

San Quentin News

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POPULATION 2,370

Seven-to-forever sentencing

By Kevin D. Sawyer
Staff Writer

Part I Elderly Lifers

A succession of state actions produced elderly Lifers who are tethered to a law that changed 49 years ago. How and why many of these prisoners became trapped behind the same political decisions and policies that designed mass incarceration may be buried with the passage of time.

Two years ago, there were 191 elderly prisoners still held under California's old seven-years-to-life statute for murder. Half of these men, and one woman, had served 50 years or longer in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, according to a public records request.

"A principal driver of the exponential growth in elderly incarceration in America is the panoply of so-called 'tough-on-crime' laws of the late 20th century," the ACLU and Prison and Jail Innovation Lab reported in "Trapped in Time." "Numerous laws were passed during this time to buttress multiple national and state administrations' 'law and order' political platforms, which operated under the since-debunked premise that harsher criminal sentences effectively deter crime."

Elderly prisoners with seven-to-life murder convictions arrived in the then-CDC, decades before the idea of rehabilitation took shape. Nonetheless, courts, legislation, governors, parole boards, victims' rights organizations, and voters, are responsible for much of these Lifers drawn-out imprisonment.

In 1917, the Indeterminate Sentencing Law was enacted by the California Legislature. After the ISL, anyone sentenced to prison for a felony received a sentence of six months, one year, five years, or seven years to life

See Elderly on pg 4



Photo by Marcus Casillas //SQNews

Graduating residents are honored with gown, diploma, and medallion.

Liberal arts degree for incarcerated

By Charles Crowe
Staff Writer

Traditionally and historically, incarcerated persons pursued training for vocations in the trades, and more recently in technology fields like coding, but graduates of Mount Tamalpais College, San Quentin's onsite college program, earn an associate degree in liberal arts.

How does a liberal arts education contribute to the rehabilitation of incarcerated persons and their preparedness for life upon release?

The College made the following statement in its 2024/25 Annual Report: "Our core curriculum is designed to challenge students intellectually, equip them for transfer to four-year colleges and universities, provide them with

skills needed to obtain meaningful employment and economic stability post-release, and prepare them to become leaders and engaged citizens."

The associate degree that MTC students earn positions them for entry into higher education in four-year colleges and universities either during their incarceration or after their release. MTC Chief Academic Officer Amy Jamgochian said the following about the transferability of MTC credits to higher institutions:

"MTC is an accredited college, and our courses are designed to meet widely recognized standards used by systems like the California State University, California Community Colleges, and the University of California. That means that students are usually able to

transfer most or all of their credits through the standard review process used by all colleges. We also have a formal transfer agreement with California State University, East Bay and are actively building additional agreements to make transfers even more seamless. MTC students have successfully transferred MTC courses to a wide variety of colleges and universities over the years, including CSU East Bay, San Francisco State University, CSU Los Angeles, UC Berkeley, and more."

The UC and the CSU systems require some courses beyond what is needed to earn the associate degree. These classes include higher math such as precalculus, ethnic studies, life and

See Liberal Arts on pg 4

Public Defender role outsourced

24 California counties
have no Office of the
Pubic Defender

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

Everyone has a right to the effective assistance of counsel. If a person cannot afford an attorney, one will be provided for them, according to the U.S. Supreme Court's Miranda v. Arizona ruling.

However, there are 24 counties in California without a public defender's office. Instead counties rely on contract-model systems, which are in primarily small and rural county areas, according to the Office of the State Public Defender.

The initial purpose of a public defender was to provide effective assistance of counsel to protect detainees from shyster attorneys and unchecked prosecutors, according to the Legal History of the California Public Defender.

"It is still the duty of the State and of the court, its instrument, quite as much to

See PUBLIC on pg 4

Clarifying Cinco de Mayo

By Aristeo Sampablo
Staff Writer

Against the odds San Quentin residents celebrated the 164th anniversary of the Battle of Puebla on May 5. Hundreds came together to build community and share a culture that has been misrepresented for many years.

This type of celebration not only keeps a tradition alive, but also helps individuals like Moises Ramos to heal and cultivate a deeper connection with his roots. In addition, he feels that any display of symbols from his culture has been misunderstood.

Resident Ramos has been incarcerated for the past 15 years and has witnessed firsthand how his culture has bounced around in negative ways. It is critical for him to take part in these celebrations that hold a special meaning in his heart.

"People here in the U.S. have always seen the symbols that represent our culture as a representation to gang members, therefor giving a bad impression to other cultures, [and] that's not ours," said Ramos.

The Mexican community here at San Quentin feels it is important to highlight days like this, in an effort to share the true meaning of their culture with the hope of educating the diverse communities in a system that has misconstrued the beliefs of Mexican culture for decades.

During the interview Ramos voiced some of his deeper concerns and feels that not everyone in prison really understands the value and importance of one's culture. He also mentioned



Photo by Marcus Casillas //SQNews

William Campos on drum and coconut shell.

how vital it is to see family and friends coming together to enjoy good food, music and tradition that honors those who came before and perpetuates tradition.

"It's very important to my life to have the opportunity to celebrate such an important day where family and friends gather to honor those who fought for our freedom in my beautiful

See Symbol on pg 4



AAPI HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

Residents celebrate Asian American
Pacific Islander Heritage Month

— STORY ON PAGES 6

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Legislation aims to
lengthen sentences
for child molestation

— STORY ON
PAGE 5

SPORTS

Oakland Ballers
compete against
SQ's Giants

— STORY ON
PAGE 8



SQNews

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to report news and stories that impact incarcerated people.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE SAN QUENTIN NEWS:

THE REVA & DAVID LOGAN FOUNDATION

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APP LOVIN

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PROFILE

Writer, composer addresses trauma through creativity

By Jason L. Jackson
Staff Writer

Sometimes creativity can come from unlikely sources. San Quentin resident Kevin Moore chooses to turn his trauma and life lessons into children’s stories he hopes will inspire the next generation.

On any given day at San Quentin, Kevin Moore is busy going back and forth to class, religious services, or interacting with his peers on the recreation yard. He always has his backpack with him, and among the classwork and study materials are the books he has published over the years.

In his effort to make a difference, Moore has published three children’s books since 2022.

Born in Richmond, California, Moore said he began writing at an early age.

“I started off writing music. I wrote my first song when I was 7 years old,” said Moore. He remembers performing at family gatherings when he was young, which prompted him to write his first song. “I fell in love with it from the start.”

Moore’s love for all things music would continue to grow over the years as he honed his skills, even during periods of intense instability.

For much of his childhood, Moore said he was forced to move all over the Bay Area due to his mother’s time in prison.

“My mother was incarcerated when she had me, and so I was born in prison,” said Moore. “I didn’t meet my mom until I was five, and that in itself was traumatizing.”

Moore said his writing and music became a refuge that offered him the outlet to express his feelings, including the pain he had developed from the years of hurt he’d experienced because of his relationship with his mom. His skills helped him build notoriety in his hometown of Richmond as he worked to secure some success in the music business.

All of this came to a screeching halt when, at the age of 22, he was arrested



Kevin Moore

and eventually convicted for robbery and murder, and sentenced to life in prison.

“When I first came to prison, it was hard because I didn’t know how to handle the failure and harm that resulted from my poor decisions,” said Moore, who admitted he was in a “deep fog” for the first six years of his incarceration. “I killed someone who was innocent and didn’t deserve it, and I let down a lot of family who were depending on me to make it.”

During this period, Moore said he gave up on writing and didn’t want anything to do with music. But after years of regret, Moore realized he needed to change his life for the better. He recalls how his experience in prison changed when he decided to take self-help seriously and start living for himself, his kids, his family, and his freedom. The positive approach to life would eventually lead him back to writing.

After attending and completing multiple self-help programs that helped him develop insight into his past, Moore began writing poetry as a way to express his growth, and as a way to connect with himself on a deeper level than he had before. Poetry would soon get him back

to writing music, and eventually children’s books.

“I’ve known Moore for 11 years, and in that time he’s become my friend, which is a rare thing to have in prison, and I’ve seen all the positive changes he’s made in his life,” said San Quentin resident David Abdul-Haqq, who connected with Moore through their love for music while in Solano State Prison. “We both still had the desire to be artists and create music that would empower and heal our community. Its good to see all he is doing”

In 2022, Moore wrote his first book, “Tariq and His Dog Busky: Beyond the Fence,” which tackles issues surrounding prejudice and discrimination in a friendly enough style that can be easily digested by a child.

Moore’s other two books are, “Ellen and Andy: A Hero’s Heart,” and “Nosey Rosey Grew from the Concrete,” which tells a story of courage and determination during difficult life moments.

Throughout his journey as an author, Moore said he realized writing children’s books was a healing process for him.

“The writing process has given me a deeper understanding of my own childhood, because they are the stories that I wish I had, and could’ve used when I was younger,” said Moore.

Moore shared that he is proud of the work he’s doing, and that his family, especially his children, are proud of him and continue to be his biggest fans and motivation.

His work is also inspiring his peers.

“Moore is a giver — from the music he makes, the programs he creates, to the books he writes. He writes stories to touch their minds while making them feel seen,” said Abdul-Haqq.

Moore said he wants his books to have the same effect on kids that “Green Eggs and Ham” had on him, in reference to the famous children’s book by the legendary author Dr. Seuss.

“I would love for kids to see the lessons in my books and learn to apply them to their lives,” said Moore.

Bonafide and California Reentry Program join forces

By Terrell J. Marshall
Associate editor

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s California Reentry Program merged with the nonprofit organization Bonafide and are now building lives together.

For more than 20 years, CRP has helped residents at San Quentin with the pre-parole process. By officially merging with Bonafide, the new consolidated mission is to assist incarcerated individuals in every prison across the state.

“Our program is unique because our clients get one-on-one time with advisors,” said Bonafide Program Manager Sofia Murillo.

Through the Bonafide program, incarcerated people meet outside advisors who can help them with the pre-parole process and make plans for reentry back into society.

Regardless of whether an individual has a determinate or indeterminate sentence, Bonafide helps people take the necessary, tangible steps toward life outside the walls of prison.

Bonafide advisory services include reviewing parole packets and helping clients strengthen potential weaknesses to present the best version of themselves at the hearing.

Advisors help clients with employment, child support information, government assistance, general health, housing, vocational training, substance abuse treatment, higher education, Social Security card application, DMV, and many other post-release support options.

According to Murillo, Bonafide founder David Cohen is a former lifer who spent time at San Quentin.

“David knows what it’s like to come out after 20 years of incarceration,” Murillo said. “The world is moving fast, technology is moving faster, our goal is to help navigate people through those challenges.”

Murillo’s passion for helping the incarcerated came from the love she has for her brother who served decades of a life sentence before his release.

Throughout the years of visiting her brother at multiple prisons, Murillo gained insight on how to navigate the complexities of getting him out. She said once her brother paroled it was hard to



Resident reentry team members with Bonafide.

leave others behind. Murillo added, “I think that’s the same for everybody here at Bonafide, we do the work because we know how challenging it is.”

Murillo said 90% of the people who work for the program are former lifers and the goal of the merger is to reach clients on a massive scale.

Bonafide is working with CDCR to gain access to more technology, which will in turn lead to helping more people.

San Quentin resident Vernon Evans is a Bonafide volunteer who also helps facilitate the Dialect Behavioral Therapy Program. He said a lot of incarcerated people have done the work needed to be eligible for parole. However, due to the stress and anxiety that comes with being in the board room, many struggle emotionally and misrepresent themselves at the hearing.

“We strive to help the population by teaching them the tools to manage their emotions so they can clearly articulate the work they’ve done,” Evans said.

He explained that Bonafide holds mock board hearings, and the people that act as commissioners are actually board attorneys who understand how the board room operates. Evans added, “This gives a level of authenticity to what is going to happen at the board hearing.”

Lily Logan is a Bonafide volunteer advisor who helps people prepare parole board hearing packets. She found the program by volunteering at other prisons. After shadowing a few advisors

at San Quentin, she now assists clients in establishing short- and long-term goals.

“I started volunteering here because I wanted to make more of an impact towards reentry,” Logan said.

Outside advisor Emily S. has worked with San Quentin residents since 2017. Her goal is to help folks prepare for the Board and a successful transition back into the community. “It’s a little bit of everything. I help people from where they’re at,” Emily said.

After helping SQ resident Jose Fajaro, 45, prepare for his parole board hearing, Emily is using her experience to help him navigate a recent five-year denial.

“It’s important to focus on the last 10 pages of the transcripts,” Emily said. “That’s where you can find the recipe for success.”

She explained the report will show the areas that are lacking, and where a person should focus their energy to present well at the next hearing.

Emily advises clients not to concentrate on the outcome of the hearing but to focus on the work. She said, “Keep focusing on how to make amends, continue taking accountability and always ask yourself, ‘How am I improving myself to be a better person.’”

Steering incarcerated people toward and through the gates of freedom, CRP’s merger with Bonafide is helping the nonprofit organization have a larger impact on prison populations across the state.

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Your Voice Matters!

The *San Quentin News* strives to include our readers’ voices in every issue. We invite prison residents, staff, and volunteers to submit letters to the editor and art for potential publication.

By submitting your content, you consent to these *SQNews* policies:

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EDITORIAL

SQNews moves toward robust future

SQNEWS: PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

By Bostyon Johnson
Editor-in-Chief

The space provided to the San Quentin News in the new Learning Center puts us under a spotlight and at the same time gives us an opportunity to show what we can do.

Since the 1940s, the San Quentin News has carried the torch of prison journalism thanks to progressive wardens, facility staff, and an incarcerated population that values the benefit of elevating incarcerated voices, but we have faced many challenges.

Most recently, those challenges included maintaining access to support from outside volunteers for our journalism and professional development, sustaining adequate staff, finding the right balance of news and story coverage, and competition for writing talent from outside publications who offer incarcerated writers payment for their work.

In the past, SQNews had around 30 volunteers, both retired and active journalists, who visited the prison weekly to teach the incarcerated staff, edit news articles, and instruct our Journalism Guild.

The number of volunteers has dwindled as the core group aged, and several did not return after COVID-19. The loss of volunteers and advisors disrupted the teaching and development of the incarcerated staff and Guild students who had a passion for amplifying incarcerated voices but lacked formal training as writers and journalists.

Thanks to our fiscal sponsor, Pollen Initiative, we now have a small number of young, highly qualified volunteers who are having an immediate impact. They in turn are networked with peers on

the outside, and through those networks we believe we will eventually restore the level of support we need. That support will contribute to the quality of the newspaper.

While we grow our team of outside supporters, the handful of excellent advisors currently in place are training us to serve as our own support system. They are teaching us developmental editing, fact checking, line and copy editing. The first cohort of six staff have completed the training and a second cohort is ready to begin their instruction in the near future.

Under the new regimen, when a writer takes on a story assignment he is connected to a staff editor who works with him throughout the story process from inception to publication. We believe that this process will gradually improve the quality of writing, the focus, and the accuracy of our news stories.

One of the biggest challenges we have faced is that the staff are not sticking around forever. Over the last few years, some have left to pursue a different job, a vocation opportunity, or to focus on earning their freedom at the parole board. The remaining staff have looked to one another for on-the-job training and development.

Prior to moving to the Learning Center, we were down to a staff of eight people at one point and some were doing the work of two or three people just to keep the monthly publication on schedule. Now we have rebuilt our staff to 16.

When I started working for SQNews in 2023, there were 21 incarcerated people on staff and around six volunteers who showed up each week to teach the Journalism Guild and edit news articles. As new incarcerated journalists were added to the team, they learned the same

way I did, from another incarcerated journalist. Each one teach one.

One benefit that we have always had here at San Quentin is access, access to write and sharpen our skills, to cross-train each other to get the job done. But the blind can only lead the blind so far before they all hit the same wall.

Over the last year or so, readers have expressed their disappointment with the newspaper. Largely the complaints are that the articles or stories aren't relatable or there are too many grammatical errors in the newspaper. We are strengthening our editing regime to address errors. Adding staff means that certain positions are not spread as thin as in recent times. These changes will take time and the resulting improvements will be gradual.

When I hear things like “I don't read the newspaper because it doesn't pertain to me” or “there’s too many events in the newspaper,” the goal for me is to find a happy medium. I know that readers enjoy different types of news. We are watching letters to the editor and talking to our readers to gauge what sort of stories and news they want.

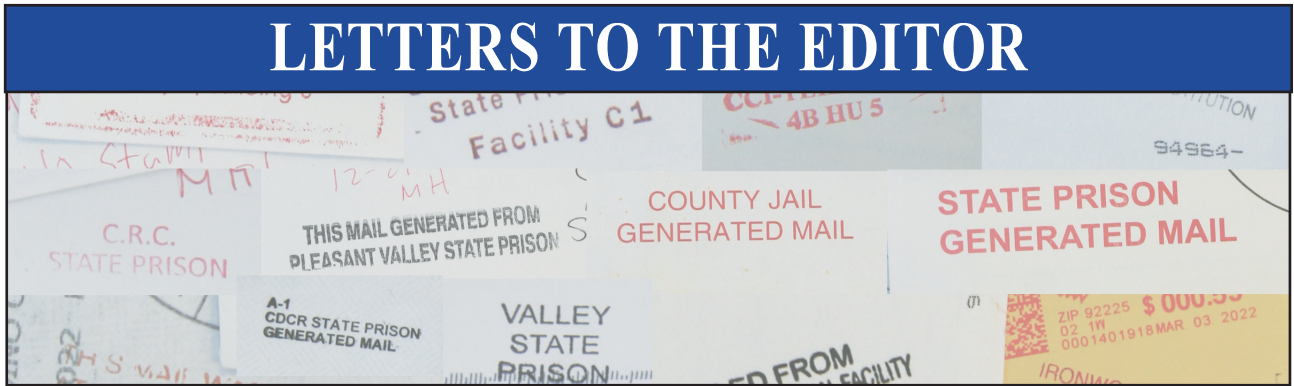
We have also dealt with healthy competition, not between prison publications, but with publications that pay incarcerated writers for stories that highlight living conditions inside prisons.

As an incarcerated person with little financial support and restitution to pay off, I can see why someone would be inclined to write for an outside publication, especially when they’re getting paid. San Quentin News cannot compete with that. Those who work for the newspaper will continue to earn pennies per hour.

We appreciate your patience as well as your criticisms, and we humbly ask for your support.

A NOTE TO THE INCARCERATED

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



NEVADA MAN SHARES HIS SUCCESS WITH NONPROFIT

San Quentin News Organization,

I am writing you as a fellow inmate that is currently serving a life sentence. I am an activist for inmates healthcare and was hoping to work with your newspaper organization. I am the founder of a nonprofit organization called to Keep Us Healthy. Last year a reporter from USA Today, emailed my nonprofit about an upcoming article they were working on. I agreed to do an interview with a USA Today reporter and the article was released in the November 2025 issue of USA today paper. I'm asking you to share Keep Us Healthy and our mission to educate inmates on how to go about getting proper healthcare while incarcerated.

Sincerely,

Nick Jacobson.
Martinez Detention, Las Vegas, NV

IP RAISES HAND TO SPREAD ARMS DOWN PROGRAM

Dear *San Quentin News*, I’m writing about an article written in the February 2026 issue titled “Exceptional conduct leads to sentence recall, resident starts going to violence prevention program.”

Great story. I respectfully request instructions on how I can start an “*Arms Down*” group here at Kern Valley State prison. All assistance you can bless me with would be highly appreciated.

I really believe this group would be

well received here and would catch fire in Los Angeles County.

Arms Down would help teach about gun violence, and help the rehabilitation of those within these prison walls.

Thank you for your time and effort and into helping me with this endeavor. Respectfully,

Salvador Negrete
Kern Valley State Prison, CA

SQNews appreciate your proactive ability recognizing the needs of your community. The process for establishing a program at your facility may be different from that of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. I would say, reach out to some of the programs at your facility and ask them how they got started.

TO PRINT OR NOT TO PRINT, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Dear Editor, after waiting and looking forward to the print edition of the San Quentin News, I’m finding out you are going digital and quitting printing out the news on news print, and asking the readers to comment.

I will be very disappointed if you no longer print the paper. I've looked forward to SQ News for many of my 46 years of CDCR care and treatment. No I say, No!

The news is too hard to read on the tablet, and the tablet keeps wanting to change the page before I finished absorbing the text of the excellent reporting.

Again, I say No to the digital crap!

Your newspaper is sought after news of the latest penal reform coming out of Sacramento, and to information about our long shot relief. We want to read it from a real paper not a digital screen.

Thanks for the warning...

Steven Ainsworth
RJ Donovan Correctional Facility, CA

PAROLEE RETURNS ON PROP 57 ISSUES

Brothers at SQNews,

First off thank you for all your dedicated work to keep us incarcerated up today on issues of life inside and out. My name is Jeff Wood and I am currently incarcerated at North Kern Reception waiting to go to a level two non-designated program facility. I've been out of the system for nine months, but I came back due to proposition 57. I'm confused, but hopeful, I want to get into some programs to help me never come back. One thing I do know is some of these new returnees are now getting love due to all the new programs and I am thankful. I plan on taking advantage of all I can and I seriously hope CDCR doesn't continue to punish all these hard-working indeterminate sentence brothers by choosing who to award or who not to with prop 57.

Jeff Wood
North Kern State Prison

SQNews has sent out a research request to learn more about individuals being returned to prison under Prop 57.

PUBLIC

Continued from page 1

protect the innocent as to punish the guilty,” said Clara Shortridge-Foltz in 1897, who was an early advocate for indigent defense.

The abstract idea of a public defender was proposed by Shortridge-Foltz, who made history as the first woman to practice law in the State of California. She spearheaded a movement across the United States to create an elected Office of the Public Defender.

In 1914 Los Angeles County made history as the first California government to create an Office of the Public Defender to represent people in criminal and civil defense, according to the Legal History of the California Public Defender.

Butte County does not have an OPD. It has fallen behind other California counties in the practice of public legal defense. A public defender’s office establishes accountability, transparency, and public trust. The contract model has weaknesses such as no central accountability or caseload limits. These exceed professional standards, according to the *Chico Sol*.

A public defender’s office has investigators who collect evidence, accept client calls, and coordinate with the court clerks. The office also uses

PD contract model

lacks accountability

social workers to connect clients to behavioral health services, and perform critical mitigation and sentencing preparation, stated the OSPD.

The legality of practicing law using tax payers’ money without any oversight does not give indigent detainees the fair representation that the OPD was originally intended to provide, according to the *Chico Sol*.

The Board of State and Community Corrections compared nine California counties with an OPD to those with similar populations, such as Butte County, who use contract attorneys to represent detainees.

In the comparisons the BSCC used data from various county jails’ daily population as a metric in the contract model, versus the public defender comparisons. In the counties examined there was a substantial difference in jail rate between the counties that used contract models compared to those with a public defenders office.

Butte County’s jail detention rate was 70% higher than counties with an Office of the Public Defender; indigent defense in California has a 62% higher jail rate than counties with a Office of the Public defender, according to the OSPD.

Of the nine counties that examined violent crime, those using the indigent contract model had crime rates 50% higher than those with an OPD. The violent crime rate is more than 100% higher in Butte County, stated the OSPD.

A 2006 report by the Judicial Council of California revealed that counties with a contract model have an 80.5% conviction rate through guilty pleas. The OPD system has a 69.4% felony conviction rate resulting from guilty pleas.

The OSPD’s Indigent Defense Improvement Division offers training for social workers, investigators, appointed private counsel, and legal defense for the youth.

Proposed Senate Bill 485, authored by California Assemblymember Eloise Reyes, would bring reform to the state’s public defenders’ system. Ensuring constitutional rights to counsel is safeguarded, according to the Vanguard.

The Bill passed the Senate with a 36-0 vote and the Assembly with a 46-9 vote. If Governor Gavin Newsom signs the bill, it would mandate a data collection system. The system would provide the number of indigent clients assigned to a public defender, according to Cal Matters.



MTC leadership watch the keynote speaker at the 2026 graduation ceremony.

LIBERAL

Continued from page 1

physical sciences, and foreign language. MTC offers these courses at San Quentin.

The College’s claim that it provides essential skills for meaningful employment is rooted in part in its rigorous and mandatory math and English curriculum. In math, students must progress through college-level algebra. The English curriculum includes a succession of courses that emphasize deep, critical reading, and disciplined thinking and writing that students demonstrate in numerous essays and compositions.

By holding to these standards the program demands competence and proficiency in the proverbial “three Rs” of reading, writing, and arithmetic, all fundamental needs in modern workplaces.

Liberal arts degrees include surveys of science courses. MTC science offerings in 2024/25 included geology, biology, chemistry, physics and public health.

Liberal arts as rehabilitation

Several of the school’s classes are geared to prepare students for citizenship. These include courses in American government, public speaking, social ethics, U.S. history, and social psychology, among others.

In a flyer distributed at San Quentin’s reentry resource fair, the College highlighted its commitment to preparing students for citizenship: “We value freedom of expression and civil discourse. The ability to communicate across intellectual, cultural, and ideological differences is vital for fostering healthy civil society.”

Resident Michael Nickerson, a member of MTC’s 2026 graduating class, mirrored that value in words he wrote for the commencement ceremony. “My college experience has changed me and made me a more socially conscious person. I’m aware of and respectful of others’ differences, and I’m a more thoughtful and respectful

individual as well.”

San Quentin resident and MTC student Anthony Galloway is working toward graduation from MTC in the future. He said that his work in the college program “shows that I can dedicate myself to a commitment and follow through the process. It shows that I have the capacity to thrive.”

Graduating with Nickerson in 2026 was San Quentin resident Keith Carter. In celebration he wrote, “Earning an Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts has given me vocabulary for my own experience and a framework to understand suffering, resilience, and justice in ways I never could before. It means I can sit with a difficult text, disagree with respect, and write a sentence that says exactly what I intend. More than a credential, this degree is my declaration that education is not a reward for good behavior; it is a human right and a path home.”

SYMBOL

Continued from page 1

Mexico,” added Ramos.

In opposition to general belief, this day is not the celebration of Mexican Independence. Cinco de Mayo celebrates the Battle of Puebla that occurred on May 5, 1862. Mexican armed forces defended their country against a French invasion during the presidency of Benito Juarez.

May 5 is now celebrated

Celebrating the

Battle of Puebla

throughout the United States, including here at San Quentin. People from different ethnicities come together in an effort to change some of the negative judgment about this culture.

“I grew up learning our history but I allowed trauma to convince me that Cinco de Mayo was not a part of my history, so it was great to perform

today and reconnect with the people I grew up with,” said resident Matt Sheppard.

Despite the challenges from weather and some technical problems, the Mexican Community at The Q was able to celebrate the importance and true essence of its culture that has always stood out for its resilience and unbreakable spirit.



Cultural Symbols.

State holidays clarified

By SQNews Staff

A new amendment to Sections 6700 and 6717 of the Government Code, relating to state holidays, were filed with the Secretary of State on March 26, 2026. AB 2156 specified that existing law designated specific days in Calif. as holidays, including Cesar Chavez Day, which is March 31. However, the people of the State of California enacted the following changes to CA GOVT section 6700 (a) that the holidays in the state are:

- Every Sunday
- January 1
- The third Monday in January, “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.”
- The date corresponding with the second new moon following the winter

solstice, or the third moon following the winter solstice should an intercalary month intervene, “Lunar New Year.”

- February 12, “Lincoln Day.”
- The third Monday in February, “Presidents Day.”
- March 31, “Farmworkers Day.”
- April 24, “Genocide Remembrance Day.”
- The 15th day of the month of Kartik in Hindu lunar calendar each year, “Diwali.”
- The last Monday in May, “Memorial Day.”
- June 19, “Juneteenth.”
- July 4, “Independence Day.”

- The first Monday in September, “Labor Day.”
- September 9, “Admission Day.”
- The fourth Friday in September, “Native American Day.”
- The second Monday in October, “Columbus Day.”
- November 11, “Veterans Day.”
- December 25, “Christmas.”
- Good Friday from 12 noon until 3 p.m.

Every day appointed by the President or Governor for a public fast, thanksgiving, or holiday, except for the Thursday in November appointed as Thanksgiving Day.

ELDERLY

Continued from page 1

under Section 1168 of the state Penal Code. Each of these prisoners had the possibility of parole. Death penalty cases were not included.

A prisoner serving a life sentence in California must appear before a parole board, once named the Adult Authority. The name changed later to the Community Release Board, then to the Board of Prison Terms. Today it is the Board of Parole Hearings.

When the ISL became law, Lifers were not provided an attorney to represent them at parole hearings. In 1972, that changed when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Morrissey v. Brewer* (408 US 471), which created due process rights for parolees at parole revocation hearings — such as the right to have counsel. The right was extended to state prisoners who must appear before a parole board.

To interpret and explain how parole hearings would be held for prisoners serving life, California’s attorney general assembled eight deputy attorneys general, two each from four state offices. They became known as the “Morrissey 8.”

In 1975, California Supreme Court rulings stated prisoners serving life had to be told, explicitly, their punishment by “fixing” their term to a set number of years before release. In response,

Lifers tethered to old law

Adult Authority Chairman Raymond Procnier issued his Directive No. 75/20 to instruct the parole board, and prisoners, that he would authorize the setting of parole dates to begin.

In the early 1950s, Rudolfo Rodriguez was sentenced to one-to-life. In 1975, he filed a petition in court to obtain his release. He argued his statutory life maximum term was disproportionate to his offense, in violation of federal (Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution) and state (Calif. Constitution, article I, § 17) law. In his petition, he contended that his 22 years served was “excessive punishment” and that the parole board had abused its discretion by “failing to fix a lesser term than the statutory life maximum term...”

The California Supreme Court concluded Rodriguez was “entitled to be discharged from his term... that was disproportionate to his offense.” Many Lifers believed *In re Rodriguez* (14 Cal.3d 639) was a turning point.

A declaration made by the parole board chairman stated, in part: “I am the Chairman of the California Adult Authority. In this position, I am responsible for implementing the California Supreme Court’s decision in *In re Rodriguez* as quickly as possible.”

Other cases in 1975, such

as *In re Williams* (53 Cal. App.3d 10), publicized similar language on the subject of fixing terms for prisoners serving life sentences.

In response, the Adult Authority stated it was “diligently seeking to set the terms of all prisoners in the custody of the California Department of Corrections in accordance with the... decision in *In re Rodriguez*, and that [it] has formulated a comprehensive plan for organized and speedy fixing of all terms.”

Because Chairman Procnier had to set base terms for prisoners, he issued Directive No. 75/30, and for a time, base terms were set for some prisoners. However, according to many elderly Lifers, any positive upshot from those directives and court rulings was short lived.

Not long after the Rodriguez decision, California Governor Jerry Brown selected Rodriguez’s attorney, J. Anthony Kline, to become his Legal Affairs Secretary.

By 1976, Gov. Brown’s secretary had gained the confidence of the state Legislature and influenced it to modernize the Indeterminate Sentencing Law. The following year, Senate Bill 42 established the Determinate Sentencing Law, which made sweeping changes to California’s Indeterminate Sentencing Law.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

School-to-prison pipeline persists

By Jason L. Jackson
Staff Writer

The failures of education continue to be a contributing factor toward mass incarceration, with solutions still being sought.

“If we don’t focus on literacy and helping people learn how to read, then rehabilitation is a joke,” said Executive Director of Fulcrum Literacy Program Dr. Kareem Weaver.

Dr. Weaver was a keynote speaker at a recent literacy symposium held at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center.

During his lecture, Dr. Weaver shared a 30-year-old study by the Department of Justice that showed, “Reading failure is most likely a cause not just a correlate for the frustration that can and does result in delinquent behavior...”

According to data from the LiteracyMidSouth website, 70% of adults incarcerated in the United States are unable to read above a fourth grade level, while incarcerated people the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation have an average eighth grade reading level, substantiating the Department of Justice research.

Poor literacy rates is a common result of a well known education trend referred to as the “school-to-prison pipeline.”

In one of its studies posted online, the American Civil Liberties Union defined the school-to-prison pipeline as a trend in the U.S. that is characterized by “policies and practices that prioritize punishment over education,” and “criminalizing minor behavioral infractions until students are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.”

After Paul Flores, a San Quentin resident, developed low self-esteem as a result of the negative treatment he received from his high school teachers, he said street gangs made him feel accepted and gave him a sense of self-worth.

“I didn’t feel accepted at school, so I ended up going out into the streets and getting involved with gangs,” said Flores at the literacy symposium.

A phrase first used in the early 2000s, the school-to-prison pipeline describes an educational environment comprised of harsh, “zero tolerance” rules that often lead to the suspension or expulsion of a student, along with the high rates of police presence on campus that help turn “discipline issues into criminal records,” according to the ACLU.

These policies help contribute to dropout rates amongst students who lose hope in education once they fall behind, often leading to criminal behavior and eventually arrest.

“If your goal is really about getting people to the top, then your system will reflect that,” said Dr. Weaver.

Dr. Weaver said the problem is the system is designed in a way that skips steps through the educational journey and doesn’t address every child.

“I suffered a lot of abuse by my mom, and would go to school angry,” said Trevor Patton, a San Quentin resident. “I stopped listening to the teachers and just became disruptive.”

Patton said he was suspended 43 times in the sixth grade, and in the seventh grade it became difficult to get to school because he was suspended from the school bus for the entire year. He said he believes teachers need to understand what is going on with students outside of school because that plays a big part in what happens wen they are in school.

The ACLU has reported the school-to-prison pipeline also disproportionately affects students of color, which can have negative results on graduation rates.

Data from the Census Bureau show 81% of Black students and 83% of Latino students in the U.S. graduate high school, compared to 90% of white students.

“I knew that I had been passed on from grade to grade, but I didn’t understand that graduating the way I did didn’t prepare me for the world,” said Curtys Taylor, a San Quentin resident and previous literacy mentor at the facility. “The school system was supposed to empower me to believe that I could go out into the world and succeed, and they didn’t.”

Taylor said he believes that a major problem is that the teachers don’t understand the students because they don’t look like them.

Eighty percent of all public school teachers across America are white, even in communities where the majority of students are Black and Latino, according to the Pew Research Center.

Twenty-eight percent of all students in the country are Latino, and 15% are Black. By contrast, only 9% of educators are Latino, and 6% are Black.

“How can you teach someone you may fear or despise?,” said Taylor.

At the symposium, incarcerated residents, outside guests and educators came together in several workshops to discuss possible solutions.

During one workshop on Teaching Strategies, Dr. Dela Morris, educator and Chairwoman of the Oakland chapter of the National Advancement for the Advancement of Colored People said that she focuses on marrying curriculums with real life examples so students can easily connect with the information.

“Its important to meet students where they are and understand where they come from,” said Dr. Morris.

The school-to-prison pipeline continues to be a complex problem creating huge impacts in communities. Improving the functionality of education systems may begin turning out more success stories and less future prison numbers.

“When we begin to talk about trauma, school trauma is the biggest issue. We have to undo the harm. Educators need to be prepared, skilled, and ready to deliver on the promise of education,” said Dr. Weaver.

Law proposed to deny child molesters

By Anthony Manuel Carvalho
Sports Editor

Two child molesters deemed safe to return to society by California’s Board of Parole Hearings stirred up the question: can sex offenders be rehabilitated?

Stephanie Nguyen, District Assemblymember for the district of Elk Grove, California, does not believe child molesters can rehabilitate, so she is proposing to update elderly parole to require that the Board of Parole Hearings and CDCR refer all sex offenders with life sentences for psychological evaluation if they are categorized as ‘sexually violent predators.’

According to CalMatters, currently California’s Department of State Hospitals can commit offenders who are determinate offenders. Nguyen’s proposed change would require DSH to decide if a person who is released by the BPH is also someone who needs continued care.

Rick Evans, vice-chair of San Quentin’s sexual offenders’ rehabilitative group called Bridging Responsibility, Accountability and Vulnerability through Empathy, attempted to dispel the community belief that released sex offenders are reintegrated back into society without any safeguards in place.

“The public doesn’t understand that parolees with a life sentence are required by law to continue therapy, and complete a year-long Sex Offender Treatment Program once released,” said Evans.

He added sex offenders with life sentences must usually register for life, must wear a GPS tracking device for [at least] three years while submitting to polygraphs monthly, and must not leave a predetermined area — usually a 30-mile radius.

Nguyen, whose district is where David Allen Funston and Gregory Lee Vogelsang committed numerous sex crimes against children, co-authored

“The public doesn't understand that parolees with a life sentence are required by law to continue therapy, and complete a year-long Sex Offender Treatment Program once released”

—Rick Evans

new legislation to lengthen the incarcerated time of child molesters. The two were to serve sentences totaling 430 years to life but both were released much earlier due to the current sentencing laws of the state.

The current laws, called elderly parole, were statutes that dated to 2014, as part of court-mandated efforts to decrease the state’s prison population.

The 2014 laws state that a petitioner must serve a minimum of 25years and be 60 years or older. In 2020, new laws lowered the elderly parole eligibility to 20 years of incarceration and reduced the age to 50.

Funston, sentenced to three consecutive 25-years-to-life terms, plus an additional 20-year sentence, earned parole at 67 years old after serving 27 years or 28.42% of his sentence. Vogelsang, sentenced to 355-years-to-life, earned parole at 57 after serving 27 years or 7.6% of his required sentence.

Nguyen said, “I think rehabilitation is a thing — people can rehabilitate [but] I don’t know that you can necessarily change yourself from wanting or stopping yourself from molesting little children. And as a mother to two young girls, this scares me” said Nguyen.

Nguyen is attempting to return the early parole program to requiring that all sex offenders remain in prison until age 65. She said, “When you’ve done things

like molest little boys, ages 5 to 11, I just don’t know that you can change from that.”

On Feb. 26, Funston was immediately re-arrested by Placer County and now remains in the Roseville jail, awaiting a new trial on additional charges, and Vogelsang faces a recession hearing to reverse his proposed release, CalMatters reported.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics created a meta-analysis, or technique that summarizes the results of research that combines independent studies. Their last report examined recidivism rates among individuals after their incarceration over a five-year follow-up period.

The report concluded that 48% of sex offenders released reoffended, which is far less than other violent crimes examined in the report.

It must be noted that the report, which analyzed data from 34 states noted that the 48% of sex offenders re-arrested for any crime within five years of release, did not imply they committed another sexual offense.

“When a fellow sex offender frets about our laws, it signifies to me that they don’t yet fully understand the devastating impact of sexual assaults on [our] victims,” said SQ resident Steve Matlak. “With progress in recovery, remorse and a strong desire to make amends ... [we] become much more concerned about those we hurt.”

B.R.A.V.E. facilitator Thomas Shelton said he would like the world to understand that although there is no justifiable reason that sexually violent predators committed their crimes, over 90% of sexual predators have been sexually victimized as children as well. “This is why the BPH recommends residents who are denied at their hearings, return to SQRC and complete the year-long B.R.A.V.E. program. B.R.A.V.E. requires sex offenders to commit to 200 hours of rehabilitative efforts in a year before they are considered for release.”

State prison spending immovable object

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

California lawmakers are advocating to cut billions from state expenditures as spending remains high despite the closing of correctional facilities.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has a budget that has not decreased or increased; it has remained the same since prison overcrowding 20 years ago.

Assembly member Mia Bonta, D-Alameda, has found fault concerning CDCR’s budget, as hundreds of millions of dollars were allocated to non-compliance lawsuits related to inmate disabilities and healthcare, according to the Sacramento Bee.

“At what point is it fair to continue to ask the Legislature to fund — I’ll use the nicest word possible — the inefficiencies of CDCR at the cost of not providing support for other parts of our system?” Bonta said. “Is it another 10 years we should wait for that?”

The department’s aging population and infrastructure spending has contributed to the stubbornly huge budget, according to CDCR’s Secretary Jeff Macomber.

The Legal Analyst’s Office

recommended the closure of Correctional Training Facility in Soledad, California. The closing of CTF would be cost effective because the state would forgo any cost to invest in its infrastructure.

CDCR’s Secretary stated that the resolve to close more prisons could enable overcrowding. The residents who were housed at the closed prisons were moved to other facilities. The closures can lead to double occupancy of cells and longer waitlists for self-help programs.

California lawmakers should anticipate future funding in order to make improvements such as installing air conditioning and catering to people who are in the Americans with Disabilities Program, Macomber said.

“A 2021 report from CDCR estimated dozens of future projects across the state would cost \$1.1 billion and \$700 million more in deferred maintenance,” reported the Sacramento Bee.

The objective of saving the state \$1 billion annually has made the department’s goals difficult to achieve. The department wants to house people in single cells instead of placing two people in a “60-square-foot cell,” Macomber said.

“Single-bed rooms are an example of that,” Macomber said. “Some of those changes have faced stiff opposition from

correctional staff.”

CDCR’s focus on education for the incarcerated has made some achievements. The recidivism rate for those who earn an Associates of Arts Degree is at 6%, and those who have obtained a Bachelors or Masters Degree have a 0% recidivism rate, according to Macomber.

“It’s a hell of a return on investment,” he said.

The department faces a higher shortfall from the expectations of costs related to correctional staff overtime and vacation payouts, according to the Bee.

California has made several attempts to recognize places where financial cuts can be made. The state awarded a \$20 million contract to the Boston Consulting Group to find efficiencies in separate departments throughout CDCR, stated the Bee.

Assembly member Tom Lackey, R-Palmdale, showed skepticism over the BCG contract. He expressed shock at the lack of reporting by BCG. He stated that the calculated \$810 million in savings was surprisingly less than the \$2.1 billion BCG predicted.

“The fact that we contracted \$20 million, and we’re woefully short on what (savings) we were told it would result in,” Lackey said. “This was a failure in my opinion.”

Oklahoma's new law creates intervention program for youth

By Bostyon Johnson
Editor-in-Chief

A new law establishing The Oklahoma Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents Program will take effect Nov. 1, 2026.

It is an intervention program for youth with incarcerated parents designed to mentor and provide them with guidance. It will also assist children who are at risk of ending up in a juvenile detention facility.

On Nov 1, 2026, and every third year thereafter, the OMCIPP is funded, and any 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations can submit a proposal to receive a grant(s) through a competitive bidding process.

The approved applicant(s) must provide “mentoring services to children of incarcerated parents and to children at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system,” according to the bill HB 3849.

In California, Project Avery is a similar program that provides a supportive outlet for children of incarcerated parents, access to summer camps, and weekend workshops free of charge.

To be eligible, applicant(s) must meet the following 11 criteria:

- Serve youth six (6) through eighteen (18) years of age.
- Have a statewide or regional presence.
- Provide mentoring services to children of incarcerated parents.
- Have served children of incarcerated parnts for three (3) years or more.
- Have rigorous volunteer application and screening processes.
- Have established child safety policies and procedures.
- Measure performance outcomes via multiple tools.
- Have here three (3) years or more of performance outcome data.
- Provide ongoing safety training and diversity training for program staff.
- Set match-retention-rate goals.
- Have experience working with high-risk populations.



65-foot dragon descends on SQ's Lower Yard in Asian American Pacific Islander celebration

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter
Staff Writer

"Look that way, over there," a man shouted excitedly, pointing toward San Quentin's hills with his right hand, "See what's coming out of the Learning Center!" Just then, a 65-foot dragon, yes, dragon, emerged from the newly constructed complex.

A fast and dramatic beat of five drums underscored the man's exclamation as a 65-foot 18-legged, green-headed, rainbow-color-bodied, antler-horned and yellow-tailed dragon with fierce, white-gleaming fangs and an open jaw slowly slinked its way across the Lower Yard of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. Soon, it arrived in the staging area of the Asian-American Pacific Islander Heritage Month celebration as crowds of San Quentin residents, staff, and volunteers cheered on the gigantic creature.

"This dragon symbolizes the fighting spirit of all

incarcerated persons," said resident Amu Wynn, who first alerted the crowd of the creature's approach. The dragon, affectionately named "Quentin," marked the high point of the May 15 event that celebrated culture, tradition, and community.

A San Quentin resident of Samoan heritage and the organizer of the AAPI event, Wynn, 50, said the dragon's construction took 15 days. Wynn credited Acting Chief Deputy Warden Eric Patao, who sponsored the event, for having found a way to say Yes to the idea.

Construction came about as a collaborative arts project in which residents teamed up with volunteers from Life on Art, a "social practice community-based installation art" organization based in Petaluma, California. To participants at the event, the dragon symbolized not only art, but a convergence of heritage, tradition, and community. The group had come to

San Quentin solely to support the dragon project.

Tracy Ferron of Life on Art said, "I met an incredibly dedicated group of residents and my group built the dragon side-by-side with them. The residents came up with the ideas and my group helped."

For Zoe Fry, also a Life on Art volunteer, the process of artistic creation inspired a passion she called "Service Is Sanity." Fry said she collaborated in arts projects for many years. She called the dragon project her "favorite art project" this year.

Fry stressed that teamwork made everything come together. "It's all about the process of building a team of artists with the residents and the staff. None of us knew each other and yet, we built a cohesive team. They all respected each other and green-wearing staff came through and were super-supportive. The program gave residents real life experience and for me, it's real life experience that matters.

One resident told me, 'This is better than therapy.'"

In a spirit of inclusivity, SQRC's Warden Chance Andes said, "I've learned so much about culture and I thank you all for letting me experience your culture. Let's build this San Quentin community."

The event included several Polynesian dancing groups, various musical performances, an art exhibition of San Quentin-created paintings and sculptures. The event served pizza to San Quentin's entire population.

Five Hawaiian dancers in red dresses danced the Hula to recorded music, wearing flower headwear and wreaths with green leaves. Their dance honored Kipukai, a location on the island of Kauai, said one of the dancers. The Tahitian dancer Ke'Olani performed the Motu-uta dance in green dress with black swirls and white flowers in her hair, barefoot. The performer explained that the dance told the story of a journey of

finding a black pearl.

Organizer Wynn also arranged for his daughter to sing at the event. Asked about her, he replied: "Koko is 27 now, a remarkable woman who inspires me to become a better person. I have never heard her sing; this was the first time. I was so happy that everyone came up to me and said they engaged with her music."

Wynn said, "I think the event contributed to the work done and hopefully inspires hope and motivation for our community to believe in themselves and pursue their dreams."

Resident Fuahala Fonuamama, 34, said, "I am proud to be a Polynesian and I am grateful for all the people and all the cultures who came. The event really captured diversity and community, and community is what it's all about."

Acting Chief Deputy Warden Patao said, "I could not be more proud of everything you guys have done.

Events like this do not happen by accident. I'm just the guy who says 'Approved.' All different races and cultures are coming together here." At the end of his speech, ACDW Patao shouted, "Yee-Hoo" and admitted that the exclamation required much practice.

San Quentin's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. A. Pachynski, found impressive the cooperation between staff and incarcerated persons to make the event happen. "It's amazing to have the recognition of so many different cultures being represented here today. Visibility is so important, and it's also so important for everybody to preserve their traditions."

Robert Wong, a retired former warden of San Quentin, said, "I am an old dinosaur prison guard," and added, "I am glad I came. Forty years ago, you would not think about having everyone together like this. I don't feel the tension like it was back then. Change and growth are good."

Photos by Marcus Casillas //SQNews

SPANISH

Analfabetismo dentro de la paredes

Por Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

El 38% de la población encarcelada en California son clasificados como “Analfabetos Funcionales”, una tasa alta de acuerdo a la publicación de Davis Vanguard. En el año 2022, el Dr. Brandt Choate director de la división de programas de rehabilitación hizo referencia sobre esta brecha que sigue en tendencia. El Departamento de Correccion y Rehabilitación de California después de procesar las personas encarceladas, son transferidas a instalaciones de recepción en donde son evaluados por medio de un Examen Educativo Básico para Adultos conocido como TABE.

“El no saber leer ni escribir me afectó muchísimo en mi vida, porque no sabía sacar cuentas. Y me enseñe lo básico... Como me gustaría que hubiern maestros que hablaran español y que de verdad nos enseñaran”, dijo Luis Zamudio de 79 años de edad, originario de México quien es uno de las miles de personas que en los últimos años está en el proceso de aprender a leer y escribir.

De acuerdo a Zamudio,

quien nunca tuvo la oportunidad de participar en la primaria o secundaria en su país natal, compartió su frustración por falta de asistencia de parte de los instructores.

El sistema educativo dentro de la prisiones, clasifica a una persona después de tomar el examen TABE determinando la habilidad de leer y escribir obteniendo una educación básica sin que la persona se allá graduado de la secundaria con puntaje entre 9.0 a 12.9

Un puntaje de 4.0 o menos significa que la persona necesita ser asignada a la escuela, hasta que su nivel mejore y puedan graduarse de la secundaria u obtener su certificado de Desarrollo en Educación General . Mientras tanto estas personas son categorizadas como Anafabetos funcionales.

De acuerdo con CDCR en el año 2025, calculó tener una población de 92,582 encarcelados, proyectando que 34,500 personas encarceladas fueron identificadas como analfabetos funcionales.

Ante este problema, el 6 de mayo del presente año, CDCR informó la contratación de más de 700 maestro(a)s alrededor de las 30 instituciones de California. La participación

de 13,000 estudiantes encarcelados, participando en las clases de educación básica para adultos sin incluir 4,500 personas participantes en programas de tecnología educativa.

Sin embargo no hay datos específicos que demuestran un mejoramiento del 38% tal como la información destaca indica.

Para algunos prisioneros el no saber leer ni escribir sigue siendo una desventaja, aunque, haya maestros donde no todos están capacitados para enseñar a personas con dificultades de audición o de la tercera edad.

Zamudio quien forma parte del programa con personas incapacitadas con audición limitadas haciendo más complicado para que el puede escuchar cuando los instructores enseñan. “Lo poquito que ser de leer y escribir yo lo aprendí ahora de adulto, y no me doy por vencido”, agregó.

Recientemente la administración educativa ha cambiado su sistema de evaluar a sus estudiantes por medio del examen del Sistema de Evaluación y Comprensión de Estudiantes Adultos conocido como Examen CASAS en el Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin (SQ). Estos

cambios afectan a las personas con un nivel educativo bajo.

De acuerdo a Idalio Villagran asistente académico de SQ, comentó que previamente el examen de CASAS requería un puntaje de 236 para poder acceder a los pre-exámenes de DEG en las asignaturas de Literatura, Matemáticas, Historia Norteamericana, Ciencias Naturales y Ciencias Sociales.

Villagran, explica que el puntaje ha incrementado a 246, y de acuerdo a un grupo de estudiantes, estos recientes cambios han creado confusión, expresando desaliento por no saber leer o escribir.

Sin embargo, otro grupo de estudiantes ven este nuevo sistema como una oportunidad para aprender y poder graduarse.

“Inicialmente me frustré con estos cambios del incremento de puntajes académicos en los exámenes de CASAS, ya que estaba tomado mis exámenes para GED en español.”, dijo Carlos García Nuñez, un estudiante y residente de SQ “Ahora este inesperado cambio me está motivado a salir adelante y me ayuda a aprender el inglés, al principio no lo miraba de esta manera”.



Ira antes de la violencia

Por César Martínez
Staff Writer

La ira tiene una conexión con la violencia, ya sea por una insatisfacción(es) o desacuerdo(s) en las interacciones llevadas acabo entre dos o más personas, sin embargo, existen métodos para hacerles frente y a travez de la prevención con la ayuda de las herramientas de autocontrol y el conocimiento de regulación en emociones se pueden prevenir sus efectos negativos.

El autor Andrew Kollins del libro *Cómo Controlar La Ira*, describe que la ira es una emoción autoconsciente. Es un estado de estimulación emocional asociado a los pensamientos, sentimientos y deseos específicos, provocado por un evento o interacción interpersonal. También señala que el comportamiento a causa de la ira puede ser leve hasta llegar a la violencia extrema.

Como tantas emociones del ser humano, la ira en específico se manifiesta de formas distintas, desde la irritación leve hasta el descontrol total.

“Me hubiera gustado conocer las herramientas para prevenir mi enojo, y molestias que sentí a muy temprana edad”, dijo el residente Angel Aguilar del Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin.

Estudios describen la ira como un instrumento para medir la salud mental, además de sus causas y efectos. Esta emoción puede considerarse positivo, siempre y cuando se exprese de una manera objetiva, adecuada y saludable, la ira como tal permite manifestar emociones negativas, a travez de formas positivas sin dañar relaciones o emociones con terceros.

Los diferentes niveles de la ira pueden manifestarse de una forma leve o significativa, puede iniciar con ignorar a alguien hasta llegar a la violencia. Quienes experimentan los efectos de la ira a lo largo de su vida sin conocimiento de ello, son afectados en su bienestar emocional y social, ya que no suelen tener la información o el conocimiento sobre las herramientas de como lidiar con estos sentimientos de una manera saludable.

Para un grupo de residentes de SQ, los sentimientos de la ira fueron desarrollados a consecuencia de eventos en el pasado en donde sintieron dolor, abandono, negligencia, vergüenza, discriminación, injusticia, entre otros y que no tuvieron las herramientas necesarias para resolver el echo de una manera saludable.

“Una de las discriminaciones que yo viví, fue por que soy blanco... piensan que no soy latino [y por esta razón] fui discriminado por mi color” comentó Aguilar y también compartió otra experiencia, “me hubiera gustado tener a mi padre a mi lado por que nunca lo tuve”. Para él estos eventos le produjeron

frustración y una baja autoestima en su persona, llevándolo a un nivel de ira en donde se manifestaba a travez de la violencia ante la sociedad.

En su libro Kollins describe que el manejo de la ira es una tarea de toda la vida y describe cómo el comportamiento y forma de comunicarse influye en la expresión de la ira.

Estudios indican que las señales de alerta para la ira son prevenir pensamientos negativos y reconocer los sentimientos que alimentan estos pensamientos, además de las sensaciones corporales que genera la ira.

El autocontrol empieza por ser consiente de “como te sientes, procesas, expresas y comunicas tu ira; en otras palabras... puede manifestarse como un sentimiento abrumador que se apodera del cuerpo de una persona” señala Kollins. El distinguir los detonantes y cómo se gestiona la ira puede ayudar a que una persona sea más consiente y tomar medidas preventivas y auto correctivas.

De acuerdo a este grupo de encarcelados, la prevención de la violencia comienza en casa y en las escuelas, pero también coinciden que miembros de la comunidad en general junto con el gobierno y sus programas juegan un papel importante para esta educación.

“Desde que era un niño , me hubiese gustado ser instruido en este tema, que en realidad nunca se me hablo” dijo el residente de SQ José Hernández.

Kollins en su libro describe el entendimiento y funcionamiento del cerebro ante un evento, y señala que entender el origen de los detonantes ayuda a tomar desiciones más asertivas para la resolución ante cualquier circunstancia.

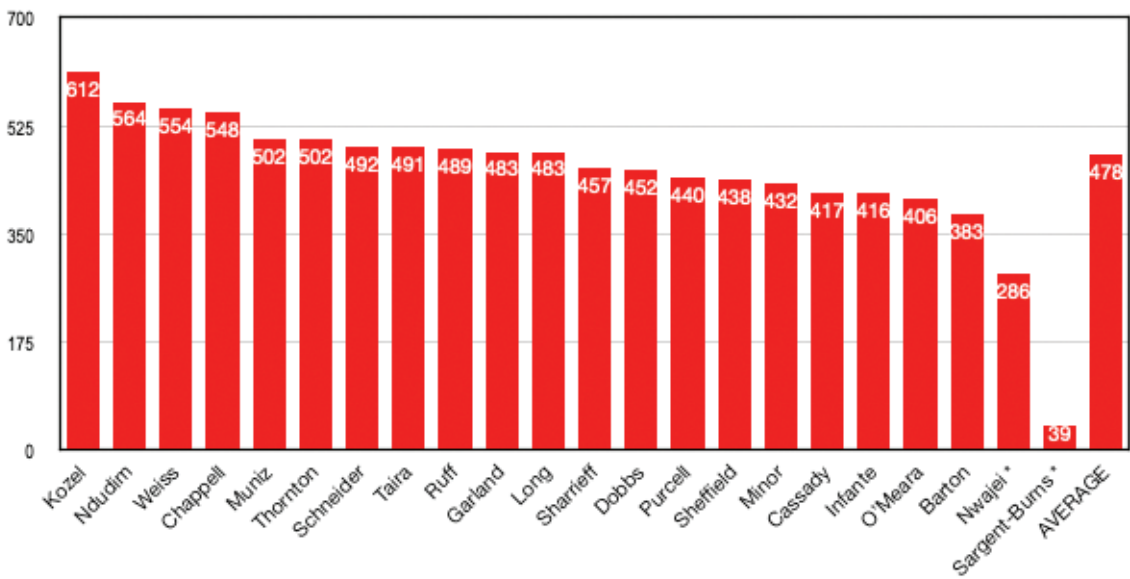
Un aspecto que destaca es como la ira tiene una relación con el perdón.

“El perdón no es una simple emoción y no puede sustituirse por otra. Es una decision que toma todo un ser, una vez que has completado tu verdadero trabajo emocional” escribió Kollins y añade, “La ira y el perdón no son adversarios detestables; son elementos necesarios e indispensables en el proceso de curación y regeneración completa del ser humano, que sólo puede tener lugar de forma espiritual y, por lo tanto, totalmente emocional”.

Raúl Galvez residente de SQ comentó que las herramientas que él utiliza para prevenir un evento de violencia es “pensar antes de actuar y alejarse de la situación”, y si es posible “ hablar después con humildad, empatía y respeto”.

Para este grupo de encarcelados, el trabajo para identificar los efectos que producen la ira y sus consecuencias como violencia; son el camino al perdón y su rehabilitación, tarea que los motiva en su día a día.

10.000 años acumulados de denegación en 2025



Análisis y gráfico realizados por C. K. Gerhartsreiter a partir de datos proporcionados por CLN.

En el 2025 La Audenciaia de Libertad denegó en total 10,000 años de libertad

Junta de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional de California (ALC) denegó un total acumulado de 9.886 años a personas encarceladas en 2025, según un análisis e interpretación de San Quentin News (Noticias de San Quentin) sobre los datos de la Junta, extraídos de las cinco ediciones más recientes del boletín trimestral California Lifer Newsletter (CLN) (Boletín Informativo para reclusos con cadena perpetua en California) .

Esta nueva perspectiva cuantitativa del panorama penitenciaria surgió de la métrica de San Quentin News denominada “Años Acumulados Denegados” (ADD), que multiplicaba el número de denegaciones por su duración. Por ejemplo, cinco denegaciones de 10 años resultan en una cifra de 50 años acumulados denegados (50 ADD).

El CLN presentó datos de 4.589 audiencias, pero no incluyó las denegaciones de un año impuestas a quienes violaron las condiciones de la libertad condicional, las cuales sumaron 139 en el año. Al sumar estas cifras, la ALC denegó un total de 10.025 años.

“Diez mil años es una cifra asombrosa; es indignante, es una cifra descabellada. Nunca antes se había analizado las denegaciones de la Junta de

forma acumulada, pero no me sorprende, ya que sé que las concesiones de libertad condicional fueron realmente bajas en 2025”, afirmó Michael Beaudette, de 66 años, residente de San Quentin cuya audiencia ante la Junta está programada para 2032.

Beaudette comentó: “Nos centramos mucho en las tasas de concesión, pero también deberíamos examinar más de cerca las denegaciones, sobre todo porque la Junta dicta muchísimas de ellas”. Para Beaudette, la métrica ADD sirve como indicador clave. Señaló que la cifra ADD resultaba redonda, fácil de entender y de recordar, por lo que debería establecerse como el número que la Junta se esfuerce para superar en el futuro.

¿Por qué los resultados fueron tan negativos? El CLN indicó que la dirección de la ALC coincidió en que el conocido problema de los reclusos que manipulan el sistema para evitar pagar la restitución es el principal responsable de esta situación adversa. Sin embargo, esa situación tenía un lado positivo: “Lo peor de este problema ya ha pasado y, de ahora en adelante, empezaremos a ver menos denegaciones basadas en esta cuestión... O, como dijimos a la junta en una reciente reunión

ejecutiva: ‘Comisionados, este asunto (la restitución) es un tema agotador. Dejen de insistir en él’”.

La CLN añadió un mensaje para las personas encarceladas que intentan eludir el pago de la restitución: “[Si todavía están jugando a eso, DEJEN de hacerlo ya”.

El análisis de San Quentin News clasificó el total de 4.589 audiencias en dos grupos: 3.541 “audiencias de idoneidad” (que implicaban únicamente la concesión o denegación de la libertad) y 1.048 “otras audiencias” (que incluían estipulaciones, renunciaciones, aplazamientos y prórrogas). Los datos de la CLN mostraban ocasionalmente ligeras diferencias respecto a los datos obtenidos del sitio web de la ALC, pero dichas diferencias no afectaron significativamente a los resultados del análisis. La cifra relativa a las denegaciones por un año procedía de un análisis realizado por San Quentin News a partir de impresiones de datos disponibles en el sitio web de la ALC.

Los datos publicados en el sitio web de la ALC ofrecían una información mínima. Disponer de más datos habría aportado transparencia a las decisiones de la junta y podría haber aclarado, por ejemplo, si los comisionados con tasas más

bajas de concesión de libertad celebraban más audiencias en centros de Nivel IV o en instalaciones rurales con escasa oferta de programas.

Beaudette expresó su esperanza de ver mejores cifras en el futuro. “Me gustaría reunirme con mi familia y poder contribuir a combatir la reincidencia. Para cuando comparezca ante la junta, espero que esa cifra de diez mil sea mucho menor”, afirmó.

Estas columnas muestran el número de denegaciones de 2025 multiplicado por su duración, según el comisionado principal. Ejemplo: 10 denegaciones de 5 años equivalen a 50 años acumulados de denegación (ADD). Las decisiones sobre la libertad condicional requieren el acuerdo de dos comisionados, pero este análisis se centra únicamente en el comisionado principal. * El comisionado Nwajei dejó la ALC en agosto y la comisionada Sargent-Burns se incorporó en diciembre. El cálculo del promedio no incluye sus datos. No se incluyen los datos de las denegaciones de 1 año; sin embargo, sí se incluyeron, el número total de años de denegación en 2025 que ascendería a 10.025.



Above: Oakland Ballers player at the bat. Right: Advertisement poster created by resident Greg Stephens.

Semi-professional team shuts out resident SQ team

By Ben Greenspon
Staff Writer

San Quentin Giants hosted the Oakland Ballers, 2025 Pioneer League champions, for the first time. To show appreciation for a special day of SQ baseball, Master of Ceremony Jamal Harrison played music while announcing the game. A bigger than usual gathering of residents showed up to watch the talented professional players.

Aaron Miles, manager of the Oakland Ballers, played for the St. Louis Cardinals in the early 2000s. Miles played with Albert Pujols and together they won a championship ring in 2006, achieving the highest honor in baseball. In 2025 he led his team to a Pioneer League championship, winning 73 games in a 96 game season.

Miles threw the ceremonial pitch, wearing both of his championship rings for the event, one on each hand.

“The personal gratification of last year is something I can’t explain, the journey was one of the most fulfilling experiences

of my life. I’ll probably be remembered more for the St. Louis ring. I spent my whole life trying to be a major league player, but the Oakland Ballers ring was a very close second,” Miles said.

The Pioneer League consists of 12 teams throughout Utah, Idaho, Montana and California. The league plays a 96 game season that runs from May through September.

Before the game started SQ resident artist Greg Stephens presented the Oakland Ballers with a custom drawn piece of art titled Razor Wire Classic. It had representations of both San Quentin and Oakland culture.

“Baseball was the first sport I played. When I was young I used to flip through the posters at the card shop. Different stadiums are known by the wall on the outfield, like the Green Monster at Fenway Park. I thought about our outfield and all you see is razor wire; that’s where I got the idea,” Stephens said.

In the first inning SQ Giants faced starting pitcher Nick Bautista, who throws up

to 94 mph and consistently pitches in the high 80s to low 90s. Bautista spent time in the minor leagues with both the New York Mets and Texas Rangers.

“Honestly, I expected this sort of environment. My pops was in prison, so I’ve been in these settings before. Being in the center of it is cool, it’s dope. Everyone expects everybody in here to be bad guys and it’s not like that,” Bautista said.

In the first inning SQ Giants had trouble adjusting to Bautista’s speed and went three and out, followed up with the Ballers scoring two runs in the first. The Ballers only allowed three hits on the day, setting the stage for a SQ Giants loss.

SQ Giants Patrick Poteat pitched two innings without giving up any hits, no runs, with one strike out on six at bats, holding his own against the professional players.

”To be able to pitch against a professional team and put up two hitless, scoreless innings, makes me feel proud of the work I’m putting in, and of

my coaches confidence in my ability,” Poteat said.

Second year Oakland Baller player Tremayne Cobb Jr. was the lead-off batter in the team’s 2025 championship run. Cobb said coming to San Quentin to play baseball wasn’t something he ever imagined doing.

“I just didn’t know it would be so laid back, it’s good to see they give other avenues to help people out. One guy was telling me about getting his trucking license. When we won the championship fire trucks sprayed water, we all got under the water. We barely lost last year,” Cobb said.

Tyler Petersen, Oakland Ballers team broadcaster/assistant manager and talent scout, said they like to find local players, roughly one third of the team is from Northern California.

According to Petersen six former Ballers have made it to the minor leagues. Danny Kirwin was picked up by the Red Sox, Tyler Davis played one season, but after two weeks the Chicago White Sox picked him up. Peterson said their main rival now is the



Yuba City Highwheelers.

“I think we could see two or three of our guys make it up to the next level. I feel half of our guys have the talent, but there are only so many opportunities. Every year we have open try outs,” Petersen said.

Jim Dedrick, pitching coach for the Ballers, said the competition here at San Quentin is better than he thought it would be.

“I can feel the intensity from your hitters. This is a chance for them to see what they can do against really good players,” Dedrick said.

Mark Kahn, Oakland Ballers general counsel and public address announcer, has been with the club since the 2024 inaugural season.

According to Kahn the owners of the Oakland Ballers, Brian Carmel and Paul Freedman, who both went to high school in Oakland, started

the team because the Oakland Athletics were leaving town and they didn’t want baseball to disappear in their city. The Oakland Ballers are beginning their third season with an off schedule win against the SQ Giants, 8-0.

SQ Giant Anthony Denard began playing baseball when he was a young boy. Denard eventually played at Laney Junior College and was drafted in 1996 by the Minnesota Twins, then in 1997 he was picked up by the Arizona Diamondbacks. Denard said he saw himself in the young upcoming players.

“I was reflecting back on the age the young players were, that’s when I got locked up. It hit home because it was something I strived for and never got,” Denard said.

SQ Giants season is off to a slow start, one win, three losses and a tie.

SQ Giants struggle at start of season without head coach

After winning the pre-season game against LA LOVE, the SQ Giants dropped their home opener to their traditional rival, the Mission of San Francisco. The following week, the Giants’ second regular-season game provided the team with an opportunity to stop their losing streak at one. Unfortunately, this did not happen.

The second game was a highly-competitive event against the Bip City Bangers, a Bay Area pick-up team who visited SQRC’s Lower Yard to battle the SQ Giants. The game went down to the last pitch where the home team had a chance to pull off the win, but fell short.

The SQ Giants got off to a fast start in the first two innings, scoring seven runs. Bip City turned the game around in the third, where after scoring their first run, the visitors followed up with two additional runs in the fifth, sixth, and eighth innings to even the game.

With the game tied 7-7 in the eighth, SQ Giants pitcher Patrick Poteat served up the game’s winning run at the top of the ninth when Jesse Guevara smashed a home run for the visitors to take the lead 8-7. The Bangers retired the SQ Giants in order to preserve the win.

The San Quentin Giants’ tailspin continued after the two-game losing streak was interrupted with a non-win.

The Barons are a local San Francisco team that plays the SQ Giants three to four times

each season. The perennial visitors struck fast and often as the Barons scored a run in each of the first three innings during the Giants’ fourth game of the season.

The game moved to the bottom of the seventh inning with the Barons’ holding what appeared to be an insurmountable lead at 6-1. Visiting pitcher Sequoya stymied the SQ Giants’ hitters, giving up only two hits in six innings while striking out nine.

The SQ Giants lacked firepower that game until Carlos Valdez drove in the team’s second run of the day. His RBI started a rally where the Giants scored six runs as their hopes to get their first regular-season win seemed within reach.

The game was stopped in the ninth inning due to time, and the players agreed a tie was fair. Both teams said they look forward to settling the score the next time Barons come to play.

SQ Giant Aaron ‘June’ Miles had a good day, scoring the first run of the game in the eighth inning. Miles went two for three, along with two stolen bases.

Cole Wertlieb, a first-time player with the Barons, said he has wanted to play at SQ since first hearing about it last season. “The experience was nothing like I expected,” said Wertlieb. “My friends thought I was crazy for coming to San Quentin to play baseball.”

“It’s shocking to me to see how good everyone treats each other. You all are great,

I feel really honored to be here.”

The Giants’ winless streak continued with an 8-0 drubbing by the Oakland Ballers.

After the 0-3-1 start, the Giants notched their only two victories of the month, both coming on Thursday evenings.

The Giants beat the Redwood Empire Baseball League on May 21 by a score of 8-7, before losing to the SF Dealers’ by the score of 19-9 on May 23. The team’s second victory came on May 28 as they beat the Oaks of the Bay Area with a score of 6-5.

SQ Giant pitcher Patrick Poteat shared that the team has started a new tradition this year. After each game, players and coaches get together and award the “pickled egg” to the player that is labeled the “biggest truck” [worst performance] of the game.

Poteat also said the team’s losing month could be attributed to the team’s listlessness due to them missing their leader, Manager Richard “Coach Will” Williams.

“We lost our head coach and really wanted to [keep winning] for him. The organization is hoping “Will” returns soon,” Poteat said.

Williams has been moved to a hospital room on the fourth floor of SQRC’s hospital — a room with a view of the game — as he is treated for an undisclosed illness.

The winningest-coach in SQ Baseball history is sorely missed.

—Ben Greenspon



2026 San Quentin Hardtimers and outside team North Bay Bombers.

50 runs in SQ Hardtimers season opener

By Marcus Casillas
Photographer

The North Bay Bombers helped San Quentin’s Hardtimers softball team open their season in a celebratory fashion. Soon thereafter both teams rolled their sleeves and competed in a game with an outpouring of runs.

The visitors spoke about the importance of the friendly rivalry that has been embraced by both teams, the incarcerated and the free.

“This is the brotherhood that doesn’t break; the bond that is built [here] I wouldn’t miss for anything,” said second year-returnee Wraith Breyer.

Courtney Sully from the Bombers became the first base runner of the year after she singled in the first inning hit.

“This is the best day of the month,” said Sully. “I’ve been coming in for years and will continue to as long as I can. I feel grateful to be here today with the SQ Hardtimers.”

In the bottom of the first, Anthony Pinaterelli of the Hardtimers hit the season’s

first home run as his drive cleared the right field fence. His was just the beginning of the scoring, as the Hardtimers opened up a 10-0 lead.

Rick Diaz hit the team’s second home run of the year in the second inning.

The Bombers battled in the third inning when they scored three runs. Sully got her first RBI of the season in the top of the fourth, when she hit a blast to the outfield that drove in another teammate.

“A diverse team playing ball brings people together, building community,” said Hardtimer Pearley, a second year-returnee. “I started playing softball when I was younger at church picnics. When we are able to compete with outside guests, I feel treated as a human being. [Baseball] gives me a sense of normalcy which takes me out of prison for a couple of hours.”

During the fifth inning, Breyer’s blast scored two runs before his teammate Chris hit a shot to right field to bring Breyer to third base.

Breyer was not only the offensive star for the visitors.

He shined in the field as he stopped Hardtimer Michael “DT” Soutar’s long fly ball to end the fifth inning.

The Bombers offensive continued into the top of the sixth as Breyer hit the first grand slam of the season, which brought the game to a tie before the visitors took a 13-12 lead to end their half of the sixth inning.

The game continued to be a nail-biter in the bottom of the sixth, as the Hardtimers scored four runs led by Pinaterelli, who slammed his second home run of the day to put the home team back in the lead 19-13.

Hardtimers new coach Patrick Poteat shared his enthusiasm. “I’m really excited about this season [because] this is the first time I’m coaching instead of playing ball.”

As the game wound down, happiness could be felt in the air as the Hardtimers came out with a victorious season opener to win 33-17. The teams circled around and gave praise to one another at the mound.

“I am proud of my team and the hard work they’ve done leading to today,” said Poteat.

Slow start to basketball season for SQ's Warriors and Kings

By Martin Keith DeWitt
Journalism Guild Member

The San Quentin Warriors started the season in April with two wins and four losses while the SQ Kings split four games to stand at .500.

No matter the records, the elite program is being compared to the traditional giants of the sport.

“It’s a lot like Duke and North Carolina; you hear about it or see it on TV but until you experience it firsthand you just don’t know,” said Jon Remedios, 33, a first-time Green Team member.

The power of SQ basketball also highlighted a day of renewal during the first week of May for two of the team’s players; Demond “Oola” Lewis and Eric Allen.

“I’m thankful to be surrounded by people who care about me and my family,” said coach Lewis. He experienced a family emergency that prevented him from attending the previous weekend’s opening day game for the Kings.

Allen, who suffered an Achilles tear in 2024, was

making his comeback from the surgical procedure to re-attach his achilles tendon. “The mental reward is to get on the court again,” said Allen. “My biggest fear is getting hurt, I gotta learn to trust my mind and body again.”

Visitors Town Boogie led 51-45 at halftime and beat the Warriors 100-85.

The Kings played the Prison Sports Ministry’s Green Team, keeping a 26-25 halftime edge before running away with a 64-47 final score.

Charles Lowery, who has been volunteering at SQ for 14 years, said everyone in blue is an example of progress. “Whether it’s lifting up a teammate... or becoming a better version of yourself, it all counts,” said Lowery.

Mother’s Day weekend saw Kingdom Ministry visiting with only four players.

“Today is my birthday. I love basketball and wanted to come play with y’all,” said Kingdom player Akeem “Keem” Mobley.

The SQ Warriors smashed



San Quentin's 2026 Warriors team and staff with outside team Town Boogie.

the visitors 120-71 in large part because the visiting team enlisted players from the Warriors and Kings to allow the games to take place.

Swarndeeep “Sunny” Basra, the Warriors’ standout offensive player, scored 35 points and slammed two dunks. “I am thankful that I can still jump despite a partially torn Patellar Tendon,” said Basra.

The Kings grabbed a half-time lead of 47-25 before winning the game 89-59.

Kingdom player Will Baker, 37, who plays in pick-up games in Oakland, Vallejo, and San Francisco, said he appreciates the quality of the play and the respect given by the members of SQ’s basketball program.

“‘It’s like seeing old friends when I come here to play,’” said Baker of his trips to the institution.

The Warriors’ woes worsened after team leader Keyshawn “Steez” Strickland was lost to a foot injury. Town Boogie mounted a late comeback to win 84-78.

Town Boogie General Manager Sam Permutt spoke at center court during halftime. He said he was dealing with the death of a high school teammate. “This place is where I feel gratitude for being able to come play,” said Permutt.

Kenan Holiday, 20, made his debut as a member of Town Boogie. Holiday works

as an employee of SQ hospital facilities and maintains family ties to the SQRC administration. He also has some family basketball pedigree; two of his cousins play in the NBA, most notably Jrue Holiday of the Portland Trailblazers.

“Warriors’ players asked me to come and I reached out to Sam [Permutt],” said Holiday.

Memorial Day saw the Outsiders squeaking by the SQ Kings 83-78.

Kings player Larun Logwood said that the Outsiders came to play before he thanked SQ Warrior Navion “Smooove” Starks, who played for the

undermanned Outsiders.

May came to a close and the Warriors and Kings hosted PSM’s Green Team, who brought in seven first-time players. Town Boogie also squared off against the Kings.

The SQ Warriors, short-handed as the Green Team by injuries, took the loss, 100-87.

Team Boogie also beat the SQ Kings, finishing the game with a 88-76 victory.

Keenan McMiller, 46, a teacher and basketball coach from Oakland, was surprised by what he found inside the wall. “There’s passion, pride, fellowship and community,” said McMiller. “All those things are lacking outside the wall.”

Annual track meet namesake visits San Quentin on day of event

An Olympic gold medalist visited the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center to continue giving back to a childhood neighbor, while encouraging resident runners in the 10th annual Eddie Hart/Ralph Ligons track meet.

The event, sponsored by SQRC’s 1000 Mile Running Club, allows the two childhood competitors the opportunity to become friends and show how people overcame adversity on a global stage.

Eddie Hart overcame the loss of his dream to be called the fastest man in the world and won a different gold medal at the 1972 Summer Olympic Games in Munich, Germany.

“‘As soon as Eddie sees me he comes up and puts his gold medal around my neck,’” said SQRC resident Ralph Ligons.

Ligons, grew up across the street from Hart in the East Bay city of Pittsburg.

Hart, being three years older than Ligons, remembered Ligons’ own track prowess in high school and saw his rehabilitative growth

at SQRC, which led him to become a runner and coach for the institution’s 1000 Mile Club.

“‘It’s a joy, [and] it’s a pleasure coming in and hangin’ out with you guys,’” said Hart. “‘You treat me with respect and I appreciate that.’”

Hart’s legacy of courage demanded respect almost immediately after he won a gold medal by running the anchor leg of the 4X100 relay at the ’72 Olympics.

Hart’s example of compassion, calm, and resiliency was emblazoned the minute his relay team won gold at the Munich Olympics because he had been disqualified for missing his primary race that he had trained for most of his life — the 100 meter sprint — as a result of being given the wrong time by his coach.

With an egregious error that shattered his personal dream, Hart bounced back that same week and competed in the 4X100 meter relay race that gave him his Gold Medal victory.

For his profile in courage

and commitment to community throughout his life, Hart was recently inducted into the Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame.

On the first Friday in June, during the track meet named after the duo, the pair reminisced about their achievements past and present.

Ligons said he is grateful that Hart supports the running club and is always happy to see his mentor.

Ligons said that he requested Hart’s name be added to an event that was named after the incarcerated Ligons, who had also competed in the 1972 Olympic time trials.

Hart then spoke about his recent induction into the Bay Area Sports Hall of Fame.

While mentioning other names of past BASHOF inductees, including Willie Mays, Bill Russell, Joe DiMaggio and others, Hart became emotional. “My name being placed alongside them is an honor,” said Hart.

Hart’s Central Junior High School running coach, Bert

Banano, was present for the induction. “‘It was magical. Coach Banano, who taught technique, diet, stretching, [and] was so helpful to my success, was there that night,’” said Hart.

Current Olympic long jump record holder, Bob Beamon, presented Hart for induction.

Beamon held both the world record and Olympic record after his jump in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. His 29 feet 2.5 inches record lasted for 23 years until his world record was broken in 1991; Beamon still holds the Olympic mark.

Also present for the festivities were Hart’s wife Gwen, son Ed Jr., and his grandchildren Bella and James, and University of California at Berkeley teammate Cliff West.

“My wife of 60 years, Gwen, has been with me through everything,” said Hart.

Hart mentioned the concept of responding rather than reacting, saying that one should take a moment to

“It’s a joy, [and] it’s a pleasure coming in and hangin’ out with you guys. You treat me with respect and I appreciate that.”

-Eddie Hart
Olympic Gold Medalist

think so you don’t make a bad decision.

Hart illustrated his response versus react technique directly after losing his opportunity to win the individual Olympic gold.

“I wanted the coach to know that I loved him and held no ill will in spite of missing my race,” said Hart.

Hart exhibited love and forgiveness in a traumatic moment and won more gold than an individual medal; he won gold in life.

The 10th annual track meet saw 28-year-old resident Christian Dominguez

dominate three events.

Dominguez, incarcerated for nine years, finished first in three events, including the 100, 200, and 400 meters.

Dominguez, who has been competing since he was 21 years old, said, “‘It [running] helps me keep healthy and positive. Focus on your life and do the best for yourself.’”

Longtime volunteer Diane Fitzpatrick spoke about the busy Friday schedule at SQRC. “‘We had a good turnout in spite of the GRIP (Guiding Rage into Power) graduation and the Skunkworks event,’” said Fitzpatrick.

Three-year volunteer Leo Pershall, who tried to coordinate the numerous running events, spoke of Ligons contribution to the races. “‘Ralph [Ligons] will be the honorary starter for the 4X400 relay.’”

Lead organizer Jim Maloney said that Hart and Ligons’ race and all articles covered by the SQ Sports department are now linked to the club’s own web page for their followers to read.

—Martin Keith DeWitt

Inaugural season of women's professional baseball league underway in Illinois

By Anthony
Manuel Carvalho
Sports Editor

The women’s professional baseball league began its inaugural season at Robin Robert’s Field in Springfield, Illinois, where current stars of women’s baseball get the opportunity of a lifetime.

The first women’s professional baseball league started 76 years ago as the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, immortalized in the film “A League of Their Own.” Women’s baseball also touched the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s field of dreams on May 27 as the SQ Giants hosted the perennial visitors known as the SF Dealers.

The Dealers traveling team included 32-year-old Rose Marston, the starting pitcher of

Saturday morning.

“I’m doing what I did as a kid,” said Marston. “I pitched against a team of men in what had been a predominantly male sport, until now.”

Marston allowed ten hits and three walks while striking out three players in four innings. The right-hander gave up one run this year, compared to shutting out the Giants two years ago.

“‘As momentum builds, there’s strength in numbers, [and] the concept is less intimidating and becomes more mainstream,’” Marston said, speaking about the league’s August debut.

Marston has stayed in baseball as an automated balls and strikes system operator for Major League Baseball at Oracle Park in San Francisco. When the Giants are out of town, she provides remote

technical assistance to ABS.

Her next off-season will be spent in training for the second season of the new women’s baseball league.

“‘Women’s baseball is more accepted now, [because] there’s not fake encouragement,’” said Marston.

The WPBL consists of four teams from four major cities, as the league incorporated cities with structured rivalries throughout all of sport — San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and Boston.

Six hundred hopefuls will vie for positions on the four teams before the league begins.

The season runs for seven weeks and is split into a four-week regular season, while featuring a week for all-star activities and two-weeks for playoffs.

Marston said she will try out for the WPBL next year

because of the increased popularity of women’s sport. “‘I didn’t think there’d be enough interest in the sport, but I’m so glad there is,’” said Marston.

SQ Giant coach Greg Snyder sized up Marston’s chances of making it in the WPBL. “‘She comes in here and in two outings she gives up one run, averaging almost a strike out per inning; I think she’ll do fine and she’ll have the support of the SQ baseball community.’”

The WPBL is staffed with current legends of women baseball players who have persevered in a male dominated industry. These legendary players include Mo’ne Davis and Kelsie Whitmore, both whom Marston hopes to compete against next year.

Davis became a national phenom at just 13 when she threw a 70 mph fastball and tossed a shutout during the

2014 Little League World Series. There, Davis “took the nation by storm,” according to USA Today’s Steve Gardner, as the first girl to win a game at the series.

Davis, a 24-year-old Philadelphia native, became the tenth player selected by the Los Angeles WPBL team in large part due to her pioneering status 12 years ago.

San Diegan Kelsie Whitmore is a pitcher and outfielder returning to familiar grounds after being selected by the league’s San Francisco team as the first pick in the inaugural WPBL draft.

According to the Associated Press, the 27-year-old made her professional debut in 2016 with a co-ed Bay Area team called the Sonoma Stompers. Whitmore has won two silver medals representing the United States at the women’s

baseball World Cup and won gold at the 2015 Pan-Am games in Toronto. She also was the first woman to compete in pro baseball’s Atlantic League, with the Staten Island FerryHawks.

Whitmore told the AP, “‘You ask [my] 6-year-old version about this opportunity happening right now, she would, one, probably not believe you, but, two, just be so ... excited for it.’”

Marston said she is readying herself for the WPBL by competing against male dominated teams in the Bay Area, working for the SF Giants, and getting ready to compete against the best female baseball players in the world.

Intimidated? “‘If I’m there, I’m pitching,’” said Marston.

—Martin Keith DeWitt
contributed to this story

PROGRAMS

SQNews staff bids adieu to old friend, solid supporter

By Charles Crowe
Staff Writer

In the fancy new digs of the San Quentin News everything is fresh, including an oval table about eight feet long that seats six. Two electrical outlets in the center lead to a power source in the floor below, a techy feature emblematic of the newspaper's new space.

What the up-to-date table lacks is history. Memories will have to be made there. Meanwhile, it has big shoes to fill. Its predecessor, rich with history, was abandoned in the move from the old newsroom.

That massive piece of furniture was the dominant feature in the old newsroom, and had for years been the proverbial fly-on-the-wall in the space. It witnessed much and served the newspaper in many ways. The stories it could tell to the new table.

The big surface was 20 feet long by four feet wide, a great rectangle that actually consisted of eight smaller tables locked together. Its size made it a magnet because very large, flat surfaces are scarce in prison and useful in many ways.

Wood-framed, padded chairs (padding not being a common characteristic of chairs in prison environments) surrounded the big fixture, anywhere from 16 to 20 depending on the number

of people gathered around the table at any time.

The table could host gatherings large enough to promote a sense of belonging and community among the newspaper's staff. Every Wednesday morning, the whole staff and their outside advisers attended a mandatory meeting around the giant desk. A succession of Editors-in-Chief led the group through an agenda and heard reports from department heads and advisers, all followed by an "open forum," where any topic was fair game.

Juan Haines, who spent years with the newspaper in various roles, recalled a definitive moment at one such meeting around the big desk. Then Public Information Officer Lt. Robinson sat in with the newspaper's outside advisers.

The paper's incarcerated staff disagreed with the outside advisers over a key strategic question. The advisers wanted to go in one direction, the staff preferred another path, and the issue reached an impasse.

As Haines recalled, he turned to Lt. Robinson and said, "Lieutenant, whose paper is this?" Robinson replied, "It's your paper." The incarcerated staff had their way and Haines received the confirmation he sought that the newspaper was, in fact, still run by incarcerated men.

The big table also served as a public square for decision-making. At monthly layout meetings, generations of managing editors led spirited discussions that determined which stories made the front page. Writers made passionate pitches for their stories and staff voted yea or nay by a show of hands.

The sturdy furniture stood up under the weight of many grievances and disputes thrashed out at "grown-man meetings," a quirky San Quentin News tradition that often featured clashes between strong personalities. Profanity sometimes flavored the harsh words that flew back and forth at these encounters.

On occasion, Super Bowl Sundays for example, workers from the entire media center gathered around the big table to break bread and foster unity between departments. Those who volunteered to prepare food spread large garbage bags on the big space to make a sanitary prep surface. Nachos and burritos typified the fare at these events and the prep work could get messy.

The long table served as a loading dock for incoming shipments of newspapers. After a forklift dropped a pallet of 5,000 newspapers at the front door, staff formed a bucket-brigade from the pallet, through the anteroom, and inside to the table. They passed the 100-paper bundles



SQNews staff regularly held meetings at the long table in the old news room.

hand-to-hand until the last man stacked them on the table. With the copies inside, workers bagged them for distribution to housing units and other destinations.

Frequently, a sudden call from the PIO announced an incoming tour. A few minutes later, a big group would show up and take seats around the table. Visitors heard staff present the newspaper's history and asked questions to satisfy their curiosity: What kind of stories do you write? Are you censored? How do you get a job at the newspaper? Do you have internet access? What are you in for?

Teachers, journalists, legislators, judges, district attorneys, governors, wardens, donors, cops, and mental health professionals composed many of the tour groups. Sometimes correctional staff from other prisons and foreign countries came. High school and college students, church groups, librarians, evangelists, and almost any other type of group one can think of visited. And once, Norwegian royalty.

Because writers outnumbered computer work stations, the big desk often served as a workspace for story creation. Writers scribbled notes,

tapped on NEOs, and sometimes conducted interviews there.

Journalism Guilds gathered around the long table to study their craft each week. Numerous symposiums assembled there.

ISUDT has moved into the space that previously served as the newsroom. They dismantled and got rid of the big table. But it looms large in the memories of San Quentin News staff. In the midst of the otherwise dilapidated, grubby environs of the old newsroom, the table was a clean, shiny surface, in a word, unusual. And valued.

Healing, rehabilitation through gardening

By Jerry Maleek Gearin
Journalism Guild Chair

Prison gardening programs in California and abroad have provided incarcerated people opportunities for an environmental education, giving them a second chance at life.

The website EarthDay.org stated that gardening programs have been known to empower incarcerated people, showing them how to address food insecurities in their communities. The objective is to bring nature-based science and environmental education into correctional facilities.

Land Together, formerly known as the Insight Garden Prison Project, at San Quentin gives residents master gardener training in conjunction with non-profit organization Planting Justice. PJ is a program that teaches incarcerated people to grow their own food, educates them about economic justice, and provides community healing, noted PJ.

"I like the soil per se. When you put your hands inside the soil, it's like putting your hands inside the Earth, becoming one with nature," said SQ resident William James Harris, 53, who paroled on April 29, 2026.

Harris was incarcerated 29 years. He said he started gardening at California State Prison-Folsom.

Harris said he became attracted to the scent of sage, because it smelled peaceful to him and put him in a place of relaxation. He added the Native Americans used sage to take away spirits and help cleanse the soul.

The sage plant affects the psychic senses, which make a person aware of details that were unknown to them. The plant enables meditation and permits access to the subconscious mind, according to the Native American Herbalist Bible by Leotie Hicks.

The alignment of ecological responsibility with prisoners'

education can transform correctional facilities into places of positive change, noted EarthDay.

Isa Pena, the Land Together project director at SQ, created a garden on the prison's main exercise yard. LT originally started in H-Unit, a lower security part of SQ, where Harris continued his gardening when transferred from Folsom..

The LT garden was placed in a high traffic area, where residents exercised only a few feet away. In the middle of the garden is a cement path that leads to a drinking fountain. One SQ resident took his canteen-purchased water container, filled it up, and watered the plants several times.

The garden area is not protected with typical prison razor wire, but SQ residents use multiple pathways to navigate through the garden with respect.

At a 2025 Day of Peace event on SQ's Lower Yard, residents painted rocks that surround the edge of the garden. The rocks were painted with rainbow colors, as well writings of positive affirmations such as: "You belong," "You matter," "Freedom," and "Thank you, Isa [Pena]."

Investment in gardening programs gives people second chances, offering psychological benefits by exposing incarcerated people to employment opportunities through green job training. The gardening programs transform people by breaking the barriers of poverty and unemployment, according to EarthDay.

The website stated that education can increase a person's future earnings by 10%, which will allow them to secure stable housing and adequate nutrition. It will also save taxpayers money when it comes to the expense of incarcerated people's healthcare.

Other correctional facilities have used different methods in their environmental programs

such as beekeeping, turtle rehabilitation, and prairie conservation. Educational gardening programs have given 1,326 college credits in gardening basics to 237 incarcerated students, stated EarthDay.

At Snake River Correctional Institute in Oregon, the prison collaborated with the Nature Imagery in Prisons Project. They found that people held in solitary confinement who viewed films about nature were 26% less likely to commit a violent act, noted the website.

Evergreen State College and the Washington State Department of Corrections partnered to empower sustainable change by bringing environmental education into its prison. Environmental programs also exist in local jails, federal prisons, and youth correctional facilities, stated EarthDay.

The website noted that in 2016 the research organization RAND discovered that people in prison who engage in any type of educational program are 43% less likely to reoffend.

Environmental education in prison is not limited to the United States. The U.K. has the Greener Prisons Initiative at His Majesty's Prison Bristol. That garden program aims to enhance ecological literacy, reduce food waste, and reconnect the incarcerated with the natural world.

Harris stated that a person who participates in a gardening program has been afforded an opportunity to learn what nature does for people, how a person who cultivates the earth can heal spiritually. The healing will begin when a person witnesses the result of their planting something and then watches it grow.

"You will never know what gardening can do for you until you try it," Harris said. "If you're the one looking for a little bit of solitude and peace of mind, then try the Insight Gardening Project."

Everyone benefits from new program space

Attitudes of participants and counselors in Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment program improve

By Charles Crowe
Staff Writer

All involved in San Quentin's Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment program are reaping the benefits of a move from the facility's gym to spaces vacated by other programs when the new Learning Center opened in March.

The gym was a challenging environment in which to run the big program and the move alleviated some of those challenges.

Parole Services Associate Dennis Farez, who has been with ISUDT since 2017, told San Quentin News that operating the program in the gym felt like a makeshift arrangement. Everyone associated with the large program was together in one big, open space not designed for classroom instruction, "But we accomplished a lot in there nonetheless," said Farez.

ISUDT is part of the Division of Rehabilitative Programs. Its five-part program includes: substance use disorder screening and assessment; medication assisted treatment for addiction disorders; cognitive behavioral interventions and therapy for all substance use disorders; supportive housing; and enhanced pre-release planning and transition services.

Before the move, the program ran ten improvised classrooms in the gym separated only by portable partitions that did little to insulate one group from the noise of others. At times the noise prevented face-to-face speakers in close proximity from hearing one another during conversations.

It was, "not an ideal learning environment," said Farez. The lighting in the space was poor and instructors had only dportable white boards on which to



Photo by Marcus Casillas //SQNews

present their curriculum.

Peer Mentor Lou Bernabei said it was hard to keep clients involved given the conditions prevalent in the gym and that he sometimes saw participants "checking out" during the program.

In spite of the difficult operating conditions in the gym, the program pushed forward, graduating 176 in September 2025. Program Director Timothy Fitzgerald talked about the impact of ISUDT. "The recidivism rate has dropped significantly since this program started," said Fitzgerald.

ISUDT works to reduce morbidity and mortality from substance use disorders, which highlights the need for a learning environment in which clients remain engaged. In the newly adopted spaces, the 10 classes that were previously separated only by portable partitions are now housed in separate classrooms. Four of those classrooms are in the Education Annex A Building and six are in Building 32, what most San Quentin residents are accustomed to calling the B Building.

"The classrooms are definitely conducive to learning," said Fitzgerald. Students previously crowded together in the gym now each have their own table. Participants have more privacy and confidentiality to

talk about difficult subjects. Instructors now have smartboards as well as white boards affixed to the walls of some of the classrooms. The smartboards give them greater flexibility with their presentations.

"The closed environment has created a safe space for everyone," said Fitzgerald. Bernabei agreed. He said of the program's clients, "I can see the difference in them. Guys don't check out."

Benefits of the program's improved surroundings extend beyond its clients. Staff that were all previously crammed into a single area now are located in three distinct spaces and the 17 incarcerated Offender Mentor Certification Program workers and six Peer Mentors are all working in improved conditions.

San Quentin resident and OMCP worker Duane Gillespie, who described himself as soft-spoken, serves in the ISUDT program. He said that the move from the gym means that the most important persons in his workday can hear him and he can hear what they have to say. "That's a morale booster for me," said Gillespie.

Fitzgerald summed up the effect of the program's move to its new spaces. "The attitude of everybody has changed," he said.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Grieving behind prison bars

By Jason L. Jackson
Staff Writer

San Quentin residents share insight and advice on dealing with the loss of family and loved ones while incarcerated.

In life, one fact stands undefeated throughout time: We will all experience the pain and heartache that often accompanies the loss of friends, family, and loved ones. How we process loss can be a determining factor in how we move forward after it has happened.

That healing journey can be an arduous one to undergo while incarcerated because distance and separation can have negative impacts on the grieving process.

“It’s hard being in prison when my son’s mother died because I couldn’t go to the funeral. I wasn’t able to connect with the family, and so I wasn’t able to grieve properly,” said San Quentin resident Tamar Thompson.

Thompson lost his girlfriend, Melinda, in February 2025. Melinda passed away from a fentanyl overdose in front of their six-year-old son. Thompson said he received the news through legal mail, with a letter from Child Protective Services notifying him of Melinda’s passing and that his son had been placed in the custody of CPS because of it.

“It was heartbreaking. We had a special bond because she gave me my first child. I just felt loss and distraught. It felt like I didn’t have anything to live for,” said Thompson.

After receiving the news, Thompson said he was placed on suicide watch after a failed suicide attempt. He would later be placed in the Enhanced Outpatient Program, a mental health-focused program that

offers direct and consistent care to incarcerated people dealing with trauma and other mental and emotional issues.

Thompson said his placement in EOP has been a literal lifesaver.

“I’ve been able to start healing because I am able to talk to my therapist and process what I’ve been through. I would’ve been lost without EOP,” said Thompson.

To help better understand and cope with the loss of a friend or loved one, some residents lean on the support of other residents.

Mourning Our Losses is a unique group at San Quentin that offers a support network for those dealing with grief. The group was born in 2021 from the ashes of the Covid-19 pandemic. More men died from the virus at San Quentin than at any other prison in the state, and residents reeling from all the death at the facility wanted to create a healthy way to process and mourn those whom they lost.

“Usually when someone dies, we mourn through violence or other negative behavior. This program provides us a healthy outlet to mourn in a positive manner,” said Arthur Jackson, a founding member of the group.

Relying on their faith also provides some residents the solace and encouragement often needed during the healing journey.

San Quentin resident Amos Carter, Jr. said his Christian faith teaches him that a person is never really lost, and that one day he will see them again. His belief helped him deal with the loss of one of his good friends, Shinti, who passed away last February after a battle with cancer.

“My faith helps me understand that my focus should be on our interaction and the moments we shared together,” said Carter, Jr.

Mark ‘Seishin’ Cádiz is a resident at San Quentin and serves as a priest for the Buddhist community at the facility. Cádiz’s practice of Buddhism helps shape his views on life and death, allowing him to create a positive approach to both.

“Do not waste time chasing the future or wallowing in the past. Understand that we all get old, fall apart, and pass away. It applies to everyone,” said Cádiz. “What I do right now in this moment is what matters.”

Cádiz said Buddhism teaches that attachment creates suffering, so we must enjoy what we have while we have it because everything comes to an end.

“How many times have we heard someone say ‘I wish I would’ve said to them I loved them?’ We must do it while people are still here,” said Cádiz.

Dealing with the death of loved ones can often be a sad and difficult experience, especially while separated from those loved ones while in prison. And yet, residents continuously discover ways to persevere.

“Talk to people so you can take your mind off of what happened. Have a good group of people around you who can help you process. I go to my mom and my grandma to help me keep myself together, so I can get back out there for my son. I listen to a lot of music too. It feeds my soul and helps me relax and deal with my depression and anxiety,” said Thompson.

Lack of transparency behind sexual abuse claims a concern

By Terrell J. Marshall
Associate Editor

Local watchdogs sounded the alarm about the lack of transparency in how sexual abuse claims are investigated inside Los Angeles County women’s jail.

“The public is not getting the truth from the Sheriff’s Department. We deserve real, accurate data about people being raped or assaulted in our jails, not hogwash,” said Hans Johnson, chair of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission.

According to L.A.Times, at the end of 2025 a federal lawsuit was filed in Los Angeles, accusing male correctional officers of spying, harassing, and groping dozens of female detainees during “shower time” at Century Regional Detention Facility in Lynwood. The case came amidst renewed inquiries into how the Sheriff’s Department handles abuse claims.

The Times found that women held at the Lynwood Facility had more than 550 allegations of harassment and sexual abuse against staff since 2021, and those who filed the grievances received retaliation. Out of the hundreds of complaints processed, none were referred to the L.A. County district attorney’s office for prosecution, which is cause for concern.

Brian Dunn, the lead civil rights attorney for the Cochran Firm, filed a lawsuit on behalf of 38 women housed at the jail. He said the women shared “chilling” allegations of “brazen” harassment and sexual abuse.

“It seems to be happening with such frequency that it was like a practice... This is something that has been accepted,” Dunn said. “It’s heartbreaking for me to hear these women crying and the only thing I can do is sue.”

In response to the lawsuit, the Sheriff’s Department said a review of all claims is underway to ensure that proper administrative investigations

were followed.

“The safety, dignity, and constitutional rights of every individual in our custody remains our top priority,” noted the department. “We are committed to transparent operations, through investigations, and maintaining the high standards of professional conduct.”

The civil complaint filed in the Central District of California stated the abuses occurred in Lynwood jail’s administrative segregation unit, better known as “the hole.” Allegations include male deputies watching nude women taking showers. This violates the Prison Rape Elimination Act, which prohibits “cross-gender viewing” by staff.

While escorting women to the showers, male guards would press their crotches up against handcuffed hands, “and intentionally fondle inmates’ hips, buttocks and bodies in a sexual manner,” noted the complaint.

The Times obtained a statement from the Sheriff’s Department claiming they maintain a zero-tolerance policy regarding all forms of sexual abuse and harassment in its facilities, especially misconduct and abuse of authority.

Overseers of L.A. County’s women’s jails include the Sybil Brand Commission, which documents sexual harassment and abuse complaints.

Commission Chair Haley Broder described the detainees as “some of the most vulnerable women on earth. They can’t do anything; they’re locked in a cell and being retaliated against if they report it.”

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center resident Steve Ramos said, “Nobody should be above the law.”

Through his personal road to redemption, Ramos said he has spent years learning about victim awareness, understanding character defects, and the causative factors of crime.

“Taking accountability for a crime, having empathy, remorse, and respect for the victim are the first steps toward healing,” Ramos said.

Ramos believes emotional and physical abuse cause trauma that will impact a person’s life forever. He said the healing process cannot begin until the perpetrators of abuse are held accountable for their actions.

“When correctional officers abuse their authority and take advantage of women in custody, the ripple effect is immeasurable,” Ramos said. He explained that the purpose of an officer’s job is public safety.

“If an officer is hurting somebody they are hired to protect, then their trust within the community is broken,” Ramos said. “Again, it all starts with accountability, and nobody should be above the law.”

SQRC transgender resident Cassandra Evans said there are privacy practices used inside her housing unit that protect members of the LGBTQ community when showering.

According to Evans, correctional officers at SQRC respect their privacy and help combat “cross-gender viewing.”

“For a while the CO’s would give us privacy screens to stop the ‘shower sharks’ from harassing us. Now we shower after everybody else is locked down,” which she said resolved the issue.

In regard to the women at the L.A. jail Evans said, “Male officers should never oversee females in custody during shower time. Stop it!”

Retired L.A. County Inspector General Max Huntsman told the Times he believes that the L.A. Sheriff’s Department is “not in compliance with PREA in many senses.”

Huntsman added that the allegations of abuse in the Lynwood women’s case are “one of the many times when the county could have avoided litigation by simply correcting conditions.”

Brian Dunn, attorney representing the victimized women, many of whom are still in custody, said, “Behind every one of those paragraphs in that complaint is a human story.”

Audio podcast Uncuffed yields agency for trainees

By Michael Callahan
Managing Editor

Audio podcast UnCuffed won multiple awards in 2025, including the prestigious Grand Award, at the New York Festival Radio Awards.

“To share our stories and have them be successful and then win awards is definitely validation, as if the public is honoring our stories,” said resident facilitator Matthew Sheppard.

Over the years organizations like San Francisco Press Club, Media for a Just Society, Solutions Journalism Network, and Public Media Journalism Awards have recognized the audio stories produced in UnCuffed. For more than a decade residents in the programs within the walls of San Quentin, California Institute for Women, and Soledad have been recognized and won 19 awards.

Sheppard said Season 4 of the podcast resonated with so many because the theme was going home. Formerly incarcerated resident facilitator Greg Eskridge told his journey of paroling after nearly three decades in prison. Sheppard said hearing about what home looked like for others and where individuals found a feeling of home in unexpected places was relatable.

Many graduates of the program have said sharing stories that highlight vulnerability, compassion, and bravery has helped them to connect with their lived experiences. Two of the six graduates paroled shortly after the culmination

of the class and Sheppard is on his way home.

“After going through that journey together and learning what it is like to produce award-winning content and develop a good work ethic, I am hopeful about the job opportunities that are ahead of me,” Shepard said.

The award-winning organization has been a launching pad for careers in media and changing the narrative about people in prison. Recently Eskridge was promoted to UnCuffed Director.

“Learning to produce and edit isn’t just technical training, it’s agency. When someone inside produces their own story, they’re not just sharing their story, they’re shaping perspective. They’re participating in civic life in a way that the system often tries to deny them,” Eskridge said.

Longtime Senior Editor Ninna Gaensler Debs and Senior Producer Angela Johnston come into San Quentin weekly with a mission to give a voice to the incarcerated through an audio podcast training program. This gives the participants an opportunity to express their humanity, develop job skills, and inspire change.

“What we really appreciate is that the stories that were selected as finalists or winners clearly showed the impact of incarcerated storytelling on the wider media landscape,” Gaensler Debs said.

UnCuffed looks to a future in the Media Center that allows the incarcerated storytellers to deepen their vulnerability and

accountability rather than just expand. The infrastructure is strengthened through high level training while offering clear pathways for leadership once released. Participants learn how to navigate Pro Tools computer software and how to edit and develop stories on their own.

Ultimately, the goal is sustainability, building a model that proves incarcerated people can produce work of real journalistic and cultural value and that society is better when everyone is heard.

“When incarcerated people are given the tools to produce, edit, and tell their own stories, it shifts the narrative from being spoken about to speaking for themselves,” Eskridge said.

2025 Awards

- Grand Award — New York Festival Radio Awards
- Gold Winner — Human & Civil Rights Awards: Awareness category
- Gold Winner — Activism, Public Service & Social Impact Awards
- Finalist — New York Festival Radio Awards, Documentary, Social Issues
- Finalist — Best Documentary Podcast (Individual Episode)
- Society of Professional Journalists, Northern California, Community Journalism (radio/audio/podcast — small division)

YOUTH

Kid CAT participant discovers empathy

By Antoine Brown
Contributing Writer

Empathy never came to me naturally. Where I came from, one didn’t really sit around thinking about how other people felt. Early on, I learned that showing too much emotion could make me a target. Instead of learning how to feel, I learned how to shut off my feelings.

When I became a member of Kid CAT, working on my empathy and remorse through groups like First Step and Juvenile Lifers Support Group was one of my main goals. I began to understand that empathy meant more than saying “I’m sorry.” It’s about recognizing the impact of what I’ve done by putting myself in someone else’s position, even when it’s painful. It also means asking myself how I would feel if the situation were reversed—that kind of thinking didn’t come easily.

At the same time, I’ve had to reflect on where I came from. Kid CAT’s “First Step” helped me realize that my environment shaped a

lot of my beliefs. The gangs and the drug use counted as contributing factors of gang membership. Everything was about loyalty, reputation, and respect. I didn’t think about the people on the receiving end of my actions, I didn’t think about their families, or the pain I might’ve caused.

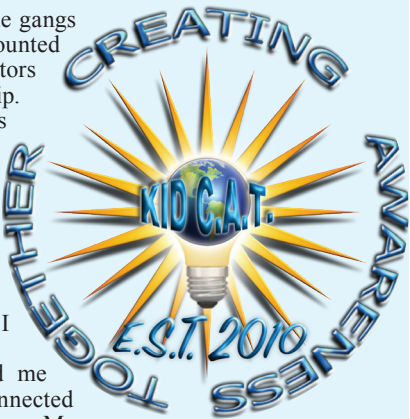
Kid CAT showed me that I was disconnected from my humanity. My path of growth and accountability showed me one of the hardest facts I’ve had to face: the truth that I’ve hurt people for a long time. I avoided those thoughts, I made excuses or told myself that my victims got what they deserved. Truth, though, won’t go away by ignoring it. Learning to feel empathy and compassion has been uncomfortable and, quite frankly, scary, but the results have been extremely rewarding.

Kid CAT made me recognize empathy not as a weakness, but as a strength. It actually gave me strength

to be honest with myself and face the past. It gave me strength to feel guilt and not run away from it. It gave me strength to want to change, even when I couldn’t change what I had done.

I’m still a work in progress and I’m learning every day. Kid CAT made building real empathy a part of my becoming a better person, someone who thinks before acting, someone who understands the weight of choices, and someone willing to take responsibility for them.

I’m not where I want to be yet, but I know that I’ll get there.



GAMES

CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Michael Fangman

"Fireworks!"
Edited by Jan Perry

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69														

Across

1. Washington, Hamilton, and Jefferson et al. - from the British perspective at least
14. It sits on the end of your pencil, patiently waiting for you to make a mistake worth fixing
15. TV Series featuring a women's prison: _____ is the New Black
16. A bond among men: _____ and _____
17. 1980's era video game wherein insect like alien ships spiral in from either side of the screen
18. _____-noid: a fish that has man tiny projections on its scales, from the Greek word *kten*, meaning "comb"
19. He's currently the Bishop of Rome
21. A different kind of colonial citizen, this mound-dwelling insect serves the needs of a queen
22. _____ vez - a Spanish second chance
23. Definitely not sad
25. A backwards walking amphibian
26. They have sponsors
27. Yes in Spain
28. It follows dē and precedes gē in the modern English alphabet
30. A little gloss
31. It united the 13 colonies (2 words)
37. Something incredibly tiny, often denoting a factor of 10⁻⁹
38. This company is one of the largest payroll providers in the world
39. According to one famous joke, seven ate it...
41. These 3 words describe a deck whose remaining face cards are Queens, Jacks, and Aces
45. It has a lot of pilots (abbr.)
47. You can get one at a JC
48. The "Georgia Peach" to most baseball historians
50. A certain Nickel on the table _____-rish (Russian "comrade")
52. "You are entitled to your own opinions, but not your own _____."
55. A person with low standards of personal cleanliness, from the 18th Century world *slab*, meaning "muddy place" or "sludge"
57. A regretful cooking step?
59. Michael Stipe led band from Athens
61. An English title (abbr.)
62. An evening meal, served scrambled
65. An out of this world dish?
67. An Italian musical scale
68. A slow, stately dance for two in triple time, popular especially during the 18th century in America
69. The refrain of a popular patriotic American hymn

Down

1. Slang term for 18th Century British soldiers (and their manner of dress)
2. A list of corrected errors at the end of a book or subsequent journal
3. He was Anakin once
4. American Intelligence during WWII
5. Kings of _____ (band named after a provincial capital in Northern Spain)
6. You might find some ashes there
7. Hollywood blockbuster wherein an unlikely pairing of Will Smith and Randy Quaid saves the world
8. A small block or peg of wood. Also short for 14-Down
9. This inland sea in central Asia sits between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was an environmental disaster from 1960-1990
10. _____ eigh: North Carolinian capital
11. Where Paw Sox competed (2 words)
12. A holiday drink, made with beaten eggs, cream, and often, alcohol
13. "Grungy" Puget Sound port city named after a Suquamish chief
19. It's on Dodgers baseball caps
20. Popular 1970's swimwear brand
23. Not her
24. It's a "yes" in Congress
27. It's where you'll find modern art while visiting 15-Down (abbr.)
29. Ha! The joke's on you. This bone isn't really even a bone!
31. A cylindrical metal container, in which food and drinks can be kept
32. John Lennon's wife, Yoko _____
33. A rowboat has this, not a paddle
34. California restaurant chain best known for woodfired pizza (abbr.)
35. Hansen of *Deadliest Catch* fame
36. It's an O-I in the USN
40. Mel Gibson played one in this movie of the same name
42. A clumsy and unintelligent person, from the Norse *álfr*, meaning "elf"
43. If "it" and "is" had a baby...
44. A certain cracked bell
46. Just missed the bronze medal?
49. An empty keg? (2 words)
51. It's a big cup of coffee
53. You can find Little Rock here
54. Two letters that register for you?
56. Looking for the words to describe an aggressive hemline?
58. You can find Niners there often
60. A list of Independent Univ.
63. Little _____ X
64. County prosecutors (abbr.)
65. It's social media optimization!
66. A demolished motel?

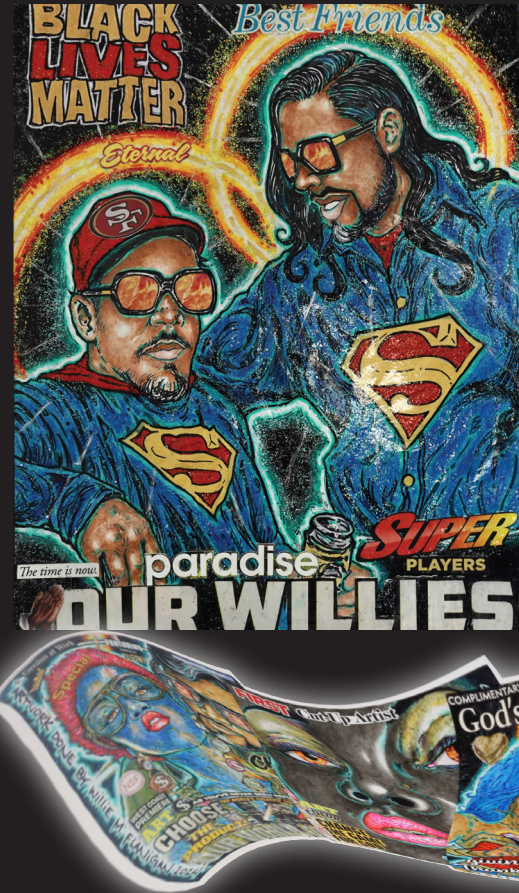
ARTS



Photos by Marcus Casillas //SQNews



Discarded magazine pages motivate artist



By Edwin E. Chavez
Spanish Journalism
Guild Chair

San Quentin resident Willie Flanigan invested his time in recreating images from discarded magazines. As a proud Black man, he watched on television all the injustices Black people underwent on a daily basis.

According to Flanigan, prior to his incarceration he used to share a strong bond with his father. Part of this bond consisted of their days when they used to dress up with Superman costumes.

Flanigan shared that he was a victim of police brutality. This motivated him to create a piece named Black Lives Matter in honor of his late father and of those who have been victims of police brutality.

"I have PTSD as a result of being a victim of police encounters. Having barely survived, this is my way of dealing with my PTSD," said Flanigan. He also created a piece named I Come in My Father's Name, in reference to his father's legacy and his own legacy. Flanigan feels that in the world

of chaos even heroes need heroes, in reference to Superwoman and Superman while they are holding a Bible.

Flanigan's, innovation could be seen as another example of how art can be taken to a completely new level.

After being served chicken on the bone, he started saving the bones when he was finished eating. Through patience and perseverance, he was able to put together his first necklace, with a picture of his beloved father as a medallion.

"This is a Voo Doo blessing [Caribbean] charmed spiritual growth and personal development," said Flanigan. It took him two weeks to complete this project after he had collected the bones. Voodoo

He customized his art on a hat that is embossed with his last name in a graphic style. The special effects are full of glitter and different paints which he says are 100 percent original.

Flanigan attempted to honor all beautiful Black women through his art. He worked on himself during his 10 years of incarceration. He gained multiple coping

skills including practicing patience while working on his projects. He was released from San Quentin Rehabilitation Center to a drug program in order to get his new life together.

"You can't come out of prison without a plan. You need to be objective and have a good plan. We cannot leave it up to others to get our lives together," concluded Flanigan.



SUDOKU

1		9		8	2	6		
	2			6				
			1			9	4	
6	3				8			
2		8		5		9		7
			6			3	2	
3	4				6			
				2		4		
		2	9	4		3		8

		2		7				
5	1			2			7	
7			4			2		
3			6			4		2
			9	5	7			
6		1		3				8
		7		4				9
	5			3			1	7
				6		5		

SOLUTIONS

8	9	6	1	7	6	7	9	4
9	7	4	8	2	9	1	8	6
6	2	1	9	4	7	8	7	3
2	8	9	4	1	9	7	6	5
4	9	6	7	9	8	1	2	7
5	1	7	8	6	2	4	9	3
7	6	2	9	6	1	9	4	8
1	8	9	6	9	4	8	2	7
8	4	9	2	8	7	6	9	1

across

7	8	9	6	9	4	8	2	1
6	2	1	9	4	7	8	7	3
2	8	9	4	1	9	7	6	5
4	9	6	7	9	8	1	2	7
5	1	7	8	6	2	4	9	3
7	6	2	9	6	1	9	4	8
1	8	9	6	9	4	8	2	7
8	4	9	2	8	7	6	9	1

A	R	I	N	N	O	O	A	W	S	I	S	I	H	L
L	E	N	N	I	W	Y	V	A	V	L	L	O		
R	E	O	N	W	S	D	E	N	N	R	I			
E	O	N	W	S	D	E	N	N	R	I				
R	O	T	S	S	L	O	V	A	L	O	J			
I	N		A	L	N	V	V							
T	S	9	N	I	K	E	R	O	W	O	N			
E	N	I	N	D	O	V	O	N	V	N				
E	S	N	O	V	O	N	O	W	O	N				
T	O		D	E	E	I	S							
L	O	V	D	A	D	V	H	V	R	L	O			
L	N	V	T	O	E	T	N							
V	O	V	T	V	O		N	O	S	D	V			
E	N	V	R	O	N	R	O	S	V	E	R			
S	E	I	R	V	N	O		L	N	T	O	A		