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SQ Nurse Dee Dee Simon struck gold at America's Got Talent

By Jambri Johnson, Sr. Journalism Guild Writer

San Quentin's North block erupted into cheers of celebration as gold confetti burst into the air on the hit TV show America's Got Talent, as the institution's own nurse of 19 years Dee Dee Simon moved into the show's final round. "We went crazy," stated resident Situe "Skoo wee" Tolua. "They was yelling for Dee Dee, she's a very well-known person. It was phenomenal; it felt like we were in the living room cheering her on." She performed "Lose Control" by Teddy Swims and judge Heidi Klum hit the gold buzzer which automatically propelled Simon to the finals. She took center stage in Pasadena, California for a chance to win one million dollars, but came up short. "I don't like to lose," said Simon. "I know that I was in a situation where I didn't win, I have a issue with that." For her final performance, Simon wore black sequin pants and a taupe blouse. She sung "Come together" by The Beatles that was also selected by the producers. She gave it her all. "Even though she lost, she won," said resident Darrell Finn. "She got a chance to have her voice heard, she earned the opportunity." Simon said, she had to learn the song the day of the duet with Andra Day. But recognizing the opportunity, she has already begun to "regroup." She added, she is weighing her options for the future, because she is a perfectionist and a true competitor. Simon won the Apollo in November 2023 and now can add finalist of a hit TV show to her resumé. She said she currently controls her career in a more meticulous manner; phone calls, appointment scheduling, performances; and of course nursing. She states she wants to parole from Quentin. It would be at the end of her twentieth year; this means this is the final stretch of the Dee Dee Simon experience. "I've had a good life," she said. "All my songs are about stuff I've been through." Every time Simon graces the stage, she brings her Oakland sophistication to the world. Her persona is accentuated by her "hard singing" style that takes you to church. "The church taught me how to sing harmony," said Simon. "God gave me the talent. I sing as if it's my last time, I'm giving you everything." Simon earned the personal stamp of approval of Simon Cowell. He told her your life is about to change, and she absolutely nailed it. In the audition round, she sung Jennifer Holiday's "I'm not going." She delivered a stellar show that incorporated the now famous trademark, of her kicking off her heels at the climax of the performance. All four judges voted for her. She advanced in the competition singing "Take me to church" by Hozier. She had reservations about whether she could have sung her favorite Tina Turner song, she said. Simon noted her career has never interfered with her dreams; it actually helped in pursuing them. She expressed a desire to be an inspiration to people who have dreams. She has been singing most of her life. She plans to organize more shows; specifically touring all the Calif. Institutions. Simon said, she wants to sing alternative music as well as soul music, so she can touch everybody. She described her passion for singing and her career in total, as something that God must approve of. "Everybody has free will," said Simon. "I always return back to God. My life and experiences have made me who I am today. That's why I can relate. I still believe God has a plan for me. If He didn't, He'd take the fire out of me." Many people were disappointed with the final results. Resident Curtys Taylor stated he didn't think it was fair; the other finalist's voice wasn't as consistent as Dee Dee's. "When I get it [success], I'll know what to do with it," said Simon. "He [God] wants me to do it another way." She expressed her desire to capitalize on the moment, which consist of writing her own music and plays. She plans to act in her plays. She added, she doesn't have time to wait for people. Howie Mandel told her, the door has been opened. "I think it was all orchestrated," resident Douglas "Poetry" Dawkins said. "It was all scripted; she was a shoe-in to win the contest. She was robbed!"

Dee Dee standing in front of SQ Medical Department.

Simon gives thanks to her fans at a SQRC performance.

Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

NORCO holds first 5K track event at facility

By Philip Peng Contributing Writer

Eleven incarcerated people at the NORCO Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility successfully finish the first ever 5K run held at the facility. The program was titled 'Learning to Run and Running to Learn.' Participants signed up and were approved to participate by the NORCO staff and were eligible for rehabilitation achievement credits or "RAC" credits that allow incarcerated runners to earn time off their sentences. "I was struggling with my classes trying to get my GED while I was incarcerated, but after I crossed the finish line of my 5K, I realized that if I set a goal and work slowly towards it, I can achieve anything I want," said Alex G, a member of this inaugural class. "Now I look forward to working toward and getting my GED." The 5K race was complete with a race clock and volunteer lap counters, the winner came in a blazing time of 20:58. All finishers were presented with a hard-earned certificate of completion for the late August event. The three-month program was developed by education professor Brian Charest of the University of Redlands along with Philip Peng, a California Superior Court Commissioner, and the Community Resources Management team at NORCO state prison. The "Born to Run Club" was self-named by members. The program consist of track workouts, nutrition and injury prevention, including book discussions such as: *Can't Hurt Me*, by David Goggins, *Born to Run*, by Scott McDougal, and *Eat and Run*, by Scott Jurek. The books focused on the power that emerges when an individual develops a growth mindset, said Peng. "Physically, since starting this class ... I have lost almost 40 lbs, and I feel so much more energy and capability in myself and what I can achieve physically," said runner AJ. "Psychologically, ... I struggle with depression, and being here and doing this has made me feel better about myself. Even reading the books on running has been beneficial, just to hear different accounts of individuals and how they keep pushing past our limits. It's helpful to read and even apply their ways of doing what they do to my own running."

This article was edited for space.

'Learning to Run and Running to Learn' participants at NORCO's first ever 5k run.

Photo courtesy of Philip Peng



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FESTIVAL

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the awards for incarcerated filmmakers.

Eric “Maserati-E” Abercrombie, previously incarcerated at the Q, opened up the festival with a song entitled “Break the Mold.” He wooed the audience with his song.

“I am so far from perfection, I speak for more than one person. If we can break mold we can change the world,” sang Abercrombie.

SQ Volunteer Cori Thomas and Rashaan “New York” Thomas — formerly incarcerated at the Q — founded the event.

“Thank you so much for making my dream come true,” C. Thomas told attendees. She then told the audience that resident filmmaker Bernard “Raheem” Ballard was currently in a Parole Hearing, saying, “lets keep him on our mind.”

Correctional Officials in attendance were, CDCR Director Ron Broomfield, SQ Warden C. Andes, Public Information Officer Lt. G. Berry, and Sgt J. Graves.

“This is mind blowing, said Broomfield. “I was here [SQ] for seven years, what I walked into, my mind was blown.”

Warden Andes thanked everyone that brought an amazing vibe to this event; he thanked the prison’s leaders for supporting the way we do rehabilitation.

“I want to recognize the first film festival; I hope we have more in the future,” Andes said.

The Narrative Film Shorts were the first to be screened. This category was open to both currently and formerly incarcerated filmmakers.

“Every Second” was directed by formerly incarcerated Antwan Banks and starred former SQ resident Maurice Reese. The short film depicted his struggles after being released.

Mike Rae Anderson, who served 17 years in prison, directed “In a Match Box.” The film depicted the character Uncle Wendell’s desire to share an age-old family secret that could change the world with his nephew.

D’Angelo “D’Lo” Louis directed “Shoebox,” which portrayed an inner city youth exposed to the perils of street life and forced to make hard decisions to survive.

Award show finds value in social justice reform from film makers, stars and industry executives

Photos by SQ Media Center // SQNews

Kerry Washington, B. Raheem Ballard, Warden Andes and Rashaan Thomes.

The next screenings were for two categories of Best Documentary, one limited to current residents housed at the Q, and the other open to both currently and formerly incarcerated people.

Bernard “Raheem” Ballard directed “Dying Alone,” featuring SQ residents Richard Sanchez, Rico Rodgers, and Amir Shabazz. The film depicted aging SQ residents as they yearned for a compassionate release.

“The film was needed, not just here at SQ, but for the aging population in California prisons. Anytime an incarcerated person is over 50-years of age they are considered elderly,” Shabazz said.

“Healing Through Hula,” directed by SQ resident Saleh Louis, depicted the story of incarcerated men striving to reconnect with their culture through a Hawaiian dance ceremony called Makahiki.

“Unhoused and Unseen” was directed by Dante D. Jones and Steven Rhashiyd Zinnamon, with contributions from UC Berkeley volunteers Mo Dick, and Marie Toldy.

The film brings awareness to being unhoused, drawing on the lived experience of SQ residents Meso El-Coles and Kolby Southwood.

The screening for the Best Feature Film included “Sing Sing,” “Daughters,” “Strike,” “Songs from the Hole,” and “Four Letters.”

“Sing Sing,” directed by Greg Kweder, showed the evolution of a friendship through theatrical comedy and the trials and tribulations of prison life.

“Daughters,” directed by Angela Patton and Natalie Rae, depicted how incarcerated fathers yearn to be near their daughters. The fathers participated in a ten-week parenting class to prepare them for a daddy daughter’s dance inside a D.C. prison.

“The Strike,” directed by Joebill Munoz and Lucas Guilkey, told the story of non-violent resistance inside a California prison depicting a hunger strike addressing harmful solitary confinement practices.

“Songs from the Hole,” directed by Contessa Gayles, was narrated by the rap lyrics of James Jacobs, a man in prison for a murder committed while he was a minor. The film details the true story of how Jacobs found redemption through forgiveness after discovering that a fellow incarcerated resident killed his brother.

“Four Letters,” directed by Bao Nyugen, told the story of engineer Charles Anderson, who rose from the depths of the criminal justice system to find hope and purpose.

Best Narrative Short went to “In a Matchbox,” directed by Mike Rae Anderson.

“I don’t know about ya’ll, I feel we all won today,” Anderson stated virtually upon receiving the news.

Best Screenplay Pitch was awarded to SQ resident Todd A. Winkler for “Exodus.”

“It felt validating when someone of the jury members told me how they appreciated the complexity of the characters and...layers of conflict,”

Winkler said.

Best Documentary Pitch awarded to Kevin D. Sawyer for “The History of SQ Journalism.”

“We lost our freedom, we lost our voice,” Sawyer shared. “If it was not for SQNews there would not be any Media Center, thank you, I am humble to receive this award.

The Best Featured film was awarded to “The Strike”. According to Director Lucas Guilkey, the film was dedicated to Paul Redd who was a important part of the film. Redd was a plaintiff in a lawsuit against the State of California. He was released from prison, and soon after passed away.

“I was one of the people in the film [The Strike],” said Jack Morris. “Thank you everyone for allowing us to share the film.”

The award for Best Documentary (currently or formerly incarcerated) went to “Healing Through Hula,” directed by Saleh Louis.

“This is for the culture, I dedicate this to the man whose life ended too soon. I do it with reconciliation,” said Louis on receiving the honor.

Best Documentary (SQ residents) went to “Dying Alone,” directed by Bernard “Raheem” Ballard. He received another award for direction presented by Open Society Foundations Award for Short Film.

“This is my 22nd year [in prison]. I am not supposed to be here today, my release date was 2039,” Ballard said after returning to the festival from his Parole Hearing, where he was found suitable for parole.

“I couldn’t believe it; I was numb,” he said, sharing that the Commissioners took only five minutes to deliberate.

“I can honestly say that this was the best day of my life,” Ballard said.

Kerry Washington an award-winning actor, producer, and executive director of “Daughters” sat down with R. Thomas.

Thomas and Washington joked about being natives of New York, coming to the conclusion that they were cousins. They discussed Washington’s success in acting, producing, and directing.

“I am really lucky to do what I love to do. I really want a world to be filled with liberation,” Washington stated.

Scott Budnick with Todd Winkler.

Rashaan Thomas, Angela Patton, and Natalie Rae celebrate the award for Daughters.

Darell Sadiq Davis, W. Kamau Bell and Dante D. Jones.

Rick Telles with SQ film maker Ryan Pagan.

Saleh Louis celebrating (lower left) win for Best Documentary with his documentary “Healing Through Hula”.

Rtd. Captain Sam Robinson with Kevin D. Sawyer.



SPANISH

Continued from page 1

here as if they were my next door neighbors or my friend,” said Candace Chavez-Wilson, Ella Baker’s for Human Rights human resource manager. Chavez-Wilson was dressed in a traditional flowered long dress.

Alfonzo Landa, resident and cofounder of WallBusters [a SQ self-help group], said the idea for this special event was based on the fact that he noticed how the Hispanic speaking community does not have the resources in regards to self-help groups and reentry compared to other incarcerated people who can manage the English language.

Ella Baker Executive Director Marlin Sanchez and supervisor Teresa Gonzales spoke about how they too have been system impacted.

“I also grew up in the system disconnected. I lived in the system since I was the age of 14,” said Sanchez. “Love is shared with food, so we are going to be eating.”

A traditional home made meal was serve that included: enchiladas, beans, chips, hot sauce and soda. The food was donated by Sanchez, Gonzales. Sanchez noted how we are all related, whether we are Black, Brown, White, or Asian.

“I grew up in cultural diversity and this is what makes this country great. I have friends that I never had before,” said resident Loren

Hispanic Heritage Annual Banquet provides a good vibe for fun, and memories of inclusivity

Mears. He added, that he felt blessed that he was invited and got to meet people from different walks of life.

The traditional (Loteria) Raffle was played among the attendees. Instead of numbers, the game uses different characters. The narrator called el camarón [shrimp], a bottle, the drunker, canteen, and the skull. All of a sudden someone exclaimed Loteria! Loteria! Loteria!

“I just like seeing people having fun, and there’s was a lot of fun, Said Gabriel Loiederman, SQ. senior librarian. “It is a good vibe, a lot of fun, take the load off, kick your feet up and get down with some good Enchiladas.”

Resident Randolph Jackson, who identifies as part of the LGBTQ+ community, said as a Black person he recognized the importance of highlighting others marginalize communities. This event have done that by giving the Hispanics a voice that needed to be heard, he added.

San Quentin’s Aztec dance group Coauchoceloti, [Warriors] was introduced by sponsor and SQ free staff, Sylvia Amador. One by one the members entered dancing to the traditional Aztec drum beat.

During an open Mic session, the incarcerated reflected, on how this experience was a healing one. Some spoke in Spanish, others in

language that made them feel comfortable.

The energy of the speakers was very moving, like when they burned the sage felt spiritually, said resident Clay Addleman. The WallBusters and Forward This Production hosted the event and the Ella Baker for Human Rights and Friends of the San Quentin Library sponsored it.

“The thing that I want for people take away is that we that none English community matter and that we are also part of this community and therefore, we should not be excluded based on our inability to speak the language,” Landa concluded.



Members of Ella Baker join in the festivities.



Above left: Residenst enjoy playing music. Above right: Guest perform traditional ceremony. Bottom left: Aztec dancers pose before performance. Center: Residents and guest enjoy conversation before festivities. Right: Resident holds cultural flag during the Hispanic Heritage Banquet.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

GATE \$

Continued from page 1

of transportation.

“A man cannot survive without the support of others,” said SQ resident Kenneth Thurman.

The core of this lawsuit is aimed at a procedure put into effect 51 years ago by former Governor Ronald Reagan which said with some exceptions, “each prisoner upon release shall be paid the sum of \$200,” said the report.

“The gate money statue has remained essentially unchanged for a half century,” Chesa Boudin and Yaman Salahi, attorneys for the plaintiffs, wrote in the court petition. “Yet rather than provide each eligible person with the \$200 to which they are entitled, CDCR routinely withholds some or all of the funds based on eligibility criteria of its own making, a criteria that violates the plain language of the law” they said.

The lawsuit was filed on the behave of John Vaesau and another formerly incarcerated person. Vaesau was housed at Folsom State Prison and after 33 years of incarceration said he looked forward to the gate money fees only to leave with nothing, noted the report.

“They just threw me out like a piece of garbage,” Vaesau said. “Like after all that time, it was nothing to

Lawyers ask for retroactive payments for released residents who never received money

them.”

The state’s gate money policies has been under scrutiny, for over three decades CDCR has found a way to take gate money, said the CalMatter report. In 2008, another formerly incarcerated alleged that the department of corrections unlawfully withheld release money. The 4th District Court of Appeal ruled, the regulations were “not authorized or consistent with the terms” of the law.

Having the gate fees taken “sucks” said Gustavo Nunes a resident at San Quentin, because after any length of incarceration to be able to have just a little help to get from point A to point B — fresh out means a lot, he added.

Regardless of the increasing wages and cost of living nothing has ever been done to meet current times, said the report. In 2022, a bill was introduce to raised the gate money to \$1,300. But Governor Gavin Newsom vetoed the bill, citing the potential cost.

“This practice has created economic harm and disadvantages among newly released individuals, leaving returning citizens significantly more vulnerable and highly susceptible to homelessness and recidivism

due to unmet needs,” wrote a group of advocates for formerly incarcerated people to state lawmakers, earlier this year.

UC Berkeley’s Criminal law & amp; Justice Center and Edelson PC, in the current lawsuit is asking for retroactive payments for those who were affected by the department not giving them their gate money. Having these funds available is considered a “critical lifeline” and “small but vital aid,” according to a 2008 report by the Stanford Criminal Justice Center.

“After 20 years of incarceration for me any kind of assistance is needed and to know that there is a possibility of me being robbed of that help is devastating,” said SQ resident Glen Wilson.

“Who’s going to hold them accountable for their actions, who’s going to right this wrong.”

Boudin, the former San Francisco district attorney, said in an interview with CalMatters, “Regan understood that the first days after release are critical to public safety so that people aren’t sleeping on the street and potentially exposing themselves to victimization, that people aren’t put in a desperate situation that might lead some to commit a crime

in order to eat or to get clothes or have a safe place to sleep.”

California legislators agreed how the department in fact has taken release funds and put together a spending law to give additional services of over a million dollars for clothing and transportation, said the report.

A study of formerly incarcerated was done by various organizations such as Roots & Rebound, Initiate Justice, Legal Service for Prisoners with Children, All of Us or None, and the Michelson Center for Public Policy that discovered one and three returning people had funds deducted from department before being released home.

“On being released having the \$200 was of help because it allowed me to not worry about were my first meal was coming from,” said SQ resident Michael Beaudette.

To not be given these funds upon release is counterproductive to rehabilitation and public safety knowing that you are indigent and have nothing forces you back into the same situation, he added.

“You come in with years of riches [years of time] to do and when it’s time to cash in CDCR kicks you out broke,” said Beaudette.

SPICE

Continued from page 1

Spice causes health issues

recalled, although it was something he told himself he would never do.

He said using spice negatively affected him. “I was giving away my entire \$240 worth of canteen, constantly asking for money. Spice enabled me to neglect my responsibilities, and arguments with my wife occurred more frequently.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the number of deaths from synthetic cannabinoid use tripled between 2014 and 2015. In mid-2018, more than 100 overdose cases were reported in New Haven, Conn, from bad batches of K2 spice, reported Wikipedia.

In 2018, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration warned of significant health risks from synthetic cannabinoid products, which contain rat poison, added to increase the drug’s effects. Severe illness and death have resulted from this contamination.

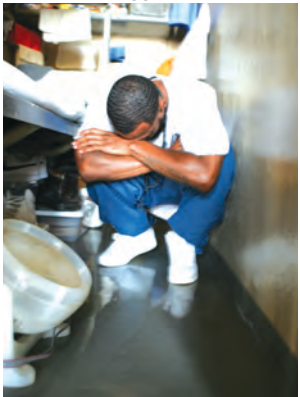
Wikipedia said there are more than 600 types of herbal blends, which are frequently called: “synthetic marijuana, and or herbal smoking blends. Studies show that many of the effects of the synthetic cannabinoids are similar to those of THC, yet many synthetic cannabinoids are more potent than marijuana.”

Furthermore, most users are unaware of the exact

potency when using, which leads to unpredictable effects, including acute kidney injury, cardiac toxicity, seizure, stroke, and tremors. The danger is in smoking spice as though it was THC, and not understanding the potency. People unconsciously put themselves at risk of a spice overdose.

In CDCR spice is not legal. Most state prisons offer Narcotic Anonymous (NA) classes or Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment programs. If someone is suffering from this addiction they seek help from Peer Support Specialist or someone they trust, said a “Spice is NOT Nice” institutional flyer.

“If I could go back, I would have never tried it,” said Demarion S. “Doing spice was one of the biggest mistakes of



SQNews Archive  
A resident struggles.



# Resource Fair: Mount Tamalpais prepares residents for college, money management, and job readiness as they re-enter society

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Journalism Guild Chair

Mount Tamalpais College held a resource fair at San Quentin to provide residents with information on college preparation, money management, and job readiness.

The event was held in Chapel B and co-hosted by Mt. Tam staff member Kirsten Pickering and Corey McNeil, formerly incarcerated at SQ.

Tables and chairs were placed in the chapel area in a horseshoe circle as residents lined up to hear about re-entry support.

"This is my first resource fair, I think it is a great opportunity because of the challenges we face when we step out of the gate," said SQ resident Mark Jarosik.

The Street Scholars program from Merritt College, located in Oakland California, shared that it's mission is to connect formerly incarcerated students with four year universities.

A number of SS staff members have lived experiences with the criminal justice system. Program representative Marlo Ornelas-O'Neil shared that she was formerly incarcerated, underscoring how much she benefited from outside support returning to society.

The program shared that they provide a tutoring and mentoring program, assist with financial aid, and organize workshops on job preparation. Their workshops also include a "clean

slate" program on how to have criminal records expunged. Further, SS assists students with housing in non-discriminate environments when people leave incarceration.

California State University East Bay and San Francisco State University were also present, representing Project Rebound. CSUEB program representative Andrea King stated that PR exists in 20 of the 23 California State Universities, providing information on educational services after prison. The only requirement for entry to the program is to be formerly incarcerated, on probation or parole, live in the San Francisco Bay Area, and be committed to higher learning.

"The resource fair is excellent, it will help me with my journey through rehabilitation," said Bill B. who is incarcerated at the Q.

Pat Becker and Jackie Dagg from the League of Women Voters, located in Marin County, provided residents with information on the voting process. Becker stated that the program never sways a person to vote one way or another.

"Our goal is to inform incarcerated people that they have a right to vote," said Becker.

She also said that LWV's intentions are to explain the complications of policies in the interest of local voters. The League distributed various flyers and voter registration applications to

attending residents.

Planting Justice, a gardening program in El Sobrante, CA, was also represented. Thr group's motto is "Grow Food, Grow Jobs, and Grow Community."

According to their pamphlets, PJ's mission is to provide support services to people impacted by mass incarceration.

Sol Mercado, a formerly incarcerated woman and re-entry coordinator with PJ, told residents the gardening program teaches people to grow their own food, advocate for economic justice, and engage with community healing.

The California Department of Rehabilitation was also present. The department shared that they have supported formerly incarcerated disabled people with job services and housing on the outside.

Ricky Flores, a financial wellness specialist from the Redwood Credit Union, talked with residents about how to build credit. He gave instructions on how to open an account and bank online, and shared additional information on money management.

"I learned that having a bank account is important when you are employed, and when you retire," stated SQ resident Kenneth Gatison.

Representatives from Underground Scholars told attendees that their organization also provides services to formerly incarcerated people. The program's stated



Redwood Credit Union specialist gives advice to resident Melvin Satcher.

objective is increasing college admissions and graduation rates in the University of California system. Underground Scholars helps system-impacted individuals develop a pathway to being enrolled in UC schools. They host workshops in prisons, jails, and youth facilities.

At the end of the event, Pickering and McNeil asked SQ residents to fill out surveys on how to improve future resources fairs, and what benefits residents took away from the day's events.

"I hope to benefit from these resources, which will enable my success when I get out, lessening the chance of me returning to prison," stated SQ resident James Duff.



Volunteer of Community Works program provide information to residents.

## California Reentry Institute graduates 38

By Michael Callahan  
Staff Writer

San Quentin's California Reentry Institute celebrated 38 graduates who completed the cognitive behavioral therapy and restorative justice practice program, which seeks transformative growth necessary for healing.

The 350-hour curriculum begins 24 months pre-release with a mission to empower, heal, and transform individuals in prison, supporting successful reentry and safer communities, according to a pamphlet.

"I am fortunate to have been involved in this group," resident Kevin Schrubbs said. "CRI provides so much information, guidance and support. Guys I have spoken with said they received support beyond what their family could provide."

Several graduates said CRI's trained facilitators provided a safe space for participants to do deep introspection and begin to care for themselves and others.

The 18-24 month curriculum covers everything from domestic violence, anger management, victim awareness, abandonment, grief and loss, pain of suffering, cause and effect on others, life-skills, criminal thinking, denial, relapse prevention, substance abuse, and a timeline to discover root cause and causative factors.

"All the hard work of introspection, self-discovery, you did it," said founder Collette Carroll. "We (outside guests) are all honored to be part of your transformation."

Carroll has been volunteering in San Quentin for 24 years. She said CRI helps participants find their



Supporters Bem Mergati and Ryan Murimnew of CRI with Graduate Resident Eliezer Prado and founder Collette Carroll.

authentic selves, live a life of living amends, and to be productive citizens in society by giving back for the hurt their actions caused.

"It is a blessing to see people heal from their traumas," Carroll said. "In truth I believe hurt people hurt people. Nobody who cares about themselves can hurt somebody else."

As part of the intensive curriculum CRI participants hear from and engage with surrogate victims and survivors to build empathy for those they hurt.

Survivor Betty Wilson spoke about losing her son to

gun violence. She said programs like CRI are needed across the country because they address healing, emotions, and trauma.

"As I listened to how you turned your life around through this program and I heard how difficult it was to forgive yourself I want you to know there is healing in forgiveness," Wilson said.

She said it is about a change of heart. She quoted Ms. Carroll's email signature quote by Maya Angelou. "Your legacy is every life you touched," Wilson said. "How will you touch the lives that are waiting for you to make a

difference?"

CRI's empowered reentry programs approach is unique because the pre-release preparation is intensive with individualized support for parole planning and case management. Collette said the fluidity between the pre-to-post release aftercare is a critical aspect to empowering participants for successful reentry and safer communities.

According to Collette of the 152 participants who completed the curriculum and were released none have recidivated.

The post-release aftercare provides resources such

as transportation, prepaid cell phone, bedding, wallet, housing stability, an individualized service plan, and an opportunity to share experiences with youth in the community through Living Amends Project.

Bruce Fowler recently paroled from San Quentin returned to celebrate the cohort of graduates he helped to facilitate. "All the coping skills we learned in this course comes into play daily outside," Fowler said. "Internalize everything you want and without the resources like Roland's House (reentry housing) is would

be ten times more difficult to transition back into society."

A 20-minute video presentation of paroled CRI participants played. Their words encouraged about investing in self, resilience, determination and strength. "It takes a real man to make the decision to be a better person," a formerly incarcerated resident said.

Graduate Bradley Ware said as he continues on this journey he said he now has a greater purpose.

"I have a purpose to share my education and be of service to other addicts," Ware said. "We are all part of a family, now we need to take that family and use it to our benefit."

Resident facilitator Timothy Holmes said the CRI program has had a positive impact on him and provided an opportunity to live a life of amends.

"I don't know if I healed them or I received more healing myself," outside facilitator Natalia Soto said of the participants.

Graduate Kevin Tojano-Nieto said his journey of transformation started in county jail. He said God had impacted his life by putting people in his path.

He said one of the most impactful moments during the cohort for him was in a small process circle they discussed about their inner child. "I had to sit in front of an empty chair and talk to my inner child."

"Prior to incarceration I wore a mask. I didn't want to look weak," Nieto said. "I thought nobody cared about me, nor wanted to hear about my trauma. But the supportive community in CRI showed me they cared. They encouraged me. They saw me," Nieto said.



# Centinela incarcerated raise \$18,000 for youth sports

Centinela State Prison Press Release

Centinela State Prison's incarcerated population along with its advisory council recently held an institutional food sale, raising over \$18,600 for

youth sports. Partnering with the local Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant, incarcerated individuals were able to order meals for the fundraiser. The amount raised was equally split into two separate donations to

organizations helping fund city league youth sports. The first half went to El Centro Youth Football Association, represented by board president Todd Evangelist. The other half went to El Centro Little League, represented by board president Ivan Murillo.



Courtesy of Centinela State Prison

Residents of Centinela donate money to El Centro Youth Football and El Centro Little League.

# California Medical Facility hosts Prison Palooza 3.0

CMF Press Release

California Medical Facility staff, community organizations, and the incarcerated population recently gathered for Prison Palooza 3.0.

Warden Daniel Cueva said the event is a great way to foster positive interactions between staff and those incarcerated at the institution.

"(It's inspiring) seeing the incarcerated folks and the staff members playing corn

hole or listening to music side by side," he said. "I've seen a lot more staff participation (because they didn't) realize this was an event for everybody."

Anthony Gonzalez, an incarcerated attendee, believes this is a way to help break down barriers and improve communication.

"(It's) simply human connection and stepping out of the realms of blue and green," he said. "It really connected us on a different level."

Pulling off the event

requires a team effort.

Several bands performed during the Palooza, including the Travis Air Force Band.

According to Lt. Gonzalez, the Travis band is the top hit.

The Palooza included an incarcerated food sale fundraiser with the money going to a local charity.

"We've been able to share music, art, and games," said Warden Cueva. "That's something we all enjoy whether staff or an incarcerated person."



Courtesy of California Medical Facility Vacaville

Staff and residents enjoy the music at CMF Vacaville.



CMF Vacaville residents compete in a game of corn hole toss.

# North Kern State Prison learns the art of beekeeping

North Kern State Prison Press Release

Incarcerated people at North Kern State Prison are learning hands-on training in the art of beekeeping. The program was introduced by a retired parole agent who brought his hobby to the institution as a rehabilitation program.

"I feel it's very important to the institution because we've made some of the worst mistakes of our lives and that's why we find ourselves here,"

said Justin who is one of the student beekeepers and an incarcerated firefighter. "It's also important to understand we don't have to be defined by the worst things we've ever done. So, by having programs like this, it presents an opportunity for us to change our own lives."

The beekeeping program is still in its infancy with 10 hives on site. The retired agent and staff have created lesson plans for the program, according to the CDCR Press release.

The first batches of honey were awarded a blue ribbon at the Kern County Fair.

Luis Cardenas, North Kern State Prison's Apiary Beekeeper noted the people's involvement.

"Everybody is a little apprehensive about being around bees," he said. "Once you feel comfortable in the bee suit and you actually pick up a frame that has 2,000 bees on it, you feel the intensity of the bees flying around you, it can actually be kind of calming."



Courtesy of North Kern State Prison

North Kern State Prison residents find rehabilitative therapy through the beekeeping program.

# California State Prison Corcoran walks to end cancer

By Heidi Wippel CSP Corcoran Contributor

The staff and population at California State Prison, Corcoran, came together for a greater cause: to fight cancer. The walk to end cancer was the first of its kind at the prison. According to Facility 3B staff member Monica Bonilla, donations were well over \$10,000. Over \$10,600 was donated to Valley Children's Hospital in Madera.

The walk was inspired by a vision from Eric Estrada to bring awareness to the destructive disease of cancer. His plan was to demonstrate a united front in the fight to end cancer, uniting staff with the incarcerated population. Estrada spoke to the crowd on the 3B Facility as they gathered for the walk.

"Cancer isn't prejudice or racist and affects everyone the same," Estrada said. "It doesn't matter if you are a correctional officer or an inmate (or) a woman or a man."

Estrada said he lost his childhood friend to cancer.

"We may not all agree on politics or policy, but we can all agree that cancer is a horrible disease," he said.

Facility B Men's Advisory Chairman Benjamin Pennington, who also leads the Boot Camp Program, marched alongside Warden Tammy Campbell.

"We must put away our green and blue for these events," Warden Campbell said.

More than 400 people walked around the yard in unison. Conversation, music, smiles, and wide eyes filled the event, according to organizers. DJ Eddie Alvarado, of Amity Foundation, pumped out



Courtesy of Hugh Neely

Corcoran State Prison raises over \$10,000 to fight cancer.

the music for the 3B and 4B facilities. Events like this are inspired by the California Model. This initiative uses the pillars of dynamic security and normalization as a tool to build safer communities through rehabilitation, education, restorative justice, and reentry.

"The walk to fight cancer turned out to be a great event," said Chief Deputy Warden Ed Silva. "We had staff and (the population) come together for a worthy cause. I think a good time was had by all."

Captains Forrest Chappel and Eric Garza rallied their staff and population to raise funds with all proceeds donated to Valley Children's Hospital.

Coach Heidi Wippel came up with the idea to make this a competition to raise the most funds possible. Sgt. Paula Rodriguez was instrumental as one of the driving forces

behind the event.

Valley Children's Healthcare began 70 years ago as the vision of five civic-minded women who saw the need for a dedicated pediatric hospital in Central California. Since then, the hospital has grown from 42 beds to one of the largest pediatric healthcare networks in the country.

This hospital has been one of the centerpieces of pride throughout the valley. The committee, led by Coach Wippel, decided to make this a Corcoran tradition. Lt. Robert Clifton, a committee member, said this is an example of cooperation and community involvement.

"The prison is dedicated to positive events like this and is actively planning future events. Making the Cancer Walk an annual event exhibits what staff and the incarcerated can accomplish together," he said.



# God Behind Bars becomes the bread of San Quentin

By Michael Callahan  
Staff Writer

For the second time this year, God Behind Bars came to San Quentin, this time for a two-day Freedom and Faith event that featured musical talent, the Robertson family from Duck Dynasty, and nearly 8,000 hot dogs.

On the evening of September 10, hundreds gathered to meet the Robertson Family and watch their documentary “The Blind.” The following day, thousands descended to the lower-yard for a full-day event.

“Being a part of something like this instills in me the belief that anyone who is in this type of environment can experience a feeling of change, if they had these opportunities,” resident Shann Sevoir, 57, said.

God Behind Bars founder Jake Bodine and former

resident Brandon Riddle-Terrell co-emceed.

Outside guest Colton Kyle, son of “American Sniper” Chris Kyle told a story from the Christian Bible of Apostle Paul’s transformative power and said, “I hope the incarcerated individuals present, could experience that power because we are never to far gone for Jesus.”

For nearly four hours, residents enjoyed fellowship, testimonies, and music that featured country star Ben Fuller from Tennessee, Christian rapper Holy Gabbana of Florida, and Christian artists One Voice, Taya, and Colton Kyle.

“In over 33 years of incarceration, I have never been to a prison that held a service on the yard that promoted the Spirit of God in a way that even the worst of the worst can relate too,” Sevoir said.

Gabbana said God had

changed his life when he introduced him to His son Jesus in a jail cell. He said he felt his life was like running on a treadmill, going nowhere. When his cellmate said we are always on the Lord’s mind, it sparked a belief that he could change.

“God is not looking at your rap sheet,” Gabbana said. “God sees your worth because he is your creator. It is not about perfection, but progression.”

He said he believed people had to change before they came to Christ, but he since discovered God said to come in their present condition. “When you decide to give your life to God, God does the cleaning as you pursue him,” Gabbana said. “He changes hearts and minds. It is a daily process.”

The event served barbequed hot dogs on the lower-yard for guests, staff, and residents.

“I have been locked up nearly three decades. The smells and sounds remind me of Fourth of July in the 1980s,” resident Hamisi X. Spears, 52, said. “I do not even have teeth and I am ready to devour my hot dog.”

Resident Ralph Leon, 42, incarcerated since age 15, said, “It has been two and a half decades since I have had a barbequed hot dog.”

The day concluded with Willie and Korie Robertson telling attendees about the Great Commission in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 28, about making disciples of all nations, baptizing, and preaching the gospel.

“Being here with you guys accomplishes those things,” Willie said. “It is not me who is doing those things, but who is in me.”

Resident Gregory “Oz” Prestigiacomo, 58, said the day’s events went beyond

meeting Willie and Uncle Si Robertson. “God puts you with someone who can instantly connect with me and where I came from,” Prestigiacomo said of his encounter with Matt from God Behind Bars. “The fellowship was awesome and it is amazing what they are doing for people behind bars.”

Music from Christian rappers “NRG” and “1kphew,” and a sermon from outside minister Levi Lusko on salvation and heaven ended the daylong event.

“It is not my words or Willie’s words that change lives, but the word of God, which is active and sharper than any two-edged sword,” Lusko said.

His sermon was on Jesus, one sentence in The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 23:43, when he replied to a thief crucified next to him. “Amen, I say to you, today you will be in paradise.”

Lusko said Jesus taught four points about heaven. He said, “First, heaven is certain not a figment of imagination. Secondly, heaven is near. Third, heaven is paradise, and lastly, heaven is being with Jesus.”

After the sermon, nearly eighty residents were baptized.

“The baptism was emotional, ecstatic, and when Dan W. performed the baptism I could feel the hand of God pulling me back up,” resident Nacona Urquidi, 54, said. “Everyone was there to hold me when I got out of the tub of water. I knew God was waiting for me to do this.”

Pastor Danny said this was his first time entering a prison and said he has never been part of an event that served so much food.

“You can feed people for a day, but God wants us to feed people’s souls for a lifetime,” Pastor Danny said.



Photos by Aristeo Sampablo & Marcus Casillas

From left to right: Recent Death Row resident Loi T. Vo celebrates his second chance with prayer. Carrington Russelle celebrates Baptismal. Duck Dynasty’s Willie Robertson and Brandon Riddel-Terrell baptize resident Kenneth Gatison. Bob Goff and his crew donates 8,000 hot dogs to SQRC.

## Harvest of the Month provides healthier dietary options with fresh vegetables and fruit

By Marcus Henderson  
Editor in Chief

A Harvest of the Month program is being implemented to bring fresh produce into California’s state prisons. SQNews talks to Impact Justice’s Heile Gantan about the program via email interview.

**SQN: Why is it important to bring Harvest Month program awareness to the incarcerated?**

HG: Harvest of the Month is a program designed to bring a variety of local California-grown fruits and vegetables into CDCR facilities. Harvest of the Month is a model that has been successful in K-12 school districts to promote the consumption of locally-grown foods. The Farm-to-Corrections CA partnership with CDCR is offering the first known record of Harvest of the Month in a correctional setting. To date, the program has served a variety of fresh produce, including avocados, persimmons, watermelon, pluots, tangerines, pears, asparagus, and grapefruit.

**SQN: Is the program statewide or just San Quentin?**

HG: The Harvest of the Month program is a statewide program that began in July 2023 at 3 facilities, and is now being implemented at 18 facilities. All CDCR adult facilities will participate in the program by the end of 2025. (San Quentin scheduled to join in January 2025)

**SQN: How would this new program benefit the incarcerated population?**

HG: The added variety and local consumption of fresh produce by the incarcerated population would not only support their health through more nutritious food, but would also bring a sense of normalcy to daily life--fresh items allow residents to consume the fruit or vegetable in a way that promotes agency among the population. Including these fresh items in resident-made meals offers an element of choice in an environment where options are limited. Monthly materials include nutritional benefits, source of origin information to promote food supply transparency, and serving suggestions, all provide residents with useful information to make more informed choices about what they are eating.

**SQN: What are the goals?**

HG: The goals for this program include to promote the health and well-being of the incarcerated population through consumption of local and sustainable fruits and vegetables. Additional goals include supporting small and medium California farms, along with increasing the local food purchases from CDCR in accordance with AB 778 (2022) which requires state-run institutions to purchase a minimum of 60% of their agricultural products from California farms.

**SQN: Were any incarcerated people surveyed for this program?**

HG: Our team is currently

in the process of seeking approval to survey the population to get feedback on the program. However, we have spoken with a number of residents at the participating facilities who have shared about the importance of a variety of fresh foods while incarcerated. According to a national report published in 2020 by Impact Justice, entitled, “Eating Behind Bars : Ending the Hidden Punishment of Food in Prison,” 62.2% of respondents reported never or rarely having access to fresh vegetables and only 54.4% of respondents had access to fresh fruit. While this was a national report, these patterns are seen across the country, and any effort to improve access to fresh produce will aim to bring better care and nutrition through food to the incarcerated population.



Courtesy of Evett Kilmartin from UC Agriculture and Natural Resources

Resients enjoy the California grown fruits and healthier lifestyle afforded by Harvest of the Month.



Harvest of the Month program provide fresh fruits and vegetables to CDCR facilities.



CDCR resident kitchen workers display the current lunches without fruits or vegetables.



# Governor Gavin Newsom signs new laws

**Senate Bill (SB)**  
**Assembly Bill (AB)**

**SB 690** - will extend the statute of limitations to charge a person with domestic violence, allowing abuse to be reported within seven years of the incident. The law currently allows abuses to be reported within five years. The law is not retroactive and would apply only to future cases. Authored by Sen. Susan Rubio (D-Baldwin Park).

**SB 1414** – will make it a felony to solicit or purchase a minor 15 or younger for prostitution. This bill was seen by the author as the second part of legislation to tackle child sex trafficking from both sides: the sellers and the buyers. Authored by Sen. Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield)

**AB 1960** – will add tougher penalties for individuals who take, damage, or destroy property while committing a felony. This bill

is one of 13 that were bundled in a bipartisan package to address property crimes in 2018. The new law will expire by 2030. Authored by Assembly Member Robert Rivas (D-Hollister).

**SB 268** – will make the rape of an unconscious person a felony, adding to the list of violent felonies that qualify under California’s three-strikes law. Authored by Sen. Marie Alvarado-Gil.

**AB 2099** - will make it a misdemeanor or a felony for

people to harass, intimidate, or commit an act of violence against someone seeking abortion care or working at abortion clinics. Authored by Assembly Member Rebecca Bauer-Kahan.

**AB 2943** – will allow multiple shoplifting offenses to be aggregated together into a felony.

**AB 3209** – will allow a court to impose a restraining order against someone who stole from a store or assaulted an employee working there.

**AB 1779** – will make it easier to charge shoplifting crimes that took place across multiple counties in a single court.

**AB 1802** – will make the CHP Property Crimes Taskforce permanent.

**AB 1972** – will expand the CHP Property Crimes Taskforce program to include cargo theft and railroad police.

**SB 905** – will allow theft from a vehicle to be charged as a felony in certain circumstances.

**SB 1242** – will make it easier to charge a felony offense when people start a fire on a commercial property in order to commit organized theft.

**SB 1416** – will create a sentencing enhancement for reselling stolen items.

**SB 1144** – will require online marketplaces to better monitor whether goods listed on their site are stolen.

**SB 982** – will allow prosecution for organized retail theft to occur indefinitely

## \$5.6 million awarded for visiting room strip search violation

**By Marcus Henderson**  
**Editor in Chief/**  
**Executive Editor**

The wife of a California inmate will receive \$5.6 million after being sexually violated during a strip search when she tried to visit her husband in prison, her attorneys said Monday.

After traveling hours to see her husband at a correctional facility in Tehachapi, Calif. on Sept. 6, 2019, Christina Cardenas was subject to a strip search by prison officials, drug and pregnancy tests, X-ray and CT scans at a hospital, and another strip search by a male doctor who

sexually violated her, a lawsuit said.

“My motivation in pursuing this lawsuit was to ensure that others do not have to endure the same egregious offenses that I experienced,” Cardenas said.

Of the \$5.6 million settlement, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation will pay \$3.6 million and the rest will be paid by the other defendants, which include two correctional officers, a doctor, and the Adventist Health Tehachapi Valley hospital.

Prison officials conducted their searches on the basis of a warrant, which said a strip

search could only be conducted if an X-ray found any foreign objects that could be contraband in Cardenas’ body, her attorneys said. However, neither the X-ray or CT scan found any evidence of such.

She was also put in handcuffs in a “humiliating perp walk” while being taken to and from the hospital, and denied water or use of a bathroom during the majority of the search process. She was told she had to pay for the hospital’s services and later received invoices for a combined total of more than \$5,000. Despite no contraband being found in any of

her belongings or her body, Cardenas was denied her visit with her husband.

One of the prison officials asked her, “Why do you visit, Christina? You don’t have to visit. It’s a choice, and this is part of visiting,” according to Cardenas.

“We believe the unknown officer’s statement was a form of intimidation used to dismiss Christina’s right to visit her lawful husband during the course of his incarceration,” Cardenas’ attorney Gloria Allred said.

Cardenas also had to undergo a strip search during a previous visit to marry her husband, and continued to

experience difficulties during her visits to him, though not to the same extent as the Sept. 6, 2019 incident. Her husband remains in custody today.

The settlement also requires the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to distribute a policy memorandum to employees that better protects the rights of visitors who have to undergo strip searches. This includes ensuring the search warrant is read and understood by the visitor, that the visitor receives a copy of the warrant, that the scope of the warrant is read and understood by everyone involved, and the scope of the warrant is

not exceeded.

Cardenas is not alone in what she experienced from correctional officers, Allred said, and hopes this case will help protect the rights of spouses and family members who visit their loved ones in prison.

California prisons have faced an ongoing problem of sexual abuse and misconduct, with the the U.S. Justice Department announcing it had opened an investigation into allegations that correctional officers systematically sexually abused incarcerated women at two state-run California prisons.

## CDCR ends use of controversial lie-detector analyzer machine

**By Jay Kim**  
**Journalism Guild Writer**

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation will end the use of their controversial lie-detector technology after decades of usage, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

CDCR will ban Computer Voice Stress Analyzer (CVSA) in all offices and prisons across California later this year.

“It’s like saying a Ouija board or an astrological chart is an investigative tool,” said Richard Leo, a University of San Francisco professor of law and psychology and expert in false confessions.

Leo approved of CDCR’s decision as he views the use of the CVSA as professional malpractice.

By analyzing inaudible tremors in the human voice, the controversial technology allegedly identifies whether the person is stressed or not, and by extension, lying.

However, decades of research and speech sound experts have concluded that the technology is ineffective and unable to detect the

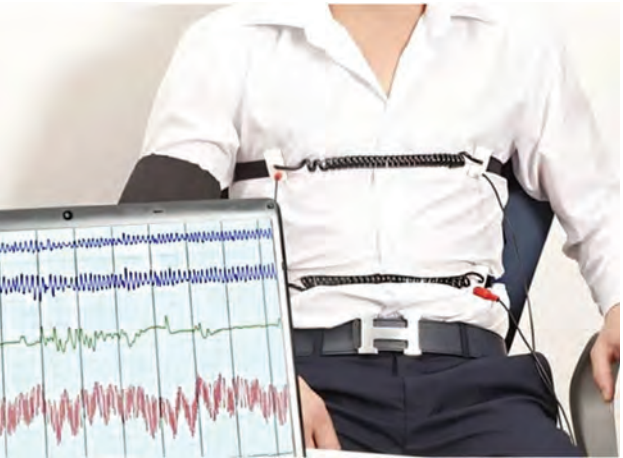
microtremors.

CDCR’s proposal stated that there are more established and dependable techniques for detecting deception and that the current scientific consensus does not support the continued use of the CVSA.

The Chronicle investigated a case in Salinas Valley State Prison where Raymond Whitall filed a complaint against the facility’s officers for beating him without reason.

Despite prison medical staff documenting evidence of the beating, the prison rejected Whitall’s claim after his CVSA exam detected “deception” in one of his answers.

CDCR is not the only agency that has used the CVSA. At least, 13 law enforcement agencies utilize the technology in their interview and hiring processes for officers, according to the Chronicle’s investigation.



A person hooked up to a lie-detector analyz machine

## Court eliminates early youth parole hearings for sex offenders

**By SQNews Staff**

The California Supreme Court recently ruled 6-1 that prisoners serving life sentences for violent sex crimes committed between ages 18 and 25 are not eligible for a parole hearing after serving 25 years, reported The San Francisco Chronicle.

In the dissent opinion, Justice Goodwin Liu said punishing violent sex offenders more severely than convicted murderers serves no legitimate state policy and does not protect the public. Liu added that recent studies have found that sex criminals actually are less likely than many other offenders to commit crimes after release from prison, said the article.

In the case *People v. Williams*, the petitioner’s lawyers argued that the litigant should be eligible for a parole hearing within 25 years. The petitioner was sentenced to 100 years to life in prison.

That sentence was

made under the so-called One Strike Law that was expanded by the Legislature in 2010. The law made violent sex offenders ineligible for early parole hearings because of the danger they could pose after release and the seriousness of their crimes, said the court.

Justice Martin Jenkins wrote that lawmakers reasonably concluded that their “risk of recidivism is high, that rehabilitation is unlikely, and therefore these offenders would not likely be eligible for parole, much less early parole,” reported The Chronicle.

Prior to the Supreme Court ruling, the appellate courts were divided on the issue. In 2019, the 1st District Court of Appeal in San Francisco ruled that such [parole] hearings were required because there was no rational basis for treating rapists more harshly than murderers, according to the article.

Under state law, prisoners who were 25 or younger at the time of their

*"sentences for violent sex crimes committed between ages 18 and 25 are not eligible to a parole hearing after serving 25 years"*

—The San Francisco Chronicle

offense are entitled to a “youth offender” parole hearing after serving 15-25 years, depending on their crime. Those sentenced to death or life without parole are ineligible.

The One Strike Law was approved by the California voters in 2006.

About the law being upheld by the court, Liu wrote, “[It] gives young offenders a meaningful opportunity to avoid life imprisonment but denies that opportunity to an especially despised subset” without legal justification.

## CDCR budget for 2024-2025 shows a decrease in funding

The California 2024-25 budget provides \$17.8 billion from the General Fund for judicial and criminal justice programs, including support for program operations and other projects. This is a decrease of \$1.5 billion, or 8 percent, below the revised 2023-24 level, according to the Legislative Analysts Office.

The reduction was made to address the state’s budget problem, said the report. The budget provides \$14.3 billion (mostly from the General Fund) for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. This is a decrease of \$559 million (4 percent) from the revised 2023-24 level. The decrease is

associated with prison capacity deactivations and the expiration of limited-term funding provided in prior years.

The decrease in spending does not reflect growth in employee compensation costs in 2024-25, because those costs are accounted for elsewhere in the budget.

The prison population is projected to decrease by about 3,400 (4 percent) from 94,200 in 2023-24 to 90,900 in 2024-25. The parole population is projected to remain roughly the same at around 35,600, noted the report.

The budget reflects ongoing General Fund reductions of \$169 million beginning in 2024-25 (growing to \$225

million beginning in 2025-26) associated with prison capacity deactivations. This consists of (1) \$77 million (growing to \$132 million in 2025-26) from the previously planned deactivation of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison in Blythe, (2) \$82 million from the deactivation of 42 housing units across 11 state prisons, and (3) \$10 million (growing to \$11 million in 2025-26) related to reduced administrative costs resulting from these and previous deactivations.

The budget includes various adjustments related to correctional health care beginning in 2024-25. Some of the major adjustments include: \$26.4 million ongoing increase

for contract medical services including funding based on medical acuity levels, medical parole, and administrative claims. This increase results from a \$38.5 million General Fund increase offset by a \$12.1 million decrease in reimbursement authority, said the report.

A \$20 million one-time General Fund to cover projected overspending in the prison medical care budget. \$10.5 million ongoing for toxicology tests provided to patients receiving medication assisted treatment through the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program. This reflects a lower cost per test and a decrease in tests per patient from 14 tests per year

to 12 per year.

The budget reflects a \$27 million reduced from 2023-24 for the delayed installation of video surveillance technology at five prisons. These costs will be shifted to 2025-26 (\$16 million) and 2026-27 (\$11 million).

\$8.5 million reduced from 2023-24 (growing to \$22.6 million annually in 2025-26) to reflect a reduction in annual training for correctional officers from 48 hours to 40 hours and discontinuing the use of the California Reality Based Training Center.

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center (SQ) 2024-25 budget reduced the educational and vocational center to project

cost of \$239 million. In addition, \$8 million of the \$20 million General Fund provided in 2023-24 was repurposed to support the continuation of the Hope and Redemption Team Program with \$4 million being provided each year in 2024-25 and 2025-26. The program provides opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals to serve as life coaches and mentors for the incarcerated population. The remaining \$12 million will be used to construct spaces for outdoor recreation and programming at SQ.

—Marcus Henderson  
**Editor in Chief/**  
**Executive Editor**



# SQ Veterans Group combats mental health issues and homelessness for its members

By T.J. Marshall  
Journalism Guild Writer

Veterans group of San Quentin is working toward solutions to help its members combat lack of housing, food insecurity, and health and welfare crisis plaguing our country.

The VGSQ is reaching out to vets who need assistance. The program encourages them to take the first step in breaking the cycle of disparity to ensure they have the support they need.

Resident VGSQ Chairman Noah Winchester said their mission is to support all incarcerated veterans. He explained some vets are prone to isolation due to ‘less than honorable discharge’ or ‘bad conduct’ status or mental health issues which can lead to a failure to seek assistance.

“The VGSQ is a valid resource for any Veteran needing help,” said Winchester. “To those who have not yet joined please reach out to any of us wearing blue and gold, we are here for you.”

Looking at a broader scope, through a bigger lens at our nation, Government

estimates approximately 40,000 veterans are homeless on any given night in America, according to U.S. Department of Housing Urban Development 2024

Although veterans are 13% of the total homeless they are only 6.2% of the total population, according to HUD.

“Even one Veteran experiencing homelessness is a tragedy,” said resident Veteran Edward Mansolf.

He expressed how some vets are just to prod to ask for help and continue to suffer in silence.

“Time for shame and embarrassment is over,” said Mansolf. “It’s time to bring awareness and find solutions to help those who served to protect our nation.”

Resident and new member of the VGSQ Alan Randal Kidd served in the U.S. Army from 1969-1971. He received an honorable discharge for his service, according to the U.S. National Archives Record Center.

One year after his release from the military Kidd said, “I started hearing voices,” and was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Kidd suffered a lifetime



Up to 40,000 veterans currently live in homeless encampments.

SQNews Archive

of mental health issues and said after 27 years in prison his only resource outside of prison where his parents who have since passed.

As an incarcerated individual with a life sentence, he said if he is found suitable for parole he fears the possibility of being homeless upon release. Kidd said he reached out to resident and Veterans Information Project clerk Donald Edge for help.

“Each person has unique

circumstances and the goal is to find a reentry recovery program that fits them best,” said Edge

Edge is the liaison between resident vets and Mary Donovan the California Veterans representative for San Quentin.

He helps residents’ complete applications for financial aid, disability claims, and transitional housing programs. “Housing for our vets is one of our main priorities,” said Edge.

Edge explained incarcerated veterans can have added obstacles. He said issues that plague veterans can include post-traumatic stress disorder, difficult transitions to civilian life and homelessness.

He helped Kidd apply to the Veterans Transition Center of Monterey County where he was accepted into the Long-Term Recovery Program located at historic Fort Ord.

According to a letter

obtained by *SQNews* VTC program director Jennie Nestler said their main goals is to help veteran’s secure permanent housing with the ability to pay their own way.

The VTC of California is a “Housing First” Program. “No one left behind is not just a motto for the battle field,” said Nestler. “No one left behind to suffer after doing their duty should be a priority for our country and those who served.”

## VGSQ honors the fallen of 9/11

During Mental Health Week, the Veterans Group of San Quentin (VGSQ) hosted a memorial event to recognize and commemorate those killed in the attacks on 9/11.

Teaming up with the Mental Health Department, VGSQ members assisted San Quentin residents, staff, and outside guests in placing the names of 2,977 victims onto a memorial banner stretching out across multiple tables on the Lower Yard.

SQ resident John Rogers said, “It’s our duty as Americans to honor the lives lost and show respect to those who protect our country.”

Kicking off the event, resident Brian “Bugler Boy” Conroy played trumpet while VGSQ’s Joel Natividade sang “The Star Spangled Banner.” The VGSQ Color Guard performed and presented multiple flags for display.

On opposite sides of the displayed Prisoner of War and Missing in Action flags, VGSQ members Darren Maheno and Noah Winchester stood. Maheno eloquently delivered the sentiment, “They are always with us. In our hearts, our minds, and our

prayers, never to be forgotten.”

SQ Mental Health faculty members Dr. Holland, Dr. Anderson, and Sociologist Cherise Irby helped organize the event and provided the thousands of name tags placed on the banner.

SQ resident Daves Mendez said, “My brothers went to fight after this happened. It makes me proud to participate at this memorial.” As Mendez attached a victim’s name to the banner, he spoke the words, “John J. Badagliacca, may you rest in peace.”

His words and actions were followed by many others.

After placing the name “Michael Allen Davidson” on the banner, SQ resident Gerald Nelson spoke about the intense emotional gravity felt by the event participants.

“It was emotional to put one name on a banner filled with so many,” he said.

Later on when Nelson asked the volunteers if he could add on any more names, they handed him a whole page filled with names. Everyone’s collaborative

actions served as a beautiful tribute to the present community.

This service was not just a way to honor the lives of those lost.

“I protect the flag” said Bob Davis about his role as a member of the Color Guard. “To me it’s everything. I served in Vietnam and I support the flag.”

VGSQ member David Deboef said, “Important events like these help the next generation not to forget.” As he approached the banner he pronounced “Sandy Waugh Bradshaw” and neatly placed her name tag in line with thousands of others.

Resident John Green said “Collen Ann Barkow” as he helped finish adorning the banner with the names of those that lost their lives. “God bless you,” said Green, “You are not forgotten.”

Trumpeter Conroy played a rendition of the song “Taps” to finalize the event, and the community event participants observed a moment of silence for the victims and fallen heroes of 9/11.

—Terrell J. Marshall  
Journalism Guild Writer



Veterans and the SQ Community inscribe all 2,977 victims of 9/11 into their annual memorial event.

## HUD's Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program is under utilized



SQNews Archive

Family members of fallen soldiers are given this flag at the funeral.

By Brett Mohr  
Journalism Guild Writer

Congressman Thompson introduced the End Veteran Homelessness Act of 2024 to address the inefficiencies and underuse of the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program.

For those who have served our country, homelessness can be a significant issue. Housing insecurity — defined as the inability to maintain consistent, affordable housing — can affect our nation’s veterans more often than other people, according to the *Daily Democrat*.

“Too often, veterans experience housing insecurity and homelessness at a higher rate than others,” said Congressman Mike Thompson, D-Yolo, who co-sponsored the End

Veterans Homelessness Act of 2024. “Nearly one-third of all homeless veterans live in California. We have an obligation to ensure our veterans, who have sacrificed so much for our country, have roofs over their heads.”

In 2023, California Veterans Data Central reported that of the 180,000 homeless residents of California, over 10,000 are veterans. That amounts to about 6% of the homeless population, according to the *Democrat*.

To address the problem, Thompson has sought to bring more efficiency and increase veteran access to the HUD-VASH program. Himself a Vietnam War veteran, Thompson has recently helped to organize town halls for veterans in his ongoing efforts to advocate for their support.

The bill aims to increase the number of veterans who are eligible for the HUD-VASH program, and target program inefficiencies that contribute to its current underuse. Currently, there are almost 30,000 unclaimed veteran vouchers for the program, according to the *Democrat*. Priority would be given to those veterans who are chronically homeless and those who face chronic disabilities.

The bill would allow those who currently utilize other federal programs, such as the Housing Choice Voucher program, to switch over to HUD-VASH. Administrative fees for HUD-VASH would be covered under the bill. It will require 218 votes in its support to pass, and was introduced by Reps. Mark Takano, Maxine Waters, and Mike Levin.

## Restorative Partners "Bridge the Gap" with communities

By Lawrence Randall  
Journalism Guild Writer

Community advocates continue to raise awareness about the inequality within the justice system, as well as, reducing violence and lowering recidivism.

Restorative Partners, a non-profit California organization, held a fundraiser titled “Bridging the Gap” to address these issues, according to

KSBY California’s Central Coast.

“It’s nice to see that in the community here, there is a really strong support of doing rehabilitative work with people who’ve had to suffer what they’ve had to suffer in going to prison,” said Father Daniel Manger, a Monastery of the Risen Christ. “So giving them a second chance, is vital today.”

The event was held at

the Fremont Theater, in late summer. The benefit raised \$102,000 noted Sister Theresa Harpin, the founder and executive director of Restorative Partners.

The multiple guest speakers shared about their experiences with the criminal justice system, said the article.

“We have a retired probation officer,” said Harpin. “We have a man who did 27 years inside, he and his wife

have a publishing company now spreading literacy among people authors inside. We have another author who has written about his heroes and heroines in restorative and social justice work, and then we have another who’s also written curriculum, especially for youth in trouble, youth at risk.”

The end goal for the organization is to reincorporate the formally incarcerated back into society while offering

continual care and resources, said the article.

“The way I got involved with it, I used to reap the benefits from being a part of Restorative Partners when I was coming out of prison,” said Ricardo Moctezuma, Restorative Partners’ juvenile hall program manager. “I made the choice to also give back and apply for these positions to be able to give back to society and our community,”

according to the article.

The nonprofit’s focus is to do the transformative work and to reach out to help people have a successful reentry.

“Well, here we are bridging the gap,” said Harpin. “Bridging the Gap” is all about bringing different people with different lenses to the table to talk about important concerns around justice issues, restorative justice, and justice that is for everyone.”



# MENTAL WELLNESS WEEK

## MENTAL HEALTH SATFF, AND RESIDENTS CELEBRATE ANNUAL EVENT

### Mental Wellness includes healing through laughter

By Jay Kim  
Journalism Guild Writer

Hundreds of residents piled inside Chapel B where it became standing room only. Excited conversations rippled through the audience as they waited for the entertainment to begin.

The San Quentin's Mental Health Wellness Week continued its streak of positive events as comedian Dennis Gaxiola entered the stage to bring comedic relief to the community.

The evening opened up with a profound short film titled Warning Signs by San Quentin TV showing how a resident suffering through a crisis can find

solutions to receive help.

He began his set claiming certain Bible characters were Mexican.

"Moses was Mexican, who else would take a bunch of people across a sea to the Promised Land?" said Gaxiola. The crowd erupted into laughter as the jokes kept coming.

"My son has a D in his English class. That's the only language he speaks. How do you flunk at talking?" Gaxiola said.

He continued his routine teasing his family, highlighting Mexican culture, and speaking about his unique upbringing. Gaxiola created dialogue with the audience while masterfully

weaving them into his set.

Gaxiola is the son of a formerly incarcerated pastor who was in and out of prisons from the age of 11 to his early 20s. After turning his life around, his father started a prison ministry which inspired him to create his own.

The comic is part of a mental health group of comedians called 'One Degree of Separation' that bring humor to affected individuals. He also serves as a minister to inspire people that they're not alone in their depression.

The entertainer said he loved sharing comedy because laughter is good medicine and how it can save people's lives.

"I'm a big believer that we

are blessed to be a blessing to others," said Gaxiola. "I'm the product of hope."

He closed his set claiming the miracles God performed in his life and encouraged everyone to develop a relationship with Jesus.

Francisco Siordia, SQ resident, said this was his first comedy event and dealt with suicidal thoughts at a young age.

"It was amazing to see a Latino representing the culture," said Siordia. "Honestly, this whole week has been the most impactful and powerful week I've been a part of. He brought a positive message and there's no better cure for it [depression]. It meant everything to me."



Comedian Dennis Gaxiola made the residents laugh all night long.



Photo by Aristeo Sampablo // SQNews

### Mental Wellness honors Hispanic Heritage Month

By Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism Guild Chairperson

A Day of Hispanic Heritage was held during the first day of The Week of Mental Wellness at San Quentin.

The event was kicked off with the displayed of Low rider vehicles and motorcycles at the Lower Yard basketball court—a black 1962 Chevy impala with a black 1990 FXR Harley Davidson, a 2018 Harley Davidson, and other wheelers.

The festivity continued with the presence

of Liduvina Gonzalez, an outside volunteer with the Ballet Folklórico Anahuac—bringing the incarcerated men dancing Aztec to the tune of drumming following with outsider's epic folkloric dance. The progression evolved in various activities—performances by several musical groups playing different genres in English and Spanish entertaining the community, as the crowd grew by the hundreds through the beat of drums the men continued to Aztec dance.

Spanish reentry program and safety plans for

future deportees were set in place—with the present of Alex Sanchez from Homies Unidos, and San Francisco Public Defender Francisco Ugarte.

Ugarte, answered questions on immigrations status and Sanchez talked about the importance of having a relapse prevention plan prior to BPH hearings. This workshop lasted from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. These events were the first of its kind and the residents seems to be enjoying them.

San Quentin staff organized a raffle for the incarcerated people in an

attempt to earn the delicious Mexican traditions candy bag. For those who have been incarcerated for decades this was a huge blessing.

"It's been 17 years I had not tried. The first thing I ate was the mango lollipop and then I ate the Chamois candies," said the resident Daniel Garcia. "It made me felt as a child once again, I recalled when I was in Tijuana when I went to the store with my five pesos. That was a good memory."

As thing simmer down the final car took off leaving the crowd cheering.



Aztec Dancers performed for SQ residents and staff.

Photo by J. Salvador // SQTV



Residents and medical staff hand out stickers in front of the chapel.

Photo by Marcus Casillas // SQNews



Mental Health nurses at San Quentin.

Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



Residents perform cultural dance on the Lower Yard.

Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



Suicide Survivor Kevin Berthia shared his life story with residents.

Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



Walkenhorst's Natalie Tovar enjoys Mental Wellness Week.

Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

### Survivors of suicide and crime share their testimonies

By Tyrone Luqman Jones  
Journalism Guild Writer

Amid all the festivities to kick off Mental Wellness Week at San Quentin, residents were also witness to a true story of survival.

In the education annex trailer C2, Kevin Berthia told his story of attempting to take his own life. On March 11, 2005, Berthia drove his car to the Golden Gate Bridge. He parked his car, got out and jumped. He said he was the survivor of 21 previous suicide attempts.

"I'm not coming here simply to tell my story, I'm here so that you can discover yourself within my story. Every storm runs out of rain," said Berthia. Berthia told residents that he never thought that the worst day of his life would be forever captured in a photograph and article on the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle.

He said that he has not allowed that one moment to define him, and that it was simply a part of his journey. His advice to residents was to place "journey before destination."

Berthia has shared his story in every American state except West Virginia and in several countries. This was his first time speaking at SQ. In all his travels, he said he never mentioned that he was formerly incarcerated before, but here, he felt he could speak to an audience he could relate to.

"It [Berthia's story] was relatable because he has empathy and compassion. His trauma led to his suicide attempts. My trauma led to me committing crimes," said resident Carlos Ramirez.

Berthia said it was important to him to come speak to men because 80% of suicides are committed by men. He said that society expects men to be strong, but he said that often strength is misrepresented.

"In today's society, strength in a man is viewed as how much one can carry, but the true measure of strength and mental wellness is how much one can let go," said Berthia.

Kevin Berthia is a nationally known motivational speaker from Oakland, California. Currently, he has a book deal and a movie in development to tell his story.

On the final day of Mental Wellness Week, a crime survivor shared her personal testimony with residents inside San Quentin's Educational trailer.

Natalie Tovar, a 10-year customer relation's employee for Walkenhorst, said she has visited every institution in California promoting the company. On this day, Tovar a crime survivor opened her heart to every resident in attendance sharing her story of childhood trauma.

She went on to explain how she found strength to endure and overcome that trauma, through her faith in a Higher Power.

In the course of sharing her story, one San Quentin resident was moved to tears.

"What touched me most was the trauma of her childhood, then her own child experiencing trauma," said Tyrone Bracks, a SQ resident. "Her story made me think of how I'm responsible for my own child's death and coming to grips with my accountability."

As Tovar began to talk about the loss of her brother and how she had thoughts of taking her

own life, tears began to escape her eyes.

"My tears are not tears of sadness," said Tovar. "My tears are tears of gratefulness."

Tovar was initially apprehensive about sharing her story again because she said it is still difficult for her, but she expressed that she finds healing from helping others.

She said that if she could reach just one person, that one person could end up changing the world.

At the conclusion of her story, she opened the floor for residents to ask questions or share brief stories of their own survival.

Throughout the discussion, Tovar said she does not view herself as a victim, but sees herself as a survivor. She also wanted residents to see their worth and not use their current situation to define their character.

Tovar left residents with one question to ponder, "If there wasn't a huge calling for your life, then why did the devil try so hard to take you out?"

— Tyrone Luqman Jones  
Journalism Guild Writer

### Residents kick-off Mental Health Week

By C. K. Gerhartsreiter  
Staff Writer

Mental Wellness Week at San Quentin started strong with a Monday evening Expressive Arts Night talent show at Chapel B.

Master of Ceremonies resident Henok Rufael kept the crowd entertained with his fluid style of event management as 12 residents took the stage to present their artistic performance gifts.

"Music is so important and it might save someone's life. For me, incarceration

is a blessing in disguise, unfortunate, but necessary. Here at San Quentin, I can help people with my music," said Kaleo Kealona Schreiner, 30, who arrived five months ago. "When you know you are destined to help, you have to help," he added.

The event featured a raffle that awarded a candy bar, a toothbrush, and a happy-face ball to several winners. One of the prizes went to resident Tony Quinia, who said, "A lot of people say they do not need help, but they really do."

The Heavy Metal band "The One Fifteens" played a variety of songs from the chapel's side-stage that amazed the audience with their stylistic fluidity of sound.

Singer Michael Adams' performance of "I Want to Go Back to My Father's Arms" gave the Expressive Arts night a relaxing, comforting spiritual interlude.

Toward the end of the event, Kaomang Saaliaw, 37, a hearing-impaired rapper with the rapper's name "Westbird" performed

a song with the title "I Feel So Good Make Me Happy." He received huge but silent applause with shaking hands held high.

San Quentin psychologist Dr. Anderson, the organizer of Mental Wellness Week, said she felt happy with the turnout of 180 residents, considering the 49ers played their opening game of the season at the same time. "We really want to lift people's spirits, do something that entertains, not just a class on depression but make people happy," Dr. Anderson said.



Resident band members from "The 115" performed outside medical facility.

Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

### Homies Unidos social reformist Alex Sanchez talks reentry

By Justin Wharton  
Journalism Guild Writer

A workshop on deportation and parole board prep was held in the San Quentin Education annex C-2 trailer, hosted by Homies Unidos. The group presented two presentations with questions and answers regarding the various subjects.

The programs mission is to end violence and promote peace, resources, and leadership to immigrant communities. They visualize a world where all the members of their community are peaceful and defenders of social justice.

"We have this program to

help the incarcerated who are immigrants and with long sentences, or lifers. We help with board preparation—insight into why you committed your crimes and parole plans," said formerly incarcerated Alex Sanchez.

50 residents attended the Spanish presentation and discussed the legalities of deportation involving incarcerated individuals with pending ICE hold cases.

Three main topics of Migratory Status were discussed:

1. Crimes before April 1996 (Form I-212C)
2. Nationalism of Family Members
3. Anti-Torture Convention

Residents were able to receive free legal advice and options they can pursue from San Francisco Public Defender Ugarte. He stated that the first interview is to take place within the first 6 months of an immigration detention.

"You are not granted an attorney in immigration court, you can be in custody for 2-3 years and your first interview is the most important," said Ugarte.

The interview process is key in making sure you have insight into why you committed a crime, showing you are no longer a threat to public safety. Ugarte states you will have to explain your insight to a judge.

"When you get deported you have no idea where you will go," said Sanchez.

According to Sanchez, a problem that deportees face when paroled as ICE picks them up, is the transition to a deportation facility can violate their parole conditions.

"If you are not prepared, they can come at any moment... You have to put in the work, you can't rely on your attorney to make miracles, you have to do the work," Sanchez told SQ residents.

Those who are seeking legal help from Homies Unidos, you can contact them at 2105 Beverly Blvd. Ste. 203, Los Angeles, CA 90057. (213) 383-7484.



Homies Unidos, Sanchez and Franciasco teach residents about recovery services.

Photo by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



# Kamala Harris prevails in Mount Tamalpais College mock election

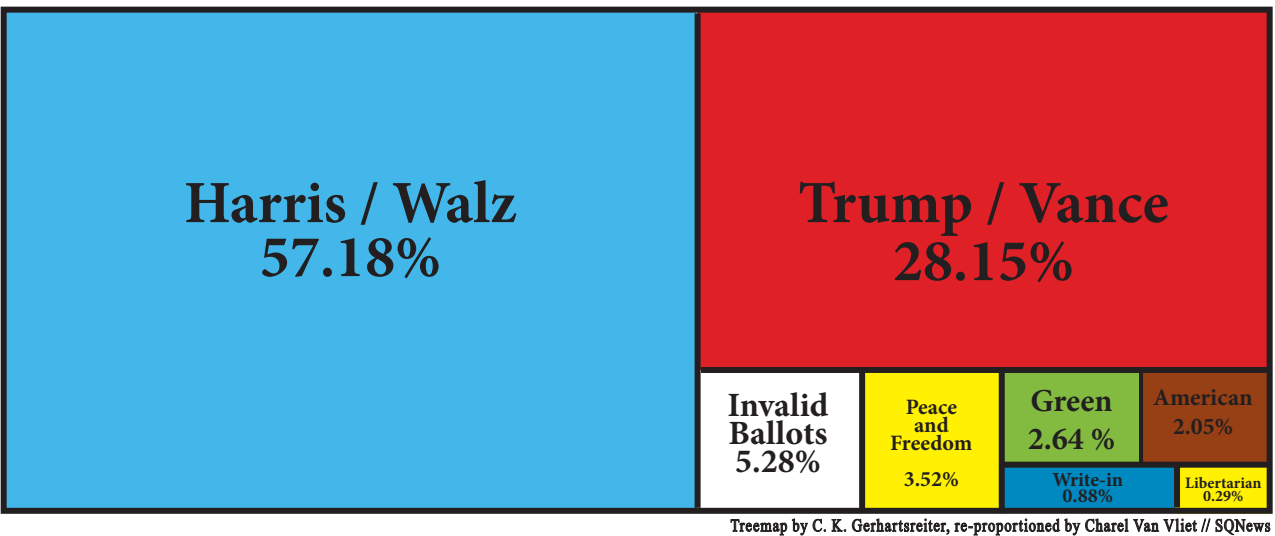
By C. K. Gerhartsreiter  
Staff Writer

A mock election at the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center chose Democrats Kamala Harris and Tim Walz as winners with 57%. Republican candidates Donald Trump and J. D. Vance received 28%.

The poll's single highest agreement of 78% went to Proposition 32, a ballot initiative that would raise the minimum wage to \$18 an hour by 2026. A voter guide distributed by Mount Tamalpais College, the organizers of the mock election, called the proposition "a way out of poverty."

"This means that San Quentin residents care more about working and earning a good wage than who goes to Washington. We want a better start after we go home. Every dollar counts, but in the first place, we really need for more companies to hire us," James Koenig, 71, said after hearing the results of the mock election.

San Quentin voters might want to work on the outside but they would not want to work here, at least not by force. The second highest vote showed San Quentin's opinion of Proposition 6, which would "end forced labor of people in jails and prisons," according to MTC's voter guide, a resounding 77% voted Yes and 19% voted against it.



Treemap by C. K. Gerhartsreiter, re-proportioned by Charel Van Vliet // SQNews

## The results of Tamalpais colleges' 2024 Presidential Mock Election.

"Self-improvement is worth more than working for pennies," said Luke Colandres, 38, adding, "I rather spend my time taking college classes."

For the U.S. Senate race, San Quentin favored Democrat Adam Schiff with 33% over 19% given to Republican Steve Garvey. Almost half of all voters — 47% — left the section blank.

San Quentin defeated Proposition 36, which would increase punishment for theft and certain drug charges with 57% voting No and 38% voting Yes. "I thought more inmates would vote against this," said Joseph Marsala, 49, who added,

"After all, this is putting more guys in prison."

The vote fell short of a broad representation of San Quentin's population. MTC had sent ballots to every one of San Quentin's 3,247 residents, but only 341 — or 10.5% — chose to make their voice heard. MTC also made returning ballots easy with a drop box in A-Building in Education, accessible for 12 hours a day.

Several non-participant residents commented on the apparent effectiveness of the mock election. The rhetorical question "It does not count, so why should I bother to do this?" echoed among many residents who ignored the opportunity to

vote.

A low voter turnout also prompted frequent criticism. "We had a lot of problems," admitted Kirsten Pickering, MTC's chief organizer of the poll. "The instructions and the ballots confused voters, the Education building was closed on Thursday, and on Friday, the place just had a lot going on." Pickering mentioned the softball game against CMS from Vacaville, the 1000 Mile running club's race, and the San Quentin Film Festival, all of which crowded residents' schedules on the final day of the poll.

Pickering, a co-instructor

of MTC's "POL241 — U.S. Government" class, said her students had designed the election material.

Previously incarcerated persons do not vote often. The article "Formerly incarcerated who received the right to vote largely failed to use it" in the February 2024 *San Quentin News* cited a study by the Marshall Project that said, "Self-disenfranchisement often takes another form. Research showed that the returning citizens who did register to vote did not make the effort go to the polls."

Resident Dennis Jefferson, 53, said he wanted to focus

more on going home than on voting. "This election was not real but as a social science experiment, it has great value." He said that after his release, he would definitely vote in the real elections.

Raymond Robledo, 49, also a resident, said he voted for Kamala Harris because he usually voted for Democrats. "They are for the people, for the middle-class. I also believe that a woman's reproduction is her right."

Jaime Jaramillo, 53, who arrived in San Quentin six months ago, said he did not vote because the vote would not matter and would not help Donald Trump, his candidate of choice. "I like Trump because he's getting rid of all the illegal immigrants, he's debunking climate change, and he's gonna drill, drill, drill," Jaramillo said.

A 2016 San Quentin mock election produced similar results. With a participation rate of 10.3%, Hillary Clinton won with 76% over Donald Trump, who received 8% of the votes.

In the same 2016 poll, Kamala Harris, who ran for U.S. Senate, took San Quentin with 68%, over Loretta Sanchez, who received 22%. Proposition 57, the prison reform measure, passed San Quentin with 97%.

The pandemic prevented a 2020 mock election.

# Correspondence with residents at other prisons is possible

By Richard Fernandez  
Staff Writer

In the days of analog and old technology, incarcerated persons communicated through mail. Residents still stay in contact with people they've met while incarcerated, once approved by CDCR.

Jo Natividad has been corresponding with residents at other facilities for 14 years.

"Some of the most important things I got from corresponding were responsibility, accountability, integrity and friends loving friends," said Natividad. "Once we parted ways, we promised to stay in touch by writing, and we did just that."

Incarcerated people may speak to their Correctional Counselor I to obtain a Request for Correspondence Approval form to correspond with IPs at

other institutions. That form can also be obtained from the prison library.

Parolees may also initiate a request by contacting their Parole Agent.

The CCI or PA shall interview the IP or parolee, and review their C-file and/or Field File to obtain the information required to process a Request for Correspondence Approval. If a request is denied, the CCI or PA shall annotate the reason for denial on the "Inmate" Request for Interview.

Rick Gary is a resident of the Correctional Training Center in Soledad, who has corresponded with residents at other prisons for over 10 years using the CDCR 1074 Form procedure.

"I first met one of my best friends while in Ironwood. Years later I was sent to a different prison," said Gary. "I stayed in contact by filing a CDCR 1074

Form. Once I was approved, this allowed us permission to correspond by mail."

Gary met his longtime friend while attending an Anger Management class at Ironwood before he transferred to Soledad.

"It has been beneficial to me because we share our situation, spiritual guidance, and friendship to someone in our same situation," said Gary. "Staying in contact has helped me prepare for the board. We share information and get great feedback. I get great moral support, some case law and prayers."

Gary said what really stood out to him. "It has helped in my continuing sobriety and my progress as a new man of God. I appreciate my friend as being one of my biggest supporters and trusted friends. I enjoy the uplifting letters he writes and cards he sends."

Russell Babcock has been incarcerated for 13 years and resides at SQ in Alpine, one of the Earned Living Units. He has been corresponding with his old cellie since 2017. They built a bond of friendship throughout the years.

"We shared life experiences and past stories," said Babcock. "I no longer correspond with my old cellie as I found out that he passed away months ago. It has brought closure knowing why he stopped responding to my letters."

Babcock still has fond memories of his old cellie. "I know he may have made a mistake, but he still had a heart and soul that was genuine," said Babcock.

"One of the fondest moments that really stands out is when my TV broke and he surprised me on my birthday with a brand new TV," said Babcock. "That

TV seals our fond memories together."

Natividad spoke of his long-distance relationships with residents at prisons he has left behind. "My friend Rick and I met in Jamestown on a Level Three. Celebrating Recovery was the program that brought us together," said Natividad. "We became cellies living together for three years, and then became involved in church as Jesus Christ followers."

Richard Otto, a resident at San Quentin for 18 months, has been corresponding with an IP from Jamestown since 2013.

"There are three individuals that I have known for seven, nine, and fourteen years," said Otto. "We older people still know how to write letters with pen or pencil."

Otto's longtime friends met through church groups or services.

"Accountability partners are important because it builds a bond with each other and reminds us to stay on track, and focus better with ourselves," said Otto. "I have fond memories of us in our praising and worshipping together."

If the request to correspond is denied at the institution, parole office, or other state correctional facility, the reason for denial shall be annotated on the CDCR Form 1074. It shall also be returned, in its entirety, to the sending institution or parole office.

A CCI said residents should remain patient as the correspondence approval and denial process may take several weeks.

The complete information process can be found in your Title 15 under 54010.22.1 Process for Approval or Denial of Correspondence Requests.

# Package lawsuit for equal access for men is resolved, but only in part

After eight-and-a-half years of litigation, San Quentin resident David Scott Harrison won a partial victory in a lawsuit he brought in 2016. The result gave incarcerated men statewide the right to buy Levi's jeans, emery boards, kimono-style bathrobes, and 18 other items.

Known among residents as the "Package Lawsuit" and on LexisNexis as "Harrison v. Kernan," the court action asked only for equality. Harrison sued for incarcerated men to have the ability to buy from package vendors the same items that the CDCR had restricted to women. Some residents called the outcome a highly appreciated upgrade in the quality of life in the state's prisons.

"Originally, I wanted for the CDCR to change the personal property matrix to let men buy women-only items from package vendors. I wanted to make purchases equal, gender-neutral," Harrison said.

The lawsuit started with a grievance — a Form 602 — and ended up in Superior Court in Marin County from which it went to the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California and finally to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the

Ninth Circuit. Harrison said he had made several overtures to settle the case to minimize expenses to taxpayers. A public records request revealed that the CDCR spent \$258,512.35 on its defense, a bill that ultimately went to the taxpayer. Harrison said he spent slightly less than \$1,000 on out-of-pocket expenses, mostly on court filing fees, typewriter ribbons, stationery supplies, and postage.

Harrison's suit cited the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and Article I of the California Constitution, two eminent documents prohibiting discrimination based on gender. Harrison said the CDCR's 2014 revised personal property schedule "deliberately and purposefully discriminated" against incarcerated men.

Harrison argued that possession of a bath towel measuring 24"×50" and sold by Walkenhorst's could not possibly present a greater danger than a 24"×36" bath towel issued by the Lower Yard laundry. The CDCR countered that incarcerated men presented a greater danger than incarcerated women did and

that the extra 14 inches of terry-cloth cotton somehow presented a danger.

"Founded on nothing more than 'invidious stereotypes,' and 'archaic and stereotypic notions' or 'fixed notions concerning the roles and abilities of males and females [.]' CDCR conjectured that male prisoners are inherently more dangerous than female prisoners," said the suit.

"The CDCR could never prove their claim, even though the court gave the CDCR many opportunities to do so," Harrison said. "The Ninth Circuit Court sent it back to District Court to allow the CDCR to produce data for each women-only item, which they swore they had."

Harrison said the CDCR's refusal to show any data of greater dangerousness for men stood out as the decisive factor for him to continue with the suit. "They still have not explained how a bath towel can make me dangerous, but I can have a robe."

Harrison said he had given the CDCR many opportunities to settle. In a settlement conference with the judge, the CDCR offered Harrison a certain

dollar amount just to go away. Confidentiality prevented him to disclose the amount or even give approximations.

The CDCR asked Harrison to dismiss the suit but "they said they would not tell me what the emergency regulations would resolve or when they would take effect."

Harrison declined the settlement, saying, "I am not going to abandon 85,000 prisoners based on no information."

In the end, the CDCR capitulated, but with a technical legal maneuver that satisfied the absolute minimum requirements of the court and that satisfied Harrison only in part. The CDCR changed the property schedule through emergency regulations and they allowed men to buy items previously allowed only for women.

The change nullified the old regulations for which Harrison had originally sued. Since they no longer existed, the case turned moot. The court made the point that Harrison could re-file to exhaust remedies for any deficiencies in the new emergency regulations. In short, the case would have to start again.



Stock Photo // SQNews

## Package vendors may now sell jeans

Harrison said the partial resolution fell far short of his goal for equality. "They could not give sugar to women without giving it to men, too, so they took the sugar away from everyone. Then they said, 'Now it's equal.' That's not what I wanted to achieve."

The change also did not make all women-only items available for purchase by men, but reserved 21 items: alarm clocks, bath towels, immersion heaters, lotions contained in pump bottles, pumice stones,

hairbrushes, and 15 other items.

Since the partial resolution, a second Form 602 grievance had gone to Sacramento. At first, Harrison said he expected another denial that would result in another lawsuit. Instead, Harrison already received a resolution. The CDCR committed to provide an explanation for any disallowed item. "It's a start," said Harrison.

—C. K. Gerhartsreiter  
Staff Writer



# California officials, staff, and residents gather for think tank

By Bostyon Johnson  
Managing Editor

A luncheon inviting California officials, facility staff, and residents to brainstorm realistic action items to promote the Reimagining San Quentin Initiative held in Chapel B.

The goal of the event was to bring the SQ community together, improve safety and wellness, and build communication and respect. San Quentin's Warden C. Andes expressed his extensive investment in seeing the transformation of the environment at SQ.

"We need to become one, [giving] the same message and purpose," said correctional officer C. Deleon. "If not, we are not going to affect change."

The Civic Engagement Group and the Inmate Advisory Council hosted the event. Residents, facility staff, and visitors from Sacramento and other facilities gathered around tables with large sheets of paper and markers to come up with achievable S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time based) goals that can be translated into action items for the initiative.

Resident Dante D. Jones, project manager of the event, also works with the Inmate Advisory Council and is a member of Civic Engagement Group. He noted that this event allowed people from other prisons to learn the good being done at SQ, and how it can be duplicated. Jones said that he wanted to share the common voice of all people.

"[These issues] are universal," Jones shared. "For too long, staff and the incarcerated [across the state] have been beating down Sacramento's door about the effects that violence, drug use, and stress have had on our wellbeing."

The September 23<sup>rd</sup> event fostered discussion among residents on recent problems in the prison, and the importance of giving growth opportunities to the younger generation.

"I want to hammer the point of how the YOP [Youth Offender Program] population is being underserved," said resident R. Henok.

Resident Coby Phillips



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

California officials, facility staff, and residents convene to promote the Reimagining San Quentin Initiative.

noted the importance of sharing honest conversations with administrative staff and residents and how optimistic the event was for him.

"I think that if Warden Andes is given the tools and support from headquarters, he will make the transformation to a true rehabilitation center a success," said Phillips.

Resident Miguel Sifuentez and CO S. Lopez MC'ed the event, sharing a little of their background and how they arrived to this moment.

"I was the last person that would be here talking about staff wellness," Sifuentez said about his journey through the prison system and his old way of thinking, which would not have facilitated these kinds of conversations.

CO R. Kruse and Program Manager Lisa Heintz of the California Model resource team discussed the importance of communication involved in this historic community brainstorming event.

Among the invited guests were San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins and Warden (A) E. Borla from California Training Facility - Soledad. Associate Warden N. Gonzales also joined the brainstorming session.

Andes talked about the wellness of the incarcerated population. He also noted that respect between staff and residents changes how people respond to high-stress

situations.

"This is the most passionate job that I have had. It's about reducing the tension in the prison," said Andes. "If talking to someone the right way does that much for a person, that is an easy win."

CEO of Healthcare services Rhonda Litt celebrated the fact that staff and residents are coming together to build community and work together to brainstorm solutions for pressing issues within the facility.

"This is the first [event] of this kind in the state in any institution where staff and incarcerated people came together to engage and have conversation to come up with solutions," she said.

Each table of participants was given one of the three topics; 1) improving safety and wellness; 2) creating a drug-free San Quentin Rehabilitation Center; and 3) enhancing communication and mutual respect. Medical staff and corrections officers took the stage with residents to give examples. Finally, each table was given the opportunity to share what they came up with in a presentation after lunch.

Medical professionals teamed up with resident Lamar Paschall to present statistics showing the number of people with a substance use disorder in the US over the past year during a discussion on ways to create



Dr. Pachinsky and visitors address substance use disorders during the luncheon.

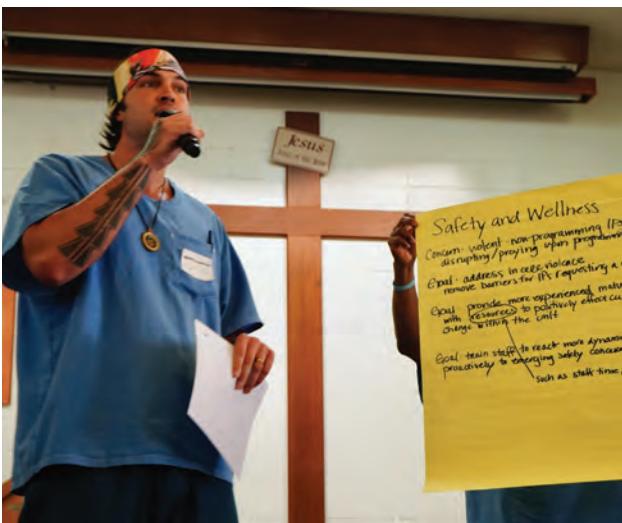
a drug-free SQRC.

"We need the solutions that are coming from the people who are in the housing units," said Dr. Pachynski.

Before the event ended, residents presented the community pledge.

Resident Demond Lewis talked about being incarcerated for 22 years, 11 of them here at the Q. While incarcerated at other prisons, he knew SQ was a more desirable place to be.

"We have more in common than we believe," Lewis said about his commitment to the people in his housing unit. "We give good mornings, we give good nights, we give love, and we give kindness."



Max Robinson shares his group's vision of safety and wellness.

# California's Independent Prison Oversight Report reveals 730 use-of-force incidents that could have been avoided

By Terrell J. Marshall  
Journalism Guild Writer

The Office of the Inspector General recommended the California Department of Correction provide remedial training to custody staff to improve de-escalation tactics to avoid use-of-force incidents when possible.

The Independent Prison Oversight OIG report "Monitoring the Use-of-Force Review Process of the CDCR" published in August said that there were 730 use-of-force incidents in Californian prisons during 2023 which could have been avoided by using new techniques.

137 of those incidents monitored had opportunity to use de-escalation techniques (19%). 54 of those 137 incidents (39%) officers failed to adequately attempt to deescalate the situation.

The OIG writes that the

California model "promotes positive relationships between incarcerated people. This is accomplished through purposeful activities and professional, positive, and respectful communication."

After being housed in both Tehachapi and Centenila stated prison, incarcerated resident Trent Woodsmore said he is grateful to have been transferred to San Quentin Rehabilitation Center where officers practice and promote the California model approach.

He said when housed at other prisons, use-of-force and intimidation tactics by correctional officers were common.

"Officers have no problem putting hands on you at some prisons," said Woodsmore. "Pushing people to the ground, kneeling down on them, or threatening to hit them with their batons happens all the time."

Since being housed in SQRC, Woodsmore said he hasn't seen the unnecessary use-of-force tactics being used by officers like they do at other prisons.

"An officer in the education building reached out and shook my hand one day when I arrived to work," said Woodsmore. "That really let me know I'm at a different type of prison."

The OIG report reviewed and summarized several incidents throughout the state with significant concerns. It argued that using effective communication techniques should be used to de-escalate and prevent violent encounters before using physical options.

One incident in the report involved a lieutenant, a sergeant, and four officers who surrounded an incarcerated person in a chair wearing considered contraband by a prison restricted housing unit.

The sergeant ordered the

resident to remove the earrings and he refused to do so. Three officers used physical force to put the incarcerated person on the floor. During a struggle, the person bit one of the officers and then swallowed the earrings after removing them.

The lieutenant, the sergeant and the other officer involved in this incident could have de-escalated this event, the report said.

The Departments operations manual states that "when force is necessary but does not involve imminent threat to subdue an attacker, effect custody, or to overcome resistance, the force shall be controlled."

OIG recommended this incident to the Office of Internal Affairs for investigation, but the chief deputy warden decided not to raise concern about this incident.

The report also noted

that superiors should be held accountable when they refuse to interrogate potential misconduct of an officer involved in unnecessary use-of-force scenarios like the one with the contraband.

Inspector General Amarik K Singh sent five recommendations to Governor Newsom and Legislative leaders:

A supervised improvement plan is needed in order to reduce violent incidents occurring in unsupervised housing units.

A need to provide custody staff with training with departmental policy and additional guidance on use of body-worn camera.

Reconsider training regarding restraint application procedures and search removal incidents.

Identify and address violations of procedures, policies and training to track

and monitor use-of-force tactics and have the ability to enforce progressive discipline for reviewers who fail to address these issues.

Provide additional training to use de-escalation tactics to avoid use-of-force incidents.

Since being housed in General Population at San Quentin, Vo said, "The reimagine California prison model has given me a chance to reimagine my life. The officers here treat us like human beings and not like animals in a cage."

Since the California Model began in San Quentin correctional officer, K. Dotts acknowledged a change in the prison culture at the Rehabilitation center.

"The communication between the staff and the residents has improved," said Dotts. "Enforcing the rules has become easier and we are beginning to meet each other on the same level."



ESPAÑOL

Por César Martínez  
Staff Writer

La Fiscal de la Ciudad de San Francisco Brooke Jenkins y su equipo participaron en el primer foro dirigido en español algo nuevo que hizo historia en San Quentin.

El foro fue organizado por SQNews y con la ayuda del recluso Edwin E. Chavez, el dio las gracias a la administración y a los fiscales por esta oportunidad, llagué es evento es de gran importancia y necesidades para los que no hablan inglés.

“Estoy privilegiada de estar aquí hoy para poder hacer un impacto para la comunidad hispana”, dijo la Fiscal Jenkins.

Durante el evento, se hablaron de temas referentes a las adversidades que enfrentan los que no pueden comunicarse efectivamente en inglés y como esta comunidad con estos eventos están creando un precedente para ser escuchados.

Como una comunidad se unieron más de 36 residentes de la habla hispana y varios fiscales, trabajadores sociales e investigadores y representantes de sobrevivientes de crímenes.

“Yo nunca pensé que yo estaría sentado entre los investigadores y otros empleados de la oficina D.A. en este foro”, comentó el residente Rubén Rodríguez. “Yo siento que soy tomado en cuenta, me hace sentir que yo pertenezco en este foro”.

Cambiado las costumbres en como SQ llevo una tradición de crear este tipo de audiencias solo en inglés.

La fiscal de SF Jenkins de descendencia Afro-americana y Salvadoreña, escucho la necesidades por este tipos de foros y junto con la participación de la Teniente Berry y el apoyo del diretor interno C. Andes, pudieron crear este evento para la comunidad Hispana.

El Director Andes se presentó en el evento y comentó que su esposa es mexicana por eso expreso su conexión con la comunidad hispana de la institución. Su compromiso lo lleva presente cada vez que recorre el patio principal.

“Estamos siempre trabajando para que las cosas mejoren en cualquier parte de la población

encarcelada y me incluyo en la comunidad y quiero que sepan que tienen todo mi apoyo”, dijo Andes.

Los fiscales y residentes formaron pequeños grupos en los cuales unos residentes hicieron la labor de facilitar varios temas.

Los siguientes temas fueron compartidos con el objetivo de ayudar a los presentes en como asistir a los hispanos.

¿Qué recursos o red de apoyo en español no están disponibles en tu comunidad en el cual hizo aceptable vivir una vida de crimen?

¿Qué información has recibido en español si es que as recibido alguna en referencia de la re sentencia?

¿Maneras para mejorar las condiciones e incrementar a humanidad entre los residentes que hablan español?

¿En qué maneras podemos trabajar juntos para crear diálogos en español entre sobrevivientes e ofensores de las víctimas?

¿Nosotros preguntamos, como podemos presentar un proyecto de ley en el estado de california que podría hacer mandatorio la asistencia de un interpretador en español así como están disponible para as personas con discapacidad auditiva?

Para la Fiscal investigadora Jessica Zamora comentó, que se siente orgullosa de poder utilizar su habilidad de hablar dos idiomas para ayudar. Reconoce los problemas de cultura y enfatiza la importancia de cambiar esos problemas generacionales.

“Gracias por contar sus historias, me siento orgullosa por estar aquí y por su honestidad. Aprendí bastante de obstáculos y leyes que nos afectan negativamente”, agregó Zamora.

Chavez cerro enfatizando esto diálogos que nunca han existido en su comunidad. El reconoció que conferencias como estos pueden romper las barreras del lenguaje, y dan el espacio de demostrar que las personas encarceladas comprenden el impacto de su acciones hacia los sobrevivientes de crímenes. “Tal vez podemos romper perspectiva en que los fiscales no son nuestros adversarios en la prisión”.

El primer dialogo en español con los fiscales de SF



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

La Fiscal Jenkins reconociendo la oportunidad de hablar con la comunidad hispana de SQ.



Fiscales y residentes compartiendo propuestas.



El residente Rene Lorenzo hablando de su experiencias.



Jesica Zamora con su compañera de la oficina fiscal.



La fiscal Brooke Jenkins con su equipo de trabajo.

Latinos siguen progresando en la educación

Por Edwin E. Chavez  
Spanish Journalism  
Guild Chair

El pasado mes de julio en el Centro de Rehabilitación de San Quentin, se celebró otra etapa en el logro educativo con un total de 135 graduados. Cada persona de la comunidad encarcelaría se encontró en el en el escenario para obtener su diploma y reconocimiento en los diverso niveles educativos.

Las emociones fueron resaltadas en la ceremonia, varios de los graduados tuvieron la oportunidad en expresar sus logros educativos. La música no pudo faltar por parte del grupo integrados por residentes llamados, “Mejor de lo Mejor” (The greater of good).

Delfino Verdín, el graduado hablo de lo que necesitó hacer pasar para obtener el GED, “Por tantos años luchando para llegar a esta meta lo más difícil fue demostrarme que si podía”.

Los logros académicos fueron en la obtención de: Diploma de Preparatoria (High School Diploma), el Certificado de Educación General (GED), Lenguaje en la Tecnología en Computadora (CRT Core), la Carrera Técnica Vocacional de Plomería (NCCER), Carrera en Educacional en Consejería educativos PLMP y el certificado a nivel Universitario.

“La belleza acerca de aprender es que nadie te lo puede quitar”, dijo el graduado y representante de CRT, Eliazar Guerra repitiendo las palabras de B.B. King, y otra frase que hizo echo por todo el salón. “Nuestro propósitos son nuestras bendiciones”.

La anfitriona del evento fue la supervisora de preparatoria y el departamento de GED, H. Lucas, quien dio la bienvenida a miembros de la administración como el director Michael Wheelles, y el subdirector Dr. Jamie Worthington y familiares de los graduados.

“Ustedes son la razón por que hoy estamos aquí, ustedes pusieron el trabajo”, dijo Lucas. “Yo quiero felicitarlos por sus esfuerzos”.

Varios de los graduaron estuvieron acompañado de sus familiares, y amistades. El orgullo de una madre no se queda atrás, esposas, hijas e hijos, hermanos y hermanas, padres y abuelos, quienes estuvieron presentes.

El residente Raymun Rivera, reconoció las dificultades que tubo para obtener su diploma de GED. El también comentó, de cómo su esposa lo ha apoyado.

“Mi esposa también se superó para ser un ejemplo para nuestro hijos, aprendiendo un profesión para progresar”, dijo Rivera, pero también dio

un consejo. “Si ves a alguien teniendo problemas en alguna materia ayúdalo”.

Patricia Morales, mamá de uno de los graduados comento, “estoy muy agradecida por toda la ayuda que le dieron a mi hijo para graduarse. Vengo desde Los Angeles para estar con mi hijo”.

Morales, a pesar de los emoción de alegría que mostraba de que su hijo pudo graduarse, también recordó con amargura de como su hijo tuvo problemas emocionales en otra institución y comento, “Una maestra de no lo quiso ayudar y que le dijo que no se iba a graduar”.

El residente Ramiro Badajoz dijo, “me siento contento y agradecido por las personas que me dieron la oportunidad de estudiar” y comenta que su familia sabe de todos sus logro y eso lo motiva a seguir estudiando.

Para unos residentes quienes se graduaron sus familiares no pudieron estar presentes. Para estas personas el contar apoyo incondicional fue una motivación para alcanzar sus objetivos.

El residente Juan López Urrutia obtuvo el GED, pero tiene la familia en Nevada dijo, “mi familia sabe que hoy me gradué y mi hijo me dijo que si se puede...a pesar que la barrera del idioma uno si puede

lograr cumplir la meta de sacar el GED trabajando duro todo es posible y este es un ejemplo claro de esto”.

Olegario Ambriz quien se graduó CRT comentó que su mamá que tiene 92 años por su edad junto con su familia no pudieron estar presentes en el evento. También comento de a pesar de llevar tres décadas, el continua a aprendiendo.

“Las decisiones errores no me definen, no solo tomando la educación y los programas de auto-ayuda puede cambiar la vida de las persona para hacerlas positivas”, él dijo.

Después de la entrega de todos los certificados, los invitados y familiares pudieron compartir un momento para disfrutar con los recién graduados y algunos aprovecharon la oportunidad para agradecer a los organizadores y maestros por la ayuda para alcanzar este logro.

Pamela Aguilar, una hermana de uno de los residentes expreso, “Me siento muy feliz. Aunque estés detrás de las barras no hay obstáculos para cumplir sueños y en la vida”.

Ella mando un mensaje a todos los encarcelados, “Siempre abra obstáculos, lo importante es no quedase con las manos cursadas y mover esa piedras que nos estorban y atravesarlas”



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

El recién graduado Joel Alavares Marales con su mamá.



Albert E. Campos residente graduado con su familia.



# La Herencia Hispana llegó a San Quentin

Por César Martínez  
Staff Writer

La Herencia Hispana se celebró por primera vez durante la Semana de Salud Mental en San Quentin. Durante todo el evento hubo diversas actividades para la comunidad hispana.

El inicio del evento comenzó en el patio principal con una demostración de carros y motocicletas de “Low Riders”, en el cual se expusieron un Chevy Impala 1962, un FXR Harley Davison del 1990 y un Harley Davison 2018 entre otros vehículos. Algo nunca visto en SQ.

Varios residentes tuvieron la oportunidad de disfrutar el orgullo de las raíces chicanas plasmados en estos vehículos. Los residentes pudieron ver las modificaciones de los orgullosos dueños al tener sus cofres descubiertos.

“Para mí fue una bendición poder disfrutar de mi cultura en la prisión”, dijo el residente Tomas Ochoa.

Enfrente de Recibir y Liberación “R&R”, se exhibió las diversas manualidades hechas por los residentes. De esta manera los trabajadores de las institución y residentes de otras comunidades pudieron ver el talento de estos artistas.

David Guerra, residente y participante de este evento como artista el admiro a otros compañeros artistas y agradeció la oportunidad de poder compartir su pasatiempo entre los presentes.

“Tienen un arte muy bueno [refiriéndose a otros artistas encarcelados] y la expresan

de diferentes formas, clásica, tradicional, la mía la puedo considerar que es un poco moderna por el equipamiento en diferentes piezas que le pongo a la figura. La puedo hacer de diferentes formas”, dijo Guerra.

Para Idalio Villagran, poder compartir su talento por medio de las rosas que el hizo para su familia y para donar a una organización es un privilegio. Estas flores fueron creadas con los ingredientes como pan y agua. Resaltado el aroma usando aceites perfumados de rosas.

La comunidad se fue reuniendo para disfrutar las canciones tanto en inglés como en español por parte de diversos grupos formados por encarcelados.

Uno de los momentos estelares fue la danza Azteca formado por un grupo de personas encarceladas llamados los Cuāuhcōlotl que significa “Guerreo Azteca”.

“Nuestros ancestros contribuyeron la manera por tradición. Podemos ser parte de honrar y representar nuestra cultura de obtener el orgullo de quien tu eres”, comentó el residente y miembro de danza Eric J. Leyva.

Con atuendos tradicionales mexicanos el ballet folclórico entusiasmo a los presentes con diferentes bailes tradicionales. La festividad continuo con la presencia de la voluntaria y participante Liduvina Gonzales del Ballet Folclórico Anáhuac.

Los empleados de SQ organizaron una rifa para

de los encarcelados, en el cual el premio consistía en una bolsa pequeña de dulces mexicanos.

Según el residente Sergio Argueta, considera que está bien que estos eventos sean disponible para que salga la gente a divertirse. Con la motivación y la emoción de ganar algo en la rifa, hay gente que no tiene esa oportunidad en poder estar alegre.

El espectáculo de vehículos se despidió del evento haciendo donas al quemar sus llantas con el pavimento, creando una nube de humo en el cual causo que los residentes y trabajadores aplaudieran y gritaran de felicidad como cuando ves a tu equipo favorito ganar el campeonato.

“Me gusto los carros, me puse nervioso cuando quemaron llantas, pero se me hizo interesante y me gusto.” dijo el residente Ruben Cuadra.

Sementalmente, se ofreció un taller informativo en español de parte del Director Ejecutivo de Homies Unidos Alex Sánchez y el Defensor Público Francisco Ugarte, quienes ofrecieron información acerca de inmigración la importancia de un plan de recaídas para la Audiencia de Libertad condicional.

“Durante este taller lo más importante fue la información que me proporcionaron cuando yo salga de este lugar y estar listo para poder reintegrarme a la sociedad nuevamente”, dijo el reo Marvin Vasquez. “ Todo el evento represento mi cultura”.



El residente Moises Ramos tocando cumbias.



Integrante del Ballet Folclórico.



Los invitados presentando bailes folclórico para la comunidad SQ.

# Abriendo la comunicación con Lenguaje de Señas Americana

El segundo año consecutivo en el Centro de San Quentin se celebró la graduación de treinta residentes del programa de Lenguaje de Señas Americana (American Sign Language).

En el evento contó con la presencia de familiares de los graduados e invitados de la comunidad del CRSQ y que fue transmitido por el medio de comunicación CBS.

“Me sorprende darme cuenta de todos los problemas que estas personas pasan. Es bueno tener esperanzas en este tipo de programas y espero que continúe creciendo para que ayuden a más personas”, dijo la Sra. Oralia madre de uno de los graduados.

Los residentes y maestros de ceremonias fueron el

fundador Tommy Wickerd y Albert Campos Jr., en el cual presentaron al Director Chase Andes. El director felicitó a los graduados por el compromiso de aprender un nuevo lenguaje para ayudar a la comunidad a no sentirse aislados.

Brenda P, esposa e invitada dijo, “estoy muy orgullosa de mi esposo y ALS por su logro fue un gusto de ver a los más de 30 graduados. Yo no me imagine de la cantidad de la comunidad necesitan de estos programas me abrió los ojos”.

Todo el evento también fue transmitido para Marion Wickerd hermano del fundador del programa quien pudo ver el evento y con ayuda de un residente y de su hermano quiénes tradujeron lo que decían en el evento con

lenguaje de señas.

“Yo nunca pensé que en la prisión yo representaría la comunidad sordo muda”, dijo el fundador Wickerd. También comentó, que con la ayuda de una maestra creo el programa y de esta manera la comunidad no se sientan aislados.

En el evento se presentaron dos documentales, el primer video, a pareció la mamá del fundador comentando de cómo ella se siente orgullosa de que sus dos hijos puedan comunicarse por medio de video llamadas.

Durante el video, también se demuestro como Wickerd capacita a los oficiales para tener una mejor comunicación con la comunidad sordo muda.

El segundo se llama Tratamiento Silencioso (Silent

Treatment), fue acerca de la familia del residente de David Valdez, en el cual cuenta la historia de esta persona de un punto de vista como le ha ayudado este tipo de programas en la institución y ahora participa activamente como facilitador.

Antes de reconocer a los recién graduados con su certificado se le dio la palabra a un grupo de reconocidos y facilitadores quienes cuando hablaban tan bien lo hacían con señas.

El residente Albert Campos Jr. compartió su experiencia del programa y como en su pasado le afectó al no poder comunicar. Pero en CRSQ lo invitaron para enseñar a otras personas y de ese modo se convirtió en facilitador.

Otro residente Brian

Conroy dijo, “asido un gran experiencia y que desde el condado, yo solo aprendí con un libro pero no era suficiente. En SQ fui invitado y tuve la oportunidad de aprender con maestros y con la comunidad”.

Durante la entrega de certificado se reconoció a los participantes aplaudió en lenguaje de señas. Después todos los presente festejaron y se reunieron con sus familiares y amigo de la comunidad de CRSQ.

Muchos de los invitados compartieron sus experiencias y de cómo estos programas ha ayudado a sus seres queridos en su rehabilitación.

Jacqueline familiar de uno de los graduados comentó, “es benéfico para todas las personas de la comunidad

es mejor integrar una comunidad en vez de estar separada me siento mu orgullosa y de cómo abre la puerta a nuevas oportunidades”.

La Sr. Brenda comentó de las necesidades que una persona con limitaciones ocupa y agrego, “yo veo en mi esposo ese deseo de comunicarse con la comunidad sordo muda y también el deseo de continuar aprendiendo”.

El residente Bertho Gauthier contó una anécdota donde una persona le dio dinero y el no tuvo la oportunidad de regresarle lo que recibió a esa persona y termino diciendo, “pero hoy podemos cambiar el mundo y dar de regreso a la comunidad”.

—César Martínez  
Spanish Guild Writer



Tommy Wickerd y el primer rapero sordomudo Kaomage usando language de señas.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews



Tommy Wickerd acompañado de su mamá, esposa y miembros de la clase.





# 10 YEARS OF CO CHAMPIONS

## Golden State Warriors Stack the House Against the SQ Warriors

By Tyrone Luqman Jones  
Journalism Guild Writer

The Golden State Warriors visited San Quentin marking the 10th anniversary of the GS Warriors annual match-up against the San Quentin Warriors basketball game. The excitement in the air drew a large crowd of residents and staff.

Last year the SQ Warriors won the match-up, however, this year Golden State had other plans. In the line-up for Golden State was none other than two-time NBA All-star and NBA legend Jerry Stackhouse.

Stackhouse said, this was his first time coming in to play with the guys and expressed a desire to score some points.

“I had family once incarcerated so this brings up feelings and thoughts; you guys made bad choices, but you’re not bad people,” said Stackhouse.

Stackhouse went on to speak on the reform and the positive movements that are taking place here at the “Q.”

Joining Stackhouse in the line-up was former NBA player and current member of the Warriors scouting department, Chuck Hayes. This was Hayes’ second time coming in. He expressed his focus on getting a win this time around. Hayes said, that it was a great experience to be able to play with Stackhouse.

Hayes said, the first time coming in and how overwhelming it was and how he was nervous, excited and scared all at the same time. He added, what brought him back was the welcome he received on his first visit. He plans to come back again for next year’s game.

Stackhouse and Hayes led Golden State to a convincing 103 to 85 victory.

GS Warriors team operations staff member Shannon said, that it was awesome to see the rehabilitation residents do on the inside and their unique perspective on life.

“I know you guys been preparing [for the game] since last year, and so have we,” said Shannon.

SQ Warriors Head Coach J.B. Brown reflected on the challenge of his team facing former NBA players.

“I welcome the competition,” said Brown. “Playing against former NBA players gave me a great measurement of my players, lets me know where we are and what we need to improve on.”

He added, it not about the loss or final score. It’s about how the team represented themselves.

Kent Lacob, son of GSW owner Joe Lacob, has been coming to SQ for all 10 games.

“This was a great day, its super unique,” said K. Lacob. “No matter what goes on outside, you get a great perspective on life and are reminded to not take life for granted.”

SQ resident Jamal “Do it all” Harrison, the public address announcer, and his co-commentator Jarrod Williams teased Stackhouse by ribbing him about his age and tender feet.

“When the yard went down I noticed Stack [Stackhouse] sort of got up slow, thought I heard his knees cracking,” said Harrison.

Harrison has been doing play-by-play for the games and credits his friend and mentor Aaron “Showtime” Taylor, who inspired him to become a sports commentator for the SQ Recreation Department.

Terry Stotts, a 30 year NBA assistant, former head coach and current GS assistant, coached with GSW 20 years ago under former head coach Mike Montgomery. This was Stotts’ first time inside the Q.

“I was impressed with how big the yard was and also the number of positive activities going on here,” said Stotts

Claudia Leist, who works in the Warriors Community Relations Department for six years, also experience her first visit to SQ.

“I was excited to see it all come to life, I’ve heard a lot about it,” said Leist. “We share so many more similarities than we think we do.”

Leist added, that the Warriors are starting a program partnering with Solano State Prison called the Twinnings, which teaches life skills and leadership.

“I’ve been locked up 23 years and I haven’t gotten a visit from my people,” said SQ resident T. Andrews. “For the Warriors to come in all these times to see us means everything to me.”

Reese Beekman was signed to the Santa Cruz Warriors G-League, as an offense and defensive specialist this past summer. He can play for GSW if called upon. He expressed how his expectations were shattered upon his arrival.

“Walking in was a totally different experience,” said Beekman. “It was very different from the way TV portrays prison, the sense of community was apparent.”

Beekman added, he hoped people would leave prison as a better person when they return to society.

Danny Emerman, a Bay Area News Group beat writer for the GSW, said he didn’t know what to expect coming through the gate and making his way down the hill to the Lower Yard.

“There were more people than I thought there would be,” said Emerman. “I was astonished by the friendly and welcoming atmosphere, I never expected it, and this was really eye opening.”

—Sports Team contributed to this article





# COMMUNITY WITH INSIDE AND OUT



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon and Marcus Casillas // SQNews

A collage of basketball game photos with the word 'WARRIORS' overlaid in large, white, stylized letters. The photos show players in blue and white uniforms, green jerseys, and a referee in a striped shirt on a basketball court. The background of the collage is a light blue and white pattern.



CROSSWORD CLASSIC

Created by Michael Fangman

“Thank you for your service”															
1		2	3			4	5	6			7		8		
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46									47	48					
49			50						51				52		
53		54							55			56			
					57	58						59			
60												61			

- Across
- Down
1. Sends its elite officer candidates to West Point, New York

4. Not just anybody

9. Often comes before IOU

10. It’s a favorite cafe of many

11. A flat tire demands you do this

14. What you might do with a good story

15. In the UK, this is a Flight Sergeant. In the US, a member in the trees

16. Tigger’s tiny marsupial compadre

20. These three letters might inspire anger in response

21. You can sometimes find the Crimson Tide here (abbrev.)

22. What your psych wants you to do during your therapy sessions

24. If Nancy had married her 1950’s comic sweetheart or Nancy, Jackie Kennedy’s sister-in-law from her second marriage

26. In my neighborhood, if all four of yours match, you’re ballin’

27. A fancy way to avoid something, or a certain Southerner’s answer to “What’s that in yer mouth?”

28. Try not to cross this if it’s black

32. A certain NCAA player. “My Cousin Vinny” had two of them.

33. It in Spain

34. The element Copernicium for short

35. Pirates love to say these

36. After the Beatles Sgt. delivered his final dissertation, he was a \_\_

38. I didn’t walk, I \_\_

39. This Tweedle isn’t dumb

40. If Johnny’s here, he might ask to drink this

45. Streamed movies (essentially)

46. The end of your address in Roma

47. Not the end that clicks

49. Its hub is Heathrow (abbrev.)

50. If your T comes with these three letters, it’s unlikely to fit

51. Some Drs. can be found there

52. Not from

53. To boil out the flavor (IMO), or one with an E was a Dubois

55. Before the Koreans brought Top 40 tunes, there was Hula

57. Wyatt and his brothers at the OK

59. Not stop, but...

60. These guys are rarely seen in the base Officers Club

61. Until the late 1990’s, these folks went to Basic in San Diego. Now they’re in Great Lakes
1. “Hap” Arnold, Jimmy Doolittle, e.g.

2. If you’re measuring “clicks” you’re looking at one of these

3. Longs for constantly

4. Wimbledon has lots of these.

5. A mystic symbol, considered the most sacred mantra in Sanskrit recitations. Also a 1902 UK order.

6. Once you’re one, you’re always one

7. If you do this, off to work you go

8. Chicken

10. Corn, wheat, sugarcane (e.g.)

12. The action of watching or catching sight of something (a great ah-hah moment when you consider the network and the awards)

13. What you sure should tell one of the men/women this puzzle honors

15. This 80’s electro-pop duo just wanted “A Little Respect”

16. A dime (abbrev.)

17. A box of baby clothing (Dutch)

23. If they’re in a hurry to get there, their lights are on

25. These days he decorates t-shirts. But he used to be a friend of Fidel

29. If your emo teenage daughter was a CEO, she would have named her company this. (Think Inside Out 2)

30. Lance Sijan, John McCain, Admiral Stockdale, e.g.

31. They were honored with the wearing of red metal wristbands etched with their names, rank, and date of disappearance

34. This famous George was told there were 7 words you weren’t allow to say on the radio. Then he said them.

36. This Danny is a twin

37. This flower decorates “boards” in VFW posts across America. Buy one to honor people who served.

38. Drs. say you should take this ea. day

39. This insecticide is now banned in most countries

40. If it’s yellow, go ahead and tie it “round the old oak tree...”

41. If you’re writing to several people, this abbrev. will avoid hand cramps

42. The star of many a destructive Allstate commercial

43. Found annually at the Kennedy Center or on the chest of many who have served

44. I lost the Spelling Bee. Turns out I can’t \_\_\_\_\_ very well.

45. Newly graduated from Annapolis

48. Many a poem starts short of here

54. Raggedy-Andy’s date most Fridays

56. If you need your spouse to handle you affairs, you might sign one

58. I think, therefore I \_\_

CORRECTIONS

- In the October issue we published an article titled “Iconic San Quentin wall torn down” on the front page, which said “The wall separates the Lower Yard from the area where the mattress factory used to stand.” Correction: “where the furniture factory used to stand.”
- In the same story resident Robert Barns was mis-pelled. The correct spelling is Robert Barnes
- In the October Issue John James requested to correct the fact that he and his wife were friends in high school and have been married only 5 year, not 13. The submission did not get processed before print.

The Classics of Mental Wellness Week

By Jerry Maleek Gearin  
Journalism Guild Chair

The San Quentin Rehabilitation Center’s hosted an array of custom cars and motorcycles, in observation of Mental Wellness Week.

The event was held on the facility’s Lower Yard basketball court; the objective was to bring awareness to mental health, in which custom vehicles were the common dominator between owners and incarcerated people.

Residents quickly gathered around to take a look at the custom built cars and motorcycles.

“I have not been this close to a car in three decades,” said a SQ resident when he first saw the vehicles.

Sonja the owner of a 1962 Chevrolet Impala brought her car to the B-ball court. The Chevy low rider had a four speed 327 Muncie engine; it was painted a custom black with a burnt red interior. The custom vehicle had 22-inch chrome spoke rims and one-quarter inch white wall tires.

She described the car as very unique because the 62-year-old vehicle had most of its original body parts. Sonja said the car appeared in car shows and it has won eight trophies as a result.

The low rider’s hydraulics were showcased to the residents, as the owner lifted the car’s front and rear repetitively.

The residents enjoyed the Chevy’s sound system, which is

something owners and residents have in common. The car had four 10-inch sub-woofers and four 6-by-9 speakers powered by more than 2000 watts of power; the song “Cold Blooded” by funk artist Rick James, blared from the speakers.

Some resident danced and bobbed their heads as the music filled the air. SQ residents held conversation with Sonja about their own experiences of building custom cars.

She says the car is also displayed for school children, events for the elderly, and when she drives by people wave recognizing her.

Big Nick owner of a black 1990 FXR Harley Davidson motorcycle, which he won in a 40 dollar raffle and then he striped the entire bike to its frame and built it up from there.

The Harley had a custom graphic paint job with a color metallic blue base and the frame supported by chrome mag wheels.

Nick’s friend Justin brought a Harley named Red Rocket to the court; it had a custom graphics paint job with a red metallic base color. The motorbike had black mag wheels and a 95 cubic inch engine. Justin said the bike is used for stunts on a You-Tube Channel called Harley Wheelies.

Brandon Riddle-Terrell, formerly incarcerated at San Quentin, brought his 2018 Harley Davidson with a 124 cubic inch motor. The bike had a black frame with a black

seat and side storage bags.

“The bike is built for speed, but mostly reliability. The cost for a bike like this ranges from 32-50 thousand dollars, depending if it’s street legal or not,” said Brandon. “When you are doing time you obviously missed your family, but I missed my Harleys.”

Incarcerated person Bradley Ware explained how the event caused him to reflect back prior to coming to prison.

“I miss my motorcycles. It’s what made me happy,” said Ware. “I need to get back to that. [Within] this moment I feel blown away.”

Car owner Sidewayz Jack brought his 1986 Ford Coupe to the court. He says the color of the car was Mercedes Silver.

Additionally, he purchased the car in 2020 and, since working at Pacific Gas and Electric, he began putting money and effort into rebuilding the car.

Jack started the Coupe’s engine revving it up. Residents seemed to be in awe of how powerful the car’s 508 horsepower engine sounded.

SQ resident Daniel Garcia said the car show brought back memories. The event reminded him of “all the good and bad he was doing.”

As the cars were leaving, the incarcerated cheered and applauded showing gratitude for the event.

“I use to go to car shows by my self,” said Garcia. “Now I want to go with my wife.”



Above: The classic car show included a 1962 Impala. Below right: A 1986 Ford Coupe. Below left: various custom bikes.



Photos by Vincent E. O'Bannon // SQNews

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SOLUTIONS															
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EDITORIAL



**Promoting the fight against mass incarceration**

Dear San Quentin Staff,

Over the past seven years I have been behind the scenes playing my part in the fight to turn the tide of mass incarceration and it's long term psychological harm through better programs that actually matter such as your graduation of the first ever truck driving program. Reading that article along with several others, especially reading that disciplinary violations were down 30%. 90% of inmates will never know the hard work and fight it takes to bring these programs, and fund them. I have been with you every step of the way behind the scenes, informing your legislatures of the sad truths of their failures. Keep up the good work. Keep up the fight. And remain empathetic.

—King Keiron.  
M Elias Nohg President

**Gratitude from Santa Rosa**

To the San Quentin News:

Every morning with breakfast I acknowledge 3 or more things I'm grateful for.

This morning, with your May SQ News in front of me, I expressed gratitude for the groups at San Quentin that promote health and well-being. I want to express gratitude for those inmates who have the courage and stamina and mental health to attend those groups. And I'm so grateful for John Eagan for turning me on to the SQ News. I met him through his daughter, Mel who used to be my neighbor until she moved. Please carry on with your fabulous newspaper. P.S I can't imagine what it'd be like to live in a 4x10 foot room... God Bless All.

—Nyla Blair  
Santa Rosa,CA

**Acquiring hope through the SQNews**

"Almost lost hope"

I just took 37 years and currently in reception housed in North Kern State Prison This is my first time in prison. I started to read *SQNews* in the county and it gave me hope knowing there's programs and options you can take to better yourself while behind these prison walls, don't matter the environment you still can do productive things in here that you can use in the outs to become something. Thanks for the knowledge and information you provide to let a person in the system know there's still hope and things are changing.

—Darryon Williams  
North Kern State Prison.

**Resident of Avenal receive ASG Merit Scholarship**

Hello everyone! I first would like to thank you for producing a wonderful publication month in and month out for us. I also would like to extend my congratulations on your recent award for best newspaper publication for incarcerated individuals, awesome job.

I am writing on my own behalf, I have for the last two years been motivated to be included in the San Quentin News and have accomplished many accolades such as 100 book club, 13 college courses in one semester, and over 80 certificates for various edovo courses. But recently I received an award worthy of maybe a 1/2 inch of your paper. Hopefully fingers crossed. I was awarded the ASG Merit Scholarship for hope scholars. I am just the 2nd person in the history of the award to win. Also while being incarcerated at Avenal State Prison. Quite an accomplishment my PSCRs and

education principal are pretty estactic about

it and encouraged me to write to you. A little about the award 1200/1500 entries a year, 12 winners a year (\$350)

One grand prize winner (not yet awarded); Must be enrolled, or previously enrolled in Coastline College, (incarcerated or not)I look forward to hearing back from you or seeing a picture or small acknowledgement.Thank you! A true fan & supporter

—Alan Lottinville  
Avenal State Prison

**The California Model spreads to Corcoran State Prison**

San Quentin News, California Model being born in the Central Valley. Here in CSATF/Corcoran we are opening a new Level 3 NDPF on C-yard. As our population here grows over 700, we thirst for programs. So far we only have the BARE BASIC, but progress is being made. We have a Captain and group of Sergeants who are willing to embrace the new California Model, transition is far from easy. Going from a level 4 180 to a level 3 NDPF is a herculean feat. As someone with life without the possibility of parole who has been in prison 29 years now, I see the progress. The Captain and I, are working on bringing GOGI Getting Out by Going In, an LWOP group "by shining light, for inmate facilitated groups. With the help of Sgt. Martin and other staff we will get these groups off the ground. We also have Bakersfield College starting a class this fall (AUG/SEP), bring a Baccalaureate course to CSATF C-yard. Progress takes time. We are on our way to being a shining New Model of "The California Model".

—John Crosthwaite  
CSATF Prison

# Former LWOP becomes an executive for a non-profit

**By Marcus Henderson  
Editor in Chief/  
Executive Editor**

California has approximately 5,200 individuals serving life without parole (LWOP) sentences. Most will die in prison if there is no change in their sentence. Allen Burnett overcame those odds — now, he is the executive director of The Prism Way, a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles. SQNews spoke with Burnett about his advocacy.

**SQN:** Man, overcoming a LWOP sentence to being an advocate for those who are still incarcerated is incredible. What motivates you?

**AB:** My commitment stems from my 28 year incarceration, where I spent my final decade on the Progressive Programming Facility at CSP Lancaster, a yard where 90% of the population was serving LWOP or de facto LWOP sentences. With limited volunteer support, we built our own programs, driven by a shared understanding that if we didn't show our humanity and prove we could change, we would die in prison. That mindset guides the work I do today.

**SQN:** The Prism Way is your organization you co-founded and are the executive director. What do you all do?

**AB:** Our team is composed of justice-impacted individuals — many of whom, like myself, have survived LWOP sentences. We provide prison programming at

California Institution for Men and California Institution for Women. We also work with Whole Integration of Self Education program at the Youth Guidance Facility and Youth Leadership Academy in Orange County.

**SQN:** You recently did a workshop for LWOPs at the California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility & State Prison. Why was that important?

**AB:** Having lived the experience of LWOP, I understand firsthand the isolation, frustration, and exclusion from rehabilitative programming that men and women serving these sentences endure. The reality is that most programs are designed for individuals who are eligible for parole, leaving those of us with LWOP largely invisible and without hope.

**SQN:** So how did you endured and got into rehabilitation?

**AB:** I remember clearly how overwhelming it was to face the weight of an LWOP sentence and how much I needed help. Remarkably, it was other LWOP individuals who suggested I pursue higher education. Their encouragement led me to earn a Master's degree from Cal State Los Angeles in 2023. To this day, my mentor — a man serving LWOP at Calipatria State Prison — has been guiding me for over 12 years. He continues to inspire me, and I like to think I'm giving back in some way by helping

from the outside.

**SQN:** What are you doing outside to bring awareness to LWOPs?

**AB:** Though I am free, I am tied to the struggles of those who remain inside. I represent them in legislative meetings, at survivors of crime events, in conversations with law enforcement, at higher education conferences, and in the media. I stand as a living testament to the possibilities for transformation, but I am not the exception. I am an example of thousands of others who could thrive with a second chance.

**SQN:** What else do you do?

**AB:** I am a member of the National Life Without Parole Leadership Council, an initiative spearheaded by Human Rights Watch, USC Gould School of Law, and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition. Our council is made up of 13 formerly incarcerated men and women from across the country who were once sentenced to LWOP. Today, we are advocates, organizational leaders, policy experts, law students, and a Ph.D. candidate.

**SQN:** Hey, thank you for your work and continually being an advocate. Do you have any parting words for your fellow brothers and sisters serving LWOP?

**AB:** If I have been able to heal from my prison experience and my response was that there is no healing for me as long as LWOP exists. I will heal after LWOP is no longer a prison sentence.



Courtesy of Allan Burnett

With 28-years as an LWOP in CDCR, Allan Burnett has used his experience to become a CEO for The Prism Way.

## AROUND THE WORLD



Photo courtesy of Ronald Hansen

Ronald Hansen vacationing in Tokyo, Japan.

## SAN QUEN-TOONS by Jessie Milo





ART

Venegas' Costa Rican roots shine through his art

**By Edwin E. Chavez**  
**Spanish Journalism**  
**Guild Chair**

Escaping from a dysfunctional home during his upbringing Nathan Venegas learned how to sketched away his pain. Decades later he continues to use his techniques and imagination in order to find peace, and true healing.

As an artist Venegas, has gained his own freedom from all the bad memories from

childhood.

“Art is the one thing in my life that I am truly gifted at and it has opened up many doors for me to be successful in life,” said Venegas.

According to this artist he loves to do portraits of anyone. He considers art to be fun and a relaxing tool in his life. For him creativity is easy.

Art is part of his identity and roots. He is a proud Costa Rican through his father who was born in San Jose, Costa Rica. The day of the dead is

celebrated in the Latin culture and what better way to part in showing respect for those whom have passed on to the life.

We have a piece of a blued haired female, who happens to be Kristen one of the artist friend. “She sent me a picture of her where she had dyed her blue and I thought that it would looked real good if I turned it into a day of the dead piece,” said Venegas.

Making amends through his art has also been another

way to pay it forward, to those he have known while incarcerated. He painted an elephant with oil pastel, a reddish horizon in the background. He recalls that his friend’s mom was ill with breast cancer and he wanted to surprised the mom with a gift. Unfortunately, couple years his friend mom passed on.

Being able to put a smile on this person that he had known for a long time meant the world to Venegas, especially

when she was going through a ruff time.

Like any other artist, sketching is not easy and it comes with many struggles. A painting with Filigree of a portrait of a woman that who happens to be his wife when she was younger, on the left side of the painting we see a skull that represents himself. “I did this painting when I loss her. It is me expressing the pain of losing her.”

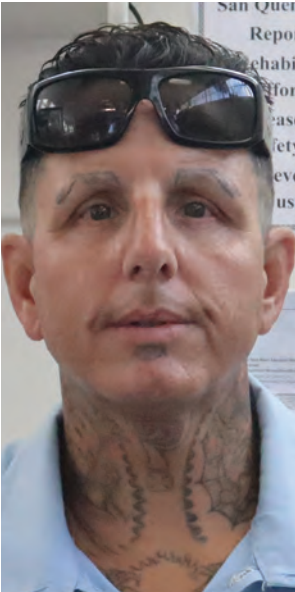
In reference to the theme of dead he also has collage of

two females on a rose clock expressing what was going on in his head as he free handed it.

In regards to his most proud piece of art, an ink pen replicated of a woman which he turned into a beautiful female demon out of a magazine challenging his ability in realism. Surrounded by multiple skulls, with a cigarette hanging form her, red lips, rises blue smoke. This piece took him about a month to complete.



Venegas painted an elephant with oil pastel with his friemds mom who was suffering from cancer.



Venegas expresses his depiction of his own skull after he lost his wife portrayed here.



Kristen la amiga del artista con pelo azul

Celebrando el

Día De Muertos

**By Edwin E. Chavez**  
**Spanish Journalism**  
**Guild Chair**

Escapando de su casa disfuncional durante su educación, Nathan Venegas aprendió como hacer a un lado el diseño de su dolor. Décadas después el continuó usando su imaginación y técnica en orden en encontrar la paz y una verdadera sanación.

Como Artista Venegas, se ha recuperado siendo libre de todas las malas memorias de su niñez.

“El arte es una de las cosas en mi vida que realmente soy talentoso y ha abierto muchas puertas para mi éxito en la vida”, comentó Venegas.

De acuerdo al artista, su pación es hacer retratos de lo que sea y considera que el hacerlo es divertido, además es una herramienta que relaja su vida y existencia, haciéndolo fácil para ser creativo.

El arte es parte de su identidad y raíces. Él está orgulloso de su descendencia Costarricense por parte de su padre, originario de San José, Costa Rica. El Día de los Muertos se celebra en la cultura Latina y la mejor manera de demostrarlo es respetando aquellos que fallecieron.

Tenemos una pieza de una mujer peli-azul, quien en realidad es ser Kristen, una de las amigas del artista, “Ella me mando la fotografía de sí misma, donde se tiñó el pelo de azul y yo pensé que se vería muy bien si lo convirtiera en una pieza del Día de los Muertos”, dijo Venegas.

Él hacer enmiendas a través de su arte también ha sido otra manera de pago al seguir adelante, para aquellos que el conoció durante su encarcelamiento.

El artista pintó un elefante de colores pastel de aceite, con un horizonte rojizo en su alrededor. Él recordó que la mamá de su amigo se encontraba enferma de cáncer de seno y él quiso sorprenderla con un

“Yo pinte esto cuando la perdí, es la manera de expresar mi dolor por perderla”  
—Venegas

regalo. Desafortunadamente, la mamá de su amigo falleció en un par de años [el artista no pudo dárselo].

Venegas sintió que al poner una sonrisa a la persona que el había conocido por mucho tiempo lo significaba todo, y el mundo lo es para el artista especialmente cuando ella pasaba por tiempos muy duros.

Como cualquier otro artista, hacer retratos no es fácil porque demanda distintos obstáculos. Una pintura con filigrana (obra de gran habilidad y finura), el retrato de una mujer quien al parecer es su esposa cuando ella estaba más joven, en la parte izquierda de la pintura nosotros podemos ver un cráneo que representa al artista.

“Yo pinté esto cuando la muerte, es mi manera de expresar el dolor por perderla”, Añadió Venegas.

En referencia al tema de la muerte, él también tiene un collage [es el procedimiento, que en este caso es dibujar diversos dibujos en uno solo] de dos mujeres sobre un reloj, expresando lo que estaba en su mente mientras él estaba dibujando libremente.

En el sentido a su obra de arte más orgullosa, es un dibujo echo con tinta de lapicero, es réplica de una mujer convertida en una hermosa y gloriosa demonia sacada de una revista, desafió sus habilidades en el realismo y lo inmortal. Rodeado de múltiples calaveras con un cigarro entre sus labios rojos y elevándose un humo azul. Esta pieza le tomó alrededor de un mes para completarla.



Venegas convierte una bella mujer en una diablita con labios rojos



Venegas divujo un collage de dos mujeres con rosa y un reloj



Esta pintura represental el Dia De Los Muerttos.