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Photo by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

San Quentin Utilization of Inmate Resources Experiences and Studies team assembled hundreds of bikes for youth

Residents give back through service

Bay Area children of incarcerated parents receive bikes

By David Ditto
Associate Editor

Almost two hundred Bay Area children whose parents are incarcerated got brand-new bicycles this holiday season thanks to a group of San Quentin residents who are dedicated to making amends to their communities.

Twelve incarcerated members of the group "SQUIRES" volunteered more than two hundred hours of their "free" time to unload, unpack, and assemble the bicycles and send them back out as gifts for the children.

"I feel really good. Like Santa Claus, putting smiles on kids' faces," said Michael Navarro, who arrived at SQ in 2022 and joined the San Quentin Utilization of Inmate Resources Experiences and Studies group last year.

The giveaway was organized by

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, an Oakland-based non-profit organization focused on organizing, restoring, and reunifying families and communities impacted by the criminal justice system.

"We're literally giving back, healing our communities and healing ourselves, too," said SQUIRES member Harold Meeks. He said it felt unreal for people in prison to have the opportunity to build bicycles for youth in the neighborhoods they came from and will return to.

The pouring rain on the afternoon the unassembled bicycles were delivered to the prison did not dampen the spirits of the crew.

"Beep, beep, beep," sounded the two trucks backing up to the South Block rotunda. Their back doors opened to reveal boxes of kids' bicycles stacked to the roofs. In just two hours, the SQUIRES team unloaded

all 191 boxes, carted them into the unoccupied Carson section of the housing block, and stacked them twenty per cell.

The crew spent several days getting the bikes ready-to-ride for the children. Two-man teams worked on one bike at a time on folding tables they set up in the dayroom of the prison cell block. They unpacked each bike and all its parts from their box, and installed the pedals, handlebars, wheels, and seats. They adjusted the brakes and tightened the goosenecks. They installed training wheels on the smallest bikes, and even hung the sparkly handlebar tassels with care on the "Little Princess" bikes.

Accomplishing all that was a small miracle, considering that for security reasons, people in prison

See Bikes on Page 4

Threat of deportation upon release causes concern

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair and
Sandhya Dharini Ganesan
U.C. Berkeley Student

Gabriel V. Chavez was a California prison resident for more than 30 years. After finally being released, Chavez was then held in an ICE detention facility for two years. Now, Chavez, 50, is again incarcerated in a Salvadorian prison—an especially dangerous environment for someone covered in tattoos.

In March 2022, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, in response to extreme gang violence in Central America, enacted the "Association With Illicit Activities" law. This law criminalized tattoos in an attempt to give police the power to suppress gangs. Any tattoos, ranging from the Virgin Mary or praying hands, may be interpreted as gang-related under the new law.

"As a mother, after my son was deported and incarcerated, I felt like I was dying," said Chavez's mother, Maria Elizabeth Hurren, in an interview. (Editor's note: Edwin E. Chavez, co-author of this article is Gabriel's brother and the son of Señora Hurren.)

Hurren, who lives in Riverside County, sends the Salvadoran government \$7 a day to ensure her son has food and a place to sleep while behind bars. She noted that if she doesn't pay, she fears her son will starve to death.

Neither Hurren nor any of Chavez's family have been able to contact him. Complete isolation has left his family wondering if Gabriel, who is in remission for brain cancer, is alive or dead. He was diagnosed more than a decade ago.

"I am depressed and I can't even focus on a daily basis because I

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Courtesy of Wikipedia

Immigrants at a border crossing

Transgender community raises awareness of transphobic violence



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

LGBTQIA+ communed in Garden Chapel for a day of remembrance

By Terrell J. Marshall
Journalism Guild Writer

The San Quentin community gathered in Chapel A in recognition of the rehabilitation center's second annual observance of the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

The purpose of the event was to bring awareness to deaths caused by transphobic violence.

San Quentin resident Michael Adams opened with a rendition of "Lean on Me" by Bill Withers. The song sparked the emotions of transgender women present, who

locked arms and sang to each other and the crowd.

"We come together today as a community, and whether you're queer or not, we are all human," said San Quentin resident and event host Cassandra Evans.

"We remember [those] lost, to

show that transgender lives matter said Evans."

Attendees joined in clapping and singing together, "we all need somebody to lean on."

Evans welcomed two condemned residents, the last transgender women on Death Row at San Quentin. One took to the stage and shared her story.

"When I was 13 my dad caught me dressed up like a girl on my birthday," she recounted, describing the sexual violence she suffered at his hands. "He told me if I was going to act like a b***h, then he was going to treat me like one."

She spoke about the daily difficulties transgender people face, including social stigmatization.

"What I want to say is we are [good] enough," she stated. "We are who we are, we are all women, we have difficulties, but we can overcome everything."

Resident Angie Gordon was invited to speak about transphobia, which she defined as a belief that the sex of a person assigned at birth is absolute and cannot change throughout a person's lifetime.

She stated this type of thinking is a root cause of transphobic ideology, which generates a negative attitude or opinion about people in the transgender community.

Gordon reminded the audience that transgender people are subjected to many kinds of violence, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, and murder. She added that transphobic hatred has more recently been emboldened in American society.

Evans then asked the San Quentin transgender community to join her on the Chapel's stage to be "seen and heard." She stated that it was important to show unity and gain community familiarity.

In the background, photographs, names, age, and manner of death, were displayed on large TV screens visible to attendees, of Transwomen killed by transphobic violence or suicide.

The event featured six memoirs of transgender women. The list included Kitty Monroe, Shannon

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
PAROLES
Marcus "Wali" Henderson
reunites with family

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VALLY STATE PRISON
Residents graduate
with Bachelors degree
through Fresno State

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PROPOSITION 6
Read how a 'No' vote
on Prop 6 affects
incarcerated

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MT. TAM
FREEDOM WALL
Annual alumni wall
recognition ceremony

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Longtime Editor-In-Chief paroled after decades in prison



Photo by Richard Richardson



SQNews Archive

Top left: Henderson with Miguel Quezada. Top right: Henderson on the Lower Yard interviewing an outside person. Below: Retired Captain Sam Robinson with Henderson after receiving a CNPA award.

**By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Guild Chair**

Award winning journalist and former editor-in-chief Marcus Henderson paroled after nearly three decades of incarceration.

As *San Quentin News* celebrates another successful story—the power of redemption. Friends of the man passionately known as “Wali,” shared memories of Henderson’s time with *San Quentin News*.

“When ‘Wali’ joined the newspaper as a journalism guild student, he published a total of 38 stories in one year,” said former associate editor and SQ resident Kevin D. Sawyer.

Henderson’s first reporting experience for the Journalism Guild led him to covering a sports event where he was asked to interview outside visitors during a baseball game.

“Right there I just realized how much of [me] was bottled up, and locked up, after years of incarceration,” said Henderson. “I hadn’t talked to any outside people for like 15 years at this time. I was shaking and nervous.”

The conversation Henderson said was playing out in his mind was, “the only people I ever talked to was incarcerated people and correctional officers. I hadn’t really got to talk to the community, so I didn’t know what to say.” Henderson recalls this as being a totally new experience for him.

“Wali was a very fast learner,” said UC Berkeley Prof. William Drummond. “What I like about him is that he never made the same mistake twice. I also like that he is a straight shooter with an even temper. He never lost his temper and he was comfortable to be around.”

In 2020, the California News Publishers Association awarded Henderson with a journalism award, one of five awarded to Henderson during his tenure.

Former SQNews layout designer and Spanish Journalism Guild Chairman, Juan Espinoza worked with Henderson

for years. He recalled how Henderson was always willing to help others and that he never acted out of character. “Wali was the same giving person every day that I’ve known him, Espinoza said.” Espinoza considers Henderson a good friend and someone who fights against injustice and for inclusivity.

Henderson has also played an integral role in organizing symposiums with district attorneys and public defenders from counties such as San Francisco, Alameda, and Santa Clara. Henderson coordinated events including Victim/Defender dialogues, Victims Awareness forums, Juneteenth, and Kwanzaa.

Henderson made it a point to highlight the diverse cultures here at San Quentin.

He mentored the youth of the Miami Youth Academy through correspondence, and became so invested in creating new narratives for those who felt left out, he started the group “Bridging the Generational Gap.” A peer led group that brought to life in-depth discussions between older and younger generations. The discussions centered around topics such as financial literacy, family relationships, trauma, and overcoming adversity.

Juan M. Haines a veteran journalist, worked at *San Quentin News* for fourteen years recalls Henderson’s dedication to the paper.

“I know his biggest challenge came when COVID hit. He was tasked with getting the newspaper out under extraordinary circumstances and he was remarkable. He showed his grit, dedication, and commitment to prison journalism. He is in the right place now — a free man,” Haines stated.

Amir Shabazz, 73 has known Henderson for over ten years. Through Henderson’s guidance, Shabazz started writing for the paper in 2016. He was a contributing writer during the pandemic. According to Shabazz, Henderson did a lot for the community, especially for people



Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon

of color. However, the narrative was not only about black people.

“When I speak about ‘Wali’ and his legacy, I have to start with the Islamic community. He participated in several self-help groups with me, and when the floor was open he was one of the first to have his hand up ready to participate, Shabazz said.

Former SQ resident, and Empowerment Avenue co-founder Rashaan “New York” Thomas had this to say about Henderson. “When I was at a level IV [maximum security prison] with Wali, we were working on a book together titled ‘Why We Won’t Tell.’” The book was about making a point instead of trying to make people tell on each other. Why not just built communities, is the question, Thomas stated.

“He [Wali] started writing for the sport section of SQNews and before I knew it, the outside community gave him some kind of an award for best writing. Next thing I knew he had become Editor-In-Chief of SQNews,” added Thomas.

Health and wellness are rights for all men



Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon
Darrell Wade

Darrell Wade, Executive Director and founder of Oregon Black Men’s Wellness, a nonprofit established in December 2019, celebrated Juneteenth with residents at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center.

“We’re here to promote health and wellness,” said Wade. “We believe that health and wellness are [absolute] rights for all our Black men.”

Wade added that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention recognized that Black communities are more susceptible to diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems, colon cancer, and lung cancer.

BMW combines health and wellness services with other activities for the Black community. The in-person nature of the program and workshops were impacted during COVID, however Wade found that working from home gave him

more flexibility.

BMW received financial support from the federal government, amid national initiatives, to allocate support to under served communities in the wake of the pandemic.

The organization is dedicated to addressing mental health, physical health, and emphasizes household healing. Their ultimate goal is to spread this sentiment into the greater community.

Wade’s academic and occupational background paired with his willingness to serve his community led to BMW’s founding. After earning his bachelor’s degree in Human Development, he worked for 23 years as a social worker in communities affected by gangs and a growing homeless youth crises.

According to Wade, after he formed BMW, he faced challenges with the organization’s moniker and title.

Wade acknowledged that these challenges sounded “exclusive” when targeting issues that statistically affect Black men. By naming the organization an overt indicator of their core advocacy, it makes clear for potential funders what they are supporting.

Despite these efforts, Care Oregon, a state-funded healthcare provider, declined to support BMW three separate times. The first rejection, BMW wasn’t a recognized healthcare organization. The second and third rejections were due to the lack of available funding. Wade said the lack of support is because BMW is blatantly advertising the community they continue to service — the needs of Black men.

Wade cited the importance of visiting

San Quentin on Juneteenth.

“Blacks didn’t know they were free for two years. Freedom starts within oneself. Freedom starts within these walls before they go home,” said Wade. “If you can access that, you can go home a free man. Liberation starts inside.”

BMW also wants to extend their services to the incarcerated population at San Quentin.

Wade noted that he acknowledges the other marginalized communities impacted by health.

Wade recently lost a friend, Ron Samero. Samero, a Filipino man who was 39-years-old and known as “DJ Efecto.” He died in his sleep.

“When I got people together to celebrate this loss, everything was nice, but the only thing missing was him,” said Wade.

Wade noted that marginalizing people includes taking away their language.

“The question is can we, the Hispanics, Blacks, and Whites all have our own space to address our traumas? Can we all have break-out groups [to hold discussions]?” asked Wade.

Wade said he recognizes how minorities are being divided in an attempt to keep marginalized communities at a disadvantage.

“In the movies, we see prison at war all the time,” said Wade. “Here is what I see. Against all odds, you guys have somehow formed a community. Within these walls, you see the camaraderie. This is not CDCR’s doing.”

—Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Guild Chair

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Photo courtesy of Fresno State Division of Continuing and Global Education

Resident graduates at Valley State Prison

Valley State residents earn Bachelor's Degrees

By Joseph Gallo
Contributing Writer

Valley State Prison held the first graduation of Fresno State University bachelor's degree students in the facility's history.

Over two hundred people were present for the event including the prison's live streaming video production team and representatives from the local NPR and ABC News affiliates.

"I came into prison with a 5th grade reading level, and now I have earned a bachelor's degree in social science through hard work, determination, awesome classmates, and incredible professors who truly care," said Michael Freitas, a recent bachelor's degree recipient who was part of Valley State Prison's first graduating class through Fresno State University. He could not contain his smile and his enthusiasm was contagious. "I've been locked up for over 25 years, and I never thought I would accomplish anything after coming to prison, but look at me now."

On October 18, 2024, Twenty-two graduates and many family members celebrated the all-day event.

"It is amazing to see all the joy and pride on display today," said graduate Joseph Segade. "Our social science degree represents a culmination of hard work both on the university administration and on our part—it makes me proud."

Nearly every professor who was part

of the program attended. Fresno State University's President Saul Jimenez-Sandoval, deans from four university departments, and the program director and founder Dr. Emma Hughes led the graduation. A myriad of other supporting faculty and university students rounded out the visiting guests.

"The president told me that he was so moved by the whole experience," said Dr. Jordan Pickering, a criminology professor at Fresno State who taught two classes to the graduates. "Your hard work and perseverance, the student speeches, the feelings of hope and positivity, the love, support, and energy in the room ... you could tell that the ceremony really made an impression on him."

From within the prison, Warden O'Brian Bailey and Chief Deputy Warden Pedro Chanelo were present and gave speeches. Current FSU students within the prison and a dozen staff from the education department at VSP were on-hand to support the culmination of many years of effort by the men of the graduating class of 2024.

"The Fresno State 2024 cohort has set the benchmark for us," current student Jonathan Chow said with a laugh "Challenge accepted! I want my family to see me up there one day too!"

During the issuance of diplomas a procession of more than 20 professors and administration, many failing to contain tears of joy, waited to shake

hands or hug the students.

"I just couldn't keep it together, I was so proud of these guys, the work they put in," said Dr. Jesse Scaccia, a media and journalism professor who taught two personal storytelling classes to the cohort. "I am not the only one who feels this way but I have to say that teaching these men has been the most fulfilling experience of my career. My time with these gentlemen has reinforced my love of education. They are all I need to believe in redemption."

The graduates are not just scholars; they are giving back to the community in other ways. Four are facilitating self-help groups; two are preparing others for college upon parole through PROPar (Project Rebound Outreach Program); five are occupational mentor counselors; two are part of the new peer support specialist program; several are Youth Offender Program mentors; three are high school and college tutors in Peer Literacy Mentor Program; and others are even part of the horse and canine therapy programs at the VSP.

Of the twenty-two graduates, six immediately went on to the CSU Dominguez Hills master's degree program, and others are pursuing graduate degrees as parolees.

"You are so deserving of all of the support, encouragement, high-fives, news segments, and presidential acknowledgments," Pickering wrote to the graduates. "We are so, so, so proud of you!!"

Education and self-worth reduce recidivism

Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

In achieving a higher education while incarcerated, social skills are obtained, enhancing self-worth that can reduce recidivism rates.

A higher education in prison makes available cognitive and psychological skill sets, giving a person the capability to self-advocate, with hopes of coping with life after prison, according to the *Journal of Higher Education in Prison*.

"I think higher education articulates people's critical thinking skills," said Frances Santiago, a Learning Specialist for Mount Tamalpais College at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. "Basically across the board college supports executive functioning skills."

According to Santiago, her efforts entail boosting students' confidence through reaffirming their success, "because their voice matters." She added that teachers get to rewrite the narrative so that incarcerated students know they are cared about.

The college experience allows students the capacity to resolve conflicting viewpoints, which are a necessary skill for pro-social communicating inside "overcrowded" prisons.

Mt. Tam's curriculum is based on the well being of the students. Their coursework includes writing, ethics, and debate classes. Some courses also address the development to tolerate uncertainty, in handling "stressful situations," according to the *Journal*.

"[College] curricula challenged my thoughts and understanding beyond the basic knowledge provided to me in secondary school levels," said San Quentin resident Pheng Ly, who earned an AA degree while incarcerated.

Tony de Trinidad, who earned an AA degree at Mt. Tam in June 2024, stated that college classes taught him how to demystify his struggles, including a public speaking course that taught him the importance of conveying his narrative.

"I'm the only one who knows my story," he said. "The audience only



SQNews Archive

Old SQ education building

knows what I tell them."

Mt. Tam's study hall, where students prepare for their daily classes, displays photos of 53 formerly incarcerated students, all of whom have paroled within the past two to three years. The photos are meant to serve as inspiration for current students.

Terry Hall, a former Mt. Tam student who paroled in 2024, sent a message back inside along with his photo after his release.

"The day you stop learning is the day you no longer draw breath," Hall said.

According to the *Journal of Correctional Education*, recidivism is to return to criminal behavior, which is sometimes measured between two to three years after release.

JCE cited 60% of incarcerated people read below a sixth grade level, causing "some" indication for recidivism.

In another report by the US Department of Justice, obtaining an education in prison lowers the recidivism rate significantly.

A report by the National Correctional Association states incarcerated individuals that earn associates degrees are 70% less likely to recidivate, and those with a GED are 25% less likely to return to prison, according to *JCE*.

Other programs catered towards higher education for incarcerated people show

positive impacts and signs of reform.

There are 51,000 men and 2,400 women incarcerated in the State of New York, 950 have access to higher learning, according to Ken Burns' Film College behind bars.

Bard University's Prison Initiative operates in the New York Correctional System, offering full-time AA and BA programs for men and women, according to *Justice Quarterly*.

The students in the BPI college program take on 12-16 units per semester and meet two hours twice a week, including with tutors outside of classes.

Justice Quarterly's data indicate a positive correlation between education and success after incarceration.

The three largest racial groups that participated in the Initiative, Black and Hispanic students' recidivism rates are less than 0.05%. Among White students, the rate is less than 0.1%.

In addition, JCE cites that people convicted of felonies are as dangerous as they were before sentencing, because prisons do not reform.

Justice Quarterly states that prisons are correctional facilities in name only; the more appropriate title would be "a long term storage locker."

"He who opens a school door, closes a prison," said Victor Hugo 19th century author.

Bikes

Oakland-based nonprofit brings joy to families and communities impacted by criminal justice system

Continued from page 1



Above: Ricky Romero and Marque Thompson
Below: John Shoppe-Rico



Above: Harold Meeks and Jared Hansen
Below: Residents load truck with bikes



Photo by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

are not allowed to use tools. This project required support from prison administrators and staff, and a lot of faith.

"I love how they're entrusting us to do this!" said Jared L. Hansen, as he was filling the assembled bikes' tires with air. He said he enjoyed volunteering in the project because it was for a good cause. They were not just building bikes, they were building camaraderie.

This year's giveaway was LSPC's 25th annual Community Giveback event, now coordinated by their "All of Us or None" program, which was created by formerly incarcerated people in 2003. They distribute applications each year to residents of prisons and jails to sign up their children for the program.

Twenty-nine-year-old Navarro has been incarcerated for nine years. He missed out on giving his daughter, who is now 10 years old, her first bicycle and teaching her how to ride it.

"This is a perfect example of how we can make living amends," said Navarro, tightening up a girl's bicycle seat. "We took from our communities, and now we're giving

"We took from our communities, and now we're giving back to the same people we hurt. I want to let them know there's people who care about them."

—Resident Michael Navarro

back to the same people we hurt. I want to let them know there's people who care about them."

"If I ever have any grandchildren, I hope to do this for them when I go back home. This is what being a father feels like," he said.

Navarro credits the SQUIRES program with his growing understanding of the impact of crimes on communities and the value of intervention for youth whose lifestyles are leading toward incarceration.

For 60 years, SQUIRES has been mentoring at-risk-youth that come in to San Quentin to see and learn face-to-face the harsh reality of what their future holds if they don't change their ways.

The SQUIRES team and

their sponsor in the warden's office, Rafael Casale, thanked the people who made bringing this project inside The Q possible; Warden C. Andes, Lt. G. Berry, Lt. B. Haub, Lt. D. Campbell, Lt. Cornwell, Sgt. Brenes, Skyler Brown and the SQ Media Center, and Correctional Officers T. Marez, S. Lopez, Oldemeyer, J. Sibley, G. Vong, S. Dearmore, and J. Nguyen.

On Friday, December 13, the team lined up the nearly 200 beautiful, brand-new bicycles on the West Block yard, ready to be picked up by LSPC and given to the children the next day.

"The kids are getting these bicycles, toys, and books, and it all came from y'all," said LSPC Executive Director Paul Briley to the guys as they filled two trucks front-to-back, wall-to-wall with the bikes they assembled. They carefully stacked them three-high, with cardboard in between to prevent scratching.

Briley said each child will send a picture of themselves and their new bike with a letter to their incarcerated mother or father thanking them for the gift.

Deportation

Incarcerated individuals lament the impact of deportation

Continued from page 1

don't know if my son is alive or if they're treating him for his medical conditions. Not having any contact with my son is hard. Practically, he is kidnapped," said the mother.

Gabriel Chavez's story is not an anomaly. The United States has been deporting incarcerated people to places all over the world, from El Salvador to Cambodia. Those who support deportation for people convicted of aggravated felonies say that people who commit those crimes should not be permitted to continue living in the United States.

Fear of deportation is one more concern facing incarcerated people. They already have to navigate rehabilitation, family reunification, and overcoming feelings of guilt for crime.

"If I was deported to El Salvador my life would be endangered because I disassociated from the criminal and gang membership lifestyle," said Arturo Melendez, an SQ prisoner.

Melendez's own family, he said, would be unwilling to help him for fear of retaliation from the Salvadoran government. Like Chavez, Melendez also has tattoos,

posing an addition threat if he's deported.

President-elect Donald Trump supported mass deportation policies during his 2024 campaign.

Melendez feels that U.S. immigration policies are unfair and inhumane.

"Families are being broken up," Melendez said. "When they are sent back, they are being put in harm's way by throwing them into poverty."

San Quentin residents like Enrique Mejia said this system of repeated incarceration, known as the "prison to deportation pipeline," is not okay. If a person has done their time, CDCR should not be sending people to ICE for additional incarceration and displacement, Mejia argued.

Another San Quentin resident Galicia Juarez noted that two of his uncles were deported to Guatemala. One of Juarez' uncles was later executed after being extorted by an organized crime group, Galicia said.

Detention has pervasive effects on the family members of detainees. Many deportees also have undocumented relatives living in the U.S. illegally and are at risk of deportation, even without

committing a crime.

Despite knowing they may face deportation themselves, and having had family members deported, some San Quentin defend Donald Trump's deportation stance.

"I agree with deporting every person that isn't legally in this country and who has a criminal history, and who would be a danger to the community," said prisoner Anicasio (CQ) Garcia.

A native of Guatemala, Garcia held a minority viewpoint among those interviewed. Most of those contacted by San Quentin News declined to comment, citing fears of retaliation.

For those with ICE detainer's, the looming knowledge of deportation causes confusion about their futures after incarceration.

"I can't continue to grow in school and self-help programs. At night, I cannot sleep — I wake up in the middle of the night," said Gabriel Lopez. "In here [SQ] there others like myself who are striving for a better future. We are graduating from school...preparing to help out others so that they won't re offend."

For others, genuine fears

of safety and getting a job in a new place can be an added pressure while incarcerated in San Quentin.

According to Luis Orozco, an SQ prisoner, many deported people found it difficult to return to Mexico, where it is harder to find a job, a place to live, or other reentry services.

Prisoners like Tomas Ochoa said that the biggest challenge in returning to Mexico is navigating the cartels, which are often waiting to recruit people into their criminal enterprises. Ochoa, like other Mexicans, worries about being killed for not wanting to join the cartels after being deported.

According to CDCR statistics, 15% to 20% of the incarcerated population are foreign-born. However, many men at San Quentin facing deportation left their homelands as children and no longer identify with their birth country's culture, and do not speak the language of their motherland.

In August and September of 2022, San Quentin State Prison transferred seven people to ICE, according to report by the ACLU.

"At 63 years, it is very hard to start again in a new



Photo from Wikipedia



Illustration by resident Jesse Milo

country that I have never worked in," said Parra Ivo Yuri, a Guatemalan immigrant serving a term at San Quentin. "I have lived almost all of my life

in this country."

Editors' Note: The interviews featured in this story were all conducted in Spanish, and have been translate.

Transgender

Biographies of six transgender women highlighted

Continued from page 1



Altar highlighting six biographies of transgender women



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

SQ Nurse Dee Dee Simon performed for attendees

Boswell, Michelle Clark, Banko Henery, Brown, Yella and Carmen Guerro. In addition to their stories, over 140 deaths were recognized and

remembered through the course of the November 20 event.

The Day of Remembrance reached its musical peak when San Quentin

Rehabilitation Center nurse and America's Got Talent finalist Dee Dee Simon sang Prince's "Purple Rain." The audience stood, clapped, and sang along in solidarity with the transgender community.

San Quentin Warden Chance Andes also showed his support, noting that he was happy the event took place.

"I'm glad to see that everybody in the community can get together and represent themselves, this is a good example of equality," said Andes.

Gwendolyn Ann Smith created the "Remembering Our Dead Project" in 1998, in response to the murder of Rita Hester, a Black

transgender woman killed in her Massachusetts apartment that year.

Smith's goal was to help her community learn more about their history, memorialize Tran's lives, and bring awareness to the violence that surrounds them, the host stated.

"Smith not only brought awareness to Hester's brutal death, but also publicized how other transgender lives were lost due to transphobic violence," Evans said.

"There will always be challenges when we try to become that beautiful flower that we have always wanted to be," said Evans. "Always remember your voices and your lives matter too, keep being you."

Health information for the New Year

By Eric Allen
Staff Writer

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans state that at least every 5 years, the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services must jointly publish a report containing nutritional and dietary information and guidelines for the general public.

The DGA report stated that healthy dietary eating routines for small infants to older adults benefit by inserting fruits, veggies, and proteins, to their eating habits. It is recommended that in order to lower the risk of certain chronic diseases, a person should use less sugar, and lessen their saturated fat intake, which helps to build healthy bodies, and minimize high blood pressure, stated the USDA, and the HHS.

Nutritional options such as iron, zinc, and vitamin D, produced through human breast milk, play an enormous role

in the growth of children. For most individuals, no matter their age or health status, achieving a healthy dietary pattern will require changes in food and beverage choices.

Dietary Guidelines have shown that 74% of adults are overweight or obese and may have other health related issues. Heart disease is known to be the leading cause of death in Americans, and nearly 18.2 million adults have artery disease.

Fact: Nutrition health and life style changes in the United States, such as, eating more greens, fruits, vegetables, and minerals, while minimizing sodium intake, has helped to prevent future health issues. Clean eating habits promote the importance of good Health, according to the report.

Childhood Obesity and being overweight: Unhealthy food intake patterns among children and adolescents and inadequate physical activity are contributors of America's

obesity and overweight problems, leading to the risk of chronic disease (e.g., type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease) later in life. Changing this trajectory is crucial because dietary patterns established during this life stage tend to continue into adult years. Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes is a concern of many Americans. Physical activity and dieting are essential to a healthy life style. 35% of American adults are pre-diabetic, and children are not exempt. About 210,000 children and adolescents have diabetes, including 187,000 with Type 1 Diabetes.

The Importance of Physical Activity: Individuals who work out at least 3 hours per week, reportedly live healthier lives. To attain the most health benefits from physical activity, adults need at least 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking or fast dancing, each week. Adults

also need muscle-strengthening activity, like lifting weights or doing push-ups, at least 2 days each week. This could lead to being in a better mood, less stress, and sleep improvement. Regular physical activity can provide both immediate benefits (e.g., boost mood, reduce stress, improve sleep) and long-term benefits (e.g., improved bone health and reduced risk of many diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, dementia, and many types of cancer).



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Fruits: Whole fruits are essential in every person's diet. Bananas, Oranges, Grapes, and Apples are provided in nutrient-dense form. It is important to add fruit into the body's daily intake to prevent body dysfunctions. 80% the US residents are failing to meet the proper requirements of fruit intake. Approximately 50% of fruit intake should come in whole fruit form, instead of 100% juice. People can improve eating habits by indulging in whole-fresh fruit instead of canned, frozen, or dried fruits without the added sugars.

Protein foods: Protein can be extracted from a variety of different sources of food. Animals and plant based selections are most common. This includes shredded beef, mackerel, poultry, eggs, nuts, and soy products. A healthy dietary option in the protein family consists of meat, vegetables,

peas, beans, and lentils. Poor protein options can be found in processed meats. Summer sausage, lunch meats, pouch meats, and any food with lots of preservatives, noted the DGA.

Incorporating a plant based diet into the body could have huge health benefits.



Dairy and Fortified Soy Alternatives: Dairy such as yogurt, cheese, low-fat (1%), and fat free milk is considered one of the healthier food choices.

Some people turn to alternative dairy options for various reason. Typically, to soy based products which are packed with plenty of nutritional value. Calcium, Vitamin A and Vitamin D are considered part of the

dairy family. In the US dairy items other than milk generally have higher amounts of sodium. Cheese, pasta, and pizza, contain saturated fat. Overall 90% of the US population fail to meet dairy recommendations.

Many people can benefit by selecting to eat fat free dairy products or choose low in fat or fat free options with their daily food intake



Sodium: Sodium is used in a variety of ways as a food ingredient. It fulfills the role of a flavor enhancer, moisture retainer and thickening agent. Americans more than a year old consume nearly 3,393 milligrams of sodium daily. Unfortunately, food selections are slim

that doesn't store (sodium chloride). Daily intake of sodium must be of high concern. Daily use should be limited to a small amount. Cardiovascular disease through sodium intake increases the chances of having a stroke if salt intake is not managed.



Grains: Grains seem to be in majority of the foods Americans eat constantly. Generally meats, poultry, eggs, nuts, seeds, and soy, and the intake of seafood fall well below DGA recommendations. Beans, peas, and lentils—a subgroup of both the vegetable and protein foods groups—also are under consumed by most adults. The recommendation for grain consumption is at least half the total for whole

grains as that for refined grains. Choose 100% whole grain foods for at least all grain consumed. Shifting from refined to whole grain is essential to good health. It can be as simple as shifting from white rice to brown, or white bread to 100% whole wheat. Reducing intakes of honey buns, cinnamon rolls, and other grain deserts will also support reducing refined grain intake and staying within caloric needs.

Caffeine: Caffeine acts as a stimulant within the human body. Coffee, tea, and soda are the most common sources of caffeine use. The FDA has labeled caffeine within cola drinks

as Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS). According to the FDA, healthy adults may consume a daily amount of at least 400 milligrams of caffeine without a risk of negative effects.



Saturated fat: Adults in the US are required to consume no more than 10% of saturated fats daily. Saturated fat is normally inherent in foods like meat, sandwiches, burgers, tacos, deserts and sugary drinks. It is important to read the nutritional facts on package labels. The key to modifying and lowering fat intake,

requires knowledge of the general manufacturers list on packaging labels. It is essential to substitute poor health choices, with options like nutrient-dense foods and beverages provided by vitamins, minerals, and other health-promoting components that and have little added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.



Residents share concern over portion size and standardized menu

By Jordan Junious
Journalism Guild Writer

Concerns have been made over diminishing food quality and portion size by many San Quentin residents.

Most recently, residents have noticed a decrease in food being served in the dining halls. This is not speculation, but rather the result of the new Correctional Food Manager, Warren Clark.

"The nutritional guidelines have not been followed, and they were not followed before

I got here. My objective is to meet the nutritional standards," said Clark.

Since assuming his post in September 2023, Clark made several changes to the portion sizes and amount of salt added to the food. A number of residents have criticized these changes, stating that CDCR has not been feeding them sufficiently.

Resident Jeremiah Brown said the quality of food is not as good as before Clark's appointment. He spoke fondly about the traditional 'Sunday

Grand Slam breakfast.'

"We had hearty food portions, sausage, eggs and sometimes cheese," Brown said. "We no longer get any of that."

Several residents expressed their dismay over the removal of pancakes and other popular food items.

"They wanted the pancakes they had before I got here. What I discovered was the size of the pancakes were twice the size of what they should be," Clark said.

"We are spending twice

the amount of what we should be. That is not financially responsible."

Clark admitted that he has reduced food quantities in an effort to adhere to 'healthy' nutritional guidelines, and to be more fiscally responsible.

He also attributed the lack of salt as the result of standardized menus set forth by the state's food management system.

SQ resident Jamal "Journal" Davis challenged these claims and questioned Clark's idea of health.

"I know that they changed the rules and they are trying to do things more healthy. But the last time I checked, starvation is not a sign of health," Davis said. "I eat before dinner just to feel fulfilled."

"I've worked in the chow hall for five years and I saw the food go from bad to worse...I would rather cook my own food," said SQ resident Eugene Hall.

Hall used to look forward to chow hall meals but now says the portions are not enough for a grown man.

Clark noted that the state adopted 'heart-healthy' guidelines in response to litigation from incarcerated individuals. He added that though he has made these changes, there is much in store for San Quentin's food program in the future.

"I am looking forward to the possibilities that I can do with the food here at San Quentin. I want the entire population to enjoy the healthy diet that they are receiving," he said. "I realize that I am not going to please everyone."

Signed and vetoed bills impact incarcerated

By **Bostyon Johnson**
Managing Editor

The following list are of bills signed or vetoed by the Governor of California and could have an impact on the SQ community. Here is what was signed or vetoed in September 2024:

Signed bills:

AB 1186 (Bonta) – Effective January 1, 2025, this bill will alleviate youth restitution fines older than 10 years. The bill also prevents the state from requiring that each juvenile in a single

case be charged 100% of restitution fines separately.

AB 1810 (Bryan) – Effective January 1, 2025, this bill requires state prison facilities with incarcerated individuals who menstruate, experience vaginal or uterine bleeding to be given access to sanitary products without having to request them.

AB 1875 (McKinnor) – Effective January 1, 2028, The Culturally Competent Hair Care Act requires local jails and state facilities that have a store for the residents to provide sulfate-free

shampoos and conditioners, curl creams, and gel.

AB 1960 (Soria) – This bill gives sentencing enhancements for individuals who participate in the commission of or attempt a felony of damaging, taking or destroying property.

AB 2310 (Hart) – Effective January 1, 2025, this bill requires important notices and forms to be available in the five most common languages of eligible parolees.

AB 2483 (Ting) – Effective January 1, 2025, this bill requires judges,

public defenders, and stakeholders to meet prior to new resentencing laws in order to discuss procedures. CDCR is required to assist litigants with retrieving institutional records within 30 days of request.

SB 285 (Allen) – Individuals given life without parole or a death sentence for a sexually violent offense are ineligible for resentencing if their judgment has not been reviewed and verified by the sentencing court by January 1, 2025.

SB 1069 (Menjivar) – Effective January 1, 2025,

this bill gives the Office of the Inspector General investigative authority over cases of misconduct including sexual interaction between staff and an incarcerated person. The OIG would compile investigation reports to be submitted to hiring authorities.

Vetoed Bills:

AB 2160 (McKinnor) – Would have required states to let pregnant women request a hearing for a delay in sentencing or a delay of their sentence. The bill

would have also required county jails and state prisons to offer pregnancy tests when requested and to keep pregnancy results confidential.

SB 94 (Cortese) – Would have allowed LWOPs to be resentenced if the incarcerated person had already served 25 years in CDCR custody and the harm they caused occurred before June 5, 1990.

SB 254 (Skinner) – Would have given media outlets access to incarcerated people to conduct face-to-face interviews at tour facilities.

Organization fights to repeal Three Strikes Law

By **Jambri Johnson, Sr.**
Journalism Guild Writer

The public may have lost interest in the efforts to repeal California's controversial three strikes law, but the 30,000 second-strikers and the 7,000 third-strikers have not.

In 2022, activists who are strongly opposed to the law ran into significant road blocks that stopped their efforts altogether.

"We couldn't get on the ballot," said Earlonne Woods, the co-creator of San Quentin's Ear Hustle podcast. He has fought against the three-strike law for 15 years.

Despite the plethora of new judicial reforms and rehabilitation programs, the three-strike rule has not changed.

"We have to end three strikes. There's no place for it," said Woods. "There's no backing from other organizations."

He said his organization, C.H.O.O.S.E. 1 (Could Hip-Hop Overthrow Oppressive Sentence Enactments) has faced many roadblocks while trying to correct the damage from the last three decades.

Over the last two years, it was unable to secure sufficient backing, and there has been no major funding invested in the movement.

Woods, who was sentenced to 31-years-to-life under the three strikes law, described how his organization was unable to keep up with the long hours. He talked about how a shortage of volunteers hindered them from competing with the mechanism of politics.



SQNews Archive

Incarcerated individual walking from a holding cage

When asked whether there would be any action taken to finally rid the state of the law, he simply said, "No."

Under Cal. Penal Code §1170.1, §667(b)-(i) many incarcerated individuals are excluded from receiving relief from the administration and courts.

Most of the reforms went directly to those who have been convicted of non-violent crimes and drug offenses, or were youth offenders.

It can explain why politicians are deterred from putting it on the ballot. This can create an unfair reality on what actually needs to be done.

San Quentin resident Haben Michael, 32, is not a lifer, but has been adversely affected by the three strikes law. He has four total strikes and this is only his first prison term.

"If I didn't have the enhancements, I would have been home years ago," said Michael.

He is referring to the exclusion of convicted felons who fall under P.C. 1170(d), §1170.126. He said the only relief available to people like

him is Assembly Bill 600.

"It kills hope. It makes you feel like; why should I go into a good program," he said.

Michael is serving 26 years for a deal he accepted. He doesn't qualify for the youth offender laws, even though he was 23 at the time of his crime.

Residents report a sense of hopelessness when it comes to the reform of the three strikes law. The stigma is that the public and law makers are insensitive to reform of the incarcerated.

For example, under the rules associated with elderly parole, individuals who suffer a third strike are excluded from going to a parole hearing after serving 20 years and are 50-years-old. Instead, they must serve 25 years and be 60-years-old.

Senate Bills 260 and 261's provisions require the Board of Parole Hearings to conduct youth offender sessions to consider releasing those who committed their crimes when they were under 25.

However, it excludes those who are serving life without the possibility of parole or who

have been sentenced under the three strikes law.

San Quentin resident Eddie Turner a 62-year-old lifer was sentenced to 35-years-to-life in 2008. He claims to suffer a significant amount of anxiety behind the three strikes dilemma.

"It's not fair," said Turner. "We already did the time for that."

He is referring to the prior strikes he accumulated over the decades. He admitted to being a repeat offender, but struggles to understand why staying out of trouble for the last 17 years carries no weight.

Turner filed two separate motions requesting relief, one under the exceptional conduct rule pursuant to 1170, which asks the administration to recommend re-sentencing, but was denied because he did not have enough programming.

"It makes me feel good knowing that I have been on the straight and narrow while I have been here. But it makes me feel like hope has failed me," Turner said. "Knowing I've been here doing all the right things, I have no hope in the courts."

John "Yay Yay" Johnson, a formerly incarcerated person who was sentenced to 32-years-to-life, is preparing a documentary on three strikes. It is outlining what some consider prejudicial treatment to men of color and older Caucasian men.

Woods stressed that outside support and contributions are central to the success of getting the measure on the ballot in the future, allowing voters to finally decide the matter.

Medicaid funding available before parole

By **Michael Callahan**
Staff Writer

Three counties in California implemented a new program which will provide Medi-Cal to persons leaving prisons and jails.

California became the first state in the nation approved to use Medicaid funding for specific services 90-days prior to residents release, according to *Capradio*.

Counties like Inyo, Santa Clara, and Yuba were approved by the California Department of Health Care and Services to offer physical and behavioral health consultations, lab services, and medication prior to being released from prison.

The report stated the program will focus on mental illness care and substance use disorder treatment. The program is open to any individual eligible for Medi-Cal in prison. CDHCS stated that at least 80% of the 350,000 individuals leaving prison or jail are eligible for Medi-Cal.

In January 2023, the state's multi-year effort to better meet health and social needs of people leaving, started with California by advancing and innovating Medi-Cal justice involved initiative.

Capradio credited the federal government waiver of their restriction on offering Medicaid to incarcerated people. California plans to require all counties to participate by October 2026.

CDCR parole program contacts and more information can be found on the California

Health Care Foundation website

Prerelease Community Programs where individuals can serve the end of sentences:

Alternative Custody Program (Statewide).

Caltrans Parolee Work Crew Program (Alameda, Fresno, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Bernardino, and San Joaquin).

Community Prisoner Mother Program (Los Angeles).

Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Program (Kern, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Joaquin).

Day Reporting Center/Community-Based Coalition (23 counties).

Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program (El Dorado, Los Angeles, Merced, Orange, and San Bernardino).

Male Community Reentry Program (Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Kern, Los Angeles, Nevada, Placer, and San Diego).

Residential programs and support services include substance use treatment, cognitive behavior therapies, transitional housing, and job placement and training.

Parolee Service Center (San Diego).

Specialized Treatment for Optimized Programming (most counties).

Transitional Housing Program (Los Angeles).

Outpatient and drop-in programs offer employment assistance, relationship and family reintegration, CBT, education/ vocational, and housing.

Second Look movement reassesses lengthy sentences

By **C. K. Gerhartsreiter**
Staff Writer

The phenomenon of mass incarceration changed criminal justice in important ways, particularly with sentencing policies. Ever-younger defendants, treated as adults, received sentences that amounted to life. For many non-homicide crimes, courts handed out sentences longer than for homicide crimes.

A report on "The Second Look Movement: A Review of the Nation's Sentence Review Laws" by the Sentencing Project detailed a California case, *People v. Contreras*, that resulted in a sentence of 50-years-to-life for kidnapping and sexual offenses and in which no one had died.

Such sentencing policies — and the irreversibility of the convictions — have produced an ever bigger and an ever-older prison population, said the report. Motivated by the high cost of housing such populations, legislators and

courts began to consider judicial review as a means to reassess lengthy sentences, starting a movement called "Second Look."

The report defined "Second Look" as "Legislation authorizing judges to review sentences after a person has served a lengthy period of time has been referred to as a second-look law and more colloquially as 'sentence review.'"

The report outlined two U.S. Supreme Court decisions as having helped the movement: *Graham v. Florida* in 2010, and *Miller v. Alabama* in 2012.

Graham deemed unconstitutional Juvenile Life Without Parole (JLWOP) sentences imposed for non-homicide offenses because states must give youth offenders a "meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation." The report said the ruling remained very small in scale, applying only to 123

incarcerated persons.

Somewhat larger in scale, the *Miller* ruling brought relief to about 2,000 persons incarcerated with JLWOP sentences. *Miller* pronounced mandatory JLWOP sentences for homicide as "cruel and unusual punishment." *Miller*, though, did not prohibit the LWOP sentences for adults, said the report. The case also created a standard called "Miller factors" of "mitigating and transient factors of youth" that required judges to consider young defendants as "permanently incorrigible" before imposing the most severe sentence of life without parole.

To support the movement for reform, The Sentencing Project said it started the Second Look Network in 2023, with members including a variety of legal professionals and mitigation specialists who delivered direct post-conviction representation to incarcerated persons. Groups as dissimilar as Fair and Just

Prosecution, a network of local prosecutors, and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers have come to play important roles. Many public defender offices and law school clinics have also joined.

According to the report, a list of over 100 contributors included the American Bar Association, the Council on Criminal Justice's Task Force on Long Sentences, and the National Academies of Sciences, which researched racial disparities in incarceration.

In California, the network said it has aided the creation of two major achievements. In 2018, a new law made eligible for recall of sentences and re-sentencing any U.S. military veterans and current U.S. service members with determinate sentences for felonies, even if convicted by plea agreement.

Also in 2018, California enacted the nation's first prosecutor-initiated re-sentencing law that allowed

prosecutors to petition courts for sentence reductions. The report said the "nonprofit organization For The People touts that prosecutor-initiated re-sentencing (PIR) is a 'powerful tool to help repair the damage' of the disproportionate incarceration of Black and Brown people."

To "improve consistency, clarity, and meaningful application based on a review of the current laws and court decisions," the Sentencing Project's report detailed 10 recommendations.

In summary, their first goal would increase eligibility for sentence review. The network said they also wanted to make certain that all provisions in the law would have full retroactivity.

Next, the network would like courts to have authority and discretion to reduce mandatory and plea-bargained sentences. Their next goals included shorter wait times between reviews, with a right to counsel for the petition and

the hearing and make hearings into a right.

In hearings, the network would like to see enumerated factors the court should consider and to require courts to address enumerated factors either on the record or in a written decision.

The Sentencing Project would also like to ensure input from crime survivors. Finally, the Sentencing Project would want courts to have clear authority to reduce sentences.

The report said that in passing sentencing reform, "the California Legislature declared that the purpose of sentencing is 'public safety achieved through punishment, rehabilitation, and restorative justice.'" Other state legislatures provided an additional rationale: "By providing a means to reevaluate a sentence after some time has passed, the legislature intends to provide the prosecutor and the court with another tool to ensure that these purposes are achieved."



Above: Martin DeWitt
Below: Tyrone "Luqman" Jones



Above: Lawrence Randall
Below: James Staggs



Above: T.J. Marshall
Below: Jason Jackson



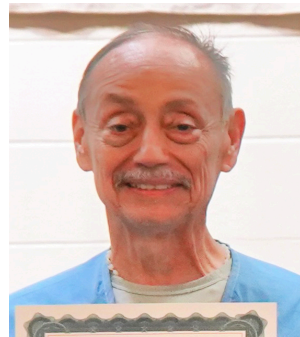
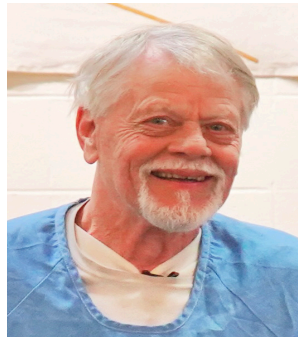
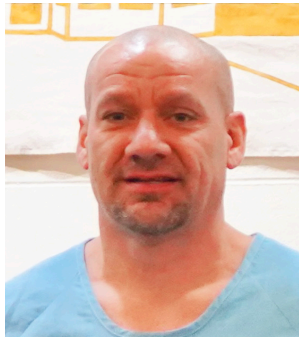
Above: Cesar Martinez
Below: Charles Vanvliet



Above: Sammie Nichols
Below: Raymond Ruiz



Above: Harold Bicknell
Below: Eric Allen



Photos By Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Incarcerated reporters' futures look bright among graduates

By Joshua Strange
Contributing Writer

San Quentin News celebrated the graduation of its English and Spanish Journalism Guild students on December 13 in the Garden Chapel. Given that incarcerated reporters are the heart and soul of any prison newspaper, SQNews appears to be beating strong among the new guild writers.

The graduates expressed gratitude for the opportunity to improve their writing skills, deepen their rehabilitation, and help speak on behalf of their peers through their journalism.

"I'm blessed to have this opportunity to spread my voice beyond these walls," said graduate Terrell Marshall in an interview. "It shows what you can do if you put your mind to it." He described finding a new purpose through journalism in order to "spread the rehabilitative message to other inmates across the state and around the world."

Another of the 15 graduates of the English guild, Martin K. DeWitt, said, "It was really exciting to see my name on the byline [in the newspaper] the first time, especially since it was something near and dear to my heart—sports." While baseball is his first love, DeWitt was surprised to discover he also has a passion for writing

about social justice. "I love being able to give a voice to the unheard," said DeWitt. "I've got the bug now!"

In attendance was Jesse Vasquez, a former editor-in-chief of SQNews who is now the executive director of the Pollen Initiative, a nonprofit that supports incarcerated journalists and newspapers.

"With every new graduation of the guild, we are building a stronger foundation and broader network of writers, whether they write for San Quentin News or someone else," said Vasquez prior to the ceremony. He explained that guild writers help give "policy makers and society anecdotal evidence of the rehabilitation that is possible."

Vasquez noted that Pollen Initiative's expansion of guild classes to other prisons, including the Central California Women's Facility, helps open more perspectives to be shared. He added, "Even though there are no guilds or newspapers in every institution, incarcerated people everywhere can still contribute. We want their voices to be heard and all of the community to stay engaged through letters-to-the-editor and contributing writer articles."

Keynote speaker William Drummond, a UC Berkeley

journalism professor and SQNews adviser, said, "I'm enthusiastic about coming here because I see that change is evident. Every time I edit a story, I learn a lot."

He told the graduates that journalism is a lifelong commitment that will be useful in all that they do. Drummond praised the positive impact of the newspaper, sharing his opinion that the California Model reform efforts would not have been possible without the journalism and rehabilitative example of SQNews. To conclude his remarks, Drummond led the graduates on a chant of "Yo soy alguien! I am somebody!"

English Journalism graduate Lawrence Randall is one of those somebodies. "I've been kicked out of every school I've ever been in due to anger issues ... Not even homeschooling worked," Randall said, sharing that it was surreal to be graduating for the first time ever, and on his birthday no less.

"This is proof that God is keeping his part of the bargain. This is so huge. More than words can express," Randall said with tears in his eyes. "I love to write stories about underdogs because I'm that underdog."

He said he wants everyone to know that it is not where

you start, but how you finish. No matter your past or the mistakes you have made, you can go on to do great things. "This is what not giving up looks like. I never stopped believing. I even had a front page story [published] this year," Randall said.

Warden Chance Andes also spoke to graduates. "The ability to write is amazing," Andes said. "You are the foundation of what we are trying to do."

Next up, Spanish guild graduates received their certificates from Chairperson Edwin Chavez. "When I think of SQNews, I think of the history we are collectively creating here today," Chavez said. "Thirty years ago when I came to prison as a lost teenager, I didn't know how to read or write. Now, I invite you to ask yourself ... did you ever think you would be sitting here today as a journalist? This is the history I am talking about!"

Chavez noted that 2024 was a great year for the Spanish-speaking community with the first ever soccer game between the incarcerated and CDCR staff, which resulted in the first front-page Spanish article in SQNews.

Spanish guild graduate Rene Lorenzo said he has been given the opportunity to "help people get out of darkness

through journalism," learning how to empathize with people more deeply instead of judging them.

Spanish valedictorian Marvin Vasquez also spoke. "I believe we are pillars of the Spanish-speaking community. We are a model and an example to follow," he said.

Next, English Guild Chair Jerry "Maleek" Gearin presented certificates to the graduates. "This is our job: to inspire people, to help people, to impact people," Gearin said.

He thanked the newspaper's advisers who make it all possible. "No matter what language people speak or whether they are involved in the criminal justice system, everyone should have a voice. San Quentin News is a platform to provide a voice to the voiceless through journalism," Gearin said.

After a short video presentation about the class, Gearin shared some quotes from guild students in praise of their instructor, Lisa Armstrong, a UC Berkeley journalism professor. "Coming from Watts, California, I never imagined being in a journalism class... Thank you for every class that you taught and continue to teach," said one quote. "She showed us the importance of reporting on ordinary people overcoming

extraordinary circumstances," said another.

Gearin turned the mic over to graduate Sammy Nichols, who shared a spoken-word piece. "Sometimes we forget that behind all these stories, is another story," Nichols said.

English guild class valedictorian Tyrone D. Jones said, "In my years of incarceration, I've always craved a platform where my voice could be heard. Nine months ago, I was given that opportunity."

To conclude, Armstrong spoke to the graduates. "I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to be a journalist. It has taken me all over the world, allowing me to cross paths with people I would have not otherwise, including being able to work with all of you. ... I see you as I see my [university] students, and I see something more," Armstrong said, wiping away tears. "Thank you. You have changed my life in ways that I can't adequately put into words."

As the graduates and guests enjoyed a meal and refreshments, SQNews adviser and honorary "fairy godmother" Jan Perry said she always leaves feeling uplifted. "These graduations always bring out a lot of emotion; intense, but in a good way," Perry said.



Resident with family in visiting room in Avenal

Avenal holds Halloween event in visiting

CDCR Press Release

Avenal State Prison and California Correctional Institution (CCI) are the latest institutions to submit their information to the Halloween

visiting round-up. At CCI, incarcerated artists painted Halloween themed backdrops for visiting. Meanwhile at Avenal (above), they held a special visiting event for families.

Sacramento Republic FC soccer kicks it at Folsom State Prison



Photos courtesy of CDCR Press Release

CDCR Press Release

The Sacramento Republic FC soccer team brought its entire roster to Folsom State Prison for a scrimmage match.

Republic FC president and general manager Todd Dunivant has been visiting the institution once a month for seven years. During these visits, he brings staffers and select players to connect with the incarcerated population.

Above: Republic FC soccer team and Folsom residents
Below right: Folsoms team won the scrimmage

This October event was unique as it was the first time the soccer club's entire roster of nearly 30 players came to train and play. The Sac Republic played against incarcerated players.

In the end, Folsom's Intergalactico team won the scrimmage 6-1 against the Republic FC.



CDCR promotes healthier workplace through trauma-informed care

By Justin Wharton
Journalism Guild Writer

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation have introduced trauma-informed staff training to promote a healthier workplace, according to the *Inside CDCR*.

San Quentin's Chief Medical Executive, Dr. Alison Pachynski related progressive steps that CDCR have undertaken to facilitate opportunities to confront PTSD for their correctional officers, in an interview with SQNews.

"SQ has a resource team of officers on the 4th floor of the medical facility trained by AMEND. Located at University of California San Francisco, AMEND is a public health and human rights program that works in prisons to reduce the debilitating health effects on residents and staff," said Dr. Pachynski.

Pachynski added, "CDCR has a wellness mobile app which provides a help now button and wellness tool kit available to correctional staff and their families. This module is focused on emotional wellness and wellbeing."

Trauma-informed training is part of the California Model goals to reduce toxic stress and increase safety and wellness beginning with staff.

"Becoming trauma-informed promotes a healthier workplace that starts with our staff. It lays the foundation for a bigger

shift in how we operate," said Briana Rojas, M.D. CDCR's chief psychologist and the associate director of the Office of Employee Wellness, according to a December 2023 article by *Inside CDCR*. "... Becoming trauma-informed starts with becoming trauma aware, therefore shifting the culture for everyone working and living in the correctional department. If we acknowledge the trauma, we can try to minimize the trauma."

Natasha A. Frost, Ph.D., associate professor and associate dean of Northeastern University, has led a National Institute of Justice. NIJ funded research to investigate correctional officer short- and long-term impacts of chronic operational and organizational stressors related to exposure to violent and traumatic incidents.

Frost's research spanned from 2010-2023 the Massachusetts Department of Corrections (MODOC).

At a 2023 NIJ Research Conference, she related that a higher percentage of correctional officers exhibited signs of suicidal, symptoms of PTSD, anger, anxiety, and distress, in comparison, to the low percentage found among new correctional officers from 2020-2023 according to Frost.

The research seeks to identify the compromised mental health to understand precursors to suicide among correctional officers stated Frost.

"Officers fear repercussions at work, for instance in their fitness-for-duty evaluations," she said. "They are reluctant to disclose mental health issues and to seek help when they are struggling. This has broader implications for both the workforce and for the incarcerated population," Frost said.

"Thankfully, some of those conversations have now started, and officer health and wellness is becoming a priority of correction agencies across the country."

According to *Inside CDCR*, recognizing that everyone has traumatic experiences is key to introducing a change in healthier interactions with employees, an incarcerated person, and family members.

"These style of courses help us assist our brothers and sisters in all departments in getting rid of the notion that nothing bothers us, said Lt. Mike Santoya regarding staff training around trauma.

"The 'it is what it is' mentality is something I notice I have and am slowly removing that thought process... Speaking for myself, this will not be an easy transition but needs to happen," Santoya said.

Dr. Pachynski recalled an experience when an officer approached her regarding the wellbeing of a resident he had been paying attention to.

"This type of concern and change of culture that is happening here at SQ is the spirit and community that makes this a rehabilitation center," she concluded.

Act funds legal representation as a human right

6th Amendment of U. S. Constitution ensures criminal defendants right to counsel

By Lilliana Ablaza
Journalism Guild Writer

The Criminal Justice Act provides funding for a person defending themselves in a federal case to safeguard the retention of legal representation.

The Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution ensures a federal criminal defendant's right to defense counsel, regardless of their ability to pay, according to *uscourts.gov*.

"By consistently providing exceptional legal representation... federal defenders and CJA panel attorneys play a crucial role in safeguarding individual rights," said Elizabeth Luck, chief of the Defender Services

Office at the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

Luck discussed the importance of committing to the principle of 'equal justice towards law'. She describes this as an integral part of maintaining an ethical justice system, the report said.

Around 90% of criminal defendants receive court-appointed assistance from attorneys, investigators, and expert testimonies which is paid under the CJA. Six decades since its enactment, the CJA remains the precedent for affording effective counsel to Americans facing criminal charges, the report said.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson spoke to the lasting significance of the

CJA in modern-day America. A former CJA attorney in the 1970s, Thompson was present throughout the Act's earliest years and its development, ensuring that individuals have representation regardless of their financial situation.

In a February event at Edward A. Garmatz U.S. Courthouse in Maryland, Thompson lectured on the history and continued relevance of the CJA. In attendance was an audience of over 100 federal defenders and CJA panel attorneys, said the article.

"As to what the future holds, I can only say to all of you, do not be close-minded to change or to new ideas," said Thompson.

DOJ focuses on transformation and reentry

By Harold Bicknell
Journalism Guild Writer

A recent Department of Justice program finds communication, caring, and compassion the key to addressing cultural needs within Corrections.

The ongoing mission of the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Visiting Fellows Program is to support correctional agencies by developing and transforming jail and prison environments, provide cross-developmental opportunities for staff, practitioners, and researchers, according to the DOJ - Office of Justice Programs.

"The way the prisons and jails are designed, the way the policies are enforced, creates a situation where they [staff and residents] often feel disrespected, put upon, definitely harmed," said Dr. Danielle Rudes, Ph.D. in a Podcast called *Justice Today*. She went on to say her fellowship focuses on enhancing spaces and cultures within correctional facilities.

Rudes discovered that staff requested more appreciation and communication from the leadership. When she interviewed staff, most complained about the lack of coverage for people who work back-to-back shifts. When these stories go

unchecked, Rudes says they become a staff's perceived reality because of the lack of communication with management, the article said.

Despite difficulties surrounding the conducting of her research during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rudes discovered a possible source to assist in the transformation of this negatively-charged environment.

"It was fascinating how much the staff wanted to be helpful to each other and the residents - and something that most people probably don't know, the residents want to be helpful to the staff, and they want to be helpful to each other," said Rudes.

1. Texas (*The New York Times*) - The day before his scheduled execution, Robert Roberson was summoned to testify in front of the house committee. Roberson's lawyers say he did not kill his 2-year-old daughter. The summons to the legislative branch was the first time an execution was halted. The Texas Supreme Court found that legislators had acted outside the scope of their power, which clears the way for Roberson's execution to proceed.

2. Oklahoma (*News On 2.6*) - The Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council reported in September that Oklahoma County Jail populations are the lowest since the 1990s. The new restoration center and diversion hub are two reasons for the decrease. City police have also increased their "cite and release" practices. "All of those things together, along with the behavioral care center and new jail, are going to give us so many more options on diverting people away from incarceration and into treatment and accountability programs..." said Timothy Tardibono, executive director of the advisory council.

3. Minnesota (*Associated Press*) - A man convicted of murder and sentenced to life was found innocent after serving 16 years. Edgar Barrientos-Quintana was released after the Conviction Review Unit found key evidence that exonerated him. "Nothing can give Mr. Barrientos-Quintana back those 16 years, and for that, we are so sorry," said Mary Moriarty, an attorney for Barrientos-Quintana.

4. Missouri (*Associated Press*) - A Missouri man was executed for murdering a woman in 1998,



NEWS BRIEFS By BOSTYON JOHNSON MANAGING EDITOR

even though her family and the prosecutor objected. Marcellus Williams's attorney noted bias in his trial's jury selection and the handling of evidence in the case. However, Governor Mike Parson (R) said the case had "languished for decades, revictimizing Ms. Gayle's family over and over again." NAACP President Derrick Johnson noted that the execution was another lynching of an innocent Black man.

5. Alabama (*Associated Press*) - Federal oversight is being almost completely discontinued at Julia Tutwiler Prison in Wetumpka after nine years. "I am thankful for the men and women who are dedicated to our mission," said

John Hamm, a commissioner with Alabama Department of Corrections. Known violations at the prison were disregard of the ban on cruel and unusual punishment, according to a federal lawsuit, which called state officials "deliberately indifferent" to the problems. The Alabama Department of Corrections disputed the allegations in both cases.

6. South Carolina (*Associated Press*) - The state Supreme Court issued an order to cease issuing death warrants until January 3 in recognition of the holidays. "Six consecutive executions with virtually no respite will take a substantial toll on all involved, particularly during a time of year that

is so important to families," according to a lawyer for the inmates. However representatives for the state declared that executions during the holidays have happened in the past, including five executions between December 1998 and January 1999.

7. Pennsylvania (*The New York Times*) - Investigators uncovered harassment of employees, and substandard healthcare at one of the country's busiest medium-security transport hubs, run by the federal Bureau of Prisons. The report also uncovered violations of policy and standard medical practices, including patients taken off antidepressants without a doctor's consultation, noted the report. The

bureau's director Colette S. Peters noted changing from a standard lockup to a transfer hub has major impacts on staff positions at the facility, but the matter is being investigated.

8. New York (*The New York Times*) - A Federal Judge in New York gave the Department of Correction leaders an order demanding them to produce a plan of receivership for the violent and dangerous Rikers Island complex. Attorney Alan Howard Scheiner, a lawyer for the corrections department, noted the progress made over the past year. However, Judge Laura Taylor Swain gave the department 45 days to come up with a vision of

receivership, because lives of staff and residents "continue to be in danger."

9. New York (*WABCEyewitness News*) - A new law seals the records of some people with felony convictions eight years after their release from incarceration. Only certain crimes qualify; the exceptions are crimes of sex, murder convictions, and Class A felonies. Sealing the records will allow people the chance of finding employment. "The best crime-fighting tool is a good-paying job," said New York Gov. Kathy Hochul. Individuals with a misdemeanor can have their record sealed either three years after their conviction or release from prison.

MTC unveils 16 new alumni on “Freedom Wall”

By Terrell J. Marshall
Journalism Guild Writer

Mt. Tamalpais College at San Quentin unveiled its newest photos of formerly incarcerated alumni as a part of the college’s “Freedom Wall.”

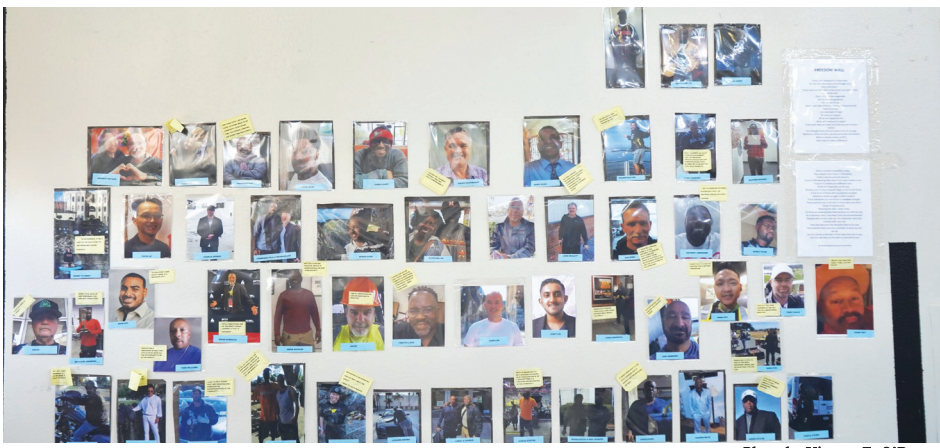
Over 60 formerly incarcerated and current MTC graduates gathered in the Education Department’s B-building annex to observe the newest collection of alumni pictures, promote higher learning, and discuss the connection between education and success after prison.

“It’s important to hear from students firsthand about returning back to society,” said Kirsten Pickering, a Mt. Tam educator. “It’s beneficial to those on the same journey to witness what’s possible.”

Three of the 16 new alumni photos displayed included John Lam, Timothy Long, and Sumit Lal, each of whom attended the event and shared their personal journey.

“If you don’t have a solid plan, my advice is that MTC can help you get on the right track,” said Lam.

He explained how



60 Mt. Tamalpais alumni adorn wall in B-building

Photo by Vincent E. O’Bannon

beings part of the college community helped him get through being incarcerated and also plays a vital role in his life achievements outside of prison.

“Focus on what you learn in here. It’s super beneficial and your credits are transferable to UC programs,” said Lam. “If you find yourself here, you can make it anywhere.”

Once known as the Prison University Project, MTC has grown into an inclusive culture of learning and community that promotes

change and personal growth through education.

Students of MTC have the opportunity to earn an Associate of Arts degree and are supported by professors, teachers, and faculty members, which help residents inside and outside of prison.

Corey McNeil, a formerly incarcerated MTC alumnus, helps students navigate their educational goals. He has become an important resource for those using education as a platform to accelerate their

rehabilitation.

“This is my community and now I’m in a position to help,” said McNeil. “Enjoy the journey. It may seem hard and the path unclear; just take one step at a time. It’s worth it.”

Resident students of MTC asked the returning alumni what challenges they could expect to encounter when they get out.

“I suffered from impostor syndrome,” said Lal. “You don’t feel like you belong and it takes a while to get through that.”

Lal explained that it’s not always going to be a given that you will succeed right when you get out of prison. He faced difficulties when looking for a job and turned in 82 applications. He was turned down 81 times.

Lal said that there are stresses and struggles when integrating back into the world and that you have to hold on to hope, be resilient and consistent.

“Believe in yourself. Looking pass your past is important,” Lal advised the crowd.

Another formerly incarcerated alumnus, Timothy Long shared how powerful education is when facing everyday issues outside of prison.

“The problem-solving skills and analytical ways of thinking learned at Mt. Tam help you to make decisions and give you confidence when faced with adversity,” said Long.

Long said that going to college helped him find his moral compass. “Accountability is everything. How you act in here is how you will act when you get out.”

Long made a decision to change by going to school. He said that the communication skills he learned help so much outside of prison. “If you are in MTC seeking change, you are in the right place,” said Long.

After thanking faculty, staff, residents, and featured guests, emcee Henok Rufael pulled down the curtain unveiling the 16 new photographs.

Rufael added the pictures to the middle row of the freedom wall. “Events like this keep it feeling more like a campus, not like a prison,” said Rufael.

Resident MTC clerk Victor Olguin said how he felt about the day’s event. “I admire these guys. It takes courage to come back to a place where they were incarcerated and share their experiences.”

While viewing the additional alumni added to the freedom wall, now adorned with 58 photos, resident and current MTC student Oscar Acosta said, “To see them out there shining is a blessing. It’s motivation these are friends of mine [and] we went through the struggle together.”

Attorney lures residents with promises of resentencing

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

Stuck in a California prison with a life sentence and little hope? A lawyer who grew up in Palo Alto, went to Princeton and Berkeley Law, once worked as a prosecutor in the Bronx, and who marketed himself as “California’s top-ranked habeas attorney ... in the top 1% among California’s criminal lawyers” would gladly help.

The lawyer, Aaron Spolin, told prospective clients, most of them incarcerated for violent crimes including murder, that the “progressive Los Angeles [County] District Attorney George Gascon could move to free them in less than a year under one new resentencing law.”

“He got me for \$3,000,” said San Quentin resident Steven Brooks about Spolin. “He made a lot of promises and then delivered nothing. Everybody should know that the guy is a crook.”

“He pushes people and tries to give them hope when there is no hope and he knows there is no hope,” said a retired public defender, as quoted in an article by Harriet Ryan, an investigative reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Freedom through Spolin had a steep price: Resentencing ran at about \$10,000, his other fees “could run north of \$40,000.” Did high fees assure success? Not in Spolin’s cases. “None of Spolin’s attempts, for which families paid about \$10,000 each, appear to have been successful,” said Ryan’s article.

San Quentin resident Anthony Oliver, 59, a non-violent three-strike lifer with a 25-years-to-life sentence for stalking without a restraining order, has served for 26-and-a-half years. In 2022, he hired Spolin to do a commutation application and a resentencing petition.

“After all that I have done and accomplished, I thought I had a good chance to go home. Spolin made it seem like relief would happen. After I paid \$20,000 to Spolin, the governor never replied. I never heard from Spolin again.”

Oliver added, “Lawyers should be fair and truthful. I believe Spolin has taken advantage of me and others, due to our desire to be free.”

In 2021, San Quentin

resident Troy Varnado, 45, paid Spolin \$18,500 for a commutation application and a resentencing petition. The account of his dealings with Spolin sounded almost identical to Oliver’s account — and so did the outcome: Spolin failed. Varnado said he regretted ever having dealt with Spolin.

On August 29, 2024, the *Times* published an article about disciplinary charges over “offering false hope” of freeing incarcerated clients. In this article, Ryan wrote the state bar association “accused Spolin of 18 violations of the rules of professional conduct for attorneys and the state business code, including moral turpitude and unconscionable fees.”

Ryan quoted the bar’s top prosecutor, Chief Trial Counsel George Cordona, as having stated, “Offering false hope to those in dire straits for one’s own financial gain is contrary to a lawyer’s responsibilities.” Ryan said Spolin had signed-on over 2,000 incarcerated clients.

Ryan’s writing depicted Spolin as exhibiting a unique combination of exaggeration bordering on massive fraud and of blundering verging on gross ineptitude. According to the articles, Spolin excelled at the single task of offering hope to desperate incarcerated persons by making them believe in the expectation of lights at the ends of their legal tunnels.

What took Spolin on this course of allegedly unethical gain?

Spolin used to work for McKinsey & Co., a once unsullied but now scandal-ridden management consultancy. McKinsey played key roles in the collapse of Enron and in the 2008 financial crisis, said Dana Sanchez of Moguldom.com. Several McKinsey partners and its CEO also went to prison, mostly for the business sin of insider trading. On November 12, 2024, the firm paid \$650 million to settle its role in marketing of OxyContin. Ryan’s articles suggested that Spolin might have learned the tricks of his trade at McKinsey.

The *Economist* characterized McKinsey and a few firms like it as “snake-oil salesmen, bamboozling chief executives and politicians with management gibberish and

glossy charts while gorging on fat fees.” Gerben Wierda of EAPJ.org assigned a word to professional work that chiefly benefits the professional: he called it “parasitic.” Ryan’s articles suggested the same about Spolin.

Spolin charged a lot for very little: \$3,000 for a case-review, an “innovation” Ryan called “McKinsey-inspired.” Most lawyers would conduct case reviews free-of-charge, said one of Ryan’s articles, and a few of them charged nominal fees of perhaps \$500 at the most. In typical management consulting fashion, Spolin told clients what they already knew.

Outsourcing, another common McKinsey stratagem, allowed Spolin to decentralize his law office into low-overhead co-workspaces and to hire lawyers from as far away as the “Philippines and other developing countries making about \$10 per hour.” Such low-paid contract lawyers “had little or no experience in criminal appeals,” said Ryan.

Most of them had no California law license. Ryan quoted one such contract lawyer, who worked for Spolin remotely from the Philippines, as having said that he had “no prior training in appellate law or California’s criminal justice reforms.” McKinsey has a satellite office in the Philippines.

“Habeas petitions are long shots by their nature with failure rate estimated as high as 98%,” said the article, yet the developing-world attorney “recommended two services to almost every family — commutation applications and pursuit of resentencing through the D.A. — because they theoretically applied to every inmate.” He added, “There was nothing to lose. That was the justification. These were already incarcerated people,” he said.

Spolin deviated from McKinsey in one way: the firm liked to deal with very large businesses that could easily afford the fees. Spolin, though, dealt with clients whose family members had to work second and third jobs and borrowed on credit cards to pay him, Ryan’s investigation reported.

Some Spolin clients did report success. Ryan’s article quoted Darrell Tittle, Jr., as having had a “magical experience” in dealing with Spolin with a resentencing.

Tittle went free after 20 years in prison. Although Ryan at first reported that none of Spolin’s resentencing efforts had succeeded, this case contradicted her earlier report.

A story by PRNewswire says that Spolin’s efforts overturned the 1993 conviction of an unnamed client referenced only by case number. Thrice denied parole on a 26-years-to-life sentence, Centinela State Prison released the Spolin client in 2022.

SQRC resident Ferdinand Flowers, 42, said he maintained his faith in Spolin.

“He did not promise me a lot, but what he did promise, he delivered,” said Flowers, “He came recommended by two of my friends at a previous prison, and they told me he is very professional. He did more for me than my last lawyer did.”

Flowers said he had Spolin file a petition for resentencing. “He charges from \$9,000 to \$12,000. He finally finished, it took him about 6 months. He sent me a computer draft and he said that I could add to it if I wanted to and he would give me his input.

“He told me from the beginning, ‘I can’t guarantee anything,’ but he promised he would do the best he could to represent me. He did give me some discounts on petitions and a couple free things he would do.”

The McKinsey-inspired Spolin business model produced huge profits while dashing the hopes of many incarcerated persons. The scale of Spolin’s activities appeared staggeringly high. Other firms have begun to copy Spolin’s business model and at one point, Spolin wanted to expand his brand into Texas, New York, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Such expansion strategies sounded as if they came directly from the McKinsey playbook. Attempts to reach Spolin have failed.

McKinsey has always touted its expertise in adapting to changing business environments and Spolin might recently have adapted his strategy. One of Ryan’s articles said he has reinvented himself as a habeas expert. “Spolin has started recommending families pursue a new reform passed last year that allows inmates to challenge their convictions on racial discrimination grounds.”

The cost: \$24,700.

\$7 million settlement over death in Santa Rita County jail

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

Nine deputy sheriffs and two health care workers face abuse charges after a man was found unresponsive in a Santa Rita jail cell.

Adanté Pointer, the family lawyer for Maurice Monk, who was found dead in 2021 after being left for several days without adequate medical care, has brought to light the Dublin jail’s reputation, further enforcing KQED’s classification of the jail as dangerous and unforgiving.

“We’re hopeful that by way of criminal prosecution, Santa Rita Jail must shape up [as] the community will not stand by and watch their loved ones receive substandard treatment and allow all these deaths to continue,” said Pointer, according to a KQED report on November 13.

Initially, Monk’s family was told that his death was of natural causes, however after Pointer filed a civil rights lawsuit in federal court, the family reached a \$7 million settlement with Alameda County. The lawsuit ultimately proved that natural causes were not the true reason for Monk’s death.

His story is one of many. And while the settlement is encouraging, it is only a temporary fix to the ongoing issues that not only affect state facilities, but also federal detention centers.

The Office of the Inspector General published a report in 2023 titled “Examining and Preventing Deaths of Incarcerated Individuals in Federal Prisons,” which highlighted foundational challenges and operational issues that contribute to failures in these four areas: Challenges with staffing, faulty infrastructure that is breaking down, faulty internal auditing practices, and ineffective procedures for disciplining staff.

“As our continuing BOP [Board of Parole] oversight and investigative work demonstrates, these issues are interrelated. We have consistently seen how understaffed prisons with

“No one told the family that the guards and the medical professionals were just throwing medications into his cell and not asking or checking in on him as if he was some animal at the zoo.”

—Adanté Pointer, the family lawyer for Maurice Monk

overburdened employees create security and safety issues,” said the report.

The report notes approximately 66 people have died since 2014 in the Dublin facility, some from a lack of care and some from overdose.

“No one told the family that the guards and the medical professionals were just throwing medications into his cell and not asking or checking in on him as if he was some animal at the zoo,” Pointer said, according to KQED.

Deputies Donall Chauncey Rowe, Thomas Mowrer, Ross Ohalloran Burruel, Robinderpal Singh Hayer, Andre Gaston, Troy Hershel White, Syear Osmani, Mateusz Laszuk, and Christopher J. Haendel, were all charged with dependent adult abuse in Monk’s death. Doctor Neal Edwards of Alameda County Forensic Behavioral Health and David Everett Donoho, a nurse from private prison health care company Wellpath, face the same charge.

Pointer noted that even in the wake of the recall of Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price, he hoped the case continued moving forward. San Francisco’s former district attorney, Chesa Boudin, was recalled in 2022, and his successor, San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins, has not moved forward on prosecuting officers charged under Boudin’s tenure, said the story.

“They’re charting the course of criminal justice here in Alameda County, and I would hope that they do not play politics,” said Pointer.

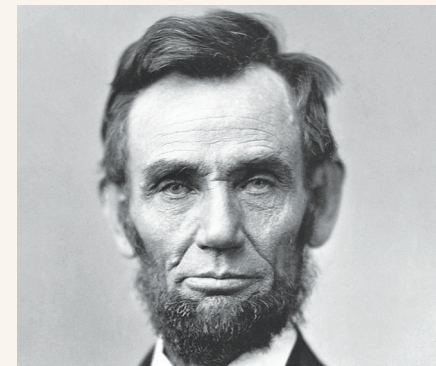
California voters take step backward



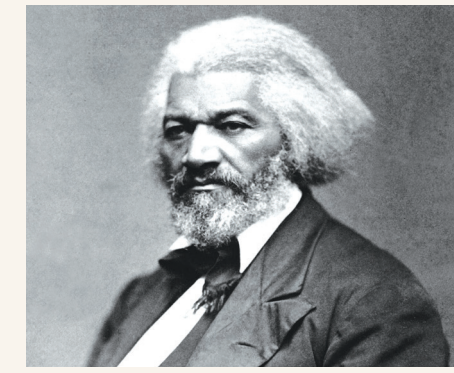
William Wilberforce (1759-1833) - British politician and abolitionist. He campaigned to abolish transatlantic slave trade which led to Slave Trade Act of 1807 in U.K.



Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) - Abolitionist, women's rights activist, and former slave. She highlighted intersection of race and gender oppression to humanize the struggle against slavery. Truth speech "Ain't I a woman?"



Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)- 16th President of the United States. Then President Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery, but involuntary servitude remained as punishment for a crime. In 1863 the issuance of Emancipation of Proclamation was pivotal to abolishing slavery.



Fredrick Douglass (1818-1895)- Abolitionist, orator, writer, and former slave. His powerful autobiographies shed light on the realities and horrors of slavery, which inspired many to join the abolitionist movement.



The first slave trade agreement which included gold and ivory was made. By end of the 19th century over 11 million Africans would arrive in Americas.



The first African slaves arrived in Jamestown, Virginia their number remained small for decades.



Laws banning African slave trade in the United States and British Colonies went into effect.



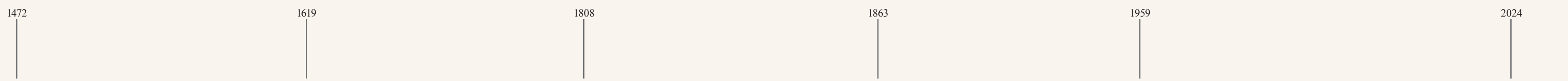
Then President Abraham Lincoln abolishes slavery, but involuntary servitude remained as punishment for a crime.



Martin Luther King letter from Birmingham jail inspires national Civil Rights Movement.



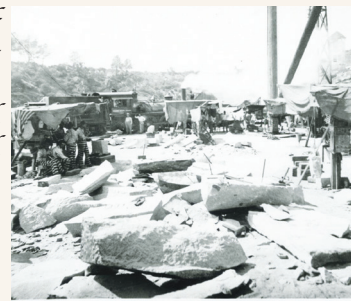
161 years later California voters decided to keep forced labor as punishment for committing a crime.



The first Virginia promoters expected the Native Americans to be forced into labor but the Powhatan people were too well armed, too numerous, and they knew the terrain very well.



The number of people of African descent was about 1,500 in the Virginia region. Some slaves were enslaved for life, while others worked as indentured servitudes and freed after their term (incarceration) was up.



Congress passes a series of Bills to appease antislavery and pro slavery proponents. The Fugitive Slave Law was enacted, giving a national authority (U.S. Marshall) to hunt and capture runaway slaves, directly targeting the Underground Railroad.



Thurgood Marshall worked tirelessly for decades to end segregation which included Brown v. Board of education.



Voting Rights Act is passed, authorizing direct federal intervention to enable blacks to vote. Malcolm X is assassinated by members of the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) in New York City.



Riots through U.S. cities over urban decay and lack of opportunities lead to more than 750 riots, 228 dead and 10,000 injured.



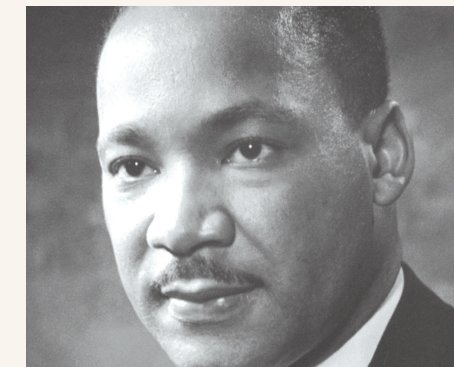
Elizabeth Heyrick (1769-1831)- British abolitionist and social reformer. Advocated for abolition of slavery and reshaped societal perceptions of slavery through her writings.



Nat Turner (1800-1831) - Leader of slave rebellion in Virginia. He led a revolt in 1831 which highlighted desperate conditions of enslaved people.



Harriet Tubman (1822-1913) - Abolitionist, underground railroad conductor and former slave. She led enslaved people to freedom and symbolized courage and resistance against oppression.



Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) U.S. Clergyman. Leader of the Civil Rights Movements. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Most famous for his "I have a dream speech."

Proposition 6 furthers slavery in prison

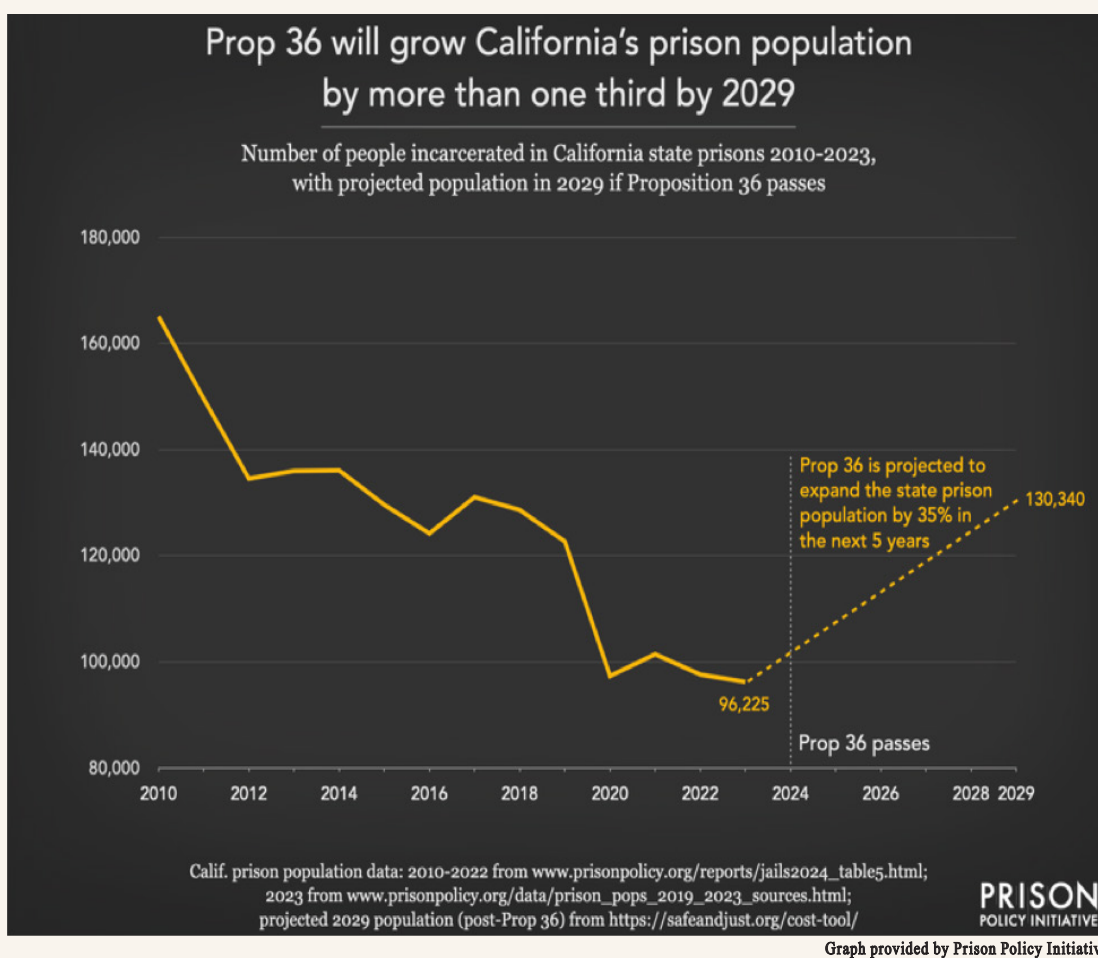
By Tyrone "Luqman" Jones Journalism Guild Writer

In 2023, the California Legislature enacted Assembly Bill 3089, which would act as California's official apology for chattel slavery. AB 3089 provided that the State of California recognizes and accepts responsibility for all the harms and atrocities committed by the state and entities under its jurisdiction that facilitated and enforced the institution of chattel slavery. The citizens of California voted no on Prop 6 in 2024, which would have removed forced prison labor from the language of the state's constitution. San Quentin resident Michael "Mikael" Walker said California voters' "yes" vote to slavery amplifies the degree of incompetence of the elected officials voters send to the state capitol. "California officially apologized for slavery, then the people of California

voted "no" to end involuntary servitude," said Walker. "If there was any way to define hypocrisy, we find no better example." Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont, Nevada, and Alabama have passed measures comparable to Prop 6, leaving 15 states yet to remove such language, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "California is officially behind the state of Alabama on slavery," said Isaac Bryan (D-Los Angeles), and vice chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus. "We should be ashamed and embarrassed." According to the Public Policy Institute of California, Black and Latino persons represent vulnerable populations that will be adversely impacted by the voter's choice to keep slavery alive. Latinos represent 46% of California's incarcerated population and Blacks are 28%, despite Blacks representing six percent of California's overall

population. San Quentin resident Lamavis Commundoiwill said that he felt the measure failed because it did not have a spokesperson or someone to explain the purpose of Prop 6 to the voters. "It is ridiculous in 2024 that we need a modern-day Harriet Tubman or Frederick Douglass because the word slavery should be removed from the modern-day tongue," said Commundoiwill. He added that had voters truly understood the conditions and the plight of the imprisoned, the results would have been different. "Any time light is shined on darkness, darkness finds itself in fear," said Commundoiwill. According to the *Marin Independent Journal*, Prop 6 failed without any organized opposition, but in the wake of the defeat, proponents would "redouble their efforts to end forced prison labor." SQ resident Jessie Milo said that he was disheartened that voters did not understand

Prop 6. He said that Prop 6 would not have raised residents' pay, but instead would have improved work conditions. He said it would have made work conditions more humane by allowing prisoners to decline to work in unsafe work conditions without fear of reprisal. "Work dynamics breed attitudes here that residents take home with them," said Milo. "Do we want residents to think that work is a bad place and resent it, or do we want work to be a positive experience?" Two weeks prior to the 2024 election, Mount Tamalpais College conducted a mock election at San Quentin. All the measures that concerned the population were on the mock ballots issued to the population, including Prop 6, which passed with 77% of the vote. "Even 23% of prisoners at SQ voted to keep slavery," said Milo. "So with that, I must defer to Harriet Tubman by saying, 'I could have freed a lot more, but they didn't know they were slaves.'"



Passing of Prop 36 set to reboot mass incarceration

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter Staff Writer

During the final inning at the 2024 ballot box, criminal justice reform took three strikes with the defeat of reform-minded prosecutors, the defeat of Proposition 6 to remove involuntary servitude, and the passing of Proposition 36 to hyper-criminalize retail theft into the felony zone. Sarah Staudt of the Prison Policy Institute titled a report "California may take a big step backwards towards more incarceration with Proposition 36" and showed her analysis that the ballot initiative would return the prison population to a projected 130,340 from the current 96,225. Her projection, over a period of five years, would mean roughly 135% of the present population. "This could make our population go up to where it was a decade ago. If that happens, it's good-bye to single cells," said San Quentin resident Darryl

Farris, 66. He added that he would dread to see triple-bunks in the gym again. The state's Official Voter Information Guide headlined the measure as a change that "allows felony charges and increases sentences for certain drug and theft crimes." The PPI article said Proposition 36 would reverse many of the gains made by Proposition 47, which had passed 10 years ago and reduced minor crimes of drug possession and theft from felonies to misdemeanors. "What Prop 36 would actually do is make thefts of less than \$950 dollars — with no minimum — a 'strike' for the purposes of future felony charges," stated Staudt. She illustrated the severity of the measure with the idea that the theft of a candy bar could land the thief in prison. "Prop 36 will grow prison populations by reversing the sentencing policy changes of Prop 47," wrote Staudt. "Because Prop 36 has no funding stream of its own, it will cut into those same Prop

47 savings that fund essential local programs. This will leave local communities without the resources they need to reduce recidivism, house people, treat mental health and substance use disorders, and help people reenter society successfully after incarceration." In 2014, proponents of Proposition 47 called the measure "transformative" because of a provision that required reinvestment of savings from decreased incarceration into programs for local reentry, diversion, substance and mental health treatment, and crime prevention. The success of Proposition 47 showed in recidivism rates of 15.3% for participants in reentry programs — two to three times lower than the average of persons who had served prison sentences. Staudt's analysis paid close attention to the funding implication of the measure. She called Proposition 36 an "unfunded mandate" that allowed prosecutors to ask

for "treatment mandated felonies" for three-time repeat offenders for drug possession but did not provide funding for treatment to take place. Successful completion of treatment mandates could mean a dismissal of charges, but failure would result in a felony conviction with possible incarceration. Failure would remain subject to broad criteria, Staudt wrote. "If at any time, it appears that the defendant is performing unsatisfactorily in the program, is not benefiting from treatment [or] is not amenable to treatment," that person has failed. The proposition put determination in the hands of courts, not medical professionals, the article said. According to the article, the measure might have an unseen racial component. "[P]eople arrested for retail theft are disproportionately young and Black despite white people being more likely to engage in shoplifting."

Proposition 36 also included sentencing enhancements for distribution and possession with intent to distribute fentanyl. These sentencing enhancements "will not just target the people putting fentanyl into the drug supply — they will target the majority of drug users," said the article. "We might get a lot of young addicts with a gang mentality — the antithesis of programmers — who could crash and burn the idea of a rehabilitation center," said San Quentin resident John Czub, 55, about the possible incoming population. He added that he feared a rise in theft in the buildings: "Users have to support their habit." Proposition 36 passed with approximately 68% Yes votes, said CalMatters. The measure might have one positive aspect that voters may not have envisioned. "I see one benefit here," said San Quentin resident William Tolbert, 65. "If overcrowding gets worse, this new law may push us old lifers out of the system."

Youth offender program recognizes 43 resident mentors

By Larry Ali Deminter
Journalism Guild Writer

The Youth Offender Program's Inside Peer Mentor Training Program closed its fourth and final cohort after graduating 43 residents.

The program aims to provide instruction on effective mentorship and group facilitation to eligible Peer Mentor candidates.

At designated YOP institution the teachers of the Every Student Succeeds Act, or designee, train YOP Peer Mentors utilizing a curriculum consisting of seven modules in 26 sessions. Once the training is completed, the peer mentors participate in a 500-hour internship, where the

candidates provide tutoring and mentorship to incarcerated youth assigned to education and other work training assignments. Once the 500-hour internship is completed, the YOP Peer Mentor candidate shall be certified and assigned as a YOP Peer Mentor, according to Undersecretary of Operations Tammy Foss.

Candidates must have their Central file and ERMS reviewed and approved by a correctional counselor prior to the interview process. Peer Mentor candidates must:

Have at least one year remaining on their current sentence and not endorsed for transfer

Have no serious disciplinary infractions within the

past 12 months;

Provide a verifiable high school diploma or GED (or enrolled in an equivalent learning course); and

Express a willingness to sign a contract acknowledging full participation and agreement to the code of conduct.

Candidates at the 80-hours classroom instruction phase of training are called Youth Mentor Trainee.

"The best part of the classroom experience was learning motivational interviewing and OARS," said Peer Mentor Jorge Lopez.

OARS is an acronym for open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections and summarizing. OARS is a motivational interviewing tool designed to facilitate

effective communication.

YMT candidates will be placed on a wait list to begin a 500-hour internship after the classroom instruction phase. The mentor intern receives both a new assignment card and a laminated pass, and is called Youth Mentor Intern.

The YMI's daily responsibilities include building a trusting relationship with mentees by maintaining confidentiality, modeling appropriate behavior, record keeping, attending all meetings and training and other work related tasks as assigned.

Once all criteria of the YOP Mentorship has been met, a certification is issued to the YMI from the Robert E. Burton Adult School.

The certified YMI receives both a new assignment card and a laminated pass, and is then promoted to Peer Mentor Trainee, or simply Peer Mentor.

Peer Mentors and interns are assigned no more than three mentees. PMT pay scale is PIA DOT 4 and earn between 50 - 60 cents an hour. The work hours are flexible and Peer Mentors often work well beyond the designated 7:30 - 10:30 am framework.

YOP Mentorship three legacies are simple: Community, service and vision. YOP trainee/intern/mentor(s) must comply with all CDCR rules and YOP agreements at all times. The actions and attitudes of those elected to

represent the YOP dramatically affect the attitudes of others towards the program. Any YOP personnel who willfully violates the spirit and word of the Operating Guidelines and Procedures and By-Laws will be terminated immediately if the violation is severe in nature.

To date only two YMIs have been terminated from the training program for a serious RVR.

"The tools that I learned in the YOP mentor training program are very accurate," said Youth Mentor Trainee Antonio Silva. "When I take these tools with me [home] and communicate with people in society, I'll be more effective in all aspects of relationships."

Awareness Into Domestic Violence celebrates over 90 participants

By Arsenio P. Leyva
Contributing Writer

The domestic awareness group AIDA, graduated 90 participants as 2024 came to an end.

Co-founder Floyd Collins, who was formerly imprisoned here at San Quentin and paroled in 2023, applauded the graduates for their hard work and commitment to the course.

"For those unaware," said Collins, "domestic abusers wear many masks. They may show up in the form of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, and as digital batterers."

"The Awareness Into Domestic Abuse curriculum is designed to help abusers identify and describe the different types of abuses in a relationship," said Collins.

One student expressed how AIDA has helped him.

"AIDA helped me identify where I went wrong in my belief system. Especially growing up," said SQ resident Steven Marrujo Jr.

"The course helped to give me the tools to deal with



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

AIDA founder Floyd Collins and guest recognize graduates

triggers whenever one arises. Now I have a better way to manage them, because they never go away. I highly recommend this group because it gives you feedback and pushes you in the right direction even when I'm unclear in my understanding," said Marrujo.

Various guest speakers took to the podium including Dr. Perrilet of Man 2 Man.

Dr. Perreleit shared his

experience with domestic violence in the home, and encouraged the graduates to look deep within "because many domestic violence perpetrators were boys who grew up without fathers."

"Understanding domestic violence and domestic abuse will help you to understand the cycle of violence, and also encourage men and women to break the silence surrounding

it," said Dr. P.

Vanessa Collins, who helped organize the graduation added, "AIDA helps you reorient yourself with values. Rooting oneself in core values will help you understand what you want, and to take a stand for it. Many of our course values include honor, respect, compassion, responsibility, integrity, empathy, honesty and gratitude."

F. Collins added "One out every four women is a victim of domestic violence. Maybe you are one of those [people] who lived with family violence. You can't change your past, but you can change your future. We do this by making a decision, not with our words, but with our actions."

Rose M., board president of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence spoke about the significance of the purple ribbon.

"The ribbon," said Garrity, "is used to represent the evolution from decades past of battered women. In the beginning of its induction, it was lavender. However, over the years its signature shade chosen ended up being purple. It's a color associated with women's rights throughout the world."

Here are a few characteristics of domestic abuse:

Physical: Bodily harm including pulling hair, slapping, preventing you from eating, sleeping, harming children or pets and from contacting emergency services.

Emotional (Psychological):

Acting jealous, refusing to trust you, isolating you from family, monitoring your activities and humiliating you in different way.

Verbal: Calling you names, insulting you, yelling and screaming, using words to intimidate and causing fear.

Sexual: Force or manipulate you into having sex, especially when you're sick, tired or physically injured from the abuse. Choke and hold you down during sex, and any sexual advances without consent.

Financial: Providing an allowance and closely monitoring how you spend it, including preventing you from viewing or accessing bank accounts.

Digital: Monitoring your following, or who you can be friends with on social media. Pressuring you into sending unwanted explicit photos or videos, sexts or compromising messages and looking through your phone.

This self-help group gives residents the tools needed for a new outlook on how to deal with important relationships in life.

Residents prepare for ministry

Nine residents of San Quentin received Christian studies certificates from Gateway Seminary under the North Bay School of Theology. This prepares them to facilitate Christian Ministry.

The commencement ceremony was celebrated in Chapel B for the nine "sacrificial lambs," said Reverend Jackson Saekow, one of the theology program instructors. The graduates will continue Christ's work of preaching "the kingdom good news" to the incarcerated and beyond, Saekow added. The program curriculum is based on the Christian teachings of Jesus Christ.

The graduates Kojo Clutchette, Peterson W. Fontes, Daniel Gomez Sr., Tommie Keith Hall, Ramiro Jimenez Ororio, Gustavo Monroy, Oscar Reyes, Jose Luis Ramos, and Guillermo S. Valencia, walked in with their caps and gowns in late July accompanied by a tune played by the residents' Greater Good Ensemble Band.

It was a festive moment for family members and program instructors, including Dr. Warren Haynes, Director of the Advanced Program.

"He is in prison and people don't expect anyone to grow in the way of the Lord," said Terri Hall, mother of graduate Tommie Hall. "At an early age he learned, but went astray. God has brought him back and now he is graduating. God is not through with him yet — this is a proud moment for both

of us [parents]."

Gateway is a worldwide program and is available in 15 different languages. The outreach is for the general public and all communities, according to Haynes.

"You never know that God is all you need until that's all you have," said Haynes. "Once students graduate, we have seen that 95% of the graduates are faithful and stay rooted in the ministries and with their ministers."

Haynes quoted John 14:27 in his speech to the graduates. "I am leaving you with a gift: peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

Graduate Clutchette earned his Christian Ministries Diploma after completing an additional eight courses in Christian theology.

"Before I met Christ, my life was a mess," Clutchette said, "Something was missing. I would see people come out of church with unexplainable joy. That's what helped me change my life. I wanted to find that joy in life... Besides theology, I learned to be a good husband and father."

Graduate Guillermo S. Valencia gave his testimony in Spanish.

"What really moves me in life is when someone does something good for me. It's my Celestial Father who is God, who has done this for me," said Valencia.

Valencia's wife and son

were in attendance for the graduation.

"We are proud of my husband; my heart is full of happiness," said Micheline Valencia. "We are happy for him — studying the Bible has been good for him. We couldn't be happier for his accomplishment."

Rev. Saekow gave the Welcome and Invocation; Rev. Cornell Swain performed the Scripture Reading and Prayer, and Haynes delivered the Academic Achievement Awards.

"I feel very happy and appreciative with God," Maria Reyes, mother of graduate Oscar Reyes, said. "I see him more dedicated to the Lord. The biblical truth has changed my son."

Joel Natividad, SQ resident and member of the Greater Good Ensemble Band, performed a solo song. The ceremony continued with "Charge to the Candidates," delivered by Rev. Bob Lawler, and was finalized by the Benediction and Faculty Blessing given by Rev. Miguel Rodriguez.

"I fell in love with the ministry here in prison. God is here," said Lawler, who has been volunteering for seven years. "The students begin uncertain about their faith [and become] very knowledgeable with their faith. I'm confident that these guys are future pastors for the population."

—Arsenio P. Leyva
Contributing Writer

Substance abuse commencement

By César Martínez
Staff Writer

The Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment program celebrated its second largest graduating class since its inception - with seventy-two residents.

The ISUDT program helps to build ones understanding of attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings. The 14-week 'Living In Balance' and 28-week 'Cognitive Behavior Therapy' programs also incorporate consequential thinking, values and goals.

"The program helped me to grow," said Fabian Salazar J. "I did not recognize the personal problems I had. ISUDT has helped me to resolve family problems that were caused by my abuse of drugs and alcohol," the graduate said.

Many of the graduates had never participated in a cognitive behavioral therapy group prior to entering the program, according to program facilitators.

"At the beginning of the program the participants do not show their feelings," said Stefanie Sanchez, an ISUDT group counselor. "As the days and weeks went by however, people began to express how they were feeling, and in some cases, they stopped using."

The ISUDT program is designed to help people in recovery to recognize the harmful effects that drugs and alcohol can have on their lives.

"Once you have learned how the effects of substances and



Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

crime have led to incarceration, you can then manage your feelings, thoughts, and actions," said Sanchez. "At the end of the day, you have a second chance, if you want it."

Group counselor Stacy C, reiterated the 'you have a second chance' mantra as she congratulated the graduates. She reminded them how their communities affected by their choices and that today they have a clean slate.

"Through trauma and incarceration, you learned to hide your feelings, but through rehabilitation, you have learned how to manage life's circumstances," said Stacy C.

Warden Andes and Public Information Officer Lt. G. Berry attended the event. Warden Andes congratulated the graduates and spoke about his support of all rehabilitative programs.

"This is the way it is done here in San Quentin," Andes said.

Resident Nehemiah Vasquez dedicated the song "Second Chance" to the group of graduates. Poet, Miguel Angel, wrote the song, but Vasquez added a melody to it.

Rehabilitative programming is fundamental in the San

Quentin community.

"I have been incarcerated at San Quentin for four years. I took advantage of the many self-help groups I could participate in, and I have acquired many tools to help me to be a better person," said graduate Armando Paez.

Graduates marched into San Quentin's Garden Chapel wearing Black caps and gowns, as family, friends, and members of the administration, applauded.

Certified resident mentors for the Occupation Mentor Certification Program assist ISUDT staff with in-group facilitation.

"To provide a service, it is necessary to recognize your limits and to be resilient. You must first be able to admit your shortcomings and be willing to recognize and acknowledge them, by admitting how these things contributed to your being in prison," said OMCP mentor Nathan Campbell.

"I could never repair the harm I caused my victims, but being given this opportunity means I have the tools necessary to make amends," Campbell said.

Gaming group hosts 64-player Smash Brother video game tournament

**By Kenneth Gatison
Journalism Guild Writer**

The Wallbusters gaming group organizes video tournament for staff and incarcerated residents in a first of its kind community-building event.

Presented by Smash Brothers, the event was held in the facility's Gymnasium. It was open to all staff and residents who wanted to participate in a day of gaming.

The gaming day was a collaboration between Wallbusters and the SQ California Resource Team to build community with those that may feel isolated.

"It's a community building event to bring everyone together as a community because some people feel left out, said resident Alfonso Landa. Chairman for Wallbusters, "This event can help with...solving conflict[s]...through gaming."

The matchups were 3 brackets of 64 players, competing a single game elimination match, with one winner from each category.

Goodie bags valued at 50 dollars each, were provided to the first place winners. The prizes were sponsored by the "People in Blue" an incarcerated led group of event organizers. CMT provided popcorn to all participants.

The winners were residents Jose Mya, Gabriel Moctezuma, and SQ Correctional Officer S. Hernandez.

Officer Hernandez chose to give his prize to second runner up resident Joshua Childers, who was surprised and thankful at the same time.

"It was really cool for him to give me his prize," said Childers. "You don't see stuff like that happening in places like this [prison]. I appreciate being in an environment where I can play video games with a Correctional Officer."

Mya, one of the winners, says he began playing Smash Brothers in 2005 when he was five years old, playing every day prior to incarceration.

"It feels great to win and I felt I won because, I know my character very well," Mya



Photo by California Model Resource Team

Hundreds of residents gather in gymnasium for the single-game elimination tournament

said. "I know that timing is important in the game, and I feel this event eases the pressure of everyday life so it gives me a sense of normalization."

The Smash Brothers sweepstakes was the highlight of the day, but people were also playing board games like, Monopoly, Corn Hole, Play Station 4, and Marvel Arcade.

Residents expressed hope that events like this continue to happen at the Q and other prisons. Remarking that gaming helps with rehabilitation, making connections with unfamiliar people.

"It helps me with rehabilitation because I can meet people that I wouldn't normally meet," said Kevin

Binkman. "It allows you to be in communication with other people who have different backgrounds and cultures from you."

Binkman says he never played video games prior to coming to prison; he started playing Marvel Munchkin a year ago.

The incarcerated people at the Q says that they love

events like this one, but they feel it should be a privilege to play video games and not a right, because some people can mess it up for others.

Dante Knight lost in the semifinals, he stated gaming should be a privilege. People who continuously get rules violation reports and making no effort to change should not be allowed to participate.

"It should be more stuff like this because everybody is getting along, and coming to a common ground at an event like this where we have no violent accidents," said Treavion Early, a participant in the SQ Youth Offender Program.

According to Wallbusters they are hoping to hold therapeutic gaming events every quarter instead of every year. They have hope of building better nonviolent communication with the people at the Q.

Early adds events like this can create a gaming community with the staff and the residents, creating a better outlet for problem solving on common ground.

Award winning musician performs on inspirational music night



Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

Essence Goldman

**By Michael Fangman
Journalism Guild Writer**

The stars are shining inside San Quentin, where residents are embracing the opportunity to write and stage music inspired by their challenges and past traumas. This with the generous musical support of resident

and staff "house band" the Greater Good and award-winning bay area musician Essence Goldman.

A recently completed music-writing group led by Goldman has recorded 30 separate songs penned and performed by residents, many of whom had little or no previous experience in writing music.

"There is always a song, and always a lesson to be learned," Goldman told the audience attending the Greater Good's most recent Inspirational Music Night.

The group used its Americana themed concert as an opportunity to perform more than a dozen songs, including three created during the song-writing program.

The event also featured the Violins of San Quentin, resident violin students who joined the Greater Good for the concert's opening Appalachian number, "The Coo Coo." For many of these violinists, it was their first-ever public performance.

An eager audience sang along with the band's arrangement of "Guantanamo" before joining resident New Zealander Darren Maheno in singing his "San Quentin Blues" with resident "harmonicist" Harvey Brooks

wailing on harmonica.

As part of their punk rock group the 115's, Don Carrillo and Eduardo Arizmendez performed two of their own original songs, "Pray for Rain" and "Two Ton Tessi" before delivering a powerful performance of the Foo Fighters' "Hero."

Essence Goldman used the occasion to speak of the joy that comes with helping others process their traumas through song, inviting residents to join her next song-writing cohort. Goldman then launched into two songs from her upcoming release.

"Meet Me in the Stars," she told the audience, was inspired by the final words her father had written to her before his death. An emotional Goldman attributed her second song to the recent end of a complicated and seemingly toxic ten-year relationship.

"This song is dedicated to any of you who, like me, stayed in a relationship that lasted far longer than served either party," she said.

Residents stated her song "Free!" spoke to the personal experiences of many of those in the audience, a poignant example of how writing and performing music can help us process and move beyond traumas.

Former resident journeys from kitchen worker to renowned chef

**By Tyrone "Luqman" Jones
Journalism Guild Writer**

Formerly incarcerated resident Michael Thomas has made the evolution from prison chow hall to renowned restaurant.

After serving 27 years at Corcoran State Prison, Thomas, 45, was hired as a prep cook at one of San Francisco's prestigious restaurants, Flour + Water, according to *SF Gate*.

Thomas discovered his love for the culinary arts while incarcerated, performing his duties as a kitchen worker.

"People always said I had a ministry through my baking," said Thomas. "It's an icebreaker for me with a lot of people. Again, food brings smiles to people's faces, and that gives me the motivation to keep going."

Thomas credits his supervisor in the prison kitchen, Correctional Line Cook Salazar, with believing in him as a cook and more importantly as a man. He said Salazar would often compliment his cooking which inspired confidence in him, stated the article.

Thomas always found joy in baking and perfecting steam cooking techniques he learned watching his father prepare seafood. His favorite pastry to bake was peanut butter pies.

Whenever the institution went on lockdown, he would spend his time making pies with his hot pot in his cell.

"It [the pies] came out perfect. Sometimes it came out better than when I made it in the kitchen," said Thomas. "So I still make those today."

Thomas has been transparent about what initiated his transformation in prison. He had long come to grips with spending the rest of his life in prison for his crime. A conversation and a simple question from a fellow resident: "What is your end goal?" triggered the beginnings of a change that would lead him to obtaining his freedom, stated the article.

After being paroled, Thomas entered GEO Reentry Services, a transitional home located in San Francisco.

The first phases of reentry proved difficult for Thomas. Jay Sutter, a reentry career advisor for Goodwill, assisted him in getting a cooking job upon his release. Thomas thrived in his first culinary job until management found out that he was formerly incarcerated and abruptly fired him.

Sutter then referred him to Farming Hope, a San Francisco nonprofit program that help the unhoused and formally imprisoned persons obtain

the required culinary skills to secure a career in professional kitchens.

According to the Executive Director of the program, Andie Sobrepeña, they have an 80% success rate placing their apprentices in professional kitchens. The program is a paid apprenticeship that teaches culinary knife skills, food safety, cross-contamination avoidance, and food temperature parameters.

Thomas graduated from the program in three months and went on to obtain employment at one of the most prominent eating establishments in the San Francisco Bay Area, stated the publication.

His new employers at Flour + Water, when made aware of his murder conviction, were clear in their stance that Thomas' job was secure and they believed in the man that he is today.

"It's been incredible having him as part of the team so far," said Derek Woodley, head chef at Flour + Water. "We look forward to supporting his growth."

Thomas is excited to have his mother taste his new baked creations when she visits from North Carolina. He said that his eventual goal is to open up a "community bakery" of his own.

"Not a lot of people can eat a good pie and not be cheered up," said Thomas

San Quentin Veterans — incarcerated but not forgotten

**By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer**

In San Quentin, the mood of Veterans Day took a celebratory tone, despite the inclement weather that had relocated the event from the Lower Yard to Chapel B. Around 150 participants enjoyed music, comedy, and a 1986 Clint Eastwood war movie at the event. The celebration's theme focused on the ever-present message, "Incarcerated, But Not Forgotten."

"A lot of incarcerated people who have made mistakes have ended up in prison, but the camaraderie that comes from serving your nation never goes away," said U.S. Army

veteran Juan Moreno Haines, 67, who served in the infantry and in the signals corps from 1974 to 1978.

Around the world, November 11 has always attracted its share of events that remember wars and those who fought them. Called Armistice Day in Europe, the day commemorated the end of World War I. For the first time since 1944, a British Prime Minister visited Paris to lay a wreath. At Arlington National Cemetery, President Joe Biden did the same.

U.S. Marine veteran Noah Winchester, 40, a member of the Veterans Group of San Quentin (VGSQ), organized the event at SQRC. The change of venue because of

weather came off without a hitch. In his opening speech, Winchester called Veterans Day "a day for all to tell our stories."

He illustrated the meaning of Veterans Day by recounting a phone call with his seven-year-old daughter who had asked him about the holiday. Winchester noted he was at a loss for words. After he saw the letters "VGSQ" on his hat, it prompted him to tell his daughter, "Veterans Day is a day in which you honor and celebrate men and women who answered the call to service."

VGSQ member and U.S. Air Force veteran Ray Melberg, 80, called Winchester "a fine leader who stimulates

committee work and holds us all together."

Winchester soon introduced Matthew Shephard as the master of ceremonies of the event. During the unfurling of the service branch banners—Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, and the Coast Guard—Shephard described the histories of the branches.

He then engaged in a comedy routine, using military terms in a humorous way, leaving his audience laughing. Several veterans congratulated him afterward.

Veterans Helping Veterans outside volunteer Tina, a professional stage performer who used no last name, said she had sponsored VGSQ

for the last 18 months. She also taught acting for Marin Shakespeare for 10 years and established the Acting for Veterans program, which she described as "a program to uplift people who have served and a chance to share their stories." She called the Veterans Day event an "opportunity for veterans to showcase their talents with amazing music."

Performers Rick Otto, Ray Torres, and Levere Callender sang "That's Why I'm Easy."

Vietnam veteran John Poggi, the outside facilitator for Veterans Healing Veterans, spoke next and noted, "At age 22, the U.S. Army thought it fit to make me a leader of men," a designation gave

him a sense that "we are all brothers."

Poggi called veterans a "shrinking species." He said that the headcount had only declined. The VA Population Survey from 2023 confirmed Poggi's message, which predicted an annual decline of 1.6% over the next 30 years.

A screening of *Heartbreak Ridge* directed by Clint Eastwood, ended the event. San Quentin resident Larry Whyte, 76, enjoyed the film from a Chair of Honor, a distinction afforded to Whyte for his volunteering for veterans' events. "I don't have any money, so I give my time," said Whyte. Winchester called such selflessness typical of "the values of VGSQ."

ESPAÑOL

Inauguración del Festival Cinematográfico en SQ



El jurado compuesto por encarcelados de SQ



Photos by SQ Media Center

La celebrada Kamau Bell y ex-residente Rahaan Thomas de SQ y otras personas de la comunidad

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

Celebridades de Hollywood compartieron la alfombra roja con los residentes del Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin, durante la inauguración del Festival Cinematográfico en San Quentin.

El evento ocurrió el 11 y el 12 de octubre, llenando la capilla B y atrayendo la presencia de compañías de cine, televisoras y prensa local y nacional.

Las celebridades y los reclusos disfrutaron e interactuaron entre sorprendentes funciones de películas, documentales y cortometrajes. Tal y como en el cine, los asistentes disfrutaron también de golosinas como: palomitas de maíz, café, dulces y chocolates, entre otras.

El comediante y actor W. Kamau Bell participó como jurado, junto con otras celebridades y encarcelados, quienes determinaron los premios a las películas y documentales producidas por directores externos. Mientras que, otro jurado compuesto por personas del exterior,

seleccionaron a los ganadores de producciones creadas en la prisión.

“Realmente me siento agradecido y es un honor ser parte de la historia”, dijo el director Timur Bootzin. “Para cualquiera que nunca ha estado en una prisión, prepárense para tener sus expectativas desbaratadas”.

Bootzin, presentó el documental “5 Bloques” (5 Blocks), que cuenta la historia de un recluso enfrentado una sentencia de 86 años a cadena perpetua y quien buscó otras alternativas para obtener una segunda oportunidad y continuar con su educación.

En la misma categoría se proyectó “Sanando a través del hula” (Healing Through Hula), dirigida por el residente de San Quentin, Saleh Louis, quien relata la historia de hombres encarcelados quienes tratan de reconectarse con su cultura a través de danzas hawaianas, en ceremonias llamadas Makahiki.

Antwan “Banks” Williams y Maurice Reese Reed, personas anteriormente encarceladas, presentaron un cortometraje en el que cuentan

sus propias batallas después de haber sido liberados de la prisión.

Voluntarios de San Quentin como la Cori Thomas y Rahaan “New York” Thomas (no hay relación entre ambos) –quien anteriormente estuvo encarcelado en San Quentin– co-fundaron el evento.

“Muchas gracias por hacer mi sueño realidad,” expresó emotivamente a la audiencia Cori Thomas.

Durante el evento también estuvieron presentes oficiales correccionales como el director de la División de Instituciones para Adultos del CDCR Ron Broomfield, el director del Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin Chances Andes, la Teniente Guim’Mara Berry de la oficina de información pública y la Sargenta J. Graves de San Quentin.

Marco Barragán, supervisor de los recursos de la comunidad del CDCR, dijo que nunca se imaginó trabajando en una prisión y menos teniendo un festival de cine. Anunció a la comunidad habla hispana, que vamos a tener más eventos como estos.

“Voy a tratar de traer a

Los Tigres del Norte”, dijo Barragán como meta para el próximo festival.

Aunque la invitación fue extendida a todos los hispanos y avisos en español fueron puestos en las unidades de vivienda, no hubo propuestas en español.

“New York” Thomas, dijo, “¿Qué pasa, boricuas? Me gustaría poder ver documentales por parte de los hispanos que están encarcelados. Yo creo que sería un tema muy interesante”.

Thomas, el co-fundador del Festival de Cine San Quentin, presentó a la actriz Kerry Washington, y entre bromas, discutieron acerca de la exitosa carrera de la multifacética productora y directora, quien también es una exitosa autora de acuerdo al New York Times por su libro de memorias y quien es conocida por su participación en la serie dramática de ABC “Scandal”.

Ella expresó, que se siente muy afortunada de hacer lo que ama y que le gustaría que el mundo fuera un lugar donde todos podamos ser libres.

Arriba: La CRM A.Torrez con residente Oscar Acosta y recrecientement liberado J. Ramirez
Abajo: Jaime Paredes and Alex Mendoza

Cambios a los mensajes gratuitos para los encarcelados

Por Marvin Vasquez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Writer

En el verano del año pasado, el Departamento de Correcciones y Rehabilitación de California, comunicó a los individuos encarcelados de cambios con respecto al servicio de comunicación con los mensajes electrónicos gratuitos de ViaPath, a partir del 1 de agosto.

Anteriormente, cada individuo podía enviar 20 mensajes electrónicos gratuitos por semana, con el CDCR cubriendo el costo de 15 mensajes y ViaPath cubriendo los 5 restantes.

Pero en su comunicado, el CDCR dijo que no cuenta con fondos disponibles para agregar 15 mensajes electrónicos gratuitos por semana.

“Este es un cambio con el que no estoy de acuerdo, porque es una herramienta a la que me negarán el acceso si no tengo dinero”, comentó preocupado Abimael García, residente del Centro de San Quentin.

Al entender lo importante que es la comunicación para los encarcelados, CDCR destacó que los encarcelados cuentan con otras opciones para mantenerse conectados con sus seres queridos y

ayudarse en su proceso de rehabilitación.

Lo anterior también se establece en la ley SB 1008 (Becker), firmada por el Gobernador Gavin Newsom y que entró en vigor en enero del 2023, que busca mejorar la comunicación entre todas las personas encarceladas en las prisiones del estado de California y los detenidos en las instalaciones de tratamiento juvenil y sus familias.

La SB 1008, también conocida como el “Keep Families Connected Act”, elimina los cargos excesivos por minuto y tarifas de conexión costosas para los

encarcelados.

De acuerdo con algunos residentes de San Quentin, al no contar con la misma cantidad de mensajes, usan otros medios disponibles para mantener la comunicación con sus seres queridos.

El residente V. Torres compartió “No tengo suficientes mensajes gratuitos, pero tengo llamadas ilimitadas para mantenerme en contacto con mi familia. Creo que es una buena idea el tener llamadas gratuitas todo el día, porque me mantengo más conectado con mis seres queridos en caso de una emergencia”.

La comunicación limitada

tiene un costo emocional para las personas dentro y fuera de la prisión, donde un sistema de apoyo sólido, es un factor importante para un reingreso exitoso a la sociedad.

“Afectaría mi rehabilitación porque no podré hacer llegar mensajes a mi familia durante su tiempo ocupado, esto causa estrés y frustración no deseados que pueden afectar mi desempeño”, agregó García.

ViaPath expresó, que seguirá proporcionado cinco mensajes electrónicos salientes gratuitos por semana a todas las personas. Sin embargo, si el usuario excede la asignación de

cinco mensajes gratuitos, se le cobrará una tarifa de 5 centavos por mensaje adicional enviado.

El residente Luis Bandala expresó, “Los cinco mensajes gratuitos que recibimos no son suficientes porque en un día o dos los termino usando, especialmente personas como yo que no reciben dinero de familiares, los cinco mensajes gratuitos no son suficientes para todo la semana”.

El CDCR reconoce el desafío, pero mantiene su compromiso de mantener la comunicación entre los encarcelados y sus familias.

Plan de preparación para los reos que serán deportados

Por César Martínez
Staff Writer

Por primera vez, la organización de Homies Unidos (HU), presentó su primer taller informativo para la comunidad de habla hispana en San Quentin.

El Director Ejecutivo y Co-fundador Alex Sánchez de HU y el Defensor Público de San Francisco (DPSF), Francisco Ugarte hablaron de temas de suma importancia, tales como Estado Migratorio, delitos antes de 1996, Naturalización y Detención de Inmigración entre otros temas.

La organización enfatiza

con información apta en un plan de libertad condicional previo a ser deportado y promover el entendimiento del remordimiento y perspicacia para que los encarcelados y su vez puedan crear un plan de re inserción social.

“Para mí que no hablo bien el inglés, este taller fue muy importante ya que tuve la oportunidad de preguntarle al abogado[Ugarte] temas referentes a mi caso y en mi propio idioma”, dijo el residente Marco Calvo.

De acuerdo a Sánchez, su organización y enfoque es en personas inmigrantes encarceladas para ayudarles

en una manera eficaz a su conocimiento de su caso ante la Audiencia de Libertad Condicional (BPH).

“Tenemos estos programas para ayudar a los encarcelados quienes son inmigrantes y con sentencias largas, personas con cadena perpetua y [se benefician] con la preparación de la perspectiva en por qué cometiste tu crimen”, dijo Sánchez.

De acuerdo al abogado, cuando un inmigrante es considerado “elegido para ser liberado” y donde BPH juntamente con el gobernador y la Oficina de Inmigración y Naturalización (ICE) te

retiene en sus instalaciones.

“No hay derecho de abogado gratis. Te pueden mandar a un centro de detención en California o Arizona y te pueden mantener en custodia de dos a tres años”, agregó Sánchez.

Ugarte, dio un ejemplo del país El Salvador, como su gobierno está metiendo en prisión a personas deportadas que estuvieron anteriormente encarceladas cuando bajan del avión y que en otros países como Honduras y Guatemala están en planes de implementar las mismas normas.

El abogado mencionó que

en algunos casos, que, para las personas transgenero hay posibilidades de quedarse en este país legalmente aplicando por medio de la ley de asilo por género según su identidad iniciando el proceso legal apoyados por la comunidad LGBTQ+.

“Este recurso es de suma importancia para comunicar a todas aquellas personas que pudieran calificar y quedarse legalmente peleando por su caso de legalización y naturalización antes de poder ser deportadas y no llegar a un país o un lugar donde no eres bien aceptado o bienvenido por la sociedad

homofóbica”, compartió Javier “Sujann” Pérez C.

Para varios residentes la oportunidad que brinda este taller fue muy productivo.

“Me ayudo toda la información que se proporcionó y así para yo poder pedir documentos y tenerlos en orden para cuando salga”, agregó Calvario.

Homies Unidos
Francisco Ugarte: Public
Defender of San Francisco
213-383-7484
415-571-3470 celular
Pregunten por: Serafin
Serrano
415-553-9319 trabajo

Cerrando el 2024 con once nuevos periodistas

Por Arsenio P. Leyva
Escritor Contribuyente

La trayectoria continua en SQNews con la graduación de once nuevos reporteros para las páginas en español. Colectivamente estos hombres siguen sobre pasando y rompiendo estereotipos y haciendo nuevas historias.

Cerrando el año 2024, el 13 de diciembre se realizó esta ceremonia en la capilla B donde los participantes fueron reconocidos. Cumpliendo 26 semanas de intenso aprendizaje y trabajo de periodismo en el estilo *Prensa Asociado* (AP).

“Estoy muy contento con esta graduación porque será mi primer certificado estando en la prisión. Aprendí como escribir artículos usando el estilo AP. Estoy muy satisfecho con los artículos que escribí porque sé que van a contribuir favorablemente a la comunidad de habla hispana”, dijo el prisionero y graduado Martin R. García.

Resaltando el compromiso y dedicación de los participantes de esta clase de español. SQNews público una edición especial de los artículos que los parte de ellos — en diciembre del 2024.

Los temas por mencionar algunos fueron información de substancias y prevención de sobredosis con los aerosoles nasales conocido como *Narcan*, Relaciones



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

El director del periodismo de Español Edwin E. Chavez felicitando y reconociendo los esfuerzos de la clase 2024

entre padres encarcelados e hijos, biografía de la nueva presidenta Mexicana, La polémica entre opiniones de los partidos políticos de EE.UU., El juego de las Chamuscas en centro américa, y finalizando con el inicio del modelo californiano.

Durante esta ceremonia de graduación, el residente y director del periodismo en español Edwin E. Chávez, señaló los logros destacados e históricos para la comunidad hispana durante el año 2024.

Chávez compartió, que en el 2024 SQNews patrocinó un partido de futbol entre los encarcelados y los trabajadores de San Quentin. Este evento

fue publicado español por primera vez en primera plana haciendo historia.

“Solo nos tomó 100 años? — pero lo logramos”, dijo Chávez.

Otro logro para la comunidad hispana fue la realización de un foro completamente en español con la Fiscal de San Francisco Brooke Jenkins, que fue patrocinado y organizado por SQNews.

“Así que, cuando pienso acerca de la historia, pienso en todos ustedes y de todos los que van a impactados por el periodismo en los siguientes 100 años” añadió Chavez y como broma dijo “afortunada o, yo no estaré presente”.

Se agradeció por todo el apoyo hacia la comunidad hispana, a la Teniente Berry de la oficina de relaciones públicas y el Director Interino C. Andes.

De acuerdo a el residente, y editor de SQNews Bostyon Johnson, que el periodismo en español tuvo sus comienzos en 2015.

Johnson habló de como los estudiantes de periodismo fueron capacitados para escribir historias originales que ocurren dentro de la prisión y expresó, “Es asombroso como estos periodistas han progresado”.

Jesse Vásquez el director ejecutivo de la organización

Pollen Initiative y ex recluso de SQ compartió, que en los años 2018 y 2019 fue editor en jefe y ahora él está promoviendo en que otros encarcelados de otras prisiones compartan sus voces.

Según Vásquez la prisión de mujeres CCWF ahora tienen su periódico llamado Paper Trail dando voz a las mujeres encarceladas.

SQNews, cuenta con el apoyo de los consejeros profesionales que dedican su tiempo libre para que el periódico sea los que es hoy en día.

“Espero que lo que hago puedo ayudar a otros. Guiando y asistiendo a las personas destacando a como escriben



Profesor William Drummond invitado de honor

y también los ayudará mejorar sus habilidades de comunicación para los residentes”. ...”¡Sí se puede!”, dijo la consejera Jan Perry.

El periodismo informa y promueve esperanzas para algunos prisioneros en las prisiones del estado.

“Yo nunca me e graduado de nada en mi vida, por mi problema con el enojo me corrieron de cada escuela que yo asistía”, dijo Lawrence Randall un encarcelado. “Esto es algo grande para mí porque por mucho tiempo yo quería que mis escritos llegaran a muchas personas. SQNews me dió precisamente eso, para motivar e inspirar a otros”.

Cultivando la Herencia Hispana en San Quentin

Por César Martínez
Staff Writer

Después de varias décadas, en el mes de la herencia hispana del 2024, San Quentin, celebró el primer evento patrocinado por el Centro por los Derechos Humanos Ella Baker (EBCR) y la Librería Los Amigos de San Quentin (FSQL).

Un evento que duro más de siete horas de celebración, conto con ritual y danza Azteca, Música, baile, comida y un juego tradicional mexicano. En la capilla la decoración consistió con papel picado, las mesas contaba con un pequeño florero con banderitas de diferentes nacionalidades latinoamericanas.

Los anfitriones del evento fue el residente y co-fundador de Wallbusters Alfonso Landa y los miembros de Fowardthis Productions. Landa agradeció a la T. Berry por el apoyo para la realización del evento.

“La cosa que yo quiero que la gente se lleve, es que ninguno de la comunidad que no habla inglés sea excluida basado en la inhabilidad de poder hablar el lenguaje porque también son parte de esta comunidad”, dijo Landa.

De acuerdo a Landa, todo inicio cuando el cedió cuenta que la comunidad Hispana no cuenta con los recursos de auto-ayuda, reinserción

en comparación de otros encarcelados quienes les dan la oportunidad en participan en programas que los guían antes de su liberación.

La invitada Julia Arroyo, directora ejecutiva del Centro de Libertad de Mujeres Jóvenes inicio la celebración hablando un poco de su descendencia Oaxaqueña. Arroyo, hizo una ceremonia Azteca, mientras otras invitadas quemaban hiervas como incienso pasando por cada mesa.

El residente Ramírez Ramiro J comentó “es un orgullo de representar nuestro país y atreves de la música y de las culturas que nos conectamos con nuestros ante pasados”.

La participación de los residentes del grupo Cuāuhcōtloti, comenzaron danzando desde la entrada hasta llegar a escenario principal. Para varios participantes este fue un momento especial.

El residente M. Ángel Rodríguez comentó, “Lo hacía (la danza Azteca) afuera desde mi infancia en San Luis Potosí, México. La danza para mi es sanación y cuando me sentí preparado para compartirlo aquí in SQ, tome la decisión de hacerlo porque así como trae sanación para mí”.

Rodríguez, compartió con los demás para así poder ayudar

a sentirse mejor interiormente. El nunca peso en bailar lo que aprendió de niño, cuando se presentó la oportunidad de parte de un compañero de la clase que lo invito no dudo en ser parte.

Silvia Amador-técnica de oficina de ADA, quien presento a los bailarines Aztecas y apoyo sus esfuerzos después de contribuir como voluntaria en la semana de la salud mental del año pasado.

“Creo que al traer esta tradición de nuestras raíces y culturas Aztecas trae paz, unidad, positividad y nos conecta ambos miembros del personal y los residentes”, durante la entrevista el ambiente y la música animó a Amador que hizo un grito mexicano.

Amador continuó, “Es importante porque mantenemos esa tradición de generación tras generaciones porque después esas generaciones se pierden y se van abajo al olvido, me siento feliz en apoyar esta causa”.

La Directora Ejecutiva del Centro Ella Baker (EBC) Marlene Sánchez junto con la Supervisora Teresa Gonzales, hablaron como fueron impactadas por el sistema siendo previamente encarceladas.

Sanchez compartió, “Aquí estamos como latinas, el amor

se enseña con la comida.”

Durante el evento, se sirvió enchiladas caseras mexicanas con arroz y frijoles. La Banda Esperanza, Lo Mejor de lo Mejor y Bori Cuba, animaron el evento, tanto invitadas y residentes se levantaron a bailar con canciones de cumbia entre otras.

Morgan Zamora de EBC comentó, “Nunca pensé que yo bailaría una prisión. En diferentes maneras quienes son libres y la gente encarcelada en este país les han robado su identidad y cultura”.

Para Zamora, fue momento que pudo reconectar con su herencia y para ella es donde el verdadero poder y liberación proviene. También comentó que desde pequeña se mantenía alejada por no poder hablar español pero reconoce que esto es su cultura y manifiesta su orgullo.

Lt. Berry bailando?

Todos los presentes pudieron disfrutar un juego mexicano lotería en el cual varios ganaron bolsitas con dulces mexicanos.

El residente del grupo Esperanza Jerry Muratalla expreso, “Estoy impresionado por que han reunido varias nacionalidades y culturas. Esto es único en esta prisión y agradezco a los organizadores por todo el esfuerzo y dedicación”.



Invitados y residentes gozando con cumbias durante el evento



La invitada Julia Arroyo iniciando la ceremonia Azteca

Las nuevas leyes del 2025

Nos brinda nuevas esperanzas y derechos

AB 1986 (Bryan): CDC Libros Prohibidos:

Este proyecto de ley requerirá que la Oficina del Inspector General publique la lista de materiales que han estado prohibidos por CDCR en sitio web de Internet de la oficina. El proyecto de ley también autoriza al Inspector General que revise los materiales para determinar si un material o publicación esta en violación del departamento de regulaciones. La oficina deberá de notificar a CDCR si no está de acuerdo con la decisión de CDCR, que una publicación ha sido revisado y ha estado en violación del departamento de regulaciones y requeriría que el departamento elimine ese material de la lista de materiales prohibidos del departamento.

AB 1986 (Bryan) fue firmada por el Gobernador en septiembre 26 del 2024, y entrara en vigor el 1 de enero del 2025.

AB 2483 (Ting) Procedimiento General de Re-sentencia:

Esta propuesta establece legalmente y legislativamente un procedimiento viable a la re-sentencia. Esta propuesta requiere que se ponga a criterio de los jueces, abogados públicos para que colaboren para avanzar en una nueva ley de re-sentencia, así se requiere que el CDCR les asista a los litigantes con los archivos dentro de la institución dentro de 30 días.

Los jueces de la suprema corte de país tiene para Marzo 1, del 2025 deberán convencer a la junta para desarrollar un plan justo y eficiente para todos los convictos procesados.

AB 2484 (Ting) Fue firmada por el Gobernador en septiembre 29 del 2024 que la ley entrará en vigor el 1 de enero del 2025.

AB 2310 (Hart) Acceso Lingüístico a la reforma de la libertad condicional:

Este proyecto de ley requiere que la Junta de Libertad Condicional (BPH, por sus siglas en inglés) traduzca los formularios especificados a los 5 idiomas más comunes hablados por las personas encarceladas.

AB 1186 (BONTA) Restitución Juvenil

Este proyecto de ley cambiaría el acercamiento del estado hacia las sanciones de restitución juvenil, por elevar la dificultad económica de la restitución que ha creado. Este proyecto de ley eliminaría eventualmente las sanciones de restitución juveniles y siguiendo, invalidara las sanciones de restitución juvenil que tengan 10 años de antigüedad y eliminaría los embargos. Este proyecto de ley también terminará la práctica de juntar las deudas de cada juvenil envuelto en estos casos, prohibiendo al estado que requiera que cada joven se le retenga la deuda por el 100% del monto de las sanciones de restitución juvenil. **Este proyecto de ley es un gran paso hacia la seguridad racial y el derecho económico en California.**

SPORTS

1000 Mile Club held annual marathon

**By Martin Keith DeWitt
Journalism Guild Writer**

The fifteenth annual 26.2 Mile Marathon was run under a Saturday morning sunrise in the middle of November at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center.

This year, the season's main event included a visit from James McCanne, and Lewis Savona, representatives from the Hoka shoe manufacturing company.

The 1000 Mile Club sponsored the marathon while shoe giant Hoka sponsors the running club.

"I believe running can change your life," stated Amy Cameron. "I came to the program after meeting former resident of San Quentin Markel 'The Gazelle' Taylor at a running practice on the outside." Cameron was assisting in her second marathon here at the Q.

McCanne added, "It was a trip, I've never been in a penitentiary before, birds flying and chirping, not as scary as one might think." McCanne has been with Hoka for three years.

Correctional Officer Ramirez of SQRC's California Model Resource Team supported the marathon by striving to run its full distance. Sadly, an injury he sustained at home was still on the mend and he had to alter his lofty goal.

Ramirez completed five miles in one hour thirteen minutes while also operating SQRC's drone which took pictures and videos of the event.

"I was inspired to come here. This is really a different experience [and] if I can be of help to the runners that's great," proclaimed Savona who has been with Hoka for four years.

In attendance was legendary marathoner runner



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon

**Above: 37 residents finished the marathon run
Right: C/O Lopez of the California Resource Team members runs with residents**

Frank Ruona. The event named in his honor.

"I'm honored by it," exclaimed Ruona.

Ruona has been volunteering with the program since 2005. When asked of his favorite moments of the track year, Ruona stated "[It's] the monthly runs leading up to the marathon."

"We had seventy starters which is amazing," said longtime volunteer Diana Fitzpatrick. "We were expecting fifty (and) had about eight race day registrations."

Fitzpatrick added that it takes lots of volunteers to pull off an event of this magnitude with volunteers coming from all different backgrounds.

David Jackson, an avid runner reminisced about his five year hobby of running, which included his first-ever North Face Endurance Challenge event—a 'fifty miler.'

"It was surreal. The clank of the door shutting and



locking with correctional officers everywhere" stated Jackson. "My experience is probably different than others," Jackson served one year in Santa Cruz County Jail and was granted diversion on his first offense.

He said he discovered the 1000 Mile Club on social media and reached out to volunteer. At his first SQRC track event, he eagerly spent a large part of the day calling out 'laps completed' to runners as they passed the

start/finish line.

"We do this because we want to build community and create goals for athletes. To take goal setting and apply it to other parts of their lives," explained Tim Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick has been a longtime supporter and volunteer of the running club.

Les Pershall exclaimed, "This isn't fabricated, this is authentic." Pershall has been volunteering for over a year and was previously acquainted with the

2024 Frank Ruona Marathon

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------|---------|
| Fajardo, Jose | (age 43) | 3:20:39 |
| Kirvuthy, Soy | (age 40) | 3:37:00 |
| Jarosik, Mark | (age 58) | 3:47:14 |
| Campos, William | (age 39) | 3:49:42 |
| Maya, Jose | (age 24) | 3:51:57 |
| Verdin, Delfino | (age 45) | 3:52:25 |
| Gutierrez, Ignaci | (age 46) | 3:54:29 |
| Dimas, Hugo | (age 42) | 3:55:46 |
| Guerra, Davi | (age 38) | 3:57:20 |
| Coleman, Jaco | (age 26) | 4:04:47 |
| Gonzalez, Leandro | (age 42) | 4:07:56 |
| Taylor, Charles | (age 46) | 4:10:38 |
| Banno, Kai | (age 43) | 4:15:23 |
| Clark, Richard | (age 52) | 4:16:52 |
| Cuevas, Jorge | (age 42) | 4:18:16 |
| Stephens, Greg | (age 41) | 4:18:38 |
| Thao, Peter | (age 34) | 4:21:15 |
| Simons, London | (age 21) | 4:27:07 |
| Covarrubias, Jeffry Lee | (age 50) | 4:35:54 |
| Lopez, Gabriel | (age 39) | 4:36:44 |
| Paez, Armand | (age 34) | 4:37:07 |
| Head, Bryan | (age 29) | 4:41:50 |
| Martinez, Jaime | (age 58) | 4:43:31 |
| Laseca, Ernesto | (age 50) | 4:52:20 |
| Raingsan, Virac | (age 48) | 4:52:33 |
| Ruiz, Andres | (age 40) | 4:56:23 |
| Ong, Dao | (age 47) | 4:58:46 |
| Thompson, Randy | (age 30) | 4:58:49 |
| Prado, Eliezer (Hamza) | (age 56) | 5:07:26 |
| Magano, Jose | (age 41) | 5:07:40 |
| Matlak, Steven | (age 46) | 5:10:12 |
| Warren, Steven | (age 35) | 5:17:57 |
| Bustos, Jorge | (age 35) | 5:39:57 |
| Tillman, Stan | (age 40) | 5:45:07 |
| Colbert, Brandon | (age 44) | 5:49:18 |
| Huynh, Long | (age 39) | 6:03:06 |
| Newman, Daniel | (age 61) | 6:05:51 |

Fitzpatrick's.

Two-time marathon champion Jose Fajardo finished with a time of three hours twenty minutes, and thirty-nine seconds.

"I feel tired but excited. This is my second, [as] I ran last year," said Fajardo. "I got a cramp but [there are] no excuses."

Fajardo said the cool weather positively impacted his run. "The hot weather makes it tougher and there was a chance of rain."

"Today was a little more than I expected, so I'll keep training. It's never too late to start, so I encourage everyone," said Fajardo.

The final runner, Daniel Newman completed the full distance in 6 hours five minutes and fifty-seven seconds.

He was the thirty-seventh runner to complete the full distance, percentage points short of fifty percent of the number of starters, a new record.

San Quentin revives Olympics after decades

Olympic events dating back to the early 1900s features multi-skills challenges



**Above: Hamed Ali Daneshmand Pourlashgari
Below: Gregory St. Mary**



**Above: Kirivathy Soy
Below: Dwayne Scott**



**Above: Daniel Hernandez
Below: Robert Carpenter**



**Left: Residents pass the baton in relay race
Right: Recreation program coach K. Bhatt shoots free throws**
Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews



The Lower Yard played host to the second San Quentin Olympics after a sixty-four year hiatus that highlighted sports for the incarcerated community.

The festivities started with the playing of the Olympic theme song, followed by the Veterans Group of San Quentin's Color Guard presentation of the colors. Joel Natividad sang the national anthem.

Running events included a 40-yard dash, a one-mile race, and a four-by-four-hundred relay race. Physical fitness competitions featured pull-ups and push-ups.

Soccer competitions featured penalty kicks, and dribbling skills challenges. Basketball events highlighted three-point shooting and free-throw challenges. A baseball throw, homerun derby and a quarterback challenge for distance throws let resident athletes show off their baseball and football skills.

A heavy bag race and a strongman pull competition exhibited resident muscle power.

Event creator Adrian "AD" Robinson, 51, felt motivated by the sign on the backstop of the ball field, which read "In memory of Jeffery 'Silk' Evans" and advised "Ball players get those arms warm."

"The plaque on the

backstop inspired me to leave a legacy," said Robinson. "When I saw that, my thoughts turned to a vision bigger than myself, bigger than all of us."

Robinson said he suffered from depression, anxiety, and PTSD, yet his participation in a boxing skills class helped him reduce those stress-ors. Robinson expanded his thought process to include others suffering from similar conditions as he considered how sporting events could bring relief while enhancing rehabilitation. "It's like one big therapy," exclaimed Robinson.

Robinson said he relied on guidance from residents Carlos Smith, 58, and Jerry "JB" Brown, 58, to create the sporting competition.

Robinson said Coach Oola and Coach Bhatt operated in unison to make this event a success, helped by residents coach Ricky Dias, 46, Damien Alvarez, 23, Tommy Wickerd, 57, Maurice Buckley, 42, Jamaal Harrison, 48, and Jerry Welsh, 54. Bighouse Fitness, Veterans Group of San Quentin, San Quentin Athletic Association

Outside coach Kevin Rumon sponsored the event. He said he researched the history of the San Quentin Olympics and dated the last event to Memorial Day weekend in 1960.

According to Rumon, athletes from the Olympic Club came to San Quentin and performed exhibitions of pole vaulting and the high jump, which did not use landing mats but only loose hay.

Olympic competition at San Quentin dated back even further than Rumon's discovery. The *San Quentin News* from May 12, 1960, said, "The 1960 'Tournament of Champions' comes into existence this year replacing the forty six year old San Quentin 'Little Olympics.' This would date the origins of the event to 1914.

The 1960 paper also reported more team-oriented competitions. Athletes competed in baseball, basketball, volleyball, handball, horseshoes, weightlifting, boxing, and wrestling as a team concept.

This year's Olympic winners received certificates of participation and gift bags during the completion of the events.

For future events, the organizers pledged to seek more sponsorship.

"Overall, this was a great event," said Robinson.

—Martin Keith DeWitt
Journalism Guild Writer

Editors note: This article is a reprint from last month with the correct SQ Olympic story.



Residents battle for a rebound in winner take all three-game tournament



Photos by Salvador Joaquin // SQTV

Correctional Officer and coach I. Hunter talking with resident about a play

Bragging rights for South Block residents in Battle of the Blocks

By **Anthony Manuel Carvalho**
Sports Editor

SQ sports season ends with 'Battle of the Blocks' basketball tournament, sponsored by members of the California Model Resource Team. Lacking the pomp and circumstance of most other California Model sponsored events, the prison's basketball organization held its annual round-robin tournament in SQ's packed outside courts where true ballers who love the sport played for pride and 'Block' recognition. "Hell yes we won!" said Coach Hunter. "Did you think anyone could beat my team? We'll do it again next year too," said South

Block Correctional Officer I. Hunter. Top recruited talent from West, North, and South Blocks, participated in the event that was filled with over-the-top excitement. In the end, bragging rights for the three-game, winner-take-all tournament, would prevail. An addition to the year's tournament, Correctional Officers from each housing unit volunteered their time and leadership to coach players leading up to the days tournament. The talent of C/O Hunter's South Block team included SQ Warrior stars Keyshawn "Steez" Strickland and Dejean "Duty" Evans. Combined, they showed off skills with numerous

alley-oops, and thunderous dunks. Many spectators likened the talented duo to a team of high-wire performers. She coached her team to victory. Hunter's dream team elaborated on the importance of the days event. "Even though we want bragging rights, It's about bringing the community together and having fun in a safe way for everyone," said South Block resident Keyshawn "Steez" Strickland. Strickland, the unselfish star of the tournament, dished numerous assists to Dejean "Duty" Evans, who soared above the rim all day. The tandem's highlight reel was surpassed only by the ultra-close game

between North and West Block- including North Block's double-overtime 51-50 victory. North Block stars Donnell "Sonic" Pimpton and Navion "Smooove" Sparks, spoke about the epic game. "True ballers came out and the competition was great. The support was awesome and the practices were tough. The 'Battle' gives everyone a chance to come together to learn about each other and to interact positively," said Sparks. Pimpton added, "I'd have never thought I'd be playing a pick-up tournament with a couple of games left in our regular SQ Warrior season," said Pimpton. The Warriors guard played in the 'Battle' for his first time. "There is

always a risk of injury." Sparks demanded Pimpton be named MVP of the entire tournament. "The Lower Yard court was packed with residents who were trash-talking all day as they cheered on their blocks, and without all the fan faire of the California Model, it was great to just see true ballers play," said SQ Warriors head coach Jeremiah "JB" Brown. Pimpton and Sparks made note of laughable moments that happened throughout the event. "The funniest thing I saw on the court was when June (Aaron Miles) received a tech (technical foul) because he was talking to his own teammates. The ref thought he was talkin' to them

[refs]." Pimpton said. "June's expression was hilarious!" Sparks also laughed at what he observed. "My funniest memory of most games is always seeing [ref]'Ish's' dance when he calls fouls. Event organizer and referee, Ishmael "Ish" Freelon presented co-MPV's, Veltteese "Teese" Mathis; Dejean "Duty" Evans; and Delvon "Delvy" Adams, with MVP plaques of the tournament. "Man, the entertainment value was unbelievable. I watched every game because they were so close. The games were equal, competitive, and just an over-all great time," said Brown. The fans around the landmark court all agreed.

SQ Warriors end basketball season on a high note

The SQ Warriors won their final game of the year against Prison Sports Ministry's Green Team. The season's end turned into a day of tributes to PSM's contributions as social reform leaders who helped change the SQ Basketball organization into a national leader in the world of rehabilitative achievements. Don Smith, founder of Prison Sports Ministries, attended the finale and reminisced about his decision to focus on PSM after his first visit to SQ in 1996. "Thank you for loving my son," said the mother of one of the formerly incarcerated residents told Smith. Smith was attending an event after his first visit to the prison when the mother of a formerly incarcerated player approached him. Smith apologized for his emotional outburst while sharing his story about the resident's mother — as if any apology was necessary. "The raw emotions displayed drove home how important relationships are that take place at SQ sporting events," said basketball fan and resident John Krueger. Bryce Warwick, PSM's Executive Director, has been with the company for six years stated, "We always talk about what a special place San Quentin is. A lot of places don't have what San Quentin has, so it's magical that this place exists," said Warwick. Callie Hooper's husband, Will plays for PSM, and she shared the spiritual aspect of PSM's relationship with the SQ Warriors. "Seeing God's hand within redemptive work was an encouragement to me and my faith," exclaimed Hooper. Don Smith said interactions with residents during pre-game

invocation, half-time prayers, and post-game fellowships are invaluable. SQ Warriors Navion "Smooove" Sparks and Donnell "Sonic" Pimpton showed the team's appreciation. "Times with PSM are my visits," said Sparks. "PSM opens the door for normalcy in prison and allows us to feel human and more than just a number because what they represent." "They take time away from their families to be with us and none of us take that for granted," said Pimpton. PSM sponsors year-end sports award banquets and special gatherings include the formerly incarcerated and their families. In fact, SQ Basketball sponsors a program called 94 feet and Beyond will be hosting a joint luncheon with PSM, which will headline hall-of-fame basketball player Bobby Jones. The celebration gave way to the season finale. In the game, the SQ Warriors generated a fast start that proved to be too much for PSM's Green Team. The SQ Warriors prevailed 94-81. Keyshawn "Steez" Strickland led the Warriors with thirty-six points while Ted led the Green Team with thirty-eight. Pimpton and Sparks said PSM is not just about basketball — it's about family. Because of the ministries longterm generosity all players and alumni feel they owe a large part of their rehabilitation to all the volunteers and strive 'to be better and do better' for the ministry as well as themselves.

—Anthony Manuel Carvalho
Sports Editor

Sports legends lost in 2024

Local favorites pass away

Championship legends, heroes and Hall of Famers of the sports world suffered great losses in 2024. Known in the baseball world as the greatest player alive, "The Say Hey Kid," former San Francisco Giant Willie Mays, succumbed to death at the age of 93. Other notable legends in the sports world, Jerry "The Logo" West (baseball), Chi Chi Rodriguez (golf), Fernando "Mania" Valenzuela (baseball), Frank Ryan (football), Dikembe Mutumbo (basketball), along with greats like Orlando "The Baby Bull" Cepeda, and Red Sox great, Luis Tiant (baseball), left gaping holes in their respective sport. Many of these athletes defined their positions and became famous, and or infamous legends as a result. Valenzuela did more for the expansion of international baseball than any other player of his generation. He won Rookie-of-the-Year and MVP of baseball's National League, and was responsible for drawing over 3 million fans a year to LA Dodgers games - even during baseball's union strike in 1981. According to NFL statistics, Oakland Raider's Center, Jim Otto, never missed a game. Larry Allen (UCLA), and Boston Celtic great Bill Walton, became renegades in their respective sport. Eugene Edward Morris, best known as "Mercury" Morris, starred on the NFL's only perfect season team the Miami Dolphins. They went 17 and 0, during the 1972-73 season. There were also journeymen in sports who never reached celebrity status, but were still legends in their own right. Greats like, Roman Gabriel; Don Gullett; Vontae

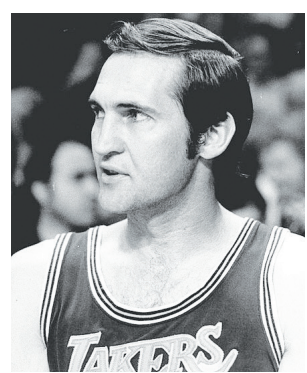


Photo courtesy of Wikipedia
Jerry West

Davis; Larry Lucino; Andy Russell; Chet Walker; Ken Holtzman; Grayson Murray; David McCarty; Khyre Jackson; Jacoby Jones; Wally Dalenbach; Chris Simon; Jerry Grote; Vonte Kiffen; Norm Snead; and Abdul Salaam. Then there were the athletes who became more well known for what they did after they retired from the game, such as Carl Weathers (actor), Bud Harrelson, and Jack Burke (broadcasting). Sports deaths also included superstars who set benchmarks never again attained, in addition to losing their superstar status for criminal acts outside of their game. O.J. Orenthal James Simpson and Pete "Charlie Hustle" Rose, fell into this category of disgrace. Careers cut short due to tragedy saw Johnny "Hockey" Gaudreau, die tragically in a car accident at the young age of _____. The loss of so many heroes throughout the years only enhanced the memories of millions of fans as the innocence of time gone by, continue to fade slowly away.

—Anthony Manuel Carvalho
Sports Editor

NFL player involved in vehicular death

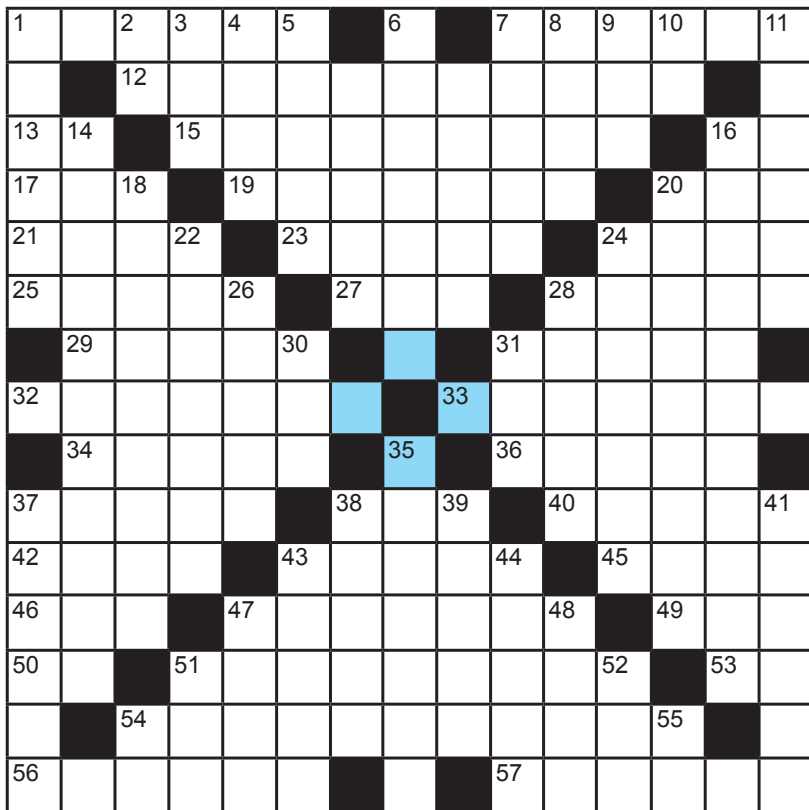
Formerly incarcerated resident Michael Thomas has made the evolution from prison chow hall to renowned restaurant. After serving 27 years at Corcoran State Prison, Thomas, 45, was hired as a prep cook at one of the most prestigious restaurants in San Francisco, Flour + Water, according to *SF Gate*. Thomas discovered his love for the culinary arts while incarcerated, performing his duties as a kitchen worker. "People always said I had a ministry through my baking," said Thomas. "It's an icebreaker for me with a lot of people. Again, food brings smiles to people's faces, and that gives me the motivation to keep going." Thomas credits his supervisor in the prison kitchen, Correctional Cook Salazar, with believing in him as a cook and more importantly as a man. He said Salazar would often compliment his cooking which inspired confidence in him, stated the article. Thomas always found joy in baking and perfecting steam cooking techniques he learned watching his father prepare seafood. His favorite pastry to bake was peanut butter pies. Whenever the institution went on lockdown, he would spend his time making pies with his hot pot in his cell. "It [the pies] came out perfect. Sometimes it came out better than when I made it in the kitchen," said Thomas. "So I still make those today." Thomas has been transparent about what initiated his transformation in prison. He had long come to grips with spending the rest of his life in prison for his crime. A conversation and a simple question from a fellow resident: "What

is your end goal?" triggered the beginnings of a change that would lead to him obtaining his freedom, stated the article. After he was paroled, Thomas entered GEO Reentry Services, a transitional home located in San Francisco. The first phases of reentry proved difficult for Thomas. Jay Sutter, a reentry career advisor for Goodwill, assisted him in getting a cooking job upon his release. Thomas thrived in his first culinary job until management found out that he was formally incarcerated and abruptly fired him. According to the Executive Director of the program, Andie Sobrepeña, they have an 80% success rate placing their apprentices in professional kitchens. The program is a paid apprenticeship that teaches culinary knife skills, food safety, cross-contamination avoidance, and food temperature parameters. Thomas graduated from the program in three months and went on to obtain employment at one of the most prominent eating establishments in the San Francisco Bay Area, stated the publication. His new employers at Flour + Water, when made aware of his murder conviction, were clear in their stance that Thomas' job was secure and they believed in the man that he is today. "It's been incredible having him as part of the team so far," said Derek Woodley, head chef at Flour + Water. "We look forward to supporting his growth." Thomas is excited to have his mother taste his new baked creations when she visits from North Carolina. He said that his eventual goal is to open up a "community bakery" of his own. "Not a lot of people can eat a good pie and not be cheered up," said Thomas

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Michael Fangman

"I'm gonna pass"



Across

1. They came to find gold and ended up making their home at Levi
7. Vader was its #2 man
12. Offensive coordinators, essentially
13. Latin, "for example" (used often by crossword afficianados)
15. What your spouse might call back to say after a fight on the phone
16. The baseball pitcher's best friend, often turned by his MI
17. This Dr. can bring your beat back
19. Contagious skin disease marked by itching and red spots
20. Many a downed pilot during the Vietnam War, particularly in Laos
21. A young girl in England
23. This usually starts with Mon and feels like it goes on forever
24. This peak in the Alps is also a St. in the U.S.
25. Her make-up is Lauder than most
27. If you hear this, beware... you just might get bitten
28. They are persons, places and things
29. Ugh. The Cure is so _____. They make me want to paint my nails black and write poems about the senselessness of life
31. Tying one is often ones final act
32. Get caught here and it'll cost 5 yards
33. These are often former soccer players. Sadly, they are more often a goat than a hero
34. Michael W. Smith gave this many reasons for praise
36. A silly or annoying person
37. Purell will often take care of these
38. This stadium was named after a famous Attorney General, not his son whose brain had a worm in it
40. Your grandfather's IPA?
42. A fancy, British way you might describe that OG on the tier
43. "I'm _____" (2-words) Phrase repeated by every stoner ever
45. A common way to win tic-tac-toe
46. The bane of every YouTube user
47. We don't need no stinkin nocturnal heavily built mammals who are members of the weasel family!
49. These USAF folks have 3 stars
50. The symbol for Darmstadtium, or an abbrev. for your male child
51. If you're back where you started, you might have done this, especially if you're doing aerobatics
53. It comes after kay and el
54. Ionic, SF's Barry, chemical, e.g.?
56. He might be a corporate acquisition specialist or a former Oaklander
57. A North American native people or confederation of such people

Down

1. You can thread it if you want. Just don't poke yourself.
2. This might signify that there was a penalty, but is also the chemical symbol for Neptunium
3. This Manning was a Giant
4. They share Sofi Stadium
5. The food services company, not the folks that make internet routers
6. Standard Oil's Rockefeller, or the manager of one of his filling stations
7. The King of Spain
8. The waters off the coast of France
9. Your mother-in-law might do this. She might even use a crowbar.
10. Every world religion attempts to answer this
11. Tom Brady, Ernest Hemingway, Roman Polanski e.g.?
14. Most players prefer these to artificial turf ones
16. Your mom probably served meatloaf on it, likely demanding you clean it as well
18. Those Pintos and F150s in Tijuana
20. The Disneyland train, essentially
22. "I was hoping we might _____ deer," said the disappointed hunter.
24. A cow that has had her tubes tied?
26. Italian on-line boyfriends?
28. SQRC kitchen volunteers (abbrev.)
30. This meter clocks your mileage
31. Sometimes even a squirrel finds one
35. Dolphins vs. Bills is one
37. Someone who likes to provoke
38. A place where you try to last 8 secs?
39. This "asa" is a spicy Polish sausage
41. According to Lennon, this omelette chef was also "the walrus"
43. A psychiatrist's vanity license plate?
44. A famous golf T
47. Batman nemesis
48. The beginning of sonar
51. The famous magazine where you might find gross teenage boy jokes and Alfred E. Neuman asking "What me worry?"
52. It's time for CA
54. Last state to ratify the US Const.
55. What the author of this puzzle says to any offer of a free burrito?

Special Theme Answer: You can find many a 35-Down on this network.

YARDBAKER entertainment news reviews top 25 prison movies



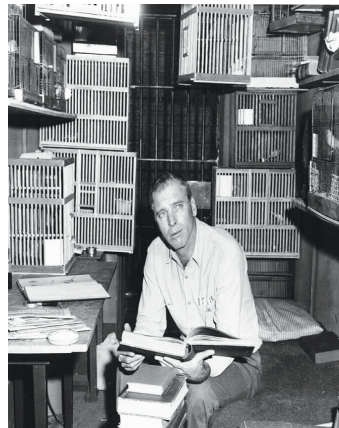
American History X



The Longest Yard



Con Air



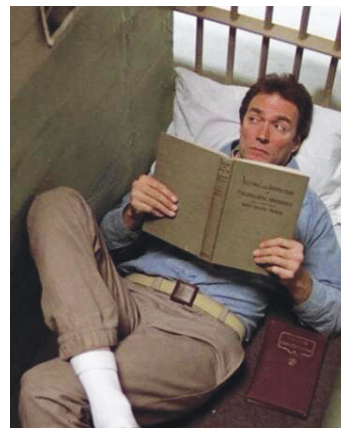
Birdman of Alcatraz



The Hurricane



Shawshank Redemption



The Great Escape



Cool Hand Luke



The Green Mile



Escape From Alcatraz

- (1947) "Brute Force"
- (1962) "Birdman of Alcatraz"
- (1963) "The Great Escape"
- (1967) "Cool Hand Luke"
- (1973) "Papillon"
- (1974) "The Longest Yard"
- (1978) "Midnight Express"
- (1979) "Escape from Alcatraz"
- (1980) "Brubaker"
- (1980) "Stir Crazy"
- (1983) "Bad Boys"
- (1985) "Kiss of the Spider Woman"
- (1992) "American Me"
- (1993) "In the Name of the Father"
- (1994) "Shawshank Redemption"
- (1995) "Dead Man Walking"
- (1995) "12 Monkeys"
- (1996) "Sleepers"
- (1997) "Con Air"
- (1998) "American History X"
- (1999) "The Green Mile"
- (1999) "The Hurricane"
- (2000) "Animal Factory"
- (2008) "Bronson"
- (2009) "I Love You Phillip Morris"

Photos courtesy of Wikipedia

SUDOKU

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SOLUTIONS

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| 3 | | 8 | | | 4 | | | 7 | | 3 | | 8 | | | 4 | | | 7 | | |
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Music & Coping Skills

Dear SQ News:
 Can I have the San Quentin news sent to me, and yes I am requesting for your San Quentin news to be sent to me. If it can be sent I thank you for your skills, stay positive and may God bless all of you Thank you for the powerful stories shared in your San Quentin news keep up the good work may God keep blessing all of you.

—Jesus Bejarah
 North Kern State Prison

SQNews Inspires Others

Dear SQ News:
 I hope when you get this letter it finds you and the comrades in the spirit of struggle were dealing with these hurricanes in Florida, Helene now Milton it did damage to the west coast of Florida I see the fires is ravaging Cali? But I just got the San Quentin news vol 4 2024 April 2024 issue 167 and vol 2024 5 May 2024 issue 168 thank you In solidarity

—Eric Wilridge
 Liberty Correctional Institution

SQ's Kid-Cat draws CSP interest

Dear SQ News:
 It was such an honor to receive your inside SQnews I read it from cover to cover! The purpose of my letter is to say thank you for all you do to tell the good stories of things happening behind the scene in San Quentin.....with those incarcerated and those who support them.

—Keith Dobbs
 Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries

SQ & MODESTO

Dear SQ News:
 Hope all is well, Please please publish my art please in your newspaper. I'm sure it will inspire, not just believers

but non believers also. I'm very confident of that we together are doing the work

—Billy Sadowski
 San Quentin State Prison

SQNews Reaches NKSP

Dear SQ News:
 My name is Alphonso Williams, and I'm the facility-F IPAC chairperson here at CSATF-SP at Corcoran as an avid reader of the san Quentin news. I wanted to submit an overview of how the California model has been working here at facility-F, the continuous, and gradual growth of facility-F and it's transformation, from a yard that known for it green wall to a facility that has a current 58% suitability rate for BPH, and has advanced the narrative of recovery and rehabilitation.

From recently being approved to implement the Wiley's Wish Dog program, to bringing on-site college program, and IP-led on-site barbershop that allows aspiring barbers to learn adopt employable job skills. Facility-f has grown tremendously over the years (with a vast amount of room to still grow). Thank you for your time and possible consideration we hope the attached/enclosed documents will make it in the San Quentin news.

—A. Williams IPAC
 Chairperson
 Corcoran SATF

Readership continues after release

Dear SQ News:
 I received your Newspaper yesterday. Thank you very much, I am no longer At Wasco State Prison in. Crescent City in California I would like to continue to receive your monthly Newspaper if possible I got March's edition, I need April's and May's paper I love the National, sport, youth guild and every single Article on the paper. I am a huge supporter and will continue to read about San Quentin after I'm released

sometime around the end of this year. I will follow you guys on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. I am excited and fascinated to get to know and hear about San Quentin News. Thank you so much for the feedback and paper it means a lot to me.

—Willie Avila
 Pelican Bay State Prison

Inspired journalist

Dear SQ News:
 Hi, I am now out of prison and living in San Diego county attending college. I am studying Mass-communication. I am on my way to be a journalist, to write article. How can I be on the San Quentin News staff writer team?

—Keith Thomas
 San Diego, CA

SQ News in Nevada

Dear SQ News:
 It's been a long time since I had my B number and was pecking with two fingers to help getting out the San Quentin news It actually seems so recent for some reason. Keep up the great work putting out the San Quentin news I never miss an issue.

—Rodney Kein
 Vacaville State Prison

SQNews Reaches NKSP

Dear SQ News:
 I am Billy Fells Jr. humbly and respectfully ask to join your service dog training program. I've been incarcerated for over 10-years with no violent write-ups, I facilitate NA and AA-groups I've taken AVP and graduated the defy ventures rigorous reentry preparation program, CEO of your New Life. However I am a dog lover and I would like to participate in your dog program, I go to my annual next month in July 2024. Thank you very much.

—Billy Fells Jr.
 Corcoran State Prison

EDITORIAL



What is a FICO score and how to obtain a credit report

By Bostyon Johnson,
 Managing Editor

Incarcerated people have a diverse range of experience with credit. Some people have excellent credit, others have had little success with credit, and there are some people who have never acquired credit. This article is the first in a series about basic financial literacy for the prison population, so that when we return to society, we will understand the basics of financial literacy.

This editorial will discuss what credit score is and why it's important. You'll also learn a few ways to receive your credit score.

To understand the importance of credit, let's first understand what credit score is and how it is determined.

When a person asks, "what is your credit score?" what they are truly asking is "What is your FICO score?" A FICO score is a three digit number that lets lenders know how much money to loan you and if you will repay that loan. So, in all, it's a summary of how much credit you have, how long you've had it, how much of it you using, and are you paying back what you borrowed on time.

Credit scores range from 0-580 (a risky borrower), 580-669 (low but can get a loan), 670-739 (considered good by most lenders), 740-799 (demonstrates dependability), 800+ (an exceptional borrower)

There is a new category of credit score called an UltraFICO score for people who have low or no credit score. There are two differences when comparing the UltraFICO score to the traditional FICO score, which only uses the credit report data.

The first key difference is the UltraFICO scores uses banking habits in combination with the data from your credit report. These habits include how responsibly you take care of bank accounts. For example, how long you've been with a specific banking institution, how many transactions you make, how often there is a positive amount of cash in your account, and do you overdraw your account.

The second key difference is that you have to opt-in to generate the UltraFICO score. This is something you do by linking your banking account to the credit report.

Let's break down the five things that determine your FICO Score.

The most important aspect of your credit score is the amount you owe. This is 35% of the score because lenders want to know that you're paying loans on time.

The second-most important part of your credit score is the amount you owe. This is 30% your credit score. Owing money doesn't mean you are a risk to the bank or lender, however your frequently opened credit accounts and the money you owe a lender can be interpreted as you're possibly living beyond what you can afford and they may not get their money back.

The length of time you've had credit in the past accounts for 15% of your credit score. This includes the age of your oldest account, any new accounts, and the average age of all your accounts. The length of credit is a plus but it is not a requirement for good credit.

Establishing new credit or requesting loans in a short period of time account for 10% of your credit score. Bankers and lenders may see

these as the warning signs of a risky loan, especially if you do not have a long credit history showing that you can pay back these requests.

FICO Scores take into consideration your diversity of credit sources. Establishing credit from a retailer, bank, credit card company, or receiving a mortgage loan accounts for 10% of how your score is determined, but it is not necessary to have one of each.

Now that you know a little about your credit score and what it consists of, let's focus on how to request your credit report as an incarcerated person.

According to the Annual Credit Report Request Form, you have a right to receive your credit report once every 12 months. It is important to request a credit report, even if you have never used credit before your incarceration, because it is possible for someone to use the identity of someone who is incarcerated to establish credit in their name because you are not tracking your credit score.

There are three ways to receive your free credit report. 1) For instant access, you can have a trusted family member or friend fill out your credit report request form online at www.annualcreditreport.com.

They would enter specific information like your Social Security Number and your last known mailing address to access your credit report. 2) Your trusted family member or friend can call (877) 322-8228 to request your credit report. 3) You can also mail a request form to Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA. 30348-5281. (Include mailing option and what needs to be included)

AROUND THE WORLD



San Quen-Toons By Jesse Milo



ART

Art provides a healthy outlet for Michael Andrus

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Guild Chair

For Michael Andrus, art means freedom from reality because it allows him an outlet for change and a way to be in tune with his creativity.

Andrus, recognizes how art has been a temperately reproach of getting away from prison drama.

He named his pieces "Leaders of Destruction," and stated, "I painted this piece to state that in America, they're one of them main leaders in our Climate Crisis," said Andrus. "I said that because I feel that they hate me because I was born Black, which is something I have no control over"

In prison, it is uncommon to find someone with a sense of humor; Andrus is one of the very few artists to bring this positive attitude into characters. He understands that there tends to be a darkness that incarcerated folks are dealing with, as he referred to doom-and-gloom, he tries to find a silver lining in everything he does. w

Additionally there is Peter Griffen, with his signature outfit doing the buttie scoot with a remarkable smile. This icon character was painted on one of his hats, painted in red "OMG THEY KILLED KENNY", following "Sike I'm Not Dying No More," Kenny is on the front left and Quagmire on the right side.

According to the artist, being creative comes with a tag price, and that is, his time and dedication when he could be doing something else, like down time for himself.

When he was housed at another prison, the correctional officers were not receptive to him wearing his Peter Griffen hat and were ordered to stop wearing it because it was "Too Loud". In contrast to where he came from, he

feels that at the Q, the officers allow people to express their artistic creativity.

During one of his visits to the prison library, he was introducing his art to another person. As someone who considers himself a student of art, Andrus asked his new friend if he could do a painting out of his friend ideas [which he has already drawn]. As a result, he decided to paint Alien Gladiator.

"When I looked at her, the first thing I thought about is that she is ready to kill anything that opposes her," said Andrus.

He noted that when looking at Alein Gladiator, it sparked something in him. This helped him in creating the background of this piece.

One of the interesting elements that this artist embodies in all his paintings for San Quentin are the Insufficient Funds, or NSF, using this as proof of origin. Every incarcerated person who is without sufficient funds will receive a total of 20 envelopes per month. In other words, his pieces are meant to highlight poverty in prison.

"It is like being on Wellfair," said Andrus.

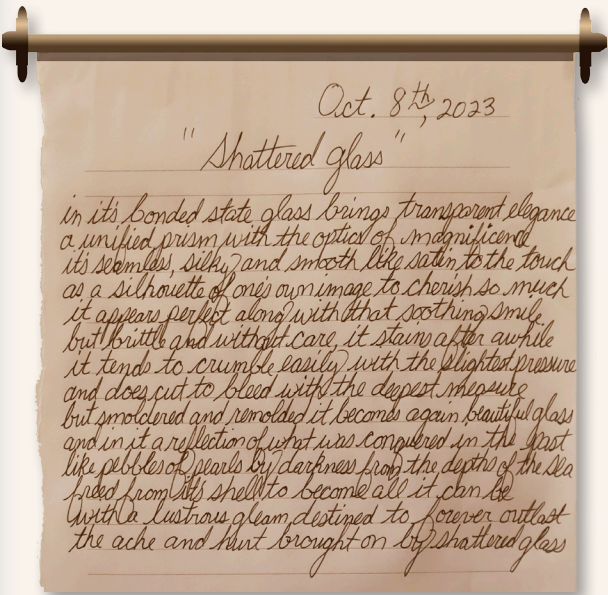
He's also motivated by animation, like Naruto, which is a show that he grew up watching. The artist decided to use a canvas to paint the eye of one of his favorite characters name Sasuke Uchia. Reminiscing on his favorite shows, Andrus shares that Sasuke Uchai at the end of the show developed the ultimate Tsukiomi, which is the all-powerful eye. In the series, art allows the characters to do incredible things, which has inspired Andrus. As a truth fanatic, this artist states, "With great power come great responsibilities."



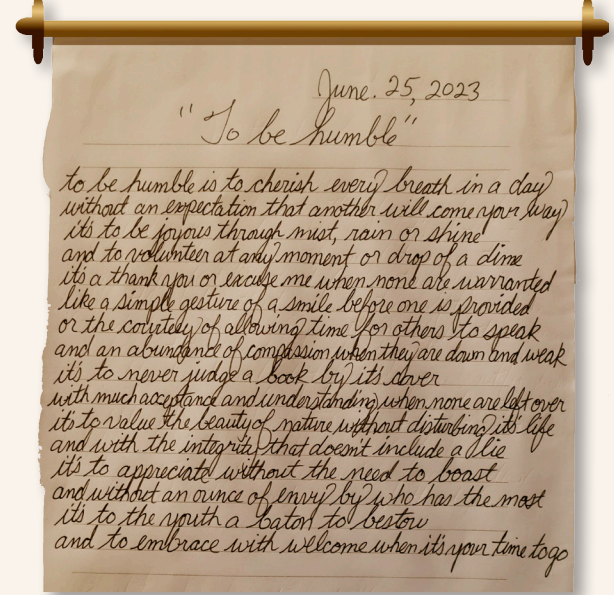
Photos by Kenny Gatison // SQNews



Blas Frank Chavez finds freedom through poetic expression



Photos by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews



Poetry is not the exception to the rules of perfection. One can find their freedom by the way he/she/they/them chooses to live life behind bars.

Blas "Frank" Chavez, (no relation to the interviewer) has been incarcerated for over eight years.

A poet at heart, Chavez tries to find his own freedom through the narrative of his thoughts.

The artist uses his poetry to transform other people's perception by bringing awareness to other incarcerated residents of what humanity should look like within prison walls.

According to the artist, words have the power to touch the soul of those who need healing.

The poem Shattered Glass gives his perception about the tribulations endured before, during, and after incarceration. Metaphorically speaking, he compares human beings to glass. According to Chavez, we are beautiful on the outside, but brittle on the inside.

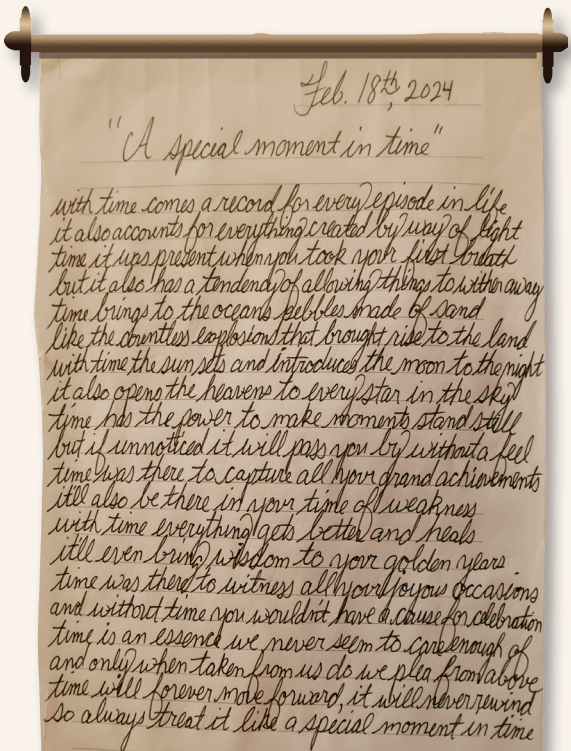
"There is beauty and truth in poetry and that has complimented my life's serenity," said Chavez. "This was revealed to me in that eureka moment."

Through his incarceration, poetry has been the vessel that has kept him motivated. Emotionally, it has supported him in his prison journey. He considers poetry as a way to self-medicate in his rehabilitation.

He recognizes that there is a huge disconnect in the world with the progression of technology.

To encourage inspiration behind prison walls, the creative writer encourages others to allow their horizons to open up by giving literacy a chance. By putting down their tablets and smart devices, to read a book, write a poem, or write a memoir. You will be surprised what you can discover.

"Everyone is overly consume with technology by staring



into the abyss of social distortion," Chavez said. "And you miss out on real life as the world moves about around you."

His perception of the world is complicated in comparison to everyday life in society. From anomalies to the status quo. Chavez noted that it can be complicated to put thoughts into perspective as he expresses his view of the world.

A Special Moment in Time is a poem that reflects how precious life is, while highlighting how it goes unappreciated by other people who don't appreciate their time on earth. The poem talks about how overly consumed people are with irrelevant and minuscule things that take their time away from the more important things, when in fact it is more important to be grateful under any circumstances and value every moment including those moments behind bars.

To Be Humble is dedicated to the unselfish person wherever they are. More often than not, society makes the rules of what is an acceptable behavior within social circles. The author, however, expresses how kindness is always interpreted as a weakness inside prison. In his opinion, it's the reason why many shy away from displaying these types of attributions.

The author understands this ideal in prison because no one wants to be characterized as weak or vulnerable.

"After all it's a dog eat dog world we live in and every man tends to look out for himself. Its survival of the fittest and not of the most considerate". He added. "This poem brings it back down to the basics free [from] judgments, walls, or barriers and defines one who has deep compassion for his fellow man or woman and with the appreciation of the world we live in."

—Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Guild Chair