

To Our Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

WELCOME TO YOUR October *Mule Creek Post*. Something to consider: What we think about all day creates our world and becomes our reality. It is our thoughts that open or close doors to our future. We can control these thoughts. Feelings and emotions come from thoughts and drive behavior. If we can control our thoughts, we can control feelings, and thus, behavior.

"If a man can control his own mind he has found the key to unlock the universe."

- Napoleon Hill

The mind cannot be confined by walls and cages. We hope you find something within these pages that inspires you to think freely.

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Participants in A Journey to Freedom for America's Sex Trafficked Kids walkathon gather in front of the wall at the Mule Creek State Prison. (Photo courtesy of the CRM's office)

Walking Toward a New Day

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter
and Nicholas Boyes, Mule Creek State Prison

ON A WARM Saturday in June 2024, 44-year-old Frank Lanear felt a profound sense of purpose and fulfillment as he checked in at the registration desk for A Journey to Freedom for America's Sex-Trafficked Kids' walkathon. He reflected on his long journey to today's event, as the dark gothic spire of the old Preston School of Industries loomed silently in the background — a sentinel of countless untold stories. Lanear spent formative teen years imprisoned there; it was his alma mater where he graduated high school in 1998.



Alonso Dearaujo walks for peace. (Photo courtesy of the CRM's Office)

It would prove to be an odd, difficult, and incomplete alumnus. While Lanear's obvious academic needs were addressed there, a series of early childhood sexual assaults (which would be the cause of his early substance abuse and eventual criminal conviction) were sadly left unaddressed. In the absence of effective support for recovery, rehabilitation, and healing, he would act out and offend again and again.

As Lanear signed the registration form, it all came into focus: His unaddressed childhood victimization combined with reckless choices to manifest as a dangerous cycle of personal victimization and criminality. From his early incarceration at Preston, Lanear would go on to experience only five months

of freedom as a non-incarcerated person.

On this particular June day, Lanear walked another dutiful leg in a necessary journey of healing. He walked as a disciplined practice of living amends. He walked as an important expression of unanimity — truly a few more laps in a personal walk toward freedom. When asked about it, he was matter-of-fact. "Anytime I can become a living amends, I am honored," he said. "This is how I am going to live my life when I'm on the streets. I have nephews and nieces who've been sexually assaulted, and have been myself. I am deeply sympathetic to victims," added Lanear.

Each walker's participation was informed by their individual experience. As he spoke to other walkers, Nicholas

(continued on page 2)



(from *Walking for a New Day*, pg. 1)

Boyes was moved to his own emotional personal reflection. He thought about his absence as a father, a harsh consequence of his substance abuse history and criminality. In this moment, he decided this walk would be dedicated to his three young sons: Brandon, Sebastian, and Jack. He understood the relationship between his past anti-social conduct and the risks that, unchecked, it inevitably posed to their futures. Of course, he would never want them to be involved as trafficked or trafficker.



Walker Michael Narbaiz
(Photo courtesy of the CRM's Office)

Gregory English recently joined the Juvenile Diversion Program at Mule Creek. When asked about the walkathon, his thoughts were clear. "We have to show ... that we are opposed to the trafficking of young people," he said. "More should be done to prevent it." David Rodriguez' personal experience informed his walk. "As a survivor of sexual abuse, it's great to bring awareness inside these walls," he said.

Gabriel Espinoza chose to frame his walk in an overview. "It's good to see everybody participating as a community for a good cause." For Raymond Stokes, the walk was more personal. "As a victim myself, I think we should help victims to heal from their trauma," he advocated. Johnny Guerrero viewed his walk through the lens of personal accountability. "It's part of my recovery," he said. "Any time that I can be involved in living amends, I strive to participate." Gustavo Sánchez Jr. walked in honor of his relatives. "I have family members that have experienced child abduction," he said. "This is for them."

In unanimity and mindful of their experiences as victim and victimizer, each walker in their unique way joined in a sober and intentional journey of love and restoration on this new day.



Mule Creek Post reporter
O. Rick Bridges also walked.
(Photo courtesy of the CRM's office)



Walker Gustavo Sánchez
(Photo courtesy of the CRM's Office)



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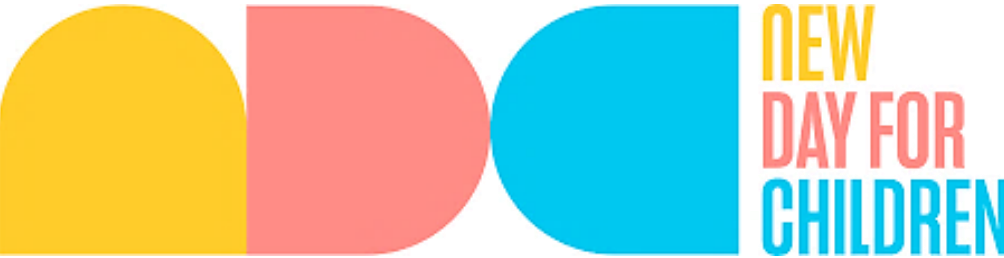
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By P. Covello
Mule Creek State Prison
Warden



Prison Seminary Inauguration at Mule Creek State Prison

IN LATE SEPTEMBER, Mule Creek State Prison celebrated the inauguration of the state's first seminary program for incarcerated students. The event included a barbeque hosted by Soldiers of the Cross and Paid In Full-California as well as faculty from SUM Bible College and prison administrators.

The event is an example of what the California Model can be. A day spent interacting with the public and staff, eating barbeque and checking out motorcycles, and just feeling like a normal human being — this is the department's future. As we move forward with more focus on rehabilitation, days like these will only become more common.

Congratulations and best of luck to all the seminary students, and to all those who will participate in future programs.

MULE CREEK POST Submissions

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



Artists Help With Rehabilitation, Pt. 1

By Don Chaddock, *Inside CDCR*



SINGER JOHNNY CASH and Folsom State Prison have been linked ever since Cash's 1968 performance and hit record that emerged from the endeavor. While Cash may have gotten the headlines, he wasn't the first major recording artist to perform at the prison.

Two days after becoming the first American singer to stage two command performances for British royalty, Sammy Davis Jr. made the trek to Folsom State Prison to become the first major artist to perform at the institution. It was November 1961.

Ebony magazine documented the visit in its January 1962 issue: "At the request of California's Governor Pat Brown, the diminutive showman had been given a motorcycle escort on the 25-mile route from Sacramento to Folsom," the magazine reported. "Rambling through an hour and five minutes of his repertoire, in the first appearance of a major entertainer at the prison, Davis was backed by his conductor-pianist George Rhodes and drummer Michael Silva."

According to the magazine, there were 2,200 inmates at the performance: "[Davis] charmed his audience by singing 'Ole Black Magic,' 'Birth of the Blues' and a medley, and received an extra burst of applause for this tap dancing, imitated voices and, just for kicks, beat drums. After the show, Davis taped an interview for the prison's (inmate) radio station," *Ebony* reported.

Davis had a small role in the movie *Reprieve*, later renamed *Convicts 4*, which would be filming at the prison the following month. He was also starring in a regular television show as well as a new radio show.

He pushed his entertainment peers to reach out to penitentiaries and perform for the inmates: "Sammy Davis Jr., urging other entertainers to follow his lead after entertaining ... inmates at Folsom prison: 'This is something that ought to be done. We should be ashamed of ourselves for not doing it before,'" he told *Jet* magazine Jan. 11, 1962.

Davis said he believed part of a prisoner's rehabilitation should be the reminder that he or she has not been forgotten by society.

A chaplain at San Quentin reached out to Frank Sinatra to perform for inmates, and he accepted. He brought the entire Count Basie Orchestra along for the show.

"At this point in his affluent career, he responds more quickly to a request to perform at a benefit concert than an opportunity to make money," *CBS News* anchor Walter Cronkite reported.

It was a life-changing experience when Merle Haggard saw Johnny Cash perform a New Year's Day show in 1959. Haggard served time in San Quentin for attempted robbery from 1958 until 1960.

"I didn't care for his music before that — I thought it was corny," Haggard told *Rolling Stone* magazine May 5, 2016. "But he had the crowd right in the palm of his hand."

Haggard pursued his music career and became friends with Cash. In 1972, Gov. Ronald Reagan pardoned Haggard as a "routine" matter. In 1982, Haggard performed for President Reagan and first lady Nancy Reagan. "I hope the president will be as pleased with my performance today as I was with his pardon 10 years ago," Haggard told the *New York Times* March 8, 1982.



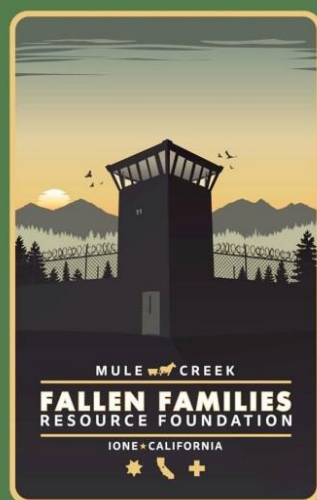
Johnny Cash performs with Carl Perkins at San Quentin in 1969. Cash performed there a decade earlier while Merle Haggard was an inmate. (InsideCDCR.ca.gov)



Frank Sinatra at San Quentin

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

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(www.kron4.com)

Narcan Arrives at Mule Creek

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

ON THURSDAY, JUNE 27, while in the middle of a meeting of writers and editors in the *Mule Creek Post* newsroom, Supervising Registered Nurse Douglas Walters and other nursing staff came in and began to hand out boxes of Narcan to every person in blue. This was quite a surprise, and Walters was happy to explain it all to a room full of journalists.

According to Walters, the Narcan distribution to all incarcerated persons in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation was made possible through a federal grant. Much like condoms and medication-assisted treatment, it is a harm-reduction program meant to save lives. With opioid overdoses on the rise throughout the state, especially with the increased use of fentanyl — by itself or mixed with other street drugs, and in counterfeit pain medications — the immediate availability of Narcan during an overdose can be lifesaving.

Walters insisted that Narcan would be made available to anyone with no questions asked. When called to respond to an overdose, the only information medical staff needs to know is how many doses of Narcan the victim received.

As to its use, the protocol is simple. If someone is unconscious and it is suspected he or she may have used drugs, that's when to use it. Put the Narcan dispenser up one nostril and pull the trigger. If after two minutes there's no response, do the same in the other nostril.

Walters noted that the Narcan is harmless and virtually side effect-free at up to seven doses, and there is no danger of legal liability for its use on a suspected overdose victim. The only thing it will do is counter the effects of opioids.

A quick moment on the calculator gave an indication of the cost of this program. At \$50 a box (two doses), one for each incarcerated individual in the CDCR (approximately 92,000), that comes to \$4.6 million for the initial distribution.

This seems a worthy investment from our federal government to save the lives of our brothers and sisters. All it requires of us is to be willing to help in a time of need.

Secretary: Death Row No More

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

IN APRIL 2024, a notice was sent by the secretary of corrections to all incarcerated people in California, informing them that death row was in the process of being depopulated. The secretary noted that those with a death sentence are to be integrated into the population of other prisons within the state prison system. This policy takes advantage of a provision in Proposition 66, passed in 2016 that was, ironically, designed to speed up the death penalty process. Prop. 66 says condemned prisoners can be housed in any prison controlled by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Death row has been a fixture at the San Quentin State Prison since the 1930s, housing California's condemned population almost exclusively. According to *Corrections Today*, in 2001, a law passed that allowed for some of the most dangerous housed on death row to be transferred to prisons with restricted housing units where they could be managed more safely and effectively.

California has not conducted an execution since 2006. In 2019, when Gov. Gavin Newsom assumed office, he said, "The intentional killing of another person is wrong and as governor, I will not oversee the execution of any individual," as he signed a moratorium on executions within the state. Newsom also oversaw the dismantling of the execution chamber at San Quentin, thereby ensuring that no executions could even be contemplated until the end of his term in office. Shortly after taking office, Newsom instituted an advisory committee on revising the death penalty for both himself and lawmakers. The committee recommended repealing the death penalty, though that would have to be done through a ballot measure; the last two ballot measures, in 2012 and 2016, affirmed the status of the death penalty as a viable sentence in California.

According to Mason Bissada of Forbes Inc., most people coming off death row are initially going to be single-celled on Level III and IV facilities throughout the state, placed on the same facilities as those sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. In addition, some condemned people will be housed in restricted housing based on safety and security concerns. Through this program, each person sentenced to death will be given an opportunity to acclimate and eventually integrate into the general population of any facility they are placed on. Potentially, they may live with another incarcerated person in a two-person cell if it is deemed a safe situation for both parties.

This move to more regular living situations for condemned persons is being done for a number of reasons, not the least of which is to give people living with a death sentence the opportunity to work at a job within the prison system, enabling them to pay off restitution owed to victims and victim's families.

California's death row has been described as a "living hell" by Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking*. She has counseled people incarcerated there. "There is sensory deprivation of a very high degree," she said. "On death row you are regarded as disposable human waste."

It is hoped that this move to join the rest of the incarcerated population can change this concept of condemned people — both within and outside the prison system. Change is frightening, and this might be even more frightening than other changes that have happened over the last decade or so, such as those sentenced to life without the possibility of parole being housed on Level II and III facilities, and the implementation of elderly and youth offender parole hearings.

Many of the changes put in place over the last dozen years have enhanced the quality of life for incarcerated people, their families, staff, and communities across the board. By being afforded the same opportunity to program and engage with others as the rest of the incarcerated population, many hope that people currently sentenced to death will take this opportunity to mix into the existing prison population with hardly a ripple, much like people sentenced to life without the possibility of parole have done.



(Calif. Dept. of Corrections)

The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

THIS MONTH'S FIRST word is *onomatopoeic* from the Greek (ονοματοποιια, *onomatopoiia*, itself a combination of οναμος, *onamos*, "name," and ποιειν, *poiein*, "to make"). The word means "to make a name," as in the formation of a word by imitating the natural sound associated with the object or action involved.

1. A word formed in this way (an onomatope).
2. The use of such words in poetry or rhetoric.

One such word is *dree*. It comes from the Anglo Saxon word *dreogan*, which means "to suffer."

So, "a dreeing cry" would be an outcry filled with suffering and despair.

One way that *dree* might be used is this: "As we rode away from the burning village, there arose a dreeing cry from the few survivors' throats."

Another word, *thrum*, is also an onomatope and is used to describe a repetitive noise or sound. One dictionary defines *thrum* as:

1. To play on a stringed instrument monotonously, idly, or unskillfully; to strum.
2. To tell in a monotonous, tiresome way.
3. To drum on with the fingers.

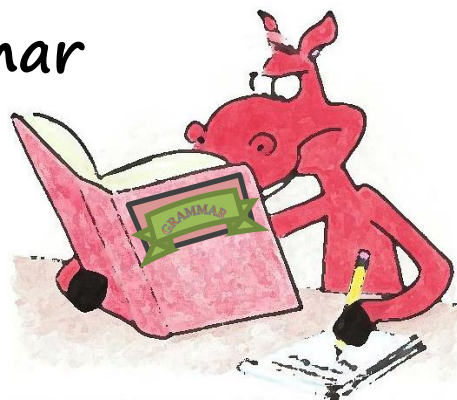
Thrum might be used like this: "My entire being resonated with the thrum of the massive engine's power."

Another interesting onomatope is *susurration* (from the Latin *susurrare*, "to whisper") and its progeny. One dictionary defines *susurration* as "a whispering sound, murmur." Also, *susurrous*, meaning "full of whispering sounds." And, *susurrus* which means "a hum, whisper, a whispering or rustling."

One way *susurrus* might be used is as follows: "He listened intently through the susurrus of the wind through the tall grass for any hint of the lion's stealthy approach."

Sources: *Webster's Universal English Dictionary*, *Webster's Collegiate 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 began a discussion of phrases, specifically the **prepositional phrase**, the **adjective phrase**, and the **adverb phrase**. This month, we'll complete our talk on other types of phrases that are formed by combining a participle with related words to describe a noun or pronoun. These phrases include:

Participial phrase: *Fleeing from the sudden storm, many picnickers sought refuge in the shelter house at the park.* (*Fleeing* is a present participle describing the noun *picnickers*; *fleeing from the sudden storm* makes up a participial phrase.)

Gerund phrase: *Singing the night away helped Joseph forget his troubles.* (*Singing* is a gerund; in this sentence, it acts as the subject. *Singing the night away* makes up a gerund phrase.)

Infinitive phrase: "To go home is my only wish right now," *sighed the tired mother after a long day of shopping with the children.* (*To go* is an infinitive; in this sentence, it acts as the subject. *To go home* makes up an infinitive phrase.)

A final type of phrase is an **appositive phrase**. An appositive is a noun (usually) or pronoun (rarely) that gives details or identifies another noun or pronoun. Here is an example:

My favorite book, a dog-eared copy of To Kill a Mockingbird, has accompanied me on many vacations.

Copy is an appositive that refers to *book*. In this sentence, *copy* and the words that go with it — *a dog-eared* — make up the appositive phrase: *a dog-eared copy of To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Next month, we'll talk about clauses.

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; *Essentials of English*, 5th Edition, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2000

Prison Seminary Program Update

By Earl S. Breckenridge, Feature Reporter

ATOWN HALL MEETING was convened May 2 in the Facility E Visiting Room for a Q&A session regarding implementation of a new baccalaureate program. Answering questions of the 15 or so attendees was Community Resource Manager Jason Ross, and Paid In Full-California representative and regular Protestant Bible teacher Bob Morris.

SUM Bible College & Theological Seminary, accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, will offer a baccalaureate in theology for 20 students. It will cost \$100,000 a year, at \$5,000 per student for three years. Footing the bill is Paid In Full-California (see the March 2024 *Mule Creek Post* for additional information).

Ross made it clear that this is not offered through the education department; there are no milestone or rehabilitative achievement credits awarded. The emphasis is on "A divine calling to serve God and the incarcerated community," said Morris.

Requirements for participation in the initial cohort are a high school diploma or the equivalent; no serious rules violation reports over the past five years; and at least five years left to serve. Though not necessary, prior theological training is desirable. "We want people who will be committed," said Morris. "The baccalaureate is typically a five-year program we're going to finish in three."



(continued on page 6)

(From *Prison Seminary Update*, pg. 5)

The anticipated start date is in August 2024. Classes will be in the Facility E chapel, Monday through Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. A practicum will be on Fridays, and a professor from SUM will conduct class twice a week. Most student work will be done on laptops via the Canvas learning management system and an additional shell developed by CDCR, including the Eb-sco academic database already used by most college students. "This is a first-time-ever program," said Morris, "everyone will be watching."

According to Morris, the plan is to add a new cohort each fall. The vision is for graduated students to be sent throughout CDCR facilities as ministers. "The ultimate goal," said Morris, "is to produce Christian counselors who can help change the [prison] culture."

Rage Against the Machine

By Mark Daigre, Feature Reporter

ON MAY 31, 1993, seismometers registered a magnitude 1 earthquake at the Pink Pop Festival in Landgraaf, Netherlands, while the four-member rap-metal band Rage Against the Machine was playing its set. The 64,300-strong crowd jumped in unison so hard they literally moved the earth. At the time, this was the only recorded earthquake by a mass of people listening to music.

As a band, Rage Against the Machine has produced three albums and developed a fan base that spans generations and continents. On one memorable occasion, those fans moved the earth. One can imagine that for the band, there was no specific intent to do anything other than play music that other people can relate to, spread the message of political struggle, and just plain rock. However, collective action is what changes the world, and while history books may focus on individuals who have made great change in the world, the reality is that historic action is made by masses of people aligning together to create the atmosphere and reality of change.

Napoleon did not conquer Europe single-handedly; he had an army. Alexander the Great did not conquer Asia by himself; he

also had an army. Genghis Khan did not threaten the government of China by himself; he also had an army. Today, no single person can change the systems that impact us by themselves.

Our country was founded on the backs of tens of thousands of people working together to gain independence from the British. England itself was established through the collective action of people coming together to push back against the Roman Empire; it has been so throughout history.

By jumping high enough and hard enough, a few thousand fans moved the earth. By joining together, by linking up common ideals, we can and will change the systems that create harm in our society; the institutionalized racism, sexism, classism, and structural violence, the belief that it is okay to step on another to get ahead; that some people are not worth saving; and the idea that some people are beyond redemption.

By jumping high and hard enough we can do anything. We can even move the earth.

Peace is Every Step

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individuals is difficult, it is the only way. Wherever I go, I express this, and I am encouraged that people from many different walks of life receive it well. And I believe that love, compassion, and altruism are the fundamental basis for peace. Once these qualities are developed within an individual, he or she is then able to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. This atmosphere can be expanded and extended from the individual to his family, from the family to the community and eventually to the whole world.

Peace is Every Step is a guidebook for a journey in exactly this direction. Thich Nhat Hanh begins by teaching mindfulness of breathing and awareness of the small acts of our daily lives, then shows us how to use the benefits of mindfulness and concentration to transform and heal difficult psychological states. Finally he shows us the connection between personal, inner peace and peace on Earth. This is a very worthwhile book. It can change individual lives and the life of our society.

—His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama; Foreword to *Peace is Every Step*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991.

HIS HOLINESS, THE 14th Dalai Lama, and Thich Nhat Hanh are refugees. Both were forced to flee their countries of origin, spent the majority of their lives in exile, and have dedicated those lives to helping others attain peace, not only as an outward expression, but as an interior state of being.

The Dalai Lama writes, "Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individuals is difficult, it is the only way." If we tried to do this, if everyone stopped the violence that would perpetuate, if each person no longer lashed out in anger or disappointment, if we all kept our hands to ourselves and held our tongues, what would the world look like? What would it take for you to transform how you engage with the world around you? Could it be something that you just all of a sudden do? Or is this kind of change a slow change that requires patience and practiced application of positive self-talk and care?

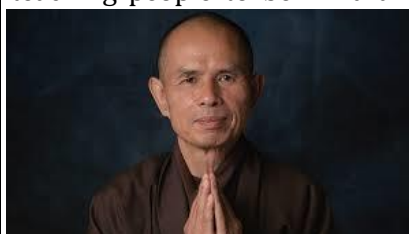
What the Dalai Lama is saying is that the way to world peace requires each of us to create the space for peace to live in our own sphere, and that is where our control stops; we literally need to create, live, and exhibit peace in every step of our lives.

Thich Nhat Hanh begins his instruction on how to create world peace by teaching people to be mindful of their breathing and to be aware of the small things they do throughout the day. Literally paying attention to the small stuff so that when the big stuff comes about, we are already practiced in paying attention to how and why we are doing anything.

Almost every group available to us contains some aspect of mindfulness, a version of slowing down and paying attention to what we are doing. The reasons for this are many, and firmly rooted in thousands of years of practice by millions who have figured out how to be in relation to themselves and others without repeating harm.



The Dalai Lama
(hhDalaiLamaLibraryLearningCenter.org)

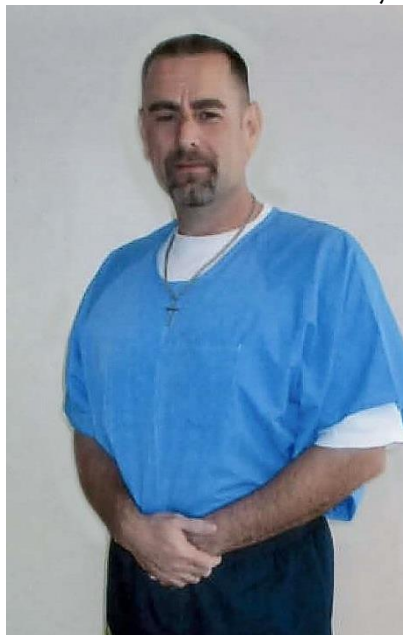


Thich Nhat Hanh (LionsRoar.com)



Gone Too Soon

By David Viens,
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility



Johnny Collins

ABOUT A YEAR ago, I wrote a book review of *Prisoner's Cry* by Johnny Collins. On Aug. 9, 2024, Collins passed away at 49 years old. He is survived by his wife and family who are heartbroken.

I met with Collins earlier that day for a captain's meeting and he appeared in good health and mind. He didn't seem stressed or fatigued. He was filled with excitement to get the Peer Support Specialist Program up and running on Facility G, and he was excited to see his wife the next morning for their family visit.

A memorial service was held on Facility G August 24. Those attending expressed their sentiments and grief. I was humbled by the respect and appreciation conveyed by the many whom Collins helped, by those he provided inspiration and hope through his work on legal briefs, and in his FUEL group.

Collins was an ordained minister with an unwavering faith. He knew where he was going when he left this world; he knew it was to a better place.

Collins left us too soon and surely he would tell each of us to live fully in the moment and press forward to the goal of meeting him in that upper room that's been prepared for us, too. Life is like a blink of an eye, but the promise of our Heavenly Father lasts for eternity.

Mass Incarceration Pt. 4

Youth, Immigration, and Involuntary Commitment

By Wendy Sawyer & Peter Wagner, Prison Policy Initiative

LOOKING MORE CLOSELY at incarceration by offense type expresses some disturbing facts about the 35,500 youth in confinement in the United States: Too many are there for a serious offense that is not even a crime. For example, there are 2,700 youth behind bars for non-criminal violations of their probation. An additional 700 youth are locked up for status offenses, which are behaviors that are not law violations for adults such as running away, truancy, and incorrigibility. About 1 in 11 youth held for a criminal or delinquent offense is locked in an adult facility, and most of the others are held in juvenile facilities that look and operate a lot like prisons and jails.

We also know that for many children, legal system involvement overlaps with other kinds of systems involvement, such as the foster care system: Almost half of youth in foster care have an encounter with the criminal system by age 17. The early criminalization of youth is apparent in the adult population: More than one-third (38%) of people in state prisons were first arrested before they turned 16.

Turning to the people who are locked up criminally and civilly for immigration-related reasons, we find that over 6,000 people are in federal prisons for criminal convictions of immigration offenses, and 12,400 more are held pretrial or presentence by the U.S. Marshals Service. The vast majority of people incarcerated for criminal immigration offenses are accused of illegal entry or illegal reentry — in other words, for no more serious offense than crossing the border without permission.

Another 38,000 people are civilly detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), not for any crime, but simply because they are facing deportation. People detained by ICE are physically confined in federal- or private-run immigration detention facilities, or in local jails under contract with ICE. While this number is below what it was before the pandemic, it's actually climbed back up from a record low of 13,000 people in ICE detention in early 2021. In fact, ICE is rapidly expanding its overall surveillance and control over the non-criminal migrant population by growing its electronic monitoring-based "alternatives-to-detention" program.

An additional 8,000 unaccompanied children are held in the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, awaiting placement with parents, family members, or friends. Their number has more than doubled since January 2020.

Adding to the universe of people who are confined because of criminal legal system involvement, 25,000 people are involuntarily committed in state psychiatric hospitals and civil commitment centers. Many of these people are not even convicted, and some are held indefinitely. While the facilities they are held in are not typically run by departments of correction, they are, in reality, much like prisons. Meanwhile, at least 38 states allow involuntary commitment for substance use disorder treatment, and in many cases, people are sent to actual prisons and jails, which are inappropriate places for treatment.

As criminal legal system reforms become increasingly central to political debate — and are even scapegoated to resurrect old, ineffective "tough on crime" policies — it's more important than ever that we get the facts straight and understand the big picture.



CALIFORNIA INNOCENCE

P R O J E C T

California Western School of Law · 225 Cedar St. · San Diego, CA 92101



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.





PREP Art Contest

By Partnership for Re-Entry Program

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR Re-Entry Program (PREP) is having a restorative justice art auction in December of 2024. We believe in the transformative power of restorative justice to heal communities, uplift voices, and offer hope where it's most needed. We're calling on artists who share this vision to use their talents to inspire change and foster understanding. It can be any medium or theme of your choice, keeping in mind that your artwork can be a beacon of hope, a powerful tool to bridge divides, and a voice for those seeking redemption.

Submission Guidelines

- Any medium or theme.
- Only ONE entry per artist.
- Deadline: 12/1/2024
- Judging: 12/7/2024
12/14/2024
- Must include a 200-word bio, and words about the art piece with your entry.

Winners will be awarded monetary prizes based on where they place in the contest:

- 1st Place: \$200
- 2nd place: \$150
- 3rd Place: \$100

December is coming fast, so submit now at the address below. Good luck!

PREP ART CONTEST
P.O. Box 77850
LOS ANGELES, CA
90007

You can also donate to PREP auctions without a deadline for submissions.

If you wish to contact PREP for its excellent self-help correspondence courses or to receive the Oasis newsletter, feel free to write.

Transgenerational Trauma Impacts

By Earl S. Breckenridge, Feature Reporter

Every family has patterns and pathologies of thought, belief, and behavior that are passed on from one generation to another in the same way that a physical characteristic is passed on. — Lyanla Vanzant

TRAUMA IS THE diseased condition — form and function — of innate human potential. It impairs neurobiological development, handicaps relationships, restricts opportunities, diminishes happiness, and in many cases goes unidentified and thus unresolved. Trauma festers and germinates before infecting current and future generations.

“In 2014,” writes Julie A. Uhermik, “the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) wrote the following definition: ‘Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.’”

Unprocessed trauma experienced by one individual, family, or community can pass to succeeding generations who have not experienced the traumatic event firsthand. For instance, a parent attacked and bitten by a ferocious dog may develop a fear of dogs. Whenever he sees a dog he perspires and experiences shortness of breath and heightened stress. His infant child who is keenly attuned to these physiological changes unconsciously connects his parent’s fear-response to dogs with his own response to dogs. Once the infant grows up, and if this experience persists unresolved, he will then pass on this fear of dogs to his children.

“Intergenerational trauma is the process by which the psychological impact of a traumatic event is transmitted from one generation to the next,” writes Emma J. Mew and her coauthors. “This results in subsequent generations experiencing the psychological effects of a traumatic event without exposure to it, such as increased risk of developing trauma — and stressor-related disorders.”

In the book *What Happened to You?*, Dr. Bruce Perry identifies six mechanisms of transgenerational transmission of trauma:

- Genetic*, which involves the genes we inherit and pass on.
- Epigenetic*, which involves the modification and control of gene expression.
- Intrauterine*, which the unborn child experiences in the womb, i.e. stress of mother, environmental toxins, mother’s use of substances.
- Perinatal experience*, which involves attachment and its regulatory impact on infant’s neurobiological development.
- Postnatal*, family-mediated (e.g. language, values, beliefs).
- Postnatal*, which involves education, community, and culture-mediated development.

What this means in practical terms is some of what makes us who we are, the experiences we have, and the challenges we face may be rooted in lingering, unidentified trauma inherited from our ancestors. Difficulties with substance abuse, anti-social behavior, criminality, confrontations with prison culture, and character defects could be the result of unconscious and inexplicable beliefs, values, and behaviors that lay buried, not just in our neuronal makeup but inherited from the distant past. Is it any wonder then that some of our most oppressive and seemingly unredeemable qualities are beyond will power to rectify?

In *Healing Trauma Attachment, Mind, Body, and Brain*, Dr. Bessel van der Kolk writes, “The human response to psychological trauma is one of the most important public health problems in the world. Traumatic events such as family and social violence, rapes and assaults, disasters, wars, accidents and predatory violence confront people with such horror and threat that it may temporarily or permanently alter their capacity to cope, their perception of biological threat, and their self-concepts.”

Understanding trauma in general and transgenerational trauma in particular, and identifying specific areas in our lives that correlate to traumatic events experienced by parents, grandparents, and even great-grandparents, may be prerequisite to our journey of health, healing, and well-being.

Sources: Emma J. Mew, et al., “Psychosocial Family-Level Mediators in the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma: Protocol for a Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis,” 2022; Bruce Perry & Oprah Winfrey, *What Happened to You*, 2021; Marion F. Solomon and Daniel J. Siegel, (eds.), *Healing Trauma Attachment, Mind, Body, and Brain*, 2003; Julie A. Uhermik, *Using Neuroscience in Trauma Therapy*, 2017

Missteps

In the July 2024 edition, page 1’s article “Mule Creek Hosts TUMI Graduation” misstated the name of the program’s creator as Chuck Colson; it was actually created by Dr. Don Davis.



By Richard “Lonewolf” Legan,
Post Columnist

I’VE SEEN THE useful herb, oak moss (*Pseudevernia prunastri*), on many oak trees here in California, and have used the plant in fire-making with the bow and drill technique.

The moss helps bind wounds and has expectorant qualities. It also is used as a cough suppressant and can assist in leavening bread; it works well.

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.



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

Prisoner Express
PO Box 6556
Ithaca, New York 14851



By Fred Munch, Post Columnist

Heat Wave from Hades

COAST TO COAST and across the globe, record high temperatures this summer sent millions searching for shade or air conditioning. The hallmark of climate change is extreme weather, which translates into heat waves lasting longer, getting hotter, and occurring more often. Residents here at the Mule Creek State Prison in Northern California can attest to the intensity. We already sizzled through three heat waves in June when a fourth arrived on July 1. Hotter than Hades, the extreme weather lasted three weeks and kept the mercury above or near 100 °F, 10 to 25 degrees above normal, with a brutal high if 113 °F on July 5, 2024. Enhanced heat is a direct result of burning fossil fuels and the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Samantha Burgess of the European Union’s Copernicus Group warned, “Until we reach zero emissions, the climate will continue to warm, break records, and produce even more extreme weather events.”

Every month of 2024 was the warmest on record, possibly making it the hottest year yet. In India, a heat wave lasted for over months, reaching 116 °F. China had heat warnings coupled with floods and the worst drought in 60 years. In Mexico, highs were 125 °F in the Sonora Desert, and in the state of Tabasco, monkeys fell out of the trees after dying from heat stroke.

Hotter, drier conditions in California increased the danger of wildfires. The season was in full swing with red flag warnings up and winds gusting. By July 6, thousands of fires were burning, consuming 200,000 acres; a normal number of fires for this time of year, but the acreage five times the average. The Thompson Fire started July 2 near Oroville in Northern California, and in two days exploded into a 3,500-acre blaze sending up a plume of smoke seen from the International Space Station and forcing the evacuation of 26,000 people. The largest fire raged in the mountains north of Santa Barbara. Driven by strong winds and triple-digit temperatures, it blackened over 30,000 acres.

New Mexico is in the midst of “climate whiplash” with multiple disaster declarations for back-to-back fires and floods. The area was still reeling from the largest fire in its history, just two years ago, while a fire this June torched over 20,000 acres. When early torrential rains hit the burn scar, mudslides closed a treatment plant leaving 13,000 people in a severe water shortage. One hundred truckloads of bottled water had to be delivered. Rainfall in the Midwestern United States was eight times the typical volume, causing a dam failure in Minnesota, a railroad bridge to collapse in South Dakota, hospitals and nursing homes to be evacuated, and 1,000 people displaced from their flooded homes.

A weak tropical storm in the southeast Caribbean strengthened into a Category 5 hurricane in 48 hours, with 165 mph winds destroying or damaging the majority of buildings on Grenada. The prime minister called the impact “Armageddon-like.” Storms are stronger and more frequent because the water temperatures have been at record highs for the last year. The extra energy magnifies the storms’ destructiveness. The 2024 hurricane season is forecasted to have the most storms ever.

I’ve painted a dark picture with this list of disasters. Victories in the climate change fight are rare and hard-fought. In December 2023, I reported on a success story in Montana, where young activists sued the state for depriving them of a healthy environment. The judge ruled in their favor, but was reversed on appeal. Now there is a bright spot in Hawaii. Thirteen young plaintiffs sued the Department of Transportation for failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Their suit declared that the state had “impaired upon the plaintiff’s right to a clean and healthful environment, including the right to a life sustaining climate.” Their lawyers argued the state had breached its duty to protect natural resources and hadn’t followed through on pledges to reduce emissions. The plaintiffs were surfers, divers, and regenerative farmers who claimed to have suffered “climate anxiety” and disruption of traditional ways of life. On the eve of the trial date, left-leaning Gov. J. Green offered a settlement, which was acceptable to all parties. These terms will be overseen by the court:

1. Targets must be set for reducing greenhouse gas pollution
2. Carbon neutrality reached by 2045
3. Decarbonize transportation sector (largest source of greenhouse gases)
4. Transition the state fleet to zero-emission vehicles
5. Invest millions into bike lanes and electric vehicle charging stations

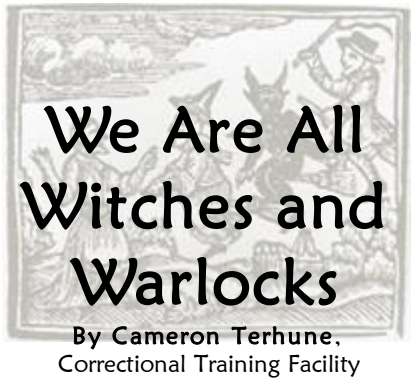
(continued on page 10)

(from **Healing Our Home**, pg. 9)

6. Reform the Department of Transportation to align with climate goals

In passing and enforcing ambitious laws, Hawaii’s leaders are taking the threat of global warming seriously, as opposed to the deniers in other states. The settlement can serve as a model for governments seeking the same goals and a legal precedent in similar pending lawsuits. It is a resounding win for the children of today and tomorrow, and it cannot be appealed.

Sources: “Court Will Enforce Climate Goals in Hawaii,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 2024; NPR, July 3 & 4, 2024; MSNBC, July 4, 2024



HUMAN BEINGS ARE hope machines. From our first moments to our last breath, we think, we wonder, we imagine. We dream. Hope is our magic. Hope flows in our blood, fuels our ambition, lifts us up when we fall flat. Hope is our modern sorcery.

The essential strength of humanity is that even when reduced to only one human, each still carries the ember of hope; that ember smolders, capable of reigniting the full range of possibility. It can blaze like a hearth that warms the grandest castle, or it can rage like a fire that burns the whole world to ashes. Our intentions direct our power toward creative or destructive purposes, but the ember itself is nearly impossible to extinguish. Even when it goes cold for decades, it can flicker back to life without losing its potency.

The Achilles’ heel of our criminal justice system is that it is blind to this reality. Prisons do not take into account the fact that this sorcerous spark exists irrespective of a person’s external situation. Hope springs eternal, as they say, and within each human being can be found a bottomless well of the stuff. A wise irrigator would channel that im-

placable flow toward barren fields that could once more become fertile, rather than dedicating themselves to fruitless efforts to dam up what cannot be contained.

Human beings need no external motivation to feed the ember of hope. Attempts to quash the heart only engender the development of alternative means by which its visions are realized. If our prisons abandoned the doomed road of trying to eradicate hope and instead nurtured that vital human spark, we could direct untold energy into positive changes within the world we all share.

Warring against a person’s hopes and dreams achieves nothing save for further alienating them. They become resentful, but no less driven. If we set aside our labels and judgments — if we take off our blinders — it becomes obvious what a dangerous position this is for society. We have the opportunity to transform the lost people filling our prisons into allies, builders, and creators. What benefit is there, then, to instead manufacture enemies? Hope is free, but aligning ourselves against it costs us everything.

Society is made of people, and it is not a zero-sum game. When a person behaves in a way that runs counter to society’s interests, they also act against their own interests. If an individual makes law and order, harmony, compassion, and the other pillars of society into foreign concepts, it stands to reason that they’ve decided their interests and society no longer coincide. Rather than using their anti-social actions to justify further tormenting someone already cast out from the warmth and kindness of the healthy and community-centered world we hold as the ideal, we can move closer to that ideal by using our collective power to identify the roots of our exile’s disillusionment. From there we can lay the groundwork for them to find their way back to wholesomeness, and home.

Redemption need not be freely given, nor made easy to obtain. But to strip away the essential humanity of another human being is beyond the power of any society, however grand it may be. No matter how far away we send our undesirables, in their mirrors they still see reflections of us. Human feet are driven by hope and will always walk. The ember of hope burns no less bright in the darkness of exile. It behooves us to light a fire for the banished, placing it on the horizon ahead of them, not the one behind. To have hope is to have magic, and magic is a power that can change the world.

Creating Safe Spaces to Process

By Gabriel Espinoza, Mule Creek State Prison

EXPRESSING EMOTIONS CAN have negative connotations as we grow and mature. There are scenarios where doing so is accepted, such as mourning loss or celebrating accomplishments. However, there are many individual emotions, demonstrated on different levels, differing from individual to individual. Unfortunately, over time, these feelings seem to be suppressed.

It is okay to be mad, sad, happy, excited, or anxious, but these emotions do not define the individual, rather, simply being aware of how we feel, or others feel, enables a pathway to healthy communication and empathy.

Our emotions can get the better of us throughout our lives, perhaps getting so angry that we physically or verbally lash out. One may experience so much sadness that ensuing thoughts and behaviors lead to further depression. Anxiety can arise at the most unexpected ventures. For example, before taking a test, one may be excitable and irritable. Specific dates on the calendar may summon negative memories, such as your arrest, or the death of a friend, and result in conflicting emotions. These events are known as “triggers.” Understanding your triggers, or those of others, is where intelligence comes into play.

Intelligence can apply to several facets of life: An individual can be street smart, or book smart. How one learns can reveal aspects of intelligence. Someone may be a visual learner, versus someone who processes information merely by listening. The notion of processing is key for intelligence. How we are able to process relationships, information, feelings, or circumstances that are good or bad, can reveal how to develop and strengthen our emotional intelligence.

Getting mad is OK, and there is nothing wrong with feeling sad. Difficulties throughout life are inevitable and our emotions mimic the same roller coaster pattern. When we are aware of varying emotions, and process them in a healthy fashion, emotional intelligence is at work. Along with our own feelings, we must also understand and be aware that others may have their difficult days, too. Our loved ones, too, experience the daily difficulties, so understanding these fluctuations facilitates healthy dialogue to strengthen communication.

Using emotional intelligence lessens the chance of defense mechanisms surfacing or acting out impulsively. Emotional intelligence paves a way for society to actively listen to each other as well as to be self-aware and self-regulate when triggers emerge. Exhibiting more emotional intelligence creates safe spaces where conversations can take place without judgment.

Step Up Your Intensity

By Fabián García, Spanish Reporter

FOR THOSE WHO work out regularly, we know what it's like to feel our muscles or overall strength have hit a plateau. Whether you're trimming down for that photo ducat you've been eager to use, or trying to put a little extra muscle mass onto your frame, adding some high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts to your regimen might be what your body's missing.

Though highly popular in the free world, HIIT workouts — when done correctly — provoke an accumulation of lactic acid that can affect your internal stability and metabolic processes, fast-tracking you to exhaustion. Hence, these workouts are not meant to be easy, but incorporating them intermittently throughout your routines can be quite beneficial no matter your fitness goals.

By integrating HIIT routines, you activate fast-twitch muscles that are responsible for generating high levels of strength and power. In addition, using these fast-twitch muscles also promotes muscle hypertrophy (i.e., muscle growth). This kind of shock that you give your muscles is what HIIT is all about. It entails getting them out of their comfort zone. By doing so, your body is able to create micro-tears in your muscle fibers, which is the key to an increase in muscle strength.

Many people who work out on a regular basis also partake in any number of sports. HIIT was found to improve your VO₂ max (maximum oxygen uptake), running, repetitive sprint performance, as well as your jumping performance. The VO₂ max serves as a measure for assessing both anaerobic and aerobic endurance, and the more of this you have the better you're able to perform for longer periods. This may equate to "not running out of gas" while playing a game of basketball, or jeopardizing good form or technique in the process.

If weight loss is what you're aiming for, HIIT can increase fat oxidation by up to 18%. Fat oxidation is the process by which the body breaks down fats into smaller molecules that can then

be used as a source of energy. Also, although cardio is for obvious reasons great for weight loss, you still burn more calories with HIIT workouts and for longer periods. Research has shown that you keep burning calories for hours after you've finished a HIIT workout. This ability to burn fat while building muscle is exactly why HIIT is here to stay, and not just a passing fitness trend.

To get started with a HIIT routine, remember that it typically pushes the heart rate to exceed 80% of its maximum, with strict internal timing. Generally, two types of HIIT exercises exist: 1) high-intensity low-interval, and 2) high-intensity long-interval. With low-interval exercises the heart rate must reach between 100% and 120% of maximum, while lasting 10 to 30 seconds with equivalent rest periods. For long-interval, the heart rate has to reach between 80% and 95% of maximum, and last for one to three minutes with similar rest periods.

It's important that your workout, no matter the type, is only half the battle. Whether trying to lose weight or gain muscle, eating adequate amounts of protein (0.8 to 1.5 grams per pound of body weight) is highly recommended. Following these guidelines will help you sustain your muscle mass when losing weight, as well as to help you put on muscle when trying to bulk up.

Ultimately, HIIT may not be for everyone since it requires you to put your body through some heavy impact on your joints. Always listen to your body, and keep that in mind before incorporating HIIT into your routines.



Famed body builder Jack LaLanne
(WashingtonCityPaper.com)

Tips From a BPH Hearing

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

Culled from missteps and scores witnessed in dozens of hearings, here's a quick cheat-sheet to help you put your best foot, and words, forward at your hearing.



DON'T LET THE little things trip you up. Every parole hearing is a stressful event and you're bound to be nervous. But there are some basic strategies you can use to help calm those nerves and assist you in making your best presentation possible to the parole panel.

Here's a baker's dozen of small things you can do to help yourself:

- Read the transcript of your last hearing; note what the commissioners told you to work on and be sure to show progress in those areas.
- Be sure to speak when answering questions; the audio transcriber can't hear a nod of the head.
- Don't interrupt the panel members; they'll let you know when they've finished their questions and want your response.
- Don't use "bad decisions" as the reason for your crime; bad decisions mean wearing brown socks with a bad suit, not committing a crime.
- If AA is part of your recovery, know the 12 steps. If you can't memorize all of them, know which one is the most important to you and why.
- Ask your attorney what questions they are likely to ask — you don't want any surprises there.
- Don't say you'll deal with anger and stress by never getting mad or letting yourself get stressed. Reality check — it will happen, but it's how you deal with it that matters.
- If you have survivors at your hearing, keep your eyes focused on the panel during their statements. The better commissioners will tell you to do so. For video hearings, looking down works.
- Wait for the commissioner to paraphrase or repeat clarifying questions from the district attorney and then answer the commissioner. The DAs are not to question you directly and the commissioners may decide some questions are irrelevant and don't require you to answer.
- If you start to feel stressed and overwhelmed, don't be afraid to ask for a short break. Chances are the panel members could use one, too.
- Don't try to impress anyone with your vocabulary. Even if you know what that 11-letter word means and when to use it (and chances are pretty good you only *think* you know), this is the place to keep it humble and simple.
- If you are denied, don't become angry. Look at it as a temporary setback and read your transcript for what areas you need to work on and improve. Showing your anger at a disappointment is proof to the panel that you might be dangerous.
- Be honest. Don't take the blame for something you did not do and don't try to make yourself look good. Honesty works, and it's much easier to deal with in the long run.

Shining a Light in SATF

By John Crosthwaite,
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

THE CALIFORNIA MODEL is slowly moving through-out the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. As someone who has been in prison for nearly three decades, it's an amazing sight to see.

Here in the California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility (SATF), we have opened a new Level III Non-Designated Program Facility on Facility C. This yard is a converted Level IV 180-design facility that now houses Level III incarcerated men. As with all new yards when they open, we've had growing pains.

Currently, some four months since opening, we have only one self-help group. The Amity Foundation sponsors the Division of Rehabilitative Programming's life skills classes, part of the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT) program. This 14-week group is coming to an end with our upcoming graduation. Our facilitators, Crystal and correctional counselor III Cunnings, have been a tremendous help. The curriculum they facilitate is sorely needed, especially as there are no other programming opportunities.

As a representative for Getting Out by Going In (GOGI) and a facilitator for Shining Light, I have sent proposals to the Facility C administration; however, nothing yet has been accepted. We hope that this will change in the near future, that this seeming dark cloud will lift, for in the darkness there is a shining light of those who wish to positively program and be part of the new California Model.

Nevertheless, even without support, we will continue to mentor and lead by example this shining light of positive programming.

Understanding Your CRA

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

THIS ARTICLE IS intended to assist incarcerated people who will receive a Comprehensive 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.

Here is part three of four of this series on understanding the CRA.

What It Means

There are several items and phrases often used both in the CRA and by parole panel members in discussing risk and suitability.

- The board and the clinician will likely refer to "mitigating" and "aggravating" factors, both for your assessment of risk and in relation to your suitability for release. *Mitigating* factors are those things that reduce risk or the likelihood of something happening, while *aggravating* factors are those that have the potential to make a situation worse.
- Psychosexual development deals with a person's intimate relationships, how they view those relationships, and any trauma or unusual events that may have influenced those views. This includes if the subject of the CRA report was ever sexually abused, committed sexual abuse, has an unusually brief or extended history of intimate relationships, or has been the subject of or perpetrator of domestic violence.
- DSM-V diagnosis of personality disorders; the DSM-V is the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, used by clinicians to evaluate and diagnose personality disorders. Many prisoners receive a diagnosis of some level of anti-social personality disorder, many are grouped into a substance abuse disorder (by virtue of past or current substance issues), and a small number also are categorized with borderline psychopathy category. While there are hundreds of other personality disorders, these three are the most often seen in CRAs.
- "In remission in a controlled environment" — usually used in the context of a substance abuse issue — means that the subject may still have a substance abuse issue, but because of the controlled setting of incarceration, they are currently not actively engaged in that behavior. This implies that the clinician isn't willing to opine if the person would continue to abstain in the free world, where their environment was not so controlled.
- Most relevant/salient risk factors — these are the issues that the clinician feels are both currently in play in present suitability and rehabilitation and most important to the long-term success of that rehabilitation. The words *relevant* and *salient* are similar in meaning and refer to those issues that could still affect your decisions and actions.
- HCR-20 (Historical Clinical Risk Management-20) is an evaluation tool consisting of 20 questions to assist in empirically evaluating an individual's risk for violence.
- The Psychopathy Checklist, Revised is a 20-item tool to assist the clinician in assessing the subject's violent and antisocial tendencies.
- Static-99R, a rating scale of past or static factors, used by clinicians to evaluate the risk of someone convicted of a sex offense to reoffend. This test is highly controversial and is not to be used on any cohort except males whose offense was committed after their 18th birthday.
- While clinicians use all three of the above tools, they do not simply stop the interview and announce the tests will begin. The questions and items contained in each test are woven into the clinician's conversation with the subject of the CRA.

Next month, we'll continue with LSA's lesson on CRAs in Reviewing Your CRA.



Awareness Into Domestic Abuse

The logo for AIDA (Awareness Into Domestic Abuse) features the word "AIDA" in large, bold, black letters. Below it, in smaller text, is "Awareness Into Domestic Abuse". A purple ribbon is tied around the letter "A".

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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

The logo for Life Support Alliance (LSA) features the letters "LSA" in a stylized, blue, blocky font. A hand is shown holding a pen, writing on a piece of paper.

The seal of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, State of California. It features a green circular background with a gold border. Inside the circle, there is a white map of California with a tree and a person. The text "DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION" is written in white around the top inner edge, and "Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services" is written in white around the bottom inner edge. "STATE OF CALIFORNIA" is written in white at the very bottom.

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

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BOARD OF PAROLE HEARINGS
P.O. Box 4036
Sacramento, CA 95812-4036
www.cdcr.ca.gov/bph
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Happiness often
sneaks in through a
door you didn't
know you left open.

— John Barrymore

Constructing Mental Health Management Plans, Pt. 4

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. This 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 final part of my article on constructing mental health management plans:

Step 7 (continued): Write an accountability contract wherein your support network agrees to help you and outlines their obligations to you, and your obligations to them. Assess from time to time if the contract is being honored and whether the person should stay as an accountability partner or it if is time to replace them.

Step 8: Write a list of ongoing things you can do to thwart depression and maintain behavioral stability.

I can do certain things to keep depression from getting a foothold in my life.

- Manage stress by exercising, sleeping seven to eight hours nightly, eating healthy foods, having a positive mindset, and having healthy relationships
- I am most stable when I have a structured day that begins at 4 a.m. waking up, showering, and getting dressed. It is important for me to be at work on time at 5 a.m. When I get off work, it is important for me to eat something healthy, and spend an hour reading something humorous. It is important for me to eat at set times, and to make sure I write in my gratitude journal before going to bed, and having the lights off by 8 p.m.
- Exercise is important for me to thwart depression, so I will make a point of exercising for 45 minutes a day and an hour on the week-ends. I will work on my core muscles on Mondays and Wednesdays. I will work on my leg muscles on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and Fridays I will work on my shoulders, neck, and arms. Saturdays and Sundays, I will do endurance training.
- It is important for me to practice mindfulness, meditation, and once a week to go to religious services.

Step 9: Identify warning times.

I need to watch out for the following situations.

- Death of a family member
- Holidays
- Breakups or severe relationship issues
- Severe disappointment

Step 10: Identify medications. List your medications and the dosage. Write that you recognize the importance of medications and taking them as prescribed, and the importance of discussing any change in dosage with your medical professional.

When medication is really working, you may feel like you do not need to take it anymore — but recognize that it is because the medication *is* working that you feel like this. You are not a doctor and you should not make the decision to discontinue the medication without medical supervision. Also recognize that you may need to take medication for the rest of your life, just as someone with heart issues may need to take their medication for the rest of their life.

I hope the process of evaluating yourself independently and in conjunction with any diagnoses that have arisen over your lifetime will help you work through and develop a comprehensive plan to deal with your mental health issues. I hope the series of steps I have outlined in this four-part article will help you to achieve better mental health outcomes throughout the remainder of your lifetime. But to do this, you must be an active participant in your mental health management plans.



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

Boot Camp Graduation

By Boot Camp Therapy Mentorship Program, CSP-Corcoran

IN MID-APRIL, the Boot Camp Therapy Mentorship Program held a graduation ceremony on Facility 4B at the California State Prison–Corcoran.

The graduation opened with an honor guard presentation and a welcome speech from program mentor Correctional Lt. D. Goss, who spoke about the program and honored its facilitators and participants. Special thanks was given to Warden Tammy L. Campbell; Chief Deputy Warden Ed Silva; former Facility 4B Capts. E. Garza, H. Gamboa, and D. Madsen; Correctional Officer Z. Madden; 4B Associate Warden J. Weber; former 4B Associate Warden B. McKinney; and senior psychologist K. Kinworthy.

The Boot Camp Therapy Mentorship Program is a group of designated boot camp mentors who provide mentorship, guidance, and life-coaching advice to men housed at Corcoran.

The program is voluntary and designed to promote sober living, rehabilitation, and restorative justice principles with a supportive environment. Its mission objective is to build more positive, productive, and disciplined men to send back to society. Boot Camp was created to combat drugs and criminal thinking addictions.

These are the four words that all Boot Camp cadets live by in their everyday lives:

- **Honor:** Honoring ourselves and others.
- **Integrity:** Building trust in our community.
- **Respect:** For self, family, community, and authority.
- **Change:** From bad to good.

Living a Noetic Life

Living the Life We Seek
By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter



IN THIS CONCLUDING article about her series, Marilyn Schlitz guides us through an examination of our life experiences, asking how we may make sense of information beyond that which doesn't necessarily fit into our worldview. She asks, "What is the nature of life in a transformative experience, and how may we live the life we seek to embody?"

One of the most important aspects of transformation is the progression from "I" to "we." Here, we begin to increase capacity for self-sacrifice, compassion, love, empathy, kindness, and helping those in need. We look for outcomes that are more meaningful, such as acts to remedy suffering, becoming more responsive to other's needs and understanding that we are more connected than separate. From this perspective we acquire a sense of oneness, a consciousness transformation that is a necessary element of true transformation.

We also become less defensive, able to hold diverse perspectives with a sense of appreciation. A new world opens as we see things with new possibility. In response to a perspective shift we experience a sense of de-centering and are more aware of the "we" than "I." We acquire a deep connection to life, integrating into a larger reality with a sense of kinship to all.

Schlitz shares that in a transformative awareness, moving from a narcissistic, ego-consciousness to spirit and soul consciousness is the only work we have to do. From this space we are drawn to altruism because it is the right thing to do, and we become healthier and happier. When we are in a deeper space we begin to see others and self differently and treat self and others better. We begin to better self and it flows outward, enhancing not only self-care, but with benefits to include others. We become less reactive and stress oriented.

Existing at this fundamentally advanced level, being part of a like-minded community, finding a daily mind-body experience to face the various situations we encounter every day, we are better equipped to tolerate the various cognitive and physical practices we face daily.

Guided imagery can help support us in the transformational journey. Think of those we love, present and departed. Meditate on that. Think of a place of peace where you would love to be. See yourself in that place. Now think of someone you lost, someone who has brought meaning to your life, and see them with you there. Know you and they a part of an interconnected whole. Allow a sense of love and connection to overwhelm you. The love you shared never dies. Feel a deep peace, know that we all are part of an interconnected whole, feel appreciation in your body, feel the sense of connection for this person, allow the sense of love and connection to wash over you.

In a transformational mindset, each of us is called to greater purpose. The seeds of life transformation grow into a broader sense of awareness to improve our spaces and environment. Here, we hold an intention for change, conditioning our mind to overcome hurdles and bad habits to move beyond limitation, accessing tools and techniques to expand our noetic inner guidance to navigate through slippery places with shared consciousness and an interconnected awareness. With this shift from "I" to a greater human consciousness, our inner self-transformation becomes a broader evolution to promote healing and growth, creating a space that nurtures on into the future.

What seeds do we want to water in order to grow our inner garden to flourish beauty? What stops each of us from being our fullest noetic self? What limits us from fulfilling our purpose of manifesting our fullest potential? Judgment, histories of trauma, blaming others, self-criticism, shame, limited understanding of the nature of interconnectedness, separateness, emotional immaturity are some things to watch for. To move forward we must leave these fixations behind.

To move more fully into the person we wish to become: Set an intention, write it down in a journal, and then release that into the world — knowing that all the right things to do are right here before us. We all have the capacity for greatness. You are a hero that represents as a role model for others who want to be inspired. It's all there within, and as you begin to develop these capacities for kindness, love, empathy, forgiveness, all these things become inspiration and you become the catalyst for the ripple effect that facilitates transformation in our lives.

Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP)

GRIP is a yearlong program designed to build understanding of how past trauma has created attitudes and behaviors that hurt the self and others.



Interviews for the next cycle are tentatively scheduled for January 25, 2025.

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





Jacques Verduin is a subject matter expert on mindfulness, restorative justice, emotional intelligence, and transforming violence. The father, community organizer, and teacher created Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP) after he began his work in San Quentin State Prison in 1996. GRIP, which existed in its first complete form in 2012, provides a comprehensive and trauma-informed approach to healing with the fourfold goal of stopping violence, cultivating mindfulness, developing emotional intelligence, and understanding victim impact. The GRIP Training Institute helps prisoners and challenged youth create the personal and systemic change to transform violence and suffering into opportunities for learning and healing. If you are interested in having the GRIP program taught at your prison, write to GRIP Training Institute, P.O. Box 2683, Berkeley, CA 64702.

Circles of Membership

IMAGINE THAT ALL our families and ancestors are present in the room with us here. Your people and also the people you have hurt through your actions are sitting around you, to remind you of who you really are and to re-affirm your best qualities. Imagine that they sit in a circle around you, to remind you of the one you forgot to be, or didn't know yet how to be, when you committed your crime. Imagine that they have gathered around you to encourage you to ask yourself who you really are. Imagine they have gathered to inspire you to never again forget who you are in the way you did when you committed your crime. Imagine that they have gathered to welcome you into making this learning journey, so you may reclaim your rightful place among them, and once more, rightfully experience your membership in the larger community.

Many of us felt alienated from and abandoned by our caregivers when we were young or felt alienated from the world, period. We may have looked for street love or tried to get approval from our peers or from folks older than us, often sacrificing our values and our integrity in the process. Some of us joined gangs or hung with the wrong associates. Breaking the law and being placed in prison removed us as members of the larger community.

GUIDING RAGE INTO POWER

By Jacques Verduin, GRIP Training Institute
Traducido por Fabián García, Spanish Reporter

In our suffering and pain, we may have lost our connection to something greater; we may have lost a sense of belonging. Perhaps we lost that feeling of being connected; connected to ourselves, to someone else, to our family, to a community, to a merciful god, or a spiritual path. I am talking about that hole in your chest, that sense of sense of feeling alienated or "mislocated." This disconnection and separation creates emotional pain. When we act out in unskillful ways from that pain, we cause more pain. As a result of committing an offense and being incarcerated, we became separated from our place of belonging to the larger community.

The Navaho describe someone who has committed a crime as "He or she who acts as if they have no relatives." Re-membering where we've come from, re-membering who has been affected by our past actions, as well as evoking those who will benefit from our commitment to heal and be of service, begins a process through which we can rightfully regain our status as members of the larger community. A GRIP Tribe is not unlike a gang, but is a constructive and an inclusive one. It will hold you and guide you as your GRIP Tribe brothers and sisters slowly but surely become your relatives.

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Círculos de Pertenencia

IMAGINA QUE TODOS tus amigos, familiares y demás personas a las que he-riste con tus acciones, están sentadas alrededor de ti (en ese círculo) y están aquí para recordarte quien eres en realidad y para confirmar tu verdadera naturaleza y tus mejores cualidades. Están aquí para recordarte aquel "yo" que has olvidado ser o que no sabías ser cuando cometiste tu crimen. Imagina que ellos se reúnen alrededor de ti para animarte a que te preguntes a ti mismo quién eres en realidad y para inspirarte de tal manera que nunca olvides quién eres, aún cuando cometiste un crimen. Imagina también que ellos se han reunido para darte la bienvenida a este viaje de aprendizaje, para que en el futuro puedas recuperar el lugar que por derecho tienes en la gran Tribu y tu pertenencia dentro de la comunidad.

Muchos de nosotros sentimos que fuimos separados de nuestras figuras protectoras o de quienes nos criaron y cuidaron cuando éramos niños (ya sea padre, madre, hermanos/as, abuelos/as, tíos/as o nana u otros familiares) y por esta razón, salimos en busca de amor en la calle o tratamos de obtenerlo a través de malas amistades, sin darnos cuenta de que en el proceso terminamos sacrificando nuestros valores. Es más, algunos de nosotros terminamos uniéndonos a una pandilla.

En medio de nuestro dolor y sufrimiento, es probable que hayamos perdido eso que nos conectaba con el sentir que pertenecemos a algo mejor. Quizá creamos que verdaderamente hemos perdido esa "conexión" con nosotros mismos, con otras personas, con nuestras familias, con nuestra comunidad o con nuestra espiritualidad. Esa desconexión y separación crea dolor; el dolor hace que cuando actuamos o nos comportamos de forma impulsiva y negativa, seamos necios y nos dejemos llevar por ese mismo dolor, y lastimemos a otras personas y a nosotros mismos. Como resultado, cometemos delitos que nos llevan a estar en la cárcel y no sólo perdemos nuestro derecho de conexión con nuestra comunidad, sino también dentro de la misma.

Los Navajo describen a alguien que ha cometido un delito come "aquella persona que actúa como si no tuviera familia".

Cometer un delito y estar en la cárcel nos ha sacado y aislado de nuestra comunidad. Pero recordar de dónde venimos, aquellos a quienes hemos afectado con nuestras acciones del pasado y evocar a quienes se beneficiarán de nuestro compromiso para sanar y servir a los demás, ayuda a que empecemos un proceso a través del cual podemos ganar de nuevo nuestro lugar y *status* o posición social, como miembros de la comunidad que esta fuera de estos muros. La Tribu GRIP es también una pandilla, pero una que construye de manera positiva. Es una pandilla que te sostendrá, apoyará y guiará.

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(Source photo: Harvard Health; Illustration: S.M. Williams)

ACEs and Dental Care

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED in the *Mule Creek Post*, incarcerated people in general have an ACE (adverse childhood experience) score of 8. Over the last 20 years, a large number of investigations have shown that an ACE score of 4 or more can indicate an increased disposition for disease, mental health issues, and addiction. Recent data has shown that an ACE score of 4 or more also impacts dental health.

In a November 2022 article in the *Journal of Family Violence*, which looked at 19 different studies where nine different oral health measurements were tracked, they noted that people with ACE scores of 4 or more had higher rates of missing teeth, fillings, periodontal disease, dental pain, dental anxiety and overall poor dental health. The most common ACE — childhood sexual abuse — was found in 68.4% of those studied, with physical abuse and neglect shown to have a significant impact on dental self-care as well. This follows a well-established pattern within incarcerated populations that generally have high ACE scores: A large percentage of incarcerated people have lived through some form of abuse during childhood, and a significant portion of them now live with dental pain and a greater than average number of missing teeth.

This connection between ACEs and dental care should be explored and taken into account when incarcerated people are seeking dental care in specific, as well as medical and mental health care. Too often the answer to an incarcerated person's dental issues has been to remove the offending teeth, often with no replacement, at least until all the teeth have been extracted, making them eligible for a full set of dentures.

However, if a trauma-informed approach is taken with

incarcerated people in regards to their dental health — what changes? For many incarcerated people, a shame-based motivational approach just does not work. Attempts by dental staff to use shame as a tactic to force change in dental self-care can backfire, with the very real effect of driving incarcerated people out of the dental clinic and into lives of even greater pain and dysfunction. So, what can be done to change this dynamic? How can we, as a community change our interactions with this self-defeating loop?

Maybe, first and foremost, each incarcerated person could do their best to realize that for the most part prison medical, mental health, and dental staff are here to help, not harm, and will often work with an incarcerated person to develop a self-care program that is both attainable and realistic. The key might be patience by both incarcerated people and providers.

Keeping one's teeth that do not live in a water glass overnight is a worthwhile goal for any person, incarcerated or not. And, while this might be a more difficult road for the incarcerated, it can be done.

Source: Leticia R. M. Sartori, Daniela H. Pereira, Sarah R. Baker, and Marcos B. Correa, *Journal of Family Violence*, November 2022.

Life on the Road to Mule Creek

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

I WAS BORN June 29, 1959. Six days later, I was separated from my mother and have not seen her since. My parents, a mixed-race couple (black and white), were freshmen at Florida State University when I was conceived. My mother returned home to the state of Washington to give birth.

Of this speculative narrative, I can only imagine that as a black man — a Negro at that time — my father hailed from the South and attended a regional college to advance his education and opportunities in life (he played football on scholarship). Not much as diasporas go. Conversely, I find it interesting that my mother attended a college that could not be farther from home, only to return after intervening obstacles in her first year. Interracial marriage was not legal in 1959 Florida.

Unwanted by my birth parents, I was adopted by Oscar Richmond Bridges Sr. and Christa Karl Bridges, another black-and-white couple. My adoption was their response to infertility. My adoptive father was in the U.S. Army and stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington. No Negro diaspora here. By my fourth year, Oscar Sr. was transferred to a new post at Fort Watchuca, in Sierra Vista, Arizona. We remained there until he retired after 20 years of military service to his nation. We then moved to Tucson, Arizona, where I was raised until my 12th year, when Oscar Sr. died at age 52.

Interestingly, Oscar Sr. was born in Nogales, Arizona, was raised on both sides of the border, and was bilingual. We owned property there. Christa was born in Saafeld, Germany. As a German emigrant displaced by war, she was a political refugee who came here as a German national and a soldier's war bride. Both suffered PTSD from their separate yet impactful WWII experience. As PTSD was yet to be a standardized medical diagnosis, together they attempted to keep their personal demons restrained with alcohol, cigarettes, and religion.

It has been my humble experience that my adoptive father died desperately attempting to manage his volatile, and frequently explosive, sense of moral outrage. I remember him as a garden-variety Negro hero of the Greatest Generation, returning to what he perceived to be a nation filled with prejudice. He returned from war to a people, many of whom were ungrateful, as his race served to diminish the value and appreciation of his service, and perpetually resentful of his choice of whom to love. Of course, his alcoholic drinking and chain-smoking response to the perceived injustice did nothing to facilitate longevity.

Our remaining family relocated to California directly following my adoptive father's death. I was pushed out of the house when I turned 16, and worked full-time as a survival strategy to pay my bills through high school. I washed out second semester of university as I was unprepared as a student and generally incompetent as a self-reliant adult. My moves as an adult have been regional and opportunistic, dutifully exploiting opportunities for personal advancement.

Upon reflection, many of my regional moves over the years were what we in alcoholic recovery refer to as *geographics*. In this scenario the alcoholic, I in this case, is with some measure of regularity attempting to move away from his problems, only to carry the real problem — alcoholism — with him. The eventual culmination of these geographics and ongoing alcoholic recklessness was a horrific criminal act.

The road to Mule Creek, then, was paved with a rather appropriate judicial order.



O. Rick Bridges (Source photo: H. Kim; Illustration: S.M. Williams)

Architecture Around the World

(October 7th is World
Architecture Day)



Tokyo Cathedral, 1965 (Modern Western)
(InteractionGreen.com)



Geodesic Dome, 1967 (Geodesic)
(WorldOfInteriors.com)



Angkor Wat, 12th century (Khmer)
(Britannica.com)



North Acropolis, 5th-3rd century BC (Mayan)
(LiveScience.com)



The Pantheon, 126 (Roman)
(MonolithicDome.com)



Maria Laach Abbey, 12th century (Romanesque)
(WikiArt.org)



Prairie House, 1902 (American Prairie)
(ArchitectureStyles.org)

Image or Impression Management

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane,
Life Support Alliance



ONE OF THE newer phrases we’re seeing in parole denials are allegations of “image management,” sometimes called “impression management,” implying the changes portrayed by a candidate at the hearing are more cosmetic than real, or are highlighted for purposes of manipulation. In using this term, the parole panels are conflating two different though interrelated psychological theories.

Image management is defined as efforts to create first impressions and having those first impressions convey an impactful presence. This is done by evaluating how others perceive and respond to us and enhancing our image through improvement of appearance, body language, and etiquette. Image management is more simply phrased as “putting your best foot forward,” or “making a good first impression.” Come as though you were going to a job interview — after all, you are interviewing for a position in your new life of freedom. Image management is an effort to show your real traits and goals in a credible manner.

Impression management is more manipulative. It’s an attempt to influence how others perceive us by regulating and controlling information available to others by providing extensive explanations for negative events or outcomes, allowing evasion of responsibility for those events and can include efforts to “speak or behave in ways consistent with the target,” according to Ervin Goffman, author of the theory of impression management.

People most often use impression management in situations where it’s important to be perceived favorably by a group or individual they are interacting with, say, at a parole hearing. Because methods of impression management (self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, and redirection) can be seen as inauthentic, this is a less desirable practice than image management, because in a parole situation, it means someone has not actually changed as much as they have learned to portray change.

However, the board appears to be using the terms interchangeably, which begs the question if the panel members recognize the difference. And indeed, the differences are nuanced and perhaps it’s more than should be expected of either parole panels or those before them to understand. It’s a bit like frosting a cake — the frosting is the attractive and tempting public face of the cake, but if there isn’t any substance, any cake beneath the frosting will not hold up.

Those who are less invested in personal change and growth than they are concerned about the perception of that change and growth may present with rehabilitation efforts that are broad and wide (lots of courses and groups), but shallow (they can’t really explain or tie any of those courses or groups to their situation). They may also have learned just enough to provide a superficial discussion that sounds good, using buzzwords and phrases, but have not learned enough depth to apply those principles to their own situations.

And while you can image manage prior to your board hearing (come well-groomed, open, and ready to participate and communicate, polite and civil, ready to interact), impression management (ingratiating, self-serving comments, rearrangement or omission of facts, self-aggrandizement) is a much trickier practice and seldom successful.

How do you recognize when you’ve crossed the line from putting your best foot forward (image management) to overblowing your accomplishments (impression management)?

First, is what you’re expounding the real, actual truth, or more heavily weighted to what you’d like the situation to be, what you think your audience (the parole panel) wants to hear?

Secondly, are you providing minute details about your accomplishments and change? Hint: If an answer to one question takes more than two minutes, you’re overcompensating.

Minimizing, self-aggrandizement (bragging), or playing the victim or hero is perceived for what it is, impression management. What that boils down to is manipulation, a prime component of criminal thinking, and certainly not something you want the parole panel to consider one of your most obvious traits.

Go to your hearing with a positive attitude, willing to discuss your struggles and mistakes in a realistic, non-confrontational manner. State your accomplishments fairly, own up to the negative source and impact of your past actions, and show openness addressing your issues. This will portray an honest, open image, and create a lasting impression of a person who could be considered for parole.

Architecture Around the World



St. Paul's Cathedral, 17th century (Baroque)
(Britannica.com)



Secession Building, 1898 (Neoclassic Modernism)
(TheGuardian.com)



The Taj Mahal, 17th century (Mughal)
(WikiVoyage.org)



The Empire State Building, 1931 (Art Deco)
(ArchDaily.com)



Hagia Sophia, 537 (Byzantine)
(Smarthistory.org)



Palais Stoclet, 1911 (Early Modern)
(FocusOnBelgium.be)

Ethics of Community

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

PLANNING FOR AN eventual release to the streets, we must consider many future challenges. However, it is not likely any self-help group, workshop, or parole hearing preparation class ever holds a blunt discussion about the ethics of a standard catchphrase of the civilian world: “See something, say something.” In prison, such an action is “snitching.” As a returning citizen, you will eventually have exposure that may require you to call the police or other law enforcement authority for assistance or action. Based on your in-custody experiences, will you hesitate when you run into such a real-world situation?

In prison or jail, customary rules about snitching are black and white: “Don’t snitch. Ever.” But you may have encountered one of the many gray areas presented in this environment. Of course, your actions may depend on the level of the yard you live on. On a Level III or IV, the decision is black-and-white; you have only one course of action. The lower Level I or II yards may give you some latitude; after all, you are much closer to the streets in these venues.

Have you ever had your cell or dorm burglarized and had a valuable MP3 or CD player stolen? Maybe lost some stamps or food? If there are no witnesses but video cameras are in your facility, you have recourse. But wait, is this snitching? You are involving staff to help you recover stolen goods that may lead to exposure of the thief. How badly do you want your stuff back? Prison’s black-and-white concept now has a gray area.

In California prisons, there is a form used to request video footage, but it is for staff use only. In one instance at a Level II prison, personal property was stolen on the yard while a man ran laps. With 30-plus years of incarceration, the man had no reservations about getting his stuff back. He noted the three-to-five minute period when the property was taken, and the two cameras that would expose the thief. He went to the program office, but the sergeant decided to blame the victim. “You never shoulda’ taken personal property onto the yard,” the apathetic sergeant replied. He had no interest to help recover the property, not even to expose a thief. It is not likely staff would have exposed the bandit’s identity anyway, and probably a good tactic on their part. So, what does one do in this situation?

See how this works? The less restrictive your yard politics are, the closer you are to the real world. Upon release, you will eventually view a crime in progress in your neighborhood or on the streets. A few common crimes you may witness are retail theft, a neighbor slapping his girlfriend, or drug sales in front of your new apartment. Your car may be vandalized or stolen and maybe you know the likely perpetrator. Will you take action or dial 911? In prison, you take care of your own business. But you want to stay on the streets, not risk a new crime by stepping up. Law enforcement contact is your only viable option in many real-world experiences.

Watching a shoplifter beat a store employee to effect an escape may also tempt you to step in and help or call 911. Your neighbor playing loud music on a weeknight when you have to work the next morning puts you in the crosshairs of becoming an informer. These scenarios are common and your potential actions should be contemplated and discussed in advance — before your release. Criminal cases generally require good witnesses, but if you feel reporting and identifying the perpetrator puts you in jeopardy, an anonymous phone call is a viable alternative. At least get help rolling. See something, say something.

A large part of rehabilitation is learning how to abide by your new set of rules as a citizen and giving up criminal thinking. Like an efficient football team or fire department, running drills and practice makes for success when you face reality. Open discussion of stressful situations and triggers is a part of all self-help groups. Roleplaying exercises in groups are valuable tactics.

Contact with various forms of law enforcement should be a regular topic of these discussions in self-help groups and workshops.

The Office of the Inspector
General is here to serve you!

The Office of the
Inspector General



The OIG is a prison oversight agency independent of the CDCR,
established by the California Penal Code, §§6125 and 6126(a).

Office of the Inspector General
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Architecture Around the World



Pagoda, 15th century (Yuan and Ming)
(uen.PressBooks.pub)



Great Pyramid at Khufu, 2500 BC (Egyptian)
(EgyptToursPortal.com)



Cathedral of Florence, 1436 (Renaissance Dome)
(Science.HowStuffWorks.com)



Ziggurat, 2100 BC (Mesopotamian)
(Britannica.com)



Parson Capen House, 1783 (Early American)
(HistoricMassachusetts.org)



Bourges Cathedral, 12th century (Gothic)
(RoadTripsAroundTheWorld.com)



Villa Savoye, 1931 (International)
(ArchitecturalDigest.in)



Giant Termite Mound (Termite)
(LongNow.org)

Of Ants and Men

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

WHEN I FIRST got to prison, I had an ant problem. At wit’s end, I killed these ants by stepping on them; but they always found their way back into the cell. Maybe they were trying to find shade from Central California’s scorching summer heat while looking for something to eat? One day I decided on a new tactic. I would kill them, but instead of cleaning up the crime scene, I left their bodies strewn about to see what would happen. Lo and behold, I observed a few ants come back and sniff around to inspect the scene. When they came upon dead comrades, they were repulsed and ran away. After that, I did not have another problem with ants in my cell.

Humans have long used terror to propagate terror in the populace, but it was surprising to witness the ants’ grasp of mortal fear. I was in awe that they were like us. They might even be better than us in that they are super-organized, hard-working, and cooperative. Additional prison anecdotes of institutional pest control got me thinking about why we are so violent. I am an on-again, off-again Buddhist. There’s no killing of life forms when you are a Buddhist other than eating plant-based foods. But there I was putting a stop to the existence of poor little critters trying to get a scrap of food and find shade from the sun.

It’s a generalization, but those subjected to violence in early life usually resort to violence as a solution to problems. Not that I shouldn’t have a healthy fear of potential disease-carrying pests, but sometimes minimal actions like rubbing cloves of garlic to repel ants would have been better for my conscience. Then again, conscience may be a luxury for those who have garlic cloves to rub, not for a society’s contemptible, cashless incarcerated person in a 50-square-foot prison heat box where my base instinct was to kill hapless critters. This zest for killing as a solution brought us pesticides like DDT that ended up causing cancer and killing us. Our penchant for mass destruction might destroy us, the unintended mass. As killing begets killing, a nuclear war will kill us all.

Recent research shows that not violence, but friendliness and cooperation are what propels successful continuation of a species. Ancestors of dogs who were friendly toward people came to be domesticated and over-populated, whereas wolves are now an endangered species. The same success was said of early humans who cooperated with other groups. They integrated, intermarried, and became more successful in numbers, more so than warring societies. Warring societies like headhunter tribes, on the other hand, usually remain small in number, or, like the Romans, receded to their home base or eventually gave way to those more successful at warfare. The Ottomans, for example, descended in part from the infamous warring Genghis Khan, and, like the Romans, they amassed an empire at one point, though their descendants adapted to more peaceful ways of life in present day Mongolia, Central Asia, and Turkey.

Natural selection at one point favored violence, but modern law is trying to legislate it out of civil society except when it serves political purposes like the death penalty and extrajudicial killings like war, unrest, or assassination. In general, people who are violent are more prone to death and injury in the course of violence, which gives meaning to the adage “live by the sword, die by the sword.” Pre-historic hunters like the one found frozen in time in the Swiss Alps lived only to his 40s, and, as revealed by autopsy, the man died of injury sustained from homicide.

So like other animals, we used to hunt but have since devised better ways. Modern society favors cooperation and division of labor. It also favors political animals able to amass a following to give legitimacy to power under the façade of representative democracy. This, as opposed to equal chance democracy where election by lottery would give Joe Politician an equal chance to represent without having been picked, groomed, and financed by partisan machines that plague our present system. Those who align themselves in special interest groups, in other words, tend to do better in modern society.

But I digress — back to the ants. When I react with stress, frustration, and aggression, it is not so good for my already high blood pressure. It may even cause a sudden cardiovascular event like a stroke. And, in the course of stomping ants I may slip, fall, and injure myself. The moral of the story is less stress and aggression and more avoidance and tolerance. Be a human turtle. Have an avoidant personality. A turtle’s longevity far surpasses a human. Brush away the ants with care, not to kill or maim. You will feel less frustration and stress in your already stressful existence.

The same goes with past memories: If these ants represent a stream of past memories that keep coming back, just brush them aside. Don’t engage in anger and destruction because you may end up destroying yourself.

Source: KCRA Channel 3, NBC Sacramento, June 6, 2024



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

The Alchemist

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

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

SO, YOU WANT to be an alchemist. Here's your challenge for the month.

One of the greatest inventions of all time is the Wheel, which has led to numerous vehicles over the millennia. Can you progress from Cart, Bicycle, and Chariot to Locomotive, Car, and Motorcycle?

Bonus points for creating the VW Beetle! Hint: You'll have to make Steam Engine and the Combustion Engine to keep moving.



(Illustration by M. Williams)



Psych View

What Programs are Present and Are You Using Them?

By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

SOME INSTITUTIONS HAVE many programs available. One complaint I've heard is that the program is insufficient, fake, full of liars, or based on religion other than one's own. If this is true at your institution, you have choices. You may choose not to program, and this will make you look arrogant. You may choose to participate minimally, lie, pretend to agree, and this may or may not work to your advantage. Or, you can get real and bring yourself and your issues to the table, and create a space for yourself in the program. Don't like what's there? Bring your own voice to it and change it. Talk about it. Ask for homework if there is a lockdown so that the program doesn't get left behind. If you do, you will stand out as a leader and a person who is proactive in seeking change and self-improvement.

Not all institutions have programs for everyone. Sometimes the only programs are religious or designed for issues that don't apply to you. If that is the case, and you are not religious and you do not have the issues the program addresses, do not fill the program with yourself just to have something to put on a parole sheet. That cheats people who could benefit from it, and cheats you because you are not getting what you need. If you need something and it is not being offered, create it. You are an adult; do you need a babysitter for your group? Do you need others? Can you design something for yourself, possibly to include others or even staff supporters? In taking proactive steps you make yourself shine, and you lead the way for others to do the same. That way it becomes clear what needs are present.

If your institution has constant lockdowns, perhaps a program goal could be based on avoiding lockdowns. Make a project of researching the things that are leading to the problem. Perhaps design some alternative strategies. Ask to meet with people who can help you. Maybe no one will care, but you will be empowered, and the point of a program is to be empowered. Even if no one takes it seriously, you can create something to show for your time in prison and you can show it to your panel as evidence of how you spend your time in a productive manner. A program doesn't have to matter to anyone but you, and if you can show change and explain how your program has helped you and could help others, then you have a program and that is reasonable.

An Unscripted Social Experiment

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

NETFLIX BOASTS OF A new reality series that is unlike any other. *Unlocked: A Jail Experiment* takes us inside the Pulaski County Regional Detention Facility in Little Rock, Arkansas. Over six weeks and eight episodes, 46 incarcerated people are interviewed and documented, chronicling what happens when they are in control of their comings and goings and how they decide the operation of the housing unit.

Behind this bold vision, Sheriff Eric Higgins said he wanted to see what would happen when unit cells were unlocked for six weeks. "How do we make the facility safer, and what can we do to still hold them accountable but empower them at the same time?"

Modeled after a reentry unit in the facility, where men took ownership of their behaviors, Higgins wondered if that unit could be replicated: "If we could take a typical unit and modify behavior based on a system of responsibility and benefits."

In a separate interview with THV11, Higgins said, "I want to humanize people. I want to empower people to have an impact on their culture, environment, and community. If you can do that on a micro level, in jail with people you don't care about or didn't initially care about, and if you take that with you when you go to the broader community, then maybe you realize that you are empowered, you can have a positive impact on your neighborhood, on your family."

As our nation continues to struggle with the revolving doors of the justice system, can giving increased autonomy to the incarcerated help create a community-driven atmosphere and deter future criminal behavior? Building more prisons and putting people away for longer sentences is not working; perhaps we need more bold visions redefining our system.



Interview with Los Rios' PREP Director Stafford

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

AS THE SPRING 2024 college semester ended, Dr. Molly Stafford —director of Los Rios Community College District Prison Reentry Program (PREP)— sat for an interview with the *Post*.

MCP (*Mule Creek Post*): What makes investing in incarcerated college students a wise decision?

MS (*Molly Stafford*): First, students are developing skills and insights that will allow them to grow and develop as individuals. Those skills and insights also will support them to become thriving and contributing members of the community when they are released. Education in prison not only supports their success, but also has a ripple effect on the community. The combination of reduced recidivism and shortened prison terms due to educational milestones results in significant savings to the taxpayers. According to the Vera Institute, "Reducing incarceration benefits taxpayers — every dollar invested in prison-based education yields more than four dollars in taxpayer savings."

MCP: What study data do you have to support the value of in-prison college education?

MS: Per Vera's report, "Incarcerated people who participate in postsecondary education programs have 48% lower odds of returning to prison."

MCP: How does the prison college experience compare outside campuses?

MS: Students who are incarcerated have fewer options: Because of space and resource constraints, PREP offers classes that can be used to satisfy general educational requirements, as well as pathways towards attaining their AA and AAT [associate degree for transfer] degrees. We recently hired a designated academic counselor who is working on developing educational plans so that Los Rios students in prison have success and meet their goals in community college.

MCP: Are costs per incarcerated student comparable to outside campuses?

MS: Costs are higher per incarcerated student because of the additional adaptations and structural components associated in-person classes in a carceral setting. For example, Los Rios supplies textbooks for each class, whereas students on an (outside) campus would purchase those books. The supply of the textbooks includes the purchase, labeling, delivery, and tracking of those books. Also, we have the additional expense of printing. Other expenses include the training, mileage, and extra time that instructors need to get into the prison classroom.

MCP: What surprises have you encountered with incarcerated campuses?

MS: The existence of bureaucratic barriers that must be overcome to be able to effectively provide educational opportunities inside prison. Between the Los Rios Community College District and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, there are many regulations, protocols, and restrictions to the implementation of face-to-face classes. An example is technology: We all want to bring current technological resources to students, but building the infrastructure is still a challenge. Thankfully, we work together productively and proactively. The commitment of faculty and students is inspiring and encouraging in the face of daunting structural challenges.

MCP: What resources are available for paroling students in your district and region?

MS: Los Rios offers reentry support services on our four college campuses: At American River and Cosumnes River, these programs are called "Reemerging Scholars." At Folsom Lake and Sacramento City, they are called "Rising Scholars." Our scholars' teams offer outreach and support to both current and prospective students who are system-impacted.

MCP: What does the future look like for Los Rios and Mule Creek college programs?

MS: I am hopeful that post-secondary educational opportunities will continue to increase so we can offer additional choice and self-actualization in students' educational journeys. We look forward to continued institutional prioritization and support of college classes inside prison facilities. We know that navigating prison in college can be challenging, and we are grateful for students' continued partnership in this journey. We are proud of their accomplishments.

MCSP Says Farewell to Deacon Carrillo

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

AFTER MORE THAN two years as the Catholic chaplain at the Mule Creek State Prison, Deacon Fidel Carrillo is moving on to a new assignment; he has been asked by the Stockton Diocese to transfer to the California Health Care Facility (CHCF) in Stockton so he can work in the restorative justice program run by the diocese.

In his time at Mule Creek, Carrillo was impressed by the dignity and purpose that incarcerated people live by, not allowing their shortcomings to rule their lives, instead, living in a space that allows for who they really are. He was also impressed by the selfless acts of service that so many of the incarcerated population engage in on a daily basis, everything from helping someone read during Mass, to giving a hungry person a soup, or even spending their days pushing guys who need a wheelchair to their appointments and activities.

Carrillo is leaving secure in the knowledge that his time at Mule Creek was well spent. This was shown through opportunities to counsel members of the incarcerated population who didn't attend Catholic services, but asked him to help resolve some issue in their lives. He is going to miss an office that feels like home, as well as the environment created by the incarcerated population.

The deacon, aka "Fluffy," would like to be remembered as someone who does not see people in blue; who does not rely on a person's worst moment to define who they are. He would like to be remembered as a straight shooter, someone who could be relied upon to give assistance when needed, and a laugh when appropriate.

In his new position, the deacon is looking forward to assisting the population at CHCF, and especially working with those in the hospice program, learning how to assist those at the end of their lives, a new chapter in his.

"See each other as human beings; crimes are different from one another, don't let a person's crime define them or you," said Carrillo when asked if there was anything else he wants the population to know.

In his services, the deacon's message is consistently about the love of God and his forgiveness for each of us. Can we do anything less?



Deacon Fidel Carrillo (sfArchdiocese.org)

A Letter from Parole

By Walter J. Lewis, Post Columnist

I USED TO run about 10 miles, seven days a week. In order to reach that level, I learned that, most importantly, I had to keep putting one foot in front of the other. I could slow down if it got too hard, but quitting was not an option. I could adjust. When I paroled, I took the same mindset. There are things that don't go my way, but that's how life is for everyone. I just have to be persistent and keep putting one foot in front of the other.



When you are assigned to transitional housing, you are legally homeless. That qualifies you for \$291 a month in food stamps. You also qualify for Medi-Cal and an SSI check once a month for \$943, if you are disabled or over 60 years of age. This all gets adjusted if and when you go to work.

I've found it rare that I run into a disagreeable person. Most everyone I've run into has been pleasant and helpful. Most importantly, they have been patient with a 77-year-old who's been in a box for the last 45 years.

The most important piece of paperwork you'll need when paroled is your birth certificate. That gets your ID and food stamps. Next in importance is your Social Security card; that gets you Medi-Cal.

I'm a walker. Any excuse and I'm off walking mile after mile. I love it. Even the trash along the side of the road is interesting. Sacramento is the "City of Trees" — beautiful trees and lots of birds.

This month my goal is to get my driver's license, and next month a car. That will allow me to reach the animal rescue where I can volunteer. I am dog crazy. For me, nothing in life is as important as dogs. I love all animals, but dogs own me.

I have an obligation to every lifer to succeed. I am obligated to the Board of Parole Hearings and governor to show they were correct in their judgment of me. For me, obligation is a way of life that includes consideration of others and fulfillment of

expectations that are required for social living. An obligation is a must of life. It is a discharging of duties to others that a person has built into the way he or she functions.

I can't find a typewriter out here. I may just buy a computer and printer so I can write more effectively.

Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,

Walter Lewis

P.S. Parole officer just showed up. We talked about *Mule Creek Post* and the facility. I'd like to go back in and talk directly to the incarcerated there. I'm very good at explaining parole board preparation, etc. I don't know where to start the process, but my parole officer seems to like the idea.

TOPSS Director Shares Expectations for Program's Future

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

AS THE SPRING 2024 semester ended, the director of the California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) Transforming Outcomes Project at Sacramento State (TOPSS) program, Will Mechling, spoke with the *Mule Creek Post* regarding the status and future of CSU classes at the Mule Creek and Folsom State prisons.

Mule Creek Post (MCP): Can you discuss student enrollment? Is there any plan in place for expansion in the immediate future? Is the program in a steady state?

Will Mechling (WM): Our hope is to continue working with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation [CDCR] and our California Community College partners to expand the available educational opportunities. We have seen student interest continue to grow with each semester.

MCP: Do you have any statistical data available on the CSUS Mule Creek and Folsom campus enrollment, participation, or performance that you can share?

WM: In Fall 2024 TOPSS will have over 100 students enrolled between Folsom State Prison and Mule Creek State Prison! CDCR has continued to emphasize the importance of education and programming which has allowed us to get to this point.

Our students have also been ambassadors for the TOPSS program through their dedication to education. They have supported both current and prospective students to create a community passionate about the importance of educational opportunities for everyone.

MCP: Are there advantages or disadvantages for TOPSS students in comparison to the main CSUS campus or other satellite campuses?

WM: The average GPA of [TOPSS] students in their Sacramento State courses is 3.82! This is a testament to the students at both Folsom and Mule Creek who continue to strive in their academic pursuit.

MCP: Is there a message you would like to share with the incarcerated student body and pool of candidates?

WM: We encourage you to keep pursuing your educational goals. Though there may be challenges, you have a community of students that have already demonstrated these goals are not out of reach. We currently have three graduates in an MA [Master of Arts] program through [California State University] Dominguez Hills and three more who will begin in the fall.

We believe in the potential higher education holds for all people. If education is something you are interested in, now is the time to begin setting those goals and working towards them.

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World's Top 10 Billionaires

By USA Today (July 23, 2024)

TEN OF THE richest men in the world only got richer in the seven-year period from 2017 to 2024.



1. **Elon Musk** (Tesla): Net worth rose from \$20 billion to \$258 billion.
2. **Jeff Bezos** (Amazon): Net worth rose from \$83 billion to \$216 billion.
3. **Mark Zuckerberg** (Facebook): Net worth rose from \$72 billion to \$187 billion.
4. **Larry Ellison** (Oracle): Net worth rose from \$61 billion to \$177 billion.
5. **Larry Page** (Google): Net worth rose from \$46 billion to \$157 billion.
6. **Sergey Brin** (Google): Net worth rose from \$45 billion to \$151 billion.
7. **Bill Gates** (Microsoft): Net worth rose from \$90 billion to \$136 billion.
8. **Steve Ballmer** (Microsoft): Net worth rose from \$35 billion to \$135 billion.
9. **Warren Buffett** (Berkshire Hathaway): Net worth rose from \$81 billion to \$131 billion.
10. **Jensen Huang** (NVIDIA): Net worth rose from \$5 billion to \$118 billion.



Mural by Shane Grammar after the Paradise fire in Northern California.



The Suboxone Solution

By Marty Williams, Production Editor



BACK IN 2017, there were 40 opioid-related overdose deaths among California’s incarcerated; in 2018 there were 62, and by 2019 64 incarcerated individuals died from opioid overdose. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), in an attempt to curb this deadly trend, pulled the trigger on buprenorphine maintenance treatment (BMT) as its primary therapy for drug addiction and drug-related deaths. While there was general approval among addiction therapists (and the pharmaceutical company that provides buprenorphine) at the time, there was a sizable enough voice among CDCR doctors and mental health professionals to have given pause.

The anti-psychotic medication Thorazine was once hailed as a one-size-fits-all mental health treatment in the late 1960s and early ’70s. Convinced of this, state-run mental health institutions nationwide were closed. This, of course, resulted in a virtually unfixable mental health crisis that has gone hand in hand with a mass incarceration crisis. It is noteworthy that Thorazine distribution skyrocketed corporate pharmaceuticals into the mega-industry it is now, which became the biggest distributor of opioids in the world (namely Oxycontin), leading to the greatest opioid-abuse crisis in the history of the United States. The same pharmaceutical companies created fentanyl, currently the largest overdose-related killer on earth.

Of the 358 doctors employed in CDCR in 2020, 158 signed a petition to review the overall use of BMT and the way in which it was administered. Buprenorphine, more commonly known by its brand name Suboxone, is an opioid derivative that, like any opioid, is highly addictive and difficult to withdraw from. Dr. Anna Lembke, medical director of Addiction Medicine at Stanford University, once praised the general effectiveness of BMT for opioid addiction, but is quick to point out that it’s still an opioid, writing, “People on buprenorphine experience opioid withdrawal and craving when they stop or decrease the dose. In fact, I’ve had some patients tell me that the withdrawal from buprenorphine is far worse than anything they experienced with heroin or Oxycontin.”

In the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment Program (ISUDT) outcomes report for 2024, there was a 4% increase in overdose deaths from 2019 to 2022; between 2019 and 2022, however, there was a 179% increase in fentanyl-related deaths. A reported 53 incarcerated people died from overdose in 2022, 40 of them from fentanyl. Five deaths were from other opioids, and 15% from non-opioid drugs. When the Suboxone treatment program was implemented in 2020, the overall overdose rate dropped dramatically, rose only slightly in 2021, but skyrocketed in 2022. ISUDT considers this to be good news, stating in its outcomes report that “access to MAT [medication assisted treatment] within CDCR is having a mitigating effect on overdose deaths and without MAT more people would have died of overdose within CDCR.” It should be pointed out that the population in California state prisons in 2018 was 128,625, while the population in 2023 was much lower (95,600).

The year 2020 saw statewide lockdowns in March due to COVID-19 restrictions. These lockdowns ended visiting, transportation, yard, groups, jobs, chapel, and dayroom for thousands of incarcerated people, and weren’t fully returned until 2023. Overall drug use was down to levels never seen in CDCR history because access to illegal drugs was hindered by COVID protocols.

There is no question that BMT is effective. Addiction therapists for the most part agree with its merits. But success cannot be claimed by numbers that don’t reflect reality. When the BMT program started, so did COVID protocols; the numbers of overdoses dropped because drug acquisition and use dropped. When COVID protocols were lifted, overdose deaths skyrocketed beyond the 2019 numbers, and this with a lower population and a four-year installment of BMT programs.

It’s time to take a pause.

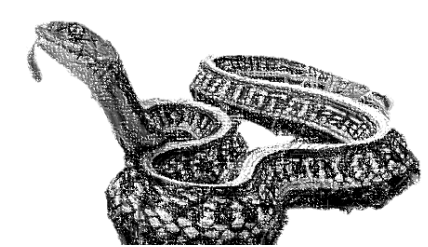
Sources: Denise Allen, et al., “ISUDT 3rd Annual Outcomes Report, May 2024,” April 2024; Alexandria E. Hatcher, Sonia Mendoza, & Helena Hansen, “At the Expense of a Life: Race, Class, and the Meaning of Buprenorphine in Pharmaceuticalized ‘Care,’” *Substance Use and Misuse*, 2018; Robin Ghertner & Lincoln Groves, “The Opioid Crisis and Economic Opportunity: Geographic and Economic Trends,” ASPE Research Brief from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018; Anna Lembke, *Dopamine Nation*, Dutton, 2021; Anna Lembke, *Drug Dealer, MD: How Doctors Were Duped, Patients Got Hooked, and Why It’s So Hard to Stop*. John Hopkins University Press, 2016; Wes Venteicher, “California Prison Doctors Object to Opioid Treatment Drug,” *Sacramento Bee*, April 2, 2024

Vignettes

Poisonous Pets, Clinic Capers

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

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



THE MULE CREEK State Prison rests in rustic forested foothills, allowing daily, close-up views of deer, turkey, and coyotes. Some of the smaller wildlife manages to sneak through the energized fences and onto the yards. Capture and domestication by residents inevitably follows, mostly of birds.

Occasionally staff sees the need and posts flyers reminding residents not to feed, touch, or take animals into their cells; fear of creature contagions the likely reason. In 2018, we found a new beastly broadcast displayed on all of our bulletin boards. Appearing to be a joke, and likely posted by an entertaining program clerk, we were skeptical. But, it was signed by the warden and appeared legitimate.

The warning read: "Inmates are not to keep rattlesnakes as pets in their cells. These reptiles are poisonous. They will bite you. DO NOT KEEP RATTLE-SNAKES IN YOUR CELL!"

A photo of a coiled rattler took up half the flyer. We never found out what event precipitated the radical warning, but it was hard to imagine anyone keeping such a reptile in the cell. Several residents kept lizards, frogs, and even grasshoppers as pets, so maybe they are secretly raising the creatures as food for their rattlesnakes?

Clinic Capers

While taking an incarcerated patient's medical history, a nurse asked if anyone in his family had ever had cancer.

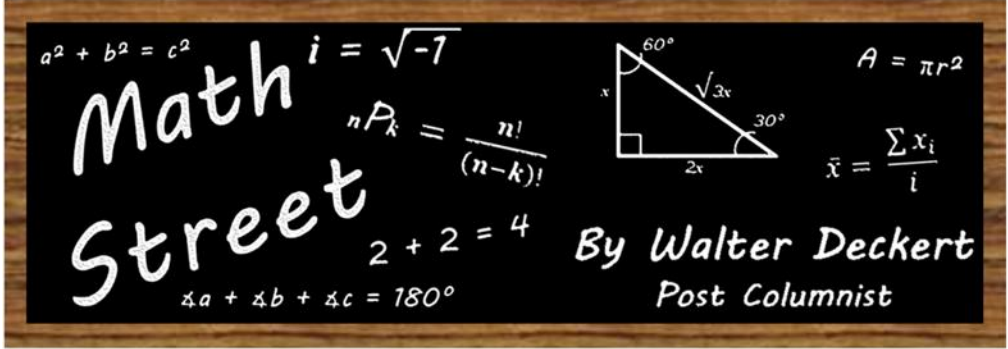
"Yeah," he answered, "my mother."

The medic questioned him further, "Where did she have this cancer?"

He thought for a moment, and then replied.

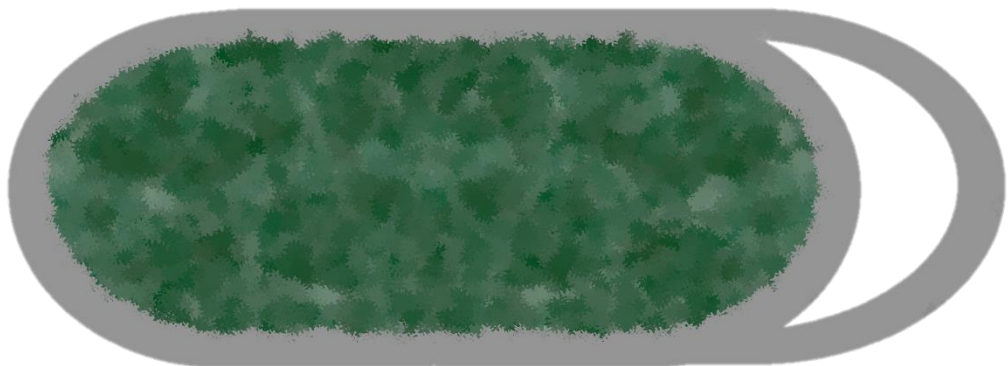
"Uh ... in Oakland."

True story.



THERE IS A concept in mathematics called “extrapolation.” This simply means that we are making a guess (formally “inferring”) about the value of some unobserved/unknown variable based on values we do know. For instance, if I know the distance from point A to point C is 5 miles, and I know point B is about halfway, then I can extrapolate between A and C and estimate the distance from A to B is about 2½ miles, even though I didn’t measure it. So let’s apply this to our lives on the yard.

There are two measured running tracks on Facility E, an outer/longer one and the inner/shorter one. They look like this:



Some run the outer track, where 3.65 laps equals one mile. Some use only the inner track, where it takes 3.87 laps to equal a mile. I, ever the oddball, don’t like walking next to the housing buildings, so I walk a combination. The question is how many laps equal a mile?

Well, we need to extrapolate! Since we have an upper bound of 3.87 laps and a lower bound of 3.65 laps, a good guess would be somewhere between the two. So, I did an average.

$$\frac{365 + 3.87}{2} = 3.76 \text{ laps}$$

This means if I walk 10 full laps, I will walk to the nearest 100th:

$$10 \div 3.76 = 2.659$$

If we round off, I walk 2.66 miles.
We’ll explore this further next time!

News Briefs

WASHINGTON, D.C. (USA Today) — Suicide was the leading cause of death among active-duty soldiers from 2014 to 2019, according to a startling Pentagon report that showed American troops were almost nine times more likely to die by suicide than in combat. There were 883 suicides in that span, and 96 died in combat. The Pentagon in recent years has launched initiatives to improve access to counseling, reduce stigma around mental health and encourage safe storage of firearms.

ATLANTA (USA Today) — Hate and extremism in Georgia was on the rise in 2023, according to the results of annual report released by the Southern Poverty Law Center that tracks extremist groups across the U.S. In Georgia, that number has grown to nearly 50 organizations, more than double the number of groups tracked across the state in 2022.

HONOLULU (USA Today) — The state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation launched a campaign to fill more than 400 corrections officer positions, *Hawaii News Now* reported.



Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp
Post Reporter



IF YOU APPRECIATE classic stories written in British prose, then you may enjoy *The Four Feathers* by A.E.W. Mason.

The story begins in Broad Place, a country estate, with a gathering of military men in what they call a “Crimean Night,” reminiscing over past conflicts and speculating on those to come. Lieutenant Sutch and General Feversham are the first characters introduced in the story; the general’s son, Harry Feversham, is the main character of the story. Fifteen years later, young Harry is an officer in the British Army, set to embark to Egypt to prepare for the Sudan Campaign of 1889.

For reasons of his own, Harry turned in his papers and resigned his commission. As a result, three of his friends each gave Harry a white feather. Doing so to a comrade-in-arms had become traditional in the British Army as the ultimate insult for cowardice. The fourth feather came to Harry a few days later when his fiancé, Ethne Eustace, presented a feather from her fan after he explained the other three. The rest of the novel concerns Harry regaining his reputation and returning the feathers.

The novel was written in 1902, and there are 14 other books in the GTL Library app by A.E.W. Mason. This tale endures and has been made into movies three times: 1939, 1978, and most recently, in 2002, starring Heath Ledger and Kate Hudson.

There are lots of unexpected twists in this adventure novel, an enjoyable read for fans of this genre. Especially powerful are descriptions of Harry’s time in an Arab prison called the House of Stone.

An interesting quote from *The Four Feathers*: “I was young. I knew very little and I was unaware how little. I judged hastily; but today I understand.”



The Development of Humility

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

ANY ONE WHO, through denial of personal responsibility, has endured the just processes of indictment and conviction, has experienced humiliation. By design, humiliation is unpleasant. The rigors and devastation of humiliation can be a foundation for the value proposition required to develop a healthy and lasting attribute of humility. It is an attribute, the development of which is required to effect criminal rehabilitation and recovery.

In Hebrew, the attribute of humility is defined by the word *hod*. In his text, *Counting the Omer: A Spiritual Guide*, Rabbi Simon Jacobson describes *hod* as “modesty.” Contemporary use of the word originates from the Hebrew phrase *hoda’ah*. In direct translation, it is saying “thank you” to God. In connotation, it is clearly recognizing that your qualities and strengths are not your own — that they were given to you for a higher purpose than satisfying your needs. Humility is modesty. It is recognizing how small you are, which allows you to realize how large you can become. Jacobson offers this teaching:

A full cup cannot be filled. When you’re filled with yourself and your needs, “I and nothing else,” there is no room for more. When you empty yourself before something greater than yourself, your capacity to receive increases beyond your previously perceived limits. Humility is the key to transcendence — to reach beyond yourself. Only true humility gives you the power of total objectivity. Humility is sensitivity; it is healthy shame out of recognition that you can be better than you are and that you can expect more of yourself. It is a dynamic expression of life that includes the qualities of love, discipline, compassion, endurance, humility, bonding, and sovereignty.

It is healthy and reasonable for us to examine our commitments in terms of humility — as our commitments are representative of our ability to follow through with integrity on our declared intentions. Given that we choose to make commitments as individuals and in deeply personal contexts, the questions that we ask ourselves about personal and intentional development of the attribute of humility and its practical implications, are important to the metacognition regarding our practice of humility. A few such questions follow:

- Does my commitment to humility support rational decision making and thoughtful behaviors?
- Does my commitment to humility endow me with the ability to rise above myself and love another person?
- Does my commitment to humility cause me to be more loving and giving?
- Does my commitment to humility inspire me to stand in awe, respect, and reverence, before the people or experiences before which I stand humble?
- Does my commitment find me standing firm in heartfelt resolve when challenged, or do I become weak and insecure in a faulty humility?
- When should my commitment to humility move me toward flexibility and compromise?
- How, why, and when does my lack of commitment to humility cause me to stand silent or ambivalent if the face of obvious evils?
- When and where is my commitment to humility compassionate and consistent? How and why is it awkward and unreliable?
- When and where might my commitment to humility be perceived as weakness, causing others to take advantage of me? How, instead, might I demonstrate the strength and durability of my humility?
- Is my commitment to humility genuine, or do I mask and protect my modesty with aggressive language or behavior?
- Do I take too much pride in my humility, rendering it just another expression or display of arrogance?
- Does my humility bring me closer to others, laying a foundation on which to build community and long-term results?

Healthy and intentional development and maintenance of the emotional attribute of humility builds personal integrity and a strong experience of community. It reduces the separation of subjective opinion making and increases the unanimity of mindful objectivity. The relationship safety afforded by our renewed humble practices becomes recognized as reliable recovery and successful social rehabilitation.

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California Coalition for
Women Prisoners

Seminary Graduates

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter
and Earl S. Breckenridge,
Feature Reporter

TOM KOHL HAD many reasons for his interest in the power to heal and restore men who were incarcerated. After serving as a judge for 19 years in Washington County, Oregon, in 2006 his family suffered a tragic loss when Kohl's daughter Megan was brutally murdered.

After writing about the pain, loss, and subsequent forgiveness in his book 2012, *Losing Megan*, doors began to open for the judge. He found himself traveling to prisons around the country, speaking to the incarcerated about grief, forgiveness, and Jesus Christ. However, God had bigger plans, which led to the creation of Paid In Full–Oregon (PiFO) and a first-of-its-kind fully accredited four-year bachelor's degree program in the Oregon prison system.

After raising all the funds for this program in 2019, PiFO launched with more than 3,000 applicants, eventually accepting a class of 25 students. The curriculum includes 30 credit hours devoted to psychology, and 30 to Bible studies. The remaining credits are in general education.

Kohl said graduates will return to prisons around the state, serving as mentors and changing the culture from inside, which better prepares them for life on the outside. With 95% of men in the prison system eventually released back into society, leaders see the crucial role educational opportunities play in the lives of these men, their families, and the community. "How do we want these men to come back into the community?" asked Kohl.

The prison seminary model requires a private, accredited school to offer a four-year degree plan within a state. The curriculum must be geared toward moral rehabilitation. All faiths are welcome, but students must realize the course of study will include Biblical tenets. A prolonged time in the academic setting, being mentored by professors and sharpened by peers, is needed to determine who will stand out among the population



as a model of moral rehabilitation.

The degree itself does not determine a graduate's suitability to be a moral leader among his peers. The transformation of one's character, as evidenced by pro-social activity, integrity, and selfless servant-hood, is the determining factor.

According to the *Salem Reporter*, "There is some anecdotal evidence to back this up. In 2012, Baylor University published a study looking at the impact of Bible colleges in prisons. It found inmates who participate in faith-based higher education are 'significantly less likely to return to prison than comparable inmates who did not participate in such a program.'"

As the Mule Creek State Prison begins to roll out its version of the Paid in Full–California seminary program, Oregon is graduating its first cohort of students, the class of 2024. Residents of their respective institutions, upon graduating, are expected to handle the role as responsible citizens of their communities, taking initiative to bring hope and healing to others.

Source: *Salem Reporter*, 2018

Empathetic Communication

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

BELIEVING THAT IT is our nature to enjoy giving and receiving in a compassionate manner is the foundation for two questions posed by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.: *What happens to disconnect us from our compassionate nature? And, What allows some people to stay connected to their compassionate nature even under the most trying circumstances?*

In his book, *Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life* (PuddleDancer Press, 2015), Rosenberg identifies a specific approach to communicating — both speaking and listening — that leads us to give from the heart, connecting us with ourselves and with each other in a way that allows our natural compassion to flourish.

Non-violent communication (NVC) is founded on language and communication skills that strengthen our ability to remain human, even under trying conditions. This means knowing how to ask for what we want, how to hear others even in disagreement, and how to move toward solutions that work for all. The intent is to remind us about what we already know — about how we were meant to relate to one another — and to assist us in living in a way that manifests knowledge. It is a sharing of "power with others" rather than using "power over others."

NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting. We are led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathetic attention. In any exchange, we come to hear our own deeper needs and those of others.

As we replace our old patterns of defending, withdrawing, or attacking in the face of judgment and criticism, we come to perceive ourselves and others, as well as our intentions and relationships, in a new light. When we focus on clarifying what is being observed, felt, and needed rather than on diagnosing and judging, we discover the depth of our own compassion.

On a deeper level, it is an ongoing reminder to keep our attention focused on a place where we are more likely to get what we are seeking, to satisfy our needs and those of others.

There are four main components to the NVC process:

- **Observation:** The concrete actions we observe that affect our well-being.
- **Feelings:** How we feel in relation to what we observe.
- **Needs:** The needs, values, desires, etc. that create feelings.
- **Requests:** The concrete actions we request in order to enrich our lives.

Dr. Deepak Chopra stated in his foreword to Rosenberg's book, "Jungians tell us that the archetype of Mars, the volatile god of war, is embedded in everyone's unconscious, making conflict and aggression inevitable, a kind of inherent vice." But, there is an alternative view of human nature, eloquently expressed in this book that must be considered, because it's our only real hope.

We should strive for greatness in all our efforts, and this starts with the way we communicate with others.



Dr. Deepak Chopra

Source: Marshall B. Rosenberg, *Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life*, PuddleDancer Press, 2015

Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S
WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee
Post Columnist

Positive Affirmations Part 2

How do you normally begin each morning? What thoughts go through your head? Can you improve these thoughts?

WHAT YOU SAY to yourself when you look in the mirror affects your self-esteem. I promise you, there's no one who's completely satisfied with the image that stares back at them. If your best friend said to you what you say to yourself, you'd find another best friend.

Looking at the mirror and thinking, "You really need to lose weight" makes you feel bad about yourself and sets you up to be self-conscious about your weight for the rest of the day.

If you *do* need to lose weight, look at the mirror and say out loud, "I'm in charge of everything I eat and drink and I make choices that reflect how I want to feel and my appearance." This provides a boost of confidence that will help you stick to your goals.

Whenever you're standing in front of a mirror, smile at yourself and say something positive about who you are or what you're going to accomplish that day.

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



Build and Protect Your Credit Like the Pros

Credit is Not Your Enemy
By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

THERE ARE PEOPLE who preach not to use any type of credit, ever. According to them, credit cards are the devil's trap, and it is best to pay cash — or use a cash card such as debit — for everything. Many of these authors or speakers are making a handsome living peddling a mixture of good advice and nonsense. They sell books, coaching sessions, webinars, kits, and DVDs. Some have become multi-millionaires and employ a staff to manage their financial brand. It's no wonder they pay cash for their cars and homes. Some might even buy a yacht or private plane while they're at it. But that is not the reality of life for the rest of us. We need credit, and when we use it wisely it does not harm us in any way. As a matter of fact, the smart use of credit does not put us behind — it puts us ahead.

Knowing how to establish credit is the first step. The next is to protect your credit. The unfortunate reality is that there are liars, opportunists, psychopaths, fraudsters, hackers, and thieves ready and waiting to take advantage of unsuspecting people. Therefore, being savvy about protecting yourself is part of survival.



By learning how to build and protect your credit, you will have the ability to conduct your finances like savvy professionals. And that, in turn, will enable you to get ahead financially and build wealth for your own satisfaction, security, and even have enough for charitable use.

In next month's column, we'll look at "A Good Start to Credit."

Carolyn Warren is the author of Amazon's bestselling *Repair Your Credit Like the Pros*, *Repair Your Credit Like the Pros: Deeper Dive*, and *Get the Mortgage You Want Like the Pros*. She is passionate about saving people money and helping people reach their dream of home ownership.



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Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1, 2023 to Apr. 22, 2024)					
●Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.76	→	\$10.59	-1.6%	
●ConocoPhillips (COP)	\$117.00	→	\$113.79	-2.7%	
●CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$93.19	→	\$57.24	-38.6%	
●Edison International (EIX)	\$63.62	→	\$87.03	+36.8%	
●Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.22	→	\$5.25	+0.6%	
●Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)	\$112.00	→	\$177.12	+58.1%	
●ONEOK Inc. (OKE)	\$65.90	→	\$92.36	+40.2%	
●Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$41.29	→	\$58.47	+41.6%	

Creative Arts Program

"Blessed are they who see beautiful things in humble places where other people see nothing."
—Camille Pissaro

The Healing Power of Art

Albert Bell



Eyes, © 2022 Albert Bell, acrylic

Feelings

Out of the fog rolls memory
That lights the path to my heart
The older I become, the warmer they get

Mother told me, not to talk to strangers
Yet they persistently invade my mind
Feeling all around in my heart

Sometimes I invite them in
To help me be alive again
Enjoying the bread in their baskets

They know no boundaries
Are not respectors of persons
Coming and going as they please

Some are young, many are old
I've learned to acknowledge
Even the ones I don't like

Even though I can't see them
We talk, cry and laugh together
I can't hide from them, feelings

—By Albert Bell

The Black Byrd Family

The leaves are gone now
But the family in the darkness
Still remains
In the night there is light
By the moon above and
By the strength of the families love
Warmth amongst so many of us
Will someone turn down the lights?
All we need is each other
Each other

—By Albert Bell

Bass Clef

I can make you dance, then I can make you dream
I am universal, speaking only one language
All in bass, low frequencies
"Woof!" says the sub-woofer
"Dive, into deeper waters:
Says the submariner to the submarine
I can sound as the forest elephants
Rumbling in between the trees
Making sound from miles away communicate
And your inner ear tremblings celebrate
All in bass, the low frequencies
Being felt, before being seen
Dream to a dance, or dance to a dream
The bass and the drum
Are all you need
"Woof!" says the sub-woofer
All from the bass guitar, of low frequencies

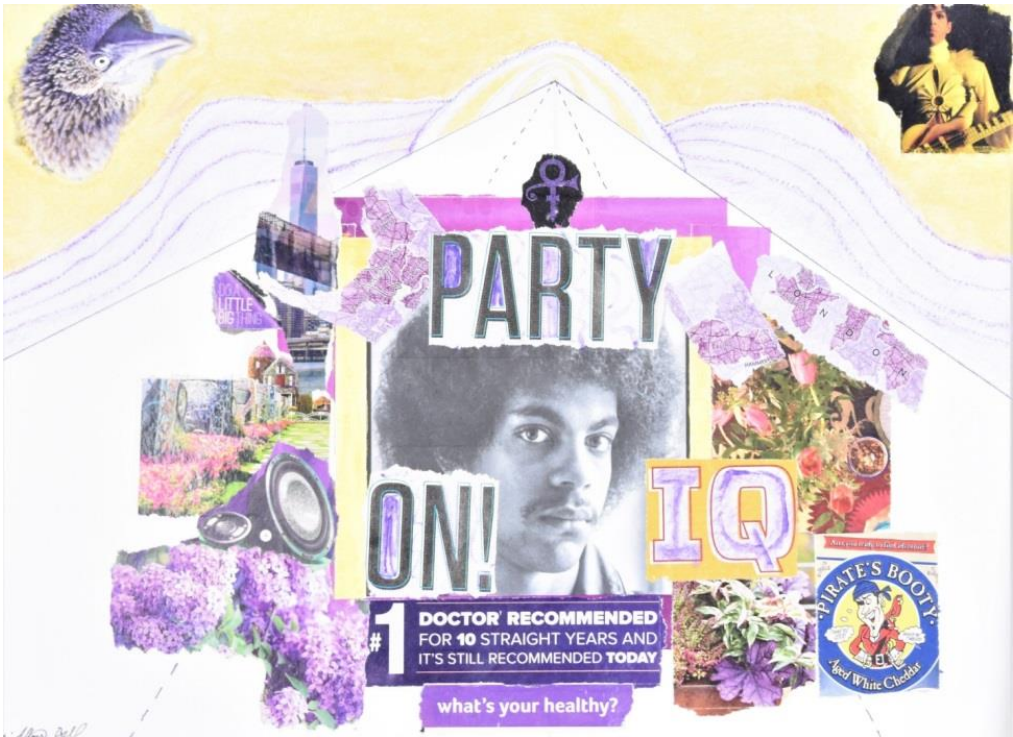
—By Albert Bell



Deities, Albert Bell, mixed media



Landscapes, © 2022 Albert Bell, oil pastel



Inspired By, ©2022, Albert Bell, mixed media

The Creative Arts Program

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

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

Opinion: We Should End Slavery in California

By Jamel Walker,
Mule Creek State Prison

THIS NOVEMBER, California voters can make history. As a deeply blue state, most will likely vote for Harris-Walz. The election will be a historic event; however, there is history to be made closer to home. Californians have the chance to remove the last vestige of slavery. By voting “yes” on Proposition 6, the End Slavery in California Act, voters will have agreed with Assembly-member Lori D. Wilson (D-Suisun): “There is no room for slavery in our constitution. It is not consistent with our values, nor our humanity.”

Article 1, §6 of the California Constitution states, “Slavery is prohibited. Involuntary Servitude is prohibited except to punish crime.” According to California legislators, for “more than 150 years after slavery was abolished correctional institutions continue to rely on the involuntary servitude exception in the California Constitution to demand forced labor from incarcerated people.” As amended, Article 1, §6 would categorically prohibit slavery and involuntary servitude, and prohibit the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation from disciplining any incarcerated person for refusing a work assignment.

In 2019, California legislators found that prohibiting involuntary servitude of the incarcerated would allow them to earn a fair and just wage, which contributes to growth of the economy and enhances public safety. These contributions to their families, taxes, restitution, and themselves will support the rehabilitative mandate of CDCR and save the state money by reducing the number of times people reoffend, the number of children in need of social services, and the likelihood of people seeking government assistance.

California voters must vote “yes” on Prop. 6, and declare to the world that slavery for the incarcerated “is not consistent with our values nor our humanity.”

The Unfortunate Demise of SB 94

By Jamel Walker, Mule Creek State Prison

WHILE MANY OF California’s 5,000 incarcerated individuals serving life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) waited on tenterhooks for news regarding whether Senate Bill 94 would pass out of the California Legislature and onto Gov. Newsom’s desk for signature, a sense of great sadness and disappointment rippled throughout the incarcerated community on Friday, Aug. 30, 2024. For the second time in as many years, SB 94 failed to garner enough votes to make it out of the Assembly.

It was not sympathy incarcerated individuals were seeking. Nor were they seeking to get out early. What they sought was equity and a chance to prove they are no longer a risk to public safety. If passed, SB 94 would have been the miracle second chance many serving LWOP were hoping and praying for. SB 94 provided for those sentenced to LWOP who committed their crime before June 5, 1990, and have served at least 25 years to petition the courts for resentencing. The new term of 25 years to life would allow an appearance before the Board of Parole Hearings.

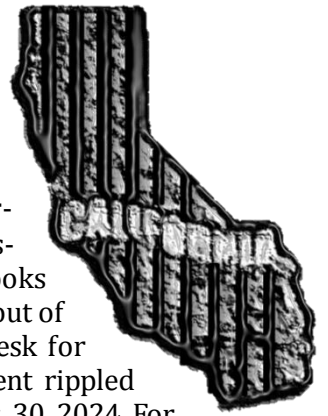
Despite negative publicity and misinformation about the bill, SB 94 represented legitimate efforts at sentencing reform. In the past 10 years, the Legislature has enacted four important pieces of legislation dealing with this issue. In 2013, SB 260 gave to those serving life or lengthy sentences who committed their crime under the age of 18 an opportunity to petition the court for resentencing, and established a parole hearing process for youthful offenders. In 2015, SB 261 expanded the category of “youthful offender” to those under the age of 23, excluding individuals serving LWOP sentences. In 2017, Assembly Bill (AB) 1308 again expanded eligibility for youthful parole hearings — again excluding LWOP sentences — to those under the age of 25. And in 2021, AB 124 permitted those serving LWOP whose crimes were committed when they were under the age of 18 to have their sentences recalled.

None of these bills addressed those serving LWOP who were under the age of 26 at the time of their offense, as SB 94 would have. This lack of equity was what California Supreme Court Justices J. Liu and J. Evans outlined in their dissenting opinions in *People v. Hardin* (15 Cal.5th p. 834), earlier this year when the majority denied *Hardin* — a youthful offender sentenced to LWOP over 30 years ago — his constitutional rights to equal protection. In his dissent, Liu saw “no rational basis for extending youth offender parole eligibility to persons convicted of simple murder regardless of the number or severity of their crimes, while denying it to LWOPs under 25.”

Evans went further, writing, “LWOP sentences disproportionately impact Black and Brown [youth]. It perpetuates racial disparities in LWOP sentences for youthful offenders.” The justices cited the Committee on Revision of the Penal Code: “42 percent of people convicted of felony-murder special circumstances are Black, compared to only 34% of the overall first-degree murder population.” A 2023 report by the Special Circumstances Conviction Project found that “Black individuals sentenced to LWOP for felony murder are much more likely to be younger at the time of offense than Whites. The total LWOP population in California is over 5,000; 62 percent are youthful offenders. Of roughly 3,100 youthful offenders sentenced to LWOP, 28 percent are Black, 38 percent are Latinx, 14 percent are White, 2 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 2 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native.” Human Rights Watch reports that African American youth are sentenced to LWOP at a rate 18.3 times higher than Whites. Hispanic youth in California are sentenced to LWOP five times higher than White youth.

SB 94’s failure to pass out of the Assembly illustrates a hard truth. In light of these statistics, many California legislators continue to allow death by incarceration for 3,100 youthful offenders — over 2,300 of them of whom are Black and Brown — in the name of political expediency. In doing so, they cling to racist notions prevalent during the Tough on Crime-era exemplifying the myth of the “super predator” label for black and brown youth. They refuse to consider the overwhelming social science recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Miller v. Alabama* (567 U.S. p. 460), which accepted evidence establishing individuals do not fully mature until approximately age 25. Their refusal to recognize that youthful offenders, under 26, sentenced to LWOP, are redeemable is partly responsible for their failure of leadership on this issue.

Senator Dave Cortese (D-San Jose), SB 94’s author, plans to reintroduce the bill in the next legislative session.



Facing the Past: Family Visits Murderer

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

All names have been changed per Mend Collaborative policy, to protect the privacy of all involved.



AFTER READING AN article about Larry in the *L.A. Times*, John — nephew of Larry's murder victim William — reached out to the district attorney's office intent on contacting the man who killed his uncle. After months of coordinating between attorneys with the Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services and Mend Collaborative, a meeting was set. This all occurred unbeknownst to Larry, who is currently serving life without the possibility of parole for the robbery and murder of William.

Three weeks prior to the meeting date, Larry's attorney said a representative from Mend Collaborative wanted to talk with him. "Although," said the attorney, "they don't want to talk to the man that got arrested." The survivor wanted to see Larry to "know who you are today, if you're the same guy in the *Times*' article."

Larry recalled the time spent in county jail as a 24-year-old drug addict and alcoholic, a time filled with anger and hate. "I didn't care about anything or anyone," said Larry. "I acted just like an animal."

Over the ensuing weeks, Larry sought counsel from men he had grown to trust through the Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP) program. He was understandably nervous; he would have to face his fear and shame in the process. "I wasn't ready until I asked for help," Larry said.

On the morning of June 24, Larry woke around 3 a.m., excited about the opportunity. "All the work I have done is about helping the survivor," he said. "And that is what was on my mind." As Larry made his way across the prison yard, anticipation built, and thoughts from the past flooded his mind. At the gate, he thought the correctional officer was looking at him in an unusual way, with patience and compassion, perhaps.

The officer led Larry into a windowless room with a monitor. There were two people on the screen, a person from the Mend Collaborative on the left, and a white man in his 70s on the right. The man on the right began. "My name is John," he said. "I don't think you know who I am." He explained that his favorite uncle was taken from him, and that he sat through every court hearing, watching this arrogant 24-year-old kid act like nothing mattered. It was devastating.

Larry listened, thinking every mannerism of his was being watched with hate. "That's how I felt," he said. Over the next hour and a half, they spoke candidly, talking about the painful past and potential for the future. John asked many questions with genuine interest. He wanted to know about Larry's education while in prison, and how he made an *L.A. Times* story featuring a master's degree program in prison.

In 2010, Larry received what would be his first of eight degrees, an AA in social and behavioral science. In 2023, he earned a bachelor's degree in communication studies from Sacramento State while at the Mule Creek State Prison.

"Something was motivating you," offered John.

Larry realized that this something occurred in 2007, while he was at the Salinas Valley State Prison working as a teacher's aide. He walked past a teacher in the hallway, a compassionate man named Herminio Flores. Larry remembered his words clearly. "You're wasting your life pretending," said Flores. "All you got to do is try; you could be helping so many people." This sparked something inside Larry, and on that day he reaffirmed a promise made to his mother: "I will never stop my education, and helping people."

Larry continues to fulfill this promise, even after losing his mother in 2011. He credits Flores for seeing something in him even he wasn't sure was there. Larry realized that John must see it as well. As the meeting drew to an end, John stated, "The man I see sitting before me today is not the same man as before in trial."

"I felt human again," said Larry. "It made me feel like God loved me again, and so did this man I thought hated me."

If you are interested in contacting the Mend Collaborative, "Be ready," said Larry, "and ask for help."

For information:

Mend Collaborative
P.O. Box 292544
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Or go to: Info@mendcollaborative.org

Whoever has done me harm must suffer harm; whoever has put out my eye must lose an eye; and whoever has killed me must die. This is an emotion, and a particularly violent one, not a principle. Retaliation is related to nature and instinct, not to law. Law, by definition, cannot obey the same rules of nature. If murder is in the nature of man, the law is not intended to imitate or reproduce that nature.

— Albert Camus (1957)

Postscriptum

IN THE LAST week of September, just before World Day Against the Death Penalty (Oct. 10), state governments executed five men, a feat unmatched since 2003. Freddie Owens in South Carolina; Marcellus Williams in Missouri; Travis Mullins in Texas; Alan Eugene Miller in Alabama; and Emmanuel Littlejohn in Oklahoma were killed. Some of the cases were questionable: Williams, for example, was ruled out several years ago by DNA evidence, and the current district attorney (and the family of the victim, St. Louis reporter Felicia Gayle) opposed his execution.

And here is one of the problems with the death penalty: It is final. There is no taking it back, no room for apologies. When mistakes are made — which is estimated to happen frequently — the state cannot apologize and make amends. That's it.

The finality of it is another issue with capital punishment: It presupposes rehabilitation. It says to society, "This is a person who is irredeemable, who will never change and be worthy of anything. We can do without them forever." Is this who we are as a nation? Do we believe that there is no potential for redemption, no chance to turn one's life around?

Calling it "capital punishment" is a misnomer anyway. That makes it sound like it is meant to correct behavior, while never allowing the offender a chance to correct. And it certainly doesn't work as a deterrent: Since reinstating the death penalty in 1976, the country's murder rate has remained about the same, dropping slightly since the 1990s.

So, why do we keep it around? Author Albert Camus provides the answer: It is an emotional response. An understandable one, given the seriousness of the crimes that call for the death penalty. Nevertheless, there is too much at stake — the lives of individuals and the soul of our country — for us to be comfortable with trivializing human life and throwing people away. This should not be the message of the United States. We all have value, we all can become more than what we have been. We all deserve life.

—JC, Editor-in-Chief

CA Legislation

How a Bill Becomes a Law in California

Bill ideas from agencies, organizations, community members, lobbyists, the governor, etc.

