



To Our
Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

DATELINE: MULE CREEK, USA, August 2024. These stories within serve as memories of events witnessed, recounted, reported; remembrances of days lived or endured, a history of moments in time, fleeting and gone.

Even the worst happenings of the past acquire a sweetness in the memory. Old harsh distresses are now merely pictures and tastes which hurt no more, like itching scars which can only give pleasure now.

—Ayi Kwei Armah, 1968

In documenting and sharing our stories, we may begin to make sense of our experiences, good and bad, and learn to appreciate their significance and meaning. We look forward to your stories; guidelines are on page 3.



The 2024 Realize graduation. From Left: Standing—Alex Rosales, Luke Scott, Laquann Hamilton, Keith McRorie, Ernesto Tarango, Vernon Barker, Eugene Sinohue, Kenneth “Little Two Bears” Brown. Seated/Kneeling—Alba Contreras, Frank Lanear, and Michael Owens. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

MCSP Hosts Realize Graduation

By Sean “Sharif” Neal, Lead Reporter

ON JUNE 5, 2024, Realize held its first graduation since the program arrived at Facility E at the Mule Creek State Prison in 2019. The celebration took place in the Facility E visiting room and began with introductions. This was followed by comments from the participants, who spoke about their experiences and growth since joining the group, seated in what is commonly referred to as a “concentric circle.”

Realize’s director and prison program manager, Alba Contreras, elaborated on the focus of Realize, which she explains as “discussing sexual harm, childhood abuse, and where the trauma started. Especially for men, where men were taught that men don’t cry. We allow a space that allows men to show up.”

Among the topics discussed during group sessions included apology letters to victims and healthy relationships. “Part of our organization is to humanize you guys,” said Contreras as she expressed admiration for the growth of the graduates.

Next, graduates offered their own words of mutual appreciation and support, affirming each other’s strength and commitment to continue moving forward.

Alex Rosales gave a heartfelt address that acknowledged the love, patience, and support of his wife Jennifer and mother Gloria. Ernesto Tarango’s emotional plea to group members to not neglect time with family reflected the emotional impact incarceration can have on the human experience. “Time is precious,” he said. “So, every time you have to spend time with family over the phone or video, express your love to them.”

On the theme of family, Realize, and the lessons taken from life experiences with childhood trauma, Michael Owens spoke about the African tradition of *Ifa*, or Ancestor Respect, in order to pay homage to the legacy our ancestors handed down. “There are two types of ancestors: Family Ancestors and Spiritual Ancestors,” he said. “We come in this group, we talk about trauma, and we learned that we got handed down trauma. But our ancestors handed down more than just trauma — they handed us resiliency.” As for Alba, Owens considers her a spiritual ancestor within Realize.

Frank Lanear read his inspirational “Forgiveness Letter to

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(from *Realize Graduation*, pg. 1)
Myself” wherein he encouraged his younger self to “start valuing, forgiving, and loving yourself, even when no one else does.”

Jennifer Rosales attested to the effects group work has had in her marriage to husband Alex. “Everything you guys are learning is definitely sticking. If I ever get triggered, he shares the strategies that he is learning with me. It is definitely working.”

The most powerful moment of the day came when Rosales’ mother Gloria brought the room to tears as she offered her own experience about the impact that her own upbringing had on raising her children. “From the time I was five years old we were taught never to cry — crying was weak. So, when my husband died, I could not allow myself to grieve or fall apart — but I should have, because my children paid the price.”

Realize is a powerful 16-month, trauma-informed process group designed for men. It was created at the Valley State Prison by Sonya Shaw in 2016, along with help from incarcerated citizens. It currently runs at the Mule Creek State Prison, Salinas Valley State Prison, and Valley State Prison, with the expected rollout of a sister program called Empathize that will be a 12-month program for men and women.

Asked what’s next for Realize, Alba had this to say, “My goal is to expand.”

The next cycle of Realize will begin in the fall. To sign up, fill out a CDCR 2016 Inmate Activity Group Program Request to be placed on the waiting list.



Frank Lanear with his mother, Pamela Botts, wife, Crystal Lanear, and Realize facilitator Alba Contreras. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Alex Rosales with his mother, Gloria Blanco, and wife Jennifer Rosales. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Community Resource Manager Jason Ross and Alba Contreras providing a banquet for Realize graduates and their guests. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



From Left Standing—Alex Rosales, Gloria Blanco, Jennifer Rosales, Pamela Botts, Michael Owens, Crystal Lanear, Luke Scott, Alba Contreras, Keith McRorie, Ernesto Tarango, Laquann Hamilton, Eugene Sinohue, Vernon Barker, Kenneth “Little Two Bears” Brown. Crouching: Frank Lanear and Izzy. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



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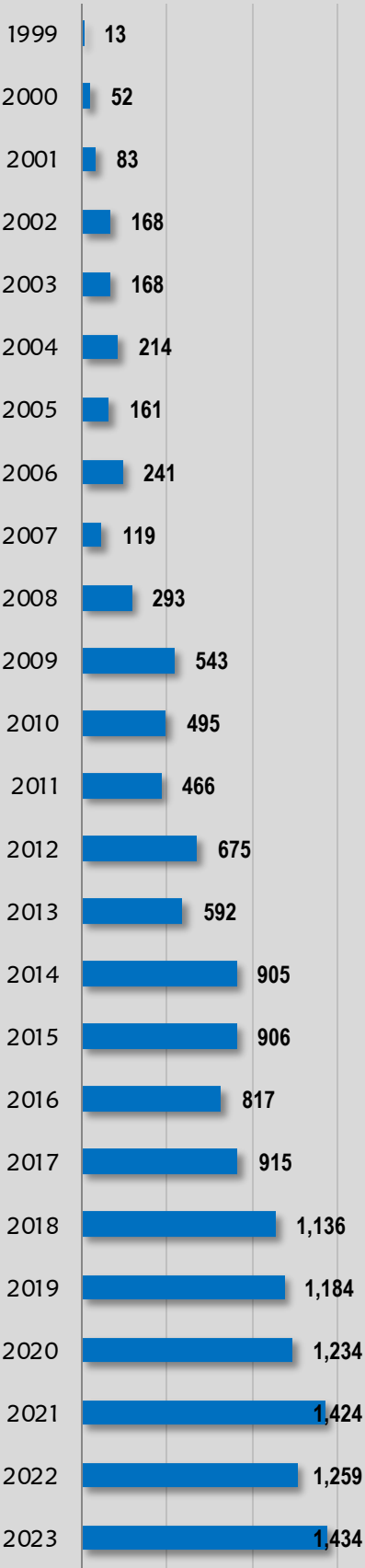
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A History of Parole Grants in California



Stage Coach Bandit, Pt. 2

By Don Chaddock, Inside CDCR Editor



BANDITS OF THE Old West were the stuff of legends and penny novels, many of them ending up as repeat offenders or hanging at the end of a rope. There were exceptions, such as the notorious stagecoach robber Black Bart.

When we left off in part 1, Bart had hit Shealy’s stagecoach a second time. “Bart was dressed in a long linen duster and had a flour sack over his head. Said he’d taken a fancy to my gun (last) trip, and I let him have it. But darned if he didn’t shove a \$50 (bill) onto the box to pay me when he’d gotten through. ... I remember the poetry he left that time. It was:

*Daniel, it grieves me to say it,
Next time you attempt to play it,
Buy an overcoat of pine,
And I’ll send the corpse in time.”*

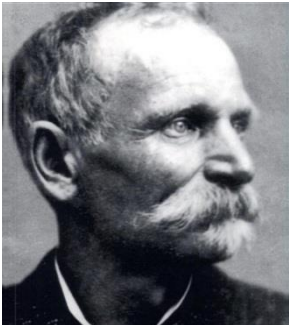
“Black Bart, Shasta County’s notorious highwayman, asked all the people he stops to contribute to an orphan asylum, and there is something so forbidding in his appearance that all the travelers shell out without asking where the asylum is, or how much it needs,” reported the *Daily Alta California*, Sept. 23, 1882. “The rascal is described as being very ‘gentlemanly,’ never forgetting to raise his hat to the ladies, and seldom asking them for donations. But he is unmerciful to men, and they are never out of range of his deadly gun. Some ... day though, ‘Black Bart, the PO8 (poet) of the Sierras,’ as he styles himself, will be shot all full of holes, just like a pepper box lid, and he won’t have any daisies planted over his little mound, either.” The article continued, “J.B. Hume, the [Wells Fargo] detective, has gone to Redding to give chase to the highwayman. Black Bart despises Hume, but never fails to send that gentleman his regards after committing a robbery. ... He is a smart fellow, and has written some clever verses, forwarding them through the mails to different papers up north. After committing a highwayman’s act, he never leaves any traces whereby he can be identified. He very politely asks that the treasure box be thrown from the stage, and then urges the necessity at the muzzle of his gun, of the stage driver’s moving on, ‘Very quietly, sir, if you please.’”

In 1883, he held up his last stagecoach. Thanks to a feisty stagecoach driver, the happenstance of a young man wandering nearby, and the carelessness of Black Bart, his stagecoach-robbing days were over.

“Last Monday evening, the detectives of Wells Fargo & Co., of whom J.B. Hume is chief, succeeded in running down and capturing, after a long chase of about six years, one of the most noted and daring stage robbers of the country, ‘Black Bart,’ as he is generally known,” reported the *San Francisco Bulletin*, Nov. 14, 1883.

While attempting to hold up a stagecoach on November 3, he finally left behind a clue.

“As the Sonora and Milton stage was running over the mountain road a man, whose face was concealed by a flour sack that had been ripped open and cleansed, jumped from behind the thicket skirting the roadway and commanded a halt. ... The driver, McConnell, was compelled to get down from his seat, unharness the horses and drive them behind the conveyance. The robber then broke open the treasure box of Wells Fargo & Co. and took therefrom ... amalgam, valued at \$4,100 ... gold and \$550 in gold and silver coin.”

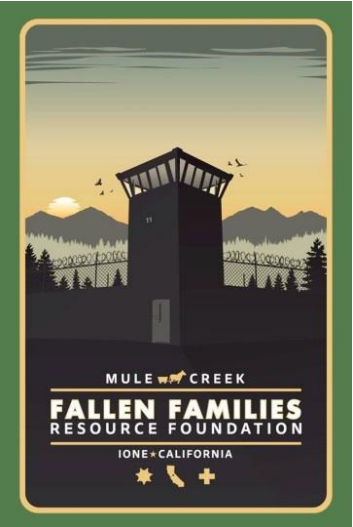


Charles “Black Bart” Boles

Be sure to catch part 3 of Black Bart’s story in next month’s edition of the Mule Creek Post

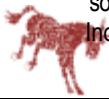
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UnCommon Law Visits Mule Creek

By Sean “Sharif” Neal, Lead Reporter and Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

ON MAY 19, 2024, representatives from the UnCommon Law nonprofit visited Mule Creek State Prison’s Facility E to provide a three-hour workshop on parole hearing readiness. The workshop served as an introduction to the UnCommon Law’s program Home After Harm, which is currently being offered in the Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad and California State Prison—Los Angeles County in Lancaster.

Keith Wattley is the executive director of the Oakland-based law firm founded in 2006 to help people prepare for the parole board. Wattley had been a lawyer for several years when he noticed something about his work with lifers.

“I realized I became more of a counselor than a lawyer,” he shared, referring to the kind of work needed to show the deep level of insight required by the Board of Parole Hearings (BPH). Home After Harm, he says, is about teaching people “how to translate the work you’ve done into language the parole board can understand.”

“People have been telling your story for you,” he says. “The hearing is the chance for you to take it back.”

Wattley could be considered an expert in the area of parole hearings: UnCommon Law’s legal team of 10 attorneys (as well as therapists and policy advocates) has helped over 300 individuals earn parole. This is in keeping with the nonprofit’s mission: To bring people home who have life sentences.

Warren Hands, a supervising parole success advocate, is one example of success. Hands served 32 years in prison before paroling in 2023, being found suitable at his third parole hearing. He remembers seeing others like him returning to prison to help guys like him, and thought to himself, “If I had the chance, I’d do the same thing.” Aiming to inspire hope in the audience, he shared that he never received a three-year denial, which many lifers consider the sign of being on one’s way

home, adding that his eventual release was earned during “the worst hearing of them all.”

Though UnCommon Law is a firm providing legal services to those with a life sentence, Hands emphasized that it is more about preparing for the parole board than it is about filing petitions in the courts. “More people go home through the board every year than go home through the courts,” he said. He points out that the same is true of commutation. During the tenure of Gov. Jerry Brown, who was the first governor to widely use his commutation power, applications increased from about 2,000 a year to over 9,000 a year. At the same time, the staff in the governor’s office to deal with applications hasn’t grown much, making the process inefficient at getting people out of prison.

UnCommon Law faces a similar problem, too: There is a long wait for its services, because the team is so small and the resources needed to prepare someone for parole so great. Wattley says he would love to provide the Home After Harm workshop in every prison, but he doesn’t have the people needed to bring the weekly, 10-month-long program into more facilities.

Fortunately, UnCommon Law makes resources available on the internet for loved ones to download and print (UnCommonLaw.org). The organization isn’t just interested in preparing people for a successful parole hearing, but getting the word out about the BPH’s policies and laws surrounding parole.

“People serving a life sentence don’t really have an advocate to help them navigate this process,” said Wattley of the parole hearing procedures. Fortunately, people like Wattley and Hands are stepping in to be those advocates.

“Having the parole board say, ‘You’ve been here 25 years, and that’s not good enough,’ that’s the ultimate rejection,” he says.

“The process is traumatic,” agrees supervising attorney Rebecca Berry. Berry has worked with UnCommon Law since it was founded in 2006. The work is personal for her, as her great-grandfather died in a South Carolina prison due to an injustice in the legal system. She primarily serves the California Institution for Men in Chino, but is motivated to bring the program everywhere it is needed. “I don’t think anyone should die in prison,” she shared.

A legal assistant with UnCommon Law since 2023, Jasmine works with Home After Harm at Salinas Valley. Despite growing up in a home with corporal punishment and developing a black-and-white worldview, she found herself working on post-conviction death penalty cases. She has come to understand that “hurt people hurt people,” she says, which explains how good people can come to do bad things.

Advice for Parole Candidates

Wattley shared some advice for those preparing to appear before the BPH, focusing on claims of innocence and on the preparation itself.

He shared the story of a well-known drug dealer in Los Angeles who was sent to prison for trying to murder someone who stole from him. The victim attended his parole hearing, during which he admitted to having made up the attack against him, supporting the man’s claim of innocence. Nevertheless, the BPH denied him parole.

At his next hearing, he left behind the argument that he hadn’t committed the crime. Instead, he discussed his social history, what led to him selling drugs and hurting people and all the other crimes that he did commit, as well as explaining the changes that he has undergone in prison. That earned him his parole.

“Don’t admit to something you didn’t do,” admonished Wattley. “The truth makes more sense. But most people don’t give enough truth.”

“Remember, these people [the BPH commissioner] are not inclined to send you home. You need to work to tip the scales.”

He also suggested preparing comprehensive parole plans, including plans for where to live, how you will find work, and how you will avoid relapse.

“Those doing book reports — please don’t write it about the book,” he smiled. “Write about how the book applied to you.”

As the day came to a close, packets of parole information were made available to attendees, and Wattley gave some final words of advice.

“If you can own what you did and why you did it, you can go home.”



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The Wordsmith

Legal Terminology

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

WHEN ONE IS caught in the act of committing a crime, the legal (and Latin) term for that act is *in flagrante delicto* — literally, “while the crime is blazing.” There are four levels of fault under the law, termed as the “the fault ladder”: malice, recklessness, negligence, not lawful.

Not Lawful: The lowest and least harmful, such as misdemeanors or other low-level offenses and general rule infractions.

Negligence: A level including both higher-level misdemeanors and lower-level felonies such as drunk driving without accident or injury. There is, however, negligent homicide. One source defines *negligence* as, “failing to exercise care of a prudent person” or “acting carelessly.”

Recklessness: Shows a complete lack of care for the consequences of one’s actions when coupled with property damage, physical injury or the death of another. Acting recklessly is often classed along with serious and violent felonies.

Malice: One dictionary defines *malice* as: “Intent to commit an unlawful act or cause harm without legal justification or excuse.”

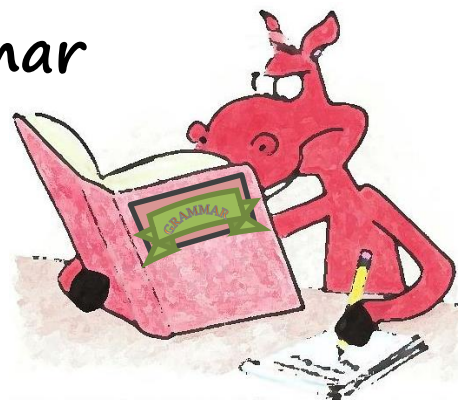
Often, when prosecutors are seeking life without parole or the death penalty, they will include in the charges the phrase “malice aforethought” (planned cruelty), which implies a deep-seated, often unexplainable, desire to see another person suffer.

Most often, the fault ladder is applied to tort claims; however, it also applies to how a prosecutor charges criminal defendants, based on the unique circumstances of each case.

Appellate courts do not exist to retry cases heard in original jurisdictions (that is, superior courts and federal district courts). Think of appellate courts as quality control over lower court’s products, which are convictions in criminal matters and judgments of equity in civil cases.

Sources: *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*; *Black’s Law Dictionary*

Big Red’s Grammar Guide



GOOD WRITING BEGINS with the basics. Here in my grammar guide are more things a writer should know. Last month, we discussed object complements. This month, we’ll talk about another kind of complement, **subject complements**, which are used with linking verbs only. (Linking verbs, you’ll remember, are all forms of *be* and, in certain situations, *appear*, *become*, *feel*, *grow*, *look*, *remain*, *smell*, *sound*, *stay*, and *taste*.) Subject complements complete (give you more information about) the subject. There are two types of subject complements: predicate adjectives and predicate nominatives.

Predicate Adjectives

A **predicate adjective** is an adjective that comes after a linking verb and describes the subject of the sentence. To find a predicate adjective, apply this formula:

1. First make sure the sentence has a linking verb.
2. Second, find the subject of the sentence.
3. Third, say the subject, say the linking verb, and then ask *what?* If the word that answers the question *what?* is an adjective, then you have a predicate adjective.

Here is an example of a predicate adjective:

Crystal is certainly intelligent.

Apply the formula for this sentence: (1) you know that *is* is a linking verb; (2) you find *Crystal* as the subject of a sentence; (3) you say *Crystal is what?* Since *intelligent* answers that question, and *intelligent* is an adjective (it describes the noun *Crystal*), then you know that *intelligent* is a predicate adjective.

Predicate Nominatives

The other type of subject complement is the **predicate nominative** (sometimes called the predicate noun). It also comes after a linking verb and gives you more information about the subject. A predicate nominative must be a noun or pronoun. Here’s the formula for finding a predicate nominative:

1. First, make sure the sentence has a linking verb.
2. Second, find the subject of the sentence.
3. Say the subject, say the linking verb, and then ask *who?* If the word that answers the question *who?* is a noun or pronoun, you have a predicate nominative.

Look at this sentence:

That man over there is DeShawn.

Apply the formula for this sentence: (1) you know that *is* is a linking verb; (2) you find *man* as the subject of the sentence; (3) you say *man is who?* Since *DeShawn* answers the question, and *DeShawn* is a noun (it names a person), then you know that *DeShawn* is a predicate nominative.

Next month, we’ll talk about the types of phrases.

Sources: *Grammar and Composition*, 4th Edition, Prentice Hall, 1990; Susan Thurman, *The Only Grammar Book You’ll Ever Need*, Adams Media, 2003; *The Associated Press Stylebook 2017*, The Associated Press, 2017; and *Essentials of English*, 5th Edition, Barron’s Educational Series, Inc., 2000

Memoirs of an Addicted Brain

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter



IN *MEMOIRS OF an Addicted Brain* (Random House Canada, 2011), author and neuroscientist Marc Lewis takes the reader on an autobiographical journey from his angst-ridden teen years in the 1960s through adulthood. He masterfully juxtaposes intensely personal vignettes of his life with concise scientific elucidation of the science behind the addictions that plagued his early life.

Lewis’s journey began with the adolescent trauma of being bullied at

(continued on page 6)

(from *Memoirs*, pg. 5)

boarding school. He coped using alcohol. Before long, he had also relished in the dissociative effects of cough syrup and later, marijuana, leading to his first arrest at 16.

Then came college in Berkeley, with drugs leading him eventually to heroin and meth, the latter his downfall. In his narrative of each drug experience, Lewis takes time to go into the science behind the effects of the drug as well as the neural mechanism that drives the addict's repetitive seeking of drugs despite consequences. His eventual arrest and his subsequent expulsion from graduate school was the rock bottom from which came redemption and a turnaround in his life.

True to the nature of addiction, throughout the book we witness relapse after relapse as the author drowned in the turbulence of addiction to emerge on the other side a scientist dedicated to the understanding of the brain's intricate inner workings as they relate to addiction, thoughts, and emotions.

The author's love of the night was later spurred by the fearlessness he experienced while on meth. He wrote about a relaxed fearlessness from danger while on meth that caused him to want to explore the night, describing the high as being "engaged, alert, stimulated, and relaxed at the same time." He attributes these effects to the interplay among dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine, all of which were effectively increased by meth. Eventually he settled on studying psychology in Toronto and getting married.

The final part of the book sees the disintegration of Lewis's marriage as he descended into the depths of addiction while pursuing his study of psychology at the University of Toronto. He would steal morphine used to euthanize lab rats where he was working. He broke into residences, medical offices, and pharmacies. Despite his brazen acts he did not get caught and went on to graduate and moved on from his marriage to another relationship that also disintegrated in the chaos of his addictive behaviors.

Finally, during an internship, his meth addiction caught up to him as he went on a binge that rendered him unable to even write a simple assessment re-

port on a new patient, the shame of which caused him to get arrested and kicked out of graduate school, and he contemplated suicide at his lowest point.

Marc Lewis's journey to adulthood was interrupted by chemical dependency, which has ensnared many adolescents, in all walks of life. The message of the book is that the brain, especially a young person's brain, is a delicate organ that can easily be wounded by drugs and lulled into chemical dependency, and while the scars of addiction are indelible, healing and sobriety are possible with help.

A life of addiction and the toll it takes on the individual and society is as relevant in Lewis's time as it is today. Our understanding of drug addiction as a disease of the brain will hopefully continue to shape our policies toward treatment instead of ostracism and criminalization. The author in this case grew up in a supportive environment of an upper middle class with all its attendant resources, financial and otherwise. What happens to those less fortunate who fill our prisons and jails? Do their lives have less redeeming value?

Many of us in prison belatedly take up reading and learning to get a grasp on how the trauma, poverty, violence, and abuse at the beginnings of our lives led us here, trying to find a way out of the darkness and prepare for integration back to society. Addressing the root cause of addiction goes beyond the biological science of the brain and beyond drug treatment. It takes pivotal concentration of resources and practical application of our understanding of the social, political, and anthropological framework that speak to issues of poverty and inequality in our society.

Source: *Memoirs of an Addicted Brain*, by Marc Lewis (Random House Canada, 2011)

The Impact of Bernard Moss

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist



ON JULY 8, 2024, Bernard Moss — friend, mentor, fellow GRIP (Guiding Rage Into Power) facilitator, and all-around good guy — passed away.

Having been incarcerated for 27 years, Bernard had a specific view of GRIP's curriculum, its participants, and the impact the program can have in the lives of those touched by it. His care, concern, and consideration were evident in how he inspired the program, starting as an incarcerated participant to his release and subsequent elevation to senior training facilitator in the GRIP organization at the time of his death.

Bernard's dedication and commitment were evident in how he engaged with others. On the 10th anniversary of my sister's death from breast cancer, I received a letter from him that offered empathy and comfort, and the recognition of how deeply loss is felt even a decade later. An example of Bernard's commitment came not long after his release during a GRIP event at San Quentin:

"Hey, Bernard, you're still here?" asked an incarcerated person as Moss walked across the yard. "Yeah," said Bernard, "I'm gonna keep coming back until every one of us is free."

They say that no person is truly gone until the last person who remembers them dies. Bernard's impact is so much greater than the people with whom he interacted. His lessons have great influence on my engagement with others, and have been quoted to hundreds of people through GRIP and other groups.

Through his work, he created a path for other incarcerated people to follow. After finding his authentic self, he gave others the space and support to find their authentic selves. He knew that before anyone could leave prison, they must first acknowledge and escape the prison of the mind — the prisons of attraction, aversion, and partiality.

In celebrating Bernard's life, many were able to acknowledge the anger felt at the circumstances surrounding his death — *If only he'd taken better care of himself*. However, loving Bernard and being angry with him for not taking better care of himself is part of grieving. In fact, there was great joy among those who mourned his death because he got out and was able to spend time with his family.

One of the lessons taught in GRIP is that no one lives a life untouched by grief, and no one gets over grief. Instead, we learn to include it in our day-to-day existence. Losing someone we love, someone close to us, someone who has meaning and impact in our lives, is one of the most difficult of things. But by holding the memory of this person who has touched our hearts, while doing our best to live in a manner that honors them, is a part of allowing endless opportunity to find grace, acceptance, and meaning in our lives.

Bernard is loved, missed, and held close in the hearts of more than can be counted. I am going to miss my friend.



Are you a GRIP graduate preparing for release, with questions about reentry, etc.?

GRIP's reentry coordinator position is open; contact

BonaFide at (415) 659-8406



PRISON
POLICY INITIATIVE

Facts about
Mass
Incarceration

By Prison Policy Initiative

OVER THE LAST 50 years, state and federal prison populations have grown by about 700%. All data below are the most recent statistics available as of April 2024. These prison incarceration rates are for the following:

- Blacks: 1,096 per 100,000 people
- Whites: 214 per 100,000 people

Of people in state prisons (2016):

- The average person has been arrested nine times
- 68% were 18 or younger at the time of their first arrest
- 33% had a parent incarcerated while they were kids
- 12% were homeless before age 18
- 22% were homeless or housing insecure shortly before incarceration
- 42% received public assistance before age 18
- 19% lived in public housing before age 18
- 40% have a physical or intellectual disability

The fraction of people in state prisons at the end of 2015 who had already served over 10 years in prison: 1 in 6. Thirty-seven percent of people in state and federal prison have been diagnosed with a mental illness (in 2017), and 49% with a substance use disorder (2016).

Mortality and aging in prisons:

- Percent that state prison deaths rose 2001 to 2018: 44%
- Percent by which deaths from illness rose: 27%; by suicide: 27%; by homicide: 208%; by drug/alcohol intoxication: 611%
- Percent by which the national state prison population rose in that same time period: 1%
- Time that each year of incarceration takes off the average person's life expectancy: 2 years (2016)

Facts about local jails

- Between 1983 and 2022, local jail populations grew by approximately 197% (i.e. nearly tripled); the main reason was use of pretrial detention
- About 5 million individuals cycle through local jails every year (2017)
- 80% of people in local jails are being held pretrial
- Median bail bond for a felony: \$10,000 (2009)
- Average income of person in jail: \$15,109 (2015)
- Yearly national cost of pretrial detention: \$13.6 billion (2017)
- Local jails incarceration rate for black people: 600 per 100,000 people; for white people: 184 per 100,000 people
- Of people booked in jail once in a typical year (2017): 12% were unemployed before arrest; 36% had annual incomes under \$10,000; 22% had a serious/moderate mental illness; 36% had a substance use disorder; 23% had no health insurance
- Of people booked in jail two or more times in a typical year (2017): 15% were unemployed before arrest

Following the money of mass incarceration:

- Cost of running the criminal legal system every year: \$182 billion (2017)
- Cost of prisons, jails, probation and parole: \$81 billion
- Cost of court systems: \$29 billion
- Cost of policing: \$63.2 billion
- Cost paid by incarcerated people and their families (for things like phone calls): \$2.9 billion
- Number of companies profiting from mass incarceration today 4,100

A Look at Mass Incarceration, Pt. 2

10 Myths about Incarceration

By Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner, Prison Policy Initiative

THE OVERCRIMINALIZATION OF drug use, the use of private prisons, and low-paid or unpaid prison labor are among the most contentious issues in the criminal legal system today because they inspire moral outrage. But they do not answer the question of why most people are incarcerated or how we can dramatically — and safely — reduce our use of confinement. Likewise, emotional responses to sexual and violent offenses often derail important conversations about the social, economic, and moral costs of incarceration and lifelong punishment. False notions of what a “violent crime” conviction means about an individual’s dangerousness continue to be used in an attempt to justify long sentences — even though incarceration does not deter crime and more incarceration is not what victims want.

Finally, simplistic solutions to reducing incarceration, such as moving people from jails and prisons to community supervision, ignore the fact that alternatives to incarceration often lead to incarceration anyway. Focusing on policy changes that can end mass incarceration, and not just put a dent in it, requires the public to put these issues into perspective.

- The First Myth: Private prisons are the corrupt heart of mass incarceration. In fact, just 8 percent of all incarcerated people are held in private prisons; the vast majority are in publicly owned prisons and jails.
- The Second Myth: Prisons are “factories behind fences” existing to provide companies with a huge slave labor force. Only about 6,000 people in prison — less than 1 percent — are employed by private companies. A larger portion work for state-owned “correctional industries,” which pay much less, but this still only represents about 6 percent of people incarcerated in state prisons.
- The Third Myth: Releasing “nonviolent drug offenders” would end mass incarceration. Drug offenses account for the incarceration of 360,000 people; 4 out of 5 people in prison or jail are locked up for something other than a drug offense — either a more serious offense or an even less serious one.
- The Fourth Myth: By definition, “violent crime” involves physical harm. In reality, state and federal laws apply the term “violent” to a surprisingly wide range of criminal acts — including many that don’t involve any physical harm. That alone is a fallacy, but worse, these terms are also used as coded (often racialized) language to label individuals as inherently dangerous versus non-dangerous.

(continued on page 8)

PEN America Prison Writing Program

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(From **Incarceration**, page 7)

- The Fifth Myth: People in prison for violent or sexual crimes are too dangerous to be released. People convicted of violent and sexual offenses are actually among the least likely to be rearrested and those convicted of rape or sexual assault have rearrest rates 20 percent lower than all other offense categories combined.
- The Sixth Myth: Reforming the criminal legal system leads to more crime. In general, violent crime has remained remarkably steady over the last 15 years; property crime has trended steeply downward and remains near historic lows, with the exception of auto theft.
- The Seventh Myth: Harsh punishments deter crime, making us safer. In 2016, the National Institute of Justice summarized the research on deterrence, finding that prison sentences, and especially long prison sentences, do little to deter crime.
- The Eighth Myth: Crime victims support long prison sentences. Contrary to popular myth, most victims of violence want violence prevention, not incarceration.
- The Ninth Myth: Some people need to go to jail to get treatment and services. Jails and prisons are designed for punishment, not care. Incarceration tends to interrupt ongoing outside care. Treatment availability in jails and prisons is minimal.
- The Tenth Myth: Expanding community supervision is the best way to reduce incarceration. Statistics found that almost a quarter (24 percent) of people in state prisons were on probation at the time of their arrest, underscoring how this “alternative to incarceration” often simply delays incarceration.



Who is Your Favorite Facilitator?

Maybe He’s Like Cinnamon the Tour Guide Cat

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

CINNAMON RESIDES AT Foxglove Farm in Garrison, New York, an Airbnb along the Appalachian Trail about an hour north of New York City. While he has no official duties there and is not on the paid staff, he nevertheless chooses to guide guests on walking tours of the trail through the forested hills. His guided tours are never hurried; in fact, he encourages guests to go slowly and appreciate the innate beauty of the landscape, to “smell the flowers” so to speak, and to stay on the trail so no one gets lost. Cinnamon is, of course, an 11-year-old orange tabby whose fame has spread everywhere through the social media posts of former guests.

“Went with my partner upstate and the Airbnb host’s cat took us for a guided hike along the Appalachian Trail,” posted Sebastian S. Cocioba on X, formerly Twitter. “Apparently this is what he does with every guest. He would complain when we took a wrong turn off the trail and knew the way back. Amazing cat I would apocalypse with [him].”

“I call him the concierge, because he just loves people,” said Airbnb owner Trisha Mulligan, an herbalist and ethnobotanist. “And there’s something about an orange cat that’s very social, and we have a very social cat.”

“We were thrilled to have her sweet kitty walk with us on the trail for a bit so we got to check off hiking with a cat from our bucket list,” posted one guest. “We had an amazing time with [Cinnamon] who went on a hike with us, coolest cat on earth,” posted another.

“I tell people, he’s gonna slow you down because he’s gotta look at stuff and he’s gotta pose,” said Mulligan. “I’ve had people that are hiking that really do slow down and be with him, which is kind of my thing. I’ve had other people say, ‘Oh my god, we were hiking and lost, but Cinnamon wouldn’t let us get lost.’”

When I heard this story on NPR’s *Morning Edition*, I was reminded of my favorite group facilitator here at Mule Creek. He, too, patiently guides group participants over and through the sometimes-unfamiliar trails of recovery from addiction and criminality. If ever I got lost, he was always there to guide me back.

Who is your favorite facilitator? The editors of the *Mule Creek Post* would like to know. Please send us a paragraph or more about the person who has been your tour guide on the trail to recovery.

Oh, and here are pictures of Cinnamon and my favorite facilitator. Is it just me, or is there a resemblance?



Cinnamon,
Tour Guide Cat



Jesse Carson,
Facilitator

What are America’s Top Dog Breeds?

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

IT USED TO be a no-brainer — America’s top dog breed for three decades running was the Labrador retriever. Dominance as the nation’s favorite K9 ended last year when the French bulldog took top spot. In 2024, it’s the Frenchy once again.

Here are the top dogs in order:



Labrador retrievers (YourPurebredPuppy.com)

1. The French bulldog stands about 12 inches tall at 28 pounds, with a short coat of smooth hair. They love children and are well mannered with other dogs.
2. The Labrador retriever is nearly 25 inches tall at almost 80 pounds. They are also good with children and other dogs.
3. The golden retriever is just a bit smaller than the Labrador, and just as loving of people and other pets. They’re well known for their long, silky hair.
4. The German shepherd is another medium-sized dog known for being highly trainable, a useful trait for law enforcement and the military.
5. The poodle comes in three sizes: toy, miniature, and standard. Known for their curly hair, this very intelligent breed loves families and children.

What’s your favorite breed? The *Mule Creek Post* would like to know. In 300 words or less, tell us about your favorite pet, past or present. It does not have to be a dog, but be sure to tell us a story about the animal, something memorable our readers might enjoy.



By Richard “Lonewolf” Legan,
Post Columnist

ROSE PETAL JAM is simple to make and is delicious. Ingredients for this recipe are readily available.

- 2 cups rose petal (domestic or wild)
- 2 cups warm water
- 2 ½ cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

Simmer all ingredients in pan for at least 10 minutes then strain off juice and add pectin. Return to heat, slowly cooking until thick, then pour into containers; let cool — seal and save. I’ve also made wonderful arrows from wild rose stems: They are strong and can be made straight easily; they fly nicely.

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.



(iStockPhoto.com)



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
SupportPWA.org



Warming World Worries

CLIMATE CHANGE IS an irrefutable fact of life. No longer a theory open for debate, it has become a global calamity wreaking havoc on lives and livelihoods with increasing frequency. Weather disasters are not sporadic incidents anymore. Floods and fires rage across the continents, destroying entire towns and killing hundreds of people. Most scientists say this is all the result of warming caused by burning fossil fuels and the release of carbon dioxide (CO₂), which now forms a trillion-ton-thick blanket around the earth, trapping heat and raising air and water temperatures to record levels.

At the same time, there is encouraging news. Emissions of greenhouse gases are down 3%, but recent statistics indicate more planetary peril. May 2023 to April 2024 posted the highest 12-month average temperature on record. The real culprit is the buildup of CO₂. Figures from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration showed the largest increase of this greenhouse gas since measurements began in 1958. California was cooler than the rest of the world, which sweltered in unseasonal heat. With four months of records already set, 2024 will likely surpass 2023 as the warmest year ever.

A heat wave in Asia in early May grabbed headlines: Schools were closed, crops failed, and hundreds died while records were shattered by weeks of triple digits. Max Herrera, weather historian, described the phenomenon as “by far the most extreme event in world weather history, caused by a mix of global warming and El Niño.”

In Canada, hot, dry conditions in the spring created the prospect of more summer wildfires; last year, blazes erupted in Alberta and British Columbia, prompting the evacuation of 10,000 inhabitants.

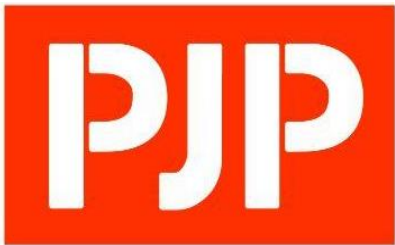
Higher ocean temperatures increased evaporation, which intensifies rainfall. Downpours in southern Brazil forced half a million people out of their homes and will take months to recede. Flash floods in Afghanistan killed hundreds and swept away entire villages. Both of these locations rank among the 10 most vulnerable to climate change.

On the positive side, global energy production from renewables was at an all-time high of 30%: One out of three kilowatts generated came from wind or solar. This milestone coincided with the opening of South Fork Wind Farm, off Montauk Point, New York. This first commercial installation will produce enough power to supply 107,000 homes. Even though emissions have been reduced, the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere continues to increase and harm the planet. A promising solution is carbon capture, the high tech removal of this CO₂ from the air. The first large-scale direct air capture (DAC) plant in the U.S. is operated by Heirloom, in Tracy, California. Inside the futuristic facility, robots travel around 40-foot columns containing trays of limestone mineral powder. They act like sponges, absorbing the CO₂ at the rate of 1,000 tons per year; the residue is effectively converted into concrete. An industry specialist at Heirloom, C. Theuer, says, “We must work towards getting to net zero emissions. Then move into cleaning up legacy pollution (the trillion-ton blanket surrounding the Earth).”

To reverse warming, billions of tons need removal. In Iceland, a Swiss startup, Climeworks, built the largest DAC plant in the world. Called Mammoth, the facility was launched May 10, 2024, and is located on a dormant volcano. The removal process is energy-intensive and relies on a nearby geothermal power station. The electricity runs the giant fans and heats chemical filters that use water vapor to extract CO₂. It is then compressed and dissolved in water for injection, 2,000 feet down into the volcanic subsoil. Climeworks will use the lessons it learns at Mammoth to increase the capacity for CO₂ removal to megatons by 2030, and gigatons by 2050. Startup and operating costs are high but are expected to go down.

There are questions about carbon capture feasibility. Will it divert funds from solutions, such as electric vehicles and sustainable energy? Is it wise to invest billions in DAC while there is uncertainty if it will remove enough carbon to halt warming? Will it keep humanity from reducing the use of fossil fuels? Climate problems keep getting bigger and more expensive, yet a livable world is worth whatever it costs.

Sources: *L.A. Times*, Climate California, May 4, 2024; *CBS Science*, May 2 and May 10, 2024; *New York Times*, May 10, 2024



Starting a Prison Publication

Part 3
By Prison Journalism Project

SO YOU’VE CAUGHT the journalism bug and you’d like to start an inside newspaper. But how do you begin? Here in part 3 of PJP’s Quick Guide, you’ll learn more about what we’ve learned about prison newspaper style and content, necessary resources and partnerships, timelines and much more.

Newsroom Roles

Here are some staff positions typically found on a prison publication:

- **Supervising Editor:** Filled by a prison employee who will facilitate volunteer participation and equipment. The position is also sometimes called a facility sponsor or liaison.
- **Volunteer Advisor(s):** This is a person outside who has a journalism background, something your supervising editor or facility sponsor will likely lack.
- **Editor-in-Chief:** This lead editor oversees the editorial and operations teams and is the main point of contact with the supervising editor and prison administration. On a small team, this person will also manage submissions and edit stories. The best writers don’t always make the best editors. An ideal editor commands respect from others in the community, is a good decision-maker, and has common sense.
- **Section Editors:** As your staff grows, you may want to add more editors who can be in charge of different sections of the publication. One recommended position is an editor in charge of writer development to help newer writers revise their stories.
- **Layout Designer/Art Director:** This person is re-

sponsible for the look of the publication by picking art and photographs and laying them out with the stories for each issue.

- **Staff Writers:** Multiple people fill this role to produce content for the newspaper. They will be assigned some stories and will pitch their own ideas, too. They attend staff meetings and training.

Newsroom Management

- **Decision Making:** The newspaper teams we consulted recommended that the staff discuss story selection and layout together, but the final decision should be made by the lead editor, since they are ultimately responsible for the publication. One person, ideally the editor-in-chief, should act as staff liaison to the prison administration.
- **In-House Editorial Guide:** Every newsroom should have an editorial guide that outlines policies and sets guidelines about the publication’s preferences on spelling, capitalization, and other formatting rules. This ensures that your publication looks consistent in style and avoids confusion.
- **Meetings:** Regular meetings are necessary to assign stories and other responsibilities. The frequency of meetings will depend on the size of your team. Most newsrooms meet weekly or biweekly. Set an agenda before each meeting so you can stay focused. Appoint someone to take notes. Recording minutes helps build institutional knowledge.
- **Publication Schedule and Other Timelines:** It will take a lot more time and effort than you think to put an issue together. Publishing monthly will likely be a challenge because an administration’s approval process can get bumpy. If a facility’s public information officer doesn’t get to it right away, it can delay publication. The printer may also set deadlines to process the order in time to make a specific distribution date. Consider starting with fewer issues. You can always build frequency later.

Training Your Staff: There are many possible approaches to training. We suggest starting by building a library of writing resources:

- *A Prison Writer’s Guide to Media Writing*, PJP’s definitive resource for doing journalism behind bars, was published in early 2024. The handbook includes a style guide, a breakdown of editing processes, story templates and a self-paced course with 18 lessons on reporting and writing that you can complete to receive three certificates. Send a request to PJP if you would like to enroll in the certification course and receive the handbook; we will do our best to accommodate your request.
- *PJP Inside*, our print newspaper, provides instruction in its “Learn” section in addition to showcasing exemplary stories published by PJP writers.
- *The Sentences That Create Us: Crafting a Writer’s Life in Prison* from PEN America (Haymarket Books, 2022) provides tips, advice and essays from prison writers.

Instruction from Outside Volunteers: Consider reaching out to educators in your facility or college in-prison programs to see if they could offer a writing, editing, or journalism class. Local media organizations might also hold workshops for you. *San Quentin News*, for example, partners with University of California, Berkeley, journalism instructors to offer an Introduction to Journalism course every semester. Additional master classes and workshops are available as opportunities arise. “You want to bring freeworld journalists in because inside journalists are still learning,” *San Quentin News* Editor-in-Chief Steve Brooks said. “They give us a lot of skills in a way that a textbook can’t do. And a journalist with an outside perspective helps keep our minds balanced, which is sometimes missing because of the limitations of our freedom.”

Writing Buddy System: *The Endeavor* uses a peer-support approach. “Every writer is assigned a buddy,” Gervasio Torres Jr. said. “Once you’re written an article, you turn it over to your buddy. It is his responsibility to read and make any suggestions of content, structure, and grammar. Once the buddy has made his light edits, he will return it to the assigned writer to make any corrections before the piece is turned over to the editors. This allows for each article to go through a pre-editing process and help writers better their skills.”

Acknowledgements

PJP thanks the following current and former newspaper staff members for their contributions:

<i>The Angolite</i> (La.) Jeffrey Dale Hillburn	<i>The M.A.C. News</i> (S.C.) Gary Farlow	<i>The Prison Mirror</i> (Minn.) L. Maurice Martin
<i>The Endeavor</i> (Fla.) Ryan Moser Gervasio Torres Jr.	<i>Mule Creek Post</i> (Calif.) David Babb Jesse Carson Al Rice	<i>San Quentin News</i> (Calif.) Steve Brooks Jesse Vasquez
<i>The Inside Report</i> (Colo.) Bob Eisenman Evan Lawlor JoyBelle Phelan	<i>The Nash News</i> (N.C.) Brian Scott Timothy Johnson Phillip Vance Smith II	

Interleague Softball Is Back



By Sean “Sharif” Neal, Lead Reporter

ON JUNE 1, 2024, facilities D and E treated incarcerated residents on Facility E to an exciting 14-inning game of softball.

The game began with what looked like a runaway victory for E players when they scored the first 30 runs by the fifth inning. However, things changed and the game became more competitive when Facility D made a pitching change in the sixth that significantly slowed down E’s scoring drives and increased their own, bringing the score to 30-20. However, that would be all the runs D could score due to the heroic defensive play by the third baseman, who gunned out runners from his knees and made spectacular diving plays that prevented any chance of a D comeback.

D’s heroes’ defense and scoring kept their team in the game. One hit a two-run homer, and another hit a triple — all in the eighth inning.

The final score was 30-20 in favor of Team E, who held on for the victory over their crosstown rivals.



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

Dying To Get Out

By Mark Daigre, Feature Reporter

WORLDWIDE, SOME 30 million people will be released from prison this year. Most will depart much the same as they entered: poor and likely under-educated, sick with diseases like HIV and hepatitis C, and possibly suffering from some form of mental illness.

In an April 2024 paper published in *Lancet*, researchers closely examined the records of nearly 1.5 million people released from prison from 1980 through 2018, in Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, Sweden and the United States.

These formerly incarcerated people were tracked for an average of seven years after being released and the researchers found that the deadliest time period for the recently-released was the first week of freedom.

The death rate in that first week of freedom was more than double the death rate after just one month. The leading causes of death were drug and alcohol overdoses in every country but Brazil, where violence was the leading cause of death for recently freed people.

Over time, the death rate from overdosing on drugs and alcohol remained high, but were overtaken by suicide, accidents, and disease combined.

One suggestion to reduce this high death rate, in general, and the number of opiate overdoses in specific, is to provide each paroled person a kit containing naloxone, a drug that treats opioid overdose. This approach was recently taken by Canada, and the results of that study are not yet available. However, if people are dying from opiate overdose, then providing them with the means to prevent overdosing seems like a good idea.

What makes even more sense is improvement of the medical, dental, and mental health care provided by the state to incarcerated individuals, as well as enhancement of education and vocational programs available to incarcerated people. If returning citizens are physically and mentally healthy, they have the tools necessary for them to live drug- and alcohol-free, so those who have learned how to acquire and use marketable skills can become valued and productive members of their communities.

Yet another study, from the Netherlands, found that time in prison had no net effect on a released prisoner’s health; people who went to prison sick, came out sick.

One massive step that could be taken to improve the well-being of our most disaffected citizens is to provide quality medical and mental health care inside. When released, the formerly incarcerated are then equipped — physically, mentally, and emotionally — to integrate back into society.

Sources: *The Economist*, April 13, 2024; Rohan Borschmann and Stuart Kinner, *Lancet*, April 2024.

U.S. Drug Overdoses on Decline

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

FOR THE FIRST time since 2018, the nationwide deaths caused by drug overdoses decreased from one year to the next, said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The numbers — according to data the CDC released May 15 — indicate a 3-percent reduction in these deaths between 2022 and 2023, from 111,029 to 107,543. For the nearly 4,000 Americans still alive today this is good news, yet the numbers remain “catastrophically high,” said Kevin Roy of Shatterproof, an addiction-treatment nonprofit organization.

Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are easily available and cheap, which is why they are found in other street drugs, like cocaine and methamphetamine, and these synthetic versions account for two out of every three overdose fatalities. “We have to look out for what’s next,” said Dr. Mandy Cohen, director of the CDC, “because we tackle fentanyl, and then xylazine comes. ... We have to stay ahead and stay vigilant.”

Despite the decrease in overdose deaths across the nation as a whole, some Western states experienced a frightening spike of 27% or higher. Alaska, Oregon, and Washington all had large increases in 2023 from the previous year. Still, the general trend is encouraging as we get further from the early days of COVID-19. “There was a big increase during the pandemic, because people were

(continued on page 12)

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.



(from *Overdoses Decline*, pg. 11)
scared and traumatized and out of work,” said Dr. Joshua Sharfstein of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. “That is resolving, so that is helping overdoses go down.” Sharfstein also credits the distribution and use of naloxone as an opioid-reversal agent, and opioid-substitute medications such as buprenorphine. Other preventive actions include cheap fentanyl test strips that make it easier for users to test for fentanyl before ingestion.

Fewer American deaths is encouraging, but there’s still a long way to go. Our health experts know this, and they continue to monitor the situation and work to resolve the crisis. “We’re working hard, so I’m glad to see it’s a small reduction,” said Cohen. “It’s a start, but we have more work to do there and I want that to continue.”

Names Can Affect Grades

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

A STUDY FROM the University of Michigan indicates that our last names can affect our academic grades. Co-author of the study associate professor Jun Li shares the following details from his research:

More than 30 million grades from the university were analyzed. Names ranked lower alphabetically tended to get lower grades. The study revealed this was due to “sequential grading bias,” based on using the online management tool Canvas, which by default ranks student assignments by last names. Students whose surnames began with letters A through E had 0.3 higher grades when not randomly graded. This, when compared to students whose surnames began with letters that occur after the letter E, resulted in 0.3 lower grades, a gap of 0.6.

What does this mean? It shows that there is a grading-bias toward these students that may disadvantage them and affect further academic and career opportunities. Educators need to become aware of biases like these and institute fairer systems of grading.

Source: *Management Science Magazine*, Univ. of Michigan, 2024.

What Happens at the Board

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

WHEN ANYONE GOES before the Board of Parole Hearings, they are asking to be let out of prison. For that to happen, board commissioners need to believe the person will not create harm in the community. This is a big ask of the person seeking release, and a huge responsibility for the board. Commissioners often err on the side of caution with denials that seem capricious and unfair. The reality is they are not comfortable in saying, “I am confident this person will no longer create harm for anyone.”

As incarcerated people, it’s our responsibility to live our lives in such a manner that someone can look at what we did to be put in prison, what we have done while in prison, the coping skills we have attained along the way, and what our plans are once released. With the answers to these questions, the board can easily come to the conclusion that we can safely be released into the community.

In order to come to any conclusion, the board has been directed by the governor’s office and state legislature to establish a consistent and fair metric for evaluating the potential dangerousness of any person coming before them, regardless of commitment crime, social station, or economic background. The Structured Decision Making Format is that tool. While not strictly score-based, it is designed to give commissioners a basis upon which to form decisions whether to grant parole. Included in the framework is the comprehensive risk assessment (or “psych eval”) performed by a forensic psychologist.

Each of the seven areas of the format are rated as *aggravating* (actions by the incarcerated person that are either not helpful or actually damage their bid to a grant of parole by the board); *mitigating* (which actually helps the case of the incarcerated person’s request to be released); or *neutral* (that the action in question has no effect one way or the other in regards to the incarcerated person’s request for parole by the board). These seven areas are as follow:

- **Criminal and Parole History:** How old were you when you started committing crimes? Have you ever been paroled before? If so, how long were you out? How long is the interval between your crimes? Did the severity of your crimes escalate?
- **Offender Self-Control:** Did you (or do you) use drugs and alcohol as coping mechanisms? What was/is your problem-solving matrix — is it successful and non-harming? Is there any history of sexual deviance in your life?
- **Programming:** Do you participate in available self-help programs; at this point in time there are numerous programs available to each and every incarcerated person, not just in-person groups, but a large number of correspondence programs available as well.
- **Institutional Behavior:** Any serious misconduct in your prison history needs to be addressed, specific attention will be paid to recent episodes of documented misconduct — rules violation reports and custodial counseling reports from the last three to five years.
- **Offender Change:** Have you actually changed? Or are you fighting back against any suggestion that the way you have always viewed the world might be warped and possibly dangerous?
- **Release Plan:** Do you have a concrete, effective, and attainable plan for when you are released from prison? Where are you going to live, work, and recreate both during and after transitional housing?
- **Case-Specific Factors:** These are unique to each individual. Are there any case-specific factors that increase or decrease your potential dangerousness if/when released into the community?
- **Victim/DA Considerations:** Has the victim, victim’s next of kin, or the DA provided reliable information that speaks to your being dangerous as you are today?

It is not enough to walk into the boardroom and say, “I’ve changed.” Each person going before the board needs to give proof of the change that has happened that makes them a reasonable risk to be released. We can provide this proof by not getting into trouble, actively seeking change, and learning new and non-harmful ways to engage ourselves and the world around us. The proof of our change is how we walk, how we talk, and how we treat other people.

Ask yourself, Am I ready to be released from prison? Does my behavior show the change I must internalize to reintegrate into society? Would I want the person that I am today living next door to someone I love?

Remember, there is always work to be done to improve our communication style, and work that each can do to help ensure we will not find ourselves in a situation where creating harm seems like a viable option.

Awareness Into Domestic Abuse

P.O. Box 5323
Sacramento, CA 95817 • Free Correspondence Course Available •





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.

Maya Emig writes a monthly column for the Mule Creek Post focusing on Board of Parole Hearings issues. For more information about the BPH, write:

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For more information regarding the Board of Parole Hearings, write to:

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
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To improve is to
change; to be perfect
is to change often.

— Winston Churchill

Constructing Mental Health Management Plans, Pt. 2

By Maya Emig, Post Columnist

WHY IS A mental health management plan important? It’s important to be an active participant in your mental health management. The plan documents an understanding of your mental health issues, in conjunction with a tangible representation that identifies your triggers, your coping skills, and how you plan to address mental health symptoms when they develop, along with a support network of people who will help assist you in maintaining your stability.

Here is the part-two continuation of my article on constructing mental health management plans:

Step 3: Write about how things are when experiencing symptoms.

What are signs I am depressed?

- I don’t feel motivated
- I isolate
- I don’t maintain hygiene — especially not showering
- It’s difficult for me to do everyday things
- I feel lonely
- I feel sad
- I say negative things to myself like “You are not good enough,” “This is never going to work,” “This isn’t worth all the work, just to be shot down again”
- I stay in bed, and tell people I am sick
- I have a hard time following my daily routine

Step 4: Write about the things that may be happening before you experience actual symptoms.

How do I know when depression might be coming on?

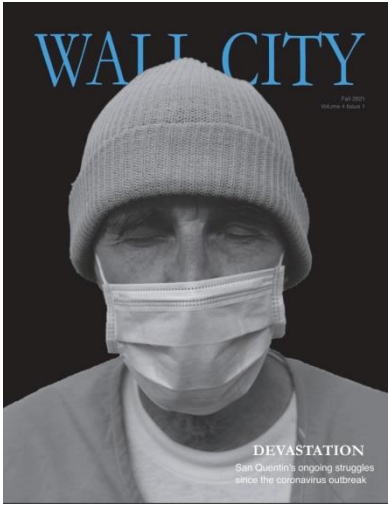
- My emotions feel bigger than they normally are — little things feel big and overwhelming
- Having conversations with people is draining for me, and I feel relief when I am by myself
- I have more stress in my life than usual, or something particularly stressful is going on and I feel overwhelmed
- It’s that time of the year again — the anniversary of the life crime, the anniversary of my mother’s death, the holidays — and I know from previous years that the holidays are particularly hard for me
- My father’s progressive disease is advancing and I know the end of his life is near

Step 5: Identify the ways you can help yourself manage the onset of depression or what you can do if you find yourself already deep in the depression.

When I am feeling depressed, I can:

- Reach out to my support network to tell them I am having stress in my life and to please check in regularly with me regarding my depression
- Get to my therapist to talk about my father’s progression and how I am having a hard time dealing with his eventual death
- Get extra sleep so I have energy to deal with these extra emotions
- Eat healthy food and get exercise so that I can burn off some of the extra stress my body is holding onto
- Journal about my feelings so that I can process them in real time and reflect on them
- Write in my gratitude journal every night before going to sleep
- Set up a plan to avoid isolating and make sure I call friends more. Make sure I tell people about what I am going through and that I would appreciate it if they check on me, and make an effort to go to work or do groups even when I do not feel like it

Part 3 will continue in the September 2024 edition of the Mule Creek Post.



The Uncaged
Writer

Wall City
Magazine
Reimagined

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

IN LATE JUNE, Pollen Initiative Editorial Director Kate McQueen agreed to a brief Q&A with the *Mule Creek Post*, allowing a peek behind the curtain of the new *Wall City* magazine operations, sharing an overview of some of the processes and publishing vision.

KM (Kate McQueen): I'm the editorial director at Pollen Initiative. We're a nonprofit organization that grew out of the San Quentin media center, to establish and support media centers in other prisons around the state and country. Our executive director, Jesse Vasquez, spent 20 years inside and worked as editor-in-chief of *San Quentin News* before his sentence was commuted. *Wall City* magazine is one of a handful of Pollen projects, and close to my heart because I volunteered with the magazine for years when it was produced inside San Quentin. In addition to the magazine, I'm also part of the new media center and journalism guild at the Central California Women's Facility, and our reboot of the historic American Penal Press Contest (which was like the Pulitzers behind bars from 1965-1991). We will open for submissions by the end of the summer.

Pollen Initiative is in the process of reimagining *Wall City* magazine. We're developing it from a news-centered print publication to a digital documentary arts magazine that publishes two stories a month. There are a couple of reasons for the shift: we want to accept submissions from writers and artists incar-

cerated anywhere in California, not just San Quentin Rehabilitation Center. That requires outside project management. And we want our contributors to have the freedom to report, explain, celebrate, and critique the world around them across a variety of media and forms. That includes textual, visual, and audio storytelling. A digital publication gives us that flexibility. We're hoping to launch the new *Wall City* later this summer. It will be available on Edovo, in case readers are interested in checking it out.

MCP (*Mule Creek Post*): Why is prison journalism and writing important?

KM: Journalists on the outside simply don't have the access or the understanding necessary to provide accurate, nuanced information about the prison system. Outside audiences need this kind of information to make truly informed decisions about the way their communities manage law enforcement. The flipside of this is that prisons are news deserts in need of some care; incarcerated people need access to high-quality information just like free people, to make better decisions in their own lives and to promote democratic engagement.

MCP: Have you seen and experienced an increased interest in this field?

KM: Yes, I have! I think general audiences have always had an interest in knowing about life behind the walls. But editors today seem to have more interest in putting the extra work needed to develop stories with writers inside. It can sometimes be a heavy lift, but ultimately worth it.

MCP: What kinds of adversities have you and your contributors encountered in efforts to advance prison reporting and publishing?

KM: Communication is always an obstacle. Snail mail is slow. Phone time is limited. Sometimes it can take years to develop good stories. Tablets are making it easier in some ways, but they aren't a substitute for a laptop and email. You need patience and stamina to do this work.

MCP: In a field where ethics and honor matter, how can prison journalism advance the cause for free speech and democratic values?

KM: The public today tends to be suspicious of the media, right from the start. There is no margin for error in this work. That is doubly true for prison journalists, for reasons that are probably clear to your readers. A prison journalist's credibility is everything. Luckily, there are a number of protections, including things like maintaining a deep commitment to accuracy in your work, always questioning your own assumptions, and staying curious.

MCP: What are some opportunities available for prison writers and journalists?

KM: I think prison journalists are like everyone else in the field, in the sense that they can report, interpret, and comment on their world around them for their audiences. As long as language can be shared, there is opportunity for that. Prison media centers and prison journalism programming are on the rise, which means incarcerated people can get the kind of training necessary to develop stories that will attract outside editors. Journalism is a profession that people can actually practice from inside now.

MCP: What would you like to see happen most working with *Wall City*?

KM: I want readers to come away with a much deeper understanding of California's prison system — the role it played in creating mass incarceration in the U.S., but also an understanding that prison culture is different in California than in other states. I imagine general readers haven't thought about the fact that California has 32 prisons, and depending on where they are located and who resides there, the vibe is very different. *Wall City* can be a place where we make all of California's cities behind walls visible, and in doing so hopefully generate curiosity, conversations, and ultimately a vested interest in improving the lives of people who live there.

MCP: What are you most optimistic about as your look forward?

KM: A lot of publications fall into a pattern with a certain type of story. I'm excited about *Wall City's* ability to tell more unexpected stories. We are looking to publish pieces driven by curiosity, humor, nuance, and a desire to dig deep.

MCP: Any additional comments, guidance, or tips you'd like to share?

KM: Stay curious — it's the best engine for good writing!



Pollen Initiative Editorial Director Kate McQueen



Pollen Initiative Executive Director
Jesse Vasquez

Freedom Long Overdue

By Fabian Garcia, Spanish Reporter

ON JUNE 4, 2024, after serving nearly 30 years of a life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) sentence, Darrell Shepherd, 67, walked out of the Mule Creek State Prison a free man. Through changing legislation in California, as well as help from All of Us or None — an organization fighting to restore the civil and human rights of formerly and currently incarcerated people and their families — he accomplished his goals.

Shepherd knew during the onset of his incarceration that what he coveted most was a sense of purpose to his newfound reality. Staying positive and bettering himself would more than suffice; he signed up for an anger management course while at San Quentin State Prison’s reception center. Throughout his time in California prisons, self-help courses continued to be the focal point of his incarceration, in addition to a positive state of mind.

Essentially sentenced to die in prison, it’s clear there were no incentives for Shepherd to stay out of trouble. Given that, he hasn’t received any rules violation reports since 2009, and it paid off for him. In 2022, upon hearing that his LWOP sentence was changed to life with the possibility of parole, he now had two years to prepare for his Board of Parole Hearings; only that was two years too many. “I’ve been preparing myself for a long time while serving my LWOP sentence,” explained Shepherd. “When I received the good news, I was prepared to go to the board that same day,” he added.

During the hearing in early 2024, the commissioners asked Shepherd what inspired him to get started with self-help groups and positive programming while serving an LWOP sentence. “Every time I looked into my tunnel, it was completely dark,” he recounted. “I made it my goal to try to find a light.” And that light eventually led to his freedom, because the panel saw for themselves the genuine change he’d made.

Fast-forward two years and Shepherd was able to share how he felt about getting released

from prison after 30 years. “I feel happy, anxious, and afraid all at once,” he said. “Although I’ve paroled from prison before, I plan on making a positive impact on society this time.” Those fortunate to have met Shepherd can attest to his deserving the chance at life in the free world.

It is ingrained in us to literally and figuratively pick ourselves up after we fall, all the while working on strengthening our balance. And, after three extensive — yet purposeful — decades of incarceration, Darrell Shepherd walking the walk with foolproof balance.

Talking BPH with Robert Arvizu

By Fabian Garcia, Spanish Reporter

A COMMON MISCONCEPTION among incarcerated lifers preparing for the Board of Parole Hearings is believing their fate rests entirely in the hands of others. Robert Arvizu, 57, currently serving a life sentence at the High Desert State Prison, sat down with the *Mule Creek Post* to provide some clarification and insight on the matter, including the importance that a well-structured parole plan has on one’s success going before the board.



MCP (*Mule Creek Post*): You’ve never actually gone in front of a BPH panel, correct?

RA (*Robert Arvizu*): Yes, that’s correct.

MCP: Yet, you’re the person many lifers go to for advice when preparing their parole plan packet. How’s that so?

RA: It all started in 2018 when my previous cellie, a HUB mentor, took the time to share transcripts of his previous board denials with me, along with those of others he was helping at the time. This showed me how properly structuring your parole plans can affect the outcome. It was then that I realized how I could be of service to others.

MCP: What have you learned from all of those denied parole transcripts that you’ve read over time?

RA: That there tends to be a lot of repetition throughout the parole plans, as well as an inability to articulate remorse for their crimes.

MCP: Are there any other common themes in some of those denial transcripts that you’ve read?

RA: In most denials I’ve read, the main theme has circled around people high-lighting all of the self-help groups they’ve accomplished and the certificates of completion they’ve amassed; all without getting into detail on how those groups have helped them internalize and gain insight to what led them to commit those crimes in the first place. Another repeated pattern I saw were the missed opportunities to fully elaborate on the changes that they’ve made in their lives.

MCP: Is there a BPH plan that you’ve helped put together that stands out to you that you’d like to share with me?

RA: Yes, a friend of mine who has paroled, in his first draft’s section, where he took ownership of his crime, he sounded borderline boastful. Personally knowing him for years, I knew he wasn’t trying to come off that way. This is why I emphasize that being careful with words like “murdered” or “killed” is very important to remember when assembling your parole plans.

MCP: Could you elaborate on that?

RA: Sure. Even though a person has remorse for their victim — including the victim’s family — and is genuinely making an attempt to take ownership of their crime, emphasizing on word choice is very important. It’s about being truthful, while appropriate at the same time. You have to be able to hear yourself from a different perspective, by paying attention to the message you’re trying to get across while examining how exactly it is that you’re saying it.

MCP: So, in essence, you help others express on paper what they truly feel inside?

RA: Yes, because that can be hard to do. Most people can express themselves verbally, but with writing, they tend to stray from what they really want to say.

MCP: That’s really interesting. We want to thank you for the time you’ve given us, as well as the information that you’ve shared today. Have you any last words for our readers?

RA: One last thought for those going to the Board: If you’re having a hard time putting your plans together, find someone you trust to help you express what you want on paper.

Remember, quality not quantity, and keep moving forward.

Understanding Your CRA

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane,
Life Support Alliance

THIS ARTICLE IS intended to assist incarcerated people who will receive a compressive risk assessment (CRA, or “psych eval”) prior to a parole hearing, as there has been a great deal of misinformation and anxiety about the CRA process.

What Is the FAD and the CRA?

- The Forensic Assessment Division (FAD) is a division of Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) created in 2006, made up of 60 psychologists.
- The FAD began interviews and creating reports on lifers in 2007.
- FAD psychologists are fully licensed and recruited from a variety of sources, including clinical psychologists previously working in the state prisons.
- Clinicians are answerable only to the BPH, not to entities such as the California Board of Psychology.
- The risk assessment is a report to the parole board prior to a hearing that summarizes the history, post-incarceration behavior, risk rating, and chances of reoffending of the prisoner under parole consideration.
- Risk ratings are noted at three levels: *low* (about 27% of those evaluated), *moderate* (about 58%), and *high* (about 17%).

Purpose and Scope of the CRA

- The purpose of the CRA is to assist the board in decision making regarding the degree of risk to public safety an incarcerated person appears to present at the time of the evaluation and parole hearing.
- The CRA always ends with a rating of *low*, *medium*, or *high* risk of violence, which should be accompanied by a clear explanation of the evaluator’s rationale. The CRA is not meant to provide assistance to incarcerated people, but can be helpful in parole preparation.
- The board provides a copy of the evaluation to

the parole candidate as a courtesy, but considers the it to be under ownership of the BPH to serve as their expert witness.

Scope

While the end result is an assessment of risk for violent reoffending, during the psychological evaluation anything and everything the evaluator deems relevant to that risk is fair game for discussion and use.

- Do not be offended or surprised if the evaluator asks you questions that may seem irrelevant, overly intrusive, or just plain weird. Nothing is off-limits and you will be asked very personal questions (e.g., about your sexual history, relationships with family members, behavior in prison, etc.).
- The evaluation will cover the following areas:
 - Childhood family and social history (including any history of trauma, abuse, childhood behavior/mental health problems).
 - Drug and alcohol abuse (including age of onset, preferred substances, severity of any abuse/addiction, etc.).
 - Criminal and parole history (including any history of early violence, juvenile arrests/placement, etc.).
 - History of circumstances before and during the life crime (your commitment offense, educational/employment history, etc.).
 - Sexual history (including relationship history during adolescence and adulthood).
 - Behavior during incarceration (including job, education, rehabilitative programming, and disciplinary history).

Next month, we'll continue with LSA's lesson on CRAs in *How To Prepare For The CRA Interview*.

BPH Parole Hearing Handbook

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

AFTER MUCH CONTEMPLATION and countless hours of work, the Board of Parole Hearings recently launched its official handbook, tasked with explaining the process of parole in California to a wide range of interests and stakeholders. It’s no small feat.

Board sources tell us the handbook, which covers everything from what constitutes a life sentence to resources for victims, should be available in institution libraries soon, on the board’s webpage, and on the GTL tablets under the Facility Information app (in the Free dashboard under the “Newspaper” tab). Life Support Alliance was fortunate enough to get an advanced look, and we electronically sent the handbook to our email service list of over 3,500 people.

What can the handbook do for the average lifer? Plenty. Think you might want accommodation for a disability to help you make it through your hearing? The handbook explains the process and what’s available. What are your rights to review non-confidential documents? The handbook will explain that to you on page 20. Considering waiving, postponing, or stipulating rather than attending your next (or even first) hearing? Explanations on how and when are in the handbook. The handbook also takes readers through the hearing process itself, as well as outlines what the board considers as criteria for suitability and what happens post-hearing, whether resulting in a denial or grant.

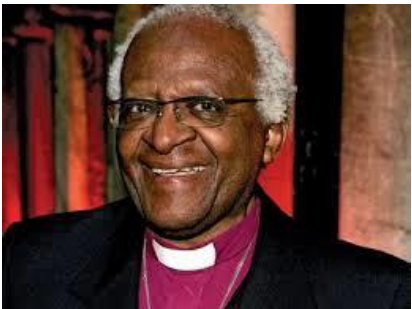
The book will be a great help to the families of lifers in order to understand the timing, sequence, and possible outcomes of various parole processes, consultations, initial hearing, en banc hearings, and release; how they can best and most effectively participate; and what some of the terms and titles used in the department mean. The publication is written with a minimum of legal-speak, though legal citations are provided in footnotes.

Also included in the volume are several forms, including a request for accommodation, BPH Form 1045(A) Petition to Advance Hearing, and CDCR 1707 form used to register victims with the Office of Victim and Survivors Rights and Services. The latter form is important to lifers because of Section C, conditions of parole.

While the handbook is available to those supplied with tablets, we recognize it might be a bit daunting to read in electronic form, with small print and without the ability to make notes or highlight passages. While some families have indicated they plan to print the handbook and send it to their incarcerated loved ones, they will have to do so in sections as the 130-plus pages exceeds the limit for personal mail.

Life Support Alliance will print the entire handbook and mail it to any incarcerated person for a donation to cover the cost of printing and mailing; please write to request more information. Families will be able to order this service on our website (LifeSupportAlliance.org) under the “Shop LSA” tab. Those inside can send a request to us with a Trust Account Withdrawal Order to receive a complete handbook.

Notable Humanitarians



Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Britannica.com)



Susan B. Anthony , suffragist (Britannica.com)



Frederick Douglass, abolitionist (uncf.org)



Rigoberta Menchu, humanitarian (AurumBureau.com)



Clara Barton, Red Cross founder (Britannica.com)



Dr. Patch Adams (AurumBureau.com)

A Life in Transition

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

BRANDON SANDERS IS a full-time student at California State University, Los Angeles, but arriving there was quite an accomplishment. Like many CSU students, Sanders’ journey was a long and challenging one, because his unique story began at the Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, California.

Sanders credits all the classes he took in pursuit of an associate degree from Folsom Lake College to establish his baseline in social literacies and rehabilitative competencies. He took many of the classes while the institution was locked down for California’s COVID-19 response. Seizing the opportunity to learn during the extended lockdown facilitated an intimacy with the curriculum. In learning about the types of therapeutic skill sets he would need to care for others, he developed and strengthened most of the requisite skill sets that effective self-care demands.

Sanders credits the discipline of regular meditation with maintaining emotional regulation, empathy, and emotional intelligence. These disciplines translate as emotional sobriety and emotional maturity; they serve as the foundation of his rehabilitative process and his practice of mindfulness.

In order to prioritize college, Sanders enrolled at Los Angeles Trade Tech mid-semester. He was halfway through two of the four courses required for him to transfer to CSU when he paroled from Mule Creek. He could have easily rationalized withdrawing from the courses to take time for his parole adjustment. Instead, he credits the discipline of determination — the same determination that he had so carefully developed and applied to his studies while incarcerated — for mastering this challenging enrollment. The momentum he preserved by dutifully completing those two courses allowed him finish the CSU requirements over the summer.

With the support of Project Rebound Los Angeles — a network relationship that he acquired while still incarcerated — Sanders enrolled in CSU Los Angeles in the fall semester of 2023, his sixth month of parole. He has since completed his first semester as well as his one-year transitional housing requirement.

Sanders is pursuing his Bachelor’s Degree in communication studies and is in it for the long haul. Academic education itself has become a lived discipline, with a master’s degree and doctoral studies visible on the horizon. He is in a handful of student organizations and keeps relationships with other CSU students at the center of his life.

Like most college students, Sanders is having the best of time of his life on campus. Some days, it all seems too good to be true.



Brandon Sanders in 2021. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Project Rebound at Sac State

Lassen Hall #2104, MS 6064
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819
(916) 278-6794
ProjectRebound@csus.edu
csus.edu/student/ProjectRebound

Creative Arts Program: Writing

The Creative Arts Program provides instructional workshops in writing techniques, led by local poet Lara Gularte.

In Facility E Hobby Room:
Tuesdays 12:30-1:30 pm

In Facility E Hobby Room:
Tuesdays 2-3:30 pm

Fill out an Inmate Activity Group Program Request (CDCR 2016) if you'd like to be on the waiting list for this group.

Notable Humanitarians



Clarence Darrow , attorney (SmithsonianMag.com)



Chen Guangcheng, civil rights advocate (Wikipedia.org)



Miep Gies, protector of Anne Frank (NationalGeographic.com)



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights advocate (Britannica.com)



Cesar Chavez, civil rights advocate (pbs.org)



President Jimmy Carter (Britannica.com)

Elder Abuse in Prison, Pt. 2

Clandestine Bullying
By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

ACTS OF ELDER mistreatment in prison are most often committed by fellow prisoners with no vested interest in the victim. Such acts are frequently motivated by a simple lack of empathy or misunderstanding the afflicted individual’s needs; often simple schoolyard bullying. Part 1 of this series pointed out a variety of these seldom-recognized acts, such as blocking passageways frequented by walkers and wheelchairs and posting flyers so high the disabled using these medical appliances cannot see the announcements.

When this topic was recently discussed in the *Mule Creek Post* newsroom, the concept quickly became a reality. In a Level II medical facility, accounts regarding abuse were infrequent. However, on the very morning of this conversation, one reporter described the recent event of a wheelchair-bound 70-year-old forcibly pushed away from the dayroom microwave by an impatient younger man. Initiation of the incident was irrelevant but the misguided aggression could have led to a serious incident and, nevertheless, was frustrating for the perplexed victim.

The regimentation of the prison environment is, by nature, subtly confrontational and a prime motivator for altercations out of a perceived disrespect of others. In the microwave incident, the aggressor spoke to the hearing-impaired elderly man, complaining loudly about his loitering in front of the oven. The older man did not hear the youngster, or even see the protestor in line behind him. In prison, ignoring another person shows disrespect; thus the prison credo requires an escalation. Wearing a “Hearing Impaired” vest is not generally required inside a dayroom, but may have de-escalated this event by reminding the aggressor the victim could not hear well; an oversight of the elderly victim. The younger man simply perceived he was being ignored and reacted spontaneously. A primary cause of prison elder abuse is a lack of empathy with the limitations of many elderly people, the very reason for the vest’s warning labels (“Hearing/Mobility/Vision Impaired”).

Several elderly patients were interviewed about their personal experiences. They preferred anonymity out of concern over escalating incidents, but freely provided insights.

“I really get pissed off when I get out of bed or get ready to go to chow and find somebody moved my walker,” related Manuel, a 64-year-old Army veteran who uses walker assistance. “Some of these kids play with my walker like it’s a wheelbarrow and push each other around the dayroom. These are the same guys who leave the cell and shower doors open and I gotta’ go around them,” he added with a sigh.

Ben, 69, who has used a wheelchair for over nine years, explained that subtle and overt elderly abuse is a common occurrence. “Guys I barely know are constantly messing around with my chair,” he said, shaking his head. “They set the parking brake when I’m not looking or put hands on the storage pockets. It sounds stupid but it’s annoying and disrespectful.” Ben was visibly upset talking about these issues. Ironically, within three minutes of completing this discussion, someone reached into Ben’s rear storage pouch and bounced it up and down. Ben loudly admonished the kid. The exchange took only seconds but rapidly escalated with a near-physical confrontation, ending only when bystanders glared at the offender.

General Population Awareness of Elders	ADA/Elder-initiated Abuse Prevention Measures
• Exercise restraint when the elderly block your path with their slow movements. • Offer assistance to the mobility impaired and elderly people, or simply step around the barrier to your path without interaction other than the offer of assistance. • Unhygienic elderly people may have an impaired sense of smell: gently remind them of sheet exchange and laundry schedules, and encourage daily showers and cleanup of their areas. • Read the ADA vest declarations describing restrictions of the individuals and modify your interaction to empathize with the person’s restrictions.	• When in confined spaces (sally port, lines, doorways, etc.), never abruptly stop; act like you are driving a car — pull over to the right or signal others to pass you; do not block forward progress of others. • Always keep to the right when traveling; do not obstruct two-way movement or cut into lines. Do not weaponize your walker or wheelchair. • Write down dates for sheet exchange and laundry turn-in, and keep track of your daily cleansings. Keep lists and update them upon completion of these necessary tasks (showers, general cleanup, etc.). • Always wear your vest to allow others to recognize and empathize with the reasons for your actions.

News ||| Inside Magazine

The Marshall Project
156 West 56th Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10019
TheMarshallProject.org

Notable Humanitarians



Florence Nightingale, founder of modern nursing (Wikiquote.org)



Mother Teresa of Kolkata (FeedTheHunger.org)



Helen Keller, disability rights advocate (History.com)



William Booth, Salvation Army founder (Historic-UK.com)



Malala Yousafzai, Nobel laureate (VanityFair.com)

An ICE Experience

By Bartolu Ku, Outside Contributor, and Fabian Garcia, Spanish Reporter

FIVE DAYS PRIOR to my scheduled release from the custody of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), I was discharged without any notice.

The process started one evening after dinner while returning to my cell; I was notified that I was to be released on the 26th at 10:30 a.m., several days away. As is customary for someone being released, I started giving away my property. At 7:30 a.m. the next day, I was told to report to Receiving and Release to process out of the prison. My release date was not for a few days, so I was not prepared for this notification. Once there, I returned my tablet and other CDCR items. I was processed out and awaited Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) transport personnel.

Before leaving CDCR custody, they gave me a form that claimed I had no money in my account, and that my \$200 release allowance would not be issued due to the ICE hold, as well as the fact I was being deported. I didn't know this at the time, but according to the California Code of Regulations, "Inmates released to the custody and supervision of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and awaiting a deportation hearing date are not entitled to receive a release allowance."

I notified a corrections officer that I did have money in my account and he told me to relay that information to the ICE agents when they arrived. Their statement was, "Have the COs handle it..." I never received my money. At 9 p.m., I was moved to a facility in Stockton where I once again made more claims for my money. I was told to wait until I was deported and then write a letter to the CDCR requesting to have my money sent to Mexico. One important takeaway for those pending deportation would be to send your money out before being deported so that you won't lose it.

After being processed in Stockton, I was taken to the Fresno Detention Center to await other people also getting deported. After a three-hour wait, I was given a burrito, granola bar, juice box, and water. A few hours later, I was driven to still another detention center, this one in Bakersfield, to drop off and pick up more people. Three hours, two burritos, and one cup of water later, the trip continued all the way to San Ysidro. I was checked for contraband at every stop: My shoes were removed and inspected while handcuffed with waist chains. The chains were removed while we ate, so it wasn't uncomfortable most of the time.

I finally arrived at the U.S.-Mexican border at 5 a.m., and waited an hour for the 6 a.m. release, at which time I was left in the custody of Mexican Immigration and given a ham sandwich. I was asked a number of questions at the El Chaparral Detention Center, such as: How long was I incarcerated? What were my charges? Where was I born? Did I have someone picking me up and sending me money? If I didn't have anyone picking me up, I would be able to procure a bus ticket to any place in Mexico at no cost.

At the El Chaparral Detention Center, you are also able to have a package delivered to you with your basic needs, including a cell phone. I recommend not leaving El Chaparral on your own if you can. I was blessed with family support and have been blessed with much more than I expected. I felt surrounded by the protection of angels.

I am forever grateful to Adrian, a dear friend of mine whose father picked me up at the border crossing and has been giving me the five-star treatment, which includes taking me to visit many places in Tijuana. This all wouldn't have been possible without the help of Adrian and his wonderful family.

For those of you reading this, keep the faith and continue on the good road; God is good and never fails when you ask. To all my friends and brothers in the faith and Christ, this is my story of the ICE experience.



A Border Patrol holding facility. (NBC News)



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.



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. Despite the ancient nature of alchemy, some of the elements are technologically advanced. There is the **Robot** (which involves **Electricity**), the **E-book** (which involves **Microchip**), and **iPhone** (which involves a fruit). Can you create all three of these elements?



(Invaluable.com)

Psych View

Have You Been Diagnosed?
By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

SOME INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS pretend to have injuries, illnesses, or mental conditions because they want to get themselves preferential cell placement, attention, or medication. Some intentionally injure themselves for the same reason. Some even have serious illnesses. Do any of these conditions apply to you?

If you have a diagnosis, is it accurate? If you have pretended to have a mental illness in order to get preferential cell placement or avoid responsibility for bad behavior, that diagnosis is not accurate and should be changed. Many individuals do this, and it is diagnosed as “malingering.”

Another form of malingering is the exaggeration or fabrication of physical complaints in order to seek placement or medication.

If you want to parole, it is better to take responsibility for your past behavior than try to maintain it. Accept that you did the best you could, and that you are now able to make better choices. Talk to your doctors, and make sure your file is right.

If you do have a diagnosis, that’s fine. Deal with it. Take responsibility for the care of your affliction, whatever it may be. If you need medication, take it. If you need accommodation, use it. Do not present yourself as a stubborn individual who is unwilling to seek help. If you need help, accept it.

What Drives Risk Assessments?

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

AS PART OF Life Support Alliance’s first ever virtual ‘webinar’ for lifer families — to provide information and facts on what their loved ones are facing in the parole process — we ventured on our first foray into the virtual world, after 15 years of in person seminars.

One of those speaking at the event was Dr. Jasmine Tehrani, acting director of the Forensic Assessment Division, who spoke to attendees on overall parole considerations as well as provided more information on the comprehensive risk assessment (or “psych eval”) process. Below is a summary of the salient points on that subject.

- It is not the crime (or severity of the crime), or one’s past, which determines their future risk of violence; if they have made the requisite changes in their life, their past holds less relevance today.
- Historical factors, such as history of violence, become more dynamic and changeable in nature when we factor in current relevance. For example, for an individual who committed a violent crime 25 years ago, their history of violence may have less relevance today because they have not engaged in violence in many years and this risk factor has been sufficiently addressed through treatment and programming, etc.
- Future violence risk hinges on dynamic (or changeable) factors and current relevance.
- It is not the mere presence of historical risk factors (e.g., number of prior arrests), but the current relevance of those historical factors and the dynamic variables (i.e., clinical and risk management factors) which differentiate the three risk categories (low, moderate, high).
- Dynamic risks, especially when assessed to be highly relevant, best differentiate long-term individuals granted parole from those denied parole or stipulating to unsuitability.
- Recidivism data demonstrate the predictive validity of risk assessments.

4400 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608
info@womenprisoners.org

California Coalition for Women Prisoners

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





Una Experiencia con ICE

Por Bartolo Ku, Outside Contributor,
y Fabián García, Spanish Reporter

CINCO DÍAS ANTES de mi fecha de salida, y sin previo aviso, fui liberado de la custodia del California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

Todo empezó una tarde después de la cena cuando me notificaron que iba ser puesto en libertad el día 26, a las 10:30 a.m. Como es costumbre para los quien están por salir, regale toda mi propiedad. La próxima mañana a las 7:30 me ordenaron empacar todas mis pertenencias y llevarlas a Receiving & Release porque iba ser procesado para salir. Con cinco días restantes en lo que era mi fecha de salida, no estaba completamente preparado.

Antes de ser liberado de la custodia de CDCR, me dieron una forma para firmar, la cual clamaba que no tenía dinero en mi cuenta. A parte de eso, por tener una detención de Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) — y por estar en proceso de ser deportado — me negaron los \$200 para gastos que todos reciben al salir de la prisión. No sabía, pero el Título 15 dice que ellos esperando a deportación no reciben su \$200.

Le hice saber al oficial que contaba con dinero en mi cuenta, lo cual me dijo que le relate esa información a los agentes de ICE cuando lleguen, me explicaron que los oficiales de CDCR son quienes se encargan de ese asunto; y nunca recibí mi dinero. Esa noche a las nueve, fui trasladado a una facilidad en Stockton, en donde hice más reclamos por mi dinero. En respuesta, me dijeron que tenía que esperar ser deportados sería envíen su dinero antes de salir para que no lo pierdan.

Después de ser procesado en Stockton, fui trasladado a un centro de detención en Fresno a recoger más personas. Espere tres horas, y me dieron un burrito, una barra de granola, agua, y un jugo. Horas después fui trasladado a otro centra de detención — ubicado en Bakersfield — para dejar y recoger más personas. Tres horas, dos burritos y agua después, continúe el

viaje hasta llegar a San Ysidro. En cada parada me quitaban los zapatos para asegurar que no tenía contrabando; todo esa mientras esposado, y con cadenas de cintura. También, para no incomodarme cuando comía, me quitaban las cadenas.

Finalmente llegue a la frontera con México a las cinco de la mañana, esperando una hora más. Estando en la custodia de agentes inmigración Mexicana, me dieron un sándwich de jamón. Ahí en el centro de detención de El Chaparral, me esperaban unas cuantas preguntas, como: ¿Cuánto tiempo estaba encarcelado?; ¿Porque estaba encarcelado?; ¿Qué edad tenía?; ¿En donde nací?; y si tenía alguien quien me iba recoger, y lo enviarme dinero. Si no tenía alguien para recogerme, podía conseguir un boleto de autobús para cualquier parte de México, sin costarme un peso.

En el centro de El Chaparral, te pueden enviar un paquete con tus necesidades básicas, incluyendo un teléfono celular. Si no tienes nadie quien te ayude, recuerda que Dios te ayuda cuando permites que trabaje en ti. Si puedes, recomiendo que no salgas de El Chaparral sin acompañamiento. Fui bendecido con apoyo familiar, igual a mucho apoyo de nuestro Padre Dios; más de lo que esperaba. Sentí la protección de ángeles a mí alrededor.

Me siento mui agradecido por mi amigo Adrián, cuyo padre me recogió en la frontera, enseñándome muchas partes de Tijuana; todo esto mientras portándose mue bien con migo. Todo esto no fuera posible sin la ayuda de Adrián, y su familia maravillosa.

Para todos ustedes leyendo esta, mantengan la fe, y sigan por el bien camino; Dios es bueno, y nunca falla cuando le pides algo. Para todos mis amigos y hermanos en la fe de Cristo, esta es mi historia de la experiencia con ICE.

Construyendo un Plan de Mantenimiento Salud Mental, Pt. 2

Por Maya Emig, Post Columnist
Traducido por Daniel Quintero, Spanish Reporter

POR QUE ES importante tener un plan de mantenimiento de Buena salud mental? El ser un participante active en la salud mental es muy importante, el mantener un plan en papel con el entendimiento de tus condiciones mentales (diagnosticadas) y sus síntomas, con una descripción de los gatillos de los cuales eres sensible. Como usaras tu herramientas de respuesta a los gatillos. Como planeas responder a los síntomas y su progresión. Como usaras tus apoyos personales y de grupo que te ayudaran a mantener tu salud mental.

Esta es la segunda parte de mi artículo anterior titulado plan de mantenimiento de salud mental.

Paso 3: Escribe cómo se siente y cómo influyen los síntomas de tus condiciones cuando los estas sufriendo.

- No me siento motivado
- Me encierro solo, busco soledad
- No me ducho ni me cambio de ropa etc.
- Se me dificulta todo lo que era rutina
- Me siento solo.
- Me siento triste.
- Me reprocho cosas como “No vales la pena”, “Esto no funcionara”, “Esto no vale la pena todo el esfuerzo que hago, y lo tener que volver hacer”.
- Me quedo en cama y le miento a la gente diciéndoles que estoy enfermo.
- Yo no sigo mi rutina diaria.

Paso 4: Escribe las cosas que pueden suceder antes de que te des cuenta de que estas teniendo síntomas.

¿Cómo me siento antes de entrar en un lapso de depresión?

- Mis reacciones emocionales son exageradas, cosas chicas me afectan más de lo normal.
- Te fatiga tener pláticas con personas y prefieres la soledad.
- Un problema me causo demasiada stress y fue anormal, o algo paso que tuvo un efecto grande en mi nivel de estrés y me siento impotente ante el problema.
- Es una fecha especial, el aniversario de cuando cometí mi crimen, aniversario de la muerte de mi madre, días festivos y sé que me afectan estas fechas demasiado.

(cont. en pág. 22)

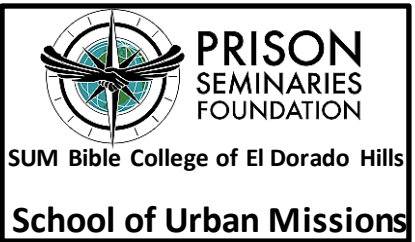
(viene de **Construyendo un Plan**, pág. 21)

- La enfermedad de mi padre ha estado progresando y su muerte está cada día más cerca.

Paso 5: Identifica y escribe las cosa que te ayudan a sobresalir de la depresión que te han ayudado antes al iniciar un lapso de depresión o al estar ya en depresión severa.

- Acercarte a tus apoyos personales o al grupo y declarar que están en un lapso o entrando en un lapso de depresión. Que ocupas apoyo diario y continuo en forma de llamadas y visitas.
- Hacer una consulta con mi profesional de salud mental y explicar mis emociones y mis pensamientos de la enfermedad de mi padre que lo está matando y lo matara.
- Tomar más tiempo para descansar y dormir para apoyar a mi cuerpo en tener energía para afrontar este momento estresante.
- Mantener una dieta sana, una actividad física que me ejercite y ayude a mi cuerpo a desechar estrés en forma de actividad física.
- Escribir en mi diario lo que estoy sintiendo para poder analizarlo en manera real al estar pasándolo en este momento y ayudarme a expresarlo y entenderlo mejor.
- Asegurarme de escribir en mi diario de gratitud a diario.

Tener un plan para no estar solo y mantener a personas informadas de mi condición a diario. Tener pláticas con ellos de la situación por la cual estoy pasando y lo que significa el apoyo de ellos para mantener buena salud mental. Que por favor me busquen a diario y se aseguren que estoy bien. Hacer el esfuerzo de ir a trabajar o a grupos aunque no quiera hacerlo.



Una Vida en Transición

Por O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter
Traducido por Daniel Quintero, Spanish Reporter

BRANDON SANDERS ES un estudiante tiempo completo en la Universidad de California–Los Ángeles. Para poder ingresar a esta prestigiosa universidad se toma demasiado esfuerzo por parte del aplican y es un camino largo y duro. Pero a comparación de otros estudiantes el camino de Sanders tiene una característica muy especial. Su camino empezó aquí entre nosotros en la prision de Mule Creek.

Sanders está seguro que su esfuerzo durante la excarceración al tomar clases para poder obtener su diploma de asociado en artes de servicios sociales de parte del Colegio de Folsom Lake como una parte integral de la elaboración de una buena fundación de estudios. Sus estudios están enfocados en la aplicación de estudio social y complementos rehabilitativos. El tomó sus clases durante la prolongada encerrada que se sufrió por la pandemia de COVID-19, que le otorgó el tiempo para entender y meditar en su currículo y poder analizarlo profundamente gracias al tiempo libre que era abundante. Mientras aprendía y practicaba el currículo de formas de terapia que son necesarias para ayudar a otros, el práctico en sí mismo y pudo aprender a usar las practicas necesarias para poder llevar una vida a sana personalmente y mantenerla. Sanders declara que la práctica de meditación en forma regular con apoyar su habilidad de proficiente meta inteligencia.

Algunas de sus disciplinas son la regulación emocional, meta inteligencia, empatía y inteligencia emocional. Al mantener estas diferentes disciplinas y mantenerlas se le llama sobriedad emocional y madurez emocional. Está en la base de su proceso de rehabilitación y su práctica personal de ser consiente de sí mismo en todo momento.

Para lograr su plan de mantener su educación universitaria como una prioridad, él se apuntó a medio semestre en la escuela de trabajos técnicos llamada Los Ángeles Trade Tech. Él ya había terminado dos semestres de los cuatro requeridos para poder transferirse a las Universidades de California cuando se le fue otorgada libertad condicional en su tabla. Hubiera sido fácil parar su educación para poder regresar al mundo civil y poder acomodarse y estar cómodo antes de seguir su educación. Sanders mantuvo su misma mentalidad que lo llevó a ser otorgado libertad condicional, de nunca dejar de esforzarse y mantener su educación su prioridad. La dedicación que demostró dentro de la prisión la demostró en la libertad y consiguió acabar en los cursos de verano los dos cursos necesarios para entrar a la universidad y seguir con su licenciatura. Él fue apoyado por los recursos de Project Rebound que otorga apoyo a todo recién salido para continuar su educación dándoles vivienda y apoyos financieros para seguir su educación. Con su apoyo él pudo lograr entrar a la universidad en año 2023. Él estudia su licenciatura en estudios de comunicaciones. Que le tomara una entrega total que ya aceptó y un entendimiento que la vida académica es su disciplina que es una parte mayor de su sobriedad emocional. El planea llegar a la maestría y seguir con el doctorado en comunicaciones en este momento. La forma parte de grupos universitarios y mantiene un grupo social dentro de la escuela como axis en su vida.

Sus días son plenos de buenas experiencias y es difícil de creer que es su vida y que es realidad. Él es un estudiante más en la universidad.

Muertos por Sobredosis Bajan

Por Al Rice, Copy Editor
Traducido por Daniel Quintero, Spanish Reporter

EN LOS EE.UU., las muertes por sobredosis de drogas han disminuido. Por primera vez desde el año 2018 las muertes por sobredosis de drogas han disminuido comparado al año anterior, lo reportó el Centros para Control y Prevención de Enfermedades. (CDC). El reporte del Mayo 15, demuestra que las muertes por sobredosis han disminuido en un tres por ciento de muertes de sobredosis entre el año 2022 y 2023. En el año 2022 hubo 111,029 fallecidos y en el 2023 hubo 107,543. Buenas noticias para los más de cuatro mil personas que ese ano sobrevivieron pero, sigue siendo un número “catastróficamente alto”, como lo declare Kevin Roy de la organización Shatterproof que atiende a personas adictas a las drogas y es una organización sin fines de lucro.

El fentanilo y la variedad de drogas sintéticas de bajo precio son fáciles de obtener y fácil de mezclar en otras drogas para incrementar la ganancia. Las drogas sintéticas son mezcladas en otras drogas comunes como el cocaína y metanfetamina, y son las responsables de dos tercios de las muertes por sobredosis. La Dra. Mandy Cohen, directora del CDC, declare: “Enfrentamos el fentanilo

(cont. en pág. 23)

(viene de **Muertos Bajos**, pág. 22)
e inmediatamente nos enfrentamos al xylazino... Tenemos una batalla sin pausa y tenemos que estar siempre en guardia”.

Mientras los números reflejan que las muertes han bajado en total, no reflejan que al mismo tiempo las muertes han incrementado y bajado por estado. El terrible incremento del 27% o más en los estados de Alaska, Oregón y Washington. Son los más afectados en el incremento de muertes por estado. La reducción de las muertes sigue siendo un logro positivo en comparación con los inicios del 2019 y la pandemia de COVID-19. “El incremento fue drástico durante ese periodo, debido a que la gente no tenía trabajo y sufriendo de mucha estrés”, dijo Dr. Joshua Sharfstein de la escuela de salud social de Johns Hopkins. “Que con el levanto de restricciones y de otras condiciones que están siendo resueltas han ayudado al descenso de sobredosis”.

Que el uso de antídosis como naxolone para recuperar a personas bajo sobredosis y el uso de otras drogas para el tratamiento de adicción a opioides como buprenorfina han dado buenos resultados. También el uso de tiras de examen para fentanilo han apoyado a la reducción.

La muerte de menos personas americanas es una buena noticia pero, siguen muriendo demasiados y el camino a que el número regrese a cero es largo. Los expertos siguen trabajando y monitoreando las condiciones y trabajan para parar esta crisis. “Trabajamos duro y me da felicidad saber que ha resultado en menos muertes”, dijo el Dr. Cohen. “Esto es el comienzo y tenemos mucho trabajo por delante y quiero ser parte de él”.

Committee Recommends Changes

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

IN ITS ANNUAL report to the California Legislature, the Committee on Revision of the Penal Code recommended to further reduce unfair and biased criminal law practices that result in alarmingly high rates of incarceration and racial disparities.

The committee has been in existence since 2020 to address overcrowding and to make changes to sentencing law. Stanford Law School professor Michael Romano chairs the committee. He was a former director of the school’s Criminal Defense Clinic. The six-member committee also consists of Gov. Newsom appointees, as well as Sen. Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley), and Assembly Majority Leader Isaac Bryan (D-Los Angeles).

With the 2014 decree from the federal judiciary to reduce overcrowding, the state passed Proposition 36 to initiate a reduction in prison population that would not result in increased crime.

As research shows that long sentences do not improve public safety, recommendations were made to reduce sentences for elderly inmates who pose minimal danger. In addition, recommendations were made to allow anyone 50 years or older who has served 15 years, as well as those who committed their crimes when they were under 26 and who have served 15 years, to petition the court for a sentence reduction. Moreover, the committee recommended banning fines or monetary punishment for those represented by public defenders, or those whose income was no more than 25% above the federal poverty level.

Already in place to prevent further mass incarceration is a test program in Los Angeles and San Francisco called Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) that refers pre-arrest suspects to community support services instead of arrest. The program has shown to reduce felony arrests by 60% and misdemeanor arrests by 85%.

With all reform measures so far, California’s overall crime rate is 55% below its high in 1992.

The above was originally reported by Anthony Caravalho in the March 2024 edition of the San Quentin News, based on a recent publication by the San Francisco Chronicle. Those interested in following up on these recommendations should contact state legislators.

Comité Recomiende Cambios

Por Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter
Traducido por Daniel Quintero, Spanish Reporter

EL COMITÉ PARA revisar el código penal creó recomendaciones para eliminar la implementación de sentencias que son basadas en elementos injustos y parciales que han resultado en estadísticas alarmantes de sentencias que son duras para la gente de color.

Desde el año 2020 cuando fue creado para eliminar la sobrepoblación basado en sentencias racistas, el comité está encargado de dar recomendaciones para crear cambio en las leyes criminales. El comité es dirigido por Michael Romano, profesor y ex-director de la Clínica de Defensa Criminal de la Universidad de Stanford. El comité es integrado por seis personas que han sido nombradas por el Gob. Newsom, incluyendo la Senadora Nancy Skinner (D-Berkeley) y el líder de la Asamblea Mayoritaria Isaac Bryan (D-Los Ángeles).

En el año 2014 el judicial federal otorgó iniciativas para reducir la sobrepoblación de las prisiones. El estado de California pasó la Proposición 36, que reducido la población de los prisioneros, sin haber tenido un efecto en el nivel de crímenes cometidos en el estado.

Los estudios han demostrado que las sentencias largas no han resultado en la disminución de crímenes o mayor seguridad para la comunidad afectada. Por eso, una recomendación que es presentada es de darle acceso a sentencias reducidas a personas de la tercera edad que ya no son un peligro para la sociedad. Otra de las recomendaciones que han sido presentadas es la de dar la oportunidad a todo preso mayor de los 50 años que ya haya cumplido 15 años de su sentencia, y los que tenido menos de 26 años cuando el crimen fue cometido que ya haya cumplido 15 años de su sentencia, la habilidad de pedir una reducción de sentencia. Mas, el comité recomiendo la de prohibir las multas y cargos financieros a todos los presos que fueron representados por defensores públicos o que hayan tenido un sueldo menor al 25% sobre el nivel federal de pobreza.

Un ejemplo de iniciativas para prevenir la sobrepoblación en las cárceles y prisiones son los programas en pesados en las ciudades de Los Ángeles y San Francisco llamado Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD). Este programa refiere a personas antes de ser arrestadas a programas de ayuda comunitaria y social en vez de ser arrestados. Esta iniciativa ha reducido los arrestos por felonías en un 60% y delitos menores en un 85%.

Después de los cambios logrados por las administraciones del poder judicial las estadísticas han demostrado que el crimen es 55% menor que en su peor temporada del año 1992.



Insight Letter

By Walter Lewis,
Post Columnist



AFTER CAREFUL REVIEW of the recommendations by the Board of Parole Hearings, it was clear I needed to look deeper into my thinking patterns and decision making. I'm in agreement with the board, but my sincere intention to change has been for its own sake. I've learned that allowing even a crack in the door inevitably opens the door to irresponsibility and crime. So I've found suggestions by the commissioners to be most helpful.

I have long experienced transient phases of disgust with my criminality, and I began to form the foundation of a new set of thinking processes. I began to learn concepts that were second nature to a responsible school-child, but new to me. I started to formulate principles of responsible thinking and action that were available to me through self-help groups; in the beginning and intermediate stages of change, errors stood out and were not hard to identify. To look back over a lifetime presented its own challenges, but the more I probed, the more I searched for errors in thinking, the more I discovered.

An important aspect of human development is the process of identification. Failure to make positive identifications with responsible, stable people is a significant contributing factor to antisocial behavior. I lacked stable, responsible models at an early age. Unwelcome at home, feeling betrayed and resentful, I turned to socially unacceptable members of my peer group with whom I identified. Lack of a stable model may be conducive to a child's identifying with people outside the family; some think a child identifies with the negative, often aggressive qualities of his parents at home. I'm of the opinion my poor choices began at this stage. However, all of these negative factors are driven by choice.

Criminals tend to probe into early experience, social conditions, use of drugs and alcohol, to establish cause for criminal conduct. Such concern can be counter-productive as it tends to absolve a person and ignore

individual choice and personal responsibility. All these factors are contributing. The crime is the outcome of habitual patterns of thinking and choice. Although my irresponsible thinking and action were firmly entrenched, I had the capacity to choose to eliminate these patterns and develop new ones. Change requires a commitment, a choice in and of itself, and then further choices to implement the commitment.

For me, *change* is not a sufficiently descriptive term for the degree of overhauling that was necessary. The overhauling, the tearing down and rebuilding of the engine, became essential. It's hard, it's tedious, and there were tremendous practical problems in achieving this objective. But what has to be done has to be done. There are no shortcuts. A moral inventory, or examination of conscience, and remorse go hand-in-hand; you don't get one without the other. Criminals tend to use well-practiced tears of self-pity to feign remorse. True remorse is exhibited in one's self-disgust and willingness to address issues that led to the sense of guilt. I believe remorse is critical to taking responsibility.

The criminal strengthens his opinion of himself as a good person by emphasizing things he would not do. There is an internal prohibition against particular kinds of crime that others engage, but not against the acts he commits that are also harmful to society. As long as he retains a good opinion of himself, he assumes license to commit criminal acts, none of which he has to justify. If held accountable by others, he regards himself as wronged, not as having done wrong. This type of criminal maneuvering must be attacked at its roots.

Reflecting on me, the evaluation of my thinking was with an emphasis on injury to others. In the past, I have experienced phases of self-disgust based on conduct I wanted to forget. However, I've learned to embrace these uncomfortable thoughts as part of my moral inventory; it builds internal deterrents against future irresponsible decision-making. There was a time when I would make a distinction between thought and act. What I failed to realize was thought and act form a sequence and are parts of the same flow of events. I learned the incidence of irresponsibility could be reduced and eventually eliminated by focusing on the incipient irresponsible thinking.

The moral inventory strengthens the anticrime attitude. Continuing use of the moral inventory is a guide toward implementation of correctives for errors of thinking everywhere. It has proven to be a lifeline. The practice of taking stock does not cease. It has created an obligation to pass on what I've learned, an obligation in moral and ethical terms. An obligation is a must of life. It is a discharging of duty to others built into the way one functions. It is a way of life that includes consideration of others and fulfillment of expectations.

By mentoring, I constantly review the cost of anger as it has operated throughout my life. Injury to others is the most serious consequence. However, there have been other costs: illogical thinking, impaired problem-solving, diminishment in the quality of performance, reduced energy for the task at hand, and alienation of other people. Anger is a universal human emotion. The criminal is chronically angry. Anger is a mental state sometimes expressed outwardly, but more often boils within. It is most dangerous when it is not on the surface. An anger reaction in the criminal metastasizes. It begins with an isolated episode, but spreads and spreads until the criminal has lost all perspective. I have learned new processes to apply to anger. I examine the attendant thinking process, the cost of anger, and my contribution to the situation. My thoughts always focus on negative aspects of substance abuse, the impaired judgment, loss of control, and regrets. I avoid any positives in my thought processes I regard to substance abuse. I've learned good times are transient, regret is long term.

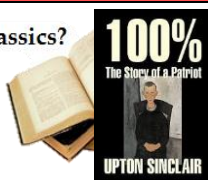
I've come to believe change requires effort to be total. Even the slightest violation leads to irresponsibility and eventual criminality. It was mandatory for me to go from one extreme to the other, from total irresponsibility to impeccable responsible functioning. This is a considerable departure from my stance of years ago, when I viewed minor infractions as unimportant. I've also learned there are red flags/triggers that lead to substance abuse. The first is a positive thought, then an obsession, and then justification. This is a mental process of which internal deterrents are slowly eliminated until the desire to commit an act outweighs the fear to the point where the desire is implemented.

Both substance abuse and crime are the outcome of a habitual pattern of thinking that is put into instant operation. The actual occurrence of the act or decision may be lightning fast, but the idea had a period of incubation. In my experience, no substance abuser or criminal has ever suddenly done something that he has not repeatedly considered beforehand.

In conclusion, a genuine act of contrition doesn't just address the past, it involves how you're going to conduct yourself in the future.

Walter Lewis is a formerly incarcerated person who provides information and insight into the parole process as well as the BPH process. The above article was written while he was at the Correctional Training Facility; Lewis is currently on parole and continues to write for the Mule Creek Post.

Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp,
Post Reporter

FIRST COPYRIGHTED IN 1920, Upton Sinclair's novel *100%* is a fascinating story of a down-and-out young man named Peter Gudge, whose misadventures run from con-man to unlikely hero. The title refers to his considering himself to be 100% American.

At various times he worked for a snake-oil salesman and a religious conman, the "Chief Magisterium of Elevtherinian Exoticism of the Temple Jim-Janbo." Later, Peter is brutalized into giving a false confession to a deadly bombing incident in an American city. But, Peter's trials had only just begun at the tender age of 20 years.

As the novel progresses, Peter is coerced into becoming a spy within a "Red" (communist) group. Having been trained in the con game, this new role fits easily into young Peter's comfort zone.

The author uses a sarcastic style that is entertaining, and his language isn't dated, but feels fresh for the hundred-year-old novel. There is a Mark Twain-ish aspect to the author's writing style, as no one and no institution is above Sinclair's poison-pen antics — he cuts no one any slack.

It begins on the eve of America's entry into WWI as Americans are divided over whether to get involved. The most interesting aspect of the story is how Peter is forced to evaluate his own values and look at the world through new eyes.

If you enjoy sarcastic storytelling and a harsh look at American society and questionable values of the early 1900s (and today), then you'll enjoy *100%*.

Upton Sinclair was a master of the outrageous in his novels. There are eight in the GTL Library app, including this one.

Calculated Degrees of Freedom

O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter



ESTEEMED RESEARCH SCIENTIST and California State University Sacramento (CSUS) Professor Fred Molitor describes himself simply as "a part time instructor at CSU Sacramento." Molitor is an engaging lecturer, a challenging mathematician, and, truth-be-told, a devoted, clever, and disciplined sociologist — beloved by his students.

As a full-time researcher and part-time college lecturer, Molitor has been teaching research methods, statistics, and data analysis courses at the CSUS communication studies department since 1995. It's clearly a labor of love. His interest in communication studies began with years of barely passing or failing his community college courses. Then, in 1983, he transferred to CSUS.

Once he arrived at the CSU level of study, it took him another year's worth of struggle to become a serious student. He remembers the courses "Introduction to Scientific Methods in Communication Research" and "Introduction to Data Analysis in Communication Research" as sparking his overall interest in education, "and research in particular." Thus, his academic journey began in earnest — a journey that culminated in the earning of a doctorate in communication studies at Florida State University.

When asked what makes the study of communication interesting as a professional discipline, Molitor is clear: "Communication Studies is interesting because researchers can use their knowledge and skill to evaluate the effectiveness of small- and large-scale communication campaigns that are designed to influence the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of populations. ... Moreover, we are constantly exposed to media reports of scientific findings. I try to emphasize in all the classes I teach that students should rely on the primary source of information [e.g., original journal article] rather than on the secondary source [media report]. Often there is a disconnect between the two. My intent is to give students the skills to critically review and critique published research studies."

Molitor articulated his experience that "Individuals can excel in most jobs if they can communicate effectively in face-to-face and group settings and when writing, and have critical thinking skills. A degree in Communication Studies enhances these skills, and prepares students to be successful employees in public or private California organizations."

Molitor, who started teaching incarcerated students at Mule Creek and Folsom State Prisons in 2022, said, "It was a very easy decision. ... I viewed teaching in a new environment with different students than those on campus as an exciting challenge. ... This semester I have 25 students in my classes. It's great to see the program grow. My experience with incarcerated students is that they are extremely respectful, dedicated, and committed. Arriving here to teach on class days reminds me [ironically] of episodes of the 1960's television show *Get Smart*. With each security door that I am required to go through, the more excited and enthusiastic I get about arriving at the destination. I've taught nearly 100 students in seven classes at Mule Creek and Folsom [prisons] and have never had a bad experience. One of the differences between classes on-campus versus incarcerated classes is that Mule Creek and Folsom students have numerous intelligent questions, and want to engage in discussions regarding class topics. ... I've had to redesign my syllabi to accommodate the number of student-initiated questions and class discussions. It makes for a much more enjoyable and satisfying teaching experience. ... It has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life."

When asked why it makes sense for California taxpayers to continue to organize, fund, and administer CSU programs in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Molitor was candid. "Statistical mathematics establishes a baseline of logical thinking and exponentially develops problem solving skills. ... From an economic perspective, the reduced recidivism associated with a college education, and the likelihood that those released with a college education will become productive members of society, is a tremendous benefit to the state."

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:

Email: submissions@prisonjournalismproject.org

JPay email: prisonjourn@psu.edu

Postal mail: Prison Journalism Project
2093 Philadelphia Pike #1054
Claymont, DE 19703



Follow the Prison Journalism Project (and prisoner-written stories) on social media: **@prisonjourn** on Twitter and Instagram, **@prisonjournalism** on Facebook. They may also sign up on the PJP website for *Inside Story*, a monthly e-newsletter.

BPH Statistics

Compiled by Al Rice, Copy Editor

2023 Parole Hearing Results
Hearings: 8,286 (100%)
Grants: 1,433 (17%)
Denials: 2,638 (32%)
Stipulate Unsuitability: 572 (7%)
Waive-not ready: 1,827 (22%)
Postponement: 1,348 (16%)
Cancellation: 405 (5%)
Continuance: 62 (<1%)

Gov. Newsom grants 37 pardons and 18 commutations in 2024. While in office, Gov. Newsom has granted 181 pardons, 141 commutations, and 40 reprieves.

March 2024 Population Report
Compiled from SOMS
(note: Data is subject to revision)

Total In-Custody/CRPP
Supervision Population: 93,220
Men: 89,452
Women: 3,768
Institutions: 90,234
Camps: 1,738
In-State Contract Beds: 7
Dept. of State Hospitals: 146
CRPP Supervision: 1,095
Parole: 35,254
Non-CDCR Jurisdiction: 758
Other Populations: 7,067
Out to Court/Hospital: 1,497
Escaped: 195
Parolee at Large: 5,375
Total CDCR Population: 136,299

Calendar Year 2024 (As of 3/20/24)
Suitability Hearing Results
Jan 664; Feb 674; Total 1,338

Grant
Jan 149; Feb 103; Total 252

Denials
Jan 209; Feb 214; Total 423

Stipulations
Jan 47; Feb 54; Total 101

Voluntary Waivers
Jan 134; Feb 172; Total 306

Postponements
Jan 93; Feb 104; Total 197

Cancellations
Jan 29; Feb 17; Total 46

Continuances
Jan 3; Feb 9; Total 12

Tie Decisions
Jan 1; Feb 0; Total 1
(note: Tie decisions appear only while pending full review by the Board of Parole Hearings)

Source: *PL.U. MAX!*, April 2024

The National Veterans Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit providing national veteran crisis management, information, and referral services.

Call 1-888-777-4443 toll-free for information and references.

5777 West Century Boulevard,
Suite 350
Los Angeles, CA 90045-5656

☎ (310) 642-0255
📠 (310) 642-0258
✉ VetSupport@NVF.org
🌐 NVF.org



TUMI Graduate Testimonials

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

ON APRIL 30, 2024, The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) held its first graduation at the Mule Creek State Prison. TUMI is a four-year program that fosters Christian fellowship, leadership, community, and service in giving its students the necessary tools for ministering to others. Four graduates provided their tributes to the program:



Michael Franklin: TUMI, in partnership with Prison Fellowship has not only provided me with a seminary level education opportunity, but has changed my outlook and thought on who I want to be and the true meaning of the word community. The curriculum has better equipped me to evangelize and make disciples, not only within my prison community, but outside the walls of the communities His Word was unable to reach spiritually through me. The advice I offer future classes entering TUMI is to enter with an open mind and heart and to expect to engage in theological and canonical discussions of juxtaposition and difference. To keep in mind this curriculum is not to avoid what others believe, but to speak truth in love through respectful engagement that is grounded in Scripture and always centered on Christ. The curriculum may seem daunting at times as you apply yourself to Scripture memorization, book summaries, ministry projects and exegetical papers, but hold on, pray for strength and guidance from the Holy Spirit.



Steven Waters: TUMI is one of the many flowers planted and watered by God during my term. The greatest thing I've learned thus far is that God wants me to be like His Son. The TUMI program reinforces godly conduct and values. Coming from a past of poor conduct, I believe my conduct is everything now. Truth and righteousness are the building blocks. Truth speaks to our integrity and righteousness speaks to our conduct. Our walks must be righteous in speech, thoughts, and actions that are pleasing to God. I have great peace now walking in the light of the gospel. That's the peace we are called to dwell in and to extend to others who desperately need it. TUMI develops peacemakers. Many believe freedom means the ability to do as they please and whatever, but true freedom is "impossible" without constraints. Prison is the land of limitations, but they don't bring confinement. Instead, I believe they enable freedom. That's God's version. I am freer today than I have ever been. I encourage all of you to live your faith out in love.



Gary Whiteside: Today, who I want to be is a man who clearly honors God in my life. I believe this can be shown in my daily life by how I act, how I speak, how I treat others, who I associate with, and perhaps most important, how I react to adversity when I encounter it. It is important to learn from every experience. I learned in Module 5 to rightly study the Bible, not to "learn things" but to know God and what He wanted of me. I've learned that leadership is really about serving, not "running the show". Learning what humility truly is has helped greatly. Professing humility in order to receive kudos is no longer anything I want to be a part of. What I have to share with others — is me, my time, my attention, my concern and that's for them, not me. I truly believe that I can be a far more effective leader because of what I've learned in TUMI.



C. Edward Foulk: When I first began to seriously study God's Word with TUMI, over seven years ago, I had no idea where I could properly serve the Lord. I felt undeserving and unqualified. The TUMI values and curriculum have increased my knowledge, skills and abilities to be able to communicate God's Word to others. I consider this type of serving as a sacred duty. Through our many ministry projects and spiritual studies, and through participation in our Christian worship services, I have gained experience in delivering sermons and messages and sharing God's Word to other inmates. I would advise future students to have patience. Don't tire or lose faith in the destination; it is a worthwhile journey. The extended nature of the TUMI curriculum can be a daunting undertaking. It takes dedication and perseverance to complete the program. The spiritual knowledge you will gain is worth all the hard work. You will learn more about God's Kingdom than you ever imagined. Through your time in TUMI you will learn how to be a better ambassador for Christ.

See the July 2024 edition for more about the TUMI graduation.

Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S
WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee
Post Columnist

Make the Decision to Be Happy

THE DAY I realized happiness was a choice was a turning point in my life. I don't remember if I read it somewhere or if it was a line in a movie, but even if I'd heard it before, I finally understood it.

Until that moment I believed happiness was conditional, as in: I'll be happy *when* _____ (fill in the blank). I had bought into the idea that the pursuit of happiness (as promised by the U.S. Constitution) meant realizing my dreams through hard work.

After I made the decision to be happy I found the decision was the easy part. I had to learn *how* to be happy. For me that meant learning to live in the moment, to be grateful and thankful, and to accept and respect other people for who they are and what they believe. In other words, I had to change. I made the decision to get up an hour earlier every day to read, write, and meditate. I read a little every day, and write what I understand to be the lesson and what I'm grateful for. Then I spend a few minutes meditating.

It's been many years since that day and, although I'm not yet the person I am meant to be, I'm better than I was, and I'm happy.

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

Using Credit to Get Ahead
By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

USING A CREDIT card (properly) enables you to build an excellent credit report and achieve a top tier credit score. Why is this important? Because you will then qualify for lower insurance premiums, the best auto financing, and the best home loan for buying a house or condo. Without good credit, the only auto loan you can get carries a high interest rate, which is like throwing money into the garbage. With good credit, you can build your personal wealth in real estate — and there are so many reasons for doing that.

When you buy a home, you stop paying your landlord's mortgage and pay your own. You are not vulnerable to the landlord raising rent or evicting you if they decide to sell. One day, you can own your home free and clear. You may choose to rent it for additional income and buy another home. Or, you may sell it for a nice profit. In the future, you could downsize and pay cash or have funds to move into assisted living, if the need arose. You can decorate the way you like, have pets, and be free of other landlord restrictions. Home owners can take advantage of income tax deductions that aren't available to renters. If you're short on cash in your senior years, you may opt to get a reverse mortgage to collect a nice monthly check for as long as you live in the house, even if all the equity is gone.

Owning a home is beneficial on many levels, but how will you buy a home if you can't qualify for a mortgage? A mortgage lender is not going to hand out three or four hundred thousand dollars without first seeing that you are credit-worthy.

Since credit is so important, you need to understand how it works and take control of that part of your life.

Next month, we'll start with the basics, then we'll get into more advanced information and little-known tips about credit.

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™*

Good to Know: "Other than your employer, the credit reporting agencies have more influence over your life than any other company." —John R. Ulzheimer, credit expert witness and educator

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

Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1, 2022 to July 8, 2024)					
● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.76	→	\$9.75	-9.4%	
● ConocoPhillips (COP)	\$117.00	→	\$112.55	-3.8%	
● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$93.19	→	\$56.63	-39.2%	
● Edison International (EIX)	\$63.62	→	\$72.40	+13.8%	
● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.22	→	\$1.02	-80.5%	
● Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)	\$112.00	→	\$170.74	+52.4%	
● ONEOK Inc. (OKE)	\$65.90	→	\$82.25	+24.8%	
● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$41.29	→	\$59.62	+44.4%	

Creative Arts Program

"Sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."
— Lewis Carroll

The Healing Power of Art

By Marty Williams, Production Editor



JOSHUA WAHLERT GOT his first guitar when he was 12 years old. With no formal instruction, he floundered for several years until given a birthday present at age 14 of six guitar lessons.

"I wrote my first song after the six lessons and it pretty much turned out how six lessons worth would sound like," he says of the result. "Pretty horrible."

This is a long road away from the powerhouse musician and songwriter currently featured on the *Resident Rockstar* instructional video currently playing on the Mule Creek State Prison facility TV channel. Wahlert takes would-be guitar players through basic but effective techniques towards being rock stars themselves.

"I want students to be comfortable with making the mistake and hearing it, because music is about releasing your inner catharsis," Wahlert explains, "and that can't happen when

hindered with an inner critic that causes a lot of inspiring musicians, artists, and any other creative outlet to quit."

His early days of guitar were spent around the musicians in his grandmother's Alcoholic Anonymous group, especially a man named Roger, a former drummer for Todd Rundgren. Roger put young Wahlert on stage with him playing in local bars in Wahlert's hometown of Hemet, California. While largely self-taught, Wahlert paid attention to the musicians around him, stealing their riffs and watching how they played. As Chet Atkins famously pointed out, all guitar players steal; the best guitar players steal only the best stuff. Much of his instruction came through the live performances he got to be in.

"It was kind of 'trial by fire,'" Wahlert says.

He warns beginning guitarists to not skip the fundamentals. As with all art mediums, learning is a discipline, and a life-long process. "I'm a decent guitarist but I'll be the first to admit that I am light years behind where I should be for the amount of years I've been playing," he says. Randy Rhoads, Ozzy Osbourne's guitarist and a major influence on Wahlert, is often quoted as saying "Any musician

who believes they have mastered an instrument will never learn anything new." This can apply to any art form, or maybe any vocation in life.

Even though Wahlert is doing a life without parole sentence, he continues to find a space for gratitude. He has found a way to gain insight through his art, teach it to



Media specialist H. Kim digitally recording Wahlert for the *Resident Rockstar* instructional program on the Mule Creek State Prison TV channel. (M. Johnson / Media Specialist)

others, live in sobriety, and be free of rules violation reports for the last four years. Because of this, he was able to end a 15-year estrangement from his mother, reuniting after years spent prioritizing drugs, motorcycle gangs, and violence. As for the future, he says, "I believe that God has given me a purpose that when I am released I will work with the Anti-Recidivism Coalition to bring music and art therapy to 'at risk youth,' and children of incarcerated parents, so teaching will most definitely be a part of that."



Resident Rockstar Joshua Wahlert.
(M. Johnson / Media Specialist)



Landscapes, © 2022 Carlos Alvarado, oil pastel



Landscapes, © 2022 Daniel Alas, oil pastel

Creative Arts Program

The Creative Arts Program provides instructional workshops in drawing, painting, guitar, and writing by local artists.

Creative Writing	In Facility E Hobby Room:	Fill out an Inmate Activity
Poetry	Tuesdays 12-1:30pm	Group Request
Painting	Tuesdays 2-3:30pm	(CDCR 2016)
Painting	Tuesdays 2-3:30pm	if you'd like to be on the
Guitar	Tuesdays 6-7:30pm	waiting list for these groups.
Drawing	Wednesdays 9-10:30am	
Guitar	Wednesdays 9-10:30am	
	Wednesdays 11-12:30pm	

Opinion: Your Neighbor's Public Execution

By Cameron Terhune,
Correctional Training Facility

PEOPLE GO TO prison every day. Whether we call them “convicts,” “prisoners,” “offenders,” or the Orwellian “inmate-patients,” that’s what they are — people. They do not lose their humanity because of where they are. People in prison are like people who are not in prison. They have hopes and fears. They dream, they laugh, they cry, they think about the future, or the past. They live.

One often-cited truth about prisons is that most of the people in them will eventually get out. In other words, they will be somebody’s neighbors. Whose interests does it serve, then, to subject our neighbors to needless cruelty before they move in?

Under the guise of the people’s right to know, the news media has made a habit of celebrating the destruction of lives and families. The news relays to its audience little more than the details of crimes and the people who commit them. The information splashed across these tabloid screens is as gratuitous as gore in a slasher flick. Besides grabbing attention — and advertising dollars — these orgies of misery serve no positive purpose.

In fact, treating crimes as drama and trials as entertainment does our communities a grave disservice. Portraying people who break the law as animals, monsters, fiends, and villains grants audiences free rein to indulge in victimhood, to be outraged and demand vengeance, to cease thinking and simply hate. Destroying a person’s humanity is tradition that makes it palatable for society to consign the targets of their ire to inhuman treatment.

The challenges of returning to that society as a less broken and dysfunctional person are already daunting. The court system is well endowed with the ability to inflict punishment and needs no help from the news reporter. Yet, rather than remain objective, it is the media who launches salvo after salvo, attacking people when they are at their most vulnerable before

burying the carcasses beneath yesterday’s headlines. For a moment of bloody glee, the target is forever scarred.

There exists no equivalent attention for positive achievements. No newspaper celebrates the person’s success against all odds when they come to terms with the traumas that led them to prison and earn release by working hard to put those anti-social behaviors behind them. Instead, if the media acknowledges the release at all, it is only to dredge up the past and exclaim that mercy is unwarranted. That is a profoundly cynical stance to take by those who claim to be the voices of our collective conscience.

Media fear mongering accomplishes nothing, save for alienating the person going to prison even further from society, which in turn makes returning whole that much more unlikely. This undermines the entire reason prisons supposedly exist: To convert dangerous people into productive members of harmonious society, to be our neighbors.

While I would never argue that the news media does not have the right to be as appealing to the basest human instincts as it pleases, piling harm atop harm heals no one. Only once we reject such attempts to erode our empathy can we live with our neighbors, rather than fear them.

Formerly Incarcerated Professor Alton Williams Turns Life Around

By Marty Williams, Production Editor

PROFESSOR ALTON WILLIAMS teaches sociology for Folsom Lake College here at the Mule Creek State Prison, but also at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), where he serves as the program coordinator for Project Rebound. He did not start life seeing college in his future. He was born in Oakland, California, to a large and often extended family of siblings, cousins, aunts, and uncles floating in and out of poverty, gangs, and drugs. He describes their status as “hood rich”; they always had plenty of expensive things, even though he didn’t even have his own room. He never once recalls anyone having an actual job. “When you’re poor and you’re a kid,” he remembers, “you don’t know you’re poor.”

All of the people he admired or looked up to eventually died or went to prison, or as he put it, “I lost my examples.” These circumstances, as well as a number of core beliefs instilled by being a black person, poverty, racism, and social positioning, led Williams into a number of criminal decisions that ultimately got him incarcerated. While in prison, he had no great desire to find a purpose, other than to not come back to prison after he got out. He hooked up with Project Rebound, a part of CSUS, which got him involved in campus housing, classes, tutoring, and financial aid.

“I went to school to stay out of trouble,” Williams says with a grin. “It was more of a hustle than a life goal. They paid for everything.”

Then he met the person who would stand as his mentor and role model for the rest of his life. A black professor of sociology, Dr. George, gave Williams someone to identify with in all the right ways. “I saw myself,” he says of George, who is now chair at Cosumnes River College. Sociology would give him the purpose he didn’t know he had been looking for, giving him a way to articulate what he’d been feeling about the way social institutions that take from certain sectors to enrich and promote others. Williams earned a Master’s Degree in sociology from CSUS, and soon after began a fervent teaching career that resulted in being a professor in the school’s criminal justice department in 2016, then eventually the program coordinator of Project Rebound. He teaches both there and in prison, actively encouraging incarcerated persons to find a way out through education.

The big difference between teaching young students at the campus and teaching adults in prison has been vast. He finds incarcerated students more receptive to challenges, more personal, and more academic, versus the often entitled privilege of free people. This reflects, as a whole, what he says society’s biggest problem is today: “There’s a lack of awareness, of social consciousness; too individualistic. The humanity is missing. If you can learn it about yourself, you can learn it about others.”

Williams has also created his own family, distinct from what he experienced growing up, mainly due to his grandmother, the only person he recalls honoring faith, inspiration, and love. There is wisdom in community, a wisdom we have been steadily losing by devotion to the individual. Such devotion will not solve social problems. For Professor Williams, what matters is what we leave for the next generation, and how individual development serves the whole.



Journey to Federal Prison

By Franklin Lee, FCI Englewood, Colo.



THE REFURBISHED, 100-seat airplane lifted off the runway carrying 80 bewildered passengers venturing to lands unknown, leaving behind their tiny accommodations, meager possessions, and old familiar connections. Each passenger looked into their neighbors’ vacant eyes and expressions, knowing the three-hour flight was not a pleasure getaway, but a dreadful reality.

Touching down in a far-away state, they were funneled into large buses, embarking further into their exhausting journey, traveling hours to another facility. Corralled into several dingy holding tanks, the passengers sought refuge on cold metal benches and hard concrete floors; their thin blankets and duffle bags full of prison clothes became makeshift beds as they sought warmth within dreams. While this sounds like a scene from the immigration crisis at the U.S. border, it is instead the first experience for prisoners arriving to federal prison.

“Club Fed,” “Camp Cupcake,” “Prisneyland” — whatever you call it, in reality is the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Divided by security levels (maximum, medium, and minimum), federal facilities are found across the U.S. Each institution offers various programs, from drug rehabilitation to sex-offender treatment. There is vocational training from culinary arts to HVAC, facility level job placement, and the more lucrative Universal Corporation (prison industries). Maximum-security facilities have fewer opportunities, while camps offer jobs in the community in road maintenance, farming, or dog training programs.

The experience varies, but prisoners are first transported by the U.S. Marshals Service to Oklahoma City, the federal hub for processing. Prisoners may be detained longer at other holding facilities, depending on available bed space. Individuals who self-surrender pay their own transportation costs to assigned institutions; these are often prisoners returning due to a violation of a previous sentence. Depending on the prisoner’s court date, the U.S. Marshals may transfer individuals to the processing hub before a hearing or sentencing, then return them to a holding facility in time for court. Prisoner warehousing in the federal system is common. Individual federal prisons differ in procedures, but upon arrival at a final destination, new prisoners attend a required Admissions and Orientation (A&O) class for familiarization with their new environment.

Federal prisons offer an array of programs to encourage residents to engage in positive programming via rehabilitation counseling courses suited to their mental health needs or addictions. Programs like MAT (medication-assisted treatment) and SOTP (Sex Offender Treatment Program) are available. In education, classes for the GED certificate are available; however, some institutions have minimal funding for higher learning or little support from local colleges. Correspondence college courses are available at the prisoner’s cost. Adult continuing education provides opportunities for residents to watch education and vocation videos to earn education credit according to the innovative First Step Act. This is an evidence-based, recidivism-reduction program for prisoners to qualify for early release, community placement, or home confinement. Unfortunately, many are ineligible for these credits.

Federal institutions have incorporated the personal device tablet program into their population. Apps for purchase include movie rental, video games, and music, allowing residents to occupy their time and stay relevant to the latest technology. Some facilities have added programs such as video visits, e-books and education programs.

Segregation by race still exists in federal prison culture, including censure by crime or background; however, facilities have pushed to change these principles by blending the population. The effort has helped break down barriers and embrace respect, though not everyone has accepted it.

The federal prison experience differs for each individual, but how they utilize their time while incarcerated will determine whether they continue with a criminal mentality or engage in positive programming.

Postscriptum

AS THE WORLD came together for the Olympics, division continued to show its face. Competitors from certain nations were booed and heckled, and some nations weren’t allowed to compete at all, due to the actions of their leaders. Questions about doping loom over a multitude of athletes, and the Olympic committee threatened to pull out of the Salt Lake City games if the United States investigates the issue. Transphobia and hysterics erupted over a scene of bacchanalia reminiscent of Leonardo’s *The Last Supper* and women — and let’s be clear: *women*, who were born, raised, lived, and competed as women their whole lives, in countries where it is impossible to be trans — in boxing. What is supposed to be an event of unity has turned instead into animosity.

Closer to home, things aren’t looking much better. Our political leaders lie about one another and call each other names (when did it become OK to call your presidential opponent “weird?”); our highest court actively resists ethical codes; homelessness is deemed a crime to be punished; immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers are demonized.

How did we get here, to this place of treating each other as less than human? And how do we get back?

Recognizing the innate dignity of all human beings is a good place to start. I believe that all people, no matter why we may disagree with them, are always trying to do what’s best in a situation. Our unique experiences, trauma, and cultures color our ideas of how to achieve that “best,” though, and usually our concepts of “best” and how to get there don’t match well. If we can look for the best in each other, and stop looking for reasons to be offended by those around us, we are likely to live a happier and more peaceful life.

-JC, Editor-in-Chief



Why “Club Fed”?

John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

The term “Club Fed” is aptly applied to federal prisons. I spent 10 years at two federal facilities in California, Terminal Island and Lompoc, both high-security prisons and both had tennis courts. One had a miniature golf course set up on the yard and Terminal Island’s visiting room boasted picture windows within 20 feet of the ocean.

Canteen sold both shoes and electronics (radios, CD players, etc.). Before going to shop, I could check my account balance at a handy ATM in a nearby hallway, or transfer funds to my phone account at the same kiosk. My ID doubled as a debit card, usable at an abundance of vending machines (24/7) or at the library copier.

All inmates had pay numbers and, at least, a menial task to earn minimum wage (\$5 per month) up to a possible \$300-\$400 in UniCor, the fed’s equivalent of CalPIA. Not quite Paradise, but superb dining hall food variety (including bacon and real meat products), quality and quantities made up for ancient facilities and crowded conditions. Club Fed seems appropriate.

Andrew Bernard Moss
Oct. 8, 1965 - July 8, 2024

To adhere to the wishes of Bernard, no services will be held to celebrate his life. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations to GRIP Training institute in honor of Bernard's compassionate spirit and the tireless passion for his work. Andrew Bernard Moss will be deeply missed and forever remembered.



With love, gratitude, and grief,

GRIP participants and graduates on Facilities D and E of the Mule Creek State Prison were asked to describe Bernard using a word or phrase; the results were combined to create the word cloud below.

