

Residents embrace cold showers for better meals

**By Michael Callahan
Layout Designer**

The state of California requires two hot meals be served every day to incarcerated persons. But for nearly a week the residents of San Quentin had cold showers and cold food until new boilers were installed. However, numerous residents said they preferred it that way because of the higher quality and quantity of cold food that was served.

Several other residents said the cold meals were plentiful for the first couple of days and then the portions dipped later in the week. Some disliked the frequency of the ham sandwiches while others raved about the turkey pastrami.

"It was tough to shower in cold water at the end of the day, but the opportunity to have good meals was a plus," resident Adan Arriaga said. "I got tired of the ham sandwiches but the different types of meats were nice."

Food quality and quantity are complaints often heard from incarcerated persons. Food Service Manager W. Clark said he is open to help change the model for food service in prisons. "Unfortunately, many food service institutions lack the resources and support their need to thrive."

California's nutritional guidelines and a budget of \$4.30 a day, per inmate, which can make it difficult

See FOOD on pg 5

Life-term residents await after suitability

Positive programming, accountability, and suitability not enough to release term-to-life residents no longer a threat to public safety

**By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair**

San Quentin residents serving a life term have been approved for release, but litigation has kept them in custody; as a result, two lifers share their views on rehabilitation and good time credits.

In 2016, California voters approved the Public Safety and Rehabilitation Act (Proposition 57). The law gave good conduct and milestone credits to people who participated in positive programming, serving indeterminate terms.

The Criminal Justice Legal Foundation sued CDCR saying that according to Prop 57 the Department had no authority to award lifers good time credits.

The Sacramento County Superior Court placed an injunction on past and future credit earning for people serving life terms, including those who have been found suitable for parole.

"Critics of credit earning just don't get it; they are misinformed by sources that speculate," said 61-year-old SQ resident Mark Hernandez. "They should take a closer look at lifer's positive programming. We are accountable for our actions, not because we have to, but because we want to."

Hernandez has served 17 years of a 21-years-to-life sentence. His original release date was 2029, but he was granted parole early on June 18, 2024 because of rehabilitative credits he has earned.

Hernandez said that he decided to change the day he was arrested. He made a commitment not to participate in prison politics and engaged in religious studies, educational programming, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

"We can never take back what we did; all we can do is change who we were. That's the essence of rehabilitation," Hernandez said.

He welcomes critics and victims' rights advocates to come inside prison and talk with residents to witness the work they are doing.

Hernandez added that CDCR has afforded positive programming for everybody and that if it were not for the self-help groups at SQ, his rehabilitation would have been a struggle.

Hernandez was not the only person stripped of his credits; there are numerous lifers at SQ whose release has been stalled.

SQ resident Ricardo Romero, 48, was arrested April 14, 2000; he was eventually sentenced to 25-years-to-life. He went to the Board of Parole Hearings on January 24, 2023, and was denied three years.

In 2026 he was scheduled to go back to BPH but ended up going earlier because of his positive programming, and on August 7, 2024 Romero was found suitable for parole.

"I believe good time credits would enable better conduct," Romero said. "It's my belief that if you provide a person with an incentive for positive conduct, their natural instinct would be to conform in order to receive a reward."

He believes incarcerated people would get into less trouble if they could receive good time credits, and

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Bus delay affords Get on the Bus participants wholesome breakfast with loved ones



Resident AdeAjai Johnson with his family

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

For many residents at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, the annual visiting event organized by Get on the Bus once again came through to deliver, safely and soundly, their loved ones for a visit. This year, GotB featured a special treat that turned into the event's big talking point: bacon for breakfast.

GotB has provided transportation

from Southern California and from the Sacramento area to San Quentin and to 12 other institutions for 26 years. Originally started by the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, the Center for Restorative Justice Works has since sponsored the all-expenses-paid events. CRJW, based in in Montebello, Calif., has collaborated with religious organizations in the Bay Area for the visit to SQRC.

"We don't get bacon here, and I

don't have the luxury to sit down with my daughters and my wife to have a good, wholesome breakfast with bacon and real orange juice," said resident Raymundo Rivera, 43. "This means a lot more than a meal from a vending machine. I got to tease my little one about the bacon: I thought I like bacon, but she *really* likes bacon." Rivera's daughters, aged 14 and 27, looked happy.

For other families, too, the bacon had turned into the conversation of the day. "Two steps from heaven," said resident Ernest Blackwell, 40, about the bacon. "I have been down for 10 years, and I have not had skillet-fried bacon in all that time. It made me feel like I was home having breakfast with my family. They looked so excited to see me."

The bacon came to SQRC in a roundabout way. Usually, San Sebastian Church in nearby Kentfield, Calif., would serve breakfast to the visiting families at its facility, but this year, heavy traffic delayed one of the buses. One of the volunteers said, "If we had eaten breakfast at the church, we would not have arrived here for until much later, so we asked San Quentin if

See BUS on pg 4

Mount Tamalpais College students receive Associate Degrees

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

To celebrate the accomplishments of a higher education at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, a large crowd of visitors gathered with residents at San Quentin's Chapel B.

The Mount Tamalpais College 2025 Commencement celebrated a distinguished group of scholars. "We honor the dedication, resilience, and sustained commitment shown throughout your journey — each step of leading to this significant achievement," the MTC program reads.

"The obstacles the students in here navigate to earn their degrees are so challenging and so hard to imagine," said Kelly Smith, an MTC instructor.

The keynote speaker for this event was David Cowan, the founder and executive director of Bonafide, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping returning citizens. The former lifer used his experience to motivate others in the room. He completed an associate degree through the Prison University Project

— the predecessor of MTC — and went on to earn a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Studies from San Francisco State University.

"I feel extremely honored and emotional to be around my people and proud of the graduates. To those who may be struggling academically, remember what it felt like to retain your hopes and remember what it took to prepare yourself, because you're all going to need to draw from what you learned in here when you get out," Cowan said in his speech.

"This is a powerful achievement," said San Quentin Warden Chance Andes as he commended the graduates by recognizing the impact of higher education. He urged them to embrace this moment of a lifetime achievement. He said he loved the history of MTC and acknowledged the significance of having an on-site campus for residents.

Robert D. Barnes Jr., the 2025 valedictorian, reflected on his greatest challenge that occurred during the peak of the overcrowding

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PROSECUTORS VISIT SQ

Reform-oriented organization hears about resident's traumas

— STORY ON PAGE 5

BOOK FAIR

Hundreds of books sent to resident's families and friends

— STORY ON PAGE 7

PRISON TO EMPLOYMENT

Residents interview with outside organizations for employment

— STORY ON PAGE 10

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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PROFILE

SQNews photographer released on 1170

Concrete Rose co-founder and community advocate walks out after decades



Vincent E. O'Bannon with daughter Autumn

By Michael Callahan
Layout Designer

An incarcerated lifer’s journey through prison is full of ups and downs. After more than two decades in and out of prison, *San Quentin News* photographer and co-founder of Concrete Rose Truck Driving School Vincent E. O’Bannon was resentenced and paroled just in time for his daughter’s birthday.

For some individuals, prison is the perfect opportunity to learn about themselves, find purpose, and be of service. O’Bannon said having a purpose lifted him up.

“Live your life for you, not by what your friends think of you,” O’Bannon said. “Self-discovery was key for me to not continue on the path from jail to prison.”

In the span of two years since his second board hearing, O’Bannon went from being found suitable, to a suitability rescission, to denial of appeal, and ultimately to a resentencing and release.

“When my suitability was rescinded I felt dejected, let down, and defeated. I spent the whole day reflecting on why — if I [was] doing the right thing — did this happen?” O’Bannon said. “The next day I got back out into helping my community.



O'Bannon with his dog at the park

I was confident they would give me a date and that I would overcome one day and push forward.”

O’Bannon said he focused on the positive instead of the negative because there was still work to be done.

Peer-to-peer therapy and mentorship has proven to be an effective formula for rehabilitation, personal growth, and transformation. O’Bannon said there were several peers and self-help programs that helped him, but it was his co-worker Heriberto Arredondo Jr. that left a lasting impact.

As a non-violent three-striker, O’Bannon thought a life sentence was enough to keep him out of prison again, but he said he was determined for this prison term to be different. “Arredondo asked [me] thought-provoking questions and challenged me to learn about myself and to be better,” O’Bannon said. He said Arredondo told him to write a timeline of life-impacted events to explore his causative factors [derivation of underlying beliefs] and his shortcomings.

Throughout this tumultuous time O’Bannon said he focused on building his truck-driving program. He also worked with his daughter, Autumn, to expand SQRC correspondence curriculum to in-person classes in English and Spanish.



Photos courtesy of Vincent O'Bannon
O'Bannon

“Working with my daughter is a good thing because two heads are better than one. I have one vision and she another, but they are pretty much aligned,” O’Bannon said. “Sometimes I get in my feelings but then I remind myself she is asking for clarity. We have a good dynamic.”

Concrete Rose is working with Virage Simulator to provide hands on truck diving program with an all-terrain simulator. Upon completion of the yearlong class, Concrete Rose will provide endorsements and training so that graduates can go to the DMV for their Class A permit.

“We are certified to give certificates for behind-the-wheel training and in three weeks to six months, we will provide truck[s],” O’Bannon said. “This program is a pathway into the trucking industry where there is a high demand for commercial drivers — 80,000 nationally.”

O’Bannon said the program’s foundation rests on three “R’s,” rehabilitation, reform, and reduction of recidivism.

“In order for you to grow to be who you were born to be, separate yourself from unhealthy friendships and figure out what you need to grow,” O’Bannon said. “If you’re headed to prison do not approach it as a reunion with friends, instead learn about yourself.”

Panic attack in boardroom leaves impact

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

For San Quentin resident Rodney Baylis, 64, and for his family, the month of August has too often meant misfortune, calamity, and even death.

Baylis’s mother had died of kidney failure in August 2006. His 20-year-old grandson and his 16-month-old great-grandson ended up killed at his daughter’s house during a sleepover in August 2016. His stepfather died in an automobile head-on collision in August 2019. His two brothers had passed away, one with kidney failure and the other with a stroke, also in August 2021. Such a compounding of misfortunes would make anyone anxious about the eighth month of the year.

The August misfortunes continued on the 9th day of August 2024, a Friday, during Baylis’s second appearance in front of the Board of Parole Hearings after 27 years of incarceration. It did not go well. Baylis suffered a panic attack.

“The commissioner asked me why I committed my crime,” Baylis said. “That’s all I remember. Then I woke up in Marin General [Hospital].”

Baylis said he had enjoyed a good morning that day. He woke up at 4:30 a.m. He went over his notes and made sure his folder contained every document he needed. Then he cleared his mind. He talked to no one that morning.

“They called me in at 8:30 a.m. and had me wait for about five minutes. I felt kind of stressed because my daughter’s husband had just died in the hospital of kidney failure a day earlier,” — yet another August tragedy — “but my case for getting parole looked fine at the time.”

He said that at the beginning of the hearing, his attorney Amanda Hart had given him hope that he would achieve his goal of a parole date. According to the hearing transcript, at 8:36 a.m., Presiding Commissioner Julie Garland and Deputy Commissioner Matthew Brueckner appeared on a conference video screen.

“There we were, in the Board Room at San Quentin, the four of us, talking,” said Baylis. “We talked about my health, my high blood pressure, my arthritis in my hip, but I was fine that morning. She asked about my medical shoes and my glasses, and everything went well.”

Baylis called the conversation mundane, almost like small talk. Baylis’s panic attack had started right there.

According to the hearing transcript, at 9:15 a.m., Attorney Hart asked for a 10-minute break. Commissioner Garland agreed. The hearing resumed at 9:48 a.m., but without Baylis. Attorney Hart said, “We had a medical emergency during the break. I had to ask for a break because I noticed signs not typical for Mr. Baylis. I am going to request a postponement for the hearing.” The commissioner granted the postponement.

The 33 minutes of the recess involved much urgent activity. Baylis said he remembered none of it. His consciousness halted when the commissioner asked about his crime.

Baylis’s lawyer later recounted the events in a message to Baylis sent via the GTL e-messaging app. “Oh wow — I am so sorry this happened! Yes, we were talking and I asked you if you were all right — you did not respond and I said, ‘Mr. Baylis, are you OK?’ You looked like you were either going to pass out or vomit, and then you did, in fact, pass out. I called the officer over and he called medical immediately but it was clear you were breathing — we tried to keep talking to you but you were not responsive.”

San Quentin’s medical staff took Baylis to the triage treatment area. From there, he went to a hospital by ambulance.

“I know what she asked me and I know what I wanted to answer... but it did not come out right,” said Baylis. “My lights went out and I woke up in Marin General. They later told me that I was unresponsive. I had a heartbeat but my heart was misfiring. They kept me in hospital for three days.”

“A panic attack is a sudden and intense

feeling of fear that triggers overwhelming physiological responses even when there is no immediate danger,” wrote Rachel Rabkin Peachman in *Prevention*. She quoted neuropsychologist Karen Sullivan, PhD, as saying that “around 13% of people will experience a panic attack at some point in their lives.”

Sullivan said panic attacks happen if the “amygdala, the emotional center in the brain, perceives a threat (ordinarily a genuine threat, but sometimes upsetting thoughts) it kicks into high gear.... To protect the body from the perceived threat, the amygdala sets off the fight-or-flight response by sending a distress signal to the hypothalamus, which regulates heart rate, breathing, and body temperature. The hypothalamus then activates a network of nerves called the sympathetic nervous system by coordinating a giant hormone dump of cortisol and adrenaline.

“These chemical messengers course through the body and prompt a series of physiological responses such as increased heart rate, quickened breathing, sweating, tingling, and a spike in blood pressure and blood sugar, all of which are meant to prepare the body to either face the threat or run from it.”

Baylis suffered these exact symptoms. Baylis has since recovered. He continued his work as a mentor with San Quentin’s Peer Literacy Mentorship Program and at his volunteer work at the Advanced Peer Education Program, which he had co-founded.

Attorney Hart sent another message via GTL: “I let the commissioner know you were doing better and both were relieved to hear it. They both passed on their hopes of a speedy recovery, and hearing, for you.”

In the end, the postponement resulted in a completely new hearing with a different commissioner, deputy commissioner, and parole attorney. It took place Oct. 22, 2024, and ended at 10:54 a.m. with the sentence, “We are giving you a minimum three-year denial today.”

San Quentin News

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CALIFORNIA

OIG says CDCR has no natural disaster preparedness

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

An 8.8 earthquake in Kamchatka, Russia, put Pelican Bay State Prison’s region on the map marked in red for a tsunami warning on the FOX Weather channel in the late evening of July 29. NPR said, “Certain coastal areas ... face a higher tsunami risk because their shallower waters amplify wave height. One of those areas is Crescent City, Calif.,” Pelican Bay’s location. What would happen if a severe natural disaster affected a California prison?

The Office of the Inspector General had already looked into the matter and published a highly critical report about its findings. The May 2025 publication with the wordy title “Audit of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s Natural Disaster Emergency Preparedness and Mitigation Efforts” said that the CDCR “does not have specific plans to externally evacuate prisons in response to natural disasters.”

“All disasters have similar beginnings, and in the worst case, require evacuation,” said Chance Andes, the warden of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. “We always have an emergency operations plan in place.”

The OIG report focused on four major issues: First, the CDCR’s ability to evacuate residents within 72 hours of an emergency; second, the CDCR’s consistency in risk assessments; third, the state’s review of proper planning for emergencies; and finally, mutual aid agreements.

“While California’s prisons are vulnerable to wildfires, floods, and earthquakes, we found they are not adequately prepared to respond to emergencies posed by natural disasters,” the OIG wrote in a letter to CDCR Secretary Jeffrey Macomber.

In an interview with the *San Quentin News*, Warden Andes went into various technical explanations and definitions about disaster preparedness and he outlined details about possible scenarios. He said he had access to professionals for appropriate responses and mentioned his satisfaction with San Quentin’s mutual aid agreements.

Asked about the July 29 tsunami threat, Andes said, “When the earthquake happened in Russia, we were alerted

immediately and we tracked the tsunami. I would really like to know what the population thought about all this and we should have a town hall about it. I am open to more conversation about it.”

Regulations, outlined in Title 15 as “3301. Emergency Operations Plan,” established a mandate for each prison to have a site-specific emergency plan, but “none included detailed plans to evacuate outside the prison gates,” said the OIG. “Prison evacuations ... will likely take more than 72 hours,” blaming the location and high mileage of transportation buses and other fleet vehicles.

Warden Andes told *San Quentin News*, “We always know what facility has space and we always know about availability of our fleet. Our next training is about natural disasters.”

For the OIG, overcrowding presented a problem. The excessive population “not only complicates the department’s ability to manage emergencies, but also greatly exacerbates its inability to evacuate incarcerated populations,” stated the report, adding that as of December 31, 2024, “California prisons were operating at 122 percent above designed capacity,” housing an excess of 16,263 residents. The OIG stopped short of recommending a decrease in the population.

Further OIG recommendations included updating plans, designating relocation sites near each prison (including deactivated prisons), relocating transportation hubs or adding additional hubs, and staff training.

The OIG’s second conclusion discussed inconsistent risk evaluations. Kern Valley rated its flood risk as high while North Kern, 2.3 miles away, rated it as low. Corcoran rated its flood vulnerability low while the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, about two miles away, rated it high.

The OIG said facilities did not use one tool for risk assessment but used four different tools, which might result in incompatible estimates. SQRC and five other facilities used the Emergency Planning Unit Hazard Vulnerability Assessment Tool while 19 other prisons used other systems. Five facilities offered no specifics. The OIG recommended to standardize risk assessments and that adjacent prisons should work together.

The CDCR also lacked in their review obligations, said the report. Within the

CDCR’s Office of Correctional Safety, the Emergency Planning and Management Unit has oversight responsibility over emergency planning and must approve each facility’s site-specific emergency plan, said the report. The OIG found “the unit lacks formal guidelines or specific criteria to assess the content of the plans” and “does not ensure prisons submit site-specific supplements or review them.” The report also said the “unit’s approval process is flawed.”

The OIG speculated that prisons “may fail to update their supplements regularly, even after significant events such as wildfires or floods, lowering their preparedness for future emergencies.” The OIG found that two institutions, Corcoran and the SATF, “showed significant gaps in detail and were missing critical information” in their site-specific emergency plans. The report reached a similar conclusion about Pelican Bay’s plan, which “still lacks sufficient detail to effectively evacuate staff and the incarcerated population.”

The OIG further found the CDCR deficient on mutual aid agreements — written or verbal agreements among public agencies, community organizations, and private businesses committing to assist one another during emergencies.

The OIG said at least two facilities have not entered into MAAs, and not all site-specific emergency plans include key details of MAAs. Some facilities reported vague plans and one facility said it entered into MAAs “with local hospitals and a medical doctor, but did not identify specifically which local hospitals, or which medical doctor,” the report said.

The OIG suggested formalizing all MAAs with clearly defined terms, and standardizing the documentation and review process. The report also suggested attaching MAA details in site-specific emergency plans.

About the OIG report as a whole, Warden Andes said, “Are we perfect? By no means, but we will address all issues.”

Californian neglect of natural disasters affecting prisons appeared common across the nation. An article in the October 2022 American Journal for Public Health said in a survey of 40 states with publicly disclosed emergency plans, only 30 mentioned incarcerated persons. Only six states included protocols around resident safety and evacuation.



Dear SQ News,

Greetings are extended, first and foremost this letter is in regards to the outstanding work performance you put in, in fulfilling your duties and responsibilities as editor in chief and keeping the San Quentin community informed and abreast in all on going functions within this facility.

The SQ community is highly appreciated for the hard work and long hours you put in and the due diligence you must do for each and every column you release /print out. The Branch in and union that you have created with your articles is essential to the SQ community, in keeping us all abreast with all top priority concerns that are of the utmost importance to the SQ facility.

Your dedication to your job and the people of the SQ does not go unnoticed and with said sir. We thank you with the highest form of respect sir. Continue writing and we all wait for your next column.

A. Salazar

Dear SQ News,

I am writing this letter about West Block to lock the doors every hour, in San Quentin prison. The problem is that

makes us late to go to work, School, ducats appointments etc.

Sometimes they want to give us a RVR that is a write-up. It would be better if they left the doors open all day, like that we won’t get in trouble and also be late to our appointments.

Jhonagan I. Bahenavalle

Dear SQ News,

When I heard from my councilor from my prison to move to San Quentin Prison. The happiness and excitement in my face cannot be sketch or drawn from the good things and programs, also jobs. We heard for the incarcerated people like me.

Since then, I arrived here at San Quentin and got go to school. We tried my very best to sign up for a program allocating my off hours for five days in a week for more than three (3) months nobody responds or says thank you for your interest in signing up program and applying job here at San Quentin. And I’ve noticed I belong to minority, no wonder why.

Diomisio Pallaya

Dear SQ News,

The Spanish community is very happy

to have for the 1st time the program to BIG TRUCK DRIVING, LICENSE class “A”. It’s been very popular among us, as Latinos we ate very happy to have the opportunity to learn each program. Thanks to Vincent as the main person of the curriculum and all the facilitators for give us all us all the knowledge of how to drive all kinds of trucks and to look forward when we going to be free outside and look for the opportunity to a good job driving a truck.

David Moreno

Dear SQ News,

I would like to express my concerns on how the unlocks are being monitored, there are unlocks are at every hour. They should be changed because other units are out all day with zero unlocks. There should be a solution to this problem. Hopefully there would be a response to this problem that we’re having.

Kahroan Nabordi

Dear SQ News,

I’m grateful for so many things here at SQ ST. Prison. Just being in a prison that I’m able to work on myself. Get a GED

Justin James Johnson

GRAD

Continued from page 1

A dozen residents show resilience and mental toughness in their journey to higher education



Top clockwise from left: Craig Williams with his parents. Carl Raybon with his friends. James Duff with his family and friends. Chris Rigsby with his daughter. Below: Valedictorian Robert Barnes gives his speech



Graduates back row: Justin James Mingham, Chris Rigsby, Dennis Jefferson, Agustin Muñoz Espino, Carl Raybon, and Robert Barnes. Front row: Hung Pham, Anthony Gomez, James Duff, Craig Williams, and William Russell Merlen

at San Quentin. He specifically pointed out the pandemic. “I have newfound levels of resilience and mental toughness, [an] improved work ethic and academic achievement, compassion and empathy for others and myself, and a confidence that moving forward, I can excel as a lifelong learner.”

The Greater Good, a band of incarcerated musicians, provided a musical interlude for this special ceremony.

Family and friends witnessed their loved ones turning their tassels from left to right after receiving their diplomas, which made their higher education journey official. Thirteen residents graduated, including one absent graduate who had recently transferred to a reentry program.

“I am very proud of him; it felt great to see him accomplish his goals and overcome all the obstacles against him,” said Rachel Muñoz, the niece of graduate Agustin Muñoz Espino, an immigrant graduate who beat the many challenges of English as a second language. “He is the first

generation college graduate in our family.”

MTC Chief Academic Officer Amy Jamgochian, PhD, said she has the chance to know all the graduates during the beginning of their journeys with MTC, which makes the graduation very special. Jamgochian said she appreciated MTC staff for their hard work and for putting together such a complex event, which involved a lot of planning, and which, at the end, went beautifully.

Gabriella Licata, a former instructor for MTC, said she felt honored to come back to celebrate the achievements of the graduates. She said education meant transformation, which seemed evident to her in this room on this day.

The impact of higher education changed perspectives and some of the graduates said they felt empowered by their achievements.

“One of my mother’s core values was education,” said Salutatorian Dennis D. Jefferson Jr. “When I was in junior high, my mother insisted that I catch a bus clear

across Oakland to go to a school an hour away. She would always say, ‘Den-Den, I just want you to go to a good school.’ After she passed away unexpectedly when I was 18, I began to prodigally squander her hopes for me away. But there is a proverb which says, ‘No matter how far you have gone on a wrong road, turn back.’ I’m at a good school now, Mom. Please rest in a proud peace.”

MTC president Dr. Jody Lewen asked the entire MTC faculty to stand and she thanked them for their work and dedication in helping the students to earn their degrees. The ceremony progressed with the graduates ascending the stage to receive their diplomas. Each one of them walked on stage in their caps and gowns, a rare moment inside prison walls.

“It’s amazing to see all the hard work that is being done in here and to be part of it,” said MTC instructor Erin Katz. “I feel that learning involves a lot of hard work, but over time, it seems beautiful to see the efforts that culminate in this event.”

BUS

Continued from page 1

Get on the Bus encourages more residents to participate next year

we could bring breakfast here, and they said Yes.”

Besides serving breakfast, the 2025 Get on the Bus event accomplished other improvements. Most importantly for the organization, the San Quentin event had greater attendance. “We served 141 participants this year, which includes 35 residents,” said Josue Avalos, one of the organizers. Avalos said the service has room for more visitors; the organization would like to receive more applications from San Quentin residents.

Another improvement made a big difference to residents with small children. Every year, GotB would give teddy bears to children. In the past, the children received the bears at the end, after boarding the bus home. This year, Lt. Haub’s California Model Resource Team received the bears at SQRC in advance for security clearance so that residents could give them to their children themselves.

Avalos said he had thanked Lt. Haub for his efforts.

“This is such a trivial favor San Quentin did, but it made such a huge difference,” said Jennifer H., a CRJW volunteer.

Warden Chance Andes also expressed his pleasure with the positive changes at this year’s event. “We have done much better with [entry] processing for visitors, and this year, we processed more visitors in a shorter time than last year.

That means staff performance is improving,” said Andes.

Chief Deputy Warden Rosales said she wished something like GotB had existed during her college days; she attended college in Cambridge, Mass., too far for her family to visit. She called the event the fulfillment of the “Heart, Soul, and Mission” of San Quentin.

SQRC’s Community Resources Manager M. Barragan and his staff looked on as the event progressed. He said he also felt pleased with streamlining of event bureaucracy accomplished by his office. CRM Office Technician A. Torres said, “This is one of my favorite events here, I love it.”

Resident Gregory Starling’s family included his son Keenan, 17, and his daughter Sherisha, 29. “Daddy!” said Sherisha at first sight of his father. She later said, “I was just so happy to see him.”

As the visiting room announced that the event would close in fifteen minutes, some frowns appeared on the faces of the visitors and the residents alike. Good-byes looked tearful and seemed hard to watch. Residents said They looked forward to next year’s Get on the Bus.

“I don’t wanna go,” said one sad-faced little girl, but her father put a positive spin on the departure by handing her the teddy bear. She hugged the bear and her father hugged her.



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

CREDITS

Continued from page 1

by attending rehabilitative activities, they would see the harm they've caused.

Romero said that program credits should apply to all incarcerated people who invest in healthier ways to deal with their violence, criminality, and addiction.

"If I'm putting in the work to learn how to address my causative factors, character defects and contributing factors related to my crime, I should be able to receive credits," Romero said.

Residents await release for received credits

"These efforts are to ensure I never victimize anyone again."

"These efforts are to ensure I never victimize anyone again."

The California Legislature is trying to make credit-earning law with Assembly Bill 622. It reads in part: "... the Secretary of the

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation shall apply all applicable credits promulgated pursuant to the secretary's authority under subdivision (b) of Section 32 of Article I of the California Constitution."

"I should have been home in December 2024, yet I am still here," Romero said. "All in all, there is a huge discrepancy in credit earnings that should not exist for people serving indeterminate terms."



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Residents share experiences with trauma

Nonprofit proposes improvements to food quality and culinary training

FOOD

Continued from page 1

to prepare quality meals. Another hurdle is the sourcing for the three meals; presently the Prison Industry Authority sets the prices for the goods that the institutions purchase.

Resident kitchen employee Delfino Verdin said the cold sandwiches, fresh fruit, and quality of food were the best San Quentin has provided in years. "The portions were enough to make me full."

Verdin said it felt good to save a little canteen by going to breakfast, lunch, and dinner. His sentiment was similar to that of several others who expressed the importance of saving some of the money their family and support network provide.

"The fruits and vegetables were refreshing and a change in the flavor of our food felt civilized," David Torresan said.

Resident Inmate Advisory Council Parliamentarian Kenny Rogers, and head of the food service committee, said the committee did a survey of the population regarding food quality. The IAC Food Survey report stated the biggest complaints were: 70% disliked plant based/no meat meals, 18% said the low quality/flavor and low portions were a concern, and, lastly, poor preparation and variety rounded out the top five.

The report also highlighted the parts of breakfast, lunch, and dinner that residents said get thrown away: 18% beans, 11% carrots, 10% uncooked veggies, and 9% said all of it.

The committee's survey reported a few of the top five suggestions for improvement: better flavor, better variety, bring back old menus, and more staff training. Rogers said after he read about renowned chef Dan Giusti's food service program, Brigaid, he immediately believed the program could be implemented in San Quentin to address the concerns of the population.

"Where you buy the food from and the partnerships that can be formed to work with the Chef's needs to make quality food could solve several issues," said Rogers.

Brigaid is a for-profit company with a team of 70 chefs working in 35 school districts in California. According to the proposal, since the founding of the program they have serviced public school districts, senior centers, homeless shelters, and correctional facilities in 11 states.

The chefs bring a wealth of experience in professional kitchens and provide operational evaluations to identify needs to improve meal quality and consistency, expand menu options, and develop professionally.

"Getting people in the kitchen that care about food will change the quality," resident Chris Rigsby said.

Rigsby worked as a chef in food service kitchens prior to coming to prison. "It is about the culture and proper guidance on how to cook broccoli properly, how to flavor beans. If the cooks tasted the food before it is served they could make adjustments."

Other objectives for the program are to improve resident's health outcomes, dining experience, and culinary skills. "Everyone who is here can benefit if there is actual training for higher quality food," Giusti said.

Giusti proposed working with San Quentin kitchen workers to implement an upgraded model for food service in the carceral system and provide marketable trade skills for future work opportunities once workers are released. The curriculum will consist of three modules: food safety and organization, kitchen professionalism, and food quality and presentation.

"I could use culinary skills when I leave here. I believe it could change my quality of life if I had a trade I could go right out and get a career in," David Torresan said.

Giusti said the trainings would be geared toward improvement of culinary skill, productivity, and worker satisfaction. The partnership will be co-designed by representatives from Brigaid, San Quentin residents, and Food Service Staff. A full-time Brigaid employee will lead an on-the-ground chef for a minimum of two years.

"Why not give someone a credential and training while they are working in prison?" Giusti said. "We want to give people a reason to work in the kitchen. If you want to do it, you can learn a lot and the repetition in prison is a great place to obtain a quantifiable skill."

"If somebody took the time to come in and teach a workshop on how to cook the food better, I would take advantage," Verdin said.

Dialogue bridges gap between prosecutors and residents

By Michael Callahan
Layout Designer

Abandonment, gang culture, substance abuse, death, violence in the home and neighborhoods — all of these were the subjects of dialogues between SQRC residents and members of The Prosecutors Alliance.

All those issues contribute to the social, environmental, and economic conditions that foster criminal thinking and behavior.

Artie Gonzalez, program director for The Prosecutors Alliance, a reform-oriented law enforcement association, came into San Quentin with district attorneys from Contra Costa and Yolo counties to talk with residents about the traumas and conditions that left incarcerated individuals with years of hurt and some bad choices.

"Trauma left me feeling alone and abandoned," resident Delvon Adams said. "My high school friend died; from that point I said I was not going to college."

Prosecutors Alliance bridges the gap by bringing prosecutors, victims' advocates, crimesurvivors, and allies committed to creating safer, healthier communities. The organization works with local and state leaders for sustainable solutions that advance public safety. This is in line with SQNews' belief that communication between victims and offenders can strengthen feelings of community between them and open up possibilities for meaningful solutions.

"I find a lot of hope that individuals who are most effective in coming up with solutions are those inside

prison," said Prosecutors Alliance Executive Director Cristine Soto Deberry. "There is no part of the system where prosecutors see the facility and the people experiencing incarceration. The end should not be in the courtroom. I am doing my part to break down that wall so prosecutors can see how is it going and how can we change."

SQ News' Eric Allen emceed the hours-long event. "Trauma impacted my life crime. We were not born bad people, we just started making bad choices."

Dozens of residents shared their traumatic experiences, accountability, what sparked their transformation, and ideas on how to prevent further harm and criminality.

"I hid my trauma. People outside the home saw what you wanted them to see," resident Johnny Mason said. "Fear was not instilled in us. When you show fear you can get hurt."

Resident Alonzo Jackson said he and his friends were engaged in prosocial activities such as sports but they enabled each other's bad behaviors all the same. "I learned the right way to do all the wrong things." He said he joined a gang at the age of 14 due to insecurities and abandonment issues.

He said he and his friends were not taking their lives seriously. For example, being shot at and laughing about it later, or friends getting shot or killed were all normalized.

"I normalized consequences and had no foresight of the ripple effect and consequences from my actions," Alonzo said.

"Violence was happening inside the home before I realized how violent it was outside my home," Jason

Jenkins said. "Joining a gang was a rite of passage because my family was in the gang. My environment shaped my reality as a kid."

Several residents provided ideas such as teaching emotional intelligence to kids, more investment into youth programs, improvements to the foster care system, and improvements to a system that understands the complexity of rehabilitation. Some said the individuals in the room could mentor the youth and be assets to the community outside.

"I did not believe before that I was a good person. Now I ask myself why I am feeling this way and why are you," resident Michael Moore said.

Other solutions mentioned were more job skills and vocation skills, self-help programming in all prison and juvenile facilities, and structural improvements to offer more humane conditions.

"I look back and I am disappointed how I viewed the world and I lost who I was," resident John Schoppe-Rico said. "I felt that I was victimized but I became the monster I was scared of as a kid, and the prison system perpetuated my criminality and victim stance."

Schoppe-Rico said time spent in his segregated housing unit, faith, and family sparked a change in his mindset. "Before, I failed to ask the right people for help and I needed my fellow guys in blue to support me and make a change."

"I am passionate to reform the system. It is going to take big systemic change to help everybody. To create safe communities outside it is about changing people," guest Kobi Salinas said.

Data debunks misleading information as crime rates are down since 2020

By Jerry Maleck Gearin
Journalism Guild Writer

Policing based on false data, misleading information, and executive policies may have caused crime to increase in the United States.

In 2019–20 the U.S. had experienced a significant increase in crime rates, as murder rose to its highest peak since 1960. Police brutality may have enabled criminal behavior, but in the eyes of U.S. citizens it delegitimizes policing altogether, according to DNYUZ.

Scholars agree that the rise in crime was connected to the 2020 murder of George Floyd; as a result of his death, protests became prevalent, which may have served as a pathway to higher crime rates.

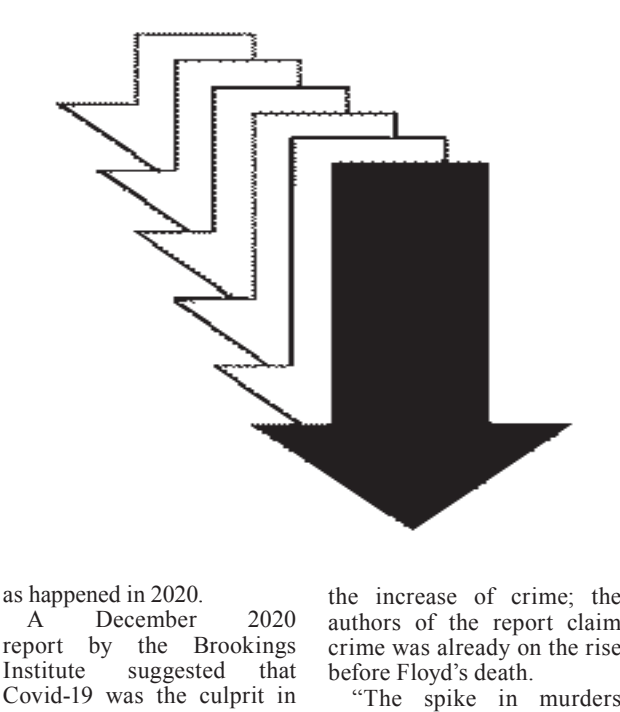
"President Donald Trump has exaggerated or

outright misrepresented the state of crime in the United States, and has used it to push for both stricter and more brutal policing," stated the publication.

Trump contended that the deportation of undocumented people would reduce crime; he encouraged the removal of a Justice Department webpage that reported on crime rates of undocumented people, whose crime rates were lower than the citizens of Texas.

The President's executive action defunded an \$800 million dollar grant for a gun control program, founded by former U.S. Rep. Gabby Gifford, which was geared to help reduce crime, the new article said.

These alternative policies may have caused crime to increase after its decrease, and further may enable a recession,



during 2020 was directly connected to local unemployment and school closures in low-income areas," they write. "Cities with larger numbers of young men forced out of work and teen boys pushed out of school in low-income neighborhoods during March and early April, had greater increases in homicide from May to December that year, on average."

The Real-Time Crime Index states that through March of 2020 crime rates were down, murder 21.6%, violent crime 11%, and property crime was down 13.8%, noted the article.

The media has faced challenges in getting good data, which makes reporting on crime rates difficult. The FBI has the top crime rate analysis, but it doesn't release the information until

the next year.

In 2024 data retrieved by the Council on Criminal Justice, on the reduction of crime rates from 13 categories in more than 40 cities, stated that all crimes decreased except for shoplifting.

Homicide decreased by 16% in some cities that reported the data; in major cities with high levels of murder rates such as St. Louis, Baltimore, and Detroit, homicide fell to 2014 levels. Even though auto theft was higher, carjacking was below 2020 levels.

"Crime is down since then. Although final statistics are not yet available, some experts think that 2024 will likely set the record for the steepest fall in the murder rate. And 2025 is off to an even better start," noted DNYUZ.

Collaborative Arts in Corrections event draws energy, connection, inspiration



SQNews archive

2017 Mural paintings on the wall in Arts and Corrections

By Ricky Ransom
Journalism Guild Writer

Student portraitist, ceramic artist, sculptors, muralist and pastel art designers gathered at San Quentin to celebrate an annual art event with incarcerated artists.

Professor Siskin co-founded the art event with Arts In Corrections staff member Carol Newborg. Every year the event is open to all incarcerated residents.

Newborg hosted the collaborative art event, which is in its fifth year. The event took place in a small quaint space of the Arts In Correction on the prison's Upper Yard.

The innovative hybrid concept unites the creativity of students and incarcerated artists to stimulate artistic vision, adding an enriching depth to their work and lives.

"This feels more like a homecoming for me, art has always been the foundational creative branch in my life," said Siskin. "I have witnessed the transformative impact art has in the lives of the incarcerated. I'm excited to be a part of the event and I am overjoyed as I watch it grow."

Travis George an incarcerated illustrative children's poetry artist, attended Art Day last year. He said, it is great those artists who are connected in the art community outside come inside to spend time with incarcerated residents.

"It makes you feel human again, to just sit and talk about art with someone who loves art as much as you do. [It's] special," George said.

Students in Professor Siskin's Artists as Citizens program are required to be active in the volunteer community. Students support food banks, some assist those who are currently un-housed, women shelters, and various other community enrichment efforts that create opportunity for artists to touch the lives of others.

Morgan C. an expressive artist who also came to Art Day last year, announced this would be her last year at Berkeley City College. The Artists as Citizens program took the next step, continuing her art education at California College of the Arts, in San Francisco.

Morgan reflected passionately about her community volunteer program, Community Works West, a program that mentors kids who have incarcerated parents. The program is located in San Francisco.

Hearing the news of Morgan's upcoming preference, Newborg congratulated her. Then asked, "Are you going to stay involved at CWW?" said Newborg.

"Yes, I love working with the kids," Morgan said.

Ned A. another Arts In Corrections team staff member gave his take on the students being active in community volunteer efforts.

"Whether it is painting or making a space more vibrant it's really about how art interacts with the larger community," said Ned A. "What the students are doing expands the idea of what artists can do in the context of art being a bigger inspirational part of our lives."



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Present day mural paintings on the wall in Arts and Corrections

Incarcerated artist Peter Thao, a fantasy portrait artist who grew-up drawing, discovered his talent as a painter in Arts In Correction. Thao has volunteered his own talent as a painter at SQ by creating banners for Roots [self-help group] and Unico Elemento, a Latino band.

When asked to give one word to describe Art Day Thao said, "Inspiring." Adding, "Art touches peoples lives in a unique and special way and the students and guests coming here to vibe with us is proof of that."

As Art Day progressed, it exuded an energetic atmosphere that blended smiles, laughter and an attentive interest in the unique creativity of the incarcerated artists by the guests and students.

Longtime resident O. Smith, an illustration journalist, a Society of Professional Journalists member, and he is assigned to the Arts In Corrections as a muralist.

Smith shared the rich history behind the paintings and drawings adorning the walls with a group of students and guests, adding little known tidbits about the artists who created them.

"I've been here for more than a decade, I have met most of the students here on prior visits," Smith said.

As he explained the history, Smith said most of the artist who created the paintings are now formerly incarcerated. Smith stated that this event is special to him and he is hopeful that once released he can come back in with the students next year and enjoy Art Day through their lens.

Blanca, a guest and community organizer

from the Black Cultural Zone, a non-profit community revitalization program in the Bay Area reflected on how foreboding structurally SQ appeared from the outside. An "intense experience" coming into the event seeing all the "barbed wired."

"Seeing all the art in here [Arts In Correction] is beautiful. I'm glad I came," Blanca said.

Newborg surprised the students and guests with a tour of South Block housing unit and then over to the dining hall to view artist and muralist Alfredo Santos picturesque rendering of early Californian history.

Then students and guests visited West Block's wall mural, a project brought to life by the staff team and incarcerated mural artist of the Arts In Corrections.

Newborg shared her vision for next year's Art Day when the students and guests return.

"Professor Siskin and I have been talking about doing a joint project. How that will work is her student's would do their part of the project there [BCC], while I will supervise the incarcerated artists part of the project here," Newborg said.

Newborg explained that next year's Art Day will bring both projects together, and have a huge unveiling.

"If we could get some staff to get involved as well it would really be great – art is for everyone," Newborg said. "The guys [incarcerated residents] really look forward to when the students come to visit every year."

Inaugural Pride week kicks off with drag show, scavenger hunt, goodie bags

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Guild Chair

San Quentin residents held an inaugural Pride event in the Gym and on the Lower Yard. The event lasted three days.

Festivities included hundreds of incarcerated members of the LGBTQ+ community and other community supporters. Resident James "Jooty" Johnson kicked off the event by welcoming everyone to the event. She spoke about the history of SQ and the importance of organizing the historic event for their community.

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence visited the prison wearing drag attire as they mingled with residents. Sister Shalita Corndog and Sister Eva said they were surprised by the number of people in prison who showed up to support their community.

"It is so easy to live a few miles away from a prison as big and full as San Quentin, and not even have the slightest awareness as to what goes on," said Corndog. "[Seeing] how packed it is, is eye opening to the reality of the prison industrial complex in the United States."

Corndog pointed out that if someone thinks that a loving creator does not like ribbons and glitter, one must look around and notice what a zebra or a giraffe looks like. "Our creator is a rainbow," said Corndog.

Tolerance has become part of prison's evolution; history shows that in past decades the LGBTQ+ community lived in the shadows, suffering from mental anguish. Lack of acceptance and understanding of their community was evident because they were subject to violence and abuse.

According to resident Dustin Laney, he felt comfortable in uncomfortable situations because prison is built to push you away from the LGBTQ+ community, but here at SQ, he found a community that he never thought he would have. Laney recognizes the stigma about being queer inside prison. He identifies as bisexual. The three-day event gave him the opportunity to stay connected to his community.

For trans women, this historic day meant liberation and community. "This day to me is a joyable event. We are now able to celebrate Pride Day," said resident Estrella Redondo. "Donald Trump needs some self-help groups himself [so] he can be educated about the



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Residents showcase artwork

LGBTQ+ community. He portrays a lot of hate, but he doesn't even know us, what we're all about, or our way of life."

The event transferred to the outdoors where incarcerated residents and volunteers performed on a stage assembled on the basketball court. Residents and volunteers also danced to different musical genres in the middle of the court. On the sideline, Purses and Bags of Love Giveaway handed out bags of popcorn and candy; they also held a scavenger hunt with a bag of goodies going to the winner.

Georgetta Jemison-McAlpine, founder of Purses and Bags of Love Giveaway, said, "Love has no color, love has no gender, and love is unconditional. If you say you love me, you have to accept everything about me. Good, bad, or indifferent, love covers a multitude of faults."

The Kiki Ball offered residents a change to feel free as they participated in a runway competition with lights and paparazzi (incarcerated media) following as they modeled on the red carpet. A panel of four judges cheered and voted for models wearing backpacks filled with books and laptops. SQ resident Kaomacng P. Saeliaw won the competition.

There were multiple categories, including School Boy/Girls and Realness.

"As a transgender woman you don't expect



Above: LGBTQ+ community on the basketball court on the Lower Yard
Below: Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence visit prison

this acceptance inside prison. What this day means to me — it brings tears to my eyes seeing history not only as California but as humans," said Kaiya Kramer, one of the judges at the KiKi Ball. "LGBTQ+ is not just acronyms. It is hard not to look at what is going with the Donald Trump and the Republicans when you see the President saying we are going to remove you from the budget. I feel deep fear because of what is going on and how it affects my friends, and I say this as a transgender woman."

Winners of the different competitions.

Winners

Painted Face – Adriana

Natural Face – Doughboi and Jaime

King and King – Patrick and Lee

King and Queen – Jooty and Jason

Queen and Queen – Doughboi and

Panda

Duke – Jamal

Duchess – Angie

Tie

Best Dressed (Tie) – Smoove and

Doughboi.

Thug Realness (Tie) – Smoove and

Doughboi.



Residents celebrate federal holiday in artistic style

Boxes of Girl Scout cookies, pizza, and free hair cuts provided to all residents

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

San Quentin residents celebrated Juneteenth through artistic expressions of music, poetry, and dance, even though California has yet to recognize it as a state holiday.

An SQ resident found the celebration to be ironic, because people in prison celebrated the federal holiday, but the state that oversees the prison does not.

“I was surprised to learn that Juneteenth was not a state holiday,” said SQ resident Charles Carter. “The state lawmakers should draw up a bill that would make Juneteenth a legal holiday.”

Residents gathered on the Lower Yard to celebrate “Freedom Day,” which commemorates that on June 19, 1865, Texas was the final state to receive notice that slavery was abolished.

Incarcerated event planners Michael Russell, Sammie Nichols, and Eric Allen hosted the event; they welcomed all residents, volunteers, and custody staff.

Russell told attendees that “we are passing out food for everyone but that’s not why we are here.”

A box of Girl Scout cookies and a slice of pizza were provided to the entire general population of 2,367 residents. Allen said that more than 35 volunteers had made donations; he wanted people to show their gratitude for the support.

He thanked SQ medical staff Ms. Bev, Summer Littlefield, and Tracy Sanders for donating their time and effort to serve the food.

Nichols asked the attendees to show appreciation for the women behind this event; the crowd exploded in cheers and applause, giving the women a standing ovation.

One mother of a Girl Scout, on the event’s GoFundMe web page, said, “In the spirit

of this historic day, the community supporting the Girl Scout troop[s] to deliver cookies to the men at SQ, will give the men...hope that their communities might support them in their second chance as a contributing member of society.”

On the yard’s basketball court, incarcerated artists displayed portraits and greeting cards that depicted the beauty of Black women past and present.

“Respect and protect my Mother, Sister and Daughter,” Douglas “Poetry” Dawkins wrote on his artwork. “I wrote this concerning my personal feelings, as a son and a father, my art celebrates the elders whom I value sincerely.”

Resident Stan Bey displayed a pencil on paper of ballerina Misty Copeland and a pen on canvas of rapper Tupac Shakur.

“My art symbolizes and recognizes Black culture to lift people up and to inspire them,” Bey said.

Residents provided free haircuts and hair braiding as their way to serve the community on Juneteenth.

“I am putting some of my artistic value into haircutting this Juneteenth,” said Kenneth Bishop Thurman.

Ronnie Perly stated that today he was celebrating freedom by braiding hair for free.

“I love braiding hair every chance I get, helping people look good, so they can feel good,” Perly said.

Resident Jamal Harris motivated the crowd for the next performance with the words “Say it loud!” The crowd responded, “I’m Black and I’m Proud!” The lyrics came from a James Brown 1970s song.

The resident dance group Sole Unique performed a hip-hop dance routine. The group consisted of SQ youth and elders. They performed a pop locking routine to Michael Jackson’s “Working Day and Night,” E-40’s “Drip



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Sole Unique perform hip-hop dance routine in front of the hospital on the Lower Yard



Residents gather for pizza and a box of Girl

Like Water,” and Kendrick Lamar’s “Squabble Up.”

Each dancer performed a solo routine. Resident Aaron Moten did his signature back flip, sending waves of cheers throughout the crowd.

As the celebration continued, guest dancer Tamika Harris and drummers Alhassane Camera and Nii Mantse Addy of the Dunya Dancers performed traditional African dance routines. T. Harris performed a routine called Casa (Harvest Dance).

“When we plant the seeds it will enable us to grow as a

community. African dance is not just about watching, it’s about participating,” T. Harris said. “As a woman I cannot do this by myself, so I am asking the brothers to come up and help me.”

The SQ men obliged her request and joined her front and center, clapping and dancing to the beat of the drums.

After the men, T. Harris invited the female staff and volunteers to join her. About five ladies followed her lead and danced to the beat of drums.



Incarcerated artists display portraits of Black Women

The attendees gave the ladies a big round of applause followed by an array of cheers. “This is how we do it,” said T. Harris.

Nichols introduced facility elder Amir Shabazz; he greeted everyone with “As-Salaamu Alaykum.” He said this message is for everyone regardless of his or her ethnicity and or religion.

Nichols instructed the residents to “read, recite, and proclaim, because freedom is not doing what you want to do. Freedom is doing what you need to do.”

At a previous celebration former SQ resident Watani Stiner gave his perspective on Juneteenth, enlightening the incarcerated on the primary focus.

“So, let this Juneteenth celebration...be more than a remembrance of what the enslaved Africans in Galveston, Texas, did not know,” he said. “Let us, instead celebrate what we do know, and what we do know is that we have a responsibility and an obligation to remember and learn from our history.”

Memorial honors fallen service members

By Steve Drown
Journalism Guild Writer

Veterans Group of San Quentin conducted a memorial service to honor the fallen men and women who served in these United States Military.

On a bright blue morning sky, incarcerated military veterans welcomed SQ residents to the service.

Memorial Day became an official holiday in the 1970’s, but it was first known as “Remembrance Day.”

As the event began to take place, a large banner of flags were displayed, they represented the six branches of the US military, the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard and Space Force.

In addition MIA, and POW flags were on display as SQ paid homage to the fallen comrades.

VGSQ Chairman, Noah Winchester, acknowledged the 85 service members and guests. Trevor Shaw the groups Vice Chairman gave a heart felt poignant tribute to his family members who had also served in the military.

Tina R, the groups sponsor

indicated that she had been given an advance copy of Trevor’s speech and that it succeeded in keeping the day special. He had spoken of the passing of a brother, which made everything more real.

The incarcerated Honor Guard conducted a flag folding ceremony of the American Flag into a traditional triangular shape and placed it into position for the remainder of the ceremony, as one of the incarcerated veterans stood guard.

A wreath was then placed in front of the service flags, and six small replicas of the American Flag were inserted into the wreath to represent the six service branches.

As each flag was inserted, the representative saluted and stood for a few moments of silence before leaving the area.

“To be a sponsor means the world to me. That the vets let me in; especially because most vets are very protective of their own,” Tina R. said. “It is no small thing that the members of the Veterans Group of San Quentin choose to share their stories with me.”

EVENT

Semi-annual Children's Book Fair a literary hit

Incarcerated build connection between society and prison through literacy

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

Residents rushed into the small prison library 10 to 15 at a time where a dozen tables loaded with children’s books stood scattered during the Book Fair.

Resident Saia Nuñez, who had been waiting in a line that stretched all the way from the library to the Lower Yard, said his first selection was a children’s Bible.

“I believe these last longer than the other books because they will give them real wisdom,” said Saia, who also chose a National Geographic book titled How Things Work. “I chose this one so that they can get a better idea about how things work so they can be more aware of their surroundings.”

Seven hundred twenty-two children received books from incarcerated family members, thanks to the 1,800 children’s books donated by the Berkeley Public Library, Book Passage, San Francisco Public Library, and Copperfield’s Book Store. Friends of the San Quentin Library sponsored the event.

“It is important for the residents to stay connected with their children, and books are one way of doing that.”

Resident Brandon Sears said he felt seen by the people who donated and paid the shipping cost of the books. He said they recognize that even people in prison have children too.

“It’s the memories, regardless to the situation,” said Sears. “It makes our relationship closer and my kids will always remember that their dad read books to them.”

The categories Board Books, Español, Graphic Novels, Sports Books, Picture Books, Science Books, Gift Books, and Activity Books hung from the walls and tables defining the type of books on that table. Other tables labeled 2–7, 8–11, and 12–15 pointed to age specific books.

Volunteers walked around helping residents pick out books for their children by recommending trendy kid books for their age group.

The variety of books ranged from fictional characters and superheroes to dinosaurs and the Solar System.

One volunteer in particular was Michael. He works at the Berkeley Public Library and has participated in the SQ Book Fair twice. He said he credits his excitement for the event to his love for literacy and bridging the connection between incarcerated people and their families.

“I hope I can help [residents] find the right book,” said Michael. “That the book they choose helps them develop a connection with their children.”

Literacy manager Natalie works at the San Francisco Public Library. She said she is interested in helping incarcerated folks bridge the gap between society and prison through reentry support.

“The opportunity to come inside and help folks bridge the gap is the start of those connections,” Natalie said.

Terra, a first time volunteer at the book fair, shared the Natalie’s sentiment, saying she felt joy sharing the space with the incarcerated people.

“It’s really good to see the process and to be here with people,” she said. “I also think people [in society] want to be helpful.”

Bryan also works at the San Francisco Public Library. He said that this collaborative effort to work with local libraries and community members is a small step in the right direction.

“I do this to try to make that little bit of difference in the world, even if it is a simple hello,” he said. Bryan also works with youth in a juvenile facility in San Francisco. He noted that every time he visits a facility, he recognizes the growth in the people incarcerated there and invites others to witness that growth. “I believe there is a perception in society about people in prison, but that is not the case.”

Pam is a volunteer with Friends of [the] SQ Library. She spoke about her love of book fairs as a kid and said she wanted to share that with the residents of SQ.

“It is important for the residents to stay connected with their children, and books are one way of doing that,” Pam said.

El robo a ciudadanía americana

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

Millones de niños pueden ser arrebatados al derecho a la ciudadanía americana por nacimiento.

La Corte Suprema de la nación se encuentra dividida durante la reciente decisión en limitar el poder de jueces federales bloqueando órdenes ejecutivas nacionalmente del actual mandatario Donald Trump. Ordenes como limitar el derecho a la ciudadanía por nacimiento cuando los padres son indocumentados.

De acuerdo a los registros de la corte suprema en el caso *Trump President of the United States, et al, V. Casa Inc., et al* No. 24A884 —Decisión June 27, 2025, síes justicias en favor del mandatario y tres en contra.

Los Estados Unidos se encuentra entre los 30 países que otorgan el derecho a la ciudadanía por nacimiento — fundamentalmente es nacimiento en territorio o “el derecho de haber nacido en territorio” — es aplicado más en las américas, Canadá, y México, Reportó de *La*

Prensa Asociada (AP) en Junio 27, 2025.

Trump y sus aliados han argumentado que deberían haber pautas más duras para llegar a ser un ciudadano americano, algo que se llama “un regalo profundo y de gran valor”, firmó Trump en su orden ejecutiva el primer día como mandatario.

La retórica de la administración Trump, argumenta que los hijos de los no ciudadanos no son súbdito hace la jurisdicción de los Estados Unidos, es una frase usada en la enmienda y por eso el derecho de ciudadanía no les corresponden.

Carlos Muñoz de 56 años residente de San Quentin y padre, quien está preocupado en el impacto que va a traer a los que no tengan el derecho de nacimiento, para futuras generaciones que nacen en este país de padres indocumentados.

“Si mis hijos son nacidos aquí y les quitan la ciudadanía americana, y se me enferman. Y no tienen nacionalidad, ¿dónde van a parar?” Muñoz se pregunta. “No son de México, no son de EE.UU. así que ¿adónde van pedir ayuda



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¿Soy o no ciudadano?

médica?” Agregó.

Sim Embargo, Trump halagó abiertamente a los jueces, “Es una victoria monumental”, que es “basado en el sentido común”, dijo el mandatario.

La mayoría de las personas se están preguntado si el presidente tiene el poder de automáticamente quitarles la ciudadanía a sus ciudadanos. La corte confirmó que esa es una pregunta que ellos no van a contestar. La corte optó en enfocarse en como escalar hacia atrás la autoridad judicial, reportaron Sarah Matussek & Henry Gass

de *The Christian Science Monitor* el 27 de Junio.

Los tres jueces liberales estaban molestos en la dirección que sus colegas decidieron, “un peligro existente en las reglas de la ley”, escribió la justicia Ketanji Brown Jackson.

En su decisión la jueza Sonia Sotomayor, declaró que ningún derecho está seguro con el nuevo régimen legal que la corte ha criado. “Ahora, la amenaza es sobre el derecho a la ciudadanía por nacimiento. Mañana será una administración diferente y trataran de remover las

armas de fuego de los ciudadanos que siguen las leyes o prevenirles ciertas fes en poder congregarse para alabar”.

Desafortunadamente el futuro es inserto para los millones que nacerán en el país, o territorio americano de padres indocumentados.

Sin embargo, lo que es cierto por el momento es que 22 estados de la nación americana serán excluidos en esta decisión. No está claro, como esta administración va a proceder en su reciente victoria.

Este tema polémico en términos de ser constitucional, no ha sido argumentado por la administración Trump en términos de que las órdenes ejecutivas van a remover el derecho de ciudadanía, es constitucional. Ninguno de los seis jueces comentaron sobre esta pregunta.

En sus comentarios Sotomayor escribió. “La mayoría ignoran totalmente si las ordenes ejecutivas del presidente son constitucionales”.

Este reciente cambio y dirección de una democracia de más de 150 años ha

alertado a personas nacidas en EE.UU. de padres indocumentados.

Personas como el Sr. Alfredo Moreno, un residente de SQ, nos recuerda que entre 1942-1945 el Alemán Adolfo Hitler, cometió genocidios contra los judíos durante la segunda guerra mundial.

Horas después de esta decisión, grupos pro inmigrantes en los estados de Maryland y Nuevo Hampshire sometieron sus demandas algo que va a prevenir al gobierno en reforzar el derecho de ciudadanía contra miembros de la clase de demanda en cualquier parte de la nación americana, concluyó el reporte de Matussek & Gass.

“Trump nos está atacando por ser latinos, son las mismas acciones que estaba cometiendo Hitler en contra de los judíos a gran extremo que casi logra el exterminio de esa raza”, afirmó Moreno. “Es deber de la comunidad que se unan y protestar para remover a este dictador que esta afectando al mundo entero. Y la economía de una nación de inmigrantes que no son criminales”.

El negocio millonario acosta de deportación de inmigrantes



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El precio de ser un inmigrante

Por Ray Torres
Guild Writer

Las empresas privadas GEO Group y CoreCivic, están cobrando millones de dólares por las políticas del Presidente Donal Trump ante personas indocumentadas. Según Cecilla Barria de la cadena *BBC News Mundo*.

De acuerdo a su artículo,

desde que el actual mandatario regreso a la Casa Blanca a principios de este año e implementó políticas sobre las deportaciones masivas, hizo que el valor de las acciones de estas dos empresas se dispararan; siendo en EE.UU. quienes dirigen la mayor parte de los centros para migrantes.

“Han gastado millones de

dólares, en apoyar campañas políticas que benefician su negocio”. Expresó Bianca Tylek, directora ejecutiva de la organización “Worth Rises” y autora del libro “La Industria Penitenciaria”, añadiendo “La rentabilidad de sus operaciones se basa en tener la mayor cantidad posible de personas detenidas y reducir al máximo los costos sobre servicios que ofrecen a los detenidos”.

Según Brett Burkhardt, profesor asociado de Sociología en la Universidad Estatal de Oregón, ha investigado el desempeño de dichas compañías, externando su preocupación por el manejo y poder financiero para crear campañas políticas migratorias.

Setareh Ghandehari, director de promoción de la organización “Detention Watch Network”, manifiesto su preocupación en la reducción de costos para los centros y por lo cual los migrantes detenidos

viven en condiciones con estándares mínimos.

Washington Post proporcionó datos de los años fiscales entre 2020 y 2023, sobre inspecciones a 17 centros de detención realizado por un organismo de control federal, en donde se hallaron evidencias sobre la carente atención médicas en más de la mitad de estos centros y violaciones a normas de salud además de una falta a la seguridad ambiental en más de un tercio de estas instalaciones.

BBC Mundo explicó, que estas dos empresas gigantes junto con otras compañías pequeñas se comparten el manejo de las prisiones y centros de detención, consiguiendo contratos “financiados con fondos públicos” a través del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional del Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas ICE, por sus siglas en inglés.

El artículo revela que GEO

Group en 2024 tuvo ingresos de \$2,400 millones de dólares y esperan doblar sus ganancias y servicios con la actual administración, con ayuda de fondos de inversionistas como BlackRock, Vanguard, Wolf Hill, FMR y Goldman Sachs.

CoreCivic siendo la segunda empresa carcelaria más grande en la nación, tuvo un ingreso de \$2,000 millones de dólares en el mismo año, esperando impulsar nuevos negocios y desde el resultado de las elecciones del año pasado, el valor de las acciones de GEO Group se disparó en un 90% y CoreCivic alrededor del 50%.

Barria, expone la urgencia del gobierno en nuevos contratos, que le permitirán reabrir o construir nuevas instalaciones de tenciones, ya que según ICE requiere que los centros de detención cuenten con mayor capacidad, y por consiguiendo estas dos empresas esperen aumentar significativamente las detenciones y sus ganancias.

La escritora añade que la administración Trump espera que los fondos sean aprobados por el Congreso con el apoyo de los Republicanos, mientras que ICE apresura los convenios con centros de California, Michigan entre otros estados.

BBC Mundo indica datos oficiales, que la población de detenidos por ICE ha aumentado de 39,000 en enero a aproximadamente a 48,000 a principios de abril del presente año, un nivel alto en cinco años. Agregando, que expertos calculan que mantener a un detenido adulto tiene un costo aproximado de “\$165 dólares al día”.

De acuerdo al artículo, la implementación de las políticas en contra de los indocumentados necesita el aumento progresivo de detenciones y las instalaciones para albergalos. Una promesa electoral que el dirigente del país llama “la mayor deportación” de migrantes en la historia.

Los efectos de la administración Trump

Por René Lorenzo
Spanish Journalism
Guild Writer

El gobierno de EE.UU., está pidiendo a todos los inmigrantes ilegales a registrarse y auto deportase. Estas acciones están afectando al bienestar familiar, temas económico a nivel nacional y familiar, relaciones entre países con acuerdos económicos, entre otras repercusiones.

De acuerdo a datos de la Organización Internacional para las Inmigraciones OIM, Mexicanos, Salvadoreños, Hondureños, Colombianos, Chilenos, Dominicanos y Guatemaltecos lideran la lista con un aumento en deportaciones desde el 2021. Seguido de inmigrantes provenientes de países como las Filipinas, Canadá, China, India, Ucrania, Birmania, Rusia y Turquía.

Kristi Noem encargada de la Secretaria del Departamento de Seguridad Interior, ha lanzado una campaña publicitaria

advirtiendo a las personas indocumentadas a registrarse en la página de *CBP/home.app* mandando este mensaje, “Si tu estás aquí ilegalmente, nosotros te encontraremos y te deportaremos”. “Hablar de deportación es algo que a mí me aterra, pues es para mí un futuro incierto”, dijo el reo del Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin José Ramirez, originario de Venezuela.

Ramirez comentó, que en su momento solicito asilo político por ser perseguido por el régimen de su país, con la actual administración y los nuevos cambios en las leyes de inmigración, a pesar de haber ganado su caso de asilo en este país, él se siente en un limbo migratorio.

De acuerdo a la campaña, personas de 14 años en adelante sin estatus legal deben someter sus datos personales; incluyendo huellas digitales en la plataforma de *CBP/home.app*, y así la administración pueda recabar una base de datos y perseguir a los



SQNews archive

Repatriados con las manos vacías

“presuntos criminales”.

El Sr. Carlos Soc., guatemalteco deportado por esta administración comentó en una entrevista realizada por *Bloomberg Line*; que él no volvería a cruzar la frontera tras haber intentado en varias ocasiones y sin haber logrado su objetivo, por las condiciones exigentes

de esta administración. Y haber adeudado \$5,000 dólares por éstos intentos de estar nuevamente con su familia dentro de los EE.UU.

Antes que ésta administración iniciara la campaña más agresiva contra de los inmigrantes indocumentados, una encuesta por parte de

Mauricio Díaz Bourdeth, del Foro Social Hondureño Sobre Deuda Externa y Desarrollo FOSDED, indicó que al menos siete de cada 10 deportados declaraban su intención de migrar nuevamente.

Las remesas no solo proporciona un ingreso importante a

quienes los reciben sino también contribuyen significativamente en el crecimiento económico y social de un país. Las campañas y las acciones ejecutivas del actual mandatario de EE.UU., ha hecho que se rompa records de envíos de dinero a otros países. Según *CNN*.

El Departamento de Seguridad Nacional DHS, expuso lo que dijo fueron “promesas hechas, promesas cumplidas”, incluido un aumento en los arrestos de delinquentes inmigrantes ilegales y la eliminación de las políticas del expresidente Joe Biden.

Según un artículo publicado por *Newsweek*. Se indica también que, a pesar de las promesas de deportaciones masivas, el número de inmigrantes expulsados del país no fue mencionado ni por el comunicado de prensa ni por el subjefto del gabinete de la Casa Blanca, Stephen Miller, en una reunión informativa.

SPORTS

Handballers double-up with only one court available

By Martin Keith DeWitt
Journalism Guild Writer

Out of sight to nearly everyone on the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s Lower Yard, the dedicated players of handball played in the shadows as they worked toward “Changa,” Spanish for game point.

Athletes of the handball court have usually received little attention, compared to the athletes on the basketball courts, the ball fields, the tennis court, the running track, or the soccer pitch. Only San Quentin residents using the gym might encounter handball, as the court sits next to the gym entrance.

“We recognize that our players have that commonality and it builds a stronger community,” said resident Kaleb Kessinger, 27. “Under any other circumstance you may not ever

get to know these people.”

Since San Quentin has only one handball court, most games play as doubles, with two players on each side, to accommodate demand. Doubles play forces teammates to work together, increasing awareness of other players’ styles, strengths, ability levels, and habits. The partnerships create a sense of camaraderie, promoting stronger team play.

“Hopefully, when the Upper Yard is remodeled we’ll get a second handball court up there,” said resident Walter Sprafka, 65.

Some players, like Kessinger, learned the game as youths. Mario Garcia, 27, like most others, gained first exposure to the sport during incarceration. Garcia reminisced how he took up handball at the Sacramento City Jail.

“We only got two hours of recreation time each day,”

said Garcia, “so we played handball.”

“Playing handball expands a person’s physical activity, fosters goal setting, creates mental stimulation and reduces stress,” said Sprafka. “It develops relationships and a feeling of being part of something.”

Many of the devotees have played only handball while others have played a variety of sports.

“The teamwork gives the game a social aspect that carries over to the yard, groups, and the chow hall, even to other prisons,” said Francisco Ortiz, 50.

Sprafka said the handball community represented a cross-section of the SQRC population and reflected the overall common spirit at the institution. He added that handball tournaments would take place twice a year as the players always strived for “Changa.”



Residents play outside on gymnasium wall

SQNews photo archive

1972 Olympic Gold Medalist Eddie Hart -- Ralph Ligons Track Meet brings out the best in participants

Members of the San Quentin 1000 Mile Running Club continued their journey to better health and honored their member Ralph Ligons at the 15th Annual Eddie Hart-Ralph Ligons Track Meet.

Over 60 runners, nine outside volunteer coaches, and hundreds of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center residents gathered on the Lower Yard June 13 to participate in the event named after Olympic gold medalist, Eddie Hart and co-founder of the running club.

Wearing an Olympic Gold Medal from 1972, Hart, 76, addressed the crowd, saying, “This track will help a person find out a lot about themselves. Individual unique qualities needed to succeed in life, like determination and perseverance, can be found right here.”

The day included multiple running events that consisted of seven distances, from the 100-meter dash to a one-mile run.

Everyone waited in anticipation on a sunny morning and as the runners approached the starting line, volunteer Coach Jim Maloney signaled for the races to begin. An excited crowd shouted encouragement across the yard.

After completing the one-mile event, club member and resident Patricio Gonzales, 57, said his talks with Coach Hart had inspired him to accomplish his goal. “He’s my secret weapon,” Gonzalez said, “I found strength from his words of advice and it helped me get to the finish line.”

Ligons and Hart have been friends since high school and ran on the same track team for years. They were also roommates at the Olympic village during the 1972 Olympic Games held in Munich, Germany where Hart won a gold medal in the 4x100 relay.

Not able to attend the event due to a scheduled surgery, resident Ligons later said Hart had taught him everything he knew about running. He said runners would often spend a lot of time training and sometimes they would have to persevere through pain and injuries to achieve their goals.

The winner of the event’s One Mile event, resident Jose Fajardo, 44, said he enjoyed the progression of the distances at track meets throughout the year.

“I like the whole experience of being in the club,” Fajardo said. “We see the coaches every other week and receive different workouts, disciplines, and training techniques that help us get ready for the big race.”

He explained the gatherings inspired him to continue to train and motivated him to focus on the challenges added to each meet. The goal is to help prepare all the runners for the 26.2-mile marathon in November.

One runner approached Coach Hart right after the One Mile Run, saying, “I left it all out there on the track, Mr. Hart, and I have nothing left to take back to my bunk.”

Hart conveyed he would continue to uplift the runners and always encouraged them to

succeed. “That’s what I mean when I say this track molds you,” Hart said. “It brings the best out of people.”

The winners and times of the day’s events included: 100-meter dash — Jacob Coleman with a time of 13.27 seconds; 200-meter dash — Chris Moore, 27.83; 4x400 relay — Wuilliam Campos, Jose Cuevas, Jacob Coleman, and Jose Fajardo, with a time of 4 minutes, 51 seconds; quarter mile — Jacob Coleman, 1:05; half mile — Ignacio Gutierrezmarian, 2:59, and one mile — Jose Fajardo, 5:09.

The over-50 category organized only one race, Junior Roberts, 50, won the 100-meter dash with a time of 13.84.

After the race, club members thanked head coach Jim Maloney and the volunteer coaches for their continued support that made the event possible.

Husband and wife coaches Tim and Diana Fitzpatrick said the track meets not only showed the commitment of the runners to achieve personal goals, but also remained a testament to the runners’ desire to find redemption. “That literally happens out here on the track,” said Diana Fitzpatrick.

All the runners and coaches gathered under the scoreboard to hear the final words of the event. “It takes guts to run at a track meet,” Coach Tim Fitzpatrick said. “Good job for putting in the work, good job for showing up, and good job on you all for a job well done.”

— Terrell J. Marshall
Journalism Guild Writer

SQ Giants slug their way to biggest comeback of season

By Terrell J. Marshall
Journalism Guild Writer

The SQ Giants walked away with their biggest comeback win of the season against a visiting team that was made up of two clubs: an under-19 American Legion team and the Yuba City Stripers.

Yuba City’s offense put points on the board first, including a three-run homerun by Sam Hurley. His blast over the left field fence had him say, “The count was 3 and 0 and I knew he had to throw me one down the middle, so I took my best swing and it was a goner.” The SQ Giants hung in to prove their moxie with a come-from-behind victory.

Over 40 Yuba City players, coaches, and guests came to the Field of Dreams at the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center far the May 31 game. The epic battle between annual rival teams ended in a 10-9 score for San Quentin bringing their record to 5-3-1.

Yuba college baseball coach David Rodriguez said playing at the prison helped his team to sharpen their skills, bringing them closer together, and provide for them an opportunity to broaden their horizons. “I bring these guys here for team bonding, to work on their fundamentals, and to give them another perspective on life,” Rodriguez said.

Yuba City bonded quickly off the defensive miscues of the Giants to take an early an 8-0 lead. In the early innings, the younger visiting team played the game on uneven terms.

Undeterred by Yuba City’s early success, SQ Giants Manager Richard Williams sent Carrington Russelle to the mound in the top of the fifth inning, which helped change the trajectory of the game.

The SQ Giants added youngsters to their roster for one day, which included El Cerrito High School players led by San Quentin Athletic Directors K. Bhatt’s son Kamal “KB” Bhatt. The younger



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Carrington Russelle

Bhatt recruited teammates from his high school to help the SQ Giants. This included teammates Jackson Coles, Maximiliano “Hollywood” Garcia, and Warren Lieu.

In the bottom of the fifth inning, both Bhatt and Garcia walked, stole second and third bases at the same time before Lieu hit a sacrifice fly that showed aggressive base running, which scored the SQ Giants’ first two runs of the day.

“We’re so thankful to have this opportunity to team up with these guys that play with so much heart and have such love for the game,” said Bhatt.

The Giants continued to close the gap, as San Quentin’s Russelle drove one down the left field line for an RBI single before stealing second.

Aaron “June” Miles then blasted one to left field for an RBI double before the inning ended 8-3.

Yuba City managed to keep the home team on defense throughout most the morning, until the SQ Giants’ bats turned hot enough to close the distance between the numbers on the scoreboard.

SQ Giants outfielder Dominick Williams said both teams would always cherish the life experience of playing these young men.

“Today’s game will have an impact on us all because we will each remember that this is where our lives crossed paths,” Williams said.

SQ Giants defense held Yuba City scoreless in the top of the eighth while picking up another run to tighten the deficit 10-9.

In the top of the ninth, Russelle continued his dominance by striking out two to add to the home team’s momentum.

The bottom of the ninth finally set the stage. With the crowd cheering for the Giants, saying, “Come on residents,” the guests supported their team by roaring. “You got this, Yuba City.”

The SQ Giants’ Lieu hit a ball that found a gap in left field for a double, before Anthony Denard grounded out for out number two. Yuba City then walked Russelle, which put the winning run on first. A wild pitch by Yuba City brought in the tying run.

Aaron Miles walked and then Jarrod “Deuce” Williams hit a singe to reload the bases. With two outs and bases loaded, all eyes saw a wild pitch hit the dirt before making its way past the catcher. Russelle bolted home to score the winning run.

After the game, both teams circled the mound for a prayer and words of gratitude. SQ Giants’ Manager Williams talked about the importance of baseball for the community. He thanked the players who joined his team for the day and he extended his thanks to the Yuba City team for their fearless efforts and competition.

Resident Denard ended the day with encouraging words for all the young players in attendance, “Keep working hard on your craft, don’t let anybody outwork you and thank you all for coming.”

SQ Warriors pull ahead early and never look back

The Prison Sports Ministry ‘Green Team’ made their second visit to San Quentin Rehabilitation Center of the 2025 season to take on the SQ Warriors.

The Memorial Day holiday weekend, did not allow the ‘Green Team’ to resemble the one that played here four weeks earlier, in fact Bill Epling’s squad had five first-time players.

“Its hard to get commitments on a holiday weekend so we have some new blood today,” said Epling.

The ‘new look’ Warriors got out to an early lead and never looked back. A twelve-point

lead after one quarter was stretched to seventeen at the half. During the third quarter they extended their lead to eighteen before winning 98-74.

“I’m so proud of the guys, we shortened the roster and rotations and they responded with great sportsmanship,” said Jerry ‘JB’ Brown head coach of the Warriors. “Shout out to Keyshawn ‘Steez’ Strickland who was constantly double-teamed.”

“It’s normal, pass to open teammates and trust that they make their shots and they did,” said Strickland when asked

about the double-teams.

In a unique twist at halftime, both teams and coaches took a lap around the Lower Yard to bond with other residents of SQRC.

“Everyone was having more fun than I expected. I didn’t know how many activities there were,” said Naji Sanaha, 29, of his first visit to San Quentin. “Everyone knows and supports each other.”

“My teammates showed up and played the best game they’ve ever played today,” said Warriors guard Navion ‘Smooove’ Starks.

— Martin Keith DeWitt
Journalism Guild Writer

SQ Kings close out 'Outsiders' with 30-point fourth quarter

The San Quentin Rehabilitation Center Kings basketball team played their second game of the 2025 season against the ‘Outsiders’ after a twenty-eight day gap.

As a result of new access requirements for volunteers, there are teams who were unable to get enough players clearance to field a team or to enter the institution altogether.

“I felt intimidated at the gate. Once inside I felt normal,” said Justin Dator, 40, a first-time visitor. “I expected more segregation, once the game started. It’s

just about basketball.”

The Kings competed with intensity. They jumped out to an early lead and played hard to the end. After the first quarter they led by four, at the half they pushed their advantage to seventeen, by the end of the third quarter the margin slipped to twelve before they closed out the game with a thirty point fourth quarter, for a final score of 91-66.

“As a kid, my mom would bring me to the East Gate on nights they had executions scheduled,” said Jack Kearns, 45, another first-time visitor.

“I was a juvenile offender and she was a death penalty opponent trying to influence me to change.” Kearns is now a volunteer who fellowships for the Latter Day Saints on Sunday evenings in the chapel.

“The preparation and unselfish nature of the players on this team make them a joy to coach,” said Demond ‘Oola’ Lewis. “Everybody on this team is also a good member of the community and always contributes positively.”

— Martin Keith DeWitt
Journalism Guild Writer

REENTRY

Mock interviews and resumé workshops offer reentry preparedness

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

San Quentin’s Prison 2 Employment Connection program held its Employer Day event that featured interviews with employers and connected incarcerated people with resources.

The last time P2EC resident facilitator Donald Edge was interviewed was more than 25 years ago. He said that his participation in the program was important because it gave him confidence.

“The one fear I have going into the interview is my lack of confidence because I’m so far behind the times, but my goal was to present myself well and make connections,” Edge said. “Talking to the interviewer of Caminar boosted my confidence.”

Edge’s future goal is to become a substance abuse counselor. During his interview with the Caminar organization, Edge learned that his biggest asset was his lived experience.

He recommends the

program to residents because there are several companies looking for people with lived experience. The event took place in the facility’s Protestant chapel.

Richard Rivali has spent 23 years behind bars. He said that prior to prison he was employed by family members. His last interview was more than 20 years ago with National RV, a job he received from his brother.

“To sit down like this and be asked questions like ‘Who are you?’ is going to be difficult, but I’m excited,” Rivali said.

P2EC is a 14-week program that conducts mock interviews, holds resumé workshops, and provides a space for individuals to practice answering tough questions presented to formerly incarcerated people. The program also offers participants job readiness skills and a direct path to employment after prison.

The visiting companies represented various industries: tech, construction, healthcare, and social

work. P2EC helps residents transform their prison work ethics into skills that make residents employable.

According to one resident standing in line for an interview, incarcerated people who have spent decades in prison may find it difficult to obtain employment once released. One way the program helps residents is by coaching them on ways they can explain the gaps in their employment history when asked, “What is your prior work experience?”

Resident Edgar Rodriguez said his goal is justice focused and deals with interpersonal work in the community. He said he was nervous because his last interview was in 2009, before he committed his crime.

Rodriguez said that P2EC helped him overcome his self-doubt and low self-esteem, but mostly the program gave him time to practice turning difficult questions into opportunities of reintegration and success.

He said that out of the 27 visiting Second Chance

Employers, two resonated with him. He felt good about the organizations that related to social programs.

“I interviewed with Planting Justice. I loved their idea of giving back to the community through planting, selling produce, and teaching community members how to plant their own crops,” said Rodriguez. “They highlighted things I want to do after I get out and they hire formerly incarcerated people.”

He added that being interviewed by a formerly incarcerated person who has benefited from the P2EC program made this experience significant.

Resident Kenneth Wilkinson said he had never interviewed with an organization outside of prison, but he has interviewed with Healthcare Facilities Management at California Prison Industry Authority, which hires incarcerated custodial workers as vocational training for residents.

“Realistically, my job [after incarceration] would be an opportunity as an

electrician. I’m trying to find organizations tied to that hands-on experience,” Wilkinson said. “It’s between Tesla and Caltrans.”

Sumer Schultz, P2EC’s exutive director, acknowledged incarcerated facilitators Robert Tyler, John Levin, Angel Alvarez, James Duff, and Terry Winston for their commitment to the cohort.

“Each of you has brought something truly special to this group. Whether it was quiet leadership, a word of encouragement at just the right time, or simply the choice to keep showing up and giving your best — you’ve helped shape the heart of this class,” Schultz said.

Schultz added that what makes this program meaningful is the conversations residents have with each other in the housing units and when the facilitators help residents finish their resumé work on the yard and boosting their confidence before the mock interviews. She said the work by the incarcerated facilitators is done with generosity, consistency, and care.

“You’ve reminded me, and everyone who’s walked into this room, of what resilience really looks like,” said Schultz. “You are not defined by your past. You are defined by your effort, your courage, and your vision for who you’re becoming.”

The graduates of the P2EC program sat across from representatives of Hospitality House, Planting Justice, Bain & Company, Tesla, Rubicon, San Francisco Public Spaces, The Last Mile, Checkr, Diane Lewis, Farming Hope, Fire Brand, Forestry & Fire Recruitment Program, Caminar, Iron Workers Union, CalTrans, Acrobat Advisors, CEO Works, Salesforce, and Alameda Workforce Development to conduct real world interviews and receive feedback. After each interview, representatives took a few minutes to fill out a survey on each candidate’s performance.

Cruise lines refuse passage to formerly incarcerated

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

Formerly incarcerated persons who wanted to cruise the seas on luxury liners have reported that they encountered policies that resulted in cancelled bookings after the cruise lines had learned of their criminal records.

Research by the *San Quentin News* found that many cruise lines reserved the right to deny boarding to formerly incarcerated persons. On cruises with destinations beyond the U.S., various governmental restrictions figured into the refusals, too.

“Love, exciting and new; come aboard, we’re expecting you ...” went the theme song of the 1970s television show “The Love Boat” but in today’s reality, the next line might very well say, “Unless you have a criminal record, then please go away.”

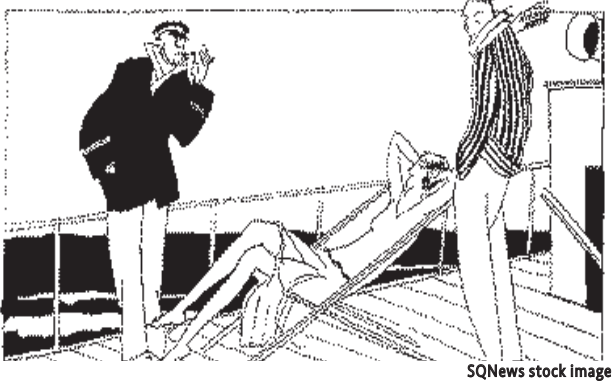
Cruise lines cited various reasons for refusing passage to the returned citizens.

“Carnival [Cruise Lines] ... reserves the right to deny boarding to any persons convicted of certain crimes which may include but are not limited to aggravated physical assault, sexual assault, and other sexual offenses, armed robbery and related offenses, and other violent or immoral crimes,” said a disclaimer. It continued, “Carnival also reserves the right to access public records containing information about any felonious convictions as part of its guest screening.”

In short, if a background check conducted by Carnival revealed a booking from a person with a criminal record, the cruise line could deny boarding to that person. Carnival would then issue a refund.

A *San Quentin News* survey of policies by Royal Caribbean Group, Princess Cruise Lines, Carnival Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Lines, Virgin Voyages, and Viking Cruises revealed that all of them had similar policies.

Some of these policies had great specificity while others did not. Royal Caribbean International’s policies said they conducted background checks on prospective passengers and might deny boarding based on their findings. Disney’s terms and conditions stated that they



SQNews stock image

reserved the right to refuse passage to guests with criminal backgrounds.

One group of returned citizens would almost always end up with a denial of passage: Registered sex offenders have the hardest time booking cruises. The public afterlife of sex offenses and the ease of access of information about the offenders have made them the low-hanging fruit of criminal-record checking. Denying this particular demographic would allow cruise lines to claim having proactive policies that keep passengers safe.

Norwegian Cruise Lines has not allowed registered sex offenders on their ships since June 1, 2022, according to a printout of a travel blog. “We planned this new cruise on NCL with 12 other family members, my husband and I for a family vacation,” said one post by a refused passenger who did not disclose her name. “I received a call from NCL one week prior to the cruise and was told my reservation was being canceled and because I was on the sex offender registry ... I could not appeal the decision.”

Sexual assaults have plagued the cruise industry for years. An abundance of alcohol played a major role in many such crimes, the report said. Legal loopholes always exempted cruise lines from disclosing crimes committed outside of U.S. territorial jurisdiction.

Alcohol also played a role in other crimes on cruises, said a San Quentin Rehabilitation Center staff member who asked to remain anonymous. In more than eight cruises, he has seen many drunken fights, even with screened passengers. “They have security and they take care of problems fast,” the staff member said. He added that ships have places for

confinement, called a “brig.” Most drunken passengers, though, would end up merely confined to quarters until sober.

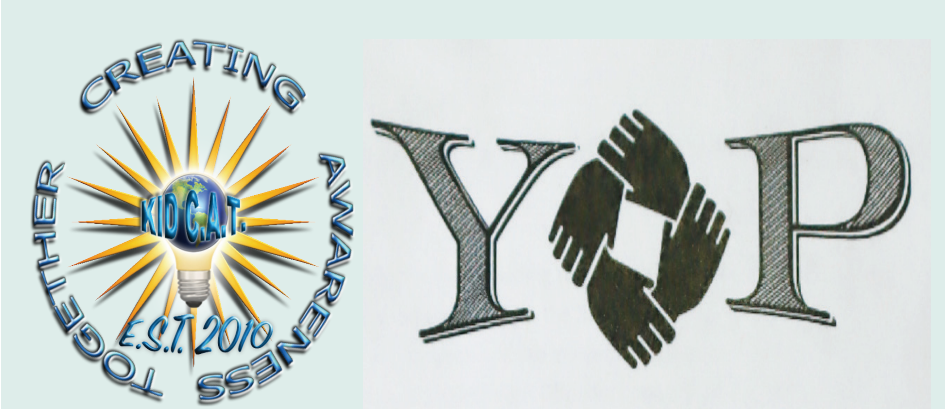
“In 2010 Congress passed legislation that would hold cruise ships accountable for passenger safety,” wrote Tiffany L. Peyroux in her report “The Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act of 2010 Founders on Its Maiden Voyage” published by the Loyala Maritime Law Journal in 2014. The CVSSA “requires protective measures for cruise ship passengers and remedies for anyone who may become a victim of a crime at sea.”

The article also said, “The cruise industry hides statistics of crimes in an effort to present an inaccurate picture to passengers and protect their multi-billion dollar image.” In 2023, the industry produced revenues of \$30 billion from 31.7 million passengers, according to the Cruise Line Industry Association. Such high dollar amounts have given cruise lines an incentive to keep up an image of safety and security.

“Cruise lines routinely share passenger data with law enforcement agencies and border authorities in each destination country,” said a printout of a webpage by Dogen Law in Toronto. “Many of these bodies will have information-sharing agreements with foreign countries such as the United States that gives them access to information about any arrests, charges, or convictions that a potential visitor has on their record.”

“I would not fear being on a cruise with former felons who have done their time and reformed themselves. Anyone currently on a wanted list would be stopped at the port prior to boarding by DHS, so I would feel safe,” said retiree Chris Kuzma, a frequent cruise passenger.

YOUTH



Youth Offender Program continues to shape new model of rehabilitation

By Chase Benoit
Kid Cat Writer

When California lawmakers passed AB 1276, allowing offenders under the age of 26 to receive a behavior override, it marked a new phase in how CDCR saw rehabilitation and it gave opportunities to thousands of young people entering prison. The bill shaped a new future for many, if they want it.

What many don’t know is that the spark for this visionary reform began inside San Quentin’s walls, with a group of incarcerated men, of the youth offender program, who refused to let their pasts define them. Among them was KidCat a youth led group whose vision, advocacy, and hard work helped lay the foundation for YOP. Many called these men juvenile lifers but in reality they were change makers.

As someone who has been a part of KidCat for many years, first as a YOP participant, then a facilitator, all the way up to the chairman of KidCat, I have seen firsthand how change happens. Not just in us, but in the system. Through curriculum, outreach, and advocacy, we challenged the idea that youth who commit crimes are irredeemable. We proved that rehabilitation is not just possible; it is already happening and making our communities safer in the process.

In 2014, AB 1276 was passed and the YOP program was implemented within CDCR in 2015. Shortly afterwards busloads

of 20-somethings started to arrive at San Quentin. Many OG’s were disgusted. Instead of going to a level-4 (maximum security) prison and facing violence, politics and little to no programming like they had to endure, these “kids” were coming to “Disneyland” and not getting the “real” prison experience. But what is the prison experience? Addiction, tattoos, putting in work and further harm; or is it growth, maturity, rehabilitation and change? Many OG’s complained “these kids have no respect, they don’t know how to do time!” well, who taught the OG’s how to do time back in their day? Probably other OG’s.

This program looked great on paper but there were little to no plans for each YOP hub. With that Kid CAT once again saw a need and stepped up with the support of the Community Resource Manager’s office we created a group for YOP’s by YOP’s with mentorship from respected Kid CAT members.

When I showed up at San Quentin, I was 21 years old and I had 58 points. I had just received a 16 to life sentence and I did not know what to expect. Kid CAT members like Kenny Vernon, Charlie Spence and Phang Tao among others initially approached me. They invited me to the YOP group and the mentorship by these facilitators and volunteers Adam and Ayoola started the change in my life. I began to open up to other youngsters about my past traumas and learned about responsibility

and accountability.

This group led the way to me completely changing my life. I owe my rehabilitation and accomplishments to those volunteers, mentors, and policy makers. If it were not for them I would be stuck on a level-4 yard somewhere completely lost.

Today at San Quentin we have a robust YOP program with highly paid incarcerated YOP mentors, incentives, movie nights and groups. I am so happy that these YOP’s are getting the opportunity to change their lives and make amends in the best way that they can as I have had the opportunity to do. I am happy to see the administration on board with the rehabilitative efforts proposed by the incarcerated. And I want to highlight Kid CAT’s revolutionary grassroots efforts to get these laws passed and for not stopping there but for also setting the groundwork for the successful YOP program that we have here at San Quentin. Kid CAT is indeed the original YOP program mentor.

And for all the skeptics of this program, isn’t one person’s change a success? One less victim in our community? Wouldn’t it make all this worth it if just one youngster realized what San Quentin had to offer and changed his outlook, vision and conduct? Well I can tell you there are many more like me who have grasped this opportunity and are making that change here at San Quentin and I am sure there are more success stories to come.

FATHERS' DAY

Fathers' Day at visiting reunites families

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

Fathers’ Day comes only once a year and for San Quentin Rehabilitation Center residents, the day has always had more significance than for non-incarcerated fathers: Some of them have not seen their children in many years.

A crowd of about 135 visitors of all ages arrived at SQRC’s Visiting Center to enjoy the company of San Quentin residents. Tiny children zoomed around the area, enjoying a multitude of board games and toys. An elderly woman with a cane hugged a resident who called her “Grandma.” Two young boys impatiently waited for their father as their mother assured them that he would come soon.

“Feliz dia del padre, pa, estamos aqui mis hermanas y yo porque te amamos y apreciamos,” — Happy Father’s Day, Dad, we are here, my sisters and me, because we love you and we appreciate you — said Vincent Leyva to his father, resident Arsenio Leyva.

Leyva, 62, had not seen his two daughters, Sara Pacheco, 23, and Abigail Pacheco, 24, for eight years. They and their brother Vincent, 34, had traveled a long way. “It was just love and one community, there were no barriers, no problems, it was just one big community, and I am so glad to see my children,” he said.

SQRC’s musical virtuosos Lee Jaspas (guitar) and Brian Conroy (bass and trumpet) added an ambiance of light jazz to the room. One visitor requested the American Standard “Fly Me to the Moon.”

Across from the officers’ desk, a volunteer who identified herself as Renée painted the faces of children. She said she volunteered for the Inmate Family Council and recently started serving as the organization’s chair.

“We meet with Warden Andes quarterly and we go over issues the residents and their families might have. We act as a bridge.” Asked what had inspired her to volunteer, Renée replied, “They need voices, and by ‘they,’ I mean both the residents and the families. I wanted to end the ‘Us versus Them’ with the staff; they’re people, too, and I wanted for everyone to work together. The Warden really listens to us,” and she emphasized the word “listens.”

About the California Model, Renée said, “The resource team fully supports us. I want for people on the outside to give the California Model a chance. It’s something positive, and I want for everyone on the outside to know all the positive stuff that goes on inside.”

The group also organized special visiting events at Easter and Mother’s Day. She said she would return on the Fourth of July and on Halloween.

Two adolescent girls argued over who wore the cooler T-shirt. One very small boy insisted on playing Jenga while his equally small sister wanted to play the Candyland board game (the sister won). A visitor who called herself Alisha complemented SQRC for the wide variety of games available at the visiting center. “They don’t have that many games at other places. This is really nice here.”

By mid-morning, the visiting room had crowded to the point at which seating seemed hard to find. Sergeant A. Borer said Fathers’ Day did not compare to an ordinary visiting day. “Normally, it’s a lot more relaxed. We have a lot more kids coming on visits.” Lieutenant Dews agreed with the sergeant’s sentiments. “It’s really nice to see kids here. This is the busiest we’ve seen since we opened the kids’ room.”

As visiting hours drew to a close, a visitor requested for the musicians to play the Bobby Darin song “Beyond the Sea” and her incarcerated husband sang to her, “Somewhere, beyond the sea, she’s there, waitin’ for me...” as the blue waters of the San Francisco Bay just beyond the visiting room looked balmy and gentle.

ARTS & CRAFTS



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

More than 300 pieces donated for children in hospice care

Stitchers donate handmade regalia

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

In a small library lined with computer stations and a few square tables in the center of the room, over 70 residents moved to and from the counter gathering yarn, needles, and fabrics in the new Stitchers of San Quentin group.

Resident Phillip Hernandez laid out a blanket that he had made with pineapple patterns running down the center. He started crocheting at California Men’s Colony state prison five years ago.

“During COVID I was expecting my first grandbaby and I wanted to have something special,” said Hernandez.

The most important thing about this new group is the 300 hand-stitched beanies the residents donated to children in a local hospital. The group meets in the library every first and second Wednesday of the month and the skill levels range from beginners to experienced people who have been stitching for decades.

Charlotte Sanders, a CDCR staff member who works in the library, started the group. It has since expanded to include embroidery, crocheting, and stitching.

A teacher, volunteer, and the education department’s vice-principal of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s were among the outside guests learning and teaching the craft to residents.

“It is very interesting because I’m not used to teaching other people how to stitch,” said Ms. Stanciu, a teacher at San Quentin’s Robert E. Burton school.

Resident Coby Phillips sat next to the window with a large ball of yarn and two knitting hooks as he learned how to “cast on,” a basic step in learning to knit.

“It’s nice to give back and it’s therapeutic and relaxing,” Phillips said about joining the group and making beanies for children in the hospital.

One resident, who wanted to be called D.A., said he has been crocheting for 14 years. He started crocheting after his cellie took too

long making a hat he had requested. Since then he has been crocheting everything from scarves and hats to a purple and brown mermaid wearing a crown for his five-year-old daughter.

Hernandez shared a beanie he made using a half-double crochet with a front loop-back loop along the brim so the beanie had some elasticity. He now teaches others how to create elephants, beanies, and blankets.

“Usually they see something that I have done and they are willing to learn and so I teach them,” said D.A.

Resident Tien Vo has participated in the stitching group backk when there was only needlepointing.

“It gives me peace of mind when I do this,” said Tien Vo, who started out needlepointing. Vo said he wanted to be able to share what he learned. “It is a really great class and a great skill to learn,” he said, holding a needlepoint mesh of a cartoon character similar to those from his childhood. “I plan to teach my family and my kids.”

Marin Shakespeare takes center stage

Residents of Shakespeare at San Quentin performed *Love’s Labors Lost* to an audience of nearly 80 people in Chapel B.

Co-director Suraya Keating has been teaching at San Quentin since 2005. She said the program gives incarcerated individuals a chance to recognize violence and crime using artistic expression. She said she hopes performance arts can have an impact on the flawed criminal justice system.

“I do it because I have always been committed to having some kind of positive impact on the world,” said Keating. “The aim of the program is to bring opportunities to people who are incarcerated to build a sense of self-esteem in recognition of their capacity as humans.”

Residents in the Shakespeare at San Quentin program said the group teaches individuals how to explore their authentic selves through performance arts. The program, which started in 2004 expanded to 14 other detention facilities in California. The Marin Shakespeare Company works with Returned Citizens Theatre Troupe and formerly incarcerated actors to share stories through theatre.

The comedic play, performed in front of an audience of around 30 outside guest and 50 incarcerated persons. The audience watched intently while laughing throughout the performance. Resident Gabriel Moctezuma, who played Biron, a Lord and the King’s friend in the play said the process from planning to live performance was around five months long.

“When I play a character, I try to embody the character fully. After reading this part, it just spoke to me,” said Moctezuma. “There is something so incredible about being in that moment.”

Resident and performer Gilberto Rios is a first time performer and said his motivation was boredom. Rios played one of the French townsfolk and said his encouragement to get involved in the theatre program came from his friend Jamie Saputo, who also performed as one of the French townsfolk.

“It’s fun, exciting, and entertaining,” said Rios. “I’m an outgoing person already, so I am not nervous about performing

“The aim of the program is to bring opportunities to people who are incarcerated to build a sense of self-esteem in recognition of their capacity as humans..”

today.”

In the play, King Ferdinand, played by resident Kelon Williams stood with three friends who swore to spend the next three years studying to make the city of Navarre, France “the wonder of the world.”

After the men signed a decree that forbid them from pursuing women, they faced a challenge as the Princess of France, played by resident Brady Godoy arrived with three additional female friends Rosaline, played by resident Angie Gordon; Maria, played by resident Aaron Zendejas; and Katherine, played by resident Jooty Johnson. The women visited the city of Navarre to discuss ownership of a different providence.

The king’s decree said that the women had to sleep outside the walls of the palace. However, the men had trouble keeping their oath because the women

infatuated them. At the same time, a young townsman named Costard, played by resident Rahim Bradshaw ended up being arrested by the Constable, played by resident Sam Kazzouh, for talking to Jacquenetta, a young townswoman, played by Keating.

During a portion of the play, the king used 20th-century iconic performers like Prince, played by Navion Starks, Snoop Dogg, played by Montrice Maize, Taylor Swift, played by Angie Gordon, and Elvis Presley, entertained the king.

Longaville, a Lord and the King’s friend, played by Darwin Billingsley said he never experienced Shakespeare before prison. He said getting involved helped him recognize his talent and find his authentic self.

“Suraya Keating magically pulled me into a performance called *Richard the Second*, in which I played a gardener,” said Billingsley. After performing in *Comedy of Errors*, a comedic play about twin brothers separated at birth, Billingsley recognized his love for theatre and performing. “I was never exposed to these types of programs growing up, so I never knew I enjoyed it, but by getting involved I learned that I am talented.”

Towards the middle of the play, the king and his men decided that love was the best kind of learning. The men sent gifts and letters, of which they disguised themselves as Russians, in order to woo and win over the princess and ladies.

The audience gave a standing ovation at the end of the performance as the entire room sang, “We Are the Champions” in unison.

—Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

FAITH

Thousands in prison convert to Islam every year

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

In spite of misconceptions around radicalization, incarcerated people converting to Islam are finding freedom behind prison walls.

In the United States, there is a perception that incarcerated people who accept Islam are being radicalized, according to *CBS News*.

The National Institute of Corrections stated that radical violence by Muslims in U.S. prisons is rare; there is no evidence that says while in prison Muslims are hostile or aggressive.

“The numbers don’t show that. Does it exist? Yes,” said Rami Nsour, director of the Tayba Foundation. “It’s a rare instance in the same way...people who are Christian extremists...are radicalized in prison.”

Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in U.S. prisons. The Tayba Foundation has served more than 10,000 people through an Islamic correspondence course. Their service to the incarcerated people has resulted in 90% of them accepting Islam as a new way of life, *CBS News* reported.

There is a great deal of mental and physical confinement within the walls of prison. By contrast, new converts find mental and physical freedom in the Islamic faith. According to *CBS*, people often accept Islam based on the positive characteristics of Muslims in their communities.

“They’ll notice that a person is different. He’s not falling into the same ruts of how other people might behave in prison,” Nsour said. “So, they ask them and then he’ll say, ‘Well, it’s my Islam and my Islam teaches me about my character.’”

San Quentin resident Karl “Ishmael” Freelon, 65, has been incarcerated for 45 years of a 79-year-to-life sentence. He stated that Islam is not a gang — it’s a spiritual practice of making amends with oneself and one’s creator.

“I witnessed my co-defendant convert to Islam, I saw the light. I saw the change,” he said.

Royce Miller, 42, a resident at SQ, has served 20 years. He said that Islam is more than just a religion; it is a way of life. The faith has codes of conduct called *Adab* (mannerism) on how Muslims conduct themselves.

“Because it has a level of submission, so you submit to a certain regiment; there [are] five daily prayers, there’s a method,” Nsour said.

According to Miller, another misconception about Islam is how it treats women. He said that women are the first teachers of our children, which is very important.

“Prophet Mohammad said that, ‘paradise (Heaven) was at the feet of his mother,’ referring to the closeness of a woman and child,” Miller said.

Rahan Asaan has spent 35 years in prison on a 15-years-to-life sentence. He said that conversion entails how a person is introduced to Islam. Every faith has a culture as its own “dogma” (statement of belief), which translates into how and why people convert.

“I would first suggest that people who have an interest in Islam to research it, in the event a person uses the faith to mislead them,” Asaan said. “As a member of the Five-Percent Nation of Gods and Earths; we view Islam as a culture based on science and peace, and as such the interpretation will vary.”

Vernon “Abdul Mu’meen” Richardson, 60, also a resident at The Q, has served 22 years of a 66-years-to-life sentence. In order to have purity of thought, he said, a person has to get past tribalism and racism.

“When we identify by race, we take ourselves out of being human. Islam has nothing to do with race,” Richardson said.

GAMES

CROSSWORD CLASSIC
Created by Michael Fangman

“Take Me Out to the Ballgame”
Edited by Jan Perry

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71									72					

Across

1. You might want to keep a close eye on this one - he might steal.

7. An early version of this game was called “Rounders”

13. A salad you can eat while leaping into a swimming pool?

14. A grandmother in Berlin - or the first sign you might be talking about something cancerous

15. This video gaming company’s motto is “It’s in the game...” (abbr.)

16. This lesser type of fidelity makes for a disappointing music experience

17. A better way of saying “50 minutes before two.”

20. You might celebrate one in June

22. This Bobby managed the Mets

25. College in Providence (abbr.)

26. While pitchers prefer these to be small, Tay Tay likes ‘em big

28. “No, it’s not Fox Sports, it _____”

30. For a good time, pump this up

32. Some of these are stranger

34. These three letters might make EXTR too much to take

35. Players on this tour require a card

37. Zadora was one

38. A scoring notation that indicates a baserunning substitution (2 words)

40. George W. famously said, “If you’re with us, you’re _____ us.”

44. Military acronym indicating a mission near an airstrip

45. A long and lazy “yes”

47. Police slang for bullet wound (abbr.)

48. Wrestling nickname for a Sith Lord?

51. Juliet’s famous line (2 words)

53. Pooh’s depressed friend

55. _____ RC RD RE RF RG

56. The sun in Mexico City

58. Not just one farm out-building, but _____ (2 words)

61. This country was formerly Persia

63. Where umpires hate to find cork

64. You can take it to Wrigley, or just about anywhere else in Chicago

65. It keeps things cool (abbr.)

66. The opposite of “rent”

68. A port for some killers?

71. Shrek thought himself to be this, at least before he found Finona

72. They come after Hits and Runs
6. To go back on a promise

7. An important average to some

8. The common form of this poem has 14 lines of iambic pentameter

9. Dorothy’s Auntie

10. How bats are often carried

11. Shakespeare’s legendary king

12. Half of all bathrooms

18. These two letters are in - at least in Barcelona and Madrid

19. German ice

21. Arnold was one once, but then again so was Rickey Henderson

22. LA’s Fernando

23. Tempe’s famous party school

24. Three letters common to both lattice work and a famous New Age John T.

27. For a time, this planet was at war with the Federation

29. One Longstocking’s nickname

31. A weekly NFL production (abbr.)

33. Another name for a fastball

35. How you get something loose, especially a secret

36. These folks will give you a tow or fix your tire. They can even offer you some gas if you’re out (abbr.)

39. The only fillet for pescatarians

41. It comes just after Mar

43. In American billiards they are blue

46. Usual, standard, or typical

48. He was Stan “The Man”

49. An _____ for an _____

50. Some MLB teams have a “_____ batting instructor” - a coach that travels throughout the minor leagues in hopes of standardizing techniques

51. In sabremetrics, it’s the most important average of them all

52. The most famous NHL Bobby ever

54. Kylo _____ of Star Wars lore

57. This large toothed mammal is more commonly called a “killer whale”

59. The abbreviation for a Yottabyte, or one septillion (10²⁴) bytes of data

60. If you add this to a “T” you can make fries. Add it to an “M” and you can eat them with ketchup

62. “It’s _____ me you want! It’s him!”

64. Everyone has two, but you wouldn’t know it when some people sing

67. This now lesser used Army rank was often common among formerly enlisted helicopter pilots (abbr.)

69. This sign tells you that you might be crossing over to the wrong side of the tracks

70. To protect her from Hera’s jealousy, Zeus turned this priestess (whom he secretly loved) into a cow

Down

1. Often follows a starting pitcher

2. This card game was also the name of a So Cal pizza chain once

3. A high latitude Dakota (abbr.)

4. What nickel looks like on the table

5. Darwin was a fan of this root word derived from the Latin term meaning
6. To go back on a promise

7. An important average to some

8. The common form of this poem has 14 lines of iambic pentameter

9. Dorothy’s Auntie

10. How bats are often carried

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SOLUTIONS														
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61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75

ART

Throwback art from the last decade



Bruce Fowler and Scott McKinstry Mural in Catholic Chapel 2017



Paul Stauffer 2018



Bruce Fowler 2017



Gustrap 2016



Freddy Huante 2024



David Calderon 2023



Darwin Billingsley 2024



Jerry Walsh 2021



Jorge Cuevas 2023

SUDOKU

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					6			
8	5				9	4		
				5		1		7

8		1		2	4			9
		7			6			
2		4				8		1
3				9	1			
	5						1	
			2	5				3
7		5				2		4
			5			1		
1			4	7		5		6