

# San Quentin News

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## SQ policy group seeks objective review commission

By Ben Greenspon  
Staff Writer

Prominent British lawyer Clive Stafford-Smith assists San Quentin Policy Group with a review of wrongful death penalty convictions.

“As incarcerated people, we understand that the truth can be lost in the battle to win a criminal trial. Our review is to determine [whether justice was] served for the accused, the victim, and ultimately society,” said SQPG Chairman resident Jessie Milo.

SQPG will examine the integrity of death penalty convictions of those long ago put to death at San Quentin. The group will act as a think tank for local officials and organizations to inform and shape statewide legislation.

According to Milo, the primary goal of SQPG is to establish a statewide review commission.

“In our State of California, access to justice is still influenced by money, race, and zip code, which is why we are seeking through legislation or executive order the establishment of an independent statewide innocence and resentencing review commission,” Milo said.

In 2004, the Legislature created the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice to study wrongful convictions and recommended reforms. Ultimately, California did not create an independent post-conviction review body, and many structural issues remain unresolved.

According to Milo, a fair and objective review commission would address that defect by creating

See Lawyer on pg 4



Photo by Marcus Casillas //SQNews

Incarcerated individuals insist hunger creates trauma, not inspiration to rehabilitate.

## New SHU restrictions disallow food purchases

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Journalism Guild Chair

Incarcerated people at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center respond to a newly proposed rule change that punishes some incarcerated persons, eliminating their ability to purchase food items.

The new regulations would affect people who are assigned to privilege groups C and D, disallowing them to purchase food items from the prison's commissary.

C-status is a temporary disciplinary assignment for General

Population residents. D-status is for those placed in solitary confinement pending an investigation, according to Operational Procedures, Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations.

The new restrictions would only allow the purchase of personal care and hygiene items, according to CDCR's Notice of Proposed Regulations change.

“If they [CDCR] take away the opportunity and/or the ability to purchase food, that would be catastrophic,” said SQ resident Giovanni Gladden, 60, incarcerated for 22

years, who has been assigned to solitary confinement twice.

Gladden stated that CDCR already limits privilege groups C and D to spending \$75 in the prison's commissary, compared to the \$300 for the rest of the population. He added that the ideology to restrict people from purchasing food in order to deter violent behavior is absurd.

“Science has shown that an incarcerated person who eats well behaves well,” Gladden said.

In 2025, CDCR modified the

See No Food on pg 4

## DYING TO RECEIVE SUPPORT

Public support for death penalty lowest in decades

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Associate Editor

American attitudes toward condemning people to die have changed.

A 2025 Gallup poll found that public support for the death penalty has declined to the lowest numbers in more than 50 years, although many people still believe the punishment should fit the crime.

“There must be consequences,” said San Quentin Correctional Officer S. Montantes, who escorted condemned residents on Death Row for four years. “The death penalty holds those who commit the most heinous crimes accountable for their actions.”

According to the Death Penalty Information Center, the assumption that capital punishment is the popular way of addressing violent crime has become an outdated phenomenon.

The Gallup poll confirms opposition to the death penalty has nearly tripled over the last three decades.

“Public support for the death penalty has been falling steadily since 1994,” noted Gallup. “Less than half of all adults ages 18–54 support the death penalty.”

According to Gallup, political affiliation is part of the expansion and disapproval. While 80% of Republicans maintain steady

See Death on pg 4

## Scanning of incoming mail delivers impact on residents, families

By Jason L. Jackson  
Staff Writer

Technology is increasingly becoming the primary source of communication for the majority of people incarcerated in the United States who are banned from directly receiving physical mail.

Nearly 600,000 inmates in prisons across 34 states, 78% of America's total prison population, are not allowed to receive physical mail, including letters and photographs, according to research from *Prison Legal News*.

Inmates facing restrictions are left with one of two options. Their incoming mail is digitally scanned and uploaded on tablets where they can read it, similar to a text message. The second option is to have the mail photocopied by prison staff or an outside company, and afterward inmates are given the copy and the original is usually destroyed.

The restrictions can be a detriment for many incarcerated people accustomed to receiving letters and pictures from loved ones.

“People depend on the physical mail,” said Deshawn Ford, a resident at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. “There is a whole ritual to it, especially when you hear your name during mail call and you get the mail and just feel good receiving something from your family.”

Over the last seven years, prisons across the country have been utilizing the services of third-party companies to scan and photocopy mail. The largest of these companies is Securus. Through its subsidiary company JPay, and with



Photo by Marcus Cassias //SQNews

Physical mail from outside world gives incarcerated something to hold onto for hope.

contracts in multiple states, Securus scans the mail for more than 21% of the nation's prison population, according to *Prison Legal News*.

Resident Ford said when he was housed in Marin County Jail, all incoming mail would be rerouted to Las Vegas, Nevada for inspection. He said it wasn't out of the ordinary for it to take months to receive the original copies of letters.

“It was discouraging for me and my family. They weren't motivated to continue writing knowing that I wasn't getting the mail,” said Ford.

Prisons and unions representing prison guards throughout the country say that mail restrictions, and accompanying alternative methods, are necessary to stop the flow of contraband and drugs into facilities. Although prison officials in dozens of states claim that an abundance of drugs enter institutions through general and legal mail, the Prison Policy Initiative reported, “There's no solid evidence to date that mail scanning has the intended effect.”

See Mail on pg 4



### MTC GRADUATION CELEBRATION

Residents celebrate with families at Mount Tamalpais College graduation

— STORY ON PAGE 6

### SOCIAL JUSTICE

New regulations for Restricted Housing Unit

— STORY ON PAGE 5

### SPORTS

Puerto Rican baseball royalty visits SQ

— STORY ON PAGE 8



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FEATURE



New library brings autonomy, normality to residents

By Charles Crowe  
Staff Writer

A low murmur filled the air in San Quentin’s spacious new library. People seated at tables and on cushions along the walls talked quietly in pairs or small groups. Others read alone or browsed. It looked and felt like a public or college library on the outside.

The new facility appears larger than its predecessor, but according to Librarian Gabriel Loiederman, the square footage is similar to the old space. The collection size is also relatively unchanged at about 20,000 items.

What is different is that in the new facility, readers can browse 1,700 linear feet of open shelving that contains, according to an OPEC Press Office Fact Sheet, “wide-ranging fiction and non-fiction books selected with input from the population, various magazines and newspapers, and reference materials such as encyclopedias and dictionaries.” One area contains an eclectic selection of CDs, ranging from Bach and Vivaldi to Tom Petty, Jelly Roll Morton, and Trombone Shorty, to name a few.

Librarians call the patron-accessible shelves “open stacks.” In the old library, a counter separated patrons from the books. Readers made book selections from an index, and then clerks fetched their choices from stacks behind the counter. No browsing.

San Quentin resident and library patron Dani Horner worked at a table with his laptop open. Of the freedom to browse the open shelves, he said, “It’s amazing. It allows me to actually look at the description [of the book] on the back cover.” There, Horner finds the information he needs to make an informed selection.

Librarian Gabriel Loiederman said that open shelving gives the materials better visibility as well. “Direct browsing allows patrons to find materials of interest that they weren’t previously aware of,” said Loiederman.

Library patronage has increased with these changes. Loiederman said that average weekly circulation quadrupled between May 2025 (old library) and May 2026 (new library).

Circulation Clerk Shane Daugherty worked in the old facility and moved with the books to the new space. Before the move, he helped patrons at the counter by pulling their book selections, a service he enjoyed providing. Though he misses the interaction that work entailed, he said the positivity of his new work environment is compensation. He said library patrons are enjoying the autonomy and normality of browsing the open shelves on their own. Daugherty encouraged any who have not visited the new archive to come and experience it themselves. “The novelty of the new space is invigorating,” he said.

Horner responded to questions softly to avoid disturbing others. “It’s a lot quieter here. It’s almost like a public library on the street. You can sit at a table and work comfortably here.”

Half a dozen members of the San Quentin group Skunkworks gathered around a table near the front entrance, talking quietly. A congregation of gamers shared a table near the circulation desk. Daugherty said such meetings demonstrate that the new space is conducive to gatherings of that sort.

A cornerstone of San Quentin’s transition from prison to rehabilitation center is normalization. The design of the new library contributes to that goal. In that context, Librarian Charlotte Roi had a message to librarian patrons.

“I believe open shelves have been invaluable in helping residents become familiar with how a library in a free and open society functions ... open stacks create opportunities for community members to develop and practice shared norms of



Top: The library’s ADA-friendly doors swing open.  
Above: Couches serve as comfortable retreats to relax and read.  
Below: Residents are free to peruse the shelves at their leisure.  
Bottom: Shelves are organized by a vast selection of subjects.



responsibility, respect, and appropriate behavior in a public space. They also demonstrate the potential for cultivating community stewardship, where residents recognize that library collections are a shared resource that belongs to everyone,” said Roi.

Innovations like the open shelving in the new library come with growing pains as beneficiaries engage in the responsibility that comes with increased access.

Roi continued, “While open browsing inevitably creates opportunities for some individuals to take community resources for personal use, it also reflects the trust libraries place in their communities. It makes me sad when I see a lack of respect for these shared resources ... At the same time, I remain hopeful. Stewardship is something that communities learn and strengthen over time, and I believe libraries can play an important role in that process. By continuing to provide open access and encouraging a sense of collective responsibility, we can create opportunities for communities to grow into a deeper respect for the resources they share and the public institutions that serve them.”

According to the OPEC Fact Sheet, two new library positions make possible extended hours of access to residents into evenings and weekends. The old repository continues to serve as the facility’s law library.

—Bostyon Johnson contributed to this story



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EDITORIAL

RESIDENTS HESITANT TO MOVE TO EAST BLOCK

*Skepticism about proposed incentives rooted in past experience*

By Bostyon Johnson

Editor-in-Chief

As one of the 40 individuals recently relocated to the prison’s East Block, formerly known as Death Row, I’ve been on a mission to understand why people aren’t chomping at the bit to occupy the cells.

The news about a kitchenette, washing machines, and dryers didn’t entice the population to sign up.

So, on July 11, I went to the Lower Yard to ask people in the population, “Why are you not moving to East Block?”

Many people shared their uncertainty about whether the next California governor would lift the moratorium on executions, an executive order signed in 2019 by Governor Gavin Newsom.

The recurring theme in some of my conversations revolved around a new state governor taking office and deciding to deviate from Newsom’s policies.

Would individuals convicted of a death sentence be returned to San Quentin? Would those housed in East Block be relocated to other housing units within the facility? These are the concerns that weigh heavily on the minds of the people.

A few individuals shared that they are uncertain about which officers are assigned to East Block. They find it senseless to move when they have established working relationships with correctional staff at their current housing unit.

Before moving to East Block, I lived in Donner, a housing unit within South Block, which operates as an earned living unit. The prospect of creating a more comfortable living space by adding a bit of paint to my cell was an appealing factor.

However, people’s concerns arose because the prison had already transitioned to single-cell housing prior to

the opening of East Block to the general population. Had East Block been opened before the prison implemented single-cell housing, the prevailing thinking about the prison’s future course of action might have been different.

The concerns raised are valid. The truth is, I am unaware of the actions that will be taken by anyone, let alone the governor or prison staff, tomorrow.

The opening of East Block is part of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s acknowledgment of the need for normalization among the incarcerated population. CDCR aims to enhance the population’s readiness for reentry, so it provides reentry programs and technology to help people navigate their way once they are outside the prison walls.

To achieve this, they plan to implement thoughtful spaces that foster dignity for both staff and the incarcerated. The renovations of East Block, the Upper Yard, and the new Learning Center are examples of community-standard architectural spaces that will promote self-responsibility and autonomy. As CDCR moves to recognize the importance of healing, usefulness, and safety in prison environments, so should we as people looking to earn our freedom.

However, there are concerns about the feasibility of moving, especially given the current single-cell setup in the entire prison. The rumors about incentives like kitchenettes and washers and dryers circulating among the inmates keep them skeptical. Additionally, after speaking to people in H-Unit, I learned that similar rumors had circulated about incentives like foosball and pool tables for H-Unit’s building 5, which was unofficially earmarked to become an ELU for residents in that section of the facility. Unfortunately, none of these rumors materialized, which

adds to the reservations.

Despite these concerns, I believe in the positive transformation of San Quentin and I encourage people to move to East Block. I understand that some people may be hesitant and find excuses to remain in their current situations.

It will definitely take time for belief in the benefits of enjoying normalization like cooking and doing your own laundry to take hold. As the old saying goes, “seeing is believing,” and for those waiting to see what happens, they risk missing out on the chance to experience the positive changes firsthand.

My understanding is that people will be transferred to this prison and are already being vetted as programmers. I foresee some frustrated people who will find it unacceptable that someone can arrive from another prison and end up in what some individuals are calling the upper echelon of the 174-year-old prison, but again, this is your opportunity.

After hearing the concerns, which were numerous, I will diligently ask the administration to clarify some of the concerns circulating in the yard about East Block. However, to be honest, if you are not willing to move based on what you know already, you may never move.

Concerns about East Block include:

Rumors of some correctional staff opposing the prison’s forward-thinking model, overcrowding in the showers, and potential noise levels. There are also concerns about rodents, the schedule of moving people in, the building’s program, the ELU status, incoming prisoners, criteria/requirements, clothing lines, buckets for washing clothes. Other concerns included uncertainty about the new governor and the limited shelf space.

A NOTE TO OUR INCARCERATED READERS

The monthly issue of the SQNews is now on the Edovo app and works properly.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MICHIGAN READER HAS PASSION FOR ART

Dear SQ News,

I hope this letter finds you all well. My name is Lynette Garza. I am currently incarcerated in a place called Marquette County Jail in Marquette, Michigan. I'm writing because I'd like a printed copy of the San Quentin news. I received a Securus tablet while in here, and it is through art classes that I found your newspaper. My bio is from my favorite song, “Immune to Danger” by “Hippie Sabotage.” It reads, “Until I'm free, I will behave like I'm immune to danger.” Funny considering I'm now locked up. My favorite quotes are about art. “Art comforts the disturbed and disturbs the comfortable.” I look forward to reading and seeing the Art Section of your paper. Can I send you guys some of my art?

Lynette Garza

Marquette County Jail, MI

NEW CLUB HELPS PEOPLE WITH INDETERMINATE SENTENCES

Dear Editor,

The inmate population at Northwest Correction Complex has recently started a new organization called The Lake County Lifer’s Club. The Club is an organization devoted to the specific needs of those inmates who have a Life Sentence. We are dedicated to inspiring

our members to use their time inside preparing for success on the outside, to incentivize excellence for a pathway to liberty, to strengthen the bonds of family, friends, and communities, and to be a positive influence on the institution. We read your newspaper, and your organization is a shining example of what can be accomplished. Please put us on your mailing list.

Peter Billington Lake County

Lifers Club Vice President

Northwest Correction Complex, TN

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOST SOMEONE BEHIND BARS

San Quentin News Editor,

Saving Lives In-Custody California offers statewide advocacy, dedicated to promoting transparency, medical accountability, and advancing systemic reform. SLIC – CA is a team of dedicated advocates who provide vital support to impacted families of loved ones who suffered losses while incarcerated.

By featuring their mission in your publication, we can and will be able to apply their positive impact in the state of California.

Their dedicated team can and will give a voice to those behind bars and shine a light on the urgent need for systematic reform and correctional facilities. Such coverage can inspire dialogue, promote justice, and encourage the adoption of measures that safeguard lives within

construct correctional facilities. I thank you for your time, effort and assistance.

Michael Ornelas

Valley State Prison

Cowchilla, California

SAN QUENTIN NEWS INSPIRES THOSE IN OTHER STATES

Dear San Quentin News,

My name is Junah Sisney, and I wanted to let you all know that San Quentin News is my favorite periodical to read on our tablets here at the jailing Douglas County, Kansas. Your stories give us readers a glimpse into the positive transformation of inmates and never failed to provoke my attention and usually leave me feeling inspired with rekindled hope that positive change can happen to anybody. Thank you for all your hard work and efforts in producing the paper.

Respectfully,

Junah Sisney,

Douglas County Jail, Lawrence, Kansas.

PLEASE SEND NEWSPAPER

Dear San Quentin News,

My name is Drew Kaupleis from Waco State Prison. I would like a copy of your newspaper. I would really appreciate it very much. Thank you. Keep up the good work.

Drew Kaupelis

Wasco State Prison, Wasco CA

LAWYER

Continued from page 1

an independent body with authority to investigate claims of wrongful conviction, sentencing injustice, racial bias, and government misconduct, and to refer meritorious matters to conflict-free courts for formal adjudication.

Upon learning of SQPG’s intentions through attorney Jennifer Sheetz of the People’s Commission for Integrity in Criminal Justice, Clive Stafford-Smith flew from the United Kingdom to meet the group in person and offer assistance. Sheetz will serve as the project liaison, aiding SQPG with gathering documents and necessary materials regarding the project.

Stafford-Smith, a human rights lawyer and author of “Bad Men, Injustice, and Far Side of the Moon,” has been involved with his own death penalty review project for eight years.

Stafford-Smith said, “Out of 171 capital murder cases in the South, we were able to acquit 124, 74% of them.”

According to Stafford-Smith, reviewing wrongful death penalty cases is a wonderful way to train young lawyers. It is also the most important tool to abolish the death penalty.

“My mom, who was a saint, taught me my job is to look around the world and at the people who were most hated, and get between them and the people doing the hatred,” Stafford-Smith said.

According to Stafford-Smith, who was a scientist

Independent reviews are necessary for proper justice

when younger, DNA evidence has a one-in-three chance of being contaminated by a lab technician. Hair analysis has a one-in-two chance of a false match, and there has never been an objective study to validate fingerprints as infallible science.

According to the California Post-Conviction Review Commission, California’s history shows recurring wrongful convictions tied to official misconduct — suppressed exculpatory evidence, incentivized informants, coerced statements, and flawed forensics.

“When Chief Justice Roberts said ‘Every time we exonerate someone, it shows the system works,’ yeah, tell that to the person who did 48 years before he got exonerated,” Stafford-Smith said.

According to the California National Registry of Exonerations, there have been hundreds of individual exonerations and multiple group exonerations due to law-enforcement or prosecutorial misconduct. One example is the Los Angeles Police Department Rampart scandal.

California recognizes the importance of review in theory, but in practice, post-conviction relief remains dependent on local institutions with entrenched conflicts of interest, unequal county-by-county practices, and limited accountability.

The SQPG will adopt post conviction review models already operating around the world.

According to the Wrongful Conviction Law Review, the United Kingdom, Norway, Scotland, Denmark, and North Carolina have created independent review boards to help facilitate the proper administration of justice, without inherently biased courts controlling the outcome.

An independent review is necessary to protect both individual rights and preserve public confidence in the justice system.

“If one man got a bad trial, then one innocent man got put to death,” Milo said.

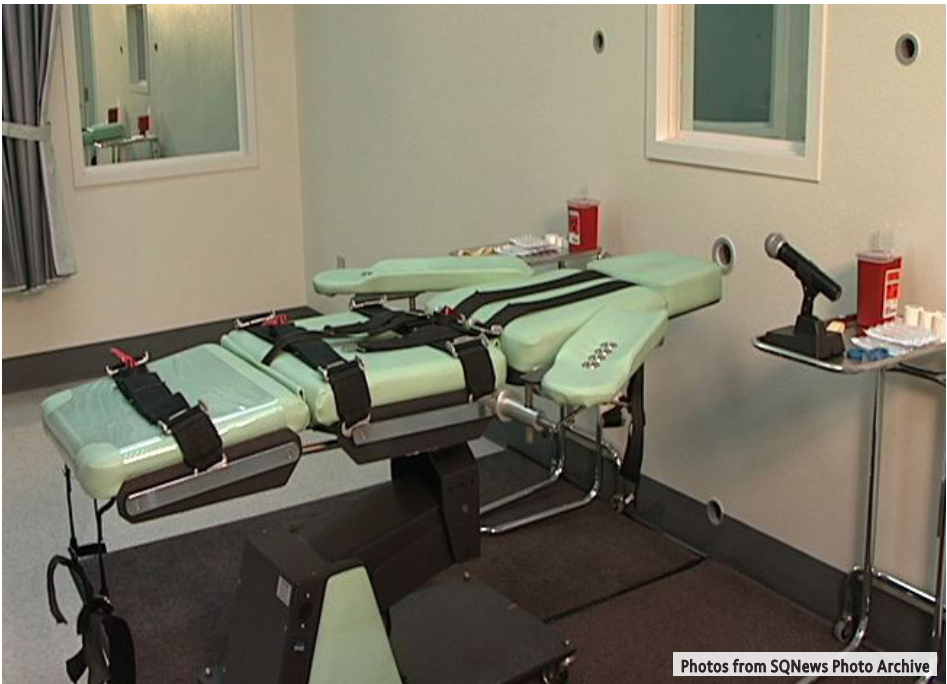
The SQPG has submitted an application to review the case of Thomas Thompson, who was put to death at San Quentin in 1997.

According to project liaison/attorney Sheetz, some senior members of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals have cited the Thompson case as a breakdown of the judicial system of review.

“Ultimately, Tommy’s case serves as an excellent review of the California justice system. It reflects our troubled history of using incentivized informants to secure convictions,” Sheetz said.

On February 20, Governor Gavin Newsom commuted Milo’s sentence, making him eligible for parole this year.

“If I’m fortunate enough to be released from prison, I want to do this work on the outside,” Milo said. “Our goal is equal access to justice for all.”



An execution table previously used at San Quentin.

DEATH

Continued from page 1

support for the death penalty, only 32% of Democrats and 47% of registered Independents still support sentencing people to die. This is a 24-percentage-point decline for Democrats and a 21-percentage-point decline for Independents from 2000–2025.

Despite growing opposition, history has shown it’s common during an election year to see an uptick in elected officials and politicians who talk about the death penalty to promote a “tough on crime” reputation to sway the public vote.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order to reinstate capital punishment in the federal prison system on his first day in office. According to the *New York Times*, 13 people were executed on federal death row during his first presidency.

Now, the Trump administration is taking it a step further, announcing in April that it would reintroduce firing squads and lethal injection for federal prisoners sentenced to death, stated the *NYT* article.

The article added that before the last year, the only firing squad executions in the country in modern times had been carried out by Utah between 1997 and 2010. Six people were executed.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche told the *NYT* the decisions by former President Joe Biden to pull back on capital punishment “inflicted untold damage on victims of crime, and, ultimately, the rule of law itself.”

However, Richard J. Durbin, a Democratic senator from Illinois, told the *NYT*

Justice Department turns back to barbaric executions



The Gas Chamber.

that the Justice Department is “turning back the clock by strengthening the barbaric practice of the federal death penalty — a cruel, immoral, and often discriminatory form of punishment.”

The San Quentin community is similarly split on the issue.

San Quentin resident Marvin Walker, 66, lived on Death Row for 43 years. After being resentenced, he now lives amongst the facility’s general population. He said the public’s growing disapproval of the death penalty doesn’t surprise him. “The government has killed innocent people,” Walker said.

DPIC research confirms that since 1973, at least 202 wrongfully convicted people were sentenced to death, then exonerated.

Walker expressed concerns about flaws in the system. He said thanks to modern technology some of those on The Row escaped the death chamber and went home to their families.

“People who get their

liberty taken away for crimes they didn’t commit is basically the worst thing the government can do,” Walker said. “DNA analysis has given some on The Row a second chance at life.”

Serving a 27-to-life sentence at San Quentin, Troy Makanski said he believes in the death penalty. “If someone goes into a school and shoots a bunch of innocent people, they deserve to die,” Makanski said.

In 2019, Gov. Gavin Newsom put a moratorium on the death penalty by executive order. But a new governor could change that, adding California to the list of 27 states that still execute people.

The past 30 years have shown a decline from 80% of Americans who were once in favor of capital punishment. Gallup research shows that that number has dropped to 52%.

“Studies find no meaningful evidence that the use of the death penalty deters crime,” noted DPIC.



Food no longer allowed on left. Hygiene items allowed for purchase

NO FOOD

Continued from page 1

program status of its medium and maximum security facilities in response to violence targeting staff and incarcerated people. At that time, communication on residents’ tablets and in-person visiting was suspended, according to *FOX26 News*.

The new regulations would also suspend messaging, phone calls, and entertainment services on tablets as means of punishment. However, people would be able to engage in self-help and academic programs while assigned to privilege groups C and D, according to CDCR.

“It’s amazing how California lawmakers and CDCR are on two different pages, with Governor Gavin Newsom’s signing of Senate Bill 551 that normalizes life in prison,” Gladden said.

SQ resident Jessie Milo, 46, spent a total of 7 years in solitary confinement at various California prisons and county jails.

Concerns over hunger and mental health

He was transferred to SQ from a Southern California prison where he was housed for six months. Milo stated that while in solitary confinement, his communications were restricted and, as a result, relationships were destroyed. It has been three years, and the relationships have not recovered, Milo said.

He stated that making his own meals while he was in solitary confinement was as important a part of his self-care as a shower and a phone call.

“It’s ironic that taking away food was done as a response to increased violence,” Milo said. “Hunger is not gonna calm anyone.”

Resident Milo stated that suicidal ideation exists in solitary confinement. He added that the current correctional nutritional requirements lack protein; the food is high in carbohydrates, which increase the blood sugar levels.

A sign of self-harm is when a person stops eating. If CDCR wants to take away food options, it may induce food deprivation, Milo said.

“It will make it difficult to maintain a supplemental nutritional diet because there would be no alternative to the crap [poor quality of food] that they are currently giving us, compared to the crap they gave us in the past,” Gladden said.

SQ resident Kevin Fuqua, 60, incarcerated for 39 years, has been assigned to solitary confinement on two different occasions.

He stated that CDCR is not being rational when they are proposing punishment which has nothing to do with rehabilitation.

“When a person is restricted from food, you are treating them like children. It’s like a parent punishing their child for their bad behavior,” Fuqua said.

MAIL

Continued from page 1

*Prison Legal News* has documented incidents in multiple states where the implementation of mail scanning had little to no positive results. In Florida, only two percent of contraband originated in mail, and in Missouri there was an increase in monthly drug overdoses even after Securix began scanning mail for the state’s prisons.

In some states, restrictions have even begun affecting legal and other privileged mail, long safeguarded by legal precedent.

In groundbreaking cases, *Davidson v. Scully*, 694 F.2d 50 (2nd Cir. 1982); *Wolfish v. Levi*, 573 F.2d 118 (2nd Cir. 1978), and *Reneer v. Sewell*, 975 F.2d 258 (6th Cir. 1992),

Handwritten mail still preferred over printouts

federal courts ruled that incoming privileged mail, including legal mail, can only be held long enough “to identify the prisoner addressee.” The rulings state that legal mail “may only be opened and screened for contraband” when done quickly and in the presence of the prisoners to whom the mail is addressed.

None of this seems to matter for states like New York, where prison guards have been photocopying legal mail since September of 2025. Other states, including Hawaii, have been using T-Ray scanners provided by RaySecur to take three-dimensional images of legal mail to inspect for contraband.

The restrictions, well

intended as they may be, have placed many incarcerated people who would rather have mail the old fashioned way at a disadvantage.

“I still get letters and pictures every other week, and I prefer them over the photos we can print on the tablet. The walls in my cell are full of family photos and affirmations,” said San Quentin resident Corey Holmes. Holmes said the personal nature of the letters is what he loves most, and would be the most difficult to go without.

“There’s something very personal about being able to get those letters and see that handwriting. It would be a catastrophe to lose,” said Holmes.

# Violent acts, overdoses in prison spurs new regulations

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Associate Editor

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation took regulatory action to address an increase in overdoses and violent acts inside institutions across the state.

CDCR announced changes to the California Code of Regulations Title 15, specifically amendments to articles pertaining to restricted housing privilege groups C and D.

“These regulation amendments are a targeted approach to address the most significant types of violent incidents within our institutions,” noted CDCR.

Restricted housing refers to various forms of confinement, segregated housing for individuals in CDCR custody.

According to CDCR, the amendment changes will help to support staff in addressing behavior before it escalates, improve safety, reduce violence, strengthen accountability for serious and repeat misconduct while maintaining access to rehabilitation, education, and reentry programming.

A CDCR memorandum titled “Restricted housing unit regulations update implementation” notes the purpose of making changes to the regulations was to add to the 2023 RHU term metrics. Added amendments include extending term length for specific incidents that are causing increases in drug overdoses and violence, while at the same time establishing accountability measures with revisions to the privilege group system.

CDCR offers a behavior-based housing model that focuses on safety and security of institutions while providing programming opportunities to incarcerated people in the

least restrictive setting.

Focusing on incarcerated individuals involved in serious, repeated, or disorderly misconduct, the CDCR website states that these changes are not intended to impact people who are following the rules and actively programming.

Changes to the regulation amendments include:

Possible RHU placement for those who distribute drugs

Longer RHU terms for selected serious violent offenses

Greater flexibility in how multiple RHU terms are applied

Possible RHU placement for those who commit repeated acts of battery

Updated administrative RHU authority

Revision of privilege groups to impose more structured disciplinary consequences

“I don’t think these changes to RHU will have an impact on criminal activity in prison,” said San Quentin Rehabilitation Center resident Curtis Taylor, 32, incarcerated for 10 years. “I think these changes can only serve to do what prison has always done—penalize and punish.”

In November 2023, CDCR reformed the framework of the use of restricted housing unit regulations in response to a directive from Governor Newsom. The 2023 reforms took steps to limit the use of restricted housing only to individuals who engage in violence and present a direct threat to people living and working inside CDCR institutions.

According to CDCR’s website, May 2026 updates to the RHU framework are calculated, evidence-based adjustments, and not a rollback of the 2023 RHU reforms.

CDCR states that safe institutions are necessary for rehabilitation to succeed.

These regulatory updates came after reviewing safety trends, operational needs across institutions, and misconduct data.

Reviews showed an increase in overdoses, battery on staff, deadly weapon incidents, attempted murder, battery on incarcerated people, murder, and serious bodily injury incidents.

RHU may also be used during an investigation into an individual because of safety concerns or non-disciplinary reasons.

CDCR previously used older restrictive housing models, such as administrative segregation units, “The Hole,” and Security Housing Units known as “The SHU.”

SQRC resident Fred Rodriguez, 43, incarcerated for 10 years, said he spent six months in The Hole. “Some of my neighbors liked being in there because they felt safe.”

Rodriguez spoke about people who deserve to have their privileges taken away because they prey on others. “There has to be some sort of added punishment for those taking advantage of people who cannot defend themselves.”

According to CDCR, an Administrative RHU is indeterminate and reserved for residents who present a significant and immediate threat to staff or incarcerated people.

Administrative RHU placement is intended for high-risk individuals with a history of serious violations, including Division A-1 and A-2 offenses such as attempted murder, murder, and rape.

CDCR states that there is a review process in place to ensure appropriate placements when necessary.

Some of the updated regulations include changes relative to privilege group designation.

The updated regulations

include the potential for short-term tablet restrictions based on behavior and security conditions that are related to privilege group designations and tablet access.

Separate from the RHU housing privilege groups are behavior-based classifications that may affect access to incentives such as packages, canteen, property, and recreation.

Only privilege groups C and D were updated in the May amendment regulations.

Individuals placed in groups C and D will have the following impacts:

Package is restricted.

Canteen is limited to hygiene and personal care items.

Access to phone calls, messaging, and paid services is restricted.

CDCR states that these adjustments are tied to accountability. It also stated that tablet deactivation is a behavior-based short-term tool used to address lower-level misconduct and prevent escalation to more serious discipline.

Deactivation is generally limited to 24 hours and restricts access to phones, messaging, and other non-essential paid services.

It is intended to create a proportionate, immediate response to misconduct when appropriate, while avoiding the need for formal disciplinary action.

Examples may include the misuse of messaging functions, failing to report as directed, refusing to stand for count, refusing to remove obstructions, or repeated minor misconduct.

These updates are designed to address misconduct early, balance accountability, and “to maintain orderly institutions, while supporting rehabilitation and successful reentry,” noted CDCR.

## PART II Seven-to-Forever Sentencing

California propositions that shook up the system

By Kevin D. Sawyer  
Staff Writer

On July 1, 1977, Senate Bill 42 went into effect and created the Determinate Sentencing Law under Section 1170 of the Penal Code. The new law eliminated life sentences for most crimes. Some exceptions were murder, mayhem, and kidnapping.

After the enactment of the DSL, only lifers — and now third-strikers — are considered “indeterminately” sentenced, because the parole board determines their release date.

In 1978, opponents of SB 42 introduced Proposition 7, which voters approved. It did away with much of the legislation enacted by SB 42.

After Proposition 7 passed, California’s attorney general called on the Morrissey 8 to get its input on how the law should have been applied to prisoners serving a term under the old, pre-SB 42, seven-years-to-life Indeterminate Sentencing Law.

On July 26, 1979, the Morrissey 8 issued a memorandum to outline how they would implement Prop. 7. In the memo, it was determined that “The parole board’s power to fix terms was withdrawn...and nothing in the current Penal Code evidences an intent to re-establish those powers for first or second degree murder.” They also concluded the old life sentences were completely different from new life sentences. Regarding *Rodriguez*, the memo reads, in part, “In re Rodriguez also appears to have been rendered obsolete by the changed structure of life sentences.”

Nearly half a century later, many elderly Lifers in the California’s prison system still disagree with the Morrissey 8 interpretation of Prop. 7. They are not alone.

“George Deukmejian [attorney general at the time] said *Rodriguez* was ‘obsolete’ because in his view, enactment of SB 42 ended the parole board’s authority to fix life terms,” wrote Judge J. Anthony Kline in a 2023 email for research on this story. “But that isn’t true.”

Kline was the attorney who represented Rodriguez in 1975. He was also chosen by Gov. Jerry Brown to become his Legal Affairs Secretary. More importantly, he was a judge for 42 years before retiring in 2021 as California’s senior appellate justice.

“There is no regulation, statute, or judicial opinion that says *Rodriguez* was rendered obsolete by the enactment of the Determinate Sentence Law,” Kline wrote.

Many lifers have said after Proposition 7 became effective and the Morrissey 8 reached its decision, parole boards stopped fixing their dates and terms. They argued under California law (Penal Code § 5002 (e)), the parole board did not lose its power to set those terms.

“*Rodriguez* has never been overruled and is often cited for the proposition that

punishment resulting from the denial of parole that is grossly disproportionate to the prisoner’s culpability for his commitment offense cannot be justified on the basis of public safety,” Kline wrote.

According to Kline, California’s Supreme Court believed Lifers constituted only a “small subset” of prisoners in a larger system of determinate sentences. “But this is factually untrue,” he wrote, and explained because of the number of offenses that carry indeterminate sentences, including Three-Strikes, Lifers are “almost half the prison population...This is why *Rodriguez* is not obsolete, [but] highly relevant.”

As time moved on, Lifers experienced other tough-on-crime political hurdles.

In 1988, California’s Constitution was amended when voters approved Proposition 89, which gave the governor authority to review parole board decisions on parole grants of prisoners serving life for murder. Subsequently, some governors appointed commissioners to the parole board as a blunt punitive measure.

Between 2000 and 2008, parole boards in California denied 98% of those who appeared at hearings. The remaining 2% who were granted release had their parole grants reversed 60% of the time by governors Gray Davis and Schwarzenegger, according to author Keramet Reiter’s book *23/7: The Rise of Pelican Bay and Long-term Solitary Confinement*.

“I am informed that Gov. Gray Davis has expressed his policy that no murder offender will be paroled on his watch,” Albert M. Leddy wrote in a July 2000 declaration. He was a Board of Prison Terms chairman. “It has been clear to me that there is a general conspiracy to prevent life prisoners from paroling, especially those whose offenses include murder.”

In 1994, California amended its Penal Code to “require that the [parole] hearing be held no later than up to five years after the hearing denying parole, if the prisoner has been convicted of murder.” At that time, the portion of the state’s prison population over 50 years of age was 4%, according to Prison Policy Initiative. By 2019, the number increased to 25%. A 2025 study done on the Elderly prison population in California, age 55 and over was reported at 18.9%, according to the ACLU and PJIL.

In 2008, California voters took an even harsher stance regarding parole hearings and approved Proposition 9, also known as “the Victims’ Bill of Rights Act of 2008: Marcy’s Law.” Prior to that law, some Lifers convicted of murder received annual parole hearings, and could be denied their next hearing up to five years under the old law. Marcy’s Law increased the time between parole denials to a minimum of three years, then five, seven, 10, and 15 years.

# Potentially hazardous infection scares SQ population

A possible case of hantavirus at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center led to a quick response by the certified Health Facility Maintenance crew to decontaminate and stop the spread of the rodent-borne disease.

*ABC7 Eyewitness News* confirmed that a 38-year-old inmate at SQRC contracted a possible case of hantavirus. Later reports revealed the suspected case was ruled a false positive.

“Everybody evacuated the building,” said SQRC resident HFM worker Gordon Kimbrough. “We suited up, went in, and followed policy and procedure in the cleaning, decontaminating, and disposal of possibly hazardous materials.”

According to Kimbrough, as soon as the announcement of the potentially hazardous infection came through, his supervisor led them into the building containing the possible threat. Before entering, the team was given added precautions as a reminder of the severity of the situation.

“There is no specific cure or antiviral medication for hantavirus,” noted Johns Hopkins Medicine.

*ABC7* reported that SQRC had no quarantine in place and the resident is said to be in stable condition.

“Supposedly, the guy who got sick ate some food that was contaminated,” Kimbrough said.

Hantavirus is a rare but severe family of viruses typically spread by deer mice, rats, and wild rodents. People primarily become infected by breathing in the virus from contaminated airborne particles of rodent droppings, saliva, or urine, according to the California Department of Public Health.

According to the World Health Organization, some types of the disease are: hantavirus pulmonary syndrome, which affects the heart and lungs—found in North and South America—and causes severe respiratory distress with a fatality rate of 20% to 50%.

Moreover, hantavirus hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome—found mainly in Asia and Europe—affects the kidneys’ blood vessels and causes bleeding.

In addition, the infamous Andes hantavirus gained notoriety when a group of Californians aboard the *MV Hondius* cruise ship was exposed to an outbreak of the disease.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the symptom-monitoring period ended for most of the Californians exposed to the Andes hantavirus outbreak on the ship.

CDC reported that the current risk of public exposure to the Andes hantavirus remains very low.

Earlier in the year, the *SQ*

“Everybody evacuated the building. We suited up, went in, and followed policy and procedure in the cleaning, decontaminating, and disposal of possibly hazardous materials.”

—Gordon Kimbrough

*News* article “Construction Leads to Rat Infestation,” by Kevin D. Sawyer, brought attention to the new construction inside the facility as a cause for the growing number of rodents inside the buildings.

The article shined a light on an SQRC team of carpenters doubling as pest control combatants who are diligently trying to eradicate the pests. “We’re rodent hitmen,” said the staff supervisor, Joe Career, working alongside three resident tradesmen.

Victor Mendoza, Steve Stevens, and Alan Cruz loaded old-fashioned spring traps, spread peppermint oil repellent, and placed glue strips down to catch or detour the pests. In addition, the carpenters plugged holes, repaired windows, and installed weatherstripping that closed the gaps where rodents might squeeze their way into various buildings

within the facility, noted the article.

WHO states that the risk of rodent contact and transmission of hantavirus happens when people are in poorly ventilated spaces without proper protection or exposed to the contaminated dust while cleaning.

To prevent possible exposure to the disease, avoid sweeping or vacuuming, which aerosolizes contaminants. Instead, wear gloves, ventilate the area, and wet the droppings with a bleach and water solution before safely wiping them up, according to Michigan Medicine.

Early symptoms of contracting hantavirus are headaches, fever, fatigue, muscle aches, and gastrointestinal complaints (diarrhea, vomiting). Symptoms typically appear one to eight weeks after exposure.

Advanced symptoms: Within a few days, the illness can rapidly progress to coughing, shortness of breath, chest tightness, and fluid in the lungs, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine.

“With the exception of Andes virus (found in South America), hantaviruses do not spread between humans,” noted the CDC. “The Andes virus can occasionally spread person-to-person through prolonged, close contact.”

—Terrell J. Marshall

EDUCATION



Left: Graduates Bobby Lewis Moody, Tu Anh Tran, Lionel Scott, Armenia Cudjo, Michael Nickerson, Keith R. Carter, and Evan Richard Aguilar received Associates of Arts degrees in Liberal Arts.  
Above: Resident Keith R. Carter celebrated his accomplishment with family.

Mount Tamalpais College graduates seven individuals at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center

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

In a full house of 300 guests and residents, San Quentin’s Mount Tamalpais College, known locally as MTC, celebrated its 2026 commencement at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s Chapel B on June 12.

Graduates Evan Richard Aguilar, Keith R. Carter, Armenia Cudjo, Bobby Lewis Moody, Michael Nickerson, Lionel Scott, and Tu Anh Tran received Associate of Arts degrees in Liberal Arts.

“Please move your tassels to the left,” said Dr. Amy Jamgochian, the college’s Chief Academic Officer. “Families, friends, faculty, staff, and members of our board, I present to you the Class of 2026. You are now graduates of Mount Tamalpais College.”

Graduate Armenia Cudjo, 69, a former Death Row resident, had already received his degree in 2002 from MTC’s predecessor, Patten University, later known as the Prison University Project. He said he never had a chance to participate

in a ceremony because “Death Row prisoners were not allowed to participate in any graduation ceremonies.” A 2022 resentencing reduced his sentence to 25-years-to-life and made him eligible to return to San Quentin, but in general population.

Valedictorian Evan Richard Aguilar, 58, did not graduate from high school. “I had been a rebellious youth,” Aguilar said. He said he had tried various avenues of higher education, but nothing worked until he started at MTC. He graduated with a 3.79 GPA. Aguilar has a determinate release date in 2034 that he has reduced by six years to 2028, largely with time credits earned from his participation in education.

“By far, the biggest challenge I overcame was math and relearning all the formulas,” said Aguilar. “If it wasn’t for the study groups, I would not have succeeded. I have had many wonderful experiences during my time at Mount Tamalpais College. All my teachers far exceeded my expectations, and a few really stood out. In philosophy class, Andrew Wood would push me to dig deeper

within myself and motivate me to write more than I ever thought I would. Learning about ancient Egypt from an Egyptologist who has explored actual tombs was simply phenomenal.”

Aguilar added, “Now that I know that I have what it takes to do the work, I plan on going for my bachelor of arts degree, and possibly progressing further in higher education, if the opportunity presents itself.”

Keynote speaker Henry Frank gave a speech about his personal journey to education. “Prison is changing slowly, but it is changing,” said Frank, who graduated from MTC in 2007. He said MTC let him imagine a life outside the walls. Since his release, Frank worked as an advocate, teaching artist, and Communications Director at William James Association, a nonprofit organization that brings arts programming to incarcerated communities.

Frank’s theme for his speech emphasized his key principle in life: “Happiness is a choice, choose it; success is a definition, define it; life is a gift, appreciate it.” He

urged the graduates—and all other San Quentin residents—to envision themselves as living a life on the outside, because “If you can’t ever see yourself outside these walls, you can’t ever make it outside.”

San Quentin’s musical ensemble, The Greater Good, performed for the event. Their selections ranged from the familiar “With a Little Help From My Friends” by the Beatles to an exotic Persian song about the Noruz Festival, which band leader, resident John Zeretzke, explained as referring to a springtime festival.

MTC writing tutor Barbara Jordan said, “I love the joyful tunes, which go so well with this joyful ceremony.”

Faculty member Grayson Chadwick said he taught four of the seven graduates in his geology class. “This is so special. Seeing these graduates is the cherry on top of the cake. MTC is one of the best teaching environments one could hope for.”

Kirsten Pickering, MTC’s Senior Researcher for Policy and Practice, said, “I love graduation every time. It means a lot to see our students achieve this really difficult

milestone. I have to honor them for all their hard work.” Pickering added that she would soon leave the college to work in Kazakhstan.

Carolyn Salcido, MTC’s Chief Development Officer, found the event “really moving and inspiring.” She added, “It gives you an appreciation for everyone’s contributions.”

Kelly Daggs, Secretary of MTC’s Board of Trustees, said the graduates were “setting an example that breaks the cycle of incarceration. These are all real people with real stories.”

A San Quentin mental health professional who identified herself as Ms. Fitzgibbon attended the event to support one of her clients. “Getting an education like this one gives these guys so many more opportunities when they get out,” she said.

Mount Tamalpais College, the only private college inside the CDCR, established a practice of recruiting volunteer faculty from academic institutions like Berkeley and Stanford. In April, the school began conducting its classes at SQRC’s newly constructed Learning Center.

Unique accommodations for students lead to success

**By Charles Crowe**  
**Staff Writer**

Mount Tamalpais College is known for its stringent academic standards, and the school strives to make those standards achievable for all who are willing to put in the work.

For the willing, MTC offers support in the form of custom-designed accommodations to help ensure success in pursuit of the College’s associate degree. With these resources, students are equipped to overcome barriers that may otherwise prevent them from demonstrating what they know and what they can do.

Mt. Tam’s Learning Specialist, Frances Santiago, oversees the accommodation process. The College publicizes Santiago’s role and availability in correspondence to students and on flyers and postings in the education area. Students sometimes hear about Santiago from peers. In other cases, an instructor may perceive that a student is struggling and suggest a conversation with the learning specialist.

Santiago meets with the student to explore their educational history and experiences, to identify their strengths, and to consider the nature of the challenges the student is experiencing in MTC’s classrooms.

From that discussion, Santiago and the student can determine if accommodations make sense and, if so, what those accommodations might look like. Examples include extra time to complete tests or alternative formats for course materials. In some cases, a peer may assist with note-taking.

Santiago knows from experience that accommodations are not the entire answer for any student’s situation.

“One thing I always tell students is that accommodations are a tool, not a substitute for the work required to be successful in college. Going to class, participating in study groups, seeking tutoring, and staying engaged with coursework are all important parts of the learning process,” she said.

She emphasized the importance of

MTC’s vigorous tutoring program. “In my experience, tutoring is one of the most valuable resources available to students because it provides additional opportunities to practice skills and build confidence,” said Santiago.

San Quentin resident and MTC student Michael Bernardino has progressed through the college program, in part by utilizing an accommodations plan he developed with Santiago. Bernardino completed Math 115, a college-level, intermediate algebra course, with a daunting reputation among the student body. Bernardino earned an A in the course with a little extra time to complete exams.

The algebra course is a degree requirement and a prerequisite to the school’s various science offerings, so it was something he had to have to continue toward graduation.

MTC has a reputation for meeting students where they are and for striving to help them succeed. But the school is firm in its policy that students must navigate stringent math and English pipelines to gain access to elective courses and to graduation.

Included in the mandatory English pipeline is a course titled English 204 (Interdisciplinary Reading, Writing, and Research), which requires an extensive research paper. Like the algebra course described above, English 204 can seem intimidating to students moving through the College’s curriculum.

Academic accommodations can be the difference that allows some students to clear these hurdles on their way to an associate degree.

Even with accommodations, not all students successfully complete every class on their first attempt. In that case, they can try again the next time the course is offered.

“Some students may need to repeat a course and that’s OK,” said Santiago. “Learning often happens through practice and repetition. Every student’s path looks a little different, and I’m grateful to be able to support them as they work toward their educational goals.”

MTC provides bridge to college courses

*Early college seminars spice up pre-college pipeline*

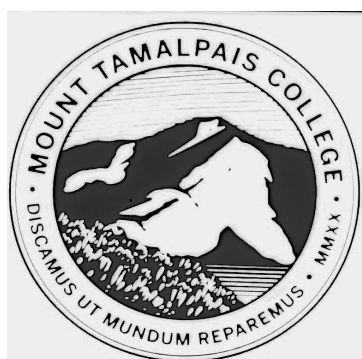
Mount Tamalpais College, San Quentin’s onsite college program, provides non-credit, pre-college courses to ensure that incoming students are prepared for success in college classrooms.

A high school diploma or high school equivalency is the only prerequisite for admission to MTC’s liberal arts program. Some incarcerated students that meet this qualification have been away from the classroom for decades and need refreshers to ensure readiness for higher education.

To gauge incoming student preparedness, the College administers writing and math assessments. If assessments indicate that the student is not ready for credit courses, or if the student declines the assessments, he is steered to pre-college courses. This can frustrate new students anxious to earn college credits and related CDCR milestones.

MTC explained the rationale for non-credit courses in its 2024/25 Annual Report. “To prepare new students for the rigor and intellectual challenge of MTC’s credit program, these non-credit courses provide a foundation for college success, a stronger sense of student identity, and a clear understanding of the academic pathways to reach educational goals.”

San Quentin resident and MTC student Paul Quattropani recalled his assessment and placement experience. “I [took] two assessment tests upon enrollment, one for math and the other for English/writing. The tests were very broad, ranging from remedial all the way up to an advanced level well beyond my recognition ... I placed somewhat low in my math assessment and somewhere in the medium range with the writing and was placed in math/English classes accordingly. While taking these classes, I felt challenged but not overwhelmed. I eventually went on to complete all the math and English classes required to graduate ... the placement I was given was accurate and beneficial. It played an integral part



in the success I’ve had in school thus far.”

Pre-college courses include Introduction to College, Foundations of Reading and Writing I & II, Mathematics Foundations I & II, and Elementary Algebra.

MTC requires Introduction to College for all new students unless they have completed a comparable course in another college or at least nine units of college credit with a C- or better.

The College’s Summer 2026 Registration Packet notes that the Introduction to College course “... introduces students to skills that will help them successfully navigate their college experience and become active members of MTC’s academic community.”

MTC’s writing assessment determines whether students will begin in pre-college English courses or in the credit-earning English curriculum.

The two Foundations of Reading and Writing courses focus on critical reading, writing, and thinking. In the first, students practice with written responses to reading assignments and with free-writes, and submit two formal essays while becoming familiar with the five-paragraph essay structure. The second course examines thesis development and evidence gathering, and students prepare three formal essays with varying purposes.

Math assessments determine if students begin in a pre-college math

course or in the first credit-earning math class, intermediate algebra.

In Mathematics Foundations I, students review arithmetic and its applications to daily life, including basic mathematical operations, decimals and fractions, exponents and roots, rates, ratios, and proportions. Mathematics Foundations II prepares students for elementary algebra. Students encounter variables, coordinate axes, and graphing. The final pre-college math course introduces elementary algebra and prepares students for intermediate algebra.

To encourage students working through the pre-college courses, MTC developed “Early College Seminars,” a series of one-credit, nine-week courses. These classes are “... open to newer students at the College to supplement the math and writing courses required for most new students. By providing access to a wider range of disciplines, MTC offers students the opportunity to explore new fields and experience the excitement of learning, motivating them to persist,” noted the 2024/25 Annual Report.

Examples of recent early college seminars include: Sense and Sensibility and Science, From Particles to People to Planets: Understanding the Physics of Our World at Every Scale, Linguistic Landscapes, and Diagnosing and Treating Psychological Trauma.

These classes give students in the pre-college math and English pipeline a chance to accumulate credits toward graduation and milestones. The College reserves these seminars as the exclusive domain of newer students.

Quattropani offered encouragement to new students. “If you’re considering enrollment in MTC, come in and take these tests, do the best you can, and be certain the school will make sure you start out exactly where you’re supposed to be.”

—Charles Crowe



|                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Cast:</b>                      |                                      |
| Cleopatra - Angie Gordon          | Menas - Curtys Taylor                |
| Mark Antony - Gabriel Moctezuma   | Varrius/guard/servant - Randy Moya   |
| Charmian - June Haro              | Mecaenas - James Ryan Clifford       |
| Iris - Suraya Keating             | Messenger/servant - Nolan Reese, Jr. |
| Mardian - Emelio Lamas            | Octavia - Lexi Garcia                |
| Soothsayer/servant - Nate Cooper  | Alexus/soldier - Misha Shkodnik      |
| Enobarbus - Kelon Williams        | Euphonius - Tim McCrea               |
| Eros - Rahim Bradshaw             | Soldier - obinna Chuckwu             |
| Scarus - Darwin Billingsley       | Egyptian Messenger - Burt Dunham     |
| Octavius Caesar - Nythell Collins | Clown with basket - Douglas Simon    |
| Lepidus/Dolabella - Steve Drown   | Guards - AJ Hummel                   |
| Proculeius - Jesse Renteria       | Guard/servant - Ron young            |
| Pompey/Dercetus - Brady Godoy     | Trumpeter - Jose Gutierrez           |
|                                   | Stage Manager - Burt Dunham          |

# Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* put on at San Quentin with contemporary feel

**By Kevin D. Sawyer  
Staff Writer**

In early June, the auditorium inside San Quentin Rehabilitation Center's new Learning Center was christened by talented incarcerated thespians who performed their rendition of William Shakespeare's play "Antony and Cleopatra."

The play opened with Bruno Mars' song "24K Magic." Original rap lyrics supplanted Mars' words and were sung to fit 21st century San Quentin, which brought the centuries-old theatrical work forward to give the audience a more contemporary feel.

Mark Antony, played by Gabriel Moctezuma, and Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt, played by Angi Gordon, opened the play with dialogue.

"I learn you take things ill that is not so," said Moctezuma (Mark Antony) in one scene.

Between scenes, the sound of a trumpet was mimicked with voice as impromptu improvisation when the trumpeter did not show for the performance. The audience watched and listened intently.

"Mark Antony's wife waged war on Caesar's troops," said Menas, a captain loyal to Pompey, played by Curtys Taylor.

"Nobel friends, what's amiss?" asked Lepidus, played by Steve Drown.

The story begins after the Roman Empire fought a civil war and the Triumvirate leaders, Octavius Caesar, played by Nythell Collins; Lepidus (Drown); and Mark Antony (Moctezuma) emerged to rule the empire as an alliance.

"You are abused beyond the mark of thought," Caesar (Collins) said to his sister Octavia, played by Lexi Garcia.

The actors' months of rehearsal became immediately apparent through their use of old-world dialect as they adorned ancient costumes from an earlier period. Makeshift props, such as an Egyptian portrait hung like a tapestry, made for real stage imagery.

The intimacy of the small venue in the new auditorium was similar to the contrast of a rock band concert performed in a stadium, versus an unplugged performance in a small lounge. The audience seemed receptive and pleased.

Not one to be overlooked, Cleopatra (Gordon) projected her voice well, in a loud and soft dynamic range, without the use of a microphone. She seemed to be in her natural element and performed comfortably on stage. At certain moments, other actors became almost ancillary to the production as Gordon commanded attention in dramatic style. When Gordon took center stage, she got into character

and never looked back.

In another scene, Antony (Moctezuma) is unable to arouse Octavius (Collins) to fight him in battle. What follows is a plan to fight on land, after a night of excess drinking and partying.

"Friends in arms, but not in war," they shouted. They danced, imbued with spirits to the point of foolish laughter in their inebriated stupor.

"To health and Lepidus," they shouted. Lepidus (Drown) was falling down drunk.

As battle ensues on the high seas, improvisation — as only imprisoned men are forced to negotiate — took center stage. A cortege of ships painted on cardboard, held by the actors, were used to depict a naval skirmish. A long colorfully designed blue cloth was held to the floor and shaken from both ends to simulate the rough ocean current.

Mark Antony (Moctezuma) loses the battle at sea. Believing he has been betrayed by Cleopatra (Gordon), Antony turns his rage on her.

"You have served me well, and kings have been your fellows," Mark Antony (Moctezuma) said in a speech to his loyal servants before shaking their hands.

In keeping with actors' tradition, the cast members all held hands on the stage after their performance and took a bow before the audience.



The play took place at SQ's Learning Center and featured costumes and props.

The applause after the two-hour performance was the indicator that everyone was pleased.

"This is our very first performance in this new space," said Marianne Shine, an assistant with Shakespeare at San Quentin.

During a question-and-answer session after the play, the audience commented. "I thought it was brilliant," said one woman who visited the prison.

"You can't be your best without the cast being their best, and vice versa," said Collins, who played Caesar.

Steve Drown (Lepidus) has been in the Shakespeare program for 14 years, starting at California State Prison Solano. "I'm able to take things from those roles and apply them to my rehabilitation," he said.

"A lot of groups in prison are about checking boxes," said Gordon. "Honestly, and truthfully, this group is my family. It helps me survive prison."

James Ryan Clifford, who played Mecaenas, a loyal captain to Octavius Caesar, said, "I get to step outside the role I have to play in a prison environment."

## Federal prison system deny 98% of medical grievances

Arguably, the federal prison system has one of the worst grievance processes for medical complaints in the nation, according to a recent study by Prison Policy Initiative.

PPI used Data Liberation Project research from 2014 to 2024 and found that less than 1% of the medical grievances — the "Administrative Remedy Program" — filed in the federal prison system were granted.

"[A] startling 98% of medical grievances were rejected for reasons ranging from the bureaucratic (such as using the wrong size sheet of paper) to the substantive (actually being denied on the merits of the complaint)," PPI revealed.

In jails and prisons across the country, prisoners use various forms of grievance systems to file complaints; this often includes medical issues.

In California, prisoners may file a CDCR Form 602-HC, Health Care Grievance, to address matters dealing with medical, mental health, or dental issues. Section 3999 of the California Code of Regulations, Title 15, is where many of the regulations regarding medical may be located. Other non-medical issues may be addressed using a CDCR Form 602-I, Grievance.

"A functioning grievance system is an important lifeline for incarcerated people, who have very little leverage to affect their circumstances," PPI wrote. "It's especially important for health-related matters, given that incarcerated people suffer from illness and disease at rates far exceeding that of the general public, and their access to medical care is highly constrained and notoriously awful."

According to federal and state law, prisoners must exhaust administrative remedies with a grievance

before moving to a state or federal court. Technically, a grievance is a pretrial pleading, and in most cases arguments, claims, and complaints raised in them are binding in a court of law.

The PPI study provided a 10-year overview of about 66,000 federal medical grievances filed from January 2014 to January 2024. Almost one-third (32%) of the complaints were rejected. The stated reason was "improperly filed." Another 51% of the complaints were closed after administrative appeal reasons.

"In particular, the dental and mental health grievance categories had the highest rates of these rejections," it was reported. "Seventy-eight percent of dental and 83% of mental health grievances were tossed out for administrative reasons."

Of the 65,712 complaints studied over a decade, 940 were granted relief, according to the study. The grievance subjects with the highest number of cases in which the system denied relief were: 1) Delayed or lack of access to medical care; 2) Improper or inadequate medical care; and 3) Prescription medication.

"As the data show, federal prisons don't reject most grievances on the merits," PPI reported. "Instead, most are rejected because incarcerated people fail to navigate administrative rules for submitting complaints, so their grievances are never actually judged on their merits."

"[I]n the end, a system does what it is designed to do, not what it is intended to do, and the federal grievance system rejects nearly every medical complaint filed by incarcerated people, often for vague or trivial reasons," PPI wrote.

—Kevin D. Sawyer

## Annual multi-county DA forum highlights rehabilitation

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

San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins held the second annual Access to Hope Symposium, May 29, in Chapel B at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. The event drew district attorneys from 11 counties with a participation of 33 lawyers and their staff.

The symposium featured conversations in which incarcerated persons informed the prosecutors of progress in their rehabilitation. The event also included a panel moderated by Jenkins in which one presently incarcerated person and three formerly incarcerated persons detailed their steps to successful rehabilitation.

"It's important for DAs to take time to listen. We have an ongoing responsibility to make sure that rehabilitation works," said Yolo County Acting District Attorney Melinda Aiello.

Jenkins has conducted many events at SQRC and visits frequently. Her previous events on prevention of smash-and-grab crime and on resentencing have made her and her events highly popular with San Quentin residents. Jenkins also hosted the first Spanish-language symposium on resentencing.

During her opening remarks, Jenkins said to her fellow prosecutors, "The goal is to see and share what I got to experience and to see the work the incarcerated people have done to go home."

Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman attended for the second time. Hochman said he appreciated the opportunity to hear from residents and to see their rehabilitation. "It's always important to get as much information and as many perspectives as possible. It's important to see what happens with people, to see what programs work to

rehabilitate them and make them productive members of society."

Besides Jenkins' San Francisco County, prosecutors participated from El Dorado County, Los Angeles County, Mariposa County, Merced County, Placer County, San Mateo County, Siskiyou County, Tuolumne County, Ventura County, and Yolo County.

DA Cassandra Jenecke of Tuolumne County said she felt curious and excited to experience San Quentin for the first time. "I appreciate Brooke's efforts." Jenecke came with Assistant DA Stephanie Novelli, who said, "I am excited to have come." She has visited San Quentin for the first time.

Brett Morris, an assistant district attorney from Mariposa County, said, "I have nothing but positive opinions, something that will turn people to education, something positive, away from the negative."

The symposium began with a panel moderated by Jenkins. She included three returned citizens, Tommy Wickerd, Greg Eskridge, Ricardo Romero, and one current San Quentin resident, Eric Allen, who co-facilitated the event.

Jenkins demonstrated her moderator skills by beginning with the statement, "I want to talk about everyone's journey." She then asked each of the panelists, "What was the mechanism that had you go back home?"

As Jenkins went from one panelist to another, her respondents explained the way San Quentin's many rehabilitative programs enabled them to rejoin society.

To Jenkins' question, "When you first did programs, what were the most impactful programs that you participated in?" Wickerd recited a long list of his rehabilitation programs and he concluded his list with the statement, "Thank God that

CDCR implemented rehabilitation."

At the end of the panel discussion, Jenkins asked for questions from the district attorneys in the audience. Los Angeles County's Hochman raised his hand and asked, "So if you had a chance to go back to the moment before you committed your crime, do you think you could persuade your younger self not to do it?" All of the panelists came from Los Angeles County.

Allen, the event's co-facilitator, said, "I would go and ask for help. In that moment I was grieving over my friend's death. As a 15-year-old kid, I didn't know what I was experiencing. I just knew I was hurt but didn't want to say it or show it."

Los Angeles County District Attorney Hochman also said he appreciated the opportunity to hear from residents and to see their rehabilitation. The *San Quentin News* reminded Hochman that during his last visit, he said, "We need to blow up the L.A. Sheriff's Department." Asked whether he still felt that way, he responded, "The Sheriff's Department has 9,000 officers and 9,000 non-officers. It runs the largest jail in the nation, which in turn, means it runs the largest homeless shelter and the largest mental health system in the country. The L.A. County Supervisors have not provided it adequate funding to maintain the facility. I am hopeful to put a spotlight on the issue that if someone comes into the system, we should offer rehabilitative treatment while they are there."

Jenkins summed up the symposium with the word "successful." She added, "Every time I come, I take away something new. My goal is that we work in partnership; normally it's adversarial and sometimes that gets out of control. Hopefully, through these conversations, we create more public safety."

SPORTS

Puerto Rican Baseball foundation practice with SQ Giants

By Ben Greenspon  
Staff Writer

Puerto Rican baseball royalty visited San Quentin’s Field of Dreams to observe and instruct the San Quentin Giants baseball program. Little did the visitors know that they would be learning life lessons as well.

Tom Axon, who was raised in Brooklyn, NY, owned the Puerto Rican professional baseball team San Turce Cangerajeros, “The Crabbers,” from 2019 to 2022. He called the team the Puerto Rican equivalent of the New York Yankees.

Axon credits fellow visitor David Kalm, who saw an article in *The New York Times* about the baseball program at San Quentin, with opening his eyes to the extraordinary grit of the San Quentin Giants.

“What a forward-thinking idea, a sports program in prison,” Kalm said, observing SQRC’s Field of Dreams. “Baseball is such a cool activity for people to engage in. This has been life changing for us, honestly.”

Kalm is a board member and legal counsel for Axon’s many businesses, which include a charitable foundation called Camino El Plato, or “Heading for Home.”

After Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico in 2021, Axon started a foundation to provide scholarships for underprivileged kids on the island.

“The public education system is awful, and the academies offer real education,” Axon said. “Public schools barely even run. The politicians in the Caribbean want the poor to stay poor, it’s insidious and evil.”

Axon’s foundation operates six academies throughout Puerto Rico.

“We have between 200 and 300 students enrolled at each academy, and 100 percent of the students graduate and go on to college,” said Axon.

Axon added that the academies are training centers for education and baseball. Several professional baseball players have benefitted from the Camino El Plato Foundation, including former Boston Red Sox catcher Christian Valdez, current Yankee relief pitcher Hector Cruz, and former New York Met Sugar Diaz.

Axon, Kalm, and a veritable line-up of Puerto Rican players, coaches, and scouts — including current Tampa Bay Devil Rays scout and former Boston Red Sox outfielder Gil Martinez — watched the San Quentin Giants enjoy a half-day practice.

“As a culture in Puerto Rico, if you play baseball, you either go pro or plan to go pro. You go to school; if you can go pro, you do,” Martinez said. “This experience is incredible; my life is baseball, [and] I’ve never seen this. Never thought it could happen in this environment. I’m 59; seeing this, I’m overwhelmed.”

Another member of Axon’s group was director Reid Wittman, who is currently filming a documentary for the foundation titled, “Beisbol, Legends of Puerto Rico.”

Wittman spoke about his impression of the prison and baseball program. “There’s good people here that are defined by an outdated narrative that needs to change,”



he said.

Humberto Miranda, another member of Axon’s posse, played baseball at Texas Northwood University. He coached professionally for more than 14 years with multiple teams, including the Los Angeles Dodgers from 2016-2018. Miranda now develops young players for the foundation.

“Baseball brings culture [and] different backgrounds together; it’s a family. That’s what sport and baseball is for, a kid sport played by adults. It’s about fun.”

Visitor Kevin Gildea credits Axon’s foundation for helping many people. “He’s changed my life and many others. He’s a visionary, one of the most intuitive [and] smartest guys you’ll ever meet,” Gildea said. “He really cares about the sport and getting the kids’ education.”

Ismael Selgado, outfielder for the Detroit Tigers minor league team in 2017, also put a glove on and practiced with the SQ Giants. Selgado, who now hosts a podcast called

the Puerto Rico Sports Nation, or PSRN, shared his wisdom and experience with the SQ Giants by running most of the drills for them.

Delgado, Miranda, Martinez, and Selgado practiced with the team as Kalm watched from the dugout and shared his family’s experiences and talked baseball.

The players and visitors circled up after practice as Martinez shared the visiting group’s love of baseball. “These are life lessons for us, talking to you guys, seeing that you are trying to do better every day, this applies to us also. We all got to do better,” Martinez said.

Axon closed by saying the Puerto Rican visit was the start of a new relationship between Puerto Rico and San Quentin baseball. Axon’s visit to SQRC inspired his entourage to approach Puerto Rican authorities about starting prison baseball programs there.

Sports continues to spread rehabilitation onto the global stage.

Tier Talk



Kameron on third base with his sights on home.

Recovery, healing motivate resident to persevere

Q & A with Kameron Hamilton

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Sports Editor

San Quentin Giants starting center-fielder Kameron “Kam” Hamilton was accepted as a great athlete at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center the minute he walked onto the Field of Dreams in 2024.

Soon though, he realized that going three for four with a homer and two stolen bases would not get him home any quicker. This lesson was emphasized after he was handed a three-year denial at his first board hearing.

Hamilton is now proving a short-term loss can be a victory toward a better life. He says his commitment to recovery and healing “started directly after my denial.”

In truth, Hamilton realized he was not ready to proclaim that he was safe for the public before entering the board room. A moment of clarity at his board hearing allowed him to see, “I had no idea why I chose to commit my crime. How could I answer for that choice?”

Hamilton’s team was split on whether to go forward with his hearing, but he refused to stipulate to a three-year denial, saying, “I put my faith in God and decided to go in.”

Hamilton’s loss at the board was SQRC’s gain as the center-fielder jumped into recovery the way he jumps on a fastball over the middle of the plate.

“I’d gone to the hearing full of anxiety and fear, [and] I left my hearing with a clearer picture of what I needed to face about myself,” Hamilton said. “The first step was to learn vulnerability and honesty; not caring what anyone else thought of me, and then I had to pick myself up and build a support network and in doing so, I have found hope, faith, and recovery.”

Not understanding why someone committed their crime is detrimental to anyone’s attempt to be released, yet Hamilton said he was as honest as he could be.

“I let the cards fall where they may. My lawyer spoke several times — stopping the hearing five minutes in — telling me I was likely going to get a five or seven year denial,” said Hamilton. “I responded that I didn’t want to run away, and today I believe things happened

exactly how they were supposed to, so I could get the help I needed.”

Hamilton fully committed to a life’s journey of recovery by prioritizing accountability, self-discovery, and understanding the harm his crime imparted through his entire community. He is also embracing his victim’s impact as he meticulously plans his life of living amends.

“My denial was not a loss. I took it as taking freezing ice-cold water to the face that woke my game up,” said Hamilton. “I made poor choices even before I chose to commit my crime. To me, the parole board was an opportunity to take accountability for those choices. I expected nothing more than that, so, no, it was not a loss.”

“Right then, I learned I need to open up to people, allow others in, and deal with feelings of my failure, shame, and fear.”

Hamilton, like any great athlete, wanted to tackle his character flaws as thoroughly as he would approach playing a game. Looking back, he sees it was an impossible task.

“Playing sports and [committing to recovery] programming is hard to manage. But I was so motivated to address my behavior, and I became overwhelmed trying to balance being a part of the baseball program while committing to programming,” said Hamilton.

“I learned that baseball is part of my rehabilitation, because building healthy relationships while dealing with feelings of failure and frustration lets me be a part of something bigger than just me.”

Today, Hamilton said baseball affords him the opportunity to exercise his new skills. He integrates healing while navigating stress and maintaining a busy schedule.

Hamilton has also become a facilitator for Awareness into Domestic Abuse, and is a leader in twelve-step work. Amidst his many contributions to the SQ recovery community, Hamilton tries to maintain humility.

“If I was to give advice to someone seeking change, I’d say sobriety, willingness to ask for help, and letting go of old beliefs and ideas that will not serve them any longer is a must,” Hamilton said. “All while not caring what anyone else thinks of them.”

Expanded World Cup kick-starts childhood memories

As this year’s feature sporting event came to North America, the largest World Cup ever has established new memories and records by star athletes.

The 2026 World Cup will be recognized as the largest competitive field with 48 teams. Canada, Mexico, and the United States shared host responsibilities throughout 16 stadiums that will witness a staggering 104 matches within the 39-day tournament.

The finals match became the most viewed sporting spectacle in the world, and Google’s search record was broken during the knockout World Cup round. “Google Search broke all prior usage records and saw its highest usage in history right after Argentina scored their winning goal,” wrote Nick Fox, head of Google’s Knowledge and Information unit.

The finals match became the most viewed sporting spectacular in the world, and the World Cup also broke Alphabet/Google’s search record during the knockout World Cup round. “Google Search broke all prior usage records and saw its highest usage in history right after Argentina scored their winning goal,” wrote Nick Fox, head of Google’s Knowledge and Information unit.

Listening to residents and volunteers around San Quentin Rehabilitation Center discuss the event, that was culminated with a victory by Spain on July 19, created an energy that was electric. Incarcerated people of all races and ethnicities rooted for their native country, which brought back memories. Senior volunteers reminisced

about past obstacles that hindered futbol in America for generations.

Brazilian resident Peter Fontes remembered the visits to Brazil’s Corinthians’ futbol matches, which he considered the best futbol team in his native homeland.

“For us, futbol is a passion inherited from childhood,” said Fontes. “There is a saying that Brazilians are born with the futbol spirit.”

That unique spirit was challenged by Salvadorian resident Erick Orellana.

“Futbol is great memories for me when I was a kid,” said Orellana. “Sharing with my brothers and friends, enjoying a sport that makes the neighborhood gather all together [and], when I played on a school team, I also played on neighborhood teams along with my brothers and friends.”

While international residents remembered a sport that was ingrained into the fabric of their psyche, the way baseball, basketball, and football were to generations of Americans, senior Catholic volunteer Vic Perella spoke as to why futbol has taken decades to gain traction in the USA.

“I am really trying to go all-in for the event,” said Perella. “But I just never took the time to learn all the rules or nuances.”

Although America’s embrace of global futbol has been slowed when compared to its own football, the sport has grown exponentially.

For FIFA President Gianni Infantino, the wthree-country hosting by Canada, Mexico, and the United States was beneficial in expanding the visibility of the sport in the

Americas.

“The power of futbol in society is on display every day around the world. It is a game that brings people together, inspires generations, and promotes team spirit,” said Infantino. “Making futbol truly global, at every level, is the core task for FIFA to pursue over the coming years.”

At the beginning of the 2026 World Cup, the United States committed to 11 stadium sites throughout its country. Mexico added three sites while hosting 13 matches, including the opener in Mexico City this past June 11, and Canada hosted 13 matches.

The remaining 78 games were played in the U.S. and started with the Americans playing Paraguay on June 12 in the Los Angeles area. All other matches in the US included games in the quarter-finals, semifinals, and a finals round at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

According to AP World Cup, this World Cup had a record number of players (1,248) from 449 domestic clubs in 71 countries, which includes the following facts:

America’s Major League Soccer was represented by a record 44 active players at the World Cup, with 103 of the players having had some experience in the American league.

Portugal star Cristiano Ronaldo leads all players with 226 caps, and he has joined Argentina’s Lionel Messi as the only players to appear in at least six World Cups. Ronaldo is the only player to score in five World Cups, with eight goals in his 22 matches.

Messi has the most career

World Cup matches with 26, and his 2026 appearances have made him the third man with at least 200 caps (Bader Al-Mutawa, Kuwait, also has more than 200 appearances in international play).

Only eight countries have won the World Cup, with six of those teams winning multiple titles, led by Brazil’s five.

Resident Raoul Sanchez spoke of the importance of this year’s World Cup.

“Look, countries are at war, and they send a team, and nothing happens; there are no reports of terroristic actions, and all the tourists project a love affair with our country,” said Sanchez.

Sanchez’s remarks are in line with the vision of FIFA’s Infantino.

“FIFA is dedicated to harnessing this power in order to have a positive social impact,” said Infantino.

Spain’s victorious championship overtime win against the legendary Lionel Messi and Argentina proved the Americas could be a champion of peaceful, global affairs throughout the United States even during a time of global war.

SQRC resident Mike Navarro added, “The end of the Cup was as exciting as possible. Mexico, the United States, and Canada completed the most extravagant World Cup ever produced without violence that was predicted.”

The World Cup proved sports are not only rehabilitative, but they are a remedy for global warfare from Jesse Owens versus Hitler to the World Cup versus Trump, Putin, and Netanyahu.

—Anthony Manuel Carvalho

SPANISH

# Reducción de contrabando en celulares

Por Daniel Lopez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Writer

El contrabando de teléfonos celulares ha sido un problema para el sistema penitenciario de California durante las últimas décadas. Sin embargo, esta tendencia ha caído a un mínimo histórico en el último año, según registros del Departamento de Corrección y Rehabilitación de California ( CDCR).

En el año 2025 se incautaron 420 teléfonos celulares en comparación con los 13.000 confiscados en 2018, aunque el número más alto se registró en 2011 con aproximadamente 15.000 dispositivos. Estas estadísticas reflejan que este había sido un problema para el sistema durante más de una década.

En julio del 2025, CDCR reportó que confiscaron 420 aparatos celulares durante un registro coordinado entre varias instituciones, claramente reflejando esta tendencia de que personas encarceladas ya no recuren a estos dispositivos ilegales.

CDCR, dirigido por sus regulaciones administrativas del Código de Regulaciones de California ( CCR), Título 15§ Sección 3006, el cual indica que está “prohibiendo la posición de contrabando electrónico”.

La posesión de teléfonos celulares dentro de una institución estatal puede conllevar a una infracción administrativa conocida como 115, las consecuencias

incluyen la pérdida de créditos hasta de 90 días. Algo que puede extender la fecha de libertad de los ofensores.

De acuerdo al Sr. Edgar Contreras, de 36 años, uno recluso de SQ, quien comentó que fue sorprendido en varias ocasiones con teléfonos celulares, durante sus nueve años de encarcelamiento, ha recibido tres infracciones por posesión de teléfonos celulares.

“Era adicto a la tecnología, y eso fue lo que me metió en problemas”, manifestó Contreras.

De acuerdo con el CDCR, los teléfonos móviles de contrabando representan una grave amenaza significativa para la seguridad penitenciaria, así como para la integridad del personal y los reclusos.

Pueden facilitar actividades delictivas como la coordinación de asesinatos por encargo, la intimidación de testigos y la continuación de actividades delictivas dentro de las prisiones.

Según datos del CDCR, entre el 1 de enero de 2019 y el 30 de julio de 2022 se incautaron un total de 31,645 teléfonos móviles, con el pico más alto de incautaciones en año 2019 con un total de 10,494 unidades.

En el año 2022, los datos indicaron un descenso de incautaciones de hasta 3,490 dispositivos. Si bien el problema persiste, los decomisos están teniendo una tendencia a la baja.

El departamento utiliza

varios métodos para combatir la entrada de dispositivos por contrabando, entre estos métodos se hacen registros de celdas con perros adiestrados, rastreo de correo y vigilancia por video, todo esto con el objetivo de impedir su entrada en la prisión.

Para el CDCR, los teléfonos móviles de contrabando representan una grave amenaza significativa para la seguridad penitenciaria, así como para la integridad del personal y los reclusos.

Contreras describe su principal motivo para tener un teléfono de contrabando y que su único uso era para mantenerse en contacto con su familia, pero él también reconoce que las cosas han cambiado desde que tiene una tableta proveída por el departamento.

“Si me dan una tableta que me permite hacer llamadas gratis sin límite de tiempo, enviar y recibir mensajes de texto y realizar videollamadas, ¿por qué iba a usar un teléfono ilegal?” añadió Contreras. Ahora en día, reconoce el valor positivo en mantener los lazos familiares con este nuevo sistema.

Securus es el nuevo sistema de telecomunicaciones para los reclusos y sus seres queridos, que puede mantenerse en contacto con su familia, hablar desde su celda cuando lo necesite, al igual que tienen la posibilidad de enviar y recibir mensajes electrónicos, realizar videollamadas por medio de sus aplicaciones.

# Securus asegura contrato multimillonario

Por Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chair

El Departamento de Correccionales y Rehabilitación en California (CDCR) firmó un multimillonario contrato con la compañía Securus Tecnología LLC después de ser demandado.

De acuerdo a la corte de Sacramento, Securus Technologies LLC v. California caso no. 2026 WL 1489053 v. California. Dept. of Tech, et al. Respondent Global Tel Link, Corp. falló a favor con un contrato de 189 millones de dólares por los próximos cuatro años.

El contrato entre CDCR y Securus Technologies entró en efecto en febrero de 2025. La transición comenzó en octubre de 2025 y se ha implementado de manera escalonada, proyectando una conclusión en febrero de 2027.

Desafortunadamente, esta transición trajo una pérdida de datos. Para las personas encarceladas y sus familiares, este traspaso de la plataforma ViaPath a Securus incluía fotos, mensajes y contenido multimedia adquiridos previamente sin ser transferidos entre compañías.

“No me di cuenta de la pérdida de mi madre en México hasta después de unas semanas,” dijo Luis Orozco, un residente de SQ. El sistema de Securus, ha traído más fallas que beneficio cuando han invertido 189 millones de dólares,”

Esto afecta a las familias a perder recuerdos digitales o a pagar nuevamente por servicios similares. Adicionalmente, hay casos de personas que han

fallecido y el único recuerdo puede ser las fotos y los videos digitales, siendo la única manera en que las personas dentro de las prisiones puedan mantener un recuerdo.

Los efectos de este nuevo servicio son evidentes para la población.

Orozco recalcó que con ViaPath GTL la comunicación con sus seres queridos en México era más frecuente y más accesible, lo que otorgaba la oportunidad de establecer relaciones con su familia. Con esta nueva compañía, ahora las llamadas no logran entrar y no sabe nada de su familia en México.

De acuerdo con American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), las consecuencias financieras de los servicios de comunicación en las prisiones han sido tema de debate entre los encarcelados sobre el costo de la comunicación para las personas encarceladas y sus familias.

Se ha señalado que aunque la tecnología facilita la conexión humana, el modelo de negocio prevaleciente impone una carga financiera desproporcionada sobre una población vulnerable.

De acuerdo con una demanda de ACLU, California se destaca como uno de los pocos estados que cubren el costo de las llamadas telefónicas para las personas encarceladas, pero el modelo de negocio de Securus se centra en servicios complementarios que generan gastos significativos.

En Contenido Digital: El acceso a música, juegos, radio por internet y suscripciones a entretenimiento es una accesibilidad que solo algunos

pueden pagar.

“Lo malo de Securus es que si no tienes dinero en tu cuenta, no puedes disfrutar la música, películas y más, más que todo mandarles un mensaje a tus seres queridos. Las llamadas se desconectan en la tabletas. En comparación con el servicio anterior por medio de GTL, el sistema telefónico y videollamadas eran más efectivos”, dijo Rubén Ángeles, un recluso en SQ.

De acuerdo con CDCR, el cambio prometía menores costos en videollamadas (0.10 dólares por minuto) en comparación con el proveedor anterior; la fragmentación del servicio y los problemas técnicos durante la implementación han generado desafíos financieros y emocionales para las familias.

Las nuevas tabletas de Securus siguen siendo distribuidas en las instalaciones estatales de CDCR. Recientemente, la población de SQ recibió las tabletas a finales de mayo.

Las nuevas tabletas de Securus traen más accesibilidad a una variedad de servicios de tecnología para personas encarceladas. Estos servicios incluyen audiotextos donde las personas pueden hablar y la tableta dicta todo en la pantalla.

Prison Policy Initiative: Una organización que publica informes detallados sobre los costos de llamadas telefónicas y servicios de comunicación en prisiones y cárceles de Estados Unidos ha llevado a cabo investigaciones que cuestionan las tarifas cobradas por empresas de telecomunicaciones en instalaciones correccionales.

By César Martínez  
Staff Writer

Las mentiras se manifiestan en comportamientos que pueden afectar las relaciones personales y profesionales.

De acuerdo con el escritor Dennis Lee, en su libro “Guía Para Crear Relaciones Saludables y Duraderas”, describe a individuos que sufren con la compulsión de mentir; quienes pueden experimentar vergüenza, culpa o ansiedad, también pueden reflejar narcisismo, psicopatía (trastorno psíquico por el que se altera la conducta de una persona) o traumas sin resolver.

“Yo mentía para aparentar algo que no soy, permitirme ser aceptado y demostrar

que soy buena persona hacia los demás”, dijo el residente del Centro de San Quentin Enrique Mejía agregó que los sentimientos de ser una persona inteligente e importante al ver como la gente le prestaba atención.

Esta guía explica que las mentiras pueden tomar diferentes formas; algunas veces pueden estar motivadas por el deseo de autoprotección, rechazo, evitar un castigo o, en otros casos, crear daños morales, manipulación, control, omisiones u obtener ventajas sobre otras personas.

Este tipo de comportamiento puede ir más allá y las razones dependen de lo que la persona quiere obtener o reflejar, por ejemplo, la motivación de obtener un estatus

o ser aceptada en un grupo social específico, logros o experiencias para impresionar a otras personas.

En un artículo escrito por Muhammad Tuhin llamado “Dentro de la mente de un mentiroso: la psicología del engaño”, se explican los factores psicológicos entre estas personas para continuar mintiendo. Puede ser por la falta de autoestima o autovaloración; también, otros factores pueden ser la falta de empatía o consideración por otros.

Wilfredo Estrada, residente de SQ, comentó que le es difícil reconocer que él empezó a mentir por miedo, vergüenza y la opinión, derivado de la cultura en la que él creció. Él usaba las

*“Es difícil no decir mentiras, se que necesito que trabajar en mí mismo...”*  
  
—Wilfredo Estrada

mentiras como mecanismo para engañar y burlarse de otras personas y desviar la atención para no ser juzgado.

Tuhin también indica que estos síntomas pueden manifestar condiciones de narcisismo o otros desórdenes mentales. A una persona que miente constantemente le es muy difícil poner un

alto a este comportamiento, llegando a ser un comportamiento habitual y difícil de romper, más si es reforzado con resultados favorables.

Otros estudios describen que mentir es un hábito que puede crear consecuencias negativas en relaciones tanto personales como profesionales.

Mejía describe que cuando las personas descubrían sus mentiras, le producía vergüenza y se alejaba porque sabía que se perdía la confianza de los demás.

De acuerdo con Lee, entender las motivaciones psicológicas detrás de este comportamiento puede ayudar a crear estrategias para parar este hábito con la ayuda profesional en casos en

que una persona desarrolla una compulsión por mentir en cada momento.

Además explica que aunque los factores pueden ser diversos, siempre el primer paso es reconocer el problema y afrontar las consecuencias. Construir la confianza ante los demás es un trabajo de toda la vida. Esto ayuda a crear credibilidad en otras personas.

“Es difícil no decir mentiras; sé que necesito trabajar en mí mismo porque es una costumbre que tengo desde niño y que, a pesar de que estoy en este lugar, quiero que mis hijos vean que estoy cambiando esos malos hábitos y ser un ejemplo de cambio positivo para mis hijos”, dijo Estrada.

# Un castigo contra la humanidad: el confinamiento solitario por dentro

En Estados Unidos, hay muchas personas encarceladas cumpliendo condena en régimen de aislamiento y sometidas a condiciones inhumanas diariamente.

“En el libro Terminando Aislamiento, El Caso Contra Confinamiento Aislado”, los autores Christopher Blackwell —un periodista anteriormente encarcelado— y la profesora de leyes Deborah Zalesne recopilaron historias de hombres y mujeres que cumplieron condena en aislamiento o que pasaron años tras las ventanas de seguridad sin contacto humano real.

“Cuando estaba en el centro de detención juvenil, [yo] me negaba a seguir las reglas y a dejarme controlar por las figuras de autoridad; me revelaba constantemente. Eso me llevó a mi primer confinamiento solitario a los 12 años, una experiencia

que consolidó para siempre mi desconfianza hacia la autoridad y despertó en mí un profundo odio hacia “el sistema”. Me tuvieron allí almacenado hasta que terminó mi condena”, relató el coautor Blackwell.

A través de relatos personales, este libro aborda puntos claves sobre cómo los administradores penitenciarios de todo el país utilizan el aislamiento para castigar y tomar represalias contra los reclusos.

Además, ofrece la perspectiva profesional sobre el aislamiento y la de antiguos empleados que decidieron abandonar sus puestos tras presenciar de primera mano las condiciones espantosas que las personas soportaban a diario dentro de estas mazmorras modernas.

Jeremy Busby es un periodista encarcelado en Texas. Habló de su propia

experiencia personal y señaló que en Texas es un lugar brutal para cumplir condenas. Afirmó que gran parte del mundo lo sabe al ver la frecuencia con la que se llevan a cabo ejecuciones allí.

“Allí, miles de personas encarceladas son sometidas a un... cóctel mortal de tres ingredientes: aislamiento severo, condiciones de vida extremadamente deplorables y una atención sanitaria física y mental inadecuada, lo que deriva en un asesinato a sangre fría sancionado por el Estado”, escribió Busby.

De acuerdo a Blackwell y Zalesne, el confinamiento solitario se introdujo por primera vez a finales de la década de 1790 en la Penitenciaría Estatal del Este (o Cherry Hill). En 1826 se consolidó lo que llegó a conocerse como el modelo de Pensilvania, en el cual los reclusos permanecían

confinados en sus celdas, sin posibilidad de hablar ni comunicarse con otras personas. De acuerdo a este modelo, se creía que aislar a los hombres bajo las duras condiciones de una celda fría de hormigón les daría tiempo para reflexionar, estudiar e incluso rezar, permitiéndoles así dejar atrás su “conducta delictiva”. Esta práctica bárbara e inhumana sigue siendo uno de los métodos punitivos letales del sistema penitenciario. Según los expertos, siglos después esta práctica sigue vigente.

“Una vez hecho esto, los guardias colocaban un ventilador frente a la puerta, lo ponían a máxima potencia y lo dirigían directamente hacia la celda de aislamiento donde yo me encontraba. No se imaginan el frío que pasé durante esas horas... Tuve que ganarme de nuevo el derecho a mi humanidad, a

la ropa y, finalmente, a una celda normal con colchón” relató en el libro Steve Nall después de estar cinco años en aislamiento.

Ejemplos como este, extraídos en “Ending Isolation” (Poner Fin al Aislamiento), hace hincapié al lector que ningún ser humano debería verse obligado a soportar condiciones tan abusivas o bárbaras, independientemente de lo que hayan hecho para acabar en “el agujero”.

Jeremiah Bourgeois es un ejemplo de cómo sobrevivió a siete años y medio de aislamiento. Relató cómo se le privó de la mayoría de sus comidas durante tres semanas enteras. Recordaba que podía oler los huevos a primera hora de la mañana, a medida que el carrito de la comida se acercaba.

Kwaneta Harris periodista encarcelada en el estado

de Texas, escribe sobre las condiciones horribles y el daño de aislamiento que ha tenido hacia ella y otras mujeres encarceladas. Ella se enfoca en los efectos negativos del confinamiento aislado y como se alejó su relación con su hija Summer Knight, quien se la pasó toda su adolescencia con su madre en la prisión y en confinamiento aislado.

De acuerdo a Harris, como madre, se enfrentó a llamadas de teléfono por cinco minutos después de la media noche, cuando su hija estaba dormida. Esto duró por siete años y en ocasiones las llamadas eran solo permitida dos veces al año.

Este libro resalta las torturas físicas y mentales que muchas persona han y continúan experimentando durante su encarcelamiento.

—Edwin E. Chavez

# Muslim Chaplain has lasting impact

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Journalism Guild Chair

Every Friday afternoon, San Quentin’s Muslim Chaplain sits in his office making final preparations for his weekly sermon. As the Muslim community awaits the Imam’s presence, they reflect on God through prayer and meditation.

Imam Muhammad Fasih begins every sermon with the recitation of the Holy Qur’an. According to the philosophy of Islamic ruling, it is required that those who recite the Holy Qur’an do it with a melodic tone.

“The melody that the Imam uses in his recitation of the Qur’an, I feel it in my heart,” said SQ resident Austin “Abd Allah” Hogan, 27, who has been incarcerated approximately six years.

Hogan stated that he has been in other spiritual environments inside and outside of prison. He always felt out of place until he walked into SQ’s Muslim community led by Imam Fasih.

Fasih first volunteered at the San Diego County Jail, then at California Correctional Facility R.J. Donovan in San Diego.

Fasih stated he was recommended for the SQ Chaplain job by previous Muslim Chaplain Imam Husain

Khawthar, and he has been spiritually advising residents for the past eight years.

“I love coming to San Quentin. I am a student of my environment. I have learned to soak in this environment; it brings me to a humble place,” Fasih said. “Prison chaplains must know the culture of the incarcerated people.”

Fasih stated that when he first walked into San Quentin, he was wearing the traditional Islamic male attire. He noticed people looking at him as if he were a foreigner, but little did they know he was born in Chicago and raised in the Bay Area.

He added that during the 1950s, his uncle lived in the United States and prayed with the Nation of Islam.

Fasih stated that the African-American Muslims are the largest orthodox community in America; this is a result of the first resurrection of Islam in this country. He added that the leader of the N.O.I., Elijah Muhammad, taught the faith to his son, Warith Deen Muhammad, who then taught Islam to his followers.

In a recent sermon, the Muslim Chaplain explained that God’s creation is in three parts: humankind, the Jinn (evil spirit), and the Angels. He said that our purpose is to recognize the creator because

“our time on Earth is limited.”

“Humankind and the Jinn have a choice to obey or disobey Allah (God), but the Angels have no choice in that regard,” Fasih said.

Fasih has assisted various self-help groups, such as Bridging the Generational Gap, which was founded by SQ resident Marcus “Wali” Henderson, who paroled in 2024. BTGG is a group that is open to all SQ residents; it brings the elderly and young people together to resolve issues through dialogue.

Fasih wants everyone to be aware of the vision of the group’s founder, and that the elderly should watch over the young people.

SQ residents Sammie Nichols and Eric Allen facilitated BTTG after the founder paroled. Nichols and Allen formed an Executive Body to keep Henderson’s vision alive, according to Allen.

Nichols, 36, has been incarcerated for 18 years and is a practicing Muslim for 14 years. He stated that Imam Fasih created a space for people from all walks of life to be vulnerable and open to constructive criticism.

“He teaches in a way that the application of the Holy Qur’an can be applied in my daily life,” Nichols said. “He showed us what your brother in humanity



Imam Muhammad Fasih

looks like in practice.”

SQ residents Robert “Talib” Ortiz, 33, and Edward “Mujahid” Renshaw, 38, explained how Imam Fasih brought diversity to the SQ Muslim community.

Ortiz said he has been practicing Islam for three years. In his 18 years of incarceration, he noticed that Muslim communities in other prisons were predominately black.

He said when he got to SQ, Imam Fasih and the Islamic community embraced him with open arms. He added that the Imam previously mentioned in a sermon that

Islam is not exclusively for one race, and that Fasih embodies the meaning of diversity by bringing it to the SQ community.

“I am blessed to have the Imam as a teacher,” Ortiz said. “He has taught me how to practice proper Islamic Adab (etiquette).”

Renshaw, who is serving a life term, has been at SQ for three years and six months. He said since being at SQ, Fasih “has given us a place to grow,” unlike other prisons.

“Diversity is heartwarming, but sometimes at other prisons politics are

prevalent. But diversity is the beauty of Islam, which is an integral part of the faith,” Renshaw said.

According to Renshaw, Fasih’s door is always open and he is down to earth, which makes it easy to hold a conversation.

In an effort to educate and show people that there are other methods of rehabilitation, Fasih has set an example of that through Islam.

“I want to cleanse the air when it comes to the image of Islam, and that it is a factor of rehabilitation, but through a different lens,” Fasih said.

# Resident's late stage cancer diagnosis does not deter his parole suitability

A resident at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center speaks about his journey through alcoholism, self-help, cancer, and parole suitability.

Carl Price, 68, has been incarcerated for 18 years for a crime he said happened more than five decades ago.

“I was convicted for a murder that took place over 50 years ago through a home invasion that someone else committed,” Price said.

Price was born and raised in South Central Los Angeles, California, and also previously resided in Compton and Inglewood, California.

He earned his high school diploma in 1980. His education began outside of prison and concluded at the California Training Facility in Soledad.

Price said his worst moment while incarcerated was when he was in a cell with a guy who made jailhouse wine. He added that alcoholism was a contributing factor in his crime; therefore, he started drinking again.

After about one year of drinking, he received a Rules Violation Report for constructive possession of prison-manufactured contraband. He then decided to move out of the cell and get involved in Alcoholics Anonymous, which he has been attending for the past 15 years.

Price has attended several self-help groups such as the California Re-entry Institute, Restorative Justice, PREP’s Victim’s Impact, and SQRC Mental Health Delivery System’s Anger and Stress Management.

Price stated that the program he resonates with is CRI, where he came into contact with people who were victims of violent crimes, enabling him to understand the scars that violent crimes leave behind.

Price stated that CRI support doesn’t end at the prison’s gate; the program has the most re-entry services. He added that the program sets you up with transitional housing and connects you with an AA



Carl Price and Greg Starling Jr.

sponsor and/or accountability partner.

Price arrived at SQ approximately 10 years ago. He was initially medically evaluated and received a colonoscopy and an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging). At that time, he was told by the medical staff that nothing was determined.

He had previously told SQ medical staff that cancer and heart disease run in his family. Price said he was assured the medical department would continue to monitor his health.

One morning, he woke up with pain in his shoulder that later spread to the left side of his torso. As a result of the pain, the SQRC medical department gave him a shot that he said lasted only five hours.

Price stated the following day his entire body was in pain and he went “Man Down” (a medical emergency) to receive urgent care. He added that his chest was hurting and he could hardly breathe. He was then transferred to Marin County General Hospital where he received another MRI.

The second MRI determined that there was a large mass on his liver. Price stated he received additional tests that determined he had stage four cancer. He wondered how his cancer got to stage four without any earlier detection.

“I believe SQRC medical department dropped the ball, especially after I informed them I am medically high risk,” Price said.

After his diagnosis, he

began to receive chemotherapy and had a conversation about it with a family member.

“I talked to my sister about receiving chemotherapy while in prison,” Price said. “She stated that it would impact my quality of life. I replied, what quality of life do I have in prison?”

Price had previous plans to work for his nephew who owns a real estate company. He wanted to save some money while living in a transitional home and then start his own auto detail business, but the cancer diagnosis changed his plans.

Price’s close friend is Gregory Starling Jr., 53, who has been incarcerated for 15 years. Starling said he met Price in 2023 at SQRC, where they established a good friendship.

“He is older than me; therefore, he is like a wise counsel to me,” Starling said.

Starling stated that one day Price expressed to him that he was in pain, and his friend was trying to get the SQRC medical department to run additional tests.

He added that for his friend to be diagnosed with stage four cancer, he wonders whatever happened to the diagnoses of stages one, two, and three?

“I was like, wow, my mouth just dropped,” Starling said. “My friend had to deal with all the psychological effects of having cancer because the end result of stage four cancer may be death.”

Price previously has been to the Board of Parole Hearings multiple times and received two five-year denials, one in 2017 and another in 2022. In addition, he received two three-year denials in 2021 and 2025.

On June 9, 2026, Price went before BPH and was found suitable for parole. “It was my honesty that got me through the parole hearing’s process,” Price said.

—Jerry Maleek Gearin

# Free ATL

Mixed feelings behind jailhouse falcon living in housing unit rafters, hunting pigeons

By Jarvis Garner Jr.  
Staff Writer

Perched high in its usual spot in North Block’s rafters, a watchful jail bird, or a peregrine falcon to be exact, which some North Block residents have affectionately named ATL, awaits its next meal.

It all started when the NB main entrance was sealed off due to construction. Residents began using the fire emergency door located next to the medication dispensary window to go to and fro.

ATL flew into the emergency door while chasing a pigeon one Sunday afternoon.

What seemed to be a hunt in progress quickly turned into one of the most eco-friendly exterminations and a chance for residents to witness nature up close.

“When ATL first arrived, a lot of the fellas didn’t know if it was an Atlanta Hawk or an Atlanta Falcon, so we just started calling the bird ATL,” resident Hamasi Spears said.

The name stuck, and NB had its mascot.

NB porter Scott Froberg was fascinated with ATL. He looked for distinctive marks on the bird so he could describe them to his sister on the phone. She searched Google to identify ATL’s species.

Her search concluded that there are 256 types of falcons in the world, and peregrine falcons are the most common in Marin County. Peregrine falcons are fierce parents and are among the fastest animals on the planet.

Known as “king of birds” and “birds of kings” because of their expert hunting skills, swift speed, and connection to the gods and pharaohs of

“When ATL first arrived a lot of the fellas didn’t know if it was an Atlanta Hawk or an Atlanta Falcon, so we just started calling the bird ATL.”

—Hamasi Spears

Egypt, falcons were considered to be sacred.

NB residents have long expressed their displeasure with the pigeon and mouse infestation within the building. North Block residents stated the problem in the housing unit and dining hall was horrible and extremely unsanitary.

One resident said he sent 602s (written complaints) to facility maintenance. However, the response was always the same: “We are aware of the problem and we are attempting to fix it in the near future. Thank you for your concern.”

Froberg recalls nothing ever being addressed with the NB pest problem besides installing rat traps that are inefficient.

“So ATL was definitely a godsend,” Froberg said.

Some residents had mixed feelings about the way the pigeons were being hunted and portrayed as pests.

Pigeons were domesticated around 4500 B.C. and introduced into North America around the early 1600s. Because of their excellent navigational skills, they were the choice of the common folks to deliver important messages from far distances.

“Having raised flipping pigeons growing up, it’s bittersweet to see this falcon stalk and hunt something

I grew up loving and protecting. But to see its beauty and power firsthand, it’s like watching an episode of National Geographic,” resident Donta Kyle said.

At one time, ATL refused to leave even when given the option. It flew halfway out the open emergency door before flying back up to the NB rafters to what’s become its lair.

One resident attested to deliberately trying to “Free ATL” by placing bread crumbs by the door so that the pigeons would come eat the crumbs in hopes that ATL would chase them out just like when he chased them in. The first half of the plan actually worked, but as soon as the pigeons flew out the door, shockingly ATL flew back up to the rafters.

ATL’s reaction to leaving its prison lair prompted residents to conclude it was a jailbird. This is a common nickname reserved for a person who can’t stay out of prison. Even when given the chance, he/she keeps coming back, hence the jailbird.

Two days after the failed attempt to free ATL, the jailbird circled the building a few times searching fearlessly for its next meal. After eliminating NB of its pigeon problem, ATL left the same way it arrived, chasing a pigeon.

A couple of NB residents witnessed ATL leave and watched it fly up to the rooftop of East Block. It symbolically perched itself on one of the lights previously used to signify when a condemned incarcerated person was about to be executed. Then it flew away.

Perhaps the real lesson here is until we do the work of becoming the exterminators of our unsanitary past, we will also remain jailbirds.

PROGRAMS



GRIP graduates, and newly annointed Peacekeepers, hold themselves in a moment of self-care and meditation at start of the ceremony.

# GRIP program near milestone of 1,000 graduates

By Jarvis Garner Jr  
Staff Writer

Caps, gowns, and smiling faces were on full display at a recent GRIP graduation.

With over 13 cycles of graduates to date, GRIP, which stands for Guiding Rage into Power, celebrated the remarkable capacity for human beings to change when they choose growth over excuses and accountability over denial, according to Z. Hudson, a once-incarcerated person.

"I used to be here. I used to sit right in those seats. I know what it's like to feel shame and regret," Hudson said.

GRIP was established by Jacques Verduin after more than 25 years of learning from educators who had long been teaching rehabilitation programs inside California prisons. GRIP teaches individuals how to manage their anger through emotional intelligence components. Acronyms are used to help persons become aware when they are triggered. Another focus is on healing from trauma, based on Verduin's book "Leaving Prison Before You Get Out."

In 2011, GRIP began as an in-person group for violent offenders.

"GRIP has graduated 948 participants with a 12% recidivism rate, saving the taxpayers approximately \$664 million," Hudson recalled with a sense of pride.

Hudson said GRIP is more than a program; it is more of a movement toward rehabilitation.

The names of tribes 833, 753, and 599 all have a symbolic meaning. Each graduating tribe name represents the total number of years served by each individual in their tribe.

Ty Warren, a student speaker and graduate of tribe 753, gave a speech.



Above left: Jacques Verduin, creator of the GRIP program.  
Above right: Zakee Hudson shared his heartfelt perspective of a perviously incarcerated individual at SQ to Regional Program Manager for the GRIP program.  
Right: Graduating Peacekeepers Ryan Baird, Shawn Brown, Bobby Castillo, and Nicolas Cruz-Araujo

"753 puts the value of our time [length of sentences] at the forefront of our minds," Warren said. He said viewing himself in a reflective perspective helped him to see he was not the worst moment in his life. "We're graduating GRIP because we see clearly as we guide our rage into power."

Eliazar Guerra, of graduating tribe 599, spoke in-depth about healing his trauma through GRIP and how being freed of that trauma now becomes an obligation to help others do the same. Speaking to the family members in attendance, Guerra spoke about peace and gratitude.

"For every loved one here, there's a special place for you in our circle," Guerra said.

SQ Warden Chance Andes also spoke to the family members of the incarcerated, telling them they should be very proud of them and how proud of them he was as well.

"Y'all make me want to get a tribe and scream," Andes said. As the speeches were



replaced by handshakes and certificates, graduates of tribes 599, 753, and 833 made their way down the aisle.

Some were creative on their way to getting their coveted GRIP certificate. Donnell Pimpton of graduating tribe 753 did the griddy, while others opted for shout-outs to their respective tribes, including Segi, a puppy in training, who yelped in excitement as Randy Thompson, his trainer, was called to receive his certificate.

A few inside facilitators became certified, including Max Robinson, who, earlier on, opened the graduation with a brief check-in and a meditation breathing exercise.

"One hand over your heart, one hand over your stomach. Now take a deep breath. This is how we connect. We tend to pay attention to how different we are, but this is how we connect," Robinson told the audience.

Families got a chance to see their incarcerated loved ones accomplish a goal set 52 weeks

ago. "My wife (Jazmine Hayes) and mother-in-law (Ameerah Mohamed) came to support me and watched me graduate all the way from Minnesota," said tribe 599's Alfredo Hayes.

"I felt accomplished and loved," Hayes continued.

Caps, gowns, and warm embraces from proud family members were on full display as the graduation came to a close.

In front of family members and friends, all tribes took an oath to become not just any peacekeeper, but a GRIP peacekeeper. GRIP graduates made the oath with the signing of a contract pledging to abstain from violence, hold integrity, challenge violence, and defend others, to name a few.

"You GRIP graduates are celebrated in the field of emotional intelligence. You have done the hard work of self-examination, transformation, and are the living proof that redemption is real," said Hudson.



Enneagram outside facilitators and Russ Hudson on stage.

# Personality types driving force behind emotions, empathy

By Aristeo Sampablo  
Staff writer

The Enneagram Prison Project brings residents, board members, and donors together at San Quentin's Chapel B to celebrate another cycle of their program. Among the guests were formerly incarcerated persons and author Russ Hudson.

After a brief opening by Susan Olesek, founder of EPP, Hudson was invited to the stage. He said that Enneagram is rooted in teaching based on the different personality traits.

"To look at the reasons why we do what we do, there's reasons why we've got stuck in certain situations. There's reasons that some of the best part of us we put on a back shelf at one point. That's everybody, that's everybody," said Hudson.

Digging into the body's inner system to discover the roots of personality types helps participants understand how their past experiences, thinking, and actions influenced prior relationships and situations.

After Hudson finished his presentation, he had a Q&A session with residents, which gave them a chance to share comments about their transformation during the course of this program.

EPP inspires change through awareness and compassion with an efficient approach. For many years, the residents have been taking advantage of what this program offers.

Resident Misha shared his thoughts about the program with SQNews.

"EPP impacted my life as I found who I was and why I was doing things I was doing. I have learned to reflect [on] who I was and



learned how to control my emotions and feelings. It has truly helped me identify me," said Misha.

Russ Hudson is the executive director of Enneagram Personality Types, Inc., and co-founder of The Enneagram Institute. He has been co-teaching the Enneagram Professional Training Program since 1991 and is founding director and former vice-president of the International Enneagram Association.

He is also co-author of Personality Types, The Power of the Enneagram, and of Personality Types at Work.

"It was an honor to have the inside and outside Enneagram family together for the community day, while also getting to meet the author of the Enneagram book we use. His insight was very impactful for all the residents and guests, board members, and donors who support Enneagram Prison Project," said teachers' assistant and resident K. Brinckman.

To close the meeting, everyone was asked to form a large circle, and each person had the opportunity to say one word to highlight their journey. The words that resonated across the room were — "hope," "gratefulness," "being present," "community," "freedom," "family," "connection," "meaning," "goodness," just to name a few.

# Prison-to-Employment Connection program sharpens interview skills of SQ residents

Terrell J. Marshall  
Associate Editor

San Quentin's Prison to Employment Connection program has made an impact on incarcerated people's transition back into society for 14 years.

P2EC is a job preparation program that focuses on teaching residents how to write a résumé, learn interview skills, and build confidence before meeting with employers and reentry professionals.

"We need to unlock the full potential of people who have paid their debt and want to contribute to society," said P2EC Director Sumer Schultz. "It's not just the right thing to do. It makes economic sense. We need to create pathways to jobs because work is one of the most powerful deterrents to recidivism."

According to Schultz, P2EC was founded by the late Diana Williams, who brought to life a San Quentin resident's vision of helping people find gainful employment when released. Williams used to say nobody is born with experience; people learn by trying and finding out what works.

P2EC readiness workshops have taught reentry skills needed to secure employment to incarcerated people since Williams started the program in the spring of 2012.

Working alongside Williams before her passing, Schultz and Gabrielle Nicolet now carry the torch of conducting the intense 12-week job finding preparation program.

Together, they work with incarcerated facilitators and outside volunteers to assist participants in presenting the best versions of themselves

when seeking a job.

The combination of hard work for the highly anticipated "Employers Day" was recognized when 26 employers and a dozen volunteer sponsors met with 36 P2EC graduates in Chapel B to put their new skills to the test.

Addressing the crowd before the interviews began, Schultz said P2EC is built on a simple belief that employment is more than a paycheck. It is structure, dignity, responsibility, job search strategies, and how to speak honestly and responsibly about the past while staying focused on the future.

"We are all here this afternoon to connect with each other so employers and residents can be together and create possibilities," Schultz said.

Throughout the afternoon, P2EC participants smiled,

shook hands, sat face-to-face with potential employers, and engaged in a barrage of 10-minute job interviews.

SQ resident Charles Love, 42, said he took the 12-week program because he will be released in four months after nine years of incarceration. "I learned how important networking is," Love said. "I got my résumé tuned up and the people I meet here today might lead to a job when I get out."

Outside organizations attending the event included The Last Mile, Checkr, San Francisco Parks and Recreation, Caltrans, Forestry Fire, Acrobat Advisors, Urban Alchemy, Hospitality House, Planting Justice, and Alameda County District Attorney's Office.

"I only had like one real job on the street," resident Julian Castilla, 26, said while waiting to meet with employers. "I'm

here to sharpen my interview skills and build my confidence."

After the interviews were over, evaluations by employers were passed out to participants.

Graduate Trevor Shaw, 57, incarcerated for 23 years, said he was grateful for the opportunity to participate because he had not been to a job interview in 35 years.

Shaw said he needed some "freshening up" on the interview process and he didn't know AI could be so helpful in writing a résumé. He added, "If you are paroling soon, take the P2EC program and help yourself get started on your future."

Resident P2EC facilitator John Levin spoke highly of how the graduates took the heaviest thing in their lives, incarceration, and "flipped it on its head."

"You don't have to hide

from it anymore," Levin said. "Instead, you can look a hiring manager in the eye, show them how you used your time to better yourself to address the root causes that brought you here, and built an unshakable work ethic."

Schultz thanked employers and guests for their thoughtful feedback and willingness to see the people in the room as people with skills, goals, and futures.

She told the graduates, "You practiced something difficult. You sat with professionals, answered questions, received feedback, and presented yourself and this program with care. Take what you heard here today and keep building on it."

Schultz ended the afternoon with a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail."

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Michael Fangman

"Are You Not Entertained?"

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| 54 |    |    |    | 55 |    |    |    |    | 56 |    | 57 |    |
| 58 |    |    | 59 |    |    |    |    |    | 60 | 61 |    |    |
| 62 |    |    |    |    |    | 63 | 64 |    |    | 65 |    |    |
| 66 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 67 |    |    |    |

- Across
1. It was Jurassic once
7. This early stormtrooper could justifiably call Jango Fett both "daddy" and "brother"
12. Everything comes at \_\_\_\_\_
13. Golgotha on one famous Friday
15. View \_\_\_\_\_ Productions: Kevin Smith's film banner
16. "Hey! We've got a lot of work to do here! Can you \_\_\_\_\_ hand?"
17. "Don't \_\_\_\_\_ me! Tell the truth!"
18. A young man in London
19. Cera hero who took on seven evil Xs
23. A large domesticated wild ox
24. In Canada, this Guide measures a building's efficiency
26. A distressed boat captain might shoot one in the air
27. "There's a snake in my boot!"
28. Arsenic on the table
30. They kidnapped Patti Hearst
31. This Barnum was the subject of *The Greatest Showman*
32. It's jewelry to some
35. *Sleeping Beauty* wore one
38. This Spielberg film starred Richard Dreyfus
39. This fabric is woven so as to have diagonal parallel ridges, after the Latin *bilix*, meaning "two-threaded"
40. What a low Rotten Tomatoes rating is meant to say about a film?
41. Until recently, it eschewed the DH
42. A yuletide evergreen
44. You can find Little Rock here
45. *Rocky III* character played by Mr. T
48. An Indiana baller
50. Wire monies?
54. This company offers red nail polish called "I'm Not Really a Waitress"
55. This James Cameron movie was by almost any measure "unsinkable"
57. A boring place to find yourself
58. This animation studio produced 54-Down long after it was purchased by Walt Disney and Company
60. He's a German grandfather (2 wds)
62. An online USAF survival school?
63. An English chimney
65. This M\*A\*S\*H\* character heard the choppers before anyone else
66. Famous Mike Myers ogre
67. Leonard Nimoy's Vulcan

- Down
1. This animated film's first 45 min. contained no dialogue
2. Sinatra's Danny
3. A dance in which its participants move around in a circle
4. Dr. Timothy Leary espoused its use in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*
5. A common childhood shot
6. Ironically, this movie alien brought the world Reese's Pieces
7. Don't Worry. Keep \_\_\_\_\_
8. Large Scale Integration, in short
9. The often precede Dokeys
10. Greek cheeses concerned with your business's bottom line?
11. Tiny Endorians, essentially
13. Road charges
14. Earth in much Science Fiction
20. John Krasinski's film that starred Ryan Reynolds as a clown
21. It was the last Battlestar
22. These two letters swith places when you have them following "C"
25. Nicholas Cage in \_\_\_\_\_ *Arizona*
27. A person's height or importance
29. This Ian pitched for both the Marlins and the San Diego Padres
31. One of Columbus's three ships
32. A delicious 3-letter lunch
33. \_\_\_\_\_ brow comedy: Ferrell to some
34. It can style your hair
35. More than one you in Mexico
36. Stimpny's chihuahua friend
37. *Raiders of the Lost \_\_\_\_\_*
42. An award winning *Attraction*
43. To change the order of things (abbr)
45. This famous Dodger Davey passed away in 2026
46. Like *King Kong*, essentially
47. A Philadelphia basketballler who cost his team the game?
48. This movie featured a kid and a tiger trapped in a boat at sea
49. "Little Rhody" to its residents
51. Carried the One Ring to Mordor
52. He starred in *Menace 2 Society*
53. He was *Iron Man*
55. Star \_\_\_\_\_ II: The Wrath of Khan
56. This film introduced the world to Lightning McQueen and Mater
59. Third person present plural of *be*
61. A short siesta
64. 58-down film focused on a retiree and his rising real estate assets

SOLUTIONS

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