

To Our
Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

WELCOME TO YOUR February *Mule Creek Post* Black History Month edition. In tribute, we are featuring Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, one of the most significant documents of the 1960s civil rights movement (pp. 33-36). King's letter is renowned as a call for justice and change, and contributed to the country's protests for equity.

Racial inequities in incarceration carry on (pg. 7), we explore African-American heritage (pg. 17), and we continue attempts at changing prison culture (pg. 14).

We encourage new readers to submit stories and updates (submission guidelines on pg. 3) from your facilities. Your families and outside readers can view the *Post* online (see pg. 2 for more information).

IN THIS ISSUE:

SATF Residents Give Back to Community	2
Unlocking CDCR History: Female Pioneers	3
Pill Line Sagas; Medical Record Access	4
The Wordsmith; Big Red's Grammar Guide	5
The Uncaged Writer: Working with Writers	5
View from a Cushion: Your Toolbox	6
Prison Policy Initiative	7
Debt-Free College; The Long Walk Home	8
Earth Mother's Secrets: aloe vera	9
CA Resentencing Pilot Program	9
Writer's Submission Guidelines	10
Sports and Recreation	11
Library Lovers; Digital Literacy Matters	12
Being Responsible about Restitution	13
Compassion Prison Project Visits VSP	14
Changing Prison Culture & the CA Model	14
PC §1170 Exclusions.; Self-Expression	15
Prison Hacks; Valentine's Day	16
Magic Johnson: The Billion-Dollar Man	17
Resting the Ghosts of our Past	18
Getting Out of Student Loan Debt	19
Psych View; The Alchemist	20
Stephen Covey Discusses His 7 Habits	21
Imprisoning Our Wounds	22
Squared Away; A Programming Miracle	23
CalPIA Fabrics on Fac. E; Math Street	24
Classics; Diabetes Management	25
Business & Finances	26-27
Creative Arts Program	28
Insight Through the 12 Steps; Job Offers	29
Nueva Guia Para la Conmutación	30-31
Tales from the Yard: Spanish Galleon	32
Letter from Birmingham Jail	33-37



Robert Preciado and Michael Jimenez play pickleball in the Facility E gym in March 2023. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

California Nonprofit Bridges
Communities Through Pickleball

By Nemo Burgos, Post Reporter

IN SEPTEMBER 2023, Redemption Serve donated \$3,500 worth of pickleball equipment to the Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, California. Redemption Serve is a nonprofit organization created to build bridges between society and the incarcerated community.

The unlikely combination of pickleball and rehabilitation is a simple idea benefitting scores of the incarcerated on and off the court, and in their future lives. Millions all over the United States play pickleball, and it is increasingly popular at prison facilities.

The game is a perfect fit for the newly adopted California Model of prison reform, which is based on inclusion and building communities within prisons. The goal of humanizing incarcerated people has proven highly successful in lowering recidivism rates in Norway, and pickleball's intrinsic qualities of social interaction offer many benefits to prison populations. The competitions bring together residents and staff who would not normally interact and promotes camaraderie among diverse populations. It is not uncommon to see former rival gang members competing and enjoying each other's company. All ages and skill levels can play pickleball.

Many prisons have constructed pickleball courts, but lack the requisite equipment or this equipment is in poor condition. This lack of equipment prevents more people from taking part in the sport.

Mimi Loucks, a retired tennis professional turned social activist, found this out through her volunteer work with the Prison Journalism Project (PrisonJournalismProject.org). In transcribing stories written by incarcerated people, Loucks made discoveries about life in the prison system. She felt called to help those who wanted to play pickleball and reached out to members of the San Diego Tennis & Racket Club, as well as the Mission Hills Country Club. Through the generosity of these two entities, she collected more than \$3,500 in pickleball equipment. She worked closely with Mule Creek's Community Resource Manager Jason Ross and Coach Andrew Scholl to approve the donation. On September 8, she delivered the equipment in person to the prison. This single act of kindness has injected excitement into the program and motivated residents of all backgrounds to flock to the courts. In addition, this generous donation freed up

(continued on pg. 2)





THE MULE CREEK POST
MISSION STATEMENT
AND STAFF

The *Mule Creek Post's* mission is to present content and messaging that encourages rehabilitation and pro-social values, and enhances a sense of community, creativity, and positivity.

Administrative Editor..... AW T. Miranda
Supervising Editor..... J. Iniguez
Publisher..... J. Mitchell
Journalism Training Sponsor E. Albertson
Media Specialist..... H. Kim

Additional Research
Pamela Cipriotti, Claudia Pérez,
Prayer Warriors Alliance

Editor-in-Chief..... Jesse Carson
Production Editor..... S. Martin Williams
Copy Editor..... Al Rice
Lead Reporter..... Sean Neal
Feature Reporters
D. Razor Babb, Earl S. Breckenridge,
O. Rick Bridges, Anthony R. Chavez,
Jason Davis, Bob Gay, John L. Orr

Reporters
Nemo Burgos, Aorrell Burrell,
Dale Hurd, Rob Sharp

Columnists
Mark Daigre, Walter Deckert, Maya
Emig, Richard Legan, Ricky A. Ortega,
C. Robertson, Daisy Switzer, Jacques
Verduin, Leah Ward-Lee, Carolyn
Warren

Contributors
Freddy Avalos, Chanelle Bessette, Shawn
Brusacoram, D. Chaddock, Lt. H.
Gastelum Jr., CCWP, M. Kane, J. Ross,
A. Scholl, Vanessa Nelson-Sloane,
Danielle Squillante, Rahsaan Thomas

The *Mule Creek Post* • Mule Creek State
Prison • % MCIC Associate Warden •
P.O. Box 409090 • Lone, CA 95640

www.ledger.news ("Archives" tab)
or go directly to the *Post* archives at
<https://fliphtml5.com/bookcase/zudxq>

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



(from *Nonprofit Bridges Communities*, pg. 1)
funds to fill other recreational needs. Incarcerated pickleball players are now enthusiastically reaping the social, physical, and mental benefits, and donors feel good about their contribution affecting a community they knew little about.
"Often, the most impactful solutions come from the simplest ideas," stated Loucks. "It's about bringing communities together."
The residents of Mule Creek voiced their appreciation for Loucks, the San Diego Tennis & Racket Club, and the Mission Hills Country Club.

SATF Residents Donate \$23.5K

By Lt. Brent Urban, Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

THE INCARCERATED POPULATION at the California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison (SATF) raised over \$23,500 for their community last fall. The funds, raised through food sales and direct donations from the population, were distributed to various programs.
SATF staff said they were honored to donate a check of \$11,091 to the Recreation Association of Corcoran. The association offers youth programs for the Corcoran community. On Oct. 18, 2023, as the SATF staff members entered the Mark Twain Elementary School to present the check, they were greeted with cheers and applause from a huge group of children. Warden Bryan Phillips and SATF managers said being able to be a part of something like this simply cannot be put into words. Seeing the children's faces made everyone's day. Phillips thanked SATF staff and the incarcerated population for making the donation possible. These funds will provide 157 local children with scholarships to play youth sports.
In addition, Facilities A and B presented Refuge Armona with a check totaling \$8,117. The organization, located in Armona, offers hope, refuge, and assistance for the town's youth. Armona is a very small town with a population of approximately 4,500. The founders of Refuge, Aaron and Alyssa Haley, visited the facilities in June, sharing their mission of helping youth make better life choices, regardless of their situation or living conditions. Many residents were moved by their words and testimony, so decided to contribute their food sale donations to Refuge. On top of the food sale proceeds, the population also donated additional funds. The Haleys were very appreciative and will be applying these funds toward the youth of Armona.
Finally, Corcoran High School received over \$4,000. The high school received three checks: One was for \$1,317 for the Corcoran High School Future Farmers of America. The girls' volleyball team received a check for \$1,472, and the boy's baseball team received a check for \$1,525. All of the students, teachers, and coaches thanked Phillips for the donations, and said the financial help was greatly appreciated.



Ralph Diaz, then-secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and Connie Gipson, director of the CDCR's Division of Adult Institutions, stop for a photo at Bastøy Prison in Horten, Norway, in September of 2019 during a six-day visit of the Norwegian prison system famed for its humanistic practices and employee wellness. The two were joined by the wardens of the California Men's Colony and Salinas Valley State Prison; the governor's deputy cabinet secretary and deputy legal affairs secretary for criminal justice; formerly incarcerated people; representatives from the California Correctional Peace Officers Association; and other advocates and educators. See pg. 14 for a related story. (Michele Casadei / UC San Francisco)

To support the future printing of the *Mule Creek Post*, send your donations to the following address. 100% of donations goes toward the printing of the *Post*. Thank you!

Ledger Dispatch
c/o The MCP Printing
P.O. Box 1240
Jackson, CA 95642
Message Line: Donation for printing the MCP

The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the contributing writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the facility or the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

The *Mule Creek Post* grants permission to reprint articles, with appropriate credit given to the writer and the *Post*. Reprints from other sources are excluded from this permission.

MCSP Food Sale Results

By Jason Ross,
Community Resource Manager

August 2023	
Don Luis Mexican Restaurant: \$57,380	
Amador County Little League East	\$5,000
Jackson Quarterback Club	\$2,481
A-PAL Humane Society	\$2,000
Job's Daughters (Bethel #276)	\$2,000
Total Donated	\$11,481
October/November 2023	
Macque's BBQ: \$46,455	
AHS Girl's Soccer Program	\$5,500
Sacramento SPCA	\$3,791
Total Donated	\$9,291
January 2024	
Costco: \$103,447.80	
Amador High Booster - Boys Basketball	\$2,000
Sober Grad	\$9,000
Consumnes River Little League	\$3,900
Interfaith Food Bank	\$4,000
Ione Elementary 5th Grade Science Camp	\$5,000
Lab Rab Sports	\$3,000
Amador High School ASB	\$500
Amador High Performing Arts	\$3,660
Total Donated	\$31,060
Totals for Fiscal Year 2023-34	
Vendor Sales	\$207,280.80
Donations	\$51,832.93

Missteps

In the October photo spread on Notable Indigenous People (see pg. 19), we inadvertently misidentified Native American icon Crazy Horse; this was a photo of Sitting Bull.



Sitting Bull (HistoriaMag.com)



Linda Clarke

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:

- Lt. J. Austin (President)
- Sgt. M. Rhode (Vice President/Treasurer)
- Lt. B. Campbell (Communications Chair)
- Officer M. Vanni (Sergeant-at-Arms)
- J. Greathouse (Secretary)
- Dr. L. Forester
- Sgt. J. Villanueva
- CCI M. Mendoza
- Officer P. Gonzalo
- C&PR R. Steele
- Sgt. E. Broussard

Pioneering Women in CDCR, Pt. 1

By Don Chaddock, Inside CDCR Editor



WHEN THE CALIFORNIA state prison system started during the Gold Rush, the guards were all male; it would take more than a century for the first women to take up duties as correctional officers. These women blazed a trail for others to follow.

Early female correctional officers faced hostile working environments, not only from the inmates, but sometimes from male counterparts. Many had to prove themselves by working twice as hard as the men. But they also received support from other officers and executive staff as the department went through the same societal changes as the rest of America. This eventually allowed women to take jobs previously reserved for men.

Technically, there were female guards at San Quentin almost since the beginning. However, they were utilized only as supervisors of female inmates, in the days before female prisoners were transferred to Tehachapi in 1932.

According to the San Quentin Alumni Group, the first modern female correctional officer was a clerk who promoted to the rank of correctional officer (CO) to supervise a condemned female inmate. "If you want to go way back, Dorothy 'Dolly' Taylor was the first CO at San Quentin. Dolly was a clerk when Barbara Graham arrived at [San Quentin]'s death row from California Institution for Women in 1955," according to Dick Nelson of the Alumni Group. "Dolly was promoted to CO to babysit her. I believe Graham was there for six weeks before she was executed, as she did get at least one stay. ... After the execution, Dorothy demoted back to a clerical position and worked the mail room for many years. She was once again promoted to CO in the 1970s and retired as a CO."

In 1971, Linda Clarke was 26 years old when she became the first female correctional officer to work at the Correctional Training Facility (CTF) in Soledad, according to CTF Associate Warden Jeff Soares in his book, *History of Soledad*. She was not given the title of correctional officer, but was classified like all women in her position as "woman correctional supervisor."

Soares wrote, "There was significant discrimination against all the women and they were often told they would not be given any promotion when they had applied, because they were women."

It was tough at first and promotions weren't in the cards. "According to Clarke, when she had put in for a promotion, she was told to wait in a room to be called for her interview. She waited the entire day before someone came back and told her the interviews were over," wrote Soares.

Clarke worked as a correctional officer from 1971 until 1978. From 1981 to 1987, she served as a training manager. Gov. Pete Wilson appointed her as CTF's first female warden in March 1995.

"The staff, I think, was very pleased to welcome back one of their own. I think they're very proud of that. It will be even more of a challenge not to disappoint them," Clarke told the *Salinas Californian* at the time.

According to the Old Guard Foundation, a group of retired correctional employees, Karon Larson and three others were the first female officers assigned to a California men's prison, in 1972 at the CTF. In 1962, Larson began her career as a clerk typist. In 1971, she became a correctional supervisor at the California Institution for Women (originally called "Frontera"). In 1981, she transferred to San Quentin until 1984, when she transferred to Folsom State Prison. She retired in 1996 with more than 32 years at the department.



MULE CREEK POST Submissions

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



Sagas of the Pill Line

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

A FUNNY THING happened to me on my way through the pill line. I met a man from Tennessee who once traveled the nation catching rattlesnakes to milk them for their venom. Seems there's a market for the poison, and his story was exciting and dangerous to say the least.

Behind him was a man who told me he was about to leave the prison. While in the pill line two months later, he brought me up to date. He'd spent seven weeks on a wild bus-riding escape to several prisons, only to end up in my pod at the end of the adventure.

The next man I met was just finishing 40 years in prison. He was on his way to a new life on the street, and I couldn't help but think of Rip van Winkle, the man who took a 40-year nap only to awaken in a world he knew little about. My friend is about to experience a whole new universe, a land where most people won't make eye contact, where cash has been replaced by debit cards, a world of PIN numbers, passwords, Uber, smartphones, and voice-mail.

Meanwhile, the pill line moves slowly day after day to the beat of the stories, the aches and pains of old and young alike. The pill line is full of adventures if one takes the time to listen and ask a few questions. These pill-line people not only survive prison, but many have survived life threatening health issues as well. Unfortunately, because of poor health, many have to visit the pill line more than once a day to brave all kinds of weather. Perhaps a parallel to the pill-line people would be the U.S. Postal Service whose motto paraphrased Herodotus of Greece in the fifth century B.C.: "Not snow, no, nor rain, nor heat, nor night keeps them from accomplishing their appointed courses with all speed." Both pill liners and postal carriers suffer through the seasonal highs and lows.

Mule Creek State Prison receives a fair share of heavy rain and extreme heat. Fortunately, our administration has shown compassion for the many who

stand for hours daily in all that Mother Nature throws our way. Warden Covello even sent a memorandum to Mule Creek staff mandating the dining hall be used for the sick and elderly to wait for their pills on days of inclement weather.

We are fortunate to have this kind of care and compassion while we listen to some amazing stories told by those who wait daily in the pill line.

BPH Accesses Your Medical Records

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

MEDICAL RECORDS ARE not off limits for the Board of Parole Hearings (BPH), including mental health and substance abuse records. In previous issues of our *Lifer Line* newsletter, we've alerted lifers to the fact that their comprehensive risk assessments (CRA), while not medically protected documents under the Healthcare Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) are, nonetheless, not available to everyone. Now it appears the same can be said of any prisoner's medical records as well, insofar as BPH access is concerned.

In a presentation at the August executive board meeting of the BPH, the board's chief legal counsel, Jessica Blonien, explained that under the California penal code and recent court decisions, parole panels are obligated to review medical records. Citing Penal Code §§2281(b) and 2402(b), "all relevant and reliable information available to the panel shall be considered in determining suitability for parole." Blonien also cited the federal court's language in *Seaton v. Mayberg*: "We join our sister circuits in holding that prisoners do not have a constitutionally protected expectation of privacy in prison treatment records when the state has legitimate penological interest in access to them."

Additionally, HIPAA allows for disclosure of medical records for administrative purposes, and the state Confidentiality of Medical Information Act (CMIA) also permits access to medical records to various boards and agencies as required by law. Mental health treatment records are also accessible to the BPH. Blonien noted six basic reasons for board's access to an inmate's medical and mental health records:

- Elderly parole must give special consideration to the diminished physical conditions, if any, have reduced the elderly inmate's potential for future violence (Penal Code §3065)
- Programming records for those in mental health treatment programs where compliance with treatment is often considered programming
- Information relevant to future risk due to illness and impairment
- Information related to mental state, conditions of treatment and control, and further information that bears on the person's institutional behavior and suitability for release
- Information on substance abuse based on the person's history
- Information needed to ascertain reasonable accommodations under the American with Disabilities Act

Concluding the multipage response, the Board states, "Based on the authority outlined above, an incarcerated person does not have a reasonable expectation of privacy regarding their medical records when the records are needed for parole consideration purposes. Even if there was some privacy expectation, the board has the explicit authority to utilize an incarcerated person's medical records for purposes of parole consideration under HIPAA and CMIA."

All of this sounds legal and quasi-reasonable until we get to the parole hearing itself and the record of that event, the transcript. Herein lies the rub: Transcripts are public record, available to just about anyone who wants to ask for a copy. How then, does the board purport to protect any given prisoner's specific information discussed at the hearing — and thus part of the public record transcript — from access and possible use by anyone who might be interested and for whatever purpose? Make an "eyes-only" file, similar to that currently used for confidential information allegations? Other suggestions?

We think that is a legitimate and relevant question, and we'll be following up with the Board and their legal team. Stay tuned. And, in the interim, all those asking if the Board can access medical and mental health treatment records, the answer is "yes."

Together we can do this, one step at a time.



Life Support Alliance provides correspondence courses to prepare you for release and for the Board of Parole Hearings. Write to find out about the **Connecting the Dots, Denial Management, RISE, and Amends Project** courses. Also ask about the **Parole Plan Roadmap!**

P.O. Box 277 Rancho Cordova, CA 95741 • LifeSupportAlliance.org

The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

WHETHER ONE WANTS to admit it or not, we all have fears we fight against. Many words describing specific fears have Greek roots that reflect the past’s reliance on so-called “scholar languages” of Greek and Latin. The Greek word *phobia* literally means “fear,” and stems from the Greek word φοβος (*phobos*, “fearing”). One dictionary defines *phobia* as “an exaggerated usually inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object, class of objects, or situation.”

Fine and dandy, but how does that apply to some common fears that people experience today?

Lysophobia combines the Greek λυσσα (*lyssa*, “madness”) with *phobia*. This means “a fear of going insane,” which is one of the more common fears among people. Losing one’s mind as with age-related dementia or from Alzheimer’s disease is a real possibility as we age, but *lyssophobia* is an abnormal fear of becoming insane.

Acrophobia combines ακρος (*acros*, “high”) and *phobia* to describe “an abnormal dread of being at a great height.”

Claustrophobia is from the Latin *claustrum*, meaning “a fear of a confined or closed space.”

Triskaidekaphobia is from the Greek τρεῖςκαιδεκά, (“three and 10”), and defined as “a fear of the number 13.”

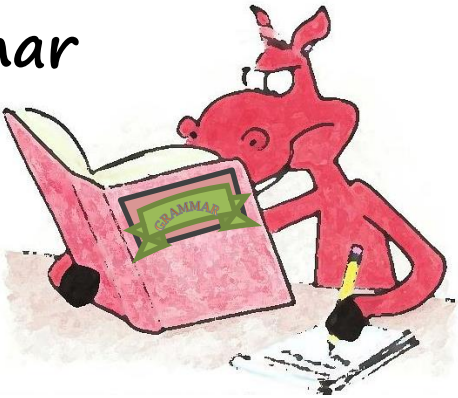
Hemophobic is also from the Greek ἡμα (*heima*, “blood”), which one dictionary defines as “an abnormal fear of the sight of blood.”

These are a few sorts of common fears, can you think of any more?



(Shutterstock.com)

Big Red’s Grammar Guide



GOOD WRITING BEGINS with the basics. Here in the eighteenth installment of my grammar guide are more things a writer should know. This month we’ll discuss prepositions.

Prepositions

A **preposition** is a word that links a noun or pronoun to some other word in a sentence. Take, for example, these short sentences:

- Jack and Jill went up the hill.*
(*Up* is a preposition connecting *went* and *hill*.)
- Little Jack Horner sat in a corner.*
(*In* is a preposition connecting *sat* and *corner*.)

Following are the most common prepositions:

about	behind	down	off	to
above	below	during	on	toward
across	beneath	except	onto	under
after	beside	for	out	underneath
against	between	from	outside	until
along	beyond	in	over	up
among	but	inside	past	upon
around	by	into	since	with
at	concerning	like	through	within
before	despite	of	throughout	without

Here’s one way of remembering what a preposition is. Look at the last eight letters of the word *preposition*; they spell *position*. A preposition sometimes tells the position of something: *in*, *out*, *under*, *over*, *above*, and so forth.

You’ve heard the rule about never ending a sentence with a preposition, haven’t you? Generally, your writing does sound better if you can structure a sentence so that you don’t end with a preposition. However, sometimes you want a more colloquial or conversational tone, and — let’s face it — in speaking, we often end sentences with prepositions. Would you be likely to say:

- With whom are you going to the party?*
or
Whom are you going to the party with?

The second way — with the preposition at the end — is almost always the way the sentence normally is said. In fact, speakers usually use *who* instead of *whom* in a sentence like this. Pointing out this awkward construction, Winston Churchill was once quoted as saying “Ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with which I cannot put.”

Next month, we’ll talk about **conjunctions** and **interjections**.

Uncaged Writer

Working with Incarcerated Writers

By Rahsaan Thomas, Outside Contributor



SEVERAL TIMES A week, I stand on a white-plastic bucket turned upside down and placed at the end of the top bunk. Pressing my “flabs” (potbelly) against the edge of the bed, I flip the mattress in half, exposing the metal cookie sheet underneath. Then a typewriter gets placed there, and I start writing for various editors in the dim light of a prison cell. My completed stories get snail mailed to various publications. I am a contributing writer for *Current*, The Marshall Project, and *San Quentin News*, with numerous freelance credentials earned since June of 2020 at nearly two dozen other outlets

Editors get several benefits from this work, too. Notably, they gain access to inside perspectives that have won awards. *San Quentin News*, *UnCuffed*, and the *Ear Hustle* podcast, all launched from San Quentin State Prison, are proof of our talents and the public’s hunger to hear our voices. Working with journalists behind bars gives editors an avenue to give a voice to the voiceless. Incarcerated people have great insight and ideas into social justice issues that could better

(continued on page 6)

(from *Uncaged Writer*, pg. 5)

our society. And, it's the right thing to do if you want to live in a world without mass incarceration and violence. For editors who want to make this investment, you're probably looking for a way to start. Here are some of the existing models that have worked for me.

Organizations focused on prison writing. The organizers of the Prison Journalism Project started out as volunteer instructors for the San Quentin Journalism Guild. I've had the pleasure of learning long-form journalism from both Kate McQueen and Yukari Kane.

Empowerment Avenue. Without outside help to overcome a lack of email, Google, and connections to publishers, our voices remain stifled. Between 2013 and 2019, I managed to get published about eight times. Since the launch of Empowerment Avenue, the gap has been closed between editors and cell blocks. Through Empowerment Avenue I have been published 22 times since June of 2020. The volunteers get us over the hump by transcribing the pieces into email-able documents that get sent out to editors. As the program grows, we hope to increase from 30 writers across the nation to hundreds and hit nearly every publication in America.

Co-Reporting. There are some stories I have been unable to write because I lack the ability to do research and conduct a full investigation. However, I do have something most publishers don't — access to the people whose lives are impacted [by] mass incarceration and social injustice. To overcome those obstacles, I would love to co-report with journalists and editors.

Type Investigations, a non-profit, has offered their help in conducting research on issues threatening the lives of incarcerated people. Many other organizations and editors decide to work with people in prison to expose and improve the system.

Fellowship Opportunities. Editors should offer people in prison writing fellowships to support and reward our work. My experience with the Marvel Cooke Fellowship, offered through the publication *Shadowproof*, is instructive.

Localized Reporting. Stories from prison have to be somewhat localized, but they can also be regional with resources. Ra-

ther than seeking a national story, try to plan around how to adapt localized reporting and storytelling that is connected to larger issues, with the help of editors who can do internet research.

Direct Relationships. The volunteers and staff I've worked with for Empowerment Avenue, the Prison Journalism Project, and PEN America are awesome — however, it's also important for editors to work directly with incarcerated writers. Sometimes our volunteers, accomplished journalists in their own right, get overwhelmed by prolific writers. An editor dealing directly with incarcerated writers eliminates any potential hold up going through busy middle people, and offers a chance to establish relationships that can come in handy for future stories and employment references.

Apogee Journal executive editor Alexandra Watson understands how to navigate the prison system, including setting up video visits, sending JPay letters, and accepting prepaid calls. We've been able to work well together despite the challenges because she took the time to figure out the most important step toward our success — the various prison communication methods. Working with incarcerated writers comes with obstacles, but knowing how to work around them makes it possible to reap rewards for both writers and publishers.



(EditorAndPublisher.com)

Rashaan Thomas paroled from San Quentin in February 2023 and now lives in Oakland. He is a producer with *Ear Hustle* and executive director with Empowerment Avenue, and completed the New York marathon in November 2023. He continues writing and assisting others in their publishing goals. This article appeared in the March 2020 edition of *Skalawag Magazine*, reprinted with Thomas' permission.

What's in Your Toolbox?

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

"Yeah, but Stevie," he said, bending to grasp the handles, "I didn't know what else I might find to do once I got out here, did I? It's best to have your tools with you. If you don't, you're apt to find something you did not expect and get discouraged."

—Stephen King, *On Writing* (Scribner, 2000)

HOW IMPORTANT IS it to have your tools with you? For that matter, what tools do you own? Can you name them and what they are best suited for? Do you own tools that don't belong in your toolbox? For instance, in your past did you respond first with anger and violence? Is this a tool you want in your toolbox? What about self-imposed isolation and depression? Are those still in there? If so, why?

For many, in our pre-incarceration lives the tools we employed to deal with situations can be likened to having only a sledgehammer; we used that sledgehammer no matter the situation. If a spike needs to be driven into a log, a sledgehammer is a useful tool. If we are putting the shingles on a dollhouse, a sledgehammer would create more harm than not.

In the many self-help groups we have available to us, we are given access to tools and instruction on when and how to use them. The secret to stocking our toolboxes might be acquiring the ability to foresee possible situations and, by extension, what tools we might need to have with us.

For those in a 12-Step program, we are urged to take time during our daily Tenth Step inventory, to not only review how and when we used the contents of our toolbox, but to also add tools we might need and shelve those we haven't used in a while, not throwing them away unless, of course, they are tools of devastation and destruction.

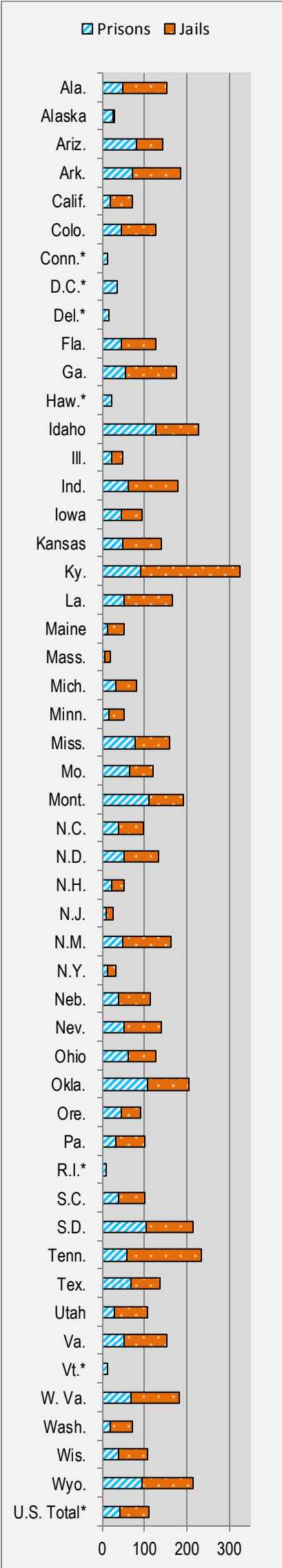
It is also important to make sure our tools are clean, well-oiled, and in good working order. Sometimes it can be useful to pick up a tool we haven't used in a bit and re-familiarize ourselves with it, thereby making sure that when we do need it, our employment of that tool is both appropriate and skillful.

Take stock; do your inventory and make the changes that need to be made. Leave the tools you don't need out of the box you carry with you every day. For if you try and keep every tool you've ever learned how to use with you all the time, most of us find that our toolbox becomes too heavy to lift, much less carry.



(Serving-Pink-Lemonade.com)

States incarcerate women in prisons and jails at very different rates. Below are the number of women in state prisons and jails per 100,000 residents.



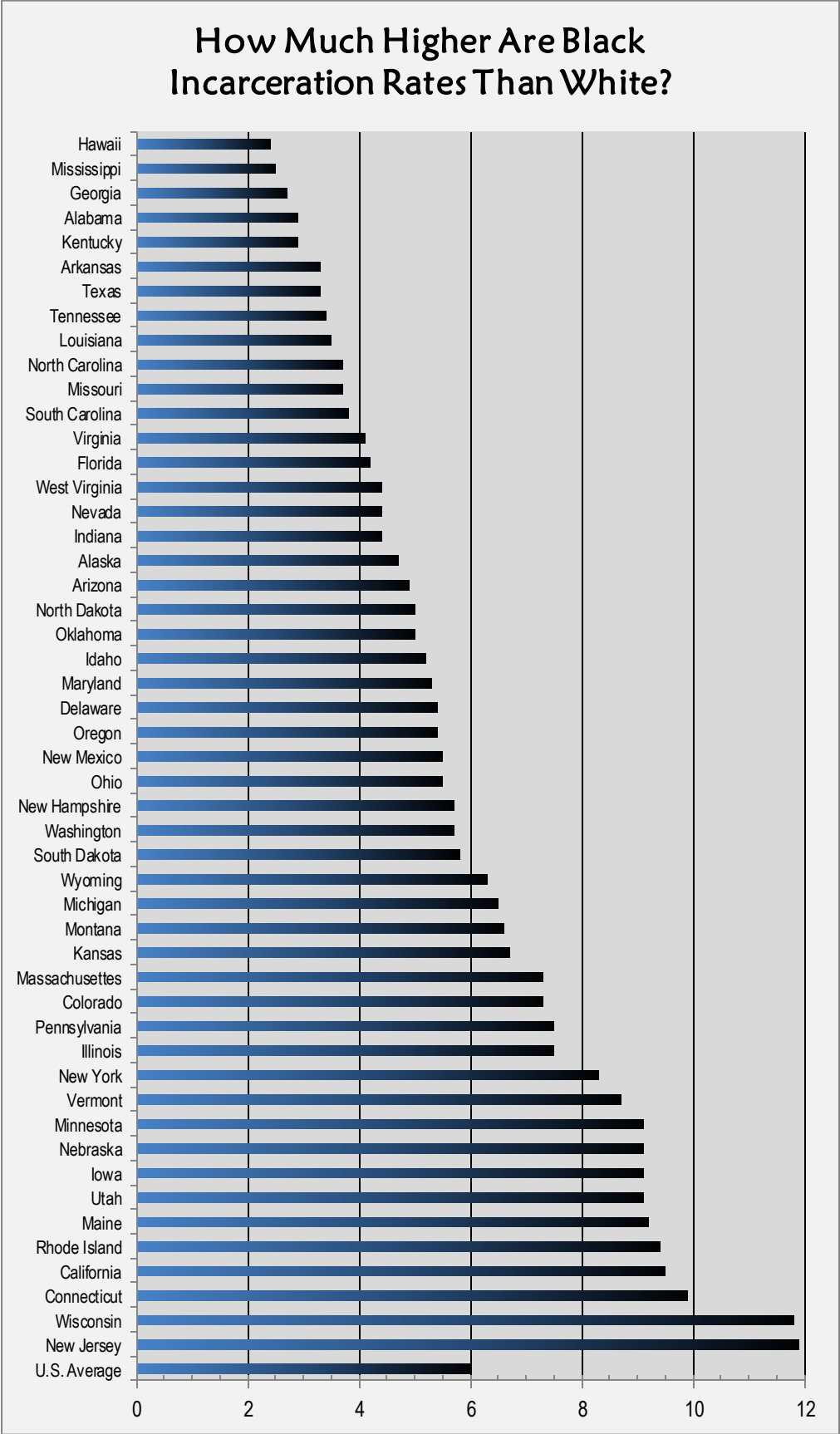
* Not all information available.

Inequities in Incarceration

By Danielle Squillante, Prison Policy Initiative



IN OCTOBER, WE released a spreadsheet containing the most recently available incarceration data for people in state prisons and local jails, by race and ethnicity and by gender, for all 50 states and D.C. We created 100 state-specific visuals as well as a national-level graph that compares black and white imprisonment rates by state. We found that every state locks up black people at a rate at least double that of white people — and, on average, at six times the rate of white residents. On this page are examples of this data:



As part of this new dataset, we created a breakdown of state prison population rates per 100,000 people in a given category. Below is the data for California:

Total state incarceration rate	Male	Female	White (non-Hispanic)	Black (non-Hispanic)	Hispanic	American Indian/ Alaska Native
259	498	20	143	1349	295	934

College Debt...FREE!

By Anthony R. Chavez,
Feature Reporter

ASK ANY COLLEGE student what's on their mind, next to finals and entering the workforce, and the biggest college-related stress students face is student loan debt. For incarcerated students who took out loans prior to being arrested, a staggering 100% of those loans borrowers have failed to keep up on payments and have gone into default, according to the Student Borrower Protection Center. Defaulted loans make students ineligible for future Pell Grant aid and have a negative impact on a borrower's credit right out of the gate.

Luckily, a program called Fresh Start can take your loan out of default, but it will still be on the borrower to keep up with payments. Students have until Oct. 1, 2024, to sign up. Also, it should be noted that you can only use Fresh Start once.

Sign up for Fresh Start in one of the following ways: Fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), if you have a Pell grant-eligible college education program available, or contact the Department of Education at P.O. Box 5609, Greenville, TX, 75403. The department suggests providing the following bits of information: Name, Social Security number, date of birth, and mailing address; it is recommended to include in the letter "I would like to use Fresh Start to bring my loans back into good standings," and clearly note that that you are an incarcerated student.

Another program provided is a process that completely writes off all Student Loan debt if you are serving 10 years or more. However, this process does not reinstate your Pell Grant eligibility, so this may not be best for continuing students or students who plan to further their education. Help is available; you just have to ask questions.



See page 19
for more
information
about
student loan
debt.

The Long Walk Home

By Ricky A. Ortega
Post Columnist

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

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

The End of Innocence

"My punishment for error is too great to carry ... from your face I shall be concealed." —Genesis 4:13-14

SINCE NEAR THE beginning, when Cain killed his brother Abel, the human conscience has been revealed through the transgressions of man. Nothing, however, was more profound than the day I was arrested for murder. In solitary confinement I faced a moment of truth, in a place where voices cry for redemption, where the gallows tree waits patiently for the ropes of justice.

I learned at a young age rules were not meant to be broken. My God-fearing parents instilled in me a strong sense of humility, coupled with strict adherence to law. Thus, I grew up with no criminal record until the age of 19 when I succumbed to the war inside my mind, which led me captive to the forbidden fruits of troubled youth. As the cell door locked behind me, I became submerged in a sea of dread, inundated by the sounds of silence. The sun no longer sustained me, yet I was still not deep enough to conceal my face from Almighty God, the One to whom I would have to answer. It was my day of reckoning, the day I refer to as the "end of innocence."

Those serving life without the possibility of parole are on a journey, enduring the pitfalls of perseverance and reconstructing the moral fibers of a seared conscience. It is a journey of reflection on our path to self-awareness when we faced the end of our innocence.

After serving four years overseas in the U.S. Navy, Dan Fedorenko came home feeling lost, with no direction in sight. Summoned by the call of his youth and seduced by the lure of money, drugs, and women, he found himself speeding down a dead-end road. Arrested on Oct. 27, 1985, and sentenced to life without parole at the age of 22, he was sent to Folsom State Prison. "I felt like I was in a toilet, being flushed down the drain and couldn't stop it," said Fedorenko. "I had little regard for human life, or for myself. Sentenced to die in prison before my life started was beyond my capacity to comprehend. It was a nightmare to me. I felt like my life was over. I was told I was no good and there was no redemption for me."

Wanting to survive, searching for acceptance and self-worth, he turned to drugs and criminal behavior, knowing he was living on borrowed time. But his breakthrough came in 2008 when his family gave him an ultimatum to either choose his friends or his family. "It was exactly what I needed to hear," said Fedorenko. "At that moment, I found the courage to ask for help and my life changed for the better."

Today, he is recognized for outstanding service in the Youth Offender Program at Valley State Prison, celebrated for his knowledge, life skills, and ability to communicate effectively with youth offenders. Criminals & Gangmembers Anonymous and victim awareness groups gave him his most valuable possessions: coping skills and understanding negative impact.

Federenko has three associate degrees, one with honors, and he is a life member of the Sigma Delta Kappa Honor Society. "When I first received my two AA degrees, it was the happiest day I can remember. I felt like I had moved up the ladder in life," he said. "But my greatest achievement is being accepted in the TOPSS [Transforming Outcomes Project at Sac State] bachelor's program here at Mule Creek. It has opened up a whole new world for me. I know now that I am bigger than these four walls of prison. I have a positive value and self-worth; I can do anything."





By Richard “Lonewolf” Legan,
Post Columnist

THERE ARE SEVERAL species of aloe vera, such as *Aloe littoralis*, which can grow at least 10 feet tall and is from Africa, and another called *Aloe parryi*, used to make a violet dye. Aloe vera has many famed qualities and uses: the gel is used to soothe and heal the skin, for example, as well as dry, itchy scalp. Aloe protects the skin from infection and fungi, reduces scarring, helps speed up cell regeneration, and treats radiation and sun burns as well as dermatitis.

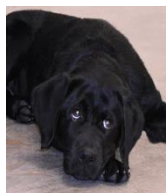
Application to poison ivy exposure relieves itching and provides protection from UV rays. In recent studies, aloe shows anti-cancer activity. For centuries, the plant has been used around the world for healing.

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, about ethnobotany and survival skills. 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.



Aloe littoralis (EssentialOil.com)



Guide Dogs of America

Tender Loving Canines

TenderLovingCanines.org

Resentencing Pilot Program, Pt. 3

By Dale Hurd, Post Reporter

California’s pilot program allowing prosecutors to look back and remedy unjust sentences, Prosecutor-Initiated Resentencing, was established to support and evaluate a collaborative approach to exercising the prosecutorial resentencing discretion authorized by Penal Code §1170 and §1172. Nine counties were selected to participate in the program: Los Angeles; Santa Clara; San Francisco; Riverside; Contra Costa; San Diego; Yolo; Merced; and Humboldt.

AS DISCUSSED IN Parts 1 and 2 of this series, the resentencing pilot program is developing criteria for identifying individuals to be recommended for recall and resentencing.

The results of this project for the period August 2022 through September 2023 indicate that among the 684 district attorney case reviews conducted during the reporting period, 105 cases were referred to the courts for resentencing. The pilot program district attorney offices decided not to refer 321 of the cases, and 258 cases were still under review.

Of the 94 cases in which courts have ruled on the district attorneys’ resentencing motions, 91 resulted in resentencing. Of these 91 cases, 63 individuals were released. Approximately 15 percent those whose cases were reviewed were released from prison by the end of the reporting period.

It is clear concern about releasing inmates with high potential for recidivism is a primary consideration driving results. What goes into making these determinations regarding a prisoner’s future “danger to the community?”

The trial judge is arguably in a position to consider public safety ramifications of an offender’s recall and release. The judge was present at trial and will incorporate into their decision the trial record and documented post-trial behavior. Judges have broad fact-finding discretion in order to tailor dispositions to the rehabilitative needs of offenders and public safety risks they pose. The bench’s presumed rehabilitative expertise is the source of discretion given the judge. The judge necessarily finds facts, because the court tailors resentencing based on an individual offender’s history, risk of recidivism, and potential public safety risk. This fact-finding ability should get better as the evolving science of measuring an offender’s public safety risk improves with the passage of time.

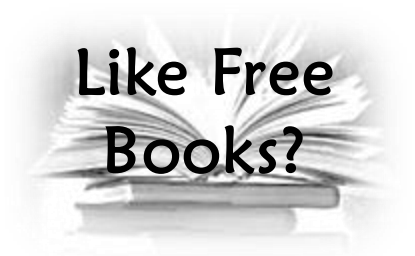
Remember Tom Cruise’s role in the film *Minority Report*, where he worked in the Pre-Crime Division of law enforcement? That was fiction, but the application of predictive analysis to curtail criminal activity is quickly becoming fact in many jurisdictions. For example, Los Angeles has established a Data Science Federation, a formal partnership with local colleges and universities aiming to promote predictive analysis supporting data-driven decision making within the city. The Los Angeles Police Department has used a machine-learning tool called Real-Time Analysis Critical Response (RACR). Some researchers are raising concerns about the use of “dirty data” from corrupt, racially biased, or unlawful police practices in algorithmic tools to support predictive policing, which can further perpetuate the biases and misbehavior inherent in the data.

The federal government also has an algorithmic tool for parole decisions: Prisoner Assessment Tool Targeting Estimated Risks and Needs (PATTERN). PATTERN was developed in response to the First Step Act of 2018, which called for the use of risk assessment in federal parole decisions. Similarly, some states encourage or require use of algorithmic tools; in other instances these tools are selected at the discretion of state or local judges. Driven largely by the First Step Act — “risk” is mentioned no less than 100 times — use of artificial intelligence to gauge the risk of recidivism is a hot topic in the academic literature.

A widely discussed ProPublica investigation purportedly showed that the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternate Sanctions (COMPAS) tool used in California and other jurisdictions systematically found black defendants to be at a higher risk of recidivism than similarly situated white defendants, even though twice as many high-risk blacks never recidivated when compared to their counterpart high-risk white defendants. The ProPublica investigation raised significant questions about the wisdom of integrating algorithms into judicial decision-making.

Basic algorithmic tools aim to predict a prisoner’s risk of recidivism by weighing factors such as criminal history, educational and employment background, financial, mental, and familial state, substance abuse, and other personal details. No tool measuring the risk of recidivism attempts to predict future dangerousness by virtue of the commitment offense alone. Dangerous prisoners give fresh evidence of their threat to society through disciplinary infractions, failure to participate in rehabilitative programming, and poor psychiatric diagnoses.

The Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has taken the approach that parole unsuitability findings based on unchanging factors, such as the nature of the commitment offense, can violate due process.



UC Davis Books to Prisoners
CSI Box #157
1 Shields Ave.
Davis, CA 95616

Prisoners Literature Project
% Bound Together Books
1369 Haight Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Prison Book Project
P.O. Box 592
Titusville, FL 32781

Human Kindness Foundation
% The Prison Ashram Project
P.O. Box 61619
Durham, NC 27715

PDX Books Through Bars
% Left Bank Books
92 Pike St., Box A
Seattle, WA 98101

Women's Prison Book Project
% Boneshaker Books
2002 23rd Ave S.

Minneapolis, MN 55404
Groundwork Books Collective for Prisoners
0323 UCSD Old Student Center
La Jolla, CA 92037

Prison Library Project
% The Claremont Forum
915-C West Foothill Blvd., PMB 128
Claremont, CA 91711

Providence Books Thru Bars
5 Angell St.
Providence, RI 02906

LGBT Books to Prisoners
1202 Williamson St. #1
% Social Justice Center Incubator
Madison, WI 53703

NYC Books Through Bars
% Bluestockings Bookstore
116 Suffolk Street
New York, NY 10002



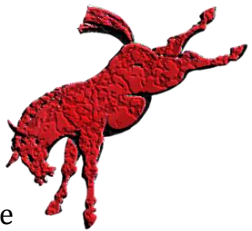
The Prayer Warriors Alliance (PWA) is a non-denominational organization of volunteers who will assist anyone of any faith with research. The PWA charges no fee; return postage (up to 20 pages per request) is paid by PWA. See the July 2023 edition for more information about the PWA.

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

Prayer Warriors Alliance
P.O. Box 28352
San Diego, CA 92198-0352
SupportPWA.org

Writer's Submission Guidelines: Mule Creek Post (Part 1)

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter



AFTER 40-PLUS YEARS communicating with writers, editors, publishers, and agents, I have seen shifting trends in the writing community that baffle even the most experienced author. In the '80s and '90s, a novice writer could send a manuscript directly to a major magazine or publishing house and actually get a response. If you adhered to industry standards and included a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE), your manuscript would also get returned to you. Without an SASE and sufficient postage, you usually received nothing back; not even a response to your query.

Today, direct contact with a publisher or author's agent is almost futile if you have never been published. These entities deal mostly with established writers who have a provable publishing history. The *Mule Creek Post*, on the other hand, encourages new writers to submit articles directly for consideration. Our circulation is now more than 70,000 readers, primarily through the state-issued GTL/ViaPath tablets, and establishes an acceptable history of publication for a novice author.

When submitting an article (manuscript) to *the Mule Creek Post*, start with formatting your manuscript according to the customary standards (see the example below). This applies to all manuscript submissions, not just the *Mule Creek Post*. Try to use 8 ½" × 11" lined paper for handwritten submissions, and 8 ½" × 11" white typing paper if typing or printing from a computer. If you have access to only certain kinds of paper, then use what you have. Manuscripts should have a 1" to 1 ½" margin all around, and be one-sided only.

On page one in the upper left-hand corner, enter your name and address. In the upper right-hand corner, enter the word count of your article. If you used a research source for your piece, enter that vital information just below your name/address. For example: 12/22/22, *USA TODAY* ARTICLE, "FREE FOOD."

About one-third of the way down the first page, write the title of your work. Double space and enter "By" (see below), then double space and enter your name. Double space again and start your manuscript, double spacing the rest of it to the end. This is the standard, accepted manuscript format. Do not number page one. Subsequent pages should be numbered in the upper right-hand corner, preferably with your name, like this: SMITH/2.

Do not combine an introductory letter with the article you are presenting. The letter is separate from the manuscript (but sent in the same envelope, and can be single-spaced). Date the communications.

If you reside anywhere at Mule Creek State Prison, you do not need to include an SASE. Submitting from outside Mule Creek requires an SASE. Write your name and address in the center of a blank envelope (this envelope will be sent back to you, from us); leave the upper left-hand corner return address area blank (the *Post* will write its address in that space). Put a stamp on the SASE, if you are able. Send your cover letter, submission, SASE and other enclosures to the *Mule Creek Post* address listed on page 2 of each edition.

Submissions to the *Mule Creek Post* require media release forms for each incarcerated person whose name appears in the article (use the CDCR Form 146, Inmate Declaration to News Media Contact, available through the law library or possibly your counselor). You could get away with just a first name and last initial (e.g., "John O."), but The Associated Press and the *Post* discourage this kind of identification.

To recap:

- Use 8 ½" × 11" size paper
- Write or type on one side of the paper only
- Format with 1 to 1 ½ inch margins all around
- Double spacing between lines — always
- Using an inmate's name requires a CDCR Form 146
- If outside of Mule Creek, include an SASE

In next month's edition of the *Post*, we will provide further information to help our novice — and experienced — writers get through the sometimes exasperating world of getting published.

Manuscript – page one:

Paul Smith AB2345 MCSP/E21-B201 P.O. Box 409090 Ione, CA 95640	word count: 554
Total Football	
By	
Paul Smith	
In the overall scheme of things, my presence on the football field did not amount to any more than the flag loosely stuffed into my waistline. If you yanked my flag, I likely folded as would the blue cloth fluttering to the ground in a heap.	



By A. Scholl, Physical Education Teacher/Recreation Coordinator

ALL YARDS HELD Christmas and New Year's tournaments. The ADA fitness program is going well on both facilities D and E. Facility D has programs on Mondays and Wednesdays, while Facility E's are on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Facilities D and E basketball games on 23 and 24 December resulted in D Facility winning the Over-50 league 49-39, while Facility E won the Young Ballers game, 140-80.

A multi-accessible workout station was installed on both facilities, accessible by both ADA and non-ADA residents. State-wide we are trying to incorporate some new things to all recreation programs. It is just a slow process. Our annual all-coaches training at Bakersfield Junior College went really well, and coach K. Madsen and I are working with an outside group, Ballers for Christ, to visit the prison in the future, as well as a Home Run Derby in June or July.

My facilitators on both facilities D and E are doing an outstanding job.



MARY DONOVAN
 (Veterans Claims Analyst)
 CalVet CDCR Liaison
 Oakland District Office,
 Veterans Service Division
 1301 Clay Street, Room 1130N
 Oakland, CA 94612
 (510) 301-6913
 www.CalVet.ca.gov

ASP Observes Vets Day at The Box

By Freddy Avalos, Avenal State Prison

ON THE MORNING of Nov. 10, 2023, The Box, Facility E's fitness group at the Avenal State Prison, participated in a WOD (workout of the day) for Veterans Day.

At the beginning of the class, the facilitator explained the WOD to both intermediate and advanced groups. A WOD is a particular workout named after a service person (military or law enforcement) that died in the line of duty. CrossFit boxes (gyms) across the country participate in WODs during Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day. This is done in part to show gratitude and appreciation to those who served and to those who have sacrificed it all to protect our country and its freedoms. The Box and its members participated in this nationwide event as our way of saying "Thank You" to all veterans who have served our country.



This year, the WOD was "Servais," named after Adam Servais, 23, of Onalaska, Wisconsin. Servais was a U.S. Air Force Senior Airman assigned to the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron. He died on Aug. 19, 2006, in the Uruzgar Province of Afghanistan when his vehicle came under hostile fire.

The WOD consisted of the following:

- 400 meter walk with D-Ball (90 lbs.), followed by 8 rounds of:
- 19 pull-ups
- 19 pushups
- 19 jump burpees
- 1.5 mile run
- 150 ab mat sit-ups

The numbers 8 and 19 signify the month and day Servais died. The WOD was modified from the original due to equipment limitations.

During the warm up, anxiety, excitement, and a major boost of adrenaline — mixed with the fact that this workout was going to be a challenge — created a huge amount of positive energy felt in the gym's atmosphere. Some of the participants warmed up with pushups, squats, or sprints; others talked strategy in hopes of getting a good time on the workouts; and others helped organize the stations to which everyone was assigned. As a source of morale and encouragement, the facilitator gave the following words prior to commencement of the event: "Give it your maximum effort, to the point that it lays you out on the floor gasping for air, so that when you do get up, you are reminded that Adam Servais did not on August 19, 2006!"

As participants completed the workout, their faces showed a sense of relief, accomplishment at having to endure the grueling WOD. Others collapsed to the floor gasping for air like fish out of water. I was one of those who collapsed, trying to make sense of what I had just experienced. Getting up off the ground, I was reminded of these words, "Adam Servais did not on August 19, 2006" and re-committed myself to living a life of servitude to others.

By the end of the class, everyone encouraged one another, pushed each other, and congratulated the next man on their performance. Some mentioned that the special significance of what the WOD represents was the reason for giving max effort.

Members of The Box expressed their appreciation to all of the Facility E staff on second and third watch who have supported the group since its conception, as well as Coach Eschew who helped in meeting the group's needs.

I challenge our readers to go out and try the WOD, and give it your max effort. Do it for Adam Servais, or any veteran you know, or for a family member, and as a way to honor your victims and their families. Do it for some reason other than getting a good workout.

What is The Box?

We are a pro-social fitness community that utilizes CrossFit methodology to fitness as a rehabilitative platform for the inmate population here on Facility E at the Avenal State Prison. CrossFit workouts are high-intensity, fast-paced, functional exercise movements that push a person to their limits physically, emotionally, and mentally. This translates to real-world circumstances such as controlling emotions in high-stress situations, being held accountable, being disciplined, and having perseverance (mental grit). Not only do we provide tools for rehabilitation purposes, but we are also a community of like-minded individuals who love CrossFit and hope to get others to try it and maybe even become passionate about it as well, in their own community (facility yards included). This is who we are and what we do — may it motivate you to create a fitness community on your yard. 3 ... 2 ... 1 ... Go!

Library Lovers Convene

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

FEBRUARY CALLS ON Cupid yet again, as residents wait their turn to peruse the stacks of books in the library. Yes, it's Library Lovers' Month, where smitten booklovers come out in droves, looking for that one special book. Maybe it is an author you enjoy or a particular classic, whatever you fancy.

With that in mind, Facility E is looking for input from you by filling out a "Readers Interest Questionnaire," with the goal of making the library a better experience for all. The questionnaire asks the following: How often do you check books out from the library? What do you prefer to read? Are there any specific authors or titles you would like made available?

The more input from residents the better. This helps expand the library and gives the library lover a voice in choice. For instance, if you would like to see more research material, special requests, or maybe a book from another yard, you can make this request at the library by filling out the questionnaire or communicating with your librarian.

"It can give you something at the most unexpected time," said Gabriel Espinoza when asked what he loved about the library. Espinoza mentioned going to his local library and finding a copy of *Runners Magazine*. Inside was the article, "Marathon Plans Under 4-Hours." This came at just the right time as he had weeks until his next race. "The library has always been a resource for me," he said. "I enjoy the peace."

For Dymitri Harszewski, he enjoys the opportunity of bonding over books. "The occasion of meeting someone new with similar literary interests," he said. "It starts something new. The excitement of finding something new, something I didn't expect to find. And I'm thrilled."

If you have not been to the library recently, maybe you will find something new or unexpected. Donated books come in frequently, and once a year new books are purchased. You never know what you may find.



Digital Literacy Matters

Student Instructions for Signing On and Off Windows

By Shawn Brusacorum, Mule Creek State Prison
and O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

FOR NEWLY ENROLLED students and those returning to education after a pause in studies, logging in to correctional technical education (CTE) network computers can be a source of real frustration and a barrier to accessing vital educational resources.

Instructions for logging in to Windows may seem a little basic; however, login and logout queries rank among the most frequently asked questions for incarcerated students when they have not been previously socialized to their use. To log in to Windows as a student, begin with the following steps:

1. At the keyboard, press any key to bring the computer out of sleep mode.
2. Press and hold the **Ctrl** and the **Alt** keys; at the same time press and release the **Delete** key.
3. With the mouse, left-click in the **User Name** box to activate it.
4. Type in your user name in the following format: CDCR#.last name. For example: AB1234.Doe
5. Press the **Tab** key
6. Your default password is CDCRxxxx, where the xxxx is your birth year.
7. Press the **Enter** key.
8. You will be prompted to create a new password.
9. Choose a word that is at least six characters long. To make it easy, capitalize the first letter; then add the numbers 01 at the end.
10. Press the **Tab** key and retype your new password the same exact way that you did the first time.
11. Press the **Enter** key.
12. Every 30 days you will be prompted to change your password. Instead of creating and remembering an entirely new password every month, you can continue updating your password by changing the last two numbers at the end, each month and in series. For example: "Private01" becomes "Private02" then "Private03" and so on.
13. To log out, use the mouse to left-click on the Windows icon in the bottom left corner of the screen: . Then left click on the head shape at the top-left side of the menu that pops up.
14. Next, left click on the words "Sign out."

Congratulations. Having executed these instructions, you have successfully logged on and off a CTE network computer. Please remember to write down your password somewhere you won't forget. This is the first step in the journey to digital literacy.

Help Wanted:

Mule Creek Post writers needed.

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

Send a Résumé and Writing Sample to:

The *Mule Creek Post* • Mule Creek State Prison • % MCIC Associate Warden • P.O. Box 409090 • Ione, CA 95640

Attn: Editor-in-Chief

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

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



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

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

Maya Emig
4225 Executive Square,
Suite 600
La Jolla, CA 92037
(833) Emig-Law
✉ AttorneyEmigMCP@gmail.com

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

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

**Division of Rehabilitative Programs**
DRP programs available on institutional channels
21. 22. 23. and 24

The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions.

— Dwight D. Eisenhower

Being Responsible About Restitution

By Maya Emig, Post Columnist

I OFTEN WEAR a lot of hats in any given week. In addition to my private practice, I also serve as the lead consultant on attorney support for Parole Justice Works. In the course of my position, I observe parole suitability hearings and write reports for Parole Justice Works. The reason I am interrupting my multi-part series on relapse prevention plans is to get the word out about a new line of questioning in parole hearings regarding restitution evasion and circumvention. I wanted to inform you of this, as it likely will come up in your suitability hearing.

I sent out a mass email to all of the state-appointed parole attorneys informing them of this new line of questioning. Please prepare yourself and address any of your future actions. The next set of en banc hearings will have cases to review because of this very issue. Can you imagine being found suitable for parole and then being referred for an en banc review because of this issue and how you answered these questions? It was already happening with Employment Development Department fraud cases, and now the issue of restitution evasion and circumvention is the latest area of focus and investigation. Certainly, for those of you who have an upcoming suitability hearing and a risk assessment, discuss this with your attorney immediately. For those of you who are involved in this activity and will be going before the parole board, make decisions that align with your values and pro-sociality. One commissioner stated this activity shows involvement in criminal thinking and behavior, and also continues to create victims.

A sentencing court orders restitution fines to cover costs related to a person’s crimes, and under California law the department automatically takes 50 percent of all incoming monies (even that earned at your job assignment) for this purpose. Incarcerated people have found ways around those deductions. A common way is by having a loved one put the money on another’s account (who doesn’t owe restitution), who charges a smaller fee of their own for use of their account. I have heard of rosters posted on walls in prisons with names and CDCR numbers of individuals who do not have restitution orders. While this may appear to be condoned by the department, it is a hot topic at the parole board.

If you owe restitution, anticipate questions about whether you have ever had your loved ones put money on other people’s accounts, how many times you did it, how long this has been going on, when the last time you did this was, whether you used the same person on several different ones, and how much you paid that incarcerated person to utilize their account. If you do not owe restitution, you should anticipate questions about whether you have ever received money from others for incarcerated people at your institution. If you did, you will be asked how many times you did it, how long it has been going on, how many different incarcerated people you do this for, what transaction fee you charge, and how this has impacted your victim and their victims.

Integrity is about doing the right thing when no one is looking. The definition of criminal thinking is knowing the difference between right and wrong and choosing wrong. The Board of Parole Hearings can, and already has, ordered investigations into restitution circumvention. Your truthfulness certainly can be examined thoroughly through an investigation. Anticipate this line of questioning and prepare for it. For those of you who have hearings coming up in the next few years, you may want to seek advice from private counsel and be proactive about this, rather than reactive in a hearing.

I want to leave you with the method a parole commissioner mentioned during a hearing that you should use when making a decision: the Bell, Book, and Candle Method. *Bell*: Does the decision or action sound right? *Book*: Does the decision violate any written laws, rules, or policies? *Candle*: How will the decision look when exposed to the “light of day” or public scrutiny?

Use this with all kinds of examples. You should employ the method to help you make decisions in healthy ways. Try this over and over again for 66 days (according to one book, the time it takes for something to become a habit).

Think about a recent event, even if you may have made a good decision to just say no, think about it through this process. Also, if you made a bad decision, go through this process and see how the method could have gotten you to a different result. This can be about using contraband, sneaking extra food, or circumventing or evading restitution orders.

I want to leave you with my hope for each of you moving into 2024: Work hard to understand yourself and what led you into prison. If you do the work in earnest, it will pay off in astronomical dividends. My book, *Earning Your Freedom*, is coming in 2024 — we are so close! I will be happy to be done with all of the rewriting and editing, and move on to my second book about the comprehensive risk assessment. I wish you all health and success in 2024.

Compassion Prison Project

By Lt. H. Gastelum Jr.,
Valley State Prison

THE COMPASSION Prison Project embarked on a transformative three day-journey visiting the population at the Valley State Prison (VSP) in Chowchilla. The project's trauma-to-transformation workshop has been having a profound impact on the lives of incarcerated individuals. It provides them with the tools to address past traumas and create positive change.

The heart of the workshop is the Compassion Trauma Circle. This group exercise prompts participants to share their experiences of childhood trauma. Participants step into a supportive circle and respond to questions about their traumatic events. This exercise serves as a catalyst for introspection and understanding. Participants recognize the origins of their behavioral issues and identify negative behavioral patterns.

Throughout the workshop, attendees delve into various themes, including:

- Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder
- Self-limiting beliefs and their resolution
- Self-forgiveness
- Personal empowerment

"The men have found value with the material, learning about how their childhood affected their behavior and choices later in life," said Fritzi Horstman, the founder of the Compassion Prison Project. "Many men report that this program is changing how they view themselves, their families, and their relationships. It is helping them become better parents as well.

"By addressing trauma's effects, these individuals empower themselves to face their past, recognize its impact on current behavior, and enact positive changes," said Warden McVay. "The collaboration between VSP and the Compassion Prison Project marks a significant stride towards a more understanding and compassionate approach to incarceration," he added in emphasis of the significance of the "Trauma Talks" program in aiding incarcerated individuals in their self-discovery journey.

Changing Prison Culture, the California Model Way

By Sean "Sharif" Neal, Lead Reporter

ON OCT. 31, 2023, the Insight Garden Program held its first graduation on Facility D at the Mule Creek State Prison. In attendance were several dignitaries, among them Assemblyman Heath Flora of the 89th Assembly District, Dana Jorgensen of the 4th Senate District, the prison's chief of health care David Smiley, and Board of Parole Hearings commissioner Robert Barton. The day's theme was about healing and lessons in accountability experienced by program participants and staff sponsors. Poems by Earl Rose Jr. and Chris Rosas set the tone to celebrate a garden grown by their own hands in this restorative space. Incarcerated citizens not only grew vegetables and herbs as a therapeutic way of doing time in prison, they also grew them in order to serve the community outside of prison by donating the produce to food pantries as part of a living amends. "This is right in line with the California Model," said Jason Ross, the prison's community resource manager.

The California Model is a version of the Scandinavian Model implemented in northern Europe that shifted away from the old crime-and-punishment model to rehabilitation after the 1990s. Programs like the Insight Garden Program are a sign of where California prisons could be headed in the near future.

The Nov. 9, 2023, *Los Angeles Times* article "California Guards Are Dying Too Young," reported that Governor Gavin Newsom is in the process of converting San Quentin State Prison into an institution — via the Scandinavian Model — that is focused on rehabilitation, not punishment.

The governor and vice president of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, Steve Durham, visited Norway this year to learn how the system works, and how it creates a safer and more humane way to incarcerate for prison guards and those under their care. When they entered Halden Fengel, a maximum-security prison, they noticed there were no armed guards and no razor wire. Instead, the prison is surrounded only by a nearly mile-long wall that stands 20 feet high and curves at the top. Another thing they noticed was how happy and relaxed the guards in Norway were, how casually they interacted with inmates who wear knockoff designer clothing instead of prison blues.

At Halden Fengel, inmates buy fresh produce from grocery stores inside the prison and chop onions with knives from kitchens where they cook food for themselves and the guards. "I'm blown away by it," said Durham. The difference between Norwegian prison culture and California's is the approach, referred to as "dynamic security," which emphasizes relationships over force to maintain control. Prison guards in Norway complete two years of college, and are paid to do so. Guards serve dual functions: correctional officer and social worker.

In the 1990s, Norway was like the U.S. with a "lock 'em up and throw away the key" mentality. In that system, recidivism rates skyrocketed to 70 percent for some crimes. However, the country soon recognized that approach didn't work for society, the incarcerated, or for guards who want a career that doesn't kill them. The *Times* article referred to the high suicide rate and other stress-related deaths among prison guards — a death rate that mirrored that in the U.S.

Their safe relationship model of security contributes to a stress-free environment for both inmates and guards because the guards are highly trained to be deeply involved with rehabilitation, therapy, job skills, and addiction treatment, all while building mutual trust and respect so inmates feel like someone is on their side, unlike U.S. prisons. The message is if prison culture is going to change, it has to begin from the top down. A philosophical shift in how corrections is done has to take place in U.S. prisons for this to happen, and no one can realistically expect inmates, who are often controlled by criminal elements and gang pressure, to be the catalysts of change.

"Gangs are a big problem inside prison and out," noted the governor (warden) of Halden Fengel. Despite this fact, recidivism rates in Norway are 20 percent for some crimes compared to 45 percent in California. It is no surprise why Newsom is moving to do things differently in the Golden State.

San Quentin State Prison, long the poster child for recovery programs, celebrity advocacy, and death row protests, will be the first prison converted into a proving ground that some version of the Scandinavian Model can work in the United States. If successful, policy decisions such as the non-designated programming facilities for program-minded incarcerated citizens will finally make sense to a population that still can't make heads or tails as to why the department would attempt to house active gang members with dropouts and sex offenders. Perhaps the new prison system envisioned to take shape under the California Model will be the change we need.

PC §1170 Exclusions

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

THERE IS A lot of confusion surrounding who will not be referred by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to the courts for resentencing under Penal Code §1170. Selection depends on the specific exclusions written into the law itself. Under §1170, a person is not eligible for the following reasons:

- Committed first-degree murder of a peace officer
- Must register under PC § 290
- Sentenced to life without the possibility of parole or death
- Has been to the parole board or is scheduled within 18 months
- Disciplinary action within the past five years
- Served less than five to ten years in prison
- Serving a determinate sentence and set to be released within 18 months
- Serving time for a single offense, serving the lower term, without any lesser-included offenses.
- Found guilty within the past year for a serious rules violation

These incarcerated persons are favored by the department for resentencing referrals:

- Positive programmers
- Enrolled in and attending AA, NA, CGA, etc.
- Facilitators or leaders in groups/classes
- CALPia or vocational program participants
- Involved in employment preparation, skills certification, and/or education courses
- Have laudatory reports from staff

To read more about the Penal Code §1170 resentencing referral program, go to your law library or write to:

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
1419 34th Avenue, Suite 202
Oakland, CA 94601

Ask for the center's *Back to Court Resentencing Guide for Penal Code §1172.1*.

Teens Search for Self-Expression

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

THE TEEN YEARS can be the most uncertain period of a person's life, and the search for self and individuality can be a daunting experience. One of the most prevalent methods used in the pursuit of individual identity is through self-expression, which may include tattooing and body piercing. In Lorrie Blair's article "Tattoos and Teenagers" (*Art Education*, Sept. 2007), she writes, "Since the teen stage is primarily about the construction of identity, schools and subject areas should offer multiple ways to include ... the management of identity development." The American education system lacks sufficient awareness of the emotional and cultural needs of its youth. Blair asserts that the most pressing needs of teens surround their search for identity and personal development. This may explain, in part, the widespread appeal and proliferation of tattooing and body piercing in youth culture.

While the American education system is expansive and inclusive of subject matter designed to enrich children's lives and learning experiences, it remains lacking in essential elements relating to personal development and self-identity issues. In fact, evidence suggests teens are strongly influenced in these areas outside of the family and beyond structured education parameters. Clinical researchers Brown, Perlmutter, and McDermott noted in a 2009 report that "Teenagers hold actors, musicians, and professional athletes in high esteem and tend to emulate their behavior." Relying on, in many instances, questionable role models and images to answer complicated questions surrounding serious life-choice decisions can be perilous. Seeking solutions to life's quandaries by emulating celebrities and trying to establish a solid sense of self through these images is unrealistic.

Given this degree of influence from outside, unregulated, and unreliable sources, a teen's search for self-understanding has never been so confusing. Not every home setting is nurturing and conducive to proper child development. This leaves the classroom as a primary source of structure, information, and education on developmental growth.

Every generation undergoes its own unique quest for self-identity, wrestling with personal and societal questions involving diversity, inclusion, equity, class disparity, oppression, bias, privilege, and where we fit into the greater scheme of things. Personal evolution and the evolution of humankind must face difficult issues in order to advance. It is the search for our humanity — the search for self — that propels us. As Ralph Ellison, author of *The Invisible Man* (Battle Royal, 1952), wrote:

It goes a long way back, some twenty years. All my life I had been looking for something, and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was. I accepted their answers too, though they were often in contradiction and even self-contradictory. I was naïve. I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer. It took me a long time and much painful boomeranging of my expectations to achieve a realization everyone else appears to have been born with: that I am nobody but myself. But, first I had to discover that I am an invisible man!

A search for self that is focused solely on external sensory experiences can bring less-than-satisfying results. It is the journey within that has the potential for a rewarding experience of self-discovery. Where in our school curriculums are we learning this messaging?

For many teens, revolt, disdain for authority, rebellion, self-determinism, and



(ABC.net.au)

self-expression exemplified in tattooing and piercing is a rite of passage, giving them a visceral experience that will endure, ensuring a lasting memory and signifying a personal statement that says, "I am here." It's validation that they count as something, that they belong and are marking self as a way to express a personal ideation. The fact that parents or society may disapprove only serves as a motivating factor. The right to rebel remains a teen ritual, as prevalent and routine now as ever, reminding us of a young Marlon Brando when asked by an equally young Peggy Maley in *The Wild One* (1953): "What are you rebelling against?"

"Whatta you got?"



(Marca.com)

Prison Hacks

Household Tips

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

hack [hæk] *verb*: a way to make tasks easier; a shortcut

PRISON LIVING CAN be tough. Try these tips to make cell and appliance maintenance easier.

Cable and TV Connections

Tight spaces, stressed angles, spilled coffee, dust, and age cause coax cable and TV connections to bind up. Without a wrench and only slippery fingertips to unscrew the joints in these confined spaces, the effort sometimes ends with skinned knuckles or worse.

Find any size rubber band, though a large one works best. Cut the band and wrap the single strand about five or six times around the connector. Tie it off or hold it in place and unscrew the locked connection. The soft, pliable surface of the rubber band provides friction needed to loosen the connector.

For prevention, use a cotton swab and a sprinkling of baby powder to dust the threads of the connectors.

Hotpot Maintenance

Is there a buildup of calcium deposits or discoloration on the metal heating element in the bottom of your hotpot? Hard water causes this annoyance.

Pour 1 to 2 inches of water into the pot and add three or four packets of sugar-free citrus beverage from your lunch (lemon, lemon-lime, or orange). Plug it in for four or five minutes, then unplug and keep the lid on for 10 to 15 minutes. Most of the deposits will be gone.

Mildewed Water Bottle

Your water bottle smells musty and you can see black deposits on the inside and in the lid area. Fill the bottle about halfway with warm tap water. Add three or four packets of citrus beverage, screw on the lid, and shake vigorously. Then turn the bottle upside down and let it stand for 30 minutes. Scrub the lid and bottle cap threads, rinse, and you're in business.

Do this at least every 10 days.



The Origins of Valentine's Day

From Animal Sacrifices to Chocolate Hearts

By Anthony R. Chavez, Feature Reporter



(WockenfussCandies.com)

FOR MUCH OF the Western world, February 14 is a day filled with flowers, marriage proposals, and sharing heart-shaped sweets while whispering sweet nothings in a lover's ear. According to the National Retail Federation, Valentine's Day is also a lucrative time of year, with \$19.7 billion spent annually. Of that, an estimated \$1.1 billion is for cards. However, the origins of this fun holiday are much more interesting.



Romulus and Remus (Pinterest.com)

The most commonly agreed upon origin of Valentine's Day dates back to an early Roman festival of fertility called Lupercalia. The festival was held in honor of Faunus, the Roman god and protector of agriculture, as well as brothers Romulus and Remus, who founded the city of Rome. Roman legends tell of the festival beginning with the sacrifice of a goat and a dog at the cave followers believed to be the birthplace of the brothers where they were raised by the she-wolf Lupa.

The bloody sacrifices were carried out to ensure fertility (goat) and purification (dog) of the people in the coming year. Priests would strip the sacrificed animals of their hides and dip the goat hide in blood. They would begin a ritual blessing of the community's women and crops by slapping them with blood-soaked goat hides. Women without children would line up to receive their blood-soaked slap in hopes of becoming fertile. Once the people were thoroughly bloody and blessed, all the single women wrote their names and placed them in a jar. Prospective bachelors would draw out the name of a woman that he was to be paired with for the coming year. If the pair was a good match, then it eventually led to marriage; if not, there was always next year. Hence, the correlation between Valentine's Day, relationships, and newfound love.

Since this beginning, other people and events were introduced to create a hybrid version of what is now celebrated with secret admirers, candlelit dinners, and expressions of love in many forms. Some believe the Christian church incorporated the honoring of Saint Valentine, who was martyred around 270 A.D., as a means to continue the tradition with a "more Christian focus" in place of the pagan celebration. Another associated figure, Cupid, became a symbol of this day by the Romans because of his role as the god of love. Some believe the naked cherub, wielding love-spell-dipped arrows, is actually the child of gods Nyx and Erebus, or Aphrodite and Zeus, or most commonly of Aphrodite and Ares. Another point commonly debated is that the Roman Cupid is in fact Eros, an immortal figure in Greek mythology, set on playing with the hearts of men by using gold and lead arrows to manipulate their desires: gold to create an unbreakable desire, and lead to drive away a genuine suitor. But nobody can confidently pinpoint his exact origins.

Lupercalia was eventually outlawed in the fifth century by Pope Gelasius, who officially declared February 14 as the day we all know as St. Valentine's Day.

It wasn't until around 1400 that written Valentine's Day items began appearing on the scene. The oldest known poem was written by Duke Charles of Orleans, which today is a part of a collection in the British Library. Another piece thought to be the first was a letter penned by Margery Brews of Norfolk, England, in February 1477. In it she writes to her fiancé, John Paston, calling him "my right well-loved Valentine." The surviving letter is also in the British Library collection, marked as the first and oldest Valentine written in English.

In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland was the first mass producer of American valentines. Her first-of-its-kind pieces of historical art were beautifully detailed in lace, ribbons, and color pictures. Cadbury, a British chocolate company, was the first to produce a heart-shaped box of chocolates in 1860, followed by the Hershey's "Kiss" in 1907. Hallmark joined the Valentine's Day evolution in 1913 when it debuted its first Valentine's Day card.

What began as a ceremony of sacrifices and bloodletting — in hope of a fertile future — has grown into a global phenomenon, with an estimated 145 million Valentine's Day cards sent worldwide. This, according to Hallmark, comes second only to Christmas. It is a feat our ancestors certainly never imagined would come from the simple hope of finding love, thriving in life, and praying that tomorrow arrives looking as sweet as true love's first kiss.

Notable African Americans



Toni Morrison (LATimes.com)



Barack Obama (Britannica.com)



The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (Arts.gov)



The Rev. Al Sharpton (Hot97.com)



Ryan Coogler (Variety.com)



Sydney Poitier (Biography.com)

Magic Johnson: The Billion-Dollar Man

By Sean “Sharif” Neal, Lead Reporter

NBA LEGEND, COMMUNITY leader, and entrepreneur Earvin “Magic” Johnson is a billion-dollar man. According to *Forbes* magazine, “Former NBA star and investor Magic Johnson is officially a billionaire, becoming the fourth athlete to earn that title. Johnson, 64, is worth about \$1.2 billion, with most of his wealth stemming from his majority ownership of EquiTrust insurance company,” the publication calculated, stating that not only is this Johnson’s biggest business achievement, but that the company’s estimated value increased from \$16 billion to \$26 billion since he took control 10 years ago.

The former Los Angeles Lakers point guard won five NBA championships with the team, and first began his career as a businessman after his abrupt retirement from basketball in 1991 when he contracted HIV. Then-owner of the team, Jerry Buss, advised him to invest the money he had earned, which is estimated to be about \$40 million. Johnson did more than that — he invested in and owned a stake in the Lakers, which lasted from 1994 to 2010.

As a community leader, Johnson also invested in the city of Los Angeles when he invested in a chain of movie theatres that bore his name, and about 100 Starbucks franchises that provided jobs for the underserved community. Later, Johnson made other significant investments in the area of sports. After giving up his stake in the Lakers, he invested in women’s basketball by becoming part owner of the Los Angeles Sparks. One of his biggest sports investments came when he announced his part ownership in the historic baseball team, the Los Angeles Dodgers. He didn’t stop there. Johnson took another historic leap when he became minority owner of an NFL football team, the Washington Commanders, formerly known as the Redskins, becoming the only former sports star who has an ownership stake in all three of America’s top selling sports venues: football, basketball, and baseball. Not to mention that he is co-owner of the Los Angeles FC, which expanded to the Major League Soccer team started in 2018.

As only an icon can, Magic Johnson has certainly inspired many young African-American athletes to follow in his footsteps. Michael Jordan and LeBron James, both NBA greats in their own eras and in their own rights, have also clocked in at billionaire status, the acquisition of their wealth coming from ventures outside of their profession. However, they are not the only African-Americans who have earned this distinctive status. There are other black notables such as Oprah Winfrey and power couple Shawn “Jay-Z” Carter and Beyoncé Knowles who are billionaires. Winfrey gained her status from an illustrious career in television, while Carter and Knowles earned theirs from a number of businesses including music and fashion.

What Johnson (and other black millionaires and billionaires) represents for the black community — in addition to quiet, humble leadership rooted in the spirit of service — is proof of what is possible. In the early 1980s, the community only had a dream of what real success could look like with *The Cosby Show*, which aired on NBC. The wholesome family, complete with two (not one) successful parents raising a family in the suburbs, was held up for many blacks as our version of the American Dream. Today, still married to his wife affectionately known as “Cookie,” Johnson not only raises his children in the American Dream, but in a dream that many critical of African-American people and African-American culture doubted would ever be possible.

Certainly, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream of a more culturally, economically, and socially just society. The sacrifices of the past set the tone for the present and the future the African-American community aspires to enjoy today. But the lessons of the past should not be lost on the fortunate ones among us. In celebrating our heritage, we must remember those sacrifices in context with the times in which they were made in order to appreciate what we have so much access to today. Unless we do, we forget what it took to get to success, for the collective; for the lessons of our heritage have always been rooted in the fact that what we do now, we do for the benefit of future generations. Johnson understands this. It is for this reason and many more that in the spirit of African-American Heritage Month, those who serve are celebrated and remembered.

History is not some distant memory of great feats done by extraordinary people long ago. Magic Johnson and others like him remind us that each one of us is capable of making history every day.



Oprah Winfrey (CNN.com)

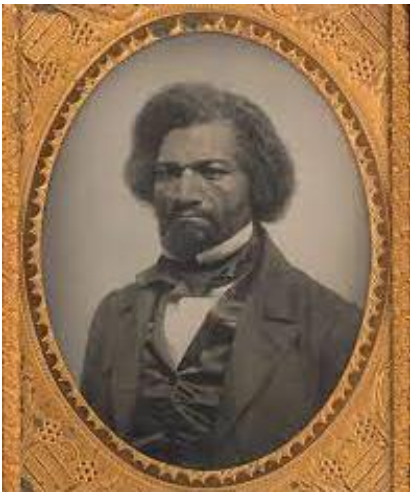
Notable African Americans



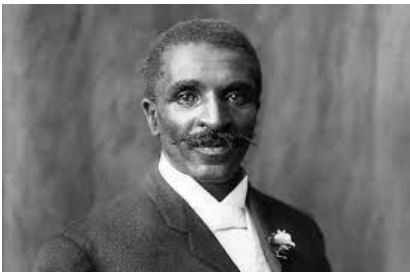
Spike Lee (BrooklynMuseum.org)



Harriet Tubman (Wikipedia.org)



Frederick Douglass (SI.edu)



George Washington Carver (ScienceHistory.org)



W.E.B. DuBois (PoetryFoundation.org)



Linda Brown (Biography.com)

Resting America's Ghosts

In Search of Freedom

By Earl S. Breckenridge, Feature Reporter

AMERICA HAS GHOSTS. Subtle, indistinguishable, and in the background, America's ghosts haunt every sphere of historical, political, economic, and social life. Manifest in legal enactments, protest rallies, substance abuse, sporadic and irrational acts of violence, and multiple inexplicable phenomena otherwise attributed to chance, fate, of happenstance, they exert influence. If not permitted rest, and left unchecked, America's ghosts may soon corrupt and consume not only the American way, but its dream as well.

Homo sapiens are a highly malleable, adaptive, and evolving species. Through cultivation, growth, and extension of innate potentials (kinetic energy), humans collaborate, explore, create, and produce conversation, culture, and civilization. If, and when, this process becomes rigid, static, and stagnant, such as through traumatic experience, kinetic energies engender deleterious effects biologically, psychologically, and social-environmentally. Individuals, families, communities, nations, and world — past, present, and future — are not immune.

Once a towering refuge against the hostilities of continental abduction, slavery, segregation, Jim Crow, and oppression for a people whose authenticity, heritage, and history were stolen, the black identity not only protected its citizens against the threat of external violence and annihilation, but provided a place to belong, fit in, and discover meaning, value, and purpose. A refuge becomes a prison when the byproduct is the tendency to recreate and relive the traumas of the past in the present. For instance, seeking justice for injustices endured in the past, from guilt-ridden or in-denial descendants in the present who are not to be held responsible, has been the unspoken and lingering haunting of American society: Ghosts not allowed to rest because their traumatic energies remain imprinted and unresolved in the unconscious of their descendants — biologically, psychologically, and social-environmentally.

Traumatic experiences are trapped, embodied energy imprinted upon an individual spiritually, morally, mentally, socially, and physically. Trauma can be transgenerational, intergenerational, and developmental as through adverse childhood experiences. If left unresolved, traumatic energy passes from one individual or generation to the next through bio-psycho-social (cultural) experience. These imprints (trapped traumatic energy) remain largely hidden in the unconscious, and perceived as natural to the possessors. Its adverse symptoms are physical health issues, mental health concerns, restricted potential, and debilitating social experiences (i.e., poverty, violence, crime, etc.). Identifying, confronting, and rectifying these traumatic imprints has a triune effect: 1) Individuals experience genuine freedom, which is authenticity, responsibility, and love; 2) The adverse effects of traumatic energy in all affected areas dwindle in proportion to recovery; 3) Once stagnation decreases and malleability, adaption, and growth restored, formerly trapped energy ushers in a renaissance of spiritual, moral, mental, social, and physical vitality culminating in cultivation, growth, and extension of infinite possibilities.

Freedom equals authenticity, responsibility, and love. Authenticity enables one to be free; responsibility enables one to think free; and, love enables one to act free. Authenticity is who I am undefined and apart from whom others say I am. It is myself as self-defined and in accordance with what I think, feel, and believe. That is, created in the image of God; a unique individual invested with infinite potential and possibilities; I am a genetically based composition of biological, psychological, and social-environmental attributes — malleable, adaptive, and evolving.

Responsibility is my duty and privilege to discover and choose my identity, which includes why I am here, and where I am going. I am responsible for the choices and behaviors, circumstances and outcomes, generated by my character, conduct, and conversation. I am the creative force of my life.

Love is to forgive, to learn and practice goodness, to do no harm, to seek and desire the well-being of others, and to accept and receive the same. Love is the force that fortifies and builds collaboration, exploration, creativity, and productivity, which enables humanity to cultivate, grow, and extend.

Resolution to 400 years of suffering and unrealized potential is not in reparations, nor in external changes in systemic racism, nor economic advances or political enactments, but rather in liberation from the oppressive weight and burden of imprinted, self-internalized, and unresolved trauma and its impediments. Transformation and growth is not dependent on change in external factors, but on time, energy, and attention devoted to redeem the past, and rebuild the future. Bringing awareness — insight and understanding — to the lingering effects of trauma, which embodies principles of hope, healing, and wholeness, transforms traumatic energy into realized potential — freedom.

Notable African Americans



Thurgood Marshall (Britannica.com)



Marian Anderson (Independent.co.uk)



Jackie Robinson (MLB.com)



Booker T. Washington (Britannica.com)



Malcolm X (AlJazeera.com)



Carol Moseley Braun (Britannica.com)

Getting Out of Student Loan Default with Fresh Start

By the U.S. Department of Education

FRESH START IS a one-time, temporary program from the U.S. Department of Education that offers special benefits to borrowers with defaulted federal student loans. Fresh Start automatically gives you some benefits, such as restoring access to federal student aid grants and post-release loans. But you need to act to claim the full benefits of Fresh Start and get out of default.

Sign up for Fresh Start for free using one of the methods outlined below. Incarcerated borrowers with most types of loans are eligible for Fresh Start. Ask for it as soon as possible, but no later than Aug. 31, 2024.

For most federal student loans, default means you haven’t made a payment for nine months. There are many consequences that come with defaulted loans, to include:

- You can’t get more federal financial aid to pay for college.
- Your credit score may go down.
- The federal government can take money out of your paycheck and your tax returns to pay your loan bill.

You can start today by signing up for Fresh Start by phone, mail, or online.

Telephone

Call the U.S. Department of Education’s Default Resolution Group at any of the following numbers:

- 1-800-621-3115 (toll-free)
- 540-792-9171 (toll number—collect calls will not be accepted at this number)
- 1-877-825-9923 (TTY, if you are deaf or hard of hearing)

Postal Mail

Contact the Department of Education’s Default Resolution Group by sending a letter to:

Default Resolution Group
P. O. Box 5609
Greenville, TX 75403

Internet

If you have internet access, go to MyEdDebt.ed.gov and either log in or create an account if you don’t have one.

Getting a Fresh Start

Does your correctional facility have a college program that accepts Pell Grants (either Second Chance Pell or a Prison Education Program)? Do you intend to enroll in that program? If so, you can get Fresh Start by submitting your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and signing a Fresh Start acknowledgement with your school.

When you contact the U.S. Department of Education, please state that you are incarcerated and want to use Fresh Start to get out of student loan default. Also, ask for an income-driven repayment plan, (more info below) which could make your monthly payments as low as \$0.

When you use Fresh Start to get out of default, we’ll return your defaulted student loans to “in repayment” status. This means you have to begin making monthly payments in order to keep from defaulting again. We recommend pursuing Fresh Start if your loans are in default and you have less than 10 years left on your sentence. But Fresh Start may not be the best option if your next possible release date is more than 10 years from now. In that case, we may be able to write off your loan interest. A write-off means you will never have to repay the loan. But you can’t get any more federal student aid (loans or Pell Grants) to pay for college after a write-off. To get more federal student aid, you would need to ask to have your loan restored. Write-off is still a good option if you have a long sentence, because it protects you against the consequences of default.

For more information about the options for a loan write-off contact the Student Loan Ombudsman using the contact information below. Send letter to:

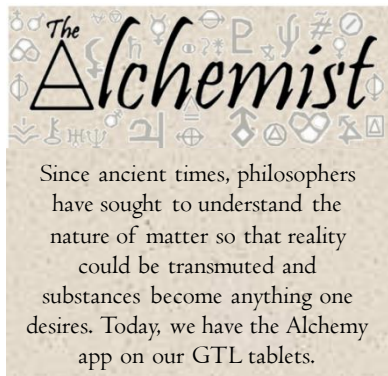
U.S. Department of Education
ATTN: Ombudsman Office
830 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

Or go to: Ombudsman@ed.gov





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



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

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

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

While **Stone** might seem like a relatively simple combination, and the journey from **Uncut Diamond** to **Diamond** fairly obvious, can you also find the right combinations for **Coal**, **Limestone**, and gemstones **Pearl** and **Ruby**?



Psych View

Understanding Risk (Pt. 1)

By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

WHAT IS YOUR current risk assessment? Usually this is expressed in an evaluation as "high," "moderate," or "low." Many evaluators will include information on which the estimate of risk has been made. This can provide a good resource for self-reflection and development. Have you assaulted others recently? Are you a sarcastic, manipulative person? Do you think you are better than everyone else? Sometimes a risk score will reflect these kinds of things. Other times risk is simply increased by historical factors, and you have to take steps to assure change has transpired before that history loses influence.

I have only lived this life, not yours, and I can't judge the circumstances of your behavior. If you have assaults, prejudices, anger that you have trouble repressing, those are things to work on. I do not judge you on your issues, only hope to offer you a ladder out of the hole that those issues can leave you in. If your risk score is "high," there is a reason. Hopefully, the reason is not an incompetent evaluator or a paperwork mishap, though I agree it is possible such things occur. If those things happen to you, take steps to make corrections (you may request to have an evaluation eliminated in some cases or you may add a notation to your file with your concerns).

The single best predictor of future risk is past risk. If you have committed a crime, or a series of crimes, your past reflects a person at greater risk than someone with no history of criminal behavior. This not to say that you haven't changed or that you can't change. You can. Perhaps you have. If your history is severe, your best option is to create the most exemplary profile you can and to maintain it over time. Since you will be incarcerated for a time, perhaps you will use that period to change your profile. Sometimes that is not what happens. Some people have no record other than their conviction, and get into trouble in prison "to survive." I know this happens because I have worked with inmates and this is what I saw and what I was told. Prison is not an easy place and frightened or selfish people do what they must do to survive. Some prisons are harder than others. Some people are unlucky, and some are simply posturing criminality until such time as parole approaches. Who are you? You will be judged on your history. How do you judge it?

If your problem started early and dramatically, you will have a harder job of showing stability. It is not impossible. People can make a choice to evolve and to actualize their best potential. You can do this. I have seen it. I have touched it. I have done it.

Some problems do not make it into prison until later in life. Some have long records of building criminal behavior, and some have been outstanding citizens. Some crimes are those of passion, which many people can understand. Some crimes go undetected until later in life. Which profile is yours? What reputation do you create around yourself? Do you look and act like a criminal? Can you show how that has changed?

In looking at the record, some crimes are violent and some are not. Some crimes seem logical where some do not. Some involve passion and relationships, some are directed at strangers. Which crimes have you had on your record? Are you cruel toward correctional staff? Do you attack other inmates? Do you destroy property or become hostile when your immediate desires are not gratified? What does your record show?

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

Email: submissions@prisonjournalismproject.org

JPay email: prisonjourn@psu.edu

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



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

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.



Stephen Covey Talks 7 Habits

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

"The difference between what we are doing and what we're capable of doing would solve most of the world's problems."
—Stephen Covey

STEPHEN R. COVEY, self-help guru and author of the best-selling *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* says, "We have barely even scratched our potential in almost every dimension there is." Covey explains that *dimension* is more than any mental, internal dimension, but rather, "it's in terms of an individual's ability to build strong interdependent relationships with others."

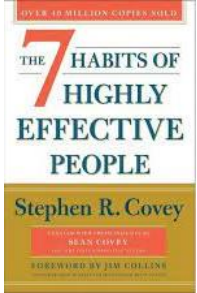
Covey is a strong believer in taking personal responsibility and moving away from the mentality of victimism, blaming, and dependence on governments or others to take care of us. He presents the example of Gandhi, who was not an elected leader, but rather an ordinary person who did extraordinary things — the change agent of the world's largest democracy. True leadership, says Covey, is not necessarily formal authority, but based in morality.

In an interview with *Financial Executive* magazine, Covey offers insight into his famous seven Habits concepts, saying that he didn't invent them; they are based upon universal principles that are timeless and self-evident. "I gave words to them and developed the habits. The key point is you have to win *private* victory before you can win *public* victory. Simply, you have to have your own act together before you can really be a leader and an influencer for the good of other people so that they can become independent and choose to be interdependent."

The Seven Habits

1. **Be Proactive.** This first step is foundational and based on responsibility. "We have the ability to choose our response in any given set of circumstances."
2. **Begin with the End in Mind.** This is based on the first, "if you take responsibility and initia-

- tive, you can get a vision of what you want to become, or achieve — at the end of today, or the end of this meeting, or your life, or whatever."
3. **Put First Things First.** "Habit two tells you what those first things are, and if you put them first, they govern all of your other decisions. Many people put second things first and first things second. They'll neglect their family and their health. They neglect their integrity (often in the name of their work, making more money or getting more recognition or prestige, etc.)."
 4. **Win-Win.** "You generally want other people to succeed along with you and start thinking co-operatively and interdependently; it's kind of the golden rule in practice, which is contrary to much of the win-lose frame of mind where people accept a secondary role in life."
 5. **Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood.** "Most of us do the opposite; we are full of how we see the world and our agenda, and see the world through that lens."
 6. **Synergize.** The fruit of habit four and five is habit six, which means the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. "When people interact with each other genuinely, and they are listening with empathy and starting to influence each other, gradually, what develops is a creative mindset that enables two people to produce a third alternative, which is better than what either one initially proposed."
 7. **Sharpen the Saw.** "Which means to maintain and improve the other six, you have to constantly nourish or renew yourself as a whole person — body, mind, and spirit. It comes from the metaphor of someone who is exhausted from sawing so long with a saw that has gotten dull, and yet doesn't stop. Why? 'I'm too busy sawing,' he says. A lot of us get that way, [and need to] take the time to renew oneself."



Organizational Leadership

We have transitioned from an industrial to a knowledge economy. The old industrialized mindset is a control-and-command structure, with leadership a position that focuses on things, not people. Out of that mindset comes a motivational philosophy that the people in charge of motivation are those with formal authority — the ones that used to carry the stick. Within this structure, most believe that bureaucracy, rules, and regulations take the place of human judgment. "The focus is on my job, kissing up to the hierarchy." It is unlike what's needed to develop individual potential. Within an organization, a family, a community, the value is in the people, in intellectual capital and social capital. It's not in things or money; it's the people. The role of leader should be as a servant leader, to remove obstacles, to enable and inspire others to achieve their highest potential. *Inspire* means "to breathe life into." Integrity is the glue that creates trust; without it, there is no trust. In an organization, everyone is a stakeholder. It's a social ecology with everything and everyone connected to everyone and everything else. You are not just focusing on the benefits to the company, or the bureaucracy, or the customer. The employees are equal stakeholders. Effective leadership is a four-step process.

The Four-Step Process of Effective Leadership

1. **Modeling.** Develop a personal mission statement and live by it within your own small circle of influence. Be a person of competency and integrity, show character and competence. Rebuild broken relationships. There's no better way to examine self than with introspection and resolve than to rebuild a broken or wounded relationship.
2. **Path Finding.** Work with your team or family to develop a mission statement. What are the strategic criteria by which decisions are made? What are you going to live by (as a team, not just yourself)? Develop a complementary team to compensate for your weaknesses. Be humble, courteous, open, strong, and courageous.
3. **Aligning.** Structure your systems to be in harmony with your path finding. It's about how you organize the structure to make the path-finding principles sustainable.
4. **Empowering.** People who find their voice are empowered and accountable. People who are autonomous can be innovative, creative, adaptive, fluid, and fast. They are inspired and show it.

PEN America Prison Writing Program

PEN AMERICA

The Freedom to Write

588 Broadway, Suite 303
New York, NY 10012

Imprisoning Our Wounds

By S. Martin Williams,
Production Editor

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS disorder (PTSD) is at the core of prison culture. Veterans are not the only “wounded warriors” of our society — social constructs, racism, gang life, domestic violence, and child abuse are deeply embedded in the attitudes and cultures guiding social beliefs and behaviors in our world that have a trauma association. Societal gender rules dictate that men hide the wounds created by childhood sexual and violent abuse, as well as the witnessing of it over years. All of this leads to an expansion of escalating crime and mass incarceration as unspoken, trauma-based wounds spread in citizens and society.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* says that PTSD is triggered by experiencing a traumatic or life-threatening event such as physical fighting, natural disasters, sexual assault, etc. The symptoms include re-experiencing the event, avoidance of event reminders, negative thinking patterns, and hyperarousal. Melody J. Shipley writes: “These symptoms can prove catastrophic to those experiencing them and can cause relationship problems and difficulties with social functioning, substance and alcohol abuse, depression, sleep dysfunction, suicide ideation, and death by suicide. These problems can result in unemployment, social isolation, loss of familial support and divorce, homelessness, incarceration, and death.” Corrections officials, and often the majority of society, traditionally view prisoners as an “invasive species” preying on humanity, not humans who have been preyed on themselves and certainly not humans in need of care. While this stance is both popular and understandable, it won’t in any way change the reality that whatever we are currently doing is not working.

The other reality is that about 90 percent of the currently incarcerated are going to find their way out into society at some point. Regardless of an inmate’s immersion into education and self-help, underlying PTSD issues acquired before and

during incarceration are going to have an impact on the released person’s ability to rejoin the world. While mental health and other treatments exist in prison, they are almost exclusively dedicated to success on parole and drug abuse; but if the majority of comorbid drug use can be linked to a kind of self-medicating of multiple PTSD issues, then these addiction treatments will fail. While in prison, the experience of sudden, extreme violence, violent responses by staff, witnessing such events or being in the middle of it, all of this is commonplace for the majority shut within a PTSD-saturated world.



inflicting trauma is at the very core of gang participation, from attacking others to prove oneself, to being “jumped in” as an initiation into masculine fraternity.

While self-help and insight groups currently offered by most prisons can be effective for treating non-trauma related addictions and mental health issues, inmates with PTSD issues, whether directly or indirectly connected to their crimes, are unlikely to benefit from them. In Sunil Lad’s 2013 report, he points out that the PTSD symptoms themselves would be the reason such programs won’t be effective. “Specifically, if individuals are experiencing high levels of avoidance, intrusions and hyperarousal symptoms of PTSD, they are unlikely to want to engage in talking openly about their offence. Thus, they would find it very distressing to work on their offending behavior and may use avoidance strategies.” Most of the time, PTSD goes unrecognized or ignored among incarcerated people, and therefore their “program failure” appears to be more of the invasive species narrative playing out.

There must be new ways of thinking, and new approaches that are not simply drug therapy or anxiety/depression groups. Appreciative inquiry models are already in practice to develop meaning-making in persons imprisoned within their own life-damage, to move past the programmed beliefs concretized through multiple trauma experiences. Recently, California’s corrections department has acknowledged that the most effective model of all may be peer-based trauma counseling involving incarcerated counselors who have worked — and are working — through their own PTSD. It’s not just about the prisoners; the rate of suicidal ideation among custody staff with PTSD issues acquired in prison is extremely high. “A prison that is responsive to and promotes the mental health of those housed within its walls is more likely to be an organization that promotes the overall morale and well-being of staff,” said Nina Portia Messina and Mitchell Schepps. Peer-based counseling creates a safer environment for prisoners and staff alike, and costs the state almost nothing.

In Viktor Frankl’s jarring memoir from his time in a Nazi concentration camp, he tells of how he found meaning in those spaces between the horrors humanity inflicts on each other and our response to those horrors. “Between stimulus and response lies a space. In that space lies our freedom and power to choose a response. In our response lies our growth and happiness.” This will be true not just for the imprisoned wounded, but for the society that must one day absorb them back.

Sources: Viktor E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: An introduction to Logotherapy*, Simon and Schuster, 1984; Sunil Lad, “A Case Report of Treatment of Offence Related PTSD,” *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*, 2013; Nina Portia Messina & Mitchell Schepps, “Opening the Proverbial Can of Worms: On Trauma-Specific Treatment in Prison: The Association of Adverse Childhood Experiences to Treatment Outcomes,” *Clinical Psychology of Psychotherapy*, 2020; Melody J. Shipley, Kim Coggins, Kenneth C. Shipley, & David Ellison, “Community-Based Art Therapy Program to Honor 9/11,” *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 2021; Jane Wood & Sophie Dennard, “Gang Membership: Links to Violence Exposure, Paranoia, PTSD, Anxiety, and Forced Control Behavior in Prison,” *Washington School of Psychiatry*, 2017.



No More Risk Assessment!

By Dale Hurd, Post Reporter

U.S. BOARD OF Veterans Appeals attorney Beth Karp is calling for a halt to risk assessments as they are currently done. Karp observes that several widely used criminal risk assessment instruments factor a defendant's abstract beliefs, peer associations, and family relationships into their risk scores. She asserts that the inclusion of these factors is empirically unsound and raises ethical and constitutional questions.

The conclusion is a result of her survey of legal scholarship regarding "criminal risk assessment." She conducted in-depth reviews of risk assessment questionnaires, score sheets, and reports, and analyzed the First and Fourteenth Amendment implications of attitude and associational factors. She challenges existing practices by critiquing widely accepted but dubious empirical justifications for the inclusion of attitude and associational items. Her research suggests quantification causes more problems than it solves; risk assessment instruments that include attitude and associational factors offer a false promise that quantification improves on narrative. Karp claims these factors are only weakly correlated with recidivism, have not been shown to be causal, and have in fact been shown to decrease the predictive validity of risk assessment instruments.

"Items that relate to abstract beliefs or expressive associations are likely to infringe on First Amendment rights at sentencing and 'criminal family' items are more likely to violate Fourteenth Amendment equal protection," states Karp. "Peer association items are less likely to infringe on Constitutional rights, but they still have little predictive value and are bedeviled by measurement problems. This could be a universe in which attitude and associated factors achieve more predictive power and remain within constitutional bounds, but we are not there yet. Until we get there,

the factors should have no place in risk assessment."

Karp calls for the cessation of the quantification of attitudes and associations unless and until it is done in a way that is empirically sound, more useful than narrative reports, and consistent with the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

A Programming Miracle

By Mark Daire, Post Columnist

IN A CALIFORNIA prison, some 30 Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) members gather in person for 90 minutes each week to talk about addiction to destructive sexual behaviors. For some this might not seem like a big deal; for the incarcerated, it is a near miracle. With the availability of "the Green Book," *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (ISO, 2005), all of that changed. Incarcerated people now have a Twelve-Step curriculum to rely upon, combined with a prison administration that actively supports rehabilitation and recovery.

"Nothing like this program has been available before in my prison career," said Perry; like the other men who shared their experiences, he asked that his name be changed for his safety. "I am so thankful that this program exists."

"I am not sure that I would be able to do the work necessary to deal with my issues if I couldn't do it here," added George.

As you might imagine, meeting inside a prison to talk about addiction to sexual behavior is scary.

"Can you relate to the warm, peaceful sensation that washes over you when you know you're doing right and you have found the perfect place to sit?" asked Frank. "That's exactly how I felt when I attended my first SAA group."

Attending meetings inside prison walls is both sad and fulfilling. The SAA group is one of the most requested, it's consistently full, and has a waiting list of those wanting and needing to get in. In fact, it's one of the largest in-person meetings on the West Coast, not just in a prison. This is cause to celebrate while also mourning the necessity for meetings in the first place.

During the first week's meeting members read the step for that month, then volunteers share how that step exists in the member's life. In the second week, they read from the Green Book or some other addiction-specific material and each member is given a chance to share how that reading affects them.

On the third, fourth, and sometimes fifth week, members listen to another member read their first step, or other selected reading. Afterwards, each member is given the opportunity to speak about how the subject for that meeting exists in their life. Members do their best to stay away from crosstalk, language, and descriptions that can trigger those in the room.

The difference on the yard is real; for some who may have hidden large parts of themselves for years, they now have an opportunity to open up and deal with their addiction to dangerous and destructive behaviors. Participants even stop each other on the yard and give appreciation for shares. Incarcerated people who carry deep-seated shame about past behavior have an opportunity to find, examine, and deal with the causes and consequences of their actions.

"We are only as sick as our secrets," said Alex. "And once I got over the fear of speaking about my issues, I found that I was more able to face my demons and wasn't as sick as I thought I was."

A number of people have discovered that, with an SAA group on the yard, they can address these issues in a safe and nonjudgmental space. And, maybe best of all, sponsorship is starting to happen, all because of access to the Green Book, support from an organization outside prison walls, and an administration that believes in change.

If someone on the outside would like to sponsor an incarcerated person, they can contact the SAA Incarcerated Sponsorship Program administrator at info@saa-recover.org. Many incarcerated people now have access to messaging on the GTL tablets, which makes the process easier.

If you would like to start an SAA group at your facility, note that in California the required paperwork includes an authorized curriculum (the Green Book and related materials) and a request to the prison administration through the facility captain, the community resource manager, and the warden's office. Also required are group bylaws, and a time and place for the group to meet. It helps to have a supportive staff member to sponsor the group.

If you are outside in the real world and would like to work with a group of incarcerated people, please contact a prison near you and find a way to volunteer. This process involves a background check and authorization from the prison administration. If you were formerly incarcerated, you can still run a group (in California); however, you generally need a fellow sponsor who has not been incarcerated and who has gone through the screening process to accompany you to each meeting.

The reward of facilitating change in the lives of others is beyond measure, and can help to fulfill the fourth, ninth, tenth, and twelfth steps.

PIA Fabrics Comes to Facility E

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

MANY RESIDENTS OF the Mule Creek State Prison's Facility E were ecstatic to learn that the California Prison Industry Authority (CalPIA) will be opening a new garment-manufacturing operation there.

The primary product will be CalTrans trousers, along with various other fabric products as needed. To make room for the approximately 50 to 60 workers, two supervisors, and 40-plus sewing machines, the Mule Creek Infill Complex's Plant Operations offices were moved to Facility D.

The CalPIA plant opened in February.



Rattle magazine, which is put out by Prisoner Express, is always open to submissions by incarcerated poets and writers. If you would like to submit your work or have questions, write to:

Prisoner Express

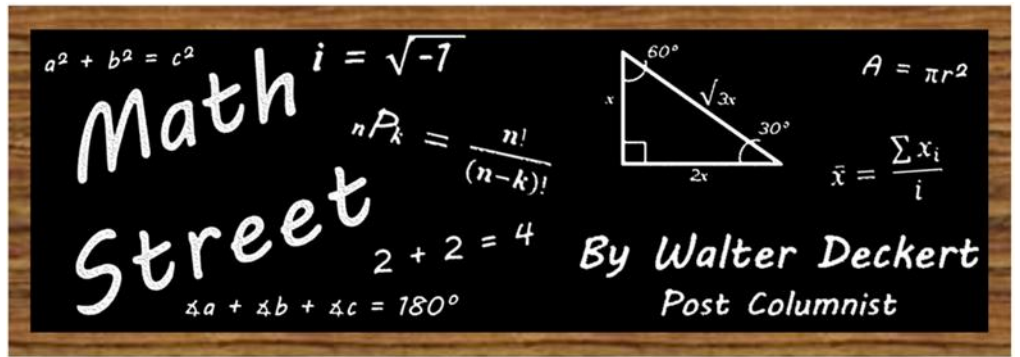
PO Box 6556

Ithaca, New York 14851

PATRICK MERRILL
HCRV Re-Entry
Specialist

Reno VAMC
975 Kirman Ave. (CH 116)
Reno, NV 89502

(775) 842-1397



PREVIOUSLY, WE DISCUSSED a way to conduct a proof using induction. Another way we can do this is through contradiction. Essentially, we make a statement that is the opposite of what we want to prove, and try to prove that. What may happen is that we get a contradiction.

Here is an example. In basic mathematics classes, we learn that rational numbers can be written as a fraction where both the numerator and the denominator are whole numbers (or are terminating or repeating, non-terminal decimals). For instance, $\frac{1}{3}$, 2, $\frac{2}{5}$, etc. are rational numbers. Irrational numbers do not have repeating, terminating decimals.

So, how about $\sqrt{2}$? Is this irrational? The calculator shows us that the *estimated* value is 1.414213562... But this does not tell us if it repeats at the 1000th place. So, we need to prove it be irrational all of the time, and we will use proof by contradiction to do that.

Our statement is that $\sqrt{2}$ is irrational. However, we will assume it *is* rational, and show this leads us to a contradiction. In other words, we should be able to write $\sqrt{2}$ as a fraction $\frac{p}{q}$ for some integers p and q , and we will assume that this fraction is in lowest terms (meaning we cannot reduce it).

$$\sqrt{2} = \frac{p}{q}$$

$$(\sqrt{2})^2 = \left(\frac{p}{q}\right)^2 \quad \text{square both sides to remove the radical}$$

$$2 = \frac{p^2}{q^2}$$

$$2q^2 = p^2 \quad \text{multiply both sides by } q^2$$

Now remember that any number multiplied by 2 is even. This means p^2 is an even number, which also means p has to be even. So p can be written as $2k$. Now let's go back to our equation.

$$2q^2 = p^2$$

$$2q^2 = (2k)^2 \quad \text{substitute } p = 2k$$

$$2q^2 = (2k)(2k) \quad \text{factor } (2k)^2$$

$$2q^2 = 4k^2 \quad \text{divide by 2}$$

$$q^2 = 2k^2$$

But wait! q^2 must be even because it is equal to $2k^2$! This means $\frac{p}{q}$ is *not* in its lowest form, which contradicts our earliest assumption. Therefore, $\sqrt{2}$ cannot be a rational number. Old mathematicians used to write "QED" at the end of a proof (QED stands for the Latin phrase *quod erat demonstrandum*, or "that which was to be demonstrated").

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

National Veterans Foundation

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

☎ (310) 642-0255

☎ (310) 642-0258

✉ VetSupport@NVF.org

🌐 NVF.org

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

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

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

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

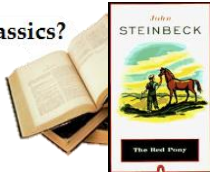
Life Support Alliance
P.O. Box 277
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741

LifeSupportAlliance.org



Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp,
Post Reporter



IF YOU'VE NEVER read a John Steinbeck novel, then *The Red Pony* is a great place to begin. This short novel, at 92 pages, is not a children's story, nor is it some sappy emotional drama. It's a well-written story about life with all the warts and grittiness we experience every day. A good example is when Jody got permission to kill the mice living under the haystack.

Jody sighed with satisfaction. Those plump, sleek, arrogant mice were doomed. For eight months they had lived and multiplied in the haystack. They had been immune from cats, from traps, from poison and from Jody. They had grown smug in their security, overbearing and fat. Now the time of disaster had come; they would not survive another day.

The Red Pony was first published in 1937 though the novel itself is set more in turn-of-the-century Salinas, California. The main character is 10-year-old Jody Tiflin, who struggles with growing up on a small horse and cattle ranch. His father, Carl, is taciturn and a bit harsh, though not exactly mean to those around him. Jody's mother is in some ways the opposite of her husband, though she can be tough as nails when called for. Billy Buck is the ranch hand who's become part of the family and mentor to Jody. The red pony is a spirited sorrel colt Carl bought at a sheriff's auction for Jody to raise and train as his own.

Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California, in 1902, and was 35 when *Pony* was published. He won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Grapes of Wrath* in 1940, and died in 1968. The old maxim, "write what you know" shows in Steinbeck's work, stories centered around California's Central Coast in the areas of Salinas and Monterey.

If you decide to read *The Red Pony*, be prepared for joy, heartache, disappointment, and gritty realism. *The Red Pony* should be available in your facility library. Not one of Steinbeck's novels is in the GTL Library app.

Managing Diabetes

By Sean "Sharif" Neal, Lead Reporter

THE DIABETES SELF-Management Education and Support Group is run by registered dietician T. Gaynor with the goal to educate the population about the risks of diabetes and how to manage the condition.

The group, which began in 2022, covers topics that include counting carbohydrates, lifestyle choices, and creating a plan for controlling the condition using diet and exercise.

"Healthy foods are eight times as expensive as unhealthy foods," said Gaynor. "But if you're eating a balanced diet, you don't need much." By "balanced," she is referring to the American Diabetes Association's recommendation that half of every meal should be vegetables, one-quarter carbohydrates, and one-quarter proteins, which is much different from how most are accustomed to eating.

One of Gaynor's principle concerns is that most people consume too many carbohydrates, causing blood sugar levels to spike throughout the day and putting them at risk of becoming diabetic. For the incarcerated, those carbohydrates often come in the form of honey buns, cookies, breads, ramen, and rice. High intake of carbs leads to the over-production of insulin which scars the body's receptors that allow blood sugars to be absorbed into tissues and vital organs, such as the heart, the liver, the kidneys, and the brain, which all need glucose in order to run efficiently. "The purpose of insulin is to build," said Gaynor. "It is a building hormone. It puts glucose in your organs so they can grow and become strong."

As Gaynor informs her group, the overpowering feeling of hunger many people experience (especially diabetics) can often be a sign the vital organs are "starving," because they are not getting what they need to function. In order to manage diabetes, Gaynor offers three solutions:

- Eat foods high in fiber
- Count your carbs
- Make daily exercise non-negotiable



"Fiber reduces blood sugar spikes and improves diabetes management," said Gaynor. "Fiber also makes you feel full, it has no calories, and it improves gut health which strengthens the immune system. High-sugar diets (honey buns, sodas, etc.) erode gut walls causing leaky gut syndrome, but soluble fiber traps fats, sugars, and cholesterol, then eliminates them through the stool."

According to Gaynor, 70 percent of our immune system is in our gut, and a weak immune system is a sign of poor gut health. A diet that includes lots of fiber-rich fruits and vegetables like carrots, apples with the skin, onions, celery, and potatoes with the skin is highly recommended to curb appetite and to manage glucose levels.

Counting carbs is another subject altogether. Gaynor informs her group that the heart healthy diet that the department has switched to was designed with diabetics and those suffering from heart disease and hypertension in mind. In fact, the menu issued to every housing unit lists the amount of calories and carbohydrates each meal provides. According to the American Diabetes Association, the total recommended daily allowance of carbohydrates anyone should be consuming is no more than 360 grams, and that the three daily meals prisons provide are in compliance with this recommendation at 120 grams of carbohydrates per meal. Anything above this number causes a blood sugar spike, i.e., a sudden rise in blood sugar levels. This can lead to high A1C and diabetes.

Finally, Gaynor encourages making daily exercise priority. "Even if it's only 10 minutes a day, and even if it's just walking," she said. She reminded the participants in her class that the purpose of blood sugar is to provide energy for the body, and daily exercise allows the body to use that sugar to do its job, like gas in a car.

It makes sense to put the best kinds of gas in your car; it will run better and last longer.



Business & Finances

Ex-Offenders Can Rebuild Financial Security

By Channele Bessette, Nerdwallet

PEOPLE WHO HAVE been recently released from prison often face unique challenges when reintegrating into society. Beware of the biggest roadblocks for formerly incarcerated people when it comes to banking.

Locating documents and a permanent address. To open an account typically requires information like a permanent address and some form of government-issued ID and a Social Security card or tax ID number. If documents have gone missing or expired, they'll have to be replaced. A permanent address can be an obstacle, too. Felon-friendly housing may be challenging to find, and it takes time to earn enough money to afford rent or a mortgage.

Little or no experience with managing finances. Depending on the amount of time spent incarcerated, ex-offenders might have a lack of experience with opening accounts and managing money or using technology.

Vulnerability to fraud and identity scams. Formerly incarcerated people who are getting on their feet financially may be targeted by criminals who are betting they're unfamiliar with common identity theft scams. There are solid resources available to ex-offenders rebooting their banking history.

Reach out to reintegration services. One of the most beneficial steps a recently released ex-offender can take is reaching out to a reintegration service. There programs throughout the United States dedicated to helping formerly incarcerated people set up their lives after prison. Search online for organizations in your city or state.

Gather important documents. Ideally, one's birth certificate, Social Security card and other forms of identification were given to a trusted person or

locked away in a safe deposit box. These documents will need to be on hand when applying for new bank accounts and other financial products. If any documents are missing, they must be replaced. The government site USA.gov offers guidance to replace them.

Find a permanent residence. You must have a permanent residence address for receiving official mail like tax forms and utility bills. Family, friends or a reintegration service can be helpful here.

Try a checking account that's made for fresh starts. If a low credit score is preventing you from opening a regular account, look for a bank or credit union that offers second chance checking accounts.

Reestablishing finances after serving time may seem overwhelming. Bear in mind that there are people and organizations ready to help ex-offenders succeed.

The Financial Corner



By C. Robertson,
Post Columnist

WE EXPLORED A proven blueprint for successfully planning and managing your savings in the last article. We touched on there being three categories: short-term, point-saving, and long-term. Our focus was on short-term savings, and now we will move to the second category, point-saving.

Point savings is exactly what it sounds like, saving for a particular point or purpose. Once you have built up your short-term and emergency savings to three to six months of your necessary monthly expenses, then you can direct the 10% of your income that you're saving to a point-saving goal. Again, 10% is just a minimum; you can save however much of your income makes sense for your budget goals. Some examples of very common point-saving goals are a new/used vehicle, expensive vacations, down payment for a house, wedding, etc. The expenses that you make point-savings goals for are the ones that are larger than the discretionary income in your budget or cash flow (the difference between your monthly income and necessary monthly expenses), and that you anticipate having to pay for at some point in the future. Incrementally saving for all the large expenses you anticipate is one of the key pieces to maintaining good financial health either as an individual or a company. It is the essence of financial planning. Most people have a difficult time accepting that their emergency fund should not be used in non-emergency situations, but the ones that do generally have the most success financially. If you know that you will need a car in a year, would like to get married and have a wedding in two years, or have a down payment for a house in five years, start saving for it now.

It's very simple to do. First, calculate the total expense. Next, figure out how far out you'll be anticipating it in months. Last, divide the total expense by the number of months, and direct that much of your savings toward it. For example, if your plan is to buy a vehicle in 12 months with \$6,000, and you have \$2,000 left over in cash flow every month, you want to set aside \$500 every month for 12 months to save specifically for the point of purchasing the vehicle. You can do this simultaneously with multiple anticipated expenses, as long as it is within the parameters of your budget. If you master this step, you are managing your finances better than the vast majority of people, and it's time to move on to the next category of saving for the long term, also referred to as retirement saving.

As we continue the blueprint for planning and managing your savings the way successful individuals and companies do, our last entries on this particular subject will be about the importance of long-term savings/retirement savings, allocating money in your budget toward it, and different types of long-term savings vehicles.

Criminon offers a correspondence course covering common sense issues designed to broaden insight surrounding rehabilitation and self-awareness. Write for more information:

Criminon West US
P.O. Box 9091
Glendale, CA 91226



Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S
WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee
Post Columnist

Your Personal Finances (pt. 8)

HAVING LOOKED AT our monthly obligations and the ways we might reduce them, let's look at our regular sources of income.

Salary

If you're paid a salary, use the net amount. If you're paid on an hourly basis, use the average number of hours per month plus the average amount of overtime you typically work. If you're paid by the shift, and the amount is variable, estimate your monthly earnings.

Social Security

If you're collecting Social Security, use the net amount. It's also a good idea to figure out how much income you can earn before it starts to affect your monthly payment (found online at ssa.gov).

Retirement

Add to your income any monthly pension or retirement you might be receiving.

Benefits

If you're currently unemployed or receiving other benefits, include those, with the understanding that you may be required to look for and accept work you are offered.

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

Turning \$9K into \$300K
By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

HOW WOULD YOU like to turn \$9,000 into \$300,000 in 10 years? Wouldn't that be fantastic? Not many people can save almost a third of a million dollars in cash in 10 years, but people with ordinary incomes who can come up with a 3-percent down payment are acquiring significant wealth in real estate. And people who can't save 3 percent but who qualify for a down payment assistance program do the same.

One of the best ways to set yourself up financially is to become a homeowner. Historically, real estate doubles in value approximately every 10 years. Let's look at a scenario: You put \$9,000 down on a \$300,000 house or condo. That \$9,000 could be your own money, gift from family, from down payment assistance, or a combination.

In 10 years, your home is worth \$600,000, assuming it doubles in value. You have now gained \$300,000 in real estate wealth. This is not liquid cash you can spend, but it represents security. If needed, you could sell the house and make a large profit, even after paying closing costs. Or, you could sell and move up to a better house. Or, you could keep the house until you own it free and clear. Eventually, you could pass it on to your children through your will. This is called generational wealth; it gives the next generation a big leg up financially. There are some groups in America that have not had the advantage of generational wealth. Now is the time to change that. For your family, it can start with you.

Let's go back to our example:

\$300,000 gained over time
+ \$9,000 original down payment
+ \$18,000 paid down on the mortgage (estimated)
= \$327,000 wealth accrued in real estate (estimated)

Now for a Big Question

Let's say you decide to spend \$9,000 to buy a car instead of a house or condo. Ten years later, what do you have? A car worth less than what you paid for it. Let's say you decide to spend the \$9,000 on a cruise, a new wardrobe, and some souvenirs. Ten years later, what wealth have you gained? Zero.

It takes vision, patience, and self-discipline to save money for a down payment. For some it takes applying for down payment assistance (if their income qualifies). I could write a book on this topic and include sources for down payment assistance in all 50 states. Oh, wait. I did.

If you want all the insider information on how to qualify for a home loan, and the intel to get the lowest interest rate like loan officers do, and avoid the needless and the stupid junk fees, and learn how to avoid the pitfalls, and what loan programs there are for people without top tier credit, then head over to Amazon and pick up a copy of *Get the Mortgage You Want Like the Pros* now before the price increases.

I'm a huge fan of home ownership. My first house was a smelly dump, but I fixed it up and sold it for a \$25,000 profit three years later.

I hope this inspires someone to become a homeowner.

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

Build and
Protect
Your Credit
Like the Pros™

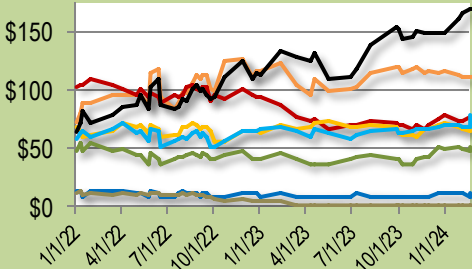
Go from beginner to expert,
raise your credit score, and
secure your finances

Carolyn Warren

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

Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1, 2023 to Feb. 19, 2024)

● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.76 → \$10.92	+1.5%
● ConocoPhillips (COP)	\$117.00 → \$110.57	-5.5%
● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$93.19 → \$77.10	-17.3%
● Edison International (EIX)	\$63.62 → \$66.31	+4.2%
● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.22 → \$1.54	-70.5%
● Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)	\$112.00 → \$170.01	+51.8%
● ONEOK Inc. (OKE)	\$65.90 → \$77.99	+18.3%
● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$41.29 → \$51.91	+25.7%



Creative Arts Program

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.”
—Marianne Williamson

The Healing Power of Art

By S. Martin Williams,
Production Editor

Holding Our Humanity

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert,
repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of
your body
love what it loves.

—Mary Oliver
from “Wild Geese”

PRISON DEHUMANIZES. IT draws humanity out of everything and everyone it touches as stone draws warmth from a body. This doesn’t affect only prisoners; it affects staff, volunteers, and their families. By its very existence, prison dehumanizes society as a whole, especially when society objectifies offenders and prisoners as already less-than-human, often relegating us to characters in TV crime dramas. Prison and crime have always been high entertainment.

For over three decades I’ve fought to retain my humanity. Not just *retain*, but over time *regain* lost parts and give voice to parts I never knew existed. I wasn’t alone in this, but it’s often lonely work. I’ve watched other men reach beyond colors of skin and rags to make a brief connection to being human, to being a non-object determined by tattoo or street name. It’s like grass reaching through cracks in the concrete. Most of the time, these connections were made through the discovery of the artist within themselves, and always through the discovery of being a vessel of meaning.

Everything a prisoner seeks in order to be in relationship with his humanity is usually found through an act of subterfuge. It ceases to be about good versus evil and becomes instead an epic striving against objectification. Arts In Corrections always functioned best when creating space for men to feel free from the constraints of the

“transformation rhetoric” that only validated works that addressed behavioral change instead of the endless moment-to-moment navigation through worlds of prison rules. Such navigation demands extreme levels of subterfuge to find pockets of humanness, pockets that are often kept hidden, camouflaged, and denied publicly. A prisoner, as a human being, needs and deserves the cohesive forum of creative peers who aren’t judging his work on anything other than “is it effective writing/art/music?”

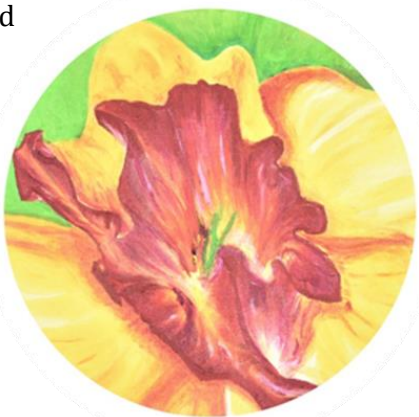
This is the real subterfuge of the arts in prison; for the individual seeking humanity through art must navigate vast, complicated levels of messages, those both designed and accidental, aligned to devalue his creative child and therefore his unique potential. Transformational narratives, once commoditized, become easy to fake, turning creative venues into a con game. There are no chronos acknowledging the awakening of unique creative inner process because it isn’t earmarked. It’s process. Art programs are all about awakening process in prisoners, and keeping the inspiration going to follow that process. When a man of clay finds within him a unique human heart, his inner values change, and that flesh and blood thing within him becomes more valuable than the clay he has always nurtured.

The awakening of art is the transformational narrative. Entering into creative processes and communities of artists, as well as the woeful inner work that all

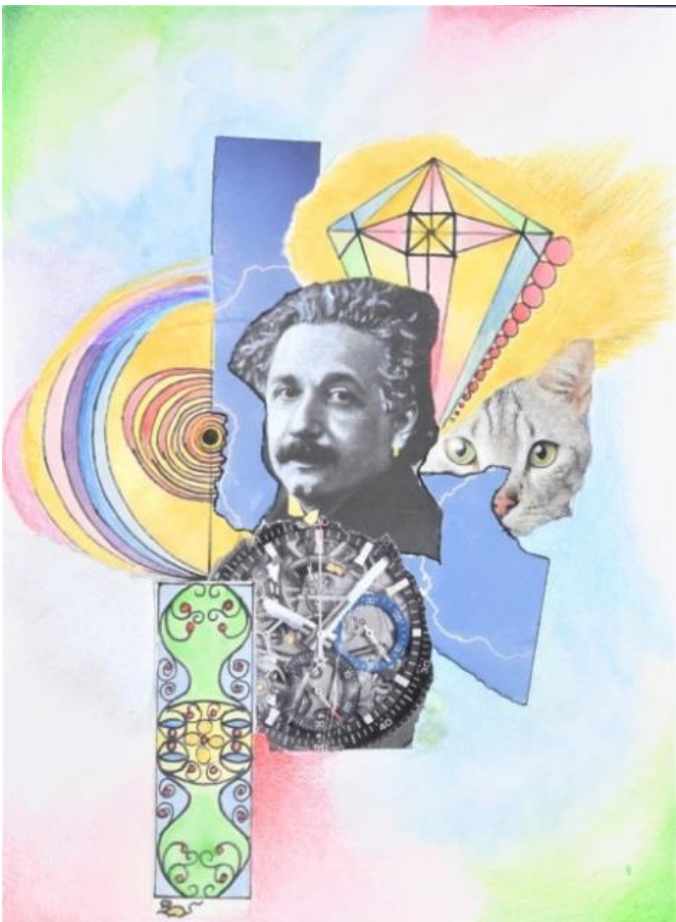
true art demands, is the song of change. Being an artist or a poet does not mean being a “good” person. Many artists aren’t great at being good, successful, or even happy; but the effect of finding hidden value and humanity in one’s self among others who have the same secret argues against economic and recidivism statistics.

Mary Oliver says it perfectly in the last lines of her poem, “Wild Geese:”

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination;
calls to you like the wild geese,
harsh and exciting —
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.



Flowers, © 2021 Daniel Alas, acrylic on board.



Inspired By, © 2022 Robert Day, mixed media

Facility E Hobby Room

Creative Writing	Tue 12:30-2 pm
Poetry	Tue 2-3:30 pm
Graphic Arts	Tue 2-3:30 pm
Graphic Arts	Tue 6:30-8 pm
Graphic Arts	Wed 9-11 am
Guitar	Wed 9-10:30 am
Guitar	Wed 11-12:30 pm
Intensive Journal	Wed 2-3:30 pm



Eyes, © 2022 Joe Bogle, acrylic.

Insight Through the 12 Steps



Step 2: Any Excuse to Fail By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

We became willing to believe that change is possible, by learning a different way of living through suggestions from those who have trudged the path of recovery before us out of insanity.

She understood too well that the brandy wasn't what she wanted, nor the vodka; what she really sought was an excuse to fail Leilani, a reason to turn inward, to retreat beyond the familiar drawbridge, up to the ramparts, behind the battlements of her emotional fortress, where her damaged heart wouldn't be at risk of further wounds, where she could live once more and forever in the comparatively comfortable isolation of suffering. Brandy would never give her that excuse and spare her the pain of caring.

—Dean Koontz,

One Door Away from Heaven

AS ADDICTED PEOPLE, how many times have we allowed ourselves retreat into the isolation of suffering that comes with letting down ourselves, those we love, and those who love us through embracing and engaging in our addictive behaviors. How often have we retreated not because we couldn't do something, but because we didn't want to, or because we didn't want to expose ourselves to the possibility of failure?

Often, self-talk in these situations sounds like, "I've failed so many times; I might as well fail this time, too." How many times have we actively sought out excuses to not engage, but to actively stay in addiction and, as a result, continue to live in the familiar and comfortable suffering that comes with addictive behavior? The character in the above passage makes a different choice; she chooses to live through the pain and discomfort of not retreating into her addictive behaviors. She chooses to instead face life on life's terms and experience the consequences and feelings. Imagine what our lives would be like if every time we faced discomfort or pain, we made the decision to embrace these not-so-nice feelings and be OK for a while, without burying the discomfort in drugs, alcohol, violence, video games, sex, exer-

cise, work — or any other addictions we use to escape.

Successful sober living is, in a specific way, much like living in addiction in that it takes practice, commitment, and perseverance. And, just like addiction, the longer we do it the easier it is. In general, someone who has been sober for a decade has markedly less difficulty staying sober than someone who has been sober for 10 days. However, addictive people, no matter how long they've been clean, will at some time experience the pull toward relapse, that moment of weakness when relapse is contemplated. Just because someone hasn't used in a decade or more doesn't mean the urge to relapse isn't there. It just means they've found a support system and successful strategies, ways of thinking and engaging both with themselves and the world around them, that allow them to stay clean and encourages a clean lifestyle. This isn't a secret and there is no magic involved. Lasting sobriety is the result of hard work and dedication.

For the woman in the Koontz excerpt above, she might not experience temptation when seeing that same bottle of brandy tomorrow. For that matter, yesterday she might not have had any urge to drink. But today, it is a struggle to turn away, to not get lost in that bottle, to not give up and give in, to fail Leilani just as she has failed herself and so many others in the past.

Step 2 tells us "change is possible" because it is. Our job, as addictive people, is to see those places where we can change how we engage with ourselves and the world around us, thereby enabling us to have outcomes that aren't tinged with the selfish color of addictive behaviors.

Incarcerated Individuals Secure Job Offers

By Michelle Kane, California Prison Industry Authority



AHIRING EVENT organized by multiple state agencies has proven successful for incarcerated job seekers at Sierra Conservation Center. The event helps attending incarcerated individuals qualify for state jobs at the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans). In total, 31 incarcerated individuals received conditional job offers from hiring events held at California State Prison-Solano (2019), Central California Women's Facility (2021), and Sierra Conservation Center (2023).

Representatives from six state organizations participated in the Civil Service Workgroup: California Prison Industry Authority (CalPIA), the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, CalTrans, California Governments Operations Agency, California Department of Human Resources, and the California Workforce Development Board.

CalPIA General Manager Bill Davidson said these events are rewarding for everyone involved. "CalPIA is one of multiple agencies coming together to improve the lives of incarcerated individuals," said Davidson. "These hiring events thrive through partnerships. It is rewarding to see individuals find employment when they are about to leave prison."

Incarcerated individuals are taught the process of getting a state job, which includes participants taking the entry-level Highway Maintenance Worker exam.

"The Prison to Employment (P2E) Civil Service Hiring Event creates many other important skills to finding meaningful employment," said Rusty Bechtold, CalPIA's Assistant General Manager of Workforce Development. "The hiring event allows the participants to practice and learn an entire employment process from beginning to end for any civil service job they may apply for upon release."

Organizers first hold an informational meeting at the prison to answer questions from the incarcerated population. A second meeting introduces participants to computers and how to use them to create a CalCareer account. They are also taught how to complete a state application. During the third meeting, the interviews are held.

"CalTrans is honored to have joined another P2E hiring event with CalPIA," said CalTrans Deputy Division Chief Tom Hicks. "Our hiring managers were impressed by the candidates and look forward to offering more job opportunities in the future. We plan to participate annually and aim to collaborate with the Department of Motor Vehicles to assist candidates in obtaining their driver's licenses. We hope the knowledge gained will encourage incarcerated individuals to pursue civil service roles, especially at CalTrans, post-release."

Joe Flores, the lead representative for Reentry Initiatives for the California Workforce Development Board, said when multiple state agencies and departments come together for the greater good, positive results take place.

"Through this coordinated partnership, we continue to build an inclusive path for incarcerated individuals to find quality post-release jobs," said Flores. "We want these individuals to be successful when they leave prison; it is not only a win for them, but for the entire state of California."

Nueva Guía Para la Solicitud de Conmutación

Editado por Ángel Castillo,
Spanish Editor

LA COALICIÓN DE Prisioneras de California (CCWP) ha revisado su guía para la solicitud de conmutación (en junio de 2019), para que los presos y sus abogados puedan preparar las aplicaciones de conmutación para someterse al gobernador de California. Así que el documento es tan largo que es dividido en siete partes.

¿Qué es Conmutación?
Las personas sirviendo una sentencia de condena penal pueden hacer una petición al gobernador de California para que su sentencia pueda ser reducida o eliminada, aplicando por una conmutación. “Clemencia ejecutiva” es otro término para conmutación. El indulto es otro proceso separado. Generalmente, las aplicaciones para indulto solamente se consideran después que alguien es liberado de la prisión y es dispensado (que ha sido liberado de la obligación) de la libertad condicional por un mínimo de 10 años.

La aplicación para conmutación está disponible en su biblioteca de derecho y en el internet aquí: gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Commutation-Application.pdf.

¿Quién Puede Aplicar Para una Conmutación?

Todas las personas que están cumpliendo condenas pueden solicitar una conmutación de sentencia. Esto incluye a personas que han estado encarceladas por menos de 10 años. Las personas con apelaciones activas en los tribunales también pueden presentar una solicitud; solo tienen que mencionar esto en su aplicación. Las personas con convicciones anteriores también pueden presentar una solicitud.

Los solicitantes no necesitan un abogado para aplicar para una conmutación. Algunos solicitantes sí trabajan con abogados, pero no es necesario.

La aplicación tiene tres preguntas principales (preguntas 2, 3 y 4) que requieren respuestas más largas y personales. A continuación hay cosas que considerar cuando responda a estas preguntas. Ofrecemos diferentes sugerencias sobre cómo abordar las respuestas si es que:

- Usted toma la responsabilidad completa del crimen.
- Usted asume responsabilidad parcial por su condena, pero no fue la per-

- sona que causó daño directo.
- Mantiene su inocencia.

Los aspirantes que solicitaron la conmutación durante la administración anterior pueden elegir reabrir su solicitud. Los aspirantes deben haber presentado su solicitud dentro de los tres años posteriores a la fecha en que el Gobernador Newsom anunció su proceso de conmutación en marzo del 2019. Las personas que solicitaron la conmutación durante este periodo de tiempo, y no desean someter una aplicación nueva, deben completar una solicitud de una página para la conmutación y el formulario de perdón (Re-application for Commutation and Pardon) para permitir que la oficina del gobernador reabra su solicitud. La aplicación está disponible en su biblioteca y en el internet aquí: gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Clemency-Re-Application.pdf.

Respondiendo a las Preguntas

Pregunta #1: Sumario de Convicción(es). Indique la(s) condena(s) por la(s) que solicita una conmutación de sentencia. Simplemente haga una lista de cada delito, condado donde fue condenado y la sentencia que le dieron. Es importante marcar la casilla si usted tenía más o menos de 26 años cuando cometió su(s) crimen(es).

Luego, enumere todas las condenas anteriores en California, en cualquier otro estado o país, o en un tribunal federal. Este cuadro solicita solo una lista (no una explicación) de las condenas *anteriores*.

Pregunta #2: Brevemente describe la circunstancia del crimen(es) por la cual está solicitando una conmutación. La respuesta a esta pregunta puede ser solamente unas oraciones, describiendo claramente y concisamente su crimen y la circunstancia. Si tiene acceso a los documentos de corte, usted puede usar frases breves de los documentos para tener coherencia (consistencia).

Si quiere mantener su inocencia y no puede decir que cometió el crimen, puede formular su respuesta así: “Fui acusado(a) y procesado(a) bajo el/los cargo(s) de ____”.

También puede agregar una explicación de los factores atenuantes relacionados con el delito aquí: su edad, si es menor de 26 años; cualquier antecedente de violencia doméstica o violencia sexual (como víctima); adicción de cualquier tipo, incluyendo un historial de adicción en su familia; impacto de la discriminación por motivos de raza, género, situación económica, o discapacidad.

Pregunta #3: Explique cómo una conmutación de sentencia puede impactar su vida. En esta sección resuma la comprensión sobre su vida, patrones, acontecimientos importantes, historia del abuso, etc. Es importante compartir cualquier factor que impactó el crimen o condena original. Por ejemplo: violencia y abuso de hogar durante su infancia, adolescencia o durante su vida adulta. Describa historia de adicción sea propia o de un miembro de la familia. La administración del gobernador Newsom también ha abierto la puerta a otros factores que pueden impactar su vida, como: envejecimiento en prisión; problemas graves de salud o discapacidad o enfermedad terminal; o sus circunstancias familiares, incluyendo enfermedad grave o muerte en la familia, y miembros o niños necesitados de su amor y apoyo paternal.

Si está solicitando una conmutación porque está sufriendo una enfermedad terminal, o tiene una discapacidad crónica grave o enfermedad que podría ser más llevadera al ser liberado de la prisión o con la reducción de sentencia, también debe enviar el formulario para autorizar liberar información de salud, el CDCR 7385 (Authorization for Release of Protected Health Information) para que la oficina del gobernador pueda acceder a sus registros médicos.

Si tiene una sentencia sin posibilidad de libertad condicional (“life without the possibility of parole”, o LWOP), empiece por explicar que está solicitando una conmutación para tener la oportunidad de ir frente a la Junta de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional (“Board of Parole Hearings”, o BPH) para demostrar su desarrollo, su percepción, sus logros que ha tenido mientras ha estado encarcelado/a, y su preparación para salir libre.

A. Si toma completa responsabilidad de la convicción de su crimen: Reconozca responsabilidad personal y culpabilidad individual; describa cómo comprende el daño que causó, como se siente, y muestre remordimiento por sus acciones y decisiones.

Describa cualquier atenuante en el contexto de su vida al momento del crimen, por ejemplo:

- Si era joven y tiene factores juveniles definidos por *Miller v. Alabama* o leyes de libertad condicional para delincuentes juveniles (“youthful offender parole laws”)
- Si fue víctima de abuso (e.g., abuso sexual infantil, violencia doméstica, violencia sexual, explotación sexual, abuso físico, o abuso basado en su género)
- Si estaba sufriendo de adicción
- Si experimentó negligencia en el sistema de bienestar infantil (“child welfare system”)
- Si no tenía un hogar, etc.

Es importante formular su información contextual no como excusa por lo que hizo sino de una manera que diga, “Estoy tratando de comprender como pude cometer este crimen”.

Comparta contexto que pueda explicar la información negativa en su Archivo Central, por ejemplo, explique el contexto de infracciones disciplinarias, etc. Si recibió varias infracciones disciplinarias al principio de su condena, explique su percepción sobre su estado emocional y comportamiento que llevó a que ocurrieran estos incidentes, después explique cómo ha cambiado con el paso del tiempo.

B. Si asume responsabilidad parcial por el crimen que fue condenado pero no fue la persona directa quien causó el daño: Describa porqué usted piensa que le asignaron mucha más responsabilidad por el crimen a pesar de haber sido parcialmente responsable. Esto puede ser complicado porque debe hacerlo mientras que asume su parte de la responsabilidad por el crimen y también porque debe ser muy diplomático al expresarse desacuerdo con la decisión de la corte.

(viene de Nueva Guía, pág. 30)

Una estrategia es describir un mapa de las decisiones que tomó y que le llevaron a la situación en que el crimen ocurrió; por ejemplo, qué le llevó a participar en un robo que terminó en homicidio.

Describa cualquier atenuante en el contexto de su vida al momento del crimen, por ejemplo:

- Si era joven y tiene factores juveniles definidos por *Miller v. Alabama* o leyes de libertad condicional para delincuentes juveniles (“youthful offender parole laws”)
- Si fue víctima de abuso (e.g., abuso sexual infantil, violencia doméstica, violencia sexual, explotación sexual, abuso físico, o abuso basado en su género)
- Si estaba sufriendo de adicción
- Si experimentó negligencia en el sistema de bienestar infantil (“child welfare system”)
- Si no tenía un hogar, etc.

Es importante formular su información contextual de manera que no se excuse a sí mismo por lo que hizo, sino que la idea sea, “Intento comprender cómo pude cometer este crimen”. Describa el entendimiento que tiene de cualquier daño que haya causado, cómo se siente, y demuestre remordimiento por sus acciones y decisiones.

Hable de las circunstancias que puedan proveer una explicación relacionada a información negativa en su expediente central, por ejemplo, diga cómo fue que recibió infracciones reglamentarias, etc. Si recibió varias infracciones reglamentarias al principio de su condena, demuestre que comprende el estado emocional y el comportamiento que resultaron en dichos incidentes, y explique cómo ha cambiado al paso del tiempo.

C. Si afirma ser inocente: Diga porqué afirma serlo y describa las circunstancias bajo las cuales le condenaron por el crimen. Esto puede ser difícil porque debe hacerlo mientras que asume su parte de la culpa por el crimen y también porque debe ser muy diplomático al expresar su desacuerdo con la decisión de la corte. Por ejemplo, sabemos que la Junta de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional (BPH) comúnmente califica como “falta de retrospectiva (insight)” una afirmación de inocencia, lo cual dificulta la oportunidad de libertad condicional. Aunque solicitar una conmutación de sentencia por medio de la oficina del gobernador no sea lo mismo que ir a la BPH, aun recomendamos que los aspirantes sean cuidadosos al afirmar ser inocentes. Tomemos en cuenta que miembros de la BPH serán quienes estudien las aplicaciones de conmutación que la oficina del gobernador seleccione para una revisión.

Describa cualquier atenuante del contexto de su vida al momento

que fue convicto por el crimen, o decisiones por las que asume responsabilidad — mientras que afirma ser inocente — como los enumerados anteriormente.

Es importante formular su información contextual de cierta manera; por ejemplo, “Intento comprender cómo pude haberme puesto en una situación que me implicó en este crimen”. Describa el entendimiento que tiene de cualquier daño que haya causado, cómo se siente, y demuestre remordimiento por sus acciones y decisiones.

Explique su remordimiento por cualquier acción o decisiones que le llevaron a la situación en donde le condenaron por un crimen que no cometió. Entendemos que esto le puede hacer sentir que se contradice a sí mismo, pero es importante demostrar responsabilidad personal.

Hable de las circunstancias que puedan proveer una explicación relacionada a información negativa en su expediente central, por ejemplo, diga cómo fue que recibió infracciones reglamentarias, etc. Si recibió varias infracciones reglamentarias al principio de su condena, demuestre que comprende el estado emocional y el comportamiento que resultaron en dichos incidentes, y explique cómo ha cambiado al paso del tiempo.

Pregunta #4: Describa qué ha hecho desde que le sentenciaron (por ejemplo, su esfuerzo para crecer como persona. Esto incluye identificar y abordar la necesidad de tratamiento; los logros profesionales y educativos; cualquier recaída, infracciones reglamentarias o nuevas sentencias; retrospectiva, o “insight”, sobre su conducta pasada; y sus metas.) En esta sección es en donde describe cómo ha cambiado internamente (la manera de pensar, sentir, y reaccionar a diferentes situaciones y circunstancias) y qué ha logrado en prisión. Este es también un lugar importante para compartir cualquier factor que crea que debe ser considerado en su solicitud de conmutación. A continuación le presentamos algunas sugerencias para responder a esta pregunta:

A. Cambio y Rehabilitación: Describa su proceso de cambio y rehabilitación, y qué programas o grupos le ayudaron durante este proceso, por ejemplo, trabajo para la comunidad (dentro y fuera de la prisión), grupos de autoayuda, estudiar de manera independiente, grupos de salud mental, logros educativos, programas de uso de sustancias, prevención de violencia, etc. Explique percepciones que ha desarrollado sobre sus circunstancias, comportamientos y patrones de conducta, y describa las habilidades que ha desarrollado para responder a los desafíos personales de manera diferente. Si tiene antecedentes positivos en la prisión, asegúrese de resaltar logros específicos, ya que esto ha surgido constantemente en los comunicados de prensa del gobernador sobre las conmutaciones. Por ejemplo:

- Programas completados, incluida la participación en grupos de autoayuda, capacitación laboral o vocacional, etc.
- Progreso educativo, cursos tomados, títulos obtenidos
- Récord positivo en su trabajo
- Asistir a la iglesia u otras actividades religiosas o espirituales
- Participación en eventos o esfuerzos de caridad
- Reportes positivos de custodios (COs), supervisores, etc.
- Admisión en “dormitorios de honor” u otros logros.

Si ha sido excluido de programas por cuestiones de alojamiento o ha enfrentado discriminación, pero aun así ha conseguido la forma de educarse a sí mismo y ha logrado ser más consiente de sí mismo, le animamos a que también comparta tal información. Esto podría incluir habilidades que ha desarrollado para hacer frente a los retos en la prisión.

B. Sufrimiento Excesivo: Explique si experimenta sufrimiento excesivo debido al encarcelamiento. Por ejemplo, si está anciano, discapacitado, enfermo, o experimenta algún tipo de discriminación, etc.

C. Factores que Disminuyen la Reincidencia: Describa los factores que garantizarán no volver a la prisión, incluyendo su plan de libertad condicional, el acceso al apoyo de la familia y la comunidad (incluyendo el CCWP) una vez que sea liberado, prospectos de trabajo o planes de educación, etc.

Para solicitar la conmutación, los aspirantes deben enviar una notificación a la oficina del fiscal de distrito del condado en donde fueron sentenciados. Este aviso, llamado Notice of Intent to Apply for Clemency, debe enviarse por correo a la oficina del fiscal, al menos diez días antes de enviar su solicitud a la oficina del gobernador.

Sugerimos que haga dos copias de su notificación al fiscal del condado antes de enviarla — recomendamos que guarde una copia para usted e incluya una copia con su solicitud que enviará a la oficina del gobernador. También recomendamos que todos los solicitantes envíen su notificación al fiscal del condado por correo registrado, así tendrán documentación de su notificación para constar ante la oficina del gobernador.

Una vez que ha enviado su aplicación para una conmutación, usted puede continuar enviando documentos de respaldo (ej. “chronos”, cartas de apoyo, evaluaciones de salud mental, y cualquier otro documento que pueda respaldar su aplicación). Cuando envíe documentos adicionales de respaldo, asegúrese de incluir su nombre y número CDCR en todos sus materiales.

Manda su aplicación a:

Governor Gavin Newsom
Attn: Clemency/Legal Affairs
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

California Coalition for
Women Prisoners

The Spanish Galleon

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

FOLK ART, ENJOYED simply for its beauty and skillful craftwork. Folk art refers to the work of craftsmen and women who have little or no formal training; ordinary craft techniques typically utilized are less than common in prison.

Without hobby craft programs at many prisons, crafters rely on their own devices, using in-cell tools that are less than ideal. Yet, the ingenuity exhibited by incarcerated crafters has been seen for decades through the creation of their own tools, collecting innocuous supplies, making glue through a process of mixing floor wax with soap, making a straight-edge from the side of a book, and making cuts with a paper-thin razor blade delicately held between two fingers.

The *Spanish Galleon* was built by Wilmer Coto on Facility E, a model replica of a ship from the 1500s. "It took me over six months to make," said Coto, "with hundreds of strips of cardboard from the state lunch boxes." He spent several hours each day, laboriously laying each piece to form the hull. Coto then gave it a wooden look by staining it with coffee, each layer accentuating the next, giving depth to the faux wood grain and sealing it with wax.

The galleon was the largest ship of the 14th century and stretched over 160 feet from stern to bow, with two heavy masts carrying two or three square sails each, and one or two small masts (mizzenmasts) toward the ship's stern. These masts carried three-cornered sails, called lateen sails. A long, raised deck called the quarterdeck ran from the main mast toward the rear of the ship, where a higher deck, called the poop, was located. Galleons served as merchant cargo vessels and warships. Many think of them as pirate ships, those "marauders of the sea."

Coto first started working with crafts in 2006. Since then he has made over 50 pirate ships and many other projects. Initially, the motivation came from an economic need. "I got hungry," Coto stated. He was then able to sell his pieces in the gift shop through the prison hobby program at another prison, which allowed him to support himself and develop new skills. He sent the work home to his family, and his daughter especially loved his art and was amazed and fascinated at how he was able to make the intricate model-size pieces with such limited resources. Sending them home added a layer of difficulty though, as he would have to make a custom box capable of withstanding the chaotic handling of the shipping company. More than once he recalls being devastated, hearing about parts that were broken off during transport.

Now, after spending months on a project, he is motivated by a sense of accomplishment and pride in what he has created. Coto looks forward to being able to teach others and share his love for crafting.

"Just try, give it a shot," he suggested to those who might be hesitant in starting something new. That's how he got started, and you can too.



Postscriptum

THIS MONTH, THE executive director of The Pollen Initiative visited with the *Post* for a landmark meeting. The nonprofit formerly known as Friends of the *San Quentin News* rebranded itself to identify with its broader aim of supporting prison journalism in general rather than focusing on the *San Quentin* newspaper.

Beyond the donations for the newsroom and the promise of additional equipment, what stood out was the overall spirit of camaraderie. While many might see the *Mule Creek Post* and the *San Quentin News* as competitors in the space, what became evident during the meeting was the determination to work together to bring our respective messages to the largest audience possible. Rather than splitting resources between the two publications, going forward we will both appear in the same venues (such as on the GTL tablets and on the Edovo app) and jointly publish for our readers. Why waste time working to outdo one another, when we could be joining together to make both newspapers shine?

Shouldn't that be the goal of all interactions? A collaboration that improves the situations of all parties, a win-win-win that helps everyone? With this fresh in our minds, I hope we can all look for ways to work together with those around us, rather than trying to win. And just maybe we can make it a habit that sticks with us year round.

-JC, Editor-in-Chief



Wilmer Coto and his Spanish galleon. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



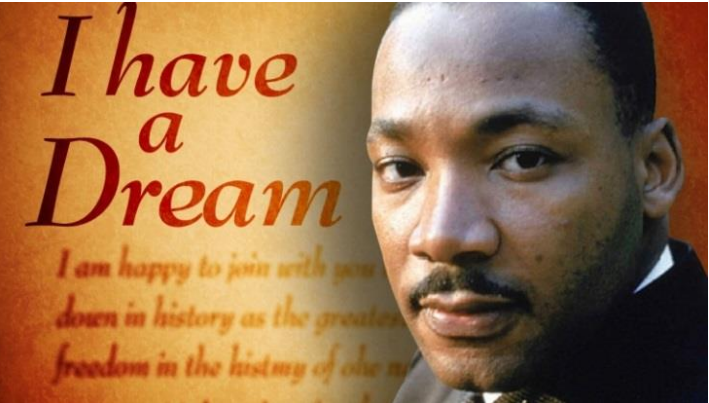
A Spanish galleon (FundacionNaovictoria.org)



Wilmer Coto's Spanish galleon. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Letter from Birmingham Jail

By the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



From the Birmingham Jail, where he was imprisoned as a participant in nonviolent demonstrations against segregation, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, in longhand, the following letter. It was his response to a public statement of concern and caution issued by eight white religious leaders of the South. King, who was born in 1929, did his undergraduate work at Morehouse College; attended the integrated Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania (one of six black pupils among a hundred student, and the president of his class); and won a fellowship to Boston University for his doctorate.

Editor’s Note: Certain details King wrote about and the strong language he used may be offensive or disturbing to some readers.

WHILE CONFINED HERE in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling our present activities “unwise and untimely.” Seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all of the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would be engaged in little else in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should give the reason for my being in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the argument of “outsiders coming in.” I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every Southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliate organizations across the South, one being the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Whenever necessary and possible, we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago our local affiliate here in Birmingham invited us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct-action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promises. So I am here, along with several members of my staff, because we were invited here. I am here because I have basic organizational ties here.

Beyond this, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the eighth-century prophets left their little villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their hometowns; and just as the Apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city of the Greco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular hometown. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial “outside agitator” idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider.

You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place to Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being. I am sure that each of you would want to go beyond the superficial social analyst who looks merely at effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. I would not hesitate to say that it is unfortunate that so-called demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham at this time, but I would say in more emphatic terms that it is even more unfortunate that the white power structure of this city left the Negro community with no other alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive, negotiation, self-purification, and direct action. We have gone through all of these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal, and unbelievable facts. On the basis of them, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good-faith negotiation.

Then came the opportunity last September to talk with some of the leaders of the economic community. In these negotiating sessions certain promises were made by the merchants, such as the promise to remove humiliating racial signs from the stores. On the basis of these promises, Reverend Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to call a moratorium on any type of demonstration. As the weeks and months unfolded, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. The signs remained. As in so many experiences of the past, we were confronted with the blasted hopes, and the dark shadow of a deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except that of preparing for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and national community. We were not mindful of the difficulties involved. So we decided to go through a process of self-purification. We started having workshops on nonviolence and repeatedly asked ourselves the questions, “Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?” and “Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?” We decided to set our direct-action program around the Easter season, realizing that, with exception of Christmas, this was the largest shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic withdrawal program would be the by-product of direct action, we felt that this was the best time to bring pressure on the merchants for the needed changes. Then it occurred to us that the March election was ahead, and so we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that Mr. Conner was in the runoff, we decided again to postpone action that the demonstration could not be used to cloud the issues. At this time we agreed to begin our nonviolent witness the day after the runoff.

This reveals that we did not move irresponsibly into direct action. We, too, wanted to see Mr. Conner defeated, so we went through postponement after postponement to aid in this community need. After this we felt that direct action could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask, “Why direct action, why sit-ins, marches, and so forth? Isn’t negotiation a better path?” You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that

(continued on pg. 34)

(from Letter from Birmingham Jail, pg. 33)

a community that has consistently refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that in can no longer be ignored. I just referred to the creation of tension as a part of the work of the nonviolent resister. This may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word “tension.” I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. So, the purpose of direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. We therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in the tragic attempt to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that our acts are untimely. Some have asked, “Why didn’t you give the new administration time to act?” The only answer that I can give to this inquiry is that the new administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one before it acts. We will be sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Mr. Boutwell will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is much more articulate and gentle than Mr. Conner, they are both segregationists, dedicated to the task of maintaining the status quo. The hope I see in Mr. Boutwell is that he will be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from the devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have never yet engaged in a direct-action movement that was “well timed” according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word “wait.” It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This “wait” has almost always meant “never.” It has been a tranquilizing thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration. We must come to see the distinguished jurist of yesterday that “justice too long delayed is justice denied.” We have waited for more than three hundred and forty years for our God-given and constitutional rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward the goal of political independence, and we still creep at the horse-and-buggy pace toward the gaining of a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say “wait.” But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity, when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers soothing in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she cannot go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears

welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son asking in agonizing pathos, “Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?”; when you take a cross-country drive and find in necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading “white” and “colored”; when your first name becomes “nigger” and your middle name becomes “boy” (however old you are) and your last name becomes “John,” and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title “Mrs.”; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at a tiptoe stance, never knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of “nobodyness” — then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court’s decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, it is rather strange and paradoxical to find us consciously breaking laws. One may well ask, “How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?” The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just laws, and there are unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine “An unjust law is no law at all.”

Now what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral code, or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. To use the words of Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher, segregation substitutes an “I-it” relationship for the “I-thou” relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. So segregation is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, but it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Isn’t segregation an existential expression of man’s tragic separation, an expression of his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? So I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court because it is morally right, and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances because they are morally wrong.

Let us turn to a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a majority inflicts on a minority that is not binding on itself. This is difference made legal. On the other hand, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow, and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal.

Let me give you another explanation. An unjust law is a code inflicted upon a minority which that minority had no part in enacting or creating because it did not have the unhampered right to vote. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up the segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout the state of Alabama

(continued on pg. 35)

(from Letter from Birmingham Jail, pg. 34)

all types of conniving methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties without a single Negro registered to vote, despite the fact that the Negroes constitute a majority of the population. Can any law set up in such a state be considered democratically structured?

These are just a few examples of unjust and just laws. There are some instances when a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I was arrested Friday on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong with an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade, but when the ordinance is used to preserve segregation and to deny citizens the First Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and peaceful protest, then it becomes unjust.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was seen sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar because a higher moral law was involved. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks before submitting to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience.

We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was “legal” and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was “illegal.” It was illegal to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler’s Germany. But I am sure that if I had lived in Germany during that time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal. If I lived in a Communist country today where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I believe I would openly advocate disobeying these anti-religious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the last few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is not the White Citizens Councillor or the Ku Klux Klanner but the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says, “I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can’t agree with your methods of direct action”; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom; who lives by the myth of time; and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a “more convenient season.” Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

In your statement you asserted that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But can this assertion be logically made? Isn’t this like condemning the robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn’t this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical delvings precipitated the misguided popular mind to make him drink the hemlock? Isn’t this like condemning Jesus because His unique God-consciousness and never-ceasing devotion to his Will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see, as federal courts have consistently affirmed, that it is immoral to urge an individual to withdraw his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest precipitates violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber.

I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth of time. I received a letter this morning from a white brother in Texas which said, “All Christians know that the

colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but is it possible that you are in too great of a religious hurry? It has taken Christianity almost 2000 years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth.” All that is said here grows out of a tragic misconception of time. It is the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time is neutral. It can be used either destructively or constructively I am coming to feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. We must come to see that the human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation.

You spoke of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I started thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency made up of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of “somebodyness” that they have adjusted to segregation, and, on the other hand, of a few Negroes in the middle class who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because at point they profit by segregation, have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up all over this nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Mohammad’s Muslim movement. This movement is nourished by the contemporary frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination. It is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incurable devil. I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need not follow the do-nothingism of the complacent or the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. There is a more excellent way, of love and nonviolent protest. I’m grateful to God that, through the Negro church, the dimension of nonviolence entered our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, I am convinced that by now many streets of the South would be flowing with floods of blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as “rabble-rousers” and “outside agitators” those of us who are working through channels of nonviolent direct action and refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes, out of frustration and despair, will seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies, a development that will lead inevitably to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come. This is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom; something without has reminded him that he can gain it. Consciously and unconsciously, he has been swept in by what the Germans call the *Zeitgeist*, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America, and the Caribbean, he is moving with a sense of cosmic urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. Recognizing this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand public demonstrations. The Negro has many pent-up resentments and latent frustrations. He has to get them out. So let him march sometime; let him have his prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; understand why he must have sit-ins and expressions of violence. This is not a threat; it is a fact of

(continued on pg. 36)

(from *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, pg. 35)

history. So I have not said to my people, "Get rid of your discontent." But I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled through the creative freedom rides. If his repressed emotions do not come out in these nonviolent ways, they will come out in ominous outlet of nonviolent direct action. Now this approach is being dismissed as extremist. I must admit that I was initially disappointed in being so categorized.

But as I continued to think about the matter, I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love? — "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice? — "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ? — "I bear in my body the marks of Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist? — "Here I stand; I can do no other so help me God." Was not John Bunyan an extremist? — "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a mockery of my conscience." Was not Abraham Lincoln an extremist? — "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." Was not Thomas Jefferson an extremist? — "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." So the question is not whether we will be extremist, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate, or will we be extremists for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice, or will we be extremists for the cause of justice?

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this. Maybe I was too optimistic. Maybe I expected too much. I guess I should have realized that few members of a race that has oppressed another race can understand or appreciate the deep groans and passionate yearnings of those that have been oppressed, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent, and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still all too small in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some, like Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, and James Dabbs, have written about our struggle in eloquent, prophetic, and understanding terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They sat in with us at lunch counters and rode in with us on the freedom rides. They have languished in filthy roach-infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of angry policemen who see them as "dirty nigger lovers." They, unlike many of their moderate brothers, have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation.

Let me rush on to mention my other disappointment. I have been disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand this past Sunday in welcoming Negroes to your Baptist Church worship on a nonsegregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Springhill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say that as one of these negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say it as a minister of the gospel who loves the church, who was nurtured in its bosom, who has been sustained by its Spiritual blessings, and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

I had the strange feeling when I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery several years ago that we would have the support of the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests, and

rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some few have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams of the past, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and with deep moral concern serve as the channel through which our just grievances could get to the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous religious leaders of the South call upon their worshippers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers say, follow this decree because integration is morally right and the Negro is your brother. In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sidelines and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard so many ministers say, "Those are social issues which the gospel has nothing to do with," and I have watched so many churches commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which made a strange distinction between bodies and souls, the sacred and the secular.

There was a time when the church was very powerful. It was during that period that the early Christians rejoiced when they were deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was the thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Wherever the early Christians entered a town the power struggle got disturbed and immediately sought to convict them for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But they went on with the conviction that they were a "colony of heaven" and had to obey God rather than man. They were small in number but big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." They brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contest.

Things are different now. The contemporary church is so often a weak, ineffectual voice, with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's often vocal sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I meet young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.

I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair for the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are presently misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America. Before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson scratched across the pages of history the majestic word of the Declaration of Independence, we were here. For more than two centuries our foreparents labored here without

(continued on pg. 37)

(from Letter from Birmingham Jail, pg. 36)

wages; they made cotton king; and they built the homes of their masters in the midst of brutal injustice and shameful humiliation — and yet out of a bottomless vitality our people continue to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embedded in our echoing demands.

I must close now. But before closing I am impelled to mention one other point in your statement that troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the police force for keeping “order” and “preventing violence.” I don’t believe you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its angry violent dogs literally biting six unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I don’t believe you would so quickly commend the policemen if you would observe their ugly and inhuman treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you would watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you would see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys, if you would observe them, as they did on two occasions, refusing to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I’m sorry that I can’t join you in your praise for your police department.

It is true that they have been rather disciplined in their public handling of the demonstrators. In this sense they have been publicly “nonviolent.” But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the last few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. So I have tried to make it clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong or even more, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends.

I wish you would have commended the Negro demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer, and their amazing discipline in the midst of the most inhuman provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, courageously and with a majestic sense of purpose facing jeering and hostile mobs and the agonizing

loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, repressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two-year-old woman of Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride the segregated buses, and responded to one who inquired about her tiredness with ungrammatical profundity, “My feets is tired, but my soul is rested.” They will be young high school and college students, young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience’s sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream and the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage.

Never before have I written a letter this long — or should I say a book? I am afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else is there to do when you are alone for days in the dull monotony of a narrow jail cell other than write long letters, think strange thoughts, and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that is an understatement of the truth and is indicative of an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything in this letter that is an overstatement of the truth and is indicative of my having a patience that makes me patient with anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,

Martin Luther King, Jr.

©1963 Martin Luther King Jr. All rights reserved. Reprinted from The Atlantic Monthly, Aug. 1963, “The Negro is Your Brother.”

Editor’s Note: Dr. King began his letter as notes in the margins of the newspaper where he first read the criticisms to which the letter addresses. Later, a black trustee in the jail smuggled bits of paper to King so that he could continue. Eventually, lawyers for King brought in a legal pad for him to work on. Over the next two months, a handful of publications printed the letter under three different titles. One prominent New York newspaper elected not to print it.

