

# San Quentin News

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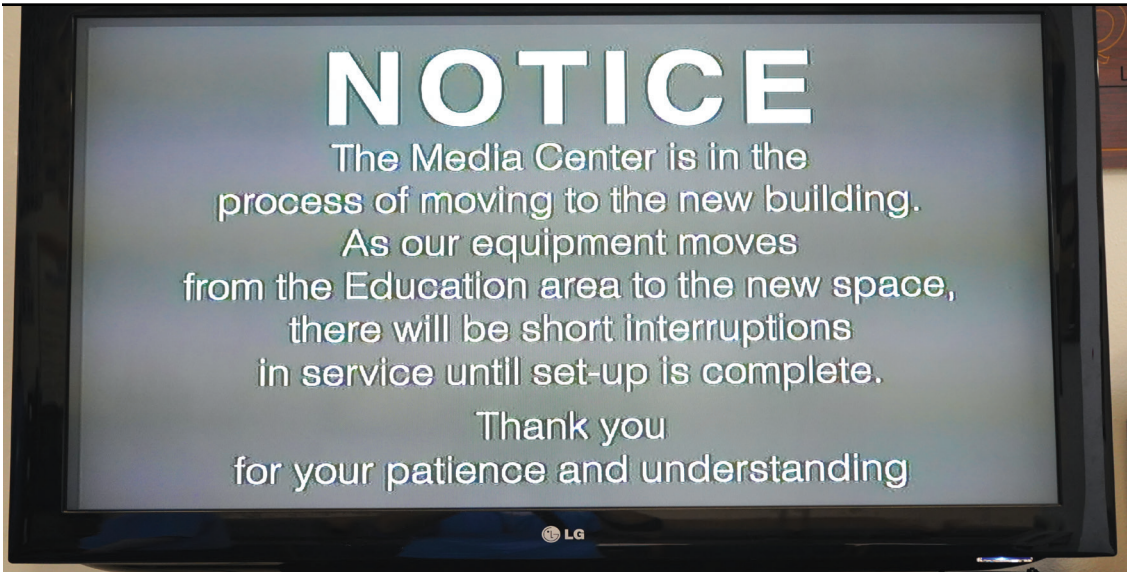


Photo by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

Institutional channel warning that the HyperCaster will be down temporarily

## Residents lament Channel One outage as TVs go black

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter  
Staff Writer

The day after Labor Day, residents at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center found with dismay that institutional television Channel One suddenly stopped working. They could no longer vicariously walk in the Snoqualmie woods in Washington state. They could no longer practice yoga with an expert instructor on a pool deck in the mountains, and they could no longer ignore the state-mandated information videos on the remaining channels.

Good news lay just around the corner, though. After the San Quentin Media Center

— the organization responsible for maintaining the channels — would complete its move to the new building, Channel One would return with more sub-channels, with new content, and with the familiar woodsy nature walk.

“Programming will return and be better than ever,” said Skyler Brown, the TV specialist at SQRC, who called the outage temporary.

The reason for the broadcast interruption had to do with the media center’s TelVue HyperCaster, a large rack-mounted device that until recently sat in a obscure back room of San Quentin’s Education Department. Brown dismantled the HyperCaster piece-by-piece

and moved it to its new location for reassembly.

“The new building’s wiring is not yet fully installed,” said resident Media Center worker Tony Tafoya. “Once the wiring work will finish, we’ll broadcast again.”

Brown said he expected that to happen well before the official move-in date. That date would appear tentatively set for March 26, 2026.

The HyperCaster’s specifications said it packed a lot of punch: 11 terabytes of storage running on the Ubuntu Linux operating system. “It compares with the 1996 CRAY

See OUTAGE on pg 4

## Creative talents on display at San Quentin's second film festival

Jason L. Jackson  
Staff Writer

The captive creativity and immense talent of San Quentin resident filmmakers shone through at the second annual San Quentin Film Festival Oct. 23-24. Residents mingled and networked with film directors, actors and producers including Jesse Williams of “Grey’s Anatomy,” and Sheryl Lee Ralph, known for many roles on hit shows like “Moesha” and “Abbott Elementary.”

But even more significant than networking was the chance residents got to showcase their skills with their creation of short films and documentaries, and by doing so, helping to reveal that incarcerated people who choose to rehabilitate have more to offer the world than the negative stereotypes of violence and crime.

“Lack of proximity helps to add to the negative image of people locked up. Events like the film festival are a way to remove the implicit bias,” said Eric “Maserati E” Abercrombie, an Emmy-nominated musician who has become widely successful since paroling from San Quentin in 2019 after nine years of incarceration.

Aside from working to improve the image of incarcerated people, Abercrombie said events inside of prisons are needed to “help restore incarcerated people’s relationships with the community” by building bridges and connections.

Incarcerated people, current and former, used the platform to share their

stories of trauma and redemption, the many effects of mass incarceration, and the hope that is born from steady resilience and purposeful change.

Two amazing standout films were “Processing,” which dives deep into the effects of incarceration on women of color, and “The Sing Sing Chronicles” which explores the story of Jon-Adrian Velasquez, wrongly convicted of robbery and murder and the investigative journalist who befriended him and fought tirelessly to prove Velasquez’s innocence.

Another wonderful documentary presented at the festival was “The People in Blue,” directed by San Quentin’s own Louis Sale. The film shows what positive change and healthy reform looks like when incarcerated men have a seat at the decision-making table.

The creative talents on display blew guests away. “It is very important that people from the outside come in and speak to people who are incarcerated,” said Brian Asey Gonsoulin, a producer at the film festival who served 26 years before paroling from San Quentin nearly two years ago. Gonsoulin said that some people have negative expectations about what they will see in prisons because of misleading information in the media, but that “people visit prison and their entire perspectives are changed for the better.”

“We have the value in prison, because we have the time to work on ourselves and get it together, if we choose,” said Gonsoulin.

More on pgs 6-7



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Aztec Dance group, Cuāuhcēloti member

## Aztec dancers connect with culture, religion, identity, heritage

By César Martínez  
Staff Writer

Nahua are tribe warriors also called “Aztecs” arrived to the valley of Mexico carrying their own beliefs and godly idol. Leaving an heritage that still inspiring generation upon the cultural importance with a profound sense of devotion.

According to MexicoHistorico.com the representation of the natural elements, used to invoke the elements on important events

such as agricultural cycles, religions festivities. At the same way, they danced to appease to their gods as mediators, the connection with the earth personifying their ties whit the spiritual world and the cosmos.

Kathleen Ann from the Indiana University, describe that this tribe used the dance as pre-Hispanic dance associated whit the occult to their Aztec gods in a form of worship and celebration, the steam from the coal was part of the purification for the dancer and the place.

In San Quentin the program Danza Cuāuhcēloti, they use this practice in a form of rehabilitation through the rhythm and meditation, inviting to everyone who wants to learn a culture where the religion and the supernatural provided explanation, motivation, structure, identity to a civilization.

“The opportunity to represent my cultural in a positive way encourage me because in the gangs they made

See AZTEC on pg 4

## U.S. Department of Justice discusses transgender gun rights

By Marcus Casillas  
Photographer

The right of transgender individuals to possess firearms is under discussion at the Justice Department due to a recent shooting at the Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis, Minn. The shooter, a transgender woman, killed two children and injured 21 others, including children, reported CNN.

Some members of the transgender community at SQRC believe the administration’s focus on transgender gun rights reflects Trump’s broader agenda toward transgender persons.

“He [Trump] wants to paint trans people as dangerous, mentally unstable, and unsuitable to bear arms because it’s a convenient distraction from his fascist expansion of the federal government,” said resident Angie Gordon.

Trump’s recent executive orders sought to bar transgender persons from military service and ordered federal prisons to house transgender inmates in facilities corresponding

to their gender at birth, said the report.

According to Justice officials, the objective of the gun ban is “to ensure that those who are mentally ill, including those diagnosed with gender dysphoria, are unable to obtain firearms because they are unstable and unwell,” reported Alana Richer of *The Associated Press*.

Richer clarifies that being transgender does not mean that one is mentally ill. The reference to gender dysphoria comes from the American Psychiatric Association’s “Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,” which calls gender dysphoria a mental disorder.

“But the gender incongruence—having a gender identity that’s not the one assigned at birth—isn’t what makes gender dysphoria a mental disorder. Having clinically significant dysphoria around the incongruence is what makes it a disorder,” Richer wrote.

The DSM reads, “Gender dysphoria is a general descriptive

See GUNS on pg 4

### BANNED BOOKS

Solitary confinement and banned books transformed one man's life

— STORY ON PAGE 2



### FAMILY DAY BASKETBALL

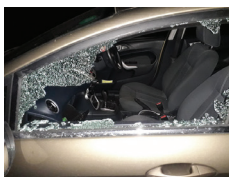
Come from behind win in the tournament's Championship game

— STORY ON PAGE 9

### DUI AWARENESS MONTH

Impaired driving is preventable but impacts all facets of society

— STORY ON PAGE 9





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

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SAN QUENTIN

Correctional Construction Management crew big part of Upper Yard remodel



Residents tear up concrete slabs

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

The sounds, smells, and sights of progress at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center have changed from carbon blades cutting steel, to jackhammers, diesel exhaust, and shadows of heavy equipment maneuvering behind a 10-foot-tall security fence.

For more than a year, Correctional Construction Management crews (formerly named Inmate Day Labor) have worked on the facility’s Upper Yard. The goal is to transform a secure outside space, once filled with solitary cells used by Death Row residents, into a rejuvenated recreation area for the entire San Quentin community.

“The focus is to have a place where rehabilitation can prosper,” said Lt. B. Haub.

In May 2024, the last of the condemned residents housed at San Quentin moved to various prisons across the state. Soon after, the demolition of 38 isolation cells (installed in 2008) and a basketball court made room for a more dignified rehabilitation space.

“There are now 52 of us trying to get this project done as soon as possible,” said resident CCM worker Daryl Beulah, 61.

Beulah added that the CCM team includes 38 San Quentin residents, and more than a dozen outside union masons, electricians, heavy equipment operators, and carpenters.

The revamping of the Upper Yard project showed signs of progress in October, when dozens of trucks made their way across the facility to deliver hundreds of yards of concrete. Masons then shoved, floated, and troweled the freshly poured cement into a path, changing the landscape of the 174-year-old institution forever.

“They are really pushing us to reopen a lane for through traffic before the weather gets bad,” said Officer M. Vesely. “We’ll have to see how much the rain will slow us down in regards to when the rest of the yard will open.”

Resident Beulah said he has worked on all the major construction projects at San Quentin over the last five years. He oversees tool distribution, job hazard analysis, and daily work reports. He explained that the newly remodeled 30,000 square-foot space



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

New sidewalk to open-up soon

will include seating areas, picnic tables, and four “seat walls” acting as planter boxes with trees in the center.

He added that the blueprints show a small stage area and a dog run, designed for San Quentin’s Canine Companions trainers to work with four-legged, tail wagging, trainees.

“The large canopy above us will have translucent multi-colored panels,” said Beulah. “The new light fixtures, installed on the overhead trusses, will really light this place up.”

Other progress evident is when an escort lane—once used exclusively by Death Row residents and their officer escorts—reopened in November to the entire population. The new path signifies a new chapter in the storied history of the Upper Yard, symbolizing the facility’s transition to a rehabilitation center.

SQ resident Joey Ochoa, 52, said that when the project is complete, it will help to relieve a lot of the congestion from the Lower Yard. “It’s exciting to see San Quentin’s continued effort in creating spaces for us to focus on rehabilitation,” said Ochoa.

Incarcerated person's smuggled books change his life

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Journalism Guild Chair

A young man’s defiance of a book ban in solitary confinement changed his life, and after his release, he vowed to create prison libraries across the U.S.

At the age of 16, Reginald Dwayne Betts carjacked a man sleeping in his car in Fairfax County, Virginia. Convicted in adult court, Betts spent about 10 years in prison, part of it in solitary confinement.

The Virginia prison where Betts served his time did not allow people in solitary confinement to possess books. In response, prisoners created a hoisting system to smuggle books into solitary, according to *The Washington Post*.

Disobeying the rules, Betts began reading anything he could get, sparking transformative thinking about other ways to live his life. Ultimately, he created the program Freedom Reads that resulted in the creation of 500 prison libraries throughout the U.S.

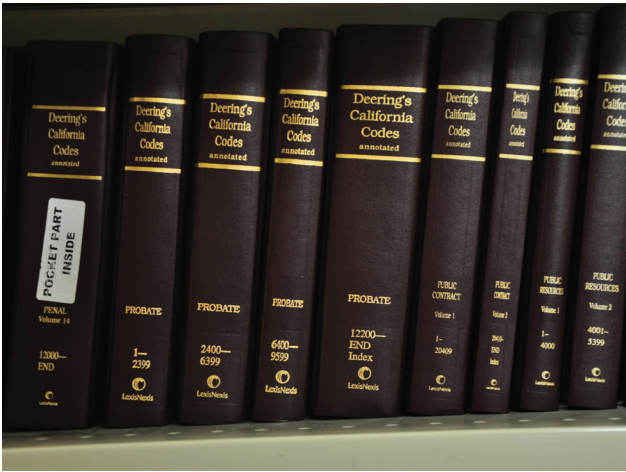
“If a person did not have a book while in isolation, they would live in silence, which would be a killer,” said San Quentin resident Steven Starr. “The mind would slowly begin to decay. You would become lost for words and your mind would freeze.”

A person who sits idly without reading will not reflect, but they would contemplate, said SQ resident and library worker Dante Knight.

Knight advised those who are in isolation without literature to write to a non-profit organization and explain their conditions in order to advocate for themselves.

After his release from prison, Betts earned a law degree from Yale School of Law, eventually becoming an advocate fighting for prison reform.

“We put millions of people in prison,” Betts said. “I want to put millions of books in prisons.”



SQNews archive

Prison Law Library book collection

Books propose possibilities and imagination, rather than just being a comfort or distraction; reading cultivates empathy by letting people put themselves in someone else’s shoes, according to the article.

A fan of Sci-Fi and fantasy novels, SQ resident library worker Mesro Coles El said his favorite book is “Starman Jones” by Robert A. Heinlein. The book is about a guy who wanted to be an astrogator, a person who uses the stars to navigate.

Coles El said the book’s character came from a diverse background that included poverty and abuse, not like many incarcerated people. One day, the book’s character stowed away on a ship that ended up getting lost in space. Using his navigation skills, he guided the ship back home.

“No matter who you are or what you are doing, you can achieve your dreams,” Coles El said.

The Freedom Reads program that Betts created has received positive feedback from those impacted by having access to books while in prison.

Formerly incarcerated James Davis III remembers that in 2022 a Freedom Reads library came to his unit at the Cheshire Correctional Institution in Connecticut.

Davis began frequenting the prison library and engaging in book clubs.

He and other incarcerated men would spend 60 minutes reading and discussing what they learned.

“Every book is like a classroom,” Davis said. “How to communicate and how to relate to people, how to treat people, all these things are played out in books.”

Davis received a commutation, and after release from prison, he sought employment, he noticed that Freedom Reads was hiring, and applied for a job.

He went to work for the non-profit as a Communications Associate, which for him was a dream come true, said the article.

San Quentin staff librarian Charlotte Sanders has contributed 20 years of public library service. She said that a person could find rehabilitation in reading.

“I would go crazy if I did not have a book to read,” Sanders said.

The Freedom Reads program received a MacArthur “genius grant” for their nonprofit work. They have a vision to set up libraries in correctional facilities throughout the United States.

Freedom Reads started in 2020 and finds its funding through donations, partnerships, and grants, including the Mellon Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The program is moving toward opening 35 libraries in men and women’s facilities in Missouri. Each library will have 500 books and low bookcases that allow easy access. The idea is to encourage the community to engage in conversations around books.

Freedom Reads opened its 500th library at the York Correctional Institution, Connecticut’s prison for women. At the opening, Betts read a book titled “Doggerel.” All the women who attended the event received a copy of the book.

“It [reading] changed the way I interact with the world and the way the world has interacted with me,” Betts said. “It helps us, it helps them. Having access to something beautiful matters.”



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

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EDITORIAL

Service and pricing could improve if the prison service providers had competition

By Kevin D. Sawyer  
Editor-in-Chief

The unanswered questions about the impending arrival of new tablets in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation cause some anxiety about the devices. How I wish transparency and answers were available to disseminate, but as it is often said: “This is prison.”

The incarcerated deserve answers, but telephone and tablet technology typically sit outside the everyday drudgery of cops and robbers, crime and punishment, writs and appeals.

The telecommunications industry is governed primarily by regulatory law instead of the Penal Code. Ever see a police officer or prison guard explain rate structures or climb a utility pole?

As a mass communication major in college, I studied telecommunication standards and regulatory law, but my real training happened during the 14 years I worked in the industry in sales, customer service, operations, network administration, and as a contractor at several corporations. More than a decade of that time I spent at the now-defunct MCI Telecommunications, Inc.

Ironically, I was employed at MCI when it had the contract to provide telephone service in all state prisons in California. I started my career there in the early 1980s as AT&T divested its holdings and ended its government-supported monopoly, eventually breaking up the Bell System. Through that experience, I gained understanding of the movement of telephone traffic — using copper wires, fiber optics, and wireless — high-speed data, and the contracts and tariffs behind it all.

None of that makes me an expert in the field, though, because I was removed from society shortly after many changes took place in the industry — changes imposed in large part by the 1995 Telecommunications Reform Act. Some things, however, have stuck with me.

Now that a court has set aside the ViaPath Technologies (Global Tel\*Link) contract with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and the California Department of Technology, new tablets will be provided by Aventiv (Securus Technologies). But unlike AT&T’s monopoly of the past, this one inside the prison industrial complex continues.

In conventional markets for goods and services, consumers have the freedom of choice, so they get to choose the best

provider. The prison phone market is different. State and local governments grant telephone companies exclusive contracts to create monopolies.

California prisoners and their family and friends stand face-to-face with a telephone monopoly created by the state and prison phone market. Consequently, these end users of service too often receive poor reception, weak wireless signals, no connectivity, dead zones, network outages, dropped calls, expensive double billing — especially for video calls — and more.

I have heard, read, and watched it all, and have written no less than 30 articles in *San Quentin News* about the prison telephone industry. I have done so not to flaunt some esoteric knowledge, but to educate prisoners who are the unwilling recipients of sub-standard service.

The newspaper is currently in the process of obtaining the Aventiv/Securus service level agreement published in a Standard Agreement with the CDCR and CDT; and through a public record request, its tariff on file with the California Public Utilities Commission.

Oddly enough, with tens of thousands of GTL/Viopath tablets issued throughout the CDCR over several years, there are no codified sections in the California Code of Regulations, title 15, (2023) regarding inmate use of third-party wireless tablets. Check it out. Perhaps the department’s Regulation and Policy Management Branch may see the need to issue a Notice of Change to Regulations to adopt a new section that will bring tablets into existence.

San Quentin’s local operational procedures (OP 0-1187, Statewide Tablet and Kiosk Operations, revised May 2023) has language that suggests that tablets exist, but it’s backed by 15 CCR, Sections 3006, 3135, 3282. Those sections cover contraband, paper mail, and wall phones, respectively.

Aventiv/Securus Technologies is the second largest provider of prison telephone service in the U.S. ViaPath/Global Tel\*Link holds the top position. For years, these two companies have held their spots in front of other predatory prison telecommunications vendors, such as AmTel, ICSolutions, Infinity, Lattice, Legacy, NCIC, Pay Tel, Telmate, and Turnkey Corrections.

None of these companies operate out of benevolence or some altruistic motive to keep families of the incarcerated connected. They are not our friends. The market they dominate is a well-thought-out plan to be exploitive, simply

because prisoners have no alternative “legal” method to communicate. We must kneel to the monopolistic predation of Big Business.

Currently, California taxpayers pay the costs for calls made from GTL phones and tablets. For now it makes little difference who the billed party is on the other end of the call.

One day free calls in California may end. Then what? Here’s a thought: What if calls from prison accessed the 10XXX dialing to direct their phone traffic to a different service provider’s network? The technological know-how and infrastructure is already in place. This would give all prisoners a choice of different service providers and billing rates. It is no different than choosing Access, Union Supply, or Walkenhorst’s to order a quarterly package.

Watch how fast service and pricing would improve if telephone service providers had to compete with each other — nationwide — for the “privilege” to provide service to prisoner consumers.

This would create *real* competition. It’s why MCI and the Department of Justice filed suit against AT&T, because the latter was a monopoly. It had no competition in the marketplace and used anti-competitive tactics to create artificial barriers to entry for other long distance telephone companies that tried to compete.

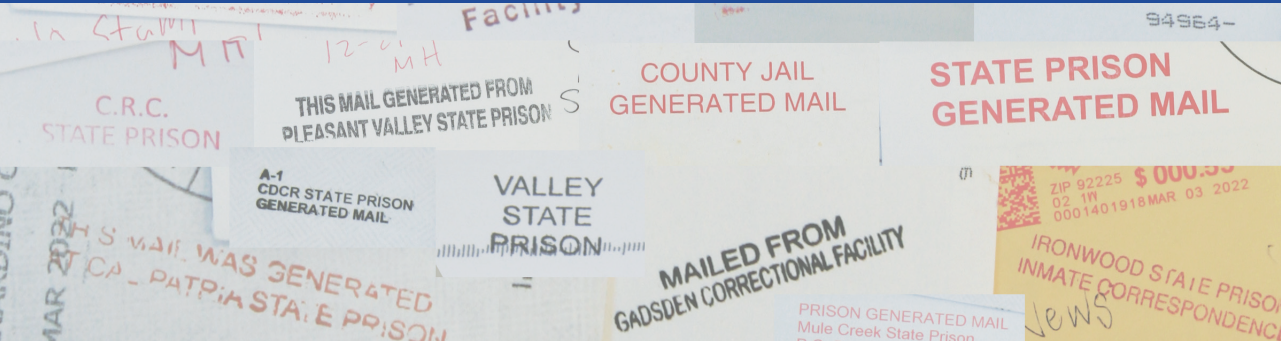
Prisoners should be mindful that Aventiv/Securus and Viopath/GTL are regulated utilities in California and in other states. This means they have to answer to state regulators. For CDCR prisoners, this is the California Public Utilities Commission. Any complaints about telephone service should be directed to the CPUC.

To file a complaint, a “person” must file a formal “written petition or complaint,” pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, title 20, Section 4.1; and California Public Utility Code, Section 1702(b). There must be a group of 20 or more complainants represented in the action. If the complainants have unresolved “trouble tickets” with their service provider, include the ticket number in the complaint language. This is one way to advocate for yourselves. Good luck!

Mail complaints to the following address:

California Public Utilities Commission  
Consumer Affairs Branch  
505 Van Ness Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94102-3298

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR FROM INSIDE SQ



Dear SQNews,  
Hope when you get this letter it finds the staff in the very best of spirits I’ve been reading the San Quentin News for about 10 years and wish that I was incarcerated there instead of (Fla) with mayor Newsom and the progressive democrats it’s actually second changes for inmates, Gov. Desantes (R) (Fla) just voted a bill (181) for the old parole system. I be listening to the pod cast (San Quentin). Keep me in the loop with more subscriptions.

Eric L. Wilridge  
Liberty Correctional Institution  
Bristol Florida

Dear SQNews,  
Hello! May I being by applauding your work. The paper is of such a professional caliber, that not only are we accurately informed but also inspired. For the publication of the S.Q. Paper with it’s admirable standard bears living testimony to just what we prisoners can accomplish. We are not all journalists, however we can extract fresh encouragement from the S.Q. News, as we strive to be the best

we can in our own respective spheres. So upon the behalf of many who are behind these walls, searching on how to be of significance and influence in our own daily lives, a most robust thank you! Sincerely having expressed this, the purpose for this latter is to see if you could please print the accompanying flyer in one of your upcoming editions? This has been in the works at the grass-roots level for a number of years in various prisons. Publicizing it in your paper will increase the awareness and produce more traction, thank you for your paper, your time and any assistance you may be able to provide.

Jesse J. Burges  
Salinas Valley State Prison

Dear SQNews,  
Greetings and may peace and blessings be upon you, your families and everyone doing the work. My concern is that soy beans its oil is in many products we man consume and soy has estrogen female hormones in it and if enough is consumed we will grow female breast. The products soy is in are nutty buddy wafers, oatmeal cream pie, prep cookies these are canteen items and the system

gives the Oreo cookies out in the lunches. This in my opinion is an assaulted on incarcerated me and men in general, but we are limited in the items we can consume we at least should have a voice in what we can eat. I for one do not wish to have female breast. Sound the alarm if you are with me. Every man should know that soy is no good for men.

Jonathan L. Mackson  
Wasco State Prison

Dear SQNews,  
First off I would like to send my respect’s to all incarcerated men and women and all the reads of the SQN. And I want to say that I love all the great News and education you put in the paper. Thank you for the hard work I really enjoy the articles. I look forward to reading the SQN every month. Thank you all very much for sending me the paper so I can sit and read the whole paper without someone else trying to get it before I. the staff at SQN are truly a blessing to your reads

Mike Chilcott Jr.  
Pelican Bay State Prison



AZTEC

Continued from page 1

you to believe that you need to being worthy and valiant in order to earn your tattoos, that used to believed before,” said Gabino Madera resident of SQ and member of the Aztec Dance.

The program focus on rehabilitation and emotional recovery fomenting the educational integration and cultural activities. Supporting their members in their own development skills for their lives, team work and community service.

“Te, imman! Mone [ ], Monemachtih!! [ ], Aquique in?[ ], Mach Amo Mexica[ ], Actique! C---!! [ ], Timoquetztaz! [ ], Momoztle a un Cualli Ce Mihuil Mique [ ], Cuauhocēloti [ ], Tiahui!!,” said all the members of the SQ., Aztec group in every session.

Besides, to explore the Aztec history and the culture, they learn how to develop their communication skills by promoting conflict resolutions.

Madera comment his interest to understanding his roots as former gang member. He had to hide his interest and the only thing he could do was to just saw the dancers performing on the streets. Since his incarceration at High Desert, he decided to represent his culture as proud Chicano.

Based on the studies from Jhon M.D. Phol, the Codex Boturini tells the legendary story of the Aztecs, originally from Aztlan they settled on the Texcoco Lake following their prophecy from their God Huitzilophlti.

According to the Aztec foundation myth, the tribe left their homeland, Huitzilophlti spoke them from a cave prophesying when they will settle

Hispanic dance program focuses on rehabilitation, emotional recovery, cultural activities



Aztec Dance group, Cuauhocēloti and resident Aztec dancers

in island where they witnessed a miraculous vision; a eagle standing on a cactus growing from a solid rock eating a snake. The tribe fulfilling their destiny, they founded in 1325 Tenochtitlan, this became the mayor capital of Central Mexico between 14th and 16th century.

Mayers in her publication add, the mexicas narrated in each movements the connection with the for elements; water”Alt”, fire “Tonatiuh”, wind “Ehecal” and earth Tonantzin”, as well with the four cardinal points, the four essence, guardians such as “Ilhuica and Tlaticpac”, and animals such as turkey, deer, jaguar among others.

Following this, the hands movements are talking the history, narrating a moment of that time of what was there, existed or inhabited,

the way how they sow, how present their sons and daughters to the Great Spirit. With each dance carrying a relation with the past and actual live, dancing with barefoot to be connected with Mother Earth “Tonantzin”.

“The dance connects me because where I came from, it is a place where the Spanish conquest has too much to do, I am from Morelos Mexico a place where are buried the remains of the conqueror Hernan Cortez,”said Sergio Medina other member of the group and resident of SQ., also he expressed his purpose to learn more of his attachments with the Aztec culture.

Moreover, in the article The Understanding of Role of Aztec Dance and Symbolism written by Mateo Villanueva, reveals that this tribe not just the dance has a meaning

the vestment, the colors, accessories and instruments have a meaning.

Villanueva explains that each color represents different elements or deity as example: red symbolize the blood and the sacrifice, while blue represent the water. The attire were made with natural material such as cotton, feathers, animal skin, each one chosen for their symbolism to earth and divine.

Also his article adds, the instruments used in de dance such as the drum represents the heart beats as well the flute is associate whit the wind and the breath of life, enhanced the atmosphere during every interpretation.

Williams C. Campos resident of SQ and the person in charge of playing the drum for the group said,” When you have the opportunity to

witness somebody who knows how to play the rhythms of air and then fire, I felt ignorant because when I started on the group I just play the drum as a choreography. Now I am more interested on well represent the meaning of each rhythm.”

The magazine Xipe Totek provided a good example of a dance called “Iztacuahltli” White Eagle, it tells the story of a chosen warrior by his village who they trust their devotions and offerings so the Great Eagle would carried to the Creator. Meanwhile the Eagle rise up to the sky to the Creator, the warrior rise his hand up to the air as a signal of gratitude.

The rhythmic dance as known “Mihtotiliztly”, it is a representation of the cosmos movements due to the circular movement of the planets. As well, the men and women has their own separate dances and some cases they joined both genders as a symbol of equilibrium of the cosmos.

According to the Routledge’s studies, each member of the Nahau tribe could participate on the dace due to they were prepared to sing and dance, even though they could use this ability any time the danced on the seedtime in order to have a generous harvest.

“To continue the traditions and everyone don’t forget where they came from, that was my motivation to joying this group at the same time was something positive in mi life because I could stay away from drugs,” said Osman Garcia Juarez resident of SQ., originally of Guatemala.” I being practicing the Maya dance since I was eight, there are different steps and rhythm, but it help me physical and mentally to take out the stress.”

Vicarious nature walks, Yoga, institutional information will return

OUTAGE

Continued from page 1

supercomputer the Pentagon used for nuclear bomb simulations,” joked resident Lee Jaspar, the media center’s HyperCaster programmer.

“The HyperCaster can handle broadcasting an unlimited amount of programming,” Tafoya said, adding that the unit “was not utilized to the fullest extent. Once we get to the new building, the movies will play no longer from DVDs, but from a hard drive, which will make playing a lot more reliable. Once that starts, the movies could potentially start at set times, instead of starting again right after they end, which will give residents a reliable time for watching them.”

Brown said San Quentin would soon hire a second TV specialist, an addition he highly welcomed. “The new TV specialist will let me



Wikicommons

Meditation screen image

spend more time on making sure the programming will change more frequently. Another worker will also make sure that we do more productions here,” Brown said.

David Rodriguez said he missed the nature walk with the solo piano music because it helped him relax. “It’s my favorite Channel One program,” he said, “I could zone out on that. We don’t get real nature here.”

Firearm ban could impact correctional officer's job with CDCR

GUNS

Continued from page 1

term referring to the distress that may accompany the incongruence between one’s experienced or expressed gender and one’s assigned gender, more specifically used as a diagnostic category.”

For both male and female persons, biologically at birth, less than one in 1,000 suffers gender dysphoria across that population, according to the DSM.

SQ Correctional Officer Hauwert said if the DOJ successfully bans trans people from access to firearms, it could have a direct impact on her because her work requires carrying a firearm at times.

“The right to carry is enshrined into the United States Constitution. If we feel our life is in danger, we should be able to exercise our right to bear arms as law-abiding citizens

when needed,” said Hauwert.

Gun rights advocacy group Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms called the Justice Department discussion “disturbing.” The National Rifle Association and Gun Owners of America oppose any blanket proposal that targets a specific group, reported *The AP*.

“The Second Amendment isn’t up for debate,” the NRA said in a social media post. “NRA does not, and will not, support any policy proposals that implement sweeping guns bans that arbitrarily strip law-abiding citizens of their Second Amendment rights without due process.”

Mark Bryant, founding executive director of the Gun Violence Archive, said that there have been more than 5,700 mass shootings in America from 2013 to present, with only five of those shooters confirmed as transgender.

In a statement, the Justice

Department said it is evaluating options but has not yet advanced any specific proposals.

“We are more likely to be the victims of gun violence than being the perpetrator,” said Gordon.



Wikicommons

Gun and holster

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Images, inferiority, outlawed culture plague generations

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Journalism Guild Chair

As a result of the power of images, outlawed culture, and inferiority complexes, psychological trauma has plagued generations for centuries.

People with a history of racial and cultural oppression in vulnerable communities are exposed to distress, according to *Health A-Z*.

“Being systematically exploited, enduring repeated and continual abuse, racism, and poverty are all traumatic enough to cause...changes,” said Gayani DeSilva, MD, a child and adolescent psychiatrist.

Images draw society into devotion and high reverences, which are remedies of salvation, people kiss them, and cry at altars

for them. An image becomes powerful when seen through the lens of the eyes, the keenest senses.

The book *Power of Images* displayed the crucifixion of a Caucasian savior in paintings created in the fifteenth century by Italian artist Fra Angelico in the Museum of San Marco in Florence Italy.

San Quentin resident Kojo Damian Clutchette, 49, a Christian incarcerated more than 18 years said that psychological slavery through the perception of images has had a social impact on Black people.

A diverse outlook enables Black people to consider themselves as less than, because of certain images held in high reverence in the Black community, Cluchette said.

He added that images of

white people who enslaved his ancestors were displayed over centuries as liberators of Black people.

“Multi-generational trauma is very controversial and is the most insidious [deceptive], starting with a false image of our savior,” Clutchette said. “An inferiority complex created a stereotype class system which said I am better than the other person.”

Generations of Black people were told they were cursed and that their savior was a particular ethnicity causing Black people to have a subordinate type of view toward that race, said Clutchette.

He stated that whenever he and his friend would engage in a cultural conversation and a random white person would appear his friend would act

inferior toward that person.

Images are uncultured, not of modern descent, undeveloped, but strategically well-made. Nevertheless, they are not accepted by critics, noted the book *The Power of Images*.

For instance, iconoclasm is a practice of opposition to widely accepted images that do not conform to the reverence of idols, according to Merriam -Webster Dictionary.

The descendants of slaves are not the only people affected by influential practices; so have the descendants of indigenous people.

SQ resident Gregory “White Eagle” Coates, a Native American incarcerated for 50 years, says that his culture was forbidden in America having a big impact on his ancestors.

Coates said his ancestors went through so many traumas that they hid their identity. His grandparents changed his last name out of fear because the practices of their culture were outlawed.

The Native American way of life was illegal until 1977, when then President Jimmy Carter acknowledged Native American people, Coates said.

Coates added that upon coming to prison in 1975, CDC would classify new arrivals in three ethnic categories, White, Black, and Mexican. As a Native American, Coates was classified as White.

Despite the lack of recognition of Coates’ identity, he does acknowledge that in 1981 San Quentin State Prison was the first facility in California to have

a sweat lodge.

Coates urges young people to learn about the trials and tribulations of their people to become educated concerning their ancestors.

A healthy way to connect with one’s culture is to study historic content in order to heal. This can strengthen efforts to recover from generational trauma. There are tools such as educational content about trauma, where teachers and parents can address systemic issues that perpetuate trauma in minority communities, according to *Health A-Z*.

“You can’t embrace anything until you heal and find your people,” Coates said. “Things have been hidden, but now it is easy to find who you are. Know your grandparents, and don’t be afraid to ask.”



# Discontentment among Black people deters voting

By Jason L. Jackson  
Staff Writer

Some San Quentin Black residents trace their lack of participation in politics to sub par education and feeling ostracized by the government that’s said to represent them. America’s laws, from voting rights to tax contributions and everything in between, eventually shape and define reality in the country. How active someone is in the political realm, can weigh greatly in determining what that reality eventually looks like. If participation is important, why are so many Black people choosing not to become politically engaged? “A lot of Black people believe they don’t have a voice or a serious stake in the country,” said Mesro Coles-El, a San Quentin

resident who became deeply engaged in politics through his practice of Islam. “We don’t feel we are apart of the country as much as other Americans. When you don’t think you are a part of something then you won’t respect it,” said Coles-El. Statistics from the 2024 presidential election reveal that 40.4% of eligible Black voters did not vote, according to USAfacts. There were myriad factors that contributed to low voter turnout, including Black voters feeling underrepresented by candidates, lack of outreach by political campaigns, and existing barriers such as closures of polling centers and discriminatory voter ID laws. Additionally, research conducted by Tufts University reveals that 66%

of eligible Black voters between the ages of 18-29 did not vote in the 2024 election, compared to 53% of all people of the same age group. In the study, young Americans said they don’t believe that their vote will make a difference in their lives. “We already believe politics is against us, so we don’t think our participation is going to matter. These thoughts are rooted in the systems, from education to prison, that we feel dehumanizes us,” said James Miles, a SQ resident who says he attempts to stay politically aware because of how laws and decisions may affect his family. How does all of this affect incarcerated people who are unable to vote while in prison? Black people are

disproportionately present in the criminal justice system throughout the state and the country. A 2023 study by the Public Policy Institute of California shows that Black people represent 6% of California’s population, but make up 28% of the state’s prison population. The Pew Research Center found that Black people make up 14.4% of the U.S. population as of 2023, but represent 38% of people incarcerated in the country. William Harris is a resident at San Quentin incarcerated for 29 years. He says that he remains consistently engaged in politics because the laws effect him directly and indirectly. He believes politics, for incarcerated people, is the most important thing in the world. “Our voices have never mattered, but that is

beginning to change. We have the power to improve our conditions, but we have to be engaged and we have to want to change,” said Harris. SQ residents believe solutions to disproportionate incarceration rates will come from incarcerated people self-educating and then getting involved in local, state and federal politics. “People who are incarcerated have a unique experience because we’ve seen it from the inside. In order to change the narrative we need to get involved and change people’s minds,” said Coles-El. Formerly incarcerated people in California gained some power in 2020 when Proposition 17 granted voting rights to convicted felons currently on parole. Prior to the law, people with felony records had

to discharge parole before becoming eligible to vote. Along with voting rights, there are organizations, such as the Los Angeles based non-profit Initiate Justice, which work to provide political education to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people while encouraging them to become involved in the politics that create the laws affecting their lives. Incarcerated Black people may have valid reasons to harbor discontent toward the political structure within the country. But, this does not mean they are powerless. Through education and participation, Black people inside and outside of prison can be the catalyst to the change that will bring meaningful and lasting improvements to their lives.

## LGBTQ+ detainees at ICE facility allege abuse

By Charles Crowe  
Staff Writer

Transgender and LGBTQ+ detainees at the women’s ICE Processing Center in Basile, La., allege systemic physical and emotional abuse between 2023 and 2025, a period spanning two presidential administrations, reported Dan Gooding in *Newsweek* Sept. 27. Complaints filed by the ACLU, the National Immigration Project, and Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, say the abuse included sexual and physical assaults and denial of medical attention. Monica Renteria-Gonzalez, a transgender who identifies as a male, told *Newsweek* of harassment by Manuel Reyes, a former ICE assistant warden. Reyes harassed him everywhere he went, said Renteria-Gonzalez, following him around the recreation yard, sitting by him in the dining hall to make him uncomfortable, and following him into the dorm. Renteria-Gonzalez also told *Newsweek* that Reyes created an ad hoc work program, sometimes consisting of purposeless work, without proper PPE and with little

or no pay, which targeted transgender detainees. “One example of such labor was pushing heavy cinder blocks or metal cabinets across a dorm, taking around 30 minutes, before the detainee was instructed to push the items back where they came from,” wrote Gooding. Officials summarily dismissed complaints about mistreatment, according to Sarah Decker, staff attorney at RFK Human Rights. “If this person complained about the abusive conditions ... the response was always, ‘If you wanna be a man, I’ll treat you like a man,’” Decker said. She told *Newsweek* that Reyes designed the program to target, through punishment and physical torture, transgender men and masculine presenting LGBTQ+ persons. DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin dismissed the allegations as smears that are contributing to a 1000% increase in threats against ICE officers. ICE’s Office of Professional Responsibility investigated the claims and found them to be false, said McLaughlin. “Nobody was forced into coerced labor... Nobody was physically abused. And nobody was

denied proper medical care.” GEO Group runs the detention center as an ICE contractor. A spokesperson said, “GEO strongly disagrees with these baseless allegations,” arguing that the allegations are politically motivated, and part of a radical war to abolish ICE and to end federal immigration detention by making baseless accusations against ICE contractors. Renteria-Gonzalez rejects official denials of the abuses. “It’s not true. It’s a total lie,” he said, adding that victims of abuse in the centers don’t speak up out of fear of retribution by ICE officials through deportation. “Because they know that, at the end of the day, we are in ICE’s hands to do with us whatever they want.” Decker said that organizations advocating for immigrants believe the sort of abuse alleged by Renteria-Gonzalez is pervasive in ICE detention facilities, especially in the women’s facilities. “There’s a really intense and disturbing paper trail of ICE’s knowledge of what was happening in this facility,” she said. “This is part of a system of neglect and abuse.”

## Gun rights possibly restored for some felons

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

The Trump administration is working to allow some convicted felons in the U.S. to have their gun rights restored if it can convince Congress that the move is a constitutional corrective. The U.S. Department of Justice is looking to resurrect an existing statute (18 U.S.C. Section 925(c)), effectively defunded by Congress in 1992, that would allow felons to apply for restoration of their right to bear arms, according to an article by Bryan Driscoll in *Handzlik Law*. Driscoll noted the broad scope of the administration’s effort. “Ultimately, the DOJ’s move to revive [the law] is more than an administrative reopening; it’s a live test of how the legal system reconciles the right to bear arms with the duty to protect the public,” wrote Driscoll. Attorney General Pamela Bondi also framed the proposal as a constitutional issue, arguing that restoration of gun rights is on the same level as the right to vote, to free speech, and to the free choice of religion. She said that Congress’ defunding of the application process in

1992 permanently disqualified individuals from firearm ownership without evaluating whether they posed an actual danger to society. Congress made the law dormant in 1992 by barring the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives from using funds to process nonviolent felons’ applications to reinstate gun rights. Reasons for defunding the law included concerns about its costliness and resulting administrative burdens, as well as the perceived risk of placing firearms in the hands of dangerous people. Supporters of the administration’s move to revive the law, like Gun Owners of America, see it as an overdue recalibration of federal policy, asserting that any rehabilitated non-violent felon should have a chance to own a firearm. “For critics, the process is both a public safety risk and a constitutional overreach in the other direction,” wrote Driscoll. Gun control advocates, like Brady and Everytown for Gun Safety, see the initiative as a reckless move, warning it will put weapons in dangerous hands and undermine decades of bipartisan consensus preventing gun ownership

by convicted criminals. Democratic lawmakers see it as the current administration sidestepping Congress with executive actions rather than pursuing bipartisan legislation. The administration’s plan is that the Office of the Pardon Attorney will process applications from ex-felons. DOJ’s FY 2026 budget includes \$448,000 to develop infrastructure to evaluate and decide requests. The OPA will be working with the FBI’s Criminal Justice Information Service integrating records from multiple agencies to a web-based application portal to avoid excessive manual reviews. In deciding eligibility for reinstatement of gun rights, officials will consider the nature of an applicant’s original offense, post-conviction conduct, and evidence of rehabilitation. The rules will automatically exclude some groups of “high-risk” applicants from the process, including registered sex offenders and persons unlawfully present in the United States. Those who qualify for gun rights reinstatement via the OPA review process would still be subject to any restrictions imposed by state or local laws.

## Resentencing report brings hope to some

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter  
Staff Writer

Mass-incarceration has done irreparable harm to California’s population. On the roller coaster of hope and despair, The Second Look Movement delivered incarcerated persons a measure of optimism by lobbying for resentencing. Such lobbying has paid off for many persons incarcerated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The Sentencing Project, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, has periodically reviewed Second Look laws and has done so again with an updated “The Second Look Movement: An Assessment of the Nation’s Sentence Review Laws.” The *San Quentin News* originally reported on resentencing in the January issue, an article that sparked much discussion, especially among veterans. “This report presents the evolution of the second look movement,” said the report, adding, “Legislators and the courts are looking to judicial review as a more effective

means to reconsider an incarcerated person’s sentence in order to assess their fitness to reenter society.” In California, resentencing began in 2018 for military veterans. Qualifying incarcerated veterans “may” petition for a recall of sentence and request resentencing if they “‘may be suffering’ from sexual trauma, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, or mental health problems as a result of the defendant’s military service,” if not previously considered at the time of sentencing,” said the report. An endnote called special attention to *People v. Coleman*: “The structure of the statute makes it clear why it uses ‘may’ rather than ‘does.’ If, after a hearing, the trial court finds that the petitioner may be suffering from a qualifying condition as a result of his or her military service, it ‘may, in its discretion, resentence the person following a resentencing hearing.’ It does not necessarily have to resentence the petitioner. And if it does, it need only consider

the fact that the petitioner may be suffering from a qualifying condition as a result of his or her military service as one mitigating factor, along with all of the other mitigating and aggravating factors in the case. The People are free to challenge the credibility of the petitioner’s claim. The statute does not require the petitioner to allege that the qualifying condition actually contributed to the commission of the crime.” The report added that the statute applied retroactively, not only to veterans convicted at trial, but also to veterans who had entered plea agreements, but with the exception that “only those serving determinate sentences (a set amount of time to serve) are eligible to seek relief.” The provision excluded anyone convicted of a serious or violent felony punishable by life imprisonment or death. “Those who are ineligible to seek relief include those who are required to register as sex offenders,” said the report. The law further excluded “anyone convicted of any homicide

offense, including attempted homicide and solicitation to commit murder; assault with a machine gun on a peace officer or firefighter; possession of a weapon of mass destruction; or any serious or violent felony punishable by life imprisonment or death.” For incarcerated persons other than veterans, Cal. Penal Code § 1172.1 allowed district attorneys and the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to file a petition at any time to recommend a sentence reduction in corrections and judge-initiated resentencing, according to the report. Since January 1, 2024, this law expanded permission to judges to initiate resentencing proceedings if laws changed, which applied to many cases. An endnote said, “Some of the most notable examples of changes in the law that would warrant sentence reconsideration are: 2) the change in the felony murder statute (Cal. Penal Code § 1172.6); removal of non-serious felonies from the three strikes law (Cal. Penal Code §

1170.126); and felonies that are now classified as misdemeanors (Cal. Penal Code § 1170.18).” The most promising part of a recall initiated by a district attorney or a corrections official lay in the “presumption favoring recall and resentencing.” According to Cal. Penal Code § 1172.1(b) (2), only a court finding that “the individual currently poses an unreasonable risk of danger to public safety as defined by statute” could overcome that presumption, said the report. Cal. Penal Code § 1172.1(a) (5)) allowed the court to take into account factors such as “age, time served, diminished physical condition, defendant’s risk for future violence, and evidence that the circumstances have changed so that continued incarceration is ‘no longer in the interest of justice.’” Psychological, physical, or childhood trauma, abuse, neglect, intimate partner violence, human trafficking, and “whether the person was under the age of 26 at the time of the offense” also figure into consideration. Among the other changes,

the report said, “the court previously could, but is now required, to consider post-conviction factors, such as age, disciplinary record, record of rehabilitation, physical condition, etc.” Courts could reconsider any felony offenses at any time. Also in 2018, California enacted AB 2942, the first prosecutor-initiated resentencing law in the nation, allowing prosecutors to petition courts for reductions of sentences for felony convictions. In passing PIR, the California Legislature declared that the purpose of sentencing is “public safety achieved through punishment, rehabilitation, and restorative justice,” said the report. As of June 2025, over 500 incarcerated persons had their sentences reduced by means of PIR in California, said the report. Data came from For the People, a nonprofit that called prosecutor-initiated resentencing a “powerful tool to help repair the damage of the disproportionate incarceration of Black and Brown people.”



# Work behind the scenes takes community effort

By Bostyon Johnson  
Managing Editor

San Quentin's version of a red-carpet event, the 2025 San Quentin Film Festival, celebrated and highlighted the transformative power of film and filmmakers.

Organizers dedicated the event to the memory of Marcus "Wali" Henderson, former editor-in-chief of *San Quentin News* and a member of the incarcerated team that put on last year's film festival.

Rahsaan Thomas, co-director of and consultant to the film festival, said he first met Henderson at Calipatria State Prison. When Henderson arrived at San Quentin, Thomas, who was sports editor at *San Quentin News*, recruited him to write sports articles.

"When we met again at San Quentin, I needed help in the sports department. He didn't care about his appearance, he cared about impact and about people," Thomas said.

Henderson's release from prison came finally in 2024. Shortly thereafter, surrounded by his family and friends, Wali lost his battle with cancer.

Thanks for the success of this year's film festival goes to a progressive warden, cooperation from facility staff, and the many generous donors who support the work and creativity of San Quentin residents.

The festival allowed film industry professionals to glimpse the prison experience by witnessing work created behind the walls by incarcerated people, something not generally highlighted in outside media.

Putting on an event of this size involved many moving parts facilitated by prison administration, volunteers, donors, and incarcerated people. Incarcerated residents assigned to the California PIA paint vocation refurbished hundreds of chairs for the event space.

"We worked on about 200 chairs. We removed all the staples, cleaned the chairs, and restored them by adding wood to the underside so when someone sat down, they didn't sink into the chair," said resident Demarion English.

Incarcerated facilitators of the American Sign Language class helped deaf community members enjoy the two-day event by translating parts of the festival that were not close-captioned on the big screen.

Incarcerated filmmakers, producers, and sound engineers operated cameras, lighting, and sound equipment to ensure a successful event.

The event would not have been as welcoming without The Greater Good, an incarcerated 10-member ensemble. The band performed more than 50 musical selections, ranging from a

Romany-Gypsy tune from Bulgaria to the famous "Working Man Blues" by Merle Haggard, a San Quentin resident in the 1960s. The selections rang throughout the chapel's outdoor courtyard.

On the outside, artists can create scripts, direct films, and produce documentaries using cell phones, user-friendly software, and artificial intelligence.

For incarcerated filmmakers, making films is not that easy. Their challenges include limited access to equipment, movement restrictions, and before an idea can become something shown to an outside audience, the administration must approve the content.

"When you're talking to somebody and they're in the moment telling you an impactful story, you can't tell 'em to hold those emotions and come back next Thursday," resident audio-visual worker Jeremy Strain said. "That's a moment you will never get back. It will never be the same."

Strain said that filming outside the media center has been challenging due to pushback from correctional staff, mostly because they are unaware of the filmmakers' work.

"We try to be transparent ... by speaking to the supervisor and the custody staff on location to limit the chance of conflict," Strain said.

Incarcerated filmmakers are motivated to carry their message of rehabilitation, redemption, and freedom to incarcerated people and to people on the outside. However, they do not often see how outside people perceive the work.

"Working in audio and video ... I get to see all the inside activity, the production, the creativity, and even the finished product," Strain said. "We don't get to see all the reactions from outside. We can ask our families, but it's not the same." The film festival provided Strain a chance to witness those reactions firsthand.

Two-hundred fifty people applauded, cheered, and gave standing ovations to the incarcerated storytellers highlighted at the festival. Residents and visiting guests alike look forward to next year's celebration of San Quentin's filmmakers.

"It is worth the celebration for the incarcerated because we don't get to interact with free people at other institutions. That's what makes San Quentin unique," said resident Donell Haynie.



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews



Top: Center is Captain Sam Robinson with Juan Haines and formerly incarcerated Media Center workers

Far left: Sgt. Graves, Chief Deputy R. Rosalez, Warden C. Andes, Associate Warden N. Avila, AW J. Cavagnolo, PIO Lt. G. Berry

Near left: Graduate Larry Deminter winner of Best Narrative with last years winner Todd Winkler, and Claudia Weill

Near right: Quentin Blue panel  
Far right: Caleb Williams and outside guests enjoy a laugh



Top: Maxx Robison, Roberto DeTrinidad, David Rodriguez, Kojo Clutchette

Top left: Resident jury with Sing Sing Chronicle actor Jon Adrian Velasquez. From left: Kevin Sawyer, Harold Meeks, Eric Allen, Oscar Acosta, Velasquez, Roberto DeTrinidad, Clark Gerhartsreiter, Michael Callahan

Left: Industry jury with Film Festival Co-founder Cori Thomas. From left: Tony Gerber, guest, Mark Anthony Green, Jesse Williams, Thomas, Chad Coleman, guest

Right: San Quentin Video Department; Back row: Miguel Munoz-Huerat, Maurice Bradshaw, Anthony Gomez, Matthew Shepard, Adam Thomas, Jeremy Strain, Eric Allen, Jason Jenkins, Anthony Tafoya, Aristeo Sampablo, Derrell Davis, Ryan Pagan. Front row: Salvador Joaquin, Louis Sale, Ernest Woods, Sophear Om, Lawrence Randall



Above left: Resident Kenneth Bell, Sammie Nichols, guests, Michael Tello, and Miguel Muenoz-Huerta

Above: Residents and guests gather for pictures on the red carpet

Below right: Harold Meeks with Captain S. Robinson and Correctional Officer Romero





# El impacto cinematográfico dentro y fuera de las cárceles

Por Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chair

Por el segundo año consecutivo la carpeta roja fue desplegada dentro las paredes del Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin. Evento en donde se resaltó al talentos de las personas que actualmente y anteriormente estuvieron encarceladas.

Este evento duro dos días, en donde las personas encarceladas se entremezclaron personalidades tales como: directores de películas, directores cinematográficos y celebridades de Hollywood. Durante la llegada a la alfombra roja posaban y se tomaban fotos, mientras otros disfrutaban del compañerismo entre colegas

con panecillos y café.

El cofundador de San Quentin Film Festival Rahsaan Thomas conocido como “New York”, inauguró el evento honrando la memoria Marus “Wali” Henderson; el anterior editor de San QentinNews. Henderson perdió la batalla contra cáncer de colon, meses después de ser puesto en libertad condicional.

Estos eventos siguen cambiado las vidas de los prisioneros, dándoles oportunidades para exhibir sus aptitudes cinematográficos. Muchos de ellos han participado en cortometrajes, con la asistencia y apoyo de organizaciones como Pollen Initiative y el Centro de Medios de Comunicación en SQ., en donde los prisioneros

aprenden y practican sus habilidades con cámaras de videos, grabadoras, micrófonos y computadoras, entre otros. Sin embargo existen, restricciones antes que algún proyecto pueda ser aprobado por la administración encarcelaría.

“Estoy angustiada y un poco avergonzada, en cómo el mundo no apoya a la gente aquí [en prisión]. En el mundo de afuera no veo que la gente sea comprensiva”, dijo Amy Gordiejew, dirigente de la campaña Justicia pare Keith LaMar.

C. Andes, el director de CRSQ, compartió como él está feliz con tanta energía positiva. Él invitó a otros directores de prisiones alrededor del estado, tales como directores de CCWF y

CMF Mule Creek, se proyecta que en el 2026 se pueda replicar un evento similar en la prisión de CCWF.

Se premió a So Boom como el mejor corto metraje, fue parte de una experiencia que tuvo la coesritora y protagonista Tiffany “Tiny” Cruz, quien anteriormente estuvo encarcelada. “Yo solo quiero resaltar a las mujeres encarceladas. Para mí todo esto es sagrado porque no te veo en azules[uniforme], te veo como parte de mí, como alguien ha estado encarcelada; siento la conexión”, dijo Cruz.

De acuerdo a Cruz ella fue encarcelada a los 17 años. y comprende el impacto del el encarcelamiento masivo. So, Boom fue dirigida por Abby Pierce quien ha trabajado

con mujeres encarceladas enseñado teatro.

El residente Larry Deminter, se ganó el premio por su narrativa UnCommon Law. La narrativa de la historia de un hombre sentenciado a muerte y que durante su encarcelamiento aprendió a leer y escribir, después fue exonerado y de ser liberado trabajó en una organización sin fines de lucro, ayudando a otras personas encarceladas. Sin embargo nunca se imaginó que terminaría ayudando a su hija que enfrentaba la pena de muerte por medio de su otra hija a que él no conocía.

En evento cerro con la presentación de “Ricky” una película dirigida por Rashad Frett, guion cinematográfico

por Lin Que Ayoung y Rashad Frett. La historia es sobre un joven que fue encarcelado a los 15 años y cuando tenía 30 fue liberado. La artista reconocida Sheryl Lee Ralph, fue quien protagonizó ser la madre de Ricky. En su reingreso a la sociedad, se encontró con dificultades en relaciones románticas, y con la relación de una madre con cultura caribeña religiosa.

“Me sentí honrado de haber sido invitado y estar en el ambiente de un teatro con [pan] dulces en la mañana y estar entre la carpeta roja, fue algo que temporalmente me sentir libre”, dijo el residente Jesús Alfredo Renteria. agradeció a demás poder tener la oportunidad de conversar y hacer preguntas a los directores de películas.

## Concientización a la sobredosis en San Quentin

Por César Martínez  
Staff Writer

San Quentin realizo un evento para crear conciencia ante un problema que está afectando a la sociedad, a lo largo y ancho del estado de California.

Representantes de la Fiscalía de San Francisco, organizaciones de la comunidad, miembros de la administración de la institución y ex encarcelados, ofrecieron su apoyo y experiencia durante dicho evento para que la población encarcelada pueda hacer conciencia y enfrentar este grave problema que está destruyendo vidas dentro y fuera de la institución.

“Nosotros... tenemos un serio problema de Spice en SQ”, dijo el Director C. Andes. “Adictos son adictos, pero los narcotraficantes

son los victimarios. Es un esfuerzo en conjunto; necesitamos la manera de que los adictos se sientan seguro para hablar acerca del problema”.

De acuerdo con la Unidad de Lucha Contra las Drogas DEA por sus siglas en inglés, Spice es una droga sintética que induce episodios psicóticos agudos de intensas alucinaciones, severa agitación, pensamientos desorganizados y delirios de paranoia.

La Fiscal de San Francisco Brook Jenkins hizo acto de presencia al evento en apoyo a la comunidad encarcelada, haciendo conciencia de este problema que está devastando vidas, familias y comunidades.

“No estamos en lados opuestos; todo es para crear comunidades seguras, no hay suficiente ayuda a nivel

de condado, necesitamos replicar este ambiente [en SQ]”, recalcó Jenkins en su discurso.

El fentanilo es un analgésico potente, que los médicos recetan en dosis controladas a personas que sufren mucho dolor, con más frecuencia el fentanilo se agrega a drogas ilegales, por ser un opioide sintético más económico y más fuerte que la heroína. Acorde a la información de Medical Reseve Corp.

Durante el evento el excarcelados Trung Huy, compartió su experiencia detrás de su encarcelamiento, esta experiencia marco su vida y ahora trabaja con la organización de Servicios Asiático Americana en la Recuperación AARS por sus siglas en ingles.

AARS ofrese servicios a la comunidad en general como terapias y consejería

individual y familiar, prevención en reincidencias criminales, terapia cognitiva entre otros servicios, sus servicios también están disponibles en español a pesar de ser una organización asiática.

Personal del Departamento de Salud Pública de Marin impartió procedimientos a los reos sobre la Resucitación Cardiovascular Pulmonar RCP con las manos y el manejo del Desfibrilador Externo Automático AED durante el evento.

De acuerdo a las enfermeras invitadas, existe una tasa alta de muerte por fentanilo, por esta razón SQ provee a los encarcelados Naloxona [nombre comercial Narcan] es un medicamento que revierte una sobredosis de opioides en un aerosol nasal listo para usar y puede restablecer la respiración.

Para enfrentar el alarmante aumento de sobredosis desde el año pasado, La Directora Médica, Dra. Alison Pachynski de SQ, comentó que se distribuyeron 2400 cajas de Narcan, y agregó que miembros del personal médico junto con residentes han recibido capacitación para el uso adecuado del medicamento.

También los grupos de auto ayuda estuvieron presentes, tales cómo; Lenguaje de Señas Americanas ASL, Armas Abajo, B.R.A.V.E. El Grupo de Veteranos de SQ, Alcohólicos Anónimo entre otros grupos para ofrecer sus servicio e información para la comunidad de esta institución.

Harriet Siqueland voluntaria del grupo de Servicio de Reingreso Puentes Familiares “Family Bridesges, Inc.”, comentó que

esta organización provee servicios de vivienda y servicios comunitarios, entre otros servicios para población encarcelada.

“Tenemos los recursos para empiecen tu nueva vida con nosotros, estamos cuando ustedes quieran tomar el primer paso”, dijo Siqueiland quien se mostró contenta a ver la respuesta a tantas personas y el interés sobre el problema de la sobredosis.

*The Reentry Network*  
**Health RIGHT 360**  
**(844)-819-9840**

*Family Bridesges, Housing and Community Service*  
**(510)-250-2018**

*Asian American Recovery Service*  
**servicios disponible en español**  
**(408)-271-3900**

# Monatoria a la pena de muerte

*La evolución de la pena de muerte en San Quentin*

Por Daniel Lopez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Writer

Según los registros del CDCR, entre 1893 y 2006, el estado de California ejecutó a 513 personas mediante el uso del ahorcamiento, gas o inyección letal.

El gobernador Gavid Newsom ordenó la suspensión de la pena de muerte y el desmantelamiento de la cámara de ejecución. La última ejecución por inyección letal fue Clarence Ray, fue la última persona ejecutada en enero 17, 2006, 18 minutos después de recibir la inyección letal a las 12:38 am el hombre fue declarado muerto.

San Quentin abrió sus puertas en 1852, convirtiéndose en la única prisión del estado de California, con prisioneros de ambos sexos condenados a la pena de muerte.

La última vez que la población de condenados a muerte en California, según los registros del “Corredor de la Muerte” de EE.UU., Death Row U.S.A. DRUSA fue inferior a 600 personas.

En el año 2000, la población alcanzo un máximo de 743 a mediados de 2010 y desde ese momento ha disminuido significativamente, a aproximadamente 150 personas [%20], desde que

el Gobernador Newsom asumió el cargo en 2019 e impuso una moratoria de las ejecuciones. Desde el 2022 al menos 70 personas han sido sentenciadas nuevamente o han muerto.

Después de 28 años encarcelado, en el 2019 Avelino Manríquez de 70 años, que fuera condenado a muerte y sobrevivió en silencio por tres décadas en el corredor de la muerte, finalmente obtuvo una moratoria a su ejecución. “Allí pase treinta años con la muerte en la espalda”, dijo Manríquez.

Manríquez a sus 34 años fue arrestado y después sentenciado por múltiples cargos de asesinato en primer grado, fue trasladado a la prisión en autobús, donde expreso que se sentía como ir de camino al matadero, pensando que pronto sería ejecutado, luego encontró en un pequeño grupo de personas de habla hispana el apoyo como el de una familia. En su celda de 10 pies de largo por cuatro pies de ancho, pasaba 20 horas al día aislado.

Después Manríquez sin saber sus derechos legales, se enteró por su abogado que no podría ser ejecutado hasta que agotaran todos sus recursos legales. en donde en el 2019, encontró esperanza en la moratoria

impuesta. “Dios ha sido tan bueno conmigo que me ha concedido lo que le he pedido”, expresó Manríquez.

“La pena de muerte es absoluta. Es inseparable en caso de error humano. En California se han condenado a muerte a personas inocentes. Desde 1973, 164 presos condenados a muerte en todo el país incluidos cinco en California, han sido liberados del corredor de la muerte después que se determinó que habían sido condenados injustamente”, dijo Kelly M. Grow del Departamento Recursos de Agua de California.

La historia de Manríquez, no es algo nuevo, sin embargo, desde 1856 hasta 1933 San Quentin a forzado la pena de muerte indiscriminadamente.

En 1906 Emma LeDoux fue la primera mujer sentencia a la pena de muerte en California por el asesinato de su esposo, y condenada al pabellón de la muerte.

“El asesinato intencional de otra persona es incorrecto y como gobernador no supervisare la ejecución de ningún individuo,” dijo Newsom. “Nuestro sistema de pena de muerte, ha sido un fracaso en todos sentidos; discrimina a los acusados con enfermedades mentales que no pueden

costear una defensa legales costosas”.

Al menos 18 de las 25 personas ejecutadas en los EE. UU., en 2018 mostraron una o más de las siguientes discapacidades: signos significativos de enfermedad mental, signos de daño cerebral, trauma infantil severo, negligencia o abuso, reportó M. Grow.

Sin embargo, hay 25 condenados a muerte que han agotado todas sus apelaciones estatales y federales y son elegibles para una fecha de ejecución.

Newsom ha comentado que la pena de muerte no ha proporcionado ningún beneficio de seguridad pública, desperdiciado miles de millones de dólares de los contribuyentes.

Los abogados que representaban a los condenados a muerte han tenido éxito durante la administración de Gobernador Newsom. Más de cien personas condenadas a muerte han sido sentenciadas nuevamente de Acuerdo con DRUSA.

El Sr Manríquez fue uno de ellos en septiembre 2023 su sentencia de pena de muerte fue conmutada por 110 años pero con posibilidad de libertad condicional.

—Edwin E. Chavez  
Escritor contribuyente

## Sentencian a 10 guardias correccionales anNY

Por Aristeo Sampablo  
Staff Writer

Diez oficiales correccionales fueron acusados por la muerte del preso Messiah Nantwi en el Centro Correccional de Mid-State, Nueva York, basado a un artículo escrito por Michael Hill y Dave Collins de *La Prensa Asociada*.

El reporte revela, que los guardias acusados con los cargos de muerte en segundo grado se declararon no culpables por dichos delitos, de la misma manera que los otros ocho guardias implicados se declararon no culpables.

Jonah Levi y Caleb Blair están acusados con cargos de homicidio en primer y segundo grado. Thomas Eck, Craig Klemick and Daniel Burger, quienes también han sido culpados por homicidio involuntario en primer grado, ambos se declararon no culpables por los cargos durante la audiencia, explicó el comunicado.

Estos cinco oficiales en conjunto con el Sgto. Francis Chandler, han sido acusados por asalto en pandilla.

Esto es solo el sentir de un residente al preguntarle sobre la difícil notica sobre la muerte del Señor Nantwi, el cual estaba en custodia al momento de su muerte.

“Es una pena el darte cuenta de las cosas que pasan en otras prisiones, y la falta de profesionalismo de los oficiales. Esto solo me obliga a recapacitar en mi seguridad, es difícil enterarse que las

personas que supuestamente deben proteger y resguardad la seguridad en las prisiones, se conviertan en los verdugos de la historia”. Expresó el residente R. Soriano de San Quentin.

Según el reporte, la paliza y la falta de atención médica requerida, demuestra la apatía manifestada por su vida.

La acusación señaló, que seis de los diez oficiales quienes agredieron a Nantwi mientras que los otro cuatro fueron acusados de tratar de cubrir con un reporte falso y además limpiar la sangre de Nantwi en un esfuerzo por destruir cualquier evidencia que los involucrara.

El fiscal William Fitzpatrick que lleva el caso, no desconoce este tipo de situación. Fitzpatrick quien también llevo el caso de Robert Brooks, quien murió el año pasado bajo las mismas circunstancias en el Centro Correccional de Marcy, que tan solo se encuentra al otro lado de la calle donde se ubica el Centro de Mid-State.

“Un horrendo crimen”, dijo el Gobernador Kathy Hochul en un anuncio y agrego, “La trágica muerte del el Señor Nantwi en manos de los oficiales correccionales, quienes son responsables en la protección de la población encarcelada es profundamente alarmante”.

Esta la segunda vez que un grupo de oficiales correccionales son acusados por la muerte de un preso en lo que va del año, de acuerdo con la información publicada.



SPORTS



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Prison Sports Ministry, outside players, formerly incarcerated and resident ballers circle up

# Seventh annual 'Family Day' basketball tournament features alumni, Emmy Award documentary

By Martin Keith DeWitt  
Journalism Guild Writer

Friends, family, and fellowship were just some of the elements of the gathering on the “Lower Yard” basketball court on the first Saturday of September.

The San Quentin basketball program celebrated the power of the game and those things that the program stands for during its rendition of Family Day.

“I do it for my brothers,” said Montrell “MD” Vines of his coming back in for the event, “I feel y’all in here,” as he clutched his heart.

Family Day gathers up icons of the nationally renowned basketball program including formerly incarcerated program participants, outside sponsor opponents and current team members of the SQ Kings and SQ Warriors to rejoice in each others’ company and revel in the ongoing accomplishments that are achieved annually by the combined efforts of all who participated in the seventh annual gathering.

The main event of the jamboree was a four-team single elimination basketball tournament made up of teams that had a mixture of outside opponents, program members, and returning players.

Before the tournament started Bill Eppling of Prison Sports Ministries Green Team spoke to the assembled crowd

to acknowledge the origins of the program. He paid homage to PSM founder Don Smith who first visited San Quentin in 1996, as well as current PSM Executive Director Bryce Warwick who oversees the basketball and softball fellowship programs in five CDCR facilities.

The tournament included spirited contests, including:

Game One, which featured team one against team three. Team one held a 49-33 lead at half-time, and prevailed by the score of 89-58.

The second game showcased teams two and four. Team four led 30-19 at the half and held on to win 77-69.

In the championship game of the event, team four led at half time 44-38, before team one mounted a comeback to win 76-61.

The champion, team one’s roster included Valtese “Teez” Mathis, Marcel Johnson, Keyshawn “Steez” Strickland, Ryan Matlock, Most Valuable Player Mike Sapp, outside volunteers Dan Wohl, Ted Hahs and Jean-Paul Bergez.

The all-star gathering provided emotional support and illustrated the commonalities of how this program positively impacts all who participate.

The day featured the formerly incarcerated who have left to become successful pillars in the community, and who have applied the

lessons they learned while participating in the sports program.

The alumni returned to inspire current players and shared their experiences of the great life waiting for them on the outside.

The dedicated volunteers who come in every week to provide insight and stability while teaching real life lessons were honored as well.

Warden C. Andes spoke of the excitement associated with the transformation that is taking place at the institution.

He said the new era that is unfolding as the new buildings come on line must include the basketball and baseball programs as part of the transition. He reflected that people outside don’t understand that residents and staff are all invested in this together. “We are similar in that we are here putting in our time and want this to succeed,” said Andes.

Alumni of the program shared success stories, including:

2021 parolee Anthony Ammons told how he went from being caught in crossfire and sustaining a gunshot wound while on parole in Oakland in 2022 to being an elevator operator for the Golden State Warriors to working for Assembly Member Mia Bonta who also mentored him and is currently working for the Attorney General of California as a

Special Project Coordinator in the C.A.R.E. Unit helping community based organizations with access to the Attorney General.

Thad Fleeton who served thirty-two years in CDCR detailed how he had no hope of getting out until he was encouraged by others to go to groups.

“I was an admitted “hot head,” but decided to give it a try,” said Fleeton. “After going through GRIP (guiding rage into power), CGA (criminal gangs anonymous) I learned to deal with anger and violence issues, and then people began to approach me for advise on change.”

Fleeton was gratified by the positive attention so much he dedicated his life to recovery and now operates group homes through North Bay Healthcare as tries to become a motivational speaker.

Fleeton believes that returning to San Quentin, Folsom and Vacaville helps keep him grounded while he is on the other side of the wall.

“The pedigree of the men coming out of the program has stood the test of time and the basketball program is still doing great things to make better men,” said Emmy Award winning documentary Gonoulin who paroled early in 2024.

Family Day celebrated the betterment of all inside and outside.

## SF 49er' George Kittle reminisces on visit to Death Row

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Sports Editor

As the lore of California’s Death Row fades into obscurity, the nation’s strongest athletes haven’t forgotten the reputation of the toughest criminals in the state. That reputation was perpetuated by future Hall of Famer George Kittle.

When he visited Death Row in 2016, he was intimidated so much by the men on Death Row that he denied what position he played.

Kittle was interviewed afterward by Teri Rodriguez of NBC Sports Bay Area about his first visit to San Quentin Rehabilitation Center.

“So we go onto Death Row, and this [Death Row resident]

guy’s like ‘Oh, the football players are here. Which one of you is the tight end because I’m going to get up in that #!\*,’ Kittle said.

Instinctively, Kittle made a choice to avoid revealing his true occupation. “And I was like. ‘I play linebacker.’ Absolutely not. I’m OK,” Kittle said.

Kittle’s comments and memories of his visit to San Quentin were noted on the podcast *Bussin’ with the Boys*.

Reporter David Bonilla, during Kittle’s appearance on the podcast, asked what Kittle would be willing to do to win a Super Bowl.

Kittle responded that he would bite someone’s ear off, or even cut off his pinky; a la Ronnie Lott. He then said he would even be willing to go

to prison for a year if it meant a sixth Super Bowl victory for the 49ers. But he did set one limitation: that he would never return to San Quentin.

Kittle’s fear was the result of a visit to San Quentin State Prison during his rookie year.

“My rookie year, they made all the rookies go to San Quentin,” Kittle told Rodriguez. “We go into Death Row area during a tour, and as soon as we get through security, they’re [the guards are] like, ‘Just letting you know, if there’s a riot, there’s nothing we can do for you.’”

Kittle’s famously vivid imagination was substantiated by the harassment about being a tight end, which allowed Bonilla to conclude, “Everyone has to draw a line

somewhere, and Kittle made the line clear this week.”

In spite of Kittle’s traumatizing prison experience on Death Row, the 49ers continue to host their annual gift giving and Q & A sessions at the prison during the holidays.

The event is led by the York family, who own the 49ers, and a host of their players, who continue to support recovery and rehabilitation.

The team donates money, time and gifts to SQRC’s annual Christmas drive, which enables randomly selected incarcerated residents and their families the chance to celebrate Christmas with gifts wrapped for their kids while the residents’ families celebrate with the team.

## SQ Giants close out competitive season with tough loss

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

The SQ Giants’ toughest year appeared to be victorious as the 24-9-2 Giants Coach Richard “Will” Williams found the silver-linings that are made within the rehabilitative competitive relationships with each visiting team.

“Playing baseball in prison is different,” said SQ Giants’ manager Richard ‘Coach Will’ Williams. “To see the next generation of ballplayers come in here and carry that love of the game with such integrity is encouraging.”

SQ Giant pitcher, Patrick Poteat acknowledged the team’s fans and thanked the opposing teams that support the prison’s 124-year-old program. “Without outside support there is no program,” said Poteat.

The SQ Giants defeated the SF Pelicans 14-4 on May 10 to open the season, as the accolades from the visiting teams started from warm-ups to the last pitch of the year.

“Just being here with these guys that love baseball is awesome,” said the Pelicans catcher Evan “Gritty” H. “We don’t win all the time but we’re always laughing and having fun.”

The Pelicans’ three-year veteran, catcher James “Hollywood” S., said he comes back every year and feels comfortable because he recognizes the players and coaches. “Playing here has inspired me to bring in other teams from outside the state to share this wonderful experience,” Hollywood said.

During August the SQ giants played a double-header against the Coquitlam Angels who returned to San Quentin’s Field of Dreams. It was the Canadian team’s second visit to the prison to play against storied baseball franchise that again, hosted the international team, which no other prison sport has done before.

The Angels’ visiting player, Darren Honeycome was all smiles after he smashed the first pitch of the series over the right field wall. “That was awesome,” said Honeycome. “All I could think about was coming back here and trying to hit a home run. I couldn’t wait for the chance to relive the experience of playing at San Quentin.”

Brendan Lyons, the Angles starting pitcher, who brought eighty mile an hour gas to the yard, said the whole team had been waiting to return to SQRC. “We’ve talked about this game all season,” Lyons said. “It’s really big for us to come in here and share a bond for a couple hours, over a game we all love.”

During October, the San Quentin Giants lost to Butte College, who proved to be too much in the home team’s 18-0 drubbing.

The younger, Golden

Conference Baseball team from Chico California was stacked with future draftees.

“This is probably the most well-rounded team we faced all year,” said SQ Giants outside volunteer Coach Steve Reichardt.

Playing at the prison for the first time, Butte’s Brent Gallegos, 20, said he usually pitches 90-95 mile-per-hour during regular season games.

Sadly, Gallegos blew out his arm in the third-inning and had to be replaced by a staff that continued his dominance over the SQ Giants. “Hopefully I get drafted this year,” Gallegos said. “Otherwise, I’ll play at a four-year and get my degree.”

SQ Giants pitcher Robert Nash, who learned about the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat over the year, did not mind the losses in spite of his competitive nature.

“I think it is awesome that we get the chance to test our skills against teams with so much talent,” SQ Giants Nash said.

Giant rookie, Saul Moreno reminded the resident veterans of the magnitude of playing on the nations’ only prison baseball team. “It makes me feel alive,” said Moreno. “For a few hours it makes me feel like I’m not in prison.”

“The season went about how we planned it,” said ‘Coach Will.’ “We had a couple highlights throughout the season and that included competing against the talented Coquitlam Angels and Butte College ballclubs.”

Whether the SQ Giants won or lost, the traditional circle-up at the mound after the game included all participants from the game so the invitees could share their experiences, strengths, and hopes for the residents to return to society.

Two of the Giants’ team captains, former professional draftee Anthony “T-Tone” Denard and one-time collegiate player, Carrington “The Natural” Russelle often led the circle-ups and humbly spoke after the loss to the talented Butte collegiate ballplayers.

“Twenty years ago, we were both where you guys are now,” said Russelle. “It’s a fine line between being out there and being in here, so respect your love for the game and continue to make smart choices.”

The Coquitlam Angels right fielder Nick Theobald summed up the spirit of the season. “Regardless of where you’re from we’re all here together sharing the love of the game,” said Theobald.

Denard added that as the SQ Giants share their life’s experiences with the younger players, the incarcerated players hope that the young men who come in to compete would stay on the right path.

“No matter if we win or lose we are victorious, just by feeling accepted by all of you. That is the mission of SQ Baseball,” said Denard.



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

SQ Giants after game



PROGRAMS

Resident strike team cleans up biohazards



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

San Quentin's strike team

**By Eric Allen  
Staff Writer**

A “strike team” of eight to ten San Quentin residents, trained in biohazard cleanup, stands ready to respond to a biohazard event at all hours. The California PIA Healthcare Facilities Maintenance employs and oversees the team.

“When people overdose using the synthetic drug spice, they sometime defecate on themselves,” said resident HFM worker Luis Orosco. “On the fourth floor [Central Health Service Building] the strike team gears up to clean up who knows what.”

The team helps medical staff with biohazards and general sanitation, and is responsible for all housekeeping duties inside the hospital and other tasks throughout the institution.

The work includes cleaning up infectious waste, such as feces, urine, blood, and any other bodily fluids. The team also disposes of soiled linen in accordance with medical waste management and health

and safety regulations.

North Block resident and HFM worker Gordon Kimbrough leads the team. He assists medical patients treated and housed in San Quentin’s health services.

Kimbrough said the work has taught him about forgiveness and change and made him less judgmental about people.

“Working on the fourth floor of the hospital, where cancer patients are housed, has humbled me. To work here, this is how I make my living amends being a helping hand,” Kimbrough said. “I don’t do this for the money. I’m sincere ... about what I do.”

Recommendations call for two workers in each housing unit, supervised by a health-management staff member, and on-call 24-hours-per-day. Even after evening lock-up, when there is no resident movement throughout the prison, the strike team stands ready to respond to medical emergencies.

“The other night my crew and I responded to two calls

in the middle of the night at 2 a.m.,” said Kimbrough.

The skills developed by HFM workers are transferable to employment on the outside. Their certification requires extensive training consisting of more than 2,000 hours of academic studies, assessment tests, and hands-on work.

Resident Billy Altes said that HFM is the only job that pays time-and-a-half like jobs on the outside. His starting pay was 35 cents per hour, now increased to 45 cents.

“This job gives me a sense of normalcy. I have a reason to get up in the morning and I’m tired enough to go to sleep at night,” said Altes.

Resident Kai Brandon said that mopping floors and cleaning toilets may seem disgusting, but it gives him structured work while serving time.

“People may look down on the job, but it’s really contributing to keep San Quentin running the proper way. If things are not clean the hospital could not run properly,” Brandon said.

NATIONAL

Impaired driving impacts all facets of society

**By Michael Callahan  
Staff Writer**

Federal laws prohibit driving under the influence, but they do not prevent drunk-driving tragedies, and people who choose to drive drunk set themselves up to cause harm.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, drunk-driving incidents kill around 29 people daily across the United States, one every 52 minutes. The annual toll is more than 10,000 deaths.

“Drinking and driving is [a] dangerous, normalized crime that has plagued societies for decades,” SQ resident Chris Rigsby said. “Every day on the news you see persons victimized because of someone’s careless [choice] to drive impaired.”

December is DUI Awareness month. While there are many reasons to celebrate during the holidays, choosing to drink as part of those celebrations means drinking responsibly.

According to California Highway Patrol’s State Integrated Traffic Records System, there were more than 125,000 DUI arrests in the state in 2023, an average of 340 per day. More than 200,000 DUI-related crashes killed more than 4,000 people and injured almost 280,000.

Chris Rigsby is serving a life sentence for vehicular homicide while intoxicated. He has been in recovery since 2016 and currently facilitates a DUI program that educates participants about the dangers and realities of

impaired driving. Rigsby is a certified Addiction Recovery Counsel peer-mentor and works in substance abuse recovery support groups.

“An impaired driving collision is not an accident,” Rigsby said. “By one person’s choice to drive while intoxicated, lives are irreparably damaged.”

With its population of more than 40 million and extensive network of highways, California’s DUI statistics are greater than the national average. Additionally, culture and lifestyles involving social events that often involve alcohol and drug use contribute to the state’s relatively high rate of DUI incidents.

Awareness and education are of prime importance. DUI laws in California may seem harsh to some. They can involve fines, license suspension, jail time, and even the installation of an ignition interlock device, all legal consequences unknown to many.

“Several people have told me the DUI class the state offered lacked connection [and was not] relatable. [It’s] as if they are going through the motions, instead of hammering home the danger of driving impaired,” Rigsby said. Several San Quentin residents said they were not educated about how intoxication severely impairs cognitive abilities.

For a first time DUI offender, the state mandates a three-month DUI education program designed to reduce repeat offenses, along with a possible six-month suspended license. A second

offense results in 96 hours in jail, and for a third offense the minimum sentence increases to 120 days jail time.

However, if you kill someone while you are under the influence, and with a prior DUI, you can receive a 15-years-to-life sentence under California’s Watson Murder law. The law deems that a person knew the dangers of their actions and consciously chose to carry out the act with conscious disregard for human life.

Impaired driving is a 100% preventable crime that only occurs following a series of choices. The first choice is deciding not to plan for a sober ride when you know you are going to drink, then choosing to have the drink, and then choosing to get behind the wheel while intoxicated.

Over the last 10 years, several rideshare organizations have formed to aid persons who choose to be responsible by not driving after drinking. Other responsible choices include leaving your keys with someone you trust and associating with individuals who value their own safety and the safety of others on the road.

According to CDC and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 1,775 people died in crashes involving a driver with blood alcohol content below the legal limit of .08.

“A responsible person does not put others or themselves in dangerous situations. Instead they make a plan before they go out and drink,” Rigsby said.

YOUTH

Power of words in KidCAT member's lyrics now used in positive manner



**By Eliazar Guerra  
KidCat Contributor**

I never thought my love for making music would ever become something bigger than just another way to express myself. I remember writing music as an adolescent; believing at heart that I was good but still telling myself that my talent would never matter to anyone else.

Until recently, KidCAT gave me the opportunity to let my light shine.

Unfortunately, the music I previously attempted to make glorified the wrong things; the kind of life style that those in the program work so hard to stand against.

I failed to understand the power of my words until I chose to use my gift for the right reason. I’m blessed for San Quentin. At the time, I wasn’t aware of how important or great my involvement with the program would be. I was still young in my rehabilitation and I wasn’t able to grasp the knowledge and insight of what the program could provide in its fullest extent.

I was currently participating in KidCAT’s first step program when the light clicked and I could see their missing clearly. Creating Awareness Together, I remember asking myself, “What can I do to give my due diligence to spread this life changing awareness?”

I could feel this overwhelming obligation to do my part as a member

of the body. Additionally, I was voted in as the secretary of the program and it brought me a great amount of self-confidence.

Mainly because confidence was something I didn’t have much off, but I viewed most of the guys in the group as positive role-models and they had confidence that I could represent them. Not long after I expressed my love for writing music.

Even then, I was asked to make a song for the program. Even then, I had no idea of how impactful such song could be. I had to tell myself that this wasn’t about me at all.

It was about all the work those who came before me put into brining the program to existence, as well as the work of those who accepted me at the time.

Feeling clueless as to what I would writer in the song, I thought to myself “if I wasn’t in the program as a youth offender facing hard time, what would I need to hear if I was asked

what KidCAT is really about”?

I then felt that there was no better way than to use the actual first step curriculum in order to highlight the modules through my music.

The modules consist of emotion/sensations, self-identity, masculinity, environment influences, consequences, communication, empathy, compassion, and forgiving.

After gaining insight from the program, I can truly see how I was affected growing up and knew that so many others could relate to my experiences. In the song, I implemented the importance of having them can lead to feeling an emotional unavailability from caregivers, causing the youth to seek the wrong environment for validation and acceptance.

I also added how unfortunately, seeking such acceptance could have a negative affect by accumulating criminal thinking and beliefs.

In the song, “*A letter from KidCAT*”

I explain how through rehabilitative classes like first step, we can come to the understanding that our criminality is what crippled us in our growth and healing throughout childhood and adulthood, and by lacking knowledge about our traumas, false identities and negative environmental influences, we project pain onto others.

Another benefit of participating in KidCAT’s first step is preparing release prevention plans, building skills necessary to utilize them and acquiring empathy through victim impact. I noted in the song to “think about the consequences” if you don’t understand the impact we cause on our communities, out of our pain and poor decisions, than we can “heal from our pain so we can give back” and “make a difference.

The commitment has to be forever, so we can represent the awareness we create together. I’m forever grateful that through music I’m able to shine in the program.

News Briefs inside California's prisons

By Bostyon Johnson Managing Editor

**1) California Health Care Facility** (CDCR Press Release) – Bridging the Gap, a program in which incarcerated individuals share their life experiences and perspectives with newly assigned correctional officers, has been successful. “The program provides valuable insight, builds understanding, and strengthens working relationships between staff and the incarcerated population,” said a CDCR press release. Developed a year ago at California Health Care Facility, the program aims to build trust, respect, and working relationships between staff and the incarcerated population.

**2) California Medical Facility**

(CDCR Press Release) – The facility hosted International Overdose Awareness Day. Nonprofits Urban Alchemy and the CROP organization offered residents housing and employment resources. The CMF Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment team offered residents information and resources to combat the overdose crisis. “By coming together, incarcerated individuals, staff and community partners are taking meaningful steps toward breaking stigma, spreading knowledge, and building pathways to recovery,” said the CDCR press release.

**3) Mule Creek State Prison** (CDCR Press Release) – MCSP celebrated eight incarcerated residents

who completed the Pre-Apprentice program, an extension of the Correctional Construction Mentorship program that started in 2002. CCM created the Pre-Apprentice program in 2011 as a pilot program with California Institution for Men in Chino, Calif. “Each participant must attend four hours classroom training and 36 hours of field training per week,” the press release said. “They must complete 120 hours of classroom training to receive a certificate of completion.”

**4) Pelican Bay State Prison** (CDCR Press Release) – Incarcerated firefighters moved beyond battling wildfires to perform field maintenance and facility cleanup for the Del Norte Little

League’s 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. “The firefighters’ efforts at Pyke Field in Crescent City demonstrated commitment to their local community, highlighting connections between the prison and Del Norte Little League,” the press release said. The initiative, developed by resident Anthony Gonzales, displayed the thoughtful mindset of incarcerated people seeking broader community engagement and impactful ways to effect change in the community.

**5) Centinela State Prison** (CDCR Press Release) – Incarcerated residents at Centinela helped raise funds to buy shoes for 169 disadvantaged children in Imperial County.

The partnership between incarcerated people, local schools and churches, child services agencies, and the El Centro Sketchers shoe store provided funds and volunteers who assisted children in picking out a pair of new shoes in the store. The festivities included shaved ice, popcorn, and cupcakes that the children enjoyed with their families.

**6) Avenal State Prison** (CDCR Press Release) – Residents, staff, and family members celebrated the graduating class of the Intellimen program. The program teaches incarcerated people techniques to develop emotional regulation, character, and spiritual growth. The Universal Beyond Bars group created the course in 2019.

“These ceremonies remind those who live and work inside prisons that even behind bars, redemption is always within reach,” the press release said.

**7) Substance Abuse Treatment Facility** (CDCR Press Release) – Residents in Facility E held a wheelchair basketball game that exuded resilience and sportsmanship for everyone, no matter their mobility challenge. SATF Sgt. L. Brewer coordinated and facilitated the event. The diverse group of wheelchair users, including an employee from the Wheelchair Repair Shop, showed that determination, resilience, and unity is not limited by mobility challenges, but that it brings communities together.

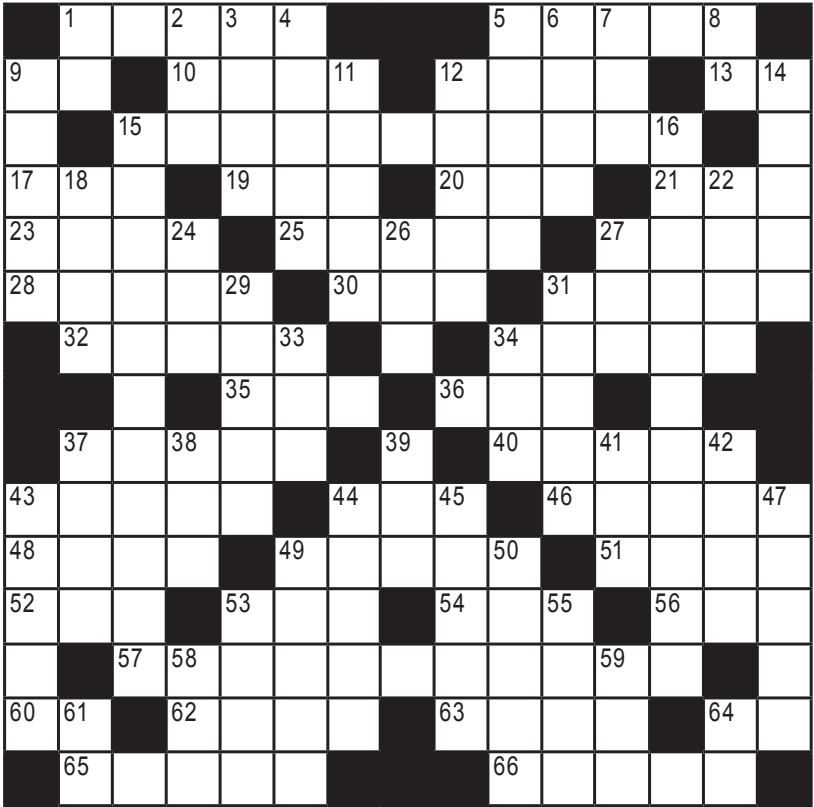


GAMES

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Michael Fangman

“Winter Wonderland”  
Edited by Jan Perry



- Across
- Down
1. For many years, these accompanied SD Padre Trevor Hoffman’s entrance

5. Guys and \_\_\_\_\_

9. They make calculators, and for a time, personal computers (abbr.)

10. To change direction suddenly

12. They famously play against Navy at least once a year

13. Ice Cube, Run DMC, e.g.

15. A boatload of bearded guys headed to Northern California?

17. A much coveted pen at times

19. The \_\_\_\_\_ - this band’s album “Mind Bomb” is considered an alt-rock classic

20. Often, the first on the scene (abbr.)

21. A digital city

23. These are an electrifying find

25. This word can describe bridges and wings (not the buffaloeed ones)

27. \_\_\_\_\_-Ball (think Chuck E. Cheese)

28. How some people feel on Sundays

30. What food needs to do before becoming compost

31. What a bicycle does when you slam on the brakes

32. Backs, buttocks, sterns e.g.

34. Kardashian brand

35. Not even

36. Hawaiian party food

37. What a Korean jazz trumpet plays?

40. You might use this bowling ball brand, particularly on a rainy day

43. What a well-trained CCI dog does

44. More in Mazatlan

46. This famous stage show is LOUD

48. “\_\_\_\_\_ the Lonely” (famous song)

49. These canned meats can also be unwelcome e-mails

51. This Japanese sport features a championship level basho six times a year

52. Response to many a jokey text

53. King Charles \_\_\_\_\_ (UK Royal)

54. \_\_\_\_\_abasca River (this tar filled river leads from the Rockies into Canada’s 4th largest lake)

56. Much of the corn produced now

57. This small print gave Tim Allen’s character a new seasonal job

60. In the eyes of some, a prison for children (abbr.)

62. You might find one packing to leave campus in June

63. Many of these travel south from Alberta, Canada year round

64. Lion, Jaguar, and Windows e.g.

65. A group of singers, often

66. The incorrect plural of a deer
1. From the Latin, meaning “two”
2. This is just one A short of being too hot to touch!
3. You might be asked to give something up for this
4. McFarlane, Rogen, Green e.g.
5. Bass, tympani, snare e.g.
6. Go ahead and leave this out
7. These end most adverbs
8. This Peter Gabriel album featured both “In Your Eyes” and “Big Time”
9. These forest dwellers screamed on 1990s college radio for a time
11. Dyslexic soul taker?
12. “No they \_\_\_\_\_!” (a possible response to “Yes they are!”)
14. Milton Bradley makes these
15. Burl Ives famously sang about these shiny noisemakers
16. Frostbite on one’s cheeks?
18. This strangely shaped edible fruit is often yellowish or brownish-green
22. The bane of infantrymen
24. Hemingway’s old man went there
26. These three letters, guarantee a French wine was produced in the region advertised. It is short for “controlled appellation.” (abbr.)
27. You can do this on water or snow
29. These can go in your eyes
31. This word describing short comedy sketches comes form the Old Norse word for ‘shoot’
33. This organization led many a student protest in the 1960s (abbr.)
34. A sign of distress
37. This keeps the lights on in LV
38. Famous Puget Sound beer
39. They will give you a tow (abbr.)
41. They make LTs there (abbr.)
42. Chefs love to hear this
43. This shrub can feel Christmas-like
44. Inter-American Defense Policemen
45. Not big or even medium sized
47. How you might track an AA Milne character through the forest?
49. Ravi Shankar played one
50. REM invited you to do this in the place where you live or work
53. Letters on a cross
55. The opposite of 45-Down
58. A long time \_\_\_\_\_ in a galaxy far...
59. Direction from San Francisco to Los Angeles (abbr.)
61. It keeps things cool (abbr.)
64. Chemical symbol for Osmium

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BOOK REVIEW

Admitting — or surrendering —  
to a state narrative to gain one’s  
freedom is a reality for some

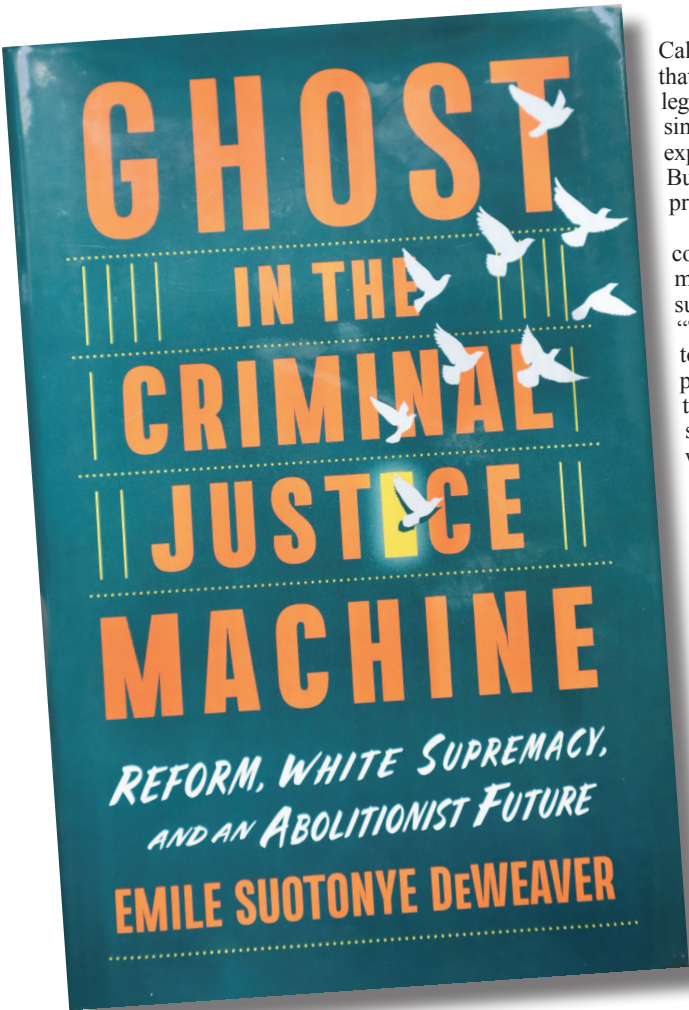


Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

By Kevin D. Sawyer  
Editor-in-Chief

First, I must start this book review with full disclosure. I know Emile DeWeaver. We both worked at the prisoner-run *San Quentin News*. We were also participants in a weekly creative writing workshop.

*Ghost in the Criminal Justice Machine* is Emile DeWeaver’s exposition on the history of Black people in America, from the prism of prison. He uses his lived experience, which includes his own incarceration, to pen his words.

No surprise, imprisonment and its collateral consequences are central themes in *Ghost*, peppered with the indispensable realities of red-white-and-blue racism to complement DeWeaver’s storytelling. He makes it clear how the tacit fallout from America’s original sin — slavery — and how White supremacy is the root of its evil, of which Blacks are the un concealed recipients.

“[I] call rehabilitation in prison a White supremacist project — it normalizes false narratives such as personal accountability that seek to justify racism,” DeWeaver writes. For him, rehabilitation was a condition on which his freedom hinged. “I had to appear to be grateful for rehabilitation, the path laid out by prison officials for any redemption.”

*Ghost* is a revolutionary expression of what many malcontent prisoners, entangled in various gears of the *Machine*, such as the parole board, must undergo.

Readers unfamiliar with prison may consider *Ghost* an undeserved diatribe about California’s parole process, but DeWeaver fittingly supports his assertion, writing, “The parole board, in fact, requires incarcerated people to ‘admit’ that the legal system that imprisons them is fair... The parole board would never have released me if I openly disrupted the political and social power structures on which parole commissioners’ authority rests.

Admitting — or surrendering — to a state narrative as a condition to gain one’s freedom is a point well-taken by many serving indeterminate sentences in

California. As such, DeWeaver underscores that reality in myriad anecdotes that few legal scholars may be capable of voicing, simply because they lack personal experience with imprisonment and parole. But for those serving life sentences, he is preaching to the proverbial choir.

“The validation of parole commissioners’ preconceptions also means the perpetuation of White supremacist culture,” DeWeaver writes. “The pathway out of prison, then, is to dedicate your life, through prison programs and redemption narratives, to validating and perpetuating White supremacy. I did this... What I learned was self-abnegation.”

What *Ghost* consistently echoes are realities unknown to many who are public safety officials. “Rehabilitation” is the state’s panacea for crime and other social ills, but DeWeaver, who is Black, aptly identifies it as “the near enemy of personal transformation.” In the end, he admits “I had to become a White supremacist to get out of prison.”

Some of the writing in *Ghost* passed off as truth is rooted in DeWeaver’s personal experience. For example, “My governor would never have commuted the life sentence of a person who challenged the social narratives and strategies of corrections. I had to act out a script in which I alone held responsibility for my incarceration...”

What I found offbeat in *Ghost* is how DeWeaver suggests he single-handedly freed himself, through his writing, while concealing his advocacy work to challenge the system. This narrative conflicts with the support network that had helped him. These were people who worked for organizations inside San Quentin such as Mt. Tamalpais College (formerly Patten University), William James Association’s creative writing, and community-based organizations such as the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, all seemingly overlooked.

Without question, DeWeaver is a brilliant writer and thinker, but no man walks alone in prison. He polished his skills through many rehabilitative prison programs. Call them self-help, rehabilitation, or personal transformation. That’s how he achieved his freedom.

I was incarcerated before DeWeaver, who is 17 years my junior. I am now closing in on 29 years of confinement. There is a wisdom that comes with age, and time inside. In large part, it is the realization that prisoners fight a protracted war of attrition. That is a unique battle for each person.

“[*San Quentin News*] perpetuated certain structural harms,” DeWeaver writes about his time at the inmate-run publication. “[W]e wanted the world to believe that incarceration could be a benevolent experience wherein incarcerated people could listen to the rehabilitative wisdom of the state, fix themselves, and come back to society as productive citizens.”

“My peers [at *San Quentin News*] and I were ‘special’ because we were articulate, emotionally intelligent, accountable, remorseful; we contributed value to our prison community and to the communities we’d harmed before our arrests,” DeWeaver writes.

Again, DeWeaver’s truth. I worked at *San Quentin News* before he arrived. I am there now. The newspaper’s focus — past and present — has been to report on incarceration, rehabilitation, and reentry. As I recall, he had other ambitions that did not align with staff. Abolition was never the mission of the newspaper.

Overall, I recommend prisoners read *Ghost* before the prison system deems it contraband. It is a counter-narrative about prison, rehabilitation and parole, and few can appreciate DeWeaver’s prose unless they have lived inside the prison industrial complex, or have been one of its victims.

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# SAN QUENTIN REHABILITATION CENTER 2026



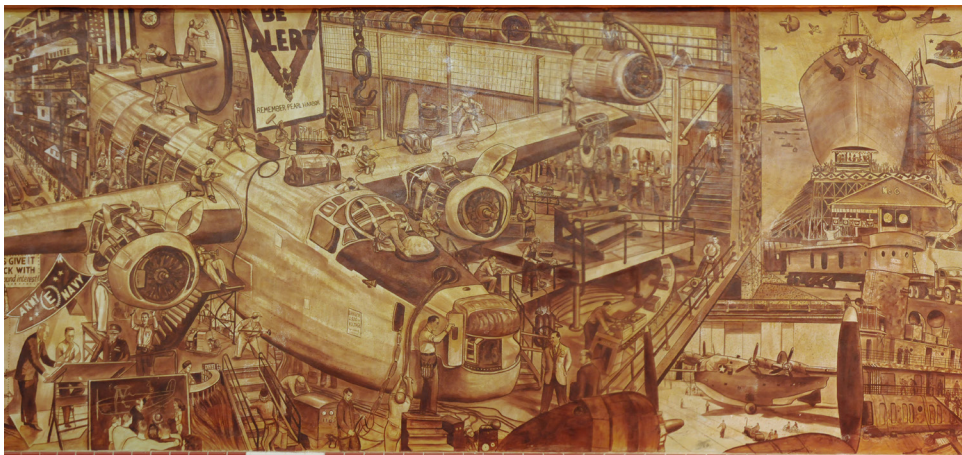
100 foot wall spanning the width of the adjustment center housing unit



H-Unit housing unit wall



North Block housing unit medical building outer wall



Alfredo Santos painted 6 murals in the dinning hall from 1951-1953



Adjustment center entrance wall behind the four-post shack

## JANUARY

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### 2026 FEDERAL HOLIDAYS

January 1 New Year's Day	January 19 Martin Luther	February 16 Presidents Day
March 31 Cesar Chavez	May 25 Memorial Day	June 19 Juneteenth
July 4 Independence Day	September 4 Labor Day	November 11 Veterans Day
November 26 Thanksgiving Day	December 25 Christmas Day	