

# San Quentin News

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Nick Bosa and resident Cassell Meadors with family

Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

## Stronger regulations on confined spaces for animals than incarcerated

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Journalism Guild Chair

The Animals Welfare Act regulates confined spaces for animals, but there is no such protection when it comes to incarcerated people.

*The Animal Welfare Act has set requirements in the confinement of dogs, while they are transported, and under the supervision of breeders, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.*

San Quentin resident Maurice Bradshaw, 45, has been at SQ for three years and has served time at Sierra Conservation Center, a CDCR fire camp. He said the dogs in the canine training program at SCC were treated better than incarcerated people.

“Dogs ate better and their all-around treatment was better,” Bradshaw said. “I would get a write up (Rules Violation Report) for mishandling a puppy in the dog program before a conflict with another resident.”

Confinement is defined as being restricted from movement, limiting the mobility of

See SPACES on pg 4

## SF 49ers' annual visit

Hall-of-Famers, legends, and current players discuss criminal justice

By Anthony Manuel Carvalho  
Sports Editor

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center's relationship with the San Francisco Forty-niners proved that it can improve even as the 30th anniversary nears for what started as an annual Christmas gift-giving event.

“Yes, this is a special day for the entire organization, and this year we had more sign-ups to come than ever before,” said the York sisters, Mara and Jenna. “This relationship started in 1997 by our brother Tony and we intend to carry on our brothers' legacy for a very long-time.” The York family is the principal owners of the SF Forty-niners.

Mara and Jenna York credited their brother Tony with starting the annual visit to SQRC as he and then San Quentin Pastor Earl Smith came to SQRC started in 1997. Tony York passed away and Smith and the Yorks now return every year to carry on the tradition that their brother started.

Smith has traded allegiances as he left the position of San Quentin Chaplain to become Chaplain of the San Francisco 49ers.

As the event moved forward, most fans in attendance agreed this years' improved roster and energy surpassed all the events of the passed.

“By far, this was their best visit,” said Correctional officer Hogan. “It was amazing to see the heroes who I grew up watching, coming in with the younger generation of players. I became a 49er fan because my father was a fan, so I carried the torch.”

Resident Jambri Johnson Sr. also pointed out the importance of the intergenerational relationships around sports, when he spoke during the open dialogue portion of the event.

“You don't know the impact the 49ers creates for me and my son,” said Johnson Sr. “After every game I call my son and we have a commonality, a connection that transpires



Patrick Willis with RN Alas



Curtis Robinson, Tyree Huntley and his daughter



49ers' dialogue with residents and staff in Chapel B

## Several policies add to disproportionate Black prison population

By Jason L. Jackson  
Staff Writer

A history of heavy policing and sentencing practices has left California's Black population overly represented in the prison system.

Black people are a minority in California, comprising just six percent of the state's population, according to the Public Policy Institute of California. This is compared to 40% of Latinos and 34% of Whites in the state. But even given their minimal population, as of 2023 Black people represent 28% of all people imprisoned in the state.

Research from Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow* details how these disproportionate numbers are rooted in the political and social climate to 40 years ago.

Ronald Reagan served as President of the United States from 1981-1988. During his presidency, his administration implemented its “War on Drugs” campaign, in direct response to the crack epidemic gripping much of the country at the time. The “crack era,” as the period came to be known, was plagued with rampant drug use and violence.

As detailed in film director Ava Duvernay's documentary *13th*, these solutions and their implementation gave birth to issues that reverberated throughout the criminal justice system.

Local law enforcement agencies across the

See SYSTEM on pg 4

### STEVE MCNAMARA

Longtime SQNews volunteer passes away

— STORY ON PAGE 3



### PAROLE PROCESS STUDY

Study highlights parole inadequacies

— STORY ON PAGE 4

### RAT INFESTATION

Construction impacts residents' living conditions

— STORY ON PAGE 6



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

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## PROFILE

## Resident works toward restitution by overcoming drug addiction and insecurities

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Journalism Guild Chair

An incarcerated former U.S. Marine Corps veteran speaks about his journey from military service to self-help after years of neglect, drug addiction, and self-realization.

Carl Lewis Raybon Jr., 61, was sentenced to 26-years-to-life for the murder of his girlfriend Patricia B.

As he sat in the Alameda County Jail, Raybon made a commitment to change his ways. He went into deep thought about why he took someone's life.

"I am accountable for what I did; I was emotionally abusive in my relationship with Patricia, as well as other relationships," said Raybon.

As churchgoers, Raybon and Patricia B attended Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, Calif., which included Sunday services and Bible study on Wednesdays.

Raybon was a member of the church's men's choir and Patricia B accompanied him to various musical events. They also frequented Cache Creek Casino.

Raybon and Patricia B were together for nearly four months; he hid his crack-cocaine addiction, before murdering her.

In 1982, he graduated from Pineforest High School in Fayetteville, NC, and 11 days after graduation he joined the Marine Corps.

Raybon's biological father and stepfather were both in the U.S. Army; growing up he had an early influence of military service.

Raybon served three years and 10 months in the Marine Corps, and during his first three years of service he received two good conduct medals. The Marine Corps equipped him with an M-16 rifle and a Colt .45 semi-automatic handgun. As a result he qualified as a sharpshooter.

Raybon went on two deployments aboard the USS Enterprise. Each one was for six months; he had stops in Hawaii, Australia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, and Kenya.

Raybon, as an active member of the military, tested positive for marijuana and was also charged with disrespecting a non-commissioned officer.

The charges led to demotions from corporal to lance corporal and then



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Jangochian and Raybon

private first class, losing two ranks.

"My delusional thinking was fear of being rejected. When I would check out from being challenged I would shut down and become numb," Raybon said. "In most cases my numbness would make me abandon my duties and relationships. I was not supportive, I was selfish."

Raybon said his drug addiction was out of control, which was a factor in his divorce from his first wife, Brenda.

Raybon met Brenda in June 1984 in Waikiki, Hawaii, on his second deployment of sea duty, and did not see her again until seven months later after his deployment was over. He says she played volleyball and basketball for Oklahoma City University, where she attended college.

"She was the love of my life. We married in June 1986, and within the 12 years we had two boys but eventually we grew apart," Raybon said. "I abandoned my wife and kids. I felt the relationship was over. My character led to bad choices. I was self-centered and had thoughts of worthlessness and rejection."

Raybon said that through self-realization, he now knows balanced communication is an essential part of a healthy relationship.

Today he says that he is consistent in treating himself and others equally, and being strong-minded has brought awareness to his previous self-defeating thinking that enabled his drug and alcohol addiction.

In June 2025, Raybon earned an Associate of Arts degree from Mount Tamalpais College onsite at San Quentin

Rehabilitation Center.

Raybon said that a quality education has taught him so much, that it takes life skills in order to be successful. In the classroom he was able to ask for help, something he previously did not do. He also interacted with his peers in the college's study hall, where he became more sociable.

Raybon worked as a Mt. Tamalpais College Clerk for two years, and during that time he learned that life is not just about him.

The staff at the college helped him develop into the role of becoming a better listener, which helped him take the negative and turn it into positive without being judgmental.

Amy Jangochian, Mt. Tamalpais College's Chief Academic Officer, and Program Manager, Maurice Avello, let Raybon know when he was pushing back too much and they told him that helping the students comes first.

"I now have a host of people whom I can confide in. I did not always have that," Raybon said. "I do not have to worry about my image. I can just be myself."

Today, Raybon says that he has a better work ethic that is not hindered by insecurities and low self-esteem. He now understands his previous behaviors, when he didn't trust himself or others.

Raybon continues to participate in self-help programs and has completed groups such as Guiding Rage Into Power, Veterans Support Group, Enneagram Prison Project, Denial Management, Family Relations, Substance Use Disorder Treatment, and Restorative Justice Victims Impact.

Raybon is currently making living amends that are based upon his determination and purpose to rehabilitate, educate, and employ comprehensive coping skills in order to not repeat behavior that dictated his life. He is currently in the process of filing the necessary paperwork to restore his honor in the military, and hopes to receive an honorable discharge. "It looks favorable," Raybon said.

"I now know that I have to respect others in order to receive respect," said Raybon. "I can now sit in a group and talk about my crime. Because of this I feel freedom."

## Simplicities in life motivate condemned prisoner

By Kevin D. Sawyer  
Editor-in-Chief

At one time, Jerry "Mo Mo" Rodriguez, 52, was one of more than 700-plus men on San Quentin's infamous Death Row. Incarcerated since 1994, he spent 25 years alone in a cell. Today, he is a Peer Specialist worker on the permanent work crew at the California Health Care Facility in Stockton, Calif.

In a series of one-on-one interviews, Rodriguez expressed appreciation for his removal from "The Row," the name he and others with death sentences have called their old home inside San Quentin's East Block.

"The one person I want to thank for all of this is [Gov.] Gavin Newsom," said Rodriguez. "We're here [at CHCF] to make the program work. We have the opportunity to help others."

In 2019, Gov. Newsom placed a moratorium on executions. "[The] death penalty system has been, by all measures, a failure," Gov. Newsom said at the time. "[It] has discriminated against defendants who are mentally ill, Black and brown, or can't afford expensive legal representation," he continued.

"I'm still condemned," said Rodriguez. Most days he participated in self-help groups or was busy assisting inmate-patients. As a Peer Support Specialist worker, Rodriguez made it his mission to speak with them. "Sometimes the simple act of acknowledging someone exists [is a blessing]," he said. "Saying 'good morning' may mean the world. It's something we take for granted — the simple act of kindness."

Rodriguez recalled his father urging him to not let prison fundamentally

change who he was when he was first incarcerated. In honoring that sentiment, he has always held on to hope. "I never fully embraced that whole 'you're a Death Row inmate' [despair], because my innate sense of who I am wouldn't allow it."

The transition from The Row to CHCF was no cakewalk, though. Before Rodriguez arrived at CHCF, he was sent to California State Prison Sacramento. "It was real depressing," he said. "I was glad I wasn't staying there." Rodriguez said CSP-Sac reminded him of San Quentin's Adjustment Center (administrative segregation) in 1996, a place he thought he would stay indefinitely.

When Rodriguez arrived at CHCF's Receiving & Release building in 2024, his handcuffs, waist chains, and leg shackles were removed. For the first time in decades, he was allowed to walk in prison unrestrained, without a correctional officer to escort him, and with fewer restrictions.

"In total, approximately 58 people were removed from death row last year...a nearly 10% single-year decrease in the population of the largest death row in the country," the Death Penalty Information Center reported. "As a result, California's death row population fell below 600 for the first time in 25 years."

In 2024, California courts reduced sentences of death for at least 45 people on The Row, according to the DPIC. In Santa Clara County, Rodriguez's county of commitment, District Attorney Jeff Rosen has used his power under state law to recall sentences in some capital punishment cases "in the interest of justice," it was reported. Rosen said

clearing the prisoners from Death Row who are from Santa Clara County was his "second and final step" in that goal.

Rodriguez said CHCF is a community of a different type. "Here, it's like, this is how it's supposed to be," he said, contrasting it to the "the beast" of the system that tried to dehumanize him "like the slaves."

"To be able to move around like a normal human being, it didn't take long for me to realize they [CDCR] sent me to a transitional home."

Rodriguez's transition did cause him a little uneasiness from the "anxiety" of having to share a cell with a cellmate for the first time, and "sensory overload" from so many people — other inmates and CHCF staff — and the relative freedom of their physical movements. "There are people who work here that make a difference," he said.

Rodriguez used the words "foreign" and "abnormal" to describe how he viewed all forms of incarceration. But he also acknowledged his past, and what led to his death sentence.

"When your crime is so horrific, you can't make direct amends to people," said Rodriguez. Now he's been given the opportunity to make amends by serving the health care facility. "You get a form of healing from helping other people."

Rodriguez said he enjoyed being able to assist others, because to perform a human act he found rewarding — acts he calls "living amends."

There was one person Rodriguez said he would like to have dinner with, it's the governor. "My main goal — I want to thank Gov. Newsom," he said, not just for himself but for others, too. "Newsom deserves his props."

**San Quentin News**

EST. 1940

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**EDITORIAL**

**SQNews volunteer Steve McNamara's business sense, training, dedication left impression**

By Kevin D. Sawyer  
Editor-in-Chief

It was with sadness that the *San Quentin News* staff learned of the passing of its longtime adviser, Steve McNamara, 92. He was a volunteer adviser to the newspaper since its re-launch in 2008.

In the early years, Steve was the newspaper's *de facto* publisher and business manager. To me he was inspiring. Of all the advisers, volunteers, and other professionals who have worked so tirelessly in our newsroom, Steve was the only one who knew both sides of the newspaper business.

A Princeton graduate, class of 1955, Steve started his early newspaper days as a reporter; he wrote for the *Winston-Salem Journal* and the *Miami Herald*. He was a contributing editor in Europe for *Sports Cars Illustrated*, and the Sunday editor for the *San Francisco Examiner*. By 1966, he became owner, editor, and publisher of the *Pacific Sun*.

Steve was one of the four initial advisers of *San Quentin News* tapped by then-Warden Bob Ayers to revive publication. Steve created much of the newspaper's design and typography to produce what many have called a "real newspaper." He did not hold on to his publishing knowledge. He passed it along to many of us in the newsroom, whom he sometimes referred to as his "men's group."

I learned a lot from Steve. Some days he would come into the newsroom or to a Journalism Guild meeting and explain how a printing press worked. He was able to do it because he was a previous owner of Marin Sun Printing, where *San Quentin News* is printed, thanks to Steve.

I showed up in 2011, the same year San Quentin's print shop closed. That's when Steve assumed the role of the newspaper's publisher. He set up and ran the non-profit Prison Media Project to pay for the paper's printing and distribution. He also built the paper's first website.

Steve's indelible print is on every issue of *San Quentin News* from 2008 to the present because his training has been passed down to the early staff of four inmates to the 75 who have followed. I am fortunate and grateful to have been one of the men who learned from the 70 years of newspaper experience he brought to our newsroom.

Beyond advising the men at the newspaper, Steve was instrumental in the formation of the first *San Quentin News* forums with district attorneys, beginning with George Gascón when he worked in San Francisco. That first meeting expanded to forums with other district attorneys, law enforcement, judges, lawmakers, teachers, and others who worked in the criminal justice system.

If you haven't figured it out by now, this is a tribute to Steve. He was in his mid-70s when he started volunteering



McNamara working hard, editing stories

SQNews Archive

to work at San Quentin. Who does that? Steve McNamara.

Steve didn't have to go inside a prison after retirement. By many definitions of success, he'd "made it." That wasn't enough for Steve. Unselfishly, he wanted to give others who were less fortunate a chance to learn a skill beyond writing. In a 2016 profile I wrote about Steve in *San Quentin News*, he said training prisoners to be journalists was not the point. He placed emphasis on the fact they would learn all kinds of life skills.

In 2017, *The Princeton Alumni Weekly* published a story about Steve and the work he did at San Quentin. The very fitting title of that story is "The Altruist." After Steve's passing, I read it again and was reminded of a question he asked himself: "What motivates some people to do good things, others bad things?"

After three decades of imprisonment, I understand clearly why people do bad things. But I'm still wondering why Steve did so much good for men about whom society says are undeserving. I think his answer would be "opportunity." We were forced to be more than writers to keep the newspaper in operation.

By the time Steve turned over tasks he handled at the newspaper we learned how to ship newspapers to other prisons, coordinate research work for the newspaper, order supplies, respond professionally to letters, maintain text and images for the website, and navigate complicated technical issues.

The *San Quentin News* was established on December 10, 1940, by Clinton T. Duffy, the prison's progressive warden at the time. The paper did not publish continuously over the decades. After a 25-year hiatus, Warden Robert Ayers Jr. revived it in 2008. But it was Steve's hands-on teaching that helped to bridge the gap between the incarcerated and the outside community to provide a better understanding of how to improve public safety.

Among many of Steve's accomplishments, he was the founding

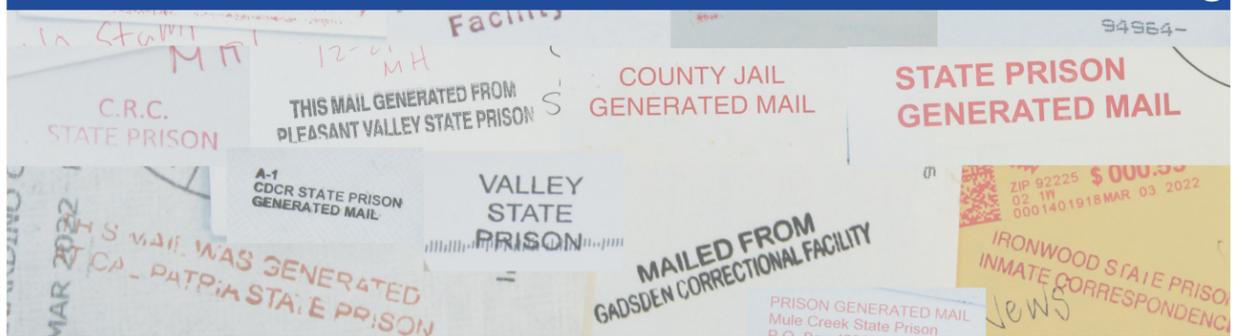


Steve McNamara

president of the National Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, president of the California Society of Newspaper Editors, a director of the California Newspaper Publishers Association, and founding president of the California Association of Alternative Newsweeklies. He was a visiting lecturer at San Francisco State University; co-founder, owner and CEO of Marin Sun Printing Company; co-founder and president of Marin Community Video; founder and CEO of Sunlight Software Company; co-founder and president of Marin Solar Village Corporation, and a member of the Innovation and Planning Commission of the California Department of Education.

Steve never judged anyone who worked in the newsroom because he came to help us. He wrote me a wonderful letter of support for my parole board appearance because he knew me better than those who are paid to hold me and those who sit in judgment of others. He was the patriarch of *San Quentin News*, a pillar of Marin County. Steve McNamara. Made in America.

**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR FROM INSIDE SQ**



Dear SQNews,  
Hi, my name is Brittney Evans I am a 45 years old transgender inmate. I read really enjoy all your articles and facts in the paper. I especially enjoy the article about the girls and inmates learning about cosmetology that is my passion I look forward to getting into the workforce in computers and of culinary onto I really hope and pray that all us inmates get our lives together that is more to life than getting high and committing crimes. Please take the time to learn and help each other strive and reach goal.

J. Evans  
R. J. Donovan

Dear SQNews,  
Good morning I have seen and heard about good that's been happening those at San Quentin prison. I have always

heard only the bad stories and bad news about what the prison was always known for. I am currently in prison serving a twenty-six year. And yes its not always easy, as a matter of fact, I sometimes don't know how I could have made it to this point in my life. Where God has bright me if it had not been for his son Jesus Christ.

Justin Conyers  
Morgan County Corrections

Dear SQNews,  
Thank you for writhing about and for society and all incarcerated persons in the world. This article was beautifully written and I both agree and disagree with them especially the about repeat offender my disagreement stem from my studies metaphysics and the ontological principals in this case the written seems

to ignore a real problem inter generational trauma. All crime is an example of damaged mind-set or a criminal-minor-set. Lets talk!

Jean-Pierre Damien Wehry  
California Men's Colony

Dear SQNews,  
I want to know why you don't write about (CDCR) corrupt policies, and practices? I am serving a 3 year term for possession of drugs. a non-violent, victimless crime. I should be only serving 33% of my sentence and I should be sent to (MCRP) males community reentry program. So write about this bullshit corrupt practices of (CDCR) and stop kissing (CDCR) corrupt ass.

Kenny Cox  
CA Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

## SYSTEM

Continued from page 1

country received increased federal funding to help combat the crack problem. The Reagan administration also enacted policies like the Military Cooperation with Law Enforcement Act of 1981. The act allowed military troops to participate in policing efforts. These measures primarily focused on Black communities, because media coverage had painted the crack epidemic as a problem plaguing predominately Black people.

Publications from 1986, including a June issue of *Newsweek* and an August issue of *Time* magazine used racially charged terminology when referring to both users and distributors of crack cocaine, including “welfare queen,” “crack

babies,” “predators,” and “gangbangers.”

“So many people have negative views of Black people, going all the way back to slavery. This makes it easier to create a system that targets who you think are the worst of the worst,” said Gregory Starling, a San Quentin resident.

Crack cocaine related crimes were routinely charged and sentenced more severely than crimes involving powder cocaine. This disparity was a product of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, and resulted in more Black people being sent to prison for longer periods. In 1995, the United States Sentencing Commission revealed that the Anti-Drug Abuse Act was disproportionately

implemented, resulting in 80% of convicted crack offenders being Black.

Between 1989 and 1993, more than 300,000 Black men had been sent to prison in the country, compared to 50,000 white men.

As recent as 2022, research conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration found that 24.3% of drug users in California were Black, compared to 22.5% of whites, yet Blacks represented 40% of all defendants sentenced to prison for drug and property crimes.

Mandatory minimum sentences came from policies that removed judicial discretion, forcing judges to sentence defendants to a set amount of time for various

crimes. It also increased the power prosecutors had when deciding how to charge a defendant, affecting the potential time a person could serve behind bars.

Fallout from Reagan’s war on drugs included California’s Three Strikes Law, which was passed under Proposition 184 in 1994, and mandated life sentences for repeat offenders.

The passage of California’s Proposition 8 in 1982, created the “Nickel Prior” enhancement, which added an additional five years to a defendant’s sentence if they had a prior felony conviction.

The STEP Act of 1988 created the gang enhancement, which added as much as a life sentence for defendants who were convicted as members of a gang. In 2023, *CBSNews*

reported that 99% of defendants who received gang enhancements in Los Angeles County were Black or Latino.

In 1998, the enactment of the gun enhancement added as little as 10 years, and as much as life in prison for gun related crimes. Possession alone, without discharge, was enough to add 10 years to a sentence.

The policies were not only disproportionately directed toward Black people specifically, and people of color in general, but helped California’s prison population explode. Data from the Public Policy Institute of California revealed that between 1980-2015 California’s prison population went from 23,264 to 127,815.

In 2020, California

lawmakers passed Assembly Bill 2542, known as the Racial Justice Act, to address the decades of race-based issues haunting the state’s criminal justice system. The author of this bill – now a law – is Assemblymember Ash Kalra wrote that its purpose is to, “prohibit the state from seeking a criminal conviction or sentence on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin...”

“The Racial Justice Act is an attempt to bring equality to the law, because the way the laws are handled is unbalanced,” said SQ resident De’Andre Brumfield.

It will take time to see how the bill’s implementation will affect the thousands of Black and Brown people currently incarcerated in California.

## Drug epidemic and mandatory minimums fueled unequal number of incarcerated Black persons

## SPACES

Continued from page 1

someone or something in order to be controlled, according to Webster’s New World Dictionary.

The AWA requires a certain amount of floor space for dogs, which needs to meet or guidelines. In order to insure those mandates are followed, AWA gives two basic steps for dog handlers to follow.

Step 1: Measure the length of the dog (in inches) from the tip of its nose to the base of its tail, and then add 6 inches to this number. Measure the dog while standing in a normal position or while lying flat on its side.

Step 2: Take the total number in Step 1 and square it. This will result to the dog’s minimum floor space in square inches. To convert the number to square feet, divide the total number in square inches by 144.

The AWA regulates floor space for animals, but who regulates floor space for the incarcerated?

San Quentin and Folsom State Prison are two of California’s oldest prisons. Each cell is double occupancy though they were originally designed for one person.

In an effort to address mass incarceration in the 1990s and early 2000s, CDCR increased its capacity by double bunking cells, and placing bunks in dayrooms and gymnasiums, according to *Cal Matters*.

As a result of litigation in *Coleman* and *Plata* in the 2000s, the federal District Court ordered CDCR to reduce its population to 137.5%. Today the department’s population

## Floor space not so much an issue for man and his dog



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

### Meikel Cooper in cell with Paidas

stands at 120%. Federal oversight addressed the overcrowding but not the double-cell occupancy, noted *Cal Matters*.

At San Quentin Rehabilitation Center the floor space in cells is 46 sq. ft. The American Correctional Association recommends 92 sq. ft. of floor space in order for two people to live in one cell, according to the 2024 Reimagine San Quentin Report.

If a person divides the 46 sq. ft. of floor space by the two people

occupying the cell, it would come to the 23 sq. ft. of open space per occupant, well below the recommendations.

In Bergen, Norway, correctional officials mandate 137.5 sq. ft. for single cell occupancy, and a privacy partition between the bed and toilet, noted the Reimagine report.

Armenia Cudjo, 68, said he has been in SQ’s general population for three years, after spending more than 25 years on the prison’s Death Row.

Cudjo said he’s mobility impaired, currently battling cancer, and dealing with epilepsy (seizures). He has been a part of Americans with Disabilities Act accommodations for most of his incarceration.

“It would be good to have an assisted railing inside the cell,” Cudjo said. “I use the sink and the edges of the extra bunk to stabilize my mobility throughout the cell.”

On February 20, 2025, California Assemblyman Damon Connolly (D-San Rafael) introduced Assembly Bill 1140. This legislation aims to coincide with recommendations of the ACA that would bring single-cell living to four adult correctional facilities.

The bill would require 10% of each facility to be single-cell occupancy by January 2027. The pilot program is on a volunteer basis, and the Secretary of the CDCR will conduct its oversight.

## Crime bills a step back in reform measures

By Eric Allen  
Contributing Writer

The Sentencing Project has raised an alarm over proposed legislation that would override local control of criminal sentencing in District of Columbia.

The Strong Sentences for Safer D.C. Streets Act is among bills moving through the legislative process. It would provide that those convicted of first-degree murder face a mandated sentence of life without the possibility of parole, a significant change from the current mandatory minimum sentence of 30 years in prison.

The bill also removes the exception established by the U.S. Supreme Court case, *Miller v. Alabama* (2012), which deemed unconstitutional a mandatory sentence of life without the possibility of parole to a minor charged with first-degree murder.

Additionally, the bill would impose lengthy new mandatory minimum sentences for several other categories of crime.

“We all believe that public safety must be a top priority. But we have decades of evidence proving extreme punishments do not make us safer,” said Kara Gotsch, executive director of the Sentencing Project. “Instead, they trap kids and parents behind bars, rip families apart, and devastate communities for generations.”

“The bottom line is lawmakers cannot talk about public safety while pushing failed policies that make us less safe,” said Gotsch.

The bill is a federal takeover,

overriding local decision-making by imposing harsher punishments, and increasing the prison population, the report said.

The Sentencing Project described some of the provisions as blatantly unconstitutional and warned that if Congress passes the bill, it will not only be a federal power grab that harms Washingtonians and dismantles effective criminal justice reforms, but that it could expand to other cities.

“What’s happening in DC is a test case that could open the door for federal overreach into communities nationwide, even as cities across the country report decreased crime rates,” said the article.

Instead of harsher punishments, evidence shows that crime decreases with investments in programs and services within the communities, said Gotsch.

Over the past decade, progressive reforms have succeeded in lowering recidivism rates.

In 2016, D.C. passed the Incarcerated Reduction Amendment Act, which gave judges authority to review and reconsider sentences of young adults and juveniles after 15 years of incarceration.

“The good news is we know what does reduce crime: Investing in community-based services and interventions has been proven to address the root causes of crime... We’ve seen such investments dramatically decrease violent crime rates in Washington, DC, well before this ill-advised takeover began.”

## Study shows parole process is inadequate and often biased

By Charles Crowe  
Staff Writer

“No state is ‘doing’ parole well,” concluded a Prison Policy Initiative study of the discretionary parole system in California and 34 other states.

The October 2025 report “Parole in Perspective: How parole boards and hearings work,” explored the mechanics of discretionary parole systems and recommended ways to make them more effective as tools for decarceration.

The systems studied often fail to ensure parole hopefuls adequate and impartial hearings, wrote report author Leah Wang. “Despite these shortcomings, discretionary parole remains a vital tool for decarceration, and having parole systems we can improve is better than not having them at all.”

PPI studied who serves on parole boards. Required qualifications vary greatly among states, but generally do not include diverse perspectives

or experiential knowledge of incarceration. The most common qualification is law enforcement background, resulting in dominance of pro-punishment voices on boards. California requires that the board “reflect a broad ‘cross-section’ of the state’s population,” said the report.

Governors appoint most parole commissioners and thereby “utilize this power to imbed their values into the criminal legal system,” wrote Wang. Four states limit commissioners’ terms, but most allow indefinite service. California commissioners serve three-year terms, but the governor can reappoint them without limit.

Some states call for boards to include professions like social work, psychology, or sociology, which may favor decarceration or have understanding and empathy for parole applicants. However, Wang noted that often these requirements are “conflated” with law enforcement experience.

Arkansas for example, calls for experience that includes “... parole or post-release supervision, probation, corrections, criminal justice, law, law enforcement, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, social work, or other related fields.” Such open-ended guidelines allow emphasis on pro-punishment voices while ignoring others.

Alternatively, PPI recommended that “qualified community-based practitioners from psychology, trauma-informed care, and substance use or mental health care” be explicitly required on parole boards.

No state requires its parole board to include a formerly incarcerated person, or one with lived experience within the criminal legal system. Without such representation, Wang said that boards “may never truly reflect traditionally policed and incarcerated populations.”

Parole board size varies greatly, from three members in Alabama to 21 in

California. Vacancies and heavy workloads can result in backlogs and rushed decisions. Commissioners’ time is “in high demand,” with the result that “all states with discretionary parole have a sizable share of the prison population that is behind bars past their parole eligibility date,” said the report. As of PPI’s report, California’s 21-member board was full.

Smaller panels, rather than full boards, commonly conduct hearings, allowing boards to split up workload in order to conduct hundreds of enquiries each month. Two commissioners sit for each hearing in California.

PPI recommended larger boards in some states, noting that the Council of State Governments estimates more than 200,000 persons are waiting for overdue hearings. “There are simply not enough parole board members to conduct hearings and make decisions in both a fair and timely way,” wrote Wang.

Hearing format varies

widely by state. Some have face-to-face hearings while California and others hold most hearings virtually, a growing trend since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PPI lamented the trend to virtual hearings, calling them “objectively different” from in-person meetings, and argued “... applicants deserve to sit before the people who will grant or deny their freedom.” Face-to-face hearings are better for conveying emotions and building trust through eye contact and body language, wrote Wang.

Only 24 of the 35 states PPI surveyed allow parole applicants attorney or other representation at parole hearings. California provides state-funded attorneys to those who cannot afford private representation. The report writers recommend that all parole hopefuls have access to “free and competent counsel.”

More than half of states hold public hearings, establishing a record to hold boards accountable. Opponents, and

in some cases advocates, of a parole candidates’ release have opportunity to address the board.

Opposition to parole often receives favored treatment, as in California, where district attorneys, victims, and victim advocates have a voice at parole hearings, but advocacy for the parole applicant is limited to attorney representation. PPI recommended public access to hearings, whether virtual or face-to-face, and free access to related transcripts.

The report’s overall assessment of discretionary parole is poor. “As it stands, parole systems have largely kept prisons overcrowded... they are politically-motivated, under-resourced, and largely dysfunctional as a mechanism for release.”

By recommending larger, more diverse boards and increased transparency in the hearing process, PPI seeks to enhance the “enormous potential of parole boards as a tool for decarceration.”



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

New educational campus under construction

## CDCR budget only \$4 billion less than LA Unified School District's

By Jason Jackson  
Staff Writer

While San Quentin moves full-steam ahead with its reimagining of a better way to operate prisons, many residents believe reform should happen long before incarceration.

San Quentin has refashioned itself as a rehabilitation center, spending hundreds of millions of dollars building a new education campus to prove its dedication to change isn't just lip service.

Slated for a 2026 opening, the new campus will feature a state-of-the-art media center, library, and college classrooms as just a few of the resources that will be available to residents. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, roughly \$240 million of taxpayer funds were allocated for the construction of the campus.

Some San Quentin residents believe real solutions will come from thinking outside of the box, starting with education.

"Funding education is like watering a plant. If you pour into education in the neighborhoods, the youth will flourish, and less people would come to prison," said Curtys Taylor, an SQ resident who has been incarcerated for 10 years.

Plenty of research has gone into studying the school-to-prison pipeline, finding serious correlations between

a child's poor literacy skills and dropout rates, and the likelihood of them going to jail or prison. According to the National Adult Literacy Survey, 70% of all incarcerated people in the United States are unable to read at a fourth grade level.

"Schools need more money, more supplies, and better teachers with better pay," said Johnny Payton, an SQ resident who has been incarcerated for 14 years.

Payton believes that education systems inside of marginalized communities should focus on science, technology, business management, and various trades in order to make youth more competitive in the future job market.

"Improving education in the communities would be a better use of the money instead of putting it into prisons," Payton said. "Create the opportunities and it will eliminate the reasons many guys come to prison in the first place."

According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation budget for the current fiscal year is \$14.3 billion. CDCR is projected to receive \$127,800 for the 2025-2026 fiscal year for every person the department incarcerates; the average annual salary for a CDCR correctional officer is \$96,659.

In contrast, the California

Department of Education reports the average annual salary for a public school teacher in the state is \$101,084, and varies widely depending on location and experience.

The Los Angeles Unified School District, one of the largest in the country, had a budget of \$18.8 billion for 2025. Much of this was pulled from reserves in order to cover huge deficits that will likely lead to future cuts in staff and resources, according to NBC news.

Annual tuition at the University of California is \$68,237, according to its financial aid department. It cost between \$50,000 and \$60,000 to send a child to one of California's private college prep high schools, according to Think Academy. These figures are half of what it costs to keep a person in prison for one year.

The cost to educate someone at a trade school, where a person can learn to be anything from a barber to a plumber or electrician, is even less. For example, Los Angeles Trade Technical College has an annual tuition of just \$1,238.

The famed abolitionist and social reformer Frederick Douglass once said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

Some SQ residents said that they are taking these words in stride, while developing alternative solutions to mass incarceration.

## Stacked charges and mandatory minimums add up

By Bostyon Johnson  
Managing Editor

A U.S. district judge gave Frederick Turner a 40-year sentence because the laws around stacked charges and mandatory minimums didn't allow him discretion to change the punishment, according to an article by Clark Neily in *Free Society*.

Turner's charges were "two counts related to dealing methamphetamine and two counts of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime," wrote Neily.

"The only thing I can do is express my displeasure," said Judge T. S. Ellis III. "I chafe a bit at that, but I follow the law."

Turner received five years for possessing a firearm on the first count and 25 years for the second firearm count. He also received 10 years for the methamphetamine charges with all of this sentencing "stacked."

Following the trial, prosecutors expressed remorse and said that if Turner waived his appeal and gave them names of other drug dealers, they'd support a reduced sentence. Paul St. Louis, a man who sat on the jury that convicted Turner in 2018, said he would have opted for jury nullification if he had known the punishment.

"If anyone who sat in that trial said that person deserved 40 years, I'd question their judgment about everything in their life," said St. Louis. "The reality is: I didn't have all the information, and if I did, I'm not sending that man to prison for 40 years. Just no way."

Due to the lengthy sentence, Turner landed in a maximum-security prison. In June 2019, Turner died in prison. The official cause of death was suicide.

"Turner's four-decade sentence seems less like a punishment for a crime and more like a warning to other defendants: Either take the plea deal or experience the terror of the trial penalty," the article said.

According to Neily, who is the senior vice-president for legal studies at the Cato Institute, the language of today's criminal legal system is far from the original language described in the Bill of Rights, which focused on the resolution of criminal charges more than any other topic. Today's system is similar to an industrial assembly line that excludes fairness or ordinary citizens in the process, he wrote.

"What on earth would persuade nearly everyone who gets prosecuted in our system to exchange the possibility of acquittal and freedom—especially in a system bristling with defendant-favoring procedural protections—for the certainty of conviction and punishment? The answer is pressure, and lots of it," reported *Free Society*.

Scholars at the Cato Institute have documented many devices used by prosecutors to convince defendants to condemn themselves. These devices include threats of the death penalty, a lengthy mandatory minimum prison sentence, pretrial detention, and threats of indicting family members if the defendant goes to trial.

According to Neily, the role of ordinary citizens in criminal juries has transformed from determining the wisdom, fairness, or legitimacy of any given prosecution to matching facts in a case. Citizens no longer have a voice in the punishment of criminal defendants because most defendants refuse to

participate in a public and adversarial trial.

The judge, prosecutors, and other players in the legal system feed juries misleading narratives during orientation. Juries hear that they don't have the power to decide to acquit or convict a defendant, only to find the facts and match them to the law, wrote Neily.

"They may even be asked whether they are familiar with the concept of 'jury nullification' and dismissed from the process of jury selection if they evince support for the concept."

Neily described the work of scholars at the Cato Institute on two reforms, both of which aimed to counter the plea-bargaining process in an effort to return juries to their original role. One, described below, requires support from policymakers, judges, and legislatures. The second is a video campaign to educate jurors on jury independence and the historic role of jurors in the criminal justice system.

Evidence of the much-needed reform is that 15% of the 4,000 registrants of the National Registry of Exonerations were convicted via false plea deals.

Professors Kiel Brennan-Marquez, Darryl Brown, and Stephen Henderson said the first reform would be to audit the plea deal process by holding a "trial lottery."

The goal is to take several cases where the prosecutor and defense attorney reached a plea deal but had not yet entered it, then send the case to trial and see if the government could persuade a 12-person jury to reach a conviction.

If the case results in a conviction, the defendant still receives the agreed upon plea deal, but if the trial results in acquittal, the defendant is released.

"A criminal justice system can function properly only when it earns and enjoys the confidence of the citizenry it serves," said the article. "A system that routinely cuts corners, flouts constitutional guarantees of due process, coerces guilty pleas, and systemically misleads citizen-jurors about their true role in the adjudicative process does not merit the trust, support, or confidence of the public. Fortunately, we can change that—and we will."



Wikicommons

Jury box

## Clean slate and resentencing laws take shape across U.S.

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

New Clean Slate and resentencing laws are gaining traction across the United States and paving the way for future criminal justice reform.

These laws aim to automatically seal or expunge certain criminal records and effectively remove barriers that follow a person long after a prison sentence, according to an article written by Bryan Driscoll in *Best Lawyers*.

"Removing post-incarceration barriers to success can only serve to increase public safety," said San Quentin Rehabilitation Center resident John Dudley.

More than a dozen states have employed some form of Clean Slate reform, demonstrating bipartisan acknowledgement that continuous punishment undermines both justice and economic growth.

By making relief automatic for eligible offenses, the laws help individuals avoid costly

petitions otherwise required to attain relief, and expedite access to education, housing, and jobs, wrote Driscoll.

According to the winter newsletter of Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, California introduced more than 2,000 bills in the 2025-2026 legislative cycle. Of these, more than 400 directly address public safety, economic priorities, and criminal justice reform.

California's Senate Bill 672, the Youth Rehabilitation and Opportunity Act, would allow individuals who committed their crime at age 25 or younger and were sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, eligibility for parole after 25 years. After the Assembly Appropriations Committee approved SB 672, it became a two-year bill.

California's SB 834, also a two-year bill, aims to help individuals with old, pending, or incomplete charges who do not qualify for automatic record clearing under current

statutes, by allowing them to petition for removal of charges and a certificate of disposition.

These reform bills do not apply to convictions related to the death of a child under 12, death of a public official, or crimes committed in acts of domestic violence.

"We also dedicated significant time to opposing harmful legislation that unnecessarily increases sentences and restricts the discretion of judges and the parole board," said the EBC newsletter.

Other states, including Illinois and Maryland, targeted legislative action to align economic priorities with justice reform.

Maryland's Senate Bill 432, the Expungement Reform Act, makes more offenses eligible for expungement with fewer disqualifications for certain parole violations. Newly eligible offenses include credit card theft, making a false statement to police, and

driving without a license.

SB 432 also removes technical barriers that disqualify people with parole violations. This change means one single misstep on parole will not block someone from clearing his or her record permanently.

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore stated that this reform bill dismantles the notion that sentences last a lifetime. He stressed that decades-old offenses should not hamper a person's ability to work, rent, or secure loans. SB 432 is not only about legal relief, but also designed to restore economic opportunities.

The law passed alongside the Second Look Act, which allows prisoners to petition for sentence reductions, and geriatric and medical reforms that account for illness and age in release decisions.

According to the *Best Lawyers* article, Maryland has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country for Black residents. These new laws

target the cycle of exclusion disproportionately affecting communities of color.

"Maryland paired record-expungement reform with sentencing review and parole changes, targeting systemic racial disparities and long-term incarceration," Driscoll wrote.

Illinois' Senate Bill 1784, the Clean Slate Act, would require automatic sealing of eligible nonviolent criminal convictions twice a year. The bill addresses employment barriers to people with a record. It states that sealing old convictions is a way to expand the labor pool while reducing recidivism.

If enacted, this legislation would make Illinois the thirteenth state with a Clean Slate Law. To qualify for expungement, individuals must complete their sentence and probation and stay crime free.

"These laws are not only a legal milestone; they are an economic and social equity

strategy," Driscoll wrote.

The National Clean Slate measures passed in 2025 are creating a shift from punitive permanence toward reintegration, equity, and measurable economic benefit. Combing justice reform with economic priorities is why the Clean Slate movement is gaining traction.

States that take this novel approach are showing others how to move away from permanent punishments that undermine public safety and economic vitality.

"These Clean Slate Laws are giving people a second chance at being productive members of society," said Dudley. "If more of these laws pass it will definitely redefine what it's like when we get out of prison."

Information about Clean Slate legislation and resentencing is on the institution tablet's *Edovo* app, under Ella Baker Center for Human Rights resource guide.

## HEALTH

## Potential effects of chronic fear can be long-term

By **Bostyon Johnson**  
Managing Editor

Living behind tall cement walls and barbed wire fences can be a fearful place for anyone experiencing prison for the first time. The body lets a person know when there is a threat and the impact fear has on a person's health, according to a report published by *The Center for Biosimilars*.

The report said fear is a natural response to physical or psychological danger. Most of the constant fear people experience is the brain recognizing the danger and preparing a person for the best chance of survival.

"The potential effects of chronic fear on physical health include headaches turning into migraines, muscle aches turning into

fibromyalgia, body aches turning into chronic pain, and difficulty breathing turning into asthma," said Mary D. Moller, director of psychiatric services at Northwest Center for Integrated Health.

Somebody who gets locked up for committing a crime against a woman or a child may feel fearful for hours, weeks, or even years depending on the culture created by the incarcerated population.

*The Center for Biosimilars* pointed out that holding onto fear for an extended period cannot only affect a person physically, but it can also play a large role in the emotional, environmental, and spiritual health of a person.

The report listed three predictable stages a person's body experiences when responding to external

events. The alarm, resistance, and exhaustion stages, also called the general adaptation syndrome triggers the sensory system and wakes up the brain.

During the alarm stage, the body identifies something external as a danger. The brain then activates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal and the autonomic nervous system, noted the article. At the same time, the release of cortisone, adrenaline, and noradrenaline stress hormones allow the body to deal with the threat.

In the resistance stage, the body uses this period of recovery for repair while stress levels decrease, the report noted.

The third stage is exhaustion. This is the stage where stress has continued to signal the sensory system in the brain that danger is still

imminent. This stage is also known as burnout, overload, or dysfunction.

Ever try to learn something or recall something from the past but can't? Moller said fear makes the brain hyperactive causing distortion in how information is stored and retrieved.

"The brain's capacity to retrieve previous learning is dependent on specific chemical states," said Moller. "Chemical alterations can distort perception of sensory information thus distorting storage."

There are many short and long-term physical, emotional, environmental, and spiritual consequences of chronic fear.

Emotionally, chronic fear creates a space for learned helplessness, mood swings, obsessive-compulsive thoughts, and disassociation

from self, the article stated.

According to an article by *Calm Clinic*, the uncertainty that stems from constant fear can potentially keep a person from leaving a violent relationship or household, unable to leave from fear of associated dangers. Another consequence could be paranoia.

When it comes to spiritual consequences of chronic fear, those can range from a loss of trust in God, a person waiting for God to fix it, bitterness, and despair of perceived loss of spirituality.

"When fear becomes chronic, it suppresses our immune systems, making us more vulnerable to the effects of infections, but by targeting your stress levels, you can reduce the suppression of your immune system," the *Calm*

Clinic article said.

To minimize the effects of chronic fear, try exercising to decrease the amount of adrenaline while promoting "feel good hormones" which are natural mood boosters. A regular sleeping schedule gives the body time to fight infections and boost the immune system, the article reported.

*Calm Clinic* recommended that meditation could ease stress, chronic pain, cancer, asthma, sleep problems, and depression.

"Fear serves an essential function, keeping us safe. This was particularly useful in the past when we often encountered predators. Though, nowadays, there isn't the same level of risk," the report stated. "Yet, millions of people around the world suffer from chronic fear/anxiety."

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

## Lack of social justice programs fuels female incarceration rate

By **Jerry Maleek Gearin**  
Journalism Guild Chair

As mass incarceration in the United States is trending down, the incarceration rate of women has increased.

Female incarceration globally has increased 60% in the last 25 years. There are 740,000 women and girls incarcerated in jails and prisons worldwide; 200,000 of them are in the United States, according to a report from the Prison Policy Initiative.

"Women are particularly vulnerable to laws and practices criminalizing poverty, as well as laws

that disproportionately impact them on the basis of their gender or disability," reported PPI.

The United States contributes disproportionately to the worldwide increase in women's incarceration. The country imprisons 614 people per every 100,000, and 212 women per 100,000.

The United States locks women up at a higher rate than nations with armed conflict and political instability, where laws openly subjugate women. A case in point shows the state of Rhode Island has the lowest rate of women's incarceration, but

the state imprisons women at a rate of 28 per 100,000, according to PPI.

Incarcerated women have access to fewer diversion and self-help programs than men do, programs that could lead to good time credits, shortening prison sentences, reported PPI.

Women are vulnerable to laws that target reproductive rights, gender bias, and psychological abuse. Women who are incarcerated because of illicit drugs have lost parental rights, and access to essential prenatal care, PPI said.

Incarcerated women

in the U.S. report sexual abuse 40% more often than incarcerated men. On a national scale, more than 22% of incarcerated women identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and they make more sexual abuse claims than incarcerated heterosexual women.

PPI reports that 4% of the world's women and girls live in the United States, but the country holds 25% of the world's incarcerated women and girls. Many U.S. states outpace entire countries in rates of female incarceration.

Rhode Island has the lowest rate of incarcerated women

in the U.S. at 28 per 100,000. Comparatively, the country of Columbia has a rate of 23 per 100,000 citizens because of drug laws that unreasonably punish women.

In Columbia, incarceration of women has increased more than 500% since 1991 because of new drug laws that lead to unreasonable punishment of women, PPI reported.

New York State incarcerates women at a rate of 34 per 100,000, the same level as Bolivia. Bolivia's imprisonment of women increased 12% in a seven-month period in 2024 due

to drug-related offenses, according to PPI.

Even nations that incarcerate women at much lower rates than the U.S. imprison women and girls for offenses that have little to do with public safety, according to PPI.

The imprisonment of women worldwide remains a calamity. The incarceration rate of women to men within the US reveals a falsely optimistic picture.

The United States has the lowest levels of women's incarceration are far out of line with a shameful global status quo.

## Tablet company accused of abusing monopoly

By **Kevin D. Sawyer**  
Editor-in-Chief

The Federal Communications Commission voted to increase the cost of telephone service in jails and prisons as industry giant ViaPath (Global Tel\*Link) is set to pay \$3 million in fines as a result of using its monopolistic control to block prisoners' accounts.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau accused GTL of wrongfully draining prisoners' accounts. Through its business affiliates, the phone company is said to have "abused its monopoly power by putting in place policies that harmed incarcerated people and their

families when they didn't have a choice in providers," according to *Bloomberg*.

All of this comes as the FCC reversed course on rules signed a year ago to limit what companies such as ViaPath and Aventiv (Securus Technologies) can charge the incarcerated, their families and friends.

"The vote raises the current cap for calls in prisons and jails by at least two cents per minute for voice and video calls, benefiting telecom providers such as ViaPath Technologies and Aventiv Technologies," *Bloomberg* reported.

The change in pricing is projected to cost prisoners and their families more than \$200 million a year,

according to the incarcerated advocate Worth Rises.

"In the past, jails and prisons earned a large share of the telecom companies' incarceration-related revenue in the form of commissions," *Bloomberg* reported. "The FCC last year outlawed that practice, but the commission reopened the topic for public comment."

Most jail and prison systems normally have a single telecommunications service provider. It was reported that Aventiv faced bankruptcy when it was unable to find a buyer to repay its debt.

"The reduction in rates threatened to cause 'irreparable harm,'" the company stated when it

requested a stay of the FCC's decision, pending judicial review.

Both companies, Aventiv and ViaPath, told regulators they needed "the ability to recoup higher costs that come from inflation and doing business in secure conditions," according to *Bloomberg*. They reasoned rate reductions would force them to halt service in some lockup facilities.

FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez said the new rate cap order is "indefensible," and called it a "greedy" cash grab by telecommunication companies that have failed to provide satisfactory details to prove they would not be able to operate under a lower rate structure.

## HOBBY

## CTF Soledad resident enjoys old-fashioned hobby

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

The arrival of the GTL tablet's e-messaging at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation changed the way incarcerated persons communicated. Messages transmitted not only faster than snail-mail but also, for at least five messages a week, without charge.

One very small group might have lamented this newfangled way of communicating: stamp collectors. At least one incarcerated person had taken up that very hobby: Dennis Paul Decker at the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad, Calif.

"I have been incarcerated for almost 20 years and have seen only one other stamp collector in prison," Decker told the *San Quentin News* by mail, "That is not to say there is not any more."

Decker's missive arrived in the old-fashioned way, via snail-mailed ink on 8.5x11 trifold paper enclosed in a Size 10 4 1/8 x 9 1/2 envelope. Decker franked it with a USA 2024 "Forever" stamp depicting a white bird (perhaps a dove) on a red background, the bird carrying a letter with its beak. The postmark to the left of the wavy lines that cancelled Decker's stamp said "SAN JOSE CA" revealing "7 JUL 2025" as its processing date.

The dictionary definition of *philately*, Decker's favored term for his hobby, referred to the study of postage stamps and postal history and to the

collection of stamps and other philatelic products.

For Decker, stamp collecting took the place of a coping tool, he explained, and "a healthy way to reduce unhealthy stress since coming to prison." He has collected stamps for the same 20 years of his incarceration and has traded thousands of them with other collectors.

Decker knew nothing about stamps when he started to accumulate them, he admitted, but now owned an impressive collection with specimens from all over the world. His hobby began once he noticed that his family and his friends sent him letters with stamps he found interesting.

A printout of a Wikipedia article said the hobby began in 1840 after the introduction of "Penny Black," the first postage stamp, which depicted the profile of Britain's Queen Victoria. The article said the American Philatelic Society used to have 57,815 members in 1988, which has since declined to 24,421 in 2023.

Decker declared that he wanted to join the American Philatelic Society. Closer to home, he might find the Sacramento Philatelic Society, listed in the article as one of the eight premier stamp societies in the U.S.

"I have no intention of quitting the hobby when I go home," Decker said. "Whenever I find myself feeling stressed, lonely, or worried, I turn to my stamp collection, which takes me to another place."

## CONSTRUCTION

## Construction leads to rat infestation

Construction at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center has unleashed an infestation of vermin at the institution—in general; it has been rodents, rats in specific.

Major renovation on the Upper Yard, installation of a building to house a new boiler, and construction of a \$240 million dollar education complex on the Lower Yard at the institution has disturbed the habitat of raccoons, squirrels, rats and other creatures.

Displaced rats scatter even as construction begins to wrap up. In the meantime, the SQRC administration has taken measures to prevent their spread throughout the prison.

"We're rodent hit men,"

Joe Greer said with a joking smile. He is an SQRC carpenter II who doubles as pest control with an inmate crew of three.

The team of four was on the Lower Yard in late November laying old-fashioned wooden snap traps, sticky traps made by Catch Master, and Ditrac Blox. The label on a bucket that contained the edible blocks states "Kills rats and mice."

Some inmates thought an odor emitted from an unknown repellant was rat poison. Greer's crew—Steve Stevens, Victor Mendoza and Allen Crews—presented a container of peppermint oil.

"They don't like it," Greer said about the oil and rats. He said when the rodents smell

the repellant, "They bounce."

Victor Mendoza held a jar of Skippy brand peanut butter used to lure rats onto sticky traps. "The rats get Skippy and we inmates get CalPIA state peanut butter," he said. They all laughed.

"Rats always have to be chewing," said Greer. He said it is because their teeth will continue to grow and protrude too far and cause them problems.

Greer said rats chew through various materials to gain entry to buildings and to forage. He said to prevent that an excluder like steel wool is used to steer the rats from that course of action.

The four-man pest control team was cheerful as they laid traps and oil inside the

education buildings and in the prison's media center.

The pest control crew said they move about the prison to combat rodents in the gym, education buildings, housing units, kitchen, staff snack bar, wall post, and other areas of the prison impacted by the rodent invasion.

"I do [guard] towers and gun rails," said Greer.

Inmates have said there is evidence the infestation has reached boxes of food stored in the commissary where they shop. The administration seems to be aware of the problem in that area.

"We do the canteen twice a day," said Mendoza.

—By **Kevin D. Sawyer**  
Editor in Chief

## MUSIC

## Violinists practice all around San Quentin

By Ben Greenspon  
Journalism Guild Writer

Music calms the savage beast. The Violins in Prison program gives San Quentin residents a chance to transform their lives through music.

San Quentin resident and program leader John Zeretske has been playing music for over 50 years. He trained in the classical musical arts and has a heart to teach and lead the first-of-its-kind Violins in Prison program.

"My life has been greatly enriched by music. I'm very grateful to pass along what I can," said Zeretske.

When Zeretske set out to start the violin program, he was hoping to have an impact on the lives of others through music. He remembers how music changed his own life. He was 10 years old when he first held a violin, and his love for music has never faded. The VIP program is as much about personal growth as it is about music.

Friends of San Quentin Strings, a support group, donated the violins used in the program.

A typical scene: a diverse group of incarcerated men sits in a circle holding the small



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Violinist Aaron Gillum

instruments, learning to bow them gracefully. The sound carries out into the courtyard, causing passersby to stop and look through the windows of the interfaith Chapel C.

A similar phenomenon happens almost every day on the Lower Yard, where one of Zeretske's students plays a violin, the distinct sound

carrying, drawing attention.

San Quentin resident Kenneth Thurman, 57, regularly plays his violin on the yard. Thurman grew up in a gang culture and got involved in crime and drugs as a young man. Nobody Thurman grew up with owned or played instruments. It was not something he ever

envisioned for himself.

"A decade ago my mind was trapped in a Pandora's box of criminality. Playing a violin back then never crossed my mind," Thurman said.

A desire to learn to play music grew inside Thurman shortly after he arrived at San Quentin. Wanting to challenge himself and step

out of his comfort zone, he signed up for the VIP program. He said he loves it.

"It brings me joy and gives my life sustenance and meaning. I feel like I have a purpose with the music," said Thurman.

The Violins in Prison program meets in Chapel C every Tuesday morning. The program is unique in that the instruments are strung and the students get to take them to their cells.

Zeretske stands in the middle of the circle of men and teaches. He shows the men how to position their hands on the violin, where to rest their chin, and how to hold the bow.

Zeretske talks about the importance of keeping the instruments clean. With proper care, they can serve musicians for hundreds of years. That is a lot of time for a violin to make a difference in someone's life.

San Quentin resident Leonardo Gonzalez, 43, grew up in the middle of a civil war in his home country of El Salvador. He said his father, a very strict military man, was abusive.

Gonzalez said he had a rough childhood, but he always loved music. It

was a beautiful thing he remembers from his early life. As a teenager, Gonzalez had many friends that were in bands, and he was constantly around live music.

At age 20, Gonzalez left El Salvador for the United States, where, within a few years, he was serving a 25-to-life sentence.

When Gonzalez arrived at San Quentin and saw someone playing a violin on the yard, he couldn't believe it. "I wanted to play a violin all of my life but never had the chance," he said.

Gonzalez sat in and watched the program for four months, waiting for the next class to begin. When he finally started the class and received a violin, he said he was happy and felt lucky to be at a prison that offers such a program. He sees and appreciates the impact that learning the instrument has had in his own life.

"For me, the mental and emotional impact is huge. My mood changes when I play the violin," said Gonzalez.

For safety and security reasons California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has never allowed inmates to have violins, until now.

## REENTRY

## Resident uses resources and networking prior to parole

By Michael Callahan  
Layout Design

Reentering the larger society following a prison term poses daunting challenges and restricted opportunities. For those anticipating the end of their terms, breaking down some of those barriers and opening doors to opportunities can begin prior to parole, if resources are available.

With that in mind, Mount Tamalpais College hosted a reentry resource fair in San Quentin to connect reentrants with fair-chance hiring organizations, vocational programs, educational opportunities, and housing assistance.

MTC Alumni Affairs Associate Corey McNeil said the goal is to eliminate impediments to reentry and pursue partnerships with the private sector to create a workforce and job-opportunity pipeline for justice-impacted individuals.

He strongly advocates fostering relationships with organizations prior to paroling.

SQ resident Ken Osako has experienced leaving prison without the sort of support McNeil promotes. "First time I paroled, the only resource was the \$200 gate money," Osako said. "After my release, I went into survival mode real quick and fell back into my old criminal ways."

This time it will be different for Osako. Parole commissioners found him suitable for parole after 13 years on this term. He has served 25 years in total. "This time my success is based on my personal transformation and the availability of resources I obtained networking prior to my release," Osako said. "Utilizing all the services out there gives me hope and optimism."

During his incarceration, Osako obtained an associates

degree, certifications through Healthcare Facilities Maintenance, and certification as a drug and alcohol counselor.

Osako recalled that parole is rife with challenges, including strict weekly check-ins, urinalysis, and economic hardships. Parolees may be subject to electronic monitoring, curfews, attending mandated groups, and unannounced visits and searches from parole agents. Other hurdles are transportation, relocation, and housing instability. Any of these requirements or issues can lead to minor, non-criminal violations, resulting in prolonged parole or re-incarceration.

Osako said when he paroled last time, he believed the parole agents looked for reasons to violate him. This time he is committed to staying

actively engaged in his recovery, education, and service to others. Osako said

he appreciates the higher-educational opportunities provided through the on-site college and hopes to obtain a master's degree after release.

"A big part of my support network is the individuals that have been released from prison and been successful. I have stayed in contact with them and they will help me upon release," he said.

The resource fair addressed some of the obstacles Osako associates with life on parole. He visited the Initiate Justice table, where he found critical information on legislation that could affect him. Another table for the Stay Out Solutions employment services could help him with a career in business ownership.

Dozens of other outside participants in the fair, many formerly incarcerated, disseminated information on program services and handed out pertinent pamphlets and business cards. Services on

display included information on technical training, counseling, transportation, internships, and health and recovery resources. Workshop information on life skills and financial planning covered tables staffed by representatives from several reentry organizations.

Further offers of auxiliary support included obtaining a driver's license, passport, real California ID, public benefits, and other community services.

Formerly incarcerated Damon Coke, founder of The Uncuffed Project, paroled in 2022. He said that paroling after 31 years in prison was difficult and there were several barriers. "Access to the resources available [at San Quentin] is different than other prisons."

Coke recalled paroling with no license, no identification, and no transportation. To help make navigation from prison to

freedom easier, Coke worked to provide more resources and tools, customized to each individual's needs. Of the current parole scenario, Coke said, "Something is wrong. The \$200 gate money today is not the same as it was in 1978."

McNeil foresees that the kind of resources provided at the fair can also be available to incarcerated individuals digitally.

"Now with the availability of tablets, hopefully organizations will engage with CDCR to put information and resources on the tablet. Knowledge and direct interaction are critical for success upon reentry," he said.

The Uncuffed Project  
690 Walnut Ave #210  
Vallejo, CA 92592

The Arrive  
2021 Shoreline Dr. #1663  
Alameda, CA 94501

## Artificial intelligence adversely impacts jobs for parolees

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

Following their release from prison, returning citizens will find that employment opportunities are much different from the past. Job seekers will not only compete against other people but also against artificial intelligence.

"I'm a certified forklift driver," said San Quentin Rehabilitation Center resident Bryan Monge. "But now forklifts are mostly automated and don't need drivers."

A study by the McKinsey Institute indicates that robotics, digitization, and AI advancements will force 14% of the global workforce to change careers within five years.

According to an article in Nexford University's newsletter, many jobs are subject to automation due to reduced consumer spending,

rising costs and wages, technological advancements, and tight labor markets. This could make finding a job more challenging for some.

The investment bank Goldman Sachs reported that by 2030 AI could replace more than 300 million full-time jobs across the globe, including a quarter of workplace tasks in Europe and the U.S.

The 90% of incarcerated people in the U.S. who will eventually reenter society may wonder how best to respond to the challenge of AI. According to Nexford's newsletter, job seekers must be willing to pivot and learn new skills, to become familiar with AI, and learn to navigate digital platforms.

"To stay ahead in the era of artificial intelligence, it is essential to embrace lifelong learning, [to] develop soft skills, be agile, and specialize in a particular area," the

newsletter stated.

Incarcerated people may prepare by furthering their education, working in a day labor or vocational program, attending self-help groups, and learning how to network. Experience in a trade, developing communication and problem solving skills, and learning to collaborate makes one less vulnerable to advancing technologies.

Many positions do not require advanced tech skills. Jobs that require a human touch, that emphasize interpersonal skills, or require skilled labor, are currently in high demand. Returning citizens who have spent years learning a vocation, facilitating groups, tutoring, or have a college degree can use the skills gained to obtain employment.

Whether they know it or not, incarcerated people already have experience with

AI. Most incarcerated people in California state prisons have tablets and access to computers in classrooms and libraries at most facilities. They cannot browse the internet but do have access to research data banks and up-to-date news apps, and they are able to search for currently trending jobs.

Resources available to San Quentin residents include the Prison to Employment Connection program, which teaches residents to write resumés, improve interview skills, and build confidence through meetings with employers, volunteers, and reentry professionals.

P2EC connects employers with residents to create possibilities. Executive Director Sumer Schulze explained that having support while still inside and meeting with potential employers helps residents gain motivation and

a renewed sense of hope for the future.

"We all know it's easier to get a job if you know somebody," said Schulze. "This personal connection empowers people to believe that success is within their reach."

The Last Mile program is a prison-based nonprofit that offers technology and coding training that prepares incarcerated people for careers in the tech field upon release.

The Last Mile volunteer Caroline Norton, who also participates in SQ's P2EC, said both programs help people build the skills needed to get a job.

"By gathering with potential employers, it helps these guys build the confidence necessary in order to present really well in an interview," said Norton.

Removed from modern technology for decades, SQ resident Eliezer Prado, 58,

said he is not worried about AI influencing his ability to find work when he gets out of prison.

Scheduled to parole soon, Prado said during his 21 years of incarceration he has taken every opportunity to learn new skill sets. He is confident that his ability to perform tasks that AI cannot will make him an asset for potential employers and help him to become a productive member of society.

"I've taken commercial trucking courses, became a master butcher, and I'm a journeyman painter," Prado said. "I am very fit, reliable and the quality of my work speaks for itself."

According to Nexford's newsletter, "developing [new] skills and adapting to the changing job market, workers can thrive in the era of AI and take advantage of the opportunities it presents."



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Runners take off for marathon run

## SQ 1000 Mile Running Club crowns new marathon champion

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

A dramatic photo finish at San Quentin's 1000 Mile Running Club's 16th annual marathon reached its climax with Hugo Dimas clocking a time of 2:53:44 to become the new 26.2-mile champion.

"I stayed close, never lost my pace, and made my move at the right time," Dimas said after outperforming Jose Fajardo's 2:53:45 by a split second, stealing the crown from the former champ.

"I wasn't expecting him to have that last burst," Fajardo said. "I'm proud of Hugo, he put a lot of work in all year."

Fajardo's enthusiasm and humble passing of the baton on November 20 demonstrates the camaraderie and compassion that each running club member has for the success and growth of its community.

Confirming the sense of community were hundreds in attendance who witnessed supporters handing out water, yelling out lap times, and cheering on the record 77 marathoners who started the race and the new record of 38 finishers.

"The discipline of running is no longer a solo sport," said resident runner Jeffery Covarrubias. "This club has become a way to connect to something bigger than ourselves. It's a way to find others and be part of community."

Covarrubias' statement

jibes with a *CBS NEWS* feature report about the popular growth of marathon running. For historical context, after the Greeks defeated the Persians in battle, a runner ran the legendary 26.2-mile distance to deliver the news, said the feature.

The distance now known as the Marathon has become a global phenomenon and marathons are selling out in every state. "This year the New York Marathon generated more than 700 million dollars for local communities," said the *CBS NEWS* broadcast.

SQ's 1000 Mile Club community set its own record, as unprecedented numbers of people cheered on Dimas and Fajardo's record-breaking sub-three-hour marathon finishes. Rounding-off off the top five finishers were Jose Maya (3:48:15), Jorge Cuevas (3:55:16), and Delfino Verdin (3:57:12).

"The brotherhood, camaraderie, and therapeutic nature of running has become a lifestyle," resident club member Steve Warren said. "Because of this community I just finished my third marathon."

Head coach Tim Fitzpatrick said that when you see these runners fully committed, you witness a transformation. "To see that change happening and to see how the power of running has impacted their lives is rewarding."

Volunteer Bill Neer said that after Coach Frank Ruona's retirement in 2023, Coaches Tim and Diana Fitzpatrick, along with Coach Jim Mahoney, have been unwavering in their support of the incarcerated runners of San Quentin.

The inside leadership of new club president, resident Greg Stephens, is another reason why the club is gaining traction, added Neer. "Greg's organizing and motivational skills have really stood out this year," he said.

Stephens said his role with the club is to sign up everybody who wants to run, encourage runners, and help the community grow. "Let's go!" he said.

If the success of a community is determined by how well its most vulnerable members are treated, then the emotional finish of Albert Campos, one of the facility's deaf residents, exemplifies the 1000 Mile Club's 20-year legacy of community.

Campos saw hundreds of onlookers congratulating his efforts as they raised their arms and twisted their hands back and forth signing "applause" during his 105-lap journey to the finish line.

"I hit the wall on lap 44," said Campos through his sign language interpreter A. Mendez. "At lap 70 I started praying to God to give me the strength to finish. When I finally got to the end, I had tears rolling down my face." (6:58:42)

## Oakland's new baseball team brings opportunity and hope

The Oakland Ballers, a professional baseball team founded in 2024, has a core principle of community involvement and is immediately giving Oakland something to be proud of, according to an October 2025 Wikipedia post.

"The Ballers help bring civic pride back to a place that can really use it," said San Quentin Rehabilitation Center resident and Oakland native Tyrone Jones.

The Ballers are the first West Coast franchise of the Pioneer League, a group of minor league teams that has been around since 1939. The team won the 2025 league championship in only its second season.

After Major League Baseball's Oakland Athletics relocated to Las Vegas, the Ballers stepped in to continue the rich baseball tradition of the East Bay community. Just as fans called the late Oakland Athletics the A's, so fans now refer to the Ballers as the B's.

The team boasts many young players with diverse backgrounds. Kelsie Whitmore, for example, signed

with the Oakland Ballers on April 11, 2024. She is the first female player to start a Pioneer League game.

On their way out of town, the A's blocked the new minor league team from playing a game at the Oakland Coliseum, forcing the Ballers to find an alternative home field, according to *schronicle.com*.

Undeterred by the setback, the East Bay community rallied around their new team and its founders, Oakland natives Paul Freedman and Bryan Carmel, by funding \$1.6 million in upgrades to West Oakland's historic Raimondi Field. Following the remodel, the Ballers played their opening game June 4, 2024.

"Cleaning up that old rundown park has been another step forward and points Oakland in the right direction," said San Quentin Giants player Anthony Denard. Denard is an Oakland native, once drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays.

According to Wikipedia, the non-profit Oakland 68s, inspired by the success of the Oakland Roots soccer team, amassed more than \$2 million to establish the Ballers.

"A press release for the team's announcement included a pledge for fan ownership based around a 2024 crowd-funding campaign," according to Wikipedia. Other notable local owners include Billie Joe Armstrong and Too \$hort.

After the signing of Aaron Miles as team manager in 2025, a game was set up with Oakland's longtime rivals, the San Jose Giants. The game, dubbed the Battle of the Bay 2.0, was where an MLB affiliate team first played against an independent league team. KPIX broadcast the Giants' 5-2 victory.

Denard said that the Ballers and the newly remodeled 4,000-seat ballpark bring hope and positivity back to the community he grew up in, the community the A's left behind when they moved to Las Vegas.

"It takes away the black eye from Oakland," Denard said. "The Ballers are inspiring the next generation of baseball players to come out of a city that I love."

—By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

## Running Club celebrates 20 years of changing lives, unity, growth

A group of trailblazers inside San Quentin Rehabilitation Center is changing the status quo by leading with empathy and forging solutions for a brighter future—one step at a time.

For the past 20 years, the SQ's 1000 Mile Club has gathered on the prison's Lower Yard to demonstrate the rehabilitative power of running.

"We start seeing people apply the skills they learn through running—the commitment, the discipline, and focus—to other parts of their lives," said Diana Fitzpatrick, 1000 Mile Club coach of 16 years.

SQ resident Jim Levin, 61, joined the club in 2015 and said each one of the 6,500 miles he has run has given him purpose and a perspective on life. Levin said he lacked the courage to take on life's big challenges when he was younger. Now, Levin said he has gained the confidence to combat the stigma and shame of being incarcerated.

He credited club's volunteer coaches not only for sharing their decades of combined running experience, but also for demonstrating commitment, kindness, patience, and above all empathy.

"The coaches choose to see to us as more than our worst decision," Levin said. "They choose see us for who we are, rather than for what we did. In a word, they humanize us."

Volunteer coach Jim Maloney said 90% of people in prison eventually will

get out, and he believes it's important to emphasize rehabilitation over punishment. Maloney said the recidivism rate of club members who have paroled remains at less than 4%.

"You men truly awe and inspire us coaches every time we come in," Maloney told the runners recently. "We feel honored to work with you in achieving whatever goals you set your mind to."

The inaugural 1000 Mile Club Marathon, held in 2008, had only 15 runners and one finisher, Ronnie Goodman, who ran it in 3:47:58.

"Goodman was the only one to finish the first three marathons; the club has grown a lot since then," said Frank Ruona, who co-founded the club and now has the marathon named in his honor.

Today, there are more than 100 runners, 30 outside volunteers and alumni, with a long waiting list of outsiders who want to promote persistence, determination, resilience and self-confidence with the club.

In November, with hundreds watching, a record number 77 runners started the celebrated event, and a record number 38 finished it.

"This just shows us how vibrant and alive the community is here at San Quentin," Maloney said.

In 2023, the popularity and visibility of the club exploded with the release of Christine Yoo's film "26.2 to Life," which immortalized the club's 2017 marathon. Yoo spent five years creating the critically acclaimed

independent documentary about the journey of three SQ 1000 Mile Club members.

Yo said the goal of making the film was to open the public's eyes to the community of people working together inside the prison to make a difference in each other's lives.

The San Quentin club has led to seven other facilities across the country starting running clubs of their own. Incarcerated runners in Ohio, Colorado, Washington, and California are now taking their first steps toward a brighter future, noted the website.

"I just want you guys to know that you are the role model for rehabilitation across the state and it is really appreciated," California Governor Public Safety Adviser Michael Redding said at SQ's July, Fun Run event.

On November 21, hundreds gathered in SQ's Chapel B for the club's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary banquet celebration. The camaraderie and passion of its members was on full display, as coaches runners and alumni spoke about the club's historic milestones, then passed out the years marathon completion certificates.

"In the beginning, maybe a guy shows up because he just wants to get in shape, but what you end up with is a bunch of really good friendships and community; it's really powerful," said head coach Tim Fitzpatrick.

—By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

## Former baseball players share knowledge of game

Jason Ferber and former Arizona Diamondback Chazz Meadows gave the SQ Giants and the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center community a rare treat by sharing their knowledge of baseball at the Field of Dreams.

Ferber, one of Instagram's most followed baseball coaches, started his coaching career in 2011 by scouting for the San Diego Padres. Today, Ferber's the co-founder of *The Evolution Events*, a recruitment agency that he built on the singular mission "to bring together like-minded individuals passionate about evolving the game of baseball." Ferber streamlined the college recruitment and the professional draft process for many of the nation's most talented players.

Meadows played shortstop for the Arizona Diamondbacks for five years, starting in 2017. Raised in the East Bay before he made it to the big leagues, Meadows said he learned to play ball on fields close to SQRC.

"When asked to come into the prison, I jumped at the chance to play with these guys and hopefully make someone's day a little better," Meadows said. He added that he visited the rehabilitation center for the first time because he felt curious and excited to have the opportunity to visit and take a firsthand look at the baseball program.

"What stuck with me was

their humility as they came to see where we're at with our game and help out where they can," SQ Giants third baseman Eli Guerra said of Ferber and Meadows at the May 2 special instructional practice.

Meadows' love for the game compelled him to pay forward what he learned by traveling around the country to coach, while inspiring the next generation of ballplayers on social media. "By sharing my experiences, techniques, and lessons on YouTube, it gives me the platform to spread my passion and joy of the game to other ballplayers," he said.

In a strong Brooklyn accent, Ferber addressed the SQ Giants' coaches and players before warm-ups began. "I didn't grow up with a lot of money and having baseball as my safe place is why I fell in love with the game."

Ferber said he believed baseball could make a great equalizer that does not discriminate against someone's cultural or ethnic background. "This is a place where we can level the playing field and help build confidence regardless of where you come from or what you've done."

After introductions and warm-ups, infield drills began, and both coaches jumped in to lead the morning practice. Meadows joined the rotation of players fielding balls from shortstop, as Ferber smashed grounders to the infield.

"Turn two, stay with it," Ferber's voice boomed as the players hustled to field the barrage of balls coming from his bat.

SQ Giants volunteer Coach Greg Snyder said having these coaches come out presented a great opportunity for the team. "There's a difference between knowing the game and knowing how to coach," he said. "To have the chance to interact and build new relationships with guys at this level is something special."

Snyder said this kind of camaraderie showed the players and the San Quentin community that people on the outside care.

Batting practice started as Meadows threw from the mound while SQ Giants fielded balls, and Coach Ferber instructed from the third base box.

SQ Giants players and coaches circled-up every 20 minutes as Ferber and Meadows reviewed with them their observations. The two journeyman coaches revealed trade secrets and expressed joyful encouragement before quickly starting the next drill.

"Some of the tools and techniques will really help out," said SQ Giants pitcher Robert Nash. "This is what these guys do, and for them to come in to coach us today means a lot."

—By Terrell J. Marshall  
Staff Writer

**SPORTS**

# Formerly incarcerated individual tells how he went from murderer to leader of Michael Jordan empire

## NINERS

*Continued from page 1*

everyday life. During our conversation, for that time, I am home with him.”

Hogan and Johnson Sr. passionately shared in front of the fully occupied Chapel B, and their experiences resonated with an enthusiasm that permeated through the entire audience.

The team brought close to 50 staff and players that included current players Nick Bosa, and Spencer Buford, Ben Bartley, Curtis Robinson, Nick Zakels, Austen Pleasants, and Clelen Ferrell. Chaplain Earl Smith hosted the event as Corey Rush, and Vice President of Communications, coordinated efforts for the San Francisco 49er media team.

The emotions of the day reached its peak as Hall-of-Famers Frank Gore, Patrick Willis, Bryant Young, and champions Tom Rathman, Eric Wright, and Donald Strickland were introduced.

The players, past and present, reciprocated the adoration that illuminated from the audience when they took the stage, and almost immediately, the stars spoke of the cohesion between the residents and themselves.

“This is my first visit, I’m elated to be here,” said former player and Hall-of-Famer Patrick Willis. “I majored in criminal justice and it doesn’t matter how many times you fall, just how many times you get up.”

Willis reiterated that he could have easily made the wrong turn and been inside of prison. “Some relatives, guys I grew up with, even ex-teammates have been incarcerated. I just hope you realize there is more for you to do out there.”

Nick Bosa made his second appearance after coming last year for Jenna and Mara. He said that visit changed his perspective of San Quentin and its residents.

Eric Wright came to remind himself that if he had made one more mistake he could have been here like the guys that he grew up with and played ball with.

“I care that society gets the wrong picture put in front of them about you guys, because its amazing to see the opportunities and hard work that you put in to your healing,” said Hall-of-Famer Bryant Young. “It’s important that the incarcerated know that the Forty-Niners care about them.”

“I came back to keep the dialogue open,” said player Spencer Buford, “society has a misconception of the people in this room.”

As the dialogue changed to a question and answer format, incarcerated resident Larry Ryzak asked Nick Bosa how his rehabilitation was going.

“It’s going great,” said Bosa, “I’ve done this before, I’ll be ready to rock.”

Warden Chance Andes then asked the players what the team learned from their visits.

“Freedom is not confined by buildings and borders,” said former player Bryant Young in response to Andes. “Living free is taking advantage of opportunities.”

The players then mingled with the residents in the audience as chaplain Smith brought up the speaker who stole the show.

Larry Miller was introduced to the crowd and the seventy-five year old shared his experience, strength and hope that took him from being a murderer to a leader of on 8-9 billion dollars business known as “Air Jordan.”

Miller’s story covered the fact that he had grown from being imprisoned as a sixteen-year-old for second-degree murder and was in and out of prison from eighteen

to thirty. During his final incarceration he decided to educate himself and then reform his life.

Miller said after his criminality stopped he earned an Associates degree in prison before acquiring a Bachelors’ of Science degree at Temple University. Re-focused, Miller joined the business world and accomplished many successes, including running Campbell’s Soup, Jansen Swimwear, and becoming president of the Portland Trailblazers NBA team.

Miller then built wealth into the Michael Jordan empire.

“When Jordan retired, the brand was worth approximately one-hundred-forty million dollars... When I took over as chairman of the Air Jordan brand, the value of the company has exponentially grown to a net worth between eight and nine billion dollars,” said Miller.

Miller’s daughter told him that he should tell his story and Jordan offered to help any way he could. Miller wrote the top-selling autobiography

“Given an opportunity you never know what potential is in you,” said Miller, “I could never have dreamed of traveling the world with Michael Jordan.”

Miller sights Harvard business school statistics that state recidivism rates decline from seventy percent to zero percent with opportunities for higher education.

Smith then stated that some incarcerated put on a ‘mask’ every morning before even getting dressed.

“What makes one man better than another?” asked Smith. “Confidence,” Smith answered.

Smith asked the crowd if they felt held back by their past and most in the crowd raised their hands.

He then asked the question, “When will your story be a yesterday story?”

The question was answered with applause.

The entourage left amid autograph hounds to receive a facility tour led by Warden Andes.

While on the “Lower Yard,” Andes spoke of the changes at the facility since 2024 in the shadow of the new buildings being built and that he believes that the new culture, spawned by the investment in San Quentin, allows for real healing.

The tour moved to the ‘Donner Earned Living Unit’ in South Block so the visitors could see the Canine Companions program that allows selected incarcerated residents the chance to raise and train service dogs.

While in Donner the five players were asked what one thing they would tell the residents of SQRC?

The following players answered:

Spencer Burford said, “Keep the faith, learn to forgive, move forward and continue to dream.”

Ben Bartley said, “You’re not too far gone. You’re never too far-gone and no one can take free will and conscious choices from you. Remember, there is always salvation.”

Curtis Robinson said, “Rehabilitation is great and understand community is important.”

Nick Zakels said, “Try to be better everyday.” Austen Pleasants said, “There is hope, it’s never too late to change, take one day at a time and trust the process.”

Clelen Ferrell said, “You still have a lot to give.”

This was on a day the teammates and the entire 49er organization gave the residents, staff and administration of SQRC hope.

—Contributions by  
Martin Keith DeWitt  
Journalism Guild Writer



1: Clelen Ferrell signing autographs in Chapel B  
2: Curtis Robinson autographs a hat for resident in Chapel B  
3: Correctional Officer Hogan with Frank Gore in earned living housing unit  
4: Curtis Robinson arm wrestles with resident Anthony Gomez' nephew

5: Curtis Robinson signs a teddy bear for resident's family  
6: Resident all smiles with his wife and kids in the visiting room  
7: Cpt. Valenzuela with signed 49ers' memorabilia in Chapel B  
8: Nick Bosa with resident Deanzer Clark and his daughter

# Nearly undefeated season ends at All-In football tournament

**By Ricky Ransom  
Journalism Guild Writer**

The All-In Flag Football playoff bonanza played out in dramatic fashion, as one team vied for the achievement every team in sports tries to accomplish.

Fans watched the four-bracket, single-elimination tournament to see if the Spartans could complete a perfect season, similar to the 1971/72 Miami Dolphins. But that dream ended when Team Finesse beat the Spartans and denied their quest for an undefeated season.

Even in defeat, Spartans team Captain Delvon Adams

said the game took second place to life. He shared a personal moment he had with his teammates at the beginning of the year, not long after the passing of a beloved family member.

“The game is secondary as memories of my teammates greeting me with open arms after hearing the news, that really touched me,” Adams said. “Coach Carlos [Smith] has been saying it all season; to build on each other, pick each other up and they did that for me. It felt great.”

Team Finesse, which finished the regular season with a 6-5 record, pummeled the Spartans, who were

11-0 and chasing the elusive perfect season. Both teams combined to score a record setting 218 points, with Team Finesse winning 114-104.

Emerson R., staff sponsor of the league recalled the day coach Carlos approached him with the idea. “I didn’t hesitate in giving my sponsorship to the program,” Emerson R said. “It’s nice to see that San Quentin supports residents and their sports programs. Sports is a value added program, that builds character and integrity through team work which are foundational pillars of rehabilitation.”

Smith and Emerson spoke about the typical sports story

lines that are associated with Championship games -- the match-ups, the stats, box scores, MVP’s and even the dream of an undefeated season.

“This is why San Quentin Rehabilitation Center held the 2025 All-In Flag Football Super Bowl championship, because it establishes the “I’m all-in, you all-in, we all-in” mantra of the coaches and the players,” Smith said. “When this season started, we made a commitment to build this program on integrity and I’m super proud of all of you guys for sticking it out.”

SQRC football league has a vibrant group of

20-to-30-year-old residents, but it also provides an opportunity for longtime, older residents to share the same orbit with younger guys. Smith said that mixing ages enhances peer-to-peer mentoring.

Team Finesse captain, Aaron Moton said, it was difficult to sum up the season in just one word.

“As a captain, I had to emphasize humility, which also helped me to manage my anger, which enabled me to communicate better with my team,” said Moton. “Growth and accountability sticks out to me. We came a long way as a team. There was a little

chaos at first, but we settled in to become a well-balanced team on both sides of the ball, and it paid off.”

Key players for the Finesse included Tiaosisi Mantangi (10 touchdowns – eight passing and two rushing), Moton (six touchdowns – three passing and three receiving) and Elijah Walden (two touchdowns and one sack).

Veltreese Mathis led the Spartans with four touchdowns. R. Fiapoto added three scores, while Delvon Adams and June Miles each contributed two and Trey Richards and Eli Guerra each had a score as well.

# ¿Que procede después de la deportación en Latina América?

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

La amenaza a la deportación involuntaria a los países de origen, perturba a las vidas de millones de personas en EE.UU. Los inmigrantes encarcelados son quienes se encuentran en un estado más vulnerable, con la incertidumbre de no saber lo que procede después de años o décadas de encarcelamiento, debido a la falta de recursos o información migratorias.

Chad Rand coordinador de distribuciones del Proyecto de la Justicia Educativa, "Education Justice Project" PJE de la Universidad de Chicago, compartió que para él es una tristeza que la gente estén renunciado su libertad por miedo a la deportación, a países que desconocen después debido

a la ausencia de tantos años. "Desde el 2015 nosotros hemos producido una guía de reingreso a la sociedad, distribuyendo diez mil copias a las personas que han estado encarceladas. Posteriormente hemos observado que han deportado a muchas personas después de haber cumplido largas condenas, reconociendo que sus necesidades son muy diferente nosotros; decidimos crear un guía para todos los que viven en los Estados Unidos con la amenaza de ser deportados", escribió Rand en su correspondencia.

Según el manual de la justicia educativa, el gobierno mexicano ayudado a sus compatriotas a obtener sus identificaciones y documentos legales, como el acta de nacimiento, la credencial de elector (Instituto Nacional Electoral), documentos es una

identificación mexicana con las que se puede votar en toda las elecciones.

En Guatemala, los deportados son recibidos en el aeropuerto, reciben asistencia médica, comida y una llamada telefónica gratuita.

Carlos Herrarte de 58 años quien ha estado encarcelado desde el 2011, enfrenta la posibilidad en ser deportado a Guatemala. Un país que dejó en el año 1990. "Poder llegar a Guatemala y tener un trabajo para ayudar a mi madre y nietos quien se quedaron huérfanos de padre, sería una bendición. Pero no creo que el gobierno me apoye cuando llega con las manos basillas", argumento Herrarte.

Las personas deportadas a Honduras son procesadas cuando llegan al aeropuerto Ramón Villeda Morales en

San Pedro Sula. El Centro de Atención al Migrante Retornado (CAMR), brinda alimentos y bebidas, llamadas telefónicas, atención médica y ofrece un kit de higiene.

Carlos Núñez reo de SQ detalló diciendo: "como un Hondureño [que soy y] que no ha estado en mi país por más de 20 años obtener trabajo es más complicado, cuando los ciudadanos regulares les cuesta obtener trabajos".

Es recomendable que obtengan la identificación nacional de Honduras; la cedula es como un número de seguro social te permite de hacer uso de clínicas y hospitales públicos, además de comprar medicamentos. De no obtener dicha documentación puedes llevar a dos testigos que puedan dar fe de que eres hondureño. Rand comparte su

preocupación con las personas encarceladas y quienes después de ser deportados a su país de origen son nuevamente encarcelados sin un proceso justo, en especial con quienes cuentan con antecedentes penales y/o tatuajes en el cuerpo.

No obstante, cuando llegues al Salvador hay seis pasos de orientación:

Breve entrevista con la Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería pidiendo tu información básica.

La policía Nacional Civil, te procesara y te preguntaran por las razones del por qué dejaste el país.

Si necesitas atención medica el Ministerio de Salud te atenderá.

Hablaras con el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, ellos te ayudara a contactarte con tus familiares tanto adentro como afuera del país.

El quinto paso es para mujeres que han pasado violencia en El Salvador u otros países, a cargo del Instituto Salvadoreño para el Desarrollo de la Mujer.

El Registro Nacional de las Personas Naturales, ofrecen una documentación llamada Documento Único De Identificación.

El Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y de Trabajo pueden ayudarte con asistencia técnica, capacitación para el mercado laboral.

Reentryillinois.net  
(217) 300-5150  
reentry@  
educationjustice.net

Education  
Justice Project  
1001 S Wright St  
Champaign, IL 61820

## HONDURAS

### Centro de Atención al Migrante Retornado

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asesoriacamr@hotmail.com  
alhovoz@sre.gob.hn  
alhovozhonduras@gmail.com  
https://conmigho.hn/centro-de-atencion-al-migrante-retornado-onoa/

### Secretaría de Salud

Barrio El Centro, Avenida Cervantes Calle El Telégrafo, Contiguo Avenida Miguel Cervantes, Tegucigalpa (504) 2222-5771  
www.salud.gob.hn/

### Registro Nacional de Personas

Col Palmira, frente a Distrito Hotelero Plaza San Martín, Tegucigalpa  
respuesta@rnp.hn  
https://rnlpm61prd-au-crnh01.cec.occ.oraclecloud.com/site/HOME

### Organizaciones Sin Fines De Lucro

#### La Cruz Roja

Ave 2, Barrio Concepción, Tegucigalpa (504) 2237-1800  
https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/americas/honduras

### Organización Internacional para la Migración

Col Palmira, 3ra avenida, Calle del Brasil, Bloque 3 Casa 12 (504) 2237-7460  
iomtegucigalpa@iom.int  
https://www.iom.int/countries/honduras

### Casa Alianza

Calle Morelos, Avenida Cervantes, Frente Óptica Matamoros, Tegucigalpa (504) 2237-3623  
alianza.org.hn  
https://casa-alianza.org.hn/?fbclid=IwAR34CAw8oipVnrJM9Jwk8t0BanyW0ExGCYMo2Edftcb3-CIPOsewD7I

### Foro Nacional para la Migración en Honduras

Col Palmira, Calzada Los Olivos, Casa No. 352, a un costado del Edificio Italia, Tegucigalpa (504) 2205-8396  
fonamih@yahoo.com  
www.fonamihn.org/

### Casa del Migrante de Ocotepeque

Basilica Nuestra Señora de Suyapa (504) 2557-1651  
liflores@unicah.edu

## EL SALVADOR

### Ministerio de Educación

Edificio A, San Salvador (503) 2592-2000  
educacion@mined.gob.sv  
https://www.mined.gob.sv/

### Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

Bldv Cancillería, Calle Pedregal, Antiguo Cuscatlán, la Libertad (503) 2555-8500  
https://sansalvador.ilea.state.gov/contact

### Ministerio de Trabajo

Alameda Juan Pablo II y 17 Ave Nte Edificio 2, 3 y 4, Centro de Gobierno, San Salvador (503) 2529-3700  
buzon.sugerencias@mtps.gob.sv  
https://www.mtps.gob.sv/

### Connigrantes

connigrantes@reee.gob.sv  
https://www.latinno.net/en/case/9065/

### Migración Extranjería El Salvador

9 Poniente y 15 Av N, San Salvador (503) 2213-7700  
usuarios@seguridad.gob.sv  
www.migracion.gob.sv/

### Registro Nacional

Alameda Manuel Enrique Araujo, Edificio Carbonell No 1 Colonia Roma, San Salvador (503) 2521-9300  
info@mpn.gob.sv  
https://www.gob.sv/

### Organizaciones no lucrativas

### Comité de los Estados Unidos Para Refugiados E Inmigrantes

Col San Francisco Calle Los Bambues y Calle Los Abetos, 37-A B, San Salvador (503) 2526-9219  
eolan@uscraa.org  
https://refugees.org/field-office/central-america/

### Cruz Roja

Calle 2, Santa Lucia, San Salvador (503) 2294-0969 (503) 2239-4942  
https://cruzrojasal.org.sv/

### Casa del Migrante de Scalabrini

Col Mugdan 6ta Av N, Passage Viaud 716 503, San Salvador (503) 2221-9725  
migrantessv@gmail.com  
https://www.migrantes.com.mx/san-salvador

### Cofamide

Centro Historico, San Salvador (503) 7602-2625  
cofamide.elsalvador@yahoo.comcontact@martinbarofund.org  
https://martinbarofund.org/cofamide-2017/

### Organización Internacional de Migración

Urbanización Madre Selva, Pasaje H # 5 01101 Antiguo Cuscatlán, El Salvador (503) 2521-0500  
cofamide.elsalvador@yahoo.comcontact@martinbarofund.org  
https://triangulonorteca.iom.int/es/el-salvador

### Consejo Noruego Para Refugiados

San Salvador nrc@nrc.no  
https://www.nrc.no/countries/south-america/north-central-america-and-mexico//

### Alianza de Salvadoreños Retornados

Boulevard Los Héroes, Condominio Los Héroes, Séptimo Nivel, Apartamento No. 7-D 503, San Salvador (202) 360-4530  
alsat.retornados16@gmail.com  
https://www.iaf.gov/es/grants/el-salvador/2018-alsare/

## GUATEMALA

### Consejo Nacional de Atención al Migrante de Guatemala

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conamigua@conamigua.gob.gt  
https://conamigua.gob.gt/

### Instituto Guatemalteco de Migración

6ta Ave 3-11, zona 4, Guatemala (502) 2411-2411  
https://igm.gob.gt/

### Registro Civil Nacional

Calzada Roosevelt 13-46, zona 7 (502) 2426-1900  
https://www.renap.gob.gt/

### Ministerio del Trabajo y Colocación Laboral

7 Ave 3-33 zona 9, Edificio Torre Empresarial, Guatemala (502) 2422-2501  
https://www.mintrabajo.gob.gt/

### Organizaciones no lucrativas

### Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

3 Avenida 10-35, zona 9, Guatemala (502) 2414-7401  
iomguatemala@iom.int  
https://www.iom.int/countries/guatemala

### Desgua

8 Ave. 5-19, zona 1, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala 09001  
DESGUAinfo@desgua.org  
https://desgua.org/

### Los hermanos de Pedro

6a calle oriente No 20, La Antigua Guatemala (502) 7931-2100  
https://hermanopedrogt.org/

### Asociación de Retornados de Guatemala

(502) 2294-9217  
info@arg.com.gt

### Consejo Noruego Para Refugiados

Ciudad de Guatemala nrc@nrc.no  
https://www.nrc.no/countries/south-america/north-central-america-and-mexico//

### Casa del Migrante. Guatemala

15 Ave. 194 "A" zona 1, Guatemala (502) 2230-2781  
casadelimigrantetecun@gmail.com  
migrantetecun@yahoo.com.mx  
https://www.scalabriniguate.org/homepage/

### Cónyuges deportados viviendo en Guatemala-Facebook

https://web.facebook.com/groups/DeporteeSpousesLivinginGuatemala

## MEXICO

### LGTBO

Federación Mexicana de Empresarios LGBT Indianápolis 8-602B, Nápoles, Benito Juárez, 03810 Ciudad de México, CDMX, México (556) 721-2138  
contacto@fmgelgbt.mx  
https://www.facebook.com/InstitutoNacionalElectoral

### Instituto Nacional Electoral

(800) 433-2000  
https://www.ine.mx/servicios-ine/

### Instituto de Salud para Bienestar

(800) 767-8527  
https://www.gob.mx/insabi

### Instituto Nacional el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia

atencion\_ciudadana@dif.gob.mx  
https://www.gob.mx/difnacional

### Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social

(800) 767-8527  
https://www.imss.gob.mx/

### Secretaría de Relación Exteriores

https://citas.sre.gob.mx/

### Secretaría de Educación Pública

(800) 288-6688  
https://www.gob.mx/sep

### Secretaría del Trabajo y Bienestar Social

(522) 000-5300  
https://www.gob.mx/stps/

### Organizaciones no lucrativas

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### Ciudad de México Comedor Comunitario

Calle Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl # 185, Piso 3, Col Tránsito, Alcaldía Cuauhtémoc, 06820 (558) 957-3466  
https://sibiso.cdmx.mx/programa-comedores-sociales

### Ciudad de México Casa Alianza México

Moctezuma #68 Col Guerrero, Alcaldía Cuauhtémoc México CDMX. CP. 06300 (800) 388-3888  
mexico@casa-alianzamexico.org  
https://www.covenanthouse.org/camino

### Comunidad en Retorno

info@comunidadenretorno.com  
https://www.comunidadenretorno.com/

### Brújula Intersexual

brujulaintersexual@gmail.com  
https://brujulaintersexual.org/

### Racismo Mx

ayuda@racismo.mx  
https://racismo.mx/

### Institutos de Gobierno y Organizaciones sin Fines de Lucro

#### Matamoros, Tamaulipas Gobierno de Matamoros

Sexto S/N, González y Morelos, Centro Heroica (868) 810-8000  
contacto@matamoros.gob.mx  
https://www.matamoros.gob.mx

#### Matamoros, Tamaulipas San Juan Diego and Francisco de Asis

Ave. Golfo de México 48, Col Ampliación Solidaridad, 87456 (868) 822-2213 (868) 822-4689  
https://redes.dh.tamu.edu/node/56

### Ciudad Juárez Chihuahua

Ave Francisco Villa 950 N, Centro, 32000 (656) 737-0000  
https://www.juarez.gob.mx/

### Ciudad Juárez Chihuahua

Soup Kitchen Calle Garambullo 7130, Héroes de la Revolución, 32696 (656) 667-7184

### Ciudad Juárez Chihuahua Casa del Migrante

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ivonnedj105245@

yahoo.com.mx  
https://m.facebook.com/CasaDelMigranteEnJuarezAC/

### Tijuana, Baja California Gobierno de Tijuana

Ave Independencia 1350, Zona Urbana Río, 2210 (664) 973-7000  
https://www.tijuana.gob.mx/

### Tijuana, Baja California Casa del Migrante en Tijuana

Galileo St #239, Col Postal, 22416 (664) 382-7685 (664) 682-5180  
casadelmigrantetijuana@gmail.com  
https://casadelmigrantetijuana.com/

### Tijuana, Baja California Casa Madre Assunta

Galileo 2305, Col Postal, 22416 (664) 683-0575 (664) 577-0025  
centromadreasunta@gmail.com  
https://istitu toma dreasunta.com.mx/

### Tijuana, Baja California Espacio Migrante

Calle Aldrete 911, Col Zona Norte espaciomigrante@gmail.com  
www.espaciomigrante.org

### Tijuana, Baja California YMCA

Bvd Cuauhtémoc Sur 3170, Col Chula Vista, 22045 (664) 686-1359  
casasymca@pymcadescom.org.mx  
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100081558090834

### Tijuana, Baja California Al Otro lado de Tijuana

511 E San Ysidro Blvd #333, San Ysidro, CA 92173 (664) 208-8994  
info@alotrolado.org  
https://alotrolado.org/

### Tijuana, Baja California Comunidad Cultural de Tijuana

LGBTI, A.C. Puente México 8202, Zona Centro, 22000 Tijuana, B.C., México (664) 290-9007  
cocut2010@hotmail.com  
https://www.facebook.com/cocutlgbt/

### Nogales, Sonora Casa de Migrantes Menores

Boulevard San Carlos, esq Con Santa Catalina, Fracc San Carlos III Etapa (631) 209-5724  
juridiconogales@difson.gob.mx

### Nogales, Sonora Casa de la Misericordia de Todas la Naciones

Calle Los Tigres 160, Bella Vista, 84046 (333) 141-6021  
team@hepacnogales.org  
https://www.facebook.com

ART

# Artwork in minimum security housing unit brings unity

By Jason L. Jackson  
Staff Writer

Two residents turn their love for art into rehabilitation and a way to break down long-standing barriers.

If a person walks around the dorm and office areas of San Quentin's H-unit, they will see murals emblazoned on the lockers of many of the officers and staff. Depictions of the Muppets, scenes conjuring the "Wild West," and the San Francisco 49ers logo pop out, as if life-like. In dorm one, there is a huge mural of San Francisco Bay — Golden Gate Bridge and all — covering one of the walls.

Above the Bay Area mural are the words "Bridging the Gap," and that is exactly what Jaime Villafan and Alejandro Perez do with their art.

"The cops saw me drawing one day and they liked my work, and asked me to start



SQNews archive

Mural in H-Unit dorm four

doing work for them on their lockers," said Villafan, who learned to draw at age 12 while serving time in juvenile hall.

Villafan was arrested for vandalism when he was younger because of the graffiti art he would paint on buildings.

In a stroke of irony, Villafan's art now helps him build healthy relationships with correctional officers.

"I used to resent cops because of how I grew up and the environment I was in, but now I can see that not all cops

are bad. They are people just like us and they have a job to do," said Villafan.

With more than 25 years in the criminal justice system, Villafan has seen volatile relationships between correctional officers and

incarcerated people. He appreciates the recent positive shift he has observed.

Aside from helping him connect with the officers and other staff, Villafan uses his art to stay productive and maintain peace of mind.

"Art is therapy because it helps pass the time. I feel accomplished and fall in love every time I do something new."

The same is true of Alejandro Perez, who got into painting by designing low rider bikes and cars when he was younger. He started drawing six years ago as a way to pass the time while in L.A. County jail. He said the art he produces helps him escape his prison environment while developing new ways to approach life.

"Drawing has helped me become more patient, because sometimes a particular piece can take time. It teaches me how to take my time with life," said Perez.

Perez is glad that his art has created bonds between himself and officers. He sees their perspective change as they appreciate the talent and the hard work that goes into creating a piece.

"I never had a real problem with cops. A lot of what I thought about them was connected with what I believed they thought about me," said Perez. "My experience has changed my perspective to see that not all officers are the same."

Upon his release, Perez plans to use his talents to help him navigate life while he rebuilds relationships with his family.

Once he paroles, Villafan is eager to continue drawing as a way to build his career and inspire his three kids, who are his biggest motivation. He will return to his hometown of Merced, Calif. and work to start a clothing brand.

YOUTH

# Mentorship is a powerful part of rehabilitation

By Michael Callahan  
Layout Design

A mentor-mentee relationship is built on guidance, learning, and trust. When both sides communicate honestly and respect each other, the relationship becomes a powerful tool for development.

California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has made strides to help support a peer-to-peer approach to effecting change in youth offenders. However, more progress and support are still needed for the mentors who have invested a lot of their free time and energy to overcome the roadblocks and space issues in San Quentin.

The Youth Offender program (YOP) started when the state of California passed legislation with the goal of providing offenders under the age of 26 with the tools, guidance, and community necessary to change the course of their lives. SQ's YOP mentors have played a big role in the growth, support, and understanding of youth offenders participating in the program.

"The importance of having somebody as a role model that you can look up to and that is invested into your well-being is overlooked," SQ resident mentee Diego Nava said.

A mentor is usually someone with more experience who can offer

advice, share knowledge, and help a mentee navigate challenges. Instead of just giving orders, a good mentor listens, supports and encourages growth. They use their own experiences, successes, and mistakes to help mentees avoid common pitfalls and built confidence in their abilities.

One of SQ's YOP mentors is S. Brown. He has been incarcerated nearly eight years on his fifth term. In addition to mentoring, Brown is the YOP education coordinator. He oversees and coordinates group schedules, participation, and facilitation.

"Being a mentor is special. I had nobody over me giving me good advice when I was younger in prison," Brown said. "I want to help these men to be productive citizens by providing them suggestions, advice, and guidance."

Brown has been a YOP mentor for three years. In that time he has been assigned to more than a dozen mentees and has a personal relationship with all of them.

Unfortunately, not all the mentees buy in to the rehabilitative model, but this does not dissuade the mentors. Brown said he focuses on active and reflective listening. He helps mentees understand their self-worth and discover their authentic self.

A mentee's role is just as important. A strong mentee is open to feedback, willing to learn, and ready

to ask questions. They take responsibility for their progress and show appreciation for a mentor's time and insight.

"For me to change, I thought about my values and what I want out of life," Diego Nava said.

Nava is 24 years old with a 32-years-to-life sentence. He said his social, environmental, and economic conditions led to a path of criminality that was familiar. Several of his family members were gang members and many of his friendships evolved into gangs. Nava grew up in an abusive household, struggled

with low self-esteem, feelings of insecurity, and power and control issues.

"Coming to prison, there were several individuals who were bad influences. But it was the mentors in the YOP program that modeled positive change and helped me stay optimistic," Nava said.

In eighth grade Nava was kicked out of school. "It was my parents who told me I did not need to attend school," he said, sharing that having a positive role model could have changed his trajectory to finish his education.

"When someone who is

invested in you shares that made the same mistakes, then I can learn to overcome my struggles."

Nava said the mentors motivated him to attend self-help groups such as Criminals and Gang Members Anonymous, Financial Literacy, and Anger Management, and to participate in events like YOP dodge ball, kickball, and movie night.

"If I need to talk or go to them, they encourage me and open my eyes even more," Nava said.

Mentors and mentees both grow through the shared

experience—one by teaching, the other by learning — and the connection can last well beyond the formal mentoring period.

"Mentorship can light even the darkest spaces. True leadership is measured not by what we achieve in ourselves, but what we inspire in others," resident mentor Larry "Ali" Deminter said.

On November 25, San Quentin's Youth Offender Program held their inaugural CLUB (Changing Live through Understanding Beliefs) graduation. Thirty residents were recognized for their perseverance, courage, and transformation.

Each individual completed the 52-week multi-curriculum courses centered on denial, self-management, thinking errors, healthy relationships, boundaries, anger management, cycle of addiction, and financial planning.

"YOP mentors are a source of support that I can look for guidance because they walked this path already," said resident youth offender Omar Suarez. "They can help me with things going on in my life within these walls."

"Our mentors took the time to invest in us. I learned to take help, even when I don't want it," Alex Mendez said. "They are much more than friends, they are someone to depend on for support and accountability."



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Mentor Larry "Ali" Deminter's mentorship does not stop at CLUB recognition



By Matthew Schumacher  
Contributing Writer

I read what you guys are doing on the tablets. It's always inspiring to see groups that are working on rehabilitation, mentorship, and education. Education and programming seem to be some of the biggest issues in here.

In 1999, I received life without parole when I was 17-years-old. It was an accumulation of many things that happened to me since I was 14. Over that short period

of time I saw plenty of counselors during my time at youth detention and treatment facilities. None of that worked for me. There was no connection or empathy.

When I look back there also was no supervision or real plan on helping us. Treatment facilities put teenagers around adults and that was a great way for us to get alcohol and drugs. Of all the times I was locked up, it was never longer than a few weeks. I thought I was invisible because there was no punishment.

The court procedure for my case was a blur. I plead guilty thinking I'd do no more than 14 years. I now realize it was a plan by the lead detective, district attorney and my attorney to get me to plead guilty. At sentencing, I was being given no parole because I didn't sound remorseful and I was doing adult things. One thing I wish the courts would do is wait to determine if a person will show remorse. I don't

see how that can be expected so quickly.

It took many years to take responsibility and start to work on myself. Wisconsin use to have so many programs and vocational classes. I still take advantage of every door that opens. In 2014, I along with 21 of my max security peers trained to become certified peer specialists. Since then the Wisconsin Department of Corrections has trained over 214 men. I've been able to give back and there is no better feeling in the world. This job has also given me the opportunity to move around. I've been to three medium security level facilities, in honor dorms, and lived in an apartment as part of a dog service program. I have trained over 20 dogs for veterans, and the police. The community has been amazing, but Wisconsin still has no bill conforming to the U.S. Supreme Court decisions in Miller Montgomery.

Good amounts of juvenile lifers

have been released over the years. It seems like we've been a few voters away from a bill passing or having one introduced since 2014. Educating people and receiving support have been some of the biggest issues. We do what we can in prison with rehabilitation and groups. It's very minimal within the walls, but we're always pushing for it.

Something a good majority of us are experiencing is our custody classification. We feel stuck because the mandatory restrictions keeping us at medium custody levels. We have a points system that doesn't mean anything, unless you're under 5 years of your release date. Right now, I am classified as minimum community. So, my next step is to show that I can make it with fewer restrictions.

I've been working with many organizations over the years. One of the best for me and my well-being has been The Center for Fair

Sentencing of Youth. They have so much information including activities for people to be a part of and they are open to connect with people. They take the time to write back. I also have Madison Law School working on my case in order to receive a parole date.

I also just took part in a survey done by second chance study. And the Governor has gotten it approved in the budget for work to be done on the bill to get in line with the U.S. constitution. We still have a lot of work and to me it's even more important to stop the flow of youth still coming in. and the ones to yet hit the system. I love reading what you guys are doing. It's inspiring and we're always pushing to incorporate positive changes here.

Sincerely  
Matthew Schumacher # 369487  
Stanley Correctional Institution  
P.O. Box 189  
Phoenix, MD 21131

GAMES

CROSSWORD CLASSIC  
Created by Michael Fangman

"You're Doing Famously"

Edited by Jan Perry

15x15 crossword grid with numbered starting points for clues.

Across

- 1. He gave us E=mc²
6. Moe, Curly, and Shemp were one, but Larry wasn't
11. A certain short nurse
12. She was Mindy to Robin's Mork
13. Native American people living in a vast area of central Canada
15. They are the pair in a Full House
19. Cube or Vanilla
21. Opposite of SE
23. Either Josh or James
24. \_\_\_\_\_ a face card = 21
27. It comes 6th on the music scale
29. A judge's address
30. Say it twice to have a Gabor
31. This dance can be spicy
34. This Ogden wrote light verse comprised of puns and epigrams
36. A short 29-across
37. According to legend, this loch hides a dinosaur in its depths
40. \_\_\_\_\_-delic: relating to the northern group of Celtic languages (Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx etc.)
41. A Biblical father
45. Had the car been invented in his time, this 16th president might have driven an eponymous SUV
47. This famous Civil War general was related to 22-down.
48. Meaning "a miscellaneous collection of things" this comes from the 17th century Spanish word for "stew"
50. The last of these 6-across brothers, this Stooze died in 1973
51. This James had his final motion picture, Giant (1956), released posthumously
53. For some, it is the best part of pie
55. This Mel was a famous Tiger
57. Use this to make 53-across
60. Both Arsenic and American Samoa
61. They often stand on street corners
62. This Larry got shot on TV in the '80s
65. MA, NH, VT, RI, MA, but not CA
67. This often pale beer varietal is known for its bitter flavor and higher alcoholic content
68. This Jim gave us Sesame Street
69. The "A" in A-Team
72. This Pope is a White Sox fan
74. Begins louder than MP
76. A famous Garth
77. Bob Keeshan's Captain

Down

- 3. Where J got poked? (Hint: He couldn't see afterwards)
4. Kevin's Doug Heffernan worked here for years on CBS
5. It has 12 steps
7. Sinatra's Danny
8. Often faster than an NFL TE
9. These two letters are a Latin plural used to identify multiple maggots
10. Stimp's chihuahua friend
13. This George was 1/2 of Wham!
16. The Kinks famously sang of her
17. An unfinished concrete level?
18. A stutter just before O?
20. They are likely in charge
22. This former British soldier showed up to America's First Continental Congress in his military uniform
23. The last surviving crew member of NASA's Apollo 11 mission
25. This prefix is Latin for "not"
26. Rocky IV nemesis
28. Where you can find the Tide (abbr.)
31. This NY borough is often associated with the city's various art galleries
32. \_\_\_\_\_-epitic: a restorative drug that often stimulates the nervous system
33. Tin on the periodic table
35. What the sun looks like in Spain
36. A small, and surprisingly unfunny, 10,000 square meters
38. These EA characters can also help you change cell phones easily
39. "You might think this is a booger, but it..."
42. Insect known for spelling acumen
43. What someone does with a book
44. This Collins orbited while 23-down walked on the surface of the moon
46. Many licensed professions are required to do this annually
49. You can find the Ducks here (abbr.)
52. \_\_\_\_\_-chian: Relating to a biblical patriarch who built an ark
54. This Pixar movie had a flying house
55. Letters that get you all wet?
58. The Matrix's Neo flies upside down?
59. A provider of carceral phone calls
60. Head law enforcement officials in most U.S. states
62. Helium on the periodic table
63. Horse's grumpy spouse? (2 words)
64. Bad information?
66. How you might listen to a corny joke? (like this one, I admit)
68. It will fine you if you don't cut your grass the proper length
70. One of the Duke brothers
71. Minimum stove setting
73. This stock symbol was removed from the DJIA not too long after digital cameras arrived
75. Jack Black's Kung-Fu Panda

Down

- 1. You can find a Dr. there often
2. "\_\_\_\_\_ Out!" (What your mom might say to a door left open)

SOLUTIONS grid showing the completed crossword puzzle.

Word list for the crossword puzzle solutions.

ART

Imagination and improvisation create beauty in miniature



By Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chair

An incarcerated man creates miniature furniture by hand. San Quentin resident Marcos "Sanchez" Valdivia employs imagination and improvisation to create his art in the absence of a hobby or crafts program at the rehabilitation center. "I came from another prison where hobby [work] is allowed, said Valdivia. When I arrived at The Q, I was surprised that I have no access to tools. I have to improvise in order to be creative. It takes more time for a project to be completed. San Quentin is supposed to be a rehabilitation center, and yet we don't have a hobby shop [or crafts] program."



he spotted rocks that could be useful in his creation of the cabinets. "What caught my eye was the shinning aspect of each rock," said Valdivia. On the side of this miniature furniture, he painted them white and glued the rocks. He also used a handmade instrument to cut and shape the edges of each cabinet as previewers to give its own style. A process that took him several days, not having the appropriate tools made it harder for him. The crafty man decided to take it to a higher level by creating a second cabinet by adding surplus art. He took the front and created two windows. In the center, he placed a red rose. He created dough out of bread and used glue, floor wax sealer and white sheets of paper, shaping a rose and painted it red and green. Side doors have the same concept as the previous one. According to Valdivia, he wanted to give each piece its own special touch and identity. This is why they look different. "It would be nice if San Quentin Rehabilitation Center was to give us the opportunity to make it easy for us to create art, hobby. We really need this access to tools," said Valdivia. "A hobby program is beneficial for mental health. We need the support from the administration."

SUDOKU

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers pre-filled.

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