

San Quentin News Honors Hispanic Heritage Month

El juego historico de fútbol que unió a dos comunidades



Aresteo Sampablo // SQNews

El Director Interino C. Andes cerró el primer juego de fútbol con un tiro penal en contra de un encarcelado

Por **Arsenio P. Leyva**
Staff Writer
& **Miguel G. Sifuentes**
Spanish Journalism Guild Writer

Por primera vez en su historia, un partido de fútbol entre los residentes y los oficiales de San Quentin, une la comunidad hispana en el Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin. Dos partidos fueron narrados totalmente en español por el residente Pablo Sánchez. Las bandas “Grupo

Único Elemento” y “Esperanza” acompañaron el partido entero con música diversa, también en español, aún durante la narración.

En el primer partido, los oficiales del Departamento de Corrección y Rehabilitación de California (CDCR) jugaron en contra los residentes, ganando los residentes seis a tres goles en el campo de futbol del patio principal.

En el segundo partido, los equipos fueron mixtos, jugando los oficiales

junto con los residentes. Para unos residentes, fue apropiado el empate cuatro a cuatro.

“Tengo 31 años preso y jamás había visto algo así. Ahora me doy cuenta que la sociedad no nos repudia, al contrario quieren que nos reintegremos a nuestras comunidades”, dijo el residente, Rubén Rodríguez.

El evento fue organizado por SQNews, del departamento de Español, el entrenador K. Bhatt, y

Edwin E. Chávez. Chávez le dio las gracias al director Chance Andes, la Teniente G. Berry y el Gerente de Recursos de la Comunidad, Marco Barragán, por hacer todo posible.

Después de otros juegos de deportes similares cuales fueron presentados en inglés, este juego dio a los hispanos la esperanza de la inclusividad y participar en una

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For English see pg 17

Fentanyl

overdoses

show effects

By **Jerry Maleek Gearin**
Journalism Guild Chair

Illicit opioid use causes life-changing effects to society and incarcerated people by way of crime, addiction, and death.

Fentanyl is a very strong synthetic opioid approved by the Food and Drug Administration for legal use as an intravenous pain reliever. The drug is 100 times stronger than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin, according to the Drug Enforcement Agency’s Fact Sheet.

It was created in 1959 and placed into practice in the 1960s. In 2011 and 2021 there were lethal overdoses associated with the drug’s use, as law enforcement encounters became greater than before, stated the DEA.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, people who sold Fentanyl mixed it with other drugs such as heroin, methamphetamine, and cocaine. The drug becomes risky when it’s hidden in other drugs, because the Fentanyl is unknown to the user and therefore enables an overdose.

This kind of mixture makes the drug’s production cheaper and deadlier because it only requires a small amount for a user to become high. When the drug comes from a source other than a doctor’s prescription, it is illegal, noted the Institute.

Ingestion or injection of the drug may be fatal to the user because a person’s body may not be able to handle the strong effects.

The artificial opioid comes in many

See **FENTANYL** on pg 4

Lifers await

possible appeal

of Proposition 57

By **Michael Callahan**
Staff Writer

Lifers found suitable for parole now must overcome another hurdle for release. If they had their parole board dates advanced based on Proposition 57 credit earnings, they must wait — possibly for as long as two years or perhaps even longer — for a ruling from the Court of Appeals on the validity of their earned credits.

In a lawsuit dating from January 21, 2022, the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation, a victims’ rights organization, asserted the CDCR did not have the authority to award time credits based on good behavior and approved rehabilitative and educational achievements as specified in Proposition 57. In a December 13, 2023 ruling, the Sacramento County Superior Court agreed with CJLF. On January 18, the CDCR appealed.

“I earned these milestones and credits and to imagine they do nothing to get me home soon is disheartening,” resident Bruce



SQNews Archive

State legislative building

Shocknesse said. “It is frustrating people have earned time and despite suitability cannot go home,” he added.

The outcome concerns an incarcerated person’s Minimum Eligible Parole Date, or MEPD, the earliest possible date for parole, said a Board of Parole Fact Sheet. Proposition 57 allowed the CDCR to advance an incarcerated person’s parole date through various credits, such as Milestone Completion Credits, Rehabilitative Achievement Credits, Educational Merit Credits, or Good Conduct Credits.

According to the Fact Sheet, the court order stated that the CDCR needed to stop applying Proposition 57 credits to MEPDs. The order further said that the CDCR must stop conducting parole hearings based on MEPDs advanced by Proposition 57 credits. Finally, the order instructed the CDCR to stop releasing anyone “found suitable for parole at hearings conducted on this basis.”

The CDCR’s appeal stayed — or halted — the first two parts of the ruling, allowing the CDCR to

See **PROP 57** on pg 4

SQ encourages self-help

By **Arsenio P. Leyva**
Staff Writer

California’s men state prisons have historically been divided by social barriers but integrated self-help programs and sport activities continue to help promote cooperation between different cultural groups.

“I feel like there is no animosity with the different ethnic groups in my educational financial course, or in the building where I’m housed,” said SQ resident John Sheridan, who lives in South Block’s Earned Living Unit. “I do not have to look over my shoulder to feel safe. It permits me to take full advantage of my rehabilitation programs.”

For decades the exercise yards and cell living have been segregated by the residents throughout CDCR. However, as the incarcerated people prepare to return to society, they have collectively involved themselves in self-help programs, according to South Block’s Lt. B. Haub.

In self-help groups people of different cultures are able to work together and share their internal traumas. This can allow for empathy and shared experiences.

“Being an identified as ‘other,’ I am housed as Black. I always had people

looking out for me. All my friends and acquaintances of other ethnic groups, I’ve gotten along with them just fine,” said Christopher “Khalifah” Christensen, who has been incarcerated 29 years.

Residents partake in various self-help programs, including Domestic Violence, Criminal Gang Anonymous, and Alcohol and Narcotics Anonymous.

Also positive interactions comes through sports, as residents compete in baseball, basketball, and soccer and learn how to become better teammates rather than better players.

“Sports promote unity; when we start our flag football games, we all pray together. I would say that a sport integrates all the different cultures and religious beliefs. We respect each other,” said resident Jose Maya.

The population at SQ have taken the initiative to lead self-help groups and learn from each other even through some social barriers still exist.

“While [segregated] areas do exist, there has been a positive change since I entered the prison system more than 20 years ago. There’s always a small margin of people who push back. There are most people pushing for integration than against it,” said SQ resident Patrick Baylis.



CCWF’s **HORSE THERAPY**

Horses assist mental health

SEE PAGE 10



TEXAS PLAYBOYS VISIT

Social reform-Minded team plays SQ Giants

SEE PAGE 16

See inserts for *Mule Creek Post* and CCWF’s *Paper Trail* publications



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

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Uncuffed Pioneer Eskridge Goes Home

Award-winning podcaster starts career with KALW radio

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Two life sentences that had him face 58 years behind bars did not deter longtime San Quentin resident Gregory Eskridge from pursuing and attaining personal growth, a higher education, and journalism awards.

Eskridge received a CDCR-recommended 1170 re-sentencing for exceptional conduct that allowed him to advance his parole board date and receive a parole grant in March.

“The commissioner mentioned despite my parole hearing being far out, he believed I was programming for real and true change. I had hope, despite not knowing if I would ever be released,” Eskridge said.

Before coming to San Quentin, Eskridge said he had started on a path of rehabilitation but still struggled with anger and negativity. He said his younger sister inspired his full turn toward self-healing and rehabilitation. His sister also played a pivotal role in his ability to maintain faith; they would read the Bible together by phone, engage in Bible study, and discuss lessons taught by preachers.

Eskridge said he knew he needed to change but did not know how. He said he felt tired of hurting and causing suffering to others, so he took a deep introspection to his younger self. “My sister was that spark,” Eskridge said. “She questioned my desire to come home. I started looking at my life in its totality, from understanding forgiveness, self-reflection, and victim impact. I believe you have to get tired of being a negative person and have to want something better for yourself.”

After 20 years of higher-level security yards, Eskridge arrived at San Quentin in 2012. “Before coming here, no one talked about rehabilitation. It was about survival,” Eskridge said. He said he met some incarcerated persons who programmed and had the courage to do positive things.

In that year, he started to work with Troy Williams and SQ Prison Report. Back then, the Media Center only had a radio station with three computers and he said he has seen the space evolve into an award-winning organization. Eskridge received awards from the Society of Professional Journalist — the 2017 Excellence in Journalism, first place in Division A — and a 2022 Public Media Journalists Association award. He and his podcast were featured in a recent CBS Special Documentary.

Eskridge said working in radio gave him an understanding of empathy, compassion, and effective listening skills. He said reporter Nancy Mullane, Holly Kern, and producers at KALW Public Radio believed people felt curious about and wanted to hear what incarcerated individuals had to say.

“I have a responsibility to interviewees to represent the truth,” Eskridge said. “A great journalist is someone who is curious and somebody they can trust.”

He called his radio program well received by listeners. Comments from listeners in other countries have shed a new light on incarcerated persons. Eskridge said that over the last decade, KALW’s staff and volunteers taught, trained, and provided a platform pivotal for incarcerated

voices. He said he looked forward to working with KALW after release.

““UnCuffed” is a vehicle for others to gain insight and hear experiences of incarcerated persons,” Eskridge said. “It is emotional leaving. I helped create something the world can hear.”

Ninna Gaensler-Debs, San Quentin’s program director said “UnCuffed” is starting a new fellowship and Eskridge will be the first person to lead the program.”Someone who has lived, breathed, and done this,” she said.

“He brings a different kind of leadership from leading on the inside,” Debs said. “He is so much a community person. His character and personality gets people involved where they can grow and have the confidence inside and outside of the Uncuffed classroom setting.”

Of the dozens of self-help groups Eskridge had attended, he said No More Tears had a great impact because a guest speaker spoke

of losing her sons to gun violence. “Seeing her pain and anguish, I started to think about the harm I caused when I took a life,” Eskridge said. “I never wanted to cause harm to anyone else again. This set me off on this journey of rehabilitation.”

Eskridge said other programs such as GRIP, VOEG, CGA, House of Healing, Restorative Justice, Yoga, Transformative Mediation, and CRP Reentry all fundamentally affected his personal growth. He said volunteering as a tour guide for visitors to San Quentin helped him to speak clearly and confidently during the parole board process. “None of these opportunities for me would have been possible without Lt. Robinson,” Eskridge said.

Eskridge graduated with an Associates of Arts degree in June of this year. He said Mount Tamalpais College helped improve his writing and speaking skills instrumental in his development of his beliefs and ethics.



Courtesy of Ninna Ginsler-Debs

Greg Eskridge enjoying a meal as a free person

Resident aims for living amends

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

A San Quentin resident is finding redemption through truth, courage, and service to his community.

Dennis Jefferson, 53, pled guilty to taking the life his three daughters’ mother. He was sentenced to 45 years to life and has been incarcerated for more than two decades.

“I was guilty, so I pled guilty, said Jefferson. “I was quite comfortable participating in a value system based on the devaluing of others; I was not a family man, just a man with a family.”

It was less about taking responsibility and more about selling out to the false idol of weaponized masculinity.

According to Jefferson, the man who raised him failed to teach him the secrets of

mature manhood, so he was vulnerable to being recruited into the ranks of a bully. From there, it was a seamless transition into an abusive mindset.

He learned that violence is more socially acceptable than tears. He was told to “control your chick, because she is yours to control,” said Jefferson.

People were applying for commutations when California Governor Jerry Brown was close to the end of his term, so Jefferson applied for relief.

During the application process, the woman who adopted his daughters wrote a victim’s impact letter, opposing any re-sentencing.

She detailed the negative trajectory his daughters experienced as a collateral consequence of his violent choices. She questioned his commutation by saying, “How dare a murderer ask for clemency?”

He should not be around another woman,” the letter read.

SQ got him away from dark thinking; it was the best place for him to reform, unlike maximum-security facilities where he was unable to grow. He says that by sitting in restorative circles we give our humanity breathing room.

Jefferson advocates against violence, guiding people to break the vicious cycle of violence. Jefferson says that we landed ourselves in prison, because we were blinded by our “destructive sense of entitlement.”

He talked about a Japanese art form called Kintsugi: when a vase is broken, the pieces are glued back together using glue mixed with gold dust. In this way, people can see where the cracks are since they are accentuated. Similarly, people can think of their own faults in the same way: not as something to be hidden, but as an integral part of their unfolding story.

“Who better to teach about un-defining masculinity than someone who recognizes his potential to relapse back into toxicity?” said Jefferson. “It’s a privilege that I get to serve and repurpose my mess into a message.”

Jefferson has graduated and facilitated numerous self-help groups such as H.E.A.R.T. (Healing, Empowerment, Accountability, Restoration, and Transformation), GRIP (Guiding Rage into Power), V.O.E.G (Victim Offender Education Group), and Houses

of Healing. He is also on track to earn an Associates of Arts degree from Mount Tamalpais College in 2025.

Cherie McNaulty, creator and program director of H.E.A.R.T., has had many roles at SQ for the last eight years including at No More Tears, Mount Tamalpais College, and now H.E.A.R.T.

She says that Jefferson is dependable and forthcoming about the pain he has caused others and that which is self-inflicted.

“He is a great facilitator and uses his personal story to help others,” said McNaulty. “The greatest quality I see in him, he is teachable, always striving to learn more about himself and the world.”

SQ resident Richard Fernandez says that he has known Jefferson for approximately four years. They became acquainted during the Covid pandemic.

“I love his personal growth, his honesty, his courage to share his story and truth,” said Fernandez. “He continues to be a part of PREP [Partnership Re-entry Program] and has become a wonderful mentor and a good friend.”

Jefferson says that as SQ transforms into a rehabilitation center, he does not mind the dynamics of the California Model. He does not want to be distracted by the aesthetics and does not want to lose focus.

“We took things we had no right to, but as peacemaker I can respect where my boundaries end and where others’ begin,” said Jefferson.



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Dennis Jefferson (center) at Robert E. Burton graduation with attendees

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Former CSP Lancaster resident turns screenplay into film



Photos by Stanley Kellis

Formerly incarcerated performers John Njoroge, Ernst Fenelon, Jr., and Deon Whitmore

By Marcus Henderson
Editor in Chief

TheatreWorkers Project screened “STAND!” a filmed spoken-word and movement piece based on writing by residents of CSP-LAC/Lancaster’s A Yard on June 9, 2024. “STAND!” was performed by Deon Whitmore, John Njoroge, and Ernst Fenelon, Jr., each of whom has lived experience. Deon was a TWP participant while at Lancaster State Prison and was one of the original writer/performers of “STAND!” when it was presented as a live theatre piece in 2023.

Through email interviews the *SQNews* was able to discuss the performance with the formerly incarcerated participants.

SQN: How did participating in TWP’s Theatre Inside program at LAC support your rehabilitation?

Whitmore: Being a part of this program essentially gave me a place to get away inside of a chaotic environment. It was a safe space for a moment to push everything to the back of mind and not have to worry about being serious or on defense. I was able to be myself and it was good to be around others who felt like me and needed an escape mentally from our reality.

SQN: Why did you choose to participate in TWP’s

“STAND!” project once you were released?

Whitmore: Working with TWP while inside, I understood the limitations when creating and developing our work. And the idea of creating a piece that allowed me to fully embody it, speak my truth, and not have to worry about what others thought felt liberating. I imagined the possibilities of TWP having full control of creating a body of work and bringing it to life would be amazing. I wanted to give the men inside an idea of what a production of the work they helped create would look like, and hopefully inspire them to continue finding peace through art.

SQN: How is this experience supporting your reentry?

Whitmore: I realized entering society was chaotic and having peace within was something I was going to have to make sure of, and I found that very same peace I felt within [TWP] even while inside. I’ve been excited to be a part of something I helped create, and I’m also discovering things about myself while being involved. This has required a level of commitment and focus and having a schedule. I also realized that I genuinely enjoy this work and being a part of TWP has been a safe space.

SQN: What does it feel like

to know that a work of art that you helped create while incarcerated is now becoming a film?

Whitmore: It’s definitely exciting knowing that my peers will see our creative piece come to life. Also, my commitment to do what I enjoyed doing working with TWP. Most importantly I know it will motivate and even encourage others to step outside of their [comfort zones] and take a chance on something new.

SQN: Thank you for sharing your story. We are proud you are coming back inside and giving us hope.

Whitmore currently uses his public speaking skills to amplify the voices of the marginalized and advocates for systemic change. He is a steadfast volunteer in community engagement, fostering connections and building bridges toward a more equitable society.

Fenelon is an international author, inspirational speaker, moderator, life coach, spoken word poet, and performer. He has channeled 33 years of lived experience (incarcerated 14 1/2 years; released almost 19 years ago) with California and global incarceration systems, into a book. Ernst works with TWP, Dancing Though Prison Walls, Prison Education Project, and other organizations to serve communities impacted by mass incarceration and social

inequalities. For more information about Fenelon, check out www.ernstfenelonjr.com.

Njoroge served 24 consecutive years in correctional facilities, paroling in 2019. He has worked with TWP since 2020, first as a participant in the LIFER: Stories from the Inside/Out program, then as a collaborating artist and program assistant, and now as a member of the Project Re/Frame ensemble. Njoroge gives back through his work as an Intake Coordinator for The Francisco Homes, a faith-inspired non-profit organization in South LA that offers holistic support to formerly incarcerated lifers.

“STAND!” was conceived and produced by Susan Franklin Tanner and directed by Marlene McCurtis, with choreography by Alexa Kershner and acting directed by James Macdonald.

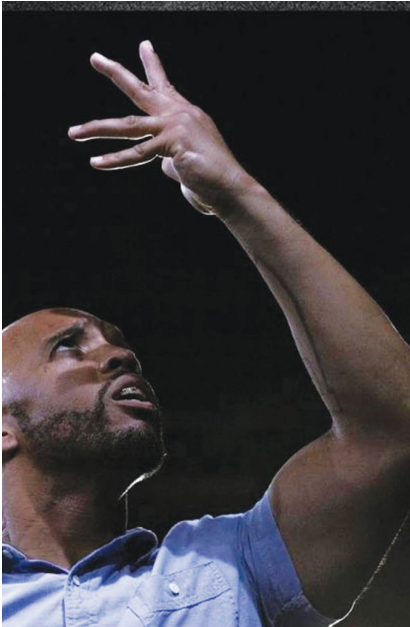
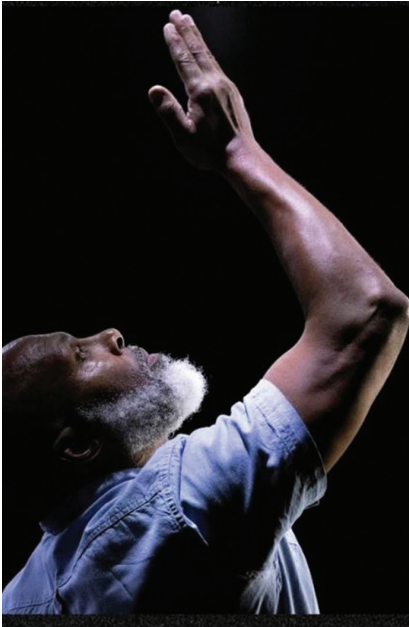
“STAND!” premiered on June 9, 2024 at The Davidson/Valenti Theatre and LGBT Center. TWP will begin their 7th year providing rehabilitative theatre programming at LAC in October 2024. To learn more about TheatreWorkers Project click here <https://theatreworkersproject.org>.

“STAND!” can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/963346407>

Susan Franklin Tanner contributed to this story



(Above) Deon Whitmore
(Lower Left to Right) Ernst Fenelon, Jr., John Njoroge, and Whitmore



SOCCKER

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rehabilitación más completa.

“Es importante para las comunidad hispana, que normalmente no nos toman en cuenta. No tenemos muchos grupos y esto nos puede introducir más”, comentó el residente Luis Orozco.

Para SQNews y el departamento de español, este encuentro marca el aniversario de sus comienzos. El primer artículo escrito totalmente en español, fue sobre un partido de fútbol entre los reos de habla hispana en el año 2010. Ahora, cuenta con dos páginas completas en español para mantener la comunidad informada sobre esfuerzos de rehabilitación.

El director del CRSQ Chance Andes dio su apoyo al tirar dos penaltis, y parar otro como portero, aún en traje y zapatos de vestir. Cuando anotó, la banda celebró con fanfarrias como un programa de concurso.

“Necesitamos un puesto de tacos con refrescos”, declaró la enfermera de Salud Publica Sarah en ser contagiada con ese espíritu hispano de festejar.

“Esta vez es más emocionante, porque esto fue una idea de la comunidad de habla hispana para tener diversidad. Se están cayendo las barreras”, dijo Andes.

Para la Srta. Lebel, interina de Psicología, en su segunda semana de trabajo, respalda el valor de apoyar a la comunidad hispana.

“El tener el comentario principal en español se sintió muy importante, y ni siquiera tener traducción en Ingles es un importante cambio de papeles



Photos by Vincent Turner // Forward This

El evento convierte un campo de fútbol a un campo de sueños

en tener representación de lenguaje”, dijo Lebel.

Los participantes del CDCR incluyeron oficiales correccionales, doctores, enfermeros, educadores y consejeros. Para el Dr. Marton, psicólogo clínico, el evento establece amistades cercanas por medio del deporte.

Estos eventos pueden promover la seguridad dentro de la prisión y en la comunidad, según el reporte de 2024, Renovando San Quentin (Reimagining San Quentin).

Para residente Anicasio García, a través del evento pudo tomar en cuenta nuevas herramientas para vivir un día en su comunidad con éxito.

“Me dio un sentimiento de humanidad, como si fuéramos compañeros y no un residente. Me sentí con más confianza para pedir ayuda a los trabajadores de la prisión”, dijo García.

Miembros de la comunidad de afuera, cual ahora son nuevos trabajadores en SQ, fueron impactados. La Srta. Lusk, interina de Psicología, también en su segunda

semana de trabajo, anteriormente laboró con juveniles en un centro de detención.

“Es una sorpresa agradable, es dar tanto humanidad; como yo típicamente pienso de prisión es deshumanizar a las personas, y aquí hay mucha alegría”, dijo Lusk.

Ella mira cómo ella misma puede ayudar a esta comunidad.

“Yo imagino que mi papel puede ser similar en ayudar a personas reconocer oportunidades y potencial en ellos mismos,” añadió Lusk.

Lebel toma un punto de vista más amplio del sistema, la cultura en las prisiones, y la validez de las experiencias vividas de los residentes.

“Es maravilloso que los equipos son mixtos. También estoy apreciando la complejidad de que tan largo se tomó para llegar aquí, y tomaremos más. Estoy interesada escuchar comentarios de los residentes cual escuchamos algo hoy, y no suficiente”, dijo Lebel.

Otros miran el valor de estos esfuerzos, pero también desean esa misma ayuda del modelo californiano en otras

partes del sistema carcelario.

Carlos Najera, residente, dijo “La convivencia entre los trabajadores de CDCR y los residentes es bueno, pero no se está atendiendo los verdaderos problemas en los edificios [de la prisión]. Pleitos, drogas y el consumo de ello. Allí es donde ocupamos la verdadera ayuda de CDCR.”

El director Andes reconoce los problemas y que todos todavía tenemos mucho trabajo que hacer.

“No se trata de un juego, eso sale sobrando, se trata de la conexión humana en pasar el balón a alguien. Crea una unión y oportunidad de sentir una conexión diferente para cuando te sientes triste o miras el caso de alguien, hay mejor comprensión de los dos lados”, dijo Andes.

Dr. Berendsen, Psicólogo, observó que es un buen comienzo, pero se necesita haber conversaciones difíciles para que haiga cambio completo.

“Más grandiosas las semillas que se plantan, más grandioso será el cambio”, dijo Dr. Berendsen.



Empleados defendiendo su gol



Los residents yendo a la ofensiva para anotar un gol



Los equipos compiten con el espiritu del Mes de la Herencia Hispana

PROP 57

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apply credits and to conduct hearings. The appeal did not stay the third part, the order that prohibited the CDCR to release anyone with an MEPD advanced by Proposition 57 credits, the Fact Sheet said.

“Many show dedication in getting into groups, which can take years,” resident Ronnie Wadell said. “Lifers are a big part of SQ community and keep the institution running smoothly. They are the backbone of rehabilitative programming and the ones serving their community. Why should they be the ones targeted?”

The Fact Sheet said that the ruling would not apply to incarcerated persons with an MEPD of May 1, 2017, or earlier, the day before Proposition 57 credits took effect. It also exempted anyone with a past Youth Parole Eligibility Date, Nonviolent Parole Eligibility Date, or Elderly Parole Eligibility Date.

Anyone found suitable with an advanced MEPD will have to wait until the resolution of the appeal, which the CDCR expects in two years, the Fact Sheet stated. Resolution could take much longer if it leads to further appeals. Until final resolution, parole grants will remain unchanged and no new parole hearings will need to take place.

The Fact Sheet indirectly cautioned that anyone with a delayed release would remain subject to Board of Parole review of any future misconduct, which might result in a referral to an en banc review and a possible rescission hearing.

“The recidivism rate for those who participate in rehabilitative programs is lower because they provide insight and coping skills,” resident Edgar Rodriguez said. “I learned on a daily basis how to change my distorted and criminal thinking behaviors from rehabilitative programs.”

Court documents obtained by the *San Quentin News* said the California electorate passed Proposition 57 in

2016 to decrease the prison population by adding section 32 (2) states to article I of the California Constitution. Section (2) states that the CDCR “shall have the authority to award credits earned for good behavior and approved rehabilitative or educational achievements.”

The section further provides the CDCR “shall adopt regulations in furtherance of these provisions,” and that the secretary of CDCR “shall certify that these regulations protect and enhance public safety.”

The December 13, 2023 court document said CJLF challenged regulations “codified at California Code of Regulations, title 15, sections 3043 to 3043.6. The Regulations appear in Article 3.3 of Title 15, Division 3, Chapter 1 of the Code of Regulations, under the title ‘Credits.’ Generally, the Regulations provide how inmates may earn credits toward their sentence, and thus reduce their term of incarceration. These credits are granted by the CDCR pursuant to the Regulations, as opposed to the statutory

provisions granting credits. It is the alleged inconsistency between these two schemes that is the subject of the Petition.”

The court document stated that CJLF argued the validity of the regulations,

“I earned these milestones and credits and to imagine they do nothing to get me home soon is disheartening ... It is frustrating people have earned time and despite suitability cannot go home,”

—SQ resident
Bruce Shocknesse

calling them “inconsistent with statutes,” an “impermissible Constitutional revision” and “inconsistent with provisions of the California Constitution.”

CJLF challenged Good Conduct Credits covered under 3043.2(b)(2)(B) and 3043.2(b)(3)(B). The group challenged Milestone Completion Credit, Rehabilitative Achievement

Credit, and Educational Merit Credit 3043.3(c), 3043.4(b), and 3043.5(b). CJLF further challenged credits for incarcerated persons in minimum custody covered by 3043.2(b)(5).

“Before I was chasing RAC programs, then this stuff started to stick and it became who I am,” resident Manuel Mena said.

“Programs with RAC credits provide me a new way of thinking. I know now when I need help I can ask for it. I have learned how to be a productive member in my community,” added Rodriguez.

“Education has made all the difference for my growth and accountability,” resident Hardeep Singh said. A native of India, he said the motivation for attaining a basic and higher education was rewarding because he was able to earn time off and a degree.

Finally, CJLF challenged regulations as containing language that the credits would “advance an inmate’s initial parole hearing date.... if sentenced to an indeterminate term,” covered by

3043(a), 3043.2(b), 3043.3(c), 3043.4(b), and 3043.5(b).

The court document stated, “[T]he drafters of Proposition 57 intended for [CDCR] to have broad authority over the application of conduct credits to reduce inmate sentences.”

Resident Edwin Tucker said, “It is hard to get time off. Whether someone is a lifer or not, everyone should get what they earn.”

“Every day I wake up with a thought [that] I need to go to groups and actively participate with my community, not just for credits but as a way of life,” resident Edgar Rodriguez said.

The CDCR appealed case no. 34-2022-80003807 and filed a writ that would allow CDCR to still implement credits and advance hearings accordingly. CDCR argued that Proposition 57 regulations implemented regarding prison credits were within statutory authority and consistent with Proposition 57 and are reasonably necessary to effectuate its purpose, according to court records.

FENTANYL

Continued from page 1

forms: powder, nasal spray, eye drops, and lozenges similar to cough drops, said the article.

As other opioids do, Fentanyl binds to the brain’s opioid receptors and makes it difficult to experience pleasure from anything else except the drug. The area in the brain where fentanyl is found controls pain and emotions.

An overdose causes a

decrease in the flow of oxygen that reaches the brain. This is called hypoxia, which can lead to permanent unconsciousness, according to the article.

To prevent an overdose, Naloxone a.k.a. Narcan, a nasal spray, can be administered. The drug reverses the effects of fentanyl by quickly binding to the brain’s opioid receptors, therefore blocking the drug’s effects.

Narcan must be administered right after an overdose and may have to be applied multiple times if a person remains unconscious, reported

the story.

Fentanyl is addictive. People who are prescribed the drug can experience dependency, which is characterized by withdrawal when use is stopped.

Strong withdrawal symptoms may occur hours after the drug was taken. Indicators of withdrawal include muscle and bone pain, sleep deprivation, and harsh cravings, said the organization.

According to KFF Health News Demian Johnson was incarcerated 35 years and then released in 2018. He works for Five Keys, a non-profit program

based in San Francisco that helps returning citizens combat substance abuse.

Johnson says that one of his friends passed away from an overdose after spending years in prison.

“He had nobody to save him, to bring him back or to issue him some Narcan. It’s not hard for me to figure out why so many are succumbing to these really, really potent drugs,” said Johnson.

Addiction becomes apparent when there is a compulsion to seek out the drug and when basic necessities become

neglected.

In California, incarcerated individuals released from prison receive instructions on how to recognize someone who is overdosing, how to immediately administer Narcan, and how to perform CPR.

The Five Keys program also assists those living in low-income areas, where parolees are often housed, and a disproportionate number of minorities and people with disabilities, stated the Health News.

According to the Department of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics Center, California

prisons have had deaths related to substance abuse overdoses.

In 2022 there were 12 overdose deaths in California Prisons and in 2023 there were 18.

As a method of overdose prevention, CDCR has begun distributing Narcan to each incarcerated person.

In a recent Memo the California Correctional Healthcare Services said that every incarcerated person will have access to Narcan nasal spray and training in how to administer the anti-overdose treatment.

2024 Ballot initiatives for November elections

In recognition of the upcoming Election, here are some bills that are proposed to be on the November ballot. These bills effect the incarcerated population.

NAME OF BILL	PURPOSE OF BILL	EFFECTS OF BILL	IF PASSED
Proposition 6	Bans Involuntary Servitude as a Punishment for Crime	This bill would remove the consequences a person in prison face by refusing to work.	Officials of jails and prisons will have to find alternatives like increased pay to encourage people to do the work.
Proposition 36	Increases Sentencing and charges of theft and certain drug charges.	Increases punishment for some theft and drug crimes. Creates a new treatment-focused court process. Requires the courts to warn those convicted of selling drugs of possible murder charges if someone dies.	Sentences of theft or property damage will increase to three years. Prison time will be required for drug possession based on the amount sold. Theft over \$950 will be a felony.

Amending Prop 47 creates ‘treatment-mandated-felony’ classification

By Tyrone D. Jones
Journalism Guild Writer

California voters will once again have a chance to rewrite legislation concerning criminal justice reform. This November, the ten-year old Proposition 47 will be placed before voters again that could possibly dismantle certain key elements of the legislation. The proposed amendment would not completely repeal the law, but penalties would increase for repeat retail theft, according to *the Guardian*. The new amendment would also create a new classification

of offense called “treatment-mandated-felony” for those found in possession of drugs such as: fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine. “This proposition will fix some of the definite wrongs, the unintended consequences that we have with Prop 47,” said Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco. The landmark legislation became law in 2014, which reduced some non-violent felonies into misdemeanors, stated the article. In the 10 years of the proposition’s existence, it has faced many challenges since former California Governor Jerry

Brown signed the measure into law. The opposition comes from law enforcement officials and prosecutors arguing the difficulty in arresting and prosecuting minor drug and theft offenses. The increase of open-air drug use, homelessness, car and retail market thefts may have created a policy reform backlash. Prop 47 naysayers will have plenty of fodder to put forth a case to Californians, stated *the Guardian*. “I don’t think there’s a need to have it on the ballot. Why have something on the ballot that doesn’t actually achieve the goals that are intended?”

said Governor Gavin Newsom. “Why do something that can’t be done legislatively with more flexibility? I think it’s a better approach to governing.” In the wake of those comments by the governor, leading democrats announced they had crafted the ballot measure Prop 2 to amend Prop 47, which failed to pass. The new measure would have allowed prosecutors to upgrade a misdemeanor to a felony. A person that is suspected of having two prior incidents of petty theft or shoplifting within the three-year period, would be eligible for their charges to be upgraded.

Newsom along with other state politicians assert that new legislation would prove to be the desired path forward to tackle retail theft instead of taking apart existing law. A few days later Newsom said that there is not enough time for state leaders to work out the final language before the upcoming deadline, according to the Associated Press. Prop 47 marked an about face in California politics. Subsequent policies followed that helped decrease prison populations and address race based disparities in sentencing, arrests, and prosecution,

reported by the *Guardian*. “[Prop 47] It’s one of those monumental pieces of legislation, and it got us over the hill for something we’ve been fighting for so long,” said Kent Mendoza of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition. In November of 2024, voters will have their voices heard in the ongoing debate over the effectiveness Proposition 47. The supporters of this measure are many law enforcement groups, major business groups, conservative lawmakers and mayors San Francisco’s London Breed and San Jose’s Matt Mahan, according to the *Guardian*.

Voters to decide changes to involuntary servitude language in California Constitution

California’s voters will decide in November, whether to remove involuntary servitude from the state’s Constitution that would eliminate mandatory work requirements in prisons. The revised amendment does not include increasing wages for incarcerated residents, according to the *LA Times*. The California State Senate passed ACA 8 (Wilson) now known as Proposition 6. The amendment would make prisons jobs voluntary and protect incarcerated residents from being disciplined for refusing a work assignment. “If somehow this bill leads

to me getting humane pay for my labor, I would send money home to my family, pay off my restitution, and give some to a non-profit,” said SQ resident Reginald Thorpe. Proposition 6 is one of 14 bills brought forth by the California Reparations Task Force, who seek to craft recommendations and proposals to combat the injustices suffered by the descendants of African American slaves in the United States, said the article. Currently, Article 1, Section 6 of the California Constitution states that ‘slavery is illegal, and

involuntary servitude is permissible when punishing someone for a crime.’ If voters pass this law, it will remove the language ‘involuntary servitude.’ “I can’t pretend to know what it was like to be a slave, but sometimes at work I’ve felt like one,” said SQ resident R.L. Carter. Carter added that the bill would have a positive effect on her mindset, and with the rise in canteen and package prices, it would help her to maintain self-care. In 2022, legislation was crafted to address involuntary servitude. The Department of

Finance projected if CDCR were required to pay residents minimum wage it would cost taxpayers billions, the legislation stalled, reported the *LA Times*. CDCR currently requires every ‘able-bodied’ resident to work for the base sum of 35 cents an hour for four hours a day. “If this bill passes, it may not impact my day to day life immediately, but I feel that in the long run ,... California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation will have to incentivize work,” said SQ resident S. Brooks. Proposition 6 passed the

Senate and Assembly with bipartisan support and has no official opponents, said the article. “[This bill]...would give me the motivation to think and conduct myself like a responsible thinking man who’s preparing to be productive when I leave prison,” said SQ resident M. Scott. Last year, chairperson of the Legislative Black Caucus and Assembly member Lori Wilson (D- Suisun City) resurrected the amendment. Wilson stated the revised amendment has nothing to do with increased wages for incarcerated residents,

although she anticipates the subject of minimum wage for residents to surface next session. If passed, Prop 6 would go into effect January 1, 2025, marking the end of the use of involuntary servitude within California prisons. “I want to be able to take pride in my work and not feel like a beast of burden,” said SQ resident Edward “Eddie” Carter. “Deciding to go to work without being forced is the first step in my journey to rehabilitation.” —Tyrone D. Jones
Journalism Guild Writer

Reform advocates seek strategic plan for prison closures

By John Liu
Journalism Guild Writer

Some prison reform advocates expect CDCR’s budget cuts will reduce wasteful spending amidst dwindling prison population, but seek more stable plans for prison closures, according to Darlin Navarrete of the *Davis Vanguard*. Advocates from Californians United for a Responsible Budget are cautiously optimistic about the \$750 million cut in CDCR’s 2024-25 operating budget. CURB noted that the budget prioritized protected existing programs that showed rehabilitation, reentry, and family connection benefits. Which including Governor Newsom’s “original plan to deactivate 46 housing units across 13 prisons,” reported the independent news organization. “CDCR has continued to use the so-called ‘California Model’ as a justification to avoid prison closures and keep operating empty prison space, despite the absence of substantive information on what this

‘model’ will ultimately entail,” said CRUB. CDCR is projected to have a 90,860 population and 10,000 empty beds in 2024. The average cost per incarcerated person is \$132,000. The department’s personnel salaries and facility maintenance made up 90 percent of the total budget, said Daz Proctor of CURB in *Vanguard’s* article. To address CDCR’s rising vacancies, Assemblymember Phil Ting of San Francisco authored Assembly Bill 2178, which mandates a plan to gradually reduce the department’s average daily empty beds from 11,300 in 2026 to 2,500 by 2030. The bill passed the Assembly in May 2024. “Maintaining underutilized facilities continues to drain resources that could be better allocated to essential community services. The reductions to CDCR are the bare minimum, just scratching the surface for possible savings,” said CURB Statewide Coordinator Daz Proctor. At least five more state prisons could close, per a

growing number of lawmakers—and the state’s non-partisan Legislative Analyst’s Office, said CURB. Curb’s executive director Amber-Rose Howard lauded the budget is a win for advocates and legislative leaders. CURB’s report also noted a \$120 million budget reduction from the \$360 million originally allocated to San Quentin Rehabilitation Center for building a new education center. “The significant reductions in the CDCR budget reflect our persistent advocacy efforts and strong leadership from the legislature. However, the lack of prison closures is a glaring omission,” said Howard. “Without closing prisons, these proposed reductions may never fully materialize, which should be a red flag for the public and spur the legislature to additional action.” Ting pointed to a Legislative Analyst’s Office report which found that CDCR’s population had decreased from 130,000 in 2019 to 93,000 by January 2024. The independent state agency’s report also anticipated

19,000 empty beds by 2028, or about one-fifth of the department’s total capacity, the article said. In budget terms, Scott Graves from the California Budget and Policy Center estimated that closing five prison facilities and eliminating 15,000 empty beds would save taxpayers \$1 billion, reported the article. Ting reasoned his legislation would allow savings to be directed toward “critical needs such as education, housing, and other integral services” rather than pay for empty beds in prison. Proctor concurred that legislations such as AB2718 would help communities impacted by prison closures by diverting underutilized funds toward workforce and community development, the *Vanguard* article reported. “California needs a practical roadmap for prison closures that meets the needs of multiple stakeholders. Newsom has the opportunity to show the nation that California is fiscally responsible on state corrections,” said Howard.

Mississippi prisons face staff shortages

By T.J. Marshall
Journalism Guild Writer

In three Mississippi Correctional facilities, there has been a shortage of staff, leading to violence and gang intimidation. In February 2024, the Department of Justice investigated three prisons and reported failures by the state to protect its residents, due to the lack of correctional officers. “Gangs operate in the void left by staff and use violence to control people and traffic contraband,” said the DOJ. “These basic safety failures and the poor living conditions inside the facilities promote violence, including sexual assault.” In response, Kate Head, spokesperson for the Mississippi Department of Corrections, said they are working hard to solve the staffing problems and safety issues. “While we disagree with

the findings, we will work with the DOJ to identify possible resolutions to enhance inmate safety and continue ongoing efforts to improve operations at MDOC,” said Head. Short staffing has led to restrictive housing practices of the incarcerated population causing hazardous and unsanitary conditions. The job vacancy rates are now at 50% at the Mississippi Department of Corrections, which directly relates to its failure to safely supervise the prison population. “They are breeding grounds for suicide, self-inflicted injury, fires, and assaults,” related DOJ. The state has made efforts to increase wages and has “worked tirelessly” to try to recruit correctional staff, fast tracking the hiring process. “We’re grateful for the often thankless work of the men and women of the MDOC, and we look forward to continuing our efforts to recruit additional staff,” said Head.

Social justice organizations visit, discuss law and court challenges

By Justin Wharton
Journalism Guild Writer

More than 50 residents and people from two organizations discussed genuine rehabilitation at an event held on August 6 in San Quentin’s Chapel B.

The three-hour conversation attended by members of For The People and the Draper Richard Kaplin Foundation centered around emotional intelligence, accountability, building community, criminality, and trauma.

“So many people don’t see behind these walls. Our goal for today was to help people see what’s inside, especially for those who have never had any proximity to people inside prison. Many people see law and order but don’t get the see the story after,” said Hillary Blout, founder of For The People.

For The People is an organization designed to help the incarcerated with prosecutor-initiated resentencing and to educate prosecutors nationwide on benefits of a reformed approach.

According to Robin Richards Donohoe, founder of DRKF, the organization is trying to create a world that is more just. For more than 20 years, they have identified and helped fund persons who are attempting to solve social justice issues.

“We set out to bring prosecutors into this area to be more of a solution to incarcerated persons rather than the ones who only send them away,” Hillary Blout said at the start of the forum. “Thank you for being here and opening up your heart.”

Former incarcerated resident Thanh Tran, invited to be the liaison between visitors and residents, said, “I felt a wave of happiness stepping back in here today to be able to



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Residents join advocates outside SQ chapel after discussion

bring people outside to see the humanity among us all.”

To help start a calm transition as participants convened into their groups, Tran began with a number of breathing exercises. He said the focus was to be comfortable with one another, listen to your body, be honest and reserved, if you liked.

“Come with what you want to get, give what you want to give. See these people beyond the blue they are wearing today,” Tran said.

Attendees broke into small groups to provide answers on which rehabilitative programs and work were impactful, what real and successful rehabilitation looks like, and who mentored or provided support, if any.

“I received an AA, but to me that didn’t help my rehabilitation. Criminal Gang Members Anonymous (self-help program) helped my emotional awareness and maturity, to see others as human,” resident Tam Nguyen said.

Resident Vernon Evans said his rehabilitative needs and the experiences he had during his 24 years of solitary

confinement paled in comparison to the rehabilitative programs San Quentin offers. “This right here is revolutionary. It does not happen elsewhere.”

“Doing Youth Offender Program work helped me with understanding my crimes and connected me with that population,” Evans said of the program that had the greatest impact on him.

Visitor Kristen Richmond from DRKF commented on what she saw and heard. “Alongside rehabilitation is maturity and growth. Everyone has that capability, but everyone changes differently,” she said.

Nguyen’s concept of accountability was taking responsibility for his actions in his community and to have a purpose. “I started finding purpose in my life. I started doing things that made me feel good about myself,” he said.

Resident Louis Sale said, “My foundation of sobriety from substance use, criminality, and gambling is my accountability. Taking advantage of opportunities like this group, and discussing freely

about myself, and internalizing my actions. You have to have courage to do that.”

The visitors and SQ residents reconvened together as a whole and discussed the impactful experiences they had shared that day. They passed around the mic to share thoughts on what each person gleaned from this experience.

Outside guest Meg Rudy said, “I feel like you don’t get this type of openness, even with your own family.”

“I would just encourage all of you to tell about the programs that could change lives,” Richards-Donohoe said. “If Guiding Rage Into Power [self-help group] was in middle schools where people could learn about perpetrators and victims, it would bring people together on both sides and that could make a difference.”

She said she believed that bringing victims and incarcerated persons together for healing could bring change.

The event began to close out with one-word summaries from each individual, beginning with the word “grateful...” to the last word “faithful.”

“Internalize and digest this experience as we continue to do this work. It is worth it, the work that you’re doing. For The People, what you’re fighting for is worth it,” Tran said. “All the work and long hours, it is worth it. Even when it might be unpopular to support it, it’s worth it.”

Resident Tony Tafoya spoke about the importance of mentors, building community, and communication. “This helped my journey of rehabilitation and addressing trauma. Without guidance, I couldn’t have learned to love myself,” he said.



Associates of For The People preparing for their presentation

SQNews wins eight CNPA Awards

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

This year, *San Quentin News* received eight California News Publishers Awards for its continued dedication to reporting on social justice issues.

Former editor-in-chief, Steve Brooks won five awards — two 2nd places, two 3rd places and one 4th place award and Staff writers Jerry Gearin, Marcus Henderson and Joshua Strange each won 5th place awards.

Additionally, *San Quentin News* excelled in the “Print Inside Page Layout and Design” category and won 5th place for the design of the “Black

History Month” double-page spread published in February 2023. The award named Editor-in-Chief Marcus Henderson.

The article “Absolute Determination” from the March 2023 edition earned Brooks 2nd place in the “Sports Feature Story” category. Brooks won another 2nd place in the “Coverage of Business and the Economy” category for his article “Basic Act takes aim at Canteen Price Gouging” published in April 2023.

His editorial “No More ‘Inmates’” in the August 2023, edition won Brooks 3rd place in the “Editorial Comment” category.

Brooks also won 3rd place in the “Feature Story” category

for his May 2023 front-page story “Death Row Transfers Face Mixed Reactions.” In the same edition, Brooks won 4th place in the Coverage of Local Government category for “California lawmaker Undaunted in Efforts to End Involuntary Servitude Prison.”

Journalism Guild Chair Jerry Gearin won 5th place in the category of “Housing and Land-Use Reporting” for his March 2023 article “Group Helps Former Prisoners Understand Housing Barriers.”

Former Senior Editor Joshua Strange’s article “Growing research shows impact of poor nutrition on prison violence” published in April 2023 received 5th place

in the category of “Health Reporting.”

The San Quentin News competed against papers like *Santa Maria Sun*, *Santa Barbara Independent*, *Comstock’s Magazine*, *Voice of OC*, *Fresno Land*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Daily Press*, *Coachella Valley Independent*, *The Observer Newspapers*, and *Grunion Gazette*. The California News Publishers Association has seven divisions of recognition and *San Quentin News* competed in divisions four and five.

San Quentin News has a mission to report on rehabilitative efforts in California prisons to increase public safety and advance social justice.



SQNews Archive
SQNews received eight awards for journalistic excellence

Inmate Disability Assistance Program work stretches beyond simple service

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

They might cruise around in pale yellow jackets, dashing from the residence buildings to the dining halls, the hospital, the chapels, the gym, to R&R, or to the education complex. Sometimes they would carry meals around the buildings, but usually, they would push wheelchairs occupied by residents unable to move on their feet.

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center classified them as Inmate Disability Assistance Program workers, but common parlance has always employed the acronym “IDAP.” Darren Lee said he had to wait for two years to join this select team, and ever since, he has worn his jaundiced livery with pride.

“When I don the yellow uniform, my fellow prisoners recognize that I am here just to help — no agenda, no angle, or hustle,” Lee said about his work of helping residents unable to help themselves. His tasks could involve changing bed linen, filling out forms, or even writing letters.

Lee said compensation (\$0.13 an hour) meant nothing to him. “I wanted this job not for the pay but for the opportunity to give back while incarcerated.” Previously, Lee said, he held jobs as a kitchen worker, carpenter, stationary engineer, and maintenance mechanic.

Lee’s work gave him a way to show tolerance and compassion, conveyed by his simple yellow jacket, he said.

“Helping a fellow human in need is a rare and solemn opportunity,” Lee said. “Any chance to pay back for the harm and injuries resulting from the caustic deeds of my past is a most welcome blessing. Finding purpose in my lost life is yet another step on the path to rehabilitation and salvation.”

Purpose has stretched even farther for Lee. The work has inculcated in him a near-religious goal. When asked about redemption, he replied that the quality came in atonement, “the deed for some souls in need. It is an emotional experience to lend a helping hand to a man who expects indifference.”

Lee said he credited much of his transformation to having

received such a helping hand. Referring to himself as a “reluctant and foundering student,” he said he had “discovered the joy and importance of an education” at San Quentin’s Mount Tamalpais College, which taught him to recognize the many facets of rehabilitation and gave him the skills to articulate his efforts.

“As Lee’s writing tutor, I had a privilege in witnessing the remarkable emergence of his writing talent,” said Eliezer Margolis, a general writing tutor at MTC. “He is someone who has something of value to say.”

The yellow jacket first allowed Lee to actualize these efforts. “Everyone needs a helping hand or kind word,” Lee said.



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews
IDAP worker pushing a fellow resident to rehabilitative program

Residents submit artwork to encourage flu vaccinations

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

As Covid considerations have faded, for San Quentin residents, the memories and impact from the pandemic has remained prevalent when deciding whether preventive measures to combat the influenza are safe, effective — or even necessary.

Seasonal influenza viruses are detected year-round but flu activity has usually peaked between December and February. According to WebMD, the flu affects on average 5% to 20% of the U.S. population.

“When I get a flu shot, I have symptoms. I am not sure if the shot is helping me or harming me,” resident Will Johnson said.

The Department of Health and Human Services stated the number of flu-related deaths has typically ranged from 3,000 to 49,000 Americans per flu season. A study from 2021, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that vaccinations have reduced infections by 40% to 60%. Vaccinated patients had a 26% lower risk of ICU admission and a 31% lower risk of death.

At San Quentin, California Correctional Health Care



Residents submit artwork for CCHCS flu season poster. Residents From left to right: Candelario Reyes, Ben Chandler, Kevin Sheplar, Freddie Huarte

Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Services public health Nurse Sara said prison environments have a higher propensity for spreading the flu. She called that fact a good reason for residents to get the vaccine. “Ask your nurse or doctor questions before you get the shot. We are here to provide education.”

Flu viruses are contagious respiratory illnesses circulated via droplets from talking, coughing, or sneezing flu-afflicted persons. “The flu infects the nose, throat, and lungs and is most contagious the first three days of the illness,” the report said.

“Getting the flu vaccination

sooner than later is important because it takes two weeks before it is effective,” San Quentin’s CCHCS infection control nurse Katie McCarver, RN.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, complications of the flu could worsen chronic medical conditions. “Sometimes getting sick with the flu can exacerbate pre-existing conditions such as congestive heart failure, asthma, diabetes, which are common chronic conditions at San Quentin,” Nurse Sara said.

Many residents said they received flu shots whenever the

institution offered them, but others said they believed the shot unnecessary. Some residents said they felt uninformed and uncertain about the effectiveness of the flu vaccine.

“I get my flu shot every year,” resident Carlos Alas said. “For three days I feel effects from the shot and once it passes I feel great and have peace of mind for the remainder of the flu season.”

Similar to public sentiments outside the walls of San Quentin, residents held the common misconceptions of the flu as not serious and of vaccines as unsafe.

Residents voiced that the flu vaccine gave them flu-like symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control report stated vaccines, like any medical product, could cause side effects, but the flu vaccine effects are mild and go away by themselves. Some side effects from the vaccine include headache, fever, nausea, and muscle aches.

Resident Mike G. said after taking the vaccine once and feeling ill afterwards, he did not want to receive another shot. “I took the vaccine once and felt terrible; I do not take it because it got me sick.”

The Centers for Disease Control said the shot contained dead viruses and could not cause flu illness because the body would create antibodies to fight the flu. Nurse Sara said residents with egg allergies can ask for “Flucelvax,” a cell culture-based vaccine safe for most allergies.

Nurse Sara cautioned about other respiratory viruses that have circulated during past flu seasons, such as rhino virus, respiratory syncytial virus, human para influenza, and human metapneumovirus. “The institution offers current Covid and flu vaccines,” Nurse Sara said with the recommendation that residents should ask the institution’s care team for more information.

Nurse Sara said San Quentin medical staff held a competition in which residents could submit artwork for a flu season poster that the CCHCS would post throughout the CDCR system. She said only a few San Quentin artists submitted works this year but she remained hopeful for more submissions next year.

“I felt we were heavily pressured to receive the flu vaccine so I was skeptical on its efficiency,” resident Alexander Yohn said. “For me there is not enough legitimate information to the effectiveness of vaccines.

Incarcerated veterans celebrate 10 year anniversary



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Incarcerated veteran receiving recognition for service

By David Ditto
Associate Editor

The Veterans Healing Veterans self-help group celebrated its 12-year anniversary and held its first graduation in San Quentin since before the pandemic. Graduates received their certificates and hard-earned white VHV hats during the ceremony in July.

VHV was created in 2012 inside SQ to help incarcerated

veterans heal from the trauma they experienced throughout their lives, including during childhood and military service.

Marine veteran Ron Self founded the program and developed its curriculum, centered on therapeutic shared trauma narratives, when he was incarcerated in The Q.

“Ron had a vision of helping veterans who weren’t cuttin’ it in prison, to give you an extra layer of healing,” announced

Army veteran and SQ resident Kevin Brinkman from the podium, opening the ceremony.

“This program now supports veterans in prisons in three states,” said Self to the 50 veterans attending the event in the SQ chapel. He became the executive director of VHV soon after paroling in 2017.

Brinkman, a VHV facilitator and member since arriving at SQ in 2017, acknowledged the other inside facilitators in attendance for their commitment to helping fellow veterans. Seven stood up and received lively applause.

“When Ron paroled, we held it together,” Brinkman said. “That’s what we do, VHV: Leave no man behind.”

California Dept. of Veterans Affairs representative Mary Donovan also addressed the audience from the podium. “It’s always a pleasure to share this space with you guys,” she said. “I’ve learned so much in

the VHV circles with all of you listening and embracing the ability to be changed by what you hear.” She estimated her time in healing circles at 1,000 hours.

Donovan was instrumental in helping Self create VHV through its first seven years as a volunteer, facilitator, sponsor, and director. Now, with Cal Vet, she works one-on-one helping veterans in California prisons get the benefits they earned during military service.

Survivors of military service have double the civilian suicide rate and one of the highest rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is associated with high levels of social, occupational, and physical disability. Imprisonment often exacerbates the damaging effects.

The most effective treatments for PTSD are trauma-focused narrative therapies that help the person process their traumatic experiences. The

VHV facilitators guide participants through the curriculum that does precisely that with listening, talking, and writing.

“I listen,” said Roberta Dillon, a VHV outside facilitator since 2019. “I’m greatly rewarded when I see the growth in the men who are intent to change.”

VHV inside facilitator Donald Edge commended the graduates for achieving an understanding of their past traumas, which benefits themselves and society. “Thank you also to Ron, Roberta, and all the facilitators for kindly reaching out to help heal the veteran population,” said Edge.

“Not everybody makes it through,” said John Poggi, an outside volunteer facilitator for eight years. “You can’t just show up and expect to succeed. You have to make the commitment and do the difficult work.”

Poggi and Dillon lauded the zero-percent recidivism

among the more than 100 veterans who have graduated since the program began twelve years ago.

One such success story is Navy veteran Tony Marquez. “I learned the hard way, and healing was a long journey,” he said. “I returned to old behaviors after I left the Navy, making poor choices leading to addiction.”

“VHV was the first group I ever took at San Quentin,” he continued. “I learned how my response to trauma and negative life events led me to be the person who committed my crime.”

After first being denied parole in 2020, three years later Marquez was found suitable and then paroled. Now working with VHV, he has facilitated for the program in three CA prisons.

“It’s bittersweet to see friends still here,” said Marquez. “It feels nice to help, but it’s sad to leave them behind.”

SQ residents share powerful narratives of childhood traumas

By Michael Fangman
Journalism Guild Writer

San Quentin residents are writing their way “Back to the Start,” sharing powerful narratives of their personal childhood traumas.

The group, which has been featured on CNN and National Public Radio, is committed to changing not only the lives of other incarcerated men and women, but those of children across the country.

Back to the Start is an inmate-facilitated workshop that empowers residents to write and read aloud stories of their adverse childhood experiences. In understanding their ACEs, graduates learn to recognize their own emotional needs and those of others.

Joshua Strange, one of the recent cohort’s facilitators, says participants hope their stories can be leveraged in a way that promotes systemic change in support of others, particularly at-risk youth.

“We want to help children and their families, so that fewer people end up in prisons,” Strange says. “Understanding the lifelong impact of ACEs can help create upstream interventions to prevent all the downstream damage.”

Strange came to the group first as a writer, working under the program’s early resident leadership, a group that included Juan Haines and Edwin Chavez.

Chavez, who helps lead and serves as an interpreter for the Spanish-speaking cohort, says he is proud to be part of a group that supports an often under served incarcerated population.

“Childhood trauma knows no bounds. It impacts every culture,” Chavez says.

Juan Haines wants people to understand the difference one person can make in the lives of others. His face lights up as he talks about the day Sam Robinson, SQ’s now retired Public Information Officer, walked into the

Media Center, a member of CDCR’s medical staff in tow.

“That changed my life,” Haines exclaims. “That was the day I first met Doctor Jenny Espinoza.”

Haines describes Espinoza as being troubled by the vast number of incarcerated people she was treating who had been impacted by childhood traumas. In becoming Back to the Start’s Executive Director, he says Dr. Espinoza inspired each of them to realize their time “inside” could be used to serve a higher purpose, that their personal stories could help galvanize public support for systemic change.

He says, “Facts and figures don’t move people; stories do.” Donald Thompson, Haines will tell you, is living proof.

In telling his story, Thompson recounts an entire childhood spent inside foster care, orphanages and more than half a dozen different group homes.

“Suddenly I was kicked

“Suddenly I was kicked out of a system that had provided for me, but hadn’t prepared me. Foster homes prepared me for group homes, which prepared me for Juvenile Hall, which prepared me for YA which prepared me for prison.”

—Donald Thompson,
SQ resident

out of a system that had provided for me, but hadn’t prepared me,” he says.

Thompson was suddenly working a minimum wage food service job, and living with someone he had met at the group home. Unfamiliar with how to make even a basic budget for rent and utilities, Donald says he started to feel overwhelmed.

“I didn’t know how to express my wants and needs,” he says. “I told people what they wanted to hear. I became

manipulative. A liar. A thief. I didn’t value other people. My wants and needs always came first.”

Thompson realizes now that these behaviors had been his means of getting through the harm, abuse and abandonment he experienced during a lifetime “inside the system.”

He started stealing candy from the local market, which led to his “boosting” clothes from a department store. All the signs were there, he says, “Obsession, compulsion and progression.”

“Foster homes prepared me for group homes which prepared me for Juvenile Hall, which prepared me for YA which prepared me for prison,” Thompson says.

A YA counselor once told Donald he would eventually go to prison for murder. It was a shocking, and as it turned out, prophetic assessment.

“I was honored when Doctor Espinoza approached me to write something,” Thompson says about his Op-Ed in support of funding

for those living inside the state’s foster care system. Even more memorable, was the day he heard San Diego’s *Union Tribune* newspaper had decided to print it.

In a difficult budget year, Donald’s story became the undeniable force behind a winning effort to secure funding for at-risk children. These monies, Thompson hopes, will help others avoid the same difficulties he faced, and more importantly, his same mistakes.

For these residents, it is tangible evidence that their stories can help change lives, and they eagerly invite others to share that same realization.

“Storytelling is not only empowering to that individual, but to the group,” Haines says. “A lot of incarcerated people don’t yet realize that sharing their own journey could actually benefit someone else.”

Back to the Start will celebrate the graduation of their most recent class of writers on November 19th.

Court rule on gang enhancements says re-sentencing not a right

By Michael Fangman
Journalism Guild Writer

The California Supreme Court has overturned an appellate court's ruling effectively stripping incarcerated persons of the right to use a recently enacted state law to challenge gang-related sentencing enhancements.

Assembly Bill 333, better known as California's STEP Forward Act, became law in 2022, requiring street gang enhancements to be prosecuted separately from any underlying criminal charges.

The court ruled 7-2 that incarcerated persons currently serving sentences for gang enhancements have no right to resentencing under the law. Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero wrote on behalf of the majority, reported the Courthousenews.com.

San Quentin resident Ray Rivera, 39, said he worried that the ruling affected the possibility of his resentencing.

"My public defender contacted me a while back about resentencing," Rivera said. "She told me a lot of laws had changed that would make me a candidate, but that first we needed to work on getting the gang enhancement removed. After all this, I'm not really sure where I stand."

Rivera said he was a 21-year-old living on the street with his cousin when they attempted to steal a car. Although he readily admits to growing up in a gang, Rivera said they were just two

unhoused kids trying to sell car parts for quick cash.

Rivera said he pled guilty to carjacking. He added that his public defender informed him that his gang ties would be used to sway a jury and convict him of more significant charges. Rivera said he received a 30-years-to-life sentence included gun and street-gang enhancements. Ten of those years are for the gang enhancements, something he considered unfair.

"This unfairness was of profound concern to the Legislature," Associate Justice Kelli Evans wrote in the court's dissent. "In clear and forceful language, the Legislature found and declared that 'gang enhancement evidence can be unreliable and prejudicial to a jury because it is lumped in with evidence of the underlying charges which further perpetuates unfair prejudice in

juries."

In the report, Chief Justice Guerrero acknowledged that similarly enacted laws allowing for lesser punishments are normally applied retroactively. In this case, she argued, the law had changed only trial procedures and not sentencing requirements.

"There is no question that the legislative findings accompanying Assembly Bill 333 reflect significant concerns about gang enhancements in general, including about their usefulness in stemming crime and their disproportionate impact on people of color in particular," the Chief Justice wrote.

"However," she added, "we do not discern from these findings a 'clear and unavoidable implication' that the Legislature intended Assembly Bill 333's bifurcation provisions to apply retroactively."



California Justices weighed against resentenceing gang enhancements

Psych assistance after parole board hearing offered to residents

By Tyrone Jone
Journalism Guild Writer

Incarcerated residents sentenced to a life term have to use many of their self-help tools to deal with some of the harmful emotions associated with parole preparation and denials. There remain incarcerated people struggling in silence from being deemed unsuitable for parole.

CDCR's Mental Health Services provide support to those found not suitable for parole. MHS are aware of the emotions connected to a suitability denial and it is their practice to visit with rejected residents to assess their mental stability within 24 hours of notice, according to Lifer Support Alliance.

"The day after I was denied [parole], [SQ] Mental Health Service showed up at my cell and asked me was if I okay," said a SQ resident J. Czub. "They came so fast, I never had the time to unpack and process the way I felt."

3, 4% of 'lifers' that appeared before the Parole Board in 2023 were found suitable for parole, thus leaving denials at 66%, according to Lifer Support Alliance.

Most life term residents are aware that, due to Marsy's Law, parole denials can be made for 3, 5, 7, 10 or 15 years. Although under the law, the default length is 15 years, meaning parole panels must find and articulate reasons for a shorter length,



Mental Health workers conversing with resident during health fair

reported LSA.

"Not every commissioner handed down a 10- or 15-year denial, but the relatively few long denials were spread among about half the commissioners," stated the report. "In fact, a couple of the commissioners with better-than-average grant rates also lead the pack in the number of long denials handed down."

Even if a resident is found suitable for parole, some will have their suitability revisited in a process known as 'en banc,' through a governmental parole review panel.

Via a phone interview, Sherman Melton, a recently paroled resident recalled his experience with the en banc process.

"I was found suitable, [and] 117 days later my suitability was revoked... After all I put into my rehabilitation, honestly bro, I didn't want

to see another sunrise as a prisoner," said Melton. "I had everything set up, ...a job, a car, somewhere to rest my neck."

He added that he credited the resident in the next cell over with helping him get back to a healthier mindset.

"I truly feel like if it weren't for my neighbor talking to me all night, I would not be alive today. In the end, it all cleared up and now I'm home, thriving. But in that moment, my mental state was in shambles. I'm blessed to have survived en banc," said Melton.

He revealed that after suffering a state of depression, he said he had to use every tool in his toolbox to rebuild. He added, he now sees it as the first opportunity he had to deploy the skills he learned in all of his self-help groups.

"Them tools is the reason they found me suitable in the first place," Melton said.

1. Colorado
(Colorado News)-
Denver Mayor Mike Johnston implemented substantial housing initiatives for the homeless, with the goal of making Denver the largest American city to curb homelessness for veterans. Johnston was inspired by an encounter with a homeless man that fueled his desire to address this issue. The mayor faced backlash from Denverites who disapproved of a new homeless housing unit, but he gained support from local business owners affected by homeless encampments. In the past year, Denver housed more people quicker per capita than any city in the U.S. "In finding them a home, we created a better home for all of us," said Johnston.

2. Missouri
(The New York Times)-
Four Missouri prison guards were charged with murder and a fifth with involuntary manslaughter for the death of Othel Moore Jr. by positional asphyxiation. "This is not something that happens on a daily basis," said Tim Cutt, the executive director of the Missouri Corrections Officers Association. Andrew Stroth, the family's lawyer, filed a federal civil rights lawsuit because "they don't want it to happen to anyone else, and they want to advance systemic change."

3. Florida
(Orlando Sentinel) -
Governor Ron Desantis vetoed three criminal justice reform bills designed to assist formerly incarcerated individuals. These bills included subsidized college tuition and probation modification to prevent revocation over minor violations. "We should not reward criminal activity by providing inmates with the same benefits as law-abiding



NEWS BRIEFS
By BOSTYON JOHNSON
MANAGING EDITOR

citizens," Desantis said. Senator Linda Stewart, D-Orlando, said that it is unjust to punish people for their past mistakes and prevent them from being successful in the future.

4. Georgia
(Associated Press) -
Juan Carlos Ramirez Bibiano's family claimed he died from heat exposure due to the negligence of Telfair State Prison officers. The facility reported that the prisoner died from natural causes, which ignited a lawsuit from the Ramirez family. Georgia's corrections system is under federal investigation for complaints of similar incidents and staff misconduct. "The number of deaths

that are occurring in custody is galling, and the absolute lawlessness inside of prisons is a humanitarian crisis," said Jeff Filipovits, the family's attorney.

5. South Carolina
(Associated Press) -
A Richland County jail is under investigation for the death of two prisoners due to overdoses from smuggled drugs. The facility's long history of issues led the U.S. Department of Justice to get involved. Custody is looking into how the contraband was brought inside in the first place, "There is no magician that pops them in there. Someone has to bring them physically in," said Richard County Sheriff Leon Lott

6. Dist. of Columbia
(Capital B News) -
Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris is receiving mixed reactions to her potential future role as the country's leader due to her history as California's attorney general. Her "tough on crime" policies pitted her against progressives and prevented prisoners from early release due to the need for them to fight California wildfires. Others view Harris in a positive light as she moves to change prosecution for marijuana charges and co-authored the first draft of the George Floyd Justice in Policing.

7. Delaware
(WDEL News) -
Two new Senate bills eliminate an all-cash bail system and prevent pre-trial releases for specific felonies. "These bills...will help rebalance the scales to make sure any determination about who gets held before trial and who doesn't is based entirely on whether they pose a danger to their community," said Senate Majority Leader Senator Bryan Townsend (D-Bear/Glasgow). Opponents of the bill argue that it disproportionately affects low-income and minority defendants.

8. New York
(Bloomberg) -
New rules proposed by the Federal Communications Commission would lower phone and video call rates in prisons across the country. Telecom providers would be prohibited from making commission payments to the jails and prisons in which they operate. President Joe Biden provided the FCC greater discretion over capping communication service costs affecting incarcerated individuals. Prison telecom providers Viapath Technologies and Aventiv Technologies would receive the financial brunt due to their current debts and refinancing their loan.

San Quentin’s YOP provides peer mentors for residents

By Larry Ali Deminter
Journalism Guild Writer

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center saw the first official gathering of its Youth Offender Program with the groups mentees and resident Peer Mentors on July 15.

After more than a year of preparation, Peer Mentors and group sponsor Nicole Wilbur organized the training program at the education annex on the Lower Yard.

On day one 19 mentees, 10 Peer Mentors, and interns showed up promptly at 3 pm to a small, stuffy classroom for orientation activities. The desks were pushed aside and chairs assembled into a horseshoe shape in front of the white board. Check-ins went smooth and fast.

The Monday meetings cohort adopted the moniker Lions to highlight their healthy sense of pride, fearlessness and heart associated

with the big cat. Three key attributes that would be tested through CLUB (Changing Lives (through) Understanding Beliefs), in the coming weeks and months.

“I needed to get pushed a couple times by my peers to acknowledge that YOP CLUB at San Quentin is where I really wanna be today,” said 20 year-old Roberto Rivera. “Without that push I never would’ve realized that [San Quentin] set me up for success.”

A survey was taken in the classroom. Lions were asked how many of them were serving a life sentence in prison. Sixteen hands rose. Lions were instructed to raise their hand if it was their first self-help session. Fifteen hands rose.

“It was heartbreaking,” said Wilbur, the group sponsor. “How young men could have their life taken away from them at such a

tender age.”

The YOP Mentorship aims to provide guidance, support and opportunities for the youth. Peer Mentors utilize CDCR YOP CLUB 52-session curriculum as its primary tool for classroom instruction. CLUB, Seeking Safety and Pushing Forward: A New Beginning are all YOP curriculum developed by incarcerated people originating at Valley State Prison, Chowchilla.

At the “Q” Peer Mentors set up a grading system of completed exercises, mid-term test, finals and video instruction from multiple disciplines to gauge mentees’ progress. In addition, mentees are afforded access to pre-approved elective courses covering personal finance, life skills, relapse prevention and CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy) - to name a few, as part of their YOP education plans.

The YOP was established in 2014, pursuant to Assembly Bill 1276, which enacted California Penal Code section 2905, requiring CDCR to afford special classification consideration for every incarcerated youth. While PC section 2905 states that a youth offender is 22 years of age, the department extends the opportunity for participation in the YOP to individuals under age 26. The expanded age range affords these young individuals the opportunity to be housed at a lower security level for greater access to programs with the goal of increasing the likelihood of rehabilitation during these critical development stages in their life, according to CDCR Undersecretary of Operations Tammy Foss.

Every person who committed their current offense before age 26 is considered a “youth offender.” However,



Courtesy of YOP Program

all youth offenders are not admitted into the Youth Offender Program for youth, mostly it applies to those between the ages of 18 and 25 years-old.

The Youth Offender Rehabilitation Community is on the move to bring youth together to encourage positive programming and afford these individuals impactful rehabilitative and educational resources targeted to their specific needs at the “Q”.

The YOP sponsor Wilbur said the CLUB curriculum launch was an overall success. She concluded that she’s “all in with you guys.”

There remains a long journey ahead to graduate the first 50 mentees enrolled for the CLUB curriculum. The one takeaway from all this was the deep sense of commitment from mentors and promise in the eyes of mentees in that YOP classroom. Therefore, YOP mentors and mentees march together straight ahead to the next milestone.

YOP CLUB is Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3-5 pm at Education B-building.

Youth offenders with specific crimes denied parole opportunities

By Jay Kim
Journalism Guild Writer

The California Supreme Court ruled that certain juvenile offenders with serious offenses, mostly those serving Life without the Possibility of parole sentences are not eligible for parole hearing under the new state law for youth offenders, according to *Cal Matters*.

The Supreme Court voted on a 6-1 ruling, denying the court’s appeal for Tony Hardin.

“Under California law,

special circumstance murder is a uniquely serious offense, punishable only by death or life without the possibility of parole,” wrote Associate Supreme Court Justice Leondra Kruger. “When it was considering whether to expand the youth offender parole system to include not only juvenile offenders but also certain young adults.

“The Legislature could rationally balance the seriousness of the offender’s crimes against the capacity of all young adults for growth, and

determine that young adults who have committed certain very serious crimes should remain ineligible for release from prison,” continued Kruger.

Hardin was convicted of murder and robbery in Los Angeles at the age of 25. The jury agreed that the crime fit under the criteria of a “special circumstance” offense, but declined the Death Penalty and Hardin was sentenced to life without parole.

Hardin challenged his conviction in 2021, arguing that

his exclusion from parole is a direct violation of the equal protection clause found in the Fourteenth Amendment.

The state’s Court of Appeals’ Second Appellate District accepted Hardin’s appeal, claiming he was eligible for a Franklin hearing as long as mitigating evidence was presented.

During this process, judges examine the offender’s state of mind when the crime was committed, if an adverse childhood environment played a factor, and if the individual

comprehends the impact of his or her actions at the time of the offense.

“The (life without parole) exclusion offends the Legislature’s only express and articulated purpose of the youth offender parole eligibility scheme and lacks rationality,” Associate Supreme Court Justice Kelli Evans wrote in a dissent. “The exclusion bears the taint of racial prejudice and perpetuates extreme racial disparities plaguing our juvenile and criminal justice systems. Thus, I conclude it

fails any mode of rational basis review.” Evans disagreed with the ruling and expressed that Hardin’s denial for parole was a violation of the equal protection clause, noted the article.

The Legislature proposed a bill in 2013 that granted parole eligibility to youth offenders after serving 25 years of more in their term. In 2017, the Legislature amended the law to allow offenders 25 years old or younger to be eligible for parole hearings, but continuously rejected people in prison for life without parole.



SQNews Archive

YOP participant Steve Warren in culinary training



SQNews Archive

Construction Technology Education gives experience in construction

KidCat seeks more vocational training in the California Model

By Trevor Lawson
Kid CAT member

What is the meaning and purpose of work? I’m not talking about same generic Webster’s dictionary definition for work. I’m talking about the meaning and purpose of work on a deeper interpersonal societal level.

What do we gain from work? Yes of course, in most cases we get a paycheck but what else do we get? I have come to realize that the meaning of work, its purpose, and what we gain from it, is far beyond a paycheck.

The meaning of work to me is to advance society in a positive way by the sweat of my brow. If no body worked society would crumble and fall into complete chaos.

Work provides purpose for one’s life.

It gives us a reason for getting up in the morning. It teaches us self-discipline through completing assigned tasks in a timely manner. It teaches us how to get along with others and work as a team towards a common goal, we gain a sense of self-esteem and pride at a “job well done” or a promotion based on work skills gained. These are all positive pro-social skills that we need to learn before leaving prison. That is why we as incarcerated individuals need more employment opportunities within the prison system.

Some of the main reasons why people come to prison in the first place is because they lack the skills necessary to

obtain gainful employment so they resort to crime. This is especially true for the youth that come into prison today.

In Kid C.A.T. we are all about creating awareness together. That is why we want to bring this topic to discussion with the hope of drastically changing the lack of job training within the system. This could be done if CDCR partnered with outside private companies.

Now don’t get me wrong I am all for self-help groups to help address and process the root causative factors of individuals behavior. But I believe that is only half of the equation of rehabilitation.

The other half is work skills development and job placement upon release back into society. One of the main

components missing in this new “California Model” is the value and education that is gained through meaningful and well compensated employment.

A lot of the young guys and even some of the older guys that I have talked to tell me they have never had a job on the streets. I find that disheartening and sad, so I decided to do a small survey in one of our Kid C.A.T. member meetings.

In this small survey in one of our Kid C.A.T. member meeting I asked three simple questions to the group of 12 people. The first question I asked was “who has never had a job on the streets”? 2 people out of 12 never had employment prior to incarceration. The second question I asked

was “who currently does not have a job”? 4 people out of 12 were unemployed. The last question I asked was “who was unemployed at the time of their crime”? 5 people out of 12 were unemployed at the time of their crime. I think it shows, in parts, the link between unemployment and crime.

I believe that there is a workforce in prison that is not fully tapped into. If CDCR partnered with outside private companies to come into prisons for manufacturing jobs, taught the skills needed to work those manufacturing jobs and actually compensated their workers with a “livable wage” they would be doing a lot more work making the incarcerated individual ready to be reintroduced into

society with a far less chance of recidivism.

It would also allow us to pay off restitution to our victims and the state. Plus it would allow us to be able to put money away in savings so when we do get out we won’t be struggling as bad financially what we get out feet reducing our chances of recidivism.

So I guess what it all comes down to is that old quote “give a man a fish and you’ll feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you’ll feed him for life time.” The same could be said about an incarcerated individuals. “Give an inmate food and he will eat for a day; teach the inmate a job and job skills and he will eat for a lifetime.”

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

Rebels Farm provides interactive therapy to CCWF residents

By Diana Lovejoy
CCWF Journalism
Guild Writer

Residents at the Central California Women's Facility gathered for an interactive therapy session with three specially-trained "experts" in compassion and acceptance; horses. CCWF Public Information Officer Lt. Monique Williams and Rebels Farm Founder Rachel Brodsky Paez, an equine behaviorist and organizer, hosted the herd of three with a small camera crew in the grassy yard of the visiting area. In order to participate, residents enrolled in the mental health program and showed commitment to self-care.

"Horses... can carry the weight of broken hearts, broken homes, and broken bodies," wrote Sage Sapergia, a quote provided in the program's handout. "Countless tears sometimes comb their tangled manes. Moments when parents and friends cannot be there to help and hold a person, horses embrace and empower. They carry physical, mental, and emotional handicaps."

One full-sized male horse and two female mini horses provided empathy and acceptance in the purely honest way that animals naturally can. Rebels Farm kept the horses' names and personal histories unknown until the very end. This way, the group had a blank slate with no preconceptions for their interactions.

Participant Liz Lozano also



Photos courtesy of CCWF

Rebels Farm brings horses to CCWF

felt the positive impact. "It was the most majestic moment I've had in 30 years. I felt the healing the horses gave me, their energy; I enjoyed their playfulness! That soul talk was beautiful." Group member Krysten Webber noted how the horses pick up on the energy of the person handling them in that moment and that a person's background doesn't matter.

"Through the interactions with the horses there was a coming back to self, a validation of who you really are. People judge you for what you've done in the past; the horse cares only about what you're doing right now, how your energy is," she said.

Paez has been a competitive equestrian since age five. She has worked for an eating disorder center, has given talks on harm reduction, and is a trauma-informed restorative yoga instructor. She shared her experience with

the group of how horses carried her through grief after the loss of a loved one. Paez is a certified equine-assisted healing facilitator who said she persisted for five years to bring her healing program to CCWF. She founded Rebels Farm in 2018 and introduced their equine therapy session to California men's prisons in 2023. The horses are based out of Ramona, CA, so the crew trekked a few hundred miles to make this event happen at CCWF.

According to Paez, horses also have the instinct to heard and protect their own, and are "gifted reflectors of our true selves because their very survival depends on reading their surroundings appropriately."

The three-hour session took residents through both verbal and nonverbal interactions with the "therapists." Paez led moments of debriefing and discussion in-between. Exercises

incorporated boundaries, self-care and compassion, communication and resilience.

After furry and human participants were familiarized with each other, the human herd members had some unstructured time to commune with the animals.

"Being with horses reminds you that you can release all the hurt and anger and choose to see now as an opportunity, a fresh start. Imagine the potential of the world if we could all experience that," she said.

Rebels Farm is scheduled to return to CCW in October 2024 to share the magic of equine healing. The benefit to people who've experienced trauma is evident.

"(Horses) will carry you to success when all you have felt is failure... life is hard, life is heavy. But a horse will make you feel weightless under it all," wrote Sapergia.



Residents and organizers gather to enjoy the equestrian event



Rebels Farm staffers enjoy time with residents and horses

CCWF residents, staff, and volunteers beautify yard to honor victims

By Kristin Rossum
CCWF Journalism
Guild Writer

Central California Women's Facility held a yard beautification event as part of Victim Awareness Week and community building in late Spring.

The event was sponsored by Unit 512 In-Between Committee in collaboration with Planting Justice and Insight Garden Program.

"Plants give life and provide a way to honor your victims," according to Insight Garden Program's CCWF program manager, Lauren Beatty.

Planting Justice donated more than 200 assorted plants. Representatives from CCWF's four housing units and the Administration Program Office arrived at Unit 512 to meet Mercado and Beatty.

Beatty noted that it can be very isolating in prison and in this event, she witnessed shame and guilt being replaced with hope, connection and community.

There was excitement and gratitude as residents surveyed



Courtesy of CCWF

CCWF's Unit 512 In-Between Committee, Planting Justice, and Insight Garden Program unite to beautify grounds

the variety of plants on flatbed carts, which included lavender, rosemary, sage, calendulas, succulents, and roses. The Facility Yard Lieutenant Johnathan Cuske and Captain Steven Rodriguez also joined.

Resident Anderson-Schwegell shared, with a woman who is the relative of one of her victims, a very powerful healing moment during the event.

"We were both able to grow and heal while offering each

other support, forgiveness, and love," she said.

The yard beautification event began with Mercado and Beatty introduced themselves and explained the purpose of the event.

Melissa Martin also had a deeply healing experience as she planted her calendula in the garden.

"Having taken a life and given the earth new life, I felt like I was doing something for my victim Eldry. She liked to

garden," Martin shared.

Participants received a blank sign, wrote their victim's name on it and worn them around their neck during the day of healing through nature while honoring victims of crime. Each person then selected a plant to transplant into their yard in honor of their victim.

Mercado encouraged everyone to speak to their plant and say a prayer to their victim as they placed it in the ground.

"I took special care to place

these two plants in a spot that I can visit daily and pay homage to the two women that they represent," Kendra Anderson-Schwegell said. "To be a reminder that I've made the conscious decision to change for the better and to honor my victims in everything I do."

Beatty brought her trademark wheelbarrow filled with hand shovels and pruning shears. She explained how plants create healing spaces and emphasized the

connection of nature to people. Participants carefully selected a plant and placed it into the flowerbed.

Cuske stated that "seeing the population give back to their community and bring life to the facility with new plants," left a great impression on him.

For the last five years, the In-Between Committee has commemorated Victim Awareness Week by hosting a walk-a-thon. This year, resident and committee chair, Yolanda Harden honored victims of violence by putting on the event. Harden reached out to Planting Justice's reentry coordinator, Sol Mercado.

Rodriguez reflected that he was impacted by the concluding activity — a brief moment of silence, followed by a lap around the track.

The day was filled with a balance between honoring the life of the victim and the life of the person planting. This is how we can all move forward and grow, nurturing ourselves and our plants with healing kindness, she concluded.

Valley State Prison holds California Model barbecue for staff and residents

Recognizing the importance of maintaining family connections, CDCR visiting staff and family councils made July Fourth visiting special. Some institutions, such as Valley State Prison, held a barbecue for the entire institution.

Editor's note: As more institutions submit their information, this story will be updated.

Staff and residents worked together for the barbecue at Valley State Prison.

Valley State Prison celebrated Independence Day with a barbecue for the entire incarcerated population. Incarcerated cooks and staff grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, providing a barbecue food plate. According to organizers, the barbecue plates were well received by the incarcerated population.

—Submitted
by Lt. H. Gastelum



Photo by Lt. H. Gastelum

Staff and residents grill hamburgers, hot dogs for the entire Valley State Prison population for their July fourth celebration

Archbishop Cordileone officiates Mass, confirmation

By Richard Fernandez
Staff Writer

Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Communion with three parishioners who graduated from a three-month catechism class given by Sister Sharon and Sister Aloysita of the Missionaries of Charity in Richmond.

Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center reached capacity with over 200 resident parishioners and guests attending the July 14 Sunday Mass.

“It’s an honor to be confirmed by Archbishop Cordileone and feel like this is where I belong. To understand faith, we are held to a higher standard, to become a light to others,” said resident Pablo Urenda, one of the two residents confirmed that day.

The bilingual Mass started with the recitation of the Rosary. Father George Williams, Father Vincent Woo, Deacon Thomas Kramer, and Deacon Juan Michel assisted the archbishop.

Archbishop Cordileone has supported the Catholic

parishioners at San Quentin for 12 years by celebrating Christmas Mass and a Mass in summer.

The archbishop noted that outside persons have found his visits to San Quentin “amazing.” He said he responded with “God has us in a dark place to become a beacon of light.”

The archbishop read from the Book of Amos 7:12–15 and said that God told Amos to be a prophet, which gave him power over the evil spirits.

Archbishop Cordileone warned of evil spirits and the way they worked. “They’re bothered and artificial and they know how to trick us because they want us to be miserable.”

After the homily, he prepared for the confirmations and showed the parishioners the Holy Oil that he would use to anoint the candidates for confirmation.

“The special oil for confirmation is meant to bring light to others,” the archbishop said.

“The Missionaries of Charity are very educated and did a wonderful job teaching us about the sacraments and the Catholic Church and



Residents and volunteers take communion from Father George Williams and Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone

answered many of our questions,” said Urenda.

“The men faithfully learned where they go from here,” said Sister Aloysita about the hard work the residents did to prepare for confirmation. “To see them growing and sacrifice and offer themselves through the act of love, doing whatever God asks of them during every Monday class — [this] makes me more eager and excited to come back.”

Sister Sharon added, “The men always show interest and do what is asked of them regarding homework. They’re open, honest, and share from their hearts. They support each other as they become God’s instrument.”

Catholic Chapel choir director Megan O’Brien said, “This is the best part of my week. To hear Father Williams’ sermon and the message that is shared [makes attending church

here] a unique experience. The musicians are so professional, and it’s nice to see the men each week.” O’Brien has volunteered at San Quentin since 2019.

San Quentin resident Noe Flores said, “I wanted to receive it within myself. My First Communion has strengthened my faith. The experience is far beyond words. It has brought me closer to God, so much closer than I was on the streets. I

have so much more knowledge; it’s a real blessing. I want to thank Archbishop Cordileone for being here today. It is an honor to be confirmed by him.”

“We are a light out there and I look forward to returning to San Quentin,” said Archbishop Cordileone after the Mass. “I love how well the church worships and serves as a light, showing what worship really means. In the light over darkness, you are the path.”

Father Williams said, “It is always an honor for us to welcome Archbishop Cordileone to our Catholic community here. He reminds us that we are part of a greater community, in the Bay Area and beyond. We are grateful that the archbishop always makes time to visit us despite his extraordinarily busy schedule.”

Sisters Aloysita and Sharon extended to every parishioner invitations to the next class. They said they looked forward to their next group of confirmation students.

“Classes have resumed and are open for everyone who wishes to attend to learn about the Catholic faith,” said Father Williams.

Hillsong Church congregation brings praise, song, and worship to Chapel B

Chapel B was filled with San Quentin residents as Hillsong Church visitors arrive for the first time.

Pastor Eric Nobles of Prison Ministry opened the service and welcomed the visitors to San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, then prayed in the service. Pastor Nobles invited Hillsong to attend a Father’s Day Saturday morning service.

“That it was nice to be able to fellowship with the residents of SQ prior to the service,” visitor Cole said. “It’s nice because we all have many different

positions within the church, so we enjoy seeing things differently.”

Hillsong Church Pastor Brendan Brown arrived with 34 people from his congregation.

The chapel was filled with praise and worship music by the Hillsong Church worship leader and guitar player Nathan. They led the congregation in several spirit filled songs.

“What a day! I’m still processing all the feelings and conversations with the inmates. The Holy Spirit’s presence touched my heart in a special way when we saw the men be vulnerable

and ask for prayer,” said visitor Adriana. “I cried in the presence of God. It was powerful. Pastor Brown’s teaching was so touching, and could see how it helped the men.”

The Saturday morning message was given by Pastor Brown. He shared his testimony and how he has been in the ministry for 23 years. “God is real! He can testify to grace. God is a God of first, second, third chances. He (God) can rewrite your story. Can’t change your past. God is always kind, and always there. He has set

us free. All it takes is one moment to break the chains. From that point it will be the last time you ever do drugs or whatever has you bound.”

Pastor Brown shared, “When you hit rock bottom, remember, Jesus is the rock. He lifts you up and crowns you. Even when you have no hope, no plan, at your worst, Jesus is at his best. He is the Christ.”

“God uses what we were to testify the glory of God. Often we rehearse our past. Jesus doesn’t – You’re not the same, you’re a new creation,” the pastor added.

Adriana said, “We were able to bridge a gap and minister Gods love and forgiveness. We love our brothers and sisters in Christ unconditionally.”

Pastor Brown expressed, “It was a day I will never forget. Such a beautiful and powerful morning with many coming to Christ, receiving forgiveness, healing and a new future. I was reminded of the wonderful words of Paul the apostle about freedom found in Jesus while he was in prison. Even though I am in chains, the word of God

cannot be chained.”

As Pastor Brown closed out the services he noted that chains were broken and lives were helped that day.

“What an honor to serve the Lord and preach the gospel. I want to give a shoutout to the amazing servant leaders who came out to help minister and Pastor Nobles and the team at Prison Fellowship, we are grateful for the ongoing work you guys are doing,” said Pastor Brown.

—Richard Fernandez
Staff writer

Prison Yoga Project promotes awareness of body and mind

By William Burley
Journalism Guild Writer

The Prison Yoga Project, a self-help program at San Quentin, offers physical- and character-changing reforms.

James Fox, founder of the program, has been practicing yoga for 38 years and teaching for the last 24. One of the guiding principles is service to all.

Fox has had personal benefits from yoga and, wanting to give back, he began volunteering with the Insight Prison Project in 2002.

He says that when yoga is mentioned most people think of the physical practice of poses, but there is so much more. A regular practice promotes self-awareness of both body and mind, assisting a practitioner to develop impulse management and behavior control.

The founder says that the most important thing yoga offers to the incarcerated is that it is “rehabilitative and character changing.....”

According to Fox, the Raja yoga tradition taught by PYP was created in India by a man named Patanjali roughly 2,500 years ago. He advocated its practice for living an “ethical,



Instructor James Fox leads a class at SQ

self-disciplined and meaningful life.” Raja yoga is the original form from which all other yoga traditions originated.

The word *yoga* literally means “union.” The practice was created with the intention of integrating the mind and body to support one’s “mental, emotional, and physical well-being.”

Performing the physical movements and poses of yoga brings union to the body’s response systems.

Controlling one’s breath is used as a tool for self-control. Mindful awareness aids in being present in the moment, and the combination aids the release of tension to achieve deep relaxation.

There are also codes of ethical behavior toward others, as well as toward one’s self, contained within the Raja Yoga Sutra text.

In 2009, Fox authored and published the book “Yoga: a Path for Healing and



Past residents practice the philosophy of meditation

Recovery,” with the intention that any incarcerated individual could receive it at no charge.

To date, over 40,000 copies of Fox’s book have been sent to those confined in prisons and jails around the country and across the world.

After completing the book, Fox left the Insight Prison Project and established the Prison Yoga Project here at San Quentin.

In 2011, he began

personally educating PYP teachers to instruct Raja yoga with a trauma-informed approach.

PYP has since expanded to include seven other California prisons, along with prisons in 20 other states, as well as the countries of Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, Portugal, and France.

The motivation that sets one on the path to practicing yoga may vary, but the proven benefits have

been assisting humans for centuries.

James Sanders, a certified yoga instructor who assists Fox with his class, is waiting for security clearance so he can teach a class at SQ.

“As a youngster in 1985, I shoplifted a book on yoga and tried it. I’ve been with it ever since,” he said.

At San Quentin, using the same curriculum, there are four yoga classes available to the prison population. Two are for the general population, one for the LGBTQ+ community, and the other is held in H Unit’s dormitory. The incarcerated veterans H-Unit their class has already began.

Students who complete the classes receive Rehabilitation Activity Credits. They also earn a certificate for completing the Yoga Project workbook.

Anyone interested can sign up to be placed on the waiting list through the Education Department. For further information about the Prison Yoga Project, or to request the book “Yoga a Path for Healing and Recovery,” write to Prison Yoga Project at P.O. Box 415, Bolinas, CA 94924.



GUATEMALA



PARAGUAY



URUGUAY



ARGENTINA



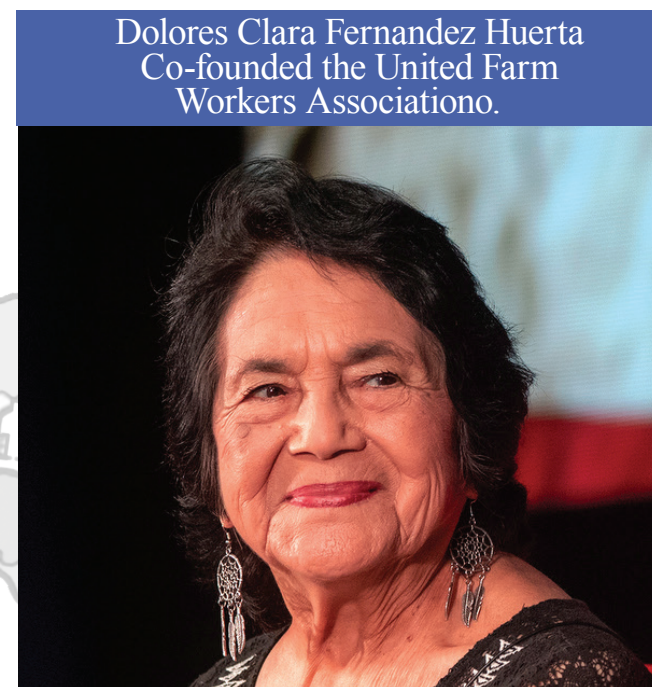
MEXICO



PERU



CUBA



Dolores Clara Fernandez Huerta
Co-founded the United Farm
Workers Association.

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Born April 10, 1930, Dolores Clara Fernandez Huerta emerged as an American labor and civil rights activist and a leader of the Chicano civil rights movement. She co-founded the United Farm Workers Association.

Her work with Cesar Chavez led to unionizing of farm workers in California in the 1960s. While serving in a leadership role of the Stockton Community Service Organization, she founded

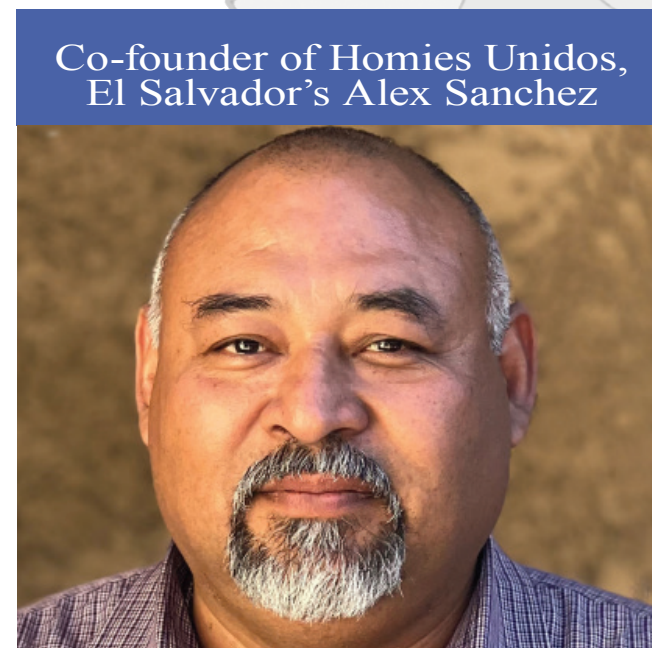
the Agricultural Workers Association, pressed local governments for barrio improvements, and set up voter registration drives.

Huerta advocated for immigrants, children, the working poor, and for women rights. Her lobbying resulted in legislation changes and program support. Gloria Steinem credited Huerta for women's ability to partake in picket lines and helping with making their voices heard.

After suffering an assault by police officers in San Francisco while protesting policies of then-presidential

candidate George Bush, she received an out-of-court settlement. Following her recovery, she traveled across the country for two years on behalf of the Feminist Majority's Foundation of Power. Women representatives at the local, state, and federal levels increased considerably after her campaign.

Huerta's accolades are quite extensive. In 2012, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the U.S., and in the preceding year, she was inducted into the California Hall of Fame.



Co-founder of Homies Unidos,
El Salvador's Alex Sanchez

By Caesar Martinez
Journalism Guild Writer

Alex Sanchez stands out as a pillar of advocacy for social justice, equality, and human rights for many incarcerated individuals. A migrant from El Salvador, a co-founder of Homies Unidos in Los Angeles continues to promote rehabilitation for many.

Sanchez has a mission to end violence and promote peace in Central American communities through gang prevention. He wants to promote human rights in immigrant communities and the empowerment of youth and families in El Salvador and Los Angeles.

Hundreds of incarcerated men and women continue

to benefit through reentry housing upon release — whether in the U.S. or elsewhere. Recently his organization has opened up reentry housing programs for deportees in to El Salvador and Mexico.

He migrated from El Salvador as a child in the 1970s, fleeing the height of a civil war brought on by military repression.

After his involvement in gangs, he served time in state prison and ended up deported to El Salvador. There he met Magdalena Rose Avila, the founder of Homies Unidos, and others who strived for social change with a commitment to turn around lives and help other youth to do the same.

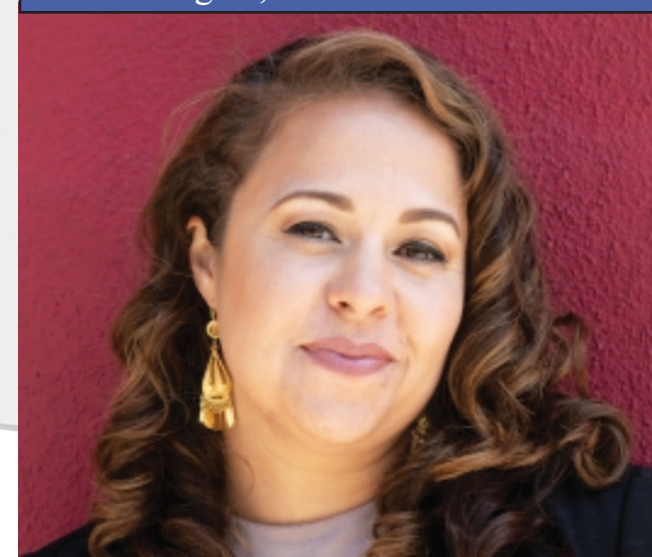
As an advocate for comprehensive intervention strategies, immigration reform and Black-Brown unity, Sanchez promotes racial tolerance and cultural understanding as a form of violence prevention.

He is committed to disenfranchised youth and their families in Los Angeles and in Central American. Sanchez has consulted with academics, journalists, filmmakers, elected officials, non-profit agencies, and advocates at local, national, and transnational levels to address youth violence prevention and intervention.

For his efforts, he has received awards that include the Drum Major Award from the Martin Luther King Legacy Association.

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month recognizes social reformers

Executive Director for the Ella
Baker Center for Human
Rights, Marlene Sanchez



By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Chair

Marlene Sanchez, the Executive Director of Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, is excited to celebrate her Hispanic Heritage. A native of San Francisco and a proud Chicana, movement leader, organizer, and a formerly incarcerated woman, she represents a pillar in social justice, advocating for better living conditions for incarcerated persons.

At a young age, Sanchez's parents were not present in her life. Her mother was deported and her father was arrested and served a term of 25 years in prison.

According to Sanchez, being ChicanaX, Chicanoism represents that we have been here before a border even existed. She proudly exclaimed during

an interview, "Ni de aqui y ni de allá, Raza Jalisco."

At age 11, she began to work at the Young Women's Freedom Center, during this time, she was arrested for a school fight. She was not tall enough to be fingerprinted and had to stand on a stool. While in custody at this early age, she saw several injustices on women of color. She became involved with social justice by advocating for legislation for pregnant women, concerning the rules that forced them to wear handcuffs while giving birth and later had to give away their children.

At 19 years old, she spoke on the first Critical Resistance Conference at UC Berkeley. She also helped with the treaties between L.A. and Chicago with people actively involved in gangs and she works for Communities United for

Restorative Youth Justice. She also works as director for Legal Services for Prisoners with Children.

In an interview with *San Quentin News*, she stood outside CCWF protesting for the incarcerated women on a hunger strike after an August 2, 2024 incident, which led to the death of an incarcerated Black woman. "I have always advocated for Black and Brown because we are the most impacted people incarcerated," said Sanchez. "I have to fight all my life and we have to continue to fight for our civil rights so that we can live with dignity."

To non-English speakers she said, "La fe es lo último que se pierde así que tenemos que seguir luchando." ("Faith shall be the last thing that we lose, therefore we need to continue with the fight.")



Chief Justice Sonia Sotomayor

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Sonia Sotomayor, born June 25, 1954 in New York to Puerto Rican-descended parents, took her place as the first Latina U.S. Supreme Court Justice and the first woman of color to serve on the court. She attended Princeton University, where she received the Pyne Prize, the highest academic award given to undergraduates.

During her time in school, she had joined two campus Puerto Rican groups, the Third World Center and Acción Puertorriqueña.

After Yale Law School,

Sotomayor started her legal career as an assistant DA in Manhattan, responsible for prosecuting robbery, assault, murder, and child pornography cases. In 1984, Sotomayor entered private practice, running the solo law practice Sotomayor & Associates from her Brooklyn apartment, while serving on the board of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Board, the New York City Campaign Finance Board, and the Maternity Center Association.

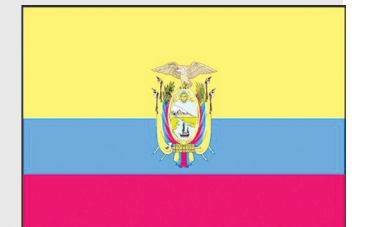
Sotomayor became the first Hispanic federal judge in New York history in 1992. She was the youngest judge

in New York's Southern District and the first Puerto Rican woman judge in the federal judiciary. Nearly 20 years later, Barack Obama announced Sotomayor's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court.

A biography source had Sotomayor say, "I want to state up front, unequivocally and without doubt: I do not believe that any racial, ethnic, or gender group has an advantage in sound judging. I do believe that every person has an equal opportunity to be a good and wise judge, regardless of their background or life experiences."



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



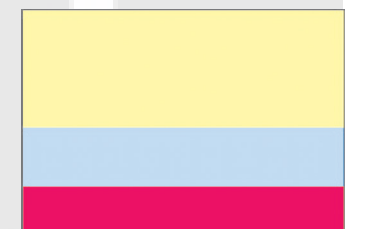
ECUADOR



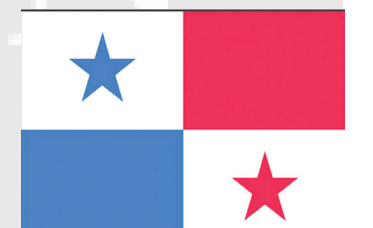
COSTA RICA



NICARAGUA



COLUMBIA



PANAMA



Jesse Vasquez, Executive
Director of Pollen Initiative

Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

Jesse Vasquez is currently the Executive Director for the Pollen Initiative, and previously was the San Quentin News Editor-in-Chief. He continues to advocate for social justice for incarcerated men and women. As a former lifer who spent 19 years behind bars, he understands the struggles of many incarcerated people.

He credits his success to the opportunity that he was given as writer and journalist, which had a monumental influence on his own change, rehabilitation, and growth. Vasquez found his purpose in life during his time with San

Quentin News and rewards the newspaper with his philanthropic expertise in funding its budgetary requirements on an annual basis. He also recruits world-class writers and other professionals to mentor the incarcerated staff. Including Professor William J. Drummond of UC Berkeley, advisor Jan Perry, retired copy-editor of the *Stringletter*, and *Pacific Sun*, and John Eagan, retired AP journalist.

Vasquez is a prime example of what rehabilitation and success looks like after being released. Former governor Jerry Brown commuted Vasquez's multiple life sentences, allowing him to go to the Board of Parol; he received parole in 2019. Vasquez has been providing direct support

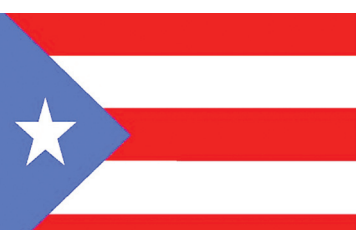
for the marginalized and underserved in the East Bay. He tutors and mentors youth as a volunteer for The Oakland Public Education Fund.

He was appointed by Gov. Gavin Newsom as an advisor for the California Model Committee, which aims to increase public safety through more pro-social prison programs, normalization, and rehabilitation for the incarcerated.

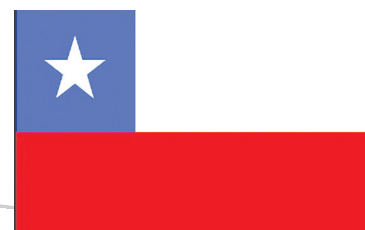
Vasquez's perseverance has paid off. In the spring, his non-profit, the Pollen Initiative opened up the first-in-the-nation media center for incarcerated women at Central California Women's Facility. His efforts made possible for incarcerated women to gain the same voice as he had gained through journalism.



CUBA



PUERTO RICO



CHILE



VALENZUELA



HONDURAS



SPAIN



BOLIVIA



EL SALVADOR

ESPAÑOL

Dos Latinos Alcanzan la Educación Universitaria en San Quentin

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

En total siete personas se graduaron en el 2024, Mount Tamapais College es la única universidad acreditada que está establecida dentro de una institución encarcelaría en los EE.UU.

Durante la ceremonia, la oradora principal fue la jefa Lateefah Simon, quien es reconocida por abogar por los derechos civiles y justicia racial en la ciudad de Oakland California y actualmente es candidata al congreso en este país.

El discurso de Simon comenzó con los consejos de su padre, de por qué la educación es importante de obtener un título. Su padre usó las palabras del fallecido y famoso boxeador Mohammed Ali. “Si ellos pueden hacer penicilina de la maza del pan, ellos pueden hacer algo de ti”.

Simon aconsejó, “El hombre que aprende es conocido como un hombre sabio”, agregando “No solo has obtenido un título, pero también tienes las herramientas que nadie te puede quitar, sigan adelante. Tú puedes comprobar que todo es posible”.

El grupo musical “Mejor de lo Mejor” (Greater Good), compuestos por residentes, interpretaron sus melodías dándole un toque familiar al evento.

“Esta graduación tiene una ambiente de fiesta”, dijo Amy Shea, directora del programa



Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Los graduados e invitados resiven con aplausos a los maestros

de escritura de MTC. “Estar presente en el recorrido, apreciando la alegría de la clase y retos que cada clase te brinda”.

Uno de los graduados el Sr. Robert Antonio De Trinidad, habló sobre momentos muy difíciles que la pandemia trajo a CRSQ. Agradeciendo a MTC por proporcionar la ayuda y cuidados de todos los residentes — con artículos higiénicos.

El alcance de cada alumno, trajo esperanza a todos los presentes. Recordándoles que todo es posible sin importar las adversidades, situaciones o las razones porque estamos encarcelados.

Según la Dra. Windy Martínez, el enfoque y la visión de sus estudiantes es la razón que la trae cada día al centro de rehabilitación. Aún que las graduaciones son tristes y felices — a la misma vez es un buen final a un capítulo lleno de esperanza e importancia por sus logros.

El amor de una madre rompe las barreras de la distancia; viajó desde Texas la madre de David Ditto, quien también se graduó con honores en este evento.

“Estoy muy orgullosa de él — su padre no pudo estar aquí...”, dijo La Sra. Doughty. “Me sorprende lo que él ha

logrado. No ha sido fácil, pero él está lleno de alegría”.

Celebrando su logro, el Sr. Ralph A. Cendejas Jr. se siente orgulloso de sí mismo y agradecido en ver sus “compadres” apoyándolo. Según residente Cendejas, este logro significa que ahora él puede alcanzar una educación superior.

Las emociones de agradecimiento de Amy Jamgochian, encargada de la oficina académica no se pudieron contener. Pare ella fue una hermosa ceremonia—ella estaba impresionada con toda la ceremonia, se quedó sin palabras y conmovida al ver la iglesia llena.

Algunos de los profesores que estuvieron presentes por primera vez, compartieron sus emociones.

“La ceremonia es muy especial para mí, fue organizada pensativamente”, dijo Dr. Gabriella Licata, instructora del español y lingüística MTC. “Me he titulado cuatro veces y nunca he convivido en una graduación de tantas emociones y alegría”.

Entre los presentes estuvieron benefactores como la Sr. Judith Hill-Weld y compañera de universidad de la presidenta de MTC Jody Lewen, PhD.

“Nosotras éramos

compañeras de habitación en la universidad. Nosotras empezamos a tener muchas conversaciones acerca de la educación y de los traumas [sobre las personas encarceladas] yo me enganché y me convertí en una donante y vine a la prisión”.

La profesora de matemáticas Jean Chadbourne, le hubiera gustado poder invitar a más personas de la comunidad para que ellos pudieran observar estos eventos.

“Si la gente realmente entendiera el poder de la educación universitaria, nosotros cambiaríamos el mundo”.

Feria de libros de verano en CRSQ

Por Marvin Vasquez
Spanish Guild Writer

Cientos de residentes del Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin, tuvieron nuevamente la oportunidad de mandar libros sin ningún costo para fomentar la lectura a sus seres queridos, el pasado Mayo.

Este es el segundo verano que se llevó a cabo en la biblioteca de CRSQ la feria de libros. Aproximadamente 1,100 libros fueron donados para este evento por la organización sin fines de lucro, “Los Amigos de La Biblioteca de San Quentin”, según la fundadora Kristi Kenney.

“El motivo que vine a este evento fue para conectarme más con mis dos niños y atreves de los libros quiero que tangan una buena educación”, comentó el residente Manuel Martínez.

Todos los libros fueron proporcionados por las tiendas locales del área de la bahía, “Copperfield” y “Book Passage”. Los libros disponibles eran para niños y pre-adolescentes de edades 4-7, 8-11 y 12-15.

En el evento se contaron con una gran variedad de diferentes géneros de libros como: Novelas Gráficas, Ciencia y Actividades Educativas que fueron los más populares entre los

asistentes. Libros de historias con fotos, libros de personas de color, bi-racial e Indígenas (BIPOC) y en español.

De acuerdo con la bibliotecaria Charlotte Sanders, agradeció los esfuerzos de estas librerías comentando, “En estas tiendas hay cajas con carteles animando a los clientes para que donen libros para los residentes de CRSQ”.

Durante el evento se les estaba proporcionando un cuestionario a cada residente para asegurar que todas las necesidades estaban siendo cubiertas para el envío de sus libros. Incluyó un instructivo en como completar los pasos necesarios para enviar los

tres libros permitidos a los familiares.

Natalie Atwright, una bibliotecaria de la librería pública de San Francisco dijo, “en la librería yo facilito servicios para encarcelados que reingresan a la sociedad. Para mí, estando aquí es una extensión del trabajo que hago para la comunidad”.

En la feria de libros, hubo cuatro voluntarios que asistían a los residentes a escoger los libros para sus seres queridos. La voluntaria Francesca Bell comentó que leer es educacional y saludable para los hijos.

Los otros voluntarios fueron, Pam Franklin, Rachel Kinson y Lisa Joss. Mientras

la seguridad estaba siendo discutida, Sanders comentó, “me siento más segura aquí en la librería de San Quentin que en la librería publica de San Francisco.

Estuvo platicando Kenney con los residentes mientras hacían fila para entrar en la biblioteca. Se agruparon enfrente del comedor del edificio Norte. “Todo salió muy bien. Me gusto que estuvieran menos amontonadas las personas. Pensé que no iban alcanzar los libros,” dijo Kenney.

Aparte de los libros, Los Amigos de La Librería de San Quentin también donan material para aguja de punto, otro programa voluntario

que ofrece la librería de SQ para todos los residentes que desean aprender esta manualidad, añadió Sanders.

En este evento se vio la presencia de muchos residentes de habla hispana. Por medio de los libros donados se permite establecer una comunicación entre los encarcelados y sus familiares. También es una de las maneras de ayudar con la educación de los hijos.

El residente Cesar Cabrera comentó, “es mi segunda vez que participó en este evento para enviarle libros a mis dos niñas y me da motivación. Agradezco a la institución que me ayuda a conectarme más con mis hijas”.



Los residentes buscando libros para sus familiares



La variedad de libros en español

Photos by J. Salvador // SQTV

Conmemorando los veteranos y soldados caídos

Por Arsenio P. Leyva
Staff Writer

El pasado Mayo, el grupo, “Los Veteranos de San Quentin”, conmemoran los que sirvieron en las fuerzas armadas y los soldados caídos en el Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin.

En el evento, mientras se tocaba la melodía con trompeta “Asistencia al Caído”, se colgaba una corona para recordar los que han fallecido durante las diferentes guerras de Estados Unidos. Varias banderas volaban en el patio principal, atadas a la cerca de malla enfrente a la recepción y liberación (R&R).

Los veteranos estuvieron en saludo militar durante este reconocimiento para los abatidos. Cambiaban la guardia de honor cada 15 minutos. Durante este



SQNews Archive

Insignia de honor

acto, los encarcelados en el patio pararon sus actividades en muestra de respecto escuchando la trompeta.

“Hicimos algo justo para proteger a los inocentes, los niños y mujeres,” dijo el veterano y residente Juan C. Rodríguez. “Siempre ayudemos a los que no tienen manera de protegerse. Me siento orgulloso de ayudar a las personas durante mi

servicio militar, para [los] que siguen sobreviviendo”.

Una gran cantidad de veteranos estuvieron presentes en la conmemoración (Memorial Day) para recordar sus compañeros callidos. Varios de ellos compartieron sus recuerdos difíciles durante su servicio militar en otros países como: Vietnam, Corea del Sur, El Golfo Pérsico y Afganistán.



SQNews Archive

Comemorando a los que dieron su vida por el país

El día de conmemoración tiene sus inicios desde el 30 de mayo de 1868. Se conocía como, “Día de Decoración”. Iniciando en 1971, se observaba el último lunes de cada mayo. Se colocaba la bandera Americana en cada tumba de los veteranos, según los reportes informativos presentados en el evento.

Se reconoció este día como

festivo en Nueva York, en 1873. En 1971 el Congreso de EE.UU. reconoció este día oficialmente como “Día de Conmemoración”, confirmó un documento oficial presentado por el grupo Los Veteranos de San Quentin.

“Esta es la única prisión donde apoyan a los veteranos, el grupo está muy organizado. También son apoyados por organizaciones de afuera.

Por estar en la prisión nos ven con desprecio, pero es agradable que la asistencia para el veterano existe aquí”, dijo el veterano y encarcelado Joel Barrera.

Cada vez que el grupo de veteranos hacen presencia en los diferentes eventos en el CRSQ, crean conciencia para la comunidad de la prisión. Esto anima a los residentes recién llegados que son veteranos, a que se unen para trabajar juntos en sus esfuerzos de rehabilitación, compartió uno de los veteranos presentes.

“Este día representa dándole honor a las mujeres y los hombres que dieron sus vidas para que este país mantenga su independencia y libertad”, dijo el veterano y encarcelado Richard Otto. “También le damos honor a los que están protegiendo nuestra nación en este momento, como miembros activos de las fuerzas armadas.”

El pueblo Mexicano Rompió barreras en la Casa Presidencial

Por Rene Lorenzo
Spanish Guild Writer

Claudia Sheinbum Pardo, será la primera mujer presidenta en un país por primera vez.

El dos de junio se llevaron a cabo las elecciones históricas en la Ciudad de México. Una mujer fue elegida con un 60% de los votos en un país tradicionalmente gobernados por hombres.

“No llego sola, llegamos todas. Con la heroínas que nos dieron patria, nuestras ancestras, nuestras madres, nuestras hijas, y nuestras nietas”, dijo Sheinbum en su discurso tras la victoria contundente y después de 200 años de historia.

En el Centro de Rehabilitación de San



Photo via website

Presidenta de Mexico Claudia Sheinbaum

Quentin, también comentaron los residentes de este suceso histórico, con las expectativas del pueblo mexicano y de los que viven en el extranjero.

El reo Armando Mata mencionó, “Me da gusto que

se le dé una oportunidad a la mujer. Creo que me puede beneficiar, con la ayuda que da para crear empleo. Deseo que pueda ser respetada por la población”.

De acuerdo a su biografía, Sheinbum nació el 24 de

junio de 1962 en la Ciudad de México, de familia judía y originarios lituanos búlgaros. Casada actualmente con Jesús María Tarriba, quien también hace historia, como esposo de una presidenta.

En su vida académica, a nivel universitario, curso en la Facultad de Ciencias de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). En el 2000, su carrera política comenzó cuando fue elegida entonces al equipo de trabajo del Jefe de Gobierno del Distrito Federal Andrés López Obrador.

“Esa dualidad entre hacer política para transformar el mundo y al mismo tiempo, este sentido académico, científico, fue donde yo crecí”, agregó Sheinbum. Al nacer de padres científicos,

fue donde le nació su interés académico y a la misma vez político.

Aunque algunos comparten la esperanza, también tiene diferentes opiniones por sus creencias religiosas.

“Creo que la igualdad es para todos. Pero en lo Espiritual, creo que la mujer debería someterse a su marido, al hombre”, dijo el residente Alfonso M. y agregó, que como un mexicano más en el extranjero le desea lo mejor en su sexenio para la nueva presidenta.

De acuerdo a BBC, la nueva presidenta quiere seguir el trabajo de su mentor y presidente, pero con un “sello propio” enfocando en el cambio climático, energético y en el feminicidio.

El residente Saul Cedillo

expresó, “creo que el que la señora Claudia haiga llegado al poder — me llena de esperanza”. El comparte su deseo en cuestión de seguridad pública.

“Ya que en el país existe diez feminicidios al día y temo por la seguridad de mis hermanas, primas y amigas”, dijo Cedillo

Para los encarcelados en CRSQ, quienes mantienen la esperanza en este nuevo cambio de gobierno, creará un beneficio para todos.

“Me siento orgulloso que México sea el primer país de Norte América que haiga roto este ciclo de machismo que ha existido por mucho tiempo”, dijo el residente Tomas Ochoa. “Deseo que se le pueda dar el lugar que la mujer merece”.

CDCR Provee información a los oficiales correccionales

Por Justin Wharton
Spanish Guild Writer

El Departamento de Corrección y Rehabilitación de California, reconoció la urgencia de informar a su organización acerca de la salud mental de los oficiales correccionales.

Según, uno de los pilares del Modelo de Californiano, informó de las necesidades ‘de cómo ser una organización informada sobre el trauma’, por Don Chaddock editor de Inside CDCR.

“La información del trauma significa el reconocer la influencia del trauma en el mundo y de buscar maneras para actuar”, dijo la Dra. Briana Rojas, psicóloga principal de CDCR y directora asociada de La Oficina de Bienestar del Empleados (The Office of Employee Wellness).

Rojas añadió, “Para hacer nuestro parte en crear un mundo que no cause más daño, significa estar consciente de las consecuencias de los traumas personales y de la sociedad”.

De acuerdo a los patrones causantes del trauma, es la decisión de la administración de hacer un cambio de mentalidad y acción para los empleados y residentes en una institución carcelaria.

La Jefa Ejecutiva Médica de San Quentin, Dra. Alison Pachynski, explicó los pasos progresivos de CRSQ y CDCR para facilitar oportunidades en combatir el trastorno

post-estrés traumático por los oficiales correccionales.

Pachynski dijo, “CDCR tiene una aplicación móvil que proporciona un ‘botón de ayuda’ y un kit de bienestar disponible para sus oficiales y sus familiares”.

Estos recursos y entrenamientos de la administración han desarrollado un cambio positivo en el trato entre los oficiales y los residentes. Pachynski, habló de una experiencia cuando un oficial de CRSQ prestó atención a un residente y expresó su preocupación por el.

“Este tipo de cuidado y cambio de cultura dentro de SQ y de sus oficiales es el espíritu y comunidad — que hace este lugar un centro de la rehabilitación”, expresó Pachynski.

Basado en el artículo de *El Guardián* (*The Gaurdian*), añade la importancia de estos efectos de trauma. En una entrevista con el oficial Michael Van Patten, explico que el 95% de las asignaciones de los oficiales son rutinarias y aburridas.

Van Patten agregó, que la mayor parte de sus asignaciones consiste en; contar a los reos a las horas asignadas, el monitoreo constante y a veces proporcionar papel sanitario.

Sin embargo el artículo informó, que dentro de las prisiones el otro 5% de las asignaciones, consiste de violencia que causa un estado continuo de hipervigilancia, un síntoma de PTSD que no acaba cuando termina su

turno de trabajo.

Debido a la cultura de prisión, un dicho común de los oficiales es “Los guardados [encarcelados] nunca pueden parecer débil,” mencionó *El Guardián*.

En un estudio del 2011 por Caterina Spinaris, los oficiales tienen una proporción más de PTSD que los veteranos del ejército.

Según el estudio los efectos son causados, cuando se ven superados en número contra los reos, creando un sentido de vergüenza de sus obligaciones en el empleo y no encuentran una salida saludable para lidiar la tensión de su trabajo.

Todo esto de acuerdo al reporte, son síntomas de las causas del trauma. Estos efectos pueden estar manifestándose y escalar. Los síntomas extremos pueden causar: malos recuerdos, pesadillas, hipersensible de sus entornos, pensamientos destructivos, depresión y pensamientos suicidas entre otros.

El entrenamiento administrativo de CDCR, ayuda a ver la perspectiva en el trabajo y vida de sus empleados.

El Teniente Mike Santoya comentó, “Estos cursos nos ayudan entender a nuestros hermanos y hermanas en todo el departamento al mantener los pensamientos que ‘nada nos molesta’. La mentalidad de ‘es lo que es’, es algo que tengo y estoy quitándome lentamente”.

Estudiantes enseñando a maestros en CRSQ

Por César Martínez
Spanish Guild Writer

Este año, Mount Tamalpais College patrocina el primer foro informativo para quince nuevos maestros voluntarios en el Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin.

El proyecto, llamado “Estudiantes Instruyendo a los Instructores”, fue creado por los residentes y estudiantes Carl Raybon y Miguel Sifuentes, con el apoyo de Nandita Dinesh encargada de administración académico. El propósito era para que los maestros tengan un mejor entendimiento de las vidas de los estudiantes.

En el foro, se manifestaron las inquietudes de parte de los estudiantes para el avance educativo de los maestros. Se resaltaron las diferencias entre un colegio afuera y uno dentro de una institución penal.

“Es difícil para nosotros encontrar el espacio y el tiempo para formar grupos de estudios”, comentó Raybon, “Muchos de nosotros tenemos que estudiar por nuestra cuenta”.

Cinco estudiantes y residentes— William Harris, Miguel Sifuentes, Robert Moody, Carl Raybon y Michael Bernardino— presentaron información del sistema penitenciario cual no está en el conocimiento general, incluyendo experiencias y retos de los estudiantes afuera los salones de MTC.

“Miguel y yo trabajábamos

en la misma oficina y los estudiantes entraban con preguntas, y miramos el cambio cuando ellos empezaban y se desanimaban”, Raybon añadió. “Nosotros pensamos acerca de esto, y el objetivo total es producir mejores estudiantes”.

El propósito del proyecto fue que los maestros pudieran tener más habilidad de ser consientes en su manera de enseñar a otro tipo de estudiante y en un ambiente diferente a la de un estudiante de la comunidad de afuera.

Durante la sesión de pregunta y respuestas, los maestros hicieron diversas preguntas sobre el funcionamiento de la institución y el apoyo actual para los estudiantes presente en la clase.

Los estudiantes de MTC pudieron contestar con información cual es básica para un residente pero no conocido por los maestros,

detallando las luchas que existen en el ambiente actual.

“Tenemos otros compromisos como trabajos y Autoridad Industrial de Prisión (Prison Industry Authority), pero también tenemos escuela y programas en grupos de auto-ayuda. ¿Adónde yo coloco mi tiempo para estudiar en los capítulos de los trabajos que me asignaron?” observo uno de los estudiantes.

Dinesh le preguntó a los estudiantes, tomando un paso más para establecer el entendimiento, ¿Qué tipo de suposiciones hacen los maestros que pudieran ser

incorrectas?” Sifuentes contestó como maestro por el día, “Las personas buenas no solamente están aquí como estudiantes del colegio, y las personas malas no están en los edificios que miraron. Las personas crecen y se evolucionan”.

Para Sifuentes, el volumen de oportunidades llena la vida de los residentes.

“Lo primero es nuestra cantidad de trabajo académico, hay personas que están tomando clases en otras universidades por correspondencia, y hay muchas otras actividades valiosas en CRSQ”. Durante el evento, se presentó una serie de fotografías de diferentes lugares de la prisión como los distintos edificios, dormitorios, las pequeñas celdas, e incluyendo las iglesias y la tienda de despensa.

Algunos maestros nuevos expresaron sus impresiones, incluyendo simplemente sobre el tipo de lugar. Tomas Husted maestro y tutor comentó, “Cuando escuche la idea de una prisión pensé que sería algo muy cerrado. Es mi primer día en la institución; no me espere encontrarme una institución con vista del mar”.

Al final del evento, Dinesh comentó, “Esperamos que este foro sea un inicio de apoyo y solución para los futuros estudiantes y maestros”.

—Escritor contribuyente
Arsenio Leyva

SPORTS

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Sports Editor

The Texas Playboys baseball team travel from Austin to San Quentin to play the SQ Giants in a historic double-header that build bridges, provide fellowship, and a chance to experience social justice through the beloved sport.

The Playboys plays games in Austin and throughout the world against all comers. They donate proceeds from their games (concessions, ticket sales, etc.) to charities that include devastated communities as well as marginalized cultures.

“Baseball is the framework to building a community and bringing people together,” said Greg Taylor, a fifteen-year member of the Playboys. “Our team allows us to leave those every day moments behind and be a part of something bigger.”

The SQ Giants won a lopsided 3-hit shutout over the Playboys with help of the SQ Giants Vic Picazo and Patrick Poteat.

“The Southern Hospitality is real, as our new friends treated us as such. Total strangers made us feel human and I think that was amazing,” said SQ Giants catcher and leading hitter, Aaron “June” Miles. “It’s people like our Texas Playboys friends that give us hope.”

The Playboys travel with approximately 20-25 players and an entourage of 20 family members who support the athlete’s hobby.

Lulo, who traveled as a fan from Texas and was inspired to come to SQ to show support for the social justice movement.

“The fact Texas still believes

Texas Playboys, SQ Giants play for memories, not for competition

in putting people to death is gut wrenching. That is why I came in to provide inspiration to those who may be hopeless,” said Lulo. “I understand how life and short comings can lead to bad decisions, but redemption should always be an option for those who earn it.”

The Playboys arrived at San Francisco the night before the games and on Saturday was held up at the entrance portal for 3 hours due to a delay in the Lower yard.

After the delay, the Texas players and their fans were able to walk down to the yard and fellowship with the inside players.

“We saw Texas as a no non-sense state that believes in the Death Penalty, pro NRA, pro-life, and lock ‘em up and throw away the key mentality,” said SQ Giants’ center fielder Kameron “Cam” Hamilton. “As well as builders of the wall to stop immigration, but these people were the most open-minded and compassionate group we have seen.”

Sarah Jones, who made the trip from Texas and her mother Kim Allen-Jones, who lives locally, came in to support the

Playboys. Allen-Jones said she is a baseball expert and the sister-in-law of San Francisco Giants hall-of-fame announcer John Miller.

S. Jones said her trip to SQ reminded her of her father who was formerly incarcerated.

“I know people who’ve been incarcerated,” Playboy fan Shannon Southerland said. “I believe communities are needed that will slow down the cycle of victimization.”

Playboy teammate Nathaniel added, “We are you and you are us; we just had different circumstances.”

SQ Giants Eli Guerra, originally from Texas, reminisced about his life in the Sunbelt state. “Being from Texas and playing against the Texas Playboys makes me feel right at home,” Guerra said.

Brandon Riddle-Terrell, former resident and San Quentin Giants Captain, said he had invited the Playboys to introduce them to social reform accomplished by the prison’s baseball team.

“I know the impact of what bringing people in can do for those incarcerated,”

said Riddle-Terrell.

John Davis, another local Playboy guest “hung-out” and visited the prison for the first time added, “I hike up to Mt. Tamalpais and admire the view, while thinking to myself about you guys in here ... And I wish there was more that I could do.”

The senior Playboy player Taylor concluded that he believes traumas of the incarcerated need to be addressed.

“How you react to what’s being thrown at you is what matters and understanding that circumstance can set you free.” Taylor said .



Anthony Denard with host Brandon Riddle-Terrell



SQ Giants’ Aaron Miles hit by pitch



SQ Giant Vic Picazo beats the Playboys



SQ Giants watch as the Playboys battle their teammates



The Texas Playboys’ extended family brings good cheer to the team’s bench



Visiting fans enjoy the game



The Texas Playboys, fans, and SQ Giants celebrate after the game

SQ Niners look to continue perfect ways of 2023 in the 2024 season

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Sports Editor

As the SQ Niners prepare to start their season in 2024, their hope is to extend their undefeated season from last year. The team’s perfect season happened after the SQ Niners became sponsored by the San Francisco 49ers.

The SQ Niners started an ‘Olympic style’ flag football league that is a 5-on-5 passing league compiled of eight teams with eight players on each team.

The season will begin on September 8th where three to four games will be played in a round-robin tournament that will crown the season opening champion.

Before the season starts the near year-round program saw Coach D. Barela supervising an intramural league well before Coach Brian Underwood drafted the players who have earned spots on the SQ Niners roster.

“I notice we have a lot of good talent and we have a total of 24 players, 12 on each side of the ball. We have

some key players but all of our players are very good,” Barela said.

“I agree with Coach Barela that all of our players are good, but we must take note of standouts, Val Teez at quarterback, 2nd year receiver J.R. Pimpton, and two-way player, LS Tillman who is a key receiver as well as top defensive back,” said Coach Underwood.

Besides the San Francisco 49ers sponsoring the team, Underwood was able to hustle up independent donations which showed the importance of the program.

“I am more amazed that CO Gaines donated over \$3,000 dollars and church volunteer, Father Ray has assisted us with new cleats, flags, and all the necessities for our Olympic style flag football league,” Underwood said. “Our players will hopefully continue their growth through the Niner Academy where we have a strict code of conduct that includes the fact players must continue programming while playing in our league.”

This years’ crew will see

Niners’ head coach Underwood running the offense and coach Baerla making the calls for the defense.

Underwood said he is hoping to schedule a game with the San Quentin Niners playing against staff of the SF 49ers.

He said he hopes that game will be hosted by former SQ chaplain and current SF 49er chaplain, Earl Smith.

The season will be in full swing on September 8th and the staff and players said they hope to see staff and residents supporting their dedication to represent SQRC in a mindful way.



The ‘perfect’ 2023 SQ Niners

Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



The champions huddle up after a victory last year



Residents Pimpton, Strickland, and Deshotel are the trio of top receivers who led the perfect season last year

Historic soccer game brings two communities together

By Justin Wharton & Marvin Vasquez
Journalism Guild Writers

Through the love of the game of fútbol, history continues to evolve at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, bringing the Spanish-speaking community and CDCR staff together on the soccer field.

This event bought participation from CDCR's personnel, from; healthcare, custody, and education along with the residents.

"Right after the Olympics, how much better does it get? I saw different ethnicities talking, coming together. Barriers are coming down," Warden Chance Andes said.

That event gave a voice to the Spanish speaking community. It was an idea building on the expansion of inclusivity of the Latino community within San Quentin.

Fourteen years ago, San Quentin News published its first Spanish article with was a soccer game which became the roots to inclusivity for the Spanish speaking community. This allowed hundreds or maybe thousands of incarcerated non-English incarcerated people to read a story in there

language. Resident Edwin E. Chavez and SQ staff coach K. Bhatt opened up the game with special thanks to the administration. The event kicked off with music ranging from Cambia's to Rancheras, from SQRC's own Spanish bands "Grupo Único Elemento" and "Banda Esperanza."

Moises Ramos, resident and one of the band members, noted that it's rare they have had a chance to play on stage this much. Normally, they might be able to play a song or two at an event here.

"We all enjoyed this event and I noticed everyone enjoyed listening to the music even though some of the visitor staff commented that they didn't understand the language," said Ramos.

Resident Pablo Sánchez, narrated the game in Spanish, with music popping off during intense moments and when goals were scored.

"For the community it helps us to have more connection with staff and we feel they take us into account. That's how we break barriers," said Sánchez.

Residents and staff played a total of two games. The first ended in a score of 6-3, with



Staff and residents celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with the first California Model soccer match

residents winning against staff. The second game combined staff with residents on the same teams, and ended with the score of 4-4.

The first goal was made by Ismael "Jalisco" Partida, in the first half of the game. The second goal was made by Dao.

Warden Andes scored two penalty kicks and blocked a goal in his "suit and tie," while the band played in celebration.

"This event helps me to be friendlier, it's a step forward to better relationships with others and it makes a better environment," said Counselor A. Dao, who first time

experience playing soccer with the residents.

Michael Navarro, a resident, added "Playing with them makes us feel normal; it's a step in a positive direction. Because we are a huge community here, it gives us a voice that we aren't always given."

"This event builds unity, cohesion and healthy habits. Sports help work out conflict," said Chief Medical Executive Dr. Pachynski.

For the some of the spectators, hearing an event held in Spanish on the yard was a new experience. They commented



Photos by Vincent Turner // ForwardThis

Incarcerated soccer player tries to get around staff

on how much they loved the music and dancing, but wished they could understand what was being said.

"This event is important for the Spanish community who isn't normally taken into account. We don't have many groups available to us in Spanish here, but this event can help show that we need more," said Resident Luis Orozco.

Ms. Lebelle, a Psychology Intern in her second week working within SQRC, commented as a person who is notable to speak Spanish, but recognizes the importance of

the overall effort.

"To have the main commentary in Spanish felt really important, and to not even have English translation is an important reversal in having language representation," said Lebelle. "It's amazing the teams are mixed. I'm also appreciating the complexity of how long it took to get here."

Special thanks to Warden Andes, Lt. Berry, Community Resource Manager Barragan and Coach Bhatt.

—Miguel Sifuentes
Journalism Guild Writer
contributed to this story

Skid Row TrackClub returns to San Quentin

By Joshua Strange
Contributing Writer

The Skid Row Running Club made a triumphant return to San Quentin in July for the first time since the pandemic. The group joined forces with the 1000 Mile Club for an hour-long fun run.

Well over 100 runners spun laps on the Lower Yard on Saturday morning to share their passion for the sport they loved.

"I really had a great time," said 1000 Mile runner Kellon Williams. "They inspired me to training for the half

marathon." Over 25 runners from the Skid Row club made the trek all the way from Los Angeles to show support for the incarcerated runners of San Quentin.

Founded by Judge Craig Mitchell, a Los Angeles Superior Court judge, the Skid Row club featured many runners with day-jobs in law enforcement. Many of them helping incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people to find their strides in life through the joy of running.

Thanks to their fundraising efforts, the club sponsored

multiple formerly incarcerated runners to compete in international marathons around the world. San Quentin resident and 1000 Mile Club President Tommy Wickerd explained that Judge Mitchell started the Skid Row Running Club because he wanted to give formerly incarcerated people something positive for parole.

"I've ran with sheriffs, attorneys, judges—one of the most diverse groups I've ever run with," Wickerd said. "It's cool to share your life experiences with people who have put people in prison but have

also gotten them out."

Special guests who joined the run included several staffers from Gov. Gavin Newsom's office, including Deputy Legal Affairs Secretary Eliza Hersh. She spoke positive words of hope to the runners who gathered after the run, encouraging residents to keep pushing forward on a constructive path.

"It was a delightful experience for everyone," Wickerd said. "Everyone kept asking when they'll be back. The running is great, but the cherry on top is the community we create."



SQNews Archive

2023 Resident Ralph leads the Skid Row Track Club to the track

TIER TALK

By Anthony Maunel
Carvalho
Sports Editor

A big question going into the year, for the SQ Giants was who would take charge in center field and behind the plate?

As early as the first day of tryouts, worries were alleviated when Aaron "June" Miles suited up behind the dish and Kameron "Cam" Hamilton anchored himself in center; both instantly becoming leaders in every statistical category, and leaders of the team on the field and off.

I sat with the new leading duo and asked what made them tick:



Resident Miles calls the shots for the team

Ballplayers Miles and Hamilton encourage teammates to build strength within themselves, SQ Giants

Anthony Carvalho (AMC): Did you know there was baseball at SQ?

Kameron Hamilton (KH): I saw it in SQNews and wondered if I still had what it took.

June Miles: Not until I arrived at SQ.

AMC: Has the game contributed to your rehabilitation. Why or why not?

KH: Yes, baseball is exercise, and community is instrumental to my rehabilitation.

JM: It's given me discipline and other tools I'll use when I get home; while improving my communication skills.

AMC: How was your

career before incarceration?

KH: I played baseball year-round from 4 years to 16, always excelling. I quit baseball in my junior year of high school because negative influences convinced me to quit as I didn't get along with teammates and one coach. I gave up my passion and focused on football.

JM: Amazing. I was the best player on every team, and was scouted by MLB's St. Louis Cardinals and Cincinnati Reds.

AMC: When did you realize you left the sport behind.

KH: My freshman year of college I suffered a career ending football injury.

JM: When I started playing here at SQ, I thought I lost it, but I heard all the talk about certain players being so good my competitive side kicked in and I went to work.

AMC: Does your family assist you in rehabilitation and what programs do you take here?

KH: My family supports my two kids so I couldn't ask for anything else. To thank them, I make good choices and give myself the best chance to parole and relieve them of that responsibility I put on them. Today, I'm involved in Prison Fellowship, which holds me accountable; Houses of Healing gives me a deeper understanding of the

impact of my poor choices. It also teaches me to forgive myself and others. I also tutor math to help others obtain their GED as I await joining ISUDT.

JM: Yes, my family is my support system – Enneagram helped me get in touch with the trauma I caused and endured.

AMC: Cam, you are about to go to the Board of Parole. How can you speak to how baseball helped in recovery?

KH: This is an overwhelming time in my life and my Board hearing is so important to me. I often put a lot of pressure on myself regarding my Board prep, but baseball is an outlet to relieve my stress, anxiety, while being an additional support system. Baseball reminds me of who I am which, I hope, I can project in the Board room.

AMC: What can you tell others about the strength you garnered by staying in sport?

KH: Sports structures and motivates me to have positive interests and goals. After sports, my life became a downhill ride because I lost my only coping mechanism, then making destructive choices to replace the game I loved. I would tell others to not put your entire life into one thing, including sports.

JM: I focus on bettering myself so I can get home to my kids, and never return

to that criminal lifestyle. I would teach other to play sports to improve your health and give you structure while exhausting yourself so your mind doesn't drift to criminal activity.

AMC: What is the legacy or imprint you want to leave behind?

KH: I always try to lead by example and I hope how I played the game and conduct myself would influences others in a positive way.

JM: I was very competitive and I didn't take no shit from coaches when they were wrong, and I loved baseball and became a better human.

AMC: Why do the two of you believe you play so well

together?

KH: We support each other and love seeing each other succeed.

JM: We challenge each other and we want the same thing...to go home, win and give our all.

AMC: What are your hopes for the future after your release?

KH: I want to show my family and community the power and ability of transformation, while implanting a positive legacy for my kids.

JM: Help the youth with all sports, help give them something to focus on and give them an outlet. I need to give back to the community I've taken so much from.

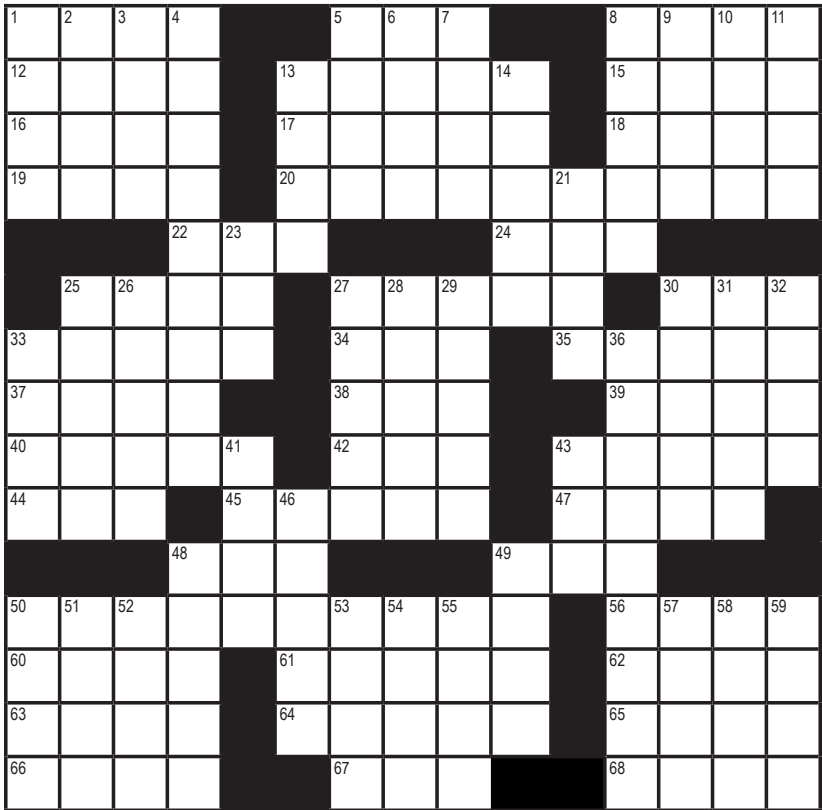


Hamilton leads the team by example

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Jonathan Chiu

Edited by Jan Perry



Across

1. Mean Girls’ Renee
5. Kitchen measurement
8. Vogue
12. Sixth month of the Jewish calendar
13. Vodka brand
15. Type of presentation
16. Surrealist painter Joan
17. ____-garde
18. Astronaut Armstrong
19. American R&B and soul singer Johnson
20. Veined Italian blue cheese
22. Some people in prison
24. Outdoor company
25. 2009 film Miss ____ starring Gina Rodriguez
27. R&B singer ____ Dean
30. Prefix that means “three”
33. Rounded fruit
34. ____ Beach, Hawaii
35. R2-D2 or C-3PO
37. Happy Days actress Moran
38. Rice (Dan.)
39. ____ von Bismarck
40. Former brand of peanut butter
42. Suffix that indicates a follower of distinctive practice
43. Sugar substitute
44. Angelo or Bernardino
45. Person of Interest character
47. Basketball’s Westbrook
48. Ender’s Game Butterfield
49. Actor Daniel ____ Kim
50. Italian cream cheese
56. White salty Greek cheese
60. Descended
61. Apollo 13 actor Dean
62. Precedes book, city, or secret
63. Olympian Jones
64. It makes bread dough rise
65. A ditch
66. Gaze in a malicious way
67. Sports network
68. Type of therapy

Down

1. Norwegian chess player Wilhelm
2. Name that means ornament of the Lord (Abbr.)
3. Young salmon
4. Sharp Italian cheese
5. 2000s TV console
6. 2016 Fox TV show
7. ‘70s video game
8. Type of scheme
9. Cookie introduced in 1912
10. AWOL Nation song
11. Singer Fitzgerald
13. Labels
14. Once a month go-to
21. Pharrell Williams group
23. Commenced
25. Two and a Half Men character
26. Sigourney Weaver sci fi movie
27. Strange
28. “Eye” cheese
29. Savor
30. ____ tuus (Lat.)
31. Actresses Hayworth and Wilson
32. Totem
33. Type of hall
36. Sheep’s milk cheese from the south of France
41. Jail infection
43. Span
46. Precedes bird, on, or riser
48. St. Vincent album
49. Actress Catherine of The Shield
50. Promenade
51. Lotion ingredient
52. Drop
53. Maker or verses
54. Algerian port
55. Lair
57. Fencing sword
58. ____ Titans
59. Columnists Landers and Coulter

Book Review

From Bounced Checks to Private Jets

By Jordan Junious
Journalism Guild Writer

From Bounced Checks to Private Jets: The Master of Miracles tells the story of Hazel Ortega, educational psychologist and owner of several multimillion dollar businesses. In her thoughtful memoir, she delivers the breathtaking account of her impoverished upbringing in East Los Angeles and her tumultuous journey toward financial freedom and self-growth.

Ortega leads readers through her life, teeming with relentless gang violence and family dysfunction. As the second of seven children, she experienced a life of disappointment, fear, and constant financial insecurity. It was not until her mother put her out of the house at the age of 19 that she began to discover her internal strength.

“I hadn’t had it easy by any stretch of the imagination and I could cash in on that story until the wheels came off. But I wanted more, and everything was possible,” Ortega said.

In 1994, Ortega’s mother killed her boyfriend, leaving Ortega to care for her two younger brothers. Her life became more difficult and her marriage ultimately failed as a result.

While working as a legal secretary, Ortega completed her Associate’s Degree. Her boss further motivated her to complete her Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees in educational psychology.

Ortega began to see her life as a series of choices, rather than just “allowing things to happen” to her. For several years, she lived “below” paycheck to paycheck. After having several revelations, she began to take ownership of her life and live in integrity.

The second half of the book serves as a self-help guideline toward personal success. She offers readers support while portraying her own failures and how she lives in integrity.

After attending a seminar on self-development, she began to understand the impact that her past

still had on her life.

“When we want to change, we often look outside of ourselves and ask someone else to change,” she said. “I looked closely at who I was and changed myself based on what I wanted, and as I made those changes everything else improved.”

As she reflected on her past and current lot in life, she began to foster sound morals and values.

She discussed the impact of mending broken relationships in her life, and how being vulnerable and “letting people in” afforded her the ability to cultivate and strengthen her bond with others. She also eliminated self-defeating and self-limiting behavior.

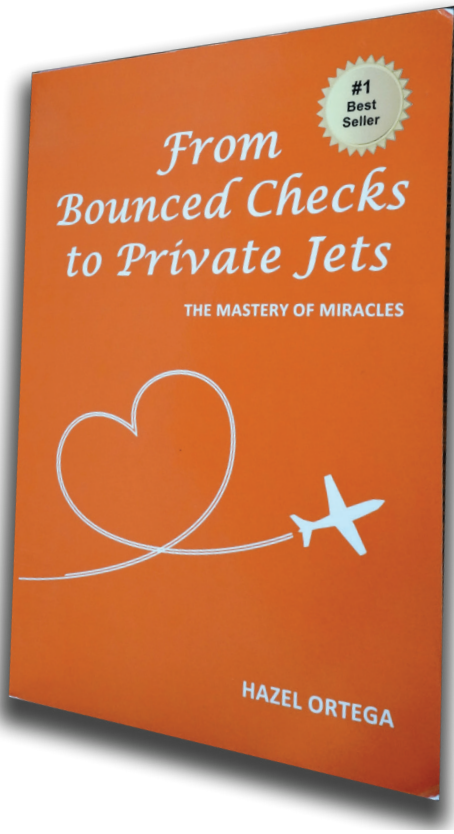
She notes that reliving past hurts and relationships can be extremely difficult. However, she assures the reader of the possibilities available through facing one’s fears.

“Cutting yourself away from fear is all about freedom. You can be free to see solutions you have never considered before,” she said. “...It can point you down undiscovered paths that lead you to adventure and joy.”

Ortega stresses the importance of becoming the person you want to attract. She adds that your actions are the biggest determinant of your outcome, and what we desire most lies in who we are willing to become.

Her memoir lends readers the opportunity to shift their perspectives and view reality through a lens of opportunity. She now travels the world and is the owner of several successful businesses.

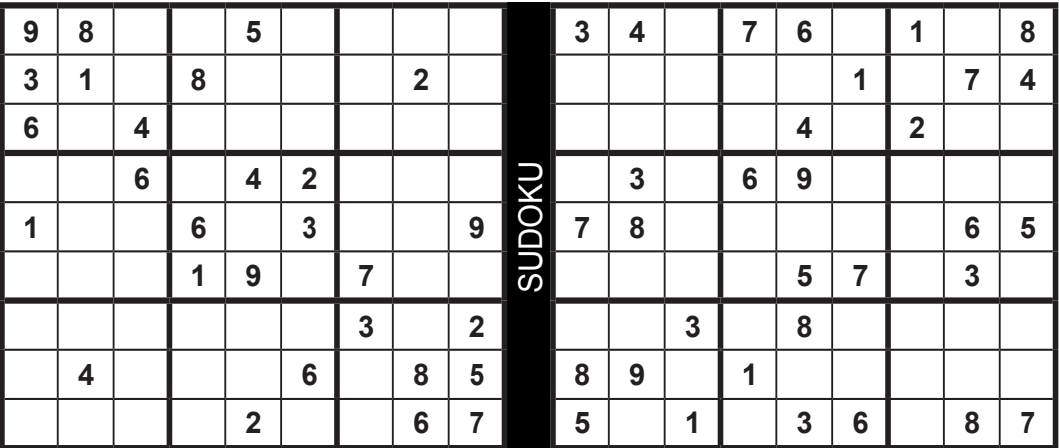
“Don’t let life just happen to you. Be a participant!” she said. “Always be creating the incredible world you deserve and want.”



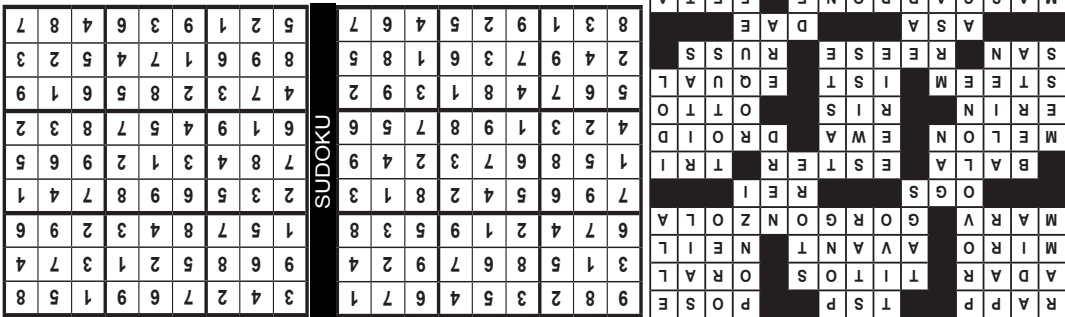
CORRECTIONS

- Jeremiah “JB” Brown, Jarrod “Deuce” Williams, and Ray Asarta started 94 Feet in 2016 and re-established the program in 2023. It was reported in the August issue of the *San Quentin News*, on page 20 that Ishmael Freelon had started 94 Feet.
- The article “SQ embarks on a new journey with Solitary Watch,” on page 8 of the June issue contained three errors; Resident Juan Haines height is 5’3”, not 5’5” as stated in the article. Haines went to prison at age 25 for seven years, received parole in 1990, and later returned to prison for bank robbery in 1996. The article incorrectly reported that Haines went to prison for bank robbery at age 25 and has spent the last 27 years incarcerated.
- Haines served in the U.S. Army, not as reported in the U.S. Navy.
- In the August Issue we published an article titled “New San Quentin program aims to stop misuse of guns and safer communities” on page 17 and contained the following error:
- The Arms Down program does not promote gun safety. That fact was inaccurate.

SUDOKU



SOLUTIONS



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EDITORIAL



Wisconsin residents search for inclusivity and non-violence

San Quentin News,
Thanks for all your work over the years. Wisconsin prisons work much different, almost opposite of California. They teach about a gender unicorn to men that are clearly challenged or confused. I am from Madison, WI so I am hip to the Gay parades, because I ran our grassroots homeless outreach prevention effort inc. Now they have progress flags above the Wisconsin capital for pride month. We helped and don't judge, but inside a prison things can look much different -HOPERGM.ORG does not endorse even magazines that exploit women in prison and we join efforts to combat all forms of trafficking.

James Kruger
Winnebago WI

Rehabilitation comes in small doses and will not happen overnight

Friends @ SQN,
I've been a fan for years. After reading about all that's going on in San Quentin I was trying to get here. I was really excited when I finally was endorsed but my first day here I heard guards laughing about assaulting inmates. I realize changes are happening but I'm afraid of you guys losing your edge. Not too much is going on at least down here on H-yard. We have to continue to hold their feet to the fire. I will be doing while I'm here and hope I can count on you to help. Seems all I read about is continually positive but that's not all there is and I'm living in it. I've started putting in appeals and will continue till they get rid of me here to. Thanks for listening. I am still a big fan.

Martin Buseth
San Quentin

GTL tablets removed apps

Dear SQNews on January 12 the "GTL Learn" app was removed from tablets here at Valley State Prison and presumably statewide. This education app provided access to the excellent professional level text books from OpenStax.
The recent addition of the Edovo app is a great addition to expand educational opportunities, especially high quality, low-cost ones such as OpenStax access is a real shame and does not seem in keeping with CDCR or Viapaths stated goals.
I am hopeful that SQNews investigative reporting can uncover what happened and possibly even reverse this unfortunate action, best regards.

Guy Erb
Valley State Prison

Forward This and CJN documentaries spurn creativity

I was reading the SQ News one day and was inspired. I read about the media team filming a documentary at a fire camp, which moved me to write a proposal to create a documentary here. I recently graduated from "Walla Walla," I proposed that we film the next class. The proposal was granted.

Bryce Huber
Washington Penitentiary

Donating News to other Incarcerated residents

I would give a donation if I could, but it would be interesting to read it and let other inmates enjoy it also. I would still like to subscribe to it, I think it be great reading about programs and other news in your paper."

Morrison
CSAT-F

San Quentin News elicits national excitement

I would like to continue to receive your monthly news paper if possible, I love the National, Sports, youth, guild and every single article in the paper. I am a huge supporter and will continue to read about San Quentin. I am excited and fascinated to get to know and hear about San Quentin News.

Avila
Pelican Bay

Giants fans throughout CDCR

I'm writing you because I am truly interested in your work, I was reading the January edition, good stuff my favorite team the San Francisco Giants was in there. Well good luck and much respect.

Gabriel Magallanes
Wasco

CSP-LA looking for equal access

Us at CSP-LA, would appreciate if someone would look into why there are no jobs and no programs. We cant do correspondence and we just want an opportunity to get rehabilitative credits or milestones. Everyone here would love to be transferred, our credits are not being calculated properly. If we were at a different facility our terms would be greatly reduced. Inmates in the CDCR system should be given the same opportunity's with education and earning milestone credits no matter what prison we'll get endorsed to, please help.

J. O'Connell
CSP Lancaster



By Marcus Henderson
Executive Editor/
Editor in Chief

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, I would like to present a throwback shout-out to San Quentin's La Mexcla, a 1980s Latino-Chicano cultural group. The function of La Mexcla (The Mixture) was to help La Raza (The people) and the torcido (incarcerated), according SQNews archives. "We're a proud people," said J. Morris, resident and chairman of the group at the time. "That could be good or it could be bad ... we as Mexicanos must get positive thoughts (schooling) into our heads. If you see someone doing something without class don't downgrade him, educate him. You didn't always know what you know now. Someone told you."

La Mexcla fought for education programs within San Quentin and sponsored entertainment events to highlight Hispanic heritage. The self-help group would transform the NorthBlock dining hall to host Cinco de Mayo (May 5) and Mexican Independence Day (Sept. 16) events. They would invite outside participants to come into the prison to perform with artists such as the Ballet Aztlan from Richmond, Calif.; El Trio Azteca, a three-person musical storytelling crew who donned

Cinco de Mayo Celebration

La Mezcla Sponsors Annual Festivities

By Bill Torres
A conspiracy to change the nature of San Quentin was uncovered last week.
At approximately 10 a.m. on May 16, while standing by the max shack watching the guys play "escort," I noticed some cons milling around the north entrance to the north dining hall, dragging bulky crates inside. I followed them into the shadows, as quietly as I could. Nobody likes to be a rat, but a man's gotta tell it like it was,

what I saw and heard there blew me away.
There were some dudes who call themselves La Mezcla, that is Spanish for The Mixture, who had everybody

on congas, and Bob V. from Pennsylvania, o boards. Later I hear Neeka is only part of a band project playing a n conspiracy, right insi



Inmates Who Stayed Out Go Back In

(UPI) — Forty-five inmates at the Washington State Corrections Center who spent a night outdoors to protest overcrowded conditions went peacefully back inside last week, satisfied that their demands would be met.
Prison spokesman Dick Paulson said the inmates ended the strike "absolutely willingly" after officials arranged to get most of them cells and beds instead of making them sleep on the floor.

traditional sombreros; and Los Esclavos, a San Jose group. The artists would wow the crowd, according to the archives.

Gloria Vasquez, the group's chief outside sponsor, worked with Latino population for 12 years. She was instrumental in getting celebrities and government official to attend these events — KPOO radio jockeys Beverly Byrd and Michelle Alexander; John Marquez, deputy labor commissioner of Napa, Solano, and Lake counties; and Judge

Carlos Ynostroza of the state's supreme court, noted the archives.

The group had the support of the incarcerated residents and the outside community, who donated their time, labor, and money to support their banquets and events. SQNews would like to honor these trail-blazers and those residents of Spanish-speaking who continue to provide the much-needed support and self-help groups to this part of our community.



EXECUTIVE BODY OF LA MEXCLA (bottom l to r) M. Valdivia, cochairman; J. Morris, chairman; V. Clemente, treasurer; L. Lechuga, secretary; (top, l to r) A. Marcelo, east block, yardside representative; M. Mendoza, committee chairman; A. Tovar, sergeant at arms; R. Garcia, programs chairman; W. Navarro, west block representative. Not shown: R. Sena, educational chairman; M. Martinez, east block, bayside, representative; J. Duran, employees' chairman; F. Satas, cosecretary.

AROUND THE WORLD

SAN QUEN-TOONS by Jessie Milo



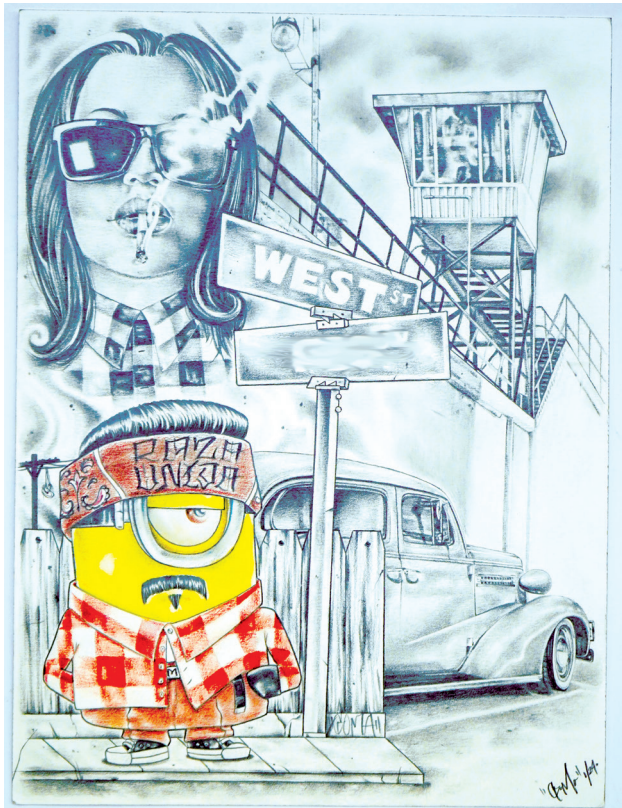
Lainy Melnitzer sitting by an active seismic and volcanic region in the Azores



ART PROFILE

Gabino Madera connects the dots

Madera highlights Chicano culture during Hispanic Heritage Month



By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

Art is just another way to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

For artists like SQRC resident Gabino Madera, creativity comes as a form of connecting the dots with his roots by sketching out a collage of Mexican culture and Chicano art that blends the past with the present of what he considers his culture.

This artist created a drawing dedicated to his father, Gabino Madera. The piece showed the late iconic Mexican singer and movie star Vicente Fernandez, “El Charro de Gran Titan,” from Jalisco, Mexico, the home of the artist’s father. In the center, a big “M” highlighted his family name’s initial. The work showed a revolutionary woman smoking a cigarette. During the era of the Mexican Revolution, these women were affectionately

known as “Anitas.”

According to Madera, people fail to realize that not only men fought in the revolution, but that women willingly risked their lives for freedom.

“Anitas make me think of my own mother because she is a strong, hard worker, [an] independent woman,” said Madera. “My mother has been the matriarch of our family and has always made sure that we have food on the table.”

For the proud first-generation Mexican-American, art has not only been a tool to function inside of prison walls, but it has also helped him embrace his roots and the cultural ways he continued to discover.

Madera has been drawing since he was a child. He acknowledged that he put his gang lifestyle first instead of putting his art first. “I could of had got a scholarship to pursue a degree in arts.”

Madera said he never named his pieces because he wanted

viewers to come up with their own ideas of meanings.

Going deep into the Mexican Revolution, the infamous and revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata held his revolver in one hand while he subjugated a rival soldier from the Mexican civil war. A *charra* — a cowgirl — awaited the return of her loved one.

The artist said the piece meant to convey that “we are basically Zapata, we’re fighting our own struggles against incarceration. Instead of bullets, our bullets is education, knowledge, and trying to survive so that we can get back to our loved ones back home.”

Madera said as an artist, he felt a responsibility to educate recent generations about a cultural era that seemed to have faded away in the lives of modern Mexican-American society. “Education is power,” he said.

Madera also has a portrait of a young man surrounded

by a ferocious jaguar in front of a temple in which sacrifices took place. It showed an Aztec female warrior, displaying her feathers and a spear, ready for the battle of life and death, and a symbol representing the internal struggles of life with which the Aztecs identified.

One cannot ignore the style of this artist who continued to expand his creativity with a bit of humor. We have a Minion dressed up as a young man wearing a brown bandana “Raza Unida,” a bundle shirt, jeans, and Chuck Taylors [shoes]. The picture shows the subject overshadowed by the infamous San Quentin watchtower, projecting a future of incarceration.

According to the artist, incarceration happens if one could not take life seriously, if one would not think about the consequences of actions and the way they affect the future.



Photos by Vincent E. O’Bannon // SQNews

Gabino’s creations include “West & Fig” (above left) and many more works that help him to connect the dots

Garcia creates happiness out of bread and water

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair
En Español

El arte y la cultura, es moldeada por medio de la arena, pan, agua, pegamento, cera de piso (Wax), y claro también con el papel del baño.

Para este residente, del Centro de Rehabilitación Martin Rodríguez García, el arte le ayuda a poder estar ocupado. Le ayuda con su salud mental de acuerdo a sus palabras, el recibe la felicidad de otros después que el comparte su arte con ellos.

“Cuando era un niño, mi abuelo hacía artesanía de barro”, dijo García. “El hacía figuras de piedras con el cincel y el martillo”.

La imaginación de García, le permite retarse a sí mismo creando nuevos proyectos, en los momentos de creación se inspira por las imágenes que el ve en la televisión.

Las habilidades del artista



Gingerbread man

son ilimitadas, a tal grado que él hizo un esqueleto humano montado en una motocicleta usando madera, cuerdas de guitarra, pan y huesos de pollo después de comerse el pollo.

Según García, él creó esta pieza usando un motor de cortadora de pelo, e instaló unas baterías dándole vida al motor, incluyendo detalles con luces de energía eficiente (LED) y una bocina para escuchar música. La obra le tomó 30 días consecutivos por aproximadamente ocho horas al día.

El arte, sigue siendo una plataforma en que el artista continúa creciendo con su talento, que lo lleva a crear rosas y patitos de pan que son formadas en varios colores en tan solo 15 minutos.

De acuerdo al artista, ha pedido de un amigo, que quería mandarle a su hijo una galletita que fue hecha con arena, agua, cera de piso y pintado con café Folgers.

Asimismo, su amigo pidió una figura de una cabeza indígena de la tribu Maya, que fue hecha con el objetivo de resaltar la cultura Mexicana en relación de su propia identidad.

“Me gustaría enseñales a otros presos, para cuando ellos salgan de la prisión se puedan ganar la vida”, dijo García. “Cuando yo estaba en otra prisión, otro recluso me pidió que le enseñara [a crear artesanía] porque a él lo iban a deportar a México — él no sabía nada”.

García desea dejar un legado artístico.



Photos by Aresteo Sampablo // SQNews
Little ducks created by Garcia



Garcia holding his creation of a minion and little red devil

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair
In English

Art and culture, is molded through sand, bread, glue, floor wax and of course toilet paper.

Reflecting on his appreciation of art, resident of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center Martin Rodríguez García said that art helps him to keep busy. It helps with his mental health, bringing joy to see the reactions that people have when he shares his art with them.

The introduction to his artistic talents began in his childhood “when I was a child my grandpa was a clay maker,” said García. “He made figures out of rocks using a hammer and chisel.”

García’s imagination permit him to challenge himself to create new projects, in those moments of creating, he gets the inspirations by re-creating images he sees on television.

The artist’s skills are unlimited; to the level he was able to create a human skeleton riding a motorcycle using wood, bread and chicken bones, after he ate the chicken.

According to García, he created this piece using a hair clipper’s motor, 4 LED lights, batteries, guitar strings, and a small speaker connected to a radio. He spent 30 consecutive days, working eight hours a day to finish this creation.

Art continues to be a platform for the artist’s, so his

talents can continue to grow. It takes him to create roses and little ducks from bread. They showcase a variety of colors, which takes him now only 15 minutes to make.

García said, regarding a project a friend wanted to create for his son, his friend requested a gingerbread man that was made of sand, water, floor wax and painted with Folgers coffee.

At the same time, his friend requested an indigenous Mayan tribe head figure, to project the Mexican culture in relation to his own identity.

“I enjoy teaching and sharing my art with others so that they can have something to take with them when they leave prison.” García continues, “When I was at another prison, a prisoner asked me to teach him [handicraft] before he got deported to Mexico — he did not know anything.”

García wishes to leave an artistic legacy.



Mayan tribal head