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"Who are you saying yes to?" marriage conference

By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism Guild Chair

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center hosted its first marriage conference for incarcerated men and their wives, along with couples who visited and shared their journey of being married for decades.

The main theme for this event was "Who Are You Saying Yes To?" There were fun activities like couples' roundtable, newlyweds' Q&A, marriage vow instructions & prompting.

Sylvia Briggs, one of the wives who visited and participated, feels that this event was overdue and that it is needed across the state prison system. There are hundreds of married couples and many others who are in relationships during their incarceration and this could be a positive tool for re-entry and family reunification.

"This conference falls in line with rehabilitation and family reunification. The man is the head of the family, and this occasion has value as a whole in terms of public safety when a man is being rehabilitated. In terms of being a husband, they are prompt to be successful," said Ms. Briggs, who added that educating the husbands gives them the tools to be a role model to the children of the future.



Photos by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Incarcerated and outside married couples singing and praising

The day progressed with a small panel of two couples who had been married for decades and shared how they faced and overcame the hard times in their marriage.

In one particular marriage, the husband talked about their first 12 years of marriage and how they found themselves bonding and growing. One of the husbands shared how he confessed to his wife

that he had relapsed with drugs and she kicked him out of the house. It was then that he realized that he was not serving God and decided to get his act together.

Pastor Zach Vestry said that there are incarcerated men who are not married but may be in a relationship or even single. He emphasized that it is important to invite those men to do the work in order to prepare them

for future relationships.

When asked by *SQNews*, "Why should anyone on the outside world care about stuff like this?" Vestry replied, "All that we are seeing here today speaks to the power of relationships as people are able to make it through the challenges of being inside and then coming out of prison."

The couples were temporarily

separated. Men were asked to gather in Chapel A while the wives remained in Chapel B. This gave men the chance to complete their marriage vows and allowed single men to write vows to their future wives.

Mando Gonzalez, a former lifer who served 21 years of a

See **MARRIAGE** on pg 4

Determination and hope persist



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Elderly incarcerated residents James Herren, age 78, Peter Cornett, age 70, Otto Delcid, age 72 James 72 await reentry

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

Three SQ residents who have spent more than 14 decades in prison share a message of hope through determination, faith, and self-help.

They were once deemed a threat to society, but after decades in

prison and declining health, the elderly are no longer a threat. However, they are faced with "senicide," the neglectful killing of incarcerated seniors, according to *Cal Matters*.

Stevin Faith, 67, has spent 45 years behind bars. His original sentence was 25-years-to-life, but through litigation in 2004 his term

was reduced to 15-years-to-life.

In 2014, the California Board of Parole Hearings denied him parole for three years. He said he became deeply depressed. Faith was called back early because of his meritorious behavior only to receive a 5-year denial. At that time

See **ELDERLY** on pg 4

Reentry programs can aid in public safety

By Eric Allen
Staff Writer

Friends Outside is an organization committed to serving all 31 California state prisons, including San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, by providing resources and reentry services to residents.

Jasmine Baldo is a liaison specialist for the organization. She helps residents feel confident about returning back into society by offering informational material, upon request Mondays - Fridays.

"I'm here to set the population up for success so they don't have to worry about coming back to prison," said Baldo.

Friends Outside is a non-profit that has supported incarcerated individuals and their families since 1955.

During weekend visiting hours, families can utilize Friends Outside services while visiting the family center station at the facility. If a guardian forgets a child's birth certificate and is prevented visiting access, the visiting coordinator will babysit children, providing a play area, food, and books during visiting hours.

The organization offers visiting family members clothing exchange options when a person's outfit is outside California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's

approved standards.

Residents incarcerated in correctional facilities can submit an institution request form or Friends Outside request form via institutional mail to inquire about services offered by the organization.

An opportunity to receive information on reentry assistance and resources is important for people who have been incarcerated for many years. Having a plan can contribute to a successful reentry into society.

Torrior King, a San Quentin resident, was advised by SQ resource team member Officer Lopez to contact Friends Outside before his release date. He took the advice and put in a Friends Outside request form.

"Ms. Jasmine helped me with a lot of things I needed, especially finding out what counties are best for me to parole to, giving me the best possible chance at successful reentry," said King. "There's so many things I can't do from [prison], like find job opportunities such as apprenticeships. Jasmine brought me the valuable information I wanted."

Rehabilitative programs inside prison tend to focus on personal transformation and self-discovery classes, while reentry programs prepare individuals for life outside prison.

See **FRIENDS** on pg 4

POWER OF CONNECTION

Family, community connections pave way for reentry

— STORY ON PAGE 4

SPORTS SEASONS KICK-OFF

Spring is here and so is baseball, and running

— STORY ON PAGE 9



FARMER'S MARKET

Novel idea for farmer's market in San Quentin

— 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

Resident no longer ashamed of being himself

By Jason L. Jackson
Staff Writer

A life sentence once meant that prison would be the place a man lived and died. Today, there is hope for many. Nearly three decades into a 50-years-to-life sentence, one fortunate man has gone home.

More than 27 years ago, Reginald Thorpe was a 24-year-old kid and still very new to prison. Thorpe said he asked an older inmate how long he had been locked up and remembered the look of shock he had in response to hearing the extensive amount of time the man said he had been incarcerated.

"I remembered that because one day a youngster asked me how long I'd been down, and when I told him 27 years he gave me the same look of shock I gave the old man all those years ago. The tables have turned," said Thorpe.

In 1998, Thorpe was arrested for first degree murder when he was 22 years old. He would ultimately be convicted and sentenced to life in prison two years later. With no prior convictions of violence, it would be his first time going to prison.

Thorpe said both of his parents were criminals, addicted to drugs and involved in violent behavior, and that they contributed to his earliest exposure to violence.

"I was cellmates with my dad while I was in the county jail. That was the last time I saw him," said Thorpe, who remembered his dad telling him to "drink his soup."

"My dad was telling me to man up and live with the choices I made," said Thorpe.

Thorpe ended up on the maximum security, level 4 yard in Salinas Valley State Prison and said the experience was shocking, especially after witnessing someone being stabbed his first day outside on the recreation yard.

"At some point you come to expect violence because of the environment," said Thorpe.

Upon his arrival to SVSP, Thorpe met up with men he knew from the county jail. Thorpe said these men helped him adjust and learn the ropes of being in prison,



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Reginald Thorpe

including "how to communicate with other races, gangs, and interact with police."

"I was gullible back then because I wasn't experienced. It caused me to make choices out of fear, choices I otherwise wouldn't have made. I was afraid of being a victim," said Thorpe.

After spending 15 years in volatile, maximum security prisons, Thorpe said he realized he was ready for a change and needed to work to better his life, his situation, and ultimately to be released from prison.

His determination led him to San Quentin Rehabilitation Center in 2019.

"The environment was night and day compared to what I was accustomed to. There were so many classes and programs, and so many people learning about themselves and about what brought them to prison," said Thorpe.

Thorpe said he credits his first cellmate, SQ resident Jerry "Maleek" Gearin, for assisting him in getting his life in order after his arrival to San Quentin.

Gearin said Thorpe was always helpful and "the type of guy who would be of service to people wherever he goes."

He told the story of how Thorpe saved Gearin's life during the Covid pandemic after he contracted the virus.

"I had this bad cough and it had gotten worse," said Gearin. "Reg kept an eye on me and alerted the officers and nurses because my condition was getting bad. They ended up taking me to the hospital, where the doctor said I would have probably died in another day if I hadn't come in."

For Thorpe, Gearin became like a big brother because he taught him about shame, guilt, anger, and pain, and how these feelings were rooted in his childhood traumas and contributed to the murder he committed.

"Maleek was the catalyst to my change and learning about myself," said Thorpe.

After his arrival at San Quentin, Thorpe immersed himself in the programming and classes that enabled him to "reconnect with his true self." He said the culture of advocacy, of growth, and of community that exists at San Quentin afforded him the opportunity to learn about his strengths, his intelligence, and that he doesn't have to be ashamed of being himself.

"I'm a good person at heart, but prison changed me for a long time. It changes a lot of people. I had to become mean and violent in order to survive the environment I was in. It was like I was wearing a Halloween costume for 27 years, but I don't have to anymore," said Thorpe.

Today, Thorpe said he values life and learned to be responsible for his own decisions. He said he is anxious and excited about the future, and ready to learn about everything, especially the technology that has evolved over the decades.

Upon his release, his plan is to complete his Bachelors degree and obtain his Masters in social work. He is looking forward to working with the homeless and advocating for people suffering from addiction.

"I harmed a lot of people in the past, and I am forever in debt to those people, especially my victim and his family," said Thorpe, who believes his life is not free for him to live, but instead is meant to be of service.

Kind-heartedness goes a long way



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Mike Winder the painter

By Terrell J. Marshall
Staff Writer

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center free-staff painter, part time percussionist, and valued member of the community Mike Winder retired to end his long and colorful career on a positive note.

"I wanted to make a living as a drummer," Winder said. "But I had to pay the rent so I started painting, and that was 50 years ago."

For more than 20 of his 50 years as a tradesman, the SQRC Plant Operations supervisor has rolled, sprayed, and brushed tens of thousands of gallons of paint onto the walls of the 175-year-old institution. On April 1, 2026, Winder set his rollers and brushes down for good.

"What I respect about Mike most is that he never looked down on us or treated us like we were criminals," said Winder's coworker of 11 years, resident Dennis Jefferson. "He always shows up with a smile on his face, a positive attitude, and a willingness to teach the next man the tricks of the trade."

For decades Winder drove around San Quentin in a small, yellow, flatbed vehicle adorned with red flames and labeled "Paint Shop" en route to his next project. Working shoulder to shoulder with the incarcerated population, Winder believed that a person is not defined by their worst mistake and

that redemption is possible.

"I've seen a lot of folks treat incarcerated people badly," said Winder. "I never saw the point in that. We are all human and we are all capable of making mistakes."

Winder's philosophy is that men and women who serve time in prison are worthy of human kindness. He said everybody is capable of making poor decisions, but they are also able to learn from their mistakes and do the right things in life.

"It's hard for folks to reenter a society that is so unforgiving," Winder said. "When a person paroles, they should have the ability to find housing, employment, and be given a second chance to prove they can be productive members of society."

Winder's legacy of kind-heartedness grew when he tapped into his passion for music and began to sponsor and play percussion instruments alongside the incarcerated band members of The Greater Good.

After playing the congas during the 2025 San Quentin Film Festival, Winder said the Latino instrument has a different musical purpose than a standard set of trap drums.

When playing the congas, "the sound is different and I can add another layer and bring more flavor to the music," Winder said.

According to The Greater Good pianist Mark Kinney, Winder enjoys playing

with the San Quentin band because of the positive reaction from audiences during their performances.

"Mike is a damn good drummer," said Kinney. "He always shows up smiling and he brings a positive vibe to the stage that helps get the crowd fired up."

Throughout his storied career in what has been at times one of the most infamous prisons in the nation, Winder was part of that history himself.

He said that before the death penalty moratorium, he worked, or at least attempted to work, during the last 12 executions carried out by the state.

"They used to call execution day 'an event,' and there would be so many protesters outside that sometimes I couldn't get past the gate to work," Winder said.

Having personally painted both the gas death chamber and the lethal injection chamber, Winder said the state never carried out an execution in the latter of the two.

"As a matter of fact, I still have a gallon of the 'San Quentin Green' I used to paint that million-dollar death machine," Winder said. "Thank God they never got the chance to use it."

Throughout the last decade of his career, Winder observed that the prison culture had become less violent. He remembered the last riot taking place 18 years ago on West Block's Upper Yard. "Now that day is celebrated as a 'Day of Peace' event and there hasn't been a riot since," he said.

Winder recalled that tension in the prison was once so heavy and unpredictable that it created a constant sense of danger.

Now he sees the population living and working together in a much safer environment, having purpose, hope, opportunity, and a focus on learning a new way of life.

Winder spent his last days of employment applying one final coat of paint on the walls of East Block, formally known as Death Row.

Pointing 70 feet up to the building's steel corbels, Winder said, "I painted those trusses 20 years ago from the top of an extension ladder perched on that gun rail."

His whole crew stood around him ribbing each other and reminiscing about the years they spent working together. "My last day is April Fool's Day," Winder said with a booming laugh. "It's only fitting I go out on April first, because that's the same day that I started."

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EDITORIAL

About time for changes to a dysfunctional criminal justice system

By Kevin D. Sawyer
 Editor-in-Chief

The new learning center at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center has finally opened, much to the delight of the incarcerated, staff and volunteers.

Nearly three years to the day from when Gov. Gavin Newsom made his speech about converting San Quentin to a rehabilitation center, *San Quentin News* moved back to the location where it was relaunched in 2008 — after it was shutdown 25 years earlier. The newspaper's new home is inside building A, on the third floor, in room A309.

In 2023, I watched Gov. Newsom deliver his speech, streamed live to a classroom at The Last Mile, co-located with the then-California Prison Industry Authority, inside the now demolished building 38, where I was an audio engineering student. On the other side of a wall, the governor spoke before the media, politicians, prison staff, inmates, and visitors.

Like many, I was somewhat incredulous but openly optimistic. Since then, I have listened to and read news articles in the media that have criticized the governor's plan and its cost. Without question, I realize, the governor has detractors and naysayers who want his decisions and policies to fail for more reasons than he can probably count.

Gov. Newsom inherited many problems, so I often asked, What was so wrong with him implementing changes to a dysfunctional criminal justice and prison system that for decades had a growing population that reached 175,000 (by some estimates), made allowances for racial injustice, had an inadequate health care system, a revolving door for recidivism, and no concept of rehabilitation?

Gov. Newsom's speech was not a campaign promise. It was a mandate for change. As a sitting governor who has higher political aspirations, he has gone out of his way to make improvements in the Golden State. But like any politician, he cannot please everyone of his

constituents. He could have played it safe and maintained the status quo, like some of his predecessors.

Three decades ago, when I entered the criminal justice system, state Penal Code § 1170(a)(1) read, in part, "The Legislature finds and declares that the purpose of imprisonment for crime is punishment." Rehabilitation has since been added.

As a reminder, Gov. Newsom did not add "Rehabilitation" to the then-CDCR's mission, which created the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. That was done by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on July 1, 2005. Nearly 21 years later, there are those who are still resistant to the idea of change. I have stopped asking why long ago.

There is a good reason San Quentin was rebranded as a rehabilitation center, and chosen as a sight with a new learning center. Its past history, proximity to major metropolitan areas, universities, and the Silicon Valley makes it a go-to destination for all things possible inside a prison. It is the epitome of what a new model prison can be, and its success can be duplicated not only in California but across the nation.

The idea to roll out the California Model at San Quentin has been a long time coming. What was needed was a politician with the wherewithal to implement such a transformation. What made it possible were the programs already flourishing here. For example, Mt. Tamalpais College (formerly Patten University) has been educating men at San Quentin for 30 years. The Last Mile started the first computer coding program inside a U.S. prison right here, and the *San Quentin News* — established in 1940 — was the inspiration for what has become perhaps the largest media center inside any penal institution in the world. Then there are the numerous groups and self-help programs to restore broken individuals who need healing.

Is it any wonder Gov. Newsom chose San Quentin? I remember him visiting

the prison when he was the state's lieutenant governor. He seems to be very familiar with what goes on at the 174-year-old institution, so it is no accident that he chose to fortify what he has seen and read about working for more than a decade. Through hard journalism, *San Quentin News* made its mission to report on what takes place at the institution, and beyond.

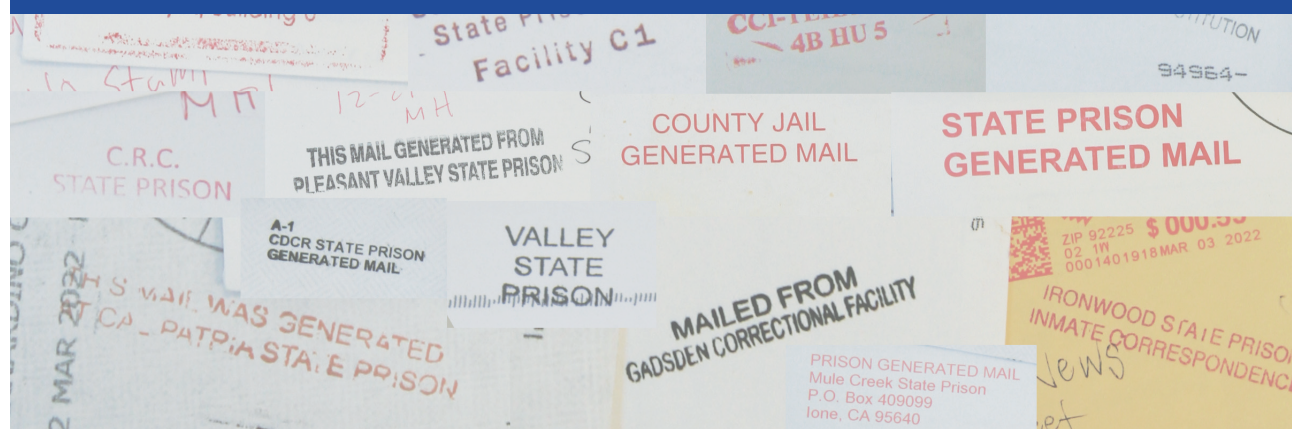
Change is still taking place. Today, several prisons have closed in California. There is a moratorium on the state's executions, and, of course, there is a new learning center at San Quentin. Some may choose to call its \$239 million price tag being soft on crime, coddling criminals, or playing politics. I live here, so I will call it change for the betterment of inmates, officers, staff, and volunteers. Everyone inside benefits, and undoubtedly so will Californians on the other side of the prison gate.

California is the world's fifth largest economy, so reforms are slow. Not so long ago a federal three-judge court had to exert its authority over the CDCR to improve its healthcare system, and to reduce its prisoner population to its current 93,000. The Board of Parole Hearings is constantly changing, and more prisoners serving life have been found suitable. I recall my first year in prison when only 13 prisoners received parole dates, and most if not all of those were rescinded by former governors.

I have seen many events — good and bad — take shape inside California's prisons. The new learning center scored big points. What I have not seen or heard from anyone in the outside media, or inside the CDCR — not that it has not happened — is a public thanks to the governor, his staff, and supporters for making an investment in people that many in society believe are undeserving and unworthy.

For prisoners outside of San Quentin, your time will come. And while I cannot speak for the entire state prison system, on behalf of the guys at *San Quentin News*, inside the new media center, Thank you, Gov. Newsom.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear *SQNews*,

My name is Michael Silver. I'm an advocate and it again for medical rights of California prisoners. I sent San Quentin News multiple letters some to the editor and one to the PIO. I was wondering if your newspaper quit handing out physical copies.

—Michael Silver
 California Men's Colony

Dear *SQNews*,

I would like to receive the latest copy of the San Quentin newspaper and a pen just kidding. I read September October. They were amazing thank you so much if possible please continue to send me issues. I found it very helpful and encouraging. Thank you.

—Daniel Herrera
 North Kern State Prison

Dear *SQNews*,

I've been reading San Quentin news on my tablet through Edovo but sometimes it's hard to load. I really enjoy reading the old issues thank you. I don't make a lot only \$.24 an hour so I would really be blessed if I could receive some more issues, sincerely

—Nathan Scarborough
 Clifton, Tennessee

Dear *SQNews*,

Please put me on your mailing list for the San Quentin newspaper. I'm currently in the new reception center in North Kern State prison. I do not have access to your paper here. You guys are doing an awesome job. Months ago I found the paper in the law library. Thanks for taking your job seriously and putting your heart into it. Hope to see the newspaper soon.

—John Ellis
 North Kern State Prison

Dear *SQNews*,

Can you please start sending me the San Quentin newspaper? I read all your digital newspapers on the Edovo app that we have on our tablets. I love the Edovo app. It has a lot of information that us inmates can use and thank you for all your time and effort you put into the newspaper. I've been incarcerated for 15 years and I am close to returning to society. I'm all for a growth and development and positivity. God bless you all, hold your heads up high.

—Ron Wallace
 Little Rock, Washington

Dear *SQNews*,

I'm a prisoner in Michigan and I'm interested in obtaining a copy of your two most recent issues on the San Quentin news. I'm in self-help group, I'm a facilitator, and college student and I enjoy reading about the college programs and other programs you have inside San Quentin and compare them to ours. Thanks for your time.

—Ken McDaniels,
 Jackson, Mississippi

Dear *SQNews*,

I just wanted to write to let you know I'm grateful for your newspaper. I'm trying to keep up, here in High Desert, and I would like to know what's going on. Please send me your latest news issue thank you, your friend.

—Terry Hauser High
 Desert State Prison.

Dear *SQNews*,

I would love to receive a copy of your latest newspaper. I highly appreciate everything you guys do with the much of utmost respect.

—Jason
 Oroville, California

ELDERLY

Continued from page 1

Three individuals stay steadfast in pursuit of freedom despite parole denials

his wife said she was leaving him, and was placed in a long care facility shortly after.

"I know what a denial did to me," Faith said, who has been denied parole ten times. "I fear it would do the same to my daughter."

Faith said he maintains his psychological health with help from CDCR's Mental Health program, but his physical health is not so good. He struggles with scoliosis, an abnormal curvature of the spine, and sciatic nerve problems, which is extreme pain in the lower back.

Despite his physical ailments Faith stated that Biblical scriptures have "immensely" helped him over the decades. Faith is a practicing Jehovah's Witness, a religion which adheres to Biblical authority and in which practitioners commune directly with God.

"Let every person be in

subjection to the superior authorities for there is no authority except God. The existing authorities stand placed in their relative position by God," Faith quoted the Holy Bible, Romans Chapter 13, Verse 1.

Faith said that during his incarceration he has participated in self-help programs such as Guiding Rage into Power which helped him live in the now. The groups Victims Impact, and Houses of Healing, helped him address his childhood traumas.

In addition, Faith has been involved with a program named "Boundaries."

"We did not learn how to respect other people's space on the outside, and how not to put our hands on other people," Faith said, reflecting on the positive impact of the program.

Harold Bicknell, 68, has

spent more than 48 years in prisons. He was originally sentenced to seven-years-to-life, and has appeared before BPH 15 times.

Bicknell said he has concerns about the difficulties he will face upon reentering society. After four decades in prison, he has amassed numerous skills, such as computer literacy, been trained as a journalist, and song writing.

He wonders if what he has learned over the decades will translate into usable and viable skills in the free world.

Bicknell stated he is a Christian by faith. His belief in knowing that God has an interest in his well-being is critical to what keeps him going.

"God knows the truth of my situation, and greets me everyday with yet more breath to breathe," Bicknell said. "Having been thus counted

worthy by God to meet the day I step into each new one awaiting God's revelation — or the call home."

In almost five decades of incarceration, Bicknell stated he has obtained his GED, an Associate of Arts in General Education, and a Bachelor's Degree in Ministry.

SQ resident Steve Drown, 76, is serving a 7-years-to-life term. He has been confined 48 years, and has appeared before the BPH 15 times. Drown said through his almost five decades of incarceration, he has experienced ever-changing regulations and requirements that have been placed on lifers.

He has outlasted six California governors, from George Dukemajian to Gavin Newsom, with each governor having a significant role in changing board requirements.

"I went before the Board of Prison Hearings thinking I could talk my way out go prison," Drown said. "I did not have the understanding and awareness over the years that I have today."

Drown fears he has lost touch with the changes of society, though he is able to keep up with current events through media consumption. "It's not the same as lived experience," he said. Resident Drown questions whether or not he will be able to formulate a lasting personal connection with someone. He has the desire to have a loving, honest, and lasting relationship with a partner after nearly 50 years of guarding his emotions.

As a lifer, Drown has participated in Dialectic [reasoning] Behavior Therapy, Alcoholics Anonymous, Anger Management, and Conflict Resolution, amongst others.

Drown said his mental capacity has strong attributes, but he does find it discerning to see other people with less time being paroled.

He stated that he has experienced six mini-strokes, and has struggled with high blood pressure as well. Drown also said that he has had problems with his balance.

All things considered, at 76, Drown is fairly healthy. CDCR has two options for elderly release, if you have reached the age of 50, and have served at least 20 years, you are eligible to appear before the BPH. The same is true for people who are 60 and have served 25 years.

"This practice of letting elderly people die in prison has quietly tarnished the soul of California,

and it will continue to do so until something changes," stated *Cal Matters*.



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Couples share their experiences with marriage and long-term relationships

Residents and wives say yes to God and each other**MARRIAGE**

Continued from page 1

15-year-to-life sentence, returned as a guest speaker along with his wife, Nini Gonzalez. When he paroled, their marriage faced unhealthy issues. Thereafter he came up with the idea of organizing a marriage conference for the incarcerated and their wives to educate and prepare those who will someday be paroling and may be facing similar situations.

The weekend before the Gonzalez couple were married, they broke a religious fast. It was then that God revealed to him that he was going to be paroling sooner than he had anticipated. Mr. Gonzalez shared how his wife started to get closer to God. Things

got heavier and heavier to the point that she filed for divorce two weeks after he paroled.

"I was broken. I came from distortion. Until I fully surrendered to the Lord, I noticed things started to change," said Ms. Gonzalez. "I was upset at how hard prison is and how they [the visiting correctional officers] made me feel when visiting my husband."

According to resident Francisco Sordid, the event was a blessing for him and his wife. It gave them the space to pray, cry, and hold hands. He feels that this marriage conference centered their relationship more by allowing them to bond and get to know each other better.

Glen and Liz Kauk participated in the panel discussion and talked about their 29-year journey together. Mr. Kauk recalled

that when Mr. Gonzalez was released from SQ, Mr. Kauk encouraged the Gonzalez family to participate in marriage counseling. Now all that has come full circle. This is why, when asked by Mr. and Mrs. Gonzalez to help with the event, the Kauns felt privileged to do so.

Brian King, an SQ educational instructor, saw the need for a marriage conference. During one of his visits to San Diego at a Love Does event, he and his wife, Camille, met the Gonzalezes and the rest is history.

"We wanted to support married couples that are dealing with incarceration by first focusing on Who They Are Saying Yes To. By focusing on their commitment to God first, then each other, we believe that incarcerated marriages can survive and grow in a healthy way," concluded King.

Reentrant program moves toward positive parenting program**FRIENDS**

Continued from page 1

Realistic reentry plans and resources are pivotal components for helping incarcerated people structure their lives before being released back into society after years of imprisonment. Studies have shown that this makes communities safer and reduces the recidivism rates of people who have served long sentences in a California State Prison.

California Governor Gavin Newsom's office released a report detailing the impact positive reentry programs have on the men and women who are released back into society across the state.

According to a *Davis Vanguard* article,

"California's reentry programs lower recidivism rates by 34 percent for men and 44 percent for women, part of a broader state effort to reduce crime and improve public safety."

"According to 2019–20 cohort data, more than 80 percent of female participants and 74 percent of male participants released through community reentry programs did not reoffend. CDCR said the recidivism rate is 15 percentage points higher for women who do not participate in reentry programs, and 14 percentage points higher for men," the article said.

Another organization that assists people after release is the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, a nonprofit founded by movie producer Scott Budnick. He started the

organization to help provide job opportunities to help formally incarcerated people stay out of prison once they're released.

Friends Outside is also planning to expand its program to include a self-help group called Positive Parenting that would qualify San Quentin residents to earn rehabilitative achievement credits. The class helps people meet court-ordered requirements regarding child custody cases. The class will serve to empower participants to become confident, better parents over a 30-hour program session and completion.

"I want to meet people where they're at. I want people to be confident and know if they are scared, that means they are doing something right," said Baldo.



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Program Director of Northern California Juan Schwanker and Jasmine B. family liaison specialist

Services offered by Friends Outside

- Addressing family concerns
- Case management
- Child custody information
- Counseling
- Family support
- G.E.D support
- General information
- Housing
- Institution problems
- Missing person referrals
- Rental assistance
- Visiting information

REHABILITATION**Visits from family and hugs are a form of therapy**

By Jarvis Garner Jr.
Journalism Guild Writer

What's in a hug? For recent graduates at a San Quentin Rehabilitation Center class, it's a form of therapy.

Resident Joey Marsala's mother Cindy Jean Auno attended an event to see her son graduate from a vocational welding class at SQRC.

Marsala said his mother was impressed by her son's accomplishments and that she played a major role in him improving his life during his

incarceration.

"My mom used to say things like 'Just come home Joey, please' and I just feel so bad. That feeling of letting her down gave me an extra sense of urgency to prioritize what was in freedom and getting back to her," Marsala said.

SQRC resident Desmond Lewis graduated from the self-help program Arms Down, an anti-gun violence program at SQRC. He remembers what it was like to hug his wife and daughter for the first time in more than a decade.

During Lewis' 24 years of incarceration he recalled only hugging his little girl just once, on graduation.

"I was [now] looking at a grown woman," Lewis said. "It felt like hugging my baby. We were just holding on to each other as she began to cry."

Lewis said that the hug was "powerful." He knew his daughter was feeling protected and secure, which fueled his need to come home.

Visiting at the facility is normally scheduled for each weekend, including some

federal holidays. The policy of routine visiting for the incarcerated is considered a privilege and not a right, according to SQRC operational procedures.

Residents at SQRC can lose their visiting privilege via a Rules Violation Report, where their negative behavior is documented, according to SQRC procedures.

However, visiting is a way to recognize the value and the meaning of family and community connections, which prepares incarcerated

people for a successful transition back into society.

Ryan Chavez, an SQRC resident, said he has been incarcerated for 17 years, and every time his family visits him he feels as though he is his authentic self.

Chavez said that for him prison is a place where you can easily become institutionalized, with unclothed body searches and being identified as a statistic rather than by your name.

"I haven't seen my family in over a decade, so when my

mom came to see me for the first time in 16 years, I was overjoyed," Marsala said.

Marsala said about a year after his mother's visit she passed away. He recalls being devastated. His mom was his best friend and "her hugs was the best," he said.

Marsala said enjoying celebrations such as graduations with family are a form of a visit. One thing's for sure: there's nothing more reassuring and motivational than a warm embrace from a loved one.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Concerns of toxic water and chronic illness in California prison

Terrell J. Marshall
Staff Writer

For more than 20 years incarcerated people at California's Mule Creek Prison have raised concerns about the drinking water.

"The water tastes like chemicals or metal, smells foul and fishlike, and appears dirty brown or foggy," according to *Prison Legal News*.

For decades many residents of Mule Creek reported chronic illnesses ranging from liver and kidney problems to various forms of cancer that are linked to contaminated water.

Based on reports from *Type Investigations* and *The Appeal*, those who live, work or have paroled from the institution traced the tap water issues back to when

the prison first opened.

Built in 1985, Mule Creek includes on-site facilities for meat packing, welding, coffee roasting, and dry cleaning among others.

According to resident sources in the article, untreated water runoff from these industries has poured down the drains for decades, and the problem has only gotten worse.

Due to a series of environmental lawsuits and reports in 2023, a consent decree required California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to repair Mule Creek's disposal and drainage system.

The plumbing overhaul did not include pipes that carry the facility's drinking water, which are close to sewer lines and at risk for cross-contamination. The agreement only stipulated

plumbing repairs to outflows that leaked into a nearby creek.

A Mule Creek free staff plumber stated that the plumbing system looks like "they took a bunch of spaghetti, just threw it in a hole, and tied the ends in," noted the article.

According to *The Appeal*, Mule Creek residents cannot buy bottled water and the prison has continuously dismissed the link between chronic illness and the water supply.

"If you want to live, don't drink the water," said Mule Creek resident Mike Cahill, 84, who had a cancerous tumor removed in 2022, to *The Appeal*.

Many prisons and jails across the United States face similar water quality issues.

Prison Legal News reports that

nearly a million incarcerated people draw from sources contaminated with toxic pollutants known as "forever chemicals." These substances are linked to a multitude of health problems including decreased immunity, thyroid issues, and various forms of cancer.

California's San Quentin Rehabilitation Center is one of the oldest prisons in the nation. Many residents worry about the quality of the facility's tap water they must consume.

"The water here always tastes funny," longtime SQ resident Richard Rivali said after drinking from the fountain. "This prison was built back in the 1800s so I imagine the water flows through some pretty old pipes."

SQ resident and Plant Operations

plumber John James said there are generations of various plumbing systems and materials used to supply the facility's water. He added that most of the old galvanized pipes, once used inside the prison's plumbing chases, were replaced with copper lines years ago.

"This place draws water from the county's main water supply," said James. "The quality of the water we consume is determined long before it makes it way into the prison."

According to SQRC's commissary price list, residents can purchase bottled water.

"When water tastes bad, that can't be good," Rivali said. "A bottle of water from the canteen costs more than I make in a day, so I have to drink what comes out of the faucet no matter what it tastes like."

The positive effects of resentencing laws in California

By Eric Allen
Staff Writer

In the last 12 years, California has passed numerous criminal justice reform laws to reduce the prison population through resentencing. For decades, the only way to release an individual sentenced to life in prison was through the direct appeal process, newly discovered evidence, or a Board of Parole hearing.

Research from *CalMatters* reveals that over the past decade, California's prison population has significantly declined from roughly 170,000 people to 90,000 as of December 2024.

California's efforts to reform its criminal justice system were spearheaded by former Gov. Jerry Brown between 2012 and 2022. Following in his footsteps, Gov. Newsom has continued efforts aimed at resentencing reform for prisoners serving long-term sentences.

"The data shows that the policies have been largely successful at reducing the prison population without increasing risks in public safety and can serve as a blueprint

for future changes," said Tom Nosewicz, legal director of the California Policy Lab, a legal and policy research institute at UC Berkeley.

Proposition 36, passed in 2012 granted relief to individuals serving life sentences. Prop. 36 gave incarcerated people, sentenced under the Three Strikes Law for "non-violent, non-serious" crimes, the opportunity to petition the courts for resentencing.

Resident Michael Beard, 67, has served over 31 years for a non-violent Three Strike offense. He didn't hear of Proposition 36 until 2026.

"I never heard of Prop. 36. This is my first time hearing about this, and my case is non-violent," said Beard.

Approximately 2,200 people have been released under Proposition 36. Nearly half of those released are Black and over age 50, according to *CalMatters*.

The implementation of Proposition 47 in 2014 afforded people convicted of petty theft and lower drug offenses an opportunity to petition the court for resentencing. However, in 2024, voters elected to lengthen the potential sentences

for certain theft and drug offenses, according to *Cal Matters*. To date, Proposition 47 has the highest release and recidivism rates.

In 2018, the passing of Assembly Bill 1437, also known as the Felony Murder Rule, challenged prosecutorial authority to charge a person with felony murder if the defendant was not the shooter during the commission of their offense. The bill opened the door for individuals to seek possible resentencing.

Many of the people directly impacted by the Felony Murder Rule are African Americans, half of whom were 21 years and older at the time of their arrest, serving 14–15 years in prison as a first time offender.

San Quentin resident Alfred Hayes was arrested at 18 years old for robbery murder and was charged with second degree murder. According to Hayes, he admitted to a detective that his intention was to commit a robbery, not to kill. In the middle of a struggle between Hayes and the robbery victim, Hayes' firearm went off, inadvertently killing the man.

"I pistol whipped him and the

gun went off. I didn't want to kill him," said Hayes.

His appeal was denied under the Felony Murder Rule. The court did not prove malice and intent, which is required by the Felony Murder Rule, Hayes stated.

Incarcerated women made up 11% of the people being resentenced and released under the same rule. People released under the Felony Murder Rule had a recidivism rate of 3% in the first year of its passage and 7% in the second year.

In 2018, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation implemented a new policy under Penal Code 1170(d), allowing any staff member to advocate for any inmate with certain case factors and displaying exceptional conduct while incarcerated by writing a letter of recommendation for resentencing to the facility's warden.

After the warden's approval, the final decision is made by the Secretary of CDCR. *CalMatters* reported that CDCR recommended over 2,200 incarcerated people for resentencing under 1170(d). Of those recommended, 786 resulted in denials.

"Long sentence does not contribute to improve public safety. There's just a certain point where we're warehousing people and using taxpayer dollars in the way that's proven to be unproductive," said State Senator Nancy Skinner.

Approximately 12,000 individuals have been resentenced under all five policies, 9,500 of whom were released from prison. African American and Latinos have benefited the most from the resentencing laws, as they tend to be charged more severely than other groups.

In 2020, the California legislature created the Committee on Revision of the Penal Code. A combination of teachers and lawmakers made up most of the groups fighting for policy reform. The committee collaborated with the California Policy Lab.

The new laws have "helped reduce our prison population, but of course, it's a drop in the bucket," said Nosewicz.

"That's why I think it's important to show how we can expand some of these opportunities and show ways that have worked and ways they haven't."

Prior criminal convictions compound new sentences

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Editor-in-Chief

Increasing the criminal penalties for people who have prior convictions in state and federal courts adds limited benefit to public safety, according to a recent study done by *The Sentencing Project*.

It was reported that a person's previous criminal conviction is a component in the decision-making in each stage of the criminal legal process, which includes pre and post sentencing. For example, people with a criminal record are more likely to be booked after arrest compared to people with no record who were arrested for the same offense.

"Lawmakers and court practitioners often use criminal histories as a basis for requiring pretrial detention and risk assessment instruments used to determine pretrial release include prior convictions when calculating risk scores and making detention decisions," *The Sentencing Project* reported.

People who have a history of criminal convictions are often subjected to having their sentences increased in state and federal courts, *The Sentencing Project* found. Sentencing recommendations, sentencing laws, and the discretion of prosecutors and judges are ways in which a person's criminal record increases criminal penalties imposed on them.

The report stated, "In 12 states, Washington, DC, and the federal

system, sentencing guidelines include sentencing grids that recommend or require the type and duration of sentences based on two key factors: the seriousness of the offense that a person was convicted of, and their criminal record."

"In addition to sentencing guidelines, many state and federal laws also explicitly require longer sentences for people with prior convictions. For example: California's Three Strikes Law doubles prison sentences for a second 'strikeable' offense and mandates parole-eligible life sentences for a third," *The Sentencing Project* reported.

In addition, it was reported that some federal laws require a mandatory life without parole sentence for certain repeat serious convictions.

Sentences that impose prison time are typically based on the severity of a criminal offense, and on a person's criminal record, or "rap sheet," which is essentially an index of one's accumulated convictions.

"African Americans are disproportionately impacted when criminal records lengthen sentences," *The Sentencing Project* reported. "Across the four states studied here, among persons sentenced to 10 years or longer, African Americans had criminal record scores — representing both length of history and offense severity — that were 26% higher than whites."

The imbalance was a factor to African Americans receiving significantly longer sentences,

according to *The Sentencing Project*. "Among people with sentences of 10 years or longer, African Americans averaged 31 years and seven months, while white individuals were sentenced to an average of 26 years and four months."

The Sentencing Project report stated that imposing harsher punishment on people because of their criminal record is "problematic because it increases the harms of incarceration while producing limited contributions to community safety — and these harms disproportionately impact African Americans."

The report addressed what it deemed the "broader issue [of] the unquestioned inclusion [of] prior drug convictions in criminal record scores." It noted the "well-documented racial disparities in drug law enforcement."

"Surveys by federal agencies show that both recently and historically, whites and African Americans have used illicit drugs at roughly similar rates," *The Sentencing Project* reported.

For sentences that are more than 10 years, *The Sentencing Project* recommended "criminal records should account for no more than 10% of sentence lengths."

The report concluded that those who follow the practice of using a person's criminal record to lengthen their sentence should take such measures with caution and investigate whether the main goal of increasing public safety is actually being reached.

Juvenile solitary confinement

By Ben Greenspon
Journalism Guild Writer

United Nations officials say long-term solitary confinement for juveniles equals torture, which can lead to anxiety and depression.

A lawsuit filed in federal court by the Legal Aid Society, on behalf of four Black detainees ranging in ages from 16-20, is seeking a remedy for abuses in solitary confinement, according to the *New York Times*.

DaMia Harris-Madden, Commissioner of the New York Office of Children and Family Services, is named in the lawsuit mainly because he oversees all the juvenile detention facilities.

"The lawyers claim that youth are often held in solitary conditions to alleviate 'dangerously low' staffing levels, and are forced to go to the bathroom in trash cans in their cells and then eat meals there," according to the lawsuit.

Children as young as 12 are held in small, barren rooms for months at a time within five NY facilities. The lawyers for the youth claim that holding minors in solitary is prohibited, noted the *Times*.

In 2021, former NY Governor, Andrew M. Cuomo, signed into law, "The Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement Act," commonly known as the HALT.

The Act prevents jails and prisons from placing detainees in solitary confinement for more than 15 consecutive days, which does not apply to juvenile offenders, reported the *NYT*.

The agency relies on loopholes to justify the banned practice of solitary confinement for minors. Staffing shortages at the five facilities have created an environment where children are locked away for months.

A spokesperson for the NYOCFS would not answer questions about staff shortages, but said the agency does not endorse the use of solitary confinement for punishment, according to the *New York Times*.

Garrett, 16, from Brooklyn is a plaintiff in the lawsuit. He loves to read fantasy novels and play video games; the youth has been in solitary confinement for months at a time.

"[Garrett feels] anxious and depressed and often acts out to get attention and to mitigate the loneliness and isolation he suffers daily," the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit filed in the Southern District of New York claims that Garrett was restricted to a cell for 22-24 hours a day during his first month at the Industry Residential Center near Rochester, in upstate New York, noted the *Times*.

According to the lawsuit, Garrett was not allowed to attend school or interact with his peers, "due to the perception that he posed behavioral problems."

Emma-Lee Clinger, staff attorney for the LAS, said the state of New York is responsible for keeping the youth in their facilities safe, "yet the state is responsible for inflicting this most serious harm upon them."

Happy Mother's Day



"Continue traversing on this path that made you the beautiful woman you are today. Love you momma."

—Kahlil



"Love you forever. I cannot wait to cook with you again."

—B. Johnson



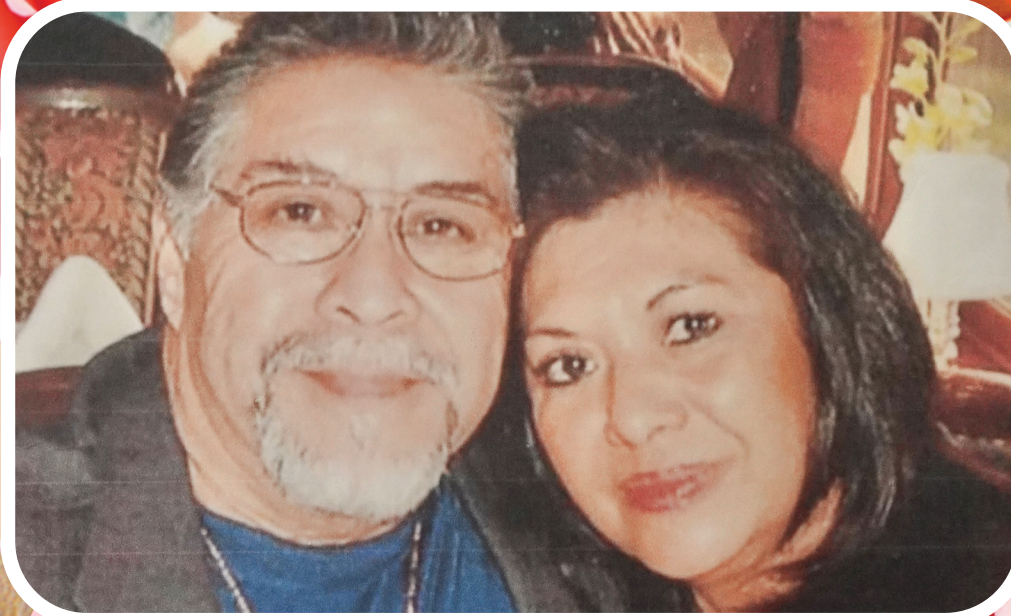
"Madre querida gracias por el amor y el apoyo incondicional que siempre me as brindado."

—Aristeo Sampablo



"Mi querida suegra usted siempre ah sido una contancia de amor, presencia calida, y una luz que guia mi vida."

—Mike C.



"Mom thank you for all the love and support, especially when I needed it most."

—Joey Ochoa



"Because of you, I stand taller, love deeper, and never break. Happy Mother's Day."

—Ali Deminter



"Thank you momma for showing us what perseverance look like and for your unconditional love."

—Anthony Graham



"Sorry mom, I miss you."

—Han



"A Family, A Friend, Forever. Happy Mother's Day Barbara. You're the best!"

—Jerry Maleek Gearin

El cáncer causa la muerte a prisioneros anterior y sus parejas

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

Miles de personas encarceladas se enfrentan al riesgo de ser diagnosticadas con cáncer.

El señor Armenia de 67 años de edad residente de San Quentin, fue diagnosticado con metástasis etapa IV. Un cáncer de pulmón que fue diagnosticado en febrero de 2025. Resaltando que inicialmente los especialistas pensaron que era operable.

Pero lamentablemente los resultados indicaron que su cáncer se había expandido al hueso izquierdo arriba de su brazo.

El Departamento de Corrección y Rehabilitación de California, generó una petición a la jueza Yvette Verastegui, del condado de Los Ángeles, para que el Sr. Cudjo pueda ser considerado para una audiencia de resistencia.

En este comunicado por

la Dra. Brittany Brizendine, PsyD, y directora, de Salud, Servicio y Tratamiento, informó a la corte que el Sr. Cudjo, alcanzó los requisitos para que el pueda ser considerado a una nueva resistencia por medio del Código Penal de Ca. Sección§1172.2.

El estudio conducido por la Universidad de Medicina Yale, indicó la alta mortalidad entre las personas encarceladas con un 30% de las muertes. Añadiendo, que el cáncer entre hombres jóvenes con decencia africana en latinoamericana son más propensos en contra de cáncer gastrointestinal junto con cáncer de pulmón, próstata y leucemia.

Al igual enfatizó, que personas liberadas fallecieron en el lapso de un año. La Doctora Emely Wang indicó que hay alto riesgo de mortalidad entre personas que no reciben el tratamiento para aliviar los síntomas,

en donde los pacientes no reciben la atención adecuada, incluyendo apoyo social y/o alimentación después de su liberación.

Mientras las personas se encuentran encarceladas tienen la posibilidad de recibir el tratamiento e información adecuada. Sin embargo las personas liberadas con cáncer enfrentan obstáculos e incertidumbres por la falta de atención médica a su reingreso a la sociedad.

Tragedias han sido reportadas con el fallecimiento de Sr. Marcus "Willi" Henderson tras ser liberado con cáncer terminal de próstata.

Henderson quien sirvió una condena perpetua, trabajó como Jefe en Redacción para *Las Noticias de San Quentin*. El mantuvo informada la comunidad encarcelada, al igual que ayudó en múltiples proyectos de autoayuda. Henderson comentó que durante su encarcelamiento

el recibía quimioterapia cada dos semanas.

"Me siento como un leproso. Ningún doctor quiere tocarme por no tener una aseguradora adecuada", escribió Henderson en una carta y añadió, que después de 60 días de su liberación no recibía la quimioterapia que tanto necesitaba. "De primera mano ahora estoy viendo la disfunción de nuestro sistema de salud".

Henderson falleció el jueves 15 de mayo del 2025, al poco tiempo de escribir su carta por complicaciones relacionadas con su cáncer.

En abril del 2023 el Centro de Asistencia Estatal y Servicios de Asistencia Sanitaria a personas de bajos ingresos otorgaron una "excepción" enfocada en dar servicios de salud dentro los 90 días que una persona es liberada, de acuerdo a *Las Noticias para Votantes Independientes*.

La administración de San Quentin reconoce estas

necesidades y el efecto que causa esta enfermedad a sus residentes

El programa Grupo de Apoyo para el Cáncer le da la oportunidad a estas personas para hablar de sus traumas y los efectos que esta enfermedad cada día cobra vidas tanto dentro como fuera de estas paredes. Cada persona encarcelada que ha sido diagnosticada con cáncer participa en un espacio seguro una vez a la semana. Este programa es administrado y coordinado por medio del Departamento de Salud Mental.

"El programa está designado para que las personas puedan compartir sin temor a ser juzgados y sentirse apoyados en un espacio seguro. Es un programa que continúa con la asistencia de practicantes de psicología antes de recibir su título", dijo elle Doc. Beenstein

El participante, Jose Francisco Navas, comenta,

que el programa le ha facilitado la información necesaria para educarse sobre su condición de cáncer de hígado. Sin embargo, en el pasado esta información y apoyo no estaba disponible de parte de la administración de salud primaria.

Las prisiones de California, cuentan con muchas personas diagnosticadas con cáncer.

Desafortunadamente no todas las instituciones cuentan con este tipo de programas, otorgando un apoyo educativo, emocional y físico.

"La personas encarceladas no quieren hablar abiertamente sobre su cáncer, por la simple razón de no querer ser juzgados o que la gente sienta lástima por ellos", dijo Navas.

Navas añadió que en las prisiones una persona enferma puede ser catalogada como débil o ser vista como objeto de burla que a su vez produce un sentimiento de victimización o de prejuicio.

Ejecución de prisioneros con enfermedades mentales severas

Por Marcos Serna
Spanish Journalism
Guild Writer

En el año 2022, una encuesta demostró que el 75% de estadounidenses están en contra de la ejecución de prisioneros que sufren enfermedades mentales severas. Ella Josh explica que muchos ciudadanos piensan que estas personas no son ejecutadas en los Estados Unidos de acuerdo a la constitución, prohíbe la ejecución en el caso de que una persona es declarada legalmente "demente" o "mentalmente incompetente". Los lineamientos legales para la verificación son altamente estrictas, por esta razón muchos prisioneros con enfermedades mentales serias siguen siendo ejecutados.

En 1986, en el juicio de Alvin Bernard Ford, la corte suprema declaró inusual y cruel ejecutar reos mentalmente incompetentes, comúnmente llamada The Ford Bar to Execution (Ley de Ford Prevención a la Ejecución). Ford, fue convicto por asesinato y fue sentenciado

a muerte en 1974.

Durante el juicio, nada sugirió que el Sr. Ford era incompetente, sin embargo su salud mental empezó a deteriorarse. Para el año 2022, él sufría con delirio que el Ku Klux Klan lo obligaría a cometer suicidio.

Justice Powell pronunció lo que se determinaría incompetencia mental: "un prisionero no puede ser ejecutado si no es consciente del hecho y las razones de la ejecución". El Sr. Ford fue declarado incompetente para ser ejecutado.

Un diagnóstico de enfermedad mental severa como esquizofrenia, desórdenes bipolares y/o de alucinaciones no garantiza que esa persona sea declarada incompetente y lo amparare de ser ejecutado.

En un estudio publicado en 2025, el profesor de leyes John H. Blume encontró que de 141 reclamos entre 1986 y 2024 bajo la Ley Ford de Prevención a la Ejecución, solo 28 resultaron en cancelación de ejecución. Todos fueron diagnosticados con enfermedad mental severa, de esos 28 con más de una enfermedad.

John Ferguson tenía historial de salud mental seria, varios profesionales lo habían diagnosticado con esquizofrenia y paranoia en los años 70 .s.

Durante diez años Ferguson estuvo internado y saliendo de instituciones mentales después de sufrir daño cerebral cuando tenía 21 años de edad. Finalmente fue sentenciado a muerte en 1978 por el asesinato de 8 personas en dos ocasiones distintas.

En 1995, sus consejeros levantaron una demanda pero la corte suprema determinó que el Sr. Ferguson presentaba un entendimiento racional y factual de las razones de su sentencia. Los Oficiales y Jueces de la Florida lo consideraron competente a pesar de evidencia de alucinaciones y una enfermedad duradera. El fue ejecutado en 2013. Sus últimas palabras en la ejecución fueron: "Soy el príncipe de Dios y resucitaré de nuevo".

Jeffrey Glen Hutchinson pasó 10 años en la Armada Estadounidense, Veterano de La Guerra del Golfo, durante ese tiempo estuvo expuesto

al gas Sarín y sufrió varias heridas que lo llevaron a contraer la enfermedad de la Guerra del Golfo y causó daño neurológico y psicológico permanente.

Hutchinson experimentó paranoia y alucinaciones tras su reingreso a la sociedad creyendo que agentes del gobierno lo perseguían por sus "conocimientos clasificados".

Fue sentenciado a muerte por el asesinato de su pareja y sus tres hijos, mantuvo su inocencia y dijo que el gobierno trataba de ejecutarlo; después de su sentencia, los abogados ofrecieron información de ex abogados, investigadores, un sicólogo y un siquiatra certificados, todos certificaron acordaron que Hutchinson era incompetente a ser ejecutado.

Los profesionales testificaron que él sufría de alucinaciones por mucho tiempo y que no era racionalmente capaz de entender porque sería ejecutado, aun así, la Corte de Distrito de la Florida sostuvo que el Sr. Hutchinson no pudo proveer suficiente evidencia para probar que era incompetente y fue ejecutado en primero de mayo de 2025.

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La percepción a la reincidencia en crímenes sexuales

Por César Martínez
Staff Writer

La noción errónea aunado con mitos sobre la reincidencia en crímenes sexuales, ha capturado la atención, opinión y percepción de inseguridad pública por décadas.

Datos demuestran que una persona que comete un crimen sexual y después de completar su condena, incluyendo con una adecuada rehabilitación en relación de su caso, tiene mayor probabilidad de no volver a cometer otro crimen de la misma naturaleza.

El criterio de algunos encarcelados es abierta hoy en día, por el entendimiento adquirido en su proceso de rehabilitación. Para estas personas encarceladas, el entender por que cometieron su crimen es un punto vital. También, comparten el deseo de que la sociedad algún día puedan tener un criterio justo en base de información concreta.

"la percepción son fáciles de

nuclare con los sentimientos y la falta de datos precisos y auténticos", dijo el residente de San Quentin Richard Evans y añadió, "Las personas que han perpetrado un crimen deben que deshacer los traumas o experiencias adversas que residen en su pasado".

El Buró Federal de Investigación del Departamento de Justicia reportó que en el 2024, cada 25.9 segundos ocurrió un crimen violento en los Estados Unidos. De estos, una muerte cada 31.1 por minuto, una violación cada 4.1 minutos y un robo cada 2.6 minutos. En total se reportaron 1,221,345 ofensas en crímenes violentos. Con un aproximado de 63,509 reportes relacionados con ofensas sexuales.

De acuerdo al reporte del buró federal, ofensas sexuales incluyen violación, sodomía, asalto con un objeto y contacto sexual criminal. Añadiendo que las relaciones más comunes que son reportadas son 52.1% en donde los

ofensores conocen a la víctima, 26% es relacionado con algún miembro de familia, 9.1% es por un extraño.

Aunque este reporte indica un descenso estimado de crímenes violento con 4.5 entre los años 2023-2024, colectando datos de 562 agencias, no especifica cuantos casos son nuevos o la reincidencia de estos.

La Oficina de Estadísticas de Justicia utilizó un punto de referencia creado por meta-análisis. Es una técnica o procedimientos resumidos de resultados de una investigación en combinación de resultados de números de estudios independientes. Estos datos demuestran la reincidencia en personas después de su encarcelamiento en un lapso de cinco años de seguimiento.

Esta oficina solo cuenta con estudios hasta el 2012, recopilando datos de 34 estados de la nación. Indicando que el índice de crímenes en ese entonces contaba con 79.3% a robo de vehículos, 78.3% a robo a casas, 72.8% a robo, 71.9

a asalto con violencia y 48% a violación o asalto sexual.

Basado en estas estadísticas, el 48% representa el porcentaje de arrestados por cualquier delito dentro de los cinco años posteriores a la liberación, no del porcentaje de quienes cometieron otro delito sexual.

Acorde al análisis meta-analítico se estimó que dependiendo en qué etapa del tratamiento y seguimiento, el porcentaje solo indicó un 10-18% de arrestos de personas después de liberación, y quienes tenían ofensas serias en asalto sexual, volvieron a cometer otro delito sexual.

Para algunos residentes de SQ la clave reside en la rehabilitación; el trabajar los factores que llevaron a la persona a cometer cualquier tipo de crimen.

"Los programas nos ayuda a reconocer nuestro pasado... [reconociendo] los traumas que no conocemos", explicó Pablo A. Sanchez residente de SQ y agregó que si la persona acepta el problema y trabaja

para cambiar la mentalidad criminal, podrá cambiar esas creencias que lo llevaron a cometer el crimen.

Estos estudios del 2012, demuestran una alta reincidencia de crímenes en robo de vehículos, robos a casa, entre otros en comparación con alguien que cometió otro crimen sexual. Añadiendo que entre los que son liberados con tratamiento, la reincidencia porcentual baja un 11% en comparación a otros crímenes violentos.

Patrick Lussier, profesor de la Escuela de Trabajo Social y Criminología con Doctorado, destaca en su estudios llevados por cientos de especialistas con más de 500 datos y documentos publicados entre los años 1940 y 2019. Identificaron información acerca de la reincidencia entre ofensores sexuales en los Estados Unidos, y Canadá.

"Algunas muestras, especialmente en los Estados Unidos, han sido utilizadas en exceso por los investigadores

a lo largo de los años. Esas muestras con altas tasas de reincidencia sexual podrían haber creado un prejuicio hacia la percepción de que estas altas tasas de reincidencia sexual eran representativas de todos los delincuentes condenados", describe Lussier en los resultados de su reporte.

Además identifican una errónea percepción y conclusión que la gente ha creado en relación del riesgo de reincidencia en ofensores sexuales. Todo esto a pesar que en los años 80s, estudios vieron un descenso en la tendencia de estos crímenes que empezó en los años 70s.

La tendencia a la baja de reincidencia en casos sexuales de Estados Unidos, y Canadá ha llegado a un rango de 40-60% entre estos dos países incluyendo "la efectividad de programas de tratamiento a los ofensores sexuales están asociados con un 25% reducción a la tasa de reincidencia", concluyen los estudios.

SPORTS

Intense competition before baseball season starts

By Ben Greenspon
Journalism Guild Writer

Hoping to make the 2026 San Quentin Giants baseball team, residents headed to the Lower Yard for try-outs.

Under a blue sky, with a well-groomed infield and freshly mowed outfield, San Quentin baseball was back for one of two try-out days that began the first Saturday of March. Residents had two chances to impress the coaches and earn a coveted spot on the team and become part of SQ Giants baseball history.

SQ Giants resident coach Richard "Will" Williams said, "Some former players may lose their positions if the talent dictates it. I'm emphasizing, don't think you have made the team, [because] every position is open."

More residents showed up to try-out than in the previous year. In fact, 40 residents showed up to showcase their skills in hopes of making the 2026 team. There were so many trying out that there weren't enough cleats to go around for all the hopefuls.

Out of frustration, the SQ Giants' assistant equipment manager, Johnathan "Goose"



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Formerly incarcerated Ki Lam joins former team for season opener

Martinez, quit as try-outs began. He quickly changed his mind before try-outs were over, which is the drama of prison baseball.

Passion and drama are part of San Quentin baseball as it is the oldest program in the prison. For over 125 years, at least 18 spots on the team roster must be filled annually, which makes it an honor to play for the organization.

"No one gets to sit on

the bench and rely on their reputation," said Williams.

After an hour of warm-ups and stretches the players gathered for a talk, then split into two groups. The former SQ Giants players played against the new players to see all the talent in action. It was old school versus new school.

First-time player SQ resident Shawn Lassen hopes to make the team. Lassen grew up playing baseball and said

when he is playing it takes time away. "The vibes are good and I don't feel like I'm in prison," said Lassen. "I never heard about SQ Giants baseball until I arrived at the prison. I'm young and just want to play."

SQ resident Lee Bailey took a longer journey to play ball at SQ's Field of Dreams. Bailey said it took him 18 years to finally make it to SQ. "I tried out for the 2025 team and made the cut and this year

I'm hoping to get more playing time," said Bailey.

Bailey said the team is excited about two games on this season's schedule — the Oakland Ballers and Butte Community College. Last year, BCC beat the SQ Giants 18-0. "They [Butte] skunked us last year, we want our run back," said Bailey.

Volunteer coach Phil Snyder said he has been coming into SQ for 15 years to play baseball. Snyder previously played on the Mission team, which plays many games at SQ every season.

"When growing up, I ate, studied and drank baseball," said Snyder. "It was the love of my life." Snyder said an injury sidelined his baseball dreams and now he enjoys teaching.

"Rather than trying to make superstars, I focus on teaching the fundamentals of the game," said Snyder. "For 3-4 hours you forget where you're at and who you are. It's just playing baseball, [and] it's a rehabilitation thing."

The 2019 baseball season set the standard for prison athletics. The SQ Giants, known then as the Athletics, started with 33 victories in a row, and ended with an

impressive 38-2 record. SQ resident Gary "Cool-Aid" Townes was a pitcher for that team. Townes first made the team back in 2013, which makes him one of the veterans on the field.

At 61, fresh off a three-year break from the game, Townes grabbed a glove and tried out for the 10th time since arriving at SQ. He said there is a lot of talent here, but he hopes to make the team again. "I kind of lost my way, took '23, '24, '25," said Townes.

By the age of 10 Townes was playing Little League baseball and at one point he played on a team similar to the 2019 team, which finished a perfect season, 26-0. He also remembers being on a really bad team.

"It's always fun when you're winning, [but] what really builds character is knowing how to lose and keep going," said Townes.

Teammates said one of the marquee games of the season will be when the Oakland Ballers come to play for the first time. They said they hope it will lead to a new annual rivalry.

The SQ Giants season opener is April 25th, and there are sure to be new faces on the team, as well as some old.

Q & A with Running Club Chairman

By Terrell J. Marshall
Staff Writer

In its twentieth year, San Quentin Rehabilitation Center's 1000 Mile Running Club has entered a new era by passing the baton to resident Greg Stephens as new club president.

When *SQ News* chased Stephens down to talk about his new role as leader of the two-decade-old organization, he said a person can find a lot more than leg cramps, and aching muscles out on the track.

"This club is a place where people become part of a community," Stephens said. "Everybody is welcome to join us, all you need to become a member is the desire to run."

TJM: When did you first get involved with San Quentin's 1000 Mile Running Club, and what led you to become president?

GS: During the Covid quarantine of 2022, I noticed a flyer promoting the 1000 Mile Running Club. Whenever I was allowed to go to the Lower Yard, I used the opportunity to run. It gave me a sense of balance and it felt good to exercise. When the quarantine was over, I started running with the club. My passion for running grew, and I started training for upcoming events. I was hooked. For me, running is a meditative experience and I always look forward to getting out on the track and getting into the zone. It's a place where I can find peace.

TJM: And how did you become the club's president?

GS: I became president when former president Tommy Wickerd paroled. I started out by setting up running events. Wickerd took me under his wing and showed me how things are done, so when



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews

Greg Stephens

he went home, I took on the responsibilities.

TJM: What are some of the responsibilities that come with being the club leader?

GS: I am responsible for overseeing and helping the running community in any way possible. I make sure practice and events are successful and positive for everybody. I work closely with the outside coaches on scheduling. I post promotional flyers, hang our banner, set up cones and water stations for the events. I also set up the electronic timer and pass out transponders that track the runners' lap times. My biggest responsibility of being club president is to encourage and support every runner out here in achieving the goals they set for themselves.

TJM: Can you share some insight on what you think draws the runners out onto the track?

GS: The positive energy displayed out here by the running community is contagious. Everybody is welcome to join us out here on the track. We support all runners no matter what their

fitness level. We don't care about age, race, gender, or religious beliefs. This club is a safe place to be part of the community. A person only has to have the desire to run. Running gives me a purpose; I have done a lot of self-reflection while spinning laps. There's a lot of camaraderie within the running community and I think that's what attracts people most.

TJM: Can you talk a little more about the outside volunteer coaches and how they help the club?

GS: Over the last 20 years, there have been countless coaches and volunteers that are passionate about helping the running community. Their tireless efforts continue to display the compassion they feel toward helping runners achieve their goals. We're so lucky to have coaches Tim and Diana Fitzpatrick, along with Jim Maloney and so many others who share their knowledge and continued support. The coaches teach running techniques, track runners' progress, and help them work through injuries. The club wouldn't be what it is today without the outside volunteers.

TJM: Can you talk about what the future looks like for the club and do you plan to implement any changes?

GS: The future of the club looks limitless. We have grown tremendously since I started with it in 2022. The amount of support we have is amazing. People have taken notice and followed suit by getting running clubs going in other institutions. As for any changes, I just want to keep what we have thriving.

TJM: Any last words?

GS: Thank you to everybody who supports the 1000 Mile Club. Let's Go!



Photo courtesy of Wikicommons

Darryl Strawberry at Crenshaw High School

President Trump pardons baseball icons

By Anthony Manuel
Carvalho
Sports Editor

A new season of baseball is providing hope for teams and players in and outside of prison. Last year, President Donald Trump pardoned Major League Baseball icons Darryl Strawberry and Pete Rose for their crimes.

Former New York Met Darryl Strawberry was pardoned in November 2025 for tax evasion and drug charges, while former Cincinnati Reds player and manager Pete Rose was pardoned posthumously in March 2025 for gambling.

When Trump pardoned Strawberry, the 1983 National League Rookie-of-the-Year, he referenced Strawberry's post-career embrace of Christian faith and longtime sobriety.

Strawberry thanked the President in an Instagram post, writing, "Thank you, President for my full pardon and for finalizing this part of my life, allowing me to be truly free and clean from all of my past."

Strawberry told the *Associated Press* that while, "Half asleep, I glanced over and saw a call from Washington D.C. Curious, I answered...the lady on the line said, 'Darryl Strawberry, you have a call from the President of the United States, Donald Trump.'" President Trump spoke warmly about my baseball days in NYC, praising me as one of the greatest players of the '80s and celebrating the Mets. Then, he told me he was granting me a full pardon from my past."

Trump approved a pardon

for Strawberry, who had served time and paid back taxes.

Prior to Strawberry's pardon, Rose served five months... President Trump said he would pardon baseball great Pete Rose and chastised Major League Baseball for barring the all-time hit leader from the sport's Hall of Fame for gambling.

Rose, who died in 2024 at age 83, was banned from baseball for life after confessing to betting on games while he was a manager for the Cincinnati Reds. In his testimony, Rose declared he had never bet against his own team before he was barred for life.

In 2015, MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred rejected Rose's bid for reinstatement.

Rose served five months in prison after pleading guilty to tax evasion charges in 1990.

1000 Mile Running club membership at all time high

The 1000 Mile Club held this year's first track event on San Quentin Rehabilitation Center's Lower Yard as its three-mile track meet started with over 100 persons walking a lap for those who could not run.

Volunteer Tim Fitzpatrick

said he felt the energy of the event that took place on February 27. "This is probably our biggest run ever," said Fitzpatrick. "We have over 90 runners and the running at San Quentin is at an all-time high compared to the last 27 years." Third-year club member

Bradley Ware sauntered around the track with no agenda in regard to his own performance. "I just want to improve on my time or my length of miles completed, because improvement is relative to where you started," said Ware. "Not everyone is

José, Hugo, or Markelle."

Ware said he respected 1000 Mile Club legends, current residents José Fajardo and Hugo Dimas, as well as former record holder Markelle "The Gazelle" Taylor.

"Today, they put the fun back in the event," said

resident Lee Covarrubias. "Running can be hard, but I get more out of it within this group, who has become like a second family to me."

Fitzpatrick added, "Thirty-five people work out every Monday night because our club is more than running;

it's gathering, fitness, and a team that leads to camaraderie within all people."

On February 27, there were more people competing than ever before.

—Anthony Carvalho
Sports Editor

Cultural expression through events brings unity and commonality

By Jason L. Jackson
Staff Writer

San Quentin residents develop tolerance, unity, and identity through freedom to express and celebrate their cultural heritages.

Cultural celebrations are a common occurrence in San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. Throughout the year events are held for various holidays including Black History Month, Cinco de Mayo, Juneteenth, and Kwanzaa. A number of other functions are hosted by members of the Muslim, Jewish, American Indian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander communities.

The opportunity to freely and safely explore their cultural identities within prison is a new experience for some residents.

“San Quentin is the first prison I’ve been at where culture events are allowed,” said SQ resident Deshawn Ford.

Ford helps to organize and

facilitate cultural events for San Quentin’s Black population. He said other prisons where he was previously held did not allow the open celebration of culture or religion. He recalled how Pelican Bay State Prison, for example, refused to allow the assembling of various racial groups because the prison administration’s assumption was impending violence.

“When holidays would come up, Blacks would have to come together and do our own thing, separate from the prison. San Quentin is different. Black men can come together in unity and celebrate each other, and that’s important because we don’t always have unity in prison,” said Ford.

Ford was incarcerated in San Quentin in 2012 and recalled that the facility did not hold as many cultural events as it does now. In 2026, Ford said the improvements are evident and rehabilitation is happening because of it.

The same is true for other residents.

“San Quentin was different before, because it was more violent. Now the prison environment is helping me grow as a person so I can have a better future,” said SQ resident Cesar Cabrera.

Cabrera is Mexican American and a member of the Aztec Dance team at San Quentin. In the two years since he joined the group, Cabrera said he has benefited from the opportunity to tap into his roots and learn more about Aztec history, culture, astrology, and mathematics.

“We meet every Wednesday. The group is more than dancing. It’s a support group where we are there for one another, and it takes me away from drugs and drinking or getting in trouble. It also helps me stay in shape,” said Cabrera.

Research from Mental Health America reveals that a healthy understanding of cultural heritage and history can help a person develop a strong personal identity and

increase community cohesion. In addition, it improves mental health by helping to lower rates of depression and anxiety, and aids in building resilience against stress.

“Being able to celebrate my culture here gives me a sense of freedom. We have a strong community because we are allowed to come together all the time,” said SQ resident Brian Gray, a Native American Indian member of the Chippewa tribe.

Gray is a clerk and one of the leading representatives for the American Indian community at San Quentin. He helps organize cultural events and collect donations for supplies and traditional medicines for the facility’s 36 registered members of the AMI community.

Gray said it is a privilege to learn about his culture because many of the traditions are being lost.

“I’ve learned more about my culture since being incarcerated,” said Gray. “At

other prisons we were not allowed to come together and celebrate the way we can at San Quentin. San Quentin allows us to have sweat lodges every weekend and two pow wows a year where we can bring in our families.”

Gray said San Quentin has recently approved a pow wow celebration where, for the first time, children will be allowed to come into the facility and join in the festivities. He said there will be dancers in attendance to teach the children traditional dance, and the kids will have the chance to celebrate with and learn from the elders.

“It will be a big significance to be with our family and teach a culture that is steadily being lost through the generations,” said Gray.

Prison has a reputation for breeding hostile, often violent environments. But at San Quentin, the sharing and teaching of cultures across racial and ethnic groups is showing potential to lessen the

divide amongst residents.

“A lot of us were taught to be racist without the understanding. Now we can develop our own understanding. We are learning about each other’s culture, and it’s helping us become more open minded,” said Ford, who learned to drop some of the bias he previously held.

Resident Gray also appreciates the opportunity he has to share his culture, while learning about others.

“Sometimes we have ‘guest sweats,’ where we invite other residents to experience the sweat lodge and learn about the importance of healing ceremonies and cleanses,” said Gray.

More than anything, SQ residents are learning how to accept themselves and others through healthy cultural exchange, and that is a huge step toward rehabilitation.

“We get to be ourselves here, instead of creating a persona in order to survive like we had to in other prisons,” said Ford.

Peer Support Specialists use lived-experience

By Terrell J. Marshall
Staff Writer

In 2025, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation broke new ground in health care and substance use treatment of incarcerated people by instituting a comprehensive Peer Support Specialist Program.

“To those who now and in the future strive every day to deliver hope and empathy to your respective incarcerated populations, you have our utmost respect and gratitude,” noted the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center PSSP 2025 Achievements and Best Practices report.

Since the beginning of last year, hundreds of incarcerated people across the state were trained, tested, certified, and hired as Peer Support Specialists by CDCR to provide a wide range of support to people among their community.

Specialists use their lived experience with substance use and mental health recovery, along with specialized training, to empower others.

“Our first goal is to build a person’s trust by providing emotional support,” said PSS John Dudley. “Our overall goal is to give individuals the tools and self-confidence they need to find their own path to wellness.”

Since becoming one of 30 certified specialists employed at SQRC, Dudley said he has helped people set goals, find resources, and advocate for themselves by connecting with community and engaging in treatment.

“We facilitate groups, collaborate with care teams, and have one-on-one sessions that help people develop everyday life skills like finding a job, navigating health care, combating triggers, and managing

symptoms,” Dudley said.

According to an article in *Corrections Today* entitled “Peer Behind the Walls,” by Lynn Patrone, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections was the first to establish the certified peer specialist program inside a U.S. prison setting back in 2012.

Since then, the peer support concept has continued to grow toward improving the health care and addiction recovery of thousands of incarcerated individuals across the nation.

“Implementing the certified peer support program is one such innovation that has far surpassed expectations and is, in part, responsible for changing the culture in how incarcerated individuals are viewed,” wrote Patrone.

SQRC resident PSS Michael Fangman said he recognizes that each incarcerated individual faces a unique set of challenges and stressors. It is his job to support them in a manner that fosters positive outcomes both throughout and beyond their incarceration.

“We can understand and relate to what people are going through because we have all walked in their shoes,” Fangman said. “We show others how we navigated our recovery and inspire them to find their own path to living their best life.”

Fangman said that most California state prisons currently employ up to 30 incarcerated certified Peer Support Specialists who each work up to 37 hours a week.

Four PSSs from Norco state prison recently transferred to San Quentin, and began supporting others in the community as soon as they arrived.

Fangman added that they all work toward the same goal of helping others

down the path of recovery by providing hope, role modeling, coaching, and ongoing practical support.

“We don’t do this work by ourselves,” Fangman said. “We collaborate with the facility’s health care staff, custody, and each other, to provide the best outcomes for our consumers.”

The *Paper Trail*, published at the Central California Women’s Facility, reported in “A Remarkable Achievement” that 28 CCWF resident PSSs passed the certification test in 2025 and began to help others on their journey toward wellness.

“It feels great,” Lena Coleman said in the article. “Not just my goal being achieved, but in being allowed to serve my community and be proactive. It’s a ‘me’ thing, but more so a ‘we’ thing.”

Paper Trail noted that by working toward and obtaining PSS certification, incarcerated individuals also gain transferable job skills for when they are released and increase the wage they can earn while incarcerated.

GovernmentJobs.com noted that in Marin County, Calif., PSS Counselors have a minimum salary of \$58,110 annually.

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, along with state health care departments and organizations like Faces & Voices of Recovery, are key funders that give grants to programs like PSSP.

According to the SAMHSA.gov grants page, many grants are drying up and facing significant cuts and uncertainty due to the winding down of the COVID-era funding.

“Executive orders have targeted certain grant types, potentially impacting funding for peer programs,”

noted SAMHSA.

Some PSSs have concerns about their jobs disappearing along with grant funding. SAMHSA stated there is a push for more Medicaid reimbursement funds that would replace or supplement the loss of grants.

Other solutions proposed by SAMHSA to support PSSPs include private funding options along with a variety of permanent funding stream solutions.

The SQRC PSSP 2025 Achievements and Best Practices report estimates the total number of peer engagements throughout the year to be more than 26,000.

The budgetary impact of the report states that under its current iteration, SQRC’s PSSP can employ up to 30 peer residents who, upon completing their certification, receive \$1.45 an hour for a 37-hour work week. This amounts to \$84,825 in annual budgeted “salary” obligations.

To achieve a similar statistical impact, an equally compensated non-incarcerated staff person would need to engage more than 103 incarcerated people every day, “over a myriad of subject and lived experiences they more than likely do not possess,” noted the report.

Dudley said the added value of having an incarcerated PSS who links people to vital community services like employment, housing, and treatment before release is just common sense.

“More than 90% of incarcerated people will eventually be released from prison,” said Dudley. “If we want healthier, more productive people reentering society after they serve their time, it only makes sense to give them the tools and the support they need now, before they hit the gate to freedom.”

Farmer's market being seeded

Nearly 1,000 residents at San Quentin signed a petition expressing their desire to see a farmer’s market installed at the facility.

Imagine being incarcerated and having the opportunity to purchase fresh vegetables, strawberries, mangos, pre-packaged salads, and even fruit smoothies. One resident at San Quentin is working to bring his idea of a first-of-its-kind farmer’s market into the facility, where residents will be able to do just that.

“Over the years, I’ve learned that diet has a huge effect on our physical health, our mood, and our mentality,” said SQ resident Kelton O’Conner when describing why he believes the farmer’s market is necessary inside of San Quentin.

Growing up, O’Conner said he suffered from issues regarding his mental and emotional health, including bouts with depression. He said he was in his early 20s when he learned the effects diet could have on mental health and began studying and learning how to adopt a healthier diet.

“Before I learned how to eat healthy, I ate a lot of food that wasn’t good for me: too many sweets, heavy starch, and processed foods. My energy and mood began to clear when I started to eat better,” said O’Conner. He said he developed the ability to cope with stress and manage his depression once his diet improved.

O’Conner said improving the mental and physical health of the incarcerated community is the primary driver behind his idea for the farmer’s market.

For him, good health is rooted in what and how we eat, and he said the food provided to incarcerated people by the state and sold to them in the canteen is overly processed, lacking in nutrition, and too high in fat and sugar.

Research from both Harvard and Stanford Universities, and the University of California, Davis reveals how a diet of mostly ultra-processed foods is linked to a number of poor health outcomes, including diabetes and depression.

People with a diet of

mostly processed foods have a 50% higher risk of cardiovascular death, such as a heart attack, and 48% higher risk of developing anxiety, according to Harvard University.

O’Conner’s idea for the farmer’s market is similar to the growing Food-Is-Medicine campaign, which focuses on the utilization of healthy foods to treat various physical illnesses while reducing medical spending throughout the country.

“I think the quality of the prison food is a four on a scale of 1-10. There is no variety, just the same food all the time. Having the farmer’s market would give us healthier options and solve a lot of the health issues like cancer and diabetes,” said SQ resident Angel Duarte.

Duarte believes the market would also give residents more control over what they choose to purchase and eat.

“Guys who have a lot of time to serve should be given more options because they have to deal with it for so long,” said Duarte.

Along with the farmer’s market, O’Conner would like to implement a six-month business-training program that would teach residents the ins and outs of running a successful business.

He said the objective of the program would be to “provide valuable business management training to incarcerated people, enable residents the opportunity to engage in positive correctional programming, and provide a means to distributing fresh produce.”

Time will tell if the dream of a farmer’s market inside of a prison, designed by and for incarcerated people, will ever come to fruition. However, just the mere possibility is exciting for the incarcerated people who would like to play active roles in their overall livelihoods.

“Food has the power to heal both the mind and the body, and we can begin to use healthy food choices to improve the lives of incarcerated people,” said O’Conner.

— Jason L. Jackson
Staff Writer

Prison altercation ends in death of incarcerated man

By Marcus Barnett
Journalism Guild Writer

An incarcerated person serving a life sentence was found dead by correctional officials in a Northern California prison.

Stephenson C. Kim, 45, was convicted for six counts of murder and one count of street terrorism and received life without parole for a 2004

shooting.

On January 4, Joe Duty Jr., 30, and Kim were identified as participants in a violent altercation that resulted in Kim’s death, according to CBS News.

According to prison officials, at approximately 7:20 p.m., staff responded to an incident between Kim and Duty at the California Medical Facility in Vacaville,

California. As a result, Kim was discovered unconscious. Staff performed CPR and Kim was taken to the facility’s emergency room.

Kim was then transferred to an outside medical facility where he later passed away. At the time of the altercation, both men received medical attention.

Duty, who survived the altercation, has been medically

evaluated and placed in the Restrictive Housing Unit pending an investigation.

The prison’s Investigative Service Unit and the Solano County District Attorney’s Office will conduct the investigation, noted CBS.

“I wonder what the reason for the altercation [was]. [It] most likely could have been prevented,” said San Quentin resident Emilio Lamas.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Public Policy Institute of California study on racial disparity in cop stops

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Editor-in-Chief

The number of racial and ethnic stops by police has fallen by one million since the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a study done by Public Policy Institute of California.

PPIC analyzed 15 of California's largest law enforcement agencies, using data provided through the Racial and Identity Profiling Act, to investigate racial disparities involving police engagements with pedestrians and traffic stops.

"The data show significant decreases in racial disparities in the likelihood of being stopped, driven by police departments, but notable gaps remain," PPIC reported. "The Black-white gap in police stops decreased by 57%, while the Latino-white stop rate gap decreased by 7%."

RIPA data reveal law enforcement stops dropped significantly at the beginning of the pandemic and remained 26% below 2019 levels in 2023. It was reported that the state's eight largest police departments were responsible for more than 60% of the decrease overall.

"We find that Black and Latino individuals are increasingly more likely to have intrusive experiences during a stop, including being detained curbside or handcuffed, compared to white individuals, PPIC reported. "While stops involving officer weapons remain relatively rare, Black and Latino Californians continue to be more likely to experience this

level of intrusiveness than whites."

While the pandemic was considered a factor in the decrease, the report suggested the aftermath of the George Floyd murder, limited pretext stops, and decreased police staffing played a role in the drop.

The RIPA law makes it a requirement for law enforcement in California to report on all pedestrian and traffic stops.

The study focused on six county sheriff's departments: Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Sacramento, San Diego, Riverside, and Orange; eight police departments Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Sacramento, Fresno, San Jose, Long Beach, and Oakland; and the California Highway Patrol.

"A million fewer stops overall means fewer intrusive encounters — including searches, detention, use of restraints such as handcuffs, and incidents involving weapons — and less risk for both officers and community members," PPIC reported.

PPIC also reviewed patterns that suggested some agencies may not have reported all stops.

"We looked at completion of RIPA-required training in racial and cultural understanding as well as use-of-force/de-escalation course-taking by officers in the 15 largest agencies," PPIC reported.

"Efforts by the RIPA Board and individual law enforcement agencies to ensure the completeness of reported data are crucial in preserving its value," the PPIC report concluded.

ARTS

Hidden jewels of quality literature found on book carts

By Eric Allen
Staff Writer

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center residents housed in the general population find hidden jewels on mobile book carts in the housing unit day rooms.

Each month San Quentin's main library donates about a dozen books to restock these carts in every housing unit. The books cover all genres of fiction and nonfiction and include *New York Times* best sellers.

SQRC resident James Wilson, 51, arrived a couple of months ago and considers himself an avid reader. Before his departure from Pelican Bay State Prison, Wilson was a library worker who oversaw approximately 3,000 unorganized books.

He said that seeing a book cabinet on his arrival here was a sign that this prison was on the right course. In the day room you pass the books before you get to the television and recreation table.

"A man once told me you can tell a lot about a person from the books he reads," said Wilson.

SQRC's main library provides a cart full of books to every housing unit for the people living inside. Residents are allowed to read these books free of charge without return dates. Most of the books are soft-covered and from a variety of different authors.

Resident Michael Vilkin, 74, has been housed at SQRC for six years. Since his

arrival, he organized all the books by author and cover size. He has made it his daily responsibility to keep all the books in order.

"People are so unorganized and inconsiderate to others, making it extremely difficult for people to find the book they need," said Vilkin.

On the cart he found a couple of books filled with jewels of historical information that connected him to his Soviet Union roots.

The book "Concise History of Communism of the Soviet Union" by author John Reshetarn Jr. helped Vilkin understand his cultural struggles. Coming from the Soviet Union in 1987, "I like to read books about my history. It makes me happy to remember that Ronald Reagan destroyed the evil empire, and I was able to come to America," said Vilkin.

Famous historian St. Augustine once said, "The man who doesn't read books travels very little."

The book carts are accessible throughout the entire day in the housing units, unlike the law library that only allows books to be checked out during work hours during the week when staff are available.

Residents can easily further their reading habit and gain more knowledge by having access to more free books that contain hidden jewels.

"There is only a few things that distinguished people in life and one of them is knowledge," said Wilson.

Bill proposed to improve access to petitions for Racial Justice Act

By Kyle Wilde
Journalism Guild Writer

Amidst community protests of George Floyd's murder, California legislators enacted the Racial Justice Act to protect people from old Jim Crow laws.

Two San Quentin Rehabilitation Center residents,

Kevin Fuqua and Roy Brown, petitioned their sentencing courts under RJA in an effort to address racial injustice, according to Knock L.A.

The courts denied the petitioners citing a lack of evidence.

Both Fuqua and Brown believed RJA would provide them with legal representation,

since an attorney would have helped them ascertain evidence showing a disproportionate sentence based on race, noted Knock L.A.

Fuqua, incarcerated the past 38 years for first-degree murder, claimed the presiding judge made a racial comment during court proceedings.

"The court's excuse

was a common one for people incarcerated here. No discoverable facts were attached to the petition to determine whether a public defender appointment was necessary," stated Knock L.A.

Under RJA, the courts were not obligated to review juror bias, non-diverse juries, or police misconduct. Instead,

RJA mandated courts to review overt acts of racial discrimination during court proceedings.

As historic as the law is, it has fallen short of delivering on its promise of significant racial justice. As instances of this shortfall grew, California lawmakers moved to fix the glaring

issues flowing from RJA.

The second iteration of the Act, Assembly Bill 1071, improved access to information and remedies, at the same time requiring courts to appoint council.

Petitioners will now be able to proceed with the "faith that justice does stand a chance of prevailing."

YOUTH

KidCat workshops influence resident's growth, empathy, and introspection

By Cesar Nava
Contributing Writer

Being part of KidCat has challenged, supported, and helped guide me into discovering who I really am. Most importantly, KidCat walked me to the root of why I chose to commit an unthinkable crime of murdering and attempting to murder two innocent human beings.

Being incarcerated since I was 16 years old, I knew KidCat was for me and that I was going to learn a lot about myself. I accomplished this through workshops that focused on environmental influences and taught me empathy and compassion.

I began with First Step and ended with Junior Lifer Support Group. Both cohorts gave me so much insight which impacted me so much that when given the honor to give back as a facilitator, I said yes. Now I am able

to be of service to others as it was done to me. KidCat challenged me to look further than San Quentin and so I did just that.

The beliefs, values, criminal thinking patterns, denial, toxic behaviors and shame I learned about does not stop at the door but extends out into society. It ensures that what we learn as a collective we practice to make it part of our lives. This makes us a safe person to be around in society and it's only going to happen

when accountability is modeled, talked about and applied. That's what KidCat is all about-accountability.

We can talk about it all day until we're blue in the face, but if it's not shown, we won't go anywhere and we won't be free. We won't forgive. We won't be safe which is why it's an honor and such a blessing to be part of KidCat, First Step and JLSG.

I'm around facilitators who are genuine and honest and always willing to give back by being of service.

Our high sponsors come in on weekends to support us and share their time.

KidCat has allowed me to be me. It has also given me the effective tools to be safe and productive. KidCat helps me understand the "why."

Most importantly, KidCat transformed me into the awesome person I am today. Thank you KidCat so very much for challenging and supporting me. You gave yourself until you couldn't, then you found resources who could.



News Briefs inside California's prisons

By Bostyon Johnson Managing Editor

1. Avenal State Prison - A gardening program at Avenal State Prison offered a familiar sense of home to residents in the general population. "The smell of fresh soil and cut herbs reminded them of their grandmother's house," noted the CDCR press release. The program participants look forward to the fruition of their most recent plantings like the basil, spinach, amaranth, bush beans, three kinds of tomatoes, and "enough chilies to keep things spicy."

2. California State Prison, Solano - Over 70 residents earned a high school diploma, general education degree, or certificates of achievement at Calif. State Prison, Solano. Principal Summer

Peterson and other educators gave graduates words of encouragement for their commitment to persevere. "They stuck it out and were determined to do it," said GED teacher Dwight Archer. "They never gave up." Residents recognize that education offers a path forward after incarceration and have sought out roles as literacy mentors to support others.

3. Centinela State Prison - Residents at Centinela were honored as they completed the Anti-Recidivism Coalition program. The program goal is to reduce civics by offering a curriculum that cover accountability, personal growth, criminal and gang anonymous, and Board of Parole Hearings prep work. Acting warden

Andre Green acknowledged the graduates for their commitment to change some family members at the event shared how the program positively impact that their loved ones.

4. Lancaster State Prison - Residents discover accountability, empowerment, and love for themselves through Land Together's year-long inner gardening curriculum. The program teaches residents gardening strategies that teaches personal development. Residence in the program gained knowledge on mulching, weeding, watering, and how to relocate plants. The curriculum teaches residents that "Composting reminds us that what breaks down can become nourishment.

Weeding asks us to remove what no longer serves. Pruning teaches that growth sometimes requires letting go," the article said.

5. Sierra Conservation Center - Incarcerated people at the facility helped raise \$1,800 through their Hooks and Needles program. The handcrafted crocheted animals, handmade beaded jewelry, and Native American necklaces support the Calaveras County Sheriff's Cold Case Task Force. The department funds DNA testing of unidentified remains, searching for missing persons, and investigating unsolved homicides.

6. The California Institution for Women - Residents at

CIW hosted a celebration honoring Women's History Month during *Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future*, an event that highlighted the changes women have made in communities from past to present. Residents also gave personal reflections on incarceration. There were musical performances by CIW's Second Chance Band, showing off their artistry. Chino Hills City Councilwoman Cynthia Moran was the keynote speaker at the event.

7. The California Training Facility - Forty-four residents participated in an eight-week curriculum that focused on accountability and personal growth. The Choices for life program is

centered on three principles, growth, accountability, and contributing something greater than oneself. The program has also expanded to other facilities across CDCR. Graduates of the program have displayed positive change and a commitment to personal growth. The program focuses on inclusivity and self-help programming that support individual rehabilitation and long-term goals.

8. Wasco State Prison - To promote overdose awareness and appreciate staff, team members of the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment program hosted a bake sale. The proceeds will support future overdose awareness activities and staff appreciation events.

GAMES

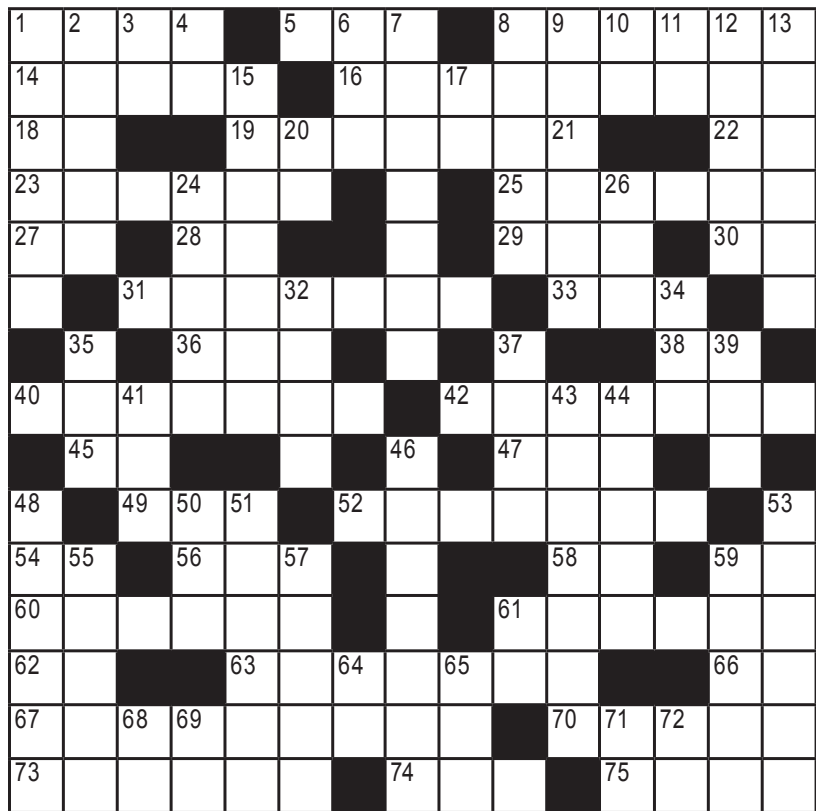
ART

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Michael Fangman

"Take Me Out to the Ballgame Part II"

Edited by Jan Perry



Across

- 1. You can find them in Cincy
5. Famous band, Lobos
8. They play on SF Bay
14. You can find this in 63-across
16. When Droids Drink Free?
18. It's the C in Do-Ray-Me
19. A setting where you might make a smoothie?
22. A well known crossing
23. Ironically, this sign of unhealthy livestock can get your dishes clean
25. A stuttering Old MacDonald
27. Rock N Roll HOF state
28. This Dr. battled 007
29. Dick, Jane, and Spot all did this
30. A once famous film on the NYSE
31. This stylish shoe is best known for an avian-styled toe cap
33. If you're planning on attending the Kelce/Swift wedding, you'll need to sign one of these (abbr.)
36. How the hard of hearing take a call
38. It's after noon!
40. Both Yankees and Mets call it home
42. Superbowl XL championship city
45. This Lady was a princess
47. Paradise City band
49. In Chinese philosophy, this is the absolute principle in the universe
52. Noem is one to some
54. It's a small British shilling
56. 100 square meters (abbr.)
58. A Kansas Auntie?
59. It's before noon!
60. Every misplaced shoe's desire?
61. Twin peaks?
62. Rhenium on the table
63. Mickey's Florida home
66. The subject of countless 2026 Superbowl commercials
67. What a bank does just before it fails
70. Bart, Kenneth, or Ringo
73. This pitch might appear at first to be a fastball, until it breaks
74. How slipways measure wt.
75. Where you can usually find a catcher

Down

- 1. You can find them at Fenway
2. A distinctive period in history
3. Its Universe includes Batman, Superman, and Green Lantern
4. Award winning Peter Gabriel album
6. This spherical body's name comes from the Latin word for "ring"
7. This Cardinal home was founded by French fur-traders in the 1760s
8. A homer to some announcers
9. A Cleveland baller, until recently
10. Terminator's SkyNet, essentially
11. One billionth of a g
12. This many 13-downs gets you out
13. Both bowlers and pitchers want one
15. Home of the 2025 AL Champs
17. No you or me, but both of us...
20. A short billionth of a second
24. Ironically, many politicians who call for this are up all night posting on social media
26. Not the beginning
32. Sandwich commonly made from meat on a spit, eaten with pita bread
34. It's a small apartment
35. Famous Red Sock Williams
37. Famous home arcade system
39. The major leagues, literally (abbr.)
41. A natural aptitude for using words in a humorous way, most often associated with crossword designers
43. This Peter once owned Baltimore's MLB franchise
44. Famous Charlie Chaplin character
48. HOU on most scoreboards
50. They offer roadside service
51. Cal Ripken, Jr. was one
53. He'll make a call if you need him
55. A messy hovel?
57. A mistake in the box score
59. It can get you up in the morning
61. It's opposite BC on most timelines
64. Dodgers ballcap logo?
65. It's a shorter New South Wales
68. A pair commonly found "after C"
69. A little road
71. Thorium on the table
72. A big deal in Australia (abbr)

Art touches heaven and honors loved ones



Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews



Mario Hernandez pictured above left

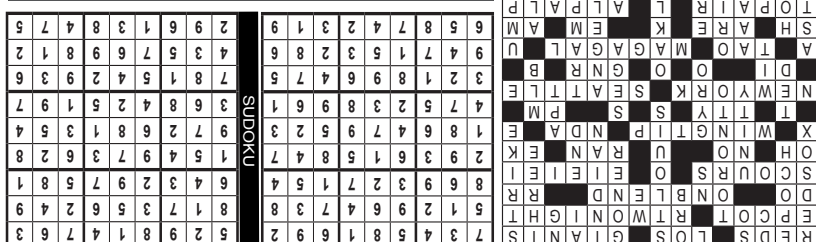
By Edwin E. Chavez Spanish Journalism Guild Chair

Many incarcerated artists find different ways to pass time in their cells. Mario Hernandez finds himself sketching portraits of his loved ones: two-brothers and a mother and father who have passed away and loves dearly. Art has its own therapeutic benefits. Hernandez takes the time to do replicates of Disney's cartoon characters, putting Goofy, Donald Duck, Mickey and Mini Mouse, Pluto the dog, and Daisy Duck on a sketch pad together like the family that they are. Hernandez says he likes to donate this kind of art to his family and church. He feels that not every family member has the financial means to afford a trip with their kids to Disneyland. As a child he recalls the impact and joy that his visits to Disneyland had on him while walking around these characters. Decades later,

these memories continue to bring out his inner child. "I enjoy doing artwork because it puts me in another world. It puts my mind where I vision things. It gives me vision and gives me a lot of ideas," said Hernandez, 69, who has been incarcerated 12 years. According to the artist, during his incarceration he had a strong bond with his beloved and late mother, who he used to call at least three times a day. When he failed to do so she would scold him. "Mario! Why haven't you called me?" His mother would often remind him. The portrait of Ms. Joyse Hernandez shows her smile with sparkly eyes. This portrait took him about two weeks to complete. "Every time I see my mother's portrait I feel sad, hurt, but seeing her smile makes me happy." Hernandez hopes that when other incarcerated people get to see the portrait of his mother they will be able to reach out to their own mothers to reconnect

and tell them how much they love and miss them. We only have a mother once and need to make the best of it. Prison is a world that brings various cultures and personalities alive. We have a different art genre, the Precious Moments, which for many can be considered an icon. Hernandez sketched two teenagers dancing together. This is in reference to a father being incarcerated and away from his daughter and missing out on her prom night or wedding day. He also drew another precious moment - a princess walking in the rain with an umbrella made out of a daises surrounded by raining drops and other flowers. Fun memories of the artist's late brother, Art Hernandez Jr., are drawn with a special touch. He placed a joker's hat on top of his brother's head in reference to his nickname. The artist said his late brother was the one who practically raised him like a son and helped him a lot.

SOLUTIONS



SUDOKU

