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Dyslexia linked to learning disabilities

By Terrell J. Marshall
Staff Writer

There is a strong link between illiteracy, learning disabilities, and the justice system, which some call a prison pipeline for the learning disabled.

Some studies reveal 47-48% of incarcerated people have dyslexia, compared to 20% in the general population, according to Person Assessments and Dyslexia Resource Center.

“A lot of people go their whole lives struggling to read and never reach out for help,” said Frances Santiago, Learning Specialist at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s Mount Tamalpais College.

Dyslexia is a learning disorder that makes it difficult to read because

of how the brain relates to letters and words (decoding). Also called a reading disability, dyslexia is not due to problems with intelligence, vision, or hearing; it is linked to how the brain processes language.

There is no cure, but most people with dyslexia can excel at learning with specialized education programs, tutoring, and emotional support, noted the website mayoclinic.org

According to *Wikipedia*, one-in-five people have some form of dyslexia, including some of the brightest and most successful people in the world.

Steven Spielberg, Erin Brockovich, Gavin Newsom, Vince McMahon, Whoopi Goldberg, Tim Tebow, Steve Jobs, Henry Winkler,

See **DYSLEXIA** on pg 4

Restitution First Act proposed by incarcerated persons

By Michael Callahan
Staff Writer

Restitution does not erase or undo the harm victims have suffered, but it is a key aspect of accountability and can significantly aid survivors as they reconstruct their lives following a traumatic event.

Just as an incarcerated person’s actions can harm victims, a life dedicated to making amends can facilitate healing for survivors. San Quentin’s Civic Engagement Group modeled that contention in collaboration with San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins, by drawing a proposal that identified

a crucial gap in services for victims of crime.

“Victims are entitled to get something and they should not have to file to the court. The burden of crime should not be placed on them and the court system does not outright help them,” resident Charles Sabbath said. “This bill will help bring comfort if something happens to them.”

Recently, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly member C. Stefani’s bill, AB 1213, the Restitution First Act, which was based on CEG’s proposal, into

See **VICTIMS** on pg 4

Relations between officers and residents improve

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

In the heart of criminal justice reform, California lawmakers have passed legislation in an effort to humanize life for incarcerated people.

On October 1, 2025, Senate Bill 551 passed by a majority vote, modifying sections 1170 and 5000 of the Penal Code by adding section 5000.5 in relation to corrections and rehabilitation.

California’s Governor Gavin Newsom signed the legislation, which encouraged California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to invest in better relationships between correctional officers and incarcerated people. The bill’s objective is to create healthier people and safer

prison environments.

“Humanity is safety, if we reduce the, ‘us against them type of mentality,’” said San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s Warden C. Andes, at a ribbon cutting ceremony for the prison’s new learning center.

State lawmakers recognized that prison life has had a negative psychological impact on incarcerated people as well as correctional staff.

The national suicide rate for incarcerated people is 31.2 deaths per every 100,000 people. The suicide rates for those working in prison settings are 39% higher than the national work force, according to SB 551.

Resident Jose Maya said he feels that residents and correctional officers

See **RELATIONS** on pg 4

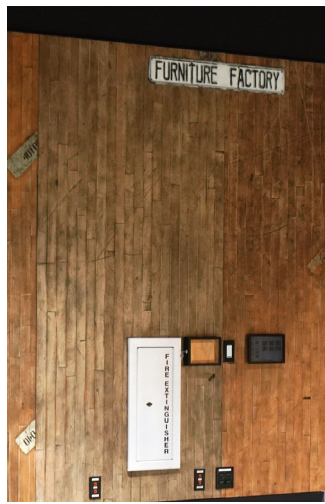


Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Back center Building A for Coding and Media Center, Right Building B education and Library, Front left Building Cafe

SQRC residents embrace new Learning Center

Project fast-tracked in only 18 months



Decor from repurposed material from furniture factory

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

The San Quentin Rehabilitation Center held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to debut its new \$239

million learning center, bringing together the who’s who of California corrections.

Calif. Governor Gavin Newsom, Executive Vice-President of the California Correctional Peace

Officers Association Steve Abner, and San Quentin’s Warden C. Andes, to name a few, were among those in attendance.

The new center is a joint effort planned and designed with public safety and successful reentry at the forefront. Teams of professionals in criminal justice, public safety, healthcare, academia, reentry, and rehabilitation held interviews and brainstorming sessions with prison staff and residents to facilitate positive outcomes.

“Our job was to do more, but also to be more open to change, to be more data driven, focused on innovation, focused on reform, focused on improving results,” Gov. Newsom said. “It was always about public safety. It was always about community safety. It was about, yes, being smart on crime as well as tough on crime.”

Gov. Newsom first announced the plan to transform San Quentin into a model rehabilitation center in March 2023. Thirty plus months later, the new learning center was completed.

On the top two floors of Building A is the Media Center. The structure’s ground floor hosts a reentry center that emphasizes the importance of preparing incarcerated persons to return to society, as well as the coding instruction program provided by The Last Mile.

See **BUILDING** on pg 6-7

AGING IN PRISON

Millions die in prison every day

— STORY ON PAGE 5



LEGISLATION LWOP

Legislative request for youth offenders serving life without parole sentences

— STORY ON PAGE 10

CANTEEN PRICES

Residents concerned over rising food and hygiene prices

— STORY ON PAGE 10



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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

Volunteer serves Mt. Tam College students in Computer Lab



Eric Roos



Roos working with Ed Tholl computer lab workshop coordinator

Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

By Stuart Clarke Journalism Guild Writer

Eric Roos volunteers his free time to serve San Quentin residents enrolled in Mount Tamalpais College. He oversees the Mt. Tam Computer Lab in the new Learning Center.

With serene humility and his trademark effervescent smile, he conscientiously seeks to ensure that MTC students get the printing needed for school and special projects. Roos also schedules and supervises the Peer Computer Lab Assistants, residents who volunteer to assist MTC students with their computer needs and teach computer skills in various workshops.

"The patience and compassion make Eric ideal for the position," said lab assistant Angel Alvarez. "The MTC computer lab provides an invaluable service to the college student community, and Eric's kindness helps welcome those who want to earn a college degree in such a tumultuous place."

When technological glitches inevitably impede the process, he coordinates with other MTC officials and San Quentin's information technology staff to restore service. Roos also works closely with other volunteers to ensure that the computer lab is available to residents as often as possible.

"One of the biggest reasons I volunteered is because of my philosophy

there but for the grace of God, go I," said Roos. "There's no difference between me and the students I work for."

Born and raised in the Silicon Valley, Roos resides in the San Francisco Bay Area. He attended the University of California at Berkeley and studied history. His focus was on the Soviet Union, specifically the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 Russia.

After college he toured the world with the music group Up with People. They performed at prisons in Europe and nationwide, including the supermax facility in Florence, Colorado. The organization also performed in the 1982 Super Bowl halftime show.

"Those experiences led me to the knowledge and desire that I wanted to be involved in an on-the-ground experience in a carceral setting," said Roos.

Eventually he decided on a career in advertising. He worked with brands such as Levi's, Clorox, C & H and Gallo.

He was responsible for branding strategy — helping companies determine how to market their products to target customers. That career took him to picturesque locations like Morocco, Paris, and Hawaii to film television campaigns.

Roos worked in a county jail in an "Own Recognition" project, interviewing the newly incarcerated to determine if they could be reliable show up for court. The goal was to release as many as possible on their own

recognition.

"I have always been interested in penal reform and social justice," said Roos.

In 2023, while serving on the Board of Directors for Larkin Street Youth Service, he met and interviewed Nandita Dinesh, former Dean of Academic Administration for MTC, for a position on the Board. However, shortly after the interview, she acquired her appointment with MTC.

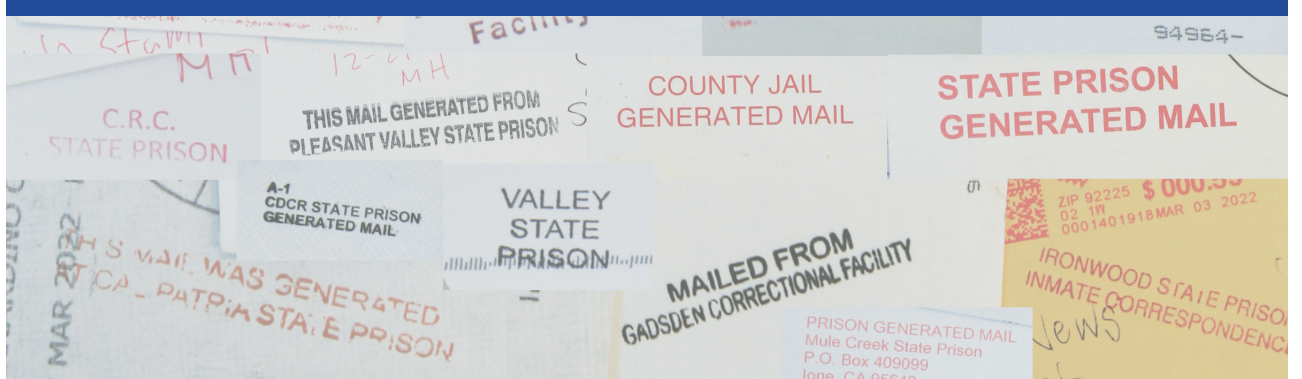
"When I left the Board, I contacted Nandita because the MTC job sounded interesting," said Roos. After a satisfying career in advertising, he hired on in a volunteer capacity with MTC in 2024. With no teaching background, he was made computer lab manager.

"Eric is compassionate and empathetic. He fulfills a service that is needed for the justice-impacted. He is a cut above the rest," said resident William Earl Tolbert.

When asked what he liked about the job, Roos replied, "Definitely the people. I work with different people every day, the atmosphere in the lab is awesome, and it's a place where students with all different backgrounds can work together peacefully."

Now semi-retired, when not selflessly serving the computer lab, he enjoys his free time doing yoga and, most of all, taking long walks on the beach with his beloved Golden Doodle dog, Luke.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear SQNews,

Once again I just want to say thank you for all you do. I love all the stories of support and giving back. I want to show my support to SQN, and I want to stay on the mailing list. One of the things I do to feel good is my artwork, and I live for the artwork you guys showcase. Maybe one day I will send some of my work. Thanks a lot and keep up the good work.

—Alfredo Arvelo Marcy, New York

Dear SQNews,

I am grateful to be a part of positive Peer Support program here at Pelican Bay State Prison and attend groups with them, to share my life experiences. My fellow peer supporters help me grow in many areas of my life and facing challenges. With a non-judgmental ears they give me knowledge, guidance, and many tips on navigating through challenges in a more self-determined life. My fellow Peer Support Specialists have helped me

develop goals, build confidence, improve empathy, and understanding. Thank you CDCR for this program it has helped me to be a better person and one day prepare me to be a person and one day a member of my community and society.

—Rios Anthony Pelican Bay State Prison

Dear SQNews,

I am writing to say I really appreciated the focus on the LGTBQ+ community. Here in Montana we do not have anything that sheds light on the turmoil's the transgender people endure. Please send my greetings to the LGTBQ+ community there and best wishes to them all.

—Ezdeh Highley Montana State Prison Phoenix, Maryland

Dear SQNews,

I am writing as a reader of San Quentin News for a couple of years. I have been in the New York State Department of Corrections for about 25 years now. I love to read and

write. Thank you for your selflessness in sending your newspaper to me free of charge. If possible please continue to send me since I have moved.

—Michael Taffinder Auburn, New York

Dear SQNews,

I enjoy reading your newspaper whenever I can get my hands on one. Keep up the good work on informing us incarcerated on what is going on in the prison system here in California and all over the world. I want to stay informed on the new laws inside and outside of the prison. Thank you sincerely.

—Paul Fuentez High Desert Prison Susanville, Calif

Dear SQNews,

Much love and blessings to you all. Thank you for keeping us all up to date with relevant news and inspirational stories.

—Roman Espino CSP- Los Angeles, Lancaster

San Quentin News

EST. 1940

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PROFILE

Going home after a millennium sentence



Governor Newsom greets Schrubb



Photos by CDCR source

Schrubb at CAL CRT graduation

By Kevin D. Sawyer
 Editor-in-Chief

Kevin R. Schrubb, 64, arrived in prison with a sentence of 1,010 years and 19 life terms. He was addicted to drugs and robbed banks to support his habit, until California's Three Strikes Law caught up with him.

After 23 years of incarceration, Schrubb faced his first appearance before the Board of Parole Hearings. Arguably, he was better prepared than most who arrived in prison with such a bleak outlook on his future. Because of his hard work and rehabilitation, he was able to pivot and turn his life around.

Warden Chance Andes at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center referred Schrubb's name to the secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for a recall of sentence. Ten days later, Schrubb received a commutation of his sentence from Gov. Gavin Newsom.

"I still don't feel comfortable saying I earned all this great stuff, like support from staff, the governor, the warden, and free people, all of whom say I earned this," said Schrubb. "This is the place [SQRC] God has chosen to bless me."

During Schrubb's rehabilitative journey, he immersed himself in multiple groups and self-help programs to address the underlying trauma that had once been the catalyst for all of his criminal undertakings.

"I have like 35 groups," said Schrubb. Some of those were California Re-entry Institute, Guiding Rage Into Power, No More Tears, and others.

"Those are the ones that really had an impact on me," said Schrubb. "They informed me with first-hand experience of what [people] went through as victims of criminal acts. It changed my outlook on the harm, pain, and suffering I've caused to my victims. As a result, I vowed to never do harm to anyone else."

Harm, pain and trauma visited Schrubb early in life, and it continued while he was in prison.

"When I was five years old, my mother left me and my younger sister with one of her eight siblings who was in a worse position to take on two more mouths to feed," Schrubb wrote in a 2021 letter. He described an older cousin as his "first bully" who later molested his sister.

A child of the 1960s, Schrubb was raised in the spare-the-rod-spoil-the-child generation. "Beatings with extension cords for the slightest offense were commonplace," he wrote. By the time he returned to live with his mother, he said she used verbal abuse to replace his aunt's physical abuse.

"I couldn't do anything right in her eyes," wrote Schrubb. "I was a 'dumb ass ni**er,' 'stupid Black MF,' 'ignorant MF,' 'ignorant ass ni**er,' etc. So, I became her words. I became Helen's monster, always in trouble, skipping school, multiple trips to juvenile hall, and eventually jail and prison."

Schrubb recalled an incident in school, at age 11, that was particularly scarring. "At career day I told the class that I wanted to become an architect," he wrote. "When the teacher couldn't convince me to change my desire and choose auto mechanic, landscaper, or a trade...I was sent to the principal's office."

"At a subsequent parent-teacher meeting, my teacher told my mother that I chose the career of architecture because I knew it was a difficult career," wrote Schrubb. "So when I failed, I could blame my failure on that, to which my mother agreed."

After run-ins with the law as a juvenile, Schrubb wrote that his mother suggested sending him to live with his favorite uncle. He described it as "an agreement with probation and the court," but "she reneged."

Schrubb eventually became a draftsman, a builder, auto mechanic, "and a damn landscaper, to my mother's great surprise," he wrote. "I often wonder what would have happened if I would have been allowed to go live with my uncle." He described him as a "positive male influence in my life," who "always encouraged me to succeed."

Through his many trips in and out of jail and prison, Schrubb became a self-taught jailhouse lawyer. At his trial, he represented himself. He said the judge called him a "fool." After conviction, he obtained a sentence review and had his sentence reduced by 40 years.

Years later he said, "I filed a habeas petition, seeking relief under Proposition 36, and was denied." He appealed and was granted a reduction of sentence on his non-violent offenses. "I got 878 years, and 18 life terms taken off." In 2023, he had two more resentencing hearings that reduced his sentence to 129 years to life.

Today, Schrubb is a man of many talents. Throughout his journey through Deuel Vocational Institute (now closed), Pelican Bay State Prison, Kern Valley State Prison, Salinas Valley State Prison, California Men's Colony (East), and San Quentin, he has obtained trades as a computer-numerically-controlled machinist, certified forklift operator, certified scissor lift operator, Material Safety Data Sheet specialist, and a CalPIA Healthcare Facilities Maintenance worker.

An IVES Training Group certificate of

completion reads, "This is to certify that Kevin Schrubb has fulfilled all the theoretical and practical training and evaluation requirements listed in federal and/or regional regulations, and, as such has achieved the designation of Certified Operator on the following type(s) of equipment: Forklift Class 3 & 4; Scissor Lift."

Last year in December, Murphy Industrial Coatings, Inc. presented Schrubb with a Letter of Intent to hire him upon release from prison. "Our company believes strongly in second chances," the letter reads. "We recognize and commend your dedication to rehabilitation and your continued efforts to build a positive future for yourself and your loved ones."

Schrubb said he plans to become a union member.

In January, Schrubb was one of 27 Facility Planning, Construction, and Management graduates recognized in the Correctional Construction Mentorship program.

Schrubb said the warden offered him a job that he has considered. "The warden's offer specifically was a position as a maintenance man."

Triumph, trauma and tragedy have challenged Schrubb's resolve to become a better man. They collided in prison, but they also became an impetus for him to stay his course and change. He recalled a conversation with his then five-year-old grandson.

"I made a promise to my oldest grandson to be good and come home to him soon," Schrubb wrote. "He, in turn, promised to do good in school. That motivated me to put my nose to the grindstone and make a drastic change." He said his grandson went on to earn a full-ride football scholarship, but concussions stopped him from making it to the NFL. Violence took care of the rest.

"Sadly, in 2021 he was gunned down in Fresno [Calif.] by a gang member," said Schrubb. He said one reason he keeps going is to fulfill his promise to his grandson who was killed at age 23.

"My mantra from the beginning was 'I'm not going to die in prison,' and I was going to walk out on my own power and be cognizant and healthy enough to live a decent life," Schrubb wrote.

While pursuing a parole date, Schrubb continues to move about San Quentin to work on himself, despite having completed self-help programs, multiple trades, receiving job offers, recommendation for recall of his sentence, and commutation of his sentence.

On February 20, 2026, while Schrubb was at work, he met Gov. Newsom. "When a tour came on the Upper Yard to the construction site, the warden pointed me out to the governor and called me over to the group," said Schrubb. "It was one of the most exiting moments in my life."

Schrubb said the warden introduced him as one of the people the governor commuted, and informed the governor that Schrubb has a job waiting for him when he is released.

Newsom and Schrubb shook hands, and the governor pulled him in for a shoulder bump and asked, "What are you going to do, man?" Schrubb responded, "I'm coming back to work for the warden."

"Who gave you the commutation?" Schrubb said Newsom asked.

"You did, man," said Schrubb. He was all smiles as he told the story of how he came to meet the governor who believed in his positive transformation. "Mainly, the culmination of my rehabilitation journey started happening here. This is where it's peaking."

DYSLEXIA

Continued from page 1

and countless others with dyslexia climbed to the top of their vocational fields.

Dyslexia is three to four times more common in prison than in the general population, according to the National Institutes of Health. In addition, up to 70% of incarcerated people have some form of literacy or numeracy deficits and are “functionally illiterate.”

Illiteracy has become an epidemic, and learning disabilities can lead to school failure, behavioral problems, and ultimately, incarceration.

“A strong link exists between dyslexia, illiteracy, and recidivism, making early identification and intervention crucial for rehabilitation,”

70% of incarcerated individuals have learning disabilities

reported the Person Assessments.

Many incarcerated individuals with dyslexia often lack proper diagnosis and support in school, contributing to their challenges. However, it is never too late to seek help.

For more than four years, educator Santiago has helped support MTC students who have difficulty with literacy. She implements individual strategies and treatments to manage their specific challenges.

Dyslexia treatments include specialized reading instruction that teaches the structure of language, linking sound to letters.

Santiago said that

one-on-one tutoring sessions along with reading programs that focus on phonic awareness, vocabulary, phonics, fluency, and comprehension offer the best outcomes for managing symptoms.

The NIH states, if left untreated, dyslexia may lead to behavioral problems, low self-esteem, aggression, anxiety, and withdrawal from family, friends, and teachers.

Furthermore, people with dyslexia are at an increased risk of having difficulty maintaining attention.

The inability to read and comprehend can impact people negatively and prevent them from reaching their full social, educational, and economic potential.

According to Santiago, some people with learning disorders have associated anxiety or emotional challenges that stem from childhood trauma.

“We really think about the whole student at MTC,” Santiago said. “I think it’s cool that we get to beat the cycle that school is scary, and show that it’s a safe place where thoughts and opinions matter.”

Santiago said cognitive behavioral therapy and supportive counseling help to build peoples’ self-esteem, social skills, and confidence, which correlates into positive learning outcomes.

Home strategies to combat dyslexia include reading out loud daily, playing rhyming

games, and pointing out words in daily life to build literacy skills.

As an educator, Santiago finds gratification helping those with dyslexia thrive by providing the treatments they need to excel in learning.

“Many people feel awkward or embarrassed of their condition, or are unaware they have a reading disorder,” Santiago said. “It’s very rewarding when I help someone gain self-confidence in their ability to learn.”

Incarcerated persons experiencing symptoms of dyslexia can see their facility counselor or Education Department facilitator to schedule literacy testing for assessment.

Dyslexia signs in adults are a lot like those in children and symptoms include:

- Difficulty reading, including reading aloud
- Slow and labor-intensive reading and writing
- Problems spelling
- Avoiding activities that involve reading and writing
- Mispronouncing names of words, or problems retrieving words
- Difficulty summarizing a story
- Troubles learning a foreign language
- Difficulty doing math word problems

VICTIMS

Continued from page 1

law. Prior to this legislation, victims of crime had to go through a long, arduous process to receive restitution. The law prioritizes financial restitution payments to victims of crime over any other fines, fees, or debts.

“This bill is intended to ensure that victims are restored, but also that those offenders can have the chance to make amends,” Jenkins said.

Resident Jonathan Huynh said offenders’ rights are protected, but that victims have few resources to ensure prioritization of their rights and the repair of harm done. He said CEG reached out to victims rights groups and held victim dialogues to address concerns about lack of support.

“A victim’s first bill puts the resources available for victims back into their hands. SFDA Jenkins and her office go above and beyond expectations to protect victims and help them recover their lives and dignity,” Huynh said.

Recognizing the importance of supporting victims and safeguarding their rights necessitates

Victims' rights come first

“I believe institutions do not offer enough support for victims and most often the resources available are not clear after sentencing.”

action, which could help restore trust in our nation’s criminal justice processes.

“Monetary compensation may be just the starting point to healing. Healing comes through not being burdened by something, especially when it was not their fault. There has to be help outside of just accountability,” Sabbath said.

Several San Quentin residents have said there is little-to-no support for victims and have dedicated their time to helping victims recover and restoring their dignity outside of state-mandated restitution.

“I believe institutions do not offer enough support for victims, and most often the resources available are not clear after sentencing,” resident Vantwan Mays said.

Mays said there should be a greater focus on what each

individual needs to repair what was broken and to move toward healing, whether it is therapy, financial restitution, or other support.

“A bill like this is important because restitution is a priority. It is more than it being about money; it is about them feeling like they have support they can rely on,” Mays said. “We as offenders may not get a chance to provide restitution directly, so court-mandated compensation and living-amenities are important.”

Mays said that through deep introspective work and self-help programming he realized the harm he had caused and took full accountability.

Some residents said better support for victims could be a springboard for exploring criminal justice alternatives and restorative justice systems. Support services such as victim offender dialogues and overhauling the existing system to make it more human-centric can be consistent with looking out for victims’ rights.

“We are being accountable and restitution is more than a word – you have to live it, give back, and hold yourself accountable,” said Sabbath.

RELATIONS

Continued from page 1

that engage in a professional relationship will slowly start to build empathy for one another. These collaborative efforts can cater to a more relaxed and stress free environment.

For example, a resident could empathize when an officer continuously works double shifts to sustain his family. In addition, an officer that travels far to get to his/her workplace, the combination of overtime and lengthy travel can cause stress, Maya stated.

Maya concluded by saying that an officer can empathize after learning a model resident has suffered a death in his/her family. An officer that shows sympathy towards a resident’s grief can bring them to the realization that they are human, despite having committed a crime.

Senate Bill 551 stated in order to have effective rehabilitation it is essential that incarcerated people live with dignity and respect.

Correctional officers would receive training on how to show residents dignity, respect, and flexibility when exerting their authority. The deprivation of freedom fulfills the purposes of penal punishment, and the additional purpose of

Shared empathy is important

incarceration is rehabilitation, noted the SB 551.

“If an officer has a hard time showing me respect, and or treating me with dignity, I would ask him/her if we could have a conversation as two human beings,” Maya said. “That I am a person who had unhealthy coping tools, uncontrolled impulses, and unprocessed trauma.”

Prison staff who repeatedly engaged in conversations through activities fosters a healthier environment. People that are familiar with each other are less likely to respond with violence, according to the SB 551.

Resident Charles Jamison, incarcerated for 23-years, gave his perspective on bridging the gap of respect and alliance.

The improvement of correctional staff and incarcerated peoples’ interaction requires a mutual aid on projects and activities. This teamwork can bridge the “chasm” that has historically divided the two sides, Jamison said.

He stated, in healthy conversations all interactions between human beings are important, whether they are representing themselves and or

a people as a whole.

“In this communication, people can achieve a shared objective of being mentally, emotionally, and psychologically safe,” Jamison said. “To treat residents with respect is to create an environment that is conducive to healing from past traumas.”

The standard of making incarcerated life as close to a normal society as possible, compared to life on the outside, prepares residents to be law-abiding citizens once released, noted the SB 551.

The legislation declared that people serving time in California prisons would be encouraged to obtain useful job skills that will enable them to become “good neighbors.”

Resident Maya said the new learning center contains space for media, education, and technology. The center includes a coffee shop, planted trees, and shrubbery.

In addition, Maya stated that there are large murals within the prison. The new building includes recycled redwood benches, but there is also a need for humanizing attire if allowed. All of these new applications can bring prison life closer to a normal society.

Inaugural Incarcerated Hearts graduation reunites couples

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

Of the 120 beating hearts present in Chapel B on the day before Valentine’s Day, precisely 22 of them found themselves without steel bars between them, if only for a few hours. Eleven San Quentin Rehabilitation Center residents and their visiting partners received certificates of completion from Incarcerated Hearts, a recently started self-help group designed to lighten the difficulty of separation of couples with an incarcerated partner.

Another 21 certificates went to solo hearts whose partners could not attend the event. Among them sat SQRC resident Situe Toluao, 42, the Samoan-American creator and founder of the group, whose goal of helping his compatriots with their relationships quickly solidified the self-help group.

“Incarcerated Hearts is here to stay,” Toluao said. “The group had a strong start and we already have 120 applications for the next three cohorts. Incarcerated Hearts fostered a cohesive group and the communication we encourage and the communication skills we build aim to increase



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

First graduation class of Incarcerated Hearts

cohesion within the couples.”

Resident Mike Glosson, 46 and married for nine years before his incarceration, called the program “the first of its kind that takes into account partners on the outside. No other class or group has ever directly centered on my family, and that’s what makes Incarcerated Hearts not only unique, but also very useful and valuable.”

Dr. Berendsen, an

Incarcerated Hearts sponsor and a psychologist at SQRC, gave the event’s keynote speech. She said her job in the group concerned masculine toxicity. “I appreciate the trust the group had in me. It’s an amazing group and they asked difficult questions and did not seem afraid to get hard answers. Relationships take work and if you show up every day, the work will get done.”

Warden Chance Andes

briefly visited the event and spoke about one of the key aspects of Incarcerated Hearts. “I am proud of you and I am proud to hear that vulnerability came up. I appreciate groups that talk about vulnerability.”

The most cogent testimony about Incarcerated Hearts came from resident Kai Brandon, 44: “After being incarcerated for over 20 years, I can honestly say that learning

how to love from behind walls has been one of the hardest and most meaningful journeys of my life. Incarcerated Hearts has helped me not just to survive my circumstances, but also really to look at the kind of man, husband, and father I want to be, even while confined.”

Brandon continued, “Incarcerated Hearts pushed me to reflect on what truly matters in a relationship. From

Incarcerated Hearts, I learned that even from prison, I can grow. I can become a better husband and father by doing internal work, by learning emotional awareness, and by choosing love over ego. This program reminded me that challenges are not signs of failure. They are invitations to grow, and today, I leave here more aware and more committed to being the man my wife deserves.”

Vanessa Valdez, the wife of resident Carlos Valdez, said, “We have been together for eight years, and married for four years. The road has been long and difficult, but Incarcerated Hearts has helped a lot with communication. They helped us see the things we struggled with. My husband not being there was difficult and Incarcerated Hearts created a space for dialogue. It helped us say, ‘Now I understand.’”

After a generous lunch, the group took photographs by the fountain. Toluao, the group’s founder, stood in the center. “I had the goal to give everyone a space where they could talk about their relationships,” Toluao said, “and this group provided this need. This graduation shows that it works.”

Transparency issues behind dying in prison

By Terrell J. Marshall
Staff Writer

Millions of people cycle through American prisons and jails every year. In 2025, *The Marshall Project* exposed flaws in the way the government tracked more than 21,000 people in custody who never made it home.

“Incarcerated people die of medical neglect. They die because guards beat them or because they get into fights with each other. They get sick or succumb to terminal illness,” wrote Ilica Mahajan in an article for the *Marshall Project*.

Congress passed the Death in Custody Reporting Act more than 20 years ago. The intention was to generate a record of everyone who dies while in law enforcement custody.

The Marshall Project

attained combined statistics for in-custody deaths from the Justice Department’s website, which accidentally made the data accessible to the public on the internet.

The evidence gathered from the database between Oct. 1, 2019 and Sept. 30, 2023 showed that the cause of death for more than a third of cases could not be determined due to lack of information, which was cause for concern.

Analysis revealed many of the Death in Custody Reports were riddled with errors. Hundreds of deaths were missing, and most of the details describing how individuals died did not meet the government’s own minimum quality standards.

“How can we decrease preventable death if we don’t understand who’s dying or why they’re dying?”

asked psychologist Sharen Barboza, who has worked in various prison’s for more than two decades. She felt much of the information from previous reports of this type was more accurate, and the newer government data is not particularly helpful because of lack of detail.

When asked, representatives for the Department of Justice did not provide on-the-record comments on this story. The DOJ does, however, review the cause of death listed in Death in Custody reports provided to each state and according to their website, “acknowledges ongoing reporting gaps and challenges that may affect the accuracy and completeness of...[in-custody death] reporting.”

Of the 21,675 incarcerated deaths noted in the data,

insufficient evidence in the cause of death was labeled as “suicide” or death from “natural causes” without details or justification.

In the 60 percent of cases where there was enough information to determine cause of death, the most common was related to heart conditions, followed by cancer, and then respiratory illnesses.

The Marshall Project uncovered that the leading cause for younger incarcerated people was suicide, followed by drug overdoses, and stated that, “for incarcerated people under the age of 55, just under half of the deaths we could identify were from largely preventable causes...” noted the article.

The procedure on how to report on in-custody deaths by each state was inconsistent

and disorganized.

Typically, upon the death of an incarcerated person, a coroner or medical examiner will determine the cause. The report includes standard autopsy and toxicology tests, along with interviews of medical staff, guards, and other witnesses as to how and why a person died.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance’s job is to administer federal in-custody death tracking guidelines, which include what type of data to collect and how to classify death.

Even though this department has the power to penalize states who do not comply with the BJA guidelines, this agency has never penalized any state for incomplete or sloppy reporting, noted the article.

“Last year Lelipe Portillo died of a heart attack

right in the South Block rotunda,” said San Quentin Rehabilitation Center resident Tony Chavez.

“After the guards pushed the alarm, Felipe just sat there suffering for 20 minutes, and by the time the nurses finally showed up, he was a goner.”

Chavez added that the facility’s nursing station was only 40 feet away from the incident, and neither the medical staff nor the officers started lifesaving measures soon enough to save his life.

Dr. Barboza asked: “Do we, as a country, care about those we incarcerate? ... Do we care if they’re cared for? Do we care if they are dying? Do we care how they die? Are we interested in decreasing those deaths?”

“And the sad answer,” she said, “is no one’s all that interested in really understanding.”

Stressful prison environments unhealthy

By Jason L. Jackson
Staff Writer

Exposures to violent, stressful environments contribute to chronic disease and shortened lifespans.

A majority of California’s incarcerated population comes from communities plagued by violence, racism, and poverty. After their arrests, many of these men and women are ushered into prison environments often just as violent and oppressive.

Research from the Legislative Analyst’s Office revealed that of the 122,687 people incarcerated in California in 2019, more than 45,000 were housed in the level three and four maximum-security prisons where violence and stress can be prevalent.

“My first stop in prison was the level four yard in Delano. There was constant violence, and many people were forced

into violent situations just because of the expectations that exist there,” said Abdiel Guerrero, an SQ resident incarcerated for 10 years.

Guerrero said many men on the level four yard were just trying to survive. He said his experiences and the time spent in Delano contributed to his anxiety and admitted that today he is constantly hyperaware of situations and his environment.

The negative impacts that stress-filled environments can have on the lives of incarcerated people is well documented.

Conditions inside prisons – including violence, racism, poor diet, and exposure to subpar sanitation and ventilation – are linked to elevated risks of heart disease and hypertension in younger residents, high rates of cancer and hepatitis C, and increasing rates of anxiety, depression, and PTSD among incarcerated

people, according to the National Institutes of Health.

The National Institute of Health reveals that every year a person spends in prison results in a two-year reduction in life expectancy.

The ill effects compound when one considers the traumatic backgrounds serving as the foundation in the lives of many incarcerated people.

“I was seven years old the first time I was exposed to violence. I saw a guy get robbed and pistol whipped while at the store with my family,” said Guerrero.

Guerrero remembers that violence was normal in his neighborhood. Aside from witnessing the assault, he recalls his attack by men when he was eight years old and witnessing a murder when he was just nine years old.

“I was scared and confused, but we never talked about it. Looking back, I know we should have. Not processing

it was horrible because I did not know how to interpret it. I ended up thinking it was normal. I learned that I would rather be the one to hurt people than to get hurt.”

Studies from the National Institute of Health and the University of California, Berkeley reveal that residents who live in communities where there is constant discrimination, poverty, and violence experience high rates of heart disease, various cancers, mental disorders and diabetes, just like people who are exposed to volatile prison environments.

The research details how “adverse conditions trigger chronic inflammation, suppress immune function, and alter metabolic and cardiovascular systems, turning social adversity into physical illness.”

Accompanying research shows improving the conditions within an

environment can have positive effects on the wellbeing of the residents.

This is where San Quentin, once considered one of California’s most notorious prisons, comes into focus.

Long gone are the days when San Quentin served as a breeding ground for violence. Take a casual stroll through the facility’s yard, and you will see staff and incarcerated people playing a game of pickle ball together, along with the random saxophone player and the residents training dogs.

Towering over all of this is the new, multimillion dollar Learning Center, where residents will be afforded the opportunity to earn their high school diploma, learn how to computer code, or obtain a bachelor’s degree from Cal State Los Angeles or Berkeley. San Quentin is far from perfect, and there is still a lot of improvement to the culture to be had, but the positive

changes are proving beneficial for the residents.

“San Quentin is really about rehabilitation. It has opportunity and hope. This is the environment where people can really change,” said SQ resident Treavion Early. Early said when people are in environments with so much violence, it becomes difficult to have hope.

Negative environments tend to produce negative outcomes. Changing these environments for the better can work to improve the outcomes for all parties involved. As San Quentin’s administration continues working to improve the conditions and culture at the prison, they are helping prepare men to return to their homes better equipped to heal their own communities.

“I move a lot better now. My core beliefs and my perception of life has changed, and now I’m happier and more positive,” said Early.

Freedom defined by the incarcerated

In a world of cages and captivity, loss and limitation, formerly and currently incarcerated men share their perspectives on freedom and the place it holds in their lives.

“Freedom is essentially just a right to be; a right to choose your own destiny. It’s having the ability to determine how you’ll live your life and who you’ll become while living it,” said Devan Jackson, released four years ago after serving nearly 10 years in prison.

Webster’s New College Dictionary defines freedom in numerous ways: “not under the control of some other person or arbitrary power; not held, as in chains; liberty; not confined to the usual rules or patterns; not restricted by anything except its own limitations.”

Designed and maintained to operate contrary to the

very definitions of freedom, the prison industrial complex shapes an environment where countless men spend years, even decades, being told when they can shower, when and what they can eat, what time to sleep, and what they are allowed to read.

Jackson said prison was debilitating for him, that the prison environment worked to kill his will to thrive, to wonder, and to think about possibilities.

“Prison eats away at you slowly, because there is little to nothing in it to build you up. It’s like someone is drowning you, and every now and again you’re allowed to come up for air,” said Jackson.

The mental and emotional residue years of prison and control can leave on men and women can be lasting.

A 2013 study conducted by the Prison Policy Organization and the National Institute of Health found that long-term confinement left former prisoners with “institutionalized personality traits” commonly associated with Post-Incarceration Syndrome, including distrust, difficulties making decisions, and alienation.

“Prison has made me more leery of basically everything. I have anxiety because I’m afraid to make the wrong move,” said Allan Buckley, a San Quentin resident with more than 11 years inside California prisons.

Freedom is a subjective, abstract idea many people do not actively think about from day to day. The average person in America is afforded the luxury to choose what they

will eat for dinner, when to go for a walk, or binge watch their favorite show. Using the bathroom or taking a shower in private is, for most people, the norm. Privacy within prison is at worst a dream and at best a privilege.

People who have not spent prolonged periods denied the simplest pleasures may take every day experiences for granted.

“People definitely take freedom for granted because most people just move on auto-pilot. They aren’t aware enough to develop a different approach to freedom,” said Buckley.

Buckley admits it took years of growth and maturity and two prison terms before he realized he spent much of his life taking his everyday freedoms for granted.

“I wasn’t free for a long time. Even on the street, I wasn’t free, because I was battling with myself and my addictions. I’ve used this term to mature and unshackle the limitations I set on myself,” said Buckley.

For many incarcerated people, the realization that they took their freedom for granted accompanies the loss of it. For some, they come to complete realization only after they regain that freedom.

Jackson said that once he was home from prison he realized how much he missed the little things, including watering the grass, taking a drive, showering in private, and talking to family without being monitored and recorded.

“I feel like I can live now, like my destiny is in my hands. In prison, no matter what is

said, there is always only so far you are allowed to go with your development. Now, there is nothing stopping me. I can go anywhere and do and be anything I want to be,” said Jackson.

Years of incarceration can make the idea of freedom seem like a distant dream, especially for the men and women serving extensive sentences. How we think about, approach, and define our experiences while in prison can be a determining factor in how we approach freedom if or when that day of release finally comes.

“Some people are freer in prison than people in the real world. It all depends on perspective. Prison is a small setback in the rest of our lives if we use the experience right,” said Buckley.

— Jason L. Jackson
Staff Writer

Formerly incarcerated congressman seeks prison reform

By Bostyon Johnson
Managing Editor

After former congressman George Santos (R-N.Y.) was granted clemency, he set his eyes on reforming the criminal justice system by supporting those dealing with harsh conditions.

“They don’t have a voice like I did. They don’t have the support system I had. So, that’s why I want to be that support system,” Santos said on Meghan McCain’s show, *Citizen McCain*. “I think we need to revisit how we do jail in this country, how we do

prison. If we’re not going to put them in prison to reform them and reintegrate them back into the communities, we are creating monsters.”

Santos pleaded guilty to wire fraud. He was sentenced to seven years in prison, but his sentence was commuted by President Donald Trump after Santos served three months.

Prosecutors disagreed with the length of time Santos spent behind bars and said that President Donald Trump’s clemency grant minimized the time, money, and resources that were dedicated the case.

“To bring a case to trial is just an incredible effort and use of department resources,” said John Kelly, the former acting head of the Justice Department’s Public Integrity Section.

The president of the United State has the “Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in cases of Impeachment.”

During Donald Trump’s presidency, clemency was granted to 1,677 people charged in the Capital riots and/or interference with the 2020 elections. As of January

20, 2026, 90 individual cases were pardoned, even though only 12 were five years into their sentenced time.

Santos, former congressman of New York told Bloomberg Law that he plans to pay back his victims and explore media opportunities. In a Bloomberg Law article, Santos said he would like assistance from Trump and his administration to reform the nation’s prison system.

“I don’t want to make money off of my activism because then it becomes murky, and then I’ll just become another grafter,” said Santos.

Joe Murray, attorney for Santos commended him for securing his own release. He also gave advice to others who are seeking to get out of prison.

“My advice is to be persistent, because that’s what it was,” Murray said. “It was making the calls, reaching out to people, and reinforcing.”

Douglas Berman, a law professor at Ohio State University said the power of granting clemency is a king-like power.

“We are creating an environment of failure, so people are prone to make poor

choices to survive, and then they’re thrown in prison and treated inhumanely,” Santos said Monday on Meghan McCain’s show “*Citizen McCain*.”

Petitioners of pardons are supposed to wait five years after completing their sentence to apply for clemency.

“The decision to put it in the hands of the president is a decision to allow it to be very politicized,” said Berman. “Certainly, the president’s definition conceptually of, when is the system being cruel, is definitely shaped by politics in a variety of ways.”



Above: Old Furniture Factory Building 38 prior to demolition
Below: Old factory photos



Top: Building 38 leveled and dirt graded
Above: March 2025 main structures erected
Below: July 2025 side panels placed on Buildings A and B
Bottom: January 2026 nearly complete



New buildings, new opportunities

BUILDING Ribbon cutting ceremony and words from the who's-who of corrections
Continued from page 1

"The Learning Center provides opportunities for students to gain digital fluency and marketable skills that result in gainful employment," said The Last Mile Executive Director Kevin McCracken.

Building B is the education hub. There, educators from Mount Tamalpais College and partners like California State University at Los Angeles and the University of California at Berkeley will support completion of high school as well as college-level courses in the center's 26 classrooms. A state-of-the-art library includes a book repair shop and cushioned seating areas.

Building C will serve as a community center and as a workforce space. The multi-purpose room adjacent to the café is also a gathering hall for events.

At a press conference, Gov. Newsom said the project took "30ish months" to complete and was on time "and on budget." He called it "the fastest state project in history."

"It was just about pragmatism. It was about dealing with the fundamental fact that 95% of people in this [criminal justice system] are going to go back into your neighborhood and what kind of neighbors you want them to be," Newsom said.

Gov. Newsom thanked Warden C. Andes and the CPOA for not dragging down or sabotaging progress on the project.

"There are dozens and dozens and dozens of facilities waiting for this kind of investment and the community, again, is the biggest beneficiary," Newsom said.

San Quentin Advisory Council's Lead Advisor to the Governor and Mayor of Sacramento Darrell Steinberg thanked the governor for his bold effort and for being on the side of accountability and change.

"When people commit a crime, accountability is appropriate. At the same time, no human being who serves time should ever be forgotten or forsaken," Steinberg said.

Steinberg said there are people in prison who will return to society and that compassion, accountability, and smart policy must always go together.

"Most residents of this center and in every other more traditional correctional facility in California will return to their communities after they serve their time," Steinberg said. "Will they come home safely with an opportunity to work and contribute to the lives of their families and neighborhoods? Seems like the answer is in our hands."

Executive Vice-President of the California

Correctional Peace Officers Association Steve Abner recognized custody staff, free staff, community volunteers, and incarcerated residents for their willingness to do the work, adding that the dedicated space, workforce preparation, and evidence-based programming is results-focused.

"This new learning center is more than bricks and mortar. For correctional officers, this center reflects an investment in the hard work and culture created here in this facility," Abner said.

Abner said an approach grounded in simple ideas, the right tools, accountability, structured programming, and meaningful engagement will build safer correctional institutions.

"Our officers remain peace officers first. Safety and security are nonnegotiable, but we know better than anybody that when incarcerated individuals are ready to change and have access to education, job training, and counseling, the population is more stable and violence can decline," said Abner. "Done right, it improves working conditions for our officers and strengthens public safety."

"This building is a reminder that California can set the standard when we stay committed and follow through," Abner said.

In the January 2024 Reimagining San Quentin report, the Advisory Council said "the transformation of the old prison industry building is the beginning of San Quentin's transformation, not the end."

Gov. Newsom highlighted the ongoing nature of the effort by saying that the next step will be conversion of what was once the largest Death Row in the Western Hemisphere. In 2019, Newsom placed a moratorium on executions. He later withdrew lethal injection protocols, and ordered closure of the execution chamber at San Quentin.

There were 737 people condemned when we announced [dismantling of Death Row] in 2023, and to see that process of conversion, that will be the next big event that we invite you all to see," Newsom said. "That is more than halfway done."

What followed was integration of condemned residents into general populations at several CDCR facilities, where they may work and pay victim restitution.

"Today represents something else in addition to justice. For all the people who live and work here at San Quentin and for the people of California, this is also hope," Steinberg said.

"It is hope for second chances and safer communities," Steinberg said.



Interior lounge areas of Building A



Small and large classrooms for 4-35 students

Recording studio



Library



Coffee Shop

Una organización ofrece información y apoyo a la comunidad recluida

Por César Martínez
Staff Writer

Para la Gente [For The People] es el nombre de una organización sin fines de lucro, que está proporcionando material escrito en forma de guías de apoyo para la evaluación de re-sentencia orientados a la población encarcelada.

Esta institución trabaja con fiscales de distritos, miembros de la comunidad y personas encarceladas en conjunto con otras organizaciones. Con el objetivo de ofrecer apoyo legal, capacitación, talleres para ofrecer datos y documentos

relevantes que sean accesibles y fáciles para la comunidad encarcelada. Sin embargo, esta organización **no** proporciona asesoría ni representación legal, solo ofrece **información legal**.

“Esperamos que esta guía le sirva de apoyo para completar el desafiante trabajo de reflexión y escribir sobre sus acciones pasadas”, según resume For The People, y agrega “los consejos y ejemplos que proporcionamos en esta guía están diseñados para mejorar sus posibilidades de ser aprobada para una nueva sentencia”.

De acuerdo a la organización, se ofrece estas siguientes

recomendaciones para preparar su paquete de re sentencia:

Preparación de documentos

Cartas personales, declaraciones y planes con respecto a su rehabilitación, reinserción planificada a la comunidad, antecedentes penales y registros disciplinarios penitenciarios.

Cartas de apoyo que usted les pide elaborar a sus familiares, amigos, colegas y miembros de la comunidad.

Documentos de verificación que confirmen aspectos de su plan de reinserción, ejemplo: la aceptación en una vivienda

de transición, programas de abuso de sustancias, servicios de apoyo a la reinserción que recibirá, ofertas de trabajo que aceptara en caso de liberación.

Documentos personales
Carta(s) de arrepentimiento.
Declaración de responsabilidad.

Declaración de responsabilidad por infracciones a las reglas del centro de reclusión, (si corresponde).

Declaración de fe, (si corresponde).

Carta del camino recorrido.
Plan de prevención recaídas.
i. Señales de advertencia.
ii. Detonantes.

iii. Mecanismos de afrontamiento.
iv. Red de apoyo.
Plan de reinserción.

Curriculum; enumere su experiencia laboral, logros educativos, certificados etc.
Instrucciones sobre la solicitud a cartas de apoyo.

FDP, ayuda a personas que no cuentan con una red de apoyo estable o que no cuenta con ninguna ayuda, trabajan en conectar a estas personas con servicios y recursos legales.

La organización **aclarar** que completar el proceso de revisión de la sentencia **no** garantiza que se emita una nueva sentencia.

El fiscal de distrito y un juez determinaran la evaluación final, y de pronunciar o no, una sentencia nueva. La recomendación de la organización es de contactar a un abogado si necesita **representación legal** durante el proceso de revisión de la sentencia.

“Sabemos que la incertidumbre involucrada en este proceso puede ser extremadamente difícil de manejar; nos esforzamos por hacer este camino lo más sencillo y claro posible”, concluye su informe de For The People.

Para mas información comuniquese a forthepp.org

El presidente de los EEUU apunta a un régimen judicial autoritario

El presidente Donald Trump hace fuertes críticas sobre el Sistema Judicial de la nación. Deseando imitar e implementar procedimientos comunistas cómo el del país de China para casos criminales, todo esto se desata después del asesinato de una refugiada ucraniana en el estado de Carolina del Norte y del activista conservador Charlie Kirk. Conforme a la publicación de *HuffPost* escrito por Sara Bolboltz.

Acorde a la publicación, el mandatario siempre ha

buscado rediseñar el sistema judicial del EEUU, desde el 2022., apaleando por un sistema que trabaje eficazmente, tal como—según él—trabaja el sistema penal del país del oriente, donde una persona puede ser arrestado tan solo porque se parece al individuo captado en video.

“Una cosa que yo digo es que, necesitamos que tener juicios más rápidos. Yo los llamo juicios rápidos”. Por la razón que en China, ellos tienen juicios rápidos”, comentó el presidente en una

entrevista y añadió “ellos no se esperan seis años, en reclamaciones o toda clase de razones...”

En la publicación exhibe la postura del presidente, remarcando que no se le puede dar una justificación a los ofensores por los traumas infantiles o por la falta de apoyo, tanto personal como del gobierno, “Ellos deberían tener un juicio al siguiente día, por lo que a mí me concierne”, siguió enfatizando el mandatario, donde—según él—un juicio en los EE.UU., puede tardar de

síes a ocho años.

Estos comentario de parte del presidente, surgen después del asesinato de Iryna Zarutka una refugiada ucraniana afinales del mes de agosto del 2025, por apuñalamiento a bordo de un tren en el estado de C.N.

De acuerdo a Bolboltz, el mandatario y el activista Kirk, junto con sus simpatizantes usaron la muerte de Zarutka, elogiando argumentos para tener más presencia policiaca en ese estado. Ante esto, D. Brown de 34 años, fue acusado

por la muerte de la refugiada.

Bolboltz añadió también que, el presidente lanzaba una campana más agresiva de la violencia en general a lo largo de la nación, presumió además de la militarización de Washington, D.C., en donde los datos que contradecía al mandatario, sobre dicha alza, después de informar sobre la detención de Tyler Robinsion de 22 años, por la muerte del activista conservador Kirk.

“Este juicio empezara en dos, tres o cuatro años. Nosotros tenemos que tener,

lo que ellos llamaban juicios rápidos. Ellos [en China] tienen un juicio rápido, un veredicto rápido”, dijo el presidente, quien no ha ocultado su apoyo a la pena de muerte, afirmó la publicación.

La Constitución de los Estados Unidos garantiza el derecho a un juicio rápido, de la misma manera protege los derechos de aquellos quienes son acusados en el nombre de la ley, finaliza la autora del artículo.

— Por César Martínez
Staff Writer

Ley de Luisiana provee liberación adelantada a reos indocumentados

Por Marco Serna
Spanish Journalism
Guild Writer

Nueve prisioneros inmigrantes, comparecieron en el estado de Louisiana ante la Junta de Libertad Condicional. Hecho inusual en un estado donde el Gobernador Jeff Landry ha dificultado a los prisioneros en obtener una libertad condicional. De acuerdo al artículo publicado por Richard A. Webster para *ProPublica* and Bobbi-Jeanne Misick para *Verite News*.

De acuerdo a la publicación, los reos no fueron interrogados o evaluados por el panel sobre su conducta o rehabilitación. Además solo uno de ellos era posiblemente elegible para libertad condicional, Aun así, el panel voto de común acuerdo

para liberarlos.

“Hoy ustedes serán puestos en libertad”, dijo Steve Prator al final de cada audiencia, y agrego “para ir directo a un centro de ICE[Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas] para su deportación”, de acuerdo a lo escrito por Webster, añadiendo que unos agradecieron y otros lo miraban sin creer lo que habían oído.

El Gob. Landry, califica duramente programas de libertad condicional como un insulto a las víctimas de crimen, insistiendo que cualquier convicto debería cumplir la totalidad de la sentencia. El abogado para eliminar la libertad anticipada e imponer requisitos más estrictos para los ya prisioneros.

Según el artículo, en 2025, el estado de Louisiana decidió

clasificar una categoría de prisionero: inmigrantes sin estatus legal. Landry firmó una ley expedita enfocada en arrestar residentes ilegales criminales y deportarlos, siguiendo los estándares del Presidente Donald Trump.

Dos de los nueve reos han sido deportados, mientras otros dos, ciudadanos de Vietnam son detenidos en un centro de detención localizado en Angola (Louisiana). La ubicación de los otros cinco reos es desconocida.

Samuel Lara García, se declarado culpable de homicidio imprevisto y obstrucción a la justicia en 2022, fue sentenciado a 13 años, pero solo cumplió menos de dos, cuando fue puesto en libertad y deportado a Honduras. Un ciudadano

estadounidense convicto de un crimen similar en Louisiana, no sería elegible a libertad condicional bajo las nuevas leyes. Expresó el artículo.

Keith Conley, jefe de policía de Kenner, ciudad en las afueras de New Orleans, elogió la creación de un panel enfocado a liberar y deportar prisioneros ilegales, agregó que reduce la población en prisión, y ahorra impuestos a los contribuyentes.

Bajo la nueva ley, el panel de deportación no opera bajo las reglas del proceso regular de la JLC, que decide si los reos están listos para obtener la libertad basado en un numero de factores. “La libertad otorgada con el objetivo de deportación es totalmente diferente a la otorgada a individuos que demuestran

estar listos para liberación supervisada.” expresó la Directora Ejecutiva de la Junta de Libertad Condicional a Verite News y Pro Pública.

Según, para ser elegibles ante el nuevo panel, debe haber una orden federal de deportación, no ser convictos de un crimen sexual o crimen violento que conlleve una condena de diez años o más. Quienes son liberados para ser deportados, no son puestos bajo ninguna supervisión, la única condición requerida es nunca regresar a los EE.UU.; quienes regresen deberán cumplir el resto de la sentencia.

También se requiere al panel notificar a las víctimas de futuras audiencias, registrarlos en un Programa de Ayuda a Víctimas, que provee servicios de apoyo. Muchas

víctimas, especialmente las indocumentadas no se inscriben o no conocen sobre estos programas. En las nueve recientes audiencias, no había víctimas registradas.

Hervin Pineda, pidió ser deportado, “deseo regresar a Nicaragua para estar con mi madre enferma en sus últimos días”, dijo Hervin al panel, con ayuda de un intérprete.

Pineda fue deportado previamente, mientras estaba en probación, cumplió menos de un año de su sentencia de siete, por posesión de cocaína, sin embargo el panel le otorgo su petición. “Eres un gran traficante de drogas,” dijo Prator, Director del panel, “pero no te queremos de regreso”, Pineda fue llevado a custodia federal por inmigración y fue deportado.

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Paquete para la audiencia de libertad condicional

Hoja de cubierta
Nombre, #CDCR, Nombre de la Institución, Ciudad

Carta de Presentación a la Audiencia de Libertad (máximo 1 página)

Incluya una breve declaración de responsabilidad y de arrepentimiento, expresada específicamente por el o los delitos, así como la aceptación de la plena responsabilidad.

Declaraciones (máximo 1 página)
Declaración de Reconocimiento/Percepción Personal: comprensión de los hechos del delito, comprensión de los factores causales y desencadenantes, y cómo ha cambiado desde entonces (máximo 3 paginas).

Carta de Disculpa/Arrepentimiento/Impacto: enfóquese en expresar el daño causado a todas las víctimas principales en cartas individuales: cada víctima directa y a sus familiares. Las cartas a otras víctimas **no** deben enviarse a la Junta, pero prepárese para hablar de todas las víctimas afectada (si se le solicita).

Información de Programas (máximo 5 paginas)

Describe los programas a completados incluyendo: los educativos, vocacionales, de rehabilitación o cursos de auto-ayuda. **No** incluya cursos completados de CDCR con Certificados en su expediente Central (C file). Incluya aquellos Certificados que demuestren que fueron completados por correspondencia si son relevantes para el nexa de su delito (solamente si son

relevantes para el contexto de su delito). Incluya Informes de Progreso relevantes y describa lo aprendido y cómo se aplica a SU situación particular.

Liberación/Plan de Libertad Condicional

Declaración de Objetivos:
Plan de corto plazo: 0 – 6 meses; puede dividir en pequeñas líneas de tiempo.
Plan a medio plazo: 6 – 12 meses.
Plan a largo plazo: 12 meses en adelante.

Declaración de desafíos: escriba sobre los desafíos anticipados que enfrentará cuando regrese a casa.

Vivienda: porque desea ir a un condado o programa en particular, tome en cuenta que **No** es necesario escribir al “programa de vivienda”. Si lo recoge ICE, tenga la libertad condicional del condado extranjero.

Educación y Empleo: incluya su currículo vitae y explique los planes de empleo. De ser posible incluya cualquier oferta de trabajo y describa los planes sobre cómo planea mantenerse financieramente.

Direcciones de Recursos locales del condado: (oficinas gubernamentales y no gubernamentales) DMV, seguro Social, Servicio Social, Agencias de Empleo, comida, ropa, Cooperativa de Crédito, reuniones de AA y/NA, Iglesias, Oficinas de Libertad condicional, Colegios comunitarios, programas de aprendizaje, etc.

Plan de Prevención de Recaída RPP

(máximo 5 paginas)

IMPORTANTE: tener por separados cada RPP para cada factor de riesgo/causal de su delito: tales como: adicción a las drogas y/o al alcohol, ira, violencia doméstica, pensamiento criminal, asociación con persona negativa, pandilla, etc.

Breve introducción: (1) explique cuál es el comportamiento objetivo; (2) cómo se desarrolló; y (3) como contribuyo a la vida delictiva.

Desencadenantes Internos y Externos de Recaída y Habilidades de Afrontamiento: sea personal y específico.

Signos de Advertencia: fisicos y emocionales.

Red de Apoyo: contactos personales, contactos a la línea directa AA/NA, vivienda de emergencia, finanzas, asesoramiento (una sola lista de Red de Apoyo para todos los RPP es satisfactoria). Incluye BHR (Reintegración de Salud Conductual) en la Oficina de Libertas Condicional.

Cartas de Apoyo/Certificados (de programas externos; sin límite)

Cartas de apoyo de familiares, contactos religiosos, instructores, oficiales de la correccional (C/O's), directores de programas + Certificados.

Declaración de Cierre: (es importante no incluirla en el paquete, pero debe llevarla consigo a la audiencia)

Por último, agradezca a todos los presentes por su tiempo e incluya disculpas a las víctimas de su crimen y exprese su sincero remordimiento por su crimen

SPORTS

Super Bowl LX a double blowout at SQRC

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Sports Editor

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center traditionally advertises Warden C. Andes' integrated Super Bowl Watch party. This year, with less than 20 days before the \$240 million Learning Center opened, Andes' vision took a substantial blow.

"This day is a nightmare for any model of rehabilitation," said resident Shawn Moore. "It's a fiasco that the officers' food took precedence over the camaraderie that could have been developed. The warden wants staff and residents to break bread during the game, but that has proven to be a fallacy."

Approximately 120 residents trusted they could enjoy the entire game at Chapel B, but they did not get to watch the first half of the game together. Instead, they were redirected to their cells for the daily 4:00 PM institutional count as Super Bowl LX 60 saw the Seattle Seahawks trounce the New England Patriots, 29-13.

"When we were ordered back to our cells, some of us missed the first half of the

game and lost respect for the way the event was forcefully handled at the last minute," said SQRC resident Coby Phillips. "A lot of residents do not have televisions and the 100-plus who were at the chapel were vested in growing the Wardens' vision for multiple years," said Phillips. "We've tried to help integrate both groups of stakeholders, but it has gotten more flagrantly insulting each year."

Phillips said the environment that was taken away from those who attended the watch party devastated resident fans and they missed the interaction from Warden Andes who wears his #40 Pat Tillman jersey for the annual festivities.

While leaving, the residents saw numerous cases of soda and bags of chips that were delivered to the chapel for the officers. Many in attendance believe the correctional officers sabotaged the event and want the SQRC model to fail.

"Being sent to our houses and having our identification cards being used as tools to stop the warden's vision changed our feelings and hopes to isolation and resentment because we missed a lot of

the commercials, pre-game analysis and even the start of the game," said resident Giovanni Gladden. "The administration and officers on staff did not care and they couldn't even make a decision, it was ridiculous."

According to Phillips some of the staff tried valiantly to reverse the decision to send the residents back to their cells. "Lt. Gardea was on the phone with Associate Warden Avila to try to get Associate Warden Symara's decision overturned. Once the order was executed, there were too many hurdles to overcome," said Phillips. "We did miss Andes' direction and energy, but it seems the correctional officers do not want the warden's vision to grow."

Gladden said the antiquated behaviors of the correctional officers are still around and the lack of support for the watch party proves that COs do not want the new culture to work.

SQRC's Jesuit priest, Father George Williams, an ardent Patriots fan, seemed miffed as he sat with the residents.

"It makes no sense, to stop the celebration. What started as a great idea three years ago seems burdensome, but I hope

it can continue in earnest," said Williams. "If the event needs to be subsidized for food, the church will be more than happy to donate."

Super Bowl resident party host Phillips tried to maintain the enthusiasm of change.

"In 2027 we could be having the watch party from the terrace on Governor Newsom's new Learning Center, however, today I was torn between running back to the chapel after count or watching Bad Bunny's historic half-time show," said Phillips. "The joy of the game was reduced because we were not treated humanely."

According to Phillips, many of the COs will never socialize with the residents. "What is really terrible is that North Block was given a quick unlock announcement and then remained locked down until 7:30 PM," said Phillips. "We never got a true chance to go back to see the end of the game with our friends and that is not acceptable."

There was a consensus that the dynamic security that is Warden Andes' goal is still creating tension between both parties because others in the administration choose not

to buy in to the model of the rehabilitation center.

"With Warden Andes not in attendance, Symara, who was the acting AOD, and a watch commander made the decision to send the incarcerated attendees back to their cells. This was done to allow staff to retrieve their food with greater privacy and separation," said resident Angie Gordon. "After count cleared, attendees were permitted to return to the party, and where many did, many more elected not to."

Gladden said that circumstances like this tell a story of how strong the force of the correctional culture is within California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. She said it is a difficult task for prison administrators to realize the hope of dynamic security, especially when they sabotage meaningful efforts in that direction, as they did this Super Bowl Sunday.

The warden's event has grown three-fold from the original 48 residents who attended the first Super Bowl watch party. Residents at this event did acknowledge COs like Kruse and Lopez, who

supported the residents as they left the building disgruntled.

Gladden said, "[Staff] cowardly hides behind the shadows and do not protest openly and it is frightening that the subliminal hatred from staff regarding the new building can be a detriment to the taxpayers of California who paid for the rehabilitation center."

Three years ago Warden Andes advertised on the tablets "This is our first event of this type and we are looking for an enjoyable, relaxed atmosphere."

A week after the Super Bowl, when Warden Andes was asked for his opinion about how the watch party turned out this year, he responded that he had heard both sides and he hoped that there would be patience and understanding as we focus on opening the Learning Center.

Residents did not relax this year as they had to scurry back to their cells in hopes of seeing Joe Montana's coin toss and the opening kick-off. Fans said they felt Super Bowl 60's watch party became an abomination instead of being a national model that is being promoted at the global level.



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

drives to the basket against PSM's Green Team

By Martin Keith DeWitt
Journalism Guild Writer

Prison Sports Ministries continues to expand team sports and fellowship opportunities for residents of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center.

Bill Epling, General Manager of PSM's "Green Team," brought in members of the American Basketball Association's Delta Valley All-Stars team for a contest against members of the San Quentin basketball program. The team, based in the Contra Costa County city of Antioch, travels all over North America

to play other professional teams in the ABA.

"We welcome the ABA and their advanced level of talent and hope to have a long future of competition," said Warden Chance Andes.

Prior to the arrival of the visiting team, San Quentin basketball coach Jerry "JB" Brown gathered his team and rhetorically asked if their children were to walk through the gymnasium door right now, which version of themselves would they want them to see; the one who came to prison or the one they have become through rehabilitation? By asking this question, Brown

set the tone for greeting the incoming opponent.

"If you're not about change, I ain't (messing) with you," said coach Brown.

The color guard performed the national anthems over 150 residents filled chairs set up on both sidelines and endpans. This game was the most watched basketball game in the San Quentin gymnasium since the "Athletes In Action" exhibition was held during the NBA All-Star weekend celebration on Valentine's Day 2025.

"Why we do this? We're trying to rehabilitate, we want to be neutral on the basketball

Outside team dominates three quarters to only win by fifteen

court and fields, to become better fathers, so friends can see a different perspective of this place, of who we are, of who we've become," said coach Demond "Oola" Lewis during the pre-game speech.

The game featured scoring streaks by both teams as the first quarter ended with DVA doubling up SQ 36-18. At half time the score was DVA 65, San Quentin 40.

During halftime resident Jason Jenkins detailed his story of growing up in Watts to parents involved with drugs and gangs. He said as a fifteen-year-old, he avoided temptations until he encountered a gangbanger who rejected him for not being, "in the game."

Jenkins said at that point he joined a gang and was involved in drive-by shootings, robberies, carjackings, and aggravated assaults. At age twenty-one he received a forty-year sentence and on his twenty-eighth birthday his "friends" gave a combination of Molly, coke, and crystal methamphetamines that he overdosed on.

Jenkins believes that God spared him on that day and on May 5, 2012 he asked God to save him. Since that time he has been clean, sober and rehabilitating and giving back to his community. He

is now an award winning documentarian that encourages others to follow his path.

The home team hit a cold streak to start the second half but recovered to finish the third quarter with a 91-65 deficit. San Quentin found their shot and closed the deficit to fifteen, falling to the Delta Valley team 116-101.

Rookie DVA player Jamil Harris, 20 from Bay Point, spoke of his first visit to SQRC.

"I was kinda scared because what I heard, but it wasn't like that, all my people are here," said Jamil Harris. "I'll come back to do this again."

"It could've been me in here," said Harris, "everybody deserves a second chance."

"I'm loving the experience and energy, I was expecting overly masculine, rough and tough guys but this is more like a family, a very uplifting community," said Carlos "Los" Mitchell. "My step dad was incarcerated, I wanted to do this to give back to my community."

Mitchell, 22, from Antioch also attended CCCC as well as Jarvis Christian University an HBCU in Texas.

Mitchell said DVA has seventeen players on the team and they travel all over the USA and Mexico.

"Honestly I have people inside, it was refreshing to see that it was really like I was told," said Te Nelson. "I played in Tijuana in a big arena, Seattle was cool too."

T. Nelson, 29, from Oakland attended College of Alameda and Santa Clara University and is in his sixth season with DVA.

"It's more community based, I didn't realize how the program was built to help," said Bret Nelson.

B. Nelson, 30, graduated from Cesar Chavez High School in Stockton and is in his eighth season. He originally started out with the Stockton Trouble ABA franchise but it folded.

According to Epling, author and former ten-year NBA player John Block will be coming to San Quentin to share copies of his book in the near future.

Sunny Basra: "Talented right, especially #30 they obviously love basketball as much as we do and it shows".

T from outside team- "Man real shit (talk) yall got game, yall got hoopers in here. I just think you need to tap into that one last gear, when yall do? Yall gonna be a problem and we'll have some good battles. Because I'm definitely coming back and I know my brothers feel the same".

SQRC's athletic field deteriorating

By Ben Greenspon
Journalism Guild Writer

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center sports brings community together by building positive relationships and creating healthy environments that promote personal growth and good mental health. All of this happens while playing on an unsafe field.

"Interested [incarcerated persons] shall be provided an equal opportunity to participate in constructive recreational and physical education programs under safe and secure conditions," reads Calif. Code of Regulations Title 15 — Rules and Regulations section 3220(a).

"This year alone there were nine injuries from dealing with that crappy field and player morale has definitely gone down," said SQRC All-In flag football coach Carlos Smith. "Lot of guys don't like playing on the field, but put up with it because it's all we got."

California's \$239 million investment towards rebuilding SQ into a rehabilitation center has ignored the athletic field, even as it has become a safety risk.

Resident San Quentin Giants player Patrick Poteat said residents dream of a nice field. "Poor field conditions create low player morale due to fear of injury and the disintegration of the field does not diminish what sports

means for rehabilitation," said Poteat.

Although Poteat recalls outside teams and sponsors making good comments about the field in the past, he said they now comment on deteriorating field conditions. "Basically the field gets used all the time now between all the sports, so there's no chance for the grass to grow back and without water it's pointless."

Poteat doubles as the lead groundskeeper for baseball. He remembers how nice the field was when he arrived at SQ in 2016. "The grass was thick and there was good coverage, the sprinklers came on in the mornings and the grass was mowed regularly. Now, none of the sprinklers

work and the grass is uneven, patchy and full of weeds."

In December 2025, SQNews reported the prison has the oldest, longest-running amateur baseball program in the nation; a minimum of 15 outside baseball teams come from around the country to play the SQ Giants every season.

According to SQRC soccer player Ronald Luna, the outside group of players that come in monthly feel they're at a disadvantage. "They aren't used to playing on uneven, bumpy fields," said Luna.

Luna said he has injured both of his ankles playing on the uneven field, and every player has tripped or fallen because they don't look at the

ground while playing.

"It's not natural," said Luna. "Soccer for me is everything [and] exercise is the only way to release my stress. I can't stop because its part of my mental health, I gotta have it."

Luna said that if the field was fixed and a plan was in place to keep it maintained, there would be plenty of free resident labor to do upkeep.

"Basically, it comes down to having a solid plan and some funding and a little help from above," said Luna. "It's not hard to have a nice field."

Recreational staff member K. Bhatt said basic maintenance like moving some of the dirt from the edges back onto the field occurs regularly, but there are no current plans

in place to reseed the field.

Bhatt said there was a plan to replace the field with artificial turf, but it fell through. He also said the irrigation system consists of copper pipes that no longer have replacement parts.

Bhatt added that as the SQ population has changed over the years, there has been less consideration for letting the field rest as residents play regardless of the schedule. "Trust me, I know the importance of sports, [but] the sheer amount of usage the field gets illustrates the need for artificial grass, but there's no funds available."

Bhatt said the current warden is big on sports, leaving the door open to change.

POLICY

New legislation aimed at LWOPs

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

New legislation mandates resentencing guidelines for people serving life without parole, in which the trial court must consider mitigating and contributing factors.

On October 1, 2025, Senate Bill 551 passed by a majority vote, modifying sections 1170 and 5000 of the Penal Code by adding section 5000.5 in relation to application for resentencing.

California's Governor Gavin Newsom signed the legislation, in an executive and legislative quest for youth offenders serving life

without parole, according to SB 551.

The new legislation states that to be eligible for resentencing a defendant must prove they were under the age of 18 at the time of the crime. In addition, a defendant must show he/she was convicted under a provision of murder, and sentence to life without parole.

In the petition for relief, a petitioner must file a request for resentencing within the county that that prosecuted the case.

The new rule of law states petitioner will have three chances to request relief; the first comes after 15 years of

incarceration, and if denied, they can re-submit 5-years later. The final petition comes after the second submission where petitioner has served 24-years.

The sentencing court should take into account mitigating and contributing factors such as mental illness, developmental disabilities, and if the petitioner was a victim of human trafficking, noted SB 551.

In addition, the bill states the court shall consider did the petitioner have an adult codefendant, and or whether the defendant had insufficient and or inadequate adult supervision.

The legislation stated that a petitioner should provide evidence of self-improvement indicating remorse. The court shall also consider if a defendant was an active participant in educational, and or vocational programs at an individual's facility.

The trial court will consider if the petitioner has maintained family connections through phone calls, letter writing, and visits, which establishes support, noted SB 551.

The Bill adds that, a petitioner may be eligible for resentencing if they have severed ties with people involved in violent criminal

activity within the last five years.

If the court finds a multitude of the evidence that one or more of the submitted statements are true; the court shall recall the sentence previously ordered. Family members of deceased victims have the right to participate in resentencing hearings of a petitioner, according to Senate Bill 551.

The bill noted that if required information is not present and there is no proof of service by mail, the court should return the petition to the petitioner; he/she will be advised that the matter cannot be considered without the

missing information.

The sentence recall will not apply when a defendant has tortured the victim, or the victim worked as a state, and federal law enforcement and or political sectors, stated SB 551.

The court shall use its discretion in resentencing the petitioner in the same manner as if the petitioner had not previously been sentenced. If a new sentence is imposed, it cannot be greater than the first one.

The new rule of law shall be applied retroactively, unless the trial court finds resentencing is not appropriate in a particular case, according to the Senate Bill 551.

Canteen prices once again escalating

By Eric Allen
Staff Writer

Despite legislators' efforts to prevent price gouging on canteen prices in the California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, residents at San Quentin have been experiencing price increases on popular canteen items for months.

In 2023–24 the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 474, requiring the CDCR to maintain a canteen at every functioning institution under its jurisdiction.

SB 474 states that sale prices inside the canteen should not exceed a 35% markup above the amount paid to the vendor. An audit report of the Inmate Welfare Fund revealed that CDCR had markup rates on canteen items as much as 65%.

The bill was created to ease financial burdens on inmates and their loved ones, protecting them from financial instability proven to have disproportionately negative effects on impoverished communities and people of color, according to the Senate bill.

On December 19, 2025, a memorandum regarding commissary price increases was issued to the inmate population via tablet notifications.

Ignacia Garcia is a resident at San Quentin and works as a building porter. He gets paid for three hours a day, although his duties usually require him to work longer.

Porters inside of San Quentin can be paid as little as \$0.08 an hour, depending on their job and how long they have worked.

"The ten dollars I make a



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Canteen items

month can only go so far. I can only buy hygiene now, no food. It's too expensive," said Sanchez Garcia.

Being able to purchase canteen items including food, hygiene products, and stamps

and envelopes to maintain family ties can help residents maintain their mental health and positive outlooks on their situations.

Incarcerated people will now have to receive fewer

items and accept the spike in prices.

Another financial burden placed on some inmates is the restitution fines courts order them to pay, including compensation for victims and court fees. CDCR confiscates 50% of any money an inmate receives from family or work in order to cover restitution costs.

Candies such as Reese's peanut butter cups and Payday candy bars, for example, have increased from \$1.20 to \$1.55. The price of popular food items like shredded beef increased more than a dollar, from \$2.85 to \$3.95.

Resident B. Johnson said the popular food items that many shoppers purchase, including salmon, mackerel, and oysters have all gone up by an average of 30 cents.

"I believe the people who supply items for the prison's

canteen and the people who are contracted to provide the food for the institution work together," said Johnson. "The chow hall food is so bad that it forces people to go to the canteen and spend more."

A 2020 survey conducted by Impact Justice found that 60% of formerly incarcerated people were unable to afford commissary while in prison. Meanwhile, 75% reported they did not have enough food because they were unable to afford items sold in canteen.

An increase of ten cents for items may sound small, but with the price hike of canteen items, an incarcerated worker will now have to work an additional two hours to make up the difference.

"It's just too much. They are taking advantage of us with these high prices," said Garcia.

Billions of prison dollars saved; more needs to be done

By Stuart Clarke
Journalism Guild Writer

A steady decline in California's adult prison population over the past several years has shifted the structure of the corrections department resulting in billions of dollars being saved.

However, prison reform advocates, such as James King, director of programs at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, contend that current projections are still inadequate, as reported in the publication, *Village Life in El Dorado Hills*.

"The Ella Baker Center commends the continued investments in rehabilitative programming for incarcerated

people. However, the state budget continues to grossly reallocate more funding to policing and prisons, with \$14.2 billion to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation," said King.

In January, the 2026–27 California Budget was released which indicated "a significant overhaul of California's correctional system, driven by decreasing prison population, notable cost savings from facility closures and increased funding for rehabilitation and reentry programs," according to *Village Life*.

King described the prison funding as "a waste of taxpayers' money" that "continues the harm that the state claims to rehabilitate."

"If we can reduce the number of victims of senseless crimes before they ever even occur, it would seem to me to be the most humane, efficient use of state funds," said San Quentin resident John Dudley.

As the prison population declines, CDCR has ceased its practice of contracting incarcerated persons to costly private prisons. The final out-of-state contract ended in June 2019 and the last in-state contract with a community correctional facility terminated in May 2021.

In March 2024, the state concluded its lease with the California City Correctional Facility, the last private prison with which it contracted, noted *Village Life*.

In addition, numerous other facilities, "yards," in other institutions have been deactivated, including the Folsom Women's Facility at Folsom State Prison. Cost savings from these closures are projected for \$208.3 million annually.

Also noted by EBC is that the state's \$3 billion deficit would be significantly addressed by the budget's inclusion of further prison closures and plans for population reduction. The \$78.5 million allocated to the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center "exacerbates the state's economic challenges."

Significant savings could be seen by the reduction of CDCR's budget and reallocation of those funds

for reentry and rehabilitative programs, housing, job development, youth initiatives, public health, and violence prevention, stated *Village Life*.

"Society is literally investing in its demise with these policies by letting the foxes and wolves guard the henhouse and paying police and correctional officers more than teachers," said resident Cornell Allen Jr.

According to advocate Emilio Zapién, director of communications for Youth Justice Coalition, probation unions hinder the reallocation of resources and movement toward "care-first" models.

Youth facilities such as Los Padrinos and Sylmar are unsuitable according to several

studies by the California Board of State and Community Corrections. However, young people remain incarcerated there even after a \$4.8 billion settlement for abuse; and "the county board is still funding the probation department at ridiculous rates," reported Zapién to *CAL News*.

Zapién also stated that the funding authority has transferred from Sacramento to county governments. The BSSC, mainly composed of law enforcement and probation officials, oversees funding in addition to the use-of-force policies, programming, education and health care.

"This issue is closely tied to larger budgetary and political systems," claimed Zapién.

Another Calif. prison laid to rest

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation announced that another institution will close this year. This is the fifth prison being closed since 2021, a decision that is projected to save taxpayers over \$150 million annually.

The California Rehabilitation Center, CRC [Norco], was known for decades to house felons along with low-level offenders with substance use disorder. CDCR used to assign these particular residents with a prisoner I.D. known as an "N" number, distinguishing those who were sent to prison with a determinate sentence for drug-related offenses from other residents.

According to an article by

Stephanie Frith of the *The Press-Enterprise* published in November 2023, CRC is the only institution in California that gives former residents who have been rehabilitated an opportunity to erase their felony convictions.

Recently, San Quentin has received new arrivals from CRC. They spent several years incarcerated there, and shared their experience and living conditions with *SQNews*.

"The condition of the prison was severely dilapidated. In some of the bunk[s] you could see hole[s] on the floor. Some of the windows were broken, and during the wintertime the wind was blowing [in]. There were rats [and] roaches," said Marcus Barnett, a newly arrived San Quentin resident.

Barnett recognizes that CDCR officials did their best in trying to fix up the facility.

However, the compound was deteriorated beyond repair, and could no longer be kept operable. To combat the frequent outbreaks of rodents, skunks, and raccoons that lived under the dorms, CRC introduced a cat program, assigning select residents to care for them.

Prior to becoming a prison, the 98 acres of land where CRC sits was a luxury hotel. Opened in 1928, it used to house and entertain the rich and famous. Buster Keaton, Babe Ruth, Will Rogers, and Charlie Chaplin were just some of those who were intrigued by the multiple amenities, which included mineral baths and an 18-hole golf course.

According to the CDCR website, in 1941 then-president Franklin D. Roosevelt converted the resort into a Navy hospital and extended it

when the United States entered WWII. In 1957, the hospital was donated to the state, which turned it into a prison. In January 1963, CRC housed its first prisoner.

CRC has stayed in the news for more than a decade, after former Gov. Jerry Brown tried to shut it down in an attempt to meet a court order for overcrowding in 2012. However, a state senate bill halted the closure.

The 2025 decision to close CRC attracted backlash from the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, which called the closure a move that will have negative impacts with serious consequences.

"It affects not only correctional peace officers and their families but also the broader Riverside County community, which has relied on the stability of these jobs

for decades. The human cost cannot be ignored. Closure will result in forced transfers, fractured families, and, in many cases, the end of long, distinguished careers in public safety," Nathan Ballard, spokesman for CCPOA, said to Brian Rokos of the *The Press-Enterprise* in August 2025.

Emelio Lamas, a former CRC resident, feels that the prison had its benefits when it came to educational achievements. He emphasized that the educational staff were incredibly helpful in helping students get into classes and orienting them to academic expectations.

Lamas recognized that the custody administration at Norco were very supportive of rehabilitative programs. However, he said some correctional officers didn't believe that prisoners could

rehabilitate themselves.

"Some officers would think that such programs as Peer Support were a waste of time and money," said Lamas.

Alfonso Hernandez III, a resident who has also been transferred to San Quentin, feels that CRC shouldn't be shut down because a lot of people depended on the prison, including the incarcerated people. He feels lucky that he was able to take advantage of what the prison had to offer while he was housed there, although he appreciates the resources that San Quentin has to offer.

"Norco is not like here at San Quentin. Over there, when a person puts in a request to participate in self-help, it will take up to six months or up to a year in order to get into the groups," he said. "I got a job within a few week of being here as a peer mentor support."

MEMORIAL

Protestant Chaplain Ang passes away

By **Anthony Manuel Carvalho**
Sports Editor

During the month of January, former San Quentin Rehabilitation Center Chaplain Yat Ang passed away with his family at his side. Ang briefly replaced Mother Jackson in the Protestant Chapel as the Covid quarantine came to an end in 2021.

Before Ang's transfer to San Quentin on June 25, 2021, he was the Chaplain of Deuel Vocational Institute in Tracy, Calif. Protestant chapel from 2015 to 2020.

During his first sermon at San Quentin Ang said, "I'm here to serve, not for myself, but for you. At DVI, I baptized 390 people [and] I hope I will baptize many more here. I want you to know that you will not see the kingdom of God unless you are born again."

At that service, ex-incarcerated pastor, Sergio Alvarez invited the congregation to "Give God



SQNews Archive

Chaplain Yat Ang

all praise and glory, by letting the new Chaplain lead our church." Unfortunately that did not happen.

Known as a humble and petite person that had a large congregation at DVI, Ang hoped to develop Christian leaders from the population at San Quentin, but the leadership feud with the chaplain soon after he

arrived at SQRC.

According to Chaplain Ang's clerk, 56-year-old Christopher Gregory, Ang confronted a lot of opposition concerning his belief system, his culture, and how he conducted his services. "The old incarcerated church leaders chose not to attend Ang's services and they started their own service on Saturday nights in the Catholic chapel," said Gregory. "Ang did not seek revenge, in fact, he approved their leaving because he wanted everyone to serve God in their own capacity."

Gregory said Ang humbled himself by allowing the Saturday night service that was held by Sister Paula Bates. Ang also let them participate in all of the Christian holiday festivities.

During a prior interview, Ang said he understood he was taking over for Mother Jackson, a popular chaplain who captivated God's followers with His word. All Ang wanted was for his

parishioners to know that his door was open to assist anyone to walk closer with the Lord.

Ang wanted to expand the church ministry from three elders and three deacons, to twelve leaders so they could help pray for the parishioners. Ang also kept the traditional holiday festivities, including the Christmas caroling that is synonymous with SQRC.

Ang's career trajectory to SQRC included studies at Walla Walla Washington and Loma Linda, Calif. before he ministered for approximately 20 years. He first became a chaplain in Loma Linda, San Bernardino, CA. He also worked in other community hospitals before he was hired as a chaplain at DVI.

And commuted from the Central Valley to SQRC as he awaited housing on the property for him and his family — that housing never materialized as Ang became ill and had to take a leave of absence after a tumultuous separation from his church. The separation occurred even

though the new chaplain was supported by then-incarcerated minister, Trent Woodmore Jr., who stated, "Chaplain Ang is obviously a man of God who is full within humility."

In spite of support from some of the elders, Ang felt threatened enough to remove the incarcerated Protestant leaders who had worked for Mother Jackson.

Gregory who had spent countless days with Ang, witnessed the wear and tear on Ang and had in fact saved his life.

"By being his clerk, God enabled me to hear a thump coming from his office and I found Chaplain Ang in cardiac arrest having a stroke," said Gregory. "I informed staff and they immediately rendered aid to the chaplain and he went on leave for six months."

Gregory said while Ang was out for six months, other ministries came into his office and asked him to succumb to their pressure to change his policies. "As his clerk I kept

his policies in place and when he returned to his chapel, our chaplain thanked me that everything had not changed."

Gregory said he found Ang to be a trustworthy humble man who truly loved the Lord. Although Ang's own religion was based on the Seventh-Day Adventist beliefs he did not force his values on anyone. "Chaplain Ang only preached God's word and praised Jesus who died for all of us," said Gregory. "He's with God now and he no longer suffers, nor is he in pain. Trust me all is well with his soul."

Gregory, who has one year left before he returns to society, hopes that when SQRC fills Chaplain Ang's position that it will be a person who is as humble as the departed leader.

Chaplain Ang said he always prepared his churches for Jesus Christ's coming. "We must be ready," Ang once said.

According to Father Williams and Gregory, Ang himself was more than ready.

NATIONAL

US Supreme Court vindicates the rights of prisoners

By **Jerry Maleek Gearin**
Journalism Guild Chair

The United States Supreme Court held that Congress' post-conviction statutes do not apply to federal prisoners' successive writs of habeas.

The USSC stated that federal prisoners could seek their review when an appeals court denies continuous post-conviction motions, according to the publication *Slate*.

The ruling releases bureaucratic headlocks that blocked several federal prisoners' claims based on

merits that the law has shifted decisively in a prisoner's favor.

"In practice, it means more prisoners will have the opportunity to secure post-conviction relief when a new law is established that supports their claims, even after previously failed appeal bids," according to *Slate*.

The US Congress has utilized a different dialog, which the Supreme Court refused to bring into federal practice of assumption.

Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor confirmed that appeals courts could not

graft additional restrictions into the federal scheme simply because they think the result would be more restrictive, according to *Slate*.

The ruling emerged from federal prisoner Michael Bowe's mandatory 10-year enhancement, in which the federal sentencing court added to his 14-year sentence.

Bowe's offenses were conspiracy and robbery, which fell under a federal firearms statute, which applies only to a "crime of violence." The mechanism that blocked Bowe's claim bars successive

habeas petitions filed by state and not federal prisoners, noted *Slate*.

A provision enacted by Congress barring Supreme Court review of appeal denials, which several Circuit Courts claim the statute extends to federal prisoners.

"Federal prisoners proceed under a different section, which contains its own gatekeeping rules," stated *Slate*.

The US Supreme Court has overruled the appeals court understands, because it speaks only to the terms of state habeas "applications,"

while federal prisoners that file post-conviction "motions" are under a different statute.

The High Court's decision strengthens the significance of the legal system; the denials of post-conviction litigation are based on its availability to the court, and not meritorious claims, according to *Slate*.

The denial of relief becomes unreviewable because of legal error; the legal system's judicial review preserves the authority of the United States Supreme Court as the last alternative.

The Bowe ruling establishes

soundness by allowing federal prisoners to petition the court if new developments are revealed that the Supreme Court has previously rejected, stated the *Slate* publication.

The federal justice system has reopened a narrowed pathway, which ensures that a bureaucratic rule in post-conviction practice does not establish legal error because the law has evolved.

The ruling affords an additional chance to challenge a decade of imprisonment that may no longer be legally justified, according to *Slate*.

YOUTH



By **Trevor Lawson**
Contributing Writer

It was a cold morning, cold enough to see my breath as I anxiously walked to Chapel B on January 9, 2026. I was on my way to set up Chapel B for the Kids Creating Awareness Together graduation.

It was finally here, the day that we had been planning for four months. I thought the team and I had everything planned to the minute as I reached the door. Immediately the temperature inside, in stark contrast to the temperature outside, washed over me like a tidal wave and I began to sweat. I think I was sweating more from the anxiety than from the temperature. But nonetheless I set out to the task at hand, setting up tables and chairs for the graduation.

The team and I finished setting up in about 20 minutes. Then I was notified by a good friend and the secretary for Kid Cat Eliazar Gurra, "Hey Trevor, we have a meeting with the Lt. this morning and the rest of the San Quentin tour guides at 9:00 a.m. in the chapel library." My heart rate

Resident explores emotional intelligence and belief system

and anxiety went through the roof. The graduation was supposed to start at 9:30.

There I was crammed in the tiny chapel library with 19 other people as we discussed our guide feed back from last year.

Meanwhile I look around the room and realized that almost the entire Kid Cat Graduation Planning Committee was in the meeting, including the 2 hosts who were supposed to get things started, Eli and myself. I look at my watch and start to panic 9:25 then 9:35. Our sponsor Mrs. Torres was pacing back and forth looking at me through the window of the library. Our vice chairman Oscar Acosta is going in and out of the meeting trying to keep things calm and orderly with the guests coming in. I look at my watch 9:45 a.m. and I try to quietly scoot my chair back from the table, unsuccessfully, as Oscar points to me. I crawl under the table to get to the door of the library, heart racing and embarrassed for leaving the meeting early I quickly left to get things started.

I rushed to the stage mic in hand to greet the 4 graduating classes of Kid Cat and outside sponsors. I knew from the facilitator training through Kid Cat that the best thing to do is to be open, honest, and transparent about the delay in starting. As I started talking

to the crowd my anxiety and heart rate lowered. I passed the mic off to Eli looked at the schedule, then my watch and we were right on time to my surprise.

From the stage I looked out to see other Kid Cat members being of service to help the graduation move smoothly. Oscar was helping set up the food in the back, Ly was manning the door helping people find their seats, Mrs. T was helping the food caterers. Right then I was reminded of what an old friend Jason Flowers used to tell me, "Trust the process" and I did. The rest of the graduation was a huge success with a lot of positive feedback in the days after.

As I reflect back to all my time in the Kid Cat membership group I have gained so much to better my life through the group

lessons. But also, and I think most importantly, the humanity, grace, compassion, service, and dedication to change that the Kid Cat membership group has shown me has allowed me to see that true, honest, lasting positive change is possible. And that we can cause positive meaningful ripple effects to go out into our community through being of service.

I am truly blessed to be able to go to a group of people who are of service to the community. It is said that you are only as good as those around you and if that is true I must be great because of this group around me. I was able to trust the process and trust those on the team and everything worked out in the end. I cannot wait to see the next act of service to the community that we will be involved in. Stay tuned!



Photo by Marcus Casillas //SQNews

Kid CAT team members serving attendees

Policy reversal in juvenile sentences

By **Eric Allen**
Staff Writer

Legislative bodies across the United States are repealing decades of evidence-based juvenile justice policy that prevented minors from being charged as adults and given long-term sentences.

In 2024, Louisiana Republican Governor Jeff Landry called a special legislative session immediately after taking office to repeal policies on "out of control juvenile crime," according to an article by *Governing*.

The changes come after years of bipartisan reforms that focused on rehabilitation for minors, rather than retribution.

"I don't think they should be charged as adults because they are young, but they need an opportunity a life," said SQ resident Latorean Christopher, who at 22 was sentenced to eight years for robbery. "They really need a role model to give them a sense of direction at life, and if it's their first time, they shouldn't get washed away for inside the system."

Louisiana's 2019 "Raise the Age" law was hailed as a bipartisan victory for its success keeping young teens out of the adult carceral system. That was until the law was repealed in 2024, leading to more youth being charged as adults for various crimes.

Although the law's reversal was intended to hold youth offenders committing serious crimes accountable for their actions, the vast majority of 17-year-olds charged as adults

were accused of nonviolent crimes.

"Only 13 percent have been charged with serious felonies, such as armed robbery and murder charges, which usually always gets transferred or direct filed into adult court," noted the article.

States like North Carolina adopted the same tough-on-crime approach, vetoing bills aimed at non-carceral youth rehabilitation efforts in favor of charging kids as adults.

In 2013, approximately 6,500 kids were being housed in the California prison system after being tried and sentenced as adults.

That same year, California voters approved SB 260 to give juveniles convicted under the age of 18 and sentenced as adults an opportunity to be considered for release after serving a term of 15 years on a non-homicide offense. The law was implemented to hold youth accountable, but also provide them an opportunity to be released early on parole.

The new changes in other parts of the country ignore recent scientific evidence on adolescent development and neuroscience, according to SB 260. Studies have shown that the prefrontal cortex is not fully developed until the age of 25.

In 2005, the Supreme Court highlighted this in the case of *Roper v. Simmons*, noting that minors are still developing their decision-making skills, struggle to find their identity, and can mature and rehabilitate overtime.

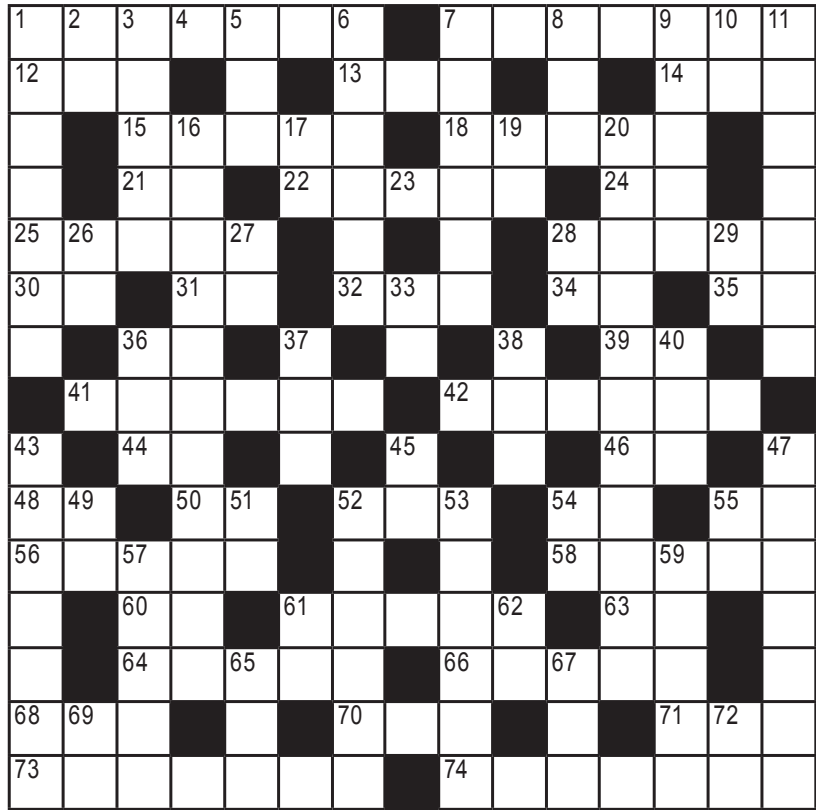
GAMES

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Michael Fangman

"Vegas Baby!"

Edited by Jan Perry



- Across
1. The tomb of this soldier is the most frequently visited at Arlington
7. This well-known pizza chain's current advertising campaign invites you to "Treat Yourself!"
12. This Hawaiian dish is made from fermented taro root
13. Home of the Buckeyes
14. It's solid H2O
15. He rarely stays in one place
18. What locals call Elizabethtown, NJ
21. F competitor
22. This meat is common in English pie
24. It equals 79.58 amperes per meter of magnetic field strength (abbr.)
25. The testing of a metal or ore to determine its ingredients and quality
28. This online recruitment system is for economic experiments (abbr.)
30. Elton sang "Candle in the Wind" at her funeral
31. It's the D in Do-Re-Me
32. If you own stock, its the E of your company's P/E ratio
34. The Padres and the Dodgers are in it, but not the Yankees
35. It's in for Argentinians
36. It's a rare blood type
39. A certain Pepper
41. While this word essentially means "typical" it can be considered a micro-aggression
42. Bambi's skunk friend
44. Randy Newman loved it in song
46. This Wang invented a magnetic core memory for computers
48. This abbreviation is often used as the opposite of BC
50. It's the C in 31-across
52. It gets you into Grad school
54. The movie "Ready Player One" imagined a society in which everyone lived there
55. You can find Boston, Fall River, and New Bedford there
56. Umpires make these without ever touching their mobile phone
58. A certain Howard
60. A broken pool stick
61. How you might reach a conclusion from data and information rather than explicit statements of others
63. Microsoft Word competitor once
64. Battlestar Galactica enemy
66. How a president is normally expected to oppose legislation
68. Mork's planet on "Mork and Mindy"

- 70. Adam's rib
71. This Mel was a Tiger once
72. Toy Story 3 antagonist (2 words)
73. A penniless pocket?
Down
1. These move data onto the internet
2. This isn't a "yes"
3. Charles, Tut, Nebuchadnezzar, e.g.
5. Q
6. When Andrew Clay cancels?
7. Deuces, not dueces
8. A cow might tell you this...
9. They are neuns in German
10. Beach community of tv fame
11. In Genesis, he gave 70-across an apple, dooming humanity
16. He commanded the land contingent during the Battle of Normandy, so the Army named a tank after him
17. It's the morning, essentially
19. Travis Kelce is one
20. War featuring 16-across battle
26. Even its popular "Swimsuit Edition" couldn't keep this magazine from going out of business (abbr.)
27. Kanye West these days
28. Word on a light switch
29. This engineer might design a circuit featuring 28-across (abbr.)
33. Tom Selleck was one once
36. Mark Cuban made a fortune selling this to Time Warner once
37. On Earth, it's 24 hours
38. Progressive Insurance ad star
40. Stimp's chihuahua pal
43. You might get this with 7-7-7
45. A short US territory?
47. If you're 57-down, a one-armed one of these might give you a 43-across
49. A Russian yes
51. MS Windows, Mac El Capitan, e.g.
52. In 20-down era bombers this airman often sat underneath, in the turret
53. YO! in craps
54. These two letters let you know a fight is going to happen soon
55. This T wore a lot of gold once
57. See 47-down
59. HP competitor
61. Zeus turned this priestess of Hera into a cow to protect her
62. Rhenium on the table
65. This potassium hydroxide is basic
67. Tac
69. Common letters on a car ferry
72. This motorcycle racing competition on the Isle of Man has taken place annual since 1907 (abbr.)

SOLUTIONS
Grid with filled-in crossword puzzle and corresponding answers.

ART



Photo by Marcus Casillas //SQNews

Mini-sculptors

Gifted by patience, art arrives in the nickel of time

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Guild Chair

For many incarcerated artists, art started as a pastime or hobby. Fred Lee Rodriguez Jr., is a resident at San Quentin. For him, creativity became an opportunity to grow while he explored making mini-sculptures, comic-book-style sketches, paper airplanes, paper motorcycles, and even paper military tanks. He became a jack-of-all-trades. This artist didn't know much about art until incarcerated in county jail, where his then-cellmate was making paper-maché art. Watching him taking his time creating art was intriguing. Later, his cellie gave him a task and the rest is history. Rodriguez Jr. uses what he can get his hands on to create. "It took me two years to get paint, like more than just three colors," he said. "Originally I was just painting with color pencils." According to Rodriguez Jr., sketching out comic figures was more accessible for him. Although he understands that

not everybody is into comics, especially inside prison settings, it allowed him to start practicing illustration. He credits the San Quentin library for allowing residents to check out comic books for free. Seeing the comic's heroes laid out on the page gave him the opportunity to recreate the characters in new, innovative scenarios. Rodriguez didn't start doing mini-sculptures until he arrived at San Quentin. He was reluctant to give up the secret ingredients for the action figures, but named a few: he uses bread, sand, water, and paper to create his own Marvel Avengers superheroes. Some of these superheroes are X Man and Deadpool, whom Rodriguez Jr. built alongside the characters Colossus, Gambit, and Cyclopes. He put all these characters on a chess board because he felt that it could be a good way to arrange the figures together. Rodriguez Jr. expressed disappointment at the lack of hobby crafts at San Quentin. Previously, he was at a maximum-security prison.

Despite that institution's higher restrictions they had a hobby program. "I will share how to do it," Rodriguez Jr. said. "If this keeps other people out of trouble, then yeah, there should be a program for it." Rodriguez Jr. said there used to be a sculpture artist who briefly volunteered at San Quentin and then stopped coming into the prison because there was no hobby craft program. This was disappointing to Rodriguez Jr., who was hoping to work with someone who knew about sculpture. The artist recognizes that people often focus on writing when it comes to creative expression. However, there are other crafts that increase skills and knowledge in new areas. For example, knowing how to paint, draw, and sculpt is another way to learn and understand human anatomy. Rodriguez Jr. has donated his art for programs like Getting on the Bus and San Quentin Veterans Groups. He feels privileged to give back for the purpose of rehabilitation.



San Quentin Film Festival
The San Quentin Film Festival 2026 (SQFF26) Pitch Competition is open from April 1st to June 30th. The pitches may be up to five pages, and will be judged by industry jurors. Send a pitch describing a documentary or narrative film. The competition is only opened to people who are currently incarcerated at any jail or prison across the country. The winner will be announced at SQFF26, October 22nd and 23rd 2026. Send pitches to: San Quentin Film Festival 1000 Fourth Street, 3rd Floor #3425 San Rafael, CA 94901

SUDOKU

Sudoku grid 1:
9 2 | | 7 | 4 | | 5 3
| | | | | | | | |
| | | 6 | 9 5 | | | |
5 4 | | | | | | 7 6
		3 1 7					
			6 2		9		
4 3					2 5		
7							
1 5 | 8 | 3 | | 6 9

Sudoku grid 2:
4 8 | | | | 5 | |
| 5 2 | | 9 | | |
6 | | 7 | 5 | | 2
| | | 8 | | | 3
5 7 | | 3 | | 6 8
9 | | | 6 | | |
2 | | 5 | 4 | | 7
| | | 7 | 6 2 |
| | 5 | | | 4 9