

San Quentin News

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Photos by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

Dunya Bay Area dancers and drummers perform traditional African music and dance.

ANNUAL CELEBRATION ACCENTUATES IMPORTANCE AND HISTORY OF KWANZAA

Holiday festivities had hundreds of residents, administrators, and guests gather December 29 in the San Quentin's Chapel B for Kwanzaa, a celebration of family, community, and culture.

Kwanzaa, an annual celebration of African-American culture, begins December 26 and ends January 1. The evening event started with a remembrance of ancestral roots in the spirit of Matunda ya Kwanzaa — First Fruits — acknowledging the paths of love, knowledge, and hard work.

"[This] Kwanzaa celebration shows there is a family vibe in San Quentin, it is a beautiful thing all different races coming together as a community," resident Kevin Robinson said.

Activist Maulana Karenga created Kwanzaa in 1966. Embodied by seven foundational principles of the Kawaaida, Kwanzaa represents a striving for freedom and liberation.

San Quentin News interim Editor-in-Chief Marcus "Wali" Henderson opened the ceremony with a customary greeting for Kwanzaa,

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer



Habari Gani, which means, "How are you." He thanked Imam Muhammad Fasih and Public Information Officer Lt. G. Berry for their support.

Henderson introduced the first day's principle *Umoja*, or unity. He talked about how he had destroyed his community and his process for

shedding that former mindset. His start of love-self had allowed him to see humanity as the apex of spirituality, he said.

"There is light in unity, this is our community, it is about common unity," Henderson said, "We are about building a movement, not a moment."

Residents performed throughout the celebration. Wayne "Belize" Villafranco performed in Swahili a comedy skit about an experience he had as a child, which had the audience laughing. He then performed a song on the drum. Steven Warren read "Somedays," and "The Return," poems about his journey through prison.

Lyrical performances kept the energy at a high level as residents Maurice "Nation" Buckley and Samuel Jackson rapped. Tam Steve Nguyen wrote a song specifically for Kwanzaa. He thanked everyone for the welcoming he had received from the San Quentin community since his arrival. "The people in here see

See KWANZAA on pg. 13

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation designated San Quentin Rehabilitation Center as a YOP institution to house youth offenders between ages 18 and 25.

SQRC provides youth-specific opportunities for rehabilitative programming and support from peer-mentors. The program

encourages personal transformation and hopes for a successful release without recidivism.

On December 5, guests gathered in San Quentin's Garden Chapel to recognize nine residents as the first-ever Youth Offender Program mentors in a graduation ceremony.

"If I can use what I've learned over the years to have a positive effect on someone, I want to do that," graduate Jimmy Daly said.

Correctional Counselor II

Incarcerated workers receive needed pay raises

By Marcus Henderson
Executive Editor &
Editor in Chief (Interim)

After more than 30 years, CDCR filed new regulations that will increase incarcerated workers' pay statewide beginning April 1, 2024, according to a memorandum from the Office of Secretary Jeff Macomber.

Incarcerated clerks, janitorial workers, construction, and other vital industry workers who help keep the prison operating will receive pay increases. Incarcerated fire crews will receive pay increases in recognition of their vital work for keeping California communities safe, said the memorandum.

Currently, incarcerated workers' pay ranges from 8 cents to 37 cents an hour depending on the skill level

a job requires, according to CDCR. The pay proposal would double to 16 cents to 74 cents, reported the *Marin Independent Journal*. Incarcerated firefighters' pay that presently ranges from \$2.90 to \$5.13 will increase to \$5.80 to \$10.24, stated the *Oakland Post*.

The pay will increase for workers, but there will be a change in how many hours an incarcerated worker can work in a day. Concerns from incarcerated people, employees, and program providers for workers who were unable to attend some rehabilitative programs due to scheduling conflicts were taken into consideration, said the memo.

"In order to increase pay using existing resources, CDCR will

See PAY RAISE on pg. 4



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Residents Gregory "White Eagle" Coates, Maxx Robinson, and Jim Kitlas.

Native residents travel Red Road in biannual Powwow ceremony

By Randy C. Thompson
Staff Writer

A sweet scent of burning sage permeated Chapel B as drumbeats sounded a persistent rhythm and a cloud of smoke lent the room's lights a hazy glow. San Quentin's Native American community held their first Powwow since the Covid pandemic.

Participating residents and their families and loved ones cleansed themselves with the smoke from the sage. The semiannual world renewal ceremony featured traditional activities such as singing, dancing, storytelling, feasting, and a give-away of

jewelry. The North American indigenous ceremony of the Powwow has its origins in the Iroquois language, meaning "gathering," says resident Jim Kitlas.

Resident Maxx Robinson said of his first Powwow at San Quentin, "These events give me an opportunity to connect not just with the Native community, but also with the rest of the community, and having our families here gives us a chance to bond with them through our traditions. I think these events bring me back in touch with my roots and

See POWWOW on pg. 4

San Quentin holds first YOP mentors graduation

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

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Correctional Counselor II

Supervisor Todd Johnson, who coordinates YOP at SQRC, said the program emphasizes mentorship. The mentors provide youth offenders with guidance, resources, encouragement, and assistance in meeting their rehabilitative goals.

One mentor, Floyd Collins, paroled prior to this ceremony and Johnson recognized Collins' effort of helping to build the program.

Johnson also thanked SQRC administration and staff for helping

with the program. "We want San Quentin to model our YOP program after Valley State Prison. These YOP mentors here are taking it serious ... I see it going that direction," Johnson said.

Johnson said the mentors went through a screening process and completed over 80 hours of training. To accumulate the 500 hours of internship needed to qualify, they

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THANKSGIVING AND
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IN FIRST FRANK
RUONA MARATHON

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PROFILE



Photos by Dante D. Jones // SQNews

Dr. Nandita Dinesh shares her zest, love for teaching

By Dante D. Jones
Staff Writer

Dharma. Idealism. Coffee. Meet Dr. Nandita Dinesh, the Dean of Academic Administration at Mount Tamapais College (Mt. Tam) here at San Quentin.

As a dean of Mt. Tam, Dr. Dinesh (who likes to be called Nandita) is responsible for overseeing the entire faculty, as well as the structure for new applications, and which courses are offered each semester, and when.

Nandita started working in education within the carceral system in 2015. Before that, she worked in many conflict zones around the world—Rwanda, Uganda, Mexico, and India—teaching theater.

As the owner of three prestigious degrees, Nandita has a zest and love for teaching. She holds a PHD in Drama from the University of Cape Town in South Africa, an MA in performance studies from the Tisch School of Arts at NYU, and a BA in economics and Theater from Wellesley College. That zest and love of teaching is what ultimately brought her here to the Q.

SQNews sat down with Nandita to give our readers an opportunity to get to know her a little better—and to go in-depth on her love for coffee. Our conversation has been edited and condensed for length.

SQNews: Talk to us about Dharma. What is that and why is it important to you?

Nandita: Dharma it's the notion that your work is your vocation [your calling]. It also can mean that there's something that is divine or bigger in the calling for whatever you do in your life. I think for me, that's a big part of my life; that work is not just a paycheck, you know?

SQNews: You grew up in Southern India. What was that like?

Nandita: [In India] a very specific path was set out for you. After college, you either became a chartered accountant or studied commerce. Then, you got married, had children, and then stop working because your husband's job was more important.

But when I turned 16, I went to boarding school. There were about 200 students from 80 countries. So, never really meeting a non-Indian before, it was that experience that shifted my [perception] that education wasn't something you did until you got married.

In those years, something started changing, where this notion of Dharma, this notion of idealism, and what it means to give back to the world, all started to make sense.

SQNews: Expound on this notion of idealism. How does that fit you?

Nandita: [It's] the idea that I don't think things will ever be perfect, but the idealism keeps me wanting everyday to try to make things that way... I just believe that however bad things are something good, however small, can make things better.

SQNews: How did you start teaching within the carceral system?

Nandita: After moving back to the U.S. I couldn't work because I didn't have my green card. So, I started looking for "war zones" in the U.S. where I could volunteer. In my thinking, the three war zones in the U.S. are prisons, borders, and Native American reservations. So,



"I don't know how my students show up with such big smiles on their faces everyday... which to me is so ironic given that it's a prison."

—Dr. Nandita Dinesh

Top: Dr. Dinesh at the education department with an incarcerated worker.
Above: At the MTC resource fair, Dr. Dinesh socialized and engaged with student projects.
Right: Gracing the SQNews newsroom, Dr. Dinesh strikes a serene character.



after everything I've learned in spaces like Rwanda and Kashmir, I felt like those were the spaces where I had the skills to navigate. So I started as a volunteer teaching theater in a juvenile detention center in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

SQNews: So... coffee.
Nandita: Yeah, man. (Laugh).
SQNews: What is it about coffee that you love so much?

Nandita: You know, some people tell me that caffeine is addictive so they might be right (laugh). It might just be that, plain and simple (laugh). It doesn't really do so much in terms of keeping me awake. I just like having a hot drink.

SQNews: What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

Nandita: The unpredictability. I don't know how my students show up with such big smiles on their faces everyday because it feels like there's so much that's not predictable.

SQNews: What do you mean?

Nandita: [When I first started] I would assume that everything is super predictable and on a schedule. But it feels like we, myself included, are always waiting for the other shoe to drop. Like, is some recall going to happen or like last semester there was a pipe that burst outside and shut the whole thing down.

SQNews: That must be frustrating for you.

Nandita: Yeah, but I also recognize that what I'm experiencing is a fraction of what my students are experiencing, so I try to keep in mind that it's a hard balance.

SQNews: Talk about the most rewarding aspects of your job at San Quentin.

Nandita: My students... their earnestness and desire to learn and try new things. Sometimes it's annoying, but it's also mostly nice... Every time I leave here, I leave with like five pages of notes and I'm like f**k why didn't I think of that (laugh).

So, when I say it's annoying, it because it's constantly making me step up my game, you know? (Laughs).

SQNews: Where do you see Mt. Tam in the future?

Nandita: So what I see as a need right now is a lot more access to and support with technology. It's something that I've been hearing from my students a lot. Another big thing my student talk about is having more faculty who share their life experience, who look and sound like them. So I'm trying to find a way to respond to that need.

SQNews: As an educator, where do you see yourself with Mt. Tam in the near future?

Nandita: Just so many things (laugh)... But I'm imagining in the most cheesy way possible that a year from now my husband and I will have a dinner at our house and there will be ten of our students [from] San Quentin who are sitting around the dinner table with us sharing food and we are laughing and talking about ways that we can help.

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PROFILE

Longest-held prisoner Ruchell Magee passes away finally a free man

IN MEMORIAM

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Contributing Writer

After serving 60 years of continuous incarceration, one of California's longest-held prisoners, Ruchell "Cinque" Magee, was released in July and died three months later in October 2023.

"With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of Ruchell 'Cinque' Magee at 84 years old," an excerpt from his obituary reads. "Ruchell lived a long life, standing strong in the face of racism, incarceration and repression. We are glad to know that he was able to spend his last months outside of prison with loved ones."

Arguably a political prisoner, Magee arrived in Los Angeles in 1963, six months after serving seven years of a 12-year sentence of forced labor in Angola, Louisiana's notorious state prison. His conviction at age 16 stemmed from an allegation of attempted rape of a white woman in 1955, the same year 14-year-old Emmett Till was lynched by whites in Mississippi for allegedly whistling at a white woman.

"This was a case of 'Southern justice,' Claude Marks wrote in the *SF Bay View* newspaper. "The jury was all white, the trial lasted just one day and it took the jurors just a fraction of that time to send Magee away."

Magee took the namesake Cinque from an enslaved African who led the 1839 rebellion on the slave ship *La Amistad*, capturing the ship in an attempt to return to freedom in Africa.

"Ruchell [Magee] has been one of the first and most consistent prisoners linking mass incarceration and the U.S. prison system to slavery," wrote Marks.

"Slavery is being practiced by the system under color of law — slavery 400 years ago, slavery today; it's the same thing, but with a new name," Magee once wrote.

"They're making millions and

millions of dollars enslaving blacks, poor whites, and others — people who don't even know they're being railroaded."

After his release from Angola, Magee came to California, where he got into an altercation over \$10 dollars of marijuana. He was arrested and charged with kidnapping, which he denied having committed. In a two-day trial — that some say showed little evidence — he was convicted and sentenced to prison for a term of seven years to life, for aggravated kidnapping.

At San Quentin, Magee started his "guerilla law" journey as a jailhouse lawyer. At the prison, Magee met George Jackson, who was sentenced to one year to life for allegedly stealing \$70 dollars. According to Marks, the Adult Authority — the parole board at the time — "regularly denied their release."

Jackson was one of the three Soledad Brothers, housed in San Quentin's Adjustment Center, accused of killing a prison guard at Soledad prison in Monterey County.

By August 7, 1970, Magee had spent nearly 15 years total behind bars. On that day, he and another prisoner, William Christmas, were taken to Marin County court — the county where San Quentin is located — as witnesses for James McClain, who was accused of assaulting a prison guard in response to the murder of Fred Billingsley, a black prisoner, by a guard.

While in the courtroom, George Jackson's younger brother Jonathan Jackson interrupted the proceeding, shouting, "Freeze." The young Jackson is said to have given weapons to Magee, McClain, and Christmas. They took hostage Judge Harold Haley, the deputy district attorney, and three jurors, demanding George Jackson's freedom.

In the courthouse parking lot, prison guards opened fire on



Photos via fundrazr.com/82E652

Above: Magee was able to reenter society before passing away. Right: Magee in his younger days.



Jackson's getaway van. Christmas, Jackson, McClain, and Judge Haley were fatally wounded. The prosecutor was permanently paralyzed by the gunfire. Magee was seriously wounded. No jurors were killed.

The August 7 incident came to be known by many as the "Courthouse Slave Rebellion." Magee was charged with murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy. Authorities also charged Angela Davis, a UCLA philosophy professor and a friend of George Jackson, as Magee's co-defendant because the weapons were registered in her name. In a separate trial, she was acquitted on all charges.

At Magee's trial, the autopsy of the judge revealed that Magee did not fire the fatal shot. The jury found him guilty of kidnapping. "Even so, parole commissions deciding on [Magee's] release, and the media, have regularly mentioned his responsibility for the murder," wrote Marks.

"These parole hearings also demonstrated the political character of [Magee's] continued incarceration," Marks wrote. "The parole process decided that the prisoner cannot be released for

explicitly political reasons, namely because he rejects the legality of his conviction and because he refuses to pronounce himself guilty."

For more than half a century, Magee fought for his freedom through litigation and 16 parole hearings. He was never found suitable for release by the parole board. "It was taken for granted that [Magee] had in fact killed Judge Haley," wrote Marks, adding, "even though the prosecution itself had dropped the murder charge..."

Magee was eventually released through Assembly Bill 960, a new California compassionate release law that took effect January 1, 2023. The law allows prisoners or their families to ask the chief medical officer at each prison to review their case to petition for compassionate release.

"We had to sue the prison bureaucracy to force them to ask the courts to release [Magee], and then we had to fight the Attorney General, who lied about [Magee] and clearly wanted him to die in prison," said Magee's lawyer Mark Kleiman.

Magee was finally released from California Medical Facility, in Vacaville, on July 28, 2023.

TAFFY FACTORY: Three SQ residents showcase their confectionery skills with personalized taffy recipes that reflect personality

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

Incarcerated candy makers reflect how their interest of taffy making catered to self-care, mental health, and entrepreneurship.

Russell Babcock shared the story of his "Hard Time Taffy," elaborating that he learned how to make the popular prison candy while incarcerated at California State Prison Tehachapi.

"There was only one guy making the candy," he recalled. Initially, the person would not share the recipe with Babcock, but after successful communication, he finally relinquished the secret.

"Making candy has been a blessing, seeing smiles on people's face[s] helps me with mental health that has therapeutic results, which enables my rehabilitation," said Babcock.

Babcock started ordering the candy's ingredients through the package vendors, which included plain coffee creamer and a variety of sugar-free drink mixes, which gives the taffy its color and flavor.

Babcock says the apple pie, strawberry, and cheesecake flavors are some of his "gourmet" recipes. He also uses caramel and cinnamon for a different taste and texture.

The candy is rolled into a string with a four-inch circumference. People at Tehachapi enjoyed Babcock's "Hard Time Taffy," and it's enjoyed today by people at SQ.

"The taffy is made from sugar-free products, but it has the sweetness of real sugar," said Babcock.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Clockwise from left: Kaleem Ray Moore Sr., Russell Babcock, and Steve Marrujo.

Steve Marrujo's shared the origin his "Jaw Breaker," as well as other candy he's made. He recalled how his love of arts and crafts led to the discovery of the art of making candy

"Art is therapeutic for me," said Marrujo. "Making taffy was like a real job, however it helped distract me from prison, and helped me to redirect my focus from criminal thinking, expanding my social skills, by interacting with people who like candy."

Marrujo elaborated that his craft started at CSP Centinella, when a fellow resident was

making candy but would not give him the recipe.

"He was about to go home [and] he said that before he left he would give it to me. It was a good thing," said Marrujo.

He discovered how to make jaw breakers, lollipops, and different variations of candy that no one else knew about.

Marrujo's secret is to listen to what people prefer. He is always looking to give people something they like. "My secret is the love that I put into it."

Kaleem Ray Moore Sr. conveyed details about his "Happy

Taffy," saying it took him about 12 months to get the correct mixture of ingredients. "Just like they say, practice make perfect."

"Making taffy to me is therapeutic, and it relaxes me, it's a big part of me getting through my time," said Moore.

He reflected that all his life he had a vision of entrepreneurship, and his gift of communication "[made] it easy for me."

Moore plans to start his own edibles enterprise, and turning what he discovered in prison, into a business. "So be on the lookout for Happy Taffy."

POWWOW

Continued from page 1

Natives unite for Powwow to honor, celebrate tradition

myself. They reconnect me to my spiritual self and my path on the Red Road.”

The Red Road, a Native American recovery and “wellbriety” program, represents the path of righteous living. Following the path involves sobriety, participation in ceremony, and respecting tradition. Robinson said that events like this one help him avoid the temptations of prison life and to stay on the right path.

The cleansing ceremony of bathing in the fragrant sage smoke prepares participants to join the gathering. Residents and guests entered the chapel from the east, symbolic of walking into a new life, like the sun entering a new day. Once inside, they formed a circle and started to dance to the singing and the drums of a variety of songs, including a medicine gathering song, a sneak-up song, and an honoring song.

Eddie Madril — an outside volunteer and spiritual advisor — emceed the event with gracious humor. He told classic indigenous American stories including the tale of Grandma Spider delivering light to the world, and the story of a rabbit that tricked a coyote.

Madril also shared his knowledge of Native traditions. He explained the theory that the high-pitched wails of a newborn babies crying out for the familiar heartbeat heard in their mothers’ wombs had inspired the North American indigenous falsetto-style of singing.

San Quentin’s Asian American Pacific Islander community also joined in the ceremony. The Native American and the AAPI communities regularly invite one another to their social events, due to the history that had confronted both groups

with religious restrictions in North America.

President Jimmy Carter had signed the Religious Freedom Act in the late 1970s, legalizing public religious ceremonies performed by both Native Americans and Asian American Pacific Islanders. The legislation made possible the celebration of indigenous religious rites in prison.

“We try to support them as they support us. They have our backs and we have theirs,” said Daryck Taufasau, a Pacific Islander resident. To his Native comrades he said, “Thank you, it’s a blessing for ya’ll to extend your hand to us. We appreciate every moment of this Powwow to walk together.”

Throughout the event, participants received treats such as venison jerky, tortilla chips, and “frybread” with honey. Dinner included Native tacos with venison, salmon, ground beef, and for dessert, pies, cantaloupe melon.

Native residents also had the opportunity to perform songs personal to them. Greg “White Eagle” Coates performed a flute dedication to Native women who have helped to keep indigenous American songs and traditions alive. James Kitlas, who organized the ceremony, led a bird-singing group in traditional Kumeyaay bird song.

Resident Jaden Green of the Yurok tribe contributed to the Powwow, his first one ever, with a performance of a jump dance ceremony — a song of prayer for future generations.

“Basically, we are praying to pass on our genetics, our culture, who we are as a people. That’s what the world renewal ceremony is about,” Green said.



Clockwise from top left: Emcee Eddie Madril demonstrating hoop dancing after teaching volunteers the basics of the Native American tradition. Gregory “White Eagle” Coates wore southern traditional dance regalia, which he has created over 32 years. A resident participant with his sister. Native American residents beaded jewelry items given to outside visitors during the event.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



Advisory council releases 157-page 'Reimagine San Quentin' report

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Residents and correctional staff assembled in San Quentin’s Chapel B on January 8, to unveil the recently completed 157-page “Reimagining San Quentin” report, authored by a diverse advisory council appointed by Gov. Gavin Newsom. The report features the California Model that focuses on increasing public safety and improving reentry outcomes through a pro-social and humane prison environment.

Three co-chairs of the 21-member advisory council hosted the gathering, highlighting ten leading recommendations for transforming San Quentin into a rehabilitation center with a college campus-like environment.

The report called for a complete shift away from the current punitive system toward a rehabilitative one by changing the institution’s culture to a normalized environment that matches as closely as possible community life on the outside. In addition, to better prepare incarcerated people to succeed upon their parole.

“If every minute is about rehabilitation, then every minute should be about that, there should be a plan,” resident Robert Tyler said.

Ron Broomfield, CDCR’s Director of Adult Institutions and council co-chair, opened the presentation by thanking the staff, the population, victim groups and advocates for their input on the report.

The next step would have the governors’ office review the report and forward any recommendation to CDCR and its health division for comment, said Broomfield. Then the governor’s office would issue a final set of recommendations and mandates for CDCR to implement.

“A lot of our inspiration was drawn from all of you [incarcerated residents]; you give a lot of hope to those who don’t yet have those opportunities,” said Doug Bond,

co-chair and regional director of the community-based reentry non-profit Amity Foundation.

Dr. Brie Williams, another co-chair, from the Amend project added that the report is inclusive, it not a consensus report “because we wanted to bring in lots of ideas, lots of vibrancy.”

“I’m gonna hold my breath until I see construction on Building 38, that’s when we will know its underway” said Broomfield, during a question and answer period.

Building 38, the old PIA mattress factory would be a centerpiece for a new college-style cluster buildings. The space would be designed to optimize programming opportunities, educational and job training facilities. Providing career opportunities such as green jobs, community healthcare, and substance abuse counseling.

There is also a recommendation to reduce prison beds and replace them with beds in residential reentry facilities run by community-based organizations, including construction of a new one outside the walls of San Quentin on the property.

Another recommendation calls for better access to affordable housing for staff and improved workspaces, including break rooms and showers.

A custody staff asked, “What about the victims from crimes? What do they get?”

The co-chairs pointed to the recommendations in section five, which includes a plan to increase victim-centered and impact-centered programming, encompassing better coordination, funding, and space for such programs.

Broomfield added that the various victims’ rights groups they had spoken to all agreed the top priority was to prevent more people from being victimized by crime. He noted that the best way to do that is to have a truly rehabilitative and humane prison environment that prepares people to succeed in their



Some Report Recommendations:

- Providing every resident with a reentry plan and a peer-support day one for new arrivals.
- Reallocating funds slated to other priority capital projects at San Quentin, such as housing improvements, new family visiting areas, and a town square.
- Paid peer-mentors.
- Associate Warden of Programs.
- Correctional officers training on normalization, dynamic security, behavioral change, and trauma-informed care.
- The permanent elimination of Death Row and refurbishing it or replacing it with new housing to modern standards.
- “Dignified living conditions” to reduce San Quentin’s population to around 2,200 to 2,600 through attrition to allow single-occupancy cells and bunks.
- Normal street clothing, a debit card system for campus use, self-service food prep and laundry, and access to fresh, healthy, and nutritional food.
- Those with upcoming release dates with adequate clearances can partake in supervised fieldtrips outside the walls.

communities without reoffending or resorting to crime.

The success of the planned California Model “boils down to each and every one on of us,” Broomfield said. “We don’t know what the future will bring, but I can tell you that this governor and the leadership of CDCR is all in for reimagining corrections in California; the momentum is incredible right now.”

Bond added, “It’s important for everyone one of us, as folks come back home, to be part of that change because it’s hard to argue with outcomes.”

San Quentin’s new acting

warden, Chance Andes, spoke about how excited he is to be part of the transformation. “I’m here with a passion and a purpose. I started 21 years ago ... but now we are in the business of corrections, a people business. Inspire the people around you and do what’s right.”

The full report is available to incarcerated residents on the GTL tablets in the “Free” section under “Notices – Reimagining San Quentin.” Outside family and community members can find it on CDCR’s website.

— Senior Editor Joshua Strange contributed to this article.

PAY RAISE

Continued from page 1

Residents see pay increase with work-hours decrease

change many full-time work assignments to half-time,” wrote Secretary Macomber. “We expect 75 percent of job assignments will now be half-time, allowing people to participate in important programs while also expanding their skills and training in work assignments.”

Unpaid work assignments will also be eliminated. “Every job is dignified, and workers should be paid for their efforts,” said the memo.

Some prison reform advocates continue to argue that the pay raises are still insufficient, and they would only boost wages by a few nickels and dimes, reported the *MJ*.

In 2022, Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a bill that recommended fair market value for prison labor and eliminating forced labor as a criminal punishment from the state Constitution.

The bill was supported by California State Senator Steven Bradford, D-Gardena. Currently, a new measure, the “End Slavery in California Act,” is being considered by the state Senate. The measure would eliminate the provision in the state Constitution that allows involuntary servitude as punishment for crime. The prior bill was vetoed after CDCR cited that it would cost billions of dollars to pay prisoners’ minimum wage.

“We are not asking for a liveable wage, we are asking for a respectable wage,” said Sen. Bradford. “It has made it increasingly difficult for incarcerated people just to provide for their basic needs in prison, be it deodorant or toothpaste, to help pay down their restitution that is owed to victims, helping their families or even staying in contact with their families using the phone.”

CDCR expressed appreciation for the incarcerated workers and their commitment to hard work and rehabilitation. Also, CDCR notes that the plan to raise wages would not require additional funds from the state budget.

EVENT Santa Claus wears stars and stripes in 2023 Christmas celebration

Veterans host toy giveaway during Christmas visiting

By David Ditto
Associate Editor

San Quentin veterans gave Christmas joy to children during their toy giveaway once again this winter. The veterans transformed the main visiting room into a festive holiday hall and gave away more than one hundred toys to the children visiting their incarcerated loved ones on December 23 and 24.

San Quentin's resident veterans turned the kids' play-area into a toyshop, inviting residents with their visiting children of all ages to pick out toys. "Children are a gift from God," said resident U.S. Navy veteran Reginald La'Mont Cooper. "It's a blessing to share the spirit of Christmas giving with these kids and their families today." This event marked Cooper's second year in a row in volunteering for the event, the first time for the other veterans.

"I was so surprised to get toys!" said 10-year-old Jonas, who came in to visit his brother Terence Robertson. "Shopping with my brother made my Christmas happier



Photos by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

Above: Resident Frank Justo approves of his loved one's choice. Left: VGSQ representatives who managed the toy giveaway.

and brighter."

Jonas picked out a big Barbie doll for his niece Treasure, Terence's three-year-old daughter. "I saw some great stuff, but I wanted something for her, since she couldn't be here with her dad today."

Jonas' and Terence's mother Erin Robertson said she felt happy that they had a chance to visit during the holidays. "I wish he was home, but I want him to keep his spirits up," she said.

"I don't know how many years it's been since I've seen a kid get so happy like that," said resident U.S.

Navy veteran Steve Drown, a first-time volunteer at the giveaway event. "To witness that — to give that — is truly rewarding."

Drown, a founding member of a group that assists veterans in Solano State Prison, has spent 45 years in incarceration.

"I like being part of a team giving back to the community. That's what being a vet is all about," said incarcerated veteran Damou 'D. J.' Evans, who served in the Navy eight years, including combat duty in the Persian Gulf and Desert Storm.

He said building camaraderie with other veterans feels good. "Even in prison, we're still proud of our country. Together, we can overcome our mistakes."

"It's amazing watching a child change from timidity to giddiness, seeing their smiles, hearing their laughter," said resident Marine Corps veteran Noah Winchester. He said he served in Toys-For-Tots drives in full dress uniform each of his four years in the Corps, but before coming to San Quentin had not found any veteran programs at prisons.

"Giving toys to kids today is a real joy," said incarcerated

U.S. Navy veteran Harvey Brooks. "I love kids. As the oldest of twelve, I did a lot of babysitting." Brooks, incarcerated for thirteen years, said he looked forward to freedom so to spend time with his grandchildren and other family.

All five veteran volunteers participate in the Veterans Group of San Quentin, in which Winchester holds the office of Sergeant-at-Arms. He said the group works hard to rebuild the veteran community inside San Quentin. The incarcerated veterans of VGSQ have kept alive the tradition of holiday gift giving for 33 years.

Marine Corps veteran and former San Quentin resident Ron Self, the founder of Veterans Healing Veterans, made the giveaway possible

with a generous donation of toys. "Thank you, and Merry Christmas, veterans, for making this happen!" said resident Aoderi Samad, relishing his first-ever holiday together with his girlfriend Deseana and their eight-year-old daughter Aeyana. He went to jail just before Aeyana's first Christmas.

"My family is my motivation. The toys surprised us all, and Aeyana was super-excited," said Aoderi, who spent years at higher security level prisons before arriving at San Quentin in September. "I'm so grateful I got to be with my dad today, picking out Christmas gifts," said Aeyana, carrying her bag with a big doll and "Trouble," "Monopoly," "Sorry," and "Candyland" board games.

CURTAIN CALL Incarcerated theater actors stage final performance

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

Students in Mount Tamalpais College's first ever performing arts class presented a theatrical end-of-semester showcase at San Quentin. In late November, the group performed "Remote Control," for 13 visiting guests and some two dozen residents in classroom C-2 of the education complex.

As a class member changed the channels on an oversized remote control made of cardboard, performers referenced various world events with each channel showing a different event. The presidential debate showed White House hopefuls debating climate change, homelessness, prison life, and ways to "make America green again", making light of some serious issues, which left the audience laughing.

Performances focused on the aesthetic, communicative, and collaborative elements of the theatrical process. The goal of the TV-centered parodies created a dialogue with the audience about homelessness, suicide, aging, and stigmas.

"[It was] a glimpse into the loss incarcerated people experience over an extended period of time, but seeing it performed right in front of the audience and not in the decades that it normally takes to get this done," said resident Tony de Trinidad.

Resident and college clerk Carl Raybon recited a poem titled "Response to Revolutionary Letter #28" about race and equality.

Some of the more serious performances left the room in silence. One such piece dealt with an incarcerated person's

"[It was] a glimpse into the loss incarcerated people experience over an extended period of time, but seeing it performed right in front of the audience and not in the decades that it normally takes to get this done."

—Tony de Trinidad

experience of loss caused by a life spent serving a lengthy prison sentence.

Performances ranged from faux-infomercials about the Canada geese on the Lower Yard to advertisements for fictitious products like "Cellie-Be-Gone Spray" and "Slop Seasoning," which brought laughter to the audience and balanced the more serious pieces.

At the end of the play, instructors Jackie Katz and Isadora Sharon joined the performers to answer questions from the audience and for feedback on their experience. "I really liked this play. I am in awe of you all. I would love to show this to a crowd again," said Katz.

The residents put the play together "as the bones of the course," said instructor Sharon. Nine students acted in the performance.

George "Mesro" Coles-El talked about his appreciation of this experience and his participation in the dramatic arts class. "I have not missed a class with MTC since attending in 2012," he said.

At the end of the show, the performers joined arms and took a bow.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

After Matt Butler's hour-long performance, he opened up for residents to share how music impacts them.

Traveling musician brings 'Reckless Son' show to San Quentin

Singer-songwriter Matt Butler performed a prison-storytelling concert for a live audience inside San Quentin in November.

His travelling solo show "Reckless Son" entertained and engaged a hundred residents in a Friday night affair in Chapel B.

Butler has performed hundreds of concerts in dozens of correctional facilities beginning in New York in 2016. He created "Reckless Son" to take that prison experience to outside audiences and he has performed the show for about a year.

The event marked the first time Butler has brought his music into a California prison. Before coming to San Quentin, only two incarcerated audiences had seen the show.

With the houselights off and the stage back-splashed with blue, red, and purple lights, Butler stepped into the bright spotlights with his acoustic guitar in hand.

"I'm from New York City. I've spent a lot of years travelling, sharing my stories, and listening to others' stories," began Butler.

He described the way stories of personal struggles of the persons living in correctional facilities had affected him. "Every time I come into a

jail or prison to perform, I feel very small," Butler said, "and I wonder: how can I make a difference?"

"I wrote songs to share those stories with people outside of prisons," said Butler. "Now it's really important for me to come in and share it all with you."

Butler began playing his guitar and singing, "Son, It's Time to be A Man."

Butler's soulful melodies and poignant, honest lyrics captivated the audience. His folk-style songs told musical stories about relationships, failure, loss, and hopelessness, but they never ruled out the possibility of future healing, comfort, and freedom.

"For the father of a reckless son," he sang, "all that's left for you is to pray."

Between songs, as applause receded, Butler told tales of his own life on the road across the country as a "hobo with an iPhone." He shared empathy he had developed by listening to the stories of his incarcerated audiences.

"Despite the tough-guy appearances, you would be surprised at the tenderness in these places," Butler said. "I feel the camaraderie, the lack of pretentiousness. These are the first places I felt genuinely accepted."

"When we heard Matt on the radio, he seemed like a kindred spirit," said singer-songwriter Danny Wilson, the opening performer for the San Quentin concert. Wilson and his creative partner Tracy Schlapp have brought art and music into Oregon prisons for five years through their non-profit Bridgeworks Oregon.

Wilson, dressed in black, brought San Quentin's hand-clapping and foot-tapping audience to life with his fast-paced acoustic guitar and lively lyrics.

He opened with his original song "Ritual at the End of a Dysfunctional Relationship" and another about how Johnny cash might tell the true story of how his trailer "Jesse James" started a destructive wildfire in California.

Wilson ended with a solid rendition of his favorite Johnny Cash song, singing, "I'm gonna sit right here 'till I die."

After his own hour-long performance, the headliner Butler engaged the audience in an intimate discussion.

Guests opened up, saying how deeply the songs resonated with their own lives, particularly "Tell Lucy That I Love Her" and "Reckless Son."

"Thank you for listening to

us without judging us," said one resident, "and for telling our stories to people outside these prison walls," added another.

Then, for an encore, Butler played a San Quentin rendition of the Johnny Cash prison standard, singing, "When I hear that train a-comin', I hang my head and cry."

"It's a humbling experience. I want to be authentic and respectful," said Butler before the concert.

"That's very courageous," said Susan Hirsch, a teacher with Mount Tamalpais College inside SQ.

Hirsch and her husband, radio show host Joe Rogoff, along with the warden's assistant Raphael Casale, were instrumental in bringing Butler's performance into The Q.

Butler's performances are supported by donations through a small nonprofit "Art That Serves," that brings healing through the arts to people behind walls. "I do this because it sets me free," said Butler. "If just one person feels less alone, it's worth it."

During this performance, many reckless souls — like Butler's — connected with empathy through music and conversation.

—David Ditto

FORUM

San Francisco District Attorney's office returns to SQ to partake in social justice reform

By Andrew Hardy
Staff Writer

San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins is dedicated to find new alternatives to curb the epidemic of violence and criminality among young people. She's doing this in the most unorthodox of places: the newly-rebranded San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. She kicked off 2024 with the second event in what has become a series of collaborative forums hosted by *San Quentin News*.

"This is not just for show," Jenkins said. "We need to figure out how to reach our youth. A part of reaching them is finding out what kinds of intervention would be most fruitful in their lives."

"The biggest mission I'm on right now is, what would've made a difference?" Jenkins continued. "For those who are going through extreme trauma, how do we reach them while they're young, so that we can get to these kids before they get to us [in the justice system]?"

Jenkins' purpose for bringing her staff to San Quentin was to create a conversation with some of those most impacted by the justice system — the incarcerated — to help prosecutors understand what brought them into prison and what might have kept them out. Assistant DA, Nathan Quigley said that prosecutors have to depend on police reports and a person's arrest record to get a picture of any defendant, including youths.

"We can talk about accountability in the criminal justice



Above: San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins and her staff held discussions with San Quentin residents at Chapel B. Right: Jenkins meets a pooch from the Canine Companions program in South Block's Donner section.

system," he said. "But it's not just jail. It's not just prison. There are diversion programs, electronic monitoring, public service. It's important that you're leading with humanity when you open a case file."

SHIFTING FOCUS

Jenkins and her team noted that in order to address the deeper root causes of youth criminality, the justice system as a whole needs to have some tough discussions on issues including adverse childhood experiences, broken families, and shame.

"So many kids don't seem to have the support they need to just be kids," said Justine Cephus, a supervising ADA in Jenkins' office. "They're being asked to feed and take care of other people, sometimes while being involved in a network that gives them the wrong kind of support. What can we do to get this kid back to being a kid, where their main concerns are sports and grades?"

Jenkins plans to build on some of the things she has learned from the start of these series of forums.

"I feel like I'm walking



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

away with a larger to-do list of things that we need to find solutions for: to elevate more people, especially men who survived trauma as boys. So many people who land in these situations are people who

survived un-dealt-with trauma as children," said Jenkins.

Shame has been a hindrance to progress in the system, she added.

"People have not made it okay to talk about that for

young boys. We can try to elevate those stories. There's more conversations to be had. Everyone from the DA's office is committed to dealing with this with you," said Jenkins.

Quigley added, that their collaboration in the DA forums has a tremendous impact on that process.

"There's something about these conversations that effects how we do our work," he said. "We have a role that we can play in advocating to our system some new patterns that would tend to impact public safety."

SHARED PURPOSE

San Quentin's new warden Chance Andes didn't just attend the forum — he jumped in with both feet as a participant in one of the small groups. Andes was open and candid with both the prosecutors and the incarcerated, describing his own justice-impacted childhood.

"I see the [incarcerated] population and myself as more similar than you'd think," he said. "I grew up with a single mom, my dad was incarcerated, and I got into trouble with the law myself as a juvenile."

As a kid, he said he didn't have much interest in school and he spent a lot of time trying to get attention. He said, it was a probation officer named Scott Ball who helped him find direction and purpose.

"I've always treated people like people," Andes told his small group. "Humanity is important to me, and I've always made a promise to myself not to forget where I came from."

PRISON HISTORY

FOLSOM: An extensive history of one of California's oldest, most distinct state prisons

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

Folsom State Prison has a rich history of development, leading all the way back to the 19th century. Although it is a walled institution, it has made a major contribution to agriculture and industry in California over the years.

The Board of Prison Directors decided to build a new prison in 1868 due to overcrowding in San Quentin. The location of the new prison was to be in Sacramento County.

Six years after the site was chosen construction began. Difficulties developed between the state and contractors, and construction was stalled.

The first cellblock with 162 units was completed in 1878, and two years later a 166-unit cellblock was completed. The cells measured 8 feet by 7 feet, and residents were secured behind solid iron doors. Each door had a 8-inch by 2-inch viewing port. Six holes were drilled at the bottom of the door to add more ventilation.

The distinctive design of both cellblocks put a housing unit inside of a building, without the cells touching the exterior walls, according to a California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation article about the history of the prison.

In July 1880 more than 40 prison residents transferred to Folsom from SQ, and years later the population peaked at 900.

Folsom's first Warden, Charles Aull, was appointed in 1887. He brought innovative ideas to the running of the prison.

Aull was the first to bring recreational activities to the



Courtesy of CDCR



The distinctive design of both cellblocks put a housing unit inside of a building, without the cells touching the exterior walls.

—According to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

was established, and if any demonstration were needed it was furnished by (last year's) disastrous break when several escaped. With a wall around the prison, these men could not have escaped," said the report.

Horatio Gates Livermore gained control of the Natoma Water and Mining Company and decided to build a dam. The construction was a part of Livermore's long-term plans to convert Folsom into an industrial center.

In the prison's development, dams provided a conventional barrier. The new design was also a way to harness power for the prison and move timber up the American River. Folsom Prison was the first facility in the State of California to

prison. According to the Sacramento Public Library, Aull arranged baseball teams that played games on weekends and holidays.

He also had a history in law enforcement and corrections, was the captain of the prison guards at San Quentin, and a Deputy Sheriff for Stanislaus County. Aull remained warden until he became ill and later died from kidney disease.

Folsom was distinctive for its granite-quarried walls, but

in the beginning Folsom was a prison without walls. The initial idea was to have a wooden barrier surrounded by granite walls.

The prison's telegraph operator, Thaddeus McFarland, approved of the length of time it took to build the wall. It actually took more than 40 years to have a granite wall built around the prison. It was finished in 1923, according to CDCR.

"The need for a wall (should be obvious). It has been urged (since) the prison

unimpeded view of the incarcerated population on the 52-acre yard, according to the CDCR release.

In a 1905 report, the State Board of Charities reprimanded prison leaders because of the length of time it took to build the wall. It actually took more than 40 years to have a granite wall built around the prison. It was finished in 1923, according to CDCR.

"The need for a wall (should be obvious). It has been urged (since) the prison

HOLIDAYS FESTIVITY

San Quentin Christmas caroling going three decades strong

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Staff Writer

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center set a milestone of tradition with its 30th annual Christmas Caroling event that took place in December.

“Tis the season of love, joy, and peace; a time to celebrate our Lord and Savior as we show the world He is King of Kings and that His love is everlasting,” said Paula Bates, church choir leader.

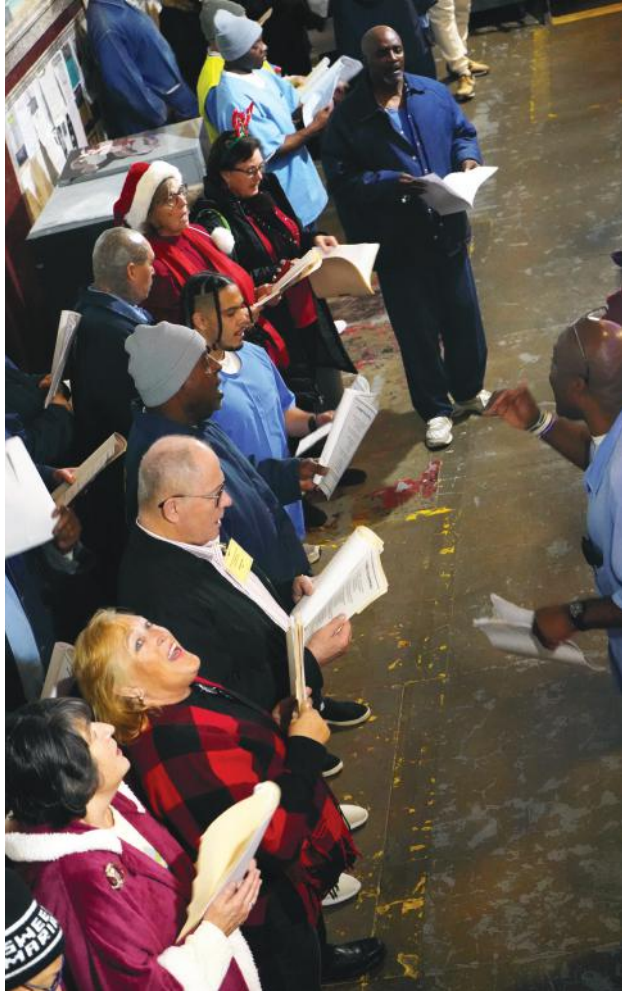
A unification of different congregations and denominations set differences aside to bring faith and holiday tradition to the residents.

“This is the night God commands unity and shows repair through redemption and acceptance,” said resident and choir leader Michael Adams to the incarcerated carolers and volunteers. “Tonight we walk and sing God’s word throughout the prison. No other prison in the country gets to do this, so let’s go.”

A mix of 55 carolers, who called themselves “God’s Choir,” rehearsed in the early evening before Pastor Sam opened the evening with a prayer.

“Focus on the Word and tonight’s miracle. Realize the blessing here, together touching every soul in the prison. Know and understand this will touch more than the men we sing for...it will touch all of us,” said Pastor Sam.

First time SQ caroler Trishia Shew, of Petaluma’s Valley Baptist Church, added, “I didn’t know what to expect. I was at SQ 25 years ago, but never imagined I’d be caroling



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Residents and volunteers of many different denominations came together for an evening to set aside differences and share their inner love and compassion. The carolers, dubbed “God’s Choir” toured the entire facility to share songs with every housing unit.



here. To me, Christmas means God’s love and the birth of Christ, who is our salvation.”

The choir headed from the Garden Chapel (Chapel B) toward the housing units: South Block, West Block, North Block, and closing at H-unit.

Volunteer violinist Amy Kribe and oboist Chris, her husband, introduced their musical instruments to the

prison’s travelling choir.

“This is so spectacular to play at San Quentin for the incarcerated. No, I was not scared because I reaffirmed we are all in God’s hands... what a sacred venue to play in. I hope I am invited back next year,” said Kribe.

Former resident Lawrence Pela was able to return after his release in 2020.

“This is so humbling and exciting, I am almost speechless. I will say, to be able to return and see brothers I pray for every day. Where I was before the grace of God allowed me to start a new life is all worth my transformation,” said Pela.

Resident Carrington Russelle added, “To see Lawrence and to hear our connection with God gets stronger on the outside makes me enjoy

this time as a gift from Him. God and the Body of Christ is the best team I ever joined.”

Spreading Christmas joy through song serves to uplift some of the residents with holiday spirit.

“This is my second year doing this and it is the greatest break from incarcerated life that I can think of; to give back makes me happy,” said incarcerated choir member Tommie Hall.

SQRC residents share impact of Thanksgiving, Christmas holiday visits with loved ones

San Quentin’s holiday weekend visiting bought friends and families far and wide to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas with their incarcerated love ones.

Both special events provided joy and reflection as families posed in front of holiday-themed photo backdrops. Children ran around the visiting room eating popcorn, cotton candy and doing arts and crafts.

“Love doesn’t cost a thing and support is everything,” said attendees Tequila Fritz and resident Ramon Fritz.

Rachel Montoya travelled from Ontario, Canada, to see her newly wedded husband Anthony for Thanksgiving.

“Distance and loneliness disappear whenever I see my man. In this prison, with the prison’s leader and his family serving treats while providing art for the kids is truly amazing,” said Rachel Montoya.

“This event showed how much, and how far we will travel to show family commitment. This is the best Thanksgiving ever,” she added.

Anthony Montoya, “Seeing Rachel makes life bearable. Incarcerated eight years ago, I wondered if people knew how shame, humility and guilt are processed as we hold our spouse’s hand...this is rehabilitation at its best.

The hosts of the holiday celebrations — Acting Warden Oak Smith, his wife Michelle, their daughter, and her friend — all attended the Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve events.

The Warden and his wife served fresh cotton candy and popcorn as their daughter and her friend helped children with arts and crafts.

“We’re happy to come out and serve the population and watch them spend time with their families,” said Warden Smith.

Resident Michael King and his wife to be Eva also enjoyed the festivities. Eva traveled for nine hours from Arizona to visit him.

“Seeing Michael is sad because

he can’t leave with me. People can’t imagine what all you go through. Being caged on holidays and not being able to leave,” said Eva King.

Visitors nestled in hugs and embraced in front of backdrops for family portraits.

Jorge and Samantha Lopez celebrated their first holiday as husband and wife

“Because of rehabilitation at SQRC, my wife Samantha is getting the best version of me,” said J. Lopez.”

On Christmas Eve, Clarence Hayes and his daughter Shania announced the family’s upcoming addition. “[It’s] our first Thanksgiving, I drove from Sacramento to start the Christmas season by telling Dad his first grandchild by me will come soon ... I am pregnant!” said Shania Hayes.

A beaming Clarence Hayes said, “Now my youngest child gives me another grandkid.”

“Shania is my baby and in August, I received a three-year denial at my first Board. I plan on improving some more to show I will be an asset for public safety and my family,” said Hayes.

Shane and Maria Dazo-Goodard said they relived childhood memories from the treats provided by the Warden’s family. “Cotton candy brings me back to 10 years old. Sadly, Christmas will be our first Christmas apart because Maria’s having surgery,” said Shane Goodard.

Ernest and Danielle Blackwell filled the visiting room with laughter.

Ernest spoke of the importance of familial bonds and he said Danielle drove from Los Angeles to celebrate the holiday. “Family is the most important thing. I give thanks to God and family by hoping everyone knows we get few precious moments healing with loved ones.”

Resident Rick and Elizabeth Dias from Fresno enjoyed their Thanksgiving and Christmas visits, thanking CDCR’s improved communications via the GTL Tablets.

“Holidays are important but it’s



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



Residents posed for photos with holiday-themed backdrops for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

more special hearing from him daily, in the comfort of his cell; calling me instead of fighting for time in line. We are lucky, speaking as often as we do. I know everyone else is, too,” said Elizabeth.

Associate Warden Rosalez added, “Seeing the Warden’s efforts to provide additional treats for families on his own time and own dime just to support residents of SQ is very special.”

AW Rosalez showed support of the holiday visitors by speaking with most families seated throughout the visiting center.

“Holidays are a time we must show our support. The days can be challenging and lonely with family so far away. To me, it is important we [SQ administration] thank everyone who travels to meet his or her families,” said AW Rosalez.

Nora Chavez, sister of resident



Jamie Chavez, said, “Christmas is amazing here with our loved ones. Decorations... incredible, cheerfulness showing hope as we make new memories with family.”

Correctional Officers Dews, Neely, and Mora summed up Christmas and the newly named San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. “We’ve always been doing rehab here...Merry Christmas to all,” said Officer Dews.

—Anthony Manuel Carvalho

NATIONAL

Federal report finds that violent crime rates have lowered

By Andrew Hardy
Staff Writer

According to the latest data published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, violent crime rates in America are not going up — they're actually falling.

Each year, the FBI publishes its Uniform Crime Reports, or UCR, compiling information crime reported by the public to police the previous year. These reports compile data from over 80% of all law enforcement agencies in the United States, which protect about 90% of all Americans.

The UCR's violent crime statistics include four major crime types: Murder, robbery, rape and aggravated assault.

Violent crime in 2022 dropped 2%, according to an assessment of the FBI's Crime Data Explorer by the Council on Criminal Justice.

The most significant decrease was a 7% drop in the homicide rate, followed by a 6% decrease in rapes. Aggravated assault fell by 25, as well. Robbery — the only category to see an increase — rose by 1%.

This report comes as a stark contrast to the FBI's data is the National Crime Victimization Survey, or NCVS, which reported increases in violent crime.

The NCVS is built on the premise that "most crimes are not reported to the police," according to the CCJ. The NCVS reports a 75% increase in overall violent crime. The rise in crime was reported in all categories except homicide, which is not measured. The NCVS includes both reported crimes and alleged crimes that were never reported to police.

According to the CCJ, less than half of all violent crimes were reported to police in 2022, down from 52% the year before.

Possible explanations for this include a decline in public trust in police, as well as an increase in police response times tied to dropping staff levels. An increase in fear of the police could also be to blame. Black and White victims were equally unlikely to report crimes to the police last year. In addition, the NCVS does not consider crimes reported by those who are incarcerated or homeless, nor does it include crimes reported by Americans under the age of 12.

Despite the discrepancies in year-over-year data between the FBI report and the NCVS, violent crime remains significantly lower since the height of the "tough on crime" era of the early 1990s.

NEW YORK

Newly signed Clean Slate Act set to seal criminal records

By Jambri Johnson Sr.
Journalism Guild Writer

New York's Governor Kathy Hochul signed the Clean Slate Act allowing certain criminal records to be sealed. The bill is designed to seal criminal records for those who have served their terms, and remained trouble free. Class A felonies like murder and sex crimes are excluded, according to the *Associated Press*.

Under the bill, the eligible cases will automatically seal most criminal records after three years of serving time or parole for a misdemeanor and eight years for felony convictions, said article.

"Removing barriers to reentry and providing

justice-involved individuals with a second chance is critical to the rehabilitation process," said Daniel F. Martuscello III, Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Acting Commissioner. "The Clean Slate Act will not only further the Department's efforts to reduce recidivism, but will bring hope to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers by providing greater access to employment and housing."

"I applaud Governor Hochul for her leadership in implementing such impactful change while fully prioritizing public safety. The Department has already begun working with our State partners to ensure that the Office of Court

"Removing barriers to reentry and providing justice-involved individuals with a second chance is critical to the rehabilitation process."

—Daniel F. Martuscello III,
Department of Corrections
and Community Supervision
Acting Commissioner

Administration has the resources necessary to implement this law as expeditiously as possible," Martuscello added.

Approximately 2.2 million residents of N.Y. have criminal convictions, based on a study from 1980 to 2021 by the Data Collaborative for

Justice, a research center at John Jay College.

Nearly 400,000 people, 80% with criminal records are Black or Latino, was included in the report, according to the *AP*.

The Clean Slate Act will bring hope to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers by providing greater access to employment and housing, said article

"They've paid their debt to society," Gov.Hochul said during the signing ceremony at the Brooklyn museum. "They've gone through the process. They did their time. They're done. But when they reenter society, there are still barriers to housing and jobs. I say no more. We're here today to correct that injustice."

OREGON

Expungement bill creates backlog after expanding eligibility

By William Burley
Journalism Guild Writer

A new Oregon justice reform law, that would expunge certain convictions has caused a backlog on its processing system, according to *Willamette Week*.

Having a felony conviction on a person's public record can limit their ability to achieve full rehabilitation and make a complete return to society.

In 2021, Oregon's legislature enacted Senate Bill 397, which eliminated the fees and widened the eligibility criteria for

expungement. The removal of the financial barrier had an immediate and staggering effect on the system. The sheer value of expungement applications has overwhelmed county and court officials across the state, asserted the article.

Under the new law individuals can have their convictions, charges and arrest expunged from public record. Portland now has a 15,000 case backlog and a 16-month wait for application review. The statute has 120 days to review to an expungement request.

"The number of expungements that we are processing is incredible; more than 10,000 last year," said Mike Schmidt, Multnomah County district attorney.

Aaron Knott, the DA's policy director said that he expected the application numbers to go up by 60%, but the data shows a jump from about 50 per month to over 800. Not expecting the massive response, the DA's office had a single clerk working through the backlog, said the article.

"I can't wait until it's cleared. We've paid the price

and earned the chance to rejoin society," said Chris LaFave, convicted for theft and drug possession.

The length of time dependent on the severity of the offense, before application can be filed. Once an application is filed, the clerk confirms the eligibility of the crimes, and then notifies the victims.

"The number of days from the motion being filed to the order being entered is unacceptably high," said Rachel McCarthy, court spokeswoman. "[The court] didn't have sufficient resources."

1. Colorado — (*Colorado Newslines*) A new group was formed to give those impacted by the criminal legal system a say in the way policy is formed in the state. "We have to shift away from who we typically consider to be experts and go beyond that theoretical expertise," said defense attorney Nicole Duncan. The group is made up of law enforcement, victim advocates, legislators, criminal defense experts, and leadership from various state departments.

2. Minnesota — (Univ. of Minn. *CIDRAP*) A new study shows that the mortality rate of jailed Americans was 77% higher in 2020 than the previous year. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that across 49 states from March 2020 to February 2021, 2,490 deaths were COVID-19 related. During that time, prison populations experienced lockdowns, movement restrictions, suspension of programs, and prohibition of visitors. Other restrictions included limiting communication with loved ones and medical isolations. All of those measures caused an increase in stress, mental health challenges, and violence, which exacerbated the risk of death.

3. Illinois — (*Chicago Tribune*) The number of people sentenced to prison in Illinois has fallen, as in many jurisdictions, acceptance of alternative treatments like enhanced probation and police-led deflection has increased. Between 70% and 75% of the state's counties saw decreases in prison sentences, and most counties saw an increase in the proportion of more serious crimes. "Almost all counties that saw increased prison admissions, or saw a larger share of people sentenced to prison for nonviolent crimes, tended to be rural

NEWS BRIEFS

By BOSTYON JOHNSON
MANAGING EDITOR

jurisdictions," the report noted.

4. Michigan — (*NPR*) Incarcerated people in Michigan will be automatically registered to vote as a result of a bill sponsored by Dem. State Rep. Penelope Tsernoglou and signed into law by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. The law becomes effective in 2025. Tsernoglou said, "Michigan actually has a really good rate of voter registration, but we wanted to increase that even more, and the incarcerated population is one of the populations that is least likely to be registered to vote."

5. Tennessee — (*Associated Press*) Clemency was granted to

23 incarcerated people by Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee in December, which is the third round since he took office in 2019. "Clemency is a very powerful tool and it is not something that I take lightly," Lee told reporters of *Associated Press*, emphasizing that it is "unique to the role of the governor at the state level." The 23 people had no victim opposition and aligned with the state Board of Parole recommendation.

6. North Carolina — (*NC Newslines*) A coalition of criminal justice reformers wrote letters and maintained a presence outside the governor's mansion during the month of December, maintaining that imprisonment is not the right tool to fix

societal injustices and that the governor should use his clemency powers to reduce the prison population. The Vigil for Freedom and Racial Justice campaign also called for Gov. Roy Cooper to address racial disparities in the justice system.

7. Virginia — (*Associated Press*) Corrections officials announced they will close four state correctional facilities and assume control of a private prison, effective Mid-2024. The four closures are Augusta Correctional Center, Sussex II State Prison, Haynesville Correctional Unit #17, and Stafford Community Corrections Alternative Program. The goal of the four closures and control of

Lawrenceville Correctional Center is to improve safety, curb maintenance costs, and address staffing challenges. The state is working to reassign staff to other neighboring facilities.

8. New York — (Press Release, Gov. Kathy Hochul's Office) New legislation that will increase the number of judges in New York was signed in an effort to alleviate the backlog of cases in Family Court, the Supreme Court, and Civil Court. "The backlog in our justice system denies New Yorkers the opportunity to have their day in court in a timely manner," Governor Hochul said. "This new law moves us closer to the fair and efficient court system

New Yorkers deserve."

9. Massachusetts — (*Boston Globe*) A new set of clemency guidelines issued by Governor Maura Healey will address "historical wrongs" noted in a Harvard Law School study that documented racial disparities in criminal sentencing. "We need to insure that our system is fair, that it's equitable, that sentences are proportionate to the crimes committed, and that the guidelines recognize all that," Healey said in an interview with the *Globe's* editorial board. "And it's the right thing to do. I don't care how much political risk there is. There's no sense in delaying what we need to do."



NATIONAL

SURVEY: Parole grants decline nation-wide, denials default choice for boards

By Randy Hansen
Journalism Guild Writer

A new report by Prison Policy Initiative showed data that there is a decrease in parole grants nationwide and most states are conducting less parole hearings.

PPI's report revealed that out of the 26 states surveyed, there are only 6 states that had an increase in parole.

"Denial is often effectively the default disposition for parole boards, and the burden of proof is usually on the person who is incarcerated to justify their release," said the report. "This is problematic, as the board often considers factors that are beyond the applicant's control, such as the availability of programming or education in the prison, or factors that cannot be changed, such as the nature of the offense for which they

were incarcerated."

The report noted, there is very little a person can do to influence the outcome, when release rests on these factors. The parole boards are charged to base their decisions on a person's likelihood of rearrest. What is rarely considered is the fact that people sent to prison for violent crimes have the lowest rearrest rate of any group, said the report.

The 28 states studied for the 2022 survey of parole approval statistics, only 7 granted rates above 50%. This included Connecticut, Idaho, Nevada, North Dakota, Utah, Vermont and Wyoming.

The highest rate was Wyoming with 78%, and at the low end of all the nation states at the bottom of the scale Alabama (10%) and South Carolina at (7%). Parole data received between



SQNews photo archive

San Quentin's East Gate, where residents leave for parole.

2019-2022 showed only 6 states seeing any increase of approvals.

Connecticut (+29%), Georgia (17%), Texas (+11%), Hawaii (+8%), South Dakota (+6%) and Nevada (+1%) none since 2019.

Not only did state's prisons

release less incarcerated individuals but all states except Oklahoma, South Dakota and Arkansas released through discretionary parole decreased.

South Carolina's Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services, website

boasts of the money saved from the past decade, even though they released 84% less people with discretionary parole in 2022 than they did in 2019.

Also at the bottom are Alaska that reduced 79% less since 2019, Alabama with 70% and Maryland with 66%. With the exception of South Dakota every state's data shows an average overall decline of discretionary parole of around 41%.

"We've gotten to a point where the people up for parole are the ones that don't need to be out; it's not like it used to be where we had a number of non-violent offenders," said Alabama's State Representative Matt Simpson, who defended the states grant rates.

Organizations such as Parole4Me and Parole Illinois are working to restore

discretionary parole in Maine, Virginia and Illinois and have had some success in recent years. Possible parole is one strategy to reduce incarceration in states who use it, said the report. But exceptions to policies can be problematic due to diverse programs from prison to prison.

The report also found that incarcerated Black and Brown people are more likely to receive disciplinary infractions than their white counterparts which implies they are more likely to be denied parole.

"Despite the dangers of incarceration in a post-pandemic world and the efforts of many to make the parole system more just, fewer people are receiving parole hearings, and fewer still are released through discretionary parole," the report concluded.

NEW YORK

Discrimination seen in victim compensation

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

The victim compensation process has shown bias against Black families.

Despite millions of dollars paid to victims and their families to reimburse medical bills and funeral costs, the AP found Black victims unreasonably deprived of compensation in many states for many reasons.

Debra Long's 24-year-old son Randy Long died from a gunshot while visiting friends in Brooklyn, New York, in 2006. In an unsympathetic letter that informed Long of a refusal to pay her reimbursement claim, the New York state's Office of Victims Services said, "Dear claimant, your son was not an innocent victim."

"It felt racial. It felt like they saw a young African American man who was shot and killed and assumed he must have been doing something wrong," Long said, "but believe me when I say, not my son."

Long pleaded with law enforcement to find out whether the New York OVS had implicated her son in a crime. The agency concluded that Randy Long did nothing wrong. Long then reminded

"Dear claimant,
your son was not an
innocent victim."

—New York state's Office
of Victims Services

state officials that the injustice also affected Randy's then-toddler son, reported the AP.

Following the murder of her son, Long paid for the funeral out-of-pocket, using savings for a down-payment on a house. Fifteen years later, she still lives in an apartment in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Requirements for victim compensation differ from state-to-state, said the article. Victim reimbursements use information from police reports. They also depend on officers' opinions of victims' behavior, which may encompass subliminally biased explanations of the events, according to the AP.

Claimants who do not cooperate with an investigation by not talking to the police may also have their claims denied. A Chicago gunshot victim had her claim denied because she could not identify the shooter who had shot her in the back, according to the article.

The AP revealed a high rate of denials in 19 out of

23 states, the largest collection of such data to-date. The information showed refusals of payment for Black persons twice as likely as Whites and three times as likely as others races.

In various states, failure to compensate may depend on "contributory misconduct," for insults voiced during an incident, or if victims have had drugs in their systems.

"A lot of times it's perception," said Chantay Love, the executive director of the Every Murder Is Real Healing Center in Philadelphia.

"State compensation programs are downstream resources in a criminal justice system whose headwaters are inextricably commingled with the history of racial inequity in our country," wrote Mat Marshall, a spokesperson for Delaware's attorney general, in an email to the AP.

The New York OVS contacted Long and persuaded her to reapply for compensation; they told her that conditions had improved through training, which would help her case. Approximately 15 years after her son's funeral, Long received a victim compensation check for \$6,000.

"It's not about the monetary amount," Long said. "It was the way I felt I was treated."

into college programs go even double duty on putting aside some of the few things that would give them relief in their daily lives in prison, to focus on school work."

The Cornell program facilitates classes in upstate New York, enrolled students can earn associate degree through Community colleges, more colleges and universities will create higher education programs to earn bachelor's degrees in prison, Scott said.

With the expansion of Pell grant eligibility, about 760,000 people will have access to federal aid for education programs in correctional facilities, said the article.

Scott noted that collegiate education programs in prison can help lower recidivism rates, but they also represent a broader cultural shift to move away from punitive methods that fail to address crime.

"It's our goal to simply imagine that they're a piece of waste that we can throw away? Because that's what we feel like the current system does," said Scott.

NATIONAL

Federal residents seek confidential emailing

By William Burley
Journalism Guild Writer

The federal prison system is working to improve communications between pre-trial prisoners and their attorneys, according to the *USA Today*.

The report discussed obstacles to access and correspondence restrictions. Prison officials are not allowed to open written legal mail, but in this digital age, confidential e-mail communication presents certain difficulties like providing secure computers for the communication, among others, the report said.

"That might seem like a no-brainer, that we could have confidential e-mail communication. However, there are security implications. How do we figure out how to validate these e-mail addresses and confirm that they are really talking to counsel on the other side?" said Colette Peters, Bureau of Prisons director.

The report was prepared by two federal Department of Justice divisions, the Bureau of Prisons and the Office for Access to Justice including more than 30 recommendations designed to make it easier for detainees to meet with, call and e-mail their lawyers, the article said.

Pretrial detainees are typically low-income people without the means to post bail. Lawyer-detainee access or lack thereof is important because delays can cause

postponements in court decisions. This leads to longer detentions before trial, the report noted.

The Justice Department review comes 60 years after the Supreme Court's *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision that guaranteed indigent defendants a right to counsel in criminal cases. It was requested by Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco.

Spanning 10 facilities from Hawaii to New York, with input from prison wardens, correctional officers, public defenders and experts, the reviewers found a lack of consistency within the access policies at the different facilities.

USA Today reports that one of the first problems found and corrected when the review began in March 2023 was that four of the facilities surveyed were still restricting legal visiting hours imposed for COVID-19. The hours were promptly expanded to include evenings and weekends, with all facilities ending pandemic-related reduced hours.

Another example of inconsistencies was that eight of the 10 detention facilities had phones in their common rooms programmed to call public defenders directly. But only three had numbers posted that detainees could use to call other court-approved attorneys that represent defendants unable to afford counsel.

Each facility has a limited number of confidential meeting

rooms for attorney-client conferences and when all are in use, lawyers wishing to meet with a detainee must wait around for one to open up.

The report suggests setting a 60-minute time limit for meeting room use and recommends creating a scheduling calendar for attorney visits, while still allowing walk-in visits for urgent meetings such as reviewing a plea deal, according to *USA Today*.

The article noted that the policies on a lawyer's ability to bring a laptop into a meeting vary by facility and can be confusing. They may be allowed at one facility, but not at another with a higher security. Lisa Monaco — the deputy attorney general — made it a priority to promote an attorney's capacity to use laptops during visits and to limit the number of officials who can deny them.

In response to the report on attorney-access issues, Monaco designated an Access to Justice Adviser to serve in the Bureau of Prisons central office. A plan regarding how the recommendations will be implemented is requested within 45 days with updated progress reports every 90 days.

"The right to counsel is fundamental to protecting the fairness and accuracy of our criminal justice system, and the federal Bureau of Prisons plays a critical role in safeguarding that bedrock right," Monaco said in a statement.

ILLINOIS

Incarcerated students earn bachelor degrees

By George Franco
Journalism Guild Writer

Incarcerated students are set to receive a College Degree from a prestigious school located in Chicago, Illinois, reported the Guardian.

To finish, students defied serious health issues related to the Covid-19. Broderick Hollins, student of the program, had to teach himself thermodynamics since he missed class due to the pandemic.

"Your mind can get into a dark, deep depression. Your mind is what's imprisoned," said Hollins.

The article noted that 20 prison residents of the Northwestern University's Prison Education Program, will be given bachelor's degree for completing their classwork while in prison.

Four hundred incarcerated students applied for the program during the latest application cycle, but only 70 were interviewed, said the report.

The report goes on to report that universities across the

"The men and women
that can get into college
programs go even
double duty on putting
aside some of the few
things that would give
them relief in their
daily lives in prison, to
focus on school work."

—Rob Scott
Cornell Prison Edu. director

country, transitioned to remote learning in order to finish their degree requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic. Northwestern staff brought class materials and limited technology access into correctional facilities.

Rob Scott, Cornell Prison Education director, congratulated Northwestern's program intensifying the great work of achieving a degree, of this incarcerated students with such a limited resources.

"This is a very difficult thing to do, let alone while you are incarcerated," said Scott. "The men and women that get

LOUISIANA

\$4.4 billion allocated for tribal public safety

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

The Office of Justice Programs of the U.S. Department of Justice announced \$4.4 billion in 3,700 grants in support of state, local, and Tribal public safety and community justice work, says a press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of Louisiana. The grants will go to programs intended to reduce violence and toward fairness of outcomes through evidence-based criminal and juvenile justice strategies with an emphasis on victims and youth.

The Sep. 29 press release quoted Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco as saying, "The billions of dollars in grants announced today will augment those efforts and the tools law enforcement is using to curb violence, counter deadly drug abuse, and promote safety

and public trust."

The biggest chunk of the funding — more than \$1.7 billion or 39% — will go to trauma-informed and culturally responsive victim services, according to the press release. The second-biggest allocation of more than \$1 billion or 23% goes to the general promotion of safety with an emphasis on curbing gun violence. A total of more than \$611 million or 14% will continue previously funded programs and spending mandated by Congress.

Equal justice and fair treatment receives more than \$437 million or 10% of the total to expand access to services among historically underserved and marginalized communities. The fifth-largest allocation of over \$418 million or 9.5% goes to research and research-related activities that would enhance the collection of data and statistics and pay for maintenance of

records. Some of these funds would improve laboratory and forensic work, the press release stated.

Finally, juvenile justice receives over \$192 million or 4% of the grants toward culturally responsive interventions for youth to direct youth away from encounters with the justice system.

The grants would also fund safe and successful reentry programs and improve the management of sex offenders.

"The Office of Justice Programs is proud to make these substantial investments in building community infrastructure and supporting communities as co-producers of safety and justice," said OJP Assistant Attorney General Amy L. Solomon.

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland said in the press release, "Everyone in this country deserves to be safe in their communities."



Our love story is the "BEST"
Because God put us together
and true love never ends.
Ralphie & Cynthia
"True Love Waits"
Ralph Arreguin



All I can say
is thank you
for everything.
Love you.
Jesse Guevara



Thank you
for choosing
me to be your
everything.
I love you.
Pheng Ly



VALENTINE'S

of SAN QUENTIN

Samantha,
you have given me the
world with your love,
and I will cherish you
deeply with my love.
Happy Valentine's Day,
my forever, my love.
I love you very much.
Jonathan Raridon



LOVE

COMMITMENT - HOPE



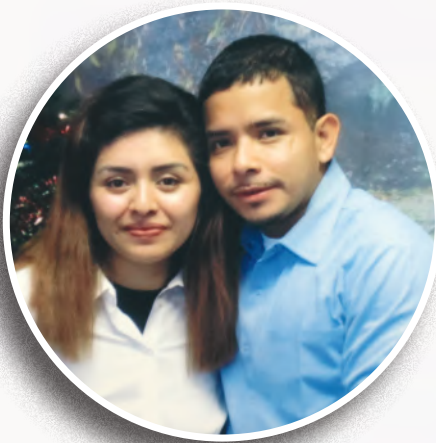
You're
appreciated
and loved more
than you could
ever know!
Love,
Marcus C.



Forever loved.
Elijah Bennett



Our 1st
Valentine's
day, for the
second time.
Larry
Deminter



Mi mejor y
unica amiga.
Anicasio Garcia



The universe puts
people together
for a reason.
Thank you for all
the blessings.
Love,
Mr. Wright





Happy anniversary & happy Valentine's Day. I love you. You got a man I approve of, sweetie. 10 years and still going strong. Dad loves you with all his heart. Love, Dad

My forever! You're the best person ever to come into my life. I am super blessed. Erik Maciel



VALENTINE'S SANTIN



No place I'd rather be. Tina and Jessie

WIE

HOPE - SACRIFICE



I looked at you lying in your crib one day as a baby and said to you, "You are my Buddha. You would be my peace, my calm, my strength, and my voice of reason. You, my daughter, are the ying to my yang." Together we are truly a father/daughter duo. I love you madly. Dad



Mrs. Woods, I love you, my queen. You're my everything. Love you. Mr. Woods



A mi apreciable y adorada esposa Thelmita, el amor de toda mi vida. Gracias por creer en mí e inspirarme con tu amor, amistad y tu espíritu bondadoso y amable hacen que el vivir contigo sea todo un regalo. Ansiosamente pasar el resto de nuestra vida juntos como familia. Sinceramente, Otto R. Delcid



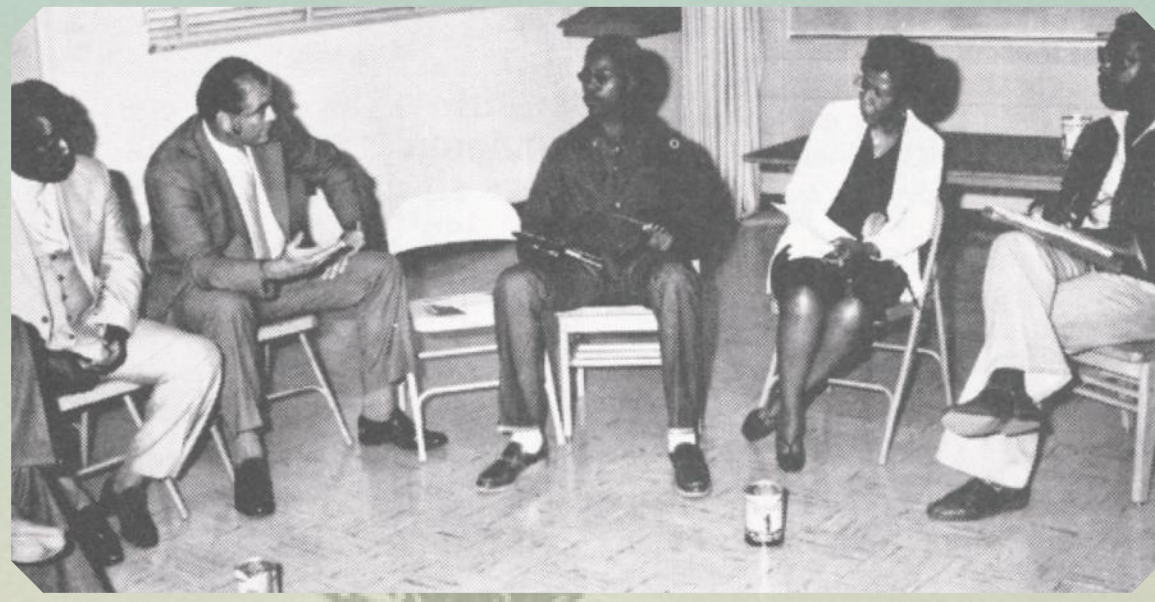
I look up at the stars And I feel so small I hold you in my arms And I feel so tall Every day you've heard it Every nut, bolt, and circuit You're absolutely perfect You're so freaking worth it I love you, babygirl. XXXXX Randy C. Thompson

To: Jenn & Staci, We love you! And we appreciate all you do for us. Love, James & Coby





Above: Mrs. and Dr. William Omega Kuykendal. Below: Dr. Kuykendal at work in his early years at SQ dental clinic.



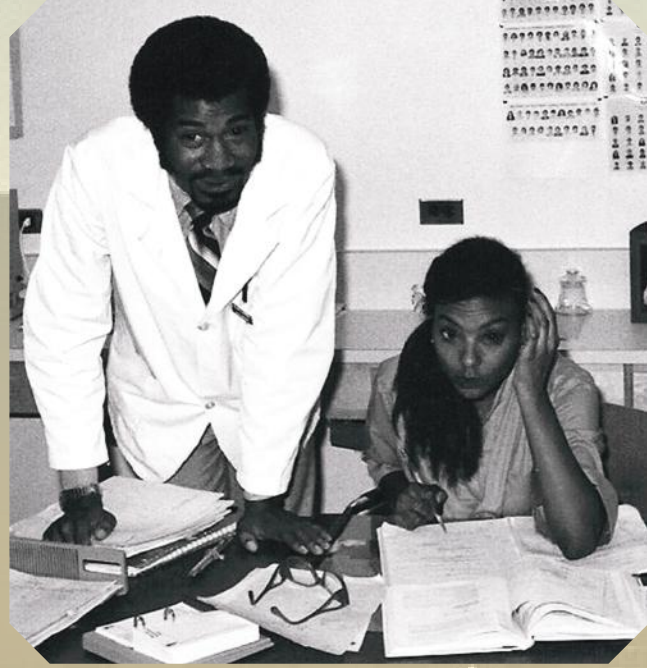
San Quentin's black cultural group (SATE) Self-Advancement Through Education, meets with Ruth Rushen, California Director of Corrections, circa 1980.



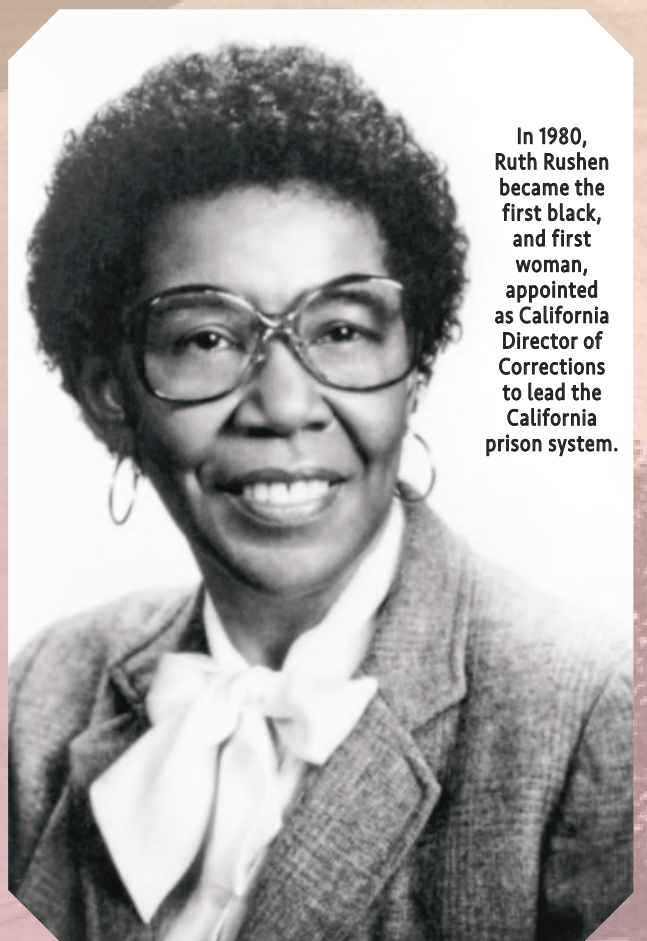
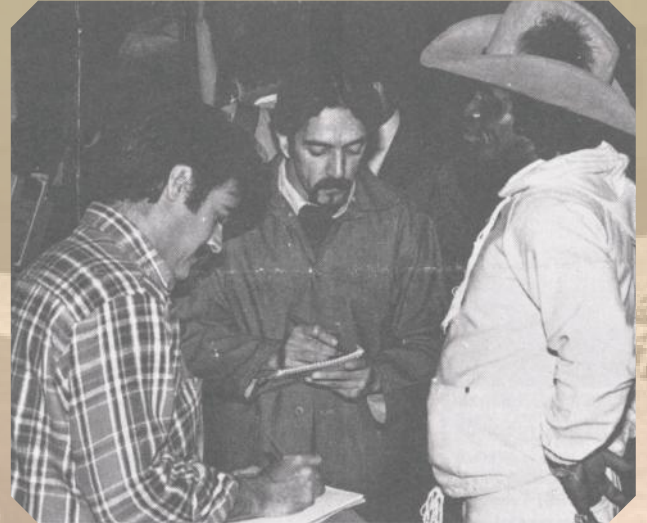
SATE Executive Council and outside sponsors. From left to right, Joel Head, Lafayette Nelson, Datari Robertson, J.C. Clark, Glen Nanace, Asa Hilliard and Stoneham.



Photos by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews



Below: During a special holiday show, SQNews journalists interview James Brown, "The Godfather of Soul," circa 1980.



In 1980, Ruth Rushen became the first black, and first woman, appointed as California Director of Corrections to lead the California prison system.



During the 80's, Warden Reginald Pulley guided two prisons through tumultuous times. First, in 1982, as the first black person to head a maximum security prison at San Quentin. Then 1985, he oversaw the new R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego.



From left, Lt. G. Berry, San Quentin current Public Information Officer sat with her predecessor, Sam Robinson, whom since then retired as Captain and former PIO.



Photos from SQNews photo archive

BLACK HISTORY AT THE Q

By Marcus Henderson
Executive Editor/ Editor in Chief (Interim)

S.A.T.E

In the 1980s, a Black cultural-awareness group, Self-Advancement Through Education, was instrumental in bringing cultural events to San Quentin. The group sponsored the Juneteenth Day and Kwanzaa celebrations for the prison general population. Glenn Nance and The Sisters of Motivation, a Bay Area based organization, were the outside sponsors of the self-help group. SATE worked hand in hand with the then Men's Advisory Council to address some of the issues concerning Black prisoners. The group held workshops on the myths and realities of Black male/female relationships where Black women came from San Francisco to discuss the topic. Everyone in general population was welcome to attend, said the flyer in the Nov. 1980 SQNews. The group held a forum with Ruth Rushen, the then CDC Director of Corrections. Discussions covered overcrowding, healthcare, minimum wage for prisoners, and expanding rehabilitation and educational programs within SQ. The group met with NAACP regional board members to discuss a proposal to have a charter within San Quentin. The charter never formed, but the members of SATE gave voice to the general population and Black prisoners in particular. Warden G.W. Sumner stated that the SATE group was viewed in a negative light but has become a positive force in its development, reported SQNews.

James Brown

In November 1980, James Brown, the Godfather of Soul, performed an explosive musical set in the SQ North dining hall for a special holiday show. Brown took to the stage and sang "Gonna Have a Funky Good Time" and "Try Me, Try Me" as he danced and sweated profusely. Brown's spirit filled the chow hall as he performed a medley of 13 tunes that brought roars from the crowd. "I was in prison when I was a kid. I could have run from it, but I had guts enough to take it and deal with it. Now I can come back and do something for other people," Brown said in a pre-show interview with Channel 5 news. After the show, Brown told SQNews, "I thought the San Quentin audience was great. I needed them and I think they needed me." He added that more shows should be performed in prison. The historic multimedia event was one of the biggest at SQ. Chants of "JBI! JBI!" roared through the crowd as he bid San Quentin farewell.

Dr. William Omega Kuykendal

In 2017, San Quentin renamed the prison's dental facility the William Omega Kuykendal Dental Clinics. SQ's dental clinics opened in 2010; the idea of naming the clinics in Dr. Kuykendal's honor came as he battled with cancer. Kuykendal was known as a one-man tour-de-force — after a 2005 class action lawsuit was settled, [Perez v. Tilton] he created new policies and procedures that were issued to all California state prisons. These new procedures not only required CDCR to upgrade

dental clinics statewide but required each institution to be fully staffed with at least one dentist on call every hour of the week, according to SQNews archives.

Ruth Rushen

Rushen was the first Black person and the first woman to become Director of the California Department of Corrections. She was confirmed by the state Senate by a narrow 22-18 vote. She was the former vice chairperson of the Community Release Board that was renamed the Board of Prison Terms, now the Board of Parole Hearings. She worked for the Los Angeles County probation department prior to joining the prison system. As director of CDC[R], Rushen was outspoken about the heavy use of lockdowns to maintain prison control. She promoted the expansion of community prerelease centers, forestry camps, and real wages for incarcerated workers. Rushen's key goals were to hire and oversee promotions for minority corrections officers throughout the state prison system. She made this vow at an annual conference of the Chicano Correctional Workers Association. "If I accomplish one thing, I would like to have an affirmative action program that would stick," said Rushen, reported SQNews archives.

Reginald Pulley

In 1982, Reginald Pulley was the first Black man to head a maximum security prison in California when he was named San Quentin's warden. Pulley pushed for rehabilitative job-training programs involving outside businesses and more family connections. He was the program administrator for the Correctional Training Facility at Soledad. CTF was in the middle of a violent period. "The director sent me there because the inmates had seen no black person in charge of anything. There were black people working ... as groundskeepers, engineers (and counselors) but nobody black ran anything," he said about the appointment. Becoming SQ Warden he told SQNews in its Feb. 1982 issue about his reform plans: "Changes are taking place at SQ which are necessary. There is always a need for constructive change, but there are alternate ways to go about changing. I encourage feedback from the inmates; they'll find that I'm receptive to their concerns." By 1985, he was the first warden for the then new R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility (RJD) in San Diego.

Lieutenant Guimmarra Berry

In San Quentin's 172 year history, Lt. Guimmarra Berry became the first Black woman to hold the Public Information Officer post. She function as the newly name rehabilitation center spokesperson and press secretary. Each institution and parole region designates an appropriate staff member as a Public Information Officer. The PIO coordinates public information and community relations programs within state prisons and parole regions. The PIO is also the warden/institution head's Administration Assistant and the institution's designee to respond to media requests.

KWANZAA

Continued from page 1

me through a non-racial lens," Nguyen said.

Resident Michael "Mikael" Walker introduced the second principle, Kujichagulia — self-determination — about which he told a story of growing up listening to the words of activists Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. Walker likened persons without knowledge of history to trees without roots.

Adorning brightly colored outfits in red, green, and gold, Dunya Bay Area dancers and drummers performed traditional African music and dance. The crowd stood and clapped to the rhythm and beats. Lt. Berry and Mount Tamalpais College Director of Student Services Dr. Wendy Martinez joined the dancers on stage for a performance, as did a dozen residents.

Resident Richard Bhimji presented the third principle Ujima — collective work and responsibility. "The type of family and society we want is our responsibility," Bhimji said. "If you do not change it, do not complain."

Experiencing Kwanzaa for the first time, resident Will Tolbert said, "In self there is no community. It is about all people, regardless of skin color."

Resident Vince O'Bannon offered his take on the fourth principle Ujamaa, or cooperative economics. He said that as a nation, we must uplift one another. "We have a responsibility to create the type of society we want."

Dr. Martinez presented the fifth principle, Nia: purpose. She said a thorough understanding and use of resources would allow proper investment of energy, which creates purpose. "What are you passionate about, think about what matters most to you. [This] will help you think and act with purpose," Martinez said.

"Seeing this turnout makes me want to revert back to practicing the spiritual principles," resident Jareal Nelson said.

On his first return since paroling in 2022, former resident Dijon Joy presented the sixth principle Kuumba, or creativity. "Within the confines of these walls it is crucial to recognize our ability for creative energy." He encouraged the residents to practice the collective resilience that defines the San Quentin community. "Creativity knows no boundaries," Joy said.

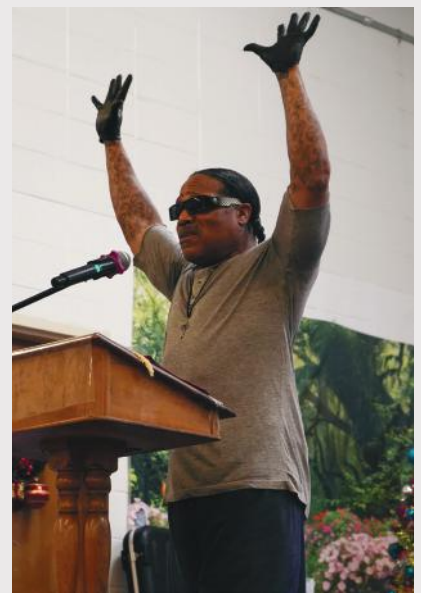
Resident Marquez "E" Sherouse presented the seventh and last principle, Imani — faith — and said one must have faith in oneself and make a commitment to family, community, and culture. "By supporting one another, we can be a light for each other and make a difference," Sherouse said.

Imam Fasih touched on the last principle, saying that it derived from "imani," the Arabic word for faith. He encouraged the elders in the community to reach out to the younger generations and give them imani. He praised Henderson for putting together a wonderful ceremony and thanked Lt. Berry for making possible the evening.

Guest Amanda Weitman said she had sponsored the event and that she appreciated the ability to partake in the celebration of another culture. "I loved this experience and how everybody expressed the principles in their own way." She said she respected the seven principles and believed that anyone could embrace them.

The San Quentin choir Graced Out Ministries sang, "Go Tell It on the

Residents celebrate African tradition, history, and principles



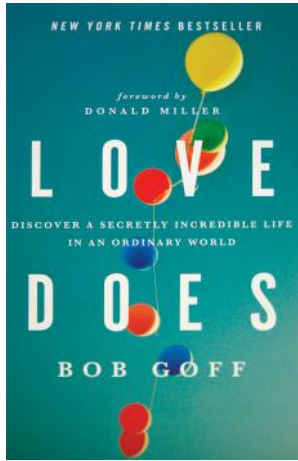
Top: Dunya Bay Area dancers brought residents on stage to teach them some moves. Above left: Dr. Wendy Martinez presented the fifth principle Nia, purpose. Above right: Resident Ira "Prince" Perry shared his personal poetry with his brothers. Below: Dunya Bay Area drummers uplift the crowd with traditional music. Bottom left: Resident Wayne "Belize" Villafranco played a beat and briefly danced. Bottom right: Dijon Joy presented the sixth principle Kumba, creativity.



Mountain," and San Quentin's house band New Syndicate of Funk provided music throughout the ceremony. Guests enjoyed vegan meat, mac and cheese, greens, peach cobbler, and Kool-Aid.

Resident Ammen Shinti told San Quentin News that he practices the principles of Kwanzaa. "The wisdom I find in Kwanzaa embodies the wisdom in scriptures. I love every man like I love myself."

GRADUATION



Dressed as Santa Claus, Bob Goff visited San Quentin to commend the twenty-five impressive residents who completed his year-long course *Dream Big*.



Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

Bob Goff holds annual Dream Big workshop celebration

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Guests and residents gathered to share love, experiences, stories, and words of wisdom in San Quentin's Chapel B.

On December 14, an annual celebration for Bob Goff's "Dream Big" creative writing workshop took place in San Quentin's Chapel B, commending 25 residents for completing the yearlong course.

Sponsored by Goff's "Love Does" nonprofit organization, participants engaged in writing and creatively memorializing their lived experiences through storytelling. The writing course emphasized spirituality by manifesting ambition, hope, and joy through written words.

"Creative writing allowed me to pick up some old feelings and thoughts in my life and put them into a creative story," resident graduate Edward Moss said.

Wearing a Santa Claus outfit, Goff welcomed the graduates to tell Santa what they wanted for Christmas. Requests included peace, love, prosperity, parole grants, help in aiding their fellow residents, and support from "Love Does."

Goff opened the celebration by reflecting on not just what one would want, but why one would want it. "It is not just about wanting something, but

doing something about it," Goff said.

Motivated by his newborn grandson and wanting to express his love for him, resident Chris Rigsby said he appreciated that the workshop afforded him that opportunity. He said he felt emotionally charged when writing, but felt a greater ease in express himself on paper as opposed to revealing his feelings out loud.

Rigsby wrote two versions of a story to his grandson; the first story followed down a dark path. Having felt unpleased and unwilling to share his love with his family, he rewrote the story with a focus on God's love.

In his writing, Rigsby encouraged his grandson to work hard in life but also to surrender to a higher power. "It is about God's love. Work hard like it is all on you, but pray like it is all on God," Rigsby said.

Before breaking into small groups, Goff invited guests perform a vision test by forming a triangle with their hands. He then asked guests to hold up the triangle and look through it, first by closing one eye and then the other, explaining the way humans see from varied perspectives. He said that while writing, understanding which eye one uses to see would help in reaching readers.

Resident Jay Kim said he appreciated how "Love Does"

made him feel. He said Goff appeared genuinely interested in incarcerated persons. "Real healing process comes from those who invest in us, they show us we are beyond our worst decisions and motivate us to move forward gracefully," Kim said.

The "Love Does" foundation supports incarcerated persons in their pursuit of higher education by offsetting the financial burdens put on college students. Five residents received scholarships to pursue higher learning. "I did not know how I was going to advance into higher learning, I was in limbo," Moss said. He voiced his appreciation for having received a "Love Does" scholarship.

In an interview with *San Quentin News*, Acting Warden Oak Smith spoke highly of Goff, adding that everyone enjoyed remaining in Goff's presence. Smith said writing and delivering stories about oneself could feel cathartic. "Put your story down, it will impact someone."

Throughout the ceremony, Goff invited guests to tell stories of how he has shown up in their lives. Visiting from Oregon, guest Eric Brown told residents that he prayed for their peace and encouraged them to stay meek. "Meekness is having a lot of strength and power but being able to control that. It is being able to say I am strong and I am

restraining myself because of love," Brown said.

Goff's friend and writer Kim Stewart had worked tirelessly to edit the incarcerated writers' stories. She said she felt honored for the gift to read all the writings. "Writers of San Quentin have reminded me that there is life and death in the words we speak," Stewart said. "I have been so encouraged to learn how the story is not over yet."

Guests and residents enjoyed pizza, boneless chicken wings, soda, and Gatorade. Michelle Smith, the Acting Warden's wife, served cotton candy for dessert. As everyone gathered in front of the chapel, Goff asked residents about the last time they had chicken wings. Some replied that they had not eaten wings in over three decades.

Resident facilitators Sergio Alvarez and Marcus Eugene thanked Goff, his "Love Does" nonprofit, and San Quentin administration. They presented participants with certificates and Goff further encouraged the storytellers to use and share their gifts and abilities. The graduates tossed their caps in the air and then enjoyed Christian music.

"It is an honor to be given an opportunity to build relationships between outside guests and the incarcerated through Bob's workshop, it is life-changing for us," Eugene said.

No More Tears annual graduation honors class

By Timothy Hicks
Staff Writer

An organization that teaches conflict resolution, No More Tears, held its annual graduation for its deserving San Quentin residents, promoting their mission of stopping violence and causing no more tears.

NMT alumni united at the start of the event and led the crowd with the traditional chant of the organization: "I'm committed to stopping the violence. We're committed to stopping the tears!"

However, there were, tears of joy shared during the impactful event. The experience of the NMT program for first time graduates was eye opening.

"No More Tears provided me with a better understanding of not just the primary victims of my crime, but the secondary and tertiary victims as well," graduate Michael Callahan said. He was one of the 53 impressive graduates in the room; the most in NMT recorded history.

NMT founders Lonnie Morris and Mick Gardner started the organization over 10 years ago and were joined by executive committee members Cori Thomas, Mia Ritzenberg-Crary, Isabel Parker, and Alaia Zaki in welcoming the graduates and guests to the event titled "Victory through Resilience."

Masters of the ceremony Jason "Boo" Robinson and outside facilitator Jasmine W. were responsible for running the event.

"Listening to other peoples experiences help me work towards my own self love and healing," Jasmine W. said.

Guest speaker Demarris Evans, Alameda County Assistant District Attorney, peered through her rimmed glasses as she spoke at the podium. Evans mentioned how the DA's office refers to NMT as a good source when they gauge incarcerated people for resentencing.

"I look at serious cases every day and can see how criminal justice stakeholders like prosecutors can get disillusioned," Evans said. "It is so important to be with people who have made mistakes of committing serious crimes, to experience first-hand that people can and

do change. No one is the worst thing they have ever done."

After spending 25 years as a public defender, Evans retired and eventually pursue her mission for change as a prosecutor.

"People do change, grow, heal, and rehabilitate. And when people heal they have the capacity and potential to heal and help others," Evans noted.

Self-help groups such as NMT fight to change the unbalanced criminal justice system by changing lives on the inside.

"I think the NMT program is a great start and is a very helpful community," program volunteer Alisha D. said.

Although the event was a graduation celebration for inside residents, it also gave meaning and perspective to those on the outside.

"I think what I hope to get from this visit is to truly look at the men from a different lens than what the media or society proposes," Violet B., NMT interim volunteer, said.

It was her first time ever inside of any prison and the future lawyer was overwhelmed with emotions from the experience.

"I came to open my mind up to the different lived experiences of these men and leave with different opinions, mindsets and outlooks," she said.

NMT cover in their transformative curriculum: non-violent conflict resolution, peer mentorship, healing circles, and re-entry services.

For entertainment, longtime NMT volunteer Linda shared an inspirational poem called "I've Been Thinking" that excited the crowd. Rafeal "Neffew" Bankston performed a spoken word poem and resident Mike B. sang a touching original song called "Everyone Hurt."

Another exciting moment of the day was the return of formerly incarcerated Sam Jones, affectionately known as "Watch Man," receiving emotional acknowledgments from those who knew him.

"I came to let everybody know that it's life after prison," Jones said. He has been out for five months after spending over a decade in prison and he advised, "Don't be afraid of the inflations out here. Once you are in NMT, you are in this family for life and they will support you as much as they can."

TRANSFORMATIVE REHABILITATION

Residents use New Year resolutions to improve productivity and achieve self-help goals

Residents of San Quentin use personal experiences to offer tips on staying on the right path

With the New Year come new resolutions, goals, and projects, but also the possible disappointment of not completing them.

A few residents of San Quentin provided tips on self-care, time management, accountability, maintaining balance, and overcoming procrastination.

"Ninety percent of the time the constructive path will propel me to persevere," resident Donald Edge said.

San Quentin residents Trevor Lawson, Donald Edge, Bertho Gauthier, and Sergio Alvarez all participate in self-help programs, religious studies, and physical fitness. They all work and take college classes.

The ability to set aside time for self-care counts as a common element for each of them to stay on track and to stay present. Making time to recharge permits one to remain mindful and allows body and mind to synchronize. "Don't overburden yourself; do what's in front of you," Alvarez said.

"To keep from feeling overwhelmed I have a 'me day' once a week," Lawson said. "I don't do any study work or course material; [instead] I allow a day for self-care and rest."

Rest does not rate as a high priority with some people, these residents said, adding that incarcerated persons typically program to go home. They called time management an important part in overcoming the resistance in completing tasks, especially when trying to balance an extensive programming schedule.

"I never fill my schedule up, actually I leave one-third of it open," Gauthier said. He said he has an official quarterly self-examination in which he rewards himself with treats, reevaluating the last three months. Such "quarterlies" allow him to assess whatever he could have done better, reviewing his strengths and weaknesses. "When I set a formal schedule, it forces me to take myself seriously," Gauthier said.

The interviewees all said that keeping a detailed calendar helps with dates and times of daily activities. Planners make other effective tools, they said, as do individual folders for each rehabilitation class or program, Post-It notes, end-of-day inventories, and to-do lists.

Lawson said time management means not taking on too many tasks. "To accomplish all I have to do, time management and self-discipline are important," Lawson said. "Also, I learn to say no and when to say yes."

The four incarcerated persons called accountability and balance a part of everyday life. They said they use various methods for attaining accountability, whether for their crimes or for the impact on others from their choices. Some persons have "accountability partners," persons who help them stay on track, they said.

"I choose an accountability partner who can encourage me. I look at how accountability breeds responsibility,

"To keep from feeling overwhelmed I have a 'me day' once a week. I don't do any study work or course material; [instead] I allow a day for self-care and rest."

—Trevor Lawson

it motivates me," Edge said.

"My past experiences keep me accountable," Lawson said.

Transformation and rehabilitation require maintaining balance, the four of them said, and they believe in spiritual aspects of their ability to sustain that balance.

Quiet time in the early morning allows Lawson to dedicate time for daily devotionals, he explained to *San Quentin News*, as he pulled out a Bible, the AA blue book, and two other books he reads daily. "To keep me balanced throughout the day, I start with my devotionals,"

Lawson said.

The interviewees put procrastination on top of a list of deterrents to following through with resolutions. They mentioned that other items on that list include a lack of confidence and possibly shame. They said they consider both as a signal of change in motivation.

Alvarez said that whenever he faced a challenge, he would procrastinate, adding that he might also procrastinate with doing unimportant tasks. To overcome these reservations, he said he reflects on the reasons for putting off the tasks, which compels him to persevere with the end goal in mind. Alvarez said that whenever he pictures the finish line or reflects on the steps of reaching it, he reminds himself of why the goal matters and then sees no reason to feel disappointment. Every challenge has little victories, he added.

"Failure is the reward in itself; self-discovery is doing my due diligence. My reward is the process part, it is doing

a good job," Alvarez said.

The interviewees said that despite feeling overwhelmed or challenged, they also find great joy and pride in completing projects and resolutions. They said they might experience shame if plans fail, but staying focused on a new path forward can feel rewarding.

Lawson said that his growing up as a difficult child made him believe that he never gave his parents a reason to feel proud of him. Motivating himself to finish a group or class gives him joy and pride that he can share with his parents, he said, adding that whenever his parents tell him they feel proud of him, they make him feel valued.

Edge said exercise provides him with extra energy he needs to stay on task and that completing tasks feels meaningful and satisfying.

"The satisfactions I get are feelings of joy, inner peace, happiness within my heart, body, and mind," Edge said.

—Michael Callahan

SOCIAL JUSTICE

50 YEARS: Juvenile justice system from tough-on-crime to reform

By Charel VanVliet
Journalism Guild Writer

Juvenile justice system policies in the United States have evolved since the 1980s because of the successful progressive approaches that have been implemented, according to The Sentencing Project.

In the 1980s and 1990s, reports of increased youth offenses changed juvenile justice system policies and led to a substantial increase in youth incarceration. Pundits called for more incarceration to fend acceleration in teen crime, said the report.

With youth offenses and arrests on the rise, many blamed the juvenile justice system's apparent leniency and inability of the juvenile courts to deal with the problem head on. Political scientist John Dilulio predicted a "demographic crime bomb" of "remorseless super-predators." Along with urging more religious piety, he argued, that the nation "will have little choice but to pursue genuine get-tough law-enforcement strategies against the super predators," noted the report.

Despite the so-called lenient judicial system, by 1985 there

were about 4,000 people under 18 in adult prisons and jails. That number more than tripled by 1995; an increase of 36%. In addition, more than 60% of incarcerated youths were confined in overcrowded facilities.

From the mid-80s to mid-90s, arrests for the most serious offenses grew 79%. However, arrests for the lesser crimes of curfew violation, loitering and disorderly conduct, were up 84%. Drug offenses increased 110%. These stats led to the "criminalized adolescent" rather than adolescent criminal behavior, especially when the offenders were Black or Brown, said the report.

During this time, the "states passed laws to encourage more placements, built cruel boot camps, and sent more youth into adult courts, jails, and prisons."

Dilulio eventually retracted his super-predator theory admitting to its many flaws. In 2005, the Supreme Court commuted the death sentence of 17-year-old Christopher Roper, citing it a disproportionate punishment for people less than eighteen years of age. In addition, immaturity and susceptibility to outside pressures and influences



Stock image

With youth arrests on the rise, eyes are on juvenile justice systems

diminishes their culpability.

That year the Campaign for Youth Justice was founded "to protect youth from the ravages of the adult criminal justice system," noted the article. It succeeded in its "raise-the-age" campaigns in many

states.

Youth justice reforms proved to be successful. Surveys indicated lower criminal behavior among teenagers. Youth arrests decreased 80% and placements in the juvenile system decreased 77%, noted

the article.

The 21st century's more progressive approach of incarcerating fewer adolescents has not resulted in the anticipated increase in crime. Instead, it has resulted in less crime.

The reforms revolve around a better understanding of adolescent development. This tactic limits out-of-home placement and keeps more youngsters out of adult criminal courts. Since the year 2000, many states have redefined their juvenile justice systems.

The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act was passed in 1974. It established the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The foundation of the JJDP is that "youth who offend should be treated differently and separately from adults who offend, that juvenile offending is preventable, and that youthful offenders should receive individualized treatment and services," cited the article.

The JJDP was aligned with a revision of due process improvements, beginning with a Supreme Court ruling that discarded the idea that the juvenile justice system could

replace a child's parents, even for minor infractions such as mischievous behavior.

Even though youth offending has decreased in the last 30 years, "the complex maze of harsh laws and policies passed in the 1980s and 1990s has proven stubbornly difficult to unwind. Many states rolled back their laws, but many others remain unchanged," noted the article.

The adult prison system can potentially incarcerate individuals for life, even when the crimes were committed in youth. Conversely, teenagers who are not sentenced as adults will typically age out of juvenile courts at age 21, which decreases carceral populations. The successes of the juvenile justice system can pave the way for adult criminal justice reform.

"We know that incarceration damages both public safety and the well-being of the incarcerated child. We know that charging youth in adult courts makes it more likely that they will reoffend. We know that teen curfews and other aggressive policing do not reduce crime and probably increase it," asserted the article.

Three-Strike law gains new eligible felony

Child sex trafficking becomes first felony added to list of eligible felonies

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

The 30-year-old California "three-strikes" law now has an additional crime on its list of eligible felonies.

In September, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 14 into law, which makes child sex trafficking a serious felony and a strikable offense, according to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

The signing of the bill, authored by State Senator Shannon Grove, R-Bakersfield, marks the first time the legislature has added a new crime to the list of strikable crimes.

The three-strikes law doubles prison sentences for repeat offenders convicted of serious or violent crimes, and a 25-years-to-life enhancement for the third conviction same type of felonies, reported the story. In 1994, 71% of Californians voted for the ballot measure that created the three-strikes law.

However, advocates are concerned that the three-strikes law has not decreased crime, and has had a negative impact on communities of color.

Carmen-Nicole Cox, Director of Government Affairs for ACLU California Action, said, "The real concern is whether or not new lawmakers who are looking to make a stand for themselves, to make a name for themselves are going to fall victim to this kind of approach that is great for sound bites, horrible for communities."

The story said that advocates have spent more than fifteen years attempting to reform the strict sentencing law, which has made possible the mass imprisonment of Black and Brown residents.

Proposition 36 later revised the three-strikes law, permitting 25-to-life sentences only if they involved not any third felony but a third serious or violent felony.

"The real concern is whether or not new lawmakers who are looking to make ... a name for themselves are going to fall victim to this kind of approach that is great for sound bites, horrible for communities."

—Carmen-Nicole Cox
Director of Government Affairs
for ACLU California Action

State Republicans and moderate Democrats have consistently made efforts to add to the list of crimes, but the Legislature has stopped all its efforts, until now, said the story.

According to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Assembly member Joe Patterson, R-Rocklin, introduced AB 229, which would have added domestic violence, human trafficking, and rape of an intoxicated person to the list

of strikable crimes. The bill failed in the Assembly Public Safety Committee.

Grove's bill did not make it through the Assembly Public Safety Committee, but encouragement from Gov. Newsom and Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas, D-Hollister, helped pass SB 14.

The article asked whether SB 14 would make way for more three-strikes changes. Legislators view more changes as a tough path to follow, and reformers vow to continue to fight adding felonies, stated the *Tribune*.

In 2011, a federal three-judge panel ordered CDCR to reduce its population, because three strikes contributed to overcrowding.

According to a California Policy Lab study, 36% of incarcerated persons serve a life sentence extended by enhancements laws as of January 2022, and 28 % of them serve doubled prison terms.

Tribal Healing and Wellness Court uses restorative justice

Advocates for incarcerated Native Americans are campaigning for more healing to wellness initiatives that would provide holistic alternatives to harsh penalization and address the underlying causes of criminal activity, reported the *Associated Press*.

The Tribal Healing and Wellness Court programs serves adults in tribal and state court and are typically for nonviolent offenders with misdemeanors such as a DUI, public intoxication or burglary. Some of courts drop the charges once participants complete the program.

"The thought and the concept will be different from tribe to tribe," said Kristina Pacheco, Tribal Healing to Wellness Court specialist for the California-based Tribal Law and Policy Institute. "But ultimately, we all want our tribal people ... to not hurt, not suffer."

According to the National

American Indian Court Judges Association, about one third of the roughly 320 tribal court systems across the country have adapted some aspects of the healing and wellness approach, said the article.

Other aspects incorporated by the various tribal courts contain restorative principles and helping adults battling substance abuse. Wellness coaches provide reintegration programs that include legal counseling, financial support, housing services, cultural programming, and career development. These programs all incorporate elements of tribal culture in a mixture of emotional and pragmatic support.

"There's a lot of shame and guilt when you're arrested," said Mary Rodriguez, staff attorney for the court judges association. "You don't reach out to those resources, you feel that you aren't entitled to those resources, that those are for somebody who isn't in

"When your justice systems align with your traditional values or the values you have in your community, the more likely you're going to see better results."

—Johanna Farmer

trouble with the law.

"The idea of holistic defense is opening that up and reclaiming you are our community member, we understand there are issues. You are better than the worst thing you've done," Rodriguez added.

Tribal Healing and Wellness Courts received from the US Department of Justice a total of about \$9.4 million in more than a dozen awards from 2020 to 2022. Such awards indicate a growing recognition of the

Tribal Healing and Wellness approach to offenders in the legal system, but not all of these programs have received federal funding.

Whether this approach reduces incarceration rates and recidivism seems unclear, even though it shows some measure of success, said the article.

"You have the narratives, the stories, the qualitative data showing that healing to wellness court, the holistic defense practices are more in line with a lot of traditional tribal community practices," said Johanna Farmer, an enrolled citizen of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota and a program attorney for the court judges association. "When your justice systems align with your traditional values or the values you have in your community, the more likely you're going to see better results," she added.

—Charel VanVliet

More than 100 judges visit San Quentin to witness life after conviction

By Timothy Hicks
Staff Writer

More than 118 California judges toured and held a small symposium at San Quentin to discuss the post-conviction life of people once they arrive at prison. The judges and resident tour guides discussed what can be done to prevent a person from committing crimes and alternate solutions for those that do.

The mid-year tour and forum allowed the incarcerated tour guides to share their knowledge and experience on crime, impact from crimes, prison sentences and post-convictions.

"I grew up in the streets of Oakland and I was raised believing that false male-role belief system of thinking that it was ok to be violent," said resident Derrell Davis, one of the guys sitting in the intimate circle with a group of judges. "Knowing what I know now, I can say that belief system and that way of thinking was wrong."

Davis said he was sentenced to 85 years to life for a first degree murder that he committed in his youth.

"I came in to gain understanding of what sentencing someone and the impact of it look like," said one judge.

Youth experiences were the chief concern of some of the judges who wanted to prevent harsh sentences like the one Davis received from happening.

Davis said, that if he could go back in time and change things that happened then he would. He emotionally expressed his apologies to the victim family and to the deceased victim.

"When I walked in, I didn't know what to expect," another judge said. "But after hearing you guys openness and transparency I am glad I came."

Another judge said that they did not want to come either, but was glad he made the trip.

Every year a group of new judges come to the prison to tour. The judges are not allowed to give their names. The judges were a mixture from Los Angeles, the Bay Area and neighboring counties.

"I came here today to get whatever insight that I can get that will help me do my job better is what I came to get," another judge said.

There were six intimate circles spread throughout the Chapel B. The circles held two to three incarcerated people in them, with judges intently listening to the accountabilities and transparencies of the men.

SQ resident Chase Benoit shared some heart felt insight of his crime that gave the judges a glimpse into the mind-set of his youth.

"When I committed my crime I thought I was protecting my family," Benoit said. "I thought I was defending my brother — little did I know that I was doing the exact opposite."

Benoit has been incarcerated for nine years on a 15 year to life sentence for second degree murder. He was a youth when he committed his crime.

After hearing Benoit story, one judge was moved to tears.

"I couldn't believe how his youth wasn't taken into consideration when he was sentenced," one judge said.

The in-depth conversations with the men in blue on rehabilitation continued through the afternoon. The large group were split up into small groups and took a tour around the prison to take in the harsh, gloomy, gothic and pre-historic prison.

*SQ tour team:
Derrell Davis, Louis Sale,
Tommy Wickard, Ricardo
Romero, Tim Hicks, Kenny
Rogers, Greg Eskridge,
Chase Benoit, Oscar Acosta,
Rafael Bankston, Kevin
Sample, Kevin Brinckman,
(H)Gabriel Granado,
Vincent Turner Jr.*

YOUTH



Photos by Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews

Left: Graduates pose for the group shot with Chief Deputy Warden Oak Smith standing amongst them. Above: Family were able to attend the event in support of their graduating loved one. Below: James Daly stands proudly with his certificate.

"I have watched him transform throughout this process to see him recognized appreciated and thanked it is an indescribable feeling."

—Steven Wright's wife

MENTORS

Continued from page 1

Historic graduation honors first San Quentin youth offender mentors

received a "case load" of mentees.

Graduate Maurice White said the training felt intense. He said the structure of the open-ended training focused on reaching youth about affirmation, reflection, and summarization. "I want to help give them a purpose, to feel needed, wanted, and heard."

Acting Warden Oak Smith congratulated the new peer-mentors and thanked them for generously contributing their time. Acknowledging that they have a lot of responsibility, he encouraged them as male role models, leaders, and mentors of youth, telling them to keep up the good work and persevere through any frustrations

or roadblocks.

"Whatever you can build into them [youth offenders], it will plant a seed and whether they succeed today or in the future, they will remember what you say," Smith said.

Graduation certificates were presented to residents James Daly, William Harris, Tony McDonald, Charles Ross, Maxx Robinson, Lloyd Townsend, Maurice White, Eric Womack, and Steven Wright.

Administrator E. Casillas acts as a liaison between the YOP program and administration. She said she believes incarcerated persons who have had experiences similar to the youth coming into the prison system remain best

suited to help them.

"By having this program it will better the institution, our youth offenders, and these mentors," Casillas said.

"Youth offender work is invaluable," said CCI Efrancis Castrilo. He acknowledged that putting the program together required a lot of buy-in from administration, staff, and incarcerated residents.

"[Despite] roadblocks and space issues, these graduates put the work in. They are helping shift youth minds to make better decisions," he added, noting that he appreciated how well the mentors communicated and how they had the courage to ask questions on the facilitation of

mentor-mentee relationships.

Wright, incarcerated for 13 years, works with youth to instruct them on financial literacy. He said many of them do not understand credit or basic facts, like the importance of a bank account. He said he considered mentorship an opportunity to give back, a way to provide resources and opportunities he has never had.

"I am encouraging them to work on themselves, to be a better version of themselves and bring out the best of those around them," Wright said.

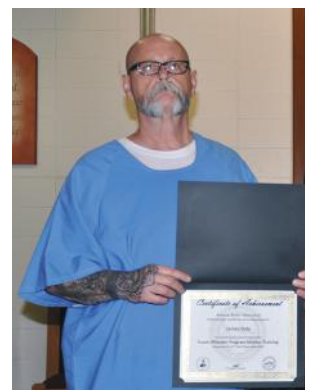
Wright's wife April attended her first graduation in San Quentin. She said she feels proud of her husband and his fellow mentors. "I

have watched him transform throughout this process [and] to see him recognized, appreciated, and thanked—it is an indescribable feeling."

The San Quentin band The Greater Good opened the ceremony with the national anthem and performed songs throughout the ceremony. At the end, guests socialized with residents while enjoying some pizza and refreshments.

Mentees Eliazar Guerra and Darius Poole attended to support their mentors. Guerra called the guidance he received a relief.

Poole told SQNews about an experience in which his mentor helped with a relationship issue. He said heeding his advice has allowed him to



maintain a good relationship with his girlfriend.

"I never had a father figure, so to go through incarceration with a mentor is a relief and gives me comfort," Guerra said.

Homeless youth receive donated hygiene items from SQ residents for the holidays

Over \$3,000 in hygiene items were raised by incarcerated for at-risk youth in the Bay Area



By Pheng Ly
Staff Writer

San Quentin residents gave generously from the hearts to support the homeless children in the Bay Area for the holidays.

On December 14, 2023, the Kid CAT group concluded its 10th annual hygiene drive. Since 2012, Kid CAT has been partnering with the Huckleberry House, a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting homeless youth. They help assist in providing homes and education to at-risk youth. The annual hygiene drive and money donations takes place at the end of the year for children in dire need. Except for the 2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic shut-down all activities were halted.

The total amount of hygiene items collected filled three large Walkenhorst's cardboard boxes and netted

more than \$3,000 in donations.

"I started participating in the annual hygiene drive in 2022, and I have several ideas to get more residents involved next time around because of the turnout from this year's event," said an excited Robert Kuikahi, Kid CAT member and donor.

For the old time members, this was a long awaited event that could not come soon enough.

Veteran member Chase Benoit shared his six-year experience participating in the hygiene drive. "I expected to be surprised on people's generosity as San Quentin donates so much each year, and I was surprised on how much hygiene and money folks give to help out homeless youth."

Benoit added, how there are really good people here despite being incarcerated inside behind these walls and fences. "I am humbled to be part of this hygiene drive," he said.

This event afforded an opportunity for those who do wanted to hold themselves accountable, and moreover, responsible for causing unspeakable harm and loss to society as part of their healing process.

"I have been participating

in the hygiene drive for some time because it was expected to be gifts to the children, giving back to the community, because I have taken so much from society," said Oscar Acosta, Kid CAT Vice-Chairman. "Being able to witness a community of incarcerated people come together and be willing to put in the effort to give back to their community in collecting hygiene [items] so the homeless kids can benefit from us is an honor and pleasure to know that I can help someone in need."

James Duff, Kid CAT member added, even though we are currently incarcerated, everyone came together to support our community by being better versions of ourselves and uniting behind a single goal to make our community better.

The annual hygiene drive is about making amends by focusing on rehabilitative efforts and practicing empathy and compassion.

For newcomers Eliazar Guerra, Darius Poole, Kid CAT and Youth Offender Program (YOP) members, this event was a revelation. All Kid CAT members went cell to cell, tier by tier, up and down four flights of stairs, soliciting from associates, friends, and strangers to donate either hygiene items or money from their trust account. It was not a task for

"I did the hygiene drive because I wanted to help and give back to kids that are on the wrong path because I too was on that wrong path. It means a lot to me just being able to be a part of something like this... so that a kid could have the basic necessities."

—Darius Poole

the faint of heart.

"This year was my very first and I had expected to get at least a half bag (mesh) full from each tier in my building," said an excited Guerra.

This event was a matter close to the heart for Poole. "I did the hygiene drive because I wanted to help and give back to kids that are on the wrong path because I too was on that wrong path," he said. "It means a lot to me just being able to be a part of something like this, so I could go around every time collecting hygiene [items] so that a kid could have the basic necessities."

Many of the incarcerated residents gave generously from what little they had.

"I expected the population to donate more than the previous year, which they did," said a smiling Ricardo Romero, Kid CAT member.

Kid CAT (Creating Awareness Together) is a group of men who committed their crimes in their teens and were sentenced as adults to life terms. The group's mission is to inspire humanity through education, mentorship, and restorative practices. Kid CAT Speaks wants to hear from all the juvenile lifers, educators, and policymakers concerning juvenile justice issues and rehabilitation. Contact us at San Quentin News, Attn: Kid CAT Speaks, 1 Main Street, San Quentin, CA 94964

HEALTH

Time-restricted eating found useful diet option for residents

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Many incarcerated persons focus on improving themselves with balance, discipline, and proper health and some achieve this goal through dieting.

Among the many forms of dieting, monitoring the times of meal consumption provides an ideal option for incarcerated persons, a practice known as time-restricted eating. TRE's intermittent fasting dates back many years. Because of its simplicity of watching a clock, it has grown as an alternative for losing weight, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Some residents reported that intermittent fasting improved their health and bodily functions while reinforcing discipline and result-oriented thinking. They talked about the way fasting improved their moods, energy levels, sleep routines, joint issues, cravings, and overall discipline.

"I started to fast because I found it helps keep my moods in line," San Quentin resident Kelton O'Connor said. "A big incentive to fasting is it helps me to think clearly and remain grounded."

Although several incarcerated persons complained about the quality or quantity of the meals served by the dining halls, they agreed that the CDCR's schedule of serving meals between 7 AM and 5

PM — a 10-hour window — effectively helps them to compress their eating schedule.

That 10-hour window allows the body to use the day's remaining 14 hours to perform other necessary functions, such as rest and the effective carrying out of the natural cycles of digestion that complete each day. According to the report in the *Times*, the tried-and-tested way of burning more calories than one consumes delivers effective weight control, but watching the clock makes the practice more accessible.

San Quentin resident Simeon Alexander said fasting empowers him because it gives him a choice of when to eat his first meal of the day.

"For me, there is a spiritual aspect to fasting," Alexander said. "My reflection during fasting allows me to be in tune with the Most High ... I notice a difference in my energy levels," Alexander said.

Resident Nicholas Hagherty, who suffers from nerve issues in his back, started fasting because he had heard that it would regulate his joint issues. "I feel better, I am more focused and in tune with what my body is telling me," Hagherty told *San Quentin News*.

He also said he feels more productive and no longer sluggish. "My sleep pattern is better, I was always dragging in the morning, but the intermittent fasting helped my energy levels," Hagherty said.

"Now I am up at six, I can meditate and do my studies."

The *Times* report quoted a yearlong study that had found time-restricted eating nearly as effective an approach to weight loss as the conventional calorie-counting method.

The article pointed to a study that divided 90 participants into three groups. The first group ate in eight allotted hours and fasted for 16 hours. The second group decreased caloric intake by about 500 calories or 25%. The third group, a control group, maintained its usual eating and exercising routines.

Halfway through the year, the two dieting groups showed weight loss with a minuscule difference. After a year, the two groups of dieters had lost about 4% of their body weight, while the control group had gained 1%, the study said.

The article quoted Krista Varady, the senior author on the study and a nutrition researcher at the University of Illinois — Chicago. She called her research the first U.S. study that compared "the two weight-loss methods head to head."

"It [TRE] is a simple diet," said Varady. "You don't need to buy expensive products or change things out in your pantry. You just have to decide on a time window and stick to it for as long as you can."

The *Times* reported the maintenance of a healthy diet

as imperative for longevity and prevention of health problems. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention designated over 40% of Americans aged 20 and above as "obese" and labeled another 30% "overweight." Such designations carry the risk of serious health disorders, which may include type-2 diabetes, heart disease, and some forms of cancer, said the study.

Resident O'Connor said he has fasted for decades. "I have relied on fasting more in prison because the access to certain foods is minimal compared to outside," O'Connor said. He even shortened his eating schedule to shorter intervals than the dining hall meal schedule. He has breakfast at 10 AM and does not eat anything after 6 PM.

O'Connor started fasting to help keep his moods in line, but he soon realized that the practice helped reduce cravings. He reported an improvement of joint functions and found that his ability to focus on tasks has improved. "I am consistently with intermittent fasting," O'Connor said. "A big incentive now is to think clearly and do academic work."

"Motivated people who want to lose weight can see positive results with either method," Varady told the *Times*, "but in terms of accessibility and time commitment, time-restricted diets could be a better option."

Hypothermia deaths prompt changes at LA county jails

By Donald Lewis
Journalism Guild Writer

Despite Southern California's reputation for warm weather, people detained in Los Angeles County jails are suffering due to a lack of warm clothing, according to media reports.

Global climate change has led to a new normal of extreme temperatures. In summers, temperatures have climbed to unexpected highs and in winter, temperatures have fallen to new lows for periods longer than usual. Extreme temperatures have plagued prisons in Florida and Louisiana and recently, in Los Angeles.

The death from suspected hypothermia — freezing to death — of two persons incarcerated in a Los Angeles jail has prompted the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to ask the jails to provide warmer clothing, wrote Keri Blankinger of the *Los Angeles Times*.

The county unanimously passed a resolution July 11, 2023 asking the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, or LASD, to provide warmer clothes to incarcerated persons who request them. The motion also asks for keeping a log of issued clothing and for creation of a consistent policy for the practice.

"While people in custody are in the care of LASD," the motion stated, "it is incumbent that they are treated humanely and that includes ensuring that they have access and are provided clothing appropriate to temperature and that facilities maintain appropriate temperatures."

The seven jails in Los Angeles County have persistently struggled to maintain humane indoor temperatures during extreme outdoor temperatures. Monitors with the County Office of Inspector General found that in winter, indoor temperatures fell as low as 58 degrees.

In a 38-page report, the Office of Inspector General noted that the LA County Detention Center only issues a short-sleeve shirt and one blanket per incarcerated person. Only residents with medical issues and those assigned to work were

"My understanding is that Title 15 is the floor, meaning that's the minimum standard. We have to do better."

—Hilda Solis

supposed to receive warmer clothes in winter. The article said that some jail residents used plastic garbage bags as blankets and as sleeping bags to shield themselves from low temperatures.

In early April, the LASD told oversight officials about their inventory of 315,000 thermal tops and bottoms, adding that Title 15 — the California Code of Regulations governing the operation of prisons and jails — did not require their issuance. The *Times* reported in June that LASD officials remained reluctant to hand out warmer clothing, despite having these hundreds of thousands of thermal undergarments on hand. They cited high cost and claimed that the garments could provide hiding places for contraband.

Supervisor Hilda Solis was determined to correct the situation. "My understanding is that Title 15 is the floor, meaning that's the minimum standard," Solis responded. "We have to do better."

The sheriff's department commander, Hugo Macias, said that officials would gladly provide residents with warm clothes but that the department would need \$3.1 million to respond adequately. The article noted that in 2023, the county spent \$4 billion — or roughly 10% of its budget — on the sheriff's department.

Speaking in support of the motion, several community members spoke about their jail experiences and the low indoor temperatures during their time in the jail. One man directed a stream of obscenities at the sheriff.

Civilian Oversight Commission member, Hans Johnson, thanked the supervisors for tackling the issue and said that some residents receive only "an aluminum foil sheet upon entry into our jails." He called the motion "long overdue."

"This will save lives," he said, "and protect the dignity of people being incarcerated."

Rising epidemic of opioid deaths prompts sales of Narcan

By Chris Moore
Journalism Guild Writer

An anti-overdose medication is now available for over-the-counter purchase, amidst rising opioid overdoses.

Narcan nasal spray drug used to rescue people from opioid overdoses is being sold in retail stores across the U.S., as an over-the-counter medication. Now, anyone can buy Narcan with relative ease and without a prescription, according to the *Washington Post*.

Narcan has been extolled as a landmark fight against the nation's drug epidemic. Last year alone, more than 66,000 people are believed to have died from overdoses involving pharmaceutical opioids such as fentanyl.

"Giving the full vial into someone's nose — and calling

911 right away — is the best practice," said Joshua J. Lynch, an associate professor of emergency and addiction medicine at the University at Buffalo.

Lynch warns potential users that handle the life-saving drug to avoid testing the spray first. Neither Narcan nor its liquid cousin, naloxone, is addictive and both can be safely administered to an unconscious person who is not suffering from an opioid overdose, reported the *Post*.

Experts believe the most effective way to use Narcan is to administer the spray as quickly as possible, noting that a single dose is usually enough to restore a person's breathing.

Narcan is manufactured by Emergent Bio-Solutions and is the nasal spray variant of a liquid opioid antidote called naloxone. Naloxone reverses the harmful effects of an opioid

overdose by restoring an overdose patient's breathing.

Major retailers such as Wal-Mart, Rite Aid, CVS, and Walgreens began selling the life-saving spray kits in September of 2023, after the Food and Drug Administration approved Narcan for non-prescription use earlier this year. Smaller retailers are also selling the spray kits online, the news story revealed.

Advocacy groups hope the FDA's approval of Narcan for OTC use will lead to the spray kit being sold in local communities such as gas stations, supermarkets and convenience stores. The expected increase in local access and use of Narcan potentially means more lives saved. Nevertheless, in order to turn advocacy groups' hope into reality, communities must be informed about how and when to use Narcan, asserted the article.

Narcan is expected to cost about \$45 for a two-spray kit—a rather pricey remedy. A more poignant way of looking at the cost is to note that using a single spray in the two-spray kit will cost about \$22.50—the same price of a steak dinner, but instead of buying a meal, it is saving a human life. Still, public health experts suspect \$45 will be too expensive for regular drug users, who are at the most risk for overdose.

Health insurance companies may be able to help pay for Narcan. Insurance companies, both private and public, have generally covered Narcan and naloxone as a prescription medication. Some states have said they will still pay the full cost of OTC Narcan. People can check with their local pharmacist to see if their plan covers the cost for the life-saving drug, according to *The Washington Post*

San Quentin residents offer encouragement, advice in suicide prevention efforts

By Simeon Alexander
Journalism Guild Writer

Residents offered their advice to people thinking about suicide. Their main suggestion: DON'T! If someone told you they were considering suicide, what would you tell them?

Meet resident Joe Gonzalez. Standing alone, leaning on a yard wall at San Quentin as the sun reflects off his gold cross and tattooed upper body, he is in deep thought over the question.

Finally, he says he would tell the person: "You're important; people love you. If I got to hang out with you all day, I will. We're going to get through this together. Think about your future. Hurting yourself is not right. Don't do it! You have people that love you."

While taking his morning laps to clear his mind, Darnell Hargrove says he would tell them, "Life is precious. Don't let the devil take control, and look for a brighter future.

Gravitate towards God... People say that God is good and He is. He loves you. Keep up the fight!"

In the depressing and dim environment of prison, mental health issues are likely to be exacerbated, with depressive factors like lengthy sentences, loss of loved ones, being in isolation, health deterioration, violence and overall dissatisfaction with one's life journey through the carceral system.

Between 2011 and 2022, more than half a million lives — 539,810 to be exact — were lost to suicide, according to the *Kaiser Family Foundation*. The highest number of suicide deaths on record occurred in 2022. In the 2011-2022 period, the adjusted suicide rate increased by 16%.

Studies show that those who have been incarcerated are more prone to suicide than those who have never been in prison, with the risk of suicide being even higher for those who have been incarcerated multiple times. A 2022 study led by *University*

of Washington researchers found that those who had been imprisoned once had a 42% increased risk of suicide; twice, a 67% increased risk; and three or more times, 113% increased risk. The study, published in the journal *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, was based on state data from Washington state between 1990 and 2017.

An older incarcerated man with an Islamic Kufi sits on a lower brick wall in the middle of San Quentin Prison. He is surrounded by people but gazes out onto the yard in solitary contemplation. He shares what he had to say to himself on numerous occasions to prevent himself from taking his own life, "I had to tell me myself, 'Don't do it. Stay focused. I have to stay strong,'" said Milton Mayfield.

According to an article written by Marina Murphy in the *Nevada Today*, there's a misconception that talking about suicide can cause a person to kill themselves or give them the idea.

"Research has shown this to not be true and, in fact, has shown that asking someone if they are having thoughts of killing themselves is actually more likely to save a life," she wrote.

Men talking about their feelings is somewhat of a taboo in prison because they don't want to be perceived as weak, don't want to feel vulnerable, and their pride at times won't let them admit that they need help. But being real and open may actually prompt others to be real and open as well.

"By talking about suicide openly and with care, we give our own signals to others that it is OK to talk about their thoughts of suicide," Murphy wrote. "This serves to seek out those who may be suffering in silence and encourages a connection between people. That connection can be used to possibly prevent a death by suicide and allows for the time needed to connect someone with mental health professional(s) for further support."

Yard workout partners

Steven Wright and Shawn Brown stopped in the middle of their mental health workout to add a few words of wisdom of their own.

Responding to the hypothetical question, Wright pulled off his gloves and said, "I'll tell 'em, 'Why speed up the process? You only have one life to live. We're all promised to die one day and have only one life, so why not live? What makes you think you can't overcome?'"

He then stated that his concern wouldn't stop at encouraging words, but that he would take it a step further. "I will stop what I'm doing and walk with that person, no matter what I'm doing, for however long it takes," he said.

With the same compassionate intensity, Brown said he would tell them, "Think about how your family would be affected. Your children will be worse off without you."

Resident Zackary Martinez spoke of his own suicide ideation after losing his mother at 18 and offered some words of

encouragement for those that may be going through their dark hour. "You're not the only one going through what you're going through. You're not alone.

"By going through this, you could build endurance and character; build resilience, so you could withstand anything. When you are the weakest, you are the strongest. There is darkness before dawn, try to see the blessing behind the bad."

Murphy's article noted that isolation makes it harder for someone having suicidal thoughts to get help.

"For this same reason, it is important that the conversation around suicide is not limited to just social workers or other mental health professionals. The conversation needs to be expanded to every single person in our community, and in a way that supports the open and informed dialogue I have been describing," he said. Adding "Yahweh is with you," reflecting the Jewish faith in honor of his mother.

ESPAÑOL

JUEGO HISTÓRICO ENTRE LOS GUARDIAS Y PRISIONEROS

Por Willy Alarcón
Staff Writer

El pasado otoño en San Quentin — un evento histórico, cerró la distancia [Bridging the Gap] fue un evento visto por primera vez, donde los guardias y los prisioneros compartieron la misma cancha de baloncesto.

Los equipos fueron compuestos por las mismas personas, que en otros tiempos sostuvieron armas manteniendo la seguridad y los otros para cometer crímenes, pero ese día compartieron la cancha.

Durante el juego, un reo brincó hacia el guardia empujándolo con su cuerpo, — pero no sonó la alarma, y no fue esposado. El árbitro llamó una falta y el reo le dio la mano al oficial, ayudándole a pararse.

La relación entre ambos tiene un historial violento que tiene sus raíces en las creencias que somos “nosotros” contra “ellos”.

“Este juego es mi enmienda a todas las personas y las autoridades en las comunidades afectadas por el crimen”, dijo Miguel Sifuentes, co-organizador del evento. “Buscaba crear una experiencia transformativa para todos”.

Sifuentes compartió con *SQNews*, que como miembro de la comunidad latina, él quiso crear más inclusividad. Fue inspirado por la popularidad de la “NBA”, (Asociación Nacional de Basquetbol, por sus siglas en inglés) en Latinoamérica y su trabajo con la organización [conocido como la Justicia Iniciativa] para mejorar la cultura dentro de la prisión usando el efecto positivo de los deportes.

Este partido de baloncesto no solo fue simplemente un “recreo”, cuando se trata con las autoridades y los reos en la prisión — quebrando las barreras de una cultura de división.



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Miguel Sifuentes un residente y co-organizador reflexionado en un partido casi imposible.

Este evento demostró que todo es posible, cuando se trata de inclusividad y la seguridad pública.

“¡Fue fenomenal! — La mayoría de nosotros podemos decir que tenemos diferencias con las autoridades”. Comento el residente y participante, Carrington Russelle. “Esto fue revolucionario, [ver] la humanidad. Es como Jesús reaccionaria”.

El impacto de tal evento fue reconocido a través del noticiero local NBCBayarea.

“Este es el primer paso hacia el cambio”, declaró la Teniente G. Berry de la Oficina de Información Pública. “Estamos viendo como quebrar barreras y las ideologías anticuadas de la prisión”.

Colaborando con la administración

Los residentes organizadores del evento, incluyendo Bryant Underwood, tuvieron una idea radical: un evento deportivo donde las barreras de separación fueron disueltas. Su visión era imaginar el partido imposible, donde los que visten azul, compitieran con los que visten de verde.

Según los organizadores, era esencial que la administración creyera que este evento es de gran beneficio. Se lo presentaron al Director de la prisión Oak Smith y el Capitán Valenzuela. Aunque existió oposición, dieron la aprobación. La Teniente Berry fue la entrenadora del equipo de los residentes.

Uno de los guardias de la prisión, E. Weaver creyó en el sueño y patrocinó el evento. Incluyó a ocho

oficiales como jugadores e invitaron a otros trabajadores estatales: tres enfermeras y dos voluntarios.

Integrando a la comunidad para participar

La segregación racial afecta la vida en la prisión. Sin embargo, 15 reos de toda clase étnica se presentaron para jugar con gusto: anglosajones, afro-americanos, latinos y los clasificados como “otros”.

El equipo azul es una reflexión que demuestra como los reos viven en armonía y con una meta en común.

El abrazo que resonó por toda la prisión

Durante esta batalla amigable, los oficiales dieron una buena ofensiva. A pesar de la rivalidad, los de azul triunfaron sobre los de verde.



La Sra. Fritz Horstman reconforta al Sr. Michael Sperling, durante una sesión de saneamiento dentro del círculo

Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

El primer simposio de su clase en SQ sobre el trauma

El trauma es algo que todo prisionero sirviendo su sentencia enfrenta tarde o temprano. Pocos son los que pueden decir que han tratado con este tipo de herida mental.

Esta reunión singular, se llevó dentro del edificio de Consejería para la Recuperación a la Adicción (ARC, por sus siglas en inglés), al fondo del patio recreativo de la prisión y atrajo a unos 70 residentes dispuestos a escuchar y recibir consejería.

“Mi nombre es Jayme. Estoy feliz de estar aquí”, expresó el voluntario del programa Proyecto Compasión en la Prisión (CCP, por sus siglas en inglés), saludando a todos los presentes. “Hay seres humanos viviendo en San Quentin”.

La presentadora y fundadora del CCP, Fritz Horstman, dio la bienvenida y saludó a todos con las siguientes palabras, “Estoy aquí para ayudarles a encontrar quienes son”.

La fundadora afirmó que también es sobreviviente del trauma. Dio inicio a la sesión recitando sus palabras que ella confía en sus hermanos porque somos todos uno.

Invitando los participantes que se condujeran en un círculo para participar, se les preguntó cuántos habían crecido en ambientes desfavorables; la mayoría de los hombres levantaron

sus manos en reconocimiento.

Hortsman, nos recordó que nuestras decisiones pasadas, no son reflejo de quienes somos — explicándonos que nuestro sistema cognitivo asesora toda situación que experimentamos y nos conduce a tomar la decisión de “pelear” o “huir”.

“Hay tres tipos de veneno: el odio, la codicia, y la ignorancia”, añadió sabiamente Horstman, “pero se pueden combatir con el amor, la compasión y la empatía”.

Durante este evento, los participantes y voluntarios formaron un círculo de trauma. Diez preguntas fueron hechas cubriendo temas del trauma físico, emocional y el abuso.

Los participantes que habían experimentado estas traumas tomaron un paso adelante, hasta que al fin de la última pregunta, se hallaron casi al centro del círculo — cara a cara.

Uno de los ejercicios [El trauma separa mientras la comunidad trayendo consecuencias] dio lugar para establecer lazos de empatía con los oficiales de corrección, con diez preguntas adicionales, dándoles a los hombres la oportunidad de ponerse “dentro de los zapatos” de los oficiales.

Los ejercicios continuaron adonde los residentes reflexionaron en el

impacto de los oficiales cuando ellos responden oh son testigos de ver casos de muerte, asalto violento o de transacciones ilícitas.

Destacando los nuevos grupos de auto-ayuda agrupados por toda la prisión, se nos retó a terminar con la segregación que existe dentro de esta institución — algo que también se había resaltado ya por los latinos, dentro del foro en español, que se llevó a cabo el pasado agosto.

Este tipo de reuniones son esenciales para educar, sanar y rehabilitar a los residentes de esta prisión. Según Horstman, hay planes de traer a los oficiales de corrección y a los encarcelados, juntos para un foro de “reconciliación y honestidad”, en un futuro cercano.

“No hay ‘Negro’, ‘Blanco’ [o ‘Café’, ‘varón’ o ‘hembra’], todos somos seres divinos; cuando nos deshumanizamos, lo hacemos a nosotros mismos”, dijo Hortsman.

Para aquellos que desean obtener más información sobre este proyecto, se les puede escribir a esta dirección: Compassion Prison Project, 8726 Sepulveda Blvd. Suite D #4201 Los Angeles, CA 90045. También pueden visitar su sitio web: Compassion Prison Project.org.

—Willy Alarcón

LOS CATÓLICOS CELEBRAN NAVIDAD

Por Aristeo Sampablo
Staff writer

Las decoraciones navideñas crearon un ambiente de libertad para cientos de residentes católicos, la lluvia no fue un impedimento en celebrar este banquete anual en San Quentin el pasado diciembre.

Al iniciar la celebración, el Padre George Williams, compartió unas palabras de agradecimiento con todos los presentes.

En seguida los coros de inglés y español combinaron su talento, con la dirección de Megan O'Brien, cantaron canciones navideñas que avivaron el espíritu.

“Quiero darle gracias al padre y a todos los organizadores de este banquete, porque nos están dando la oportunidad a convivir entre nosotros”, dijo Rubén Rodríguez. “Me hacen sentir como si estuviera libre en la sociedad. Tengo 30 años prisionero y no he presenciado un convivio como este”.

En el evento, la felicidad no se pudo contener en compañía de todos los creyentes en esta noche tan especial. Se sentía la armonía entre todos los asistentes incluyendo a los voluntarios.

Willis y Linda Rice, quienes ofrecen cursos bíblicos católicos estuvieron presentes celebrando 56 años de casados.

“Es un gozo y privilegio estar aquí con ustedes para celebrar el nacimiento de nuestro salvador Jesucristo”, dijo el Sr. Rice. “Yo he estado viniendo aquí desde el año 2000”.

La Sra. O'Brien, agradeció al coro por hacer un gran trabajo esta noche subiéndose al escenario cantando los hermosos himnos. A continuación las voces de los feligreses se unieron junto con los del coro, que inspiraba alegría durante la celebración.

“Estoy mirando hacia adelante, a la ‘Misa de Gallo’, yo sé que el coro va a hacer un bello trabajo. Esta es una bella oportunidad para que este junta

El puntaje final fue rotundamente a favor de los residentes conquistaron 80 a 50.

Con el toque del silbato, terminó este partido singular, pero continuó lo excepcional.

Sin importarle que los presentes vieran, el residente Sifuentes abrazando al guardia Weaver y en su agradecimiento soltó las lágrimas. El guardia respondió y lo abrazó, “fuertemente” por un minuto entero.

Ambos capturaron la atención de todos y el silencio condujo a una verdadera celebración.

“De alguna manera, no esperé que todo el sentimiento de mi vida me pegaría de repente a mí mismo, llorando sobre el hombro del oficial Weaver”, dijo Sifuentes.

Weaver confesó que el correspondió al abrazo porque, quizás el algún día puede necesitar un abrazo y un hombro que lo consuele el día de mañana.

En la cancha de baloncesto las barreras fueron derribadas; ya no eran dos grupos diferentes, sino una sola comunidad — humanidad. La visión se convirtió en realidad.

Una tradición que puede ser incorporando en el futuro

El siguiente partido está planeándose para un plazo trimestral. Todos disfrutaron de la sana competencia y del resultado mayor — cambiando las opiniones de ambos grupos.

Este partido introdujo el nuevo tipo de sociabilidad en el futuro deseado — la normalización. Si hay cambios entre los guardias y los residentes, la comunidad afuera lo verá también. Todos podemos seguir la guía promovida por el Gobernador, para obtener el resultado: la inclusión y la transformación.

Este juego, poderosamente demuestra lo que es posible: el retorno a nuestras comunidades. Todos somos humanos.



Dante D. Jones // SQNews

Willis y Linda Rice

la comunidad católica”, añadió la Sra. O'Brien.

Los presentes expresaron su felicidad, al tener la oportunidad de ser partícipes en este evento.

“Primero, tengo que darle gracias a Dios, y al padrecito George Williams por toda la atención que nos ha brindado”, comentó Tranquillano Figueroa [un residente y miembro del coro]. “La comida estuvo muy deliciosa y quiero darle gracias a todos los que lo hicieron posible.”

Hubo muchos creyentes que agradecieron el trabajo de los dirigentes de la iglesia católica.

El Padre Williams, afirmó que se ocupó mucha planeación para los preparativos de este evento.

Residentes como el Sr. Michel Navarro después de ocho años de encarcelado para él esta fue la primera vez que disfrutó de un buen ambiente navideño, gozando de un coro bonito. Él se sintió bendecido al ser parte de la comunidad católica de SQ.

“Es una bendición, estoy agradecido en venir hoy día a pasar un tiempo con los compañeros de la comunidad y poder comer algo delicioso y celebrar navidad en la casa de Dios”, concluyó el recluso José Fajardo”.

¡Atleta latino sobrepasa todo record previo!

Tres hispanos se coronan en el maratón de SQ

Por Arsenio Leyva
Spanish Journalism
Guild Writer

En estas carreras, cada segundo cuenta y el prisionero José “Chepe” Fajardo, excedió el record del previo campeón el Sr. Markelle “The Gazelle” Taylor, por cinco minutos con 22 segundos.

El evento es anualmente reconocido como “Maratón Frank Rouna”, patrocinado por el “Club de 1000 Millas” en esta prisión. Por primera vez los tres lugares más anhelados fueron dominados indiscutiblemente por hispanos.

Fajardo, se coronó como el ganador del maratón, este pasado 17 de noviembre. En comparación con Taylor, el nuevo tiempo record consistió de tres horas, cinco minutos y 26 segundos.

“Espero que esto motive a los demás latinos, a cumplir sus propias metas y un día lograr sus sueños”, dijo (el nuevo campeón) Fajardo.

El recordó que hace siete años cuando el comenzaba a correr, apenas podía correr cinco vueltas en el patio de la prisión. Según el campeón, el entrenó cada semana, en preparación para este evento especial y riguroso.

Estos eventos motivaron la producción de la película “26.2



millas”, producida dentro esta prisión.

Fajardo compartió con SQNews, que 26.2 millas lo motivó a correr el maratón — después de ver la película. Se puso la meta personal en romper el record de Taylor.

“Me siento orgulloso de poner en alto a la comunidad hispana con este logro”, añadió Fajardo.

Otro reo, Wuilliam Campos quien participó en el maratón alcanzó un tiempo de tres horas, 40 minutos y 58 segundos, llegando en segundo lugar.

Según Campos el entrenó en días soleados y lluviosos.

Correr llegó a ser parte de su rutina. “Este es un logro más de mi vida. Nunca me imaginé hacerlo aquí en la prisión”, dijo Campos.

Debido a sus varias actividades deportivas Ignacio Gutiérrez es otro residente de la prisión quien se preparó para este evento tan especial. Terminando la carrera en tres horas, 51 minutos y tres segundos.

“Se siente algo hermoso y excitante... provoca emociones bonitas”, dijo Gutiérrez. “El ser reconocido por este logro”.

Gutiérrez señaló, que cada vez que pasaba por los

entrenadores que manejaban el tiempo, le exclamaron palabras de motivación para seguir compitiendo y eso le llenó de fuerza para continuar adelante. Llevándolo a terminar la carrera en el respetable tercer lugar.

Según la registración para este evento de los 63 corredores, 30 de ellos fueron latinos; jesto es equivalente a un 60%!

Un espectador que estuvo presente en este evento dijo, “Esto si es ‘paisa’ power... esta es la primera vez que se ven tres latinos terminar en los primeros lugares”.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Izquierda: Wuilliam Campos, José Fajardo, y Ignacio Gutiérrez.
Abajo: José “Chepe” Fajardo establece nuevo record del maratón.



El decreto Bukele-ismo

La nueva era de encarcelamiento masivo — erradicando derechos civiles de los ciudadanos

Por Willy Alarcón
Staff Writer

“El Bukele-ismo” es el nuevo concepto del fanatismo y admiración gubernamental que está arraigando todo Centro y Sur América, reportó Kate Linthicum de *Los Angeles Times* el julio, 2023.

El presidente salvadoreño Nayib Bukele, implementó pólizas de “mano dura” contra las pandillas y personas que son sospechosas de ser pandilleros del crimen dentro de su país.

Durante su campaña, Bukele prometió erradicar la corrupción. Se ha mantenido consistente con sus métodos controversiales.

“Dicen que para una enfermedad fuerte, se requiere un remedio fuerte”, explicó el residente de San Quentin, Pablo Sánchez.

Mientras que en El Salvador se vio a unas 70,000 personas en cuestión de meses ser puestos tras las rejas — su fama estalló en Latinoamérica y Sudamérica, según Linthicum.

La fama de esta figura se resalta por las políticas que implementó, y por sus discursos, atrayendo a fanáticos gubernamentales en los países vecinos.

Otros gobiernos están adoptando la misma política, imitando siendo “más duros” poniendo sentencias más severas para los criminales de sus países.

De acuerdo a *La Prensa Asociada*, Honduras tomó una medida muy similar y controvertida combatiendo el crimen dentro del país, aunque inicialmente solo dentro de dos de sus ciudades más grandes, reporto *La Prensa Asociada*.
Bajo el nuevo decreto

“Dicen que para una enfermedad fuerte, se requiere un remedio fuerte”.

—Pablo Sánchez

inaugurado en diciembre, 2022, las autoridades iniciaron con: declarando toque de queda en barrios enteros, aumentos de arrestos de personas, y las autoridades allanan casas buscando a delincuentes.

Linthicum asegura en su reporte, que este presidente es un dictador y populista — igual que lo fue el presidente socialista venezolano, Hugo Chaves.

“La seguridad empuja a las personas hacia la derecha [política], casi indudablemente”, dice Steven Levitski (coautor del libro “como las democracias mueren”).

Levitski, añadió, “Empuja a los votantes en una dirección más autoritaria, en el sentido que están dispuestos a aceptar violaciones de los derechos humanos, libertades civiles y el mando de la ley”.

Esto trae la pregunta al frente, ¿qué se valora más, la seguridad y la paz o la libertad con la incertidumbre?

El coautor del libro indica que la gente alrededor del mundo estará dispuesta a sacrificar muchas de las cosas buenas que el proceso democrático tiene, solo para conseguir la seguridad y la paz.

Bukele está desafiando todo sentido común.
Como ilustración Bukele

se está promoviendo como candidato para re-elección a la presidencia Salvadoreña — algo que la ley nacional, lo prohíbe. Constitucionalmente, solo se permite un solo plazo presidencial.

Analistas apuntan a los problemas que el país acarrea como consecuencia — la deuda nacional que sigue incrementando sin freno.

Augusto Pinochet fue el famoso hombre fuerte que controló Chile y terminó siendo un déspota por definición. Donde se introdujo la seguridad nacional, pero a costo del temer al gobierno, y ya no del criminal en la calle.

Viendo el peligro similar por este fanatismo del día de hoy, la escritora novelista, Isabel Allende escribió en el periódico *El País*, que ella teme que el continente podría regresar a ser controlado por los más fuertes.

Los resultados de una encuesta muestran que los colombianos apoyan más al presidente salvadoreño (con 55% de apoyo), que a su propio presidente colombiano (con el 32%), añadieron los reportes.

Aquí en San Quentin, los residentes tienen opiniones apoyando ambos lados. Pero todos están de acuerdo que el encarcelamiento de individuos sin ningún procedimiento legal, acarrea grandes consecuencias irreparables para la sociedad.

“Esto se regará. Es una presión que se les pone a los políticos más altos, para hacer algo que alivie el problema”, añadió Juan Flores otro residente de SQ. “Todo trae un precio. La pregunta es, ¿qué estás dispuesto a pagar?”

Los mismos analistas dicen que Bukele está casi garantizado ganar una segunda presidencia.

Newsom rechaza el proyecto de ley AB-1306

En California — los indocumentados, son protegidos dentro de muchas instituciones: escuelas, instalaciones de cuidado de salud, agencias de policía, y de ley.

Sin embargo, para todas las personas indocumentadas tras las rejas, no hay tal protección del “estado santuario”, según lo publicado en el *San Francisco Chronicle*.

El proyecto de ley AB 1306 conocido como la Acción HOME, hubiera detenido la deportación de personas que están encarceladas después de que fueran liberadas de las prisiones. Fue aprobado por las dos legislaciones por márgenes muy amplias, según reportó Daniel Lempres.

AB 1306 hubiera terminado con la colaboración entre los Departamentos de Correcciones y el Departamento de Seguridad Interior (que maneja ICE).

Desde el 2019 los mediadores de leyes han estado intentado cerrar esta gran oposición, mientras que en el mismo año aproximadamente 2,200 personas encarceladas fueron transferidas a las autoridades federales para su deportación, informó Lempres.

Desde ese entonces, 7,800 inmigrantes fueron transferidos del sistema de prisión a los centros de detención manejados por la Oficina de Inmigración y Aduanas (ICE, por sus siglas en inglés).

Según el informe, las personas que cumplieron sus sentencias o fueron hallados disponibles para la libertad condicional, completaron diversos programas de auto ayuda para su rehabilitación.

Cinco mil cuarenta (5,040) inmigrantes, son de nacimiento mexicano.

La Unión Americana de Libertades Civiles (ACLU, en inglés) informó que revisó correos electrónicos por empleados del Departamento de Correcciones y agentes de ICE, añadió Lempres.



SQNews photo archive

Encontraron, que como rutina, personas sospechadas de ser indocumentadas eran referidas a ICE — sin verificación de su legalidad. Al ignorar la potencial evidencia de ciudadanía o residencia legal, mostró que el proyecto de ley tenía merito, según Wendy Carrillo — la autora del proyecto de ley y miembro de la asamblea.

Cuatro proyectos de leyes fueron presentados a la legislación de California desde ese entonces. Tres fallaron y la Acción HOME — el esfuerzo más recién para hallar alivio — estaba puesto para firmarse y hacer que California cumpliera con su promesa de ser llamado “santuario”.

Introducida el febrero pasado, la Acción HOME, hubiera terminado con la práctica de colaborar o informar a ICE la identificación de recelados indocumentados.

El senado aprobó el proyecto de ley el lunes y solo faltaba que el Gobernador Gavin Newsom diera el último paso al firmar este proyecto de ley.

La asambleísta Wendy Carrillo preguntó... “¿Cree el en un sistema de justicia que trata a toda gente igual o cree el que los inmigrantes deberían ser castigados doble, mandados a ICE y potencialmente ser deportados?”.

Lamentablemente, el gobernador ya contestó por medio de su negación del proyecto de ley — poniendo al cuarto proyecto de ley, y las

esperanzas de miles de reos indocumentados en la tumba.

De acuerdo al artículo publicado en el *Chronicle*, Newsom ha recibido asistencia financiera de la unión de las prisiones desde el 2014.

La Asociación de Oficiales Correccionales de Paz de California, es una de las más poderosas en el estado y gasta millones de dólares poniendo presión en esfuerzos políticos cada año.

Esta unión le donó \$107,800 directamente y contribuyó otros \$1.75 millones para su campaña anti-retiro en el 2021.

El rechazo de la Acción HOME, está ocurriendo justo en el momento que la oficina del gobernador autoriza un aumento de mil millones de dólares en salarios, y aumento de beneficios para los 26,000 guardias de prisión y oficiales de libertad condicional — en un plazo de tres años, según Daniel Lempres para el *Chronicle*.

Hoy día, la ley sigue requiriendo que los dos departamentos continúen la identificación de todo inmigrante indocumentado en la prisión y otorgando el transfiere de los tales, a las autoridades federales inmigratorias.

“El estado necesita un sistema de justicia”, concluyó la asambleísta Carrillo. “Uno que no discrimina contra californianos, solo porque no son nacidos aquí”.

—Willy Alarcón

SPORTS

Records broken by 1000 Mile Club runners at first-ever Frank Ruona Marathon

By Joshua Strange
Senior Editor

November 17 was record setting day for the San Quentin 1,000 Mile Club during its annual marathon on the Lower Yard. Over 60 runners gathered on the starting line along with 22 volunteer lap counters, the most ever, to give their best effort to finish the brutal 105 laps to complete the 26.2 mile marathon, one of the toughest races known to humankind.

A hard rain had fallen the night before, washing away the dust of summer and making for near-perfect conditions on a sunny morning. The marathon would be the last for several runners who were going home, as well as for the club's beloved head coach, Frank Ruona, who was retiring after 18 years of service.

Coach Tim Fitzpatrick, among those slated to help lead the club into the future, welcomed the gathered crowd to the 14th running of San Quentin's famous marathon. "The race is going to be called the 'Frank Ruona Marathon' from this day going forward," he said to cheers.

Two questions were in everyone's mind: How many of them were going to finish? And would Jose Fajardo break Markelle "The Gazelle" Taylor's club record on his way to a season sweep of wins?

Whatever the outcome, Taylor, the most decorated runner in the club's history, would be on hand as a volunteer to witness Fajardo's attempt to take down his 2017 San Quentin marathon record of 3:10:58. And whatever the outcome, there would be no "us and them," no questions of race, no stigma of crime — just runners gathering to pursue their passion and find health through the art and science of endurance running.

Before the start, many runners paced nervously as they worked up their mental



The marathon saw record breaking turnout with the most participants and most finishers.

willpower, hoping it would be enough to carry them through to the finish line.

Robert Tyler, 61, said it would be his first marathon attempt. "Just gonna start, have fun, and see where things end up," he said.

Rookie David Vargas, 33, said he was feeling the butterflies. "Of all the places I could be, I'm here doing this with a shot to complete a marathon. How cool is that?"

For Randy Thompson, 30, he was excited to finally be running his first marathon after all the buildup of a long season. "No San Quitting!" he said with a wide smile.

Long-standing club runners Fidelio Marin, 53, and Larry Ford, 67, were running their last race on the yard. They had finally completed their "marathon" of incarceration by earning their parole after decades of serving time.

Ford said he officially completed five San Quentin marathons, unofficially eight or nine, while racking up a mind-boggling 20,000 miles on the track since 2009. "I'm hoping

to keep running with the Mt. Tam club if they'll have me," he said with a grin.

Resident Tommy Wickerd was feeling bittersweet, having shepherded another successful season as the club's president yet finding himself unable to run for the first time due to a serious knee ailment. "It sucks," he said bluntly, pain in his eyes.

Fortunately, his friends were there lift his spirits, teaming up to run the marathon as a relay team in his honor. Michael Callahan, Bostyon Johnson, Estaban "V" Lopez, Thai Hieu, and Dao Ong all ran five to six miles each, while last but not least, *SQNews*' Sports Editor Timothy Hicks did his part by running the 0.2 miles.

Tommy's wife, Marion, was so moved by the gesture that she was crying on the tablet with him beforehand. "It's so freakin awesome what you guys are doing for Tommy," she said.

With the mob of runners crowding the line like a phalanx of Greek soldiers, Ruona

and Fitzpatrick led a countdown — "Three, two, one, go!"

Fajardo, 42, bolted out in front as per usual, setting a blistering pace of 6:35 after the first mile, a pace that did not seem sustainable. Doing an admirable job of staying close were Ignacio Gutierrez, 46, at 6:54 and Mark Jarosik, 57, at 7:05, while the bulk of runners were content to stick with a more manageable nine-minute-per-mile pace.

Even after the half-way mark, Fajardo was still going strong despite the warmth of the sun that was starting to take a toll on the runners. The calm smile on his face was betrayed only by the intensity in his eyes and the set of his jaw as he clocked in at 1:26:26.

"A lot of times people hit the wall around mile 18, mile 20, so we'll see how he does then," said volunteer Chesa Boudin.

Yet as Fajardo crossed the line to cheers, everyone looked at the clock to see his final time — 3:05:26, a new course record! For the 26.2



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Above: Jose Fajardo finished the marathon at a record setting three hours, five minutes, and 26 seconds. Right: To help keep track of laps for the runners, 22 volunteers came in for the event and participated for the hours-long race.



miles, Fajardo managed an impressive average pace of 7:07 per mile.

Taylor said he was proud of Jose. Nonetheless, it is always an emotional moment for a prominent runner when a hard-earned record falls, even if Taylor's personal best on the outside is now 2:48. However, the record setting day was nearly derailed by a yard recall that was cancelled in the nick of time. Taylor noted it was the first time he could remember with no alarm during a marathon, which certainly helped.

With a strong second half, William Campos passed Gutierrez to claim second place with a time of 3:40:38, while Gutierrez cruised to third at 3:51:03.

Campos, 40, was happy and tired after running his first marathon, saying that he surprised himself too by taking second place. "I'm excited to tell my son," he said, adding that he felt like quitting at the

20 mile mark, but his friends kept him going.

Rounding out the top five were Greg Stephens with a time of 3:55:51 and Jose Velasco at 4:02:12.

In addition to the new fastest marathon, a record 24 runners finished the race.

After the race, one of those runners, 37-year old rookie Johquill Thomas-Weisner said, "It feels awesome to run that far. Jose is phenomenal, a freaking beast, he runs hard but with a smile. I'm just so glad to be here and be part of the club."

Fitzpatrick said it was a very successful marathon, the club's first since the pandemic. "We're back! Lots of new runners, lots of people learning that constant practice is key, which is positive. New course record, which is cool." He thanked all of the volunteers and encouraged any aspiring runners at San Quentin to join the club and come run on Monday nights.

SQ Warriors excel in season's final games

By Timothy Hicks
Sports Editor

Mason Ryan's dominance on both ends of the court, especially the boards, left his opponents departing the San Quentin's Lower Yard on a hot, late-summer morning pondering how they could find a way to stop him next time.

Ryan, who has been given nicknames of "The Hero" or "White Chocolate" by his teammates, finished with a near triple-double of 22 points, 10 assists, and eight rebounds in a hard fought 82-71 victory for the SQ Warriors. The win came against the Prison Sports Ministries' Green Team, led by longtime volunteers Bill Epling and Don Smith.

At one point, Epling pulled his players into a huddle with a clear message: "Our shots are falling, but we need to start helping on the defense when Ryan has the ball. He's good."

Ryan's supporting cast did its part to keep the visitor's defense guessing with a balanced offensive attack. Keshawn "Steez" Strickland added 23 points, 13 rebounds, and seven assists, while Tyler "Drizzy" Cooper had 19 points and 14 rebounds as the SQ Warriors looked unstoppable in the paint and the perimeter.

SQ Warriors guard, Donnie "JR" Pimpton, contributed 11 points and three rebounds. His game added pressure on the Green Team, but Cooper was the focus for the defense.

"We gotta stop Coop," said Green Team center Greg



Dante D. Jones // SQNews

Mason Ryan (right) works the defense of the rival Green team.

Wright, now a fourth-year visitor to San Quentin who has observed the home team's growth. "He's improved a lot since he first played. The whole team has."

Residents surrounded the court to view the game, watching the SQ Warriors' smothering defense make it tough for the Green Team to create good scoring looks.

Even Epling's wife Carolyn got into the fast-paced game with cheers of "Oh no!" and "Oh yeah!" from the sidelines. Her friend and former college basketball player Shawna B. also cherished the great competition during her first visit to San Quentin.

"Basketball is a dance," Shawna said. She noted that she played college basketball and loved watching the game. "I see the growth mindset of the players, the core values, and I love to be a part of growth and seeing someone succeed and realize their core

values and get better."

Guard Nick Guillory led the Green Team with 29 points and 12 rebounds, while Vick Hahs added 14 points and nine rebounds and Masa Mwambo added 14 points and 12 rebounds. Shooting guard Kolson Frame contributed nine points and six rebounds, rounding out the pack that helped keep the visiting team close.

"I liked our approach," Guillory said. "We did battle, but we lost. I just love playing you guys every week and every week it is a battle."

After their loss, power forward Billy D., a high school PE teacher and athletic director who has been coming into the prison for the basketball program since 2015, had a message to those on the outside: "We all deserve second chances. The public needs to have an open mindset about releasing people back into the public."

Volunteer team Outsiders shakes up rivalry with SQ Earthquakes in dramatic matchup

By Idalio Villagran
and Adan Arriaga
Spanish Guild Writers

In a game full of non-stop action the San Quentin Earthquakes struggled to dominate the Outsiders, in what turned out to be an haunting game that resulted in a 6-4 score.

Looking to avenge a recent lopsided loss of 10-4 that occurred on August 26, the Outsiders stormed the field. Connor Gosa one of the players for the Outsiders challenged the SQ team.

"It's a long season, don't get too comfortable," Gosa said.

According to Outsider coach, Dario Abramskiehn the intense rivalry started in the year 2017 when he started coming into the prison to play.

"At first we were getting defeated badly by the Earthquakes, but I started to recruit college soccer players and players from different leagues. Next thing I knew, they couldn't defeat us," Abramskiehn said.

After many passes, angle kicks and pulled shirts, the first half ended with a smashing 5-0 in favor of the Quakes. SQ Resident D. Sanchez scored three goals, increasing the fast lead against the Outsiders.

At halftime both Captains from both teams encouraged

"At first we were getting defeated badly by the Earthquakes, but I started to recruit college soccer players and players from different leagues. Next thing I knew, they couldn't defeat us."

—Dario Abramskiehn

their players. "They did a great job compressing when we were defending and using the width to spread our attack with the ball," Coach Abramskiehn said.

"The team is playing very well; they are moving and making good passes. The final touch is to make another goal, if we keep playing like this, we will score more goals in the second half. The Outsiders are fighting to score their goal," SQ Resident coach Ronald Luna said.

The second half started after adjustments were made. Control the direction that the game need to go in order to reach a victory, was the strategy of the Outsiders.

"I've been here before COVID and I love everyone's sportsmanship, good people here who love this game," Dario's father Don King said. He was encouraging his son

to get some water as he witnessed him put on a great performance.

"It's an honor to be here, as a first timer, I heard nothing but good things about SQ Earthquakes. I came here for some stiff competition and have a memorable time and I found it," Phillip J. said.

Celebrating their victory and grateful for the visiting team and appreciation. Quake Sergio Medina said. "I like to participate in the team and I would like this to become a bigger event, so more residents can become part of it, and for everyone to keep programming and personally, I like to cooperate."

A few of the incarcerated players played with the Outsiders, Mauro Cervantes was one of those players who made the first of four goals. He said, "This goal is dedicated to my daughter Ariel Cervantes Arevalo, and she is my whole world, my world, my love."

Protecting the goal for the Outsiders was resident Luis Lopez who commented, "I feel privileged to be part of the outside team."

Resident spectator Kolby Southwood said. "I love to play the game of soccer, but I am injured right now, so I am here to watch the game and the people I love and care about playing. There is no place else I rather be."

All-star flag football game provides opportunity for players to showcase skills and values

By Timothy Hicks
Sports Editor

The gridiron was the place where respect and discipline was happening this summer for the all star lineup on the football field. The Yellow team, led by their captain, defensive end Marques "Ques" Whitaker, lost to the Green team, 34-14.

"I don't like to lose, but I can say that it wasn't because of the defense," said Whitaker.

Whitaker looked like defensive end Aaron Donald of the NFL's Los Angeles Rams when he applied pressure on the Green team's quarterback "Licks" Gawron. However, the pass rush defense could not stop the precision side arm throws of "Licks" Gawron, making the QB look like Patrick Mahomes of the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs.

"Hurry, hurry!" screamed Whitaker on every play to his defense.

The exhibition flag football game was being played with no coaches, but the referees did their jobs to keep the athletes on course to continue the game. But when it came to maintaining the competitive trash-talking that kept the game lit, spectators got to observe true cohesive ways to peacefully resolve issues. It was all on the players to maintain order.

The men exemplified true conflict resolution skills



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

when things got heated. Their abilities to execute peaceful temperaments revealed their leadership characteristics and mature qualities needed in today's society, preventing potential hostile situations from escalating.

Back to the game. QB "Licks" ran a 95-yard quarter sneak into the end zone, stretching out his team's lead by double digits.

It was time for the Yellow team's quarterback Taiosis "CC" Matangi to try and

strike back. He was unable to connect with his receivers and could not avoid the terrifying sack by Big Wayne who wasn't letting anything in his lane.

"Licks" connected with tight end Marcus Eugene in the back of the end zone for one of his two touchdowns of the day.

Dust from the field mushroomed, submerging QB "Licks" in the back field, making it hard for him to see the blitzing of the Yellow

team's defensive lineman, "N-O." Scrambling in the back trying to dodge the rush, "Licks" was sacked in the red zone. On the next play, he threw a deep back pass to wide receiver "Tazz" Murdock for the point.

After "CC" and his team were able to put points on the board, it was all his offense was able to offer for the rest of the game despite their efforts.

Quarterback for the Green team "Licks" was relieved by another star athlete, "Steez"

Strickland, who came in and ran an immediate run back for 90 yards from the pocket. He taunted the defense by looking back after he evaded a defender with a fancy spin move avoiding the tackles.

"He is a naturally talented athlete," said teammate Little Smooth.

Wide receiver "Tazz" was not able to avoid the breakups from the Yellow team cornerbacks. A spiral throw from "Steez" was diverted and the defensive corners caused a

- Yellow team:**
Marcus "Ques" Whitaker
Taiosis "CC" Matangi
Pitts
N-O
J-J
Shack
A-P
Mike
Jay
David
- Green Team:**
"Licks" Gawron
"Steez" Strickland
"A-R" Brown
"A-1" Gilmore
Leno
Big Smooth
A-D "Fresh 48"
Dwayne "Big Wayne" Scott
Little Smooth
"Tazz" Murdock

injury to happen to the star wide receiver.

The Lower Yard came to a hold when C/Os sounded the alarm for the injury to "Tazz." He was surrounded by concerned teammates and other players. Once the medical cart hauled him off, all of the star athletes gave him an ovation.

Love of tennis unites two sides of freedom on Lower Yard

Two Thai natives were able to connect on the San Quentin's tennis court. The duo clacked their rackets together to celebrate winning one of the three matches they had played together. The difference is one them is free and visiting and the other is incarcerated. Both tennis players are part of SQ "Outside Inside" Tennis team.

"Sa-wad-dee-ka," (farewell), a greeting done with bowed prayer hands, a traditional Thai gesture, outside volunteer Nu O., 45, receives when she arrives and leaves the tennis court. The gesture is a customary way of honoring and greeting each other upon meeting and departure.

Nu O. met the inside tennis player, who does not wish to be name, and learned that

they are both from Chon Buri, Thailand, a city literally on the other side of the world. For the inside player it had been an entire decade since he had found someone who could hold a regular conversation in the Thai native tongue with him.

"I didn't expect it," the resident said, about meeting another Thai native for the first time. "Most people from Thai that I know are born right here in America."

Nu O. came into the prison for the first time with the outside tennis crew. She walked down the hill to the Lower Yard through a sea of residents onto the tennis court. The green painted court is surrounded by wired fencing. That is where she met her Thai tennis counterpart, who

was getting some swings in with other incarcerated teammates.

It was not until the group had their introductory that they learned of each other's birthplaces. The club gave a brief history of themselves as usual when new outside tennis players come into the prison to play for the first time. "He opened up to us," Nu O. said.

The two players not only learned that they were from the same country, but from the same city as well. They started to chat about the native foods from their hometown.

In between the matches, the two stood by the wire fence of the court continuing to converse in their Thai language. The two seem excited

to have someone they could identify with on the court.

"We talked about the food and what he misses from our hometown, we have a Thai food connection," Nu O. said through a smile. "It's surreal for me. To have someone here that I can speak Thai with, I'm grateful."

The two paired up in doubles on the court and matched against all challengers. Every time Nu O. visits the prison for a tennis match, she pairs up with her now new Thai counterpart. Upon leaving, they depart with the traditional bow as they have done upon her arrival. On the cool autumn morning, the two went undefeated. "We play well together and [He] is good at the net," Nu O. said.

—Timothy Hicks

NFL's C.J. Stroud speaks out on need for justice reform

The NFL has a huge following and whenever a big-name player speaks, the press listens and the public pays attention, even if the topic concerns a non-sports-related, personal matter.

Houston Texans rookie quarterback C. J. Stroud spoke out about his incarcerated father at a press conference after the Texans beat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, a game in which Stroud had set a record for the most passing yards by a rookie, according to Fox News.

Like many other Americans who have incarcerated parents or loved ones, Stroud perseveres through the aberrance of his father's serving a 38-years-to-life sentence at Folsom State Prison. Coleridge Bernard Stroud III had pled guilty to carjacking, kidnapping and robbery charges in a drug-related incident in 2016, reported the article.

"Our criminal justice system isn't right, and it's something that I need to probably be a little more vocal about, because what he's going through is not right," the quarterback said.

For Stroud and many other Americans with incarcerated loved ones, the statistics look grim. In California, almost 100,000 men and women reside in a carceral system that has separated families and shattered familial bonds. Stroud told reporters that he has dealt with absence from his father since he attended middle school.

San Quentin resident Rob Tyler also has to deal with incarcerated fatherhood.

"I feel ashamed," said Tyler, the former coach of the San Quentin baseball team. Through his coaching, Tyler acquired the ability to guide his children to better choices, but he said he still feels terrible. "I feel like I damaged my kids," he said.

Tyler said he has six children and called himself "a terrible dad." He said he now studies Marshall Rosenberg's writings, which help him recognize his past failings. Rosenberg, the founder of Non-Violent Communications, a self-help group, says that if a child — or anyone else — feels frustrated, one should focus on that person's needs, which puts everyone in a more compassionate mood.

Resident John Levin said, "Because of the self-help groups I took here at San Quentin, we [my children and I] have a better relationship. Although we do have a good emotional relationship, I wish I could be there for them physically."

Stroud had to rely on his faith and his remaining family during the times without his father in his life, according to the article. He now supports his father and other incarcerated persons.

"What I've been battling with is trying to still be a family man, still help out, and still be a football player and do my job," Stroud said. "It's been tough."

The Texans quarterback said he had watched video about the poor living conditions of a prison in Mississippi, which motivated him to expose the system: "I think just letting it be known that it's not just my dad's situation, but the whole criminal justice system is corrupt."

Stroud said, "Some of the prisons there have rats, roaches and things like that. Don't get me wrong — criminals, they should do their time, but they're still humans."

Standing at the podium, Stroud told reporters, "I'm praying for the situation and a reform, and the people with reform are helping me a little bit."

—Timothy Hicks

TIER TALK

SQ Warriors' forward talks anger management

Golden State Warriors power forward Draymond Green came back to the court after his "foul play" when he swung and hit another player during a game. That was not Greens first outbreak of violent acts during a game; in fact he has had several encounters. For people who commit acts of violence and come to prison, they are referred to attend Anger Management classes or other self-help programs that fit the circumstance that can possibly make them better. Draymond was given that option to find help for his anger issues. So now the question remains, should he be allowed back on the court? I sat down with SQ Warriors forward Darrell "Sadiq" Davis and got his perspective.

Timothy Hicks: Being a passionate player on court like Draymond, what do you think about how he becomes violent at times?

Darrell Davis: I get passionate in the games too sometimes, but I never let myself turn to violence.

TH: How do you think he



Skyler Brown // TV Specialist

Terrell "Sadiq" Davis during the first game of the 2023 season.

can control it?

DD: I think he takes it too far. He allows himself to get out of hand. He just needs to work on himself.

TH: This type of behavior has been going on with Draymond for quite some time now. Do you think that he deserve a second chance with the team?

DD: Honestly, I think he should get this last chance and if he mess up again then they should trade him, because he is a cancer to the team if he

can't get his act together. He should come in here and take some of these self-help groups with us.

TH: Yeah, Berkeley's Professor Bill Drummond said the same thing a while ago about Draymond. What do self-help groups do for you when challenging times happen?

DD: Self-help groups help me and other athletes I play with on our anger issues and other challenging issues we might go through on

the court. Things like what Draymond faced. Things like challenging our manhood, physical, and mental abilities or any derogatory statements. Self-help groups help with our triggers. They teach us to react in better ways other than violence.

TH: What else can self-help groups do for someone, particularly Draymond and other athletes?

DD: Self-help groups allow you to look inside of yourself. They help people look inside of themselves. They help to work on a person internally. Programs like GRIP, Guiding Rage Into Power, can do a lot for a person like Draymond and other people in sports in general if they take advantage of them.

TH: KRON 4 sports reporter Jason Dumas said that Draymond sounded insightful when Draymond said that he do not deserve the appreciation from his teammates when he returned. That's a word that defines someone who learned a lesson.

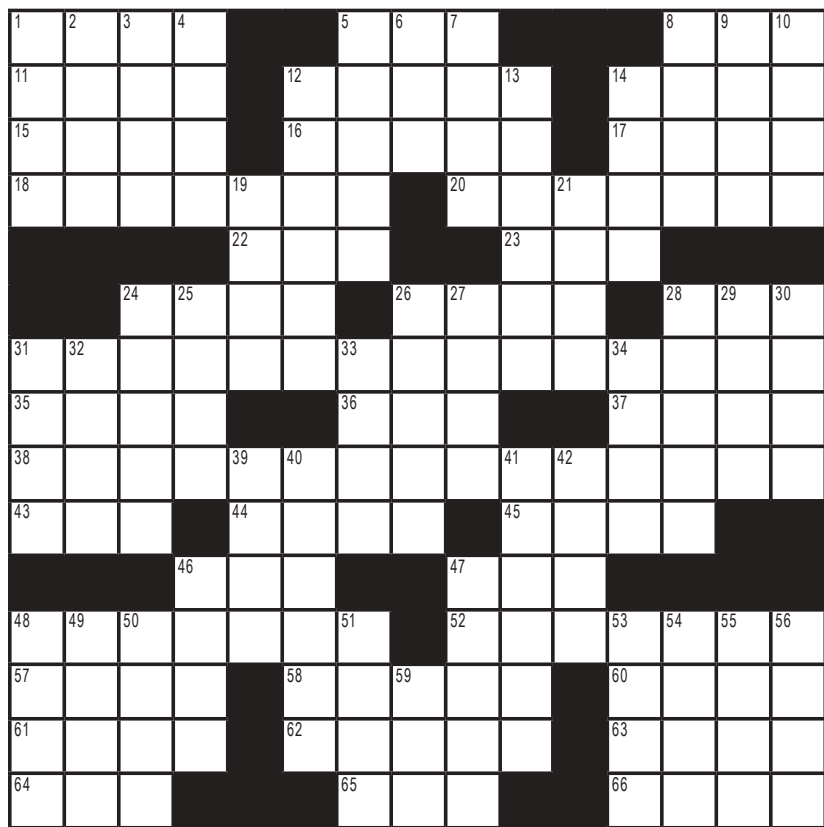
DD: I hope he did.

—Timothy Hicks

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Jonathan Chiu

Edited by Jan Perry



Across

- 1. Catalog
- 5. Plant
- 8. _____ Miss
- 11. Norway capital
- 12. '80s band _____ Trick
- 14. Spoken
- 15. Actor Tudyk
- 16. Rap yell
- 17. Characters Stark and Kelly
- 18. The beginning
- 20. _____ Mayo
- 22. Time zone which Puerto Rico falls under (Abbr.)
- 23. Address abbr.
- 24. Former name of vocation tech class
- 26. Org. that gives out Artist of the Year awards
- 28. Anger3
- 31. July 4th
- 35. Chappelle Show cocreator Brennan
- 36. Assist
- 37. Touch
- 38. Type of time
- 43. Measurement of time (Abbr.)
- 44. Capital of Okinawa Island
- 45. _____ Cola
- 46. Water locale (Abbr.)
- 47. Some rappers' locale (Abbr.)
- 48. Saint celebrated in March
- 52. Day celebrated in May
- 57. Middle East country
- 58. George Michael album
- 60. Casino in Vegas
- 61. East coast basketball team
- 62. Fastens
- 63. Tupperware items
- 64. _____ kwan do
- 65. Luxury brand (Abbr.)
- 66. Vending machine holdings

Down

- 1. Credit
- 2. _____ of Man
- 3. Cabbage salad
- 4. Singer Bennett
- 5. Actor Martin
- 6. Long fish
- 7. Body powder
- 8. Cream cookie
- 9. Actress Cheryl of Charlies' Angels
- 10. In a different manner
- 12. Abstinent
- 13. Countryman
- 14. One time only
- 19. Wyatt _____
- 21. Color encoding system used by DVD players
- 24. Actresses Aubrey and Molly
- 25. Auction
- 26. South African self-woven basket
- 27. "He's off his _____"
- 28. Actress Menzel
- 29. Sounded
- 30. Peepers
- 31. _____ 500
- 32. Close
- 33. Not really
- 34. Actor Roberts
- 39. Peru's monetary unit
- 40. French waiter
- 41. Performers
- 42. Chevy EV model
- 46. Hospital staff (Abbr.)
- 47. Arrow actor Steven
- 48. Type of measurement
- 49. Territory assigned to a military unit
- 50. Actor Larenz _____
- 51. Warriors' Thompson
- 53. Xbox game
- 54. Actress Moriarty
- 55. Song on Usher's Confession album
- 56. Cheek

BOOK REVIEW

SLOW LEARNER: EARLY STORIES

An anthology by Thomas Pynchon

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

Before Thomas Pynchon wrote nine extraordinary novels, he wrote short stories. Published from 1959 to 1964 in periodicals as diverse as *Kenyon Review* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, five of these works have appeared in "Slow Learner" (1984, Back Bay Books, 193 pages, \$13.95).

Pynchon, to me, equals a literary deity, and if not a deity, then at least the high priest of postmodernism in literature. Anyone who has read his novels "V," "The Crying of Lot 49," "Vineland," "Mason & Dixon," or his greatest novel, "Gravity's Rainbow," would likely agree.

My first acquaintance with Pynchon novels did not happen in a literature class but in an undergraduate physics class on thermodynamics. The professor told us arch-geekazoids, "If you want to understand entropy, if you *really* want to understand entropy, then read Pynchon."

American Heritage Dictionary has five definitions of entropy: it could mean (1) a measure of thermal energy *not* available to do work; (2) a measure of the disorder or randomness in a closed system; (3) a measure of the loss of information in a transmitted message; and (4) a tendency for all matter and energy to evolve toward uniformity.

Pynchon uses these four in abundance, but much of his writing employs the fifth definition: The inevitable and steady deterioration of a system or society. There lies Pynchon's domain and "Slow Learner" shows readers his first literary exploration of the concept in the book's third story "Entropy" from 1960.

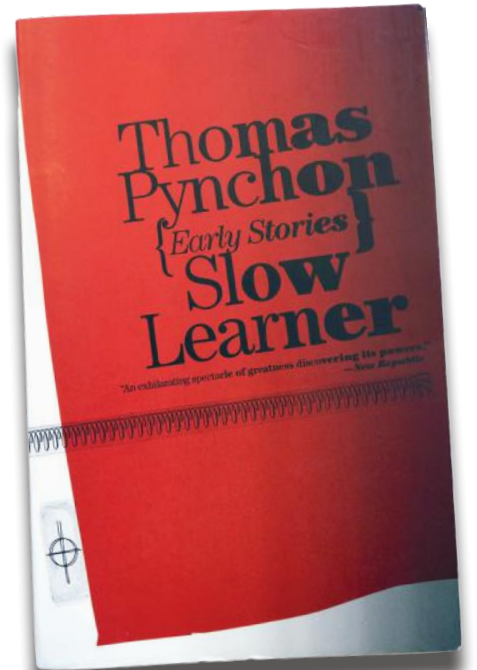
In the story, the character talks about Madison Avenue and consumerism and "envisioned a heat-death for his culture in which ideas, like heat-energy, would no longer be transferred, since each point in it would ultimately have the same quantity of energy; and intellectual motion would, accordingly, cease." Pynchon uses entropy as a metaphor to blame consumer culture for the dumbing-down and downfall of America.

The entropy theme also shows up in the book's fourth story "Under the Rose" from 1961, which reappeared two years later in Pynchon's first novel "V" as its third chapter. "V" (no relation to an identically titled 1980 TV miniseries) blends narrative styles and historical periods. It has an intricate plot and dense prose that deals with themes like identity, physics, astronomy, art, jazz, rhinoplasty, and wildlife in the New York City sewage system.

In the 23-page introduction of "Slow Learner" Pynchon admitted to having made the procedural error "to browse through the thesaurus and note words that sounded cool, hip, or likely to produce an effect, usually that of making me look good."

A self-effacing Pynchon admitted that the title of the book refers to himself and his potholed road as an author. The introduction taught me more about writing and re-writing than many writing classes. To me, the anthology seems easy to read and often hilariously funny, but readers should not expect the literary seriousness and multi-hued spectrum of "Gravity's Rainbow."

Critics have often compared Pynchon to James Joyce and have compared Pynchon's masterpiece "Gravity's Rainbow" to Joyce's "Ulysses" (available on the GTL tablet's library). Beginning readers of Joyce should start with "Dubliners" and beginning readers of Pynchon should start with "Slow Learner." Readers also ought to tackle Pynchon's books in



order of publication. "V" and "The Crying of Lot 49" remain a prerequisite for "Gravity's Rainbow."

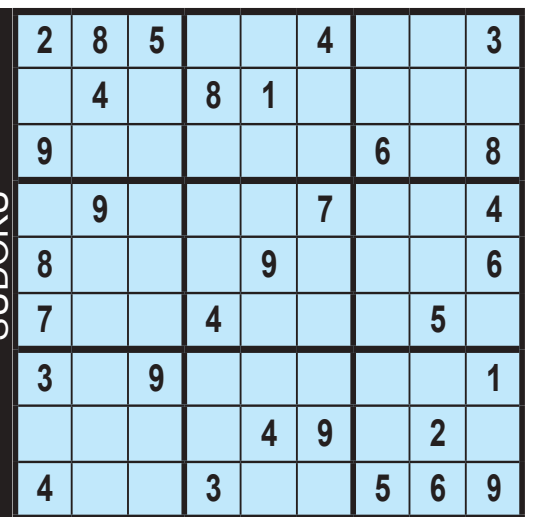
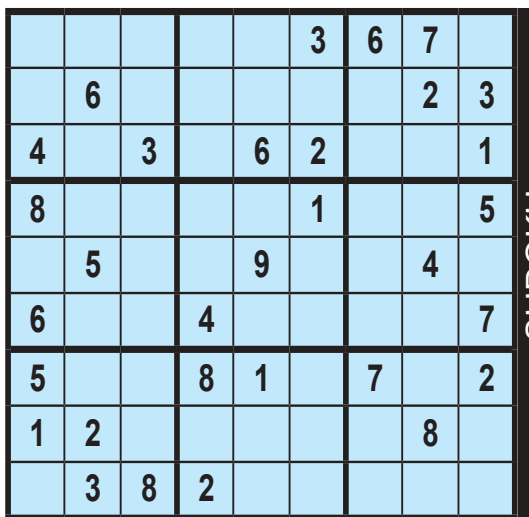
"Slow Learner" also introduces readers to Pynchon's exalted place in the literary pantheon of postmodernism, of which any review of Pynchon requires a brief discussion. Postmodern literature has infinitely many brevity-defying definitions.

My simplified explanation would call it an alternating contrast of high and low pastiches. Postmodernism elbowed out a high culture of tradition and structure with a low culture of technology and consumerism. Postmodernist literature responded to 1920s high modernism, such as "Ulysses," and T. S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land," — two of my favorite works of all time, both of which make parodical cameo appearances in "Slow Learner."

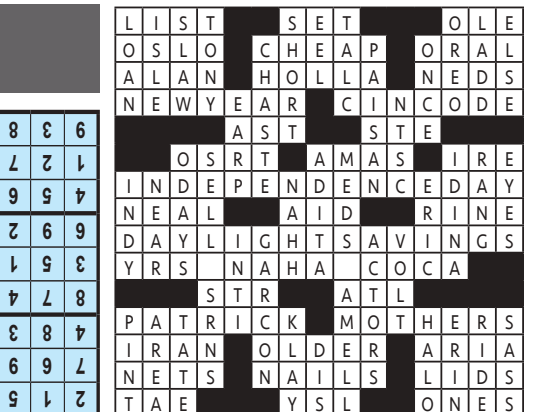
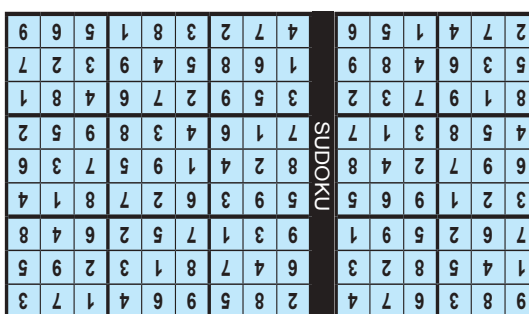
Pynchon presents conspiracy theories with a satirical verve that convinced me of a total absence of hidden designs. Re-reading "V" and "Vineland" during the pandemic has given me Pentateuchal levels of reverence for a null hypothesis that life remains subject to randomness alone, contingent — of course — on entropy. Nonfiction changes minds; novels change hearts.

High postmodern literature points directly to Pynchon while low postmodern literature might point to writers such as Paul Auster ("City of Glass" and "Baumgartner," released in January) or Kurt Vonnegut ("Breakfast of Champions"). Don DeLillo ("White Noise") makes a good midpoint, as would British author John Fowles ("The French Lieutenant's Woman"). "Low" does not mean bad — these writers have places of high honor on my bookshelves, but none of them comes close to Pynchon.

Pynchon would not work for everyone. The Pulitzer board vetoed its jury's nomination of "Gravity's Rainbow" for the fiction prize, calling the novel "unreadable," "turgid," "overwritten," and in parts "obscene." Pynchon's diction seems difficult, his humor sounds Marxist (20% Karl and 80% Groucho), and his stories appear convoluted, but anyone willing to take the plunge into one of his books would experience a wild ride. "Slow Learner" seems the perfect primer.



SNOIINTOS



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



RUNNING CLUB ALUMNI PROUD TO HAVE RAN

Dear SQNews,
I am sending a letter of excitement to your staff about seeing the segment on the 1000-mile club. I had a screenshot of the club photo displayed during the segment and was able to confirm I was not present. I was still able to feel pride for being a part of the club. Joining that club in 2019 was the beginning of letting myself heal. Since, then I've remained disciplinary free and continue to run every single day. Love your life. Thanks for pulling me towards the light.
Lee Adams
California Men's Colony-SP San Luis Obispo, California

MAN CALLS FOUL ON BOARD DENIALS FOR SUBVERTING RESTITUTION

Dear SQNews,
I am writing to express my opposition, to the BPH's new policy of denying and/or revoking inmates' suitability, using erroneous information as justification for these actions. BPH has been denying inmates' suitability and revoking suitability findings, using information from a recently created investigative unit. Using inmate confidential, among other circumstantial evidence, to investigate inmates who have allegedly circumvented restitution, who have allegedly committed fraud or may have had their identities stolen and used for EDD fraud. This new tactic lacks complete transparency, and denies the right of due process

afforded to inmates who have already been through a complete process, evaluating their public risk of violence- via both CSR and state-appointed psychiatrist, and the BPH panel itself. This new tactic is regressive and provides no new insight into an actual nexus to the primary offense of the inmate. It is wholly arbitrary. Punishment is unfair and disproportional and it is not consistently applied to all incarcerated. Circumventing restitution does not portend malice or criminal intent; nor does it suggest a criminal enterprise. Inmates are simply hungry and in need, while the diet in California prisons is inadequate, canteen prices are incredibly high, paying jobs available are limited and pay is abysmal. Inmates are then left to either go hungry, go without basic hygiene or unduly burden their loved ones further. Fulfilling basic needs should not be considered criminal. Put plainly, this is yet another attempt to subvert recent legislation and court decisions and advancements in rehabilitative programming.
Rollivon M. Jakina
California Institute for Men Chino, California

MCSP RESIDENT DISCUSSES HIS TRUTH ON APPEALS

Dear SQNews,
The truth about appeals, when you win an appeal, you go back to court. What sense does that make? You are in the same position you were in the beginning. The appeal means something went wrong in the first place. Why get penalized for no wrong-doing of

your own? Example is if the assessment is a due process violation. What is the reasoning in going backward to trial? The fault was not of your own, but the benevolent system erred. The fair remedy is "Freedom and reparation, Now that's justice."
Earl Houser
Mule Creek-SP Lone, California

COVID DOESN'T HALT READERSHIP OF WASCO MAN

Dear SQNews,
I really enjoy your SQNews newspaper. I have been blessed to receive it regularly until the Covid thing happened. Please send me a recent edition to me. I really thank you for all you do.
Thomas Goff
Wasco-SP Wasco, California

PREVIOUS SQ RESIDENT WISHES TO RETURN

Dear SQNews,
Thank you for your letter. There are only three subscriptions I've kept religiously since my 2016 arrest, SQNews being one of them. I am proud and grateful to SQNews for publishing some of my casual writings in the past. I've been begging for return to SQ since reception, instead of being at SATF, a despicable, soul-sucking institution. Please send SQ transport ASAP. I am clean, quiet, zero points and speak fluent Norwegian. Well not technically but I am duly inspired and malleable.
Charles Tooker
CSATF-Corcoran Corcoran, California

EDITORIAL



Stock image/Illustration S. Joaquin/SQTV

Dog whistles distracting from real issues

By Marcus Henderson
Editor in Chief

Shhh! Did you hear that? The high-pitch sound of fear-mongering, race-baiting and the attack on any reform be it criminal justice or social. It is 2024, an election year, and political "Dogs whistles" are being blown both nationally and locally from many candidates running for governmental offices. Political "Dogs whistles" are rooted in coded language that appeals and seeks the support from a particular group and used to attack an opponent without provoking opposition. Not only are we experiencing dog whistle politics, this year, but also a case of déjù. Currently progressive Alameda District Attorney Pamela Price has become the latest to face a recall campaign. First, it was San Francisco D.A. Chesa Boudin and then Los Angeles D.A. George Gascón. Boudin was recalled from his position, but Gascón weathered the storm. These recall tactics have become the new way to undermine democratic elections when someone's ideas or candidate did not win the general election. These prosecutors only crimes where their attempts to implement balance criminal justice reforms and ending the system of mass incarceration that mostly plagues minority communities. Maybe it could be because of these D.A.s threaten to bring criminal charges against some of these law enforcement officers for different abuse allegations that spark the backlash from the community. Oh no! We can't have that! — and here comes the political outcries that crime will rise and the community will be unsafe. This is how these officials public relation machine kick-start their fear-mongering campaign. This is where I start to watch the political playbook go into effect. It begins with the process of discrediting the person. First they accused the person of being soft on crime, - which they are probably not - then it focus on a perceived rise in crime -this depends on what version of statistics one chooses to use - finally, don't forget to add a grieving family member who is on a quest for justice for a love one that suffered from crime to the mix. Now, the stage has been set for an

alternative agenda. Just like dog whistles, the hidden hand of big business, some victim advocacy groups, including some tech and big real estate development companies take the real pain and frustration of crime survivors to advance their financial goals. The major news outlets are saturate with retail crimes, car vandalism and a homeless crises that threatens property value. The blame — criminal justice reform. What we learn in our self-help groups is the danger of objectify others where it becomes easy to deny their human value and declare them unworthy. So whatever happens to them is they get what they deserve. Many of us have been in prison for over 15, 20 or 25 years and are elderly and breaking car windows or snatching packages off of doorsteps are the furthest things on our minds. Those of us who have done the internal work know the ripple effects of harm and chosen the path of amends. But somehow we are continued to be blame for societies woes even though we have been decades removed. It is easy to find fault with others than to deal with the root causes of where we are at as a society. Selfishness is at an all-time high, depression, mental issues and the lack of love for our fellow human beings is driving us further away from true human advancement. There is a need to protect our ears from these overt and abstract language such as: "un-American," "predator," "strong leadership," "states' rights," "family values," "these illegals," and don't forget the new N-word this "Woke" movement. Some of the goal for these abstract "dog whistles" is for voter not to focus on the rising inequalities, surging housing prices and massive transference of wealth in this nation. The aim of these coded words of fear-mongering and racial overtones are to get the voters to vote on agendas that may go against their own interest. Maybe it is time for the incarcerated to become the social referee for these political grandstanding and "blow the whistle" and call the "fouls" and the "out-of-bounds" because definitely these political "civil servants" should be penalize for these "unnecessary roughest" rhetoric.

AROUND THE WORLD



Eleanor Cox, Cape Cod



Lainy Melnitzer, Greenland Iceberg

ART

S. Joaquin honors God-given talents through art

SQ resident finds purpose in using his artistic creativity to help others

By Anthony Manuel Carvalho
Staff Writer

Artist S. Joaquin, fell upward and landed at SQRC. He has rejoiced in his God-given talents as he gains recognition as one of the top graphic artists in the prison.

Joaquin said his talents began paying bills after his arrest.

“Out of boredom I became an artist, designing cards in jail, I quickly moved to portraits. My work became popular enough to become a source of income for survival,” said Joaquin.

The multitalented artist said he first displayed creativity during his teen years back in high school, studying and practicing photography, music composition, and graphic design in Adobe Photoshop.

He attributed the application of his current art form of graphic design while at Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center.

“Imprisoned five years at North Kern-Delano and now San Quentin, I am suddenly able to exhibit my art while practicing my skills at SQTV. The Media Center renews my enthusiasm for photography and lets me practice video production, music scoring and filmmaking at the same time,” said Joaquin.

Joaquin said he saw an opportunity to hone his craft the minute he walked into the Media Center.

“San Quentin’s Media Center was my ‘ah-ha’ moment. I witnessed the potential of incredibly talented people; seeing what they have to offer while understanding God let me continue to work on my skillset. God’s passion of higher purposes tugs on my

“My work became popular enough to become a source of income for survival.”

—S. Joaquin



Joaquin uses graphite to create remarkably accurate black-and-white pieces that bear uncanny resemblance to photographs. He also creates vibrant drawings using color pencils to achieve a brilliant quality in his work.

heart all day, so, now, I realize art through media is what I’m called to do.”

Joaquin said his experience in the Media Center opened his eyes to healing he had never thought possible.

“I thought my talents and skills were selfish dreams that may happen once I got out. I never imagined a media center existed in prison. Today, I look back and laugh at myself, wondering how God blessed me, given my situation and circumstances?”

Adverse childhood experiences, including sexual abuse as a child, had left him with repressed anger and trauma that led to his criminality, he said.

“I took my victim’s life. Programming and art teaches me empathy and remorse... A regular ‘sorry’ just doesn’t cut it, because I can never undo what I did. I only pray my art inspires others and points them to the Messiah Yeshua; that is my living amends,” said Joaquin.

Joaquin explained conversion to Christianity had happened for him two years ago, following 20 years of self-proclaimed atheism.

“There are no coincidences in life. God always has a purpose even if it goes beyond our understanding. If something keeps tugging at your heart, God may be trying to tell you something. Who knows, perhaps, like Esther

in the Bible, God has put you where you are for a reason,” said Joaquin.

The artist said he had sought spiritual connectivity by attending church.

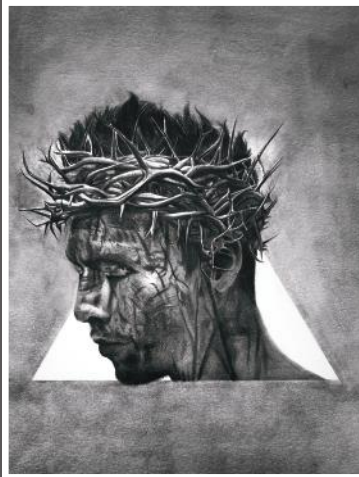
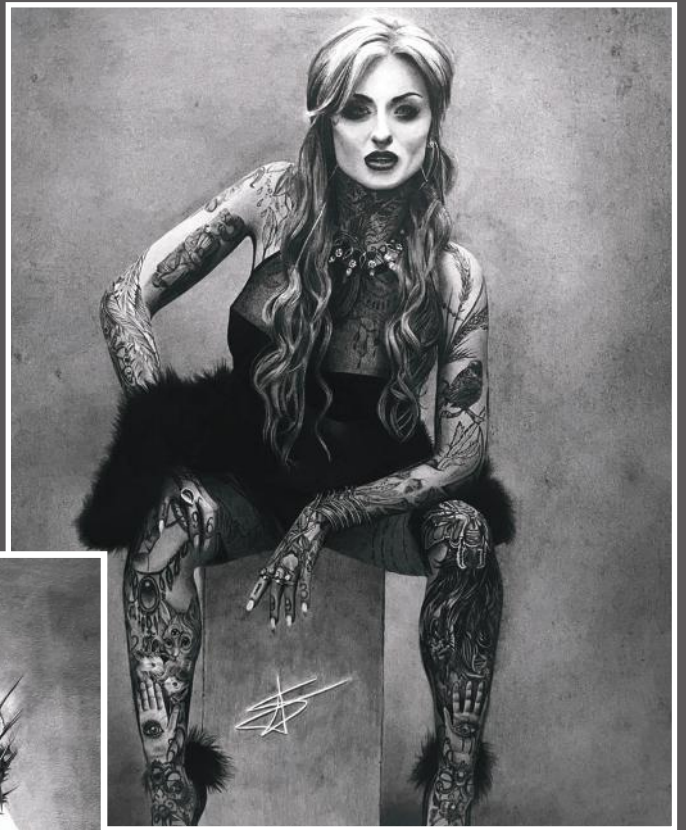
“Church frustrated me and I questioned God, because I heard sermons on letting go of selfish desires, including my art. I felt I could do nothing but church stuff, until I discovered God’s purposes for me were more than that,” said Joaquin.

Joaquin said he thinks of his art as a passion that fulfills him therapeutically as he strives to provide hope and inspiration to incarcerated youth.

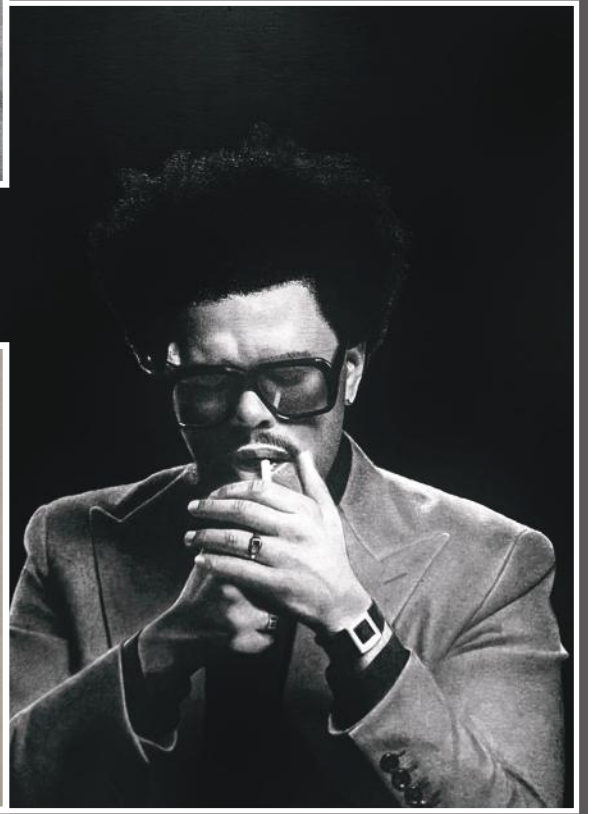
“If I can change the minds of the youth with artistic skills that I’ve been entrusted with, then they can see they should never give up on whatever they’ve been called for. I hope they dream big, and believe in their dreams, as they get in touch with God,” said Joaquin.

Joaquin said he gives grace to his family. “My family recognized the positive changes since I came to SQRC. Fortunately, they have been here to support me in whatever capacity they can since the day I was incarcerated,” said Joaquin.

“Yeshua loves you! Don’t run away from his love as I did. You’re gonna wish you gave your life to him sooner than later,” said Joaquin.



Above and below: These drawings represent the artist’s rendition of Ephesians 5:25.



From bookcases to medicine cabinets, Prichard’s works of art take weeks to construct. Countless hours of research go into each piece to ensure the highest quality.



“I am blessed to help improve Donner or any other cell where my art is permitted. It gives residents a sense of home; a grounding stability reminiscent of days beyond the wall.”

—Stephen Prichard



CRAFTSMANSHIP CURES

Stephen Prichard shares passion of craftsmanship

Whenever San Quentin resident Stephen Prichard starts a project on his long waiting list, the patience that he puts into his craft is worthwhile and transformative.

The detailed artisanship acquired during the decades of Prichard’s incarceration lent a transformative aspect to the artistic furniture builder’s work that has pleased residents and officers.

Prichard’s artistic journey started around the age of six after a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), he said.

“The doctors wanted to put me on Ritalin to calm me, but my parents looked for other ways to calm me down without using drugs,” said Prichard.

He said his parents’ holistic approach led them to suggest that he should try model building.

“It was a great choice because I found I loved making things with my hands. I started with Revel models, all types of vehicles — racecars, military vehicles, aircrafts, boats and ships. Eventually, as a teenager, you could find me on a hill with a bunch of old dudes tossing gliders I built,” said Prichard.

Prichard constructs his designs from layers of reinforced cardboard that has been discarded. He then custom fits his design, primes and finishes his product with faux paints before highlighting it with layers of wax.

With his talents growing, ADHD still made his life

difficult, Prichard said. His grades plummeted because he lacked concentration, which led to impulse and anger issues. “I then started using drugs and alcohol at the age of 12,” he said.

In 1992, Prichard said he accepted his fall from grace, landing in state prison. Prichard’s gravitational pull toward the details of model building enabled him to diffuse the angst he had developed while wrestling with ADHD. His return to the therapeutic hobby that had helped him grow as a child took two years, he said.

“I have spent over half of my life in jails and prisons, have been drug free for over 30 years now, and I still rely on my hobbies for peace and purpose,” said Prichard.

Prichard’s pieces usually take three weeks to construct and they turn into the fashion at each prison in which he has resided. The artisan creates anything and personalizes his works with painting or designs.

“I will spend hours researching how to construct [an item] in the top quality I am accustomed to,” said Prichard.

From bookcases to medicine cabinets to any item that helps residents’ cells feel more like home, the cabinetmaker realizes his work has therapeutic value.

“I am blessed to help improve Donner or any other cell where my art is permitted. It gives residents a sense of home; a grounding stability reminiscent of days beyond the wall,” said Prichard.

Resident GRIP facilitator, Robert Barnes agreed with the therapeutic benefits of a crafts-person like Prichard.

“Stephen has done several pieces for me. He is an excellent artisan and his precision and attention always exceeds my expectation,” said Barnes.

Resident Carrington Russelle added, “Stephen’s talent allows me to design my cell to feel more like home, which allows me more comfort for studying in a peaceful environment.”

Prichard said his commitment to community enables him to live a life of service. “I see each day as countless opportunities to be of value, because I consider myself blessed while contributing positively to the greater good of those around me.”

The artisan said he believes his hobby helps him identify with his divine self, which he lost through his ADHD and his criminal actions. He does not blame his medical condition but chooses spiritual awakening through his craft.

“I create beautiful works of art, pleasing all while giving me a purpose; a vessel to receive and give hope and confidence through the healing powers of creation,” said Prichard.

Prichard said he is a devout Christian and quotes Romans, chapter 12, verse 6, which says, “It is a gift given to me by God.” Prichard added, “I intend on serving Him by pleasing others with my gift of design.”

—Anthony Manuel Carvalho