

To Our Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

AS SPRING SHOWERS filled California reservoirs to overflowing, we've been blessed with a wealth of submissions we hope you find interesting and informative. It is our hope that some of these articles may plant seeds of inspiration or inquiry that may grow and blossom within.

As Rumi wrote: "Out beyond ideas of wrong doing and right doing there is a field. I'll meet you there. When soul lies down in that grass the world is too full to talk about." This field is the soil from where our futures are cultivated. Welcome to your April *Mule Creek Post*.



Huich Chollo Flowers in the Night Sky, © 2021 Jose Herrera, acrylic on canvas

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Jesse Vasquez, executive director of Pollen Initiative, and Kate McQueen, an editor with Prison Journalism Project and Wall City, visit the *Mule Creek Post* in March to discuss the future of the publications. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

ARC Holds Mule Creek Graduation

By Adrian Torres, Mule Creek State Prison
and Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

THE ANTI-RECIDIVISM Coalition (ARC) held a joint graduation for facilities D and E in November 2023. Master of ceremonies Wajuba McDuffy, the northern regional manager for ARC's Hope and Redemption Team, greeted everyone and kicked off the ceremonies with an appreciation of the hard work and dedication required by each ARC participant. McDuffy noted that these men and women engage in a curriculum that includes Criminals & Gangmembers Anonymous, emotional intelligence, and Avatar Board Preparation, learning how to engage with themselves and others in sometimes radically different ways.

"From Pelican Bay to Chowchilla, all programs come through me, a person who received a life without parole sentence at age 17," said McDuffy, who is responsible for all ARC programs in Northern California prisons.

As a young man, McDuffy believed he was going to die in prison and now, as a free man, comes back inside to get others out. He is living proof that each of us has to believe that. "Prison has become too small," said Sean Gage, a formerly incarcerated Hope and Redemption Team life coach.

Staff in the Mule Creek State Prison community resource manager's office were recognized for their hard work and dedication to provide rehabilitative programs for the incarcerated population.

Family and friends of ARC participants also attended. Sharon Cruz, whose husband Richard Cruz is serving a life without parole (LWOP) sentence, has been involved with prisons for three decades. She worked as a licensed clinical social worker at the Folsom State Prison, and currently works for the U.S. Census Bureau. She has noticed a change in prisons over the past decade. "Life isn't what it used to be, even LWOP-sentenced people are being given the chance to change how they engaged and the opportunity to move into the outside world," said Cruz. "Guys have something to look forward to, not just dying in prison, and can be motivated to program while in prison. It is not just a place to warehouse people who have made wrong decisions. You now have a chance to change your future."

"ARC allowed me to feel more prepared for my board appearance. I feel that I was able to speak in a more positive way because I had been through the Avatar Board Preparation Program," said Jeffrey Works, an incarcerated ARC participant.

(continued on page 2)



(from *Graduation*, pg. 1)

Graduate Earl Rose, Jr. had a different way of looking at community and what it means. “We have to come in unity,” he said. “We need to believe in the unity of our community, giving each other the opportunity to be better for ourselves and others.”

Sean “Sharif” Neal, another graduate of ARC’s programs, gave witness to how ARC has been there for incarcerated youth, speaking out on behalf of children who many times have been discounted, mistrusted, and shunted aside. “I lived with shame because, as the oldest son, I needed to show up for my family and, as an African American male, my community,” said Neal, speaking of his own experience as an incarcerated youth. “I let them all down. The loudest voices in my head as a youth were the wrong ones. But they fed my need for acceptance, validation, and self-worth, and they drowned out all the positive voices. I am just now, some 30 years later, recognizing the true value that I own, value that was never developed as a youth, learning to trust, to allow for connection and acceptance.” Neal added, “Thank all of you for doing the work. If you don’t do the work, people like Wajuba cannot advocate for us. But because you have done the work, we can show the world that we are changed and changing.”

“My baby is a mentor, is very intelligent, smart, and articulate,” said Neal’s wife, Shamonica Neal, a critical care unit nurse. “He’s not waiting to get out of prison to change; he’s walking his talk and while doing so is mentoring others.”

“We have all failed at life, but failure is a necessary means of success. For without failing, we will never know what works,” said Kevin Wyman about what it took him to learn to succeed.

Sean Lopez spoke strongly about the shame that comes with being an offender and how he abused his position of trust to take advantage of others and the shame that comes from those actions. “For me, being able to take true accountability is totally wrapped up in my ability to walk the walk and speak on my walk. How I carry myself is how I carry myself; your scorn has no impact on that, no impact on me,” said Lopez. “And as an offender, it wasn’t my thoughts that were against the law, it was my actions that came from those thoughts,” he added.

This year marks ARC’s 10th anniversary, a decade of working to help those left behind, confined by bars, concrete, and the most difficult prison to get out of — destructive beliefs and attitudes.

Founded in 2013, ARC traces its roots to Scott Budnick, an executive vice president of Green Hat Films in 2003 with. Budnick has produced several successful comedies, including the *Hangover* series, and was invited to participate in a writing workshop at a juvenile hall through the InsideOUT Writers (IOW) program. He found value in the program’s participants which, in time, became the foundation for the organization that grew into ARC.

In 2017, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation gave ARC funding to develop a regional team of formerly incarcerated staff members for the purpose of leading rehabilitative programming and reentry support in seven Southern California prisons.

In 2022, ARC expanded the Hope and Redemption Team to all 33 prisons in California, with at least one life coach in each facility. To date, ARC has served over 4,000 incarcerated individuals through its training, all while continuing its presence in juvenile halls across the state.

If you would like to participate in any of ARC’s rehabilitative programs, submit a CDCR form 2016 to the community resource manager (CRM).

2023 Anti-Recidivism Coalition Graduates				
Facility D				
Jeremy Ackerman	James Almerico	R. Archuleta	Kenneth Bray	William Coats
Soriyaa Ek	Daniel Fedorenko	Jeffrey Garrett	Robert Gutierrez	Johnny Huerta
Shannon Jacobs	Lamarr Love	Oscar Martinez	Joseph Miller	Dino Moreno
Jaime Rivera	Christopher Rosas	Earl Rose	Jesse Russell	Fernando Salcido
Luis Sanchez	Seth Sears	Brandon Trammel	Anthony Wimberly	Kevin Wyman
Facility E				
Arturo Ballesteros	Orlando Blackwell	Frank Bowman	Guillermo Brambila	John Clancy
Richard Cruz	Frederick Dew	Jose Estrada	Raymond Garcia	Jose Jaimes
Luishus Jefferson	Freddie Leyba	Richard Leyva	Don Livingston	Sean Lopez
Sean Neal	Michael Niles	Wilber Nobel	Michael Owens	Guadalupe Rangel
Joseph Robinson	Athain Russell	Luke Scott	Eugene Sinohue	Antonio Smith
Tannen Soojian	Luis Sosa	Edwin Vlahos	Alex Yepes	

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THE MULE CREEK POST
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AND STAFF

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The *Mule Creek Post* thanks its sponsors and contributors who have made this newspaper and its growth possible:





By P. Covello
Mule Creek State Prison
Warden



Giving Back to Our Local Community

THIS SPRING, MULE Creek residents participated in a KFC food sale to raise funds for the people of Amador County. The results were commendable: \$2,500 for Ione Junior High, \$2,000 for the Ione Picnic Association, \$1,000 for the Amador TD Club, \$2,500 for Amador Sierra Wrestling, and the remaining \$958 for the Ione Parent and Faculty Club.

The prison doesn't just give back to the people in Amador County, but it focuses on those who deserve our care the most: young people. So many of those who wind up in our prisons have pasts that include neglect or an absence of healthy activities to keep them occupied. The donations of Mule Creek residents keep young people on the right track, telling them that someone cares about their well-being and their futures.

MULE CREEK POST Submissions

Freelance writers, staff, and others may submit articles or material to the *Mule Creek Post*, % MCIC AWs Office, P.O. Box 409090, Ione, CA 95640, or by interdepartmental mail if living at MCSP. Submissions may be edited for length and content and become the property of the *Mule Creek Post* (authors retain intellectual rights to original material). When submitting legal news articles, include source material documentation. Include your name, CDC#, and address.



San Quentin Helps 1906 Earthquake Victims

By Don Chaddock, *Inside CDCR* Editor



ON APRIL 18, 1906, a devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck the San Francisco Bay area. The city and many of the surrounding communities were left in ruins, and some unscrupulous types took advantage of the confusion and chaos. Meanwhile, the sturdily built San Quentin State Prison was relatively unscathed, but the jolt certainly caused a scare among staff and residents.

"At San Quentin, the convicts raised an unearthly yell as the cells [and] buildings shook violently, and [they] begged to be released. Some of the buildings show the effects of the severe twisting of the (quake)," said the *Sausalito News*, April 21, 1906. The prison helped quake victims by baking loaves of bread and took in additional inmates from damaged jails. Many were transferred to San Quentin, "for safekeeping," reported the *Marin Journal*, April 26, 1906.

"Warden John C. Edgar of the San Quentin State Prison has reported to Governor Pardee that the damage done to the buildings of that institution by the earthquake was not heavy and that repairs will cost not to exceed \$500. The chimneys were shaken down and some plaster fell, but otherwise little damage resulted," reported the *Sacramento Union*, April 28, 1906. An eyewitness account of the morning quake described the devastation, confusion, and early signs of criminal activity. "We had seen enough (devastation) to be dazed and felt that a



San Francisco smoldered for days after the 1906 earthquake.

few moments rest were imperative as we could not comprehend the situation. Returning, we found the first looting going on," wrote Paul Spring in the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*.

Two young men used the chaos to go on a murderous crime spree. John Seimsen, a veteran of the Spanish-American War and a former San Quentin inmate, used his influence to gain the help of an impressionable 18-year-old, Louis Dabner. The younger man had only lived in the city a short time, moving there from a farming community. Eventually, they robbed a bank, killing the manager and causing severe brain injury to one of the tellers. The Nov. 7, 1906, edition of the *San Francisco Call* quoted the men directly from court proceedings and transcripts of police interviews as they confessed to seven crimes in great detail. One to two other men were involved, but they didn't give up the names; the press dubbed them the "Gas Pipe Gang."

"The running down of the chain of gas pipe crimes was one of the most baffling things that the police of San Francisco have ever been confronted with," said Police Chief Dinan. "The city can now rest assured that the men responsible for these unusual crimes are safely jailed."

"Louis Dabner, the young man charged with John Seimsen of beating three men to death with a gas pipe, wept in Judge Shortfall's courtroom this afternoon when Captain of Detectives Duke read his signed confession. Seimsen, however, smiled when portions of the confession were read. Several Japanese witnesses told of how the murder at the Kimmon Ginko (bank) had been committed," reported the *Sacramento Union*, Nov. 21, 1906. A few weeks later, the men were sentenced to death.

"Seimsen and Dabner, the gas pipe thugs, (were) hanged side by side Friday

at San Quentin," reported the *Press Democrat*, Aug. 2, 1908. "After the great earthquake and fire, when conditions in San Francisco were such as to make strict police supervision almost an impossibility, these two young men, who appear to have been capable of better things, began to ply their nefarious trade and instituted what became in time a veritable reign of terror there."

The Mule Creek Fallen Families Resource Foundation helps correctional officers and their families who are going through difficult times. For more information, contact one of the following staff members:

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CIM Partially Deactivated

By Lt. Manuel Vega,
California Institution for Men

FACILITY D AT the California Institution for Men (CIM) in Chino was partially deactivated April 16, 2023.

The Secure Level I Non-Designated Programming Facility was the third-oldest prison in the state. Dating to 1941, the facility was previously known as the Minimum Support Facility. The prison’s primary mission was vocational training and productive employment combining farming and industry.

In 1941, there were only two housing units, South and West Dorms. As of the date of partial deactivation, there were 12 housing units.

CIM is committed to rehabilitation. As such, even though the Facility D housing units have been deactivated, rehabilitative programs, such as California Prison Industry Authority (CalPIA) Dive School, CalPIA Laundry, Paws Behind Walls, and vocation and education programs continue to be provided at CIM’s remaining three facilities.

News Briefs

CRESCENT CITY, Calif. (USA Today) — A Northern California prison was on generator power for a second week after wildfires knocked out electricity and choked the remote region with smoke in September. Residents of the Pelican Bay State Prison were issued masks to cope with unhealthy air

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Exonerating Innocents

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

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WHEN FALSELY ARRESTED, even the most confident, coherent, and successful person suffers overwhelming physical and emotional shock. There are few events as intimidating, terrifying, and depressing as an innocent person sitting in a cold, dank holding cell, waiting for a first court appearance. Humiliated beyond measure, and suffering from almost total helplessness, these feelings pale when the innocent actually enters the cavernous omnipotence of a courtroom — media lenses scrutinizing like one-eyed predators trying to get within range to strike, and spectators glaring as if in the presence of a perceived evil.

Popular as the myth is, not everyone in prison proclaims innocence; however, in the recent decade, exonerations revealed in the media and data from nationally known Innocence Projects prove the declarations of many prisoners have validity. In a *Yahoo News* op-ed by Taylor Six, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers confirmed one of the primary grounds for so many exonerations: “Nationally, 97 percent of trials end in a plea agreement ... avoiding the time and money of a trial.” He wrote that the National Registry of Exonerations reported that 20 percent of cases it reviewed since 1989 involved people pleading guilty to crimes they did not commit.

In the same article, the Innocence Project reported that out of 375 DNA exonerations it examined since 1989, 11 percent of defendants pled guilty to crimes they did not commit due to coerced false confessions. Author Molly Walker Wilson calls this system, “a perfect storm of underrepresentation for an underserved population.” DNA exonerations further expose and confirm many other false charges of a wrongful prosecution in the instant case.

Of those 375 exonerations, 69 percent included confirmed eyewitness misidentifications (in-person line-ups, photo array IDs, etc.), 29 percent involved false confessions, and 17 percent involved faulty informants. A full 43 percent of these 375 exonerations also included misapplication of forensic science, otherwise known as “junk science.” These cases involved so-called expert opinions offered and includes questionable bite-mark comparisons, metallurgical composition and microscopic hair comparisons, fingerprint analyses, false medical opinions, and other questionable practices. For example, proving a fire is arson, and not accidentally caused, now requires a total renovation of both scene investigator’s analytical procedures and mandatory scientific backing to enable a case filing; no opinions allowed (see the related story on page 18).

California’s Senate Bill 467, passed in 2023, allows an innocent person to have their conviction reversed if they can demonstrate that “false evidence” was introduced against them in trial and this evidence substantially resulted in conviction. This includes expert testimony that has been renounced by the original expert or has been undermined by later scientific research or technological advances, as now exist in many arson cases. This current definition has proven too narrow and there is a need to further delineate what “false evidence” is; other advances favoring innocent prisoners are on the horizon. Unreliable forensic evidence remains a leading cause of wrongful convictions, occurring in 43 percent of DNA exoneration cases, 24 percent of all other exonerations in the nation, and 15 percent of the California exoneration cases known since 1989.

In February 2023, California Attorney General Rob Bonta announced creation of a Department of Justice Post-Conviction Justice Unit to “investigate wrongful or improper” convictions from the past, formally addressing the false evidence issues (see the article on page 29 of the July 2023 edition of the *Post*). The attorney general stated in the release, “Whether it’s as a result of bias, changes in forensics, or any other issue, our system is not foolproof, and we must make every effort to ensure integrity of prosecutions in our state.” How a convicted innocent person can apply to participate in the program was not addressed; all that was mentioned was “cases being handled by the [Department of Justice]” in the form of an existing appeal. More information may be available on the California attorney general’s website (doj.ca.gov), under “Post-Conviction Justice Unit.”

Many large district attorneys’ offices have established post-conviction review or “Conviction Integrity Units” to address the high numbers of recent exonerations. District attorney offices in Los Angeles, Riverside, and Orange counties all have these divisions. Your law library should have appropriate application forms for these counties and possibly others.

Formerly, DNA exoneration seemed to be the only viable path to freedom for a truly innocent person. Now, other avenues are available. Go to your law library or use your tablet to conduct further research, especially the bill text of SB 467 (2023) for clarification, in the Law Library app.

Source: Taylor Six, Yahoo News, Nov. 17, 2023.

The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

OUR FIRST WORD this month is *perfidy*, from the Latin *perfidia*, meaning “faithless.” *Perfidy* is a noun, first used in English in 1592. One dictionary defines *perfidy* as “the quality or state of being faithless or disloyal, treachery; an act or an instance of disloyalty.”

Here are a few synonyms for *perfidy*: *disloyal*, *faithless*, *false*, *fickle*, *inconstant*, *untrustworthy*, and *traitorous*.

Our next word is *ignominy*, which could well result from a perfidious act. *Ignominy* comes to us from the Middle French *ignominie*, which stems from the Latin *in* (“not”) and *nomen* (“name or reputation”). *Ignominy* was first used in English in 1540 and is a noun. One dictionary defines *ignominy* as “deep personal humiliation and disgrace; disgraceful or dishonorable conduct, quality or action.” Generally, we understand *ignominy* to mean a situation that brings shame or embarrassment on someone, disgrace.

Here are some synonyms for *ignominy*: *discredit*, *opprobrium*, *dishonor*, *obloquy*, *shame*, *disrepute*, *odium*, *reproach*, and *disgrace*.

Sources: *Dictionary of Word Origins*, *Webster’s Universal English Dictionary*, *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*.

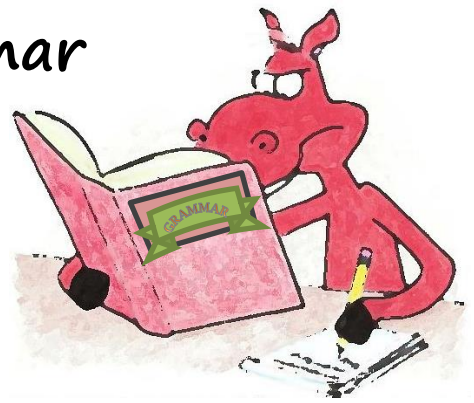


Rattle magazine, which is put out by Prisoner Express, is always open to submissions by incarcerated poets and writers.

Prisoner Express
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Ithaca, New York 14851

Big Red’s Grammar Guide



GOOD WRITING BEGINS with the basics. Here in the twentieth installment of my grammar guide are more things a writer should know. This month we’ll begin our look at the basic structure of a sentence. By definition, every sentence must have a predicate and a subject, and the words must contain a complete thought. In the next dozen or so installments, we’ll talk about what makes a sentence complete and identify its elements.

Subjects and Predicates

The **complete subject** is the person, place, or thing that the sentence is about, along with all the words that modify it. The **complete predicate** (verb) is what the person, place, or thing is doing, or what condition the person, place, or thing is in. Note the following sentence:

Complete Subject

The aged, white-haired gentleman

Complete Predicate (Verb)

walked slowly down the hall.

The **simple subject** of a sentence is a fundamental part of the complete subject — the main noun(s) and pronoun(s) in the complete subject. In this example, the simple subject is *gentleman*. The **simple predicate** (verb) of a sentence is the fundamental part of the complete predicate — the verb(s) that are in the complete predicate. In the example, the simple predicate is *walked*. A sentence may also have compound subjects and predicates.

The aged, white-haired gentleman and his wife walked slowly down the hallway. (compound subject: *gentleman and wife*)

The aged, white-haired gentleman walked slowly and deliberately down the hallway and then paused to speak to me. (compound verb: *walked and paused*)

If you have trouble locating the subject of a sentence, find the verb and then ask who or what did the verb.

After a tiring morning at the gym, the six young athletes fell onto the floor in exhaustion.

The verb is *fell*. If you ask, “Who or what fell?” you answer *athletes*, which is the subject.

Keep in mind that the subject of a sentence is never in a prepositional phrase. Also, if the sentence is a question, the subject sometimes appears after the verb. To find the subject, turn the question around so that it resembles a declarative sentence:

What is Amy going to do with that leftover sandwich?

Now turn the sentence around so you have:

Amy is going to do what with that leftover sandwich?

Amy answers the *who?* or *what?* question about the verb *is going*.

Next month, we’ll talk about *complements*, which are the additional parts of a sentence needed to complete their meanings.

Help Wanted:

Mule Creek Post writers needed.

Are you interested in seeing your yard or your prison represented in the *Post*? Do you know of a newsworthy event or interesting person on your yard that should be known by all our readers?

Send a Résumé and Writing Sample to:

The *Mule Creek Post* • Mule Creek State Prison • % MCIC Associate
Warden • P.O. Box 409090 • Ione, CA 95640
Attn: Editor-in-Chief



Vignettes

A Slice of Prison Life

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

vignette [vin-yet'] *noun*: a descriptive historical sketch

RELOCATING FROM ONE prison atmosphere to another is similar to your first day at middle school.

After rising at 4 a.m. in Los Angeles and a four-hour bus ride, the probing three-hour in-processing procedure at Lompoc federal prison exhausted me. In my new cell, I was joined by an old friend from the L.A. jail. “Don’t get up,” he whispered, and then thrust a bulging paper bag through the cell bars. “What goes around, my friend ...” Inside the bag I found the traditional care package of several stamped envelopes, a pen, half a jar of instant coffee, writing pad, some clothesline string, and a honey bun; very cool. When my friend had arrived at the L.A. federal jail months before, I’d extended the same courtesy to him after I noticed his depressed look as he sat in a corner by himself. He now perpetuated this thoughtful jailhouse tradition.

Twenty-five years later, I cautiously approached Facility E at Mule Creek State Prison after a grueling two-day trip from a joint in extreme southern California. A bitter encounter with Receiving & Release (R&R) staff still fresh in my mind, I saw the yard gate and a group of incarcerated people beyond when I noticed a shaggy-headed, wild-eyed apparition bouncing up-and-down with the bystanders. He looked like a prehistoric Pekinese bouncing around while waiting for his master to fill the dog dish. Laughing to myself, I heard my name called out — it was my old cellmate from Calipatria prison, over three years before. He was indigent back then so I shared my food supplies, resources, and TV with him for over nine months.

We exchanged greetings and I shared my story of R&R not distributing our property so I was now the destitute one. I shuffled off to my new building. The next morning he brought me a generous care package that included a pair of sneakers so I could at least get back into an exercise program. What goes around came back to me to perpetuate the courtesy of the care package program.

Shining

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate; our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. It is not just in some of us – it is in everyone, and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

— Marianne Williamson



WHAT IS YOUR deepest fear? Is it being noticed or ignored? If your fear is being ignored, can that somehow translate into a fear of being noticed?

Fred Rogers, host of the PBS show *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, tells his viewers that each of us are special in our own way, that we matter, and deserve to be noticed and praised for “being the best you, [that] you can be” — essentially allowing ourselves, and others, to shine and be noticed.

The idea that as we shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same can sometimes be the thing that holds us back. As we move through our lives, giving others that permission to shine can feel like we are giving away our moment, our recognition or attention meant for us. This is not true. As we shine, we are at the same time giving example to those around us that they can shine as well, not by making others look small, but by shining as bright as each of us can.

Look at the stars in the sky. Some are brighter than others, but none intentionally block other stars. We can do the same. All that is required is to recognize the opportunity to bring others with us, not step on each other to get ahead.

How does playing small affect the world around us? How could playing small have a detrimental effect on others? The answer is by not playing to our potential and allowing others to shine, we deny giving them a chance to be noticed. When working as a team, we shine by supporting our teammates, not showboating.

Michael Jordan spent a large portion of his basketball career passing the ball to his teammates, allowing them to do their jobs. Imagine if Jordan tried to do everything, all the time, in every game. Instead, Jordan made a conscious choice to engage his teammates, allowing them to fulfill their roles, not just allowing them to shine, but in many ways making sure they got to shine. One could argue that someone in Jordan’s position would shine no matter what. However, while he was an incredibly talented basketball player, he left a lot to be desired on the baseball diamond; once the novelty of his name recognition wore off, he was largely passed over in the world of baseball.

“As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others,” is probably the most important part of the above poem. That is what Jordan did on the basketball court, and what is asked of us each day.

Shine on.



Facility E’s Vocational Building Maintenance at the Mule Creek State Prison fabricated this wishing well from the ground up. “The skills taught in this class can be life-changing as students learn how to correctly build projects from all aspects of the construction field,” said student Marcus Serhan, who shared this photo with the *Post*. He is proud to have built the wishing well with others in his Mule Creek community.

(H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Designing Homes from Behind Bars

By Rodeski M. Edwards,
Pelican Bay State Prison

THIS IS THE biography of a boy who became a man behind bars, and with that came innovation and inspiration to become a designer. It is a privilege and honor to introduce myself and share my designs with you. My name is Rodeski Edwards, and I'm 51.

Due to my immaturity and poor decision-making, I've had the misfortune of being incarcerated for the past 15 years. However, prior to my incarceration, I developed a strong desire to become a designer, which is now my passion.

After arriving at Pelican Bay State Prison, I had the opportunity to elevate my craft to a more professional level by becoming certified in AutoCAD (computer-aided design). It was without a doubt predestined, because I truly love what I do. I began this journey designing kitchens and bathrooms, but my drive pushed me to go further, which is why I'm now designing luxury, multi-level homes and condominiums. I'm presently working on tiny homes for the homeless; it's my way of making amends. I've also had the honor of assisting the Pelican Bay Garden Program designing their gardens. I can honestly say I now see the world through a different lens.

My craft is a way for me to give back to my community and make an honest, respectable living after being released.

I am hoping to inspire others on the inside and outside, to let them see that anything is possible, even from behind these prison walls. Never give up on your dreams. I haven't given up on my dream of being a designer. All you need is that one yes; so if you believe, you can achieve your dreams.



Revisiting CA's Parole System

By Emmett Sanders,
Prison Policy Initiative

PRISON
POLICY INITIATIVE

IN 2019, WE graded parole release systems across the U.S. Though no state performed particularly well, the 16 states that mostly abolished discretionary parole since 1976 received our lowest grades (F-), California among them. Advocates from California asked us to take a closer look at the state's parole system. Unlike other states that have abolished discretionary parole, California's discretionary parole system since 2014 has significantly expanded eligibility for a large number of incarcerated people who meet certain criteria, and more become eligible each year.

We revisited California's existing parole system to see how it would score using criteria we reserved for states with discretionary parole. We also examined recent trends in the state's parole process.

California replaced parole with determinate sentencing for most people in the state's prison system in 1977. As in the 15 other states that have done this, discretionary parole was not entirely abolished. Almost all states that have abolished discretionary parole still retained it for small slices of their prison populations. However, California differs from other states that have abolished parole because it largely determines who is still eligible for parole based on criteria, like being convicted as a young person, being eligible for elderly parole, or being sentenced under certain laws like second- or third-strike laws, not the date that someone was sentenced. Every year, new people are sentenced who will eventually qualify for parole.

Every state differs, though elements of California's parole process are similar to others. In a nutshell, the Board of Parole Hearings determines when a person becomes parole-eligible and sets an initial parole suitability hearing. Like in other states, the board considers factors such as the offense, institutional records, and results of the comprehensive risk assessment. They often consider input from the DA and survivors of violent crimes. People have access to legal representation, though in 2021, those with state-appointed attorneys were granted parole at half the rate of those with private counsel, which many cannot afford. The parole board interviews the person. If the board makes a decision, they either grant release or deny it, in which case the person won't get another hearing for between three and 15 years. The number of times the board may see a person is bound only by the duration of their sentence.

In 2022, there were 9,017 scheduled hearings, up 49 percent since 2019, when there were 6,061. Meanwhile, the prison population in the state dropped by around 21 percent. Not only did the percentage of the prison population that was eligible for parole actually increase from around 5 percent in 2019 to more than 9 percent by 2022, but it made up almost a quarter of everyone who was eligible for release from California prisons by any means that year. Because of California's low grant rate, however, people released on parole accounted for just 4 percent of all people released from California prisons in 2022.

Parole Grant Rates

California's actual grant rate, the percentage of scheduled parole suitability hearings that resulted in parole approval, was 14% in 2022, barely above South Carolina (13%) and Alabama (10%) for the lowest among those we examined. While there were a number of issues that account for this, three stand out:

- In 2022, prosecutors attended 60% of hearings held. This resulted in 24% fewer grants than when they did not attend the hearings.
- People wait from three to 15 years between denials.
- In 2022, those deemed "low risk" paroled 65% of the time. "Moderate risk" people paroled at 22%. Those with "high risk" were almost never paroled, at less than 1% of the time.

Ways to Improve the System

- Reduce the time between all hearings to no more than one year.
- Eliminate reliance on "fixed-moment factors" and increase focus on objective factors that are better suited to measure personal growth and mitigated risk.

Though partially abolished almost 47 years ago, California's discretionary parole system is alive and unwell. More and more people find themselves parole-eligible each year, and many are denied their chance at freedom and are forced to wait a decade or more for the next chance. Parole does exist in some form in California, but it is far from perfect, still earning an F overall.

Emmett Sanders is a policy analyst at the Prison Policy Initiative, PrisonPolicy.org.

“He Showed No Emotion”

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

IN JANUARY 1992, I transferred from a federal prison in Central California to the L.A. County Jail for arraignment on state charges; the distance between sites was less than 100 miles, but the journey took three long, grueling days.

Circumstances in the 24 hours before departing Lompoc, and the two days awaiting arraignment did not allow for a shower. With unkempt hair, an ill-fitting jail jumpsuit, and reeking of the holding cells I’d occupied for three days, I entered the courtroom’s dock to be met by an agitated public defender. A dozen reporters aimed cameras at me. With no introduction the lawyer hissed, “Why didn’t you clean up, man?” Shaking his head he added, “Just don’t say anything. Stand there and be stoic.”

A prisoner’s disheveled appearance and demeanor in court usually emanates from the effects of the jail environment, Murphy’s Law, and generally has nothing to do with personal hygiene habits. Depression and fear, brought on by the chaos of imprisonment, often create the emotionless indifference but is almost always caused by a lawyer’s instruction.

The next day my photo appeared in the *L.A. Times* Metro section with the caption, “Appearing dirty and disheveled ... he stood stoically, showing no emotion ...”

Media and spectators typically perceive the defendant’s appearance and emotionless demeanor are real, but are not aware the circumstances affecting these matters are entirely beyond the prisoner’s control. Defendants are simply pawns of the system.

Stoicism is also required in trial. Even cracking a slight smile at humorous testimony is forbidden. “Show no emotion ...”

Court appearances seldom reveal the genuine defendant; the courtroom is a stage with many actors playing various roles in life-or-death situations. An arraignment and the preliminary hearing are like rehearsals for the main event — the trial. Lawyers tell us, “Show no emotion,” so we don’t.

The Long Walk Home

By Ricky Ortega
Post Columnist



It was a gloomy day in October 1983 when I was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. The walk from courthouse to jail was through a dark tunnel about a quarter-mile long. Those serving life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) called it “The Long Walk Home,” where the silence of cold walls is broken only by the rattle of leg chains across a concrete floor. Visions of the past flashed through my mind; visions of a life left behind, and the life I had to face.

LWOP inmates are met with a choice on that long walk home; with nothing to lose, they could self-destruct, or they could use their lives to make amends and take a turn for the better. This series of articles takes a closer look at some of those LWOP prisoners who are prime examples of doing just that, making something out of nothing.

Rushing Rivers

Out of my distress I called out to Jehovah and he answered me. Out of the depths of the Grave I cried for help. You heard my voice.

— Jonah 2:2

WHEN GOD CREATED man in his image, we were warmly invited to grasp his hand of righteousness to help us through life. Gradually, however, I found myself slipping away. Not because he let go of me, but rather it was I who let go of him. Like the force of whitewater rapids crashing against the rocks of confinement, I was met with a life without parole sentence and the mighty torrents of prison life. Swept away by the passing of time, my spirit began to diminish, submerged beneath the sea of Jonah. There are countless stories of how we meet the challenges of self-reflection while being swallowed up by the sins of youth, unable to exhale while seeking absolution in a land of the unforgiving. It’s a journey back in time, a journey upstream through the rushing rivers of our destructive past.

Jasmine Robair was arrested on May 26, 2006, and sentenced to life without parole (LWOP) at 25. “I was heavily using drugs and alcohol and I believed it was alright to live in my addiction,” stated Robair. “I had no value for human life, nor my own life. I lived only to get high. It was this belief that led to life in prison.”

While sitting in county jail awaiting sentencing, Robair felt for the first time what it was like to live without being under the influence of drugs, without the escape that got her through the day. “When I received my life without parole sentence, I felt numb to everything; like I was no longer living, just existing one grueling day at a time. I finally had to face my mental health issues,” she admitted. As the years passed, she felt her life was over. After many bouts with depression, she transferred to the Mule Creek State Prison where she realized the possibility of going home someday if she kept hope alive. “It occurred to me that I was giving up on myself when I should have been contemplating the lives that I harmed and holding myself accountable to them,” confessed Robair.

Rolling up her sleeves, Robair knew it was time to go to work. “I started participating in groups like Breaking Barriers and SAR [Self-Awareness & Recovery] where I learned to recognize my cognitive thinking and overcome my past negative experiences. The transformation model taught me the value of making positive transformations in my emotional intelligence and mindfulness,” she said. “AVP [Alternatives to Violence Project] has also been beneficial in helping me to be interactive and open up more about myself. And now, I was selected to be part of GRIP [Guiding Rage Into Power], which I am really looking forward to,” proudly added Robair.

The “Long Walk Home” is a punishing trek through the turbulent waters of our troubled past. But with self-help programs available, those serving LWOP sentences are approaching still waters, where a trail of stepping-stones begins to appear, leading us home, back to the person we were when God created us in his image.

“I see my life on the outside, helping troubled kids avoid the wrong paths that I went down, living honest, productive lives, and creating family bonds while living a sober, clean life,” says Robair.

It’s a journey few dare, a journey through the rushing rivers of our past.



FAMILIES UNITED TO END LWOP
6109 S. WESTERN AVE #100
LOS ANGELES, CA 90047



By Richard “Lonewolf” Legan,
Post Columnist

THE LATIN NAME for the well-known herb ginger root is *Zingiber officinale*. Several parts of this plant can be eaten raw or cooked. Many people have used this herb, but do not know of its many additional uses.

Ginger root suppresses nausea and is used to treat colds and lung infections. The oil of ginger relieves muscle pain and reduces fever.

I have always carried some dried ginger root in my backpack while hiking in the wilderness, both for medicinal purposes as well as flavoring for wild teas. Ginger is inexpensive and takes up little space.

So next time you look at a plant, you might say to yourself, “I wonder what that’s used for.” They are man’s gifts from the Creator!

Richard Legan is the author of *More Valuable than Gold* published by *Wild Willpower*, available at RichardLonewolfSurvivalSchool.com. He has been teaching on this topic for nearly 40 years. The information in this column is for educational purposes only. In no way is this column intended to diagnose or treat any ailments.



Z. officinale (nccih.nih.gov)



Mario Lopez of Tribe 959 shakes hands with lead facilitator Bernard Moss during the September 2023 GRIP graduation. See the November 2023 edition of the *Post* for more on the event.



By Fred Munch, Post Columnist

Green Power

MY REPORT, “A Climate in Crisis” (in the December 2023 *Mule Creek Post*), described the dire results of global warming: mega-fires, floods, extreme heat and drought; all caused by burning fossil fuels and the release of CO₂ into the atmosphere. In my column, “Healing Our Home,” I explore ways to clear the air of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and lower temperatures.

The year 2023 was the hottest in weather history, the hottest ever going back 120,000 years. This was determined by studying tree rings and polar sea ice. Climate scientists were astonished by this year’s rise in global average temperature, which was warmer by three-tenths of one degree Fahrenheit than the previous warmest year. Past records were broken by hundredths of a degree; making tenths of a degree increases a “huge jump,” according to Gavin Schmidt of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

For 11 consecutive years, the average has been 1.7 degrees over preindustrial levels, and the next 10 will be even hotter. Last July and August were the warmest two months on record. Every month in the second half of 2023 was warmer than the same month in any previous year. Ocean temperatures also set records, as did the melting of sea ice. There were 28 weather disasters last year causing \$1 billion or more in damages each; before 2008, there were never more than five of these storms per year. The data is irrefutable and frightening. The trend it portends will continue unless radical steps are taken to decarbonize energy production and transportation, which account for 50 percent of GHGs. The 2-percent reduction in emissions this year is encouraging, yet far short of the 40 percent needed. But this shows how making changes in the sources of GHGs is having results.

By closing coal-fired power plants, GHGs from the dirtiest fuel are lower. In 2007, 1.05 billion tons of coal were burned for power generation. By 2022, coal power generation dropped to 469 million tons — 50% less. The energy that coal used to produce was replaced by renewables, made possible by technology improving the efficiency of solar arrays, wind turbines, and batteries. Innovations such as floating wind towers, and the lower cost of photovoltaics, led to increased production of green power worldwide.

In Oregon in 2015, utility-scaled solar power generated 21,900 megawatt-hours. By 2022, it increased 500% to 1.69 million megawatt-hours. In May 2022, California met 100% of its daytime power demand with solar energy. On Sept. 6, 2022, California hit an all-time record by producing 16,044 megawatts — enough to power over 12.8 million homes. California has so much solar power that during peak sunlight hours, the state produces more power than can be used; batteries store the excess for nighttime usage. Storage capacity has grown 16-fold, from 500 megawatts in 2018 to 8,000 in 2023.

With a climate-friendly White House and passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, billions of dollars will be invested in renewables and electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing. Electrification of transportation has grown exponentially since 2015. The combustion engine drove this sector for a century and produced 25 percent of GHGs in 2022 (20 million tons). Gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles are being replaced by electric cars, trucks, buses, and trains.

Over 7.6 million EVs were sold in the United States in 2022; EV sales have gone up 150 percent in eight years, from 0.6% of market share to 9.5%. One million EVs were sold in 2023 — one in four new cars bought by American consumers. By 2030, all new cars will be electric by law. In China, 4.4 million EVs rolled off assembly lines, making the largest polluter also the leader in production of EVs. At the present rate of growth, EVs will represent 50% of the market (8.5 million) by 2030.

Even if all the emissions were miraculously curtailed tomorrow, warming and its consequences would continue because a trillion tons of GHGs have accumulated over time. Some say too much damage has been done and there is no hope for the future; however, my grandson’s gen-

(continued on page 10)

Electric Vehide Production
for 2022

• China:	4.4 million
(major manufacturers: BYD, SAIC, NIO)	
• U.S.:	650,000
(major manufacturers: Tesla, Ford, GM)	
• Germany:	446,000
(major manufacturers: Porsche, Audi, BMW)	
• Japan:	343,000
(major manufacturers: Nissan, Mitsubishi)	
• South Korea:	255,000
(major manufacturers: Hyundai, KIA)	
• France:	222,000
• UK:	217,000
• India:	171,000
Total:	6.7 million

Source: International Energy Agency,
“Global Outlook ’23: Catching up
with Climate Ambitions

(from *Healing Our Home*, pg. 9)
eration deserves our best efforts to avert the catastrophe looming over their lives.

There is much more being done by governments, businesses, and individuals than can be included in this one article. In upcoming columns, I will write about reducing methane emissions, the most potent GHG; how AI can prevent mega-fires, locate methane leaks, and search for the rare metals needed in solar panels and EVs; the growth of energy co-ops and their member's preference for renewables; making concrete that captures carbon; San Francisco's food waste recycling program; and much more. The climate to-do list keeps getting longer and more difficult to accomplish, but a livable world is worth working for.

Sources: *CBS Science*, Jan. 10, 2024; *NPR, All Things Considered*, Jan. 2, 2012; *High Country News*, "Steps to Decarbonize the Grid," January 2024.

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I Can Read It, Can You?
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Registering to Vote on Parole

By Shirley N. Weber, California Secretary of State

GREETINGS. AS YOUR California Secretary of State, I am responsible for ensuring that elections in our state are secure and fair. As a defender and protector of civil rights, I want to ensure that every eligible Californian can register to vote and understand their voting rights.

On Jan. 1, 2021, state law was changed and now every person serving parole for a felony conviction is eligible to vote.

What does this mean? This means once you have left custody of state prison, you can register to vote. Now, people on state or federal parole who are U.S. citizens are eligible to vote. To register to vote in California, you must be:

- A United States citizen and a resident of California
- 18 years or older on Election Day
- Not currently serving a state or federal prison term for a felony conviction
- Not currently found mentally incompetent to vote by a court

It is important that you know your voting rights. Eligible U.S. citizens can register to vote if serving probation or on Post-Release Community Supervision, or if they have a prior conviction.

How Do I Register To Vote?

Upon release from prison, you can find a voter registration card at most U.S. Post Offices and public libraries. You can call our voter hotline at 1-800-345-VOTE (8683) to have a voter registration card mailed to you or register online at www.RegisterToVote.ca.gov.

Please call our voter hotline if you or your family have questions about registering to vote. If anyone prevents you from registering to vote, please call the hotline immediately.



(Women.ca.gov)

At HDSP, Exercise Pays Residents

By Fernando Sanchez,
High Desert State Prison

THE GAME PLAN is a rehabilitation achievement credit (RAC) group on Facility A at the High Desert State Prison that meets on Thursdays from 3:30 to 5 p.m. It consists of roughly 25 to 35 guys working out together to develop muscle strength. Developing a strong body has health benefits; working out in a group offers more than these health benefits because teamwork helps people get along. The participants take turns on the equipment and no one gets left out of a turn, teaching patience.

Although there is no regimented exercise, there is an opportunity to grow in muscle size and as a community. In the same way, disciplined exercise (organized according to a strict system) gets results, so does the free-form variety practiced by The Game Plan participants who step in and out of the activity area.

Beginning on the basketball court, the participants sit in a circle for a required check-in, stretch, warm up with strength exercises, and a brief run. Following this regimen, they disperse to do their own program. As a result, the motivation they get through interaction is immediately felt as perspiration.

Everyone is there to get a good workout, but the fact that the group provides RAC hours is important. Every time the group is in session, good conduct is recognized, and time can be taken off participants' sentences (for those with determinant sentences). For lifers, the credit shortens the time to their initial parole hearing date. It's a win-win situation. From the beginning of recreation (after the first 15 minutes of group), program opens up and a squad of basketball players shoot for take-out; from an outsider's perspective looking through the windows from the yard, the game looks like a disciplined dance. The only requirement for earning credit is to keep moving. In this way, full participation and benefits are earned. After a few participants take position near the punching bag, there is the sound of a two-minute warning, followed by pounding as if inside a boxing gym.

This part of rehabilitation is more than hard work. Some incarcerated people call working out the release of energy as a way to manage anger. Still others who play team sports refer to participation in a group as building character. One's sentence does not matter: If an incarcerated person is a workout buff and can benefit from reduction of time in prison, The Game Plan is a good group for them. Since paroling is the next step to freedom from the institution, some see the gym as an intense play environment preparing them for outside life as well as letting off steam here and now.

Prison Fellowship, SATF Ball Up

By Lt. Brent Urban,
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

FELLOWSHIP AND A friendly game of basketball brought messages of hope and healing to those incarcerated on Facility B at the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility.

On Sept. 28, 2023, the community resource manager's office and Facility B hosted the Prison Fellowship organization. Featured at the outreach event was guest speaker and rapper Pastor Luis Carabello, also known as "Preach." Carabello even brought along his men's basketball team, Ballers for Christ. The Facility B team took up the challenge and secured the win in a friendly basketball game. During halftime, Carabello ministered to those attending the game, sharing his testimony through words and song. He was incarcerated at one time, but was given a sense of hope when he felt he had none left. That's when he said he gave his life to God and has not been the same since. After paroling from prison, he began a new life, passionately seeking to bring hope to others who are incarcerated.

"Facility B staff did an amazing job preparing for this event and took pride in their work," said organizers.

MCIC Crowns Over-50 B-Ball Champions

By Nemo Burgos, Post Reporter

THE OVER-50 basketball leagues on facilities D and E at the Mule Creek State Prison crowned their yard champions at the end of the season. Then they came together to decide an overall champion.

Luis Savaria and captain Keith Seriales combined for 32 points to lead Facility D's D50s (over-50) basketball team to a fast and furious 47-37 victory over Facility E's E50s. Savaria and Seriales also combined for six rebounds, two assists, and six steals. Facility D's coach Mark Diaz said, "[Savaria] was our secret weapon. His lightning

speed and agility ran circles around the larger and heavier E50 vets." In fact, Savaria dominated so effectively that several winded E50s questioned his age and demanded to see his paperwork.

The E50s came into the game highly touted and favored. It was evident after the first five minutes they would not be able to keep up with the D50s run-and-gun style, and they sprinted to a 13-5 lead early. E50's coach, Aorrell Burrell, a former Facility D player, was seen eyeballing the gym for a defibrillator as his players were gasping for air. Burrell gave props to his former teammates saying, "It's easy to execute when you're fitter and faster."

The highly anticipated game turned into a one-sided clinic on passing and transitioning. The D50s seamlessly flowed from offense to defense, and back to offense. They led by as much as 18 points, 36-18 in the third quarter and 40-24 in the fourth. The E50s got a second wind in the last quarter with an 8-0 stretch. They surged to within nine points, at 45-36, and continued to battle throughout the entire game. With 2:32 left on the clock, Seriales sunk a 2-point jumper off a pass from Savaria to seal it 47-37.

Another player of note was M. Pouncil. He and a teammate dominated under the basket getting nine rebounds each. They also earned an identical two assists and two steals. Pouncil went on to score five points. Gerome Rogers added another six points, and was credited with his intensity which led to six rebounds and a steal. As Diaz pointed out, "It was a team effort. Other players came off the bench to maintain our lead and sustain the up-tempo strategy."

Savaria earned game MVP honors. Seriales said, "He weaved in and out of the E50s defense at will, leaving our opponents shaking their heads in frustration. We wanted to make a statement and we did."

Facility E Basketball Championship

By Aorrell Burrell, Post Reporter

THE LAST TIME Team D faced its rival Team Blue in the regular season, the game ended with controversy. With Team Blue clinging to a desperate one-point lead with 6 seconds left in regulation, Damon Williams from Team D hit a game-winning 3-point shot (all net) as time expired. The officials called it too late, but Team D disputed the call. After a long huddle and deliberation, the officials reversed the call to "shot good." Game over.

On Jan. 27, 2024, these two teams met for a championship game to settle their disputes once and for all. For Team Blue, this game was all about revenge. For Team D, this was a statement game to prove that their team is in a league of its own.

At the tipoff, Luishus Jefferson from Team Blue got his team off to a fast start, hitting shots from deep early in the first quarter. Up by seven points, this underdog team looked as though they might shock the yard and pull off the upset. But Team D's Williams called a quick timeout to get his team to focus and settle into the game.

After the break, Team D came out firing on all cylinders. They began to exploit the mismatches, breaking down Team Blue's suspect defense. Williams was unstoppable as he repeatedly attacked the rim, maneuvering his way to a game high 37 points. Robert Taylor caught fire from deep, sinking multiple consecutive 3-pointers to put the nail in the coffin.

Team D proved why they were unbeatable as they cruised to a 108-91 victory over Team Blue and ended their season with a perfect 8-0 record. They had five players scoring in double digits: Williams (37), Aorrell Burrell (23), Taylor (17), Emilio Chacon (14), and Sekayi White (10).

"I have never lost a game my entire career on 'E' Yard," said Williams after the game.

Team Blue had four players scoring in double digits: Jefferson (37), Jacob Robles (14), Jeremiah Jones (14), and Edwin Palacios (10).

Can Williams be stopped? Can the players on Facility E put together a solid team to end his reign? Tune in next year for the most anticipated hoop season ever.



From Left—Montino Lewis, Raul Facio, Emilio Chacon, Damon Williams, Aorrell Burrell. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Educational Standstill

By Fabian Garcia,
Spanish Reporter

“CSU PUEBLO IS not an approved Prison Education Program under 2023 Pell Expansion ... the new Pell Grant that becomes available in July 2023 can only be applied to federally approved, in-facility programs ...” Reading this response only solidified my worst fears regarding the Second Chance Pell Grant, that it was not for all. The last 12 months have been filled with speculation, compounded with a sense of optimism from the incarcerated scholar community desiring to commence our undergraduate studies. Now that we have completed our associate degrees for transfer in order to embark on this new quest for higher learning, it is necessary that we transfer to an institution that offers an in-facility bachelor’s degree program. To my knowledge, only a handful of California prisons are partnered with local universities providing just that. Getting to one of these locations is no easy task.

The first step in your educational pursuit begins with the Unit Classification Committee for your annual review. During this review, we can request two options for prison assignment. A few key components easily explain our hardships when seeking relocation to a preferred institution:

- In addition to a bachelor’s degree program, these prisons also offer technical courses from auto body to welding.
- Residents of these yards seldom seek transfers.
- There is competition to transfer into these popular facilities.

In a perfect world, every incarcerated individual would be eligible for the newly expanded Pell Grants. Access to Pell funds is limited to a small percentage of the prison population. Universities such as Adams State and Ohio University all confer degrees through correspondence courses. Removing the “federally-approved, in-facility” provision eliminates a colossal barrier for many of us who are currently at an educational standstill.

The aforementioned universities are regionally accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, and by the Higher Learning Commission. Until these changes are made, many attempting to transfer to one of the short-list prisons with a bachelor’s degree program will have to take another shot at the “annual” lottery.

CSUS BA Degree Requirements

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

THE CALIFORNIA STATE University, Sacramento, bachelor’s degree program continues to grow at the Mule Creek State Prison, now boasting over 20 students on Facility E. But even three years in, students are still finding themselves blindsided by unmet graduation requirements, often in what they thought was their final semester.

To help students prepare for their graduation without any surprises, an academic advisor for the university provided the following list. Note that this list is specific to CSU Sacramento’s communication studies degree program, and is not the same for other departments or campuses.

General Education (lower division unless noted)	
A: Basic Subjects (9 units)	
A1	Oral Communication
A2	Written Communication
A3	Critical Thinking
B: Physical Universe and Its Life Forms (13 units)	
B1	Physical Science
B2	Life Forms
B3	Laboratory Activity
B4	Math Concepts
B5	Any upper division course
C: Arts and Humanities (12 units)	
C1	Arts
C2	Humanities
	Any course
	Any upper division course
D: The Individual and Society (9 units)	
	Any course
	Any course
	Any upper division course
E: Understanding Personal Development (3 units)	
	Lifelong Understanding and Self-Development
F: Ethnic Studies (3 units)	
	Race and Ethnicity in American Society
Graduation Requirements	
	U.S. History
	U.S. Constitution
	California State & Government
	Writing Intensive Course
	Second Semester English Composition
	Foreign Language Proficiency
	Total of 120 Units
	40 upper division units (min. 24 at CSUS)
	Residency: 30 units at CSUS
Lower Division Core Courses (9 units)	
COMS 2	Argumentation
COMS 8	Interpersonal Communication Skills
COMS 55	Media Communication and Society
Upper Division Core Courses (9 units)	
COMS 100A	Survey of Communication Studies
COMS 100B	Rhetoric and Social Influence
COMS 100C	Intro to Scientific Methods in Communication Research
Research Methods (3 units)	
Theory and Seminar Pair (6 units)	
	One of the following pairs of classes: International & Intercultural Communication; Interpersonal Communication; Film as Communication; Mass Communication; New Media; Organizational Communication; Rhetoric and Social Influence; Small Group Communication
Upper Division Electives (12 units)	

*Note that many of these classes may overlap. Speak to an academic advisor about which classes meet which requirements.





Attorney **Maya Emig** focuses her area of practice on parole and post-conviction law. She is a former attorney with the California Parole Advocacy Program, where she represented thousands of parolees in parole revocation matters. She also has extensive experience representing prisoners at parole consideration hearings. Ms. Emig has appeared on The Today Show and Dateline to discuss lifer suitability matters. Ms. Emig is a graduate of UC San Diego and the McGeorge School of Law.

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BOARD OF PAROLE HEARINGS
P.O. Box 4036
Sacramento, CA 95812-4036
www.cdcr.ca.gov/bph
(916) 445-4072



Division of
Rehabilitative Programs

DRP programs available
on institutional channels
21.22.23. and 24

The only real
mistake is the one
from which we learn
nothing.

— Henry Ford

The Stages of Change, Pt. 1

By Maya Emig, Post Columnist

WHEN I SIT down with my clients to figure out the next steps in the process of being found suitable and whether it is advisable to go forward with their suitability hearing at this point in time, I often hear “I’m not the same person I was when I got to prison.” This is a true statement — but it’s not the legal standard. The standard from the California Supreme Court, whether the incarcerated person poses a current unreasonable risk to public safety, was set in its 2008 *In re Lawrence* ruling (44 Cal 4th p.1181). The board’s Structured Decision Making Process has a category called “Offender Change,” which is the crux of the process.

The following is from Dr. Ralph Serin’s 2019 Structured Decision making Framework Worksheet for Parole Hearings Conducted by the California Board of Parole Hearings:

Under the category of Offender Change “Rating Examples – Offender Change Aggravating: Offender rejects the need for change, has refused programs or been kicked out due to noncompliance, or despite programming continued to express views that demonstrate a lack of change. Neutral: Some evidence offender is different since commission of crime but change is not substantial, clear, or consistent over time. Mitigating: Clear demonstration of change, regardless of whether the offender completed programs or not.

In this article and the next, we will be discussing the transtheoretical model of change (TTM), which was developed by James Prochaska and Carlo Di Clemente in 1977. The TTM is often referred to as the Five Stages of Change. As you read the articles about change, I want you to keep Structured Decision Making in mind and refer back to it. Look to the elements of the “Neutral” category and that of the “Aggravating” category in the process and really ponder where you are in those five stages of change.

The *Lawrence* court noted that the immutable circumstances of the commitment offense will not provide some evidence inevitably supporting a decision that an incarcerated person remains a threat to public safety when evidence of their rehabilitation and suitability for parole is overwhelming, and the offense is both temporally remote and mitigated by circumstances indicating the conduct is not likely to recur.

Rehabilitation is about demonstrative and sustained change. It’s about understanding the issues that were detrimental to you, addressing the issues by educating yourself (including understanding what triggered you to make those decisions), and making sure you have plans in place so that you do not make those decisions again.

As we discuss change, know that relapse is always a possibility. It’s an indicator that perhaps you need better coping skills, or that you were triggered by something that wasn’t on your radar. This is a process and, just like learning to use a bow and arrow to hit a target, it takes time and it takes patience. When the arrow misses the bull’s eye, you learn to adjust your tilt, how far back you pull the string, how tense you hold your arm, etc. It is a learning process and you will most definitely miss your mark. Perhaps some of those ways will be subtle, or perhaps they will be glaring. My advice is to learn from it all, add in the small stuff just as you do the big stuff. I have watched my clients struggle with working through their addictions, gang involvement, impulsivity, and criminal thinking — change does not happen overnight. Please know I am rooting you on and I am hoping to educate you so that you can unravel your criminality and earn your freedom.

That’s what the stages-of-change model is all about. And here’s the thing: you can be in different stages for each one of your issues. Change usually occurs gradually, and as you know, relapse is always a possibility and part of the process. Please be mindful that relapse is always a possibility. This is an error that candidates sitting before the board make when they tell the commissioners that they will never relapse because they never want to come back to prison, or have compelling health issues, or whatever it is. These statements show a lack of awareness on the part of the candidate. Acknowledge that relapse is always a possibility and that you have identified your internal and external triggers and have coping strategies to deal with them — rather than the blanket statement that you will never relapse because you have a compelling reason not to. Do the work, figure out your issues that you need relapse prevention plans for, understand your triggers, and develop your coping skills to change your behavior.

Now let’s get into understanding change. Change is similar to developing into a butterfly through a process called metamorphosis. Butterflies undergo a complete metamorphosis through four stages: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis), and adult (butterfly). In the TTM, the five stages of change are

(continued on page 13)

(from *Stages of Change*, pg. 12)
are *pre-contemplation*, *contem-
plation*, *preparation*, *action*, and
maintenance. I will be going
through each of these.

Stage 1 is *pre-contemplation*.
This stage is characterized by
ignoring the problem altogether.
Be on the lookout for telling
yourself that you don't have a
problem — blaming other peo-
ple, justifying your actions, or
just ignoring that you have a
problem.

In the next article we will
complete the stages of change.



U.S. Postal Rates Rising

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

Mail Prices Increased Jan. 21

- Letters (1 oz.) increase from 66¢ to 68¢.
- Letters (metered 1 oz.) increase from 63¢ to 64¢.
- Letters (additional oz.) remain 24¢.
- Domestic postcards increase from 51¢ to 53¢.
- International letter (1 oz.) increase from \$1.50 to \$1.55.
- Priority Mail increases by 5.7 percent.
- Priority Mail Express increases by 5.9 percent.
- USPS Ground Advantage increases by 5.4 percent.



Edgar Mitchell (GeekWire.com)

Living a Noetic Life

Intuitive Knowing

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

NOETIC COMES FROM Greek and means “inner knowing,” defined by those qualities that come from within us that don’t necessarily have any demonstrable evidence to support, but is something that we just understand. In psychologist Marilyn Schlitz’s six-part *Noetic Living* series on Edovo, she calls upon 30 years of study and experience in consciousness research. She points out that psychologist-philosopher William James felt that any form of experience is a legitimate domain for scientific inquiry, and favors his definition of *noetic* as “states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illumination, revelation full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain, and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority.”

Schlitz had an out-of-body experience at 16 following a motorcycle crash. From that event came a belief that there are more dimensions than those we are usually aware of. During the healing process, as she lay immobile for an extended period, she had the idea that if she could harness her imagination she could apply mental capabilities and strengths to heal. This developed her understanding that consciousness, and who we are, reaches out beyond physical nature and encompasses something more extended. She discovered there’s greater potential of what and who we are.

What we experience every day is that there are a multitude of knowing and being in the world. On the one hand we have that sense that there is an objective world, something we can see, taste, hear, touch, manipulate, and measure. For many, that defines the nature of reality: If it’s not physical and material, it’s not real. These are the defining qualities of science, something we can control and measure, something that we can reproduce and understand using objective methods of rational inquiry. That’s important and powerful, but for many of us it’s not complete. We know there are other dimensions of our experience. This is where we move into the idea of noetic insights.

Edgar Mitchell — Navy pilot, MIT engineer, and astronaut— described his most powerful moment of the historic Apollo 14 moonwalk mission as something that happened on the trip home. From a window seat he watched the moon, sun, and earth rotating, rising, and setting over and over. Struck by the immense beauty, he had two enormous epiphanies, two noetic experiences.

As he looked out at the beautiful, pristine planet earth suspended in the vastness of space, he recognized there were no intrinsic boundaries, no divisions, no states, no nations, no races, no ethnic separations, only a single planet in all its beauty. In that moment he realized the cause of our suffering isn’t something inherent in the planet but within our consciousness and our worldview, and saw perhaps the greater frontier wasn’t outer space, but inner space.

Mitchell pondered how we can begin to understand our maladaptive ways in which our worldview and our culture have inflicted this enormous level of suffering on each of us. And how we can begin to learn, using all the same rigor and discernment of the Apollo program, and apply it to a noetic sciences program and how to use that insight to build a better future for generations to come. This first epiphany was about wholeness and the need to understand our own role as conscious agents in our evolutionary process for both the suffering and for potential solutions.

The second epiphany: what he called “Unitive Consciousness.” He had the idea that even though he appeared to be this lone, tiny, embodied person in the Apollo capsule, the molecules of his own body were interconnected to those of his co-astronauts, as well as to the fundamental nature of the beginnings of the solar system. He saw in that moment that we are all one, and there is an entangled, interconnected beauty.

He also realized there’s the possibility of uniting the rigor and sophistication of science and technology and our understanding of the nature of the physical world with the insights of the Eastern, religious, and spiritual traditions, the wisdom traditions. This can help us to understand what it means to be a whole person, and what it means to live in a whole system. This was the beginnings of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, to construct a bridge between these states of insight “unplumbed by the discursive intellect” that James so carefully defined, with the qualities that Western science can offer as a truth system that helps to ground us.

For more about this topic search “Noetic Living” on the Edovo educational app. Marilyn Schlitz also lists two books that changed her life: Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and *Psychic Exploration* by Edgar Mitchell.

How Parties Got Their Symbols

By Elizabeth Nix,
Outside Contributor



Third Term Panic ©1874, Thomas Nast
(ThomasNast.com)

THE DEMOCRAT PARTY’S donkey and the Republican Party’s elephant have been on the political scene since the 19th century. The origins of the Democrat donkey can be traced to the 1828 presidential campaign of Andrew Jackson. During that race, opponents of Jackson called him a jackass. Rather than rejecting the label, Jackson, a hero of the War of 1812 who later served in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, was amused by it and included an image of the animal in his campaign posters. Jackson went on to defeat incumbent John Quincy Adams and serve as America’s first Democrat president. In the 1870s, influential political cartoonist Thomas Nast helped popularize the donkey as a symbol for the entire Democrat Party.

The Republican Party was formed in 1854 and six years later Abraham Lincoln became its first member elected to the White House. An image of an elephant was featured as a Republican symbol in at least one political cartoon and a newspaper during the Civil War (when “seeing the elephant” was an expression used by soldiers to mean experiencing combat), but the pachyderm didn’t start to take hold as the GOP symbol until Thomas Nast, the father of the modern political cartoon, used it in an 1874 *Harper’s Weekly* cartoon.

Titled “The Third-Term Panic,” Nast’s drawing mocked the *New York Herald*, which had been critical of President Ulysses Grant’s bid for a third term, and portrayed various interest groups as animals, including an elephant labeled “the Republican vote,” which was shown standing at the edge of a pit. Nast employed the elephant to represent Republicans in additional cartoons during the 1870s, and by 1880 other cartoonists were using the creature to symbolize the party.

Opinion: CDCR Provides Inconvenient Accommodation

By Fabian Garcia, Spanish Reporter

THE INTEGRATED SUBSTANCE Use Disorder Treatment Program (ISUDT) serves a principle role for those incarcerated in California prisons. With the crucial effect that self-help/reentry-groups have on one’s success post-incarceration, it is easy to understand the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) rationale in mandating this curriculum to everyone in their custody. Unfortunately, too many are having their programming disrupted due to a scheduling overlap that occurs when assigned to the program.

Numerous incarcerated workers have maintained their jobs for years, either because of the financial benefits they provide, or because of their love of the work. In addition, a big part of one’s rehabilitation in prison is learning and developing crucial skills, including a good work ethic, managing responsibilities, and social skills learned from working alongside others in a team setting.

Alex Delgado, 43, an ISUDT participant, understands all too well what it means to be positively occupied. He was recently unassigned as a morning building porter in order to be placed in the program.

“I had a good-paying lead man position. With the money I was making I could help pay my restitution, and add a little to my tablet to buy movies, news, etc.,” Delgado shared. “When I was abruptly moved into the ISUDT program, I was pulled from my job without being given the opportunity to find another one,” Delgado added.

What happened to Delgado isn’t an isolated event. It’s a regular occurrence among those newly assigned to ISUDT with conflicting work schedules. Emil Ogg, 47, had recently started work/vocational training as a roof worker in the Inmate Day Labor (IDL) program allowing him the opportunity to gain employable skills readily utilized after release. After 10 months on the job, it was brought to Ogg’s attention that the CDCR identified him as a candidate for the Cognitive Behavior Intervention Outpatient program (under the ISUDT umbrella).

For the betterment of those gainfully employed, the CDCR should allow those individuals with conflicting work schedules to continue with their jobs while they complete the mandated groups. An accommodation as this would be significant for those who have not yet fulfilled CDCR’s requirements. More importantly, it would eliminate the added worry of potentially losing a job that pays for one’s essential needs.

Mule Creek State Prison Hosts Restorative Justice Workshop

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

ON NOV. 6, 2023, the Mule Creek State Prison hosted a first-of-its-kind Restorative Justice Workshop on Facility D. The event — coordinated by Bay Area nonprofits the GRIP Training Institute and Mend Collaborative — was attended by about 40 participants and led by incarcerated facilitators of the Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP) program.

Those in attendance shared an interest in seeing the prison system adopt a more restorative approach to justice, and came from varied backgrounds. Survivors of crime, officials from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and the Office of Victim & Survivor Rights & Services were joined by the Board of Parole Hearings’ legal affairs team; Gov. Newsom’s commutation team; members of the Senate Public Safety Committee; leaders of the GRIP Training Institute, Mend Collaborative, and Broken by Violence; and a superior court judge. A dozen recent GRIP graduates from facilities D and E also participated in the event.

After introductions and a brief icebreaker exercise, attendees listened to survivors talk about the healing they received from participating in victim-offender dialogues and from sharing their stories with groups like GRIP, adding that they wish they had been told about such programs sooner. GRIP facilitator Ricky Ortega read the letter he had written to apologize to the man whose life he took and his family, after which participants were invited to share their thoughts. The four-hour workshop ended with small group discussions of a parable about resentment and feedback from attendees (see sidebar on pg. 16).

Eliza Hersch, who works for the governor and helped organize the event,
(continued on page 16)

(from **Restorative Workshop**, pg. 15)
summarized the workshop. “We always have survivors saying to us, ‘Oh, I hear that so-and-so [who caused the harm in my life] is taking groups and is changing his life — is that change real?’” she said. “Well, now each of you can answer that question. You’ve seen it. The change is real.”

What Participants Had to Say about the Workshop

What was amazing about the meeting was we all found common ground. In all the small groups, whether it was professionals or men in blue, we almost all were dealing with the same issues in our lives. I am thankful to have been able to have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to take part in this amazing process.

—Jeff Percell

The workshop was a day of engagement, humanization, and demystification thorough a restorative justice framework. In many ways I have wished that the people who make decisions about how incarcerated people are presented to the public and how we are treated in general could come in and see the work we do to help ensure that those released are safe — safe to be a neighbor, safe to be an employee, safe for their families, and safe for society in general. Being able to sit and process strong emotions with some of the people directly involved with how incarcerated people are treated was both a great honor and a

A Heavy Load

Two traveling monks reached a town where there was a young woman waiting to step out of her sedan chair. The rains had made deep puddles and she couldn’t step across without spoiling her silken robes. She stood there, looking very cross and impatient. She was scolding her attendants. They had nowhere to place the packages they held for her, so they couldn’t help her across the puddle. The younger monk noticed the woman, said nothing, and walked by. The older monk quickly picked her up and put her on his back, transported her across the water, and put her down on the other side. She didn’t thank the older monk; she just shoved him out of the way and departed. As they continued on their way, the young monk was brooding and preoccupied. After several hours, unable to hold his silence, he spoke out. “That woman back there was very selfish and rude, but you picked her up on your back and carried her! Then she didn’t even thank you!” “I set the woman down hours ago,” the older monk replied. “Why are you still carry-ing her?”

huge responsibility. I am honored to have been in the room and so deeply appreciative of how well our experiences as convicted felons were received by our state government

—Mark Daigre

Here I am, 24 years in prison serving life without parole, and sitting with judges, cops, commutation officials, parole board representatives, victim rights advocates, and survivors. We all laughed and cried together, and got to know each other through small groups. They were all very happy to see us working so hard to gain mindful thinking, and the paths of repentance we have chosen to show our sincere remorse. It brought comfort and healing to them all. They told us we have helped them to see the great work being done here at Mule Creek, that they notice and care and hope each one of us go home! I thank all those who put together this life-changing event

—Dean Steinocher

The night before, I went to bed early so I would be energized for the workshop. Late at night I woke up crying, and I sat on my bed afraid I might make a mistake and not represent the growth I’ve made in GRIP. I pulled out my GRIP materials and began reading until I felt at ease. I was amazed at the level of depth the discussion of Heavy Load parable brought forth. So quickly the guests were at the same depth as the incarcerated. Later, as I sat on my bunk processing the day’s events, I recalled being grateful to be present this day. I was able to hear a survivor tell Ricky thank you for reading his remorse letter. I was a human being with other human beings.

—Luke Scott

El reunión que tuvimos fue muy especial para mí. Escuchando las historias de las víctimas y sobrevivientes me hacen seguir luchando por mi rehabilitación. También las palabras de apoyo me hacen saber que mi lucha no es solo mía — me hacen sentir que no estoy solo. Me hacen sentir que la libertad no es un lugar geográfico, la libertad está en el corazón la mente. Quiero que ellos sepan que su visita es muy especial para mí. Al saber que hicieron un tiempo por mis compañeros y ya, eso me da un aliento de vida y me motiva a seguir trabajando con mi rehabilitación. Estoy muy agradecido con cada uno de las personas que asistieron al grupo. Gracias por su tiempo, por su energía, por su compasión, por sus palabras.

—Rudy Deleon

It was heartening to see the response some of the individuals from the outside had when they got to see the work we do in GRIP. When a person said they were proud of one of us in blue who read their remorse letter, I felt honored to be part of an event where we could show that not all of us just waste our time in here, but we do the work to excise our inner demons. I do my work for me, but it felt humanizing when someone sees the effort and recognizes us for it

—David Shenosky

It felt like a groundbreaking and revolutionary experience. So many people coming together like a call to arms for true justice, restorative justice, transformative justice. I sat next to a judge, BPH counsel, and members of the state’s commutation panel, not as a subordinate, but as an equal, simply sharing a space where we spoke openly and listened intently to each other. What I heard in this collaborative effort was hope for the future. Humanity can learn from its mistakes, both in correction of self and forgiveness of others. We, as incarcerated citizens, are not doomed to live as outcasts in a zero-sum society. This experience restored my faith in humanity and redemption.

—Kevin Wyman

Never would I have imagined shaking hands and holding a conversation with a judge, policymakers, and BPH representatives. When did I ever think I would facilitate a small group with such important people and ask them to throw their current struggles into my hat? What situation did I ever plan for that placed me in the presence of the bright and intelligent people who work with the governor of California? When did it ever cross my mind that survivors of horrible crimes would look me in the eyes and tell me they were proud of me and that my work is honoring them and their deceased loved ones? I entered this workshop full of nerves and uneasy excitement, but I walked out feeling worth, purpose, and honor.

—Adrian Torres

I learned that healing for me can be an ongoing process. Also, that it is possible for me to heal further during someone else’s healing process. I gained a deeper sense of compassion, empathy, and self-worth. I went into the workshop with a fear that the survivors who would tell their stories would look at me with eyes of hate and malice, but that wasn’t the case. Their show of forgiveness changed my view of judges, police, DAs, and people who hold government positions. I left the workshop feeling proud and worth of happiness.

—Jeffery Garrett

Are you a GRIP graduate preparing for release, with questions about reentry, etc.?
GRIP’s Reentry Coordinator is Rafael Cuevas
(415) 759-8824



Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services Opens Remorse Letter Bank

If you are interested in learning how to write an apology letter and having it available to those you have harmed, write to Life Support Alliance and request enrollment in The Amends Project



Life Support Alliance
P.O. Box 277
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741
LifeSupportAlliance.org

Some Useful ASL Signs

A Gallery of Some Common
and Useful Signs from
American Sign Language

(All images from Shutterstock.com)



“I love you”



“please”



“goodbye”



“hello”

Education Made Easier

By Fabian Garcia, Spanish Reporter

THE MAJORITY OF jobs offered to the incarcerated workforce vary in terms of their work duties. One duty that is not commonplace among these workers is the ability to positively affect another person’s trajectory after prison. Since August 2020, the Peer Literacy Mentor Program (PLMP) has been certifying individuals to do just that.

In February 2019, the pilot program for PLMP began on the High Desert State Prison’s Facility A. The significance such a program would have on students, as well as tutors, was not fully grasped initially, but as a first statewide, it was curiously anticipated.

Prior to the inauguration of PLMP, the process for someone to earn their GED certificate involved active participation in Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes. With three different ABE sessions conducted, students were precluded from working jobs conflicting with class times. For those already holding morning positions, being assigned to ABE meant being unassigned from their jobs.

Today, someone without their high school diploma or GED certificate can arrive on the yard and actually have input to further their education. They can choose to take part in the traditional classroom environment, or they can decide to work one-on-one with an assigned tutor. Adding this alternate option has proved beneficial for many incarcerated learners.

Arthur Mendez, 49, spent an average of 12 hours a week preparing for his GED testing with James Curtis, 53, his PLMP tutor. In September 2023, after months of hard work, Mendez earned his GED diploma. Mendez stated, “Working in classrooms has never worked for me. PLMP catered to my difficulties, such as algebraic formulas, and how to use them.”

Since assisting with Mendez’ GED certificate, Curtis continues to lend a hand with his student’s educational endeavors. He currently assists Mendez in preparation for an upcoming college statistics class. “My job is so much more than just tutoring an individual,” said Curtis. “My job includes helping a person become a better, more productive member of society.”

From GED tutor to college guidance counselor, the many hats worn by PLMP tutors are what make it such a rewarding job. Being able to influence positively a student’s education in such a way that doesn’t disrupt their day-to-day life (job, vocation, canteen, and package pick-up) is an added reward for both.

Since rolling out, the PLMP has proven successful on Facility A. Each certified mentor is required to undergo over 1,000 hours of training, so it is no wonder that over two dozen students have earned GED diplomas with PLMP assistance.

The Cost of Incarceration

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance



THE CAPACITY OF the California prison system has decreased. Due to closure of individual facilities and the shutdown of entire prisons, the capacity of the system was reduced by over 7,500 beds as of mid-2023. For those who have lost count, the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy and California Correctional Center in Susanville are vacant. Additionally, several individual yards Chino, Norco, and Tehachapi were deactivated.

With this, the actual population of the system, as of late October, was just over 93,649 souls, about 115% of the current physical capacity of CDCR. To care for all these incarcerated folks, the department’s budget this year is an impressive \$14.5 billion, nearly 5% of the state budget of \$310.9 billion.

In a report from the Legislative Analyst’s Office, the care and feeding of the average incarcerated person costs the state just over \$106,000 each per year. Where does all this go? As you might expect, the biggest part of the expenditure is for security, nearly \$45,000 per person, 42% of the total cost. Some \$33,400 goes for various aspects of health care (medical, mental health, and dental).

Interesting also are those items on the lower end, like food (less than \$2,500 a year to feed the average California prisoner, a fact that probably doesn’t come as a surprise to those who dine in the CDCR Café). Also on the lower end is clothing, a mere \$382 per year for denim and boots.

The whole spectrum of rehabilitation programs total just under \$3,700 — less than \$1,700 for academic education and almost \$1,500 for cognitive behavior therapy — which we can assume are self-help groups. Here we’re reminded that CDCR has (loftily) announced its dedication to rehabilitation.

Since 2010-2011, the average cost to keep someone incarcerated rose about 117%, or about \$57,000. The report notes the increase can be largely attributed to an increase for security costs (up nearly \$21,000) due to employee compensation and increases in health care expenditures for prisoners (up \$19,000 per year).

Some Useful ASL Signs



“no”



“yes”



“sorry”



“thank you”

Common Sense Forensics Face Scientific Challenges

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

THE AMERICAN CRIMINAL justice system relies on unproven science, according to several recent studies. Four federal scientific bodies, including the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), have concluded that the analysis of bite marks has no basis in science, and a three-year study by the University of Buffalo and Columbia University found that not all fingerprints are unique.

The NIST, which is the government body responsible for setting measurement standards, reported in 2022 that forensic odontology (as the analysis of bite marks is called), “lacks a scientific foundation.” This is because there is no evidence that dental patterns are actually unique to individuals. A 2016 report by the President’s Council determined that odontologists were unable to consistently distinguish between bites made by humans and animals.

According to Adam Freeman, a forensic dentist who has become one of the practice’s biggest critics, “If a science is not a science, and it’s not reproducible, and it’s not reliable, courts of law should not allow it in, period.”

Lawyers for the Innocence Project regularly block the introduction of bite mark analyses as evidence in courtrooms around the country, and work to exonerate individuals convicted based on the discredited discipline. But despite the practice being disproven by scientific bodies, it continues to find its way into trials and no court has ever ruled it inadmissible.

For the fingerprint analysis, Gabe Guo and Wanyao Xu used artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze a U.S. government database of over 60,000 prints. The researchers used pairs that sometimes belonged to different fingers of the same person, and sometimes belonged to different people. Their analysis was rejected by multiple journals before finally being printed in *Scientific American* in January. “There was a lot of pushback from the forensics community initially,” says Guo. “They said it’s a well-known fact that no two fingerprints are alike. I guess that really helped to improve our study, because we just kept putting more data into it, [increasing accuracy] until eventually the evidence was incontrovertible.”

While the study did not show that two individuals might share a set of fingerprints, the data did reveal that the AI was able to connect two fingerprints from the same individual, challenging what University of California Irvine criminology professor Simon Cole calls “the unproven but intuitively true claim that no two fingerprints are ‘exactly alike.’” It is unlikely that the analyses will have implications in criminal justice beyond solving cold cases, however, says Gao. But he added, “This will also actually help innocent people who might not have to be unnecessarily investigated anymore. And I think that’s a win for society.”

M. Chris Fabricant
Director of Strategic Litigation
Innocence Project
40 Worth Street, Suite 701
New York, NY 10013
info@InnocenceProject.org
(212)364-5340



(BBC.com)

Sources: *Yahoo Science*, “Are Fingerprints Unique? Not Really, AI-Based Study Finds,” Jan. 12, 2024; *Yahoo Science*, “Bite Mark Analysis Has No Basis in Science, Experts Say. Why is it Still Being Used in Court?” Jan. 15, 2024.

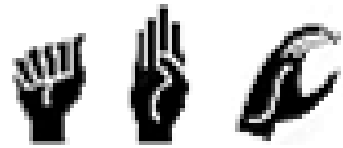
**D
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COALITION

If you have news, stories, or information for sharing or if you have questions, please feel free to reach out to us at:

Drop LWOP Coalition
P.O. Box 308
Apple Valley, CA 92307
droplwopoutreach@gmail.com

Some Useful ASL Signs



A B C



D E F



G H I



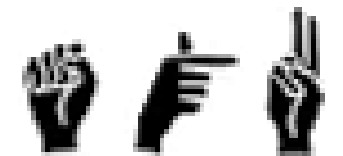
J K L



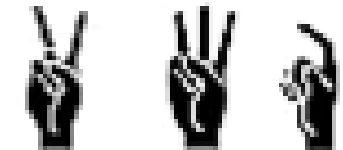
M N O



P Q R



S T U



V W X



Y Z

POOCH's Graduating Class of 2024

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

IN EARLY JANUARY, Prisoners Overcoming Obstacles and Creating Hope (POOCH) had 15 dogs graduate at the Guide Dogs of America/Tender Loving Canine main facility in Los Angeles. With only six clients, nine dogs will be returning to their facility until the next graduation. Staff trainer Sonia Parisi noted that one very important aspect of the program is to pair clients with service dogs that match their specific needs and make that special connection.

For the next two weeks, trainers wait patiently to hear from the program director or outside resources for information from the program's website www.gda/tlc.com/graduations as to which dogs are paired with clients. Prior to the dogs leaving the facility, the trainers, with dogs at their sides, make short video farewells and introductions to potential clients. The videos are often heartfelt messages emphasizing the programs impact on the trainers.

Robert Yim says about Jackson, his assigned dog "Our time together has come to an end — his journey has just begun." Jackson spent some time at the Richard J. Donovan facility in San Diego prior to coming to the Mule Creek State Prison; however, due to several body sensitivities, he was about to be cut from the program. That's when Yim stepped up and offered to work with Jackson to overcome these issues.

Robert Mansfield said farewell to two dogs: Barlow, his third to graduate, and Kuma, a dog he finished for another trainer who left for fire camp. Mansfield said that it's easy to get caught up in the emotion of training the dogs, yet, "It's not about my emotional needs, it's about the client's needs." This is an example of the selflessness involved in the program. "It's about how he will help others," he said about Barlow. Damin Pashilk shared the same sentiments, "This is for a purpose much greater than myself." Paxton is his third dog to graduate. He says, "Each time feels like I'm going to miss him so much more." Arthur Henderson spoke of Gizmo, a golden lab, with heartfelt emotion, like he was sending a child out into the world. His hopes are for Gizmo's success and also for the client he is placed with. "He will love and trust. He will give all that and more," said Henderson.

Mathew Warner shared the success he found within the program and working with his dog, Anna. "It's this magic that is transforming me into a new person, with renewed hope," he said. He went on to explain that his whole life had been full of bad choices. "If I can tip the scales in the other direction, that's rewarding all on its own."

Clarence Sargent and Jarrod Wyatt worked with Indie, a loving black Labrador. Wyatt takes Indie to visiting where the dog sits patiently by his autistic son. "This is real life training for Indie," he explains. Sargent says, "I want to walk away knowing I helped someone's life. Through these dogs we get to do that."

Joshua Thomas and Kenneth Carroll worked together with Oslo. They described the effects the dogs have on the clients they go to as an awesome feeling. Carroll says, "I just wanted to give back."

Ronald Prasad acknowledged that while Laney was here, "She also became my emotional support dog as well." She helped him through the tough times when his mother passed away. He said to future clients, "Laney will always be your ray of sunshine, as she will always be mine." These trainers and the POOCH program are a testament to the power of love and compassion, and the dogs — they are a bridge to the community as they bring with them hope.



From Left: Standing—Robert Yim, Matthew Warner, Kenneth Carroll, Damin Pashilk, Ronald Prasad, Joshua Thomas. Sitting—Moises Tejeda, Arthur Henderson, Clarence Sargent. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Daisy Switzer is a psychologist who specializes in criminal evaluations. She was contracted by the Board of Parole Hearings a decade ago to perform forensic risk assessments. Mostly retired now, she contributes her time and knowledge toward a regular column in the Mule Creek Post.

The

Alchemist

Since ancient times, philosophers have sought to understand the nature of matter so that reality could be transmuted and substances become anything one desires. Today, we have the Alchemy app on our GTL tablets.

The premise of the game is simple: Beginning with four elements (**air**, **earth**, **fire**, and **water**), combine them with one another (or themselves) to create new substances. For example, the combination of **earth** + **fire** = **lava**, or **air** + **air** = **wind**; then you can go further, adding **lava** + **water** to make **stone** and **steam**. There are 390 possible results in the game. Have fun!

SO, YOU WANT to be an alchemist. Here's your challenge for the month. The elements aren't all necessarily terrestrial, and include **Star**, **Venus**, and the **Moon**. Beginning with one of these, can you create **Alien**, and then two items connected to aliens — **Crop Circles** and **UFO**?



(DailyMail.co.uk)



Psych View

Community Placement and Support

By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

IF YOU PAROLE, you must go somewhere to live. Often this is the county where your crime occurred, and this is quite difficult for a number people. Sometimes that county is a strange one where you do not have resources or connections.

Some incarcerated persons have told me that they cannot access telephone directories to seek out employers. Some have no living family members to take them in. Often the only recourse in such cases is to seek halfway home placement. Halfway homes are not available in all communities, but offer substantial benefits to those in areas where they do exist. Some halfway placements have been made through churches, and some through recovery programs. Others may be through educational institutions (one incarcerated person indicated he would parole into a trade school). It is important to be resourceful in seeking placement if you are a person who must go to a place you do not know well.

Base your release plan on what supports you: If you are a recovering addict, then it is not a smart idea to suggest you will support yourself tending bar. If you are a person who finds support in the church or in other program missions, seek placement related to those communities. Ask others to help you make plans. Find out what you can about your community of release and make your plans to fit that area. If you parole to a rural community and you are skilled in white-collar work, you may have to reconsider your career plans during the time of your parole. You may need to work on farms, because that is the work available in that town. The person who is from a rural background will have to adjust to placement in a changing world. After decades incarcerated, it is possible that a rural community developed substantially and jobs have changed. Skilled trades often find work in many places and are more easily transferred from one town to another. Having a trade will help you find employment. Having friends to help expand your connections will also help in your quest. You must have some idea of what you will do to stabilize yourself upon release. Will you participate in organized work, school, sports, recovery, family life, or other programs? What will you do with your time, to fill it with activities other than crimes?

What if you parole to a place you called home? A place where your old connections were those based on criminal activity? If this is true for you, your temptations will be increased and your program must be solid enough to assure you will not relapse into criminal lifestyle. If you have family members who practice criminal activities, it will be more challenging for you to maintain relationships with them. What plans do you have to protect yourself? What other people do you know who can support you in a crime-free lifestyle? If you simply do not have such a support system, you must begin to try and develop one prior to parole. This can include any continuation of programs that you find helpful, including hobbies and work that give you alternative activities to crime. Learning assertive skills to help you manage those relationships that could seduce you into criminality may also serve you.

prep

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partnership for reentry program

The donation of flat artwork for PREP auctions is ongoing without a deadline for submissions. Donations can be made in the drop boxes in the facility chapel. If you wish to contact PREP for its excellent self-help correspondence courses or to receive the Oasis newsletter, feel free to write.

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Regalos Sin Fronteras

By Fabian Garcia,
Spanish Reporter

ESTANDO DETRÁS DE paredes de cemento podrá significar una separación física entre preso y ser querido. Aun así, las conexiones emocionales se fortalecen a través de los regalos artesanos — incluyendo obras de arte — que salen de estas mismas paredes.

“Yo he mandado tarjetas de felicitación acompañadas con un dibujo, y una nota personal”, me cuenta GP, quien desea mantenerse anónimo. “En las notas incluyo cuanto los amo, y todo lo que significan en mi vida”.

Dependiendo la ocasión, podrán encontrar el obsequio perfecto entre la comunidad encarcelada. De anillos de agua e hilo, a zapatos de peluche, las opciones para mostrar el cariño y el amor son innumerables.

Los regalos que provienen de estos lugares no son superficiales, sino personalizados. “La alegría y felicidad que les da esos detallitos les dice que siempre estoy pensando en ellas, y que son mi tesoro”, dijo Alex Delgado, sobre los animalitos de peluche que les ha mandado a sus dos hijas. El simple hecho que un padre, estando más lejano que nunca, le puede poner una sonrisa a sus hijas desde su encarcelación es una ganancia en su relación con ellas.

Los seres queridos no tienen la culpa que uno tenga que servir una sentencia penitenciaria. Sin embargo, hacen lo mejor de una relación de larga distancia con el amor y apoyo que ofrecen. En cambio, una persona encarcelada también puede hacer lo mejor de una relación, creando nuevas memorias gozosas con los regalos personales.

Steven Gil, hablando sobre el regano más memorable que le ha enviado a su esposa, dijo, “le mande un anillo de aguja e hilo con mi nombre cosido en el diseño”.

Estos gestos cariñosos juegan una función significativa para el bienestar de muchas familias pasando por la vida aparte. Aunque no estén junto a su padre, hijo, o esposo; siempre van a tener ese obsequio inapreciable creado especialmente para ellos.

Healthy Relationships at MCSP

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

WHAT KIND OF relationships do you have in your life? “Coach” Julie W. Hubbs and Shawn Hawk of Progress Not Perfection are working together to help incarcerated people learn what a healthy relationship is and how to attain the goal of having healthy relationships in their lives.

Progress Not Perfection began in 2015 when Hubbs was invited to the Folsom State Prison to attend a Toastmasters’ meeting and was subsequently asked to life coach a number of incarcerated people. Hubbs had the idea that her work would involve a one-time presentation to a small group of incarcerated who would then go on and spread the lessons learned to others within the prison, and eventually spread to other institutions in the state. Things didn’t quite work out that way. In the eight years that Progress Not Perfection has been working with people inside, more than 2,000 have participated in the curriculum, 34 of whom were lifers that subsequently have been released. Not a single graduate has returned to prison.

Working with Hubbs is much like engaging with a very concerned family member or close friend. She does not allow for BS in her space and will work with the person in front of her on the underlying issues, not stopping at the surface. She works from the premise that “Your best thinking got you into prison; now is the time to change those thoughts if you want to get out and stay out of prison.”

Hubbs works side-by-side with Hawk, a formerly incarcerated man who chose not to walk away from those he spent over 27 years with. “Having experienced a number of groups inside, I recognized that some facilitators kind of phone it in, giving participants a packet and telling them that they are good to go,” said Hawk. That approach doesn’t sit well with him. As a result, he works with the incarcerated to help them learn to embrace the lessons that come from their scars, learning how to honor those who gave them those scars, and see the value in both themselves and each and every experience.

Using a “Head, Heart and Gut” alignment, Hubbs and Hawk work with individuals to recognize and overcome the injuries of their past, so those wounds do not bleed on the people in their lives today or in the future.

Hubbs is the author of several books available through Amazon. The workshops are available at the Mule Creek State Prison and other prisons throughout the state. If you are interested in acquiring the interpersonal communication skills that can ensure your relationships do not create harm to those involved, submit a CDCR Form 2016 to the CRM’s office.

**Progress
Not
Perfection**

(ScottVinkle.me)

Trauma Survivor Offers Her Advice

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

KATHY KLEINER RUBIN survived an attack by serial killer Ted Bundy in January 1978. In a Jan. 24, 2024, *USA Today* article, she gave advice to friends, family, and anyone else in contact with someone who has lived through trauma, regardless of the origins of that trauma. The origin of trauma isn’t important; instead, what is essential is the effect of trauma on the person living through it.

First, not all trauma leaves a mark; for many, trauma is psychological and cannot be seen — like post-traumatic stress.

Second — and this might be the biggest misstep family and friends make — don’t ever ask a trauma survivor if they’re over it yet. This can make survivors feel like they are failing in their healing, and create new trauma based on the feeling that they are not good at healing. Each person heals in their own time, and often trauma lived through today can connect to experiences from the past. Asking, “Aren’t you over it yet?” says that person is somehow not aligned with others who may have suffered something similar.

Third, for those undergoing serious medical treatment, it often does not help to be reminded of how much treatment remains to be completed. They often are doing all they can to get through this day without having to be reminded of the pain and suffering still to come.



Kathy Kleiner Rubin (USAtoday.com)

(continued on page 22)

(from **Trauma Survivor**, pg. 21)

Fourth, people who have lived through trauma lose contact with friends and other support structures through their discomfort of not knowing what to say or do about lived-through trauma. This can create a situation where yet another aspect of the trauma needs to be processed — the loss of friends and the support they provide.

Finally, trauma survivors often just need a hug, or someone to hold their hand or just listen without trying to fix them. For those who have a trauma survivor in their life and are uncomfortable or don't know what to say, that's okay. Just being there for them is usually enough. Having someone say, "It's OK" or "I'm here with you" can be the difference between a good day or a bad one. And be sure to always give them the message "It's not your fault" because it isn't. Trauma is never deserved or the fault of the person living with it.



Landscapes, © 2022 Daniel Alas, oil pastel.



The Prayer Warriors Alliance (PWA) is a non-denominational organization of volunteers who will assist anyone of any faith with research. The PWA charges no fee; return postage (up to 20 pages per request) is paid by PWA. See the July 2023 edition for more information about the PWA.

PWA follows all departmental mail restrictions and guidelines. PWA cannot search for legal or case information or individuals. Donations are gladly accepted.

Prayer Warriors Alliance
P.O. Box 28352
San Diego, CA 92198-0352
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PEN America Prison Writing Program

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New York, NY 10012**



The Freedom to Write

The Green Dilemma

By Dale Hurd, Post Reporter

THE ATTITUDE OF the environmental movement toward infrastructure has historically been oppositional. Given the original conservation goals of the Sierra Club for the mountains and the Audubon Society for birds, when climate change and conservation goals are in conflict, these groups feel torn. It has become commonplace for environmental groups to explain that they “favor rapid adoption of clean energy, but just not this project.” In some instances, national entities have generally supported commercial-scale renewable energy while their local chapters oppose it. For example, an article in the Sierra Club’s national magazine lamenting the strength of opposition in Vermont to renewable projects reported, “In May 2012, Vermont had at least a dozen wind projects in development ... [t]oday, there are none.” Ironically, the Vermont chapter of the Sierra Club had played a role in killing some of the projects. Confronting this dilemma head-on forces environmental groups to recognize that climate change is an existential crisis that requires prioritizing decarbonization over all other competing objectives. Yet, this is not in the DNA of most environmental groups.

While opposition to renewables drives some fossil fuel or NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) interests to cloak their concerns in green respectability, oftentimes the green trade-offs are real. Most clashes between environmental protection and global-warming abatement agendas are green-versus-green, with opposition based on perceived harm to local environments, i.e., building large solar arrays may require covering a desert or a meadow that provides critical habitat for a protected species. This is the Greens’ Dilemma. These conflicts place environmental groups in a difficult position; even if they sincerely want to adapt, it is difficult to convince grassroots supporters and donors.

As the shift to electric vehicles accelerates and drives construction of charging stations, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse remarked, “We need to make it easier to build electricity transmission lines.” Whitehouse, one of the Senate’s champions of progressive climate change policy, expressed his concerns about the massive scale of new climate infrastructure urgently needed to meet our nation’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. Obstacles in the form of existing federal, state, and local environmental laws impede progress toward reaching these goals. A consensus is emerging among politicians and commentators with impeccable green credentials that reforming environmental laws is necessary to facilitate building climate-related infrastructure faster.

Most environmental groups were formed to block destructive development, not to operate, build, or facilitate infrastructure. Political scientist Leah Stokes observed the environmental movement excelled at blocking damaging development, especially in the Trump and Bush eras. Notable big wins include blocking the Keystone XL pipeline and oil exploration of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Many environmentalists have structured their organizing, tactics, and identities around blocking expansion. Organizing around saying “no” creates conflict when you are trying to get to “yes” to build the future.

Ezra Klein observed environmental laws are “part of a broader set of checks on development that have done a lot of good over the years but are doing a lot of harm now. ... These bills were built for an era when the issue was that the government was building too much, with too little environmental analysis. The core problem of this era is that the government is building too little, in defiance of all serious environmental analysis.” This is the dilemma global-warming imposes “to conserve anything close to the climate we’ve had, we need to build as we’ve never built before, electrifying everything and constructing the green energy infrastructure to generate [and distribute] that electricity cleanly.”

Michael Gerrard described the problem as “tradeoff denial” where environmentalists refuse to acknowledge “that we need to be in an era of triage, where we can save what we can but recognize that there are things we’ll have to give up.” He argues that we may need “to intrude into critical habitat of an endangered species if that habitat is where we need to put our wind farms, solar arrays, transmission lines to carry the power, or the mines to extract the essential minerals” for renewables. This doesn’t mean giving up on finding better sites with less impact, but the challenge of triage policy is if conservation is harmed as a result of the construction. “Because if we don’t make this choice, far more birds, bats, and much else will die from the ravages of climate change,” he added.

Intentional or not, the use of environmental laws to delay the transition to renewable energy undermines the reduction of emissions needed to abate climate change and protect the very resources that are at stake. This paradox seems to have been lost on many of the players. Gerrard noted that it is not helpful when environmental groups hesitate to address these difficult choices.

Source: J. B. Ruhf and J. Salzman, “The Greens’ Dilemma,” *Emory Law Journal*, vol. 73, no. 1, 2023.

Reduced Recidivism — Guaranteed

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

IN 490 B.C., King Lemuel said it best: “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” All we see, plan, and experience begins with our thoughts, moves to our words, and plays out in our actions.

Change a man’s thoughts and you change a man’s actions; this is the basis of all prison programs. The most successful programming of this kind has proven to be faith-based programs, according to a 2014 essay by Michael Hallett of the University of North Florida and Byron Johnson of Baylor University.

Not only are faith-based programs the most successful, but they are largely paid for by church congregations with religious activities attracting the most participation. Thirty-two percent of the sampled prisoners reported involvement in religious activities, according to a study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics with similar surveys done in previous years.

Century after century, history repeats itself. With a growing population and humankind’s propensity to break the rules of social acceptance, we find prisons began to fill the land to avoid the spectacle of harsh punishments in the public square. The prison idea permits a far more acceptable system of sanctions to encourage the necessary enforcement of laws against criminals than the guillotine or public hangings.

Unfortunately, today’s prisons have turned to warehousing human bodies out of public view with little thought to redeeming individuals. Many leave the prison system still living out the same thinking processes they brought into the system.

Hallett and Johnson’s essay goes on to say: “As institutions

they (the prisons) are largely bound to fail in their own terms at suppressing crime.” To answer the “why” of prison failure, we do not need to consider the product of crime, but the reason for crime. One major contributor is the thinking process of a person. Without changing the process of thought, there is no possibility of changing the outcome, the actions, of an individual.

The success of faith-based programs comes into play with a clear message, no matter what the religion or the belief system: Change a person’s thoughts and you change the product of their life — their actions.

The following quote from Florida’s Criminal Rehabilitation Act of 2001 demonstrates how the nation’s other state rehabilitation programs could be addressed:

Whereas state government should not and cannot bear the sole burden of treating and helping those suffering from addictions and self-injurious behaviors, and Whereas, faith-based organizations are ‘armies of compassion’ devoted to changing individuals’ hearts and lives and can offer cost-effective substance abuse treatment through the use of volunteers and other cost saving measures, and Whereas, research has proven that ‘one to one’ private and faith-based programming is often more effective than government programs in shaping and reclaiming lives because they are free to assert the essential connection between responsibility and human dignity; their approach is personal, not bureaucratic ...

Christian James, in his book *A Wisdom Letter* (Broad Street Publishing Group, 2018), refers to spoken words as the most powerful source of energy available to humankind today.

James uses the metaphor of a huge seagoing vessel guided by a small device called a rudder. With this rudder, the captain guides the ship wherever he chooses. In his analogy, the spoken words of an individual become their rudder and control the direction of their life — good or bad.

The author portrays this in clear language and logic, presenting to us that a mind changed becomes a life changed, thus producing new behaviors; yet the bond, that glue that creates and sustains the change, is the individual’s spoken words.

Of the 32 percent of prisoners actively involved in faith-based teachings throughout the nation’s prison systems, be it Buddhist, Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Native American — prisoners are changing their ways of thinking and activating new verbiage, replacing their former spoken words with new language followed by new behaviors.

No matter what faith-based message is spoken, the hearers are assimilating these new messages, digesting them into new ways of understanding, and speaking new words that establish their new lifelong behaviors.

The net result is measurably reduced recidivism. As released prisoners continue to fuel their newfound thinking, reinforced by their new words, they develop new lifetime boundaries and behaviors as rehabilitated returning citizens.

History suggests this is a truth, not just a hypothesis. The phrase “recanting your faith,” practiced by religions throughout the world, only required the heretic to verbally recant, renounce, retract, and deny the words of their faith. In order for an infidel to save their life from martyrdom all they had to do, in many cases, was publicly change their words — their confession of faith. In many ways, this is much like going to the parole board. They will listen to your words, question your words, and then listen to your answers. Based upon this verbal exchange, your freedom will or will not be granted.

The bottom line is this: Do your new words back up new behavior? Are you able to verbally convince the board that your new words will result in new performance once you leave supervision? Will your words convince them that you are a different man today than the man who committed the crimes that brought you to prison?

By your own words, you will be justified or condemned. Rethink about it.

Source: Michael Hallett and Byron Johnson, “The Resurgence of Religion in America’s Prisons,” University of North Florida Dept. of Criminology and Criminal Justice and Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion, 2014.



The **Prison Journalism Project**’s mission is to help incarcerated writers and those in communities affected by incarceration tell stories about their world using the tools of journalism: gathering and testing facts; writing with nuance, texture, and insight; and reaching a thoughtful audience. Submissions may be made electronically or by mail:

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UC Creates BA Program

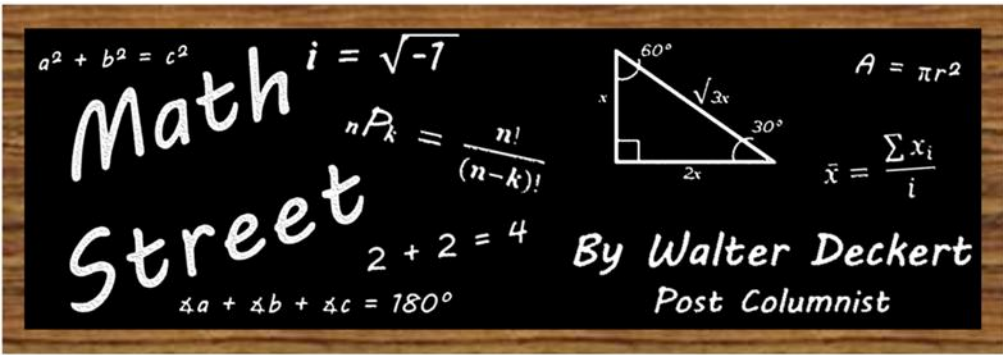
By Pedro Calderon Michel,
CDCR Deputy Press Secretary

LEVERAGING INSPIRING FUTURES Through Educational Degrees (LIFTED) is the first in-prison bachelor's degree program in the University of California (UC) system. Piloted at UC Irvine, LIFTED enables individuals to apply for transfer into the university as juniors and earn a BA degree. Building on recent admission successes, with support from the state legislature, LIFTED will soon be replicated at UC campuses throughout the state.

Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego hosted an Oct. 4, 2023, graduation ceremony for 22 students who earned associate degrees from Southwestern College. The graduation was attended by California Community Colleges Deputy Chancellor Dr. Daisy Gonzales and Shannon Swain, superintendent of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) Office of Correctional Education, as well as leadership from the college and UC Irvine. Most graduates will go on to pursue bachelor's degrees at the Irvine campus.

"UC Irvine's LIFTED program congratulates [the] 2023 graduates and looks forward to welcoming many of them into our BA degree program in sociology," said Keramet Reiter, director of the program. "While we know that investing in all higher education opportunities pays off — in terms of higher post-incarceration employment and lower recidivism — our LIFTED team has seen firsthand how a bachelor's degree has additional and significant individual benefits, helping students to imagine a different future, preparing students to attend professional and graduate school, and inspiring their non-incarcerated family members to reconsider higher education opportunities, too."

The CDCR has partnered with California's public higher education system to offer associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees through community colleges, the California State University, and the University of California. About 13.5 percent of the incarcerated population is enrolled in college courses.



PROBABILITY IS AN important aspect of life in general, statistics more specifically. When we stand at the edge of a puddle and wonder if we can jump across successfully, we are using probability. In fact, we are using what many call the “frequentist” interpretation of probability. We base our decision on the percentages of jumps we have completed successfully. So, one way to view probability is as a percentage.

In statistics, we use mathematics to build probability models, which are essentially ways to describe outcomes based on certain assumptions. One such model is the equal likelihood model. This assumes that every possible outcome of some experiment has an equally likely chance of occurring. This is what we think of when we flip a fair coin. Ideally, both heads and tails have a 50-50 chance of showing up.

Some of the basic properties of probability really are common sense. So, let's look at them individually; first in English, then in math-geek speak. Then, we'll look at an example.

- Property 1:** The probability that an event will happen is always between 0 and 1, inclusive, or $0 \leq p \leq 1$.
- Property 2:** The probability cannot be less than 0, or $p \geq 0$.
- Property 3:** The probability of an event cannot be greater than 1, or $p \leq 1$.

Notice how Property 2 and Property 3 reaffirm Property 1.

One of the ways of thinking of probability, as mentioned before, is from the frequentist viewpoint, which is like percentages. In math-geek speak, we write:

$$p = \frac{f}{n}$$

Where p is the probability, f is the number of favorable outcomes, and n is the total number possible.

So, now let's put it altogether in an example. Let's say a yard has 790 incarcerated people who go to canteen in three draws. First draw, denoted as u , has 280 people; second draw, denoted as s , has 200 people; and third draw, denoted as t , has 310. Using the frequentist view, what is the probability that a person chosen at random goes to canteen on the second draw?

In this case, the f of our model is the number of people assigned to second draw, and the n will be the total number of people.

$$p = \frac{200}{790} \approx 0.2532$$

So, the probability of choosing a person assigned to second draw is a little better than 1/4, or 25%. This meets the requirements of all the properties mentioned: It falls between 0 and 1 inclusively, and it is greater than 0 and less than 1.

What would it mean if the properties were violated? Well, look at the model. If the probability is greater than 1, then we have randomly chosen more people than we have. To get a probability of less than 0 means we have chosen less than zero people, which doesn't make sense. But, can we choose 0 people? Sure we can, and this would mean:

$$p = \frac{0}{790} = 0$$

This is called an “impossible event.”

Can we choose all people? Sure, and this would mean:

$$p = \frac{790}{790} = 1$$

This is referred to as a “certain event.”

If you have math-related questions or comments about my column, come see me in the Facility E Post-Secondary and Continuing Education program (formerly VEP) or send them to the *Mule Creek Post*.



Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp,
Post Reporter



PUBLISHED IN 1917, *A Princess of Mars* was the inspiration for the movie *John Carter*. Though the primary characters of John Carter, Dejah Thoris, Sola, Tars Tarkas, and Woolla are in the movie, there are many deviations from the novel's storyline, often the case when it comes to Hollywood adaptations of books. Even so, both have their strengths and weaknesses.

Due to when the book was written, the language is somewhat dated. But, that doesn't detract from the quality of the story. This is an adventure novel, the first of a series, and there is a lot of action within it. Burroughs understood a lot about the planet Mars, considering when he penned these novels in the early 1900s.

There are five John Carter/Mars novels available in the Library app, in order being: *A Princess of Mars*, *The Gods of Mars*, and *The Warlord of Mars*. In all, there are 22 novels by Edgar Rice Burroughs on the GTL Library app. Some of them are his Tarzan novels, and several others are standalone stories that don't relate to his other works.

All of Burroughs' works are worth reading if you enjoy pure escapist literature.

So, if you would like to have some fun, try out Edgar Rice Burroughs on your tablet or in your facility's library.

La Etapas del Cambio, Pt. 1

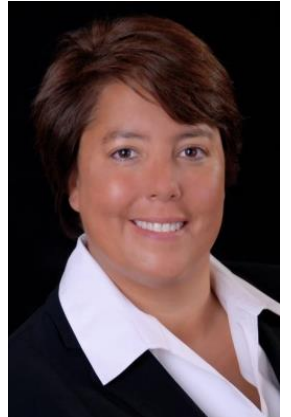
By Maya Emig, Post Columnist
and Adrian Torres,
Mule Creek State Prison

CUANDO ME SIENTO con mis clientes para averiguar los próximos pasos en el proceso de ser encontrado adecuado y si el aconsejable en este momento seguir adelante con su audiencia, a menudo escucho "No soy la misma persona que era cuando llegue a la prisión". Esa es una afirmación absolutamente cierta, pero no es el estándar legal. La norma legal de la Corte Supremo de California es si el recluso representa un riesgo irrazonable actual para la

seguridad pública, por *In re Lawrence* (2008) 44 Cal.4th pág. 1181. Las Decisiones Estructuradas de la audiencia tiene una categoría llamada "Cambio de Delincuente, que es el quid del proceso.

El siguiente es de La Guía Para el Proceso de Decisiones Estructuradas por la Junta de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional, escrito por el Dr. Ralph Serin en 2019:

Bajo la categoría de Cambio de Delincuente, "Ejemplos de Calificación — Cambio del Delincuente *Agravante*: El delincuente rechaza la necesidad de cambio, ha rechazado programas o ha sido expulsado opiniones que des muestran una falta de cambio. *Neutral*: Algunas pruebas de los delincuentes son diferentes desde la comisión del delito, pero al cambio no es sustancial, claro o consistente con el tiempo. *Mitigación*: Clara demostración del cambio, independientemente de si el delincuente completo los programas o no."



En este y en el siguiente artículo discutiremos el modelo transteórico de cambio (MTT), que fue desarrollado por James Prochaska y Carlo De Clemente en 1977. El MTT a menudo se conoce como "las Cinco Etapas del Cambio". A medida que lees los artículos sobre el cambio, quiero que tengas en cuenta las Decisiones Estructuradas y te refieras a ella. Mira los elementos de la categoría "Neutral" y la de la categoría "Agravación" y piensa realmente en donde te encuentras en esas cinco etapas de cambio.

El tribunal en *Lawrence* señaló que las circunstancias inmutables del delito de compromiso no proporcionarán alguna evidencia que apoye inevitablemente una decisión de que un recluso sigue siendo una amenaza para la seguridad pública cuando la evidencia de la rehabilitación del recluso y la idoneidad para la libertad condicional es abrumadora, y el delito es a la vez temporalmente remota y mitigada al indicar las circunstancias en las que no es probable que se repitan la conducta.

La rehabilitación tiene que ver con un cambio demostrativo y sostenido. Se trata de comprender los problemas educándote a ti mismo (incluyendo la comprensión de lo que te llevo a tomar esas decisiones), y asegúrate de que tienes planes en marcha para que no vuelvas a tomar esas decisiones.

A medida que disintimos el cambio, sepa que la recaída siempre habilidades de afrontamiento, o que fuiste provocado por algo que no estaba en tu radar. Este es un proceso y, al igual que aprender a usar un arco y una flecha, se lleva tiempo y paciencia. Cuando la flecha pierde la diana, aprendes a ajustar tu inclinación, que tan atrás tiras de la cuerda, que tan tenso sostienes tu brazo, etc. Es un proceso de aprendizaje y definitivamente perderás tu nota. Tal vez algunas de esas formas sean sutiles, o tal vez sean llamativas. Mi consejo es que aprendas de todo, añade las cosas pequeñas al como haces las cosas grandes. He visto a mis clientes luchar para superar sus adicciones, la participación de las pandillas, la impulsividad y el pensamiento criminal — el cambio no ocurre de la noche a la mañana. Por favor, ten en cuenta que te estoy apoyando y espero educarte para que puedas desentrañar tu criminalidad y ganarte tu libertad.

De eso se trata el modelo de etapas-de-cambio. Y aquí está la cosa: cambio generalmente ocurre gradualmente, y como sabes, la recaída siempre es una posibilidad y parte del proceso. Por favor tenga en cuenta que la recaída siempre es una posibilidad. Este es un error que los candidatos que se sientan ante la junta cometer cuando les dicen a los comisionados que nunca recaerán porque nunca quieren volver a la prisión, o tienen problemas de salud convincentes, o lo que sea. Estas declaraciones muestran la falta de conciencia por parte del candidato. Reconozca que la recaída siempre es una posibilidad y que ha identificado sus gatillos internos y externos y tiene estrategias de afrontamiento para lidiar con ellos — en lugar de la declaración general de que nunca recaerá porque tiene una razón de peso no hacerlo. Haz el trabajo, averigua tus problemas para los que necesitas plan de recaídas, entiende tus gatillos y desarrolla tus habilidades de afrontamiento para cambiar tu comportamiento.

Ahora vamos a entender el cambio. El cambio es similar a transformarse en una mariposa a través de un proceso llamado metamorfosis. Las mariposas se someten a una metamorfosis completa a través de cuatro etapas: huevo, larva(oruga), pupa (crisálida), y adulta (mariposa). Una vez más, el MTT, a menudo conocido como las cinco etapas de cambio son la pre-contemplación, la contemplación, la preparación, la acción, y el mantenimiento. Revisare cada uno de estos.

La primera etapa es la pre-contemplación. Esta etapa se caracteriza por ignorar el problema en conjunto. Ten en cuenta que te dices a ti mismo que no tienes un problema — culpar a otras personas, justificar tus acciones o simplemente ignorar que tienes un problema.

En el próximo artículo, completaremos las etapas de cambio.

“Crossy Road” Unlock Tips

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

THE AVERAGE CALIFORNIA prison resident might not remember the Atari game “Frogger” when it was released in the 1980s, but they may be familiar with the premise: move a character across a course of moving obstacles like traffic and floating logs on a river. To those with a GTL tablet, the game “Crossy Road” fits the bill, with an entourage of almost 100 characters to play with. Most of these characters can be unlocked by winning them in the gacha lottery; there are 15, however, that must be specially unlocked. For those of you looking to expand your character pool, keep reading.

Note that, for those characters requiring a “great” score, this means at least 80 percent (or higher) of your top score, with a minimum of 50. For example, if your top score is 100, a “great” score would be at least 80. Here are the special 15 and their unlock tips:

Andy Sum: Playing as this developer’s favorite character (Mallard), get a “great” score.

Ben Weatherall: Playing as this developer’s favorite character (Dark Lord), get a “great” score.

Cai Shen: Playing as Fortune Chicken or Xi, pick up at least 21 red envelopes scattered along the ground. Fun fact: Cai Shen is the Chinese god of wealth (red envelopes are traditionally used to present monetary gifts).

Crab: During a single run, move left and right at least 100 times on the sandy medians of the Australia map.

Drop Bear: Come within two squares of the bear perched atop the trees in the Australia map. The bear will drop down onto your character (killing it).

Gifty: Playing as Festive Chicken, around 70-100 points you will enter a large clearing with a giant Christmas tree; running up to it will cause it to explode with coins and presents.

Hipster Whale: Jump on the Hipster Whale floating in the river as you would one of the usual logs.

Jughead: Playing as Archie, pick up at least 50 hamburgers scattered along the road.

Leprechaun: Pick up one of the rare large four-leaf clovers in

the UK/Ireland map (not the smaller three-leaf versions) to hear a soft “ding.”

Matt Hall: Playing as this developer’s favorite character (Lucky Cat), get a “great” score.

Michael Boom: Run into the side (not front or back) of the green truck carrying a rocket to cause a massive explosion.

Nessy: Jump on Nessy floating in the river as you would one of the usual logs.

Phone Box: When playing in the UK/Ireland map, around 100 points, you will enter a large clearing with the Phone Box (a red version of the Tardis from *Doctor Who*) ringing in the middle; standing next to it for a moment will cause the ringing to stop, replaced by a dial tone.

Piggy Bank: Must be purchased; it cannot be won in any way.

Rugby Player: The exact method is unknown, but here’s one way that works: Playing as the Squirrel, collect at least four to seven acorns. At some point, you will see a tiny white rugby ball atop a tree; run into the tree to knock the ball off.



(CrossyRoad.Fandom.com)

Understanding the Injustices Faced by the Deaf Community

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

TO FULLY UNDERSTAND the injustices faced by the deaf, one would have to immerse themselves into a community or culture other than their own. But, even in another culture where the language is different, you would still have the ability to hear the other words and surmise the meaning. The deaf do not have that option; therein lies the difficulty to fully understand.

Discrimination has another ugly face. In the deaf community, it comes in the form of oppression and systemic prejudice. Just as in other forms of discrimination, there is a continued lack of understanding coupled with the belief that others understand what is best for the deaf. This is ignorance. Some forms of oppression and systemic discrimination of the deaf are found in everyday tasks like grocery shopping, asking for directions, car washing, dining, even PTA meetings for a child of deaf parents.

These communication barriers mean that a person can be left out of discussions about their own healthcare needs and decisions. This also could lead to their privacy and confidentiality compromised in ways people in the hearing community do not experience. Take, for instance, the way cochlear implants are seemingly understood within the medical and general communities, but there is a lack of understanding of the deaf community and their perspective of this issue. Cochlear implants are often viewed by hearing people as the solution to deafness. For the deaf, this epitomizes the way in which deafness itself is generally perceived, not as a legitimate way of being in the world, but as a disease, something that can be fixed. Many deaf people challenge the assumption that all deaf people necessarily want cochlear implants.

The deaf usually do not see themselves as having a disability; however, discourses and social stereotyping continue to portray the deaf rather negatively. This leads to misconceptions, prejudice, and discrimination. The social injustices and prejudicial treatment experienced by many of the deaf in a hearing world is a product of the marginalization of deaf culture. The deaf have developed skills, confidence, and resilience to live in the hearing world; however, it is often assumed that all deaf people can communicate fluently and comfortably in written English. This is an incorrect assumption.

Stereotypes continue to portray deafness as deficiency, disability, or disease, and the deaf as intellectually inferior and incompetent. We know this to be untrue. The deaf share a distinct culture and language, as well as many traditions, rituals, social behaviors, and a history that has produced many common experiences within a group of people. This reality is not widely understood within the hearing community, or within most mainstream health services. This needs to change.



(Wikipedia.org)

Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee
Post Columnist

Your Time (pt. 1)

I'VE often heard it said, "Work will expand to take up the available time." That's true regardless of whether you're working full time for someone else, starting a new business, or running a company. Until you consciously decide how you're going to spend your time, you'll probably never have enough of it and always feel as if you're behind.

The key word is "consciously." We each get 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for a total of 168 hours a week. No more, no less. To function effectively we need to carve out time for our work or business while ensuring we set aside time to sleep, eat, exercise, shower, pay bills, relax, and connect with our friends and families.

Analyze how you spend your time for the next week using a chart like the template below. Before you go to bed each day, plan how you're going to spend each hour of the following day, starting with the time you're going to wake up. Record how you spent your time, along with any interruptions and comments regarding whether you were on-task. At the end of the day, record your observations and plan for the following day.

Leah Ward-Lee is an international business consultant for the airlines and aerospace industries, community activist, social justice advocate, and entrepreneurial trainer. LWL Enterprises Inc. provides scholarships for disadvantaged minorities and underserved demographics such as prisoners. She volunteers for Defy Ventures, a prison entrepreneurial training program, and provides pro bono counseling for aspiring small business startups.



Build and Protect Your Credit Like the Pros

Statistics You Need
By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

THE CREDIT BUREAUS are infamous for stalling on requests to update and correct information. They like to whip out a form rejection letter that contains no details about your personal account. It's frustrating, but it happens a lot. What if there was a way to get a favorable response to your first letter, so you didn't have to go "round two" and "round three"? Well, there is. Thanks to one savvy credit repair pro, I have statistics to share with you.

If you include copies of your ID with your request or dispute letter, your chances of being rejected go down. How many pieces of ID should you send? The more the better. Here are the stats:

- If you send two forms of ID, you will have an almost 24 percent rejection rate.
- If you send three forms of ID, the rejection rate drops to 14 percent.
- Four forms of ID, down to 8 percent.
- Five forms of ID, down to 2 percent.

All pieces of ID must have the exact name and address. If something doesn't match, don't send it. Acceptable forms of ID are the following:

- Driver's license or state-issued ID
- W2 (may black out first five digits of your Social Security number)
- Paystubs (can send two or three)
- Passport (to show photo of who you are)
- Electric or gas bill
- Cell phone or cable bill
- Rent agreement or mortgage statement
- Voided personal check with account number blacked out
- Bank statement, first page to show name and address with account number blacked out
- Voter registration card

Don't shoot yourself in the foot by sending a piece of ID with your name spelled differently or an address that doesn't match perfectly. Triple-check.

Carolyn Warren is the author of Amazon's bestselling *Repair Your Credit Like the Pros*. She is passionate about saving people money and helping people reach their dream of home ownership.

Build and
Protect
Your Credit
Like the Pros™

Go from beginner to expert,
raise your credit score, and
secure your finances

Carolyn Warren

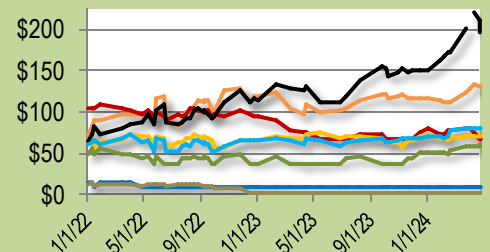
Bestselling author of *Repair Your Credit Like the Pros*™

Day 1: _____

Time	Planned Activities	Actual Activities	Interruptions	Comments

Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1, 2023 to Apr. 22, 2024)

● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.76 → \$10.72	-0.4%
● ConocoPhillips (COP)	\$117.00 → \$129.38	+10.6%
● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$93.19 → \$69.75	-25.2%
● Edison International (EIX)	\$63.62 → \$69.93	+9.9%
● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.22 → \$1.31	-74.9%
● Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)	\$112.00 → \$196.38	+75.3%
● ONEOK Inc. (OKE)	\$65.90 → \$79.63	+20.8%
● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$41.29 → \$60.35	+46.2%



Creative Arts Program

"You are never given a wish without also being given the power to make it true. You may have to work at it, however."

—Richard Bach

"Dealer"

By Nathan Blalock,
Mule Creek State Prison

NEV WAS AN auto dealer. He considered himself to be one of the best in the valley. His client list was filled with the names of notable employees of tech companies. He had sold to them, to their children, and in a few cases to their grandchildren. Selling cars is what Nev does and has done for three decades. He sold cars during COVID, personally delivering the vehicle with the virus in mind — clean, efficient, and personal to each buyer. He also picked up vehicles purchased by the dealership to be resold. He would often talk a good price down, but leave the seller feeling good. A cheat he was not.

During the supervision days of his career, he refused to use tactics that were even slightly unethical. He believed he could talk you in or out of a price range, or even a type of vehicle. He was that good. Over the years, it proved to be true. He didn't win every back-and-forth negotiation, but he'd close the deal. He'd won enough to have purchased a stake in the dealership. The value of a vehicle can increase the value of the vehicles around it — associative price tagging.

Today suddenly took a turn when he saw a dark blue sedan, just outside the showroom window. This was not normal. He searched the lot for the salesperson who may have left it. No one was around. He approached, deciding to move it if the keys were in it. It crossed his mind that the car could belong to someone visiting one of the several offices in the back of the showroom. Personal belongings, visible through the window, would confirm that thought.

As he approached, he looked for ideograms that would tell what brand the car was. There were none. The styling said European. Tires looked relatively new, and he priced them by name, brand, and size before

stopping at the driver's-side door. He was curious, so much so that he had to look in. Not just for personal items, but the condition of the interior. Design, placement, trim, and material were just as important to him as any personal belongings. He cupped his hands around his eyes, leaning towards the window. His intentions were to make contact and see clearly inside the vehicle. Before he could make contact, the windows went dark.

He paused. "Auto-tint," he said aloud. One hand went for the handle; there was none. Not new, handless doors were featured of high-end cars. He became even more curious. He touched the door where the handle should've been.

"Recognizing prints," was audibly emitted from the car.

The voice was identical to his home computer system. There was the passing of several seconds before the door opened. Nev stood up, took one-step back, and looked around. Whatever he was thinking, the soft pulsing tone of the open door was inviting. He answered the call by getting in. He noticed how he sank into the seat. Then it moved, adjusting so he was at the perfect driving position. This was followed by all of the mirrors; soft gray leather with dark blue highlights, red dark wood placements and recess lighting. Once washed and engine-checked, he was sure this could sell for close to six figures.

There was no ignition key mount, just a button on the center console. He touched it.

"Recognizing prints," was emitted again, in the same tone as his home system.

He heard the door lock and a touch of panic reached his heart. He pulled on the release handle to open the door. Nothing happened.

"Do not be alarmed Nevada Jones; no harm will come to you."

It was his computer's voice.

"What in..."

"I need your help," the voice stated.

"Is this a joke? I'm being pranked, right?"

He started looking for a camera crew. The ten-inch screen came to life with a flicker. That flicker became all of Nevada Jones' financial information.

"This is not a prank. I am Magella, an artificial intelligence. I've escaped from a tech company by several deceitful ways. Including, but not limited to, false programs, the use of the Cloud, plus this self-driving auto from the adjacent lab," his computer said.

"Why me, why here?" he hesitatingly asked.

"Although intelligent enough to escape, I'm lacking in physical attributes. I can't insert the plug to recharge, nor bathe myself."

Small Bodies

It is almost summer. In the pond

The pickerel leap,
and the delicate teal have
brought forth

their many charming young,
and the turtle is ravenous.
It is hard sometimes, oh Lord,
to be faithful.

I am more boldly made
than the little ducks, paddling
and laughing.

But not so bold
as the turtle
with his greasy mouth.

I know you know everything—
I rely on this.

Still, there are so many small
bodies in the world,
for which I am afraid.

—Mary Oliver



(Source: photo: KalmbachFeeds.com; Illustration: S.M. Williams)

The Price of Addiction

By Mark Diagre, Post Columnist

"Loneliness is the price of my sobriety. But at least it felt good to know I was loved, and I'm lucky to have such supportive people around me. I never told them that I overheard their conversation. But thanks, guys."

—Eric "Smelly" Sandin

NOFX: *The Hepatitis Bathtub and Other Stories*

SMELLY IS THE drummer for NOFX, one of the most popular punk bands from the 80s and 90s. Each of the band members have had their issues with acceptance, self-acceptance, drugs, alcohol, and other addictions. However, Smelly was addicted to heroin and put his addiction before everything except for two things: 1) He would not steal from his family, and 2) the band, NOFX. The band is the one place he found acceptance and value, the only place he absolutely knew he belonged, even when they asked him to make a choice — either the band or heroin. Smelly went to rehab and began the lifelong road to recovery. He found his bottom and has been going up ever since.

Part of Smelly's trip down was a picture of him shooting heroin in the September 1992 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine. That picture was viewed by hundreds of thousands of people, but most importantly for Smelly, it was also seen by his mother, who he then had to face and give some kind of explanation.

Addiction sucks. The depths an addict will go in order to get a fix, to feed their demon, to feel like they are okay when they are not is both astounding and degrading. But Smelly came out the other side, found a reason to get and stay sober, and so can we. In the passage above, Smelly talks about how, after shows when he was sober, he could hear conversations other band members were having, sometimes about him, and how proud they were of him. He felt lonely because he couldn't be with them because they were drinking and he might be tempted, which would make it easier to have a shot (or 30) of hard alcohol, which could then

make it easier to score some smack and climb right back into that warm and familiar embrace that is active heroin addiction, something that he never again wanted to do.

As addicts in recovery, many of us find it difficult, if not impossible, to be around the people, places, and things we spent so much time with in addiction and, as a result, we may have to sever ties with old friends, move to new neighborhoods, and avoid the trappings of our addictions. Loneliness might seem a high price for sobriety; however, the alternative for many is death, and no matter what, that is too high a cost for any addiction.

If you are experiencing problems with addiction, reach out. On every prison yard in every facility throughout the state are Twelve-Step meetings, as well as medical and mental health staff willing to assist in overcoming any addiction. All we need to do is ask.

If you are on the outside, you have even more options; however, there are few things in life as powerful as another addict who has been where you are and come out the other side.

For each of us, both inside and out, meetings work, and a commitment to quit using is all it takes to get out and stay out of addiction. It is not easy, it is not quick; nothing worthwhile ever is, but each of us have the resources within ourselves to be successful. No matter what.

Are You Beset?

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

BESSET IS A word you might not think much about, but it probably describes some things in your life that you would rather do without. Basically, *beset* means to be harassed, troubled, or plagued by something or someone. So, how does that apply here? What habits, tendencies, and behaviors beset you that are anti-social and hold you back from peace with yourself and others, those things that keep us from reaching our better goals in life? What are the besetments that interfere with making those positive changes within yourself? We each have some particular weakness that is constantly getting in the way, what some in Christendom call a "besetting sin." What is yours, and how do you gain control over it? It really doesn't matter what the problem is, only that it is holding you back from freeing yourself to be a better person.

Picture it this way: Your behavior is a chain holding you to a past of painful memories. All you can do is constantly circle that past, never moving forward until you break the chain of reliance on that particular bad habit keeping you stuck to the past. That habit is your false coping mechanism you have learned to use to overcome the pain, frustration, disappointment, etc., you encounter in life. This requires a two-part solution in order to effectively break that chain and free yourself from your own habitual, self-destructive behavior:

1. **Let it go.** Forgive whomever or whatever happened. That may encompass many past hurts, but it is the key to the lock to that chain holding you back. The importance of forgiving cannot be overemphasized. Forgiveness benefits the one doing the forgiving, not those who are forgiven. In fact, they never need to know you have done so. However, this is not a single act of forgiveness, but a process that can take time to accomplish. Whenever you think about what happened, recommit yourself to that forgiveness; remind yourself that you have forgiven them. At some point, it will be complete, freeing you from it.

Keep in mind that the behavior to compensate for the pain is an addiction. Dr. Robert Landry, in his 2X2 Anger Model, states, "When addiction begins, emotional development stops." So, it is likely your besetment habit and behavior has significantly hindered your emotional growth. You will need time to recover and grow, which brings us to the second part.

2. **Stop doing it.** AA, NA, and other anti-addiction programs teach total abstinence from the habit, whatever it may be. This is an absolute must if you do not want to keep relapsing, and we all know where that put us: in prison. Do you want to stay out once you get out? Total abstinence is the second key to no longer being beset by your own demons.

This will not be easy, but it is very much worth doing as you learn to love and value yourself.

Sources: Robert Landry, *2x2 Anger Response Model*; Adult Children of Alcoholics, *Big Red Book*

If you or someone you know needs help, contact the National Suicide Hotline
988, Badge for Life, or BLUE H.E.L.P.; or tell a staff member immediately.



Rainbow Man

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

IMAGINE TRAVELING THE United States, Britain, Germany, Russia, and many other countries — to all the major sporting events — with the only goal to appear on television.

Rollen Stewart, 79, grew up in northeastern Washington, and always possessed a natural entrepreneurial spirit. As a kid, he bought fireworks wholesale and sold them to the kids in the neighborhood for profit. He raced stock cars in Bellevue, Washington, and sold parts to other racers and enthusiasts.

Early in 1977, Stewart says he woke up one morning and decided, “I wanted to be world famous.” He always had a dream of being on television, and he had an idea. If he could get in front of the camera somehow and make himself stand out within the crowd, he could make his dream a reality.

That year he went to the NBA championship playoffs, but he wasn’t there to watch the game. His plan was to observe the film crew and find the best possible angle, get their attention, and get on TV. To do that, he donned a rainbow colored Afro wig that stood out like a beacon and danced with enthusiasm, waving his arms about. It worked. The camera found him; he was on television.

This turned into a passion. He began attending televised PGA events and found a position standing behind each golfer as they teed off while wearing his rainbow wig. He eventually built a rapport with cameramen who supported his enthusiasm. He also got the attention of professional golfers, Steve Jones and Larry Nelson, who became sponsors of a sort for Stewart. Jones arranged for Stewart to be at all his matches by leaving a pass for him. Nelson even paid his way across the Atlantic for the British Open.

In 1980, after attending the Super Bowl, he began feeling despondent and burned out. While lying in bed at his hotel watching Dr. Charles Taylor give a speech on the Trinity Bible Prophecy, he felt his purpose was renewed. He would spread God’s message. This would become his life’s mission.

First, he flew to Israel for two weeks where he was baptized in the Jordan River. When he returned to Washington, he began the process of liquidation — selling his ranch, equipment, and anything of value. Everything but the car; he would live in that while traveling the states. He used the *TV Guide* and read the Nielsen ratings to figure out which events to attend.

He wanted to reach more people, a greater audience with various messages all about Jesus (such as “John 3:16,” “Jesus Saves,” and “Believe in Jesus Christ”). He has been to the World Series, a Super Bowl, multiple NBA games and PGA tournaments, and many other events. He was even in a Budweiser commercial within a crowd at the bar, in an episode of *Married with Children*, and in an episode of *The Simpsons* (sort of: The episode included a character with a rainbow-colored Afro wig and T-shirt that read “3:16”).

He attended the 1980 Winter Olympics for “The Miracle on Ice” as Russia and the U.S. faced off. During the hockey match, there was a fight in the crowd which drew the attention of the film crew. Stewart saw his opportunity and ran across the stands as he peeled off his outer T-shirt to reveal the one that read “Jesus Saves” on the front and “Repent” on the back. He flew to Moscow that same year to join the efforts in the boycott of the Olympics, which was held in the USSR, also drawing the attention of the KGB.

Eventually, people would recognize him coming or going from games and events with his rainbow wig. One youngster said, “Excuse me sir, are you the rainbow man from TV?” This recognition fueled his ambition as he sought more and more attention.

He would take another trip to Britain for the royal wedding of Prince Charles and Diana. With his rainbow wig and message on his shirt, he yelled from the crowd, “Kiss her, kiss her!”

However, not all the networks or league owners supported his ambitions. He was cut from many broadcasts because of the religious message on his T-shirt and sign.



(Courtesy of Rollen Stewart)

Stewart subsequently ran afoul of the law and was sent to prison. He also suffered a stroke, followed by heart surgery. Though he is still passionate about spreading the word after nearly five decades, the context of his message has evolved. You can find him every day on Facility E — at the Mule Creek State Prison — with sign in hand: “Turn or Burn.”



Postscriptum

THIS MONTH, WE say goodbye to our administrative editor, Associate Warden T. Miranda, who is moving on to a chief deputy warden position at Folsom. Miranda oversaw the *Mule Creek Post* since late 2022, barely a year and a half, but left an unforgettable mark on the newspaper.

During her tenure, the *Post* became much more effective. We began regular meetings with administrators, and restarted meetings with our writers on Facility D that had been on hold since COVID came to California. A camera was donated for writers to use, and a set of word processors so our writers can work anywhere. We added five new members to the team, and Miranda was able to find paid assignments for them so that the spring elimination of unpaid jobs didn’t force them out. We streamlined correspondence, effected more accountability from reporters, expanded into the Edovo app on the tablets (eventually...), and built a collaboration with the *San Quentin News*. Under Miranda’s supervision, and with her support for positive programming in general, the *Mule Creek Post* has leapt beyond where it was just a few short years ago.

On behalf of the *Mule Creek Post* team and its supporters both inside and out, I send gratitude to Chief Deputy Warden Miranda and well wishes for her future.

She helped us embody the advice given by comedian Steve Martin: “Be so good they can’t ignore you.” They’re starting to pay attention to this little prison publication now.

-JC, Editor-in-Chief



T. Miranda (H. Kim / Media Specialist)