

## CELEBRATING OUR 150th EDITION

By Marcus Henderson  
Editor in Chief

Struggles, tragedies and triumphs are what a good story and powerful dynasties are built on. *SQNews* is honored to reach another milestone by celebrating our 150<sup>th</sup> edition.

This illustrious milestone was almost derailed by the deadly Covid-19 outbreak that claimed 28 of our incarcerated peers' lives. Seven *SQNews* staff also paroled throughout the Covid-19 outbreak, leaving a huge void in our production team.

We found ourselves without our executive editor, managing editor, photographer and both of our layout designers. We were proud of their releases; some of their sentences were commuted by Gov. Gavin Newsom and others were found suitable at the parole board.

We immediately began to rebuild our team from scratch and promoted from within our existing staff. We started holding our Journalism Guild classes within the housing units. This allowed us to train new reporters.

For months, most of the staff members were separated. We were allowed to interact with only those in our own building or housing unit. The Covid-19 pandemic shut down the world's societies and businesses, sparking shelter-in-place orders. These protocols shut down prison programs nationwide as well. *SQNews* production screeched to a halt like the rest of the world. But our dedicated and persistent outside advisers contacted San Quentin administration and the California



San Quentin News was given new life in 2008 under then-Warden Robert Ayers, Jr. The newspaper was initially printed at San Quentin's own vocational print shop (above), where prisoners,

including SQN all-star alumnus Richard "Bonaru" Richardson, learned the trade. Here, Richardson worked alongside print shop instructor John Wilkerson to create SQN's highly sought-after calendars.

Archive photo

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation headquarters to revive the newspaper.

While other media outlets were covering the rise of Covid-19 and its associated deaths around the world and the nation, incarcerated voices

were missing. CDCR, San Quentin administration and our advisers worked out a correspondence program whereby *SQNews* staff could receive research and source material through the administration's office.

Aly Tamboura, former *SQNews*

layout designer, was instrumental in getting the Friends of San Quentin News, our support network, a grant to fund a fellowship program for our paroled staff members. The paroled

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## Third annual Mental Wellness Week promotes suicide prevention

By Bostyon Johnson  
Staff Writer

San Quentin celebrated its third annual Mental Wellness Week in September to promote suicide awareness and prevention through events aimed at encouraging, empowering and inspiring the residents of San Quentin State Prison.

The week of fun-filled events concentrated on a variety of mental-wellness support systems and emotional check-in opportunities for individuals to support their fellow humans who may be struggling to overcome a circumstance or situation.

For additional coverage of mental health matters, please see page 7

"We're promoting anything that brings people joy," said Dr. E. Anderson, organizer of the event and the Suicide Prevention Coordinator here at The Q.

Mental Wellness Week allowed residents of San Quentin to have access to a special platform where they can be vulnerable yet relaxed in an environment outside of formal groups and classrooms.

"Preparation for the event started in 2021 while everyone was locked down. It is Dr. Anderson's compassion that gave me the courage to give

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## Candidates for State Assembly visit San Quentin media center



Damon Connolly (left) and Sara Aminzadeh are both vying for the 12th District State Assembly seat at this year's midterm election

Tony Singh, *SQNews*

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

The two top candidates for the 12<sup>th</sup> District State Assembly seat in California visited San Quentin State Prison ahead of the November 2022 election.

Damon Connolly and Sara Aminzadeh, both democrats, stopped by SQ to hear about its rehabilitation programs and talk about their campaigns. Both are vying for the Assembly seat vacated by Marc Levine, who is pursuing the job of California Insurance Commissioner.

"I am hoping to be in a position to represent you at the state level," Connolly said. From a personal stand-

point, I want to advocate for programs that will help us turn around people's lives."

Connolly and his aide, Gustavo Goncalves, sat down with a group of incarcerated people and had a round table discussion about Mt. Tam College, *San Quentin News*, the Shakespeare program, and other aspects of SQ.

"I'm a fan of *San Quentin News*," Connolly said. "I read several copies over the years. Looking to learn more about the newspaper in particular."

The San Rafael resident has a law degree from the University of California at Berkeley. He is from a

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## GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS: CHAMPS RETURN TO THE Q



Tony Singh, *SQNews*

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

The Golden State Warriors, champions of the NBA, sent members of their organization to San Quentin to support the incarcerated population and resume their basketball rivalry with the San Quentin Warriors. The visiting team won the Sept. 16 game, 83-65, and extended their series lead to 5-3.

The team the GSW brought in to play was led by owner Joe Lacob's athletic sons, Kirk and Kent Lacob, and was comprised of coaches, trainers and front-office staff from the organization. The new group included two women

who balled out on the court to the delight of the crowd, and featured former NBA and college players along with the GSW's top assistant coach, Kenny Atkins, who served as head coach for the game.

It was the first time the GSW had been able to return for their annual visit and game since the pandemic began over two years ago.

Kent Lacob emphasized how much they all missed being able to come into to San Quentin. "I really enjoy coming here to spend time with you guys... There was so much positive energy here today. No matter whether

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**SanQuentinNews.com**

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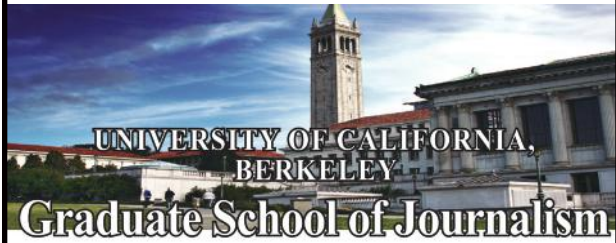


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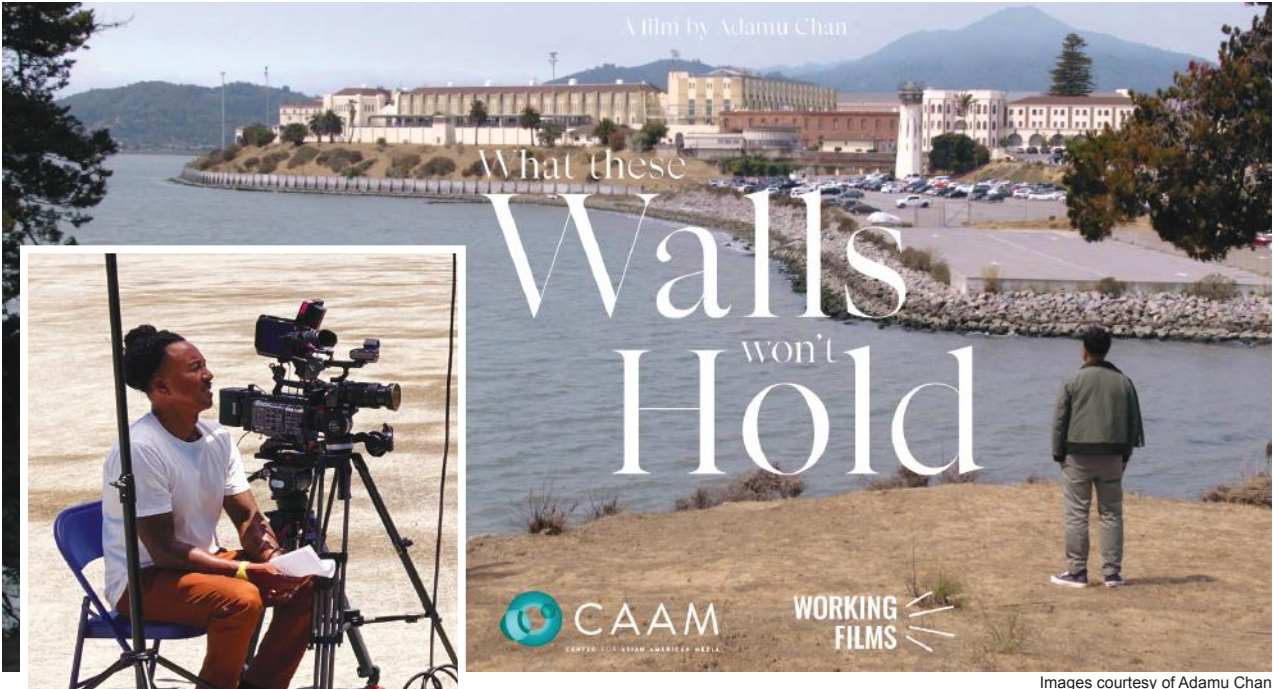
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PROFILE



Documentarian returns to San Quentin

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

Former San Quentin State Prison resident and Bay Area native, Adamu Chan, has created a documentary film about the SQ Covid-19 outbreak. The film, entitled *What These Walls Won't Hold*, is about 40 minutes long and details the relationships, struggles, and connections that transcended prison walls during the deadly outbreak. "This film tracks the origins of Covid-19 inside the California state prison system and a newly formed coalition led by currently and formerly incarcerated people," Chan wrote in an email. Chan is referring to the #StopSanQuentinOutbreak coalition that was formed in the summer of 2020. The coalition brought forth an "abolitionist framework to a life or death situation," according to Chan. The film was screened at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco on June 5, 2022. It follows Chan's relationship with his best friend Isa Borgeson and formerly incarcerated person Lonnie Morris as well as Rahsaan "New York" Thomas, current co-host of SQ's *Earhustle*. Chan spent 13 years in Cal-

ifornia's prison system, the last two at San Quentin. He was fortunate to be moved during the outbreak from the West Block housing unit to H-Unit's dorm living, which was unaffected by Covid at the time. During the Covid lockdown, he stayed connected to friends and family via phone calls and letters. While at SQ, Chan joined a media center program called First Watch, which helped him develop skills for documentary filmmaking. First Watch has since changed its name to Forward This Productions. As part of First Watch, Chan walked around the prison with film crews to make short clips about prison life. These clips were broadcast at prisons throughout the state. Chan also wrote several articles for outside publications that detailed the dismal conditions inside the prison system during the outbreak. "It was there that I learned the technical aspects of filmmaking," he said, "but also formed my commitment to serving and representing the community of incarcerated people across the state with this powerful platform." He was eventually granted a Penal Code Section 1170 recall of sentence while the surge was ongoing and

paroled. Chan started working at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, went to school and continued pursuing his passion of studying film. In 2022, Chan became a Mellon Artist Fellow at Stanford's Center for the Comparative Study in Race and Ethnicity. The fellowship provides funding for a year of film making projects. "Being a person who has been impacted by harmful narratives and representation in the media, it informs my purpose and fuels my desire to create work that shifts perspectives," Chan said. "I want to help reverse the harms of the Prison Industrial Complex." To date, Covid has killed over 200 incarcerated people in California and more than 50 correctional officers. It has also affected the lives of tens of thousands of incarcerated people and their families. Chan's goal is to make films that open up avenues for people who have also been impacted by incarceration. He hopes system-impacted people can tell their own stories and share their experiences in a way that feels true to them — rather than allowing these narrative to be shaped by the state or the biases of outside media. Chan hopes that his film will be available for screening

at SQ in the fall of 2022. "My work is rooted in the belief that cultural strategies can drive political transformation, and to do this, directly-impacted people must have the resources and opportunities needed to tell their own stories," said Chan. Chan wants to inspire people to overcome the violence and pain of incarceration. He encourages incarcerated people to stay closely connected to outside communities and the loved ones that help hold them together. "This film is a testament to the transformative power of our relationships, which reach across prison walls and beyond separations of power to actualize the world impacted communities are fighting to create," he said. "I see my art as a commitment to communities who are fighting for their very existence." Chan is referring to communities around the Bay Area that are either undergoing gentrification or facing the threat thereof. "I see my role as maintaining a collective memory of the people, places, and experiences that make up the Bay Area that are under threat of disappearing," he said. Chan's next project will be to direct a short documentary about a local activist for PBS.

SQ volunteer campaigns for Oakland mayoral seat

By Timothy Hicks  
Staff Writer

Oakland mayoral candidate, community activist, and San Quentin volunteer Allyssa Victory is running to be the new Mayor of Oakland in the upcoming November election. If she wins, she would replace the current Mayor, Libby Schaaf, who is terming out. If elected, Victory would make history as the first Black woman to be Mayor of Oakland — the city's 51st mayor. Victory wasn't born in Oakland but says her heart bleeds Oakland, where she was raised and lives now. Growing up in the city, she is familiar with the hardships that come with it, including homelessness. She overcame her own adversities through education and studying law, becoming the first in her family to go to college, and developed a passion for helping others along the way. Growing up, she attended public schools in Oakland's Bushrod neighborhood where her family bought their first home after being evicted in Berkeley. Victory says she and her younger sister were raised by their mother and extended

family while her other siblings lived with her father deep in East Oakland. Since her youth, Victory has been no stranger to hard work. She pursued a higher education while continuing to support her community. She earned a bachelor's degree with honors in Ethnic Studies and a minor in Black Studies from University of California at San Diego. Victory went on to earn an impressive list of accomplishments and achievements including earning a law degree with a Government Law concentration from the University of California Hastings College of the Law. Victory currently works as a criminal justice attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Northern California and as legal counsel to Communications Workers of America, Local 9415. She also frequents San Quentin on Fridays to facilitate a group named *PREVAIL*. "The purpose of *PREVAIL* is to educate the youth on why it is important to understand history," said Philippe Kelly, an incarcerated co-facilitator of the group. "Gaining insight for where self-hate came from.

The class shows us ways to love ourselves as a people to prevent us from killing ourselves and others." Victory's background provides insight into some of the issues that she intends to combat if she is elected mayor of Oakland, which include housing, public safety, and economic justice. Solutions to these problems are urgently needed. The homeless crisis in Oakland is at an all-time high. In a campaign email, Victory said she has been fighting for an Oakland where all people are housed, healthy, safe and restored. Oakland also faces challenges with its economy and employment. Notably, the city has recently lost two of its three major sports franchises — the Raiders, who are now in Las Vegas, and the Golden State Warriors, who are now in San Francisco. The city's third sports team, the Oakland Athletics, are being approached by Las Vegas casino billionaires in an effort to lure the team to Las Vegas. Until the election is decided, life for Victory will continue to include coming into the prison and working with the men in



Stock Image

blue, helping them with their transformations. "Working with Allysa has taught me what it's truly like to show up as a professional — dedicated, open, with a willingness to empower participants to challenge their beliefs and perceptions. And to also become mentors to pass along the knowledge they have obtained to others," Philippe Kelly said. At the end of her campaign email, Victory ended with a quote from the first Black woman to run for president of the United States, Shirley Chisholm: "I'm looking to no man walking this earth for approval of what I'm doing."



PROGRAMS

# Offender Mentor program changes lives at the Q



From left : Watson Allison, Larry Johnson, Chris Price (Program Director), Henok Rufael, Che Hoskins (Associate Program Director), Todd Winkler

Vincent O'Bannon, SQNews

Treatment programs throughout California's adult prisons.

"OMCP is a program that requires you to work on yourself first," said mentor Larry Johnson. "This program has been so beneficial and is a blessing from God for me. I can help so many people; also, this is a real job for me when I parole."

After completion of training and internship hours, offender mentors earn certificates that are recognized by the Department of Health Care Services. This can assist in obtaining employment as a drug counselor upon release.

In order to graduate and become certified, mentors must pass a written AOD counselor exam issued by the certifying organization. Additionally, each mentor is closely supervised through a 2,000-hour counseling internship within the ISUDT program.

"I've learned that effective counseling is not about 'teaching' or 'coaching' people how to be sober," said program participant Todd Winkler. "It is about helping people decide for themselves that they want to commit to sobriety. In this manner, addiction counseling is not about leading horses to water, it is about helping the horses realize that they are thirsty. This program has helped me to become a better listener and more empathetic towards others."

For Henok Rufael, the program has been more than just beneficial. "It is life changing. It has introduced me to a brotherhood and fraternity of support, accountability and lifelong relationships founded in growth and support," Rufael said. "OMCP is one of the most valuable experiences I have had in my years of incarceration."

Watson Allison spent 35 of his 40 years of incarceration at San Quentin. Originally, he was on Death Row but was re-sentenced to 25-to-life. Allison is the only individual from Death Row to complete OMCP.

His OMCP training began in June of 2015 at Solano State Prison. After gaining his certification he worked as an incarcerated mentor for five years. Allison paroled in July of 2020. For the past eight months, at age 63, he has returned to San Quentin to work as a free-staff counselor.

"The most beneficial thing for me was gaining the courage to look within myself and address my issues," Allison said. "The program helped me prepare for the Board by allowing me to be totally open and transparent. I want to give thanks to Kimberly Chu [supervising Correctional Counselor] at Solano. Thanks to CCIII Collins at San Quentin for believing in me and encouraging me when I did not believe in myself."

Additional information about the OMCP program is available at [www.cdcr.ca.gov/rehabilitation/omcp.html](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/rehabilitation/omcp.html)

## San Quentin News

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The *San Quentin News* strives to include our readers' voices in every issue. We invite prison residents, staff and volunteers to submit your original articles, letters to the editor and art for potential publication. Submissions should be clear, concise (350 words or less), true and of interest to our incarcerated community.


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

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## Peer-based support program assists with addiction counseling

By Richard Fernandez  
Staff Writer

The Offender Mentor Certification Program is changing incarcerated lives for the better.

OMCP is a volunteer program that provides long-term

offenders a year of training to become a "certified offender mentor." The program focuses on Alcohol and Other Drug addiction counseling. Once graduated, the mentors are assigned to serve as co-facilitators within the Integrated Substance Use Disorder

## SQ debuts hi-tech audio engineering program

By Juan Haines  
Senior Editor

Four days a week, Yu "Paul" Chen gets up early. He makes his way through a checkpoint and then a heavy, medieval-looking metal door to sit behind a 21<sup>st</sup> century computer where he works on the sound design for a fictional commercial.

"I read the books inside the cell and use the classroom for hands-on — to maximize the resources available to us," Chen said.

Chen is one of 12 incarcerated students in an audio and video engineering program at San Quentin State Prison. The curriculum includes the fundamentals of audio engineering, audio post-production, and techniques for mixing music and spoken-word. The backbone of the course is Avid Pro-Tools, the industry-standard software for digital audio processing. The students also learn critical thinking and problem-solving techniques.

Four years ago, Chen completed a coding program in which he learned webpage development skills. Chen says that the coding program was good for him and allowed him to refresh his skills and keep up with industry standards for web applications.

"Before I came to prison, the web had not quite launched for everyone," Chen said. "It had just started. Now, I know that I can contribute and earn a nice living."

He continued coding until he was selected for the audio and video engineering program.

"I hope in the future, I can combine coding and audio," Chen said. "This is the first step in learning what's in the recording industry."

Chen's hope turned brighter on Sept. 7 when the parole board determined he was suitable for release.



Lt. S. Robinson, Public Information Officer / CDCR

Yu Chen mans his workstation, learning the technical side of audio engineering.

"My feelings are for the victim's family," Chen said. "Twenty-seven years ago, I would be lacking that feeling. I have compassion for the people who are hostile for my release. For that, I feel that I am a better person."

To qualify for the audio and video engineering program, applicants must have a General Education Diploma or high school diploma, two-to-four years left on their current sentence, an excellent (recent) disciplinary record, no prior record for cyber crimes, and a desire to pursue computer programming and/or education post-release.

Lawrence "Tank" Cox-Davis, 33, already an accomplished musician, has performed in churches and clubs since he was 16 years old.

"I always wanted to produce music, but I never knew the technical side," Cox-Davis said. "With the stuff I'm learning, I can go right into a studio, because I'm learning the industry standard and I can speak the

professional jargon."

Cox-Davis says he thought the course would be more difficult than it is, but "how we're taught makes it a lot easier, so when I hit the streets, I won't have to worry about a paycheck."

Cox-Davis says the audio and engineering program is "one of the best" investments that taxpayers could make, because he's confident that when he's paroled he won't be coming back to prison.

Quinn "Cory" Martin, 42, recalled an interview process that contained a lot of "what if" questions regarding high stress situations.

"Being asked those kinds of questions made me feel normal," Martin said. "I felt comfortable, like I'm preparing for a job once I'm out of here."

Martin said that when he got an acceptance letter in the mail, he felt like his life was picking up. The accomplished musician said that his limited experience in sound design prior to incarceration slowed

his career.

"Now, I'm learning sound design the right way," Martin said. "We have the tools right in front of us and if we have any questions, we have Google Meet."

Martin talks about using his free time to create his own music. "We'll get dry audio and learn how to spice it up," Martin said as he flips through a *Step-by-Step Mixing* guidebook with color-coded notes.

The program also includes professional development assistance for fundamentals such as résumé writing, how to apply for a Social Security Number, an identification card, transitional housing and other basic services formerly incarcerated persons might need.

Martin says he has less than a year to serve in prison and aims to complete the course before he paroled.

"This shows that I wasn't wasting my time in prison," Martin said. "Plus, my daughter sings and I would love to record her."



Wellness

Continued from page 1

back to the community,” said the week’s emcee, incarcerated resident Louis Light.

“I am CCCMS, and helping her organize the event with our committee allows me to see I am not alone. Twenty-eight years ago, when I joined mental health, it was stigmatized. Today I am proud to be a part of mental health rehabilitation,” Light said.

The opening event was called Hope Gathers and featured Alive Inside, who performed easy-listening music for the 80 incarcerated people in attendance. Performers John Elliott, Chelsea Coleman, Lydia, Rachel Garcia, Than Tran and Nick Jaina filled the chapel with live music. After sharing some of their mental wellness experiences and personal stories, they opened up the stage for members of the audience to share their struggles.

“I am so grateful to be here,” said Timmy Estrada, a resident of West Block, who discussed his journey to find his higher power and the mental struggles that he endured.

Besides music, the week

Annual Mental Wellness Week celebrates life, focuses on suicide prevention



Mental Health staff and prison administrators from San Quentin pose with members of the Golden State Warriors during the prison's annual Mental Wellness Week events.

was filled with poetry, a magic showcase, open forums, art, sports and a special presentation from members of the Board of Parole Hearings on the hearings process and how to find support.

Many incarcerated individ-

uals took the stage in support of mental wellness by reciting poems, testimonies, raps and spoken word, validating the idea of seeking help from support groups that are available within California Department of Corrections and Rehabili-

tation.

Tuesday’s event was a magic show performed by professional magicians Taylor Hughes and Cameron Zvara. Some of the incarcerated population was invited to the stage to help with the

tricks. There were moments of excitement as the visiting performers awed the audience with mind-blowing displays of magic illusions.

This included a notable performance where a Rubik’s cube was passed around to the

audience to change however they saw fit. Once that Rubik’s cube was collected by the performer, the cube matched identically to a Rubik’s cube that was located in a jar on the table.

Every speaker was followed by a live performance by one of the visiting musicians. The last day of Mental Wellness Week was Field Day. This was a fun-filled day for everyone to gather outside the chapel on the Lower Yard to witness expressive arts, music and recreation activities.

The benefits of the week were not limited solely to residents. “You guys teach me more than anyone on the outside... It has changed my life to come in here,” said Big Ned, speaking of his experiences visiting San Quentin.

Suicide awareness and prevention continues to be an important focus of CDCR, according to the coordinating team for Mental Wellness Week. Anyone needing help should speak up and reach out to their facility’s mental health staff. After all, one of the big themes of Mental Wellness Week is that we all need help sometimes.



Dao Ong, SQNews

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staff was tasked with research, transcribing the incarcerated staff’s articles and laying out the paper. Bi-weekly conference calls were held with the SQNews editor in chief, advisers and prison administrators for updates and to insure that the mission of “written by the incarcerated” was intact. In this way, SQNews was able to sustain production for the 14 months the staff was out of the newsroom.

In 2021, SQNews won five awards from the California News Publishers Association for the Best of the Best of 2020 contest. Two of those awards were for our coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak within the prison.

Eventually, SQNews returned to the newsroom fully staffed. The newspaper was once again being designed within the prison walls. But the new staff had to learn to produce the paper quickly, because different Covid-19 variants have caused multiple quarantines within the prison. However, the staff’s passion for reporting never wavered. The hard work paid off when SQNews won seven CNPA awards in the 2021 contest.

For 82 years, the SQNews

San Quentin News marks 150th Edition since the newspaper’s 2008 resurrection

has continued to find ways to thrive and reinvent. In 2008, after a more than 20-year hiatus, the newspaper was resurrected. Like the proverbial phoenix that had risen out of the ashes, the newspaper has weathered periods of administration suspensions, funding challenges and the tragic death of our inspirational leader Arnulfo Garcia.

In January 2018, SQNews celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> edition. This milestone came after enduring the closure of the print shop in 2010, including a 45-day administrative suspension in 2014 for what was deemed to be “circumventing the editorial process.”

In 2010, the SQNews was able to survive when Michael “Harry O” Harris, co-founder of Death Row Records and SQNews editor in chief (at the time), paid out of his own pocket for the Marin Sun Printing company to print the paper. However, Harris was transferred to federal prison after his state sentence was completed, and the newspaper was faced with another funding challenge.

SQNews adviser Steve McNamara stepped in and created the Prison Media

Project that helped supplement funding generated from grants and donations. It was after a large grant from The Reva and David Logan Foundation and the Jonathan Logan Family Foundation that the newspaper fundraising team expanded with the creation of the Friends of San Quentin News with its fiscal sponsor, the Social Good Fund.

In 2017, SQNews hired its first development manager, Lisa Adams, who was formerly incarcerated. Adams has since moved on and FoSQN is now headed by Jesse Vasquez, former SQNews Editor in Chief, who paroled.

But it was the 2014 suspension that threatened the newspaper with another permanent shutdown. However, because of the passion of the writing, the commitment to social justice and rehabilitation during that time of suspension, the SQNews won The James Madison Freedom of Information Award from the Society of Professional Journalists. Winning the award generated national media attention from The New York Times, the Nation and the Columbia Journalism

Review, including a host of California publications.

CDCR also took notice. A CDCR headquarters press team stepped into the newsroom and the staff just knew it was over, but the CDCR team said, “We are not here to shut you down; we are here to help you become better.” With the added support of the administration, SQNews has created a model to expand and renew prison journalism within CDCR as well as prisons nationwide.

SQNews’ early staff had to develop an editorial structure and learn journalistic integrity all under the tutelage of retired professional journalists. In 2008, the SQNews was a four-page monthly printed on an outdated printing press with only 5,000 copies circulating within the prison walls.

In 2022, the newspaper has grown into 24 pages with a circulation of 35,000 copies that are sent to all 36 California prisons, individual donors and prisoners nationwide. This 150<sup>th</sup> edition is dedicated to all our readers. Without your support we would not be able to survive. And this is a testament that incarcerated voices matter.

Two candidates vie for 12<sup>th</sup> District State Assembly seat in California, visit The Q

Assembly

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working-class family and is the first person in his family to graduate from college. He is currently on the Marin County Board of Supervisors. Connolly has also worked as a city councilman and is a member of various regional boards and commissions.

“We have entirely too many people in prison in California,” said Connolly during his visit. “No other state or country comes close. We need to do better. We need to create a society which is more fair and just.”

Sara Aminzadeh is a Kentfield resident who has a law degree from the University of California Hastings College of Law in San Francisco.

“I see this as a movement toward justice,” Aminzadeh said during the group discussion with the incarcerated. “It’s one that you are all a part of and I would be honored to be a part of that movement.”

“We’re not going to get it done without your leadership and your voice,” she emphasized.

Aminzadeh previously worked for the environmental nonprofit organizations California Coastkeeper Alliance and the Pisces Foundation. She has served on the California Coastal Commission since 2017.

“I don’t look like the typical politician. Part of why it’s important for me to be here is because of my four-year-old son Henry. This is about leaving him a planet that is livable,” she said.

Aminzadeh said she also sees it as her duty to help get rid of institutionalized and systemic racism. She wants to help shut down the school-to-prison pipeline. She is particularly

concerned about juveniles who received excessive sentences during a time when their brains were still developing.

“Everything you guys said about your childhood and some of the trauma you suffered, I deeply empathize with that,” said Aminzadeh in reference to the group discussion.

In the June primary, Connolly led Aminzadeh with 38.6% of the votes compared to 35.4%, which was a difference of about 1,500 votes, according to *The Marin Independent Journal*.

Although incarcerated people cannot vote, Connolly and Aminzadeh support restoring that right and wanted to hear the pressing issues that incarcerated people have and how they could best represent them.

San Quentin is located in Marin County, which is part of the 12<sup>th</sup> District.

Both candidates are passionate about fixing what’s broken in our criminal justice system and reducing the prison population in a safe and effective way.

The two also said they believe there is a need for parole reform.

Aminzadeh also cares about climate change and the impact COVID-19 has on the prison population.

Connolly added that he wants people to have the resources available that they need to successfully reenter society.

Whoever wins this November election, it will be a win toward a more just criminal justice system. It’s also a win for the incarcerated population who got to participate in this historic conversation.

“Thank you for coming in,” said incarcerated person Tony Tafoya. “It’s an honor. It kind of like restores some dignity to us and tells us that we are actually human, especially since we all wear the same color and a lot of the time we are spoken down to, to dehumanize us.”

**“We have entirely too many people in prison in California. No other state or country comes close.”**

— Damon Connolly



# ELLA BAKER CENTER, SMART JUSTICE RETURN

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

Politicians and reform advocates visited San Quentin (SQ) State Prison to discuss crime, punishment, and rehabilitation. Among them were two formerly incarcerated men who are now working for social justice organizations.

“Thank you for welcoming us to share your experiences and expertise,” James King said to the circle of over a dozen men-in-blue gathered in SQ’s Media Center on Sept. 19. “We’d like to dig a little deeper into getting a sense of who people are.”

King is with the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. He and Phil Melendez of Smart Justice both returned to SQ to give incarcerated people an opportunity to speak with stakeholders. King and Melendez paroled from SQ prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We also have two candidates running for this particular district here [today],” said Melendez. “We want to open it up to a conversation about what’s impacting you guys. What are the pressing issues for you?”

The candidates, Damon Connolly and Sara Aminzadeh, are facing each other in a run-off to decide who will represent the 12<sup>th</sup> District in the state Assembly.

Other guests included Anne Irwin, founder of Smart Justice, Smart Justice board members, several defense attorneys, and representatives from San Francisco Rising and the Campaign for Fair Sentencing of Youth.

SQ resident Brian Asey started the discussion by sharing his childhood story. Asey witnessed both domestic violence and gun violence as a child. He also saw police violence when they smashed out the windows of his home and took his parents to jail during a raid. He shared memories of being both physically and sexually abused.

“I didn’t really understand what was happening to me at the time, but I was having issues in school,” Asey said. “I had a lot of shame and I even-

tually started acting out, using cocaine and going to jail.”

Philippe Kelly described himself as a child prodigy in math with a passion for learning that was derailed by childhood troubles. Kelly’s mother had given him away at birth to his aunt, who started to verbally and physically abuse him. This caused Kelly to question his self-worth and hang out with delinquents in the Los Angeles neighborhood where he grew up.

“At nine years old, I’m holding drugs for gang members,” said Kelly. “I started to get a lot of praise for that. It helped build my self-esteem.”

Kelly’s behavior escalated from getting into fights and stealing from stores to carrying guns.

“I had a gang, I had a gun, and I had power and control,” he said.

At the age of 15, Kelly ended up shooting and killing a rival gang member.

Another participant, SQ’s Reginald Thorpe said, “I never had no adult life. I never paid bills or nothing. I was sentenced to 50-years-to-life for murder at 24 years old.”

Thorpe said that when the judge sentenced him “all the hope left out of my body.” Thorpe came from a world that taught him boys don’t cry. He bottled up his childhood pain and trauma.

“The most dangerous person in prison is somebody with no hope. I was that person,” Thorpe continued, while in tears.

Thorpe explained that what set his life on the right track was when the Youth Offender bill became law. It made him eligible for parole in 2022.

“All of a sudden that dark cave lit up and I was full of hope,” he said. “Being eligible for parole motivated me to explore my childhood and open up and even cry when I needed to.”

“I deeply empathize with your stories,” said Aminzadeh. “I think the next Assembly representative has a responsibility to tell a different story about incarcerated people. I think it’s the duty of our



Tony Singh, SQNews

A gathering was held at the SQ media center with representatives from both the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and Smart Justice, including former SQ resident Philip Melendez.

**“I think the next Assembly representative has a responsibility to tell a different story about incarcerated people. I think it’s the duty of our Assembly person to restore voice and political power to incarcerated people.”**  
— Sara Aminzadeh  
Candidate for State Assembly

Assembly person to restore voice and political power to incarcerated people.”

Taking a quote from philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevski, candidate Aminzadeh said, “A society should be judged on how they treat incarcerated people.”

After a few more incarcerated men told their stories, the room transitioned into talking about the parole board process. King opened the discussion by giving an overview of the process.

When a person’s parole hearing date comes due “under California state law you’re presumed suitable for

release,” said King.

However, King pointed out that commissioners often look for reasons why a person isn’t suitable.

“You go through multiple hearings with different commissioners having different criteria,” said King. “Studies have been done that show the Board of Parole Hearings has developed a series of rituals and standards that are not written in the law.”

For example, commissioners require some prisoners to take criminal thinking courses.

“There is no such thing as ‘criminal thinking’; that’s a made up term,” said King.

Kelly got a commutation from Gov. Jerry Brown but was denied parole twice before he was finally found suitable and given a release date. Previously, the board found Kelly did not have enough insight into his crime.

“There is no clear definition for insight that the board uses,” said incarcerated person E. Phil Phillips. “The board has created a movable target.”

Connolly, who is currently a Marin County supervisor, agreed that there seem to be too many people in prison who have aged out of crime. Connolly sees a need for more early childhood intervention

programs. He also sees a need for parole board reform and better reentry services.

“When you’re in prison, the goal has to be to get you back on your feet. My job is to help you do that,” said the Assembly candidate.

As the event came to a close, Irwin of Smart Justice offered some words of hope and encouragement.

“I want to extend some really deep gratitude to you all for letting a group of strangers come in and sit down with you to hear some deep personal parts of your life,” she said. “I promise you that your vulnerability is not in vain.”

## Inside Circle Foundation fights violence — at its source

By William Harris  
Journalism Guild Writer

Inside Circle Foundation is a successful rehabilitation program that was founded in prison to help men become better men.

It’s a program that empowers system-impacted people to adopt change from within by providing opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people to heal and serve both themselves and others. It has impacted more than 100 men to date.

The program welcomes people from all walks of life, every race, and every religion. Members gather in a circle and perform a ritualistic cleansing of the “trauma demons” that exist inside of them, which have been built up by years of pain. A candle is lit to symbolize the fire in which they sit.

Men from the community also go into a prison to assist the men in prison as part of Inside Circle. What is at the core of the men’s work is stripping away the layers of false-masculinity, bridging the gap, and establishing more in-depth male friendships. The objective: better husband, better father, better leader.

“We exist to reduce recidivism and all forms of vio-

*Program brings healing to prisoners and formerly incarcerated, works toward reducing recidivism*



Photo courtesy of Inside Circle Foundation

Inside Circle volunteers connect with an incarcerated participant on a deeper emotional level.

lence — physical, emotional and psychological — in our prisons and communities,” the organization’s website reports.

Inside Circle Foundation is an idea born out of a race riot that occurred on Facility “B” at CSP-Sacramento (now Folsom) in 1996.

The men’s group is the brain child of Patrick Nolan, Rob Albee, Don Morrison, Eldra Jackson III, Aaron Burris, Manuel Ruiz, and Rick Misner. Each became a member of the group during its infancy stages at new Folsom. All were gang members, all were lifers,

and all of them were trying to become better men.

Nolan, the program’s founder, was a participant in the riot and landed in the Hole. He thought to himself, “I need to change my life. There has to be a better way to live in prison.”

He began to write poems about his life, his experiences, and the changes he wanted to make — to shift the dynamics of violence and hatred to one of love and support.

“I’m just a dude doing a life sentence, one of the countless thousands shelved away in institutions statewide, who will probably die here on the inside,” said Nolan. “I accept this. But just because a guy is serving life doesn’t necessarily mean life is over. The quality of our existence, even under the worst conditions, can still be determined by us in how we approach this road we are on.”

Nolan died in custody on April 7, 2000.

Eldra Jackson III is now the executive director of the Inside Circle Foundation, Burris is the business development director, and Misner is the lead community circle facilitator. Ruiz is the board chair and oversees Inside Circle Foundation’s larger relationship with the community and holds the intent of Patrick Nolan’s vision of what the Foundation could be in the world.

They, along with other men who have paroled and some of the original Inside Circle members from the streets, have expanded Nolan’s vision. Inside Circle is now nation-

wide and efforts are underway to establish a circle at San Quentin.

The Foundation has linked with other community-based organizations in Boston, Washington D.C., New Jersey and New York. As recently as June, Burris traveled to Boston to train staff with the Jericho Circle Project, which operates a circle in a federal prison in Norfolk, Va.

Burris wrote, “Something happened when circles began to happen. Hope began to be born and held quietly in men’s hearts that there was another way to live their lives, even if they would never leave prison alive. Inside Circle is proof that dreams can survive, even after death.”

Inside Circle was the subject of a 2017 documentary called “The Work” that was created by San Rafael resident James McLeary.

The documentary follows three civilians on a four-day, group-therapy retreat with men who were incarcerated at Folsom. “For four days let’s be what we could be” a voice states in the film’s opening scene.

The original founders have dedicated their lives to moving the Inside Circle mission forward in the world and behind prison walls.



HEALTH & WELLNESS

*Transitions Clinic Network is a network of community health clinics that serve returning community members. TCN clinic programs are led by Community Health Workers with lived experience of incarceration. TCN hosts a monthly Frequently Asked Questions column. We answer questions about health care and empower individuals to prepare for healthy reentry. This week we are writing about gender-affirming care.*

**What does it mean to be transgender or non-binary?**  
Everyone is assigned a biological sex based on physical features at birth: those who are born with a penis are assigned “male”; those who are born with a vagina are assigned “female”. Gender identity is one’s own internal sense of self and gender. Someone’s biological sex and gender identity may match. People who identify as transgender have gender identities that differ from the gender they were assigned at birth. A transgender woman is a woman who was thought to be male at birth based on their biological sex. A transgender man is a man who was thought to be female at birth based on their biological sex. Some people do not identify with any one gender category or with any gender at all; these individuals may identify as non-binary, genderfluid, genderqueer, or

Obtaining gender-affirming healthcare in the community



something else.  
Biological sex and gender identity are not the same as gender expression (how someone presents their gender identity on the outside) and sexual orientation (who someone feels romantically or sexually attracted to). Gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation are defined by each person, and you cannot assume based on someone’s name or look. We all can choose names or pronouns to express and affirm who we are. It’s best to share your pronouns and ask what others prefer!  
**What is gender-affirming care?**  
Gender-affirming care means creating safe spaces for support and offering treatments that help people live their gender identity. People who are transgender may receive medical treatments to change their physical bodies. Some people use hormones to look, sound, or feel more male or female.

Hormone therapies may come in pills, injections, creams, or patches. Speech therapy can help someone sound more masculine or feminine. Some people may choose surgery to remove and sometimes reconstruct genitals and reproductive organs. Gender-affirming care also includes offering mental health supports for patients to support coping, self-esteem, and confidence.  
**Why is gender-affirming care important?**  
There are millions of adults in the US who identify as transgender. Nearly 5,000 people who are transgender are incarcerated in state prisons. People who are transgender or non-binary experience higher rates of depression and suicide when their identities are not accepted, as well as higher rates of violence from others. Gender-affirming care improves the health and well-being of the transgender population.

**What services are available inside?**  
Patients can request and receive gender-affirming treatment while in CDCR. These services may include hormone therapy, gender-affirming surgery, and mental health resources. Prior to your release, the Transitional Case Management Program will meet with you to enroll in state health insurance (Medi-Cal) and other benefits. You will speak with a nurse or social worker to plan for your release. You will get a 30-day supply of medications at release, so you will want to be sure to follow-up with your new doctor in the community within the first month.  
**What services are available**

**in the community?**  
You should know that it is illegal for any insurance plan (public or private) to deny someone of gender-affirming care. In California, gender-affirming care is covered by Medi-Cal health insurance. The services covered by Medi-Cal include mental health services, hormone replacement therapy, and surgical procedures. Make sure to call the county as soon as you are home to turn on your Medi-Cal.  
If you are getting gender-affirming care now or want to start new treatments when you are home, you will need to find a primary care clinic and a medical provider for your care. Some clinics have specialized programs for gender-affirming care. For example, St. John’s Family Health Centers in LA has a “Transgender Health Program” that offers medical services, social supports, and educational resources. Some

regions of the state, however, may not have specialized programs. Any doctor at any primary care clinic can prescribe hormone therapies or make referrals for surgeries, though some health care clinics may not be as experienced or educated.  
When looking for a clinic/doctor at home, patients are encouraged to do their research and make calls to clinics to ask some questions up front to find the right fit. It’s important to find a clinic that makes you feel welcomed and supported. It can be difficult at times to find the right care when coming out of prison, so you may have to be persistent and advocate for yourself to get what you need. For information about resources near you, call the Trans Lifeline at (877) 565-8860, a trans-led organization connecting people to the support and resources they need.

**Conclusion**  
*If you have healthcare-related questions about reentry, write us at: Transitions Clinic Network, 2403 Keith Street, San Francisco, CA 94124. Call our Reentry Health Hotline at (510) 606-6400 to see if there’s a TCN program in your community of return. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. We accept collect calls from CDCR.*

Report: Prisoners more likely to suffer chronic illness, go untreated

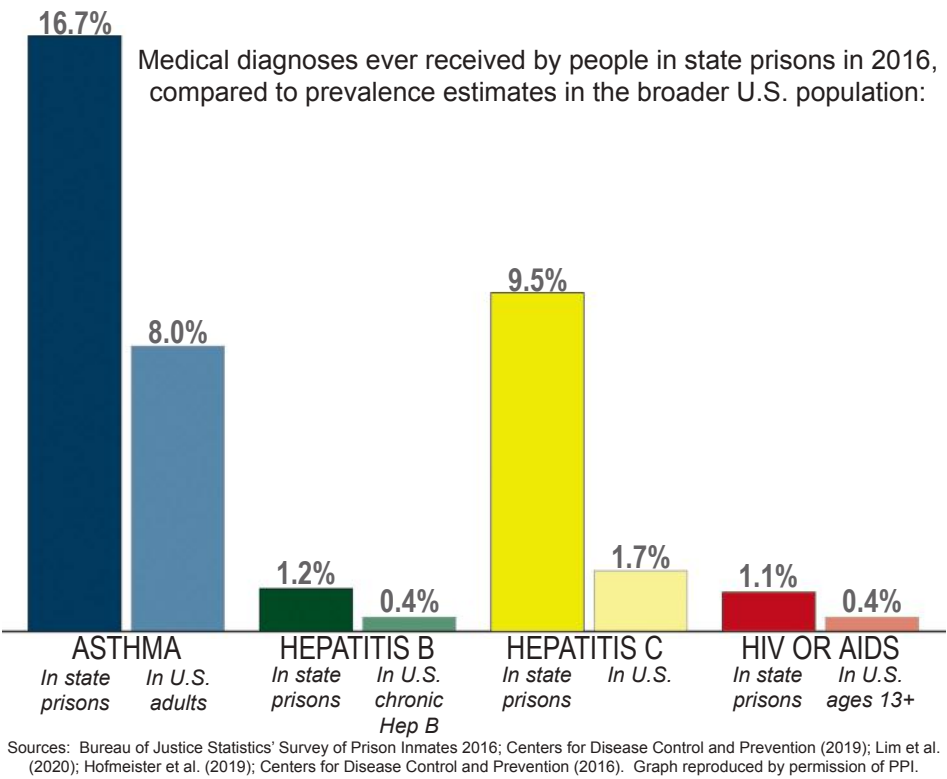
**Prison Policy Initiative**  
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A new report from the Prison Policy Initiative offers the most recent national data on incarcerated people’s health, and shows that U.S. state prisons are continuing to ignore the plight of people in their care. The report, *Chronic Punishment: The unmet health needs of people in state prisons*, examines the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ *Survey of Prison Inmates* and breaks down the prevalence of several chronic conditions in this country’s 1,566 state prisons. The report also takes a deep dive into the medical histories of people behind bars.  
Key findings in *Chronic Punishment* include:  
People in state prisons suffer disproportionately from asthma, hepatitis C, HIV, and substance use disorder.  
Significant numbers of people in state prisons also suffer from illnesses such as heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes, which are exacerbated behind bars.  
Half (50%) of people in state

prisons lacked health insurance upon the arrest that led to their incarceration, and those with insurance disproportionately received Medicaid, a sign that poverty, exclusion from the healthcare system, and incarceration overlap significantly in this country.  
Other standout findings in the report suggest that state prisons, nationally, are not treating medical problems among incarcerated people:  
Four in 10 (43%) people in state prison report one or more diagnosed mental health conditions, and women’s rates are even higher. Yet only about one-fourth (26%) have received some sort of professional help for their mental health since entering prison.  
19% of people in state prisons report having gone without a single health-related visit since entering prison.  
Existing research suggests that many people who go to prison die prematurely: Cancer is more deadly in prison than on the outside, and people recently released from prison have a higher risk of hospitalization and death from heart disease than the

average person. In the first two weeks after release from prison, individuals face a risk of death that is *more than 12 times higher* than for non-incarcerated individuals.  
The report, which includes 15 powerful data visualizations, analyzes how the typical individual in state prison lacked healthcare long before their incarceration and how prison doctors often diagnose problems that prisons lack the capacity to treat. The report takes a particularly close look at how incarcerated women fare medically, including a section about the treatment of people who are pregnant.  
*Chronic Punishment* is the second installment on the Prison Policy Initiative’s analysis of the 2016 *Survey of Prison Inmates*, a national dataset released last year that offers the most thorough and recent demographic picture of people behind bars in the U. S. This report follows the Prison Policy Initiative’s recent report *Beyond the Count* about the adverse life experiences of people behind bars. The data cannot be disaggregated by state.

People in state prisons suffer disproportionately from various medical conditions compared to the overall U.S. population



THE MONKEYPOX MYTH: Dispelling misinformation about world’s newest public health emergency

**By Steve Brooks**  
Journalism Guild Chair

An old disease is haunting new territories, leading to public health emergency declarations across the globe.  
Monkeypox is spreading uncontrollably with more than 25,000 cases across the world. The country with the most cases is the United States, with over 14,000.  
Of the 49 affected states, California has the greatest number of cases.  
The World Health Organization declared monkeypox a public health emergency in July, according to the Centers for Disease Control.  
The U.S. declared it an emergency in August.  
Monkeypox is painful and can lead to permanent scar-

ring. It can cause fever, headache, muscle aches, backache, swollen lymph nodes, chills, exhaustion, nasal congestion, cough, a rash on any part of the body, pimples and blisters. Most people get rashes.  
While monkeypox can be painful, and in rare cases deadly, there doesn’t seem to be much public concern for this disease.  
“The name just sounds funny,” said SQ resident Greg Eskridge, smiling. “It’s like chickenpox. Why are you naming it after animals?”  
This disease was discovered in a colony of monkeys in 1958. The first known human case was in the 1970s. Said to be the cousin of smallpox, monkeypox is known to be transmitted from animals to humans.

When I asked other San Quentin residents if they were worried about this disease, some laughed or looked at me like I was accusing them of something. It seems as if this disease is taboo to talk about.  
Some SQ residents see monkeypox as a gay disease.  
“The media said you have to be gay or transgender to catch this disease,” said resident E. Phil Phillips.  
Although the majority of cases have been found in the gay community, everyone is susceptible to this disease.  
Monkeypox has been contracted by children and heterosexual adults. There is also evidence the disease was spread from a human to a dog. Thus, the idea that this is a gay disease is untrue.  
Eskridge sees the media

representation of monkeypox as spreading a dangerous public narrative.  
“I think they don’t want to alarm people, so they’re blaming it on the gays,” said Eskridge.  
Dangerous public narratives often lead to violence against marginalized communities, as was the case when President Trump referred to COVID-19 as the Asian flu or Chinese virus. It was also seen in the early 1980s, when rich gay men were dying from AIDS and catching HIV.  
“It’s not a gay disease; it’s a disease spread through skin-to-skin contact with open sores,” said SQ resident Delvon Adams.  
There are two types of monkeypox. The first is a West African subtype with a high

probability of causing scarring and a low fatality rate of 1%, according to the CDC.  
The Congo Basin strain is more dangerous, with a 10% fatality rate for immuno-compromised people. Pregnant women and children are also at higher risk of complications from this strain.  
Monkeypox can spread through sex; skin-to-skin contact; rash; scabs; bodily fluids touching objects like bed sheets, clothing, towels or other surfaces; respiratory secretions; hugging; massaging; kissing; prolonged face to face contact. It’s also possible to get monkeypox by being bitten or scratched by an infected animal.  
The virus enters the body through broken skin or the eyes, nose or mouth, and can

live on bed sheets up to 15 days, while the illness lasts 2-4 weeks.  
The biggest concern is that monkeypox, like COVID-19, spreads orally and through respiratory secretions. The CDC recommends that people wear a well-fitting mask.  
Experts worry that this disease could begin to spread in overcrowded jails and prisons.  
At least one case was found in the Cook County Jail in Illinois.  
SQ residents and incarcerated people throughout the prison system should take precautions.  
“We live in a place that was the epicenter for a deadly outbreak of COVID-19. It’s only a matter of time before this disease also enters this prison,” said Adams.



# BROTHERS’ KEEPERS: STRIVING TO SAVE LIVES

## Peer-based suicide prevention responds to prisoners in crisis

By Anthony Manuel Carvalho  
Staff Writer

On February 17, 2005, Robert Dubner had breakfast in the chow hall with fellow inmates, then returned to his cell, and hanged himself.

Dubner’s good friend Marvin Mutch was devastated. He was also perplexed, because his friend was popular and respected in the prison community. He loved playing music in a band and was generally sociable. “It’s that helplessness and hopelessness of prison,” said Mutch.

As a way to remember his friend and redirect his grief, Mutch founded Brothers’ Keepers: an organization that allows incarcerated people in crisis to seek support from their peers.

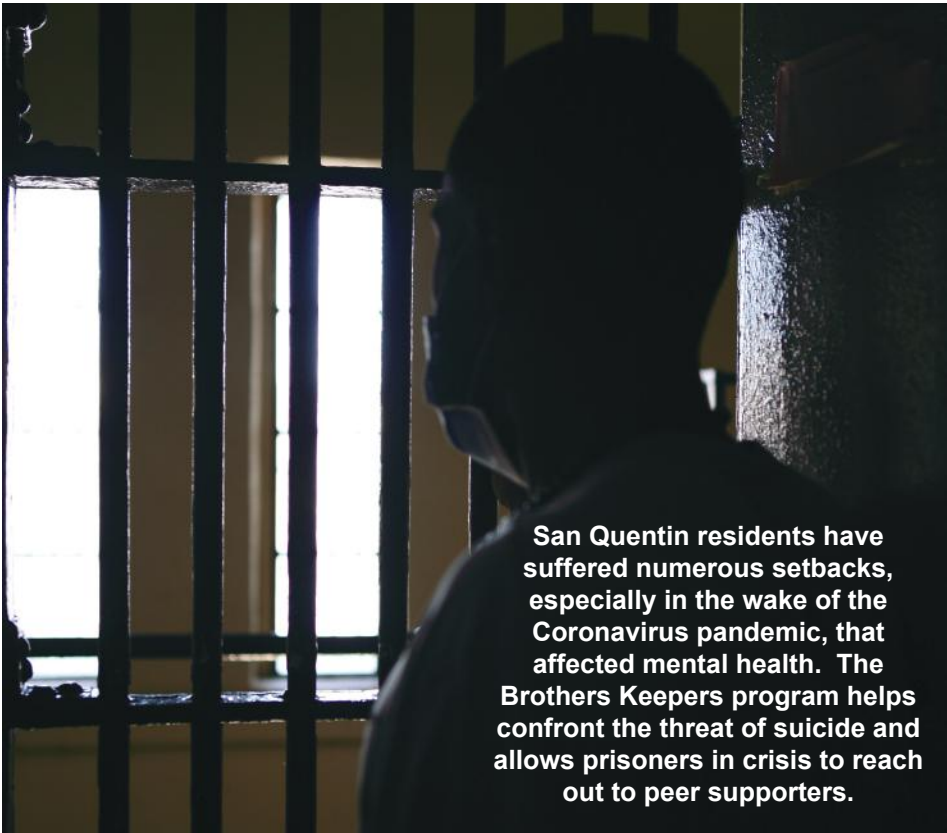
Before the formation of Brothers’ Keepers, only prison staff was allowed to respond to those having thoughts of suicide. However, inmates in crisis often avoid communicating to staff because they fear CDCR’s suicide protocols. Some worry that thoughts of suicide might harm their chances of being found suitable for release in front of the Parole Board. Mutch believed an inmate-to-inmate support model would be crucial for providing incarcerated people

with the support they needed.

Mutch and the executive director of the Insight Prison Project, Jacques Verduin, lobbied then-Warden Robert Ayers for support and got the green light to actualize their vision. Along with Marcia Blackstock and Diane Beynon of Bay Area Women Against Rape, as well as the Family Violence Law Center in Oakland and Suicide Prevention and Community Counseling of Marin, they built a program that allowed incarcerated residents of San Quentin to become first responders for inmates in crisis.

Their mission statement read: “...The purpose of the Peer Responders is to establish an atmosphere of trust and confidence within the population. Brothers’ Keepers will strive to meet the physical, psychological, and emotional needs of inmates in crisis, and act as a source of information regarding available mental health, spiritual, and/or medical services.”

During COVID outbreaks and quarantines, San Quentin’s Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Dr. E. Anderson, and clinical social worker Ms. K. O’Neil, worked in tandem with Brothers’ Keepers to coordinate crisis intervention. After the ups and downs of the pandemic reduced the



Phoeun You, SQNews

Peer Responders group to four members, Dr. Anderson believed it was time to absorb Brothers’ Keepers into CDCR’s portfolio.

Dr. Anderson and his team will change the name of the group to Keepers, or possibly Keepers of San Quentin, to make it more gender-inclusive. The goal is for the prison administration to enhance the program and collaborate with

mental health and custody partners to provide additional support to the population, especially for those who are unwilling to or uninterested in speaking with mental health staff.

“I hope the experienced members and new members we selected know how honored Ms. O’Neil and I are to join their team. We believe they share a vision that saves

lives through this program,” said Dr. Anderson.

Prison staff will provide training in crisis and suicide prevention, and provide Keepers’ members with an overview of the mental health services that are available within CDCR. The goal is for this information to help the population understand mental health challenges, and de-stigmatize them for those who need

support. Dr. Anderson and his staff would like the population to see mental health support as a resource that can be utilized at any time if needed.

“Collaborating with Mental Health and Custody on issues of preserving life is a massive step in the right direction,” said new member Henok Rufael. “We’re grateful for being selected because this program builds bridges between staff, Mental Health, and the incarcerated.”

Keepers’ members are available 24/7 to any officer or incarcerated person. Members of the group previously wore black wristbands so staff and residents could identify them in times of need. Now, members of the Peer Response Team wear a starfish lapel pin.

“Whether it’s Brothers’ Keepers, Keepers, or Keepers of San Quentin, it’s an honor to carry out Mutch’s vision,” said returning member Rob Tyler. “Members of Keepers are respected residents of our community who maintain leadership positions throughout the prison. Participants also demonstrate emotional intelligence, empathy and caring, and are willing to work with anyone in need. We will be there for our incarcerated family.”

“Mutch wanted to save every life by having guys in blue be the first responders of someone in crisis. This will not change,” added K. O’Neil.

Anyone needing assistance for any reason can reach out to the crisis/suicide inmate team at San Quentin.

## California invests \$4.7B to address youth addiction, mental health

Gov. Gavin Newsom announced an allocation of \$4.7 billion to cope with mental health and substance abuse problems for the youth of California, the *Modesto Bee* reported.

The governor’s office called the funding, “the most significant, multi-year overhaul of our mental health system in state history.”

Data gathered by the governor’s office confirmed the COVID pandemic traumatized the youth of the nation and created an epidemic of mental health crises. A result was a rise in depression for young Californians up to age 25.

The Aug. 18 story also reported suicide rates among youth between 10 and 18 climbed 20% during COVID between the years of 2019 and 2020.

“(Over) the last two years, there has been a stacking of stress, the likes of which none of us could have conceived of. That stacking of stress comes from two years where we’ve neglected your mental health (and) where we’ve neglected investing in the subject that brings us here today,” said Newsom.

The Modesto Bee reported that the investment includes allocations for the following:

- Training and support for 40,000 new mental health professionals including loan forgiveness and tuition assistance for educational expenses related to the selected professions;
- \$5 billion toward a Medi-Cal initiative to “better integrate” behavioral health services for low-income children; and
- Creation of a virtual platform to enlarge access to mental health services.

Newsom announced the record-setting investment at Fresno’s McLane High School. The school’s student social-emotional support services are thought to be a model for the rest of the state.

The governor praised Fresno Unified School District Superintendent Bob Nelson for making student mental health the district’s “top priority” after it invested an initial \$38 million of the district’s own funding in mental health services.

—Anthony Manuel Carvalho

## Study: Procrastination linked to physical, mental health problems

By Bostyon Johnson  
Staff Writer

Procrastination is the cause of many health and career problems, but regulating your emotions can improve your mental health and wellbeing, according to *The Epoch Times*.

Researchers have found that the parts of the brain connected to threat detection and emotion regulation are different for each individual. By avoiding an unpleasant task -- for example, breaking up with a partner -- we are most likely also avoiding the negative emotions associated with it.

“Reminding yourself why the task is important and valuable to you can increase your positive feelings toward it,” said Dean Drobot from Shutterstock.

Avoidance provides temporary

mood relief but conditions us to procrastinate, especially those tasks that make us feel averse. If a task gives you anxiety or threatens your wellbeing, you are more likely to put it off for a later day or time.

Procrastination does not only take away valuable time, it also carries other problems, reported the author, Fuschia Sirois, a professor in social and health psychology at Durham University in the UK.

In a U.S. study in which 22,000 surveyed employees reported they procrastinated, the research found that they received lower incomes and less job stability, reported the article, originally published in *The Conversation*.

Procrastination can also result in low academic performances, poor mental health, high levels of depression and anxiety, headaches, flu and colds, digestive issues, high

levels of stress, and poor sleep quality.

Emotionally loaded or difficult tasks are great candidates for procrastination. In the end, procrastination is not an effective way to manage emotions, the article stated.

When individuals engage in self-critical ruminations, it increases their negative mood and reinforces their tendency to procrastinate.

A study of 3,000 German students showed that procrastination had negative effects on their performance, led to academic misconduct like cheating and plagiarism, and fraudulent excuses to get deadline extensions.

A study of 700 individuals who were prone to procrastination found 63% were at higher risk of poor heart health.

Individuals who regularly pro-

crastinate are less likely to practice healthy behaviors, such as exercising and eating a healthy diet.

Not procrastinating, however, does not solve all of a person’s problems. What is needed is a more effective way to regularly manage emotions to improve wellbeing.

Recommended steps include:

- Managing your environment,
- Change your view toward tasks,
- Quarantine distractions, and
- Arrange your tasks to avoid anxiety.

When you do procrastinate, the article says, show yourself compassion and forgiveness, which can help break the procrastination cycle. When you feel bad, recognize and admit the feeling without judging yourself.

This can take the edge off the feeling of negativity about a situation, an event, or yourself.

“Guilt and shame often linger when people try to distract themselves with more pleasant activities,” said Amenic181 on Shutterstock.

## Counties authorize forced medication of jail prisoners

### Critics say jails favor ‘tranquilizing’ prisoners over treatment options

Marin County has joined other California counties in authorizing the administration of medications to jail prisoners without their consent, the *Marin Independent Journal* reported.

Marin supervisors authorized the action under provisions of Senate Bill 568, which allows administering antipsychotic medications to, and without the consent of, individuals who cannot give informed consent because of their mental disorders.

“Are we going to tranquilize incarcerated people because we don’t have an adequate system in which to treat them?” asked Lisa Bennett, a critic of the Marin County Sheriff’s Office and a resident of Sausalito.

Prior to SB 568, mentally ill individuals who refused medication were placed on a waiting list for transfer to a state hospital.

“Right now that wait list is anywhere from three to six months,” said Todd Schirmer, interim director of the county’s division of behavioral health and recovery services.

At a state hospital, individuals were deemed competent after being forcefully administered medication, but they would stop taking the medication when they were back at the jail. Back at the jail, they would be found to be incompetent, noted Schirmer, “and the cycle repeats,” he added.

Pretrial diversion programs were created for people with mental disorders. But to qualify, the person must be diagnosed with one of the following: schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder or bipolar disorder, and must be a low enough risk to be allowed back into the community to attend a treatment program. There are fewer than 10 Marin

incarcerated persons in the diversion program, according to the August 2022 report.

The Stepping Up Initiative was created to help people with mental illness stay out of jail. Since the county joined the Stepping Up Initiative in 2017, Schirmer has added five and a half positions to his mental health services department, which includes a supervisory position inside the jail, according to the report.

Keeping mentally ill individuals locked up in a cell “is a cruel situation to say the least,” said Marin County Public Defender David Joseph Sutton.

Sheriff’s Capt. Mark Hale said mentally ill prisoners cause disruptions in the housing units and that these cases are not only severe but also major health concerns. Mental health staff and a psychiatrist at the Marin County Jail are available 20

hours a day, seven days per week. Their efforts are supplemented by an on-call psychiatrist, the report said.

Contra Costa, Sonoma, Solano and Napa counties allow administration of medications to the incarcerated without their consent under SB 568, the newspaper reported. San Mateo and Santa Clara counties use separate facilities to administer medications, though the facilities are still located inside the jails.

San Francisco and Alameda are the only counties that administer medications in county-operated hospitals.

“If the litigation has occurred and there is an involuntary order in place, in some cases that will actually benefit some of our clients by restoring them to competency,” said Sutton.

—Bostyon Johnson



NATIONAL

# Incarceration rates linked to illiteracy

By George Franco  
Journalism Guild Writer

Children with low reading rates also have a statistically higher chance of going to prison, and unfortunately to keep returning, *USA Today* reports.

Nationwide, about 70% of incarcerated people cannot read at the fourth-grade level. In Oregon, 15% of incarcerated adults read below the eight-grade level, however, with no state-by-state comparison data, evaluating reading abilities in different prison systems is difficult.

“A lot of these folks have been in the criminal justice system since they were young children, so those cute little folks that we should have taught to read before? They are adults now. And they still deserve the opportunity. They still deserve the opportunity to do better,” said Julianne Jackson, a criminal justice reform advocate from Salem, Oregon.

Childhood reading ability is a key factor for high school graduation. Education advocates want more options and increased access to higher education classes during and after prison. Existing organizations already support parolees with housing and employment after their release, but there is lack of support for continuing education and literacy, they say.

Incarcerated students and education programs addition-

SAN QUENTIN NEWS

Nationwide

about 70% of incarcerated people cannot read at the fourth-grade level.

ally face numerous barriers such as daily or weekly class roster changes, interruptions, counseling and health appointments, lockdowns, or housing units having to return for emergency counts.

Yet these prison literacy efforts and education programs help reduce the rate of violence in prisons and break the cycle of crime, the article reported. Those who parole may receive information about educational opportunities upon their release, but many barriers remain for them to achieve educational success and become reading-proficient.

“If we are going to address homelessness and hunger, we have got to address literacy. We’re never going to reduce recidivism if we do not address literacy,” said Vivian Ang, executive director of the Mid-Valley Literacy Center in Salem.

SanQuentinNews.com

INTERNATIONAL — RUSSIA

# Russia recruits prisoners to man frontlines in war against Ukraine

By Clark Gerhartsreiter  
Contributing Writer

For Russian incarcerated persons who thought that uniformed visitors at their penal colony in St. Petersburg had come to inspect the facility, the visit turned out to be far more momentous. The visitors were seeking recruits to fight with the Russian army in Ukraine in exchange for amnesty, reported *The Associated Press*.

As of July, about 1,500 might have applied in Russia, estimated Vladimir Osechkin, founder of the prisoner rights group Gulagu.net. Many of the volunteers have contacted Osechkin to say, “I really don’t want to go.”

Attrition in the Russian army seems to run high as hundreds of Russian soldiers refuse to fight or intend to quit the military. Said Alexei Tabalov, a lawyer who runs the Conscript’s School’s legal-aid group, “I get the impression that everyone who can is ready to run away ... and the Defense Ministry is digging deep to find those it can persuade to serve.”

Osechkin added that recruitment of incarcerated persons may be conducted by the Wagner Group, “a shadowy private military force.” Wagner manager and financier Yevgeny Prigozhin denied that he had personally visited prisons to recruit convicts.

The article said that the for-

mer-Soviet Union employed “prisoner battalions” during World War II. Ukraine also offered amnesty to incarcerated veterans if they volunteered to fight, the article said, though it is unclear whether anything came of it.

In San Quentin, incarcerated people commented on a country offering amnesty to its incarcerated people in exchange for military service.

“If my country called on me to fight in a war, it would be an honor to serve again,” said Darryl Farris, a navy veteran and the only respondent willing to go on record.

The other nine San Quentin interviewees’ responses were conditional, based on the circumstances of their sentences. “If I had life or life-without-parole, I would go,” said one respondent, who asked for anonymity. Most other responses echoed the same sentiment.

One respondent who requested anonymity said that he thought incarcerated persons in Russia would enlist simply because they likely only knew the Russian side of the story of the war, including the promise of an easy victory. “Putin has effectively brainwashed them,” he added.

The *PBS NewsHour* reported Sept. 22 that the U.S. Dept. of Defense estimates Russian casualties in the conflict at about 80,000, much higher than the official Russian figure of less than 10,000.

NEW YORK

# Use of word ‘inmate’ scrapped, deemed offensive

By Bostyon Johnson  
Staff Writer

New York has enacted laws that replace words like “inmate” and “mentally retarded” with “incarcerated person” and “developmentally disabled” in official documents, *The Associated Press* reported.

State Sen. Gustavo Rivera sponsored the bill that was signed into law by Gov. Kathy Hochul, changing the term “inmate” to “incarcerated person” in official documents in August in an effort to reduce the dehumanizing and demeaning stigma created by language that critics say is outdated or offensive.

“Language matters,” Rivera said. “This is another concrete step our state is taking to make our criminal justice system one that focuses on rehabilitation, rather than relying solely on punishment.”

The August inmate law is intended to reduce the stigma of incarceration. The July law changed “mentally retarded” to “developmentally disabled.”

The laws were modeled after a 2018 bill that replaced gendered titles with gender-neutral words in official documents, such as replacing the words “fireman” and “policeman” with the gender neutral terms “firefighter” and “police officer.”

However, some Republicans disagree with the inmate measure, saying it coddles criminals, claiming these

changes may become politically risky, especially for candidates running for office who want criminal justice reform.

“Parading around a bill that removes the word ‘inmate’ from legal materials at a time when crime in New York continues to spike at an alarming rate shows you a lot about how misguided the Democrats’ agenda is,” said Assemblymember Chris Tague, a Republican from Schoharie, a town west of Albany.

Hochul, however, maintained that safety can go hand in hand with social justice.

Many incarcerated people feel the label “inmate” dehumanizes them and may feel degraded when referred to as “inmate” by a guard, such as when they are visiting with their families.

“Word choice to describe certain individuals does matter ... especially when it comes to individuals who are vulnerable in any way,” said Michael DeGraff, a professor of linguistics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Changing the wording in language gives individuals the opportunity to process the past and present by helping to understand who they are and how they got to where they are, said DeGraff.

“By treating all New Yorkers with dignity and respect, we can improve public safety while ensuring New Yorkers have a fair shot at a second chance,” said Hochul in a statement.

**1. Arkansas** — (*The Associated Press*) The state of Arkansas has been given permission to continue using the sedative midazolam in its lethal injections by a federal appeals court. Midazolam has been criticized due to concerns over its use in botched executions and scientific debate over the amount of pain experienced by those receiving the sedative as part of a sequence of drugs to carry out an execution. “With no scientific consensus and a paucity of reliable scientific evidence concerning the effect of large doses of midazolam on humans, the [lower] district court did not clearly err in finding that the prisoners failed to demonstrate that the Arkansas execution protocol is sure or very likely to cause severe pain,” the court said in its ruling.

**2. North Carolina** — (*WSOCTV.com*) A former corrections officer turned a school bus into a mobile prison museum to help keep teenagers from ending up in real prisons someday. Lorenzo Steele was concerned about the amount of violent crimes, especially among youth, in his Charlotte, North Carolina, community and decided to do something to help. “It’s not a scare program. It’s a program that gives you the necessary information to change bad choices and bad decisions,” said Steele. High school senior Kyra Moss, who toured the mobile prison museum, said, “It shows your actions have consequences, you know? You don’t want to do something that will put you in a position where you are in prison or in jail.”

**3. West Virginia** — (*The New York Times*) Dr. Anthony Fauci has received criticism from various groups and individuals over his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, but a West Virginia man recently received a three-year prison sentence for sending emails to Dr. Fauci threatening to kill him and

his family. The man’s threats came amid a period of general vitriol aimed at health officials around the country over mask and social distancing mandates aimed at stopping the spread of the virus, a situation that worsened after former President Trump criticized Dr. Fauci. The man was reportedly upset over the isolation his mother experienced in a nursing home during the pandemic.

**4. Louisiana** — (*The Associated Press*) The state of Louisiana has begun construction of the \$146 million Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) to replace a former facility that was damaged by flooding six years ago. “I know that this new and improved facility is going to enhance access to education and vocational training programs such as cosmetology, horticulture, welding and computer programing — just to name a few,” said Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards. “This new facility will provide more space for these reentry and vocational programs than we had at LCIW before it flooded. That’s great news, and is going to help us rehabilitate a lot more women.” The new women’s prison in St. Gabriel, with a capacity of 938 beds, will be the first state prison to be built in Louisiana since 1989.

**5. New Mexico** — (*The Associated Press*) Concerns are being raised over New Mexico’s new policy to provide the incarcerated with photocopies of their personal mail, and not the originals, in an effort to curb the smuggling of drugs into its prisons. The policy is specifically aimed at stopping paper soaked in drugs, such as fentanyl or synthetic cannabis, from being sent to incarcerated people through the mail. However, some state legislators are worried the new policy will pose another barrier to meaningful communication between incarcerated people and their families, which is important to



## NEWS BRIEFS

rehabilitation and successful reentry. “It seems so draconian to find that inmates could no longer get drawings from their kids,” said state Rep. Gail Chasey (D-Albuquerque) at a hearing concerning the New Mexico is not the only state implementing such policies, but the effectiveness of such measures is inconclusive to date.

**6. California** — (*The Los Angeles Times*) A California man with a 39-year sentence for assaulting a police officer in 2010 was ordered released from prison as part of the fallout from the Long Beach police officer’s arrest on perjury charges. Court records show Miguel Vargas, 34, was arrested after he was shot twice in the back by Officer Dedier Reyes, who alleged Vargas was reaching for a gun during a chase. But that changed after prosecutors accused Reyes and another

police officer of lying about the circumstances surrounding the recovery of a handgun in another case, which caused the wrong person to be arrested and detained. Tiffany Blacknell, a special adviser to Los Angeles County DA George Gascón, said prosecutors are reviewing other cases where Reyes was listed as a witness to see if those defendants’ sentences might also need to be overturned.

**7. South Carolina** — (*The Associated Press*) South Carolina’s Department of Juvenile Justice has a new director as part of an effort to reform the troubled agency and its chronically dangerous juvenile prison facilities. Eden Hendrick was appointed director after two of her predecessors resigned following state audits that found major faults. She previously worked as a prosecutor on juvenile criminal cases but has pledged to make sweeping changes.

“We’ve been fighting this battle for a long time,” Hendrick said. “I’m very hopeful that now that it’s actually getting some traction, and that we’ll be able to actually start to provide these youths the real services that they need.” An investigation by the U.S. Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division found problems ranging from youth being held in solitary confinement in small concrete cells for months to numerous violent attacks by peers and guards on youth offenders and staff. Agreed-to remedies include installing a modern surveillance system, revising use of force rules, reducing solitary confinement and making sure incarcerated children get physical and recreational activity.

**8. Mississippi** — (*North-east Mississippi Daily Journal*) A recent federal court ruling upheld the state of Mississippi’s Jim Crow-era provision that bars Mississippians

convicted of felonies from taking part in elections. The lawsuit was brought in 2017 by two plaintiffs who argued the section of the Mississippi Constitution containing the provision was steeped in white supremacy. Mississippi denies voting rights to a higher percentage of its residents than any other state in the country — 235,150 people or 10.6% of the state’s voting age population. “For far too long, we as a nation have willfully deprived Black people of their right to vote — with Mississippi frequently leading the way,” said Vangela Wade, CEO of the Mississippi Center for Justice, which represented the plaintiffs in the suit. “This ruling doubles down on this legacy. Access to democracy should not hinge on outdated laws designed to prevent people from voting based on the color of their skin.” Attorneys for the plaintiffs said they will ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case.



MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi now world leader in incarceration

*Trend reverses previous administration’s prison reduction reforms; new efforts under way to treat addiction, reduce recidivism*

By Andrew Hardy  
Staff Writer

Mississippi has become the world leader in locking up human beings. The per capita incarceration rate in Mississippi is now higher than any other state in the U.S. or any other country on the globe, reported the *Sun Herald* Aug. 12.

Mississippi imprisons a higher percentage of its population than Russia, Iran, or even communist China, according to the *World Population Review*.

Under Gov. Tate Reeves, the state has recently reversed course away from reforms and returned to previous generations’ ‘lock-em-up’ approach, a move critics are calling dangerous and bad for Mississippi, the story stated.

“Is there a political price to be paid for foolishly sticking with a failed system that’s made us the world capital of mass incarceration?” asked Cliff Johnson, director of the University of Mississippi School of Law’s MacArthur Justice Center.

“What’s it going to take for Mississippians to realize that the mass incarceration we have carried out for decades has made us less safe, rather than safer?” he asked.

Over the last decade, with its Parole Board led by law enforcement veteran Steve Pickett, Mississippi instituted prison reforms and an “aggres-

sive” parole policy that brought its prison population down as low as 16,500 earlier this year, the lowest number in 20 years, the *Sun Herald* reported.

Pickett’s leadership saw the earned release of roughly 60% of those who appeared before the Parole Board.

But Gov. Reeves appointed a new Parole Board chair this year, a former Chevron executive less bent on challenging mass incarceration. The percentage of parole supplicants who earn release has dropped significantly to about 25%, less than half what it was under Pickett.

The state prison population bloomed by nearly 1,600 in the six months between February and August, and Mississippi is on track to exceed 22,000 prisoners by the end of next year, a number not seen in the state since late 2013. If these projections prove true, taxpayers will foot the bill to the tune of an additional \$100 million per year, according to the article.

Meanwhile, those who go to prison in Mississippi are forced to endure horrific and unconstitutional living conditions, the story said. The Department of Justice began an investigation of Parchman prison in 2020 following reports of brutal violence, subhuman conditions and gangs controlling the prison, the *Sun Herald* reported.

Many of the Mississippi

Department of Corrections’ problems stem from mistakes made under previous administrations. In 2014, the state passed House Bill 585, a bipartisan law meant to cut the prison population, save \$266 million, and invest in rehabilitation. Instead, the money went to cover enormous corporate tax cuts and prison programming was all but forgotten, the story said.

Other problems are a product of overcrowding and understaffing.

“The Mississippi Department of Corrections can’t have a rodeo or enough GED classes, because we don’t have the staffing,” Johnson said. “We probably can’t support more than about 12,000 incarcerated, but we’ve got 18,000.

“We’re stuck in this futile cycle of throwing more money at prisons,” Johnson said. “Even with the Department of Justice breathing down our necks, we can’t handle the people we have.”

Corrections Commissioner Burl Cain made a successful push to raise correctional officers’ salaries this year, a move that is expected to help address staffing shortages.

On another front, Cain is striving to address the three-quarters of Mississippi’s prisoners who battle addiction, recently repurposing a shuttered prison and turning it into a drug and alcohol treatment center, housing 32 prisoners for

a 90-day program.

He is also working to create dozens of schools within the prisons to offer inmate certification programs in welding, engine repair and building trades such as plumbing and carpentry. In Louisiana, he ran a comparable program that dropped recidivism to under 10%.

“We’ll reduce recidivism and we’ll reduce violence,” Cain said. “About half of the 4,400 inmates we release each year will have a skill or trade... We’re going to turn the curve.”

Cain’s new training program takes a unique approach and saves significant funds by using prisoners with relevant certifications as instructors rather than hiring teachers from the community.

Johnson hopes Mississippi’s new role will prompt meaningful dialogue about the future of mass incarceration in the state.

“Now that we’re number one in mass incarceration, we ought to stop and take a collective timeout and have a long conversation about whether we’re satisfied and whether we’ve had a good return on the billions we’ve invested,” he said.

“Are we locking up more people because there’s something about Mississippians that make them morally deficient or more likely to commit crime? Or is there something more to this story?”

MINNESOTA

DEREK CHAUVIN’S ACCOMPLICES TO BE RESENTENCED

*Two former police officers improperly sentenced in killing of George Floyd, judge rules*

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

Two former Minneapolis police officers convicted of violating George Floyd’s civil rights had their sentence guidelines changed, potentially resulting in lower sentences, reported *The Associated Press*.

Lawyers for J. Alexander Kueng and Tou Thao argued that U.S. District Court Judge Paul Magnuson should base their sentencing on involuntary manslaughter, rather than murder. The judge agreed, the August article said.

“The facts of the case do not amount to second-degree murder under federal law,” wrote the judge. “Defendants Kueng and Thao each made a tragic misdiagnosis in their assessment of Mr. Floyd.” Magnuson also wrote that both genuinely believed Floyd was under the influence of drugs and in an “excited delirium,” a disputed condition supposedly conveying exceptional strength.

The ruling lowers the minimum sentence from 19½ years to 2¼ years. But, since the former officers acted under the “color of law,” the 2¼ year minimum would increase to somewhere between 4¼ and 5¼ years, according to the article.

The former officers also face state charges of aiding and abetting second-degree murder and second-degree

manslaughter. They have turned down plea deals and must stand trial in October. The court also convicted Kueng and Thao of failing to intervene to stop Derek Chauvin from killing Floyd.

Thomas Lane, the fourth former officer involved in Floyd’s death, pled guilty to a state charge of aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter and awaits sentencing on federal charges of depriving Floyd of medical care. Lane received a sentence of 2½ years.

Chauvin’s state convictions of second-degree murder and manslaughter gave him a 22½-year sentence, to be served concurrently with his federal sentence. Prosecutors asked the judge to sentence Kueng and Thao to less time than Chauvin but more than Lane.

Federal sentencing guidelines require complex formulae. The former officers’ convictions require cross-referencing with other offenses, creating the baseline for calculating a sentence guideline. The additions or subtractions of other elements determine the final range for sentencing.

While Chauvin knelt on Floyd’s neck for 9½ minutes, Kueng held Floyd’s back and Thao controlled bystanders. Lane held Floyd’s feet. The killing, recorded by a bystander on video, made news worldwide and led to nationwide protests.

NATIONAL

Alliance for Justice report shows disconnect between federal judges, population

Federal appeals court justices overwhelmingly represent the wealthy and powerful interests, a liberal advocacy group maintains.

“We have created a justice system where working people are far more likely to sit before a judge with experience union-busting or blocking consumer protections than someone with experience representing people like them,” said Alliance for Justice President Rakim H. D. Brooks.

The group reported that fewer than 6% of all federally appointed appellate

court judges ever represented laborers, consumers, or low-income people before becoming judges.

The group’s report also concluded that recent decisions in federal courts display bias in favor of “the wealthy and powerful against the interest of working people and communities.”

The report revealed that 68% of federally appointed appellate judges are former corporate attorneys and 28% are ex-prosecutors, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported Aug. 4.

Alliance for Justice noted

that just two of the 11 appellate judges had worked in labor law, consumer protection or legal aid before joining the judiciary.

One of these two was Judge Jennifer Sunghas, who had prior experience as a union organizer and worked on civil rights cases for two years before she practiced labor law in San Francisco.

Johnnie Rawlinson, another judge with similar knowledge, spent a year representing low-income clients at Nevada Legal Services before becoming a Nevada prosecutor for 18 years.

The report credited the Biden administration for its advancement of gender and racial diversity in its judicial appointments so far. Of President Joe Biden’s 65 Senate-confirmed judges as of June 1, 49 were women while 37 were people of color.

It also noted a few appointments of former public defenders to the courts — the most influential being Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, who became the high court’s first member who has worked as a public defender.

—Anthony Carvalho

NEW YORK

Dept. of Corrections bans care packages from home

By Clark Gerhartsreiter  
Contributing Writer

One of the last states to allow the public to send care packages directly to incarcerated persons — or deliver them during visits — has decided to phase out the practice. Home-cooked meals or grandma’s cookies may no longer enter the prison, wrote Maysoon Khan, a corps member of *The Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative*.

Citing fears about contraband, New York’s Department of Corrections and Community Supervision succeeded in its second attempt to institute the new policy. In 2018, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo quickly rescinded a policy that allowed sending packages only through six pre-approved online vendors.

Caroline Hansen, who for 10 years hand-delivered packages to her incarcerated husband, said, “When I first started bringing him packages, he said he loved avocados. He hadn’t eaten them in about 20 years.” Her husband also likes bananas and she said that the prison cafeteria served bananas once a month, at most. “I take for granted having a banana with my yoghurt,” she added.

The Aug. 14 article also quoted Wanda Bertram of the Prison Policy Initiative calling prison meals a “nutritional nightmare.” She also said that some incarcerated persons rely on care packages to keep

a healthy diet. Formerly incarcerated person Wilfred Laracuenta said the new policy removes “the human component that’s very vital and necessary for the reentry process.”

The article said the new policy would shift the sending of care packages entirely to third-party specialty vendors like Walkenhorst’s and Jack L. Marcus Company. Prisoner advocates call the new policy too restrictive and an added financial burden as the items sold by third-party vendors can cost a lot more.

Hansen and Laracuenta also cited cost as a major drawback of the new policy. A 35-pound package, ordered from a third-party vendor and containing cakes, cookies, chips, soaps, shampoo, and some toiletries, cost Laracuenta \$230. Hansen called third-party vendor prices “ridiculous.”

New York Assemblymember David Weprin, the chair of the Committee on Correction, criticized the new policy, according to the article. More than 60 families of incarcerated persons have sent grievance letters to Weprin.

The New York prison system also began testing a program that delivers all letters sent to incarcerated persons as computer-scanned copies. This program means to stop a trend of sending letters soaked in drugs. The article said that Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and the federal Bureau of Prisons already use the practice, as does New Mexico.

MICHIGAN

Study: Increased school funding reduces criminality

By Harry C. Goodall Jr.  
Journalism Guild Writer

A recent Michigan study shows that increasing funding in schools decreases adult crimes.

“Michigan’s school funding equalization process led to otherwise similar students receiving drastically different funding amounts during elementary school,” said Education Policy Initiative.

“Some students with luck attended elementary school in a school district and year in which the state assigned large increases in spending in order to equalize funds across districts.”

The study focused on two groups of kindergarten students who were tracked into adulthood.

San Quentin resident M. Carter was asked what could have been different in his

schools when he attended them. “There were too many people in each classroom,” he said. “You could never get help from the teachers. The books we had were worn out and missing pages. I could go on if you like.”

The Michigan schools that received additional funding were able to better equip classrooms and teachers with needed upgrades, according to the report.

The study demonstrated the following key differences in funded classes:

“Students who attended better-funded elementary schools were taught by teachers with greater experience and earning higher salaries, were in smaller class sizes, and attended schools with a larger number of administrators such as vice principals.

Students who attended better-funded schools were

15% less likely to be arrested through age 30.

A likely reason for the observed reduction in adult arrests is that students in better-funded schools had better academic and behavioral outcomes and higher educational attainment.

The reductions in adult crime alone generate social savings that exceed the costs to the government of increasing school funding.”

San Quentin resident E. Moss was also asked what could have been different in his schools when he attended.

“I would say increased opportunities, meaning opportunities to learn different things,” he replied. “Some schools don’t have the same resources as others, so kids aren’t exposed to different things. I never took home economics or woodshop or auto mechanics — basically, things



# AB 990: Restoring the Right to Visit

PART 2

By Ivana Gonzales, LSPC  
Contributing Writer

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation saved millions of dollars in visiting costs while visiting was shut down or severely curtailed during the pandemic. It should not be allowed to claim a lack of resources to provide both in-person and video-calling visiting to help repair the damage that has been caused by prolonged family separation over the last two years.

## CDCR's Promised "Next Steps" Do Not Address the Subcommittee's Concerns

On May 28, 2022, the Budget Sub-5 Committee held a hearing that included testimony regarding visiting issues occurring in California prisons. CDCR issued a report about visiting, but it did not address the subcommittee's concerns:

CDCR promises customer service and other training for visitation staff. While possibly useful, such training does not address the structural problem of insufficient in-person visiting time to match the demand of family members seeking to visit their incarcerated loved ones. Moreover, the plan of train-

ing visitation staff on June 10, 2022, illustrates CDCR's lack of commitment to visiting as this training took place on a Friday, when all prisons hold in-person visiting. This scheduling decision caused the cancellation of visiting that day throughout the prison system (see [cdcr.ca.gov/visitors/visiting-status/](https://cdcr.ca.gov/visitors/visiting-status/)). We strongly suggest the subcommittee ask for the agenda for this training and ask what prompted the training, when the training was first planned, how it was funded, and why it could not have taken place on a date that did not cause the cancellation of in-person visiting or video calling.

CDCR makes a vague promise to work with the VSA [video scheduling] vendor to resolve technical problems. However, this does not solve the structural problem of insufficient in-person visiting time. Moreover, CDCR's report incorrectly suggests that it took action to stagger appointment openings in response to the subcommittee's hearing. In fact, that action was taken long before the hearing in response to an outcry from frustrated family members, and it was still insufficient to prevent the experiences testified to by

Laila Aziz and Senator Cortese. Regarding actions taken since the hearing, CDCR only vaguely reports that it is "working with ViaPath to evaluate the application to determine the cause and work towards a solution." The subcommittee should ask for a more substantive response on this issue.

CDCR promises continuing discussions with Inmate Advisory Councils, the Statewide Inmate Family Council, and other "stakeholders." Dialogue is helpful, but cannot be an excuse for failing to implement the Legislature's budget directives and should not be used as a cover for CDCR's not proposing or considering a solution that would accommodate both the desire for video calls and full implementation of three in-person visiting days. We urge the subcommittee to ask CDCR to identify the stakeholders who will be invited to participate in these discussions, and we specifically request that the Coalition for Family Unity be included, as we represent family members of people incarcerated in California prisons across the state.

Finally, CDCR promises to implement the transportation funding for expanded in-per-

son visiting at some unspecified date. As described above, the subcommittee should require CDCR to account for the delay with much greater specificity. For example, CDCR argues that none of the bidders were able to accommodate 600 trips and for that reason has waited a whole year to request another bid. That could easily be solved by contracting with multiple bidders to start transporting California families to their loved ones and start making use of the ongoing \$2.3 million allocation for transportation.

We look forward to continuing to work with the subcommittee to implement the Legislature's directives and the governor to provide three in-person visiting days at all California prisons and the related transportation.

## The Root of the Problem: Repeal of the Right to Visit in the 1990s

The root of the current visiting crisis is the repeal of incarcerated persons' right to visit in the 1990s. Our goal is to restore that statutory right.

Former California Penal Code section 2600 provided: "A person sentenced to imprisonment in a state prison may, during any such period of confinement, be deprived

of such rights, and only such rights, as is necessary in order to provide for the reasonable security of the institution in which he is confined and for the reasonable protection of the public."

Former section 2601, subdivision (d) provided: "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, each such person shall have the following civil rights: ... (d) To have personal visits; provided that the department may provide such restrictions as are necessary for the reasonable security of the institution."

Former sections 2600–2601 remained basically the same until 1994, when the Legislature changed the section 2600 legal standard to "reasonably related to legitimate penological interests," the highly deferential standard adopted by the U.S. Supreme Court for the enforcement of federal rights in actions against state prison officials. Two years later, the Legislature removed the right to "personal visits" from section 2601. The author's goal was to make visiting a privilege rather than a right (except as guaranteed by the Constitution). In the sponsor's words, "Only then can inmates be taught that they are accountable for their actions" and disabused of the

"misguided notion that people deserve something for nothing."

This antiquated view is inconsistent with the Legislature's current policy that incarceration is for rehabilitation and not merely punishment.

Nor is it consistent with the constitutional right of family members of incarcerated people — who have not been convicted of a crime and thus lawfully subject to punishment — to maintain their family relationships. After the right to personal visits was repealed in 1995, visiting hours were cut back from seven days a week to the mere two days of a week that are offered today. Moreover, excuses to deny visits have proliferated, including disciplinary sanctions for violations unrelated to visiting security, errors in visiting paperwork, and arbitrary enforcement of unwritten rules by whichever correctional officer happens to be on duty.

*Editor's note: Coalition for Family Unity is a program of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. Part 1 of this article can be found in SQNews' Oct. 2022 edition.*

# LA prosecutor George Gascón survives second recall attempt

By Andrew Hardy  
Staff Writer

Opponents of Los Angeles County's District Attorney George Gascón have failed in a second attempt to recall the progressive prosecutor, news media report.

The multi-million dollar recall campaign — largely supported by police unions, conservative mega-donors, and anti-reform politicians — failed to gather the almost 567,000 signatures necessary to get the recall measure on the November midterm ballot, falling short by nearly 47,000, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Guardian* reported Aug. 15.

The campaign submitted more than 700,000 signatures in support of the recall, but close to 200,000 (about 27%) were declared invalid by the LA County Registrar's office because they were duplicates, the person's signature didn't match what was on file, or the person was not a registered voter.

"Grateful to move forward from this attempted political power grab," Gascón tweeted. "Rest assured LA County, the work hasn't stopped. My primary focus has been & will

always be keeping us safe & creating a more equitable justice system for all."

Since taking office, Gascón has received praise but also criticism. His reform policies have drawn fire from seemingly every direction, including many of the deputy prosecutors in his own office who supported the recall campaign, the *Guardian* reported.

Gascón has been a strong proponent of prison diversion programs for some low-level offenders. He has also taken a stance against excessive or disproportionate prison sentences, cash bail for non-violent felonies, the death penalty, and gang-related sentencing enhancements.

In spite of his previous tenures as San Francisco's Chief of Police and DA, Gascón has been heavily criticized by law enforcement agencies and officers' unions, likely due to his prosecution of police officers who commit crimes. According to the *Guardian*, Gascón brought criminal assault charges against one officer who shot and injured a man during a mental health crisis and charged another with manslaughter after he killed an unarmed man.



Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascon recently faced a second attempt by conservatives to recall him from office.

Victims' advocates, too, have criticized Gascón's policies, not least his refusal to charge children as adults. He has been plagued by recent controversial high-profile cases, including that of 26-year-old Hannah Tubbs,

a transgender woman who was 17 when she sexually abused a child. As she was a minor when she committed the crime, she was charged as a juvenile and received a light sentence, sparking outrage nationwide.

Nonetheless, supporters of justice reform are calling the failed recall effort a win.

"Los Angeles' criminal justice reform movement has prevailed because this is a community that prefers facts over misplaced fear," said Christine Soto DeBerry, executive director of the pro-reform group Prosecutors Alliance of California.

"With another failed recall attempt behind us, we hope opponents to reform will look to the data, science and the future, instead of relying on ineffective models from the past," she said.

The *LA Times* and other news outlets have also countered the recall rhetoric blaming Gascón's reform policies for recent spikes in violence and criminality — the same kind of rhetoric that drove the successful June recall of Chesa Boudin, Gascón's successor as San Francisco's DA.

The Gascón recall effort was "[f]ueled by Republican mega-donors, police unions, and others ideologically opposed to reform," said Anne Irwin, executive director of the reform advocacy group Smart Justice California.

"[T]he campaign followed

a familiar pattern of using misinformation, fear-mongering, and the politicization of tragedies to scapegoat District Attorney George Gascón ... Angelenos saw through these disingenuous tactics for a second time," she added.

The recall campaign was surprised and disappointed by the news that their measure had failed to make the ballot, the *Guardian* reported.

According to a statement by recall organizers, the roughly 520,000 valid and verified signatures collected by the campaign showed that LA was fed up with reform.

"To interpret this in any other way other than a wholesale rejection of Gascón's dangerous policies [sic] would be disingenuous, or naive at best," the statement said.

However, University of Southern California law professor Jody David Armour said this shows that voters are still in favor of serious reform.

"This establishes that there's no buyer's remorse from voters who supported criminal justice reform," Armour said. "If anything, the Chesa Boudin recall is more the aberration than the pattern."

# San Francisco Innocence Commission to continue under new prosecutor

By Anthony Manuel  
Carvalho  
Staff Writer

Newly appointed District Attorney Brooke Jenkins says she will retain the San Francisco Innocence Commission created by recalled DA Chesa Boudin.

"I am committed to continuing and supporting the work of the Innocence Commission to ensure that we help free any innocent individuals who may have been wrongfully convicted," Jenkins said.

Boudin created the commission, which is a post-conviction unit assisting in the resentencing of people who

were incarcerated during times of severe sentencing policies or who were wrongfully arrested and convicted, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported July 14.

San Francisco's commission is different than the state's standard model where each county's post-conviction unit is managed by its respective DA's Office. The pro bono panel is headed by a law professor at the University of San Francisco, Lara Bazelon, who remains a staunch supporter of Boudin.

Boudin believed the management of the post-conviction unit by the prosecutors' office would run into conflicts

of interest when investigating the office's own cases.

To avoid conflict, Boudin established an independent panel of experts, which was not attached to the DA's office. This group independently investigates cases that potentially uncover wrongful arrests and convictions in the city, the story noted.

According to the National Registry of Exonerations, there are 93 conviction integrity units in the nation. Most units are managed within each prosecutor's office. California Gov. Gavin Newsom allocated \$30 million to his state's prosecutors to develop

similar units. Nine counties have participated.

Bazelon reported being swamped with inquiries about the future of the Innocence Commission. She told the *Chronicle*, "I tell them the truth, which is I don't know."

She also added, "I don't want the commission to exist in name only."

The story said a large number of prosecutor's offices are accused of "running a so-called Conviction Unit in Name Only." The story said most of the units in the country are underfunded or understaffed for the daunting responsibility of investigating anomalies created by district

attorneys.

The National Registry of Exonerations reported that of the nation's 93 conviction-integrity units, 41 have helped overturn wrongful convictions.

San Francisco's Innocence Commission gained notoriety when it exonerated Joaquin Ciria after he spent 32 years in California's prisons for a crime he did not commit. Ciria told the *Chronicle* that the commission's neutral panel maintains its impartiality throughout any investigation and should remain a vital part of the county's judicial system.

Ciria added, "They bring

back the confidence to innocent people in prison."

Jenkins, who left Boudin's office in protest, promises a more tough-on-crime approach.

Supervisor Dean Preston authored a resolution that will protect the independent post-conviction unit.

He told the *Chronicle*, "The Innocence Commission has proven that it can fairly and efficiently do the difficult work to address the harms perpetuated against individuals on behalf of the people. We should be doing everything in our power to make sure it can continue its crucial work."



# 2020 Racial Justice Act made retroactive

By Steve Brooks  
Journalism Guild Chair

A new California law allows people to retroactively challenge their criminal convictions or sentences on the basis of racial discrimination.

The Racial Justice Act for All — Assembly Bill (AB) 256 — was sponsored by Assembly Member Ash Kalra (D-San Jose) and has been signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom. It takes effect Jan. 1, 2023.

This bill comes on the heels of the original Racial Justice Act — AB 2542 — authored by Kalra and passed by the Legislature in 2020.

“When we passed the Racial Justice Act, we did so with a promise to not leave behind those with past criminal convictions and sentences that were tainted by institutionalized and implicit racial bias in our courts,” said Kalra, according to the *Davis Vanguard*. “For those incarcerated because of unjust racial bias, AB 256 will extend the possible remedies to cure the harm and seek justice.”

The new Racial Justice Act for All law makes the provisions of the original 2020 law apply retroactively “to ensure equal access to justice for all.”

Section 745 of the Penal Code, which now applies retroactively, reads: “The state shall not seek or obtain a



Stock Image

## 2022 version of law named Racial Justice Act for All

criminal conviction or seek, obtain, or impose a sentence on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin. A violation is established if the defendant proves by a preponderance of the evidence, that a judge, district attorney, law enforcement officer, expert witness, juror,

etc., uses racially discriminatory language, bias, or animus, whether explicit or implicit.”

This new bill will be implemented in a phased approach beginning Jan. 1, 2023. That means individuals with past judgments, sentences and convictions before 2021 can peti-

tion the court for retroactive relief by motion, or by way of a habeas corpus petition using the following timeline: Jan. 1, 2023—Individuals facing deportation or death sentences; Jan. 1, 2024—Individuals incarcerated for a felony; Jan.1, 2025—Others with a felony

conviction after 2015; and finally Jan. 1, 2026—All others with a felony conviction.

Both laws were tirelessly supported by a coalition of organizations including the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, The ACLU, The League of Women Voters, and

California Innocence Coalition among others.

“The Legislature’s passing of the Racial Justice Act for All affirms our state’s core values of embracing inclusivity and rejecting the racism that divides us,” Derick Morgan, senior policy associate with The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, told the *Davis Vanguard*.

“What this signals to me is that California just moved back to the forefront of recognizing the need to combat racism in our criminal justice system,” Ella Baker Center Campaign Manager James King said in a phone interview with SQNews. “My hope is other states will follow California’s lead.”

Prior to the Act, proving racial bias was nearly impossible because of the 30-year legal precedent set by the U.S. Supreme Court in *McCleskey v. Kemp* (1987). That decision required California defendants in criminal cases to prove intentional discrimination when challenging racial bias in their cases. Under the new law, defendants no longer need to prove intentional discrimination.

“The good thing about this bill,” Kalra said in a phone interview with SQNews, “is that it will allow people to retroactively challenge implicit bias by using a myriad of evidence, including statistics.”

## Ruling: Prosecutors required to follow Three Strikes law

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

Prosecutors must charge defendants with sentence-lengthening “three strikes” enhancements, even if they oppose the state’s three strikes law, a California appeals court ruled in June, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reports.

In the 3-0 ruling, Justice John Segal said that California’s 1994 three strikes law “shall be applied in every case” in which a defendant has a past conviction for a serious or violent felony. This upholds a February 2021 ruling that requires prosecutors to argue for increased sentences under the three strikes law, the June 3 article said.

However, while the ruling says that district attorneys cannot require prosecutors to oppose three strikes enhancements, the court also said they may seek dismissal of the strikes “in the interests of justice,” based on a defendant’s record and other factors. In these cases, a trial judge will decide whether a third-strike term would be excessive.

This comes after progressive prosecutors, such as George Gascón in Los Angeles and the recently recalled Chesa Boudin in San Francisco, have started vocally opposing California’s sentence-lengthening three strikes law, neglecting to enforce the law in their offices. Gascón opposes three strikes in all cases, while Boudin sought three strikes only in “exceptional circumstances,” the article said.

Gascón’s policy prompted an in-house rebellion by the 800 members of the Los Angeles Deputy District Attorneys Association, who accused Gascón of siding with the criminals and interfering with the traditional

authority of prosecutors, said the article.

However, others have argued that sentence-lengthening measures have led to huge increases in the state’s prison population, which creates overcrowding and disease, the *Chronicle* reports.

Attorney Nathan Hochman, a Republican candidate for state attorney general, called Judge Segal’s 3-0 ruling a victory. Gascón’s office shot back that the ruling “maintains the district attorney’s discretion and authority as an elected constitutional officer. The court affirmed his ability to pursue his policy goals in the furtherance of justice.”

California’s three strikes law imposes sentences of 25-years-to-life for defendants convicted of a third serious or violent felony, regardless of the normal sentence for that offense, while second offenses double the usual sentence. Critics point out that the legal definition of “serious or violent” felonies is too broad and can include criminal actions that few would agree deserve long sentences.

In June, the same California appeals court that upheld the three strikes law made an additional ruling about sentencing increases. In this ruling, the court said that a law increasing sentences of up to 10 years for the use of a gun in a violent crime was not mandatory, and could be rejected by a judge at the prosecutor’s request. The court used the same “interest of justice” standard in this case as they did in the three strikes case.

This means that sentencing increases of up to 10 years for the use of a gun in a violent crime—another type of sentencing increases opposed by Gascón—do not require mandatory implementation, the article said.

## Call for repeal of state’s Three Strikes law

By Harry C. Goodall Jr.  
Journalism Guild Writer

California needs to repeal the Three Strikes Law, which has lengthened sentences of more than 33,000 people, including more than 7,400 whose latest conviction was neither serious nor violent, according to an op-ed article in the *Los Angeles Times*.

The authors maintained the best solution is to repeal the law because “keeping people in prison for longer periods has not made us safer.” Adding, “Instead, these failed strategies have devastated communities of color while stripping us of the resources necessary to invest in strategies proven to prevent and reduce crime.”

The article cites the case of Leandro Andrade, sentenced to 50-years-to-life for stealing \$153 worth of videotapes. The

D.A. could have “charged him with two counts of petty theft,” the Aug. 12 article said.

Andrade could have been charged with one or two counts of felony “petty theft with a prior,” which carries a maximum sentence of three years and eight months. But the D.A. charged him with two counts, seeking an enhancement under the Three Strikes Law and a 25-years-to-life sentence.

The California Court of Appeals recently ruled that district attorneys are required to pursue all three-strike enhancements. This action stripped D.A.s of their prosecutorial discretion to reduce sentence recommendations. The article

urges the California Supreme Court to overturn that ruling.

Data from Kern County show that over “40% of the prison population had their sentences doubled by a prior strike,” said the article.

Kern County has one of the highest conviction rates and usage rates of the Three Strikes Law, and has the highest homicide rate in the state since 2016, the article stated.

“...[t]he research has shown that lengthier prison sentences actually increased recidivism rates and make it harder for formerly incarcerated people to reenter society,” said the opinion article.

California demographics

show that 80% of people sentenced under the Three Strike Law are people of color. The article also said that the disparities are even greater for people sentenced for a third-strike when younger than age 26 at the time of their offense.

The article highlighted recently paroled former San Quentin resident Allan MacIntosh, sentenced to 25-to-life for possession of a firearm. There are efforts to resentence some people sentenced under the law, but there is not a universal resentencing policy in California.

Authors of the article were Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of UC Berkeley School of Law; Gil Garcetti, a former Los Angeles district attorney, and Miriam Aroni Krinsky, a former federal prosecutor and director of Fair and Just Prosecution.

## Federal: Detained immigrants can sue over forced labor

By Dante D. Jones  
Staff Writer

Detained immigrants received a favorable judgment from a federal appeals court in June regarding labor practices during detention.

The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court ruled the detainees can move forward with a suit against a major operator of private prisons for forcing them to perform manual labor for little or no pay, in violation of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s policies, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

In 2017, two ex-detainees filed the class-action lawsuit against CoreCivic, a private company that has contracts with ICE to house immigrants awaiting deportation hearings.

In response to the suit, Ryan Gustin, spokesperson for CoreCivic said, “All work programs at our ICE detention facilities are completely voluntary and

operated in full compliance with ICE standards, including federally established minimum wage rates for detainee volunteer labor.”

In June 2022, the Ninth U.S. Circuit judges ruled unanimously that evidence produced by former detainees showed that CoreCivic required everyone housed at its facility to perform manual labor under rules which contradict the personal work requirements of ICE. This ruling affirms a federal judge’s 2020 judgment to let the suit go forth as a class-action.

ICE policies state that detained immigrants should not be required to do manual labor save for keeping their cells clean and making their beds.

The lawsuit claims detainees were required by CoreCivic’s formal policy, “to remove trash, sweep, mop, clean toilets ...” for \$1 a day or without pay.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the

U.S. Constitution along with the California Constitution—prohibit the use of forced labor except when one is convicted and punished for a crime. California prisons have been depending on this forced labor for years.

“I think it’s modern day slavery,” said Michael Williams, who has been at San Quentin for 13 years with multiple work assignments. “How do they expect us to live on eight cents an hour when most dudes in here have to pay restitution? How can you pay for hygiene, food, etc., when they are taking 50% of everything we earn? How can we survive?”

To understand the contrast that exists between the two experiences, it is important to note that immigrants detained in these private prisons have not been convicted of any crime. However, people sentenced to state and federal prisons have been duly convicted.

According to the *Chronicle*,

the former detainees who filed the lawsuit said that disobeying a cleaning order could land them in solitary confinement, a violation of ICE policies.

In part because of these types of reports, California passed legislation in 2019 to cancel all contracts with private facilities when current contracts end, or by 2028.

Legislators who authored the measure stated that coupled with the increased difficulty to inspect or regulate these private prisons, conditions at these facilities are poorer than in state prisons. However, the new law is being challenged in court.

For the class-action lawsuit, the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Appeals Court ruled that CoreCivic, in future proceedings, has the option to try to limit the class-action to only detainees that were in custody in 2010 or later.

Immigrants’ rights activists will be watching this case closely.





LEFT: Jonathan Kuminga poses with SQ dental staff; ABOVE LEFT: Dani Langford and Hannah Heiring spent some time on the pavement bringing the crowd to a frenzy with their hoops; ABOVE RIGHT: Former SQ resident turned freelance announcer Aaron "Showtime" Taylor returned to put his skills to work; RIGHT: Zaza Pachulia towers over SQ resident Vince Turner; BELOW: The SQ Warriors starting lineup gets serious for the game; BELOW RIGHT: KPIX Bay Area's Verne Glen poses with SQ Kings' head coach Ish Freelon.



ABOVE LEFT: Ryan Rollins and Moses Moody kickin' it with Philippe Kelly.

ABOVE CENTER: James Wiseman stands head and shoulders above SQ Spanish residents.

ABOVE RIGHT: Wiseman and Kuminga hang out with Mental Health staff during Mental Wellness Week.

LEFT: The Golden State Warriors crew shows a little love for the Wall City magazine's Sports Edition.

RIGHT: The San Quentin Warriors and Kings teams and referees gather in the sunlight.



## Golden State Warriors come out to play

### WARRIORS

Continued from page 1

you're on the inside or the outside — we're all people and we all need support and love," he said after the game.

SQW's Montrell Vines has played six games against the GSW during his career. He said that whenever they come in here, it shows him that people do care about the incarcerated and will "treat us like humans."

Kirk Lacob was confident in his team's chances before the game, given all the new weapons he'd brought in. "I don't think that we will lose today," he said before the game.

Two of those weapons were former college player Noel Hightower, who is 6'5", and former NBA player Hilton Armstrong, 6'11", both of whom are now on GSW's coaching staff. Armstrong was a first-round pick in the 2006 NBA draft and he showed why with his dominating defense in the paint, swatting balls like they were flies.

Two other notable weapons brought in by the Lacob brothers were physical trainer Danielle "Dani" Langford and data analyst Hannah Heiring, who wowed the crowd with three-pointers, tight defense, and even a no-look dime pass into the paint that brought both benches to their feet.

Heiring, who came off the bench before Langford, had the distinction of being the first woman ever to play a game on the men's prison's basketball court. She impressed the crowd with several clutch three-pointers and showed she was not afraid to drive or pressure the defense. She went two-of-three from three-point range and one-of-one from the field.

"It felt good," said Heiring, who played basketball in college. "It was fun today, my first time coming in here. The level of competition was more intense than I was expecting, but great to meet everyone. I had a great time."

Many of the GSW's younger players came along to watch their team play and to visit the prison for the first time. Notable among them were budding NBA stars James Wiseman, Moses Moody and Jonathan Kuminga. Just like at a NBA game, they had fans smothering them with pens and paraphernalia for them to sign.

The GSW gathered at a stage erected for SQ's Mental Wellness Week and spoke to the assembled crowd after arriving. Brian Asey, GM of SQ's basketball program, greeted the team and thanked them for their continued participation in the annual event. The GSW's General Manager Bob Myers did not attend due to a nagging hip injury, nor did Draymond Green or any of the other Warriors' starting players come for the visit.

Other special guests who accompanied the GSW were former SQW coach Rafael Cuevas, filmmaker and SQ alum Adamu Chan, and SQNews alum Aaron "Showtime" Taylor, who came in to bless the event with his unique play-by-play calling. "This is a surreal feeling for me. To come back in and to see all the dudes who I left here and who I love here. I'm speechless," said Taylor, who brought along his fiancée.

After the speeches and meet-and-greet, the GSW players graciously signed autographs and joined resi-

dents for the traditional lap around the Lower Yard's track. Wiseman, Armstrong, and former GSW center Zaza Pachulia, who are all nearly seven feet tall, towered above the crowd on the packed yard.

Wiseman was amazed at the culture inside the prison, saying that it was nothing like he expected. "I am familiar with the good and bad things that happen in life and that people have to serve time for crimes, but at least people can get a second chance," he said while he walked around the track.

Wiseman jumped over a puddle and weaved around all the Canada geese poop so that he would not get his retro-Michael Jordan basketball shoes dirty. He laughed about it as he rounded the corner by the recreation tables near the Black section of the yard.

After the lap, the group gathered in the center of the basketball court to share words of encouragement and pose for pictures. It was finally time to play ball.

Aaron "Showtime" Taylor introduced the starting five players for each team. For the GSW, the starting five were Kirk and Kent Lacob, Hightower, Mujtaba — the GSW's Santa Cruz G-League head coach — and Armstrong. Starting for the SQW were Rickey "Big Rick" Hales, Derrell "Sadiq" Davis, Don-taye "Twin" Harris, Delvon "Delvy" Adams, and Key-shawn "Steez" Strickland.

Hunok Rafael played his rendition of the national anthem on his violin. "It's an honor to serve my community in this capacity, and I am blessed by this opportunity," he said.

The crowd was excited to see "Big Rick" go head-to-head with "Big Hilton" Armstrong and they were not disappointed. "Big Hilton" started off the scoring with a lay-up that "Big Rick" quickly answered with a turnaround jumper. Despite "Big Hilton's" height advantage, "Big Rick" held his own and was dominant off the boards. Adams also had some big-time "wow" moves under the rim early and got himself to the free-throw line often.

The first quarter looked good for the SQW, who took an early lead and kept the game close. It seemed as if they were going to hang tough with the big-league weapons the Lacobs had brought in this time. The SQW's stingy defense was giving the GSW a hard time, but too many turnovers by the home team and superior ball movement by the visitors did not allow the SQW to hold on to the lead for long. By the end of the first quarter, the GSW led 21-16.

The SQW made a push for the lead in the second quarter thanks to a big three-pointer by Harris and the sweet feet of Strickland. Burton added a pull-up jumper and cut the GSW's lead to 34-31 in the middle of the second quarter.

The GSW started running a two-three zone defense that increased the turnovers of the SQW, who were also having a hard time getting shots past the long frame and dominating swats of "Big Hilton."

At halftime, the score was 38-33. After "Showtime" Taylor's halftime speech, Warden Ron Broomfield got in on the action by attempting a shot from the free-throw line. Other prison staff, from custody to free-staff, attended to root for the teams.

When the game resumed, it was back to battling. SQW's Adams turned it up and "Big Rick" tried to keep the team

in it, but it was not enough to compete with Lacob's new weapons. Hightower started pouring on the offense, including a highlight-worthy left-handed dunk that got the crowd going. "Big Hilton" couldn't let his teammate steal the show and added some big dunks of his own. The GSW maintained a 10-point lead through the third quarter.

A left-hand lay-up by SQW's Adams over "Big Hilton" forced Coach Atkins to call a timeout, but Heiring started blasting her three-pointers, refusing to let the SQW challenge her team's lead.

"It was hard guarding Hannah [Heiring]," said SQW veteran Vines after the game. "She's a woman and I didn't know how to defend against her."

"Plus, she's just got a good game. I really have no excuses," he added with a laugh.

In the fourth quarter, a surprise no-look pass by Langford on a dime into the paint for an assist sent the GSW's bench into a frenzy of celebration as they jumped up and down cheering on their teammate. The SQW's coach Brown called a time-out with one minute left, GSW leading, 79-63. Shortly after, as the game clock wound down, Heiring hit the last shot off the glass to make the final score, 83-65 GSW.

Both teams brought hustle and talent, but the deciding factor of the game was the many missed opportunities by the SQW's team.

"We played terrible today. We have to work on our turnovers and make those free throws. We weren't ready," said Coach Jeremiah Brown of the SQW.

All players were competing for the win, but more importantly, it was the human aspect and the love of the game that mattered the most.

"Keep your heads up," said Hightower. "We're here for the love of the game."

The SQW shared the same sentiment. "Hope and inspiration. There is light at the end of the tunnel. People that care — it's bigger than prison. People take time out of their life to do the things we love, becoming like family," said the SQW's Davis.

"I have been playing with the San Quentin Warriors for 10 years. Playing with a spiritual mind-set for the love of the game is a big part of my rehabilitation," Vines added.

Another guest, sports reporter Vern Glenn from KPIX Channel 5, said the day was a truly great event.

The GSW have now won five of the eight games they have come into the prison to play. The GSW's NBA team has also won the NBA Championship four of those times after they have come into the prison.

Kirk Lacob said that perhaps they are getting their winning luck from coming into the prison. After the game, he thanked everybody gathered around the court, saying, "Good things happen with the Golden State Warrior's season when they come into San Quentin to play basketball."

A few stats: Hightower finished with six blocks and a team-high 12 points while Armstrong had seven blocks and 11 points, Kirk scored nine and Kent eight. For the SQW, Hale led his team with 15 points and 11 rebounds, followed by Burton's 12 points, while Adams and Davis had 11 each, and Strickland had seven.

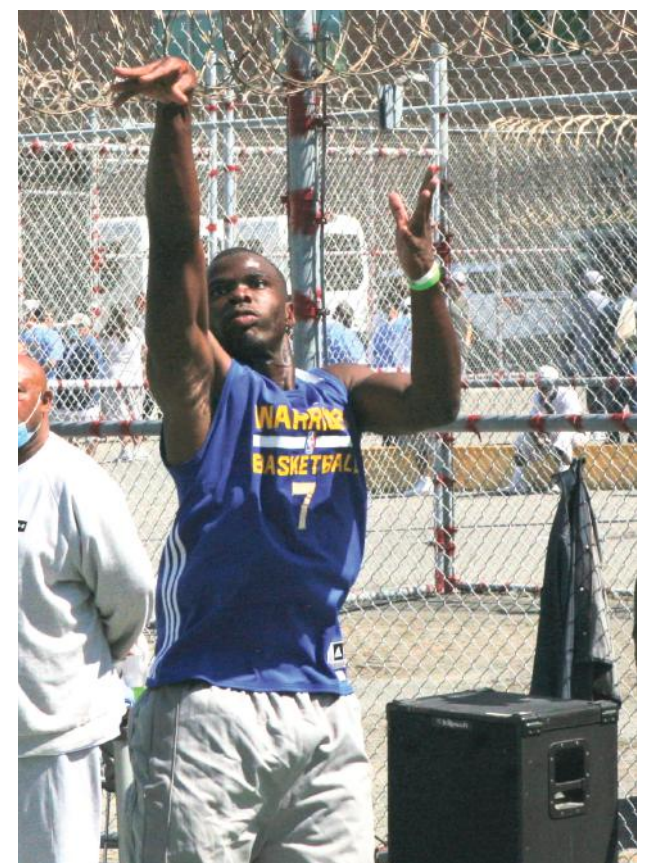
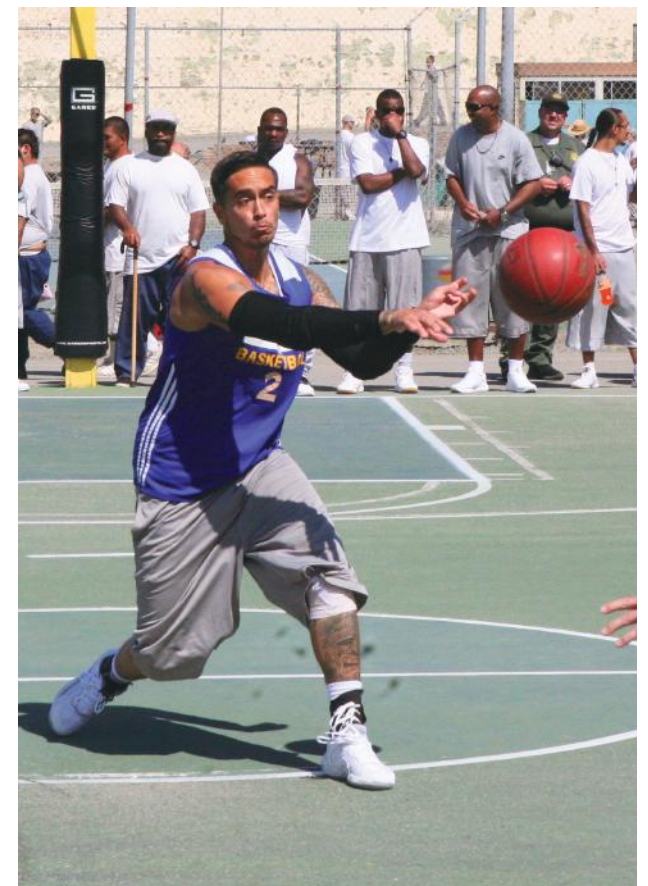


ABOVE: A rare and special occasion at San Quentin State Prison saw Hannah Heiring gracing the Lower Yard's basketball court and giving incarcerated players a run for their money.

BELOW: SQ Warrior Travis Vales shoots a pass to a teammate.

BELOW CENTER: Rooting for team unity.

BOTTOM: SQ Warrior Derrell 'Sadiq' Davis puts the ball up for a clean swish.





# IN FOCUS: GRIP graduates, facilitators offer heartfelt personal insights on the power of the flagship program

Last month, we covered the first post-Covid graduation ceremony of the Guiding Rage Into Power program, commonly known as GRIP. The graduation was a two-day event attended by a number of notables from across California, including a state senator, folks from CDCR headquarters, and

friends and families of graduates, all of whom gathered to witness and celebrate students' new roles as Peace Makers. This month, we highlight the graduates themselves for their unflagging dedication, hard work, and sincere commitment to change.

The deadly coronavirus pandemic and repeated quarantine lockdowns turned the normally one-year program into a two-and-a-half year ordeal. These Peace Makers never gave up, but rather found a welcome challenge and opportunities for deeper personal reflection in the extended periods of isolation.



Photos by Vincent O'Bannon, SQNews

« [TRIBE 847:] Anthony Carvalho, Edwin Chavez, Floyd Collins, Scott Davis, James Doherty, Donald Evans, Terry Givens, Mario Gomez, William Hearn, Michael Keeyes, Mark Kinney, Max Lopez, Bryan Monge, Chan S. Park, Carl Eric Price, Calvin Rogers, Jake Stebler; and facilitators Patrick Baylis and John Hays

**D**uring my 16 years of incarceration I remained in denial, making excuses while minimizing my culpability. I was exposed in Tribe 847 which taught me to “sit in the fire” of awareness. From early childhood I lied and was deceitful in everything I did. My denial ended with Tribe 847. My epiphany gave me peace of mind to write an apology letter to my victims. I discovered honesty leads to remorsefulness. I achieved what ... I needed to learn: true remorse. I consider the yearlong program entirely worth the journey to my transformation. I am indebted to the GRIP Institute and my fellow Tribe members.

—Jim Doherty



« [TRIBE 728:] Michael Beaudette, Chase Benoit, Richard Fernandez, Harry Goodall Jr., Timothy Holmes, Mark Jarosik, Vashon Jones, Jerry Kelly, Samuel Marquez, Royce Miller, Kelly Philippe, Ricardo Romero, Jad Salem, Kevin Schrubbs, Amir Shabazz, Trent Woodmore Jr.; and facilitators John Gillies and Carlos Smith



« TRIBE 864: Steven Brooks, Rudy Camozzi Jr., Hau Chan, Warren Corley, Scott Fretette, Jon Goldberg, Lee Joffrion, Dejon Joy, Mark Radke, Carlos Robinson, Eugene Sykes, Donald Thompson, Dung Tran, Leonard Walker; and facilitators Robert Barnes, Arthur Jackson, and Dennis Jefferson



« TRIBE 315: Juan Aguilar, Robert Almazan, Ramiro Badajoz, Alejandro Delgadillo, Pedro Espinal, Fausto Fabian, Tranquillano Figueroa, Nestor Hernandez, Juan Lerma, Fidelio Marin, Pablo Salinas, Rolando Tut, y Tare Beltranchuc (facilitador)

**E**l internalizar el concepto “yo no soy mi crimen” fue muy importante en mi transformación. Entender que mis acciones no definen mi verdadera identidad. Me permitió dejar de odiarme a mi mismo y empecé con el proceso de reconexión con mi yo verdadero. [Internalizing the concept, “I am not my crime,” was very— important in my transformation. Understanding that my actions don’t define my true identity, allowed me to stop hating myself and begin the process of reconnection with my authentic self.]

—Tare Beltranchuc, facilitador





## SQ EVENTS

# Substance abuse program celebrates recovery

By Juan Haines  
and Dante D. Jones  
San Quentin News

The triumphs of recovering substance abusers were on full display in San Quentin's (SQ) gymnasium during the recent Incentive Day, a day of celebration.

A couple years ago, San Quentin's gym was converted into a place for prisoners to learn life skills and get drug treatment. On Sept. 1, the gym was converted into a carnival to offer participants something different from the classroom setting of the life skills and drug treatment programs.

At first glance, it was noticeable that the event's atmosphere was joyful and filled with togetherness.

Incarcerated people and staff members connected with one another through conversation, music, carnival games, and popcorn, cotton candy, and pizza — it was a beautiful scene.

For this brief moment in time, to paraphrase a keynote speaker (Dr. Kaia Stern) at a recent SQ graduation, it erased a fictional "human contact" barrier that somehow seems all too real in prison.

Life skills counselor Stacy Kemp and two incarcerated mentors, Everett McCoy and Todd Winkler, organized the carnival with the approval of Correctional Counselor III Cedrick Collins, head of the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT) program that is housed in the gym.

"The purpose is to show the men we appreciate them for making the effort to change their lives. So, hopefully they feel that and it continues to motivate them to work on

themselves for the better," Kemp said.

Near an office door in the gym, in quiet conversation, stood Paris Mays and Shayla Scott. It was their first day on the job with ISUDT, they said.

Mays said her motivation for being a counselor to incarcerated people is that "incarcerated people are humans and deserve to be treated like everyone else." Scott added, "I feel like everybody deserves a second chance, that anyone can do better. So if I can help them do that, then I will."

■ ■ ■

Sitting alone in a chair near the P.A. system, enjoying the music, was participant Sunny Maldonado. A man with a quiet demeanor, humble eyes, and tattoos on his face, Maldonado is in a group that addresses alcohol and drug abuse as well as family relations.

"We work on our tools like 'stop, think, and listen,'" Maldonado said. "We also work on ways to change our lifestyles."

Although this is Maldonado's third time through the course, he advises people to "give the program some patience [and] it will work."

A tall Black man wearing glasses and prison blues nibbled on a snow cone. Jeffery "3-Jay" Jernigan Jr. is an incarcerated mentor for the participants.

He is one of the many ISUDT counselors comprised of prison officials, formerly incarcerated and incarcerated persons who offer San Quentin prisoners Medically Assisted Treatment for substance use as well as life skills training.

Jernigan is currently mentoring sessions aimed at anger



Tony Singh, SQNews

San Quentin's dedicated ISUDT team of addiction treatment professionals and incarcerated offender mentors put on a celebration of recovery, including pizza and sodas for everyone.

management and victim's impact.

"We talk about the ripple effects of crime and our actions on victims, family, friends, the community, and ourselves," Jernigan said.

He said he enjoys the work. "It also makes me smile a little more. Plus, seeing others learning to do better also inspires me to do the same."

During the open mic session, one participant told the crowd that he was a 30-year heroin addict before getting into the program. He credited the program for saving his life.

Formerly incarcerated person Tith Ton is a Cognitive Behavior Therapy counselor.

He served nearly 25 years of incarceration and completed substance-use-disorder treatment training while imprisoned. He paroled in 2019.

"I started doing residential and outpatient work in early 2021," Ton said. "My boss

asked me to come in to The Q to work with the guys. Understanding that it is good to give back, I did not hesitate."

Ton said he has been in addiction recovery for 12 years. His goal, he says, is to teach the incarcerated life skills and help them understand what got them in prison. "In my class, I try to tell them the truth because no one did it for me when I was struggling. I try to help them recognize and understand the insight into their crimes."

There were several carnival-like games geared to reinforce positive change based on the course curriculum. The games also aimed to provide participants with what it means to work as a team and develop cooperation skills.

Ben Davis, a 50-year-old man and SQ resident, attending the carnival just two days after being denied parole, called the event "a blessing."



"It is nice that all races and ages are getting along and playing these games together — clean and sober," said Davis. "This gives me motivation to keep doing what I'm doing and to get rewarded for the efforts that we get for doing the classes."

"It's nice to be around everyone without tension," said James Hatfield, 49. Referring to the carnival, he added, "This is awesome. I haven't had cotton candy since I was 12."

"I'm celebrating sobriety and getting appreciated for doing something right. That makes it a lot easier," he added.

Hatfield, incarcerated 26 years, said he also appreciates the camaraderie between fel-

low incarcerated participants.

Brett Westphal, 35, added, "I'm just having fun with like-minded people doing the right thing."

For the competition portion of the event, Hatfield, Davis and Westphal teamed up and called themselves Moose Tracks. They won Darts Derby — a dart-playing game where they tripled the highest score — and Crazy Corn Hole. They also came in second place in two other games. Other winners were Bunkers Basket and Zebra Cakes.

Before serving the pizza, Alison Pachynski, Chief Medical Executive at SQ, took the mic to address the crowd. "This is fantastic. Every time I come in this space, it serves a purpose. Every time I sit down and listen to the discussions, there is real effort being put forth — popcorn and pizza is icing on the cake. Let's eat!"

At the end of this illustrious event, ISUDT program director Christopher Price, 49, who has worked in the social service field for 17 years and holds a master's degree in criminal justice, spoke elegantly about the importance of recovery:

"The best place to reach persons who suffer from criminality, substance abuse and mental health is while they are incarcerated," Price said. "While incarcerated, it makes the best opportunity to change a person's life."

Price said he aims to "establish a health foundation" for the incarcerated population by ridding the prison of "anything that is dysfunctional" and meeting the needs of participants. His ultimate goal? "To save as many lives as possible."

## SQ & Marin Shakespeare Co. offer *Henry IV* performance

By Joshua Strange  
Staff Writer

A prison chapel transformed itself into a theater for a Shakespearean play when about two dozen incarcerated men teamed up with Marin Shakespeare Company directors to perform *Henry IV*, Parts 1 and 2.

As the audience of about 50 people, including free people from the local SF Bay Area, settled into their seats in San Quentin's Garden Chapel, director Lesley Currier asked them to think about their relationships with their fathers. Then she asked everyone to turn to the person next to them and talk about their father — adding that free people ought to seek out an incarcerated person for the exercise.

In easygoing conversations with giggles, head nods, and obvious smiles behind masks, folks talked about their fathers. But it wasn't all easygoing, some serious subject matter was also discussed, much like that of the play.

*Henry IV*, as presented at this performance, focuses on the turbulent relationship between King Henry of England and his son, Prince Henry, known as "Hal."

"This is a story about fathers and sons," went the opening line by the narrator. "It's also a story about partying, thievery, and trickery; and about responsibility and honor."

Participant William Harris, 21, could relate saying his relationship with his father was "rocky with fights and arguments." He said he felt like he "had to step up and take responsibility," so he finished school and got a job. Making



Tony Singh, SQNews

San Quentin thespians team up with Marin Shakespeare Co. for a stirring performance of *Henry IV*.

his "own choices" made him feel better about himself, he said.

Harris said this was his first on-stage appearance, which triggered stage fright. Nonetheless, he was determined to overcome his fears and gain the confidence to "show my voice to others."

Philippe Kelly, a six-year veteran of the program, said he has too much fun to get stage fright anymore. But he joked, "The first time, I almost threw up like five times."

New actor Kolby Southwood added, "If you're having

fun up here, then nothing else matters."

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 lockdowns, some participants were recruited just days before, and the group was barely able to hold any formal rehearsals. This resulted in lots of improvisation and ad-libbing, yet this spiced up the play nicely, providing some memorable moments and hearty laughs.

"You may have noticed a lot of improv going on up here," said Kelly afterward during the Q&A with the audience. "Trust is the main thing.

Knowing we are going to show up 100 percent every time, which allows us to improv a lot...because everyone knows we are going to perform, we're going to deliver."

Henok Rufael also spoke about the importance of trust. "We did trust falls to allow that brotherhood and camaraderie to develop, which helped me to get out of my comfort zone," he said.

The improv also brought a refreshing dose of modern language to the thick Shakespearean vernacular, which was accented by bass beats

booming over the sound system. A live concert touch was added to the soundtrack when Rufael, who played several roles, bowed his violin while stage manager Bill Holloway palmed the conga drums.

As usual, some impressive physical acting was on display, particularly during the (wooden) sword fight scenes. At one point, the stage was a swirl of action as the opposing sides pitched a mock battle in a struggle for the throne.

Perhaps what stood out the most were the dramatic performances and interactions of Darwin "Tall" Billingsley, who channeled his regal disposition to play King Henry, and Raiveon "Ray Ray" Wooden, who played Prince Hal.

Wooden said playing the role of Prince Hal was challenging because of all of the word play in the lines and because of the transformation the prince undergoes — from an irresponsible, entitled youngster to one who has to mature quickly because his father is dying.

He said he reached deep within his own experience for inspiration and that "we have to put away the false belief that all youngsters are bad."

He also revealed that he looks up to Billingsley as a mentor and father figure, who actually talks with Wooden's father on the phone to let him know how his son is doing. He said that director Currier "type-cast" them in those roles because of that, but admitted it worked.

Billingsley said he got into the Shakespeare program by accident back in 2017 and is grateful that he did.

"You discover talents you

don't even know you had. That's why people should always try to check things out, because you never know," he said. "It's a therapeutic program because you come in and share, and it helps to breakdown prejudices and allows self-expression and growth."

Braydon "Ten" Tennison, who was one of the last minute add-ons to the cast, also shared praise. "I heard a lot about what a great program it is. I'm honored and grateful to have this opportunity," he said.

Another new actor, Jay Kim, said it was refreshing to be part of something positive, to have a break from the negative grind and daily prejudice of prison life.

"I've always loved skits and drama...and coming in here really clicks. It kind of brings back the humanity, which you lose sight of in here. It's helping me to get through this time," he said.

Things got emotional for Wooden at the end. He was performing his last Shakespeare play in San Quentin before going home after being a star of the program.

"I just love these guys," said Wooden, who choked up as the whole cast surrounded him for a group hug. "Shakespeare is good for these guys. It's not 'goodbye,' it's 'see you later.' This has been a beautiful moment."

Wooden plans to continue his acting career on the outside, including with the Marin Shakespeare Company's Returned Citizens Theater Troupe to tell important stories about incarceration and justice through theater.

—**Senior Editor Juan Haines contributed to this article.**



# Jennifer Shaffer packs San Quentin chapel for face-to-face Q&A

## Parole board's Executive Officer offers powerful insights



Tony Singh, SQNews

By Dante D. Jones  
Staff Writer

The Board of Parole Hearings' Executive Officer Jennifer Shaffer visited San Quentin on Sept. 14 for a Q&A during Mental Wellness Week to discuss preparing for the Board.

Shaffer, an attorney, has been with the Board of Parole Hearings for 11 years. Relying on notes written by the BPH's Chief Psychologist Dr. Cliff Kusaj (who couldn't make the event due to a death in the family), she began her speech by explaining the importance of how an incarcerated person prepares for an evaluation by a forensic psychologist prior to a Board hearing:

- 1) Be prepared and get organized, yet don't over-rehearse things or try to anticipate what the psychologist might want to hear.
- 2) Relax and be yourself. If you have real, positive changes in your life, then you have nothing to fear.
- 3) Be honest and transparent because credibility is important. The psychologist has access to far more records than you could possibly know, so they will know if you're being disingenuous.
- 4) Stay focused and provide relevant information such as who you were then, what was going on in your life at the time of your crime, and who are you today as opposed to who you were then.
- 5) Follow the psychologist's lead. The psychologist is not your advocate; however, they are not your adversary either. When they're asking you questions, answer them. Being evasive will not help

your chances for a positive review.

At the conclusion of the notes from the BPH's Chief Psychologist, Shaffer shared a quote of his saying, "Know that we are looking forward to your safe return to our communities."

After this, Shaffer opened up the event for questions. Here are some of the questions asked by members of the audience:

**Question (Q):** I put in a medical form for mental services to seek help with my childhood drama. I was interviewed but never actually seen by a doctor. Does the mental health department help us process childhood drama, things that we don't understand that's related to our crime? And if it does, why wasn't I afforded that opportunity?

**Jennifer Shaffer (JS):** The protocol that has come as a result of Coleman [Plata v. Coleman] is that the Mental Health Delivery Services program is intended for people who have a diagnosed mental health disorder... If you're not diagnosed with a mental health disorder then that treatment wouldn't be available to you. However, I do recommend seeking out some volunteer support groups that have volunteer clinicians that come into the prison to talk about any childhood drama issues that you may have.

**Q:** I fear going to the Board due to my past criminal history. Though I've worked on myself, I'm not good at expressing myself, especially when the Board has so much power to let you go or not. Will they be able to recognize

that I'm not the person I use to be even though I'm not able to articulate it well?

**JS:** Here's another really big myth about parole hearings: Everyone thinks it's about what you say in that hearing... The majority of what makes you suitable or not suitable is reflected in your C-File — your behavior, how are you interacting with your peers, how're you spending your time, your programming, etc.

■ ■ ■

After the event, SQ resident Philippe Kelly, 38, said that he was aware of Kusaj's to-do list, but in his experience it doesn't match some people's reality with the Board. Kelly has served 23 years in prison and was just granted parole after three tries. In Kelly's opinion, CDCR-appointed psychologists can be inconsistent in how they handle write-ups (RVRs—Rules Violation Reports) in a person's C-File, which can cause problems during Board hearings.

"I remember I had a charge for selling drugs [methamphetamines] in prison, and when I went to my first psych evaluation I wanted to talk about it in an attempt to be transparent, yet the psych said she didn't want to discuss it because the case was dismissed. However, the first two times I went to the Board they banged me [for it]," Kelly said. He attributes this as a major reason for his denials.

He added, "The panels at the first two Board hearings determined that my psych evaluation was inaccurate

because they felt I was 'hiding' or 'withholding' information, even though the psychologist gave me a low risk assessment knowing about the drug issue."

It is important to note that Kelly, prior to his first two Board hearings, was: 1) A youth offender; 2) had his VIO (violence) code removed; and, 3) remained violence free for nearly 13 years.

According to Kelly, at his second psych evaluation the psychologist told him that whatever Kelly brought up they would discuss; whatever he didn't, they wouldn't. Yet he said the Board, at his first two hearings, accused him of hiding the drug issue because "I didn't talk about it in my first evaluation."

"So when I went to my last psych evaluation," Kelly continued, "I brought it up and I still received a low (risk assessment), but this time the Board didn't even talk about it. We discussed my personal drug history, but for some reason or another, the meth issue never came up."

■ ■ ■

Donald Edge, 64, a SQ resident who has served nearly 28 years and has been to the Board, has also had experiences that in his opinion contradicts the assurances given by Shaffer.

"To me, instead of evaluating you on an even scale, they [the Board] are looking for a reason to deny you," Edge said. "They're looking to make you mad — as if they are trying to make you lose your composure or catch you in a lie."

According to Dr. Kusaj, these factors mitigate a person's risk of causing harm:

- Cares for others
- Is compassionate
- Is empathetic
- Forgives others and self
- Is able to let go of grievances
- Possesses self-worth
- Is able to conform to laws, rules and expectations
- Is able to commit to intentional self-improvement
- Is self-reliant and responsible
- Is capable of maintaining housing, employment and finances
- Is capable of reaching out to someone for support
- Is resilient when faced with adversity
- Is able to understand the origins of their violence
- Is able to better regulate harmful emotions and impulses
- Transforms destructive beliefs, attitudes and behaviors into mutually beneficial relationships

Pathways to the above:

- Spirituality and religious services
- Vocational/job skills
- Educational accomplishments
- AA/NA
- Correspondence/self-help programs
- Strong parole and relapse prevention plans
- Mental health services

Edge recalls that at his first psych evaluation the psychologist brought up an issue pertaining to a write-up he received for over familiarity with a staff member. "She asked me why did it happen, and I told her the lady crossed the line and so did I. I admitted it was wrong and that at the time I didn't have a handle on the aspects of criminal thinking," he said.

Edge says the Board accused him of being in denial. "I told them the full truth, but they accused me not taking full responsibility, even after I explained my criminal thinking and entitlement issues," he said.

It is Edge's opinion that the Board's decision was already reached before he even stepped in the room. "If they ask you a question, you have to be truthful, right? But the reality is that you have to be careful with how you tell the truth because they are looking to twist it in a way to justify the [parole] denial they know they're already going to give you," Edge said.

■ ■ ■

Overall, while everything that Shaffer expressed about

what the BPH is looking for at a hearing or a psychologist in an evaluation is legally factual and appropriate, it doesn't always match the real-life experiences of incarcerated people who have gone through the process.

As such, incarcerated people going before the Board may need to consider her assessment as well as the practicalities that emerge based on the actual experiences of those who have been denied or found suitable by the Board.

Shaffer says there are a lot of programs in prison that will prepare you for a Board hearing, but the key questions to answer for the Board are: "Who were you then? Who are you now? And what is the difference?"

She continued, adding, "Whether people like it or not, it's based in the science of risk. The type of person the Board is looking for... Are you someone who seeks help when you need it? Are you someone who lifts people up? Are you somebody who actually positively contributes to your community, here in prison? That's what we see as people who succeed upon release, that's what we're looking for."

## BPH commissioners embrace video format for parole hearings

By Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism Guild  
Chairman

In-person appearances before the Board of Parole Hearings for suitability appear to be a thing of the past. Instead, audio-video hearings are likely to become permanent, Life Support Alliance reports in their February 2022 newsletter.

In California, thousands of incarcerated people with life sentences who seek freedom by going before the Board can no longer participate in-person as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Board commissioners ini-

tially approved the video-based hearing as a temporary measure given the social distancing needed for COVID-19.

At first, the Board commented on the importance of having attorneys and interpreters present in-person. However, the COVID-19 pandemic overrode these considerations, and now, the practice has proved preferable to the Board.

However, some San Quentin's residents disagree.

"When we were in person, it was more of an intimate setting," said San Quentin resident, Raymond T. Estrada, 49. "Now because we're behind the screen, it does not feel intimate. What I mean by this is

it's because of the human contact that makes me feel human. Behind the screen, I don't feel the connection."

According to the newsletter, the Board Commission determined that people who cannot establish effective communication using the audio-video system would still be given the opportunity to participate in-person during their hearings.

The Executive Director of the Board, Jennifer Shaffer, recognizes that this new method has not been popular with incarcerated people. However, this new method does not appear to have impacted the rates of suitability granted by the Board. In

2019, before the implementation of audio-video hearings, the percentage of people who were found to be suitable for parole release was 34 percent. In 2020 it was 36 percent, and in 2021 it was 34 percent.

Shaffer also mentioned this measure reduces stress for the candidates while generating considerable fiscal savings and allowing more flexibility in contracting commissioners.

"I have participated in my suitability hearings in person and I always get nervous," said SQ resident Jose Lopez, 49. "I find it difficult to express myself because of my nerves."

People like Lopez who have been incarcerated for decades

often suffer from anxiety and nerves when being questioned by the commissioners and trying to explain the reasons why they committed their offenses, and why they will not reoffend.

Since it was implemented, the audio-video hearings have invited greater participation by victims and their families. Such participation increased by an average of 270 percent. This increase is due to the fact that people can participate in the hearings from their homes and don't have to deal with the expense of travel or the potential stress of being present with the offender.

However, DA offices as well as an organization called

Victims Next of Kin Advocacy Camp, which represents those impacted by crime, expressed their opposition to the audio-video format for hearings. This was primarily due to requirements that victims' families register 30 days before the hearing and that surviving victims register 15 days before. In spite of this, these regulations haven't decreased the number of victims and victim representatives at the hearings.

Recording hearings is prohibited, and unauthorized people or organizations connecting to the audio-video feed is also prohibited, stated the newsletter.



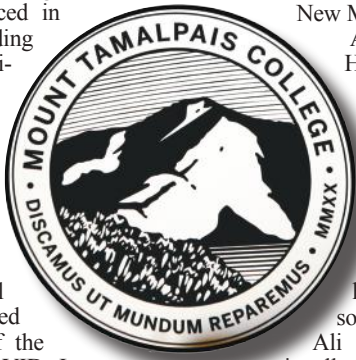
EDUCATION

MT. TAM WELCOMES NEW STAFF

**By Amy Shea  
Mt. Tam College**

I recently celebrated my one-year anniversary with Mount Tamalpais College (MTC), as the Writing Program Director. I am amazed to see all the amazing changes and growth we've experienced in that time, including new opportunities with the computer lab and the student Learning Center, new students, and new classes. Even more impressive is all this has happened in the midst of the ever-present COVID. In recent months, we've also had a great new group of staff join us that I would love to introduce you all to. You've likely seen or met with some of them around education but I'd like to take this time to formally introduce them to you. Please give our new folks a big MTC welcome!

Nandita Dinesh is our new Senior Academic Program Director. She's an alumna of the United World College movement and



has conducted community-based theater projects in Kashmir, India, the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Nandita has been involved in prison education since 2015 and founded the Prison Education Portals program in New Mexico.

Ali Bond is our Humanities and Social Sciences Director. She's a former MTC faculty volunteer who has taught numerous courses across the humanities and social sciences. Ali worked internationally in Poland, South Africa, and the demilitarized United Nations Buffer Zone in Cyprus.

Dr. Windy Franklin Martinez is our Director of Student Services & Advising. Her professional experiences and career spans from being a faculty member to administrator of student services for more than 24 years. Windy's interests include students' development, administrative leadership development, and the psycho-social

aspects of disability.

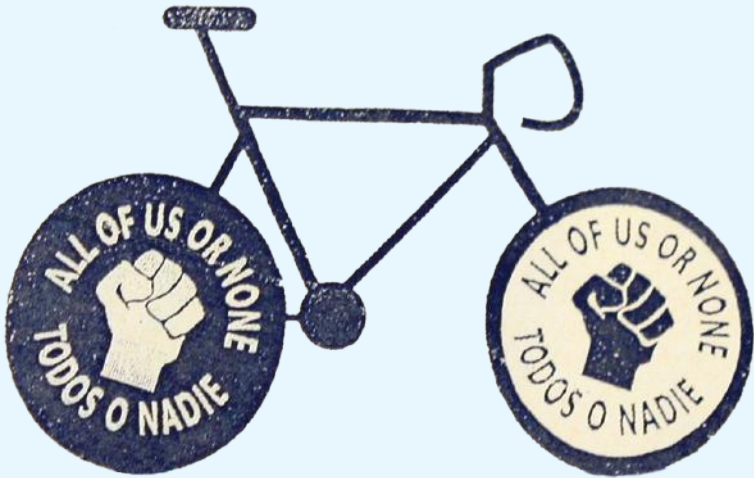
Frances Santiago is our Learning Specialist who has over five years of experience in creating resources for students with learning disabilities. Frances' passion for social justice and serving students from marginalized backgrounds has positively impacted families and students with disabilities in meeting their academic goals.

Amy Brunson is our Director of Library Services & Educational Technology. She was instrumental in establishing outreach services for incarcerated people during her time as a Community Services Librarian at the Suffolk Public Library in Virginia. Amy is working to expand MTC's library and technology services so that all MTC students have access to essential resources, computer skills, and independent research.

Carson Temple is our Development Associate. She previously worked as the Development Coordinator at The Crossroads, an organization serving homeless youth, and prior to that as the Intake Assistant at the New England Innocence Project. Carson is passionate about permanent criminal justice reform and ensuring every person has access to high-quality higher education.

COMMUNITY EVENT

All of Us or None:  
23rd Annual Community Giveback  
Organization to host yearly bicycle giveaway  
for Bay Area children of incarcerated parents



*Legal Services for Prisoners with Children will be hosting a community event on December 10, 2022.*

*The Community Giveback is an event for children in the San Francisco Bay Area whose parents are in jail or prison to receive a new bike or other gift from their incarcerated parent.*

*Registration forms are available at SQ chapels. For other institutions, check with your chaplain. Forms must be received by November 19. Submit applications to:*

**LSPC - Community Giveback**  
**4400 Market Street**  
**Oakland, CA 94608**

Many prisoners living in educational wasteland

**By Charlotte West  
Reprinted by permission.**

**‘Nothing academic is offered here’**

When I started covering prison education last year, I sent out a lot of messages asking people what kinds of educational programs were offered at their prisons. It took Jennifer Graves, who is incarcerated at the Florida Women's Reception Center in Ocala, Fla., a while to get back to me.

"I had no idea what opportunities we have," she wrote. "After a little research, I found that we have none. Nothing academic is offered here, which is pretty sad because the University of Florida is about 30 minutes away."

Graves' response is not surprising. While I receive a lot of letters from people in college-in-prison programs, I get just as many, if not more, from people who want to earn a degree but don't have the opportunity. For this issue of College Inside, I wanted to get an overview of how many places offer higher education in prison, and who is excluded from it.

For example, in Florida, which incarcerates 80,000 people, only six out of the 143 correctional facilities in the state offer incarcerated students the opportunity to earn associate's or bache-

lor's degrees according to the Florida Department of Corrections. If those six programs enroll 50 students each (which would likely be on the high side), only 300 prisoners are attending college in the third-largest prison system in the United States.

**Limited opportunities almost everywhere**

In most states, it turns out, the majority of prisons do not have higher education programs, especially ones that lead to college degrees. Incarcerated people in less than a third of state and federal prisons have access to post-secondary education. And for some populations, academic options are even rarer. Some states explicitly ban people with long sentences from participating in higher education or don't offer any degree programs, while others prioritize enrollment based on time to release.

There are some exceptions. Since 2014, California has allowed community colleges to use state funding to enroll incarcerated students. As a result, California, which has the second-largest state prison system (behind Texas) with 97,000 prisoners, is one of the few states offering classes in nearly every prison. Face-to-face college programs leading to an associate's degree are

available at 33 prisons, and people at all 34 facilities can enroll in community college correspondence courses. Six California prisons currently offer in-person bachelor's programs according to the California Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections.

Nationwide, there were 374 prison education programs operating in 522 facilities in 2019-2020, according to data collected by the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison. Those numbers include programs that offer certificates, associate's degrees, and bachelor's degrees, as well as those that offer college classes but not credentials, and require a high school diploma or equivalent for admission.

Most of those programs are offered at the 1,566 state prisons and 100 federal prisons in the United States. People in the 5,000-some local jails, juvenile facilities, immigration detention facilities, military prisons, and other facilities are even less likely to have access to higher education.

While the actual number of prison education programs is likely higher due to the expansion of Pell Grants and the fact the data is self-reported, those numbers indicate that the majority of people in prison do not have access to postsecondary education.

As of 2020, states like Delaware, Idaho, Montana, and South Dakota did not offer any bachelor's or associate's degrees to their prison populations. All of those states now have at least one Second Chance Pell site with the latest expansion of the program in April, but those programs won't start until fall 2022 at the earliest and not all will lead to two-year or four-year degrees.

"If the government and its citizens really want to 'rehabilitate' prisoners, then education and job training should be a top priority," wrote Shawn Bell, who is serving a life sentence at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, S.D. "If people don't have something positive...like education, they find other, more negative ways to fill their time in prison."

**Too much time**

Even within facilities that have postsecondary programs, some categories of prisoners, including lifers like Bell, are often excluded from higher education. Half of the states impose restrictions on participation in education based on the length of an individual's sentence, while 11 states have restrictions related to conviction, according to the Council of State Governments Justice Center. Many states also pri-

oritize enrollment based on release date.

For example, people with life sentences in Alaska are excluded from vocational education and individuals on death row in Georgia are not allowed to formally participate in education programming. States like Colorado, Louisiana, and Missouri specifically prioritize those who have less than five years on their sentences.

Kamau Bentley, who is serving a life sentence in Wisconsin, has tried repeatedly to enroll in higher education programs. In the early 2000s, he tried to sign up for a college program, but was ineligible for state financial aid because he hadn't registered for the Selective Service. He gave up on his education.

Almost 20 years later, Bentley heard about Pell Grant reinstatement and decided to apply to another college program. Although the Selective Service requirement had been waived, he encountered another obstacle.

"It was determined that I had too much time on my sentence to be enrolled at that time," he said. "I was once again denied, and once again defeated. As of this writing, I am still trying to figure out a way to gain my degree, but in all honesty, every year I go without getting it done, the more unlikely it will be for me

to do it."

Although people with long sentences account for a relatively small number of state prison admissions, their numbers add up over time, according to a recent study from the Council on Criminal Justice. At the end of 2019, 57% of people in prison had been sentenced to 10 years or more. More than 200,000 people in the United States are serving life sentences.

Mary Ann Webb, who has been incarcerated at Anson Correctional in Polkton, NC, for 18 years, said that the criteria to take college courses at her facility is to have a release date within 10 years. "Since I have life without parole, it's impossible for me to grow mentally beyond trade classes," she wrote. "The reason I'm offered trade classes is so I can keep the prison clean and running."

Prison without opportunities for rehabilitation is "a life of stagnation," she wrote. "I feel as if I have no purpose because I'm considered a waste of time and money to educate."



**By Carlos Drouaillet  
Staff Writer**

Mount Tamalpais College staff hosted a long-awaited symposium that featured research results on the benefits of college attendance to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people.

The event was held on Aug. 25 in San Quentin's education B building. MTC staff member Jen Juras welcomed everyone and introduced the keynote speaker, Dr. Naomi Levy of Santa Clara University. Levy is a professor of political science who began teaching at MTC in the fall term.

Levy shared with the audience her experiences as a researcher in Europe and South America. "I love everything about research," said Levy.

She also presented key findings from surveys taken at

SQ between 2018 and 2019; informing the audience of up-to-date college participation statistics for alumni of MTC based on interviews of incarcerated graduates and those formerly incarcerated. She emphasized the finding that former students gained more confidence upon completing college.

The benefits start even before students graduate. The surveys found 60% of students become more motivated after taking five or more classes, obtaining new skills and increasing their self-esteem.

"I didn't see myself as someone incarcerated — I was a student. I carried a book all around and was constantly studying," a former student was quoted as

saying in the survey results.

"It is truly a transformative experience, and one that will not only transform the individual, but allow the individual to regain a contributory role in society," said another former student in a survey.

College programs change how students see their potential and the potential of others by improving their relationships inside and outside of prison. The surveys found 40% of students serve as tutors and mentors to their peers versus 9% for those who don't take any classes. Participating in a college program makes students more confident they will find a job after incarceration.

However, incarcerated students — even at a pro-

gramming-focused institution such as San Quentin — face challenges in receiving their education. Classes can be canceled without warning or explanation. Students can be delayed during unlocks or in trying to navigate through the various checkpoints to get to classrooms. These issues also affect non-MTC programs, but the resulting frustrations were expressed by many of the incarcerated students present at the symposium.

Most of the feedback expressed at the symposium was related to gratitude for MTC and for the opportunity to go to college.

MTC student Vincent Turner, who was present, said, "No matter if it is the college

program, self-help groups, sports or GED, overall these are the opportunities that help change the narrative of who we are."

Andrew Gazzeny, another MTC student at the symposium, said, "For me, MTC staff have been nurturing in a magnanimous way and that helps you overcome nearly every obstacle that any student can encounter, whether it be academic or personal."

MTC student John Levin, who was present, added, "Prison is typically divided on racial and ethnic boundaries. However, in an educational environment those boundaries disintegrate and we become one community of learners."

Dr. Levy emphasized it has

been proven that recidivism rates go down when incarcerated people are given the opportunity to further their education.

"My job is to guide you, to be able to answer your own questions as a group," concluded Dr. Levy.

Dr. Levy will be sharing her passion for research by teaching a research clinic at MTC on Tuesdays and Fridays at 3 p.m. The official name of the course is Socio-Science SSC 280, and it will cover data types, data collection and data presentation, among other topics. The only prerequisite is completion of English 204. To see if there is still room to sign up or inquire about class schedules in the future, please visit SQ's Education Department.

— **Manuel Dorado**  
*contributed to this story*

Mt. Tam College hosts symposium



SPANISH

Liberándose del enojo reprimido

Por Edwin E. Chávez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chairman

Buscando curación desde adentro hacia fuera. Una vez que los participantes de habla hispana adquieren las herramientas del programa Guiando la Rabia en Poder (GRIP por sus siglas en inglés) pueden controlar la ira.

La ceremonia fue coordinada con la ayuda de la directora ejecutiva Kim Moore y Tare Beltranchuc, un residente de San Quentin y facilitador del programa en español.

“Estos graduados completaron el programa en su propio idioma”, dijo Kim Moore. “Necesitamos reclutar más personas que sean bilingües y puedan facilitar el programa en español”.

Reconociendo el impacto positivo que el programa ha tenido en la comunidad encarcelada de habla hispana. La directora se dirigió a la Tribu 315, “Ustedes saben que nosotros somos su familia”.

“En GRIP aprendí a entender mis sensaciones corporales que siento cuando estoy en peligro inminente,” dijo Ramiro Badajoz de la Tribu 315. “Me enseñó a

Graduación de la Tribu 315 de GRIP



Vincent O'Bannon, SQNews

Momentos antes de la ceremonia la Tribu 315 de GRIP se reunió y celebraron los momentos en que ellos descubrieron la sanación.

entender el daño que yo le causé no sólo a mi víctima sino también a su familia y a mi familia, a la sociedad y a mis amigos.”

Actualmente, GRIP no tiene la capacidad para expandir este programa a todas las prisiones de California, comentó Moore. Sin embargo, tenemos el deseo de llevar el programa de GRIP a las mujeres encarceladas y a los hispanos y también a la juventud.

Según el manual de GRIP, una de las metas del programa

es sanar las heridas del pasado que aún no han sido procesadas y que contribuyen a la ira. Los participantes realizan un “inventario” de “asuntos inconclusos” en el que relacionan sus experiencias traumáticas con sus acciones violentas. Ellos internalizan el concepto que las personas heridas lastiman a otras y las personas sanas pueden ayudar a sanar a otras.

“Para mí, GRIP fue uno de los grupos que impactó a mi vida de una manera positiva,”

dijo Fabio Fausto de la Tribu 315. “Me sanó internamente y pude liberarme de todo el coraje, resentimiento y odio del pasado. También rompió mi creencia que los hombres no lloran.”

Al inicio del programa se les pregunta a los participantes cuántos años han estado encarcelados. Posteriormente, los años de cada persona son añadidos y así es como nació la Tribu 315.

Desafortunadamente la Doctora Lucia de la Fuente,

quien es la facilitadora de la Tribu 315, no pudo estar presente en la ceremonia por razones médicas.

A pesar de su ausencia, ella mandó un mensaje escrito que le tocó el corazón a toda la Tribu. Los participantes la extrañaron y le desearon una pronta recuperación.

“Querida Tribu 315, ¡muchísimas felicidades, Tribu de guerreros pacificadores! Aquí empieza su nueva vida como pacificadores. Es ahora responsabi-

dad suya el pasar este trabajo a las próximas generaciones. ¡Que se sienta la fuerza hispana y latina para que seamos nosotros quienes llevemos esta curación a todas nuestras comunidades!”

Al fin de su mensaje la doctora les recuerda a su Tribu 315. “Los esperamos acá afuera con los brazos abiertos y el alma bien contenta. Con la cabeza siempre en alto.”

Tranquilino Figueroa 65, uno de los que se graduó compuso su propia canción en español refiriéndose a los cuatro elementos.

Enfrente de una audiencia y con el corazón abierto, él cantó su canción resonando las cuerdas de su guitarra, dándole vida a la canción que desplomó su pasado de violencia.

“Esta canción significa para mí la curación y las herramientas para poder procesar mis traumas y los traumas que he causado a mis víctimas,” dijo Tranquilino Figueroa.

La canción habla de como detener mi violencia, desarrollar la inteligencia emocional, practicar la conciencia activa y plena en la prisión y finalmente entender el impacto en la víctima, y mi propia victimización imaginaria. La curación llega a aquellos que la buscan.

“En pasado éramos el problema, hoy somos parte de la solución”, dijo Tare Beltranchuc. “Ahora que podemos transformar la ira en poder, tenemos el poder para construir familias y relaciones saludables. Poder para contribuir a construir una mejor sociedad. Que nuestros pasados no se convierta en el futuro de al quien más”.

Resolviendo problema de vivienda económica en San Francisco

Por Manuel Dorado  
Journalism Guild writer

San Francisco es reconocido como el centro financiero del oeste de los Estados Unidos. Con una acumulación de riquezas extremas, y ganancias de corporaciones que son afectadas por la política moderada y conservadora, particularmente en referencia a la economía, de acuerdo con el artículo de Christopher D. Cook.

Cooper Teboe, un estratega demócrata, dijo en la revista de *FORBES*, que Chesa Boudin, el fiscal del distrito antiguo de San Francisco, es el “desafortunado recipiente de toda la ira de los inversionistas y billonarios.”

El aumento de gente sin hogar y la droga-adicción son tragedias que se pudieran evitar, además el precio de la vivienda está entre los más altos del país pues el costo promedio de una casa es de Dos millones de dólares, cantidad que muy pocos pueden pagar.

Debido a la alta concentración de billonarios el Area de la Bahía es la más prospera financieramente; donde el 10 por ciento ganan 12.2 veces más que aquellos de bajos ingresos que son los menos afortunados 10 por ciento, reporta Cook para *The Nation Magazine*.

“Hay un esfuerzo monetario muy grande para volver a cambiar la política progresiva en San Francisco,” dice Tim Redmond, el fundador y editor de *48 Hills*, quien ha reportado sobre el clima político en San Francisco desde 1986, de acuerdo al artículo.

Respecto a los precios excesivos de la vivienda, Rebecca

Solnit, una escritora, cita un reporte de la ciudad de que hay 40,000 unidades residenciales que permanecen vacías.

Por décadas el narrativo constante ha sido que edificando bastantes edificios, el precio de viviendas van a bajar. El problema no es que no hay suministro, sino de distribución, comentó Solnit.

En Vancouver, Canadá los votantes aprobaron una ley en enero para imponer impuestos sobre cada unidad vacía y así presionar a los terratenientes a que las ocupen. Activistas estan proponiendo una votación similar aquí. “Hay más leyes contra la comunidad sin hogar, en San Francisco que en cualquier otra ciudad en el estado”, dijo Jennifer Friedenbach, Directora de una organización (por sus siglas en inglés) Coalition on Homelessness.

William Obendorf, un billonario Republicano, hizo una donación de \$300,000 al grupo conocido (por sus siglas en inglés) Neighbors for a Better San Francisco [Vecinos para el mejoramiento de San Francisco]--- dinero que se usó para ejercer presión contra candidatos y medidas liberales, reporta *48 HILLS*.

En 2020, este grupo y sus alianzas de corporaciones---se unieron con la Alcaldesa London Breed---a oponerse a la Proposición 1, un impuesto de bienes y raíces a los dueños, para financiar viviendas de emergencia durante la pandemia. Los votantes aprobaron la medida con un alto margen y rechazaron a varios candidatos liberales, entre ellos a Chesa Boudin, informa la revista *Nacion* conocida en inglés *The Nation Magazine*.

CoreCivic enfrenta demanda por trabajos forzados

La demanda fue iniciada por los ex prisioneros reclamando violaciones a las leyes laborales

Por Carlos Drouaillet  
Staff Writer

Una corte federal de apelaciones dictaminó el viernes que los emigrantes que fueron forzados a trabajar sin pago o con poco sueldo por limpiar los baños y la cocina y sacar la basura pueden demandar al principal administrador de esas prisiones. Todo eso se lleva a cabo mientras en California se espera la decisión final acerca de la legalidad de prohibir el encarcelamiento de inmigrantes en prisiones administradas por agencias privadas, reporta Bob Egelko para el *San Francisco Chronicle*.

La demanda pública (class action suit) fue presentada en 2017 por dos ex reos en prisiones de California que son propiedad de CoreCivic, la cual tiene contratos con la Oficina de Inmigración y Aduanas (ICE por sus siglas en inglés) para detener a inmigrantes mientras esperan sus audiencias de deportación, dice el artículo.

Aunque la corte dice que CoreCivic tiene 24 de esos contratos a lo largo de la nación, la compañía dijo el viernes que ahora sólo opera 13 centros de detención para ICE, incluyendo uno en California, localizado en La Mesa de Otay, en San Diego.

Normalmente, las reglas para las prisiones de ICE, indican que a los detenidos no se les debe requerir hacer ningún trabajo, excepto el higiene personal, como hacer su cama y mantener el piso limpio, y que deben ser remunerados \$1 al día si toman parte en programas de trabajo voluntario,

de acuerdo al artículo.

Pero los prisioneros, de los cuales uno fue detenido desde el 2005 al 2015, dijeron como parte de la demanda que CoreCivic les obligaba a ellos y a otros, supuestamente en acuerdo a la póliza interna formal, a hacer limpieza general alrededor de la prisión por \$1 al día y, en ocasiones sin ningún pago, según el reporte de Bob Egelko.

Ellos dijeron que les ordenaron diariamente, “a levantar la basura, barrer, trapear, limpiar excusados, limpiar lavamanos, limpiar baños, limpiar muebles” y hacer otros trabajos, explicó el Noveno Distrito de la Corte de Apelaciones del Noveno Circuito de EE.UU. en la decisión, permitiendo que el caso continuara como una demanda pública, de acuerdo con el *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Como castigo, aquellos que desobedecían la orden de limpiar podrían ser enviados a confinamiento solitario, dijeron los presos.

Ellos mostraron a la Corte de Apelaciones del Noveno Circuito de EE.UU. un docu-

mento de parte del principal administrador de CoreCivic, en donde decía que tal póliza o práctica era de acuerdo con las compañías de prisiones de inmigración a nivel nacional.

Dichos reportes eran parte de las razones aprobadas por los legisladores de California (California Lawmakers) que el gobernador firmó en 2019 para terminar contratos estatales con prisiones privadas. En cuanto a los contratos en vigencia, continuarán hasta que se venzan o a más tardar para el año 2028, de acuerdo con el artículo en el *San Francisco Chronicle*. Los autores de la medida

dijeron que las condiciones en los centros de detención privados eran, frecuentemente peores que en las prisiones estatales y más difíciles para inspeccionar y regular, de acuerdo al *San Francisco Chronicle*.

En una demanda del Grupo GEO, otro contratista de prisiones privadas, el panel de abogados del Noveno Circuito votó 2-1 en octubre del 2021 que la ley del estado,

como se aplica a prisiones de inmigración, interfiere con la autoridad federal para regular inmigración y para decidir dónde deben ser detenidos los inmigrantes, según el reporte.

Pero en abril 2022 una mayoría de los 29-miembros de la Corte de Apelaciones, decidió ignorar ese dictamen y ordenó una nueva audiencia ante un panel de 11 jueces, planeado para junio 21, 2022, reporta el artículo.

La demanda que fue iniciada en el 2017 por los ex prisioneros en contra de CoreCivic reclama violaciones de las leyes laborales de California, y está en contra del tráfico humano. Algunos demandantes han estado detenidos en California desde el 2006, y en otros centros de detención en otros estados desde diciembre del 2008, reporta El *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Defendiendo una decisión del juez federal del 2020 que permitió el caso a continuar como una demanda pública, la corte de apelaciones dictaminó, por votación de 3-0, el viernes que dos ex reos presentaron evidencia de que CoreCivic requirió que todos los prisioneros trabajaran bajo órdenes que estaban en conflicto con reglas de limpieza personal anunciadas por ICE.

Al pedirse comentario, Ryan Gustin, un vocero de CoreCivic, dijo, “Todos los programas de trabajo en nuestros centros de detención son completamente voluntarios y llevados a cabo en completo cumplimiento con los estándares de ICE, incluyendo el pago mínimo federal establecido por trabajo voluntario de los detenidos.”

La demanda que fue iniciada por los ex prisioneros en contra de CoreCivic, reclama violaciones de las leyes laborales de California y está en contra del tráfico humano.



# Reflexionando en el Día de Acción de Gracias

Por Manuel Dorado  
Journalism Guild Writer

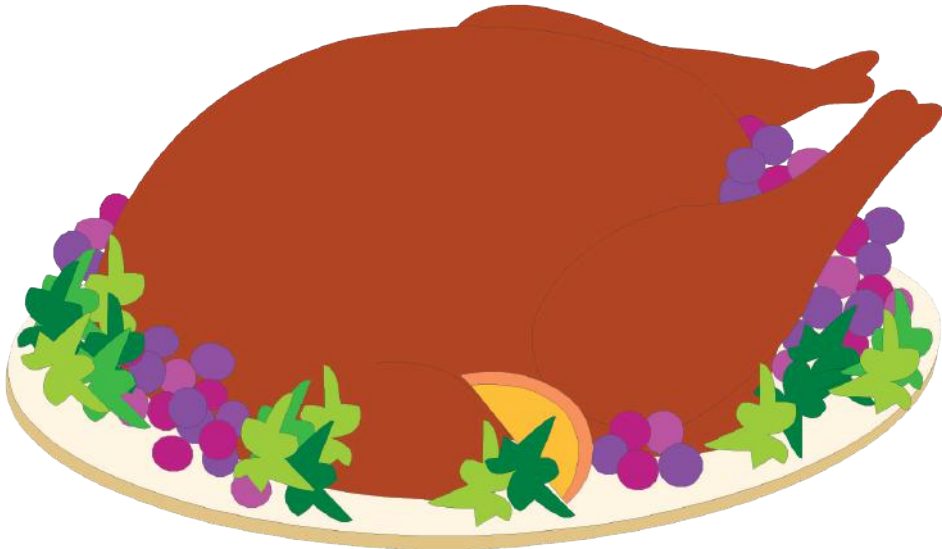
El Día de Acción de Gracias es un día para reunirse con la familia y recordar las bendiciones de la vida, que se celebra cada noviembre en los Estados Unidos.

Para mucha gente, el Día de Acción de Gracias trae recuerdos de mesas llenas de comida, reuniones alegres, juegos de futbol Americano, reflexiones religiosas, y el desfile del Día de Acción de Gracias de Macy’s en la ciudad de Nueva York.

Pero para los residentes de la prisión de San Quentin, ellos no pueden celebrar el festivo como la mayoría de americanos.

SQNews, entrevisto a residentes de la prisión de habla hispana. Ellos reflexionaron en las bendiciones de este día festivo extrañando a sus seres queridos.

“Extraño en compartir con familia las bendiciones que en el transcurso del año hemos recibido”, dijo un residente de la prisión Tut Rolando. “En no poder estar físicamente con mi mama”, mis hermanos me



afecta”.

Reflexionando en las raíces y tradiciones de este día festivo SQNews nos recuerda, [basado en el reporte de la enciclopedia], que en la primavera del año 1621, un indio Patuxet llamado ‘Tisquantum’ que convivía con los Británicos les enseñó como cultivar

plantas nativas de las Américas, junto con las plantas de chicharos, trigo y cebada que trajeron los Europeos.

Al principio del otoño de ese año, el gobernador de Plymouth, William Bradford, organizo una celebración de tres días para darle gracias a Dios por la primera cosecha y

porque la colonia sobrevivió.

La tradición mantiene que los colonos invitaron al Jefe Massasoit del grupo indígena de Wampanoag. El lleo con 90 personas y apor to a la fiesta llevando cinco venados.

Las mujeres del poblado supervisaron la cocina sobre fuegos al aire libre. Es muy

probable que lo que comieron se complementara con pato, guajolote, avena de maíz, y platillos de calabaza.

Los británicos y el pueblo Wampanoag jugaron juegos y concursos de habilidad; inclusive, los británicos presentaron ejercicios militares, de acuerdo con el reporte de del libro de enciclopedia mundial 2019.

La costumbre del día de agradecimiento se extendió de Plymouth a las otras colonias de la Nueva Inglaterra. En 1789, el Presidente George Washington promulgo una proclamación general nombrando el 26 de noviembre un día nacional de Acción de Gracias.

Por muchos años, el país no tenía un día oficial de Acción de Gracias. Algunos estados tenían un día festivo anual.

Para poder ayudar a la economía y a los negocios y extender el periodo de compras, en 1941 el Congreso determino que el cuarto jueves del mes de noviembre seria observado como el Día de Acción de Gracias, declarándolo un día festivo federal, añadió el reporte de

Enciclopedia.

El primer desfile Navideño de Macy’s se ha convertido en una tradición nacional, los animales del zoológico fueron reemplazados con globos de personajes, tal como el debut de “El Gato Félix,” in 1924. Hoy día el desfile solo es dosy-media millas, y se llama el “Desfile de Acción de Gracias de Macy’s”, de acuerdo con el artículo de Christopher Klien.

No muy lejos de la cancha de tenis de la prisión se encontraba el Señor Javier Oliva Guerrero quien comentó con la cabeza baja extrañado a su familiares durante su encarcelamiento.

“Me afecta en el aspecto que no puedo tener visitas con mi familiares, como mi padres...y no poder convivir con ellos... por no poder visitarme”.

“Me afecta emocionalmente en estar lejos de mi familia... y por las cuarentenas por el virus de COVID-19 – en el Día de Gracias.” Dijo Ramiro Bada-joz de 55 años de edad. “La tristeza me mata en el saber que no puedo salir a visitar a mis amistades en otros estados y países.”

## Las sentencias de los oficiales en el caso Floyd fueron modificadas

Por Carlos Drouaillet  
Staff Writer

En Minneapolis, dos de los cuatro ex policías condenados por violar los derechos civiles de George Floyd pueden recibir sentencias más cortas, después de que un juez federal anunció que sus sentencias se calcularan bajo una fórmula más benevolente, de acuerdo con el reporte de Amy Forliti a la Prensa Asociada.

Paul Magnuson, el juez federal del distrito, sentenciara a J. Alexander Kueng y a Tou Thao el miércoles utilizando el delito de homicidio involuntario en vez del de asesinato al calcular dichas sentencias beneficiando a estos dos implicados, reporta La Prensa Asociada.

Los fiscales del caso, sin hacer recomendaciones específicas, solicitaron al juez Magnuson que sentenciara a Kueng y a Thao a un tiempo menor que a Derek Chauvin, sin embargo “sustancialmente” más que a Lane. Por su parte el abogado personal de Kueng envió su recomendación sellada, mientras tanto el de Thao recomienda 2 años para su cliente, según el reporte.

“Los hechos de este caso no equivalen a asesinato en segundo grado según la ley federal”, escribió el juez Magnuson”. “Los acusados Kueng y Thao hicieron cada uno un trágico diagnóstico erróneo en su evaluación del Sr. Floyd”.

En resumen, los cuatro ex oficiales, Chauvin, Lane, Kueng y Thao fueron encontrados culpables de violar de los derechos civiles federales que a la vez se combinan con asesinato, para sentencia elevada; u homicidio involuntario, para sentencia menor. La intervención individual de los oficiales fue la siguiente: Chauvin controlaba a Floyd por el cuello, Kueng inmovilizaba la espalda de Floyd, Lane le sujetaba los pies y Thao controlaba la muchedumbre, reporta Amy Forliti.

Según la interpretación del juez, el delito de Kueng y

Thao es considerado homicidio involuntario, permitiendo que la sentencia sea más baja para ellos. La cual seria de 2 ¼ años de prisión en vez de 19 ½ años si se considerara asesinato, según los reglamentos de la Comision de Sentencias de EE.UU., siempre y cuando, considerando que otros factores afectaran los cálculos. Añade Magnuson que como el delito se cometió bajo el “color de la ley” el rango referencial de la sentencia cambia de 4 ¼ años y 5 ¼ años de prisión; sin embargo la semana próxima el juez podría revelar otros factores que afecten el proceso de la sentencia, según el artículo.

Por lo tanto, Kueng y Thao quienes no aceptaron acuerdos de culpabilidad, estan libres bajo fianza mientras esperan su sentencia y esperan ser juzgados por sus cargos en el juicio que iniciara el 24 de octubre, de acuerdo al artículo de La Prensa Asociada.

En contraste, Lane, quien fue la que sujeto los pies de Floyd, acepto culpabilidad de complicidad en homicidio involuntario y se encuentra libre bajo fianza después que fue sentenciada a 2 ½ años. Se espera que se determine su fecha para entrar a la prisión federal en octubre, según La Prensa Asociada.

Por ahora, el único sentenciado que está cumpliendo una condena en prisión estatal por la muerte de George Floyd es el ex oficial Chauvin quien sirve sentencia estatal de 22 años y sentencia federal de 21 años simultáneamente. Presentemente él está en la prisión estatal de máxima seguridad pero puede ser enviado bajo custodia federal en algún momento.

En referencia del caso de Kueng y Thao que está pendiente para el 24 de octubre, el juez explico “que ambos hombres realmente pensaron que Floyd sufría de una sobredosis de drogas y ‘delirio excitado’, una condición controvertida en la que se dice que alguien tiene una fuerza extraordinaria”, concluyo el juez Magnuson.

## La fundadora del proyecto Bandera de Paz Runa Ray visita San Quentin

Por Ray Torres  
Journalism Guild Writer

Una diseñadora de modas utiliza el arte y la moda para crear un mejor medio ambiente alrededor del mundo, y promover la Justicia Social en la población carcelaria.

Ray, es la fundadora del Proyecto Bandera de Paz (The Peace Flag Project). Este es un programa innovador, sin-fines de lucro patrocinado por EL Departamento de Correcciones y Rehabilitación de California (por sus siglas en inglés, en colaboración con el programa de Artes en Correcciones en la prisión de San Quentin.

“El proyecto está en 193 países en este preciso momento” dijo Ray. A nivel mundial, el proyecto ha coleccionado más de 100,000 muestras de arte. Los donadores son prisioneros, estudiantes, refugiados, personas con enfermedades-terminales, y en general el público con tendencias artísticas, quienes desean un mundo justo y equitativo, explicó la fundadora Ray, añadiendo que ella, invierte sus propias ganancias en el proyecto de todo corazón.

La fundadora tiene como objetivo involucrar al mundo para obtener la paz, usando la moda de vestir como una plataforma. Ella trabaja con la Organización de las Naciones Unidas, para poder reducir el calentamiento de la tierra, el impacto tóxico y la amenaza al futuro de la humanidad. Runa añadió, que la moda es una industria de trillones de dólares que es responsable por el calentamiento del medio ambiente.

Más de tres millones de toneladas de ropa pasada de moda, que no se puede vender, es quemada y adicionalmente, diez millones de toneladas son mandados a basureros, provocando contaminación a nivel mundial. Las telas desperdiciadas contienen materiales tóxicos que dañan el medio ambiente y a la humanidad, de acuerdo al el artículo.

Las fibras de las telas, al llegar al aire que respiramos cau-



Tony Singh, SQNews

Runa Ray durante El Día de Paz en San Quentin

san problemas pulmonares y otros malestares de salud, por esa razón debemos de proteger y mantener más limpios los océanos que estan repletos de productos contaminantes, de acuerdo al artículo.

Runa se preguntó a ella misma, ¿“Como puedo yo crear un mensaje con la moda-vestir, para educar, abogar y unificar”?

Así fue como nació el Proyecto Bandera De Paz. Las personas que participan en el proyecto, usan su creatividad para mostrar sus deseos para un mundo más saludable.

SQNews estuvo presente durante una sesión del programa de Artes en Correcciones donde los estudiantes trabajaron con las telas cuadradas para crear una gran bandera. Los uniformes de los reclusos, camisas-usadas, fueron pintadas y cosidas juntas para formar una bandera gigante, que será usada como emblema de la clase de artes.

El programa aborda los derechos humanos y es comparado con la explotación de mano de obra infantil, donde

niñas y niños son usados para raspar pantalones y hacerlos ver usados y descoloridos. Las condiciones en la que estos menores de edad laborar son aborrecibles.

El proyecto Bandera de Paz también está en la cárcel de San Mateo, California y otras organizaciones a nivel mundial, y sigue creciendo rápidamente, según Ray.

El proyecto está en las redes sociales y tiene su propia página Web (www.runaray.com), en Instagram y en el medio de Podcast.

SQNews: Le preguntó ¿”Qué la inspiro para que pueda compartir este proyecto con la población carcelaria y con el mundo entero”?

“Quiero darle brillo al trabajo de otras gentes, usando el arte y la moda para crear un mundo mejor, unir a la humanidad y avanzar en la Justicia Social”, dijo Ray.

A partir del 2015, el Proyecto Bandera de Paz, y la Organización de las Naciones Unidas, se propusieron como meta obtener más claridad en el proceso de fabricación de

productos, según el artículo.

Carol Newborg, coordinadora del evento y directora del programa de Artes en Correcciones de San Quentin, comentó que mientras la bandera continua creciendo con cada pieza de arte, las personas son parte de la historia.

“El arte es medicina para la mente y religión para el alma para los que se encuentran en lugares oscuros”, dijo Orlando Smith un reo en SQ, estudiante, escritor y dibujante. “El arte trae luz”.

Runa Ray estuvo presente en el evento “Day of Peace” celebrado en la yarda deportiva de SQ. En ese evento ella mostro la ‘Gran Bandera de Paz’, estando acompañada por colaboradores y estudiantes del ‘Prison Arts Project’ en SQ.

“Es un honor para mí el haber participado en el ‘Proyecto Bandera de Paz’”, dijo emocionado Jeffrey A. Isom. “Una de las razones por lo cual yo hago arte, es para contribuir con proyectos de arte, para hacer un cambio con nuestro clima”.



SPORTS

FIRST 5K HELD AT THE Q SINCE COVID

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Staff Writer

A 5K-run was held at San Quentin in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic to celebrate overcoming hardships due to program modifications and restrictions, and commemorate those who were lost during the outbreaks, which have changed the prison and the world.

The five-kilometer (three mile) run was organized by SQ's 1000 Mile Club and attracted nearly 400 residents who signed up to participate.

Participants had the option to run, jog, or walk, and it was open to everyone regardless of their level of athletic ability. The event was also held to support the SQ Mental Wellness Week and the national Suicide Prevention Month by taking life "one step at a time."

"Covid really messed some of us up, and we're still trying to regain our previous form. I guess the harder the struggle is, the more it lets us know we accomplished something meaningful," said incarcerated volunteer and runner Darren Settlemeyer.

There were sign-up tables for each housing unit: North Block, Badger Section, and H-Unit, but unfortunately none for West Block because of an unexpected quarantine for yet another outbreak of Covid-19.

Community and incarcerated volunteers from the club arrived at 8 am, eager to help and offer words of encouragement as participants began to assemble and prepare for the run.

"I'm happy to be back, it's a wonderful opportunity for us to come in and volunteer," said staff volunteer Charlene Liebes. In May of this year, Liebes says she ran a 50K run



Tony Singh, SQNews

Nearly 400 San Quentin residents participated in the five-kilometer run. Participants ran, jogged, or walked according to their athletic ability.

(30 miles).

The run started at 9:10 am. There were new runners, veteran runners, and some residents who just wanted to walk the 5K with their friends.

Despite the absence of West Block, the yard was fully occupied by the run along with two other events taking place at the same time. Members of the 2021–2022 NBA Champion Golden State Warriors visited SQ along with their staff and coaches who played

the SQ Warriors in a basketball game, and at the same time volunteers were hosting the final day of SQ's Mental Wellness Week.

"Exercise is great for the mental health," said Margo Freeman, another 1000 Mile Club community volunteer.

The Lower Yard was so crowded that runners faced challenges of navigating through a multitude of people in order to finish the run. Some seemed not to mind, while others sported looks of displeasure.

Joshua Strange, 47, finished first with a time of 19 minutes and 43 seconds. Throughout the run, he held a brisk pace, despite having to weave around other people.

Finishing second was Olivares Francisco, 44. "When I was running I had my family on my mind, to focus on something positive means a lot to me," he said.

Steve Warren, 34, finished

third, followed by Pastor Garcia, 60, in fourth place.

"I use to weigh 220 pounds. I had high blood pressure. I took medication. Now, I weigh 173 pounds, no medication," said Garcia.

All participants received a certificate of completion acknowledging their accomplishment, along with a wristband commemorating the event.

Coach Frank Ruona and Assistant Coach Kevin Rumon

have been helping and encouraging incarcerated people prepare for runs ever since the club started in 2010.

"It feels great to be back," said Rumon.

Unfortunately, lockdowns due to Covid-19 continue to hamper the club's efforts to train and hold other events. Due to this, the 26.2-mile marathon that typically takes place in November is unlikely to happen, according to members of the club.

Los Angeles Sparks: First WNBA team to hit 500 wins

By Dante D. Jones  
Staff Writer

Sports history was written this past summer when the L.A. Sparks took down the Dallas Wings 97–89 to secure the team's 500<sup>th</sup> win, making it the winningest team in WNBA history.

What makes this accomplishment even more historic is the fact that the Sparks reached this milestone in just 837 games. The Milwaukee Bucks set the first professional basketball record in 1979, when they recorded 500 wins in 866 NBA regular season games.

A large part of the Sparks' success is attributable to Nneka Ogumike, a WNBA star and future Hall of Famer. "It's a part of history," said Ogumike, a 10-year vet with the Sparks

who helped contribute to 193 of their victories. "As a professional, these are the only colors I've ever worn... I just love being part of such a rich legacy."

As one of only three franchises that have been with the WNBA since its beginning, Los Angeles' history is rich with accolades. With three titles, the Sparks are akin to their NBA counterparts (L.A. Lakers) by having the second most championships of any WNBA franchise.

DeAndre Brumfield, resident of San Quentin and an avid Sparks fan, expressed his excitement about L.A.'s historic accomplishment. "I think it's great. I think they're proving that women's



sports deserve to get more coverage because they are out-performing some of the men's (NBA) teams," he said.

According to the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, throughout their history, the Sparks have reached the playoffs 20 times in 26 years. They have boasted 13 years with at least 20+ wins in the regular season.

"There is so much culture here with our team and there's so much success... I've played with legends that have their jerseys hanging up. I'm just glad to have been a part of another milestone moment with the Sparks," Ogumike said.

Multiple Hall of Famers and future HOFs have donned the

Spark's "Purple and Gold" throughout the years including Lisa Leslie, Tina Thompson, Teresa Wither- spoon, Candace Parker, and Kristi Toliver.

Michael Cooper of the great Showtime Lakers coached the Sparks to their first two championships ('01 and '02) and Brian Agler lead them to their third in 2016.

Notwithstanding a recent coaching change from Lakers great Derek Fisher to veteran Coach Fred Williams, and a 13–23 season marred by injuries that meant no trip to the playoffs that the Las Vegas Aces won, the Sparks' future is bright. With stars like Ogumike, Jordin Canada, Liz Cambage, and Te'a Cooper leading the way for the Sparks, winning another title seems likely in the not too far distant future.

TIER TALK

Life-long boxing enthusiast Raymond Estrada reflects on coaching



Timothy Hicks, SQNews

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

One of San Quentin's oldest sports is boxing, but the sport is not practiced here anymore due to its violent reputation. However, the residents can still use the punching bag and get training from some of the prison's self-proclaimed boxing coaches, such as boxing enthusiast Raymond Timothy Estrada.

■ ■ ■

**Timothy Hicks (TH):** How long have you been into boxing?

**Raymond Estrada (RE):** I have been into boxing since I was 10 or 11. It was all

around me.

**TH:** Who did you see boxing?

**RE:** My cousin was a Golden Glove and my uncle was a boxing coach. I looked up to them.

**TH:** How did you learn the sport?

**RE:** I emulated everything that my older cousin did. I used to tag along with him when we were kids.

**TH:** Did you ever have a match?

**RE:** Not professionally. I boxed a lot when I was young, and when I got older that's when I had my first match. I used to box at a place called Ring Side, but it started at

Holmes playground.

**TH:** Did the love for boxing follow you to prison?

**RE:** Yeah, sometimes tears would well up in my eyes when I would watch the matches on TV because I would wish it was me. I wish I had chosen that path instead of the one I chose that brought me to prison. Boxing is my passion.

**TH:** So what do you do to fulfill that passion while you are here?

**RE:** I stay sober and I apply all my coping mechanisms. I use the heavy bag as my therapy.

**TH:** Have any injuries ever stopped you from boxing?

**RE:** Yes, because of my lifestyle I had chosen out there, I was shot several times and I sustained serious injuries from it.

**TH:** Since you cannot box anymore, do you train anyone to share your knowledge of boxing with others?

**RE:** Yeah, when people ask me to coach them. Some may even offer me money, but I refuse it. I do it just to give back. It is my way to do good. I tell those that I coach that there is no cause for violence. We do this for the sole purpose to learn techniques of boxing and to stay in shape. I tell them that if I ever see them get into fights or be neg-

ative with this skill, I will not coach them no more.

**TH:** How many people do you coach?

**RE:** It's only three so far.

**TH:** Do those you train trust your skills?

**RE:** I believe so.

**TH:** Do you plan to do this when you get out?

**RE:** Absolutely. It's in my relapse prevention plan. Everyone that knows me knows that it's my passion. I love it like those who love other sports love their sport of choice. I plan on helping at-risk youth out there so that I might save someone from taking the route I took that brought me to prison.





Tony Singh, SQNews

By Joshua Strange  
Staff Writer

The San Quentin (SQ) Warriors finally faced fresh competition on Aug. 13 as the first outside basketball team came in for a scrimmage after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19. The Lower Yard was filled with sports activity on that sunny day, but it was basketball that drew the biggest crowd with spectators ringing the court to cheer on the home team. The Warriors played a team put together by the California-based Prison Sports Ministry, which typically sends a regular rotation of local teams to play the SQ Warriors and the 40-and-over SQ Kings. However, the last time a basketball team came in was on Sept. 5, 2019, during the filming of the *Q Ball* documentary produced by NBA star Kevin

Durant. “This day means a lot to us. We’re a basketball family, and when these guys come in, it’s like having a visit. A lot of the newer guys on the team haven’t even experienced this or played against outside guys, so it’s a big deal,” said Brian Asey, general manager of the SQ Basketball Program. Several of the spectators who had recently transferred from higher-level prison yards couldn’t believe their eyes — a basketball game being played with guys from the streets with no correctional officers (COs) in sight, like it was just another day at the park. “I guess what they say about San Quentin is true,” one of them was heard saying, in reference to The Q’s culture of positive programming. SQ resident and referee Tay Reed also welcomed the sight. “For a few hours you get to

feel normal again. I’ve heard a lot about outside sports teams coming in here, but this is the first time I’ve actually seen it up close and personal. It’s nice to finally get to experience some of what this place has to offer.” Basketball players and spectators from The Q were not the only ones rejoicing that COVID-19 restrictions were finally easing up enough to let outside sports teams back into the prison. Coach Don Smith, one of the leaders of the Ministry, noted they had been disappointed numerous times trying to get into the prison to play. “It’s so important for our guys and myself to actually be here now,” he said. Live-action rust was evident early for both teams with a rash of unforced turnovers, fouls and sloppy play. Derrell “Sadiq” Davis opened the

scoring with a three-pointer for the Warriors, but the Ministry team took an early lead as the Warriors struggled to finish at the basket. After the first quarter, the Warriors eked out a one-point lead thanks to a hot hand from Montrell Vines and Keyshawn “Steez” Strickland. On defense, the younger Warriors team stuck with man-to-man while the Ministry team — an assorted bunch who normally play the SQ Kings — switched to a two-three-zone to slow down the pace. Pressure defense and turnovers forced by Joshua “JB” Burton and Delvon “Delvy” Adams helped create a tide in the Warriors favor along with Strickland’s highlight-worthy Euro-step move and behind-the-arc swishes. When the duck-call whistles sounded at the half, the scoreboard read: Home 46, Guests

# BASKETBALL COMES BACK TO THE Q

33. Players gathered at half-court for some inspirational words of encouragement and prayers led by Coach Smith. The Ministry team was shorthanded, so they recruited two players from the SQ Kings — “Pookey” Sylvester and Nash Batta to help share the load. But the Warriors soon started busting the zone D with good ball movement and penetration into the paint. Rickey “Big Rick” Hales and Adams added timely offensive rebounds and put-backs, and the Warriors cruised to an 84–65 victory over their friendly rivals. “The guys really locked in defensively,” said Warriors coach Jeremiah “JB” Brown. “With the pace in the first half, I knew we’d eventually wear ’em down. I kept rotating players to keep our guys fresh — as long as I could look in a guy’s eye and see he was ready to play, I’d put him in.” Coach JB was pleased with the offense, saying they just needed to make the shots. Most of all, defense was the key to victory in his eyes. “I went through the (stats) books from the last few years and when the other team went over 70, we usually lost. So our goal, our mantra, was 70 — hold them to 70,” he said. If the Warriors keep up their smothering defense and increase their offensive efficiency, then expect them to meet that goal and continue winning games. Regardless of the scoreboard, the day was a win for everybody involved. “It means the world to come back in here after a couple of years with everything we’ve been through,” said Charles, one of the Ministry team players. “Feels good to see the old faces, and some new ones, too. The fellowship and the brotherhood, it means a lot to us as well. We’re looking forward to more basketball.” His teammate, Free, who has been coming in since 2016, agreed. Free led all scorers with 17 points and 10 rebounds, but said his favorite part is getting to welcome people into the fold on the outside when they are paroled. “Just the other day we had a barbecue to celebrate with like 25 to 30 guys, a lot of them who we used to play in here,” Free said. Warriors players who scored in the double digits included Strickland with 16, Adams with 14, and Hales with 10 points in the paint. As long as The Q remains outbreak free and open to visitors, the Warriors and Kings will be holding court for more spirited balling on the Lower Yard with their brothers from the Prison Sports Ministry this season — so stay tuned.

## SQ sports program speaks the language of self-help

By Timothy Hicks  
Sports Editor

San Quentin sports programs produce many replay-worthy highlights, and while everybody has their personal favorites, the size of the crowd for each suggests a ranking order. Judging by the size of the crowds, sports enthusiasts’ top sports team here is likely the SQ Warriors because they are sponsored by the Golden State Warriors, who visit the prison regularly. The NBA Warriors have mingled with residents and even shared their championship trophy with the population — truly a big deal! Whenever the Golden State Warriors visit, their coaches and staff play a friendly yet highly-competitive scrimmage against the SQ Warriors. Even with General Manager Bob Myers dropping threes and former NBA players bringing their game, the SQ Warriors managed to beat their NBA rivals in 2017. Apparently, Stephen Curry was chirping in Myer’s ear afterwards, making sure he wouldn’t forget the loss. We also have the SQ Kings basketball team, competitive 40-and-overs whose team name is a nod to the Sacramento Kings. But they don’t receive the notoriety the SQ Warriors do, and they don’t consistently beat the Warriors in head-to-head games. Altogether, in combination with the intramural basketball leagues, basketball can be considered the main attraction among San Quentin sports. Another San Quentin sport that draws big crowds is football. The coaches honored John Madden by naming the flag-football league All Mad-

den in his honor. Football can be deemed the second most-admired sport in the prison. Taking third place is one of America’s oldest pastimes, baseball. The San Francisco Giants sponsor the SQ A’s baseball team. The MLB franchise refurbished the Field of Dreams on the Lower Yard, where baseball games are held along with football and soccer, more than 20 years ago. Also swinging bats on the Field of Dreams is SQ’s Hardtimers softball team. Many outside teams come to play The Q’s teams. A program called Prison Sports Ministry is a faith-based organization that brings outside basketball, baseball, and football teams into the prison. Along with the competitive sports battles, the Ministry ministers to the residents about character, faith, and spiritual healing. The fourth most cherished sport is fútbol, also known as soccer. When a match is going on, or the San Jose Earthquakes come to battle the men, everyone knows when a goal is scored from the loud cheers echoing across the yard. Another Lower Yard sport is running. While the runners might not draw the crowds, they certainly have the best endurance and maybe the toughest assignment when they run their 26.2 mile marathons. If you were to take a jog around the Lower Yard along with the SQ 1000 Mile Club’s athletes, you would see a symphony of sports played in their respective areas, including

tennis. SQ has a tennis court and a team that plays matches against retired tennis players who come in for matches against the men-in-blue. Other sports at San Quentin might not bring crowds but are always exciting to those who participate. In the horseshoe pit you can hear the clang of the metal shoes hitting the iron when the throwers chase ringers. On the handball court you can hear the blue rubber balls smacking the wall with the force of a slap from an open palm. Those who play cards and dominoes make plenty of noise slamming down their pieces or cards on the tables and trash talking each other in their never-ending rivalries. The mental wars waged during chess matches are silent but no less competitive. Aside from the competition and the crowds, the sports programs have a unique rehabilitative aspect. Athletes benefit from playing sports and from the social skills that result from being part of a team. Leadership skills and discipline are developed from participation in competitive athletics. Unity, togetherness, and teamwork are attributes of athletic experiences. So no matter the size of the crowd or the wow-factor of the latest, greatest highlight play, always remember that we all win through the character-building benefit of sports — all sports, from the most prominent to the least.

*When a match is going on, or the San Jose Earthquakes come to battle the men, everyone knows when a goal is scored from the loud cheers echoing across the yard.*

## Remembering Vin Scully: Legendary voice of the Dodgers dies at 94



Stock image

Vin Scully, famous sportscaster, was known to one and all as the ‘Voice of the Los Angeles Dodgers.’

Vincent Edward Scully, affectionately known to the world as Vin Scully, passed away on Aug. 2, 2022. He was famously known as the sportscaster for Major League Baseball’s Los Angeles Dodgers since the 1950s, when the franchise was in Brooklyn, according to Wikipedia. Scully served the Dodgers and their fans for 67 years until he passed away at age 94, reported *ESPN News Services*. “We have lost an icon,” said Dodgers President and CEO Stan Kasten in a statement. “Vin Scully was one of the greatest voices in all of sports. He was a giant of a man, not only as a broadcaster, but as a humanitarian. He loved people. He loved life.” Kasten lauded Scully and his love for the sport and family, and he sent his condolences to Scully’s family. Scully’s extensive career earned him an abundance of awards and recognition from the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1982, the National Radio Hall of Fame in 1995, and the California Sports Hall of Fame in 2008. Scully was inducted into the NAB Broadcasting Hall of Fame in 2009. His broadcasting skills even

earned him an Emmy. He played sports at his alma mater, Fordham University. He went on to be hired at CBS as a broadcaster and later switched to NBC. Scully’s voice was heard over the PA systems of many different sports, from football to golf to baseball. According to Wikipedia, Scully even commented on tennis. Scully called the play-by-play with his unique voice and he will be missed in the broadcasting world, just as he was missed when he retired in 2016. “He was the best there ever was,” said Clayton Kershaw after a Dodgers game. “Just when you think about the Dodgers, there’s a lot of history here and a lot of people that have come through. It’s just a storied franchise all the way around. But it almost starts with Vin, honestly. Just such a special man. I’m grateful and thankful I got to know him as well as I did.” Scully called the play-by-plays of well over a thousand games in his career. He also had the opportunity to be the voice that shouted out history-making events and record-breaking home runs of some of the greatest names in baseball history.

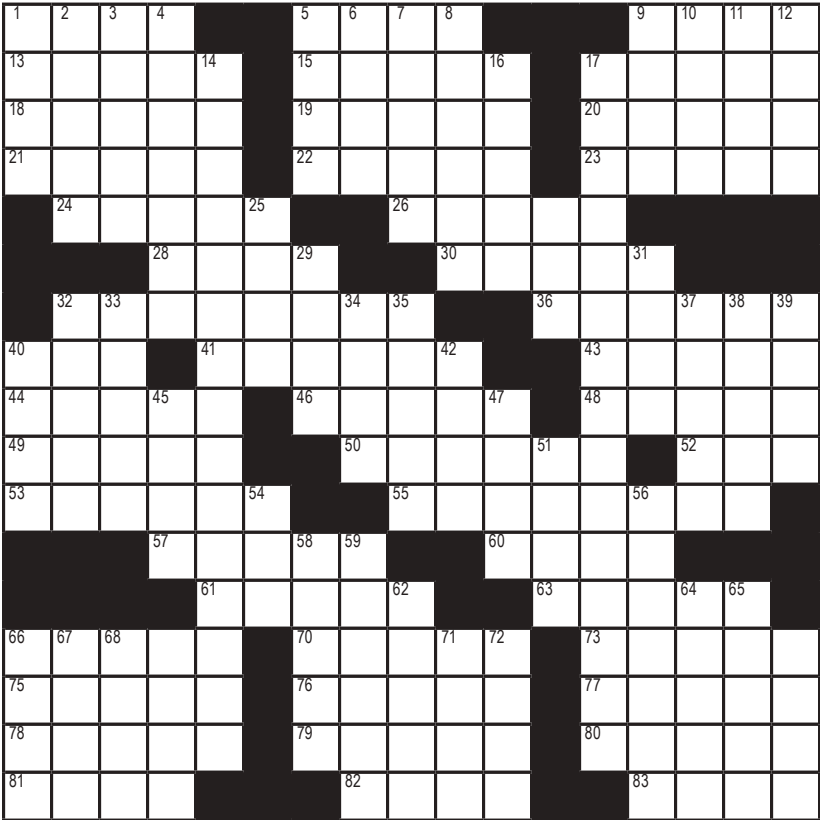
That includes Hank Aaron and his 715th career home run that broke the legendary Babe Ruth’s record in 1974. Scully was there in 1956 when Don Larsen pitched a no-hitter. He saw Barry Bonds break records in 2001. Scully was there at the turning of an era in baseball history when racism was prevalent in all sports, and he witnessed Hank Aaron receive a standing ovation when he broke Babe Ruth’s record against the Dodgers. “A Black man is getting a standing ovation in the Deep South for breaking a record of an all time idol,” Scully said. “What a marvelous moment for baseball.” Scully saw the 1950s era baseball with historical greats like Jackie Robinson and Pee Wee Reese on through the ’60s and ’70s with Don Drysdale, Sandy Koufax, Steve Garvey and Don Sutton, noted *ESPN News Services*. He received praise from just about everybody in the sports arena — from past and present Dodgers players, to general managers and other front office executives, to Magic Johnson. The world lost a sports icon. —Timothy Hicks



CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Jonathan Chiu

Edited by Jan Perry



Across

- 1. Unit denoting a factor of 10<sup>9</sup>
- 5. The speed of sound
- 9. Road work safety object
- 13. Soviet symphony/ballet composer, \_\_\_\_\_ Khachaturian
- 15. Hacker on The Black List
- 17. A shady garden alcove; pergola
- 18. Ancient internet connection device
- 19. Underwater diving with air tanks
- 20. Subsurface tentacles of trees and plants
- 21. Somnolent emanation
- 22. German undergarments: “lieder \_\_\_\_\_”
- 23. Canary speech; also, social media declaration under 280 characters
- 24. Agitates: “\_\_\_\_\_ the pot”
- 26. Vietnam capital
- 28. Lobster alternative
- 30. Authorization
- 32. Green of Golden State Warriors
- 36. Thread or wire
- 40. Portuguese for “saint”
- 41. Small trees of the caesal pinia family
- 43. “\_\_\_\_\_” course or time (2 wds)
- 44. Slang for arrest
- 46. Characteristic of perpetual snowy region
- 48. Young women in college
- 49. Enthusiasm or passion
- 50. One who saves; also, Jesus of Nazareth
- 52. Albanian currency
- 53. Fibrous protien in muscle tissue
- 55. A gland does this
- 57. First Indian ruler to embrace Buddhism
- 60. City in Sudan west of Nyala
- 61. To vigorously shake the butt
- 63. (Scot.) A fist or a hand
- 66. “\_\_\_\_\_’s Razor” solves problems with simple assumptions
- 70. The nostrils
- 73. Long leather straps for guiding horses
- 75. Spinoff show from Mary Tyler Moore
- 76. Home or residence
- 77. Mortise’s mate
- 78. Hunters’/soldiers’ multi-hued outer-wear (abbr)
- 79. Shrek’s mate
- 80. Bean-bag: \_\_\_\_\_ sack
- 81. Greek god of war
- 82. Science of the body (abbr)
- 83. Former unit of Portuguese and Brazilian currency

Down

- 1. The shapely legs of a woman
- 2. Batman vs. Superman actor Jeremy \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Wonder Woman’s Gal \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. “\_\_\_\_\_ the Beautiful” patriotic song
- 5. Military field hospital unit during Korean War
- 6. Brand of gas station
- 7. To smash or grind
- 8. Legal writ application: “\_\_\_\_\_” Corpus (Latin)
- 9. Native tribe from the N. American plains; also, large black bird
- 10. Double-reed woodwind instrument
- 11. A particular sound or tone; also, a quick message
- 12. Long ago (archaic)
- 14. December holiday greeting
- 16. Biblical “bread from the sky”
- 17. “Creative renaissance” (2 wds)
- 25. Alike
- 29. Springstein song, “\_\_\_\_\_ in the USA”
- 31. Island SW of Stockholm in Baltic Sea
- 32. Product derived from cows’ milk
- 33. A form of music with a recurring theme
- 34. TV show: US Navy intrigue (acronym)
- 35. J.Lo, Madonna, Lady Gaga for example
- 37. “Set Fire to the Rain” singer
- 38. Pictures in birthday suit
- 39. Work station
- 40. Hawaii’s signature meat
- 42. To preserve or rescue
- 45. US Mafia moniker: \_\_\_\_\_ Nostra
- 47. To thrash or defeat (slang)
- 51. Port city on Algeria’s Mediteranean coast
- 54. Pop music compilation; also, the present time
- 56. Edible tree-grown mushroom popular in China (2 wds)
- 58. Hibiscus cannabinus
- 59. Region of Asia between the Red Sea and Persian Gulf
- 62. Monetary unit in Estonia
- 64. Swingers actor \_\_\_\_\_ Vaughn
- 65. Edible Japanese mushroom with slender stem and small cap
- 66. Killer whale
- 67. To partially char or blacken
- 68. To advance or draw close
- 71. Famous American poet \_\_\_\_\_ St. Vincent Millay
- 72. Chair, bench or stool

BOOK REVIEW

By Edgar Villamarin  
Journalism Guild Writer

More than an autobiography, the book *I, Rigoberta Menchú* is a meticulously detailed document about the real life of Guatemala’s indigenous population. It provides a look into the political system that reigned there in the 1960s, told by a then-23-year-old indigenous woman from El Quiche, a province in western Guatemala.

The author narrates the book in Spanish, a language she learned as an adult so she could give her people a voice in a country in which the majority of its inhabitants come from 22 indigenous ethnic groups. Despite their majority, the country’s power resides with a non-indigenous population.

In a very personal style, the author recounts intimate details about life in secluded mountains, the abject poverty of her people, their inhumane work conditions, and the mistreatment they suffer daily by the authorities.

Menchú’s simple, entertaining and yet respectful manner educates the reader about her people’s reverence for Mother Earth, Father Sun, and the companionship of Sister Moon. She describes their unquestionable allegiance to their rituals, customs and rites of passage. In a unique mixture of innocence, sacredness and honesty, her people commit to a life of reverence to the teachings of their ancestors, an ultimate respect for human and animal life and deference to everyone, including their unapologetic, self-entitled and cruel overlords.

Chronologically, the book takes the reader through rituals such as conception, birth, rites of passage, courtship, marriage, community support and death. It does so in a joyful, unadulterated manner while offering disagreements with the excessive suffering, alcohol abuse and an absence of schools. She conveys a need for her country to see, treat and relate to indigenous people as human beings.

The book has a graphic part that tells how the Spaniards, during the colonization period, deceived indigenous people by taking their artifacts, their land and their rights. She then explains how Ladinos are perpetuating these practices today. The book defines Ladinos as “... any Guatemalan — whatever their economic position — who rejects, either individually or through his cultural heritage, Indian values of Mayan origin. It also implies mixed blood, Spanish and Indian.”

Ladinos systematically use Indians for cheap labor in a manner that resembles their colonizers. They bribe judges, the military and politicians to curtail any attempts by Indians to claim land, to earn a decent living, to grow their own food and to have access to medical services, education or justice promised them by Guatemala’s constitution.

To this day, indigenous children work next to adults, often in inclement weather, without sanitary facilities. They often suffer insults and violence and have their pay denied because they cannot meet unreasonable quotas. Most indigenous people work on large farms, where they live in inhumane conditions, undernourished and without hope for a better life.

A victim of deliberate discrimination and hatred since she was a little girl, the author witnessed military raids, mass shootings of people in her village, home invasions by government militia, kidnapping, rapes and public acts of torture that villagers were forced to watch. Menchú witnessed gruesome dismemberments of Indians, including scalping, removing of nails, allowing wounds to get infected and attacks by worms that eat human flesh alive. All these



I, Rigoberta Menchú  
An Indian Woman in Guatamala

inhumanities drove Menchú to become an activist for her people.

This book is a testament of the reality of Indians in Guatemala, but the world would benefit from making it available to people all over the world to raise awareness that these atrocities are happening today. History books everywhere ought to include the mistreatment of indigenous populations anywhere.

Menchú makes readers reflect on the use of force, fear, violence and torture of people frequently perceived as inferior to animals. She tells a story of her job as a domestic servant in the capital city and describes her employer feeding a special diet to pet dogs while giving the servants spoiled items heading for the trash.

Does society, as a whole, have a responsibility to educate itself about the mistreatment of humans and to find potential solutions? The book makes the point that, at the very least, society ought to find a common thread that makes us all human, regardless of nationality, skin color and socioeconomic status.

*I, Rigoberta Menchú* presents first-hand evidence of the existence of modern versions of slavery. It shows that crimes against humanity are not just accidents of the past. Ethnic cleansing continues to occur in the 21<sup>st</sup> century just like the atrocities of the Holocaust and the annihilation of natives in North America, and the unnecessary mass killings of civilian children and women in Ukraine today.

The book offers readers an introduction to a gentle people, forced into famine, slavery and methodical demise. It also invites us to revere all humans, animals and nature.

Reading *I, Rigoberta Menchú* means to embark on a mesmerizing journey that readers do not want to end; it leaves them better human beings. Although not mentioned in the book, Menchú received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her efforts to end oppression against the indigenous people of Guatemala.

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

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

MARS	HERA	SAPS
OLEIC	EVAD	RUBIO
CONGO	MIDOL	UMBEL
KEANU	PLANE	BOARD
SNIP	RICCI	
NOBS	STICK	
MAGNOLIA	TOILET	
SUN	SNARLY	ENCODE
ALDA	PALOS	KNEE
SCONCE	NOGOOD	EMS
STRAIN	TAMBOURA	
STYLE	SICK	
RAYON	TERMS	
OROMO	OCULO	NAOMI
RAMEN	NEMEA	TIDES
LISTS	SNEAK	SNELL
ELKS	ENDS	ELLE



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FLORIDA PRISONERS PERSEVERE IN FACE OF OPPOSITION

Dear San Quentin News:

Hope this letter reaches you in the very best of spirits. I enjoy reading the San Q newspaper and have been for like the past 15 years. I always share with my comrades who are for the struggle. We're very inspired by you and is actually trying to put something together in Florida, but of course we face hard opposition with our state government. Thank you and God Bless.

— Eric L. Wilridge  
Santa Rosa  
Correctional Institution  
Milton, Florida

PELICAN BAY PRISONER WANTS TO 'GET A GRIP'

Dear San Quentin News:

My name is Michael Davis and I have been locked up for 19 years. I make sure to always read SQN because I love it — PERIOD! There is always good stuff in it. The August 2022 issue is a good one. It helped open my eyes to the Board of Parole Hearings' Psychological evaluation. Thanks SQN!

I would like to know if there is any way we at PBSP can get into the GRIP program via correspondence? There are a lot of people here that are in college, including myself, and we work real hard to making positive changes. I would like

CMC VETERANS HELP COMMUNITY VETS

Dear San Quentin News:

The California Men's Colony (CMC) West facility, Vet group has donated 450 lbs. of food items and \$100 cash to a pilot food pantry program sponsored by the San Luis Obispo Veterans Service Office (SLOVSO). The pantry is intended to service hungry veterans and their families in the community.

Morgan Boyd of SLOVSO, in a recent email, writes, "We cannot thank the men at CMC enough for their dedication to helping their brothers and sisters out. I am quite impressed with their organization skills and hope that CMC's veterans will continue to work with us if our pilot program becomes permanent, and I fully intend to support it."

Mr. Boyd goes on to say that it is his intention to have a team member attend the monthly Veterans group meetings at CMC West Yard to provide support. This is an important step forward for the veterans at CMC.

— Dennis M. Daly  
California Men's Colony  
San Luis Obispo, California

to know if GRIP can be started here as well. I will do whatever needs to be done to make it possible.

—Michael Davis  
Pelican Bay State Prison  
Crescent City, California

CENTINELA READER RESPONDS TO 'COVID WHIPLASH' STORY

Dear San Quentin News:

I finished reading the "COVID whiplash" article recently and was slightly relieved to hear that all these nonsense 'COVID' policies are impacting other prisons the same as ours. Our prison just went through a second complete inmate population infection of 'COVID' and none of the "Healthcare" policies did anything to prevent it... These policies are nonsense.

"COVID-19" isn't even dangerous anymore. It is not COVID-19 anymore, it's COVID-22 and I just had it and it's a joke. I've had worse colds...

Furthermore, we were afforded Extraordinary Conduct Credit (ECC) by the Secretary of CDCR because of the COVID lockdowns in the form of 84 days all the way back to July 9, 2020. It's now two years later and we have been subjected to the same hardships repeatedly and have been given nothing for all the hardships they impose since then. We deserve the same ECC for every two years. The Correctional Officers are getting "COVID bonuses" for dealing with this "COVID."

— Lance Lawrence  
California State Prison  
Centinela  
Imperial, California

ROCK SOLID: Inspirational children's book offers under-dog moral



GRANITE

By Susan Butcher and David Monson

Need something inspiring to read to your kids during a visit?

"Granite is full of adventure, trials and tribulations, near defeat and an incredible comeback.

The inside front cover reads:

*"Granite is the greatest lead dog in history, but that wasn't always a given. As a puppy, Granite was small and shy. Even though he lacked self-confidence, he had a spark of potential ready to ignite. All he needed was for someone to believe in him, to encourage him day after day, and to show him that the best leaders are found in unlikely*

*places. That person was Susan Butcher."*

Incarcerated folks are lucky that the vice-principal of our education department found *Granite* and donated it to our library. Its underdog narrative with a "don't give up" attitude is something that we want our children to have and, quiet though it's kept, we like those kind of stories, too — the ones that build self-confidence and where leaders are found in the most unlikely places.

We all should feel special as Butcher, who won the famous Iditarod dog-sled race four times, writes to us, "May you find peace chasing your dreams!"

A MESSAGE TO OUR NATION'S INCARCERATED VETERANS:

*We at San Quentin News would like to thank you all for your service to this country.*

*No matter which branch you served in, or the length of your service, our freedom is dependent on the sacrifice of those brave men and women who are willing to put their lives on the line to defend and protect it.*

*This Veteran's Day, let's all express some appreciation for our vets, both inside and outside.*

*Thank you, each and every one.*

—SQN Staff



Sam Hearn, SQNews

Tony Singh, SQNews



## ARTS

# Isom finds therapeutic relief at the tip of his brush

By Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chairman

Art contains hidden treasures. For some, this treasure is the use of their art as the raft to navigate the deep, raging rivers of their past in the quest for internal healing and reconciliation.

Jeffrey A. Isom is uniquely willing to open up and share such hidden treasures and expose his vulnerability.

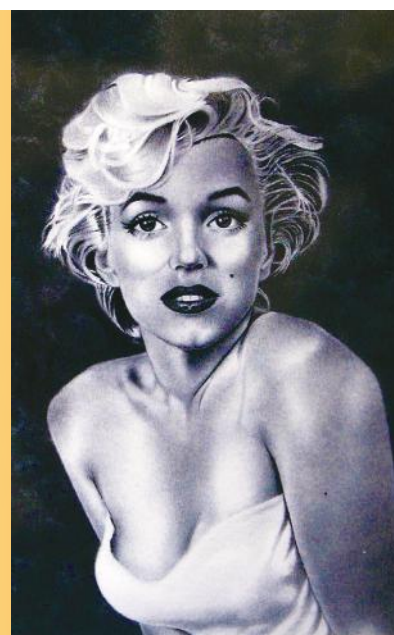
Isom, 58, creates art for a number of reasons. One is for his own therapy as it helps him to express his feelings and to vent his frustrations, anger and emotions.

Isom considers art to be a major part of his rehabilitation. For him, it is a way to honor those he has impacted through his crimes, as well as society. Isom is a repeat offender who received three strikes and was sentenced to life in prison.

Another important reason why he does art is because he sees it as a potential vocation upon his eventual parole. He envisions himself as the owner of his own art shop someday.

Through art he is able to appreciate the positive impact of his craft on others whom have viewed his paintings during various events at the Lower Yard here at San Quentin. He is grateful for the peace of mind that comes from contributing to a good cause.

The artist has a job assignment assisting the "Mirror Crew" at SQ's Arts in Correction — an art hobby shop run through the sponsorship of the Williams James Association.



Photos by Vincent O'Bannon, SQNews

**Artist Jeffrey Isom finds space for truth in his art, and finds within himself an openness that reveals his own personal vulnerability.**

**"Through Arts in Corrections," he said, "I have worked with many artists whom are incarcerated as myself. We all get along and appreciate, not only our talents, but the opportunity to show the world that people do change."**



"Through Arts in Correction I have worked with many artists whom are incarcerated as myself. We all get along and appreciate, not only our talents, but the opportunity to show the world that people do change," said Isom.

His craft has allowed him to connect with professional

artists from the outside community, many of whom volunteer their time and talents inside the prison, teaching and encouraging the incarcerated artists.

Isom feels it is a privilege to help others by teaching new techniques to younger generations. This allows him to

create positive relationships in an otherwise stressful environment. The camaraderie at the shop helps everyone share and learn the gift of creativity by socializing in a healthy and peaceful way.

These experiences have given the artist the space to heal in a way that will prepare

him for the future upon his release.

One of his creations — one of his "babies," as he calls them — is a classic Ford truck that he painted in blue against a background of fall foliage. He calls the piece *Return to Nature*, reflecting on the climate change that the world

is witnessing, caused in part by the burning of oil and gas, which are on their way out as more sustainable-energy sources are prioritized in many places.

According to the artist, his father sent him a picture of his neighbor's old and rusty truck and asked him if he could make a painting of it. He obliged his father's wishes, which gave rise to the beautiful painting many enjoy today.

He also paints birds, such as eagles and storks, because they are endangered. His motivation for such creativity comes at a time that we should all appreciate nature given the havoc climate change is causing around the world. He makes paintings like these in hopes that people will appreciate the value of birds, so that we won't lose them forever.

Isom is currently working on numerous paintings. One symbolically speaks out against Asian hate. It is like a yin and yang story that depicts, in the background, Western figures of hate on one side, and on the other, Asian figures of blessings.

The main figure in the foreground of the painting is an Asian woman who represents an object of hate but also a figure of love and beauty: the yin and the yang.

He was moved to create this piece when, during the pandemic, his art instructor's father was murdered in San Francisco because he was Asian. He is working especially hard on this painting in honor of all Asian people who have been impacted by racism.

"I want to bring awareness of such tragedies and to spread the message of love," Isom said. "Someone's race should not be a crime or a reason to be murdered."

## David Roybal's timeless pin-up style creations say it all

SQNews believes art is a universal language, a tool to explore our creativity and inner-self in the quest for betterment and understanding. For some of the artists we have featured, art is even more personal — it is part of their family tree.

San Quentin resident David Roybal, 63, exemplifies this. As a little kid he witnessed his late father recreating human figures before his own eyes. He was amazed, and his father's art left a lasting impression.

"I didn't start out drawing people because I was scared to death to draw faces," said Roybal. "So I started by drawing landscapes from Arizona highway magazines."

He moved on to drawing horses to help him to develop his abilities, which helped him with drawing people because of the parallels in the muscle structures. Ironically, he notes it is harder to draw a horse than a person because there are more details to capture on a horse.

"Once I got confidence that I could draw, I decided to draw the face of a girl out of a glamorous girl magazine," said Roybal.

Roybal says his artwork has given him greater self-confidence by helping him to realize he is good at something. As he became more proficient, art helped him with his recovery and personal growth.

Art has also connected him with others, regardless of

their background or religious beliefs, including those who love his art and may end up requesting some of his custom artwork.

Roybal pours his heart out through his work, breathing life into the beautiful portraits that he draws — people of differing backgrounds, personalities, and even eras.

His artistic style was defined in part at the age of 20 with the creation of his first pin-up girl, Trixie, which remains a fan favorite and helped to pave the way to his artistic success.

He learned to appreciate pin-up art at an early age. His father was a gunner in a B-17 bomber during World War II, and his plane sported a painting of a flamboyant pin-up girl. Roybal was entranced when he first saw a picture of the painting on his father's plane. This led to an eventual infatuation with pin-up girl Betty Page when he saw her pictures in a *Bombshell Pin-Ups* book.

He feels it is easier to work with black and white through a graphite pencil in order to capture and contour a face. All you have to do is press the pencil down lighter or heavier to achieve the shading, which makes the process faster and more straightforward.

After having perfected this approach, he translated it to colored pencils, and can now quickly replicate his most popular pin-ups — what he calls



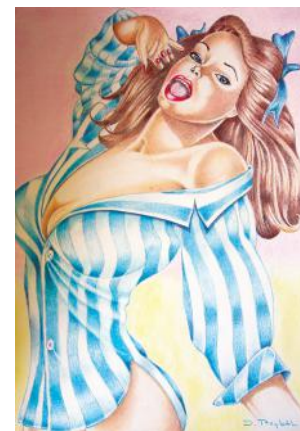
**SQ artist David Roybal's illustrations express beauty in their attention to detail and faithfulness to the by-gone "pin-up" era. "I know I will always have such a girl pinned to my heart," he said.**

his "bread and butter" — and earn some snacks and hygiene from fans of his art. He also does portraits on request of people's family members or even the family dog.

One of his favorite pieces is a black and white pencil portrait he made of a Black woman wearing a veil on her face with a jeweled headdress, whose eyes look alive as if a soul lies behind them.

Another one of his creations, inspired by a tattoo magazine, is "Goldie." She is a pin-up girl with mischievous blue eyes that gives viewers a sense of appreciation for the mystery and beauty of a woman.

The original, real-life Goldie girl was riddled with tattoos, which he found unattractive. He decided to reform her appearance by removing



Photos by Vincent O'Bannon, SQNews



the tattoos to bring alive her innocence, transforming her into a "nice girl."

"I feel that by removing the tattoos I enhanced her beauty," Roybal said.

Goldie stands out for him as one of his greatest achievements. He feels he has transcended the ordinary with such a masterpiece.

Over the years, Roybal says he has come to appreciate the

"alluring comfort found in the image of the all-American pin-up girl."

He said, "It is no wonder that thousands of military men carried pin-up photos with them onto the battlefield — some taking one last look before going to the grave for their country. I know I will always have such a girl pinned to my heart."

—Edwin E. Chavez