green team had the size advantage, the Kings came out firing on all cylinders, both offensively and defensively.

"Pookie" Sylvester and Bryan Underwood shared in a defensive steal that led to an easy layup by Sylvester.

"It hurts me to see Pookie score," laughed Mark Stapp, coach of the Green team.

The game on Oct. 15 was fast-paced and both teams battled under the rim on offense and defense. They gave the modest crowd a pleasing game to watch on that misty Friday morning. While the Lower Yard had other sports activities going on, the basketball game drew the most attention. When "Big Will" Wheatley dropped a dime pass for a well-contested layup, the crowd responded with oohs and ahs.

At halftime the Kings led comfortably 44-28. During the halftime break, both teams met in the center of the court to express appreciation for the opportunity to play despite each team coming from opposite sides of San Quentin's walls.

For one player, basketball has transformed his life from one of negativity to positivity, and soon, a life of freedom. "Basketball changed my life," said Jamal Green, the Kings' power forward, as he shared his journey to recovery in the center of the crowd of players. "It saved me from a life of drugs and negativity. It's like a self-help group. It's more than just basketball."

During the third quarter, Jamaal "Do it all" Harrison

*"I feel grateful. A lot of us are just one mistake away from being in here. I have family that is incarcerated. I believe that we all deserve a second chance."*

—Big Will Wheatley

let his presence be felt with a sweet layup under the bucket and drives to the basket. The pressure was on and the Green Team's Wheatley suffered a scuff to the face while trying to block a shot, leading to a timeout. By the end of the third, the Kings led 53-43.

"[Basketball] brings people together and allows people to get to know each other," Wheatley said, reflecting on second chances and playing basketball in prison. "I feel grateful. A lot of us are just one mistake away from being in here. I have family that is incarcerated. I believe that we all deserve a second chance."

The Kings dominated the game. As hard as the Green Team played, they struggled to gain momentum. Once the Kings stepped on the court, they let it be known that they came to play and it gave them their first victory this season.

"We played good defense and we played well," said Kings Head Coach Ish Freelon. "Although it was a team effort and we scored good shots, I give the game ball to Mall, Derek and Nash."

Going forward this season, Coach Freelon was optimistic. "We just gonna take one game at a time."

—Timothy Hicks

The San Quentin Hardtimers finally got the opportunity to have their baseball season-opener in early September against the Outsiders. Although the competition was stiff, and the Outsiders put up a valiant fight, the Hardtimers beat them 4-2.

"Even though we won the game, it's just a blessing to be able to play the outside team," said Hardtimers Head Coach, Lamar "Coach P" Paschall.

The Outsiders had never won a game against the Hardtimers since the teams started meeting three years ago. Covid prevented the outside team from coming into the prison and that two-year hiatus left a void in the head coach's life, he said. As for the players, it was not about who won or lost, but being able to come into the prison and play some baseball with the residents and just have some good old-fashioned fun.

"I just like coming into the prison and playing the game against some good competition," said first baseman Hank K. of the Outsiders. He had to sit this game out because he was nursing an injury he sustained playing baseball on the outside. Hank K. retired from playing a minor league career with the Oakland A's, but when he can participate, he still loves and enjoys playing the game.

"These are some of the most fun and respectful games I've ever played," Hank said.

His team had an early lead after second baseman Kevin hit into middle center field that scored a runner from first.

The Outsiders team was comprised of eight players. Two of those players were some very brave and experienced women. The runner who scored from first on Kevin's hit to center was Lia. If it wasn't for her daring hustle around those bases and her critical slide to home that left her with a bruised knee, her team would not have had that two-run lead.

It was Lia's first time inside the prison, but her experience and spirit of competition would not allow her to be intimidated or do anything less



Players from seasons past share a congratulatory high-five following a Hardtimers victory over the Outsiders.

Eddie Herena / SQNews archive photo

## Hardtimers issue beatdown to Outsiders

*SQ baseball's belated season opener brings two old rivals back together for head-on collision*

than give it her all.

"I think this is great to be able to compete in this great community. Both sides have a really good time. I like friendly competition," said Lia.

After her slide into home, the Hardtimers held defensively and came to bat in the bottom of the third. The Outsiders lead was quickly overcome by a Hardtimers offensive rally. One run, two, three, finally four runs came in and the Outsiders' lead was gone.

In the fourth inning number 18 of the Hardtimers smacked a line drive down the third-base line and past the Outsiders' tough third-basewoman Emily A. She is an experienced softball player and the

coach of an 18-and-under high school team. Although she had been inside the prison twice before, she said that she just loves the team camaraderie.

"I come back because it's just fun to be out here," said Emily A. The Hardtimers held the Outsiders' offense through the top of the sixth and final inning for the final score, 4-2.

For the visitors, being able to come inside the prison meant more than just playing the game. Kevin of the outsiders said that it was a blast. Coach Bob said that their return to play inside was long overdue.

Covid had prevented the teams from meeting up for too

long, but the patience and resilience of both the Hardtimers and the visiting Outsiders paid off in this break-through meeting.

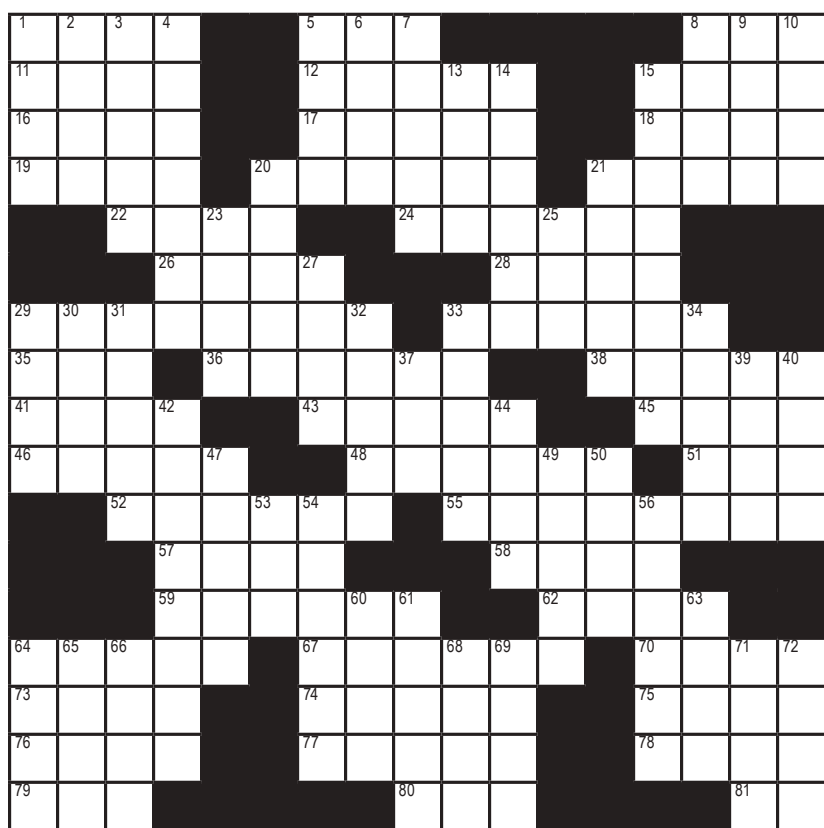
"I would ask about the guys in prison; who passed away? And I would genuinely be concerned about them," said Matt E., head coach of the Outsiders. "The reason why I don't care about having a winning record is because it's about creating and building relationships on both sides. I like bringing new people in so they can get the chance to see how it's like in here. Even though, I would like to win sometime, though," Matt said jokingly.

—Timothy Hicks

# CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Jonathan Chiu

Edited by Jan Perry



### Across

1. Exclam. used to attract someone's attention surreptitiously
5. Calipatria to San Quentin, as the crow flies (abbr.)
8. Diner sandwich (acronym)
11. Of or relating to wings (zoology)
12. Actors James and son Scott (pl.)
15. Tusked wild pig
16. The Golden State (slang, abbr.)
17. Buddhist term for attaining nirvana or enlightenment
18. 17th century Italian painter and etcher Salvatore \_\_\_\_\_
19. Gratuity (2 wds)
20. Former US territory, location of Black Hills
21. Fall guy; person easily framed
22. The central part
24. Lots (informal)
26. Chemical element with atomic number 82
28. Atoms that become charged due to the loss or gain of electrons
29. Having a natural creative skill
33. A quick feline rest
35. Southern Calif. women's prison (abbr.)
36. Meaning "despite the fact"
38. Upright
41. Steve Carrell film "\_\_\_\_\_ Almighty"
43. Early 20th century American painter and etcher John \_\_\_\_\_
45. A broad valley
46. Of the kidneys
48. Electronics: A doughnut-shaped coil
51. Singer \_\_\_\_-Lo Green
52. Candlestick Park alumni
55. 1000 Mile Club's ultimate event
57. Strongly alkaline solution used in cleaning (pl.)
58. NBC Today Show's \_\_\_\_\_ Koth
59. Magazine: *Reader's \_\_\_\_\_*
62. To fit an arrow's notch to a bowstring
64. \_\_\_\_\_ Helberg of 67 Across
67. The Big Bang \_\_\_\_\_
70. Amanda Seyfried movie: In \_\_\_\_\_
73. The crop of a bird
74. One-hour CBS news show
75. One individual on a list
76. Related
77. Online communication
78. Class after bio (abbr.)
79. Modem's successor
80. Opposite of 5-Across
81. Symbol of chemical element Tantalum

### Down

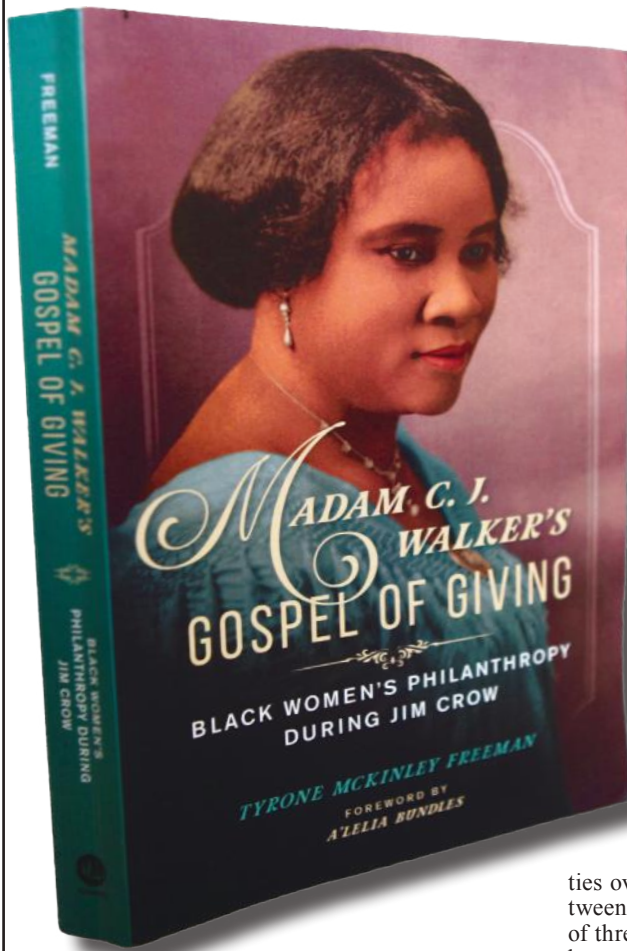
1. Nocturnal South American rodent
2. A thin, narrow piece of wood
3. Relating to the descendants of the Frankish Merovingians
4. Capital of Libya
5. College sports assoc.
6. A snitch (slang)
7. Hurray! (exclam)
8. Drill sergeant's fiefdom: \_\_\_\_\_ Camp
9. Scottish for "girl"
10. Chow hall vessel
13. N. Hemisphere body of nations with mutual aid pact
14. Ancient Greco-Roman measure of length, about 185 meters
15. Arm-band worn with a uniform
20. Hot California tourist destination \_\_\_\_\_ Valley
21. Pasta: "\_\_\_\_\_ regate"
23. Relax, refresh, recover
25. These were cast for the clothes of Jesus of Nazareth (singular)
27. Spanish for God
29. Genus of trees including maple and European sycamore
30. Tear apart violently
31. Country music vocal style
32. "Don't drink the punch" (pl.)
33. Small ornament
34. Bane of Duane Allman
37. Slime, sludge (informal)
39. Pre-Christian Egyptian queen (abbr.)
40. Suffix attached to numbers between 12 and 20
42. To hammer out (2 wds)
44. World's first zoologist
47. Bed rest for prisoners
49. Sarcasm
50. A groove cut to mate two boards
53. Opposite of poz (abbr.)
55. Bloodsucking African fly
57. The T in SWAT (singular)
60. Carpenter's tool
61. George Strait's exes all live here
63. Friends, acquaintances, relations
64. Jack mackerel
65. Annoys
66. Pony Express
68. "Dock of the Bay" singer \_\_\_\_\_ Redding
69. 20th century English astronomer Sir Martin \_\_\_\_\_
71. Come together
72. American author of *The New Colossus* (1883) \_\_\_\_\_ Lazarus

## BOOK REVIEW

# MADAM C. J. WALKER'S GOSPEL OF GIVING

## BLACK WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY DURING JIM CROW

By Tyrone McKinley Freeman



By Juan Haines  
Senior Editor

When the biography of a Black female millionaire dropped on my desk, I tilted my head. "It's too distant a subject for someone locked up," I said to myself.

The subject was Madam C.J. Walker. All I knew was she got rich selling hair products to Black people. I didn't know that she did this during the Jim Crow era. I didn't know that she began a national chain of beauty schools that were a major source of vocational education for Black women. I also didn't know how she struggled against male dominance, even from prominent Black men such as W.E.B. DuBois and leaders of the Black press.

I became more interested in Walker's story while sitting on my bunk on a Saturday morning. A commercial touted the newest Barbie doll—Madam C.J. Walker. That put a smile on my face as I picked up *Madam C.J. Walker's Gospel of Giving—Black Women's Philanthropy during Jim Crow* (2020), by Tyrone McKinley Freeman.

Walker's story "highlights how giving shaped [her] life before and after she became wealthy. Poor and widowed when she arrived in St. Louis in her twenties, Walker found mentorship among black churchgoers and working black women. Her adoption of faith, racial uplift, education and self-help soon informed her dedication to assisting black

women's entrepreneurship, financial independence, and activism," the back cover reads.

That resonated with me as an oppressed incarcerated person and as someone who uses kindness to navigate within my peer set.

What surprised me about Walker's story are the many times she stood up to male dominance as well as her refusal to adhere to a "woman's place."

An example of Walker's willingness to stand up to power happened Aug. 13, 1912. The wealthy 45-year-old Walker literally took the stage away from Booker T. Washington to tell an audience of approximately 2,000 about her early struggles, the legitimacy of the beauty-culture industry, the size of her business, and about her staff and accomplishments. The crowd interrupted her speech "with great applause," Freeman notes. Nevertheless, Walker drew even greater applause when she advocated building "a Tuskegee Institute in Africa."

Walker felt that economic independence for Black people depended on education. So, she launched beauty schools across America in spite of Jim Crow's influence in government, business and philanthropy.

She pursued her ambitions in spite of U.S. history showing that the three entities overlap, "resulting in a blurring of the lines between them." For Black people, however, "the notion of three separate sectors has not always worked well because oppression has been pervasive and the three sectors have colluded in that oppression," Freeman concluded from his extensive research.

*Madam C.J. Walker's Gospel of Giving* is a biography of a woman whose modern-time counterpart could be Oprah Winfrey. But Oprah's wealth and fame is in a different genre and her philanthropy come after she gained her wealth—yet, the systemic oppression that existed in Walker's day continues. The evidence is in the outcomes of current government policies that show the gains by African Americans are marginal.

Freeman opened my eyes to a Black woman's struggle with stories tied to vivid and authentic references. In the end, her biography will have a lasting effect on readers' idea of right and wrong—in addition to the power of giving.



Photo courtesy of Tyrone McKinley Freeman

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### November's Solutions

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## TEXAS READER LOVES BOOK REVIEW

Dear SQNews:

I am writing to tell you I have read your article the book "The Mars Room." Something the author said rang a bell in my mind about accepting responsibility and being accountable. I would like to recommend a book called "Shantaran" by Gregory Davis Roberts. I have been incarcerated here in Texas for 32 years now. I have my ups and downs and I love this book, and relate to it in so many ways. I would like to ask this book be read and given a book review in the SQN. Thank you,

—*Davey Crockett  
Gatesville, Texas*

## WASCO PRISONER REQUESTS YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION

Dear SQNews:

I hope and pray this letter finds you guys in the best of health and spirits as it is my heart's desire. I really like all the information your paper had to offer and therefore have attached four stamps to be able to obtain your most recent edition of your paper. I also wanted to ask if it is possible to subscribe to a yearly subscription and if so, how? Thank you for considering this letter.

—*Jose Manuel Orozco  
CSP-Wasco  
Wasco, California*

## NORTH KERN SHOWS SOME LOVE

Dear SQNews:

My name is Pablo Lanuza and I will love to tell all of you guys there to keep up the good work you are doing. I love reading all the new programs and all the different articles that you guys mention in the San Quentin News. Thank you also for giving us the opportunity to get more news for a very low price. God bless you all and thank you.

—*Pablo Lanuza  
CSP-North Kern  
Delano, California*

## FLORIDA PRISONER WANTS EQUAL ACCESS TO PROGRAMS

Dear SQNews:

Just got volume 2022, No. 7. I'm glad to see that the progressives are continuing to push the agenda for better education for the inmates at the "Q". However, Florida needs to adopt the programs that are going on in the CDCR. I like that the warden there at the "Q" is letting STG (Security Threat Group) members [to] participate in programs. Everybody deserves a chance of educating one's self. A STG file/label can hinder inmates from getting good paying jobs.

—*Eric L. Wilridge  
Santa Rosa Corr. Inst.  
Milton, Florida*

## "THERE IS NO RIGHT WAY TO DO THE WRONG THING"

Dear SQNews:

If you are sitting inside a prison cell while reading this article, then you are probably incarcerated for attempting to do the wrong thing in the right way and you got caught. You are not alone, because I got caught too. In 1988, I got caught for doing the wrong thing the right way, not knowing at the time that there is

no right way to do the wrong things. Doing something that way is just flat out wrong. It goes against the natural laws of what is morally right.

As a criminal addict in recovery, I came to the moral resolution and a spiritual understanding over 10 years ago that there is no right way to do the wrong thing.

For those of you who are addicted to the "game" (criminality), now is the time for you to take the necessary steps to treat your addiction. I did not write this to make any person suffering from criminal addiction feel bad or ashamed. This is written to inform you that you don't have to be loyal to the "game" or be dedicated to the streets. Be loyal to your family and dedicated to your recovery from criminal addiction. Thank you

—*Irvin T. Tatum  
CSP-Calipatria  
Calipatria, California*

## INSIDE FELLOW FOR ELLA BAKER CENTER PROMOTES CHANGE

Dear SQNews:

For the past six months, I have had the honor of serving as an Inside Fellow for the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. My primary responsibility is to motivate my peers to take an active role in their destiny.

When the court sentenced me to life without the possibility of parole 30 years ago, with the tacit complicity of society, they were insinuating that I was incorrigible, a lost cause. I was just 23 years-old. Over 5,200 of us have been explicitly written off with this sentence, a sentence of death by incarceration. In addition, tens of thousands of others have been written off with sentences so enduring these eternal sanctions also amount to death.

Through the Inside Fellows the Ella Baker Center challenges the prison population to defy these sentences that disproportionately imply that we are worthless because of the color of our skin. Today, Ella Baker is handing us the tools to make our own case to push back to finally have some say in our own destiny. As Inside Fellows, our task is to encourage others and to also learn ourselves ... I am proud to give this much deserved shout out to the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. The legacy of Ella Baker, the woman, thrives in our condemned world. [In] a world where one might expect hopelessness, the reality is just the opposite. Indeed, iron sharpens iron, and Ella Baker's legacy of people power is as alive as ever. Best regards,

—*Dortell Williams  
CSP-Chuckawalla  
Blythe, California*

## WASCO READER APPRECIATES TRANSPARENCY

Dear SQNews:

For hundreds of years, our society has evolved within a perpetual class system, footing one above another by race, creed, religion, gender and even employment. A system where those with power and authority believe it their right to judge, control, and silence those among them. Our justice system is but one example, often used to further personal interests rather than stymie crime.

In that context, I believe that significant praise is in order for

those who make "SQNews" possible for its very existence and continuity prove those voices cannot be silenced. I hope to continue seeing truth and hope in its pages from Roger Parker to the laws and stories we need to understand. If we don't forget the depths we came from, we won't forget the changes that must be made. Thank you.

—*Robert Vanleeuwen  
CSP-Wasco  
Wasco, California*

## MORE LOVE FROM DELANO

Dear SQNews,

I read you guys' newspaper whenever I come across an issue. It does not matter whether it is an old issue, I read every single article. I love the work you fellas are doing. Keep up the great work. With Respect.

—*Jonathan Velasquez  
CSP-North Kern  
Delano, California*

## CHUCKAWALLA PRISONER'S HOPE FOR CHANGE

Dear SQNews:

Perhaps like me, you read September's issue of the San Quentin News.

You, like me may have been shocked by the California State legislature's reasoning for not amending the state's constitution to stop the practice of slavery in this state. What I find strange is how the most liberal state in the nation fell back on the same excuse used by the southern states to justify the continuance of the practice, "it would be economically destructive." In a state where emphasis is on personal freedom such as abortion, where does the ethical and moral obligation vanish to when it comes to slavery? Are these morals predicated on finance? There are ways of ending slavery without "breaking the bank."

I'm sure some would argue that if prison job assignments were voluntary there would be a shortage of workers because inmates would not want to work. As a lifer, I know this is not true. We all want a job assignment. It helps to pass the time and we get a little perk here and there. Also, the work would be of better quality. Forced labor does not produce quality work. Most inmates forced to work only do the bare minimum.

Then there are the rehabilitative benefits of voluntary work. First, an inmate can take pride in his work; he is no longer a low-life slave forced to do something he doesn't want to do. He is a man on the job. Every rehabilitative program in the system works to improve an inmate's self-esteem. A person who has committed a crime usually suffers self-worth issues. What does it do to a person's self-worth to be reduced to slavery? Volunteer work is something an inmate can take pride in.

Then there is the Board of Parole Hearings. What looks better to the panel, an inmate that does the work he is forced to do or one that volunteers and does a great job?

Lastly, let's look at the racism aspect. The majority of the population in CDCR is people of color. What is the valid excuse to enslave anyone descended from slaves?

—*William Ennis  
CSP-Chuckawalla  
Blythe, California*

## EDITORIAL

## With all the upheaval in 2022, what will next year bring?

By Marcus Henderson  
Editor in Chief

As the year comes to an end it's hard for me to find the words to be optimistic about 2023. America has experienced multiple mass shootings that were committed by our youth.

Homelessness is off the charts, drugs and mental health issues are also running rampant. There is a resurgence of tough-on-crime rhetoric and racism is still a problem—post former President Barak Obama and current Vice President Kamala Harris. We even have a political "crisis of democracy."

People are running for public office but screaming to their constituents that we cannot trust the voting system. That is an oxymoron if I ever heard one. How can we trust that you were the one who actually won an election under that logic? The system only works if you win—huh?

Most mainstream media and city officials nationwide are promoting this "doomsday" scenario of the rise in crime, and even the city of Oakland, Calif., is talking about arming robot cops with guns. Next, there will be talk of arming drones.

Even I, as an offender, am scared and concerned for our society—there are kids running around with ghost guns and other weapons without knowledge of conflict resolution. Just like us old-school criminals, these youth don't see a future or feel genuine love. They're dying just to be seen, literally.

As a nation we seem to be grappling with despair. For some of us who have committed harm on others, most of these acts came from a place of despair and selfishness. With all the political chatter from veteran politicians and those who are seeking political offices, there is rarely a discussion of how we got into these situations to begin with.

In the mid-1980s, under President Ronald Reagan this notion of trickle down economics, slashing social programs and closing mental hospitals may have contributed to some of this deterioration in society. Especially when it comes to the continued widening of the income gap.

I remember as a kid in the '80s we had after-school programs such as arts, tutoring and sports. Also during summer break, the school served hot lunches and there were activities for the kids to play throughout the day.

Once social programs were cut, the only fun was hanging in the streets, which started a rise in gang culture and violence. Where there is no direction, there is despair.

After mental health services were cut, when someone had a mental breakdown or an episode, there were less mental health facilities to provide services. Jails and prisons

became the main option for treatment. I'm not only blaming the Republicans; the Democrats set in motion the 1994 "crime bill" that allowed for harsher sentences to further devastate communities.

In 2022, the nation still invests more in its prison system than its citizens. In California, to house an incarcerated person costs \$106,131 a year compared to \$22,147 to educate a child in elementary school, according to data from the Legislative Analyst's Office. It will cost more than \$1.2 million to house a prisoner for 12 years compared to close to \$300,000 for children going through K-12. I would be remiss not to say there are some social programs to stop the violence or to support the homeless, but their budgets are nowhere near the state's prison apparatus.

These programs, however, will take a few years to take root. And there is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on the nation and the world at large. In addition, we are dealing with supply chain shortages and a water crisis in the western states.

On top of that, our physical humanity is under attack, tech corporations are on a silent push to make everybody cyborgs by placing computer chips in our heads—really, do we need to Google the nearest DoorDash eatery with our minds?

In the midst of these bleak realities, it's easy to wonder: how far is too far?? With these so-called technological advancements, who would need homeless shelters?—right? We can just give our un-housed virtual headsets so they can live comfortably in the Metaverse. "It's cost effective," I have a feeling politicians and corporate shareholders will tell us. Think about it.

For the incarcerated and those who have been system impacted, e-incarceration (electronic incarceration) may be used to usher in these new technologies. Who would care? We are the scum of the earth—right?

I understand these harsh realities may be disturbing to most of us, but this is not a "call" to waddle in hopelessness. This is a "call" for us as mankind to dig deep into our humanity and to believe in our humanity. To counteract this "climate change" of our culture—not to mention of the actual planet—for 2023, I humbly suggest we commit to our own "investment."

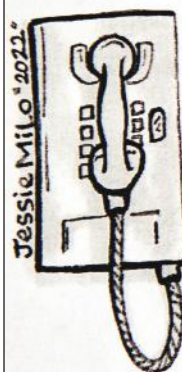
Invest in yourself—your health, both physically and mentally. Invest in your family; be a support network for their challenges and their dreams. Invest in your community, both those incarcerated and out. Give your time and spirit. When times are tough we all need somebody to lean on.

Even though I'm still not too optimistic about the state of our nation—what the hell, have a Happy New Year!!

## UNCOMMON SENSE

By Jessie Milo

## Phone Etiquette



Don't Dial More than twice  
Unless trying to wake up your sister.

Call Parents First  
They won't be around forever!

Call Kids Second  
Ask about school/work/if they're okay.

Tell everyone you love them and how you feel—You never know when it'll be the last time you talk to someone.

# 2023

## January

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31						



JAMES HETFIELD OF METALLICA

Art by Paul "Irish" Kerwn



JIMI HENDRIX

Art by Paul "Irish" Kerwn

### HOLIDAYS

- NEW YEAR'S DAY JANUARY 01
- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. JANUARY 16
- PRESIDENTS DAY FEBRUARY 20
- CEASAR CHAVEZ MARCH 31
- MEMORIAL DAY MAY 29
- JUNETEENTH JUNE 19
- INDEPENDENCE DAY JULY 04
- LABOR DAY SEPTEMBER 04
- VETERANS DAY NOVEMBER 11
- THANKSGIVING NOVEMBER 23
- CHRISTMAS DAY DECEMBER 25