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San Quentin News reports on rehabilitative efforts to advance social justice and to improve public safety.

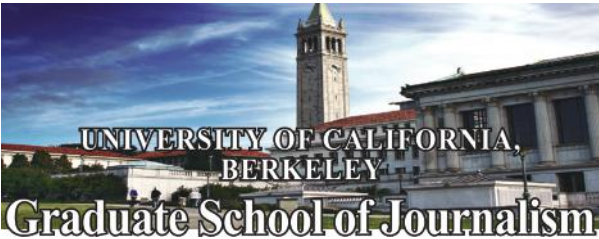
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PROFILE

A.J. Hardy, SQNews layout designer, returns to society

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Contributing Writer

Andrew “Boots” Hardy, *San Quentin News* senior layout designer, paroled in mid-January after more than eight years in prison.

Hardy worked three years at *SQNews*, in different capacities such as staff writer and managing editor for *Wall City* magazine.

“I’ve written about forty stories,” Hardy said after counting his articles in the newspaper and magazine. “I didn’t realize I’ve written that many.”

Writing for *SQNews* was not Hardy’s first rodeo, though. “I was in the third grade and won the Young Writers Award, in Santa Rosa,” (Calif.), he said. “I’ve loved writing ever since.”

Hardy’s interest in publication layout started in high school when he fabricated a magazine for an English class. “I had a lot of fun and I learned a lot, he said.”

Prison reignited his interest, but not until he arrived at San Quentin. “I ended up here, and I did a dummy-up newsletter for the Catholic chapel,” he said. “Father George gave it to Sam Robinson (Ret. captain and SQ public information officer), who gave it to the editorial board of *SQNews*.”

“It was the first time I even realized the newspaper was in this prison,” said Hardy. “It’s been a long road to get here.”

Hardy started writing in the *SQNews* Journalism Guild, but said, “When it came to hiring me I was told it was a no-go because I’m gay.” Believing that, he dropped out of the guild.

By 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic swept through the prison and many of the *SQNews* staff paroled.

“Wali (Marcus Henderson EIC) stopped by my cell one day and asked me if I could write,” said Hardy. “I wrote a few stories by hand, while on lockdown.”

Hardy said with some



Courtesy of A. J. Hardy

Andrew Hardy at home and making furry friends, enjoying freedom.

coaching, Henderson gave him some pointers on how to structure his story. “Then he gave me a portable word processor.”

It was Henderson who Hardy said went to the PIO, then-Lt. Robinson, to lobby for him to get a job assignment at *SQNews*. “When the quarantines were lifted, I got to come down here for the first time.” He said Henderson sat him down with layout designer Phoeun You for training.

“He brought some good skill set to the newspaper,” said Marcus Henderson, *SQNews* editor in chief.

To Henderson, the best hires involve inclusion. “I thought he would be a good representative for the LGBTQ community, by giving them a voice,” he said.

“It was an easy decision,” said Henderson. “We lost everybody (to parole) and we wanted to fill positions with qualified people.”

Henderson said Hardy gave passion to the paper, adding, “Whatever field he (Hardy) lands in society I think he’ll do a wonderful job. The streets

will humble you.”

Hardy said when he started working on design and layout; You gave him a blank layout file and a finished copy of the *SQNews*. “You told me to ‘Make this look like this.’ He made me learn the hard way. He made me earn it.”

He was the best teacher I ever had in my life.”

Hardy said Henderson and You gave him “the opportunity and the guidance to change my life. Because of them, I now have purpose—the one thing my life had always been lacking.”

“I loved working with Charles Crowe,” said Hardy. “As a managing editor, he was the perfect offset. He encouraged, challenged and supported me.”

During his three years at *SQNews*, Hardy did the design and layout for 26 issues of the newspaper, and six issues of *Wall City* magazine. He said it was never easy.

“It’s hard creating something powerful and relevant when you’re working on grossly outdated equipment

that crashes every time you sneeze,” said Hardy.

Before Hardy left, he trained other staff to do the job. Randy Thompson was one of them.

“His way of training is to show you the horse and then say ‘okay, go ride it,’” said Thompson. “When he started here, he was taught that the best lessons are the ones you learn yourself.

“He showed me the basic details of a layout and then said ‘all right, now go do it,’” Thompson continued. “When he reviewed my work, he would break it apart and show me what not to do. From that I learned what to do.”

“The layout is looking clean and nicely organized,” *SQNews* and *Wall City* design and layout adviser Sarah Horowitz wrote in a letter to Hardy. “You have made a lot of progress in your design sense and facility with InDesign and Photo Shop. I hope those skills will serve you well as you start your new chapter this month (January). Hope you’re not too stressed finishing up this issue and your other responsibilities! Best of luck as you parole.”

“I’ve never had a job before where I can say I love my job,” said Hardy. Design and layout he said is what he wants to do for a living. “Berkeley City College has a design program where I could get certified in the (Adobe Creative Suites) software.”

“Graphic design, logos, publications — it’s all parallel to what I’m doing now,” said Hardy.

“I don’t know if I would change anything, because every conflict and challenge that I’ve had to face has all got me ready for what comes next,” said Hardy. “It’s all been preparation for a life of purpose, and I absolutely believe that.”

Since *SQNews* restarted in 2008, more than 75 men have been on its staff. Of those who have paroled while on staff, all maintain a recidivism rate of 0%.

Corey Willis paroles again after making needed changes

Corey Willis, 54, finally paroled in December 2023. He served five additional years at San Quentin after originally paroling in 2017, and being sent back to prison in 2018. His crime: a relapse into criminal thinking.

Willis previously served 29 years on a 15-years-to-life sentence for a second-degree murder he committed at age 19. He paroled from San Quentin in late 2017.

By late 2018, Willis was returned to custody for violating the terms and conditions of his parole.

“Coming back to prison is a shock within itself, but to the same building [West Block] I paroled from is humiliating and shameful to me,” Willis wrote in a letter to the parole board.

Upon his return, Willis said other prisoners called him a “sucker and a stupid ungrateful MF” as he waited in line to use a telephone.

State records show less than half of prisoners serving life sentences are granted parole dates each year, which makes a finding of suitability for release by the Board of Parole Hearings a coveted golden ticket to freedom.

“Okay, Corey, you put yourself back in here,” Willis wrote in what he described as a “self-talk” statement. “I’ll just keep my head straight forward and do what I’m supposed to

do to get back to my family.”

Before Willis paroled the first time, he gave an interview to *San Quentin News*, published January 2018. “The crime starts in your mindset,” he said. “We tell ourselves what we need to hear in order to feel good about ourselves, in order to continue on in that destructive thinking.”

For five years, Willis had to eat those words. His story illustrates a cautionary tale on the reality that parolees relapse for a variety of reasons, in his case, a simple transfer of funds to someone’s debit card for illegitimate reasons.

“I had a problem with not taking my time to just let life take its course,” Willis wrote. “I understand that my life became unmanageable when I indulged in risky behaviors and illegal activities.”

Willis was fortunate to stay alive through his parole violation. At the time of his return to custody, Covid had spread throughout San Quentin, leading to the deaths of 28 inmates and one correctional sergeant. Willis knew some of them personally. All he could do was pray.

“Oh, Father, please,” Willis wrote, “Now that Covid has swept San Quentin, I’m doing a little deeper reflection.”

Willis tested positive for Covid during the pandemic and was moved to a tent on the



Courtesy Corey Willis

Corey Willis, leaving San Quentin again, but with lessons learned.

prison’s Lower Yard. “I never imagined exiting West Block like this,” he wrote. “This experience has been a real wake-up call for me.”

“I understand today that I was living a double life,” Willis wrote in a Violation Accountability letter to the parole board. He also prepared an Offenders Corrections letter, and a Cognitive Awareness letter.

“I really let us down by wrong decisions made shortly after being paroled,” Willis wrote in his Family and Forgiveness letter.

“My responsibilities now are to my wife, family, and furthermore, my grandkids.”

Willis went back to the proverbial drawing board, retaking self-help programs.

Then, literally, back to the parole board — five times, once each year, before he was released.

“It’s coming down to the wire,” he said weeks before he paroled. “Anxiety is setting in.”

Shortly after Willis paroled in 2017, a story, “Criminal and Gangmembers Anonymous graduation,” appeared in *San Quentin News*. It featured Willis, wearing a flashy suit, holding a Macy’s bag while riding a cable car in San Francisco. “I have to remind myself to be a man of my actions,” he said back then.

Asked if he was ready this time, Willis said he feels sure. “I got a jogging suit this time. I’m running from prison.”

—Kevin Sawyer

San Quentin News

EST. 1940

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The San Quentin News strives to include our readers' voices in every issue. We invite prison residents, staff, and volunteers to submit your original articles, letters to the editor, and art for potential publication. Submissions should be clear, concise (350 words or less), true, and of interest to our incarcerated community.

By submitting your content, you consent to these SQNews policies:

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PROFILE





Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Residents performed alongside outside volunteers during the week-long workshops. Above: Travis George singing his heart out.

Music professionals join SQ musicians at workshop

By Dante D. Jones
Staff Writer

An organization that promotes collaboration and community through the power of music held its fourth annual five-day workshop at the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. Musicambia, a mash-up of the two words: music and cambia, which is Spanish for change, is a nonprofit created by classically trained musicians Nathan Schram and Brad Balliet. Balliet, who returns to San Quentin every year, said he enjoyed coming back to conduct the workshop. “It’s amazing to see everyone again,” Balliet said. “I’ve been looking forward to this week for a very long time.” Believing that creativity is a “human right,” Balliet stated that he believes in music as a critical tool for processing emotions, thoughts, and traumas that people experience in the world. “It’s an extremely enjoyable way to interact with the people around us,” he said. About 30 residents were invited to Chapel A this January 8-12 to attend the workshop. They were greeted by Professor Matt Worth from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, along with about five of his students. In attendance as well was new volunteer Patricia Santos, a cellist and songwriter who is the Program Director for Musicambia at Bedford Hills Women’s facility in New York. “I’m expecting to not only learn something new about myself but about the new musicians I’m meeting here at San Quentin,” she said. Santos expressed that, for her, talking to and learning about people is the root of compassion and empathy. “I really wish that more people would talk to more people in the world.” In a chair in the back of the chapel, writing in his notepad, sat Robert Belfield. A dark-skinned Black man with kind eyes and a quiet demeanor, Belfield talked about how he was humbled by his first experience in this workshop. “I was expecting to come in and just kill it,” Belfield began, “because I thought I was good at creating music. And then, I met Patricia [Santos]; she’s great at creating music.” Belfield said that watching Santos, other volunteers, and participants create music made him realize that he had a lot to learn. “There is so much talent here at San Quentin and in the world. I believe we should force ourselves to get out of our own way and just enjoy what life has to offer,” he said. David Leon Vargas, another new participant,



Nate Harlan (left) and Matt Worth (right) perform alongside residents, on instruments and singing.

agreed with Belfield’s sentiment. “I’m taking part in Musicambia because I want to finally do things my way,” he said. “For me, it’s basically like a protest.” Vargas said that for a long time he wanted acceptance from people who wanted him to be a certain way. “But no more. I’m going to do me,” he said. “I used to not do certain things because I would think that people would see me a certain kind of way, but now I just wanna do what makes me feel great.” The concert was filled with beautiful music like the smooth “In or Out,” the bluesy “How Far Will I Go?” or the old school R&B track “Freedom.” The night was capped off with a song titled “Living Funky Free” that was performed by the entire workshop. “Spark the flame and let the funk burn free!” everyone sang.

Residents make impact on youth with correspondence program

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

“Exchange for Change,” a correspondence program that connects incarcerated youth with San Quentin residents, has had positive impact on both offenders. Henry Unger, a retired journalist, found out about the program after moving to Miami in 2015. He began teaching journalism at Miami Youth Academy, a detention facility for young offenders between the ages of 14 and 18, Unger wrote in an e-mail. The correspondence program has had a tremendous influence on the young kids’ behavior. “Absolutely, an enormous impact; I have been blown away,” said Unger. “The kids are extremely quiet and thoughtful when I read the San Quentin letters aloud. There is a productive discussion before the kids reply.” The program is a non-profit organization started by Kathie Klarreich, a former journalist, who currently leads the organization, according to “Exchange for Change.” Unger revealed the program was originally between college students and incarcerated students. He said during a meeting between “Exchange for Change” and the “Prison Journalism Project” that it was decided to extend the letter writing program to youth-offenders and incarcerated adults. The program’s policy is to keep photographs blurred and names of the young people anonymous. One of the young people at the Academy wrote to an SQ resident expounding on his appreciation for the letters. “It makes me feel good that you take time out of your day to write letters to us and tell us that we have another chance to be great,” said L.B. in a letter to an SQ resident and participant. Unger said Marcus “Wali” Henderson, who works for SQNews, played a significant role in the exchange of letters between youthful offenders and SQ residents.



Courtesy of Miami Youth Academy

Miami Youth Academy staff and residents.

Yukari Kane, co-founder of PJP, previously taught journalism at SQ, where she knew some of the incarcerated journalists. According to Henderson, Kane introduced him to Unger; they started to talk about the most impactful way some of the men at SQ could share wisdom concerning life on the inside, including their own personal struggles as youths. “As a youth offender myself, I can relate to what they might be feeling and going through. I know how hard it is as a youth to be open with your feelings. If I show that, I can be open and caring — I know they can avoid committing crimes again. They are still young and have a chance,” Henderson said. Mesro Coles-El, a San Quentin resident, shared the reason why he writes to the youth. He said it is vital to support mental health by paying attention and accepting the trauma and pain in isolated communities. “Writing letters can be safe spaces for exploring thoughts and feelings without judgment, and the youth can ask questions to those who have suffered in the same way,” said Coles-El. “The goal of these correspondences is to keep children who are our future out of jails and prisons, by encouraging them to find better ways to achieve their dreams.” SQ resident Edwin E. Chavez expounded on how writing letters to the youth has helped him become transparent about bad experiences in his life. He said that “Exchange for Change” helped him become open to conversations about childhood traumas, confronting the “shame,” and the “fears” because the burden he carried for several years “has dissipated.” “I believe that the only way one can connect with the youth is by honesty as to how I ended up with a life sentence as a teenager,” said Chavez. “I use my own negative experience as an example of who or what they don’t want to be, reminding the kids to love themselves first and foremost.” In a letter to Chavez, a young offender related what he is going to do in order to stay out of detention. “Your advice is great. I’m going to get a job and get back on the right track. I’m going to finish my probation and stop smoking. I’m going finish my GED. I will leave my old ways behind,” said K.M. . Tim Hicks, who served 17 years and recently paroled from SQ, talks about having the chance to impact others’ lives, the greatest “blessing God can give a human being,” he said. “I am able to share my accountability and openness with them and allow them to see a true uncut version of the outcomes of negative circumstances. It has always been a dream of mine to give back in this fashion and save the youth from destruction,” Hicks said. In a letter to an SQ resident, a young-offender finds ways to cope by visualizing life from a different perspective. T. H. wrote, “Whenever I am outdoors, I exercise or participate in sports. Now when I am outside I try to clear my mind by observing the trees, birds, and the flowers. People might say I’m tripping, [but] let them say what they want. I reflect on how it feels to be in a bird’s body, [and] I feel free.”

HOUSING

Continued from page 1

exceed 50% at state hospitals and prisons, said the article, referring to open positions of 50% for psychiatrists and 20% for primary care physicians.

The report noted that the latest prison doctors' union contract offers of bonuses of \$42,000 in addition to raises as incentives for working at prisons. The union represents almost 2,000 employees.

Despite such incentives, CDCR officials have a difficult time attracting skilled medical professionals, who can easily find work somewhere else.

Filling these persistent gaps in staffing has cost the state over \$1.1 billion for temporary workers over the past five years, said court documents obtained by CALMatters.

Soaring medical costs have devoured any savings from prison closures, the article said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom closed three prisons and cut costs in other areas of the carceral system and critics argue that the governor should close more prisons in the wake of a projected \$38 billion deficit, the report said.

California prison populations have decreased from the average 120,000 in 2018

Cost of incarceration rises

to the projected number of 90,240 for 2024 while correctional spending has dropped from 7% to 6% over the same period, according to the article.

CALMATTERS quoted John Pfaff, a law professor at Fordham University, about the effects that spending cuts have on overall prison conditions. "If you don't cut [budgets] carefully, that makes prisons worse places to be. It makes the more dangerous, more traumatic," Pfaff said. "I say that as someone who is not a fan at all of prisons as a general institution."

Prison closures currently save the state an average of \$200 million a year per facility, the article said, but the number does not sufficiently offset increases in pay and benefits.

According to the article, the Legislative Analyst's Office said the state could close as many as five prisons, listing a declining population as the reason.

Gov. Gavin Newsom, though, wants to keep prisons open with fewer residents and more space for rehabilitation programs.

Department of Finance spokesperson H. D. Palmer said the state remains committed to "right-sizing

California's prison system as the prison population declines over time, and to addressing space needs as the state transforms the carceral system to one more focused on rehabilitation."

Rehabilitation costs such as education and activities amount to a mere fraction of total correctional spending, about 3% over the last 10 years. A CDCR statement said the department "judiciously uses taxpayer dollars in a manner that balances the need for cost-efficiency while maximizing public safety, the wellbeing of incarcerated people and successful rehabilitation."

The \$18.1 billion CDCR budget accounts not only for persons currently incarcerated, but also for parole supervision.

Phil Ting, a Democrat from San Francisco and former assembly budget chair called corrections the only state program in which spending increases as the population decreases.

"If we were educating 50% less kids, you'd see the funding go down," Ting said. "So how is it at a time when the prison population has not just gone down a little bit, has gone down significantly, that spending increased?"

CONCERT

Continued from page 1

unforgettable music journey.

"I love doing this," said Simon. "It feels so good to be here, but I can't go no further without my lipstick." There was no makeup artist so she applied fresh lipstick on stage. The crowd loved it.

Opening with Sweet Love, by Anita Baker, Simon's voice mesmerized the incarcerated community and guests with the old-school classic. The performance ended with an unreserved roar and standing ovation.

"In this life, we need to be happy," said Simon. Then she introduced the audience to nostalgia, singing Mary J. Blige's song, Be Happy. Simon danced to the music, as the band played on wearing matching black T-shirts with her name and picture silk-screened on the front.

"This is the California Model," said Simon about San Quentin after performing "Saturday Love," by Alexander O'Neal and Cherelle. "I got some amazing players here."

The performance of every song drew applause and cheers as the enthusiasm grew. Then Simon solicited a response when she called out: "The roof, the roof, the roof is on fire." The audience did not hesitate to answer in unity: "We don't need no water let the MF burn. Burn MF, burn." "Y'all remember Biggie?" Simon asked. "Y'all remember Faith?" Then she sang Faith Evan's song Use To Love Me. Following that was Bartender, by T-Pane.

An impromptu moment came when Simon asked, "Are there any rappers in here?" Several stepped to the foot of the stage and one by one she handed over the microphone so they could test their skills while she played MC.

As the band locked into the pocket of a long R&B groove, Maurice Buckley, from West Oakland, rapped his lyrics, "Keep the faith in the Lord and He'll bless you too/Keep the faith in the Lord and He'll see you through." The crowd went crazy after the spit his rhymes and displayed his raw talent. If this was American Idol, rap style, Buckley got the golden ticket of the evening.

The show continued with the song Rock With You, from Michael Jackson's 1979 solo debut album, Off The Wall; Superstition, by Stevie Wonder; and I Will Always Love You, by Whitney Houston.

"How many Prince lovers up in here?" Simon asked. Then Wilton Rabb played the familiar chords to Purple Rain on his Fender Telecaster guitar to start the song.

Dee Dee Simon & The Truth



Simon's manager.



Dee Dee Simon on stage.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Above: Dave Council getting down on the keys.
Below: Maurice Buckley gets in on the performance.
Bottom: Dee Dee Simon, all smiles, enjoying herself.



"I never meant to cause you in sorrow," Simon sang. "I never meant to cause you any pain." By the end of the song, the audience was singing the chorus "Purple rain, purple rain."

Little Giant Lighting changed the chapel lighting, which transformed the setting to that of First Avenue club from the movie Purple Rain. For a moment, time rolled back to 1984.

Rabb's guitar solo did not disappoint as he played the memorable solo, resur-recting the memory of Prince. Instinctively, the audience closed the song singing, "Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh," just like in the movie.

"I've never played in a prison, but I wanted to," said the backup vocalist who goes

by the stage name Bjanét.

"I think it was fantastic—a blessing and refreshing," said Christopher Gregory, a chapel clerk who has been at San Quentin for two years.

"I've seen Simon perform before, and I personally know Eric Thomas," J. Stallworth who retired as a CDCR correctional officer after 28 years—the last 26 at San Quentin. "When I heard she was going to be up here playing, I said all plans cancelled. It feels so good being up here in San Quentin—home away from home."

"After I won the Apollo, I said 'it's time now.' That was the reason Simon said she decided to perform at San Quentin. "This place is changing. A Rehabilitation Center—Imagine that."



SQNEWS

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monthly run in 2008 after a 20-year shutdown. The revived SQNews began with printing and distributing a few thousand copies only within San Quentin and expanded for 16 years to achieve the current 35,000 copies shipped monthly to all prisons across the state.

The distribution of the tablets in California prisons began in Valley State Prison in Chowchilla in August 2021. San Quentin was one of the last prisons in the state to receive tablets, distributing to their residents in May 2023.

In addition to our newspaper, SQNews videos and our Wall City magazine also became available through Edovo on the tablets.

SQNews published twelve issues of its Wall City magazine in six years, beginning in 2018. Nine are available on the tablets.

SQNews began our Criminal Justice News videos in 2022 on the San Quentin prison closed-circuit television system and on the SanQuentinNews.com website and YouTube channel in 2023. The SQNews videos include three episodes of CJN, one episode of The Pulse, and two SQNews / ForwardThis Productions videos.

SQNews now on GTL tablets



Illustration by Randy Thompson // Bostytson Johnson // SQNews

Finding the SQNews on your tablet:

From the main menu, just tap on the Education button, log in to Edovo, and then search for "San Quentin News."

To see our SQNews videos, scroll down to the bottom of that first search results screen and tap the "Load More" button. To see our magazine, search for "Wall City."

The newspaper takes time to load, so please be patient, especially turning the pages and zooming in to read an article or see a picture better. We are working on making it faster and easier to use.

Below: SQNew's staffer Pheng Ly anchors for CJN.



Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews



Residents and public defenders form a circle to conduct their forum in the SQNews office.

SF Public Defenders return to SQ for forum

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chairman

San Francisco Public Defender’s Office visited San Quentin’s Media Center to discuss parole hearings and reentry.

Resident Edwin E. Chávez facilitated the visit; he welcomed residents and public defenders to the news-room thanking them for coming.

The January 10 event marked the second visit within the last 12 months. Seven Attorneys and approximately 25 residents attended.

“It is a shocking revelation, when you add up the number of years lifers in this room has served, it amounts to more than a thousand years,” said Chávez.

He asked the residents and the lawyers to introduce themselves and reveal their thoughts about rehabilitation and the criminal legal system.

One public defender elaborated on working with post-conviction for more than a year. The lawyer talked about a goal to do social work with parolees, so that they would not have to recidivate to survive.

Eric Allen, 30, said his first arrest dated back to age 15. He discussed the events that had brought him to prison.

“I felt hopeless, said Allen. I felt a need to change, I had to grow up.”

Allen’s sentence of 107 years started in juvenile detention, then county jail, and now prison.

Incarcerated veteran Noah

Winchester, a member of SQ’s Veterans Group, said his incarceration began eight years ago.

Winchester elaborated on how the SQ Veterans Group and the Veterans Healing Veterans program helped him cope with PTSD, making him feel part of a community.

“What I have experienced has allowed me to let my guards down,” he said.

Attorney Elliot Hosman said she previously worked for the Ella Baker Center, a social justice advocacy group; she will continue to advocacy work.

Resident Peter Chadwick told the public defenders, “I have a lot of respect for what you all are doing here.”

Peer Literacy Mentor Alex Ross said he has served 29 years. He added he benefited the most from anger management.

An attorney elaborated the Board of Parole Hearings originated in 1893 to reduce the prison population.

He added, San Quentin has a lower rate of parole grants than other California prisons, that offer minimal self-help groups. In 2023, other prison’s grant rates were about 40%, compared to 14% at SQ, grants should at least 50%.

A resident said he tried to get his restitution reduced, based on Assembly Bill 177 which passed in 2021; he explained this came up at his parole hearing.

“You should not be penalized for

expressing your legal rights,” said public defender Marrisa Harris.

A Media Center worker talked about the board finding him unsuitable for parole. “I have been to Board 12 times, and I am here to be involved,” said Earnest “Ben Shua” Woods. He told everyone his incarceration has surpassed 38 years.

Chávez asked two questions: What kind of challenges do the public defenders face concerning criminal justice? What can we do to help?

The lawyers responded by saying that they need more resources concerning re-entry, so that they can re-direct re-entry plans.

SFPD conveyed that residents could get the word out by letting everyone know what goes on with parole hearings and to file writs concerning denials.

The lawyers also informed residents about some private attorneys who do not work toward the best interest of the residents, recommending to avoid those lawyers.

They distributed reentry information, which included Uncommon Law’s list of transitional housing, and information about the Homecoming Project, which offers reentry at private homes.

At the end of the visit, the public defenders expressed their appreciation to San Quentin administration and to the residents.

“I appreciate you guys for sharing this space with us,” said public defender Jacob Miller.



Adamu Chan

Courtesy Adamu Chan

Former resident debuts award-winning documentary on PBS

By Marcus Henderson
Executive Editor/Editor in Chief

After traveling around the country showcasing his award winning documentary “What these Walls Won’t Hold,” former San Quentin resident and current film director and producer Adamu Chan’s visional masterpiece is set to be broadcast nationwide on PBS.

“My hope is that this film will open up avenues for others, who are traditionally seen as ‘subjects’ in stories, to be seen as the storytellers,” said Chan to SQNews. “The ability and opportunity to tell stories is itself a story about power and access, and I want this film to shine the light on this dynamic.”

“What These Walls Won’t hold,” received the Golden Gate Award for best mid-length documentary at the San Francisco International film festival in 2023.

The film was created during the Covid-19 pandemic and San Quentin’s own outbreak of Covid, which 28 incarcerated resident and one correctional died. The film follows Chan’s relationship with his best friend, Isa Borgeson, formerly-incarcerated Lonnie Morris and Rahsaan Thomas, who paroled from San Quentin. The film is more about how people come together and respond during a crisis than the pandemic, said Chan.

“After coming home in October of 2020, I set out to direct and produce my first film about my experience living through the COVID-19 pandemic in prison and the intimacies formed between people within and beyond the walls,” said Chan. “The production of the film felt like an important place to reconsider and



Richard Richardson leaving SQ.

undo all of the unscrupulous practices that I had witnessed from the filmmakers who had extracted stories from the inside.

“All of the participants in the film are my dear friends. It was vital to me that the film be a communal space where people felt like their stories could be expressed accurately and with care,” he added.

Chan honed his film and storytelling skills in San Quentin Media working with the First Watch video team. He has met one of his filming goals by having documentary feature on PBS. Chan has broken a barrier for formerly incarcerated and incarcerated filmmakers.

“I feel privileged to have been able to learn filmmaking in side of the San Quentin media Center and don’t take that privilege lightly — it has informed my purpose to use the platform to uplift and inspire others and to build community across walls,” he concluded.

Viewed via PBS WORLD
“America ReFramed” Thurs.
April 11 at 8pm ET/7pm C/5pm PT (Check local PBS listing)

David Lazar talks impact of Blue On Blue forums

By Dante D. Jones
Staff Writer

After this years Blue On Blue forum at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, SQNews sat down with San Francisco’s Assistant Chief David Lazar for an in-depth conversation to talk about the importance of this quarterly event.

SQNews: Why is it important for your officers to attend these types of dialogs every year?

Lazar: As police officers, it is essential to understand others at a very basic human level. To bring our perspective to the Blue On Blue conversation. More importantly, to hear the prospective of others and to understand how we all ended up where we ended up. This does not happen during arrests or investigations. What is gleaned from this interaction will allow us, as officers, to have a better understanding of those we interact. We learn that people come with trauma, they are hurting, they may of had a challenging background. We can do our jobs better with this in mind and in the end, treat others better and more humanely. This is our goal.

SQNews: How are you encouraging your officers to attend these forums?

Lazar: We are not really asking for volunteers. Most officers do not truly understand the “why” behind what we are trying to do in these

visits until they arrive at San Quentin, see the facility and speak with incarcerated individuals. They are assigned to go with very little mention of what this is about. After 5 trips, all of our officers have communicated they are glad for the visit and the conversations have provided them with a better perspective on humanity.

SQNews: As a result of the most recent forum, how are you using what you have learned to improve public safety while also advancing social justice?

Lazar: The overarching theme of the forums is to understand and to listen to each other as fellow human beings. Not as officer and incarcerated person. As people. Listening and giving others the opportunity to have a voice is procedural justice. Treating all those they way you want to be treating in policing is advancing social justice.

SQNews: Can you talk a little about the progress that has been created because of these forums.

Lazar: For all those who have participated, to this day, dating back a few years, are still talking about their forum experience. I believe when the visiting officers are interacting with others who have committed crimes, especially serious crimes, they have a greater perspective on what that person may of gone



Courtesy CDCR // Sam Robinson
David Lazar

through to get to this point in their lives. This is especially true for the young 18 or 19 year old. We have seen that when an 18 year old enters the prison system, they will not be that same person in their 40’s and 50’s. They will improve themselves in great ways. This has been the most amazing experience witnessing for us as part of these important forums.

SQNews: Please provide any suggestions to improve on these forums and ways of helping everyone involved (i.e. survivors, community members, law enforcement, and incarcerated people).

Lazar: Those who facilitate these forums do an incredible job. We are always impressed. I like the format. We need a little more time on the larger group introductions with maybe some questions and answers there-- just a few. We also need more time in the small groups to have the one-on-one conversations with maybe a wrap up by 1:00 p.m. or 1:15 p.m.

Thank you for the opportunity to be interviewed by the San Quentin News!

Historic Blue On Blue forum back at SQ

A day of honest dialog, vulnerability and accountability was on display in Chapel B at the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center on January 10, 2024.

The San Quentin News and the San Francisco Police Department held their fifth annual Blue on Blue forum, during which prison residents and law enforcement come together to strategies for improving the criminal justice system, prevent crime, and strengthen their communities.

In this year’s forum, the goal was to address the social, environmental, and economic conditions that foster criminal behavior. The agenda also centered on improving the post-conviction rehabilitation of the incarcerated, including addressing the environment and culture in prison.

“What we are trying to do with these forums is to really have a conversation with you about your lived experiences,” said San Francisco’s Assistant Chief of Police David Larza, opening up the forum’s dialog.

Assist. Chief Larza, who has attended these forums since the beginning, said he is adamant about finding solutions to public safety that will benefit everyone.

To open, the residents and law enforcement sat in a huge circle and introduced themselves. Residents started by stating their names, their victim’s names and the time they are serving, while the guest stated their names and how long they’ve been in law enforcement.

“It’s not lost on me that there is nearly a thousand years of system impacted experience sitting here in this room today,” stated resident Vincent Turner. “I’m confident that we will be able to brainstorm some solutions.”

The ensuing discussion served to facilitate mutual understanding of the challenges and successes of both law enforcement and incarcerated people who are seeking to better themselves and their communities.

“We need to hear from you about your life and how you got here,” said Larza. “Because us as cops, we tend to see it only one way. But some of you have come here when you were kids and there are traumas and things that led you to your crimes and we want to understand why and what we can do to help change things for the better.”

Eric Allen, a young Black man who recently became a resident of the Q, said he hoped to gain insight into what he can do to help fix his community, which he had a hand in breaking.

“I also would like to gain insight on how the officers – after they leave this forum – plan to interact with their community and people who are reentering society,” he said.

Allen stated that, if giving a chance, he believes that people going back to their communities can make a positive impact because they now know what not to do.

After the big circle

introductions were completed, the residents and guests broke up into smaller circles around the chapel to have more in-depth talks about the topics of the day.

Some residents gave testimony about how recognizing the ways in which their choices have harmed society has inspired them to make new choices, which will stop the cycle of violence that has plagued them and their communities.

“Growing up in impoverished communities, we learn to blame a lot because it’s easier to not accept responsibility for our choices when we’re face with situations of trauma,” said one resident.

Another resident added, “In the interest of public safety, it is vital that we discuss the uncomfortable topics such as race relations, poverty, unemployment, and substance abuse, if we really want to find solutions.”

These law enforcement forums were the brain child of the late SQNews Editor-in-Chief Arnulfo Garcia. For the advancement of social justice, his vision was for the incarcerated to help communities at-large in their efforts to improve public safety.

“Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people are valuable assets who can help with this effort because of their lived experience and unique perspectives,” said SQNews interim Editor-in-Chief Marcus “Wali” Henderson.

—Dante D. Jones

REENTRY

Undocumented face deportation despite parole suitability

By Stuart Clarke
Journalism Guild Writer

Undocumented persons who are incarcerated and have American families face the risk of deportation after being freed from prison, according to *The Press Democrat*.

Ramon Ruelas was born in Mexico and emigrated to the U.S. when he was nine years old. He grew up in poverty and was sometimes homeless.

In seventh grade, he began drinking alcohol and using drugs to cope with childhood trauma. “I never understood why I wanted to hang out with broken kids, the trouble-makers,” Ruelas said.

“Drugs allowed me to socialize, to be comfortable with myself. I didn’t know how to cope with my trauma, didn’t know how to address it.”

Being undocumented and without a Social Security number, Ruelas could not find employment like other high school kids.

At the age of 20, he was accused of kidnapping and threatening to rob a woman he had been dating. He was tried, convicted and sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

“At first I was so angry, but then I told myself I got something inside me that needed to get out, something inside me needed to change,” said Ruelas. He enrolled in various self-help programs and got involved with the Catholic Church. “I could tell he was going to get released as soon as he did his time,” said Deacon

Marcos Lopez, the Catholic chaplain at Centinela State Prison. “He was doing very well.”

The California Legislature determined that youthful offenders who commit crimes before age 26 should have a “meaningful opportunity of parole,” noted the article.

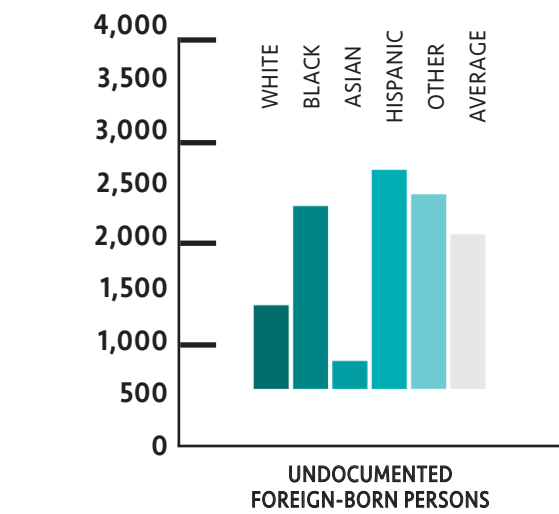
In 2019, after serving nearly 10 years, Ruelas was granted parole. “A few months later, immigration officials came to see me and told me, ‘Don’t tell your family to come pick you up because we’re going to pick you up; don’t make them drive all the way here,’” Ruelas said.

Ruelas was transported from San Quentin to a holding cell in San Francisco and the next day taken to San Diego where immigration agents escorted him across the Mexican border. There he awaited his American wife.

Ruelas has a chance to return to the U.S. if he is granted post-conviction relief. He would need to have his case vacated and not tried again. This would allow him to go through the legal U.S. immigration process.

“I do believe that the U.S. does have a right to its own sovereignty, its own safety, said Ruelas. “But I wish they would take the time to look at individual cases. I wish they would see me and say, ‘This guy grew up here in the U.S. and that’s all he knows; he’s getting deported to a foreign country to him. He didn’t just parole from prison; he earned his right to get out of prison.’”

California’s sanctuary law



Note: Rates are per 100,000 residents in each subpopulation. SOURCE: CATO Institute, *Illegal Immigrant Incarceration Rates, 2010–2018; Demographics and Policy Implications*, by Michelangelo Landgrave and Alex Nowrasteh, 21 April 2020

prohibits local law enforcement agencies from using resources to investigate, detain, report or arrest people or immigration violations. Schools, health facilities and courthouses are set aside as “safe” spaces, reported *The Press Democrat*.

However, California is obligated by other legislation to cooperate with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which oversees Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

In August 2023, the ACLU reported that CDCR officials were “tagging” immigrants, refugees, and others in custody for possible deportation, and accused the department of discrimination. Prison officials were reporting people to ICE based on “assumptions about their names, country of

birth and the language they spoke.” Some U.S. citizens were offered to ICE, noted the article.

Legislation to ban CDCR from turning over incarcerated individuals to ICE has failed. The HOME Act which focused on paroled immigrants or those given compassionate release was vetoed by Gov. Newsom.

Ruelas is now barred from living in the U.S. and resides in Mexicali, Mexico. His American wife, Marisol, and their American born baby daughter visit him once a month.

“It would be ideal for us to be in California,” said Marisol. “Me being raised there, him being raised there, Jasmine being born their. It will give us a sense of normalcy, and it will give him a better sense of community.”

New program offers \$2,400 to some returning residents

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Seeking to improve on the prison-to-employment pipeline, a new program aimed at easing the transition from prison disburses \$2,400 to some Californians.

Center for Employment Opportunities is a first-in-the-nation program providing reentrants direct cash payments upon reaching certain milestones. The center said payments are stringent on engaging in interview preparations, earning industry credentials or certificates, creating a budget, and opening a bank account, according to the Associated Press.

“Getting out there will be a new normal for me and I do not know what that is,” resident Thomas Denove said. “Assistance financially could get me on the right track.”

After years of incarceration, Denove said he has no idea of the cost of living now, but any additional support would help alleviate any justification of unnecessary spending and allow him to get a head start.

“I learned in prison that I could do more with less. I have little desire for materialistic things,” Denove said.

Samuel Schaeffer CEO of the national nonprofit said the goal is to cover the crucial and most essential needs in the early days of paroling.

“The first three to six months are the riskiest, when many people end up back in prison,” Schaeffer said. “We want to take advantage of this moment

to immediately connect people with services, with financial support, to avoid recidivism.”

Devoted to improving the California’s labor force the governor’s Workforce Development Board provided a \$7 million grant to boost community based organizations, stated the report. \$2 million of the monies will go to formerly incarcerated upon reentry in the form of direct-cash payments of \$2,400 per applicant.

According to the story, the Center for Employment estimates within the first year of release around 60% of formerly incarcerated remain unemployed.

As an assemblyman who focuses on justice system issues, Tom Lackey from Palmdale praises attempts to reduce recidivism. His concern for this program is the lack in tracking whether the taxpayer’s money is being used effectively.

“If we are going to issue stipends without parameters for accountability I worry about the return on our investment as it relates to outcomes and community safety,” Lackey said.

“I wish this partnership had existed while I was in re-entry,” formerly incarcerated Carmen Garcia said to the associated press. Garcia is now director of the Root & Rebound, a non-profit offering legal advocacy for people leaving prison.

“Re-integrating back into society is just talk when there are so many roadblocks additional funding for support services is paramount,” Thomas Denove said.

CALIFORNIA MODEL

Panel suggests changes to criminal laws

Report aims to reduce prison populations, increase restorative justice

By Anthony Manuel Carvalho
Staff Writers

A six-member panel that included four appointees of Governor Gavin Newsom released suggested changes to California’s criminal laws and the judicial system that administers those laws.

The report-highlighted changes to reduce prison populations, increase community-based restorative justice policies, and attempt to minimize the financial burden on the encumbered impoverished community, reported the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

“Our recommendations aim to improve public safety, optimize law enforcement resources, and reduce unfair and biased criminal law practices,” Michael Romano, the committee’s chairperson, said.

The panel, named The Committee on Revision of the Penal Code, delivered its annual report in January to the state’s legislative body. The report said, “High incarceration rates and alarming racial disparities continue to plague our system.”

Romano, who lectures at Stanford Law School and was the former director of the school’s Criminal Defense Clinic, joined three other appointees of Governor Newsom and state legislators, Senator Nancy Skinner, D-Berkeley, and Assembly Majority Leader Isaac Bryan, D-Los Angeles to produce the report.

The committee research found racial injustices within the administering of judicial decisions that lead to long prison sentences that do not improve public safety. The report also noted that some of the extensive sentences in California have been initiated after the Three Strikes law was approved by voters in 1994.

The committee suggested:

The state reduces prison sentences for older inmates who pose relatively little danger.

The committee recommended legislation that lets anyone who has served 15 years in prison to ask a

“[Allowing] people who have served a significant period of time in prison to apply for resentencing directly to a court would create significant cost savings for the state while preserving public safety.”

—The Committee on Revision of the Penal Code

judge for a reduced sentence.

The panel suggested anyone 50 or older, who has served 15-years; or anyone who was younger than 26 during the commission of their crime should be eligible.

The report said, “[Allowing] people who have served a significant period of time in prison to apply for resentencing directly to a court would create significant cost savings for the state while preserving public safety.”

The state limit or ban fines for low-income offenders.

According to The *San Francisco Chronicle* the report said, “Ordering people to pay amounts they cannot afford does not improve public safety.”

The committee requested the elimination of monetary punishment when the convicted person’s income is, “No more than 25% above the federal poverty standard, or is represented by a public defender because he or she cannot afford a private lawyer.”

The state expands a test program that has excelled in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The program, called Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, lets police refer pre-arrested suspects to community support services in lieu of arrest.

According to the report, San Francisco and Los Angeles has

shown promising results when potential arrestees for possession or sales of illegal substances or prostitution are diverted to rehabilitative services.

The report said the existing LEAD programs reduce felony arrests for participants by 60% when compared to defendants who were arrested, booked, jailed and released.

It also said there was an 85% reduction in misdemeanor arrests where the program is used.

The panel recommended any extension of LEAD should include the broadening of crimes recommended to community support services to include crimes like theft and burglary.

The Committee on Revision of the Penal Code started in 2020 to specifically address prison overcrowding and to propose changes in sentencing.

According to The *San Francisco Chronicle*, the state’s prison population declined from 135,000 in 2012, to its current level of 95,000.

The prison population early release plan of 2014 came into existence after courts found overcrowding to be a major contributive factor, which adversely affected prison health. At the time, new laws like Proposition 36 spawned reduction of the prison population and the subsequent release of the incarcerated, did not adversely affect any increases in crime.

The population reduction established recidivism rates provided by the *San Francisco Chronicle* which shows 42% of California’s released incarcerated residents commit new crimes within three years, but only 27% of the released, those with conditions similar to recipients of Prop 36, have committed new crimes, of which, only 2% were designated violent.

The panel stated overall crime is 55% below the highest point of violent crimes that was recorded in 1992.

REPORT: Transformation Council of SQ suggests officer retraining

By Randy Hansen
Journalism Guild Writer

As Governor Newsom works to transform San Quentin into a “rehabilitation center,” there are efforts on the way to train CDCR officers on how to work in the new environment, according to *SFGATE*.

In January, the San Quentin Transformation Advisory Council released a 156-document outlining Governor Newsom’s vision for how to reform California prisons to reduce recidivism in the state.

One of the big proposed changes is to train prison guards on how to become “community correction officers,” which includes foundational changes to how they do their jobs.

“We train staff like they are going to war. We’re not going to war. We have to change the training,” an unnamed correction official said in the report.

The report explains that prison guards should note positive change in inmates behavior. It also encourages guards to help with vocational training. For example, those who have experience in plumbing, welding or carpentry type work can help train the prison population. Eventually that will become part of the rehabilitation management program, noted the article. It also encourages guards not to worry so much about “overfamiliarity” with incarcerated people. Instead, guards should ask about their families, favorite sports teams, and meet with them in common spaces to share meals or watch movies.

With more than 90,000 incarcerated people in the California’s state prisons, San Quentin has around 3,300 residents. The report also encourages the prison to put an end to double-cell occupancy so that there can be more room for a table, where residents can study, *SFGATE* reports.

The report suggests that both new and existing guards should be trained to understand the traumatic

experiences many incarcerated people have faced, such as substance abuse disorders, anger management, and mental health issues.

“While the administration has articulated some broad approaches in pursuing the goals of the ‘California Model,’ such as ‘becoming a trauma-informed organization,’ it has not identified any clear changes to policy, practice, or prison environments it deems necessary to achieve the goals,” said Caitlin O’Neil, the author of the advisory report.

Gov. Newsom has estimated that it will cost \$380 million to turn San Quentin State Prison into a Rehabilitation Campus, noted the story in *SFGATE*.

“California elected officials have shown a distaste for more prison spending while the prison population drops and would prefer to spend that money on community-oriented solutions, but cutting money to the prison means fewer programs and worse living conditions,” The advisory report said, according to the article.

The advisory group report added, “There is no magic wand that can resolve all of these tensions, policy-makers will be grappling with these tradeoffs.”

San Quentin has waiting lists of incarcerated people in many other California prisons, who want to transfer to the institution. Some of these lists have stretched on for years. San Quentin is the oldest prison in California, and has many renovation needs. The size of the population must remain low while officials work to bring the prison up to code. Its maintenance needs were estimated to cost \$1.6 billion in 2021, according to *SFGATE*.

San Quentin has is famous for its numerous long-standing rehabilitation programs, many years such as the award winning *San Quentin News*, the famed inmate-hosted Ear Hustle podcast, and Mt. Tamalpais College, which allows residents to earn an associate’s degree.



Photos by Dante D. Jones // SQNews



Above:Eddie Arizmendez, Joe Thursen, and Darryl Farris play together on stage. Far left: James Snider performs a solo act on guitar. Left: Natasha Haugnes, an MTC English teacher, performing "Wake Up Everybody."

Residents use music, poetry to highlight talent at MTC Open Mic event

**By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor**

Over 60 outside guests, including teachers and faculty members of Mount Tamalpais College joined San Quentin residents in Chapel B for its annual Open Mic night.

The goal of hosting Open Mic is to give SQ residents a chance to use music, poetry, and spoken word to express and share their talents with the population. Some faculty members of MTC also shared their talents with residents.

The 12 incarcerated performers played for the audience in the dimly lit chapel that allowed for standing room only as the artists took the stage one by one to present their performances.

The residents performed music and spoken word to over 80 people. Each performer was introduced by emcee Angel Alvarez.

Natasha Haugnes, an MTC English teacher performed a musical piece titled, "Wake Up Everybody." The audience clapped to the rhythm

and some of them sang, "The world won't get no better if we just let it be."

Resident Darryl Farris talked about his experience as an MTC student and said he enjoys watching the talents of other students.

"This was special for me because I am an alumni. Now I know some people I can go to for musical help," said Farris.

Banda Esperanza is a five-member band that sang "Mexico Lindo y Querido."

Resident Jay Kim performed a solo stand-up

comedy skit on his experience as a "first term" during his time in prison, which included topics of race, culture, excessive sentences, and life behind bars.

Other residents presented spoken word, poetry, and musical numbers. Steve Nguyen strummed the guitar, talking about waking up after experiencing lights flashed in his face by the correction officer at two o'clock in the morning.

"These late nights, can't stand these late nights," he

sang. "My eyes are weary, time wearing down my soul," were some of the words in his original piece.

Nguyen sang about the number of late nights left to go. The melancholy sound had turned the room quiet.

Another resident sang about how he had met the girl of his dreams in Michigan. Residents Bertho Gauthier and Eli G. performed Gospel rap about their past lives and their transformations to live lives of salvation.

Sammy Nelson, who

arrived to San Quentin the night before the event, contributed a spoken word piece titled, "To be heard." His lyrics noted the discovery of familiarity of the pain a person experiences from loss while behind bars.

A group of MTC volunteers and administrative staff took to the stage to sing "We are the Champions" with some altered lyrics.

"I'm really curious because there is a lot talent behind bars," said Volker who works the back office at MTC.

Life Support Alliance: A history of advocacy

**By Pheng Ly
Staff Writer**

The Life Support Alliance nonprofit organization continues to work throughout California by educating the public about the state's tens of thousands of life-term incarcerated residents, including the impact these sentences have on their families and friends. Also the organization advocates to reform the state's Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) policies and procedures.

In 2010, two women, Vanessa Nelson-Sloane and Gail Brown, both having incarcerated loved ones, took up the challenge to hold accountable the BPH commissioners for making life-altering decisions. They wanted the commissioners to understand that their decisions affect a multitude of lives beyond the lives of victims and surviving families.

The women co-founded Life Support Alliance, a social advocacy organization. Nelson-Sloane said, in a span of 13 years, the two-person team grew into a small organization with a handful of volunteers advocating for residents incarcerated with life sentences. "Our mission is to provide hope and help so people can come home," she said.

According to Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance educates legislators and the public on the characteristics of life-term residents versus non-life-term residents, reminding them of the formers' low recidivism rate of less than 1%, relative to the non-lifer cohorts' recidivism rate of 44%. The group makes these numbers a main focal point for advocacy, seeking favorable suitability findings for lifers.

Nelson-Sloane said she takes pride in serving as a voice and presence for residents. The Life Support Alliance staff takes their advocacy to legislative offices, public gatherings, and lobbying CDCR



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

David Sloane and Vanessa Nelson-Sloane in SQ's Chapel B.

representatives regarding conditions of confinement and programming. They remind the parole board of the realities of lifers' situations.

From 2010 onwards, Nelson-Sloane's advocacy brought her in contact with BPH Executive Director Jennifer Shafer, to whom she articulated her concerns about the BPH process. Nelson-Sloane said, she broached the idea of participating in actual parole board hearings. Since then, Nelson-Sloane has participated as an observer in over 200 parole suitability hearings over the last 13 years.

Life Support Alliance also helps life term residents in their rehabilitative efforts necessary for suitability for parole. Nelson-Sloane said, the group helps lifer residents and their families understand life sentences and the accommodations necessary for suitability for parole. The group also helps with locating resources for such accommodations.

Nelson-Sloane said, her group wants to convey hope for second chances to bring lifers home. For many lifers, this message comes as their first real legitimate chance at creating a better existence for themselves.

The Life Support Alliance provides correspondence courses, workshops, and classes for parole suitability preparation. In November

2023, a team from Life Support Alliance attended a meeting of the TRUST self-help group and conducted a workshop at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center's Chapel B.

The group has a six-to-eight-page monthly Lifer-Line Newsletter publication, free to everyone via email, Nelson-Sloane said. It also has a more extensive and comprehensive quarterly 50-to-60-page California-Lifer Newsletter publication available for purchase.

The Life Support Alliance holds educational web-based seminars for incarcerated residents' families. These seminars cover a wide variety of incarceration topics intended to make life more understandable and easier to manage, aiding in navigating the prison and parole systems, said Nelson-Sloane.

Nelson-Sloane, a veteran with more than 25 years in prison reform movement, said she believes in the work of her group. She wants incarcerated residents to know that the organization does not provide legal advice or legal services, but welcomes all other questions regarding life incarceration.

Life Support Alliance
P.O. Box 277
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741
Telephone: (916) 402-3750
Only on Monday,
Wednesday, & Thursday
from 12 p.m. - 3 p.m.
www.lifesupportalliance.org

Special guests attend poetry reading at SQ

**By Kevin D. Sawyer
Contributing Writer**

An intimate poetry reading took place at San Quentin in November 2023. Billed as a "Poetry Reading & Craft Talk," the event featured guest poets Douglas Manuel and Anders Carlson-Wee. Each read excerpts from their recently published books.

Marin's Poet Laureate Francesca Bell also attended the midday reading inside the prison library. Bell opened with a poem she wrote about her cousin who did time in state prison, and then introduced Carlson-Wee and Manuel.

"I want to hope that what I'm doing is for you all," said Manuel. He acknowledged the incarcerated writers who want to be "remembered for the best thing you do."

Manuel was impacted by prison in a different way. After his mother died of MS when he was eight, his father fell victim to the crack epidemic and was incarcerated.

"Despite these early losses and despite our country's stubborn segregation of opportunity, Manuel went on to earn his PhD from USC and to engage his family's history and what it means to be a Black man in America in his poems," stated a flyer for the combination poetry reading and craft event.

"Books gave me another world to live in," Manuel said, adding that he felt comfortable navigating both school and the streets. "I was able to live in both spaces."

More than 25 prisoners attended the event, many of whom were participants from the Arts in Correction's creative writing workshop, taught by Zoe Mullery and sponsored by the William James Association. Bell later approached the William James Association with the idea for the



Douglas Manuel



Photos by Dante D. Jones // SQNews
Anders Carlson-Wee

SQ poetry reading, which was then arranged by Mullery.

Carlson-Wee read from his book "Disease of Kings," which he dedicated to his grandfather. In his 20s, Carlson-Wee spent time "scavenging dumpsters for food and other necessities and hopping freight trains, in order to give himself time to read and write and develop his poetry," the event flyer stated.

In his poem "Cups," Carlson-Wee described different experiences living as a wanderer. "I had the (Subway) cup so long I named him."

In his poem "Living Alone," he wrote, "Another day of not seeing anyone, except the faces on TV."

Inmates and other guests snapped their fingers after each poem was read, in lieu of applause.

"I felt like both poets knew their subject matter well," said Juan Haines. "They did what poets do."

Stu Ross said, "I was pretty impressed. I feel guilty not having paid for the experience."

Manuel read from his book "Trouble Funk." In his poem "Loud Looks," he wrote, "All Black people are fluent in silence."

Other poems told stories from his childhood, such as "Washing Palms," where Manuel recalled being told to "save those tears, you'll need

them later."

Manuel said a lot of his poems are about his troubled relationship with his father. From his poem "I'm My Father's Name," Manuel read, "I'm each purple scar on his face."

"So much of my work is trying to search for my father and who he was," he shared.

"At first I was a little put off by the language — the vocabulary," said Douglas Bray. "But it fit. That's what it was supposed to be." He was "fascinated" by Carlson-Wee, who read a poem that told the story of coming home to find his mother had died by suicide when he was in high school.

"I feel so connected to him after that," said Bray. "It was a topic that most people don't ever share, and he laid it all out. He gave us an awful lot of what he was feeling."

"I thought it was fantastic," said Mullery. "I think they had great synergy with each other. Their poems were character based. I really loved their sense of story. They're doing it for all the right reasons."

Before the event ended, incarcerated poets and writers shared their poetry, spoken word, and short stories with the guests. Borrowing from Manuel's poem "Dynamite," the event ended with all participants agreeing that the experience earned the same accolade. "Everything is dynamite."

NATIONAL

In-custody deaths during Covid suggests systemic failure

By Richard Blanchard
Journalism Guild Writer

A study was conducted showing the increase of in custody deaths in the United States, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There were 2,500 prison resident deaths between March 2020 and February 2021, according to the statistics from Bureau of Justice.

A study concerning the July 2020 impact of the Covid-19 crisis, revealed the incarcerated peoples deaths soared by 77%. It also conveyed that mortality rates comparative to 2019, were triple the amount of the free world, according to *the Guardian*.

“These steep increases suggest systemic failures that simultaneously increased risk of illness and limited access to medical care,” reported by the study.

The study published by Science Advances, is the most comprehensive analysis of the in-custody deaths since 2020.

“Covid-19 was the primary driver for increases in mortality due to natural causes; some states also experienced substantial due to unnatural causes,” stated the study.

The information collected by using data from record requests, from more than 45 federal and state departments of corrections.

“We staffed a hotline and started this archival project

hearing what people were going through in California prisons,” said Naomi Sugie, an associate professor of criminology, at the University of California Irvine.

Sugie began studying the effect of Covid-19 in California prisons after they imposed containment lockdowns in 2020. The Prison Pandemic project found that the institutions reduced facility’s communication and transparency down to zero. Some facilities did not record the causes of deaths in that year,

Despite the in Custody Death Reporting Act passed in 2000, its reauthorization in 2014, which mandates the collection of data information

regarding the deaths of, incarcerated people, in county, and state facilities,

“All of those deaths that are related to the pandemic, for various ways, we don’t know about them because they’re not officially coded as Covid-Related. So even if someone died of Covid-19, their death may not have been recorded as a Covid-19 related death,” stated the report.

The study included that being confined to cells, and limited movement, including visitor restrictions. These limits encompassed solitary confinement, medical isolation, which was intended to lessen infection, and prevent suicide, according to *the Guardian*.

NEW JERSEY

Law enforcement training program accused of teaching unconstitutional practices

By William Burley
Journalism Guild Writer

A law enforcement-training program has been accused of teaching unconstitutional and discriminatory policing tactics, according to the *New Jersey Monitor*.

A report issued by New Jersey’s acting Comptroller Kevin D. Walsh uncovered the state’s lack of oversight on post-academy police training by instructors at the Street Cop program offered by the company NJ Criminal Interdiction.

Walsh and his team investigated a Street Cop conference in 2021 and discovered that “instructors glorified violence, encouraged insubordination, promoted unconstitutional policing tactics, and disparaged women, people of color, and other marginalized groups,” noted the article.

“The fact that some police officers are still involved in Street Cop training points to the huge gap in oversight over police training, and it seems to me that new Jersey residents and the public at large should know what the contents of those trainings are,” said ACLU-NJ legal director Jeanne LoCicero.

She called into question whether attendees have been respecting people’s rights or evading their constitutional obligations. Those officers

“learned how to violate the Constitution and New Jersey’s policing laws and directives,” LoCicero said.

Street Cop was founded in 2012 and uses active duty law enforcement officers as instructors. It is marketed to policing agencies as a training tool to provide officers with skills and insight beyond what they learn at academies.

The comptroller’s detailed report listed the presenting instructors by name and associated police department, as well as quoted the presented material, noted the article.

Attorney Brian Neary represented a client who had been arrested on drug charges during a traffic stop by one of the presenters. He took the Walsh report to court and showed the prosecutor. Her response, he said, was to shake her head and say, “You don’t even have to say a word, I’m moving to dismiss the case.”

The release of the comptroller’s findings has inspired police departments to open internal affairs investigations into their officers who presented training material. In some instances, officers that only attended the 2021 conference will be required to receive remedial training. According to the article, the Walsh report has even drawn the attention of the Senate’s law and public safety committee.

NATIONAL

White House announces reform on certain drug offenses

By Randy Hansen
Journalism Guild Writer

A clemency action and new reforms, targets the criminal legal system, in efforts to change its disparities.

The White House announces a sweeping bipartisan set of clemency action reforms against disparities within the United States criminal justice system, according to the Seattle Medium.

The plan is to change unequal treatment of sentencing lengths in non-violent drug offenses and start to realize the promise of equal justice in American

communities.

President Biden plans to pardon people with marijuana offenses. He wants to follow up on clemency actions for outdated sentences, especially cocaine and crack crimes. This should help rectify some of the outdated and unjust sentencing practices of the past stated the article.

“I am announcing additional steps I am taking to make the promise of equal justice a reality,” Biden said.

These steps concern people who have been incarcerated for extended periods for “non-violent” offenses. Darryl Allen Winkfield of

Georgia, Leroy Lymons of Florida, they are life terms has been adjusted by clemency actions.

Winkfield convicted in 1998 of conspiracy to distribute and possess cocaine, his sentence was commuted, and he is scheduled for release in April 2024.

Lymons who was sentenced in 2012 to life for conspiracy to distribute and possess, with intent to distribute five kilograms of cocaine, will be released after 27 years, asserted the news.

The president noted that the disparity in sentencing of “crack-to-powder” cocaine

aligns with his push for criminal justice reform.

The White House insists that experts and law enforcement both realize that crack-to-powder disparity in sentencing guidelines should be eliminated, noted the story.

In the past few years marijuana reform has been gradually becoming the norm and Biden signed a proclamation to pardon additional offenses related to the use and possession of marijuana under federal and D.C. law.

“It’s time that we right these wrongs,” said President Biden.

1. Colorado — (*Axios*) Incarcerated people who have acquired their bachelor’s degree are being hired on as professors to teach college-level classes to other incarcerated residents through Adams State University in Alamosa. The initiative helps lessen the burden of staff shortages within prison education programs in prison and pair students up with professors with shared experiences. David Carrillo earned his MBA in 2021 from Adam State in 2021 and is the first incarcerated professor at the Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility. “To be able to help these guys realize that they are capable of doing so much more — that’s a reward right there,” said Carrillo.

2. Nabraska — (*Associated Press*) Death Penalty Information Center issued an annual report noting that the death penalty is being administered improperly according to the American people. A new bill introduces asphyxiation by nitrogen to conduct executions. “It’s the will of the people. I introduced this as a way to do the death penalty humanely,” said state Sen. Loren Lippincott. However most manufactures have refused to openly supply the drug.

3. Missouri—(*Associated Press*) A man housed in an honor dorm at the Potosi Correctional Center was backed by 60 corrections officers and staff urging Gov. Mike Parson to halt the man’s execution which is scheduled in April 2024. “Generally, we believe in the use of capital punishment. But we are in agreement that the death penalty is not the appropriate punishment for prisoners, officers, and



NEWS BRIEFS
By BOSTYON JOHNSON
MANAGING EDITOR

former warden Troy Steele.

4. Arkansas — (*Associated Press*) A lawsuit against the Board of Corrections was dismissed after a judge found there was not a violation of the state’s Freedom of Information Act. “The board did not violate the FOIA, and there is no reason for the FOIA litigation to continue,” according to a statement by Abtin Mehdizadegan, an attorney for the panel. “We invite the attorney general to meet with the board to work through these differences directly, once and for all.”

5. Tennessee — (*The Hill*) New guidance ordered by the DOJ establishing the creation and management of special units for oversight and transparency.

The guidance follows a yearlong effort after the death of Tyre Nichols in Memphis by the “Scorpion unit” last January. Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta noted “After the tragic death of Tyre Nichols and public scrutiny of the SCORPION unit, we made it a priority at the Justice Department to develop a practical resource for law enforcement and community leaders assessing the use of specialized units in police agencies.”

6. North Carolina — (*The New York Times*) After spending 44 years in prison on rape and burglary charges, a man is pardoned with a \$25 Million dollars settlement. In the settlement, exonerated Ronnie Long

insisted there be a public apology included. Jamie T. Lau , a lawyer for Long, noted that the jury pool was manufactured saying Mr. Long “was targeted by police, the police manufactured a jury pool to ensure his conviction and, when the evidence indicated they had the wrong person, they just lied about it or made it disappear,” the attorney said.

7. Virginia — (*CBS News*) History was made as Virginia’s first Black speaker of the House of Delegates, was sworn in early January. The journey of Virginia Del. Don Scott Jr. to the chamber was unique. While in college, Scott, Jr. served close to eight years in a federal prison on a drug conspiracy case. “Damaged goods

sometimes can turn out to be OK,” Scott said. “We are a lot more interesting than the people that followed all the rules and did everything perfect.”

8. Washington DC — (*Associated Press*) Thousands of people were given clemency for their conviction of marijuana possession. The pardons by President Joe Biden aims to rectify racial disparities with the legal system. “Criminal records for marijuana use and possession have imposed needless barriers to employment, housing, and educational opportunities,” Biden said. The pardon does not apply to people who were convicted while illegally in the U.S. and only accounts for marijuana convictions.

President Biden called for governors to erase marijuana convictions.

9. Massachusetts — (*The Boston Globe*) The Supreme Judicial Court agreed that sentencing 18- to 20-year-olds to life without parole is considered cruel and unusual punishment in a 4-3 decision. The report noted that people between those ages have a lack of impulse control among other juvenile characteristics. “So many people whose lives have been wasted because of terrible, impulsive actions as young people will now have a chance to start over in the community and not cost taxpayers millions of dollars to warehouse them, noted former public defender, Lisa Newman-Polk.

GRADUATION

E.A.T. holds first graduation

Incarcerated-created self-help group called 'transformational'

By Randy C. Thompson
Staff Writer

If you change the thought, you change the behavior. If you change the behavior, you change the thought. So goes the slogan for Emotional Awareness Therapy, an incarcerated-created self-help group that celebrated its first graduating class in Chapel A in late January.

The E.A.T. curriculum, created by San Quentin resident Harry C. Goodall, consists of the collective knowledge from other self-help groups he had attended over 20 years in prison. It covers anger management, domestic violence, substance abuse, criminal thinking, childhood trauma, and many similar topics.

Resident facilitator and mentor Ramon Fritz credits E.A.T. for preparing him to appear before the parole board in 2026. In 32 years of incarceration, he said, no other program has helped him identify where and how he went wrong.

“[E.A.T.] found a way to merge criminal thinking and why trauma plays a role in criminal-thinking. For me that’s huge, because it allows me to confront various aspects

from my childhood. Before, I used to wash over it. Now I’m dealing with who I am now and what I went through then,” said Fritz.

Before awarding certificates to the 14 graduates, Goodall told the audience about the beginnings of E.A.T. and his hopes for its future.

“We learn this not just to help ourselves but to heal others around us with what we now know,” said Goodall. “To rid myself of criminal thinking, I had to learn a new way of thinking. Change is necessary, rehabilitation an absolute.”

Goodall said group members do not just deal with wounds but tear them open so that they can heal. Many graduates referred to this aspect of the program in their certificate acceptance speeches.

Resident Raul Aguayo said, “E.A.T. has been an atom bomb, taking off all the Band-Aids I put over my scars thinking that healed me.”

Bill Marable, also a resident, revealed similar sentiments, saying, “When I started, Harry said inside this class I will be peeled like an onion. Well, I stand before you today an exposed, peeled onion.”

Other graduates took the opportunity to make amends with their victims. “I dedicate this to my victims,” said Resident Maxx Robinson. “I live every day dedicated to making amends to them.”

Resident Gary Johnson praised the class for his transformation. “I want to apologize for the crime I committed to get here. There’s a lot of good people out there [in society], and I’m starting to become one of them,” he said.

Beth Crittenden, an outside sponsor, commended the graduates for opening up in an intense environment. She told the audience that someone cannot dig up something and save face at the same time.

“There can be a stigma for opening up emotionally, but it can save,” Crittenden said. “From what I’ve seen... to bring out what’s inside is heroic.”

Some of the resident graduates will continue as facilitators and mentors for the next cohort. E.A.T. vice president Cesar Nava will take on the role of president. He told the audience about his journey as a story of redemption.

“E.A.T. not only allowed me to reflect on what’s inside



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Above: The first graduates of the E.A.T. program.
Right: The program's creator, Harry C. Goodall, explains the E.A.T. curriculum.



myself. Before, I didn’t ask questions, and got angry because I was confused, but question after question gave me insight into myself as a human being. Gave me insight over time. Gave me time to reflect, to be honest, to be transparent, and be happy.”

At the end of the graduation, participants and outside guests ate a celebratory meal of pizza, fried chicken, tortilla chips, muffins, and Coca-Cola.

E.A.T. will return soon; the roster for the next cohort had already filled up before graduation.

“These aren’t just books with stories you’ll read. It’s

something you’re going to grasp, love, and learn from. What E.A.T. has done for me is to be able to see people, hear people, and love them for whoever they are,” said Nava.

Enneagram Prison Project graduates return for annual celebration event

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Enneagram Prison Project inspires transformation through awareness and compassion with a systematic approach, motivated by a vision of freeing people all over the world from the prison of their own making.

A couple hundred Enneagram alumni, ambassadors, guests and EPP representatives gathered to recognize the recent graduates of the 12-week course, in San Quentin’s Chapel B in January.

Delving into the bodies psychological system to discover the roots of personality types helps participants understand how their past experiences, thinking and actions influenced prior relationships and situations.

“Going through the program I learned why I overthink everything. Once I understood the different personality types I realized it is who I am, it is my personality,” graduate George Navarro said.

Susan Olessek founder of EPP opened the ceremony with a video presentation of testimonials from participants. She told the guests watching the video evokes emotions each time for her.

Olessek talked about understanding personality foundationally comes from identifying how we came into the world and the innate goodness, identity and strength we came into the world with.

“We came in to the world totally trusting and whole of faith,” Olessek said. “Distancing ourselves to get away from pain drives us from who we are.”

Resident graduate John Gerhart told *SQNews* the Enneagram program provided an opportunity for him to delve into his past. He said realizing most dark negative experiences affected him and impacted how he related to others in different situations.

Gerhart said he appreciated



Dante D. Jones // SQNews

One person of each type took the stage to answer prompts.

the vulnerability everyone exhibited; it helped him face his demons and build empathy for himself and others. “I believe I am able to reach out to fellow inmates and see their perspective, by being aware,” Gerhart said.

“Understanding personality types helps me figure out who they are and accept other people, now I focus more on positive outlooks,” graduate James Staples said.

EPP ambassadors all of whom are formerly incarcerated told the guests about the transformational process and freedom which occurred through attending Enneagram. Chuck said he made peace with his childhood experiences and he rid the bounded feeling of the thirty-five year prison of his own making. “Freedom came when I finally believed I was worthwhile.”

“Learning about myself gave me a type of hope I never had before,” Ambassador Clay said.

Troy Phillips said the programming does not stop once you get back into society, but when difficult issues and experiences occur Enneagram has provided tools to respond in a positive way. He uses his community of like-minded people to lean on.

“My hope is I can be a beacon for other incarcerated individuals,” Phillips said. “I am no better than anyone in here, but I am free from the prison of my own making.”

Everyone in attendance

The Enneagram System classifies personality traits as follows:

1. Idealist/Reformer
2. Giver/Helper
3. Performer/Achiever,
4. Romantic/Individualist
5. Observer/Investigator
6. Skeptic/Loyalist
7. Epicure/Enthusiast
8. Protector/Challenger
9. Mediator/Peacemaker.

was guided through a meditation prior to EPP participants taking stage to speak about their personality types. Olessek said EPP is a system of self-empowerment and understanding the systematic nature of our bodies involve cognitive and emotional behavioral strategies. The personality traits are grouped into triads; the body (8, 9, 1), the head (2, 3, 4), and the heart (5, 6, 7).

Susanne Gawreluk an EPP guide and faculty member said she had the privilege to be connected to the incarcerated individuals on a human level through writing some of the participant’s biographies.

“I realized we are all in a prison of our own making because of how we have suffered. We all have a journey, each in our own way,” Gawreluk said.

“The light is always in your essence, it never goes away from us, although we go away from it. We can unfold these beautiful essential qualities, when we do not detract from who we are,” Olessek said.



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Grauates of Man 2 Man program pose proudly with their certificates of achievement.

Man 2 Man graduation honors fatherhood

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Contributing Writer

Man 2 Man, a non-profit organization, teaches prisoners how to become better fathers to the children they left behind, and ultimately better men. In February, 14 participants graduated from the program. Most of the men in the program were older. None appeared to be in their 20s.

“This is something I’m very passionate about,” Dr. Stewart Perrilliat said in his opening speech. “It’s all inclusive.” The Oakland native is a former Marine who holds a PhD in theology. He also founded Man 2 Man, an urban youth advocacy organization dedicated to “strengthening families, one father at a time.”

“Fatherlessness is the most destructive trend in our society,” Perrilliat said. “Anyone can be a father, but not everyone can be a dad.” He shared the statistic that 80% of prisoners had no father present in their life. Man 2 Man participants examine the impact of not having a father.

“I came to this class to get some credit under my belt; to get home early,” said Geff LaFranchi. “But this man (Dr. Perrilliat) gave me something I can’t give back. Doctor P., I appreciate you.”

Dr. Perrilliat said LaFranchi will become a facilitator in the next class. “I’ve seen a whole lot of transformation in his life.”

“He’s trying to stay out this time,” said Monica Witten, LaFranchi’s wife. “The vulnerability is really there.”

LaFranchi’s mother-in-law, Jean Wares, also attended and

said “It was very heartfelt, listening to the guys talk.”

Gregory Starling was the class valedictorian. “I didn’t have a father that was present,” he said, which started a trajectory that caused emotions he never understood. He learned “how to tap into my emotions.”

The Course Curriculum used was *Inside Out DAD*, a fathering handbook. Gradually, the men worked through 12 sessions over several months, covering what it means to be a man, handling feelings, fathering, communication, children’s growth, discipline, co-parenting and other subjects.

“I always knew I wanted to be the kind of father I never had,” said Maxx Robison. “Taking this class has opened my eyes. Dr. P. has invested in us.”

Gary Rico said when Perrilliat started teaching the class, “it broke me.” Now approaching age 60, he said, “I grew up in a home that was pretty toxic. If I had a dad like this, I wouldn’t be here. I didn’t know what I was living wasn’t normal, and I haven’t been a good dad. The class changed me and made me want to be a better dad, and a better person.”

John Scharico said he didn’t know what to expect of the class, but praised Dr. Perrilliat who “took this class to a whole different level,” and now “wants to be a better uncle for my nephews and nieces.”

“I’m a father and I was also fatherless,” said San Quentin warden Chance Andes who attended the graduation with other members of his staff. “I was raised by a single mother. To hear the impact [Man 2

Man] made makes me very happy.”

Dr. Perrilliat said Man 2 Man was all inclusive, and demonstrated it when remote interpreter participated by video, on a laptop computer, for hearing impaired graduate Saeliaw Kaomoang. The interpreter watched him communicate using American Sign Language, and translated his words with her voice over the chapel’s speaker system.

“After much study, I finally understand what it means to be a father,” said Kaomoang “I lost my father. He passed on.” Living in foster homes and a violent household, he blamed his mother for his father’s death. “It’s not my mother’s fault.”

Edward Moss said the class made him think. “I have a 24-year-old son, and I’ve been incarcerated 20 years of his life,” he said. “Taking this class made me realize that I had given my son the same bad advice I was given.”

“Every one of the classes build on top of each other,” said Dr. Perrilliat. At the end of the graduation lunch was served, but not before he blessed the food with a prayer. “You don’t give up on us, Father.”

Lunch was provided by Perrilliat’s wife, Jean, a local cater. Graduates and guests dined on chicken, shrimp, rice, beans, salad, fruit, dinner rolls, sparkling water, coffee, and cake.

Jerome Leonard’s said, “We’ve been blessed through this journey, and we have a long way to go.”

Juan Sobrano concurred. “I’m blessed for being a part of this group,” he said.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

United Nations recommends U.S. end LWOP sentences

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

A committee on human rights recommended that the U.S. should end its practice of life-long imprisonment. In November 2023, The United Nations Humans Rights Committee suggested that the U.S. —should proclaim an end on their criminal legal system’s use of life without parole sentences, according to a United Nations Human Rights Committee. Life-long imprisonment is often referred to as “death by incarceration.” The UN committee’s recommendations are the first time this type of moratorium has been recommended to put an end to certain prison sentences. “It is incumbent on the United States to heed the call of the United Nations Human Rights Committee to correct its violations of basic human rights in routinely sentencing people, at both the federal and state level, to “death by incarceration,” said Stanley “Jamel” Bellamy, a New York City organizer who survived

Of the 182 people serving **LWOP** in California's womens prisons

MANY ARE MOTHERS & PARENTS

"I never tell my kids I'm coming home, ever. My oldest took it the hardest because she remembers me the most. She was 5-years-old when I got arrested. She convinced herself I was going to be home for her 6th grade graduation...she was devastated."
-Mimi

"My daughter is [getting] married next month. She won't have her mother there for the wedding.
My son is extremely angry and has every right to be. He's 35 now. He has every right to feel abandoned, to feel that he has missed out on everything that we [could] have done together."
-Laura

Abolish the Death Penalty and Life Without Parole.

www.Alivingchance.com // www.womensprisoners.org

DBI, asserted the committee. A coalition of organizers throughout the U.S. combined with more than 100 representatives to end life without parole. The coalition consists of abolitionists such as Amistad Law Project, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, and the Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration. The committee emphasized previous recommendations to end life without parole for

every juvenile offender. They now advocate ending DBI for everyone. According to the UN report, more than 200,000 incarcerated persons await death by incarceration in the U. S. Black Americans make up 46% of DBI. A committee member said death-by-incarceration unreasonably affects Black and Indigenous Americans. The goal would make parole obtainable to insure the

release of political prisoners serving DBI sentences. “My brother Phil was sentenced to 49.5 years to life at the age of 16. He has been in prison for 41 years and is not eligible for parole until 2031. We all have a fundamental right to hope that our loved ones will come home and not die in prison,” said Lisette Nieves, a community leader for the Release Aging People in Prison. The committee has questioned the U.S. not just on DBI, but also on the right to freedom of expression and women’s reproductive rights. “This is the first time the Human Rights Committee has recommended the U.S. abolish all sentences that do not include the possibility of parole. The committee came to this conclusion after listening to the stories of so many families and individuals who have been impacted by these cruel sentences – showing that DBI sentences serve as another form of the death penalty,” said Samah Sisay, a staff attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights.

University uses degree program for restorative justice

By Byron Joy
Journalism Guild Writer

A University offers a curative College degree program, taking a different method responding to and preventing crime The University of San Diego has invested in a Master’s Degree program of restorative justice, the fourth in the U.S. and the first in California, according Criminal Justice. USD intends to give students leadership skills, and necessary information to facilitate the restorative justice process. Once the

students are in the program, they will learn what restorative justice is, and how to manage harm. “Restorative justice is a much-needed approach to harm and conflict in our highly divided society,” said David Karp, director of the Center for Restorative Justice at USD. “It is an emerging global movement that embraces personal and community empowerment, collaboration, and personal accountability to address harm and strengthen relationships.” Director Karp is co-investigator, for the National Center

on Restorative Justice, which U.S. Department of Justice funds. He has published more than 100 academic papers and 6 books. His publications consist of The Little Book of Restorative Justice for Colleges and Universities, Wounds That Do Not Bind: Victim-Based Perspectives on the Death Penalty, and the Community Justice Ideal, asserted the article. The program is intended to have a cooperative tactic, rather than a disciplinary one, in efforts to stop and respond to crime. According to a university statement, examination

displays a revelation to restore practices to improve students’ academic achievement, and reduces suspension rates. Colleges that that explore the procedure of and practices of restorative justice witnessed progress in school safety, noted the story. The restorative justice program will take more than 15 months to finish, including two weeks of campus classes, and a travel seminar. The Master’s Degree program is presently enrolling students, and the first class will start in the fall 2024, conveyed the Criminal Justice news.

Dangers ignored in weaponization of routine traffic stops

By Vance Eugene Sams Jr.
Journalism Guild Writer

The federal government uses traffic stop policies as way to combat crime, despite being proven to be ineffective and dangerous. A practice implemented by the Department of Transportation, which was originally designed for transportation safety. The war on drugs has been an essential part of all the government’s failures, and a result of mass incarceration, and policing across the United States. The original mandate of DOT was to regulate the auto industry and to promote vehicular safety innovations. This standard was left up to the police to regulate and

ultimately was transitioned into a crackdown on drug crimes, according to *the Hill*. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a sub-division of the DOT, has and trained local police departments in traffic stops under the pretext of combatting drug trafficking and violence criminals. The agency also assists the Drug Enforcement Agency’s “Whisper Program” , which allows a federal agency to “whisper” to local law enforcement agencies about potential persons of interest. Local agencies then find a pretext to stop or arrest that individual, the article stated. Even President Biden backs these traffic enforcement policies. The President’s Office

on National Drug Control Policy promotes and encourages perpetual police stops in so called “high-intensity drug trafficking areas”, which comprise roughly two-thirds of where all Americans live, noted the story. One of the examples of the racial disparities, was the traffic stop of Tyre Nichols, who was murdered by the Memphis Police Department. Nichols, the Memphis Police Department followe their training for low-level traffic stops, asserted the article. One study showed that out of the 3.4 million traffic stops conducted by 15 of the largest law enforcement agencies in the California, only 905 firearms were recovered, a rate of 0.03%.

The department’s practice of perpetual traffic stops led to the killing of Nichols. This country has a traffic safety crisis, the story stated. The opening of an investigation by the Department of Justice into Nichols’ murder is a necessary step in the right direction that will hopefully prevent another death during a routine police traffic stop. However, there is an indication from the Fayetteville, North Carolina Police Department, where the reduction of low-level traffic violations and recommitting on moving violations has not only reduced the number of crashes and fatalities, but also the racial disparities in who’s being pulled over, according to *the Hill*.

Black Attorney Generals discuss elimination of racial prejudice in criminal justice system

By Edward Che Renshaw
Journalism Guild Writer

Black Attorneys General use their prosecutorial discretion, in becoming prolific proponents of the criminal justice reform. At a time when the criminal justice system is has become the center of public conversation, the four Attorneys General sat down with the *Associated Press* and shared the challenges and the opportunities that they face in their roles, according to the *AP*. In the United States, a debate over race, criminal justice, and democracy are

intensifying amongst the public. These attorneys experience the perils of justice systems, in regards to policing, and the underserved communities of color. According to Andrea Campbell attorney general of Massachusetts, she elaborated, that the public has an expectation of the Black attorneys general. They expect them to weed out the systemic bias in criminal and civil prosecution, and focus on the communities of color reorganization of being over policed, yet under protected, noted the article. After the prosecution of former Minneapolis Police

“You don’t solve crime unless you have communities that trust that they can go to law enforcement...”

—Kwame Raoul
Attorney General for Illinois

Officer Derek Chauvin for the highly publicized, murder of George Floyd. Keith Ellison Minnesota’s attorney general confessed to the press during his interview, to seeing mixed progress on criminal justice reform, since Floyd’s death. Ellison goes on to tell the

press, that it is his belief that in order to advance reform in the criminal justice system, attorney general involvement is “probably” needed at both the state and local levels, reported the *Press*. “If we’ve made a change it’s been incremental.” Ellison said. Anthony Brown says his top priority as Maryland’s attorney general, is decreasing racial inequalities in the incarcerated population of his state. He plans to do this through a multifaceted collaboration with state and local police and civil organizations, to reduce crime and disparate

Holistic approach to legal justice saves prison time

Advocates of pilot program successfully prevent 'five-thousand years of jail and prison time'

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

Underfunded, understaffed, and overworked, public defenders serve 80% of all people charged with a crime in America, *The New Yorker* reports. To ease this burden, Partners for Justice, or P.F.J., has launched two pilot programs, which have shown notable success, according to the article. The pilot programs, one in the state of Delaware and the other in Alameda County, Calif., use a holistic approach to criminal defense that “benefits the accused, their families, the community, and the public at large,” Sue Halpern wrote in the story. “If you are a defender practicing in an office where there are only criminal-defense attorneys, it’s like being in a hospital with no nurses,” said P.F.J.’s co-founder and co-executive director Emily Galvin-Almanza, a former public defender in Santa Clara County, Calif., and in the Bronx.

“If you are a defender practicing in an office where there are only criminal-defense attorneys, it’s like being in a hospital with no nurses.”

—Emily Galvin-Almanza
P.F.J.’s co-founder and co-executive director

According to the article, the program employs advocates dedicated to improving the results of defendants not only in court but also over the long term. P.F.J.’s unique approach of “collaborative defense” allows for a collaborative effort that places defendants at the same table as advocates and the legal team. One aspect of “collaborative defense” focuses on storytelling. The craft creates a “persuasive account of a defendant’s circumstances,” that enables obtaining benefits and social services and even housing — the kind of benefits that add stability to a life, said *The New Yorker*. Such stories end up in “mitigation packages” that may also include letters that attest to a defendant’s character. The article illustrated an example of a young defendant with a first-ever contact with police for whom a P.F.J. advocate gathered 40 such letters within a week and wrote a narrative so convincing that the prosecutor dropped the charges. Galvin-Almanza told *The New Yorker*, “We really, really want to live in a world where by 2030 you can’t find a public-defense agency that’s only doing criminal defense — where everybody has these capabilities to problem-solve and address the underlying drivers of

crime and also help their clients avoid incarceration and find better opportunities.” In the late 1990s, Galvin-Almanza worked at the Bronx Defenders, a New York City group who provided similar aid in the South Bronx. The article cited a study conducted by the RAND Corporation, a public policy research organization, and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, which found that “defendants represented by the Bronx Defenders spent more than a million fewer days behind bars, and well more than four-thousand people avoided jail time entirely.” According to Galvin-Almanza, in Delaware, nearly 90% of cases covered by mitigation memos had resulted in no jail or prison time, and more than 70% of P.F.J. clients had their charges dropped, saving an estimated 600 years of prison time. Galvin-Almanza said, “I became a public defender because I couldn’t imagine myself waking up in the morning knowing there’s somebody sitting in jail, and I’m in a position to do something that could help bring them home. How could I not do this?” *The New Yorker* reported that the success of the pilot project has placed client advocates in every Delaware county. The program, initially backed by philanthropy, has since recieved public funding from the state. Estimates indicate that these programs “have prevented five thousand years of jail and prison time and, since this program reduces incarceration, it creates the option for jurisdictions to reduce their spending on jails. Every dollar spent on the P.F.J. program, then, creates the possibility of saving three to six dollars from the cost of operating a facility.”



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

The Greater Good Emsemble performs at many San Quentin concerts and events.

Concert celebrates full spectrum of genres

By Stuart Clarke
Journalism Guild Writer

San Quentin residents and guests gathered in Chapel A on December 2 and were treated to a concert of 15 songs that celebrated the spectrum of American music.

The overflow crowd enjoyed songs that ranged from 18th century English folk music, to 1950s Blues, to 1980s Punk Rock. Filling the gaps were Mexican Mariachi, Motown, and Native American flutes, which mesmerized the audience. That number crescendoed into the theme of the 1992 movie, "Last of the Mohicans."

The Greater Good Ensemble, composed of keyboards, guitars, violins, drums and more, provided the entertainment. All members of the ensemble are resident musicians of SQ.

The concert opened with a toe-tapping Appalachian/Old Timey version of an English folk song performed by Nicholas "Hippie" Hagerty. It was reminiscent of a merger of Riverdance and Bluegrass, and received an immediate standing ovation.

"I sang for the Music Cambia program last year," said Hagerty. "My Favorite music is reggae and bluegrass. I like to be able to give something to people that makes them feel good about themselves. It's nice to be able to give back," he added.

The entire audience joined in on "Guantanamo," which

"It's a real blessing to work with people who want music in their lives. I think the time is right for rehabilitation through music."

—John Zeretzke

started off traditionally Cuban and transitioned into a pseudo Latin Rock version heavy on percussion that earned a second standing O. The Blues band took everyone on a journey to New Orleans.

Lisa Canin from the Rodef-Sholom congregation in San Rafael was a guest in attendance with two friends. Her group has been coming to SQ once each month for over five years. They bring instruments for the musicians and sing with them in the Jewish chapel, supported by many of the band members.

"I'm here to be blown away by the music and musicianship," she said, admitting that this was her first time to enjoy a public event here.

The ear-drum-shattering tribute to the Ramones registered on the Richter scale and had everyone rocking.

"I loved it! I've come to all of their concerts. I'm impressed with all the talent of the men at SQ. I enjoy being able to come and listen to it with my community," said resident John Levin. "Minor Swing was my favorite," a hot tune by Django Reinhardt.

Resident Amos Carter

sang a Marvin Gaye classic, "What's Going On," which was a tribute to the pain and suffering experienced by people worldwide.

For over a year, resident Gordon "Flash" Kimbrough has been their drummer. He said the band evolved into an ensemble, then a symphony.

"Everyone brings a different element to the Greater Good," said Kimbrough. "We blend different styles of music; that's what makes it fun."

Resident John Zeretzke, designated music clerk for the Jewish congregation, is the creative force of the ensemble. He began playing the violin at age 10, trained at UCLA's Ethnomusicology, and studied cultural music of the world. Afterwards he was a professional violinist, composer, and studio musician and director.

"It's a real blessing to work with people who want music in their lives. I want and hope to start a violin program here at SQ. I think the time is right for rehabilitation through music," said Zeretzke.

The spectacle came full circle and ended with a Gypsy-Spanish arrangement of an ancient tune, "Greensleeves," which dates back 450 years to medieval England.

"I loved seeing the smiles on everyone's faces, not just members of the audience, but the musicians as well," said Rabbi Paul Shleffar. "It is evident that they care for each other within this musical ensemble and community they have formed."

TAMING OF THE CREW

Residents address common societal issues in performance of popular Shakespearian play

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

Fifty guest watches as the words trust, pride, worth, control, duty, and power are held on large sheets of paper against the chest of six San Quentin residents while a narrator tells the story of values during the Shakespeare's Taming of the crew, a spin-off from Taming of the Shrewd.

John Ray Ervin, Sr. read "Bear My Soul" sharing about the loss of his son, other relatives, and friends to violence. He thanked "Mama K" and the Marin Shakespeare family for their support over the years.

"These are the long caring people who have helped pick me up," said Ervin.

Jesse Renteria dedicated his reading to his brother who went to a Christian retreat. "The moral of the story is to change your life."

Of the 25 guest who visited San Quentin from near and far, one man traveled from Oregon and this was his first time at the prison. He expressed how moved he was by all the performances.

Residents read poetry and performed short pieces like "Anger Transformation" performed by Steve Drown who discussed anger and his journey with it after 46 year incarcerated.

"Me Too Who" was a piece about five people who ended up in a bar debating about gender roles. The play took a deep look into relationships and the obstacles of maintaining friendships after the romance is over.

Wayne "Belize" Villafranco played the Congo drums as the history of his life growing up in Belize was narrated in the background.

"Music helps us Belizeans keep our spirits up," he noted.

Resident performer Kolby talked about this being the first time he participated in something like this and how it has impacted his life.

"I've never done Shakespeare before. Someone talked me into it four years ago and I loved it," he said. Adding how grateful he is for all the people who come into San Quentin giving him the opportunity.

Mike Camacho performed a piece titled "Daydreaming," a piece about looking in the eyes of love. During his performance he laid on the floor.

"Have I been laying down gazing upon your eyes? I'm trying to find a way to break free. Help me find a way to break free. Your eyes are swallowing me. Your eyes keep smothering me. It feels as I am sleepwalking. Every second, every minute, every hour, every day, it never ends. It never ends. It never ends," he concluded.

Kelon Williams sang "Falling" where he talked about being that support that another person may need in those lowly times.

"You can have it all, and I will catch you if you fall."

Bruce Bowman wanted to encourage others to participate in the performing arts.

"It helped to teach me discipline and being able to work with groups and it brought out my creativity. 'I would have never tried doing something like this,' said Bowman. Adding, "Show up and give it a chance."

American Library Association pushes for reimagining of American prison libraries

By Gordon Kimbrough
Journalism Guild Writer

An effort is being made to reimagine America's prison libraries as librarians, educators, and social service practitioners work to address core social issues leading to imprisonment, and increase inclusivity in information access.

In 2021, the American Library Association created a task force uniting correctional facility librarians and institutional stakeholders to begin revising library standards in U.S. prisons. The standards, which haven't been updated since 1992, and are being changed to increase inclusivity and account for women, LGBTQIA+ folks, people with special needs, and foreign nationals.

The ALA will also account for people's literacy needs

"All are welcome to inquire and or submit to the new Standards and will be viewed by various libraries, shareholders, and readers."

—American Library Association

regardless of where they are held in custody — be it prison, jail, detention facilities, juvenile facilities, prison work camps, immigration facilities, or segregated units within facilities. According to the ALA, these standards will cover people incarcerated at both public and private institutions, in both civilian and military capacities, and will be required in the United States and its territories.

The standards, currently titled "Library Standards for Adult Correctional

Institutions," will be retitled "Standards for Library Services for Incarcerated and Detained Individuals." In 2022, various agencies and stakeholders convened in Washington, D.C. for a discussion about the realities of the new changes and guidelines, noted the ALA. The event centered individual testimonies of how difficult it can be for incarcerated people to access information, and the takeaways from the convening have helped inform the drafting of the new guidelines.

Ultimately, the ALA hopes to build a platform that will cater to the needs of incarcerated people in the United States and its territories. It seeks to integrate feedback from currently and formerly incarcerated people, and others impacted by the carceral system.

Mount Tamalpais College hosts annual Research Showcase

Event provides opportunity for students to present academic papers

Mount Tamalpais College hosted its 2023 Research Showcase highlighting work by San Quentin residents and faculty members.

The event began with a screening of the PBS documentary "College Behind Bars" that featured Bard Prison Initiative alumnus Rodney Spivey-Jones and Tamara "Triizzy" Barley.

The film explores ways in which the benefits of education can overcome issues of injustice and racism through the lens of human stories of men and women struggling to obtain their college degrees in prison. A panel discussion followed the screening.

"The power of education is the one thing that is very important. It doesn't matter what category we occupy at the moment — we are human," said Spivey-Jones.

BPI's pilot program has provided 12,000 incarcerated men and women with an

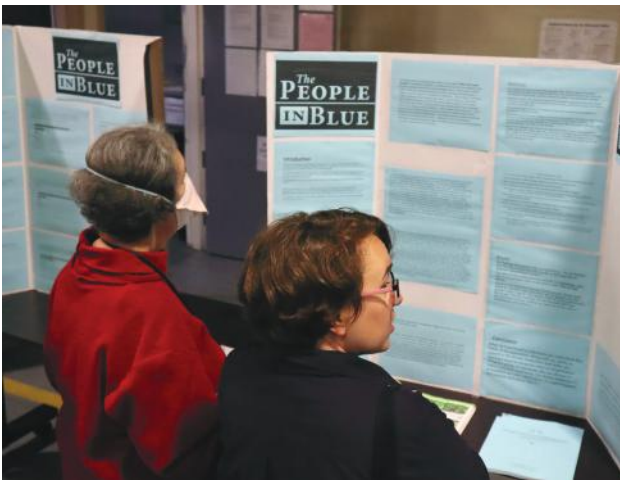
opportunity to gain higher education degrees. Spivey-Jones and Barley played active roles in the video and contributed to the panel.

Anthony Annucci, one of the executive directors of the program, discussed the importance of providing educational opportunities for incarcerated persons.

"I'm saving taxpayer dollars," he said.

Thirty attendees asked about requirements of graduating from BPI. Spivey-Jones talked about senior projects required to obtain degrees. He said most students wrote papers on critical areas of interest like migration, civil rights, and the impact of incarceration.

The film shows formerly incarcerated persons from institutions outside California relating their experiences in the criminal legal system and the effects the BARD program had on their lives.



Dante D. Jones // SQNews

Outside guests peruse the many presentations residents displayed.

"I didn't come to prison to go to college. If I had to choose to go to college, I would not do it," said one participant in the BPI prison program.

Participants in the program acquired skills like resumé building, ways of discussing incarceration, and how to overcome social stigma after release.

After the video, the panel opened up to questions about

research, college aspirations, continued education, past experiences with education, and goals for future accomplishments. The panel talked about doors that close because of prison records.

One participant in the film spoke about college and the how he came to attend the program.

A mother in the program opened up about the nine years she did in prison



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Resident Milton Alcantara explains his study to visitors.

because of the choices she made staying in an abusive relationship, ending with the death of her two-year-old daughter.

"I just want to be better and do better. I don't want my daughter's death to be in vain."

—Bostyon Johnson

Photos by Aristeo Sampablo // Dao Ong // SQNews



Thomas T. ▲



Travis George ▲



Paul Stauffer ▲



Robert Ortiz ▲



Peter Thao ▲



Clark Gerhartsreiter ▲



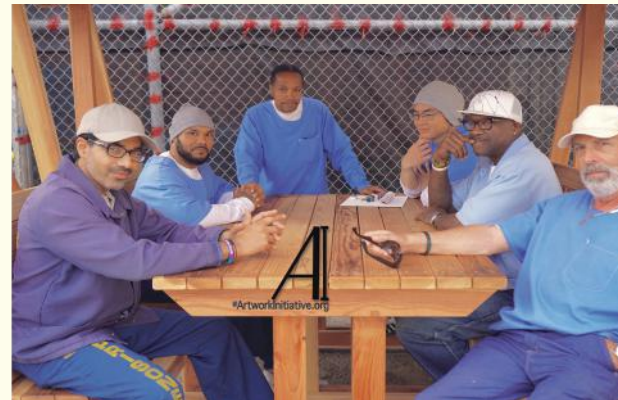
Daniel V. Le ▲



Luciano Borjas ▲



Mark A. Cadiz ▲



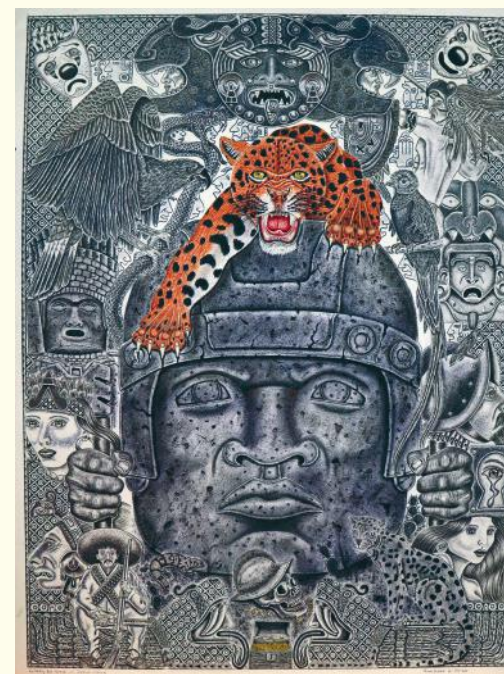
The staff of Artwork Initiative who organized the event. ▲



Jason Jackson ▲



The Greater Good ▲



SAMUEL MARQUEZ ▲



Jessie Milo ▲



Jessie Milo ▲

ART EXPO 2024 ART EXPO

Continued from page 1

San Quentin residents showcase artistic talents in first-of-its-kind art expo

industry, universities, foundations, government agencies, corporations, and non-profit organizations.

"I've seen incredible images. It adds character to the persons who created their pieces," said outside guest Nancy, a representative from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Arts. "It takes us to different times and places. This is my first time here at San Quentin, and I will recommend my associates to come to future art events here at San Quentin."

The Art Expo was geared to give the outside community a chance to see how they could support the incarcerated artists with job opportunities, while the residents are using their skills toward rehabilitation. Through the Artwork Initiative, the group goal is to help lower the recidivism rate by being a bridge to employment for incarcerated artist once they are released, no matter the genre of art.

"How come there is no prison to employment for people in the arts, or the infrastructure to support such a thing?" said Comundoiwilla, about his chance encounter with Gov. Gavin Newsom, who was on a tour of San Quentin to announced the prison

renaming to a rehabilitation center.

Comundoiwilla said, the governor introduce him to Chris Applegate, the deputy advisor, who said that he had great questions — [so] "create some answers for me." That's how the Artwork Initiative and Art Expo was created and organized, said Comundoiwilla.

"I received a lot of exposure," said resident artist Luciano Borjas, who showcased his Chicano cultural art. "I'm blessed to have this opportunity and give thanks to God for the gift of art."

Resident Jeffrey Isom's paintings "Against Asian Hate" and "Bridge to Freedom" impressed the patrons with the deep detail fiery flames and hidden layers of with the pictures.

"My hope is that this Art Initiative brings about the necessary changes and awareness that prisoners may face in the labor market," said Isom.

The event attendance consisted of more than 75 outside visitors and 325 residents that mingled throughout the art reviews, panel discussions, and concerts that featured a diverse line up of Rock, Hip-Hop and classical. The groups included the incarcerated:

The Greater Good, and a Jazz session performed by formerly incarcerated Reggie Austin. All the musicians received standing ovations.

"I traveled from New York to see this AI Art Expo," said Emily Nonko, co-founder of Empowerment Avenue. "I support incarcerated writers through my organization Empowerment Avenue. This is the big one that we have been supporting."

"Working through phone contacts and visiting rooms, it's nice to meet individuals in person," she added. "The incredible creativity — so few people don't have access to an event like this and it is very powerful."

Rowena, a secretary for Assemblywoman Mia Bonta added, "It's so beautiful to be here. I feel so engaged with the humanization aspect of the artwork," said Bonta. "I will take back with me good things from here to the people of my community. I'm brainstorming on how our community can be part of this [San Quentin AI Art Expo]."

Also, some former San Quentin residents, who have paroled, returned to support the event.

"Guest from some of the top

museums, funders of documentary films, Devy Ventures, and Nation Swell were blown away by the art and talent," said Rashaan "New York" Thomas, former SQ resident and Ear Hustle podcast host. "Now were working on the next step to create pathways to employment."

Resident artist Jeshurun Borders added, "They showed me another way of having doors open for me and of how to find a job when I get out."

The expo aimed to provide an inclusive platform that's supports, promotes, and protects the incarcerated artist community, their rehabilitation and their intellectual property.

"The San Quentin AI was brought to me by Shorty. This is the first event of its kind," said Tammy Appling-Cabading, Secretary of the AI. "I've been here before for the Annual Public Reading. I'm in deep reflection with the individuals that have the gift and talents and creativeness. As someone coming from the outside and to see talents and to experience their talents is deeply healing."

Arsenio Leyva contributed to this article.

Mark Stanley-Bey ▼



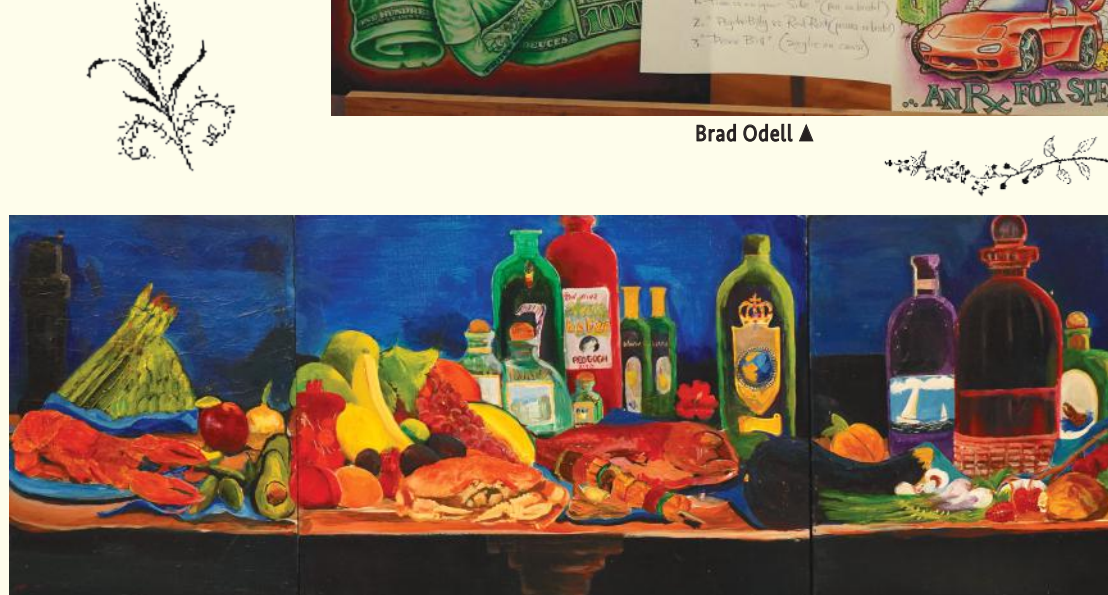
S. Moore ▼



S. Moore ▲



Ignacio Gutiérrez ▼



Ben Chandler ▲

Ben Chandler ▼



Jorge Cuevas ▼



Brad Odell ▲



Bruce Fowler ▲



Peter Thao ▲



Luciano Borjas ▲



Willie Flanigan ▲



Willie Flanigan ▼



Jeff Isom ▼



Richard Hernandez ▲



Jorge Ramirez ▲

NATIONAL

States nationwide admit rehabilitation and reentry services lower recidivism

By George Franco
Journalism Guild Writer

The recidivism rates across the country fluctuates significantly, because how the data is collected and presented to the public.

Recidivism data tracks the number of convicted offenders who engage in criminal activities after their released from prison, according to *Correction1*.

Reduced recidivism is the evidence of effective rehabilitation of individuals people formerly incarcerated.

”It is one of the metric that state correctional leadership and state community supervision leadership pay close attention to,” Green Lowe wrote to Stateline.

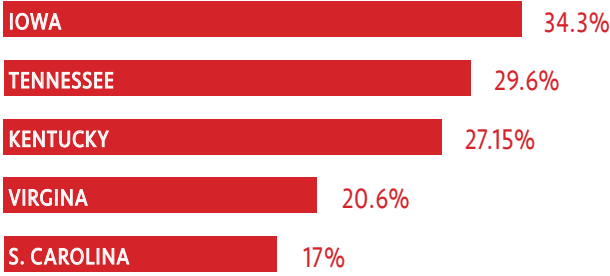
Several states reported

lower recidivism rates this year, Iowa, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia all pointed to reentry or other rehabilitative programs as part of the reason.

The statistics shows how rehabilitative, and reentry programs lower the number of reoffenders returning to prison. Some of those with a history of substance abuse, or other influencing factors such as population shifts or the recent impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, stated the article.

Politicians and officials use erroneous crime data as a good evidence of their success in rehabilitating criminals. In May, five months before Kentucky’s elections, Governor Andy Beshear announced at the news conference that the state had

RECIDIVISM RATES NATIONWIDE



Graph: Randy C. Thompson
Source: *Correction1*, "Lower recidivism rates reported in several states 2023. Among the states that reported lower recidivism, Iowa, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia all have pointed to reentry or other rehabilitative programs as part of the reason," Dec.17, 2023, Amanda Hernandez, www.stateline.org

achieved its lowest recidivism rate in history at 27.15% for incarcerated.

“When we get somebody who is leaving prison in a stable position, in a good job, with the services they need,

maybe in treatment if they need it, they are less likely to reoffend, which makes our communities safer,” Said Beshear. ”It means fewer crimes are happening.”

“It can harmful effects on

public understanding because the public believes they’re being they are being told something by a responsible person that directly assesses public safety, and recidivism does not measure public safety.” Jeffrey Butts told *Correction1*.

States this year have pointed to rehabilitation and reentry programs as major contributors to their drops in recidivism, In Iowa the recidivism rate for fiscal year 2023 stands at 34.3, down 2.7 points from last year.

Tennessee recidivism rate drop to 29.6% this year for people released in 2019, Virginia recidivism rate dropped to 20.6% including people released in 2018, including people who were re-incarcerated within three

years of release.

South Carolina had a low rate of 17%. ”It’s never one thing, but a combinations of interventions. The South Carolina Department of Corrections take a holistic approach based on the needs of the individual offender,” Christian department’s director wrote to Stateline. “It’s just not a true picture.”

Some states only consider felonies as recidivism, excluding less serious misdemeanor that may result in local jail time rather than a state prison sentence, and states categorizing crimes differently as felonies or misdemeanor.

Stateline is part of States Newsroom, a national non-profit news organization focused on state policy, according to *Correction1*.

WASHINGTON DC

First incarcerated woman voted into Advisory Neighborhood Commission

By William Burley
Journalism Guild Writer

A jail facility holds elections amongst its residents, in efforts to elect an incarcerated person to represent the local district.

The District of Columbia’s Department of Corrections held an election inside a jail facility where incarcerated registered voters elect one of their own to represent their district on the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, according to *the Washington Post*.

The Advisory Neighborhood Commission of the District of Columbia has more than 300 local elected officials that typically serve a few blocks of residents. The Correctional Treatment Facility, a part of the D.C. jail, covers enough area with enough residents to qualify for its own commissioner, stated the *Post*.

The elections are regularly held in the jail, and for the first time a female detainee has secured the position.



Instagram

Shameka Hayes

she will represent as a single-member for district 7F08 as the ANC commissioner. There are about 1,700 incarcerated people, only around 100 of which are women, noted the news.

In line with their mission of expanding suffrage, the League of Women Voters worked to register the incarcerated to vote. Too often individuals are pessimistic about their ability to make change amid government bureaucracy, according to Angie Whitehurst, a volunteer with the League

“Activities like this serve to encourage people. They know what they need and want,” she said.

A DOC statement declared that, among other

requirements, D.C. jail residents interested in running for ANC commissioner must have lived in the district for at least 60 days and must submit an interest form. Felony convictions can disqualify ANC candidates elsewhere, but not in district 7F08, stated the article.

Hayes has many concerns to address, such as, overcrowding, and rodents, poor ventilation, flawed response to suicide among detainees, asserted the story.

She is concerned about issues like parking for correctional officers. “When they’re unhappy, we’re unhappy,” Hayes said. “Their stress is redirected at inmates.”

Kent C. Bose, executive Director of Advisory neighborhood Commissioners, has said that the jail is not a place for long-term placement, but even when a commissioner cannot complete the two-year term, the elections are important. Hayes is no exception. She is awaiting trial and if exonerated or she makes a plea, she could be gone before her term ends, according to the article.

“As long as I’m here, I’m going to fight as long as I can,” Hayes stated.

ALABAMA

State legislature set to end judicial override of death penalty retroactively

By Jason Satterfield
Journalism Guild Writer

An Alabama State Legislature plans to end judicial override, which allows judges to choose an alternate prison sentence imposing the death penalty.

Rep. Chris England D-Tuscaloosa has proposed legislation, to insure those who received death sentences by judicial override, would be eligible for resentencing by the courts, according to the *Alabama Political Reporter*.

The judicial override is when a judge supersedes a jury sentencing decree, imposing the death penalty.

The Bill would permit people sentenced before June 1, 2024 to can appeal to sentencing for resentencing. England conveys if judicial override was wrong, people deserve resentenced, conveyed the article.

“And if we as a legislature determined that [judicial override] is wrong, which we did by passing a law to get rid of it, then we should afford the people who are serving on death row as a result of judicial override the opportunity

to be resentenced,” England said.

Kenneth Eugene Smith is that very person who was sentenced to death because of judicial override. A jury of his peers found him guilty in 2000, for the 1988 murder-for-hire of Elizabeth Sennett.

In a vote 11-1, the jury gave him life without parole, but the presiding judge used judicial override and invoked a death sentenced, asserted the story.

The DOC had tried once before to execute Smith. The first time was in Nov, 2022 using lethal injection, but there was an interruption that stopped the execution on July 2023.

Alabama is now the final state to abolish the judicial override; there are 30 people currently on Alabama’s death row because of this practice.

“Honestly, it’s a very complicated discussion,” England said. “Because quite honestly, the person we’re getting ready to execute by nitrogen gas and suffocate to death was sentenced by judicial override if I’m not mistaken...if we can recognize that maybe judges shouldn’t have unilateral power to sentence the

next logical step is that then we should also afford relief to those folks that have been sentenced that way.”

Alabama has issued a redacted decorum about the use, the training, and the storage of the gas. The Department of Corrections elaborated on how dangerous the gas can be, officials had Smiths spiritual advisor sign a document acknowledging the risk of viewing this execution, noted the news.

England focus was the problem of judicial override, to show that punishing and executing those found guilty has not fixed the problem within the criminal justice system.

The state of Alabama plans to spend more than \$1 billion on a new facility, which many people say will not solve the problem of prison overcrowding, violence or staff shortages.

The ACLU related in their “State House to Prison Pipeline” conclusions there were more than 140 Bills proposed disciplinary methods of the “carceral system,” according to the *Alabama Political Reporter*.

NATIONAL

U.S. shows largest-ever decline in homicides

By Jessie Milo
Journalism Guild Writer

In 2022, the United States experienced a considerable decrease in homicides, a trend that continued in 2023, positioning the country for one of the largest declines in homicides ever recorded, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

This is trend marks a shift from the rise in crime during 2020 and 2021, an unfortunate symptom of the pandemic, increased gun availability, and changes in policing strategies.

According to the FBI’s annual report, homicides fell by 6% in 2022, more than experts like Jeff Asher, a crime data analyst, had anticipated. Asher’s analysis predicts an 11-12% reduction in homicides nationwide in 2023, though the final figures may show a slightly smaller decrease of 7-10%, reported the *Times*.

Violent crime in general has also decreased, returning to pre-pandemic levels. This reduction aligns with the long-term trend of steady violent crime rates since 2011, despite occasional spikes in certain types of crimes like auto thefts.

California statistics are comparable to those across the country. According to data from the Public Policy Institute of California, 2022 saw a 6.1% decrease in homicides in

the state despite a 5.7% increase in violent crime overall the year before.

Based on data from the Los Angeles Police Department, violent crime in the city has decreased by almost 7% so far this year compared to the same period last year, according to the *Times*.

Despite these positive trends, the general public views things differently.

For years, Gallup has conducted Fall surveys on crime among Americans. According to a survey conducted last year, 56% of Americans reported that local crime has increased.

That is nearly always the case. According to Gallup, more Americans believed that crime had increased rather than decreased during the previous 24 years, with the years 2000, 2001, 2004, and 2018 being the exceptions. That was true even in the face of a dramatic national decline in crime that started in 1991, the year crime peaked, and lasted until 2011 for violent crimes and until 2020 for property crimes.

According to the *Times*, this disparity between perception and reality can be explained by the power of anecdotes. In a nation of almost 340 million people, there is a crime every hour of every day. Stories of these incidents are remembered, especially

if the details are graphic. Clear statistics are less effective at influencing people’s perceptions of the world than vivid stories.

Public perception is also skewed by the ready availability of crime images on social media. Pollster David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University polling center, said that every smash-and-grab incident “just amplifies in people’s minds that crime is out of control.”

The *Times* went on to report that the outdated and slow crime reporting system in the U.S. contributes to this disconnect, as does the localized nature of crime which sees some areas experience crime spikes even when the national trend is downwards.

Political influences also affect public perceptions of crime. Despite a nationwide decrease, certain groups continue to feel unsafe, often influenced by broader concerns of disorder. Those who advocate for stringent crime policies typically reside in safer areas but perceive high crime rates elsewhere.

Recent studies suggest a shift in public attitudes towards addressing crime, with a growing preference for preventative measures over punitive actions. This change is evident in recent election outcomes, where hardline crime policies have not been as effective.

ALASKA

Alaskan Tribes form pilot program to protect against non-native offenders

A pilot program authorizes Alaskan Tribes to exercise criminal justice over non-native offenders.

The 2022 Violence Against Women Act, gave Alaska Native Tribes legal jurisdiction over crimes, such as, sex trafficking, stalking, child violence, obstruction of justice, and assault, committed on Native American Land, according to the Office of Public Affairs.

The program was planned by the Alaska’s Native Tribes, and the United States Justice Department, to help the communities with their safety concerns.

“This week, I met with advocates, law enforcement, and care providers in Anchorage and Nome to discuss the acute crisis of sexual and domestic violence in rural Alaskan communities.” “VAWA...is an important step forward in ensuring Tribes can keep their communities safe from those offenses.” said Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta,

In June the Justice Department convened an Inter-departmental Program, the tribal consultation including representatives from the Department of Interior began in July.

Based on feedback received during those consultations, the working group wrote a three-track process

for the Pilot Program, meeting the requirements set forth in VAWA providing Tribes with requested support, noted the article.

Track one, Alaska Tribes will join the Inter-Tribal Technical Assistance, receiving assistance and peer to peer support, aided by an Violence Against Women Office awarded to the Alaska Native Justice Center in partnership.

Track two, in order to exercise special Tribal jurisdiction, and identifying the statutory gaps for especial criminal jurisdiction, any Alaska Tribe may become a preliminary pilot program.

Track three, Using the same questionnaire used for track two, an Alaska Tribe may pursue Attorney General Destination. After the staff review, may either recommended to Attorney General Destination or invited to participate in readiness activities under track two.

A Federal liaison is assigned to each Tribe, upon completing the questionnaire, who working together with the Technical Assistance Provider, will address the unmet requirements and eventually structuring their criminal justice capacity, according to the Office of Public Affairs.

—George Franco

HEALTH

SQ residents discuss impact of administration breaking Christmas meal tradition

By Dante D. Jones
Staff Writer

This holiday season the residents of San Quentin did not enjoy the traditional holiday meal.

Every year, for decades, residents at the Q have enjoyed a hefty holiday meal on Christmas day: a thick slice of real turkey, a slice of “turkey ham,” or chicken-on-the-bone, with all the fixings on the side—stuffing, real mashed potatoes and gravy, fresh sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie, or another festive dessert.

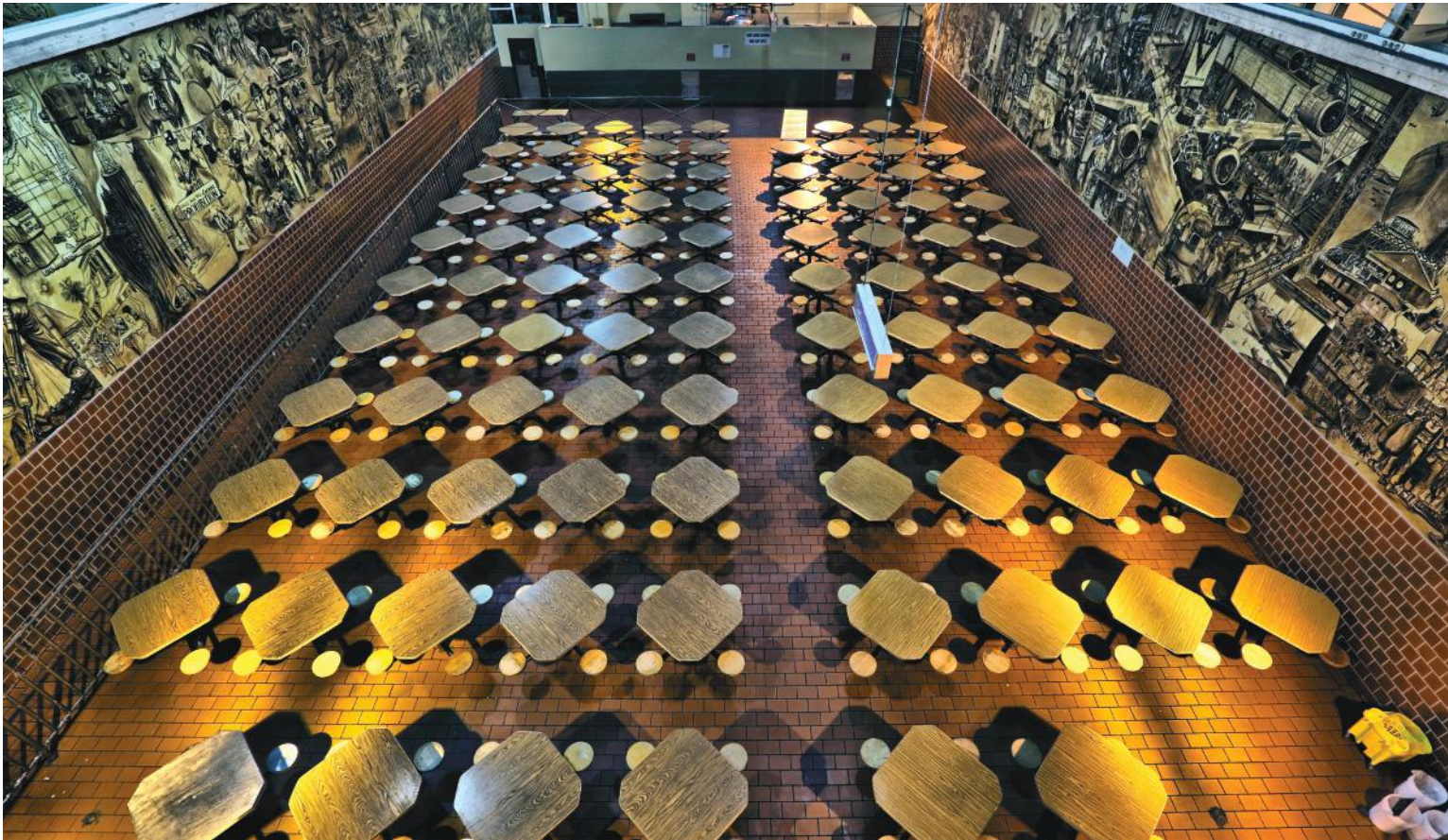
However, on Christmas day 2023, the traditional holiday meal was nowhere to be found. Instead, residents at the Q were served regular a meal—one that is served on a regular day: chicken Pozole with steamed rice and corn tortilla chips.

“It’s was a travesty,” said Raul Aguayo, a Hispanic resident, who expressed his complete disappointment. “It shouldn’t have even been called a holiday meal because there was nothing festive about it. I mean, don’t get me wrong, I love Pozole, but that was awful.”

Aaron Ramzy, a Black resident added, “I feel that it was wrong.” Ramzy has been at San Quentin for two years and said that each year he has been served the special meal on Christmas.

For some residents, the holiday meal is all they have to look forward to during that time of year. Being away from family — or for some, not having any family at all to connect with at that time of year — some residents felt that it was disheartening and a hit on the overall morale denying them the holiday meal.

“It was conveyed to me by administration that they want take a more inclusive approach to the Christmas



Courtesy CDCR // P. Jo

San Quentin's South Block dining hall.

holiday meal,” stated Cainen Chambers, the IAC chairman here at San Quentin.

Chambers said the IAC was told that the reason for the change was that the administration wants to take a more “cultural experience” approach to the Christmas meal.

“And so, they want to rotate cultural experiences so that’s why they

went with the Pozole,” said Chambers. “I mean, I’m all for inclusiveness as much as the next person ... but I love my turkey and peach cobbler.”

Ray Ochoa, a Mexican-American resident stated, “I think they should give a cultural meal on a cultural day. But not on Christmas because it’s for everybody.”

Chambers added that he is more

concerned about how the population here at the Q will interpret why “someone would take [away] our goodie bags with no explanation as to why.”

Traditionally, every Christmas when the meal is served, residents receive a paper goodie bag full of items not normally served throughout the year, such as candy, or some kind

of fruit pie, pound cake, or the like. These goodie bags were also absent during the Christmas meal.

“Going into 2024 and the California model, I don’t think that’s a good first step. It said a lot and I don’t think the population respects it,” Chambers said.

Both CDCR and the Food Manager declined to comment.

Prison meals serve ill effects on population

By Stuart Clarke
Journalism Guild Writer

Prison food can damage the long-term wellness of incarcerated individuals leading to chronic illnesses, cited an article in *Madison Pauly*.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports approximately 44% of federal and state incarcerated persons have experienced such chronic conditions as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart problems. This compares with 31% of the general population.

These illnesses are linked to obesity that stems from the highly processed and high carbohydrate institutional food.

Poor prison nutrition can exacerbate preexisting conditions suffered by the many incarcerated persons who disproportionately come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

This low-quality and non-filling prison diet causes them to purchase food from the commissary. However, these supplemental items include ramen noodles, Fritos and other chips, liquid cheese and chili beans. Prison residents combine these ingredients into a meal called a “spread.”

“It’s like a carrot and a stick,” said Jose Villarreal, who spent 10 years in solitary confinement at California’s Pelican Bay State Prison. “But even the carrot is dipped in poison,” he added, referring to the choice between commissary and prison food.

Dinners in “the hole” composed of mashed potatoes, bread, a slice of processed meat, no seasoning and were always cold. Vegetables ranged from eight string beans to 26 peas. “It became almost a joke,” he said.

Many corrections systems typically serve low-nutrient food to adhere to budget requirements and minimum



SQNews photo archive

Meal served in CDCR dining halls.

calorie quotas. The cost of each meal can range from about \$1.30 to as little as the 15 cents that Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio once bragged about.

Scandal-plagued private companies often serve high-starch meals. Meats are usually processed and fresh fruits are rare to help prevent the making of homemade alcoholic beverages, noted the article.

“This uninspiring diet is likely taking a toll on inmates’ health,” cited Madison Pauly. In 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determined that incarcerated persons are “6.4 times more likely to be sickened from spoiled or contaminated food than people on the outside.”

While correctional systems often skimp on food to save money, this practice costs taxpayers more in the end. An analysis by the Prison Policy Initiative discovered that health care is the second highest expense in public prisons behind staffing costs. This sets back government agencies billions of dollars annually.

The improvement of prison diets can reduce health care costs. One study showed that

incentivizing food stamp recipients to purchase more produce and fewer sodas could result in a health care cost savings of over \$4.3 billion in five years. It is estimated that taxpayers could save about \$500 million if similar policies were put into effect in prisons.

Savings on security costs would also ensue if the incarcerated were satisfied with their meals and not instigated to riot.

Nutritious prison food does not have to be more expensive. At one time, punitive farm labor in rural detention centers was commonplace. Small-scale prison agricultural programs could be established to enable persons to consume the products they have grown. Improved mental health, reduction in recidivism, and job skills result from these activities. Incarcerated individuals in Oregon have earned certificates in gardening, noted the article.

Villarreal traces his damaged eyesight and sleeping deficiency to the poor diet he was subjected to while incarcerated which made him physically less resilient. “If I had better, nutritious food, I think it would have helped me,” he said.

Uncuffed podcast launches extension at CIW

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

A Public Media platform, will be taking its award winning podcast to a women’s correctional facility in the Southern California.

The Uncuffed podcast will be carrying its tradition to inspire change, by expanding to California Institute for Women, in Chino Calif., according to *KALW Public Media*.

The podcast enables prison residents to elaborate on their personal stories, by expressing humanity, and encouraging transformation. Currently, the podcast program operates at San Quentin and Solano state prisons.

“It is critical for incarcerated [people] to tell their own story and have their own voice, shifting the narrative further,” said Ninna Gaensler-Debs SQ’s Uncuffed senior editor, told SQNews.

According to Angela Johnston SQ’s Uncuffed senior producer, she is enthusiastic to bring a story telling program to incarcerated women. She conveys, the voices of incarcerated women have been ignored for some time, and their stories need to be told, and heard.

“We hope that it will be empowering, knowledgeable, and a fun experience for the CIW participants,” Johnston said to SQNews. “And we know their voices will make a difference in so many lives, including their own.”

Johnston went on to say the women will get a similar chance to learn all about podcasting and storytelling, just like the men at SQ and Solano prisons.

In launching an extension of the podcast, Uncuffed is searching for someone to lead the development of training at the women’s facility.



Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

The Uncuffed podcast provides a platform for incarcerated voices.

The program prefers people who have experience coming inside of prisons, enabling inclusive learning settings, including the use of Pro Tools, Google Suite, Slack, Zoom, and Airtable for daily work, asserted the KALW article.

KALW explains, a work week will consist of 20 hours, 4 of instruction, 10 of administrative application, and six hours of travel.

The job pays an hourly wage, at \$57.50 an hour, and \$35.65 an hour for travel, with the expectancy to earn more than \$4,000 dollars a month, stated the news.

KALW Public Media, originally started its training at San Quentin State Prison in 2012, where the initial radio studio was established. It’s was led by SQ resident and co-founder Greg Eskridge, Ninna Gaensler-Debs, and Angela Johnston who came on aboard in 2013.

The co-founder revealed to SQNews how he feels in passing on the what he has learned to others.

“It is a privilege to know that I had an opportunity to pass my knowledge on to

some else, said Eskridge.

At a recent SQ Uncuffed graduation, two participants elaborated on their his gratefulness in participating in the program.

“I appreciate the opportunity to tell my story and others stories,” said program participant Steve Brooks. “I do what I do so society doesn’t forget about people behind these walls.”

The expansion will give the incarcerated women a voice, as it did for a SQ resident.

“KALW voices give us a voice; they represent who we are to society,” said graduate Juan Haines about the impact of the program.

The stories and conversations are shared around the world, inside the walls, and beyond. In addition to storytelling, Uncuffed helps the incarcerated participants learn audio recording and to edit interviews of other prison residents.

The *Uncuffed*, podcast is obtainable on the internet, and on Bay Area radio station, KALW 91.7 FM. The incarcerated can access the podcast on GTL tablets.

YOUTH

Youth offenders exonerated after decades of incarceration

By Edward Che Renshaw
Journalism Guild Writer

A Judges’ ruling of in two separate cases vindicates two Los Angeles men after decades behind bars. Giovanni Hernandez, he was exonerated, on the second submission of his case to the Conviction Integrity Unit of the District Attorney’s Office. He was represented by the Juvenile innocence and fair sentencing clinic at Loyola Law School, according to the *Associated Press*. Hernandez went through two trials before being found guilty in 2012 of the 2006 drive-by shooting of a 16-year-old boy, when he was 14 years old. Hernandez, was sentenced to 50 years to life in prison, and served 11 years before being freed. The DA’s Office released a statement saying, it was

“It’s truly devastating when people are wrongfully convicted... Mr. Hernandez was just 14 years old.”

—George Gascón

the testimony of witnesses who were never interviewed by Detectives. According to Hernandez’ phone records, he was not near the crime scene, reported the news. Miguel Solorio was convicted of the 1998 shooting death of an 81-year old woman and sentenced to life without parole, when he was 19 years old. Solorio served 25 years in prison before he was finally exonerated, noted the article. An attorney from the Northern California Innocence Projected representing Solorio, submitted a claim of



Giovanni Hernandez (center) with Maria Harris and Chris Hawthorn.

innocence to the CIU in 2021, based on new evidence that Solorio was misidentified in a photo line-up. According to the statement by the DA’s office, related the story. Apologies were given to both men in a news conference by George Gascón, Los Angeles’ District Attorney.

Gascón said, “It’s truly devastating when people are wrongfully convicted, especially when they were so young at the time of their arrest. In the case of Mr. Solorio, he was 19 years old. Mr. Hernandez was just 14 years old,” According to the *AP*.

Program uses offender-victim communication in restorative justice effort

By Charel VanVliet
Journalism Guild Writer

A restorative justice program, sheds light on the cause and effect of it developments, when it comes to communication. Restorative justice gives victims and perpetrators the opportunity to face one another in a controlled environment and address the cause and effect of an incident, according to Marin Independent Journal. In the sessions, perpetrators acknowledge their wrongdoing and victims voice their anger and pain, and ultimately for all parties to find a resolution. “Everyone would like to give restorative justice a chance here,” wrote Marin County Superior Court Judge Beverly Wood in an e-mail to Don Carney, executive director of Youth Transforming Justice program. She referred to an incident from October 19, 2022, between a Marin Redwood High School student James Brahnham and his social studies teacher Derek DeNardo, stated the article. James Brahnham 17 was arrested, facing legal consequences over an altercation with Redwood High school, which the incident was caught on camera. “I very much appreciated James’ willingness to participate and be vulnerable,” wrote DeNardo in an email to the judge. Brahnham and DeNardo’s restorative justice circle

coincided with Brenham’s 18th birthday on November 18, 2022. Both Carney and Wood agreed that putting Brahnham through the legal gauntlet would lead to a detrimental outcome and that restorative justice would make a better course, asserted the news. The program’s founder conveyed the process would reveal empathy and compassion once both parties overcame their initial mistrust and suspicion. “I would like to reiterate my support for the restorative plan that we agreed to today,” said Carney. “I do not want James to be charged with any crimes related to the incident. I support his return to Redwood High as soon as possible.” DeNardo and Brahnham ended the session in an emotional embrace, each acknowledging the other’s point of view, reported the MIJ. Marin County schools approve of restorative justice circles to varying degrees, saying students respond positively. Youth Transforming Justice provides training for staff and students alike. The County’s school Superintendent concede that as effective as the restorative circles are, they are not considered an alternative to discipline, but rather after appropriate action has been taken. Used in the aftermath of incidents, the circles serve to repair harm, give voice to victims and perpetrators to acknowledge the harm caused, according to the Marin Independent Journal.

Impacts of incarceration on families revealed in HPI study

By William Burley
Journalism Guild Writer

A new study reveals that having an incarcerated family member can cause serious and long-lasting health and economic harm across generations. The Health Policy Institute of Ohio found that that having an incarcerated member of a household is an “adverse childhood experience,” according to the *Highland County Press*. HPIO found that children in families with a history of incarceration face increased of incarceration themselves, beginning with the juvenile justice system. Seeking

additional focus on the oversight of learning programs, the article suggests that there are ways to educate children on life skills especially in stressful situation, the report noted. “Poor community conditions ... and exposure to racism and discrimination increase the risk of criminal justice involvement, drive poor health outcomes and create disparities and inequities in both,” the study’s executive summary reads. HPIO formerly found that children from homes where an adult was incarcerated saw an increased risk of poverty and housing insecurity, and were more likely to develop a

learning disability or to have emotional growth and maturity delays. The article reported that HPIO also identified fundamental causes of incarceration unrelated to criminal activity that could instigate involvement with the justice system. The study asserted that low-income people and communities of color are more likely to face policing practices like community surveillance, stop-and-frisk searches, and racial profiling, which leads to high rates of interaction with the justice system. The study also found that the re-entry process can also affect household health. Restrictions

to employment, housing, education, professional licenses, and civic participation can prolong the effects of incarceration on children. The institute recommended that policymakers shift funds to bolster mentoring and social-emotional programs to support affected children to “manage emotions and tackle life’s challenges.” “There are evidence-informed policy and program solutions to prevent and break generational cycles of justice-involvement, support children and families who have an incarcerated parent and improve community health and safety,” HPIO concluded.



By Pheng Ly
Staff Writer

Dear Readers, It is important that we, the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s Kid CAT group revisit our history to give those of you who a just arrived into the prison system recently, awareness of what this self-help group is and what we do concerning rehabilitation. Kid CAT (Creating Awareness Together) began in 2010 when a group of men came together because of shared opinions that they would like to see a change in the process of the Board of Parole Hearings. Over time, their opinions and ideas evolved, not limiting ourselves to simply wanting to see change, but progress the idea of wanting to be part of the change that we want to see. This group of juvenile lifers, men who committed their life crimes when they were between the ages of 14-25 and were sentenced as adults, came together on San Quentin’s yard to meet and discuss how to navigate the prison system and change existing laws around juvenile justice and the way the parole board treated these men. Out of these first meetings, an idea was born to start a group that created awareness about what the

Revisiting Kid CAT's history from its beginings to today

juveniles faced. With the help of San Quentin’s administration and volunteers from the outside community, Kid CAT was formed. Together, Kid CAT aims to restore the communities that as youth offenders have harmed through their poor choices in life. The members of Kid CAT represent a specific population of inmates in prison who are not only capable of being part of change, but who are an accurate representation of change itself. Today, we have matured into a community that cares for others, is responsible to others and who is accountable for our own actions. Naturally, the harmony of our group was not always present; it has, like everything in life, we have taken all of our efforts to work together to achieve our goals that we have recognized to be much larger than who we are. Part of being who we are, and being a part of change, we recognized the importance of getting involved with the inside and outside community by offering our services and resources to the youth who are in need of assistance. At San Quentin, with the innovative mind and support from dedicated outside volunteers and facilitators, Kid CAT has created a number of rehabilitative programs such as First- Step Curriculum and the Juvenile Lifers Support Group to help serve the general population. We are grateful for the opportunity to develop a strong partnership with Project Avary, Huckleberry House, The Beat Within, and other organizations to build a safer community. Thanks largely to the contributions and generosity from the men at San Quentin, together, we will continue to serve the community in a positive way.



SQNews photo archive

Founding members of Kid CAT, in 2011.

Since that time, Kid CAT has expanded to include men who committed their crimes at a young age. In 2013, the group was restructured to allow men who completed The First Step Curriculum and qualified to be a part of the group. Kid CAT has also grown in its dedication to giving back to the communities we once harmed. The group’s transformation to being of service to these communities is now a driving force behind many of the projects we are involved in. The mission of Kid CAT is to inspire humanity through education, mentorship, and restorative practices. Kid CAT envisions that all youth can be guided through nurturing, compassion, and education to grow up into caring productive members of their communities. The values if Kid CAT is

accountability, compassion, education, restorative, dedication, and community. The members of Kid CAT are made up of diverse backgrounds. We differ in the ways of communication, the ways in which we view the world, and how we navigate through our explorations of self-discovery. It is with our shared differences that we have come together and have bonded in one similarity: “We all received a lengthy or life sentence for crimes that we committed during our adolescent years.” Today, we ask you to allow us the opportunity to share with you a look into our lives and yours. We invite you to walk with us and hopefully connect the dots and bring you understanding into your causative factors, which contributed to you committing your life crime. For our San Quentin youth

offender resident’s, if you would like more information into our First Step and the Juvenile Lifer Support Group Curriculums, we encourage you to write to us at ‘Kid Speaks’ by sending us a simple letter addressed to the San Quentin News Media, we’ll do our best to answer your questions and provide you with the information you requested. For those of you from other institutions, if you are interested in starting your own Kid CAT group with our By-laws and 1st Step and Juvenile Lifer Support Groups curriculums, you can request them by getting in touch with your Community Resource Manager (CRM) and have him/her, reach out to San Quentin’s PIO (Public Information’s Officer) Correctional Lieutenant G. Berry and request for a copy of our group materials. Thank you. Kid Speaks.

EDUCATION



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

MASTER’S DEGREES NOW OFFERED, BUT NOT (YET) FREE

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

A few years ago, professor Matthew Luckett recognized an opportunity to break new ground. California’s shift from tough-on-crime policies to rehabilitative programs that reduce recidivism gave him an incentive to push for a program that would let incarcerated students earn master’s degrees.

Luckett is a professor at Cal State University Dominguez Hills. He worked with his university to form a partnership with the CDCR, and the program has since grown to 31 incarcerated students, according to an article by Hannah Wiley in the *Los Angeles Times*. Luckett now serves as the program’s director.

“I want us to be groundbreaking. Not just the first, but groundbreaking, and on the cutting edge,” Luckett told the *Times*, adding, “This is very much a pilot program. We’re kind of feeling our way through the dark right now, trying to see what works and what doesn’t. It’s a process.”

Some of the credit for the program’s origin belongs to Darrell Dortell Williams, 57, an incarcerated student at Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe.

At graduation from high school several decades ago, a guidance counselor had told Williams that his 2.85 grade-point average would label him as “not college material.”

That label had sent Williams on a road of “a lot of horrible decisions,” he told a *Times* reporter. “I felt rejected,” Williams said.

Since receiving a sentence of life without the possibility of parole for his 1992 murder of his wife, Williams has proved the counselor wrong by earning four associate’s degrees from Coastline Community College and a

“They have a responsibility, a moral responsibility and a fiscal responsibility, to provide resources and services that help incarcerated people rebuild their lives.”

—Romarilyn Ralston
Executive Director of Project Rebound

bachelor’s degree in communications studies from Cal State Los Angeles, the article said.

The five degrees did not satisfy Williams. He wanted to keep studying, though he saw no future degrees available to him, the article said. He wrote many letters to colleges that had asked about launching a master’s degree program for incarcerated students, most of which resulted in nothing but rejections. Other incarcerated students had found themselves in the same predicament.

One of Williams’ letters had reached Luckett, who urged Williams and other students to keep pushing for such a program, according to the article. They wrote letters and launched surveys in which they identified the kind of classes they wanted.

Their work had paid off three years later, said the *Times*. Cal State Dominguez Hills and the CDCR agreed to restart a master’s degree program discontinued in 1974.

The article said that incarcerated students who “have a bachelor’s degree and graduated with a minimum 2.5 grade-point average” may apply to the Dominguez Hills Cal State master’s program.

The incarcerated students have to clear one more hurdle. “The degree costs roughly \$10,500, which students or their families must pay,” said the *Times*, adding that the CDCR makes available certain

taxpayer funded financial aid. Cal State Dominguez Hills also provides financial aid and accepts donations to cover tuition.

The program has two out-of-state students, one on a private scholarship and another who self-funded his participation. All other students received financial aid that covered their entire tuition and the cost of books.

Pell Grant funding for incarcerated students might also apply, said the article. In 1994, Bill Clinton’s federal crime bill “cut and decimated college options for those behind bars,” the article said, but as of July 2023, incarcerated students again have full access to Pell Grants.

The article said Romarilyn Ralston goes a step further and suggests that funding for the program should not fall on the university or the students and their families, but solely on the CDCR.

“They have a responsibility, a moral responsibility and a fiscal responsibility, to provide resources and services that help incarcerated people rebuild their lives,” Ralston said.

Ralston, the executive director of Project Rebound, a college program for formerly incarcerated persons, said the CDCR should use some of the \$14 billion allocated in this year’s budget to invest in educational opportunities.

Ralston called education one of the best ways to lower recidivism, the article said. The article also mentioned a 2013 study by RAND Corporation, a nonpartisan research organization, which said incarcerated persons who participated in education programs had lower odds of returning to prison.

In 2023, over 800 incarcerated students received associate’s degrees, the CDCR told the *Times*, and another 17 incarcerated students earned bachelor’s degrees.

SkunkWorks presents study on gaming

By Stuart Clarke
Journalism Guild Writer

Incarcerated members of San Quentin SkunkWorks conducted research on the effects of tabletop and role-playing games in prison and gave a first-of-its-kind presentation to the 2023 National Conference of Higher Education in Prison last November.

“Skunkworks” is a term used in business, engineering, and technical fields to describe a small group of innovators working together on a world-changing project. SQSW is a nonprofit innovation lab working at the intersection of criminal justice and reform.

The organization combines the insight and ideas of incarcerated people with the expertise of professionals. Their mission, transforming prison culture, facilitating successful reentry, and reducing recidivism.

The innovation lab is composed of two parts. The Impact team is made up of volunteer SQ residents, and is the heart of the organization. They work in tandem with the Operations team, which is comprised of formerly incarcerated people and “top-tier” professionals who run the organization’s operations from the outside.

Current SQ resident Kai Bannon and former resident Kyle Winchell are the co-founders of SQSW.

“We believe that every person has an inherent potential waiting to be realized. Through a blend of mentorship, skill development, self-reflection, and trauma-informed support, we provide the tools and environment for profound self-discovery and growth,” Bannon said.

Winchell is currently a board member on the Operations team, acting treasurer and secretary, and SQSW’s web designer.

“After my release, my experiences at San Quentin were both an inspiration and a driving force behind founding SkunkWorks,” Winchell said.

SQSW’s latest project, a milestone event conducted in coordination with Mt. Tamalpais College, was a significant advancement in criminal justice reform that spotlighted the potential of incarcerated individuals to contribute to meaningful change through their lived experience.

The pioneering research was conducted by the Impact team, which dove deep into the effects of gameplay on incarcerated people’s behavior and social dynamics in prison settings. The study



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

SkunkWorks' inside team at the 2023 MTC Research Showcase.

began with a comprehensive literature review that examined existing research on the pro-social effects of games.

“Games are not only a source of entertainment but also a powerful tool for empowerment, skill development, and positive change,” reads the SQSW brochure.

In addition, Bannon cited research indicating that tabletop and roll-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons “can increase creativity, social interaction, and empathy.”

The Impact team investigated the social and racial segregation that abounds with the California prison system. One of the few places where racial segregation is typically not evident is at gaming tables.

“Games bring people together. They create a space where people of different races, gender identities, and affiliations congregate freely,” Bannon said.

Academic researchers have proposed a theory known as the “contact hypothesis,” which theorizes that the convergence of four conditions can reduce prejudices between different social groups. These conditions are: 1) equal status among participants; 2) common goals that require collaboration; 3) intergroup cooperation without competition; and, 4) support from authorities or social norms.

The Impact team conducted a survey composed of semi-structured interviews among the SQ population to compliment the research results they studied. They designed open-ended and broad-based questions that covered players’ motivation for game participation, the effects on pro-social behavior experienced, and the amount of time engaged in game play.

The team’s in-house investigation concurred with the academic research. They discovered that the impact of

roll-playing games on residents they surveyed aligned with the contact hypothesis by meeting the four conditions. This gave a compelling explanation for the social integration of the gaming tables.

Interestingly, the highest increase in pro-social scores occurred between one who does not play at all and one who plays occasionally. This indicates that even limited gaming results in positive outcomes and pro-social benefits.

Research results were submitted to NCHEP. Bannon was then invited to give a 15-minute video presentation, recorded by Mt. Tam, which was played at the 2023 conference in Atlanta. The presentation was not just about displaying findings; it was a powerful statement about the capabilities and contributions of incarcerated people to academic research and prison reform.

Eventually, SQSW intends to introduce more games — through its game donation drive — into prisons to promote teamwork, effective communication, and the development of social skills.

Beyond gaming, SQSW is also developing PathLight, an online reentry initiative aimed at supporting formerly incarcerated individuals. This project represents a digital lifeline, providing resources, information, and mentorship to ease the transition back into society. PathLight exemplifies the organization’s commitment to holistic reform, addressing not just the in-prison experience but also the challenges of reentry.

In his closing remarks, Bannon emphasized the broader implication of their work. SQSW, through its innovative projects and research, is redefining the contours of confinement, turning years of lost potential into opportunity for growth and change.

Oakland Tech high school teachers collaborate with SQ's incarcerated for insight

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

In January, *San Quentin News* hosted a forum with teachers from Oakland Tech High School and San Quentin resident youth offenders to have candid conversations on the school-to-prison pipeline.

During the conversation, which took place in the Catholic Chapel, some fifty residents and guests discussed how teachers can build trust, be a better source of support, and provide a safe space for students.

“I enjoyed openly talking with teachers about how they can be better leaders for kids,” resident Julian Ambrose said. “I wish someone would have been that for me.”

San Quentin News staffer Randy Thompson emceed the

event, opening with a meditation guiding the group to be centered, connected, and focused.

Thompson said a huge part of rehabilitation is gaining insight into traumas, so an incarcerated person can identify how character defects developed. “Keep in mind, they are not making excuses,” Thompson told the gathered teachers as the residents discuss their traumas and subsequent crimes. “We discuss these things so you can help those kids who are experiencing those same traumas we had, because they too could be developing dysfunctional thinking, bad habits, and harmful behaviors.”

As the guests and residents broke into small groups, several incarcerated individuals offered suggestions on

what they thought should be taught in schools, including subjects such as emotional intelligence and emotional processing, life-skills, moral values, and communication skills.

Most of the residents said building trust and communication were imperative. Resident Matangi “Sisi” Taiosisi said he was encouraged to share his insight on how to reach out to kids. “I thought of myself as a kid and all the unprocessed emotions I had as a kid.”

One small group discussed the similarities between school and prison. Some of the youth offenders reflected on the “us and them” they remembered between students and teachers at school. Some saw their teachers as authority figures, while

“I enjoyed openly talking with teachers about how they can be better leaders for kids. I wish someone would have been that for me.”

—Julian Ambrose

others felt school provided an escape from the dysfunction in their homes. One teacher said she felt teachers do a lot of policing, controlling and keeping track of things unnecessarily.

Teacher Glen Augustine said he was interested in being a “beacon of love and hope” for his students. A takeaway for Augustine’s

from the small group discussion was the need to provide time and a space to talk with students. “I build trust by consistent action,” Augustine said. Other solutions discussed included parent engagement, positive affirmations, better resources, and equal opportunities regardless of socio-economic class.

Resident Dejean Evans said the forum was inspiring because the teachers attending the forum were looking for solutions to prevent kids from going to juvenile hall or prison. Evans grew up in Oakland and said he would have taken advantage of the resources like those discussed at the meeting had they been available.

“They showed they want to be there more for their

students,” Evans said.

That kind of support can be incredibly important, said counselor Analaura Castro. She believes the system impacted students need help with resources and a connection with person’s who have similar lived-experiences. “One person in the school system can change the life of a student,” she said.

Similarly, teacher Terrence Holliday said Oakland Tech teachers have a responsibility to support each one of their students as individual humans, regardless of their backgrounds and situations.

“Do not write these kids off,” he said to his fellow teachers as the forum ended. “Put in the extra work and grit. Even one young soul not going to a continuation school is a success.”



Cientos de libros en español incrementan la literatura

Por Arsenio Leyva
Journalism Guild Writer

Más de Ochocientos ejemplares fueron otorgados a los residentes de la prisión. Gracias al evento bi-anual conocido como la feria de libros, las personas encarceladas de habla hispana fueron incluidas para el crecimiento a lectura.

La organización sin fines de lucro, Los Amigos de La Librería de San Quentin, patrocinaron el evento. Colaboraron con librerías del área de la bahía quienes donaron libros nuevos para la exposición.

Los bibliotecarios donaron su tiempo y estuvieron presentes asistiéndonos en la distribución de los libros.

Su presencia y su dedicación no solo fueron impactantes en las vidas de los residentes pero también en las vidas de nuestras familias.

“Es emocionante traer luz en un lugar oscuro, para crear un enlace y vínculo”, dijo Carlota Sanders bibliotecaria de El Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin.

Hubo una gran variedad de libros para todas las edades tales como: cuentos e historias y bilingües.

Durante la exposición de libros, se vio el gusto en el rostro de los residentes al

escoger los diferentes libros para enviarlos gratuitamente a sus seres queridos y amistades en cualquier parte de EE.UU.

“Es una bonita causa para los presos y sobre todo, poder mandar libros a la familia y amigos”, dijo un residente de CRSQ Magdaleno Nájera.

La fundadora de Los Amigos de la Librería de SQ Kristi Kenney, comentó que hasta el momento CRSQ es la única prisión donde patrocinan la feria de libros dos veces al año, durante los meses de junio y diciembre.

“Estamos con la esperanza de facilitar una conexión, para promover el amor a la lectura, y abrir la librería de SQ para una comunidad más amplia”, añadió Sra. Kenney.

“Estamos trabajando para poder ofrecer estos eventos en otras prisiones”.

En comparación de años pasados, la biblioteca ya ofrece más libros en español.

Para los reclusos que se están preparando para sus estudios generales de preparatoria, el año pasado se contó con libros educativos en español para prepararse para el examen del GED.

Gracias a esta oportunidad, un residente latino, completó el curso recibiendo su diploma de GED — en solo tres meses.

En este día, hubo largas



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Los residentes revisan la gran variedad de libros donados.

filas para poder entrar a la feria del libro.

“Definitivamente asistieron más latinos en esta feria de libros”, dijo Alfonso Landa, residente y trabajador de la biblioteca de CRSQ.

Los Amigos de la biblioteca de SQ, donaron mobiliario: mesas, estancias, y sofás. Incluyendo libros que son solicitados por no encontrarse en la biblioteca.

Los organizadores de la feria estuvieron sorprendidos al ver la gran cantidad de residentes interesados en este tipo de eventos.

Sanders, expresó como le derrite el corazón al ver como los asistentes escogían los libros para enviarlos a sus

seres queridos.

Los organizadores de esta feria de libros agradecen, a los donantes de los libros para la feria, fueron las librerías: Copperfield Book Store, Book Passage Book Store y la biblioteca pública de Berkeley.

Se espera que el próximo junio, asistan una mayor cantidad de latinos en la feria de libros en CRSQ, para inculcar la lectura a sus hijos y familiares, en una sociedad dominada por las redes sociales. La lectura abre la mente y le da paso a una mayor creatividad.

“Un libro es como un amigo, mientras leas nunca estarás sin un amigo”, concluyó Diana St. James una voluntaria.

Los Maestros de Oakland Tec acudieron a CRSQ

Por Aristeo Sampablo
Staff Writer

El Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin, recibió la visita de aproximadamente veinte maestros provenientes de la secundaria Oakland Tec.

La esperanza resultó en la capilla de CRSQ, reflexionando en cómo encontrar posibilidades y soluciones a este problema tan grande que es el encarcelamiento de los jóvenes de su comunidad.

“¿Porque?, es más fácil obtener una pistola, en vez de un libro o un trabajo”, dijo el Maestro Terrance Holliday.

Mientras todos tomaban sus lugares, un residente y anfitrión Randy Thompson los alentó a participar. Formaron un círculo en donde los residentes y maestros tuvieron la oportunidad de presentarse individualmente.

La dinámica consistía que todos se sintieran seguros, y que a la misma vez los jóvenes encarcelados de CRSQ, tendrán la oportunidad de ser escuchados, vistos y entendidos; en lugar de ser juzgados.

En este evento la narrativa fue basada en los jóvenes que han pasado por traumas y que los han llevado a tomar malas decisiones en sus vidas, cuando no se les brindó la ayuda necesaria a tiempo.

Los maestros se expresaron que ellos se sentían desvalorados, por no contar con el apoyo necesario, ya que ellos en muchas de las veces son vistos como los segundos padres para todos sus estudiantes.

Sin embargo los maestros compartieron, que el sistema educativo expulsa a los estudiantes de sus escuelas por diferentes incidentes, esto crea resentimientos y los arroja directamente en las manos de las pandillas.

Se les pidió a todos los participantes que se dividieran en cuatro grupos pequeños, en los cuales se tocaron temas como: calificaciones, expulsiones, traumas, y de los

padres solteros.

“Ayudar a que los niños aprenden a como contar sus historias, sus verdades, anima a estos niños para que puedan expresarse ellos mismos,” dijo Sammie Nichols un residente de CRSQ. “Puedan crecer y aprender a cómo expresarse a sí mismos”.

Los jóvenes residentes de CRSQ tuvieron la oportunidad de expresar sus inquietudes ante los maestros y contaron los momentos difíciles por los que ellos han pasado. Compartieron su dolor por no ser entendidos, escuchados y esto los llevo a sentirse solos y sin ningún apoyo.

De acuerdo a los participantes, sería de gran apoyo contar con centros de ayuda y con mentores de la comunidad que les enseñen habilidades que puedan poner en práctica en sus vidas cotidianas, esto podría reducir el encarcelamiento de muchos de estos jóvenes.

La consejera Ana Laura Castro de Oakland Tec y la Maestra Zuleyma Rivera, crearon un espacio el cual se llama “*El Cafecito*”, en donde se les hace la invitación en general a los padres de los estudiantes al igual para otros maestros. Este espacio es en español para poder incluir a la comunidad de habla hispana.

“Porque quiero a prender más de ustedes, y encontrar una manera de como una consejera puede ayudar a sus estudiante cuando necesitan el apoyo”, añadió la consejera Castro.

“La razón porque la que hoy estoy aquí, es para aprender a como apoyar a mis estudiantes, que a la mejor no tiene el apoyo que necesitan en la casa”, compartió la maestra Rivera.

Tanto maestros como consejeros entienden el compromiso y el apoyo que se necesita para enfrentar estos problemas. Este tipo de foros crean conciencia, a igual posibles soluciones para futuros debates.

Auto-ayuda entre reclusos están creciendo detrás de las paredes de CRSQ

Por Willy Alarcón
SQ Staff Writer

Residentes de El Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin se unen creando grupos de auto-ayuda en español.

En el estado de California los grupos de auto-ayuda en español son muy escasos en comparación de otros grupos en inglés. Esto no detuvo a dos personas que se encuentra sirviendo cadenas perpetuas.

Sin embargo, ellos han buscado la manera de enseñarse uno al otro suministrando grupos de auto-ayuda en los edificios de CRSQ, con el apoyo del Teniente Haub, en los edificios de viviendas honorables, un programa de rehabilitación que fue aprobado por el gobernador de California.

Según el Sr. Luis Álvarez, quien es originario de Guatemala, llegó a CRSQ en el año 2021. Sin encontrar ayuda, se sintió como un hombre extranjero y rechazado.

“Pensé, ‘si esta gente necesita ayuda, yo sí les voy ayudar’” dijo Álvarez.

Él, reconoció la necesidad para cientos de latinos que son sentenciados a cadena perpetua y no hablan el idioma de EE.UU., otra barrera que les impide en sus saneamiento — rehabilitación.

De acuerdo con Álvarez, se incorporó con grupos de auto-ayuda participando y recibiendo “preparación para

las Audiencias de Libertad Condicional”, en el edificio B de educación.

En el grupo TRUST, fue donde se le dio la oportunidad para brindar ayuda a los que no hablan inglés.

Cuando se trasladó Álvarez al edificio de viviendas honorables en Alpine, tuvo la oportunidad de comenzar tres grupos de auto-ayuda — algo que fue motivado no solo por la necesidad pero también por su esposa Esperanza.

SQNews se comunicó con el Teniente Haub, quien confirmó que él ha estado apoyando a Álvarez, en su trayectoria de auto-ayuda. Otorgando cronos a los participantes que se gradúan de los programas que son facilitados por Álvarez y Linares.

Nombrando los grupos Esperanza, que fueron fundados en CRSQ por Álvarez, que resaltan la Violencia doméstica, Manejo del enojo, *Impacto a la víctima(s), Gestión de la Negación, Mente Criminales*, y el Grupo de apoyo para los Vidales, *Eperanza Lifer Support Group*.

Álvarez admite, que aunque no maneja bien el inglés, él se impulsó para abrir estos grupos sin ayuda de la administración. Compartió que se apoyó mucho en su familia, para proveer todo material a los integrantes de los grupos de rehabilitación.

Todas las copias, diplomas y



Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

Quince residentes de CRSQ se graduarán de uno de los grupos de los edificios de vivienda honorables.

cualquier otro documento para los estudiantes, han sido provistos por su conyugue.

De acuerdo al diccionario, la palabra Rehabilitación es entendida por su uso común, pero tiene un significado muy profundo — especialmente para todos los individuos encarcelados.

Su significado es de: restaurar rango, privilegio perdido, de preparación para los discapacitados o reos, para reintegración al empleo o a la población.

Igualmente fue difícil el acceso a los diferentes edificios donde viven los residentes, para brindar los cursos de rehabilitación, agregó Álvarez.

Dentro de CRSQ, el espacio es limitado y hay una larga espera para poder ser integrado a grupos de auto-ayuda en los

salones de educación. Pero con el modelo californiano trayendo la innovación, este residente abrió sus propias puertas de oportunidad.

“He batallado porque me han corrido de muchos lugares”, añadió Álvarez. “Al principio se portaban...hostiles, [con] mala actitud”.

Según Álvarez, el encontró un aliado con el Teniente Haub, y consecuentemente, los oficiales de otro edificios comenzaron a creer en la rehabilitación para los latinos.

Álvarez finalmente se ganó el respeto de la administración. Sin embargo, la carga es mucha y buscó ayuda para poder sobrellevar el peso.

Sergio Linares, otro residente de CRSQ y originario de El Salvador, se sintió sorprendido cuando se le ofreció

la oportunidad de co-facilitar estos grupos de español en los edificios.

“Gracias a Luis que me dio la oportunidad”, declaró Linares. “Es algo bonito que hacer para la comunidad. Lo hago porque se, [tengo la habilidad] y se me puso a mí, a poder dar de lo que he aprendido”.

Linares reconoce que con la rehabilitación, la personas pueden crear lasos de relación con compañeros en los grupos y ellos mismos llegan a ser como familia.

Participantes que han completado los cursos iniciales, recibieron certificados y los “cronos” que fueron firmados por el Teniente Haub quien maneja el programa de viviendas honorables.

Estos hombres que bajaron arduamente por 14

semanas para lograr entenderse y expresarse sobre estos temas, muy alegremente compartieron lo que estos cursos significan para ellos.

“Este es el primer programa que completé en 11 años”, dijo un graduado y residente Félix Eliziel.

El impacto de estos individuos quienes facilitan estos grupos en español sobresale en las opiniones como el de Sr. Luis Gutiérrez.

“Ahora que están en español estos cursos, me beneficia mucho. Antes iba a los grupos de AA y NA en inglés, pero no entendía nada”, dijo Gutiérrez.

“Esta es la única prisión donde ha habido grupos de auto-ayuda en español”.

Otros grupos ya se iniciaron compartió Álvarez — compuestos por estos graduados, para formar otros grupos de auto-ayuda. Así el latino ayuda al latino para salir adelante, ejemplando como el modelo californiano se ve en acción.

Linares, indico que la emoción lo condujo a llamar a sus familiares, compartiendo lo que aprendió en los grupos de auto-ayuda.

“Han notado mi cambio por la manera de expresarme — le he pedido perdón a mi madre”. Dijo David Arias. “Ahora oro con mi familia por teléfono”.

Estas oportunidades fueron creadas por hombres que vieron la necesidad y son apasionados por ayudar a sus prójimos.



Fundadora y Facilitadores Comparten con los Residentes Conocimientos de EPP.

Sistema Emocional de Inteligencia de EPP

Por Arsenio Leyva & Cesar Martínez
Spanish Journalism Guild Writers

Los hombres en el Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin exploraron su niñez y el efecto de sus traumas. Buscando sanación de las heridas del pasado.

Eneagrama (EPP por sus siglas en inglés), es un grupo de auto ayuda. Para hombres y mujeres [encarcelados], para que los participantes aprendan a hablar acerca de la autoconciencia. Todo estos al hacer memoria desde el punto que uno tiene razón.

Los residentes asistieron al último curso del programa que puede tener una duración entre ocho a 20 semanas, de acuerdo a la literatura de Eneagrama los ejercicios son basando en la posibilidad de sobrepasar las viejas costumbres hasta el punto de obtener serenidad ante las circunstancias.

Durante esta sesión se creó un ambiente de calma usando ejercicios de respiración induciendo a los participantes a ser más conscientes de lo que pasa adentro de su cuerpo y de su alrededor.

Susan Olesek creadora del programa invitó a los participantes a describir lo que percibieron y hablar de sus pensamientos.

“Todos somos prisioneros



Photos by Dante D. Jones // SQNews

Voluntario y Susan Olesek Durante Una Presentación.

de nuestros propios hechos, incluso en la sociedad de allá afuera. Porque vengo de traumas en mi niñez”, dijo Olesek, “Estaba enojada con el mundo y no entendía el porqué. La prisión fue hecha para mí desde mi niñez. Yo me certifique... tratando de entender mi dolor”.

En el año 2009 la Sra. Olesek fue invitada a enseñar a las personas encarceladas sobre la autoconciencia, una experiencia que la motivo a crear el programa de EPP en el 2012.

El programa usa un diseño basado en las siguientes ideologías:

Misión: Enseñar a los participantes del por qué hacen

los que hacen usando el programa para cambiar el punto de vista al corregirse y tener compasión de uno mismo.

Visión: Enseñar a la gente de todo el mundo a romper con esas barreras mentales.

Método: Ayudar a los seres humanos [encarcelados] a guiarlos a travez de su conciencia, emociones, y comportamientos. EPP identifica la estructura del ego y de encontrar nuestras fortalezas internas con la ayuda de guías [facilitadores].

De acuerdo al programa, solo ayuda si somos sinceros con nosotros mismos. Y también de acuerdo a su misión “es de entender por qué hacemos lo que hacemos”.

El programa publicó su

propio libro en español, La Sabiduría Del Eneagrama en su edición 19ª por los autores Don Richard Riso y Russ Hudson incorporando los elementos que sirven mejor para la auto-observación y autoexploración.

Dustin Baldwin un anterior residente de CRSQ es uno de los voluntarios reformados señalo que hizo el curso tres veces al igual participó en grupos como SAP, AA/NA, entre otros. Continúa siendo un miembro activo del programa desde 2016.

“Yo tomé lo que necesitaba de cada programa...” dijo Baldwin, “yo quería ser un ejemplo para los nuevos internos...”.

Gracias al programa de EPP, Baldwin viaja alrededor del mundo promoviendo su testimonio. Agregó, que se está trabajando para crear este programa totalmente en español, para aquellos que no hablen inglés.

De acuerdo a la filosofía del programa: todo comportamiento humano es de sentirse amado, el tener autonomía, conocer nuestro valor y sentirnos seguros y protegidos. Cuando buscamos las necesidades básicas y de derechos humanos que no han sido satisfechas. Y una comprensión de los motivos que precedieron los comportamientos de compasión.



The LLS Difference

Giovanni Hernández (centro) con sus representantes de Inocencia Juvenil y Clínica de Sentencia Justa.

Exoneran a Dos Personas Tras Décadas en Prisión

Por Cesar Martínez
Spanish Journalism Guild Writer

El fiscal del condado de Los Ángeles anunció que su oficina exoneró a dos latinos convictos por crímenes que no cometieron, según reportó la *Prensa Asociada* (AP por sus siglas en inglés) el 13 de diciembre del 2023.

La oficina de la fiscalía del distrito comunicó por medio de un correo electrónico la decisión de un juez, en la cual dio la completa revocación de las condenas de Giovanni Hernández y de Miguel Solorio.

En una conferencia de prensa, el fiscal George Gascón hace una disculpa pública para los dos hombres.

“Es realmente devastador cuando la gente es condenada injustamente cuando ellos eran muy jóvenes al momento de sus arrestos”, dijo George Gascón. “En el caso de Solorio, tenía 19 años de edad y Hernández tan solo 14 años de edad”.

En el año 2012 el Sr. Hernández fue condenado a 50 años a cadena perpetua, después de dos juicios donde fue hallado culpable de asesinato. Alegando que disparo desde un vehículo en movimiento causando la muerte al joven Gary Ortiz de 16 años. Añadió el reporte de AP.

Según los hechos ocurrieron en la ciudad de Culver City, en aquel entonces Hernández declaró que él se encontraba en casa con su familia al momento del tiroteo.

El caso del Sr. Hernández fue presentado dos veces a la Unidad de Condena e Integridad, por parte de la oficina de Abogados Públicos de Los Ángeles, reportó el artículo.

De acuerdo al comunicado, la fiscalía durante las investigaciones del crimen, las autoridades recopilaron declaraciones de testigos a los cuales nunca fueron considerados.

Al analizar los registros del celular de Hernández. Concluyeron que el Sr. Hernández no se encontraba en el lugar al momento de los hechos.

El Sr. Solorio, fue condenado injustamente a cadena perpetua sin posibilidad de libertad condicional, por la muerte de Mary Bramlett una anciana de 81 años, en una área rural cerca de la ciudad de Whittier en el año de 1998.

El reporte declaró que las autoridades insistían que mientras la Sra. Bramlett se encontraba parada en un semáforo, Solorio iba manejando en compañía de miembros de una pandilla quienes por error dispararon a la víctima.

La Sra. Bramlett conducía de regreso a casa después de un juego de mesa con unas amistades la cual se realizó en una iglesia. Solorio declaró que la noche en la cual Bramlett fue asesinada, él estaba con su novia al momento que ocurrieron los hechos.

Los abogados presentaron una petición reclamando la inocencia de Solorio, a la Unidad de Condena e Integridad, al final concluyeron, que basado en la nueva evidencia en la que aclara que él fue confundido entre una línea de fotos - por lo cual, no es la persona que cometió el crimen.

Hernández y Solorio fueron representados por los proyectos de inocencia dándoles una segunda oportunidad en la vida, después de ser injustamente encontrados culpables por un jurado por crímenes que no cometieron.

Empleados de CDCR recomienda a cuídanos americanos a la deportación

Por Manuel Dorado
Contributing Writer

El departamento de Correccionales y Rehabilitación de California trasladó a doce ciudadanos americanos hacia las manos de la Oficina de Inmigración y Aduanas para ser deportados.

Los archivos de la Unión American de Libertades Civiles confirmaron las comunicaciones entre CDCR y la Oficina de Inmigración, quienes creyeron que miles de reos que se encontraban en la custodia de CDCR eran disponibles a la deportación, reportó Andrea Castillo de *Los Angeles Times* en agosto 29, del 2023.

“En su enfoque de estar en complicidad con ICE, CDCR estaban señalando a las personas quienes cumplieron sus sentencias y estaban destinados a regresar a sus casas siendo entregados a ICE para ser deportados — barrieron con residentes legales y a ciudadanos americanos, asumiendo con criterios racistas e ignorando los archivos personales”, reportó ACLU.

Terri Hardy vocera de CDCR, comunicó que el departamento está trabajando

en limitar la comunicación con el departamento de ICE, solamente cuando alguien entra a la prisión y cuando su fecha de libertad se aproxima.

Hardy añadió que cuando no hay manera de comprobar el lugar de nacimiento, o situaciones legales de las personas, pueden indicar que son ilegales.

Richard Beam, vocero de ICE pidió a las autoridades de California que notifiquen a su agencia de posibles personas ilegales.

De acuerdo al reporte, durante la custodia de CDCR los reos que son designados hacia la deportación — no se le permiten calificar para niveles de baja seguridad, al igual de ciertos trabajos o programas de reingreso.

Las Organizaciones como Avanzando por la Justicia Asiática Americanos y el Comité de Ley Asiáticas en conjunto con ACLU confirmaron el acuerdo la demanda contra ICE. Por la detención ilegal del ciudadano americano Brian Bukle, en consecuencia siendo procesado a la deportación.

Bukle fue detenido por 36 días en *Mesa Verde ICE Processing Center* en



SQNews photo archive

Inmigrantes son sometidos a deportación.

Bakersfield — él fue liberado después que su abogado interfiriera. Añadió Castillo en su reporte.

Las investigaciones indicaron que en un caso específico, un empleado de la prisión de Avenal, envió un correo electrónico acerca de un reo que fue nacido en California. En el correo, el empleado de CDCR jugando le dice al agente de ICE:

“Deberíamos solo escribir en un papel ciudadano americano doblándolo y ponerlo en el sombrero, y después escribir en otro pedazo de papel Mexicano,

doblarlo y también ponerlo adentro del sombrero, y escoger uno”.

Hardy, dice que el incidente con el ex-oficial de Avenal no era aceptable y están asegurando que la comunicación con la agencia de ICE sea mejor. CDCR no respondió a otras preguntas de *LA Times*.

Según Castro, en otro correo electrónico enviado por un supervisor del Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin a ICE, el reo fue reportado al procedimiento de deportación once días antes de su libertad, cuando sus archivos indicaron

que era nacido en California.

El supervisor en este caso escribió, “Él no es [ciudadano americano]; él nació en México”.

El agente de ICE correspondió, preguntándole; ¿“Puedo preguntar que te hace creer que él nació en México?”

Las sospechas del supervisor fueron basadas en un reporte de la oficina de Supervisión de Libertad Condicional, añadió el reporte de Castro.

Los datos en esta demanda señalaron, que la mayoría de personas recomendadas por el CDCR no tienen apellidos anglosajones, y en muchos

casos, los oficiales detienen a los reclusos después de la fecha de su libertad — esperando que ICE verifique el orden del detención.

En otro caso, un técnico de archivos en la prisión de Chuckawalla, documentó que un prisionero se negó hablar con ICE. Aun así el técnico, contactó al agente de ICE y le preguntó, ¿“Todavía quieres programar una cita con él?”

La leyes de California prohíben esta clase de actitud de parte de los empleados estatales — indicando que las entrevistas con ICE son voluntarias.

Wendy Carrillo, una miembro de la Asamblea de California (Demócrata de Los Angeles), había propuesto un proyecto de ley apoyando el avance de la Acción HOME — pero no fue aprobada. Algo que hubiera detenido las transferencias de personas ya en custodia hacia las cárceles de ICE, quienes califican en ser liberados.

“En activa colaboración con ICE y con sus propias acciones y de lenguaje discriminatorias, CDCR ha traicionado la confianza del público en su cargo de proveer exitosamente la reintegración de las personas”. Concluyó Wendy Carrillo.



Photos by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

Top: Tommy Wickerd.
Left: Residents walk in preparation for the 2023 Ruona marathon.

Resident uses injury as opportunity to create walking club, fosters connections with family

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Sports Editor

A San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s premiere track athletes’ misfortune helped to create the 500 Mile Club for walkers of every shape and size.

The 1000 Mile Club sponsors the new club. The 1000 Mile Club instills discipline and dedication through year-round training and events, which leads up to an annual marathon.

“We all need to work on ourselves as we learn to cope with our choices that landed us in prison. Walking is a low impact source of energy that let’s us learn about accountability,” said Tommy Wickerd.

The 500 Mile Club started when marathoner Wickerd suffered a knee injury and had to look for new alternatives as he healed.

In September 2023, Wickerd designed the 500 Mile Club for physically challenged people. The club aims to achieve improved connections with residents and their families through a unique tracking of families walking on the outside with their family member.

The former marathon runner spoke of his belief that exercise is vital to recovery.

“Coming to San Quentin in 2015, I wanted to leave immediately. Running helped me overcome small cells and long wait lists for programs. I then realized the more I stayed at San Quentin the more I saw how goals are an important of prison life and life itself,” said Wickerd.

Wickerd set two goals; to run a marathon and get his GED.

“I ran three marathons before I got my GED. As I progressed, I found running to be



Wickerd is known at SQ for his devotion to the running club.

my ‘go to’ when I needed to cope with anything. Running and programming changed my life until I hurt my knee a few weeks ago. Now, I can’t run distances until I see the medical staff.

“I still had to cope with tough days so I decided walking was my new alternative,” said Wickerd.

Wickerd’s injury led to his observations that many residents walked the track because of malingering injuries, Covid long haulers afflictions, or advanced age.

Wickerd and resident Kevin Brinckman immediately established the walking club but they each felt something was missing.

Other residents asked to invite family into the program and Wickerd and Brinckman developed a tracking system in which families walk and log miles on the outside for themselves creating their own walking events on the inside in support of their incarcerated family member.

“I want to do anything to be a part of my family and friends’ lives. Walking together achieves that goal,” said Wickerd.

Saturday, February 4, was the first mile “walk-on,” that attracted 70 walkers.

Brinckman and Wickerd said the program increases in mileage at each monthly event.

“Tommy “voluntold me” that I was his partner for this new club. Seriously I couldn’t be more honored helping establish genuine connection for me and their family members on the outside,” said

Brinckman.

Attendees felt inspired by the first event.

“Kevin and Tommy provided the best alternatives for the elderly community I have ever seen,” said resident John Krueger.

“I see my cellie work with his family on a goal-oriented mission and I believe he has walked more miles this past month than anytime in his life,” said resident Terry Gephardt.

The 500 Mile Club plans to build community by logging miles and making memories with loved ones.

“At San Quentin, we can make every step of the day a step with our loved ones,” said Wickerd.

Like the 1000 Mile Club, the 500 Mile Club is a membership organization that extends past the walls of San Quentin and involves the greater community.



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Needed repair puts hinderence on season

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Sports Editor
and Timothy Hicks
Contributing Writer

As spring time draws nearer and San Quentin sports programs prepare for their season openers, it’s crunch time for the California Model to acknowledge, and include sports as rehabilitation.

With baseball, track, tennis, softball and the jewel of SQ Sports, the basketball season is upon us, the incarcerated organizations like the SQ Kings, the SQ Warriors, the SQ 49ers and the SQ Giants begin try-outs and pre-season practices, but decades of weatherization and general wear and tear on the facility’s recreational equipment is concerning to the incarcerated athletes.

It’s been at least a decade since the outside basketball court and the baseball field’s grass, which also operates as a the soccer and football field received upgrades.

Incarcerated workers started patching up the court with a cement sealant material in mid-November. But rainstorms put a halt to their work and now the court sits barren with a coat of the light grey matter on its surface exposing the many bumps, cracks and crevices.

The unregulated courts are used to host outside teams including the Golden State Warriors when they come to the prison to play the San Quentin Warriors on their annual visits. However, San Quentin residents have been given an alternative of going inside to the gym and balling on the more leveled courts that are polished with lacquer and finish.

This coming season the SQ Kings and the SQ Warriors games will be hosting their games in the gym.

The outside courts are not the only recreational equipment that need upgrades, incarcerated residents also are using the same dip-bars and

pull-up bars that other residents have been working out on for decades on the Lower Yard.

It has been decades since the original bars were replaced. The wear and tear on the bars structures are clearly ran down, worn out and long overdue for an over hall. The splintered logs that hold the bars in place are barely holding them together.

Small upgrades have been done over the years to “Band-Aid” the underlining issues of the workout areas, but nothing significantly notable.

The limited workout space makes it crowded for residents to do their daily exercises.

So, maybe, some of that \$360,000,000 that will be invested into the re-imagined idea of San Quentin can be invested into the re-imagined idea of the long overdue refurbishing of the recreational areas such as; the workout areas and the basketball courts on the Lower Yard.

Preseason scrimmage game tests mettle of new SQ basketball teams

By Jonquil
Thomas-Weisner
and Edward Renshaw
Journalism Guild Writers

Preseason winter workouts for the 2024 basketball season started when the “New” San Quentin Warriors faced-off with the ‘New’ SQ Kings in their first scrimmage of the year.

On February 6, the two teams met in the gym on SQ’s Lower Yard in what was dubbed the battle of the ages. The Warriors outpaced the Kings in a back and forth exhibition match to beat the Kings although, an official score was not kept.

The coaching staffs were very vocal throughout the scrimmage.

The Kings have a new coaching staff this year. Desmond “Oola” Lewis assumed head coaching duties as former head coach Ismail “ish” Frelorn moved up in the organization.

Lewis hired Jason “Boo” Robinson as his assistant coach.

“There was nothing wrong with last year’s coaching, I want to make that clear,” Lewis said. “With different coaching comes different philosophies and different ideas.”

Lewis said the Kings would focus on a 2-3 defense with an emphasis on moving and staying flexible. The new staff is looking to Charles “Pookey” Sylvester and fellow teammate Jared “Duce” Williams to take more of a leadership role on the team. They also hope Thomas “T-Moss” Vaca will be more vocal.

“[Our league] is deeper than basketball; it’s a platform



SQNews photo archive

for all of us to learn our triggers and find positive outlets in regards to dealing with our emotions,” said Robinson, who said he specializes in emotional intelligence on the court.

“There are always going to be some form of ‘court’ in our lives and we have to know how to communicate, if we are hoping to get through it,” Robinson added.

Both coaches for the Kings are former players and are looking forward to the season.

After the scrimmage, Lewis said he was “very disappointed in the outcome,” and a half-court offense is going to have to be worked on emphatically.

David Rodriguez, who was a late addition to the Warriors last year, made the team again this year and is attributing the basketball program here at San Quentin with helping him stay focused by being a form of therapy for him.

“I’m not going to be my best every play, I am not my mistakes,” Rodriguez said.

This program taught him to leave the last play in the past no matter how bad it was. Which translates to life by teaching him resilience and tenacity, he added.

Several Kings’ players feel

as if this is a monumental opportunity for them. It allowed them to be a part of something bigger than themselves. It also allowed them to be the real them.

“We are afforded the opportunity to remove racial stigmas,” said Alonzo “Zo” Jackson, the two-guard for the Kings.

Like many of the players, Jackson had a troubled past and for most of his life he stuck to the gang culture. Playing sports at the Q allowed him to be his real self, he said.

Jay Uhler, 50 years young, a returning veteran Forward for the Kings, feels that he needs to work a little bit more on his “defense and ball handling.” And at his age he wants to stay healthy enough to showcase his talents, he added. Jay also plays football with the San Quentin Niners and SQ Hard Timers softball team.

Sports at San Quentin helps in the rehabilitative process by bringing focus to their lives. Moreover, it helps people to work together to accomplish common goals.

“[It] makes you feel a part of something and you’re known in a good light,” said 55-year young guard, Sylvester.

SQRC HOLDS SUPER BOWL WATCH PARTY

First Super Bowl Watch Party under new model finds underwhelming success

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Sports Editor

On Friday, February 9, San Quentin Rehabilitation Center's newly appointed Warden Chance Andes sent to all residents a message that provided insight into his enthusiasm about the California Model.

Via the tablets, residents were told there were invitees selected to attend Warden Andes', "fully integrated Super Bowl Sunday Watch Party." The game featured the San Francisco 49ers and the Kansas City Chiefs.

The warden reserved Chapel B for his vision of an interaction between San Quentin staff and residents.

Warden Andes asked IAC members to develop a list of invitees that included 35 residents from each residential unit to guarantee attendance would stay within "max capacity regulations set forth by the Fire Marshall."

Despite good intentions, the warden and the IAC members failed to take into account the traditional festivities in resident housing that usually takes place during Super Bowls. Such festivities usually include residents gorging themselves on prepared meals, competitive Super Bowl predictions, and rankings of the commercials.

Andes' new tradition hoped fully to integrate both groups of stakeholders, but the parameters did not work with either side.

Residents, who were given a dining hall meal of BBQ chicken at lunchtime to recognize the start time of the Super Bowl, reported their displeasure about the decision to offer pizza only to staff members. The decision left a sour taste in residents who felt the offerings to COs represented segregated selections to them.

"I'd rather stay in my unit, celebrating with all of my brothers; and the food is better," said Raoul Sanchez.

Conversely, many of the COs not fully sold on the California Model did not feel compelled to socialize with the residents. IAC President Cainen Chambers tried to explain their views.

"Anytime staff and the population can come together, it's



Photos by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews



Turn-out was rather low, with just three COs hanging out.

a good thing. I understand the population's frustration, but I truly believe this is bigger than pizza, the Super Bowl, etc. This event was a win for everybody. We do indulge in a lot of food at these events, I'm not upset that this time the pizza went to the CO's. Staff often feels overlooked in this whole California Model move and that brings tension between them and the population," said Chambers.

The dynamics of the Warden Andes, first event sent unease between both parties because the late instructions sent to IAC representatives did not give the IAC time to promote the event. They also could not overcome resident objections.

Lack of promotion and coordination resulted in the attendance of only 48 residents and approximately 10 COs who attended the first Super Bowl Watch Party.

Warden Andes showed courage and insight when he stated, "This is our first event of this type and we are looking for an enjoyable, relaxed

atmosphere," Andes told the San Quentin community in his invitation delivered by tablet.

As Usher dominated the halftime show, Andes thanked the small crowd. "This [event] is a win. This is how it all starts," said Andes, who wore a Pat Tillman jersey of the Arizona Cardinals.

The dedicated fans reacted enthusiastically.

Warden Andes requested feedback from the event to improve all aspects for future events and the fans had no problem voicing their feelings.

"Rehabilitation offers chances for new thinking and some people remain in their misery instead of reaching out to try something new," said resident Lee Jaspar.

"I was happy and honored he offered staff and resident an opportunity to break bread. I only hope next time he does it on an equal scale," added Jaspar.

Father Williams enjoyed his afternoon at the first event even though the crowd and the outcome of the game were disappointing. "The



Warden Chance Andes

entire community should be enthused as to what Warden Andes is adding to the California Model. I will pray for a better turnout next year," said Williams.

The residents in attendance were appreciative and optimistic about Andes' attempt to facilitate rehabilitation.

"If this is Warden Andes' vision we should all feel as lucky as heck. It appears he is as genuine as ex-wardens [Ron] Broomfield and [Oak] Smith. He seems to share their passion to do innovative things and I look forward to see what he does after he fully transitions," said resident Jessie England.

"And if a slice of pizza eases that tension [of the COs], then so be it. I had a great time and thank Warden Andes," Chambers.

The Super Bowl Watch Party may be an indication of Warden Andes' commitment to rehabilitation, then he may be equal to the visionary Al Davis who envisioned the N.F.L. in Vegas long before anyone else.

Mr. Irrelevant proves critics wrong in Super Bowl LVIII

In February a group touring San Quentin Rehabilitation Center asked who would win the Super Bowl. *SQNews* staffers all agreed the answer was Brock Purdy – not the Niners, but Purdy himself.

As 49er Faithful lick their wounds because of missed opportunities to win their sixth Super Bowl, everyone should feel privileged to join the bandwagon of the least expected superstar in the N.F.L.

A scrawny 24-year-old from Iowa State, lacking arm strength and size was considered such a waste of time, no other team touched him.

Yet, the 49ers used picked him in the 2022 draft, forever labeling Purdy Mr. Irrelevant.

Traditionally, the iconic position as the last darftee of the annual N.F.L. draft allows an individual brief celebrity status alongside Commissioner Goodell during draft day.

A cherished professional experience for Mr. Irrelevant usually means he's kept on a team until the first round of cuts and then he is let go. A great year for Mr. Irrelevant is if he makes the taxi squad as a lowly-paid reserve.

The odds of becoming a superstar in the N.F.L. are slim and none; even less of a chance than Hall-of-Famer Kurt Warner who rose from the depths of the Arena League to win a Superbowl for the St. Louis Rams. Warner was able to shop his services around the N.F.L. where Purdy did not have that option.

Now this \$700,000 a year, third string 'emergency' quarterback forces a team with a rich history of quarterbacks to eat \$53 million in contracts of a #1 pick and another quarterback who had taken them to a Superbowl a few years ago; Trey Lance was traded to the Dallas Cowboys and Jimmy Garropolo landed with the Las Vegas Raiders.

Purdy's promotion seemed as bizarre as when a gray-haired fox traded the #1 rated quarterback in the N.F.L. (Steve DeBerg) to the Chiefs just to give a skinny-legged fifth round pick from Notre Dame a chance to start. That bench warmer went to legendary coach Bill Walsh and said 'play me or trade me.' His name was Joe Montana.

Mr. Irrelevant beat the odds because Coach Kyle Shanahan



Wikipedia

Brock Purdy

saw something in Brock Purdy; the same intangible that makes 3,000,000 incarcerated residents cheer for him.

All Mr. Irrelevant did was smash records of 49er legends as he derailed perennial all-stars Jalen Hurst, Dak Prescott, Jared Goff and Matthew Stafford. Purdy's accomplishments happened as he never forgot he was considered not athletic enough, or having a weak arm and White Man's speed.

Brock carried the stigma of the last pick that implied he did not deserve to be there.

Like #13 constantly struggling for recognition and acceptance in a community, the incarcerated population struggle for the same recognition if we're lucky enough to get one last shot at freedom.

Just as he worked to win approval, incarcerated serious about going home, prepare to show we're not a threat to public safety; praying we can again be treated as a free human of the world.

The York family, owners of the 49ers, bless San Quentin each Holiday Season as they and their extended family of players' donate time to give normalization to the SQ community.

Maybe the Yorks and GM John Lynch put their intellectual and financial pedigrees aside and saw the look of a kid who deserved the chance he worked for all of his life.

Mr. Purdy, understand there are 3,000,000 residents who have that same look, with many of us doing work that is more rewarding. That is why we all truly believe you were the real winner on February 11.

Thank you for being irrelevant and never forget that.

—Anthony Manuel Carvalho

TIER TALK

"Neon" Dionne Sanders and Bo Jackson are legends of multiple sports. San Quentin Rehabilitation Center has a few dual sports stars, including Jarrod "Deuce" Williams.

"Deuce" lives up to the name he carries, as the 5'5" second baseman for the SQ Giants enjoys speeding around the bases when he hit the ball deep into the Dead Center alley 400 feet away from home plate. When he is not playing second base at SQ's Field of Dreams you can find him handling the rock as guard on the SQ Kings.

I sat down with Williams, one of SQ's dual sports stars as he prepares for his two seasons.

Timothy Hicks: This man needs no introduction, so lets jump right in. It's the off-season and so much is going on in the outside sports world. The latest was the huge loss of Golden State Warriors assistant coach, Jevic. What are your thoughts on that?

Jerrod Williams: That was a big loss to the GSW. But, with all of the positive things

Jerrod "Deuce" Williams talks playing multiple sports, learning about life

everyone had to say about him, the legacy he leaves behind reaches way beyond the game. He touched a lot of lives. I pray that I can leave a legacy as great as his.

TH: I agree. I didn't get the privilege of meeting him, but the GSW organization means a lot to the SQ's basketball program and the community in general. So, their loss is our loss. Switching gears, the NFL loss some good coaches last season right?

JW: Yeah, for sure. I am a Patriot fan, so you already know that I'm sad to see the great Bill Belichick leave. But, he will go down as the best coach in NFL history. And Nick Sabian was the best college coach the world has known. Pete Carroll is another; to know a 70-year-old man stills' got it is inspiring.

TH: Yes, all three are some of the greatest coaches football and fans everywhere will who have had the privilege to see them in their lifetime is privileged. Staying on the subject of football, what do you think about the proposed

"Sports teaches me that it's not about me; I'm not alone. And no matter how much I feel I know everything about a sport, I always learn something new. I am proud to serve others whom I learn something from. Sports are about teamwork."

—Jarrod "Deuce" Williams

ban on youth football?

JW: To ban youth football would be terrible. Because that's a part of a lot of young kids lives growing up. It's a right of passage. Football is all that some kids have to look forward to. If you take it away, it's no telling where they would end up.

TH: Great points. What has sports done for you?

JW: Sports teaches me that it's not about me; I'm not alone. And no matter how much I feel I know everything about a sport, I always learn something new. I am proud to serve others whom I learn



Williams plays on both baseball and basketball teams, and met Jon Hamm at an LA Love game.

something from. Sports are about teamwork.

TH: Those are good attributes. Speaking of good traits learned through sports. You were on the intramural basketball team 94 Feet. Tell me about that and what it means.

JW: We went undefeated, 16-0, a first time it's ever been done at the "The Q" as far as I know. The meaning of the name 94 Feet is; It's the distance of the court, but the



deeper meaning is to never give up an inch and always complete the goal. 94 Feet is about conflict resolution, being accountable, teamwork, time management, completion and discipline. Today, I thank all my basketball and baseball coaches, as well as my teammates for teaching me that.

TH: Ok, last question. Tell me about that awesome baseball team you play for.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

JW: My baseball team, the SQ Giants, are currently 18-2, but over-all our last three seasons we are 64-5. We are a dynasty continued and we are blessed the San Francisco Giants are co-sponsoring us.

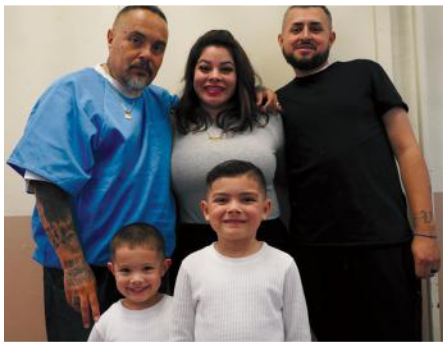
TH: Man, only at SQ

JW: The only baseball program in the nation and the Warriors; the community must know how lucky we are.

—Anthony Manuel Carvalho



Austin Redden



Anthony Navarro

LOVED ONES OF SAN QUENTIN'S VALENTINE'S DAY VISITING



Alexis Moran



Toriano G. Hudson



Andre Davis



Jarvis Masters



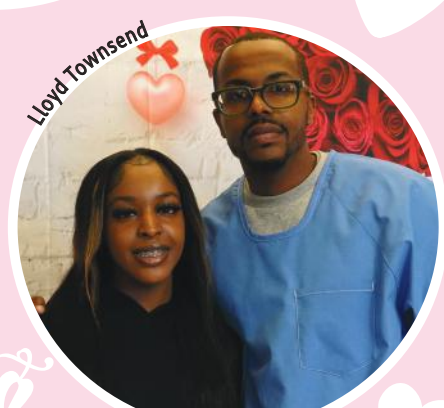
Robert Galvan



Lonnie Capers



Vincent Wiggins



Lloyd Townsend



Kelvon Lyman



Eric Landry

Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

EDITORIAL



Essie Justice Group // Marissa Leshnov

Women of the Essie Justice Group supporting their loved ones during Covid with peaceful protest.

Justice-impacted women, we salute you

By Marcus Henderson
Executive Editor/Editor in Chief

Everyone, please stand-up and give the women around the world a standing ovation. March is Women's History Month where women's accomplishments are celebrated. But there is a class of women who also need to be recognized, and that's women who are system impacted: The mothers, daughters and wives of the incarcerated, the formerly incarcerated, and currently incarcerated women.

These wonderful women have endured financial losses, emotional and physical trauma, both those inside and out of the system. Some of these women have sat in courtrooms — sometimes bewildered — and witness what can be a brutal process. Some of these women have missed work to travel hundreds of miles to visit a loved one in a crowded prison or jail visiting room, with the hope of keeping their family together.

A 2015 report, "Who Pays: The True Cost of Incarceration on Families," found that more than 80% of those who paid court-related fees for an incarcerated loved one were women. The study also found that 65% of families experienced difficulty paying for housing, buying food, transportation, or clothing due to paying for a loved one's incarceration-related costs.

"Women in the lowest income brackets spent between a quarter and a third of their incomes to maintain contact with their partners," says an Essie Justice Group report titled "Because She's Powerful: The Political Isolation and Resistance of Women with Incarcerated Loved Ones." This puts families in debt and causing countless anxiety, stress and anger. But these courageous women have not cowed down to their circumstances. They have hit the protest frontlines — letting their voices be heard with powerful campaigns and social movements such as the #Say Her Name, #Nevertheless She Persisted, #MeToo Behind Bars, Survived and Punished and The Moms Bail Out campaigns.

These women have formed organization of support that have become leaders in the criminal justice and social movement such as: Essie Justice Group, California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), and Legal

Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC), The Young Women's Freedom Center, and Initiate Justice. This includes formerly incarcerated female leaders who work tirelessly and provide services for women in need. Some of these formerly incarcerated leaders are Gina Clayton, Hamdiya Cooks-Abdullah, Topeka Sam, Susan Burton, the women of the Drop LWOP (life without parole) campaign and the countless other women leaders — I salute you all.

These women are challenging the male-dominated political and economic system and breaking barriers. The incarcerated women also need to be cheered for creating self-help groups to deal with their trauma and being a support network for each other. Many of these incarcerated women have developed curriculums to process the effects of domestic violence, sex trafficking and inequality from a system impacted and marginalized point of view.

The resilience of these women deserved the equal level of commitment and support as their male counterparts. For the last decade, I have watch amazing women stand-up and be fearless in the face of economic and social injustices. Women, especially women of color are under-cherished, but still manage to uplift the voices of a nation, provide for their families, be partners, mothers and lovers.

Each year, this month means that we need to acknowledge these women's importance and value. Let's embrace and bow to their wisdom, while respecting their life journeys. I truly apologize for my harm, my toxic masculinity perspective, my "BS" (flawed belief system). The women in my life never raised me to be a thug, criminal, a gang-member or disrespectful. These strong women were and are my inspiration and lifeline. Maybe I should have defined my manhood through the eyes of womanhood. I had to ask myself at one time, did I know what it truly meant to be supportive to a spouse and my children? Due to the bad decisions of most of us incarcerated men, we have left the women in our lives to bear the burden and carry the torch.

These women have risen to the occasion, defied the odds, and held us down through "thick and thin." So for all you "Woman Kings," I bow and salute you, and say to the world, "Long live the Queens."

AROUND THE WORLD



Pau San Goh Ly
Brunei

ART

David "Coach" Barela uses art to find solace, respect his victims

By Anthony Manuel Carvalho
Staff Writer

As seasons change, life returns to San Quentin’s Lower Yard, athletes shake off cobwebs of a dormant winter and fans prepare for another year to reconnect with their favorite teams in the real world.

Next to a fence that separates incarcerated individuals from their packages ordered by family, many eyes are fixated by the sports paraphernalia hung against that fence and David “Coach” Barela is affixed to that wall as he barter his designed sports emblems completed during the stagnant winter days.

“I love my prison logos as much as the fans of my art do. I also find my medium of paint and design to be a therapeutic way for me to heal. In a way I get more joy than they do,” said Barela.

Fans enthusiastically negotiate for Barela’s sports treasures not seeing they’re not the only ones who benefit from his work. Over the years, sports design has helped Barela heal from witnessing years of domestic violence and alcohol abuse in a dysfunctional family setting.

“My designs let me reflect about my past as I give solace and respect to my victims and the damage I have done to my free community. And, because of going back to what I learned as a child, I could perhaps gain my true self from doing so.

Sport design allows me to cope

“Sport design allows me to cope with the healing process and the quiet, unannounced promise I have made to my victim, which is honoring (her/him) as a productive citizen anywhere I go – including my time in prison.”

—David “Coach” Barela

with the healing process and the quiet, unannounced promise I have made to my victim, which is honoring (her/him) as a productive citizen anywhere I go – including my time in prison,” said Barela.

As the line for viewing his work is longer than the line for Walkenhorst packages it appears his creations of Dodgers, Giants, Warriors and Giants placards are wanted throughout the Rehabilitation Center.

“Coach” as he is called, has been incarcerated for 19 years, residing at SQRC for the past six years.

Barela first noticed how painting affected him therapeutically at an early age.

He moved from painting on paper to auto painting. “Around 1975 I just fell in love with how a car looked after I painted it, so I stayed in paint,” said Barela.

‘Coach’ Barela has learned as a child he used art to create a world away from the family that was teaching him how not to act.

“My painting was my safe zone then and it is now too,” said Barela.

His gifts almost went unnoticed at SQ because he “fought tooth and nail” to stay near his family; in fact Barela contemplated refusing a transfer.

“I thought that I would not like this prison, because it was so far from Orange County, but SQRC has so much to offer I really learned to love this place,” said Barela.

Athletic events that happen regularly on SQRC’s Lower Yard assisted ‘Coach,’ to rekindle his love for playing in sports and coaching. Today, Barela admitted sports contributed to his rehabilitation, by extending his occupational talents as a vocational painter to his creative side.

Barela said he gains strength in healing because he stays self-supportive, away from his family while at SQRC. “Becoming self-sustaining means I don’t have to be a drain on them. It’s the least I could do for all the harm I’ve done to them,” said Barela.

As the sun begins to shine at SQRC, Barela’s art brings out the zealousness of any fan as he can make designs to custom order.

Barela is not a drain at SQRC but a replica of a team member who gets better with every stroke of the brush.



David "Coach" Barela

Background image SQNews photo archive

Travis George connects with his son through illustrating children's poetry-art

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Chair

No distance or prison walls can separate the love of a father from his child. Travis George, an incarcerated father, has developed his artistic ways motivated by the love of his son.

With the portrait *Simon* “I wanted to convey to my son his importance to me is not demised by physical separation,” said George.

Initially, drawing did not top the artist’s to-do list. Distance from his son and the inability regularly to see him inspired George to turn to visual art.

Prior to his incarceration, George said he used to make sculptures from leaves. His son, aged two at the time, stimulates memories that linger in George’s heart to this day.

The innocence of his child made his art alive whenever he saw tree bark that his son thought looked a pelican. They took it home and used pinecones, driftwood, dried banana leaves, and seashells to turn it into a full pelican.

A drawing in which his son wears two-tone shoes and a suit shows him surrounded by other figures and engaged in multiple activities. It shows Simon eating vegetables with his dog — a black lab named Christopher, it shows Simon on a stage, with pandas at a zoo, at a train station, laughing at mandrake root, and finally enjoying the “slippy-slime

feel of the orange river-newt.”

The poem “Two Toned Shoes and a New Suit” accompanies the art:

“I feel good when I eat lots of veggies and fruit, and felt great when I learned to play ‘Chopsticks’ on the flute, and speaking of chopsticks, some are made from bamboo shoots, and mentioning bamboo makes me think of the zoo, and those Pandas who always are good for a mood boost, and my ‘Panda fish’ t-shirt, which is really a hoot, when the train conductor saw it, he blew the whistle twice, whoo-whooh! And by the way, I find the mandrake to be a very humorous root, and the slippy-slime feel of the Orange River-Newt, is more precious to me than the loot of a coot. But fruits, flutes, bamboo shoots, and zoo-Panda mood boosts, shirts that are hoots, and train whistle whoo-whoos, humorous roots, Orange River-Newts, and Coot’s loot, are all best enjoyed in two-toned shoes and a new suit!”

“Art has demonstrated to my son in a concrete way that he still retains the highest level of priority in my life, if I was out there with him,” George said.

George’s unique style originated as a demonstration of his love for

his son; through such works, George illustrates other children poetry-art.

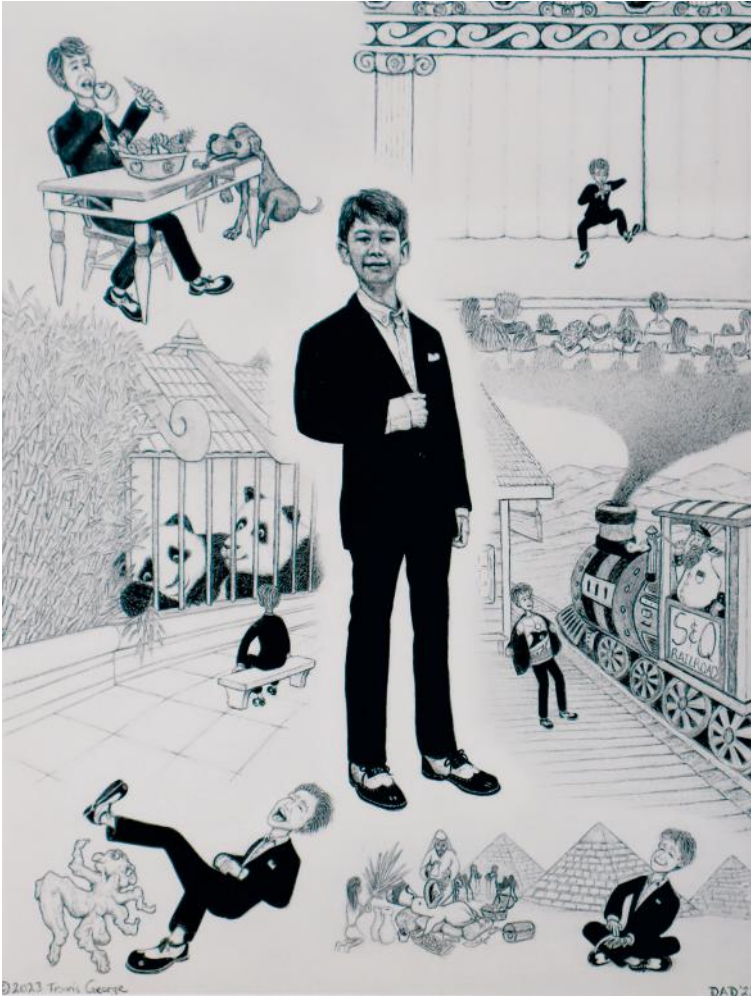
“Hairy Cheese” is a comical yet penetrating commentary on an uncomfortable social dynamics with which everyone has familiarity: finding a hair on something to eat.

George, a known figure in San Quentin, participated on the annual Day of Peace yard event. He was one of the many artists to use chalk as a means to sketch out a self-portrait with his son Simon. The event promoted a culture of peace and compassion within the San Quentin community.

During the pandemic, George came across a newspaper article that highlighted the drastic disparity in the rates at which Native of American children lost their caregivers, compared with other ethnic groups.

According to George, this article contained a very moving portrait of a young Native American boy who had recently lost his caregiving grandfather. In honor of this loss, George created an artwork that memorialized the beauty of their relationship.

The sorrow of separation from his child has given George a profound sense of empathy for others and an awareness of the importance of reaching out and supporting each other in times of grief.



Top left: Travis George.

Filling a void with art: George uses his son that he still remains the highest priority.

