

# Hard Climb Journal

Pollen Press

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CELEBRATING AMERICA'S 250 YEARS

Est. 2021

## Sacred Grounds

### Community



By Howard Jenks  
Layout and Design

Finding inner peace amongst us can be hard in a prison setting.

"I have found that touching the earth is a stress reliever and I feel there is something wholesome about it," said Wayne 'Drew' Laffoon.

Odinism is a spiritually enlightening religion that can help you get in tune with yourself and Mother Earth. As far back as many can remember social norms in prison have been driven by negativity and racial bias. As more yards turn from general population or sensitive needs yards to non-designated program facilities, the population's outlook on racial and social norms are changing for the better. Here at California Correctional Institution's Facility A, we act a bit different from the norms of prison when it comes to the way we program together.

Bending the boundaries and stigma of racial segregation by playing sports and card games together, we have changed the way we think and the way that custody views us. While these are just a few examples showing we are all one people and one population, many of today's incarcerated have grown past such school yard behavior and welcomed a new way of life; Using religion and spirituality, finding new friends in faith, and finding one common ground.

Recovery and spirituality run hand in hand and when a person finds a path to recovery through spirituality, they become enlightened. Being one with themselves and the earth brings to light a very real feeling of recovery that people across the world seek to find in their daily lives. Here at CCI there are several gentlemen who have found a path of recovery by dipping into their own spirituality and finding solace on the grounds that California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has provided for them, the grounds that I speak of are of course the squared off,



Drew Laffoon (Left) and Dalton Markgraf (Right)

fenced off, sections of hollowed ground that are use by the Odinists.

The population at CCI's Facility A arrived around October of 2024 but were not given access to the grounds until July 2025 due to maintenance issues with the fence. Since that time, Drew and Brian Nicholes have spent countless hours cleaning, tilling, and clearing the trash from

the fence line, and composting food waste. With the trash removed, Mr. Laffoon in his personal growth felt it would be a great time to remove the stigma that Odinism is for whites only. Just because it originated from the Norse God Odin does not mean that people of all races can't learn and find a spiritual path through Odinism. The land can be shared with all individuals who are on

a path of recovery and spiritual healing. Being in tune with the planet brings a sense of spirituality and love for nature. Hospitality is one of the Odinists virtues, just like Christianity has the Ten Commandments; Odinists have the Nine Noble Virtues. These are the rules for a good a wholesome life that everyone who is on the same journey can come and see for themselves.

## Hope on Facility B

Sacred Grounds: Continued on Pg. 6

### Community

By Luis Perez  
Facility B Resident

My name is Luis Perez and I'm a resident of CCI's Facility B, and I've been incarcerated for 14 years.

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to write something for the Hard Climb Journal. I'll begin by reiterating what the men before me have conveyed: CCI is a prison of opportunity to embark on a journey of recovery.

Although, I must reinforce the idea to those seeking rehabilitation that real recovery is only obtained through your personal given effort.

I grew up in a dysfunctional household where our needs

went unmet. Gangs, drugs, and violence were prevalent, now and through previous generations in my family.

Today, I choose to live a different lifestyle. I've started to address my troubling past and shortcomings to guide me on a positive and honest path. Arriving here at CCI in 2022, I've managed to obtain my GED, as well as complete ISUDT, ARC, DEFY Ventures, and other groups during my time at this prison. It's allowed me to challenge myself and has given me new life skills and coping mechanisms to uplift others and myself.

I'm currently a mentor in the PLMP program and helping others to reach their educational goals. There's a community of awesome people that make rehabilitation possible.

This upcoming spring semester, I will be starting college. This is something I could have never envisioned for myself in my destructive past. Today, I'm driven through goals and have a purpose in my life. I'm constantly finding new ways to pass on what has been passed on to me. This is a testimony to all the incarcerated that change is possible. It applies to all who are not afraid to take the necessary steps in making the world a better place.



Luis Perez & Defy Mentor

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Pollen Press



Editorial

By Kannon Chambers Editor-in-Chief

Progress continues in the California Correctional Institution’s Facility A. Recently converted to a level three non-designated programming facility, the dedication to make this yard a staple in rehabilitation is under way. With the arrival of a new warden, who promises to address issues that prevent the majority from experiencing the atmosphere they need to be successful; Facility A has seen a recent decline in overall incidents, according to residents.

“Within the first six months of my arrival here, there were major problems. Fights everyday, riots every month, drugs were everywhere. This yard was a dangerous place. I’ve seen some

changes starting to take place as things get more stabilized,” said one resident in an interview with the HCJ.

This is a common trend amongst new facilities in CDCR. Often, although some of the incarcerated residents who arrive are from programming yards already, most beds have to be filled with people from reception centers. Facility A is comprised of residents who were either transferred from other prisons, came from facilities within the same prison, or came from reception. This leads to a high probability that incarcerated individuals are frustrated upon arrival.

If you came from reception, maybe you are new to the system and haven’t really become acclimated to prison life. Many of those residents haven’t yet acquired many of the amenities that make prison life comfortable like T.V’s, radios, personal clothing, etc. With that ruggedness comes a mind frame that is prone to hustle to get what one needs, combined with

no rehabilitative tools to prevent criminal activity. If you came from another prison, maybe you really didn’t want to leave where you were at, and now you’re frustrated. Finally, if you came from another yard inside the same prison which was stable, now you are subjected to uncertainty, power struggles, lockdowns, logistical glitches, frustrated residents, and wait time while staff gets it all sorted out.

Amidst all of those challenges, there is starting to be progress. As more programmers arrive ideas are formulating, resources are showing up, groups are being started, a rhythm is being created. Don’t get me wrong, we are nowhere close to where we want to be as a community, but I’ve seen changes amongst the residents and a willingness to work that wasn’t previously there.

Remember this is a level 3, with two level 4 buildings on it.

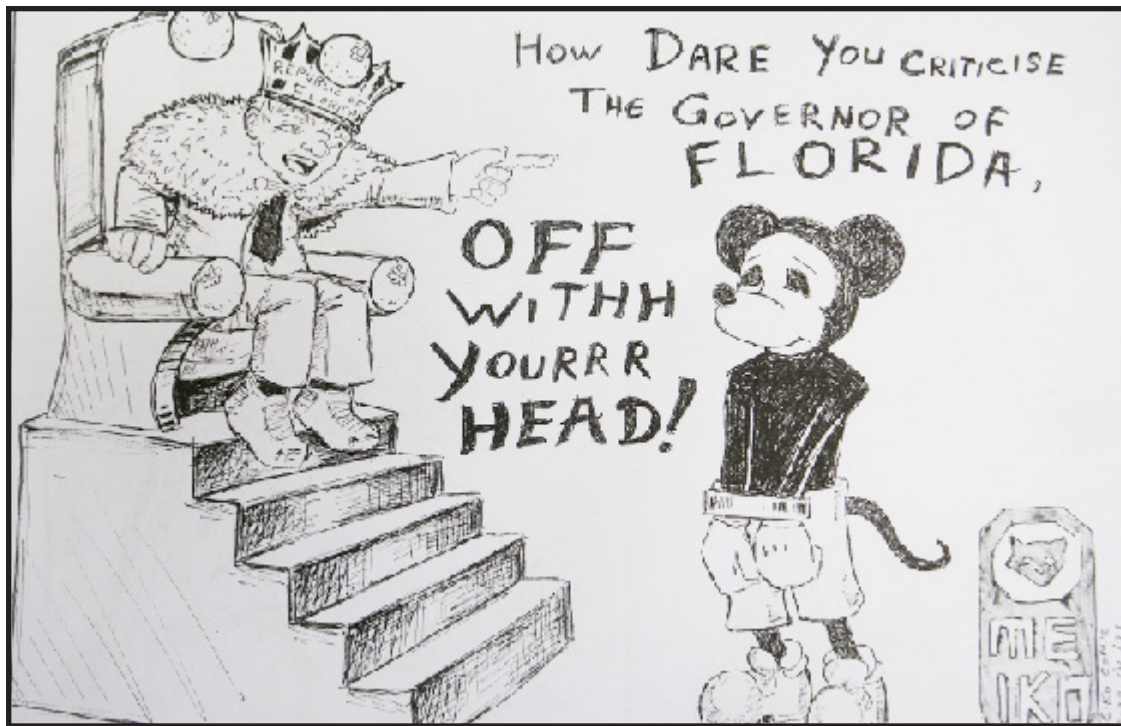
There is a lot that could go wrong just because of the caliper of people on this yard. It’s not like we’re

trying to bring rehabilitation on a level 1 or 2, where most people are already calmed with the thought of going home. Many of the people on this yard don’t have to change. However, when level 3’s and 4’s get serious about changing it’s real, it’s powerful, and it’s promoted by residents whose influence and passion make others notice and follow.

No shade to other levels, their change is real too. My point is: many of the residents on these upper levels have fallen a lot farther, so the climb up is tougher and fueled by a genuine determination that really stands out.

CCI as a whole is moving in the right direction and moving away from historical narratives. If you’re willing to put in the effort, there is nothing that can’t be accomplished at CCI. Shout out to Facility B & C and all the programmers doing their thing down there. Great job on the float Facility C!

Comics By MEIKO



Facility A IAC Update

We would like to ask Facilities A, B, and C a question: what are you doing to better your community? Here on Facility A, we are working together with the Community Resource Manager on how we can bring more programs to this Facility.

We have been able to establish a brand-new working Executive and MAC Body within the last year and have had Kern Valley

State Prison’s Administration come to learn how we established our IAC.

We have been able to host several events such as KIROS, ARC’s Ball Out, and DEFY Ventures coaching event. The Hard Climb Journal has graduated two cohorts of the Hard Climb Journalist Society’s School of Journalism. We have had two Marley’s Mutt’s cohorts graduate. OMCP graduated

cohort four and has cohort five in education. We have hosted High School, College, and a Vocation graduation.

Facility A has been able to establish the Peer-to-Peer Community Support Liaison Team as well as Awakening Conflict Resolution for our E.O.P Community members. The Revive@ Media Project is in full swing creating content

for the entire institution as well as DRP. We would like to encourage and challenge Facility B and C’s IAC to update the entire institution on their progress as well. We hope to see more positive things as we go through 2026.

Attention Facility A, B, & C Inmate Advisory Council Members!  
The HCJ wants to share what’s going on with your facility with the entire institution. If you would like to participate, please submit 3 or 4 positive updates from your facility to Ms. Hammonds via institutional mail.  
(all submissions shall be reviewed for content and may be edited.)



# Governor's Race

CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC

## Candidates

By Kannon Chambers HCJ  
Editor-in Chief

As California's 2026 gubernatorial campaign continues to take shape, the state's prison system stands at a crossroad. With outgoing Governor Gavin Newsom constitutionally barred from seeking a third term, the wide-open field of candidates present sharply different visions for public safety, criminal justice policy, corrections spending, and the future role of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

"If we get the wrong person, it can be detrimental to all of the progress that we have made. No incarcerated person wants to go backward," said resident Jerome White on Facility A.

For years, CDCR, who is responsible for incarcerating adults convicted of serious felonies, supervising parolees, and administering rehabilitation programs, has been a focal point of debates over prison closures, budgetary pressures, and the purpose of incarceration in modern California. Newsom's administration has pursued a strategy of system downsizing and reform that reflect shifting public sentiment towards alternatives to incarceration. This included moving to close at least four prisons during his tenure, and proposing a fifth prison by late 2026 as a part of efforts to save money amid a projected budget deficit.

These closures, tied to long-term decline in the states incarcerated population have been framed by supporters as fiscally responsible and aligned with broader criminal justice reforms. Advocates for reducing incarceration assert that closing underutilized facilities, borne of sentencing changes such as Proposition 47 and 36, can free up scarce resources for social services and community-based programs that reduce crime and recidivism.

"We should invest more in rehabilitation and preparing people for the streets, where most will eventually end up. We need a candidate that supports that vision," said resident White.

Not all stakeholders agree with this approach. CDCR's operating budget remains a substantial line item in the state's ledger, with billions of dollars allocated to secure facilities, healthcare for incarcerated individuals, and rehabilitative programming. Despite reduction, ongoing cost combined with unplanned spending have placed the department under fiscal strain, drawing criticism from some lawmakers who argue

that overspending hamper the state's ability to fund education, housing, and healthcare. Against this backdrop, the 2026 governor's race introduces competing philosophies on corrections policy. On the Democratic side, the leading candidate-including former U.S. Representative Katie Porter and former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra have largely aligned with moderate positions. While not centrally focused on corrections issues in campaign forums so far, these candidates acknowledged the dual need to reduce crime and have systemic reform in ways that minimize incarceration where feasible.

Conversely, Republican contender Chad Bianco, sheriff of Riverside County and the most prominent GOP candidate, has campaigned on a tough-on-crime platform that would likely oppose further prison closures and prioritize law enforcement. Bianco's law enforcement background and critique of progressive criminal justice measures signal a potential departure from the status quo, if a Republican governor were to emerge in a state where GOP victories remain historically unlikely.

The political dynamics also intersect with broader budgetary constraints. California faces significant fiscal shortfalls heading into the future, and correction's spending is a part of the conversation over how to balance priorities. Debates over whether to maintain, reduce, or adjust CDCR's funding could take center stage in budget negotiations under the next governor. This could affect healthcare within prisons, rehabilitation and reentry programs, and parole supervision.

Beyond cost considerations, the governor's race carries symbolic importance for the direction of California's criminal justice system. Voters and advocates alike are watching closely to see whether candidates will articulate substantive plans for public safety that reconcile calls for accountability, rehabilitation, and community investment. In doing so, the next governor will help to determine if CDCR evolves toward a more rehabilitative model or if years of reform give way to renewed emphasis on traditional punitive approaches.

As California prepares to elect a successor to Newsome, the future of its corrections system remains one of the most consequential yet under examined policy arenas. This race will shape the lives of the incarcerated and the affect the lived experience of communities across the state for years to come.



**Chad Bianco (R)**

Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco is a conservative Republican running for California Governor in 2026, focusing on a tough-on-crime stance, criticizing progressive criminal justice reforms (like Prop 47) for increasing lawlessness, homelessness, and drug issues, and blaming Democratic leadership for California's decline. He advocates for restoring public safety, "making crime illegal again," and promises a "revolution of competence," positioning himself as an alternative to current policies while also aligning with President Trump.



**Antonio Villaraigosa (D)**

Antonio Villaraigosa is a California Democrat positioning himself as a pragmatic, "unabashedly progressive" problem-solver with executive experience, focusing on kitchen-table issues like affordability, public safety, housing, and infrastructure, while balancing progressive goals with business-friendly approaches like an "all-of-the-above" energy policy, contrasting with more ideological progressives by supporting law enforcement and opposing single-payer healthcare. Advocates for strong public safety, increasing police presence, and has a record of presiding over crime declines in Los Angeles.



**Katie Porter (D)**

Katie Porter is a progressive Democrat known for consumer advocacy, financial oversight, and holding corporations accountable, supporting abortion rights, climate action (like California's gas car ban), and immigrant communities, while also being a vocal critic of big banks, Big Pharma, and Big Oil, though she has sometimes diverged from party lines on specific issues like immigration policy. She emphasizes fighting for working families, increasing transparency, and opposing Trump, positioning herself as a strong voice against powerful interests, as seen in her runs for U.S. Senate and her current campaign for California Governor.

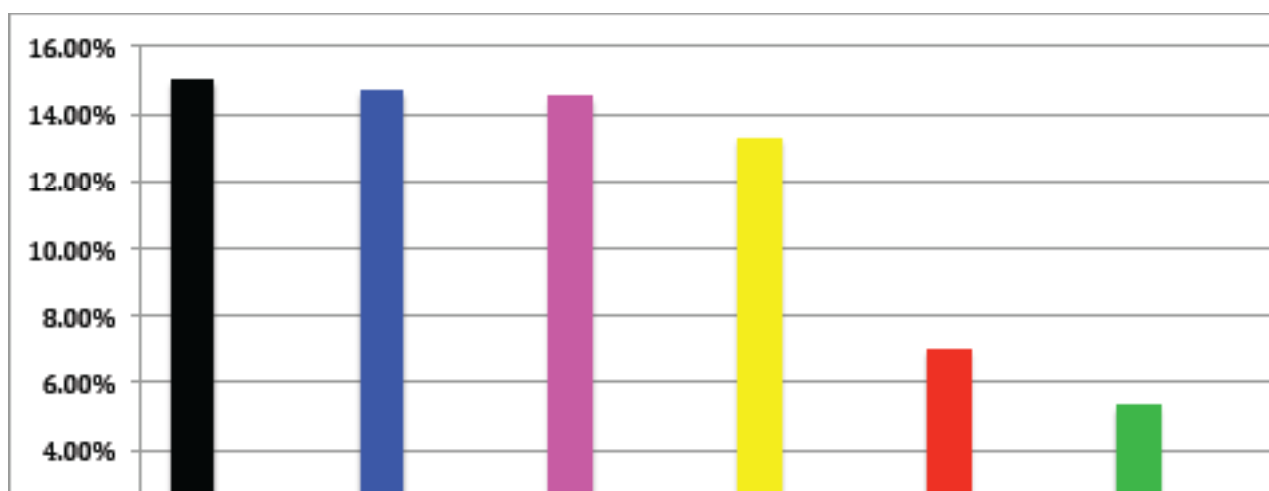


**Xavier Becerra (D)**

Xavier Becerra is a prominent American politician and a member of the Democratic Party. He holds progressive political stances, particularly on healthcare, reproductive rights, and environmental protection, and is currently running for governor in the 2026 California gubernatorial election. Becerra is considered a progressive Democrat. One analysis of his voting record in the House of Representatives found him more liberal than 94% of the 115th House and more liberal than 86% of Democrats.

### Average of 3 Polls

- Porter 15%**
- Hilton 14.7%**
- Swalwell 14.5%**
- Bianco 13.3%**
- Becerra 7%**
- Villariagosa 5.3%**



# American Politics

## Want to weigh in?

We want to know what you think. Write in and let us know and you may see your response in next month's HCJ!

## What Do You Think About Trump?



### Ivan Morales (R)

Political attitudes among the incarcerated remain divided and controversial, particularly among those such as myself who identify with the Republican Party.

I am part of a subset among the incarcerated that holds a favorable view of president Donald J. Trump, highlighting the persistence of partisan identity despite my incarceration and civic exclusion.

My support for Trump is shaped by several factors, which align with conservative ideological principles including: limiting government intervention, skepticism towards federal institutions, support for law and order, the backing for the nation of Israel, America first policies and if an able body man does not work, he does not eat (crystal meth addiction is not a valid disability to collect unemployment). Additionally, Trump's public experience in which he was persecuted by Biden's Department of Justice has been a validation to my view that the system is fundamentally flawed or unevenly applied.

There is a relief in my spirit knowing the strength and resilience of our commander in chief who does not show weakness, standing up against the radical left, all socialist or better yet communist who see capitalism, sanity, and God as an enemy to a progressive society. The first year of Trump in office has proven his competency unlike the previous administration that has never achieved a worthy endeavor, in my opinion. The dark ages and desolation of the last four years proved how foolhardy it was to vote in a man who was unable to perform his duties of office in 2020. Frailty personified in the person of Joe Biden would reach its ultimate climax during the presidential debate in which he stated, "uh.. uhh..uhh... we finally beat medical care!".

I understand that Trump's actions may seem assertive and brash at times, but for most Republicans, that is exactly what we felt about the prior administration's actions, even when they were presented with "an attitude of decency and presidential politeness". Sometimes it takes bold action to combat real problems, which have been allowed to soak into the very fabric of the American experience. Stronger borders, eradicating drug cartels, exposing waste fraud and abuse have to be done with a heavy hand. It's like pulling out a tooth... this might hurt a little.

Next Month...

### Z. Shumaker (R)



Trump is a disruptor. His very presence defies the rules and norms of politics, and this is why we see the foaming-at-the-mouth opposition to everything he does

by the other side of the aisle. This fact makes him the most qualified person in America to hold the presidency. For decades we saw what the status quo achieved: American jobs shipped overseas, increased dependence on foreign adversaries, America's enemies threatened and robbed her with impunity, and America declined on the world stage. Trump will not stand for it. And while his enemies refuse to support the very fabric of America, every move Trump makes is keenly calculated to reestablish American Prosperity.

As we have seen, he will stop at nothing to ensure his golden vision for America comes to fruition. It has been decades since we've had a president this invested in the average American. No one else would ever so much as consider withstanding all that has been thrown at Trump. Assassination attempts, witch-hunts, conspiracies, hoaxes, lawfare, and partisan corruption. Trump withstood it all for one reason and one reason only: To fight like hell for America.

Can anyone point to a president that has sacrificed so much of his personal life, put his own family at risk, to prove that America can once again be the prosperous undisputed leader of Planet Earth again? Who has shown, through word and deed, such pure love for America? Two long decades have passed yet only one president has been the undisputed possessor of a pair of testicles: Trump!

Since 2021 only one man has held office as the undisputed Head of the Executive: Trump! The same people who assured us that a man unable to remember what he ate for breakfast was "at the top of his game" now castigate Trump for every American victory he achieves. When Trump was reelected, we knew that he would actually be the one running the country. We knew that every ounce of energy would be put towards restoring American Prosperity and Might. You can tell a lot about a man by his enemies: when his enemies abroad represent the worst of humanity, you can count on that man to be every bit the opposite. Trump's enemies cheer for terrorism, mourn socialist dictators, indoctrinate children into dangerous ideologies, disregard the average American, desire to regulate every aspect of American life, and appease America's enemies. It's obvious why they harbor so much hatred for him. Donald J. Trump is America First.

### Keenan Todd (D)



When it comes to Donald Trump, he is about as grounded as his hairpiece. There's an apparent lack of professionalism and prestige present.

He's a "man" empty of refined grace or dignified propriety. Not to mention, his strategy to combat illegal immigration is both twisted and deranged.

Now don't get me wrong, I understand prioritizing the safety and security of your home (or country); but I also believe that people deserve to be treated like people, instead of being executed like Renee Nicole Good, the 37-year-old mother of three, who was shot in her car by an (ICE) agent in Minnesota, a democratic state.

The Trump administration has labeled her a "domestic terrorist" according to BBC News. I am willing to bet every quarterly package throughout my incarceration that not all undocumented individuals are dangerous or intend to cause harm. So, grouping them together is not only biased but it contradicts American ideals entirely. We are in desperate need of change and empathy, not (ICE) robots whom target groups that include but are not limited to: my Mexican, Asian, and Middle Eastern peers whose families helped build this fine nation.

Esquire magazine was spot on when they called Trump's regime, a "Thugocracy". In January 2026, the New York Times stated, "California will be cut off from around \$7 billion in funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, which provides cash assistance to households with children, according to two people familiar with the matter. The five states will also lose access to nearly \$2.4 billion for the Child Care and Development Fund, which supports childcare for working parents, and around \$870 million for social services grants that mostly benefit children at risk.

Alyais Harper, A yard resident, responded "How you going to cut off funding for [at risk] children? That's sick" and I couldn't agree more. But fair is fair, a vote is a vote so in conclusion, I leave you with this historic quote. "In Springfield, they're eating the dogs, the people that came in, they're eating the cats. They're eating... they're eating the pets of the people that live there".

Is this your president? Is this your leader?

Continue on Trump

# Legal News

## Three Strikes Law Challenged

By Joseph D. Miller  
HCJ Secretary  
Source: AI

In an article from the *Daily Journal*, the State Supreme Court ruled that killing two individuals in the same crime should not count as two strikes under the Three Strikes sentencing law, reversing a 3rd District Court of Appeal panel decision and disapproving a 2015 appellate court precedent.

This came into being when Justice Leondra R. Kruger was asked the question if a vehicular manslaughter while under the influence – a single criminal act – should count as two strikes. Justice Kruger said no.

Troy Lee Shaw killed a mother and her young child in 2002 while driving intoxicated and received two strikes. Shaw was convicted in December 2020 for driving under the influence, and this was counted as a third strike and he was sentenced to 25 to life, noted the Journal

3rd District Court of Appeal. Justice Stacy Boulware Eurie affirmed the sentence; she



Justice Leondra R. Kruger  
Courtesy California State Supreme Court

cited a 2015 appellate ruling in affirming Shaw's sentence. Kruger noted that Shaw was already facing a longer term for his 2002 manslaughter conviction.

Kruger said "it does not follow, as the Attorney General supposes, that the voters and legislators who enacted the Three Strikes law intended to authorize imposing an indeterminate life term on Shaw for his current offense even though his two prior strikes stemmed from just one crimi-

nal act while merely doubling who had previously engaged in identical conduct," according to the article.

Kruger sent the case to the 3rd District giving instructions to have the Placer County Superior Court judge to re-sentence Shaw. *People v. Shaw* 2025 DJDAR 11355 (Cal. S. Ct., filed Au. 16, 2024).

The courts have debated over how to handle criminal cases where a defendant commits two offenses against one victim, or where a single act has

two victims.

"For decades, our courts have consistently determined that where multiple victims have been injured by a single violent act, a defendant may be punished separately for each victim of his or her violence," wrote Justice Patricia D. Benkean appointee of Gov. George Deukejian according to the ar-

**"We should interpret the Three Strikes law as it was presented to voters, as punishing defendants who committed a third violent felony after two prior dialed attempts at reform."**

-Justice Joshua P. Groban

Benke went on to say that this has been accepted for so long and been in practice. Undoubtedly Legislators, and the People know this when they enacted the Law. *People v. Rusconi*, DJDAR 4679 (4th District Court of appeal, 2015 filed Feb. 20, 2014).

Kruger, in her writing for

the court, decided to disprove Rusconi, stating "the state Supreme Court's decision in a 2014 case in which the defendant was convicted of two felonies (for robbery and carjacking) committed against the same victim, should not control in Shaw's case. *People v. Vargas*, 2014 DJDAR 9070 (Cal. S. Ct. filed July 6, 2012). Justice Joshua P. Groban agreed and complained that the caselaw on what counts as a third strike is inconsistent. Here, he cited a few examples that he wrote would produce a very different outcome in sentencing depending on the case factors.

"We should interpret the Three Strikes law as it was presented to voters, as punishing defendants who committed a third violent felony after two prior dialed attempts at reform," said Groban. He went on to say that the public would understand the 'Three Strikes' baseball metaphor to mean just that, a person would have three chances. 1, 2, 3 swings of the bat before the harshest judgment could be applied. []

## From Death to Life

### OPINION

By Darren Williams  
A-Yard Resident

The journey toward becoming a certified drug and alcohol counselor is profoundly personal and often stems from a place of deep introspection and transformation. My decision to pursue this career is no exception, rooted in a tumultuous past that has, over time, shaped my desire to contribute positively to the lives of those ensnared in the grip of substance abuse. Growing up in South Central Los Angeles, an area where drugs and alcohol were ubiquitous, I witnessed firsthand the devastating impact these substances had on my community. This exposure, coupled with my own descent into gang involvement and criminal activities, including a conviction for murder, has given me a unique perspective on the complexities of addiction and the possibility of redemption.

My transformation from a former gang member to a proponent of positive change was neither swift nor easy. It required a profound shift in my worldview,

the adoption of new values, and the commitment to live a life diametrically opposed to the one I had known. This metamorphosis was underpinned by a rigorous self-assessment and the implementation of a relapse prevention plan designed to steer me away from high-risk situations that could precipitate a return to criminal thinking or behavior. The skills and routines I have developed over the year, including those learned through my participation in the Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment program, have been instrumental in this ongoing process of personal evolution.

My approach to avoiding relapse centers on avoidance, problem solving, and the power of refusal. These strategies are informed by an understanding of my past, where exposure to violence and gang culture from a young age molded me into a person prone to aggression and unlawful conduct. Recognizing the factors that triggered my criminal and addictive behaviors was a crucial step in breaking the

cycle of violence and substance abuse. Through a combination of reflection, education, and the development of emotional intelligence, I have come to understand and manage the triggers that once fueled my destructive actions.

These triggers, ranging from feelings of rejection and judgment to challenges to my authority and disrespect, once precipitated reactions characterized by increased aggression and an inability to control my emotions. Today, I recognize these warning signs and have learned to navigate them constructively, ensuring that my responses are measured and conducive to positive outcomes.

My educational background, including a Master of Business Administration in Technology Management from the University of Phoenix and a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology and Computer Networking from Westwood College, alongside certificates in conflict resolution, parenting, anger management, and customer service, among others, equips me



Darren Williams

with a broad skillset that I aim to leverage in my role as a counselor. These qualifications, combined with my lived experiences, provide a solid foundation for understanding and addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by those struggling with substance abuse.

In conclusion, my journey to become a drug and alcohol counselor is driven by a deep-seated desire to use my experiences and insights to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. Having navigated the treacherous path from addiction and crime to rehabilitation and

self-improvement, I am uniquely positioned to empathize with, guide, and support those embarking on their own journeys to recovery. My past, once a source of pain and regret, has become the bedrock upon which I built my future as a counselor, dedicated to helping others find their way out of the darkness and into light of

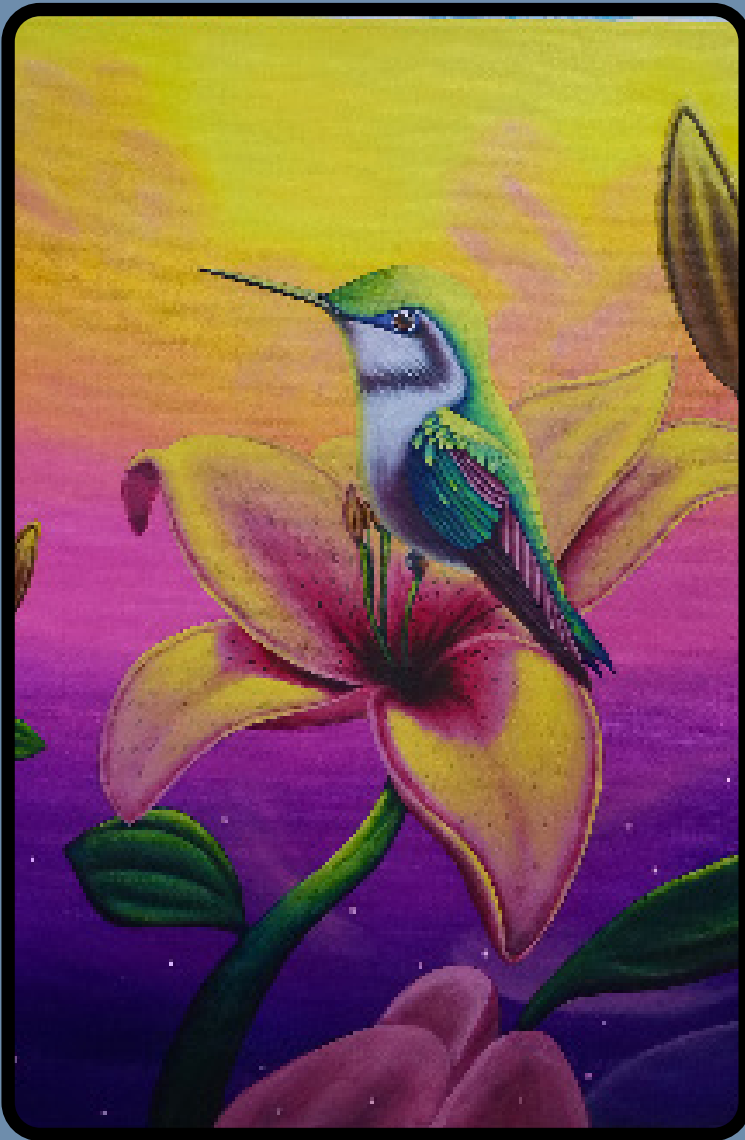


# Art Showcase

The Hard Climb Journal invites the incarcerated, custody, free staff, volunteers, and members of the community to submit articles, art, and poetry. Contributors retain their intellectual property, but all submissions become property of The Hard Climb Journal and may be edited

## GOT ART?

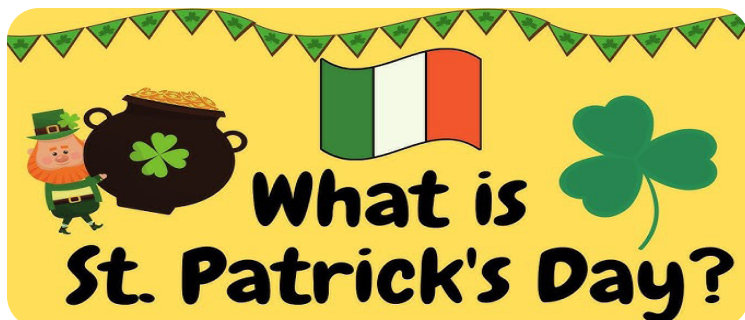
ARTIST: Andrew Salas



## The History of St. Patrick

By: Howard Jenks  
Layout and Design

St. Patrick's Day, celebrated on March 17<sup>th</sup>, honors the patron saint of Ireland, and has evolved from a religious observance into a global celebration of Irish culture. St. Patrick was born in Roma Britain in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. At 16, he was kidnapped and brought to Ireland as a slave. When he escaped slavery, he returned to Ireland to help convert the Irish people to Christianity. He famously used the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity. St. Patrick died on March



17<sup>th</sup>, 461. This day was established as a feast day to celebrate his life and while this day was originally for church services and feasts for the catholic church that changed over the centuries. As Irish immigrants migrated to the United States, they used St. Patrick's Day to celebrate their heritage. Now, in today's times, St.

Patrick and his day are celebrated all over the world. The Irish and the Irish-for-a-day alike, party with parades, festivals, food and, of course, by dressing in green attire paying homage to a slave turned saint. Maybe this was the idea behind "Green Eggs & Ham". []

## Sacred Cont.

With most Odinists and naturists the journey starts with a cleansing and continues into recovery. Drew found his love for nature from his brother Kory Marshal Kay who unfortunately passed away from a Fentanyl overdose. Spending time with his "hands on the earth" brings him good memories and peace of mind. Drew has been an Odinist for 15 plus years and is a very grounded spiritual advisor; this has allowed Drew and others to share a view that differs from the mainstream approach of religion. Everyone is welcome to come and join to find your own personal journey. Drew plans on starting a garden next spring and is looking to find a

few like-minded individuals of the community into the Odinists area to help grow some veggies or flowers and perhaps find their own consciousness along the way. Unfortunately, due to the limited amount of area we have to work with we cannot take as many people as we would like to. So, if you find yourself interested in getting in touch with nature by getting a little dirt on your hands, feel free to stop by the Odinist area and introduce yourself. You might just find yourself invited into the circle. []



# Dare to DEFY



DEFY  
VENTURES  
Coaching  
event  
on  
Facility  
A



Tittle Time



Tyrone Tittle

## Quote:

Hope is not Optimism.  
Hope is the decision to keep  
lighting the candles  
when the dark  
keeps blowing them out

# The 68th Grammys Are Electric

## Entertainment



By Keenan Todd HCJ Staff Writer

On February 1st, the stars were out and about to celebrate one of music's biggest nights, the 68th Grammy Awards.

Bruno Mars and ROSÉ set the tone by opening with their smash hit APT. New artist such as Lola Young, Olivia Dean, and Leon Thomas won their first Grammy ever; beating out talented nominees such as Sombr, Alex Warren, and even Lady Gaga, who won for her track Abracadabra.

Benito Ocasio, aka "Bad Bunny" was front and center while host, Trevor Noah, tried his absolute hardest to persuade him to perform. However, the Puerto Rican phenom was



contractually obliged to decline considering his Super Bowl performance this year. That didn't stop the party, because the Reggaeton artist took home multiple Grammys including Album of the Year for DTMF, which is the first for a Spanish Language Album. Before thanking God, he uttered the words 'ICE OUT' which inspired artist such as Billie Eilish to speak out after being awarded for Song of the Year,

WILDFLOWER. Compton native, Kendrick Lamar, made history as well by surpassing Jay-Z for all-time wins as a rap artist, topping the list at 27 Grammys. His track Luther, featuring SZA, won Record of the Year but not until after presenter and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Cher, mistakenly announced the late Luther Vandross as the winner.

Live performances are usually what electrifies the night and Sabrina Carpenter as well as Justin Bieber did just that. Carpenter's airport themed rendition of Manchild, could be mistaken for a Broadway show, while Justin Bieber's intimate version of YUKON captivated the audience.

Post Malone and legendary guitarist, Slash, gave an amazing tribute to Ozzy Osborne, followed by

a tribute medley to R&B artist D'Angelo by musical legend Lauryn Hill and company.

Additional Grammy winners included: Jelly Roll, Kehlani, Tyler the Creator, Chris Stapleton and Ariana Grande, amongst many others. The 68th Grammys served as a reminder of the power of music and how it can connect the world during a time of turmoil.

# The HCJ Journalism Society

## Community

By: Christopher Corbit HCJ Society Chair

A cohort of eight community members has embarked as the third cohort of a 20-week journalism education course on Facility A.

The topics covered range from newsroom basics, news judgment, and the how and what to write about when it comes to journalism.

"It was an experience of growth, and to be honest it made me a better writer," said Ivan Morales, a graduate of the second cohort when asked about his experience.

Ivan spoke about how he learned to "stick to the facts" and to reduce his bias. He also went on to share how this experience is transferable into the career he plans on getting into. Remaining objective and open-minded are both practices he has learned to put into prac-

tice as a journalist.

David Muegge, a current student of the Journalism Society, expressed his enjoyment of the class stating, "It's been eye opening. There's a lot that goes into the conveyance of information that I didn't see at first glance." He noted that having to be more thoughtful about the way he sees things and how he conveys them is life changing. David said that he would recommend for others to reap the benefits and contribute stories or just simply read the Hard Climb Journal.

Are you up to the task of contributing to positive programming and changing the culture at CCI just like our newspapers founder Benjamin Norton did in 2021? His vision was to highlight the positive here at Tehachapi in spite of all the negativity. If you would like to sign up for the next cohort, applications are available in the Facility A library upon



request and can be turned in to the media room. The Hard Climb Journal will soon be creating a correspondence course for B and C Yard that can be viewed on our REVIVE@ institutional channel 19. On behalf of the HCJ staff we hope to see your applications.



Chris Corbit  
HCJ Society Chair

# C Yard: Running Through Adversity

## Opinion

By Cameron Harrison  
Facility C Resident

It's six A.M. and I've been awake for 45 minutes now. I stretch in the dark quietly so I won't wake up my cellie. Shoes laced, I wait. Light turned on and was streaming into my cell, the dayroom is now illuminated. It's almost time to go.

The porters emerge for their morning duties and I stand by the door with anticipation. Finally, at six fifteen a.m., my cell door pops open and I slip out of the housing unit into the crisp morning air. I'm the first to arrive on the empty yard and do some stretches to keep my muscles loose. Several other people materialize from their housing units and join me. It's a cold dawn morning and the dark night recedes into a purple haze on the eastern horizon.

"Everybody good?" I ask.



Heads nod and we take off. Warmth spreads through our bodies as we jog lap after lap. By the time we finish it's seven a.m. and we are invigorated, mentally awake, and charged for the day.

Over six months ago someone approached me about starting a running group in the mornings before chow release and I was all for it. I've been a runner for most of my life and have seen the health and men-

tal benefits that running provides. We put together a list of ten names that we felt would help make the runner's group a success and it was approved.

Within a week we had several other guys express their interest in joining. Two months later we have grown to two groups of twenty runners. The participants range from seasoned runners to those who haven't jogged in decades. Monday through Saturday, you can see communi-

ty members running laps, doing interval lap training, or breathing through hill repeats. Everyday their endurance improves and everyday they gain a sense of accomplishment.

One of the participants could only make it around the track once before having to walk and catch his breath. Now he does three miles non-stop. Another participant talks about how he notices a difference between the days when he does run and the days he doesn't.

He talks about how his emotional state is more regulated, he can cope better, and his day starts in positivity.

Tremendous growth and camaraderie has come to the individuals that come out to run. On Thanksgiving a few of the runners came together to support each other in a long-distance run. Some ran five miles, some fifteen, and a few even ran an entire marathon. Everyone who participated enjoyed it and it is being considered for an annual event.

Running isn't for everybody. But for those of us that come out and hit the pavement it makes a difference. It helps with our physical, mental, emotional health and anything that moves us toward positivity and rehabilitation is what we need more of.



# Full Body Apparition

Local Artist  
Danny Cabral  
Makes a Dia De Los  
Muertos  
Paper Craft Tribute

