

## To Our Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

**W**ORDS OF WISDOM rarely go out of style; we offer these from Mother Teresa of Kolkata from 1968:

"People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; Succeed anyway. If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; Be honest and frank anyway. What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight; Build anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; Be happy anyway. The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; Give the world the best you have anyway."

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Members of the Soldiers of the Cross prepare and pass out grilled hot dogs to residents of Facilities D and E for the September 28 Prison Seminary Program grand opening. (Photo by J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

## Seminary Program Grand Opening

By Al Rice, Copy Editor



PRISON  
SEMINARIES  
FOUNDATION

**T**HE COMBINED ROAR of 25 V-twin motorcycles vibrated the walls at the Mule Creek State Prison, their brilliant colors and glittering chrome conspicuously out of place as they circled the prison exercise yard on Facility E. The men riding these machines easily would have blended into a prison yard were it not for the black vests with lettering that read "Soldiers of the Cross." In fact, at least two once wore prison blues at Mule Creek not long ago.

This day, Sept. 28, 2024, marked a first in California state prison history as SUM Bible College & Theological Seminary celebrated the grand opening of its newest campus that offers a baccalaureate in field ministry to the first cohort of 23 incarcerated seminary students.



Soldier of the Cross work the mobile 20-foot-long grill to cook for the event. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Of the 100 or so special guests on hand were Secretary Jeffrey Macomber and Director Ronald Broomfield from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation; the Prison Seminary Foundation's Burl Cain; Paid in Full California's Joe Stewart and Bob Morris; and others from these state, public, and private organizations who were here to celebrate and support the commitment of the students.

Not long after they parked their motorcycles along the track, Soldiers of the Cross set up a 20-foot grill and began to barbecue approximately 2,000 foot-long hotdogs for the populations of facilities D and E and guests. Each incarcerated resident received at least one hotdog and bun, a bag of chips, and bottle of water.

The Facility E music program, in coordination with the seminary students, played music appropriate for the day's  
(continued on page 2)



(from *Seminary Grand Opening*, pg. 1) event. Media Specialist H. Kim recorded the joyous affair for later airing on the institutional TV. The community resource manager's office and *Mule Creek Post* photographers also took hundreds of still shots of the cheerful gathering.

After several speeches on the yard, the dignitaries, students, and guests retreated to the chapel for a more intimate discussion of the program, its goals, and expectations of its students.

Despite some minor hiccups and delay, it turned out to be a glorious day as men from both facilities intermingled in a friendly atmosphere of hotdogs, music, and motorcycles.



Singers Robert Taylor and Deshaun King performed for the crowd.  
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)



THE MULE CREEK POST  
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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.

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Clarence Butterfield and a Soldier of the Cross share a moment in line. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Soldiers of the Cross spent the day connecting with residents, such as Marcus Smith of Facility E. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Soldiers of the Cross getting ready to feed the yard. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



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.

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By P. Covello  
Mule Creek State Prison  
Warden



## A Time to Be Grateful

**E**VERY NOVEMBER IN the United States we celebrate Thanksgiving. It is our traditional time to be grateful for the things that we have been given, even when we maybe would have preferred more or something different.

This month, I hope you will join me in being grateful for some of the amazing things that have happened at Mule Creek State Prison. This year we have inaugurated a seminary program for our residents — the first in the state — which included a barbeque to celebrate; we have begun implementation of the California Model of rehabilitation; our own Mule Creek Post earned national kudos; and we've expanded our educational and vocational opportunities. There is a lot to be grateful for this year. I hope you'll join me in appreciating it.

### MULE CREEK POST Submissions

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



## Artists Help With Rehabilitation, Pt. 2

By Don Chaddock, Inside CDCR Editor



The rock band Metallica shot a music video inside San Quentin, donated \$10,000 for improvements to the prison's baseball diamond, and put on an outdoor concert for inmates in 2003. (InsideCDCR.ca.gov)

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

At the height of her career, comedienne Phyllis Diller was invited to help the drama workshop, Le Cage, at San Quentin. She did a standup routine, answered questions, and gave pointers. The workshop, also known as The Players, was founded by inmate Rich "Rick" Cluchey, who was inspired by a play he saw in the prison in 1957.

"Before her rise to fame, she worked in Oakland as an advertising copywriter and then as a writer at radio-station KROW. In fact, it was her friendship and working relationship with Wanda Ramey, a female pioneer in the Bay Area's broadcast industry, that got her the gig at San Quentin," reported the *Marin Independent Journal*, Jan. 8, 2018. "In 1960, Ramey had filmed a report about inmates at San Quentin that kicked off a lengthy relationship between the two. The night Phyllis performed she was given an over-sized honorary key to the prison."

Capitol Records recording artist Tennessee Ernie Ford cut an album with the choir at San Quentin according to *Billboard Magazine*, May 11, 1963.

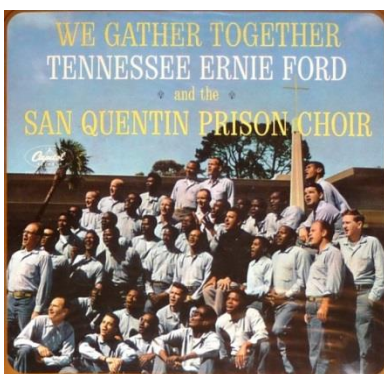
"Four years before Johnny Cash recorded his famous album at San Quentin, Ernie took mobile recording equipment to San Quentin where he and the prison choir recorded a gospel album," according to *Southwest Shuffle*, by Rich Kienzle.

"One of the best things you can do with a song is bring comfort to people who need it," Ford said. "Some of the people who needed it most were the prisoners."

In 1972, blues musicians John Lee Hooker and his son, John Lee Hooker Jr., performed at the Correctional Training Facility in Soledad. The concert was recorded and released as *Live at Soledad Prison*.

Many more actors, artists, and bands performed for San Quentin inmates over the years including BB King in 1990 and

(continued on page 4)



(InsideCDCR.ca.gov)

The Mule Creek Fallen Families Resource Foundation helps correctional officers and their families who are going through difficult times.

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BB King performs at San Quentin in 1990. (InsideCDCR.ca.gov)

(from **Artists Help Rehabilitation**, pg. 3)  
Metallica in 2003.

Rosanne Cash, daughter of Johnny Cash, performed inside Folsom State Prison in 2011. "I'm really emotional about this," she said at the time, according to KCRA Channel 3. "It's become a Cash family tradition."

In 2017, Common and Residente performed at the Calipatria State Prison. Common performed at numerous prisons that year as part of his Hope and Redemption Tour. More recently, Los Tigres del Norte performed for inmates at Folsom State Prison in April 2018.

## Learn About the Law

By Philong Huynh,  
Feature Reporter

**W**ITHOUT MUCH RESOURCE, many in prison are often befuddled by an array of contradicting legal advice, and when we try to do legal research, we often do not know where to begin. The prison provides us with LexisNexis, a comprehensive research tool on the GTL tablets under the Law Library app, and on computers in the prison libraries. Lexis includes published legal guides and case law searchable under the "Search All" hyperlink at the top of the front page of the app.

To be resentenced, you need to find out if the new resentencing law is retroactive. Put the specific law in quotation marks in the "Search All" link, add the conjunction "and" next, and add the word "retroactive" after that and read the results to see if it's

via a petition for writ of habeas corpus, which has to be presented to the trial court and the California Supreme Court first before going to federal court, which has a one-year deadline from the date the California Supreme Court denied your direct appeal after trial. Claims involving new evidence and new laws may also be submitted using habeas petitions. Explain any justifiable delay and don't miss deadlines if you can help it.

Once you decide what you are going to file and in which court, you can research the laws supporting your filing by clicking on the "Search All" tab in LexisNexis and enter keywords or phrases on the topic. A phrase of more than one word needs to be put in quotes. Once the search results come up, go to "Secondary Materials" to read legal guides and books that have been published by experts on the topic. Click on "search within the results" to refine your search and look for other keywords or phrases within your original topic. If you are looking for case laws, they are listed under "Cases" and you can click on "Filter Results" to "search within the results" or to sort the cases by courts. Only published cases are considered case law, except you can cite unpublished federal cases that are after 2007.

State courts follow case laws in their own appellate districts, in the California Supreme Court, and in the U.S. Supreme Court. Otherwise, cases in other appellate districts or jurisdictions are only considered "persuasive" authorities and not "controlling" authorities, meaning the courts don't have to follow them. So take time to learn what state appellate district you are in. For example, if you are from Los Angeles, your appellate district is the Second Appellate District. Sometimes districts differ in opinions. When that's the case, you can ask the California Supreme Court to resolve the difference in your favor especially if the majority of the districts lean in your favor.

Federal courts follow their own federal appellate circuit decisions and U.S. Supreme Court decisions. For example, the 10 western states that are in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will abide by cases handed down from the 9th Circuit.

Courts are mandated by the U.S. Supreme Court to construe or interpret your filing with leeway. They understand you are not lawyers or skillful at presenting the issues the way a lawyer is expected to. As long as your writing is legible, the issues you are addressing are more important than how nice the petition looks. In a landmark case called *Gideon v. Wainwright*, Gideon, a chronic criminal, wrote a handwritten petition to the U.S. Supreme Court complaining that the State of Florida, as a matter of practice, did not provide lawyers for criminal defendants like him, in violation of the Sixth Amendment. The court agreed with him and issued the landmark decision that created the public defender system we see today that helps carry out the Constitution's guarantee of legal representation for criminal defendants. So what you say in your pleading with the court is much more important than the form or format of your pleading.

Finally, pay attention to the graphic signs next to the case name. A red stop sign (●) means either the case is unpublished or has been overturned and is no longer good law to use. You can "shepardize" any case by clicking on the graphic signs next to the case name to see how other courts cite or use the case you are looking at. Seeing how others frame their arguments can help you better present your case.

You are your best advocate. Learn the system so you can navigate it and fight for your rights.

retroactive. If the law itself or court cases do not say anything about that law being retroactive, then courts do not have jurisdiction to resentence once 120 days passed since your original sentencing.

Assembly Bill (AB) 600 gives the courts discretion to resentence you on its own motion under currently applicable laws, but the discretion to even answer your petition is entirely the court's. If you have an active case in the court, you can ask your lawyer to petition the court to apply current laws that are applicable in your cases. Otherwise, any challenge to your conviction and custody based on constitutional violations has to be done

## The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Feature Reporter

**D**O YOU EVER get frustrated? Of course you do. You're human, you're conscious, and deal with all manner of things every day. So, what manner of things vex you? Is that a new word for you? It actually goes back a long way to the Latin *vexare*, meaning "to agitate or harry." One dictionary defines *vex* as meaning "to bring trouble, distress, or agitation, physical distress (headache), to irritate, annoy by petty provocations, or to harass."

The word *vex* was first used in English in the 15th century (1400s). The term *vexatious litigant* is used by courts to deny someone who continues to raise petty and pointless appeals. *Vexed* usually refers to an extremely frustrated state within a person.

According to one dictionary, the word *harry* is actually a form of the word *harass*, not a diminutive of the name Harold, and means "to make a pillaging or destructive raid on; an assault; to force, to move along by harassing, to torment."

Interestingly, *harry* is also related to *harrow*, which we now use to describe a farm implement towed behind a tractor or horses. It was first used in the 14th century to describe a torment or vexing situation, such as "losing control of her car was a harrowing experience."

Enjoy using new words; you can amaze, befuddle, and confound your friends and acquaintances.

**Sources:** *Webster's Universal Dictionary*; *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*; *Dictionary of Word Origins*

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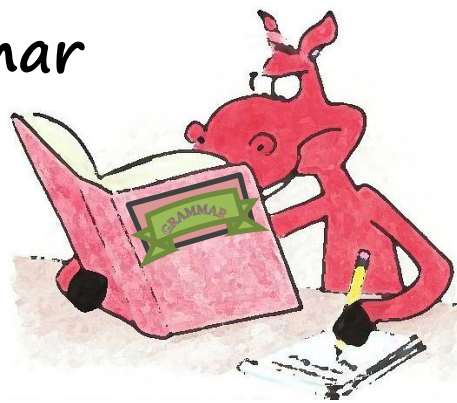
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## Big Red's Grammar Guide



**G**OOD WRITING BEGINS with the basics. Here in my grammar guide are more things a writer should know. Last month, we completed our discussion of phrases. This month, we'll begin a discussion about clauses.

### Clauses

Like a phrase, a **clause** is used as a particular part of speech or part of a sentence; however, unlike a phrase, a clause has a verb and its subject.

### Independent Clauses

An **independent clause** (sometimes called a main clause) is a group of words that has a verb and its subject. These words could stand alone as a sentence; that is, the words could make sense if they were by themselves. Here is an example:

*The white index cards fell to the floor.*

This is one independent clause. It has a subject (*cards*) and a verb (*fell*), and it stands alone as a sentence. Now look at this sentence:

*The cards scattered on the floor, and I had to pick them all up.*

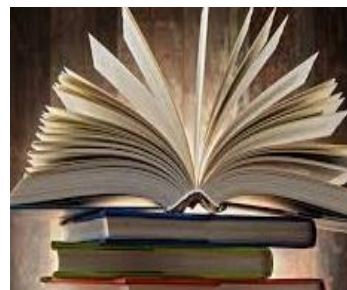
This is made up of two independent clauses. The first —*the cards scattered on the floor*—has a subject (*cards*) and a verb (*scattered*); it could stand alone as a sentence. The second —*I had to pick them all up*—has a subject (*I*) and a verb (*had*); it also could stand alone as a sentence.

Next month, we'll continue our discussion of clauses.

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

## The Importance of Learning to Read, Pt. 1

By Don Domelle, Mule Creek State Prison



**I**HAVE BEEN working with the reading program in the CDCR educational system for over 17 years. During that time, I did a lot of research in helping men with their reading skills. I found it a joy to see men in their 50s begin to read for the first time.

Many of the men said they never had the opportunity to learn how to read. One man said he spent only one month in school in his entire life. His father was an alcoholic and never stayed in one place very long. Thus, his son never had the opportunity to enroll in a school. It wasn't that he did not have the ability to read, he just did not have the opportunity to learn to read. I began to work with him starting with the first book of the *Laubach Way to Read*. The very first day he was reading for the first time in his life at the age of 52. It lifted up his self-esteem. He couldn't get enough of reading.

One other man I know of thought he had a mental disorder that kept him from learning to read. He learned for the first time at the age of 56. I was able to teach him how to read phonetically (using a system of written symbols that represent speech sounds in a way that is very close to how they actually sound). Once he learned to read, it brought great joy into his life. I have to say that I used him as one of my success stories.

I found that using the right programs, using the right methods, in the right way will go a long way to bringing about reading abilities. It works. Just try it.

Why am I so concerned about reading? Because my mother was illiterate, and she was never able to read to me as a child. Today, like these two men, I can't get enough of reading. This is my favorite pastime. Instead of watching the TV during the day, I use my time to read.

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# Prop. 57 Credit Limbo for Lifers

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane,  
Life Support Alliance

**P**ARTIAL SUCCESS BY a conservative think tank focused on blocking progressive criminal law changes has thrown a roadblock, hopefully temporary, into the state's application of milestone and rehabilitative achievement credits toward the timing of lifer parole hearings, and, in a few cases, the release of lifers already found suitable.

This complicated case, *Criminal Justice Legal Foundation v. California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation*, was brought by the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation (which includes Ronald Regan's Attorney General Edwin Meese and former California Gov. Pete Wilson among its trustees and advisers). The foundation contested the implementation of Proposition 57 credits to sentences imposed on both determinately and indeterminately sentenced prisoners. The Sacramento Superior Court, while rejecting most of the lengthy filing (thus allowing credits to be applied to the sentences of determinately sentenced prisoners), upheld the challenge applied to the initial hearing date of indeterminately sentenced prisoners ("lifers"), calling for a hearing on the issue and a pause in implementation of Prop. 57 credits to this group.

The court initially issued a stay in executing the order, but that stay has expired. Until the department's ongoing appeal of the decision can win a reimposition of the stay, it must stop applying credits, and cannot release someone based on a release date calculated with those credits. This has resulted in several delayed hearings; but more troubling is a number of lifers, found suitable months ago (after a hearing date calculated with these credits) and expecting release, who find themselves still incarcerated until the legal situation is resolved.

Worse yet, the potential exists that some formerly incarcerated people found suitable and released could conceivably be ordered to return to custody if

this court ruling stands. This boggles many minds, including legal minds at the department. Although this scenario is unlikely, experts tell us, it remains a possibility.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) is diligently working on methods to preserve the scheduled hearings and release dates, and we are keeping eyes and ears out for any new developments. This is a most unusual situation, and if for no other reason than the CDCR, Board of Parole Hearings, and lifer advocates find themselves on the same side, battling to maintain decisions benefitting the incarcerated.

## Let Me

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;  
Where there is hatred — let me sow love;  
Where there is injury — pardon;  
Where there is doubt — faith;  
Where there is despair — hope;  
Where there is darkness — light;  
Where there is sadness — joy;*

*O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek to be con-  
soled as to console; To be understood as to understand; To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive, It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

—St. Francis of Assisi

**S**T. FRANCIS IS known by many, and not just in the Christian world. He was born an Italian noble and as an adult gave up his wealth and position to live in poverty with the creatures of the forest.

For many, this might sound like an idyllic existence, nothing to do but to sit in communion with their God and woodland creatures. No demands on one's time; no meetings, phone calls, or texts, and on the surface this sounds like it could be a little piece of heaven. And it can be, with practice.

However, for most of us, once things get quiet, we feel a need to find something to fill the void, something to keep our mind busy, some "thing" to distract us from ourselves. And this is just the beginning of the issues many of us could have with emulating St. Francis.

Do you find it difficult to give pardon? What about hope or faith? Can you honestly say that you can give someone else hope? How about joy? This prayer goes on to talk about the hard parts of being human, like having and exhibiting understanding, giving pardon for injury, and giving all of one's self in any situation.

As with many of the great spiritual writings, the Prayer of St. Francis is aspirational; it is something that we can work to achieve. These writings can be used to give us a goal, a roadmap, and even direct instructions that describe how we can respond and behave in almost any situation throughout our lives.

What St. Francis seems to be saying here is that in order to become more complete or even better as people, we need to put others before ourselves, that we need to forgive and be of service; that it is only through service, giving, and forgiving that we can discover the full richness that is the human experience.

What would it take for you to be able to live the life of St. Francis? Not so much the living in the woods, which might not be possible for the vast majority of us. However, the intent of this prayer can be lived. Giving pardon, comfort, and hope can be done by each of us. What would it take for you to be able to do so?

Are you willing to console, understand, love, give, and pardon without receiving? Can you be peace, light, and joy? How easy or difficult would it be for you to totally give of yourself with no expectation of return?

Part of the human condition is to have a concern for ourselves, concern for our welfare and continued existence. St. Francis is believed to have done the exact opposite; he committed to giving his life for the well-being of others, and not just humans but the myriad other creatures that lived around him in the forest.

Some people get so caught up in the action of St. Francis's prayer that they can completely overlook the very first line, a request for assistance, the admitting of a lack of strength and of falling short. St. Francis is admitting failure first and is asking for help to become "an instrument of peace."

Can we do any less?



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# What is Hanukkah?

By Anna Kaufman, *USA Today*

**H**ANUKKAH, THE JEWISH festival of lights, marks a time for celebration and reflection. Rich with history and laced with just a bit of latke grease, Hanukkah is a time for Jews to gather and retell a fabled story of resistance. There is plenty to learn.

*Hanukkah* is Hebrew for “dedication.” Though the holiday is popularly known as the festival of lights, it also is the festival of rededication, honoring the victory of the Maccabee soldiers over the Syrian Greek army.

In their victory, the Maccabees, led by Judah, reclaimed the temple in Jerusalem and rededicated it to God. They had only enough oil to ignite the temple light for one night, and yet the light burned for eight days.

In the Jewish faith, this is referred to as the miracle of Hanukkah. A candle on the menorah, or *hanukkiah*, is lit each night to mimic the one that burned in the temple. The holiday lasts for eight days and nights. The dates of Hanukkah are determined by the Hebrew calendar, creating a shift in when the holiday is celebrated each year.

Traditions can vary. Aside from the lighting of the menorah, Hanukkah is celebrated with games and food. Jewish celebrants often will cook potato pancakes or *latkes*, with applesauce or sour cream. Another dish is a jelly donut, or *sufganiyot*.

An honored tradition involves the game of dreidel, in which a top is spun. Each side is painted with a Hebrew letter. Whichever face it lands on, the panel instructs the players to add or remove coins from a pot. The “coins” are chocolate. Wrapped in gold foil, they are called *gelt*. Whoever has the most coins at the end wins.

Some Jews are in mixed-faith families and celebrate Christmas while others choose to participate in their own traditions to mark the day.



(123rf.com)

# Mass Incarceration Pt. 5

Community Supervision, Poverty, Age, Race, and Gender Disparities

By Wendy Sawyer & Peter Wagner, Prison Policy Initiative

**O**NCE WE HAVE wrapped our minds around the “whole pie” of mass incarceration, we should zoom out and note that people who are incarcerated are only a fraction of those impacted by the criminal legal system. There are another 800,000 people on parole and a staggering 2.9 million people on probation. Many millions more have completed their sentences but are still living with a criminal record, a stigmatizing label that comes with consequences such as barriers to employment and housing.

Beyond identifying how many people are impacted by the criminal legal system, we should focus on who is most impacted and left behind by policy change. Poverty plays a central role in mass incarceration; people in prison and jail are disproportionately poor compared to the overall U.S. population. The criminal legal system punishes poverty, beginning with the high price of money bail: The median felony bail bond amount (\$10,000) is the equivalent of eight months’ income for the typical detained defendant. As a result, people with low incomes are more likely to face the harm of pretrial detention.

It is no surprise that people of color — who face much greater rates of poverty — are overrepresented in U.S. prisons and jails. These racial disparities are particularly stark for black Americans, who make up 35% of the prison and jail populations, but only 14% of all U.S. residents. The same is true for women, whose incarceration rates for decades have risen faster than men’s, and who are often behind bars because of financial obstacles such as an inability to pay bail.

Finally, while states have made progress in reducing youth confinement — due to developments in adolescent brain research, mounting evidence that confinement leads to worse outcomes, and dogged advocacy to protect youth — the elderly population in prison has only grown. Many are stuck serving excessively long sentences, despite the evidence that their incarceration is both extremely costly and unnecessary to ensure public safety.

Equipped with a full picture of how many people are locked up in the United States, where, and why, we all have a better foundation for moving the conversation about criminal legal system reform forward. For example, the data make it clear that ending the War on Drugs will not alone end mass incarceration, though the federal government and some states have taken an important step by reducing the number of people incarcerated for drug offenses. Looking at the “whole pie” of mass incarceration opens up conversations about where it makes sense to focus our energies at the local, state, and national levels. For example:

- How can we effectively invest in communities to make it less likely that someone comes into contact with the criminal legal system in the first place?
- Can we persuade government officials and prosecutors to revisit the reflexive, simplistic policymaking that has increased incarceration for violent offenses?
- What will it take to embolden policymakers and the public to do what it takes to shrink the second largest slice of the pie — the thousands of local jails?
- While the federal prison system is a small slice of the total pie, how can improved federal policies and financial incentives be used to advance state- and county-level reforms?
- Given that the companies with the greatest impact on incarcerated people are not private prison operators, but service providers that contract with public facilities, how can governments end contracts that squeeze money from those behind bars and their families?
- What reforms can we implement to both reduce the number of people incarcerated in the U.S. and the well-known racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal legal system?
- What lessons can we learn from the pandemic? Are governments prepared to respond to future pandemics, epidemics, natural disasters, and other emergencies, including the plans to decarcerate?

The United States has the dubious distinction of having the highest incarceration rate of virtually any democratic nation on Earth. Looking at the bigger picture of the 1.9 million people locked up in the United States on any given day, we can see that something needs to change.

Even narrow policy changes, such as ending incarceration for “technical” violations, can meaningfully reduce our society’s use of incarceration. At the same time, we should be wary of proposed reforms that seem promising but will have minimal effect, because they simply transfer people from one slice of the correctional pie to another, or needlessly exclude broad swaths of people. Keeping the big picture in mind is critical if we hope to develop strategies that actually shrink the “whole pie.”



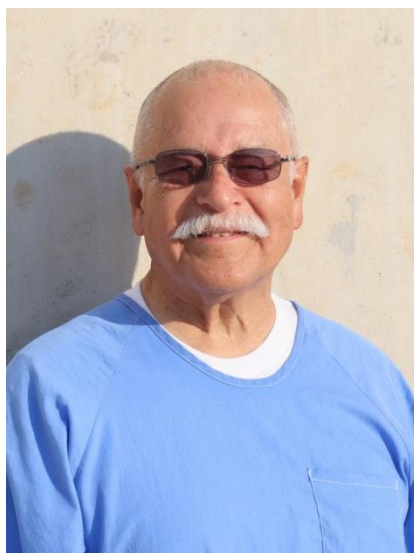
# The Long Walk Home

By Ricky Ortega  
Post Columnist



## Where We've Come to Die

**T**HE CRIMSON AND gold of autumn, glistening in the November rains, mark a delicate display of natural beauty. In the concrete world of life without parole, however, there are no scenic landscapes. The trees are bare and rooted in the destruction of our past. But, as I write this story about aging in prison, I uncovered a beauty that I once overlooked. Those living out the latter part of their lives behind prison walls reflect the falling leaves that help color our world, descending downward onto the bed they made of shattered dreams.



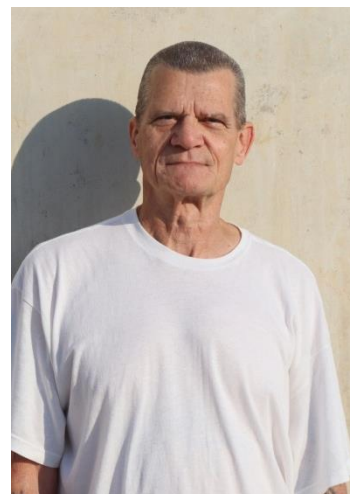
Henry Sianez  
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Henry Sianez, 80, has spent 52 years in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. "At first, I didn't feel like I was getting old," said Sianez. "I would work out every day when I was younger and I felt like I could carry the world on my shoulders. But slowly, I began to notice that I can't do the things I used to do. And being in a place where I feel like I have to take care of myself, that's a scary feeling. I look around and see people much younger than me and the people I've known are slowly dying off. It really brings it home. As I serve out my life-without-parole sentence my mortality has risen and is staring me in the face," confessed Sianez.

As a 63-year-old incarcer-

ated person serving life without parole, I too have spent the past 44 years contemplating the meaning of life and the thought of dying alone. I often find a corner of the yard where I stretch after a morning jog and reflect on the possibilities of a new day. Scanning the yard, I look for dangers to avoid — it's an old habit that I still find useful today. But the atmosphere is different these days. Instead of the typical white and gray attire we are required to wear on the yard, there is a sea of lime green Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) vests with walkers and wheelchairs cluttering the walkways like rush-hour traffic on the freeway. It has given my somewhat unsympathetic impression of aging a glimpse of what my future will look like. Afraid of what I might uncover, I decided to delve into this story anyway, preparing myself for the inescapable truth that I don't want to hear about growing old.

Then I met Frank Bowman. At 68, he has spent a total of 45 years behind prison walls — since the age of 17. Denied parole in a recent hearing and battling chronic health care issues, my conversation with him became more interesting over the next few days. A quiet, soft-spoken gentleman, Bowman attended our weekly religious services, never saying much but always willing to read a scripture when asked. Soon after his parole hearing, he got a job in the food-packaging factory, working on the assembly line, generally a job for a younger man. One day, when the crew left for lunch break, I noticed Bowman stayed behind and kept working. When I approached him to see if anything was wrong, he calmly explained, "I just enjoy staying busy and productive."

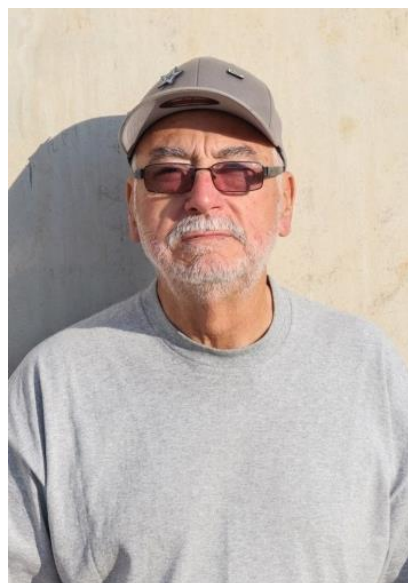


Frank Bowman  
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

I couldn't help but be drawn by his positive outlook on life, despite such trying conditions. "It seems that the older I get, the more medical attention I require on a daily basis," said Bowman, who's struggling with liver disease, emphysema, hypertension, arterial disease, chronic cellulitis, and other infections. In 2014, he had arterial surgery and was treated for hepatitis C. Then, in 2023, he had prostate surgery that is still causing complications. "It scares me to think of what I may need next," said Bowman. "But the truth is, my biggest fear is loneliness — watching my family die off without me being there. At times, I wish it would just end. Death becomes acceptable and as hard as I try to be positive, it seems to get more and more difficult. But I endure," continued Bowman.

As our conversation ended, it seemed strange to me that we had talked through his entire lunch break while he worked. It left a lasting impression on me and gave me the encouragement I needed to reframe my outlook on life.

Robert Cortez, 76, has spent 23 years incarcerated. "I feel great," said Cortez. "I take life as it comes and I embrace it, good or bad. I just make the best of it. I achieved an electronics vocation, office services certification, and worked in various prison industries. The windmills of my mind are always turning," he added. But his legacy is his humor. Known for his quick wit and funny jokes, he has a colorful personality that endears him to everyone who knows him. "I love to make people laugh," said Cortez. Perhaps he has uncovered the secret of the ageless ones and it has helped me to understand that the sun sets just as beautifully as it rises.



Robert Cortez  
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

I've come to appreciate the gifts I received from Sianez, Bowman, and Cortez. Like sand filtering through an hourglass, they are feeling the effects of their golden years, leaving them to believe that time is running out. But thanks to them and many like them, I now understand that there is beauty within the colors of autumn leaves, colors that transcend the emptiness of prison life — the place where we've come to die.



By Richard “Lonewolf” Legan,  
Post Columnist

THE PLANT GOLDENROD (*Solidago canadensis*) is used universally to treat insect bites, kidney and bladder infections, coughs, asthma, flu, and sore throats. I have applied parts of the plant to treat wounds suffered while hiking; the plant helps in healing. Goldenrod can also be used to treat indigestion; the flower and its leaves make a generic medicinal tea.

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

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



*S. canadensis* (plants.ces.ncsu.edu)



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

Prisoner Express  
PO Box 6556  
Ithaca, New York 14851



Fire and Fury

FOR OVER ONE hundred years, the burning of fossil fuels has spewed planet-warming pollution into the atmosphere; the resulting temperature rise has altered the climate to disastrous effects. Floods, fires, heat waves, hurricanes, and droughts occur more often, last longer, and cause more death and destruction. As in a living organism, everything on earth is interdependent. Warmer air and oceans have dire ramifications for all life, from whales and polar bears to birds and insects, from plants and trees to coral and algae. Wildlife biologists studying whales in the Arctic found 20% of them were underfed. Their diets consist of krill, a tiny crustacean that feeds on algae growing under the sea ice. Warmer water melts the ice, which decreases the food supply for krill and whales.

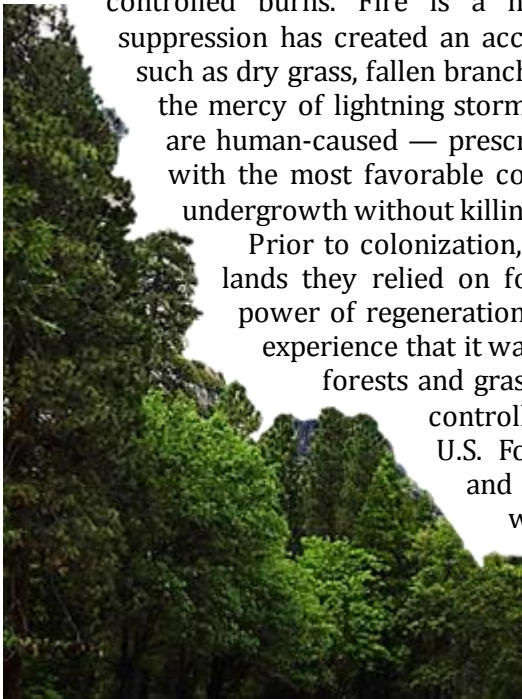
The trillion-ton-thick layer of greenhouse gases blanketing the planet traps heat. Every month from June 2023 to July 2024 was hotter than the same month in any previous year. The highest global average temperature ever was posted on July 23, 2024. Climate change also hit home here at the Mule Creek State Prison. In July alone, there were 21 days of triple digits, 13 of which reached 105 °F or higher. Extreme heat increases the frequency and severity of wildfires because it dries out vegetation and soil. Over the last year, there was a 500% increase in fire activity. Weather variability caused by climate change leads to very wet years followed by very dry years. Grass and shrubs grow lush with heavy rainfall, and then dry out during heat waves or drought. When a wildfire ignites, it burns hotter, spreads quicker, and is harder to fight.

After a month-long heat wave, the Park Fire was started by arson on July 24 northeast of Chico, not far from where the Camp Fire destroyed the town of Paradise in 2018. Red flag warnings were up with low humidity and wind gusts. In three days, it consumed 340,000 acres at the rate of 5,000 acres per hour. On July 26, it torched 150,000 acres and created a “firenado” captured on film, which showed an ominous column of dense black smoke rising hundreds of feet, a swirling vortex of flames and ash caused when heat rises quickly creating an updraft. Simultaneously, there were 110 active fires burning across the U.S. The Park Fire was still going after three weeks and had blackened 430,000 acres, consumed 640 structures, and was only 30% contained. There were 6,000 personnel on the lines, including hundreds of incarcerated firefighters.

The lightning-caused Jasper Fire in Canada became the largest in that nation’s history. It swept through the town of Jasper with a 325-foot wall of flames that rendered one-third of all buildings into piles of ash. The heat was so intense it changed parts of cars into rivulets of molten metal that flowed across the road. Elsewhere in the province, 48 fires burned out of control. Because of warming, fire events have doubled over the last 20 years. “Extreme wildfires is just a part of a series of unnatural disasters we are going to see because of climate change,” explained Jennifer Norton of Yale University.

To slow the warming trend and avoid weather catastrophes, emissions must be reduced. Another way to mitigate the danger of mega-fires is the use of controlled burns. Fire is a natural process, yet decades of fire suppression has created an accumulation of excess fuel in the forest, such as dry grass, fallen branches, and thick brush. Instead of being at the mercy of lightning storms and carelessness — 9 out of 10 fires are human-caused — prescribed burns can be planned to coincide with the most favorable conditions, thereby removing flammable undergrowth without killing trees and threatening buildings.

Prior to colonization, native peoples used fire to manage the lands they relied on for all their needs. They recognized its power of regeneration, and knew from thousands of years of experience that it was integral to the maintenance of healthy forests and grasslands. Tribes are now allowed to start controlled burns on reservation lands, and the U.S. Forest Service is following their model and has received extra funding to fight fire with fire.



**Sources:** *Yahoo Science*, July 24, 2024; *BBC News*, July 27, 2024; *CBS Science*, July 24, 2024; *NPR Insight* Aug. 7, 2024.



(GreatNorthernCatskills.com)

## A Modern Rip Van Winkle

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

AS THE FAIRY tale depicted Rip Van Winkle as he awakened from his 20-year-long nap, imagine the changes he faced. So you, too, will face a similar shock upon release from prison, be it for five or 25 years.

You will face many confusing and complicated issues, both legal and non-legal according to Root & Rebound, a nonprofit reentry legal advocacy organization. Its mission is to increase access to justice and opportunity for people in reentry from prison and jail, and educate and empower them for success.

Its 10-chapter legal guide includes topics like legal aid, community services, understanding and cleaning records, education, family and children, court-ordered debt, employment, public benefits, housing, parole, probation, getting an ID, and voting.

A couple of main concerns for the returning citizen are obtaining an ID and key documents. One may begin by contacting the Legal Services of Northern California License Suspension toll free at 800-972-0002. The ACLU of Northern California can be contacted at 415-621-2488. These are starter contacts; your next steps will follow as contacts are made in order to follow through on your goals.

Another area of concern is legal aid, parole, and probation. For parole, probation conditions, transfers, and other issues, contact Root & Rebound at 510-279-4662, weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Next, legal aid for housing issues becomes paramount. You can start your quest by contacting Legal Services of Northern California toll free at 800-972-7700. Once a returning citizen is situated, they will need legal aid for public benefits. Again, the Legal Services of Northern California is the place to start and that same toll-free phone

number of 800-972-0002 is the first call to make.

As you begin to consider the issues you will face, you will find the Legal Services of Northern California is your first stop for other needs, such as legal aid for employment issues, legal aid for court-ordered debt, and legal aid for education — all available at the 800 number listed above. Some returning citizens will have family and child issues, and the first step once again is to contact the Legal Services of Northern California at their 800 number.

For some returning citizens, wiping the slate clean will be of utmost importance. For expungement and cleaning up criminal records, the starting point will be the public defender's office. One good place to begin is the San Francisco Public Defender's Office at 415-553-1671.

Then there are those returning citizens who must deal with immigration. For this need we look to a familiar source: The Prison Law Office. The office wants returning citizens to make their requests by mail to: Prison Law Office General Delivery, San Quentin, CA 94964.

As you can see, these are all just starting points, and anything legal always takes time. The 1,192-page *Roadmap to Recovery* offered by Root & Rebound is free and filled with critical information to help the returning citizen experience a smooth transition from prison to civilian life. The organization is dedicated to your success and will even take collect calls any Friday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. That hotline number is 510-279-4662.

Ol' Rip Van Winkle wished he'd had Root & Rebound's tender loving care, but the good news is they are expecting you and looking forward to helping you make a success of the future.

## Arturo Castro: A Path to Freedom

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

GROWING UP IN the late 1950s, Arturo Castro learned the street life by the age of 8. Working as a shoeshine boy for the tourists in Baja California, he learned to lie, cheat, and steal. Unwanted at home as a stepchild and physically abused by his mother, he adapted to the streets in order to survive.

It didn't take long before Castro's first run-in with the law around the age of 9. He started helping out at a tortilla factory, building trust with the owner. But once inside, Castro observed where the money was hidden. He stole it, got caught the next day, and was sent to reform school.

This was a traumatic time, Castro recalled, "Always being hungry." As a new arrival he had to fight, and "the only way to make it stop was win." He eventually ran away, even though he knew if he was caught there would be severe consequences. Of those consequences, he described the pit of water he was submerged in as punishment. "You scratch and claw for the edge, but they push you down with a pole. You are at their mercy," he said.

By age 12, he lived with his aunt and six cousins in California. It was here Castro began to use and sell drugs. It wasn't long before his aunt no longer wanted him around and sent him to a foster home.

Castro joined the U.S. Marine Corps at 18, leaving behind a pregnant under-aged girlfriend. While in basic training, he faced charges for statutory rape and was discharged. He went back to what he knew best — the criminal lifestyle.

This began a revolving door of incarceration, in and out of prison nearly a dozen times over the next 27 years until 2000, when he was sentenced to two 25-to-life terms plus 20 years. He joined a prison gang and, for the first 10 years, fueled his drug and violence addictions. When Castro decided he'd had enough and wanted out, he was physically assaulted on two separate occasions.

He eventually found spirituality as a Jehovah's Witness, which opened a completely new world where he learned about forgiveness. In 2015, Castro took the first of many self-help groups, Breaking Barriers. He soon discovered through group the things that were wrong in his life. "If you're not meeting your needs, change the way you are thinking," he said. After taking Realize, he began to change his thought processes.

On May 22, 2024, after 24 years incarcerated, Castro attended his first parole hearing, under the elderly parole consideration program. The original elderly process was a result of the Board of Parole Hearings' work with the federal three-judge panel overseeing California's prison population growth. In 2020, the legislature passed Assembly Bill 3234, lowering the qualifying numbers from 60 years old and 25 years incarcerated to 50 years old and 20 years incarcerated. This change in consideration of elderly parole for lifers sparked a wave of interest in preparing for board. This gave many hope, including Castro. After a consultation hearing in 2020, he left with a list of expectations and rehabilitation goals.

On the day of his hearing, Castro was nervous; he expected a three-year denial. While he was prepared for all the group talk, however, the main thing was

(continued on page 11)

(from Arturo Castro, pg. 10)  
insight. “No one knows this but you,” he said. “It comes from your life, childhood.” When asked the difficult questions, “I was completely honest; they asked a question, I just answered it.” When they asked how he managed 24 years without any write-ups, he was true to a fault; this showed them the level of honesty they were looking for.

After two hours, then deliberation, he was found suitable for parole. Summarizing the hearing, presiding commissioner Nwajei stated, “You are a reformed person as someone who understands the gravity of the damage they did and who is more than likely not going to reoffend. You have good self-awareness that results in sufficient insight, accountability, and expression of remorse for your crimes.”

Castro was released in September, going to transitional housing. His greatest fear is being homeless. He plans to utilize the organizations available for support, such as PREP, Back2Work, and the Christian community.

## Org. Helps in Finding Jobs

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

ONE OF THE greatest fears once paroled can be around finding employment. With the stigma of a criminal background and lengthy gaps in employment on your resume, the thought of applying for a job can be unnerving. Once, when paroled, I recall filling out dozens of applications, with the resounding thought: “I am never going to find a job.” I felt hopeless: No one called me back.

Recently, Pamela Rogers from Back2Work held a workshop funded through the Butte County Office of Education, part of a state program of 100 work crews in 32 counties that offer employment and reentry resources. In the Facility E hobby room at the Mule Creek State Prison, a room full of incarcerated men was given hope: hope to succeed and hope for success after parole.

Rogers briefly described her 13-year career with the Sacramento County Sheriff’s Department when she began working

with the population. “My passion became facilitating programs,” she said. Rogers went on to create her own position and program, describing the opportunity as “The best thing that I ever did in my life. I saw a need and I filled it.”

This led Rogers to the work she does now. “I don’t do this work for a paycheck,” she said, “I do it because it matters. I care deeply about people and our communities. It’s a passion project.” Partnering with Homeboy Industries, a nonprofit gang-intervention program in L.A., made this possible. About Homeboy Industries, it “is my happy place,” she stated. Back2Work also works with Project Rebound and Rising Scholars education programs.

Back2Work focuses on finding work for you, not on the stigma of prison. “We make choices based on equity and our development,” said Rogers. “That said, when you go home, you’ve got to put in some effort.” The organization will help work around parole issues and transitional housing schedules. Rogers added, “I don’t want you to think you are un-hirable; there are a lot of opportunities for you.”

With four main offices in Los Angeles, Fresno, San Diego, and Sacramento, the program’s reach covers the length of the state. For specific counties it is not in, there are other resources it can help with.

For more information on Back2Work you can write the address below (be sure to add your name, CDCR#, housing, and city and county where you will be paroling).



Back2Work  
2015 J Street, Suite 205  
Sacramento, CA 95811

## Socialized into Community

By Earl S. Breckenridge, Feature Reporter

THE TERM *SOCIALIZATION* refers to the process whereby individuals realize their humanity and become acclimated into society. Apart from this process, humans would be little different than wild animals, and societies and civilization could not exist.

*Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? What is my relationship to others and the world around me?* These are among the great questions of humankind. Theologians, philosophers, and scientists have offered varied answers to these questions that have enriched our vision and understanding. How I view myself, others, the world and my place and role within it, shape and direct my beliefs, values, behaviors, and ultimately how I experience life. According to sociologists, our views — and how we developed them — are largely the product of socialization.

Humans are social beings. Socialization helps realize our humanity and optimize our potential. Stated another way, we learn what it means to be human, how to survive, function, and thrive, through interactions with other humans and the institutions (social functions) they create.

Examples exist — such as with children who grew up in isolation and were later discovered with impaired social and cognitive capabilities — to show that the absence of human connection (socialization) has deleterious effects on human health and well-being. This is not to suggest that those with disabilities are less human. Socialization does not make us human; our 23 pairs of chromosomes make us human. Rather, an individual’s capacity to realize full potential comes through socialization, which effects how we express and experience our humanity, as well as our ability to function successfully in society.

For instance, those socialized in impoverished circumstances develop beliefs, values, and behaviors, as well as neurobiological adaptations that are consistent with, reinforce, and perpetuate a life of poverty for themselves and future generations. Beliefs about race, gender, wealth, power, and prestige are culturally learned. Each society, over time and space, develop social identities, which citizens must learn and assimilate that, in turn, help society function and individuals integrate. Humans create society: Society creates humans.

Spiritual, moral, psychological, social, and physical development encompasses various stages of socialization. Societies differ in beliefs, values, and behaviors to which they socialize their citizens. Family, schools, peers, mass media, and religious institutions are the means of socialization, which occurs in childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age, and throughout the life course. Given the existence of social evils, such as racism, hate crimes, sexism, crime, poverty, etc., it is important that individuals, families, schools, peers, mass media, and religious institutions be proactive in recognizing their privilege and duty to socialize people’s beliefs, values, and behaviors in a way that minimizes dissention and maximizes harmony for individuals and society. We, as a society, are the product of our own making: the hope of our own undoing.

Source: Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, *Introduction to Diversity Studies*

# The Impact of My Crime

By Matthew Castaneda,  
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

I DIDN'T REALIZE the seriousness of what I did in 2010, and, quite honestly, I really didn't care. It's one thing to learn about the damage I've caused, but, to actually hear about it? That left me with a lot to think about.

I went to my parole suitability hearing on April 11, 2024, and the people I victimized were there. They each were given an opportunity to speak on their own behalf. Listening to them talk about how my behavior affected them to this day, I felt so disgusted and ashamed of myself that I started to cry. I'm even more disgusted with myself to say that I treated people however I wanted regardless of the consequences, and then blamed them for it. I wasn't sorry for what I did; I was only sorry that I got caught. The more I listened, I thought about how much I don't deserve to get out no matter how much I've changed and rehabilitated myself.

I know I can talk about my abusive childhood, alcoholism, homelessness, and my sexually abusive and deviant behavior, but the truth is the destructive lifestyle that I've lived was done by choice. Nobody forced me to live it and nothing caused me to live it. There's nothing I can say that'll justify my behavior, nor can I even make it make sense.

I am sorry for what I've done and have committed to making real change. I'm also motivated to give back to the community any way I can. This will help to ensure that I will never use and act out in violence against anyone ever again.



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

# Refuge

By Earl S. Breckenridge,  
Feature Reporter

*Abandoned by the light, they took  
refuge in the dark.*

PARALYZED BY FEAR, the 2-year-old sat motionless, careful not to be noticed, and to avoid being singled out and attacked.

Loud, angry shouts came from the adjoining room. The boy's parents were in another fierce argument. Had his father been drinking again? Waves of terror — adrenaline, cortisol, toxic stress — coursed through his tiny body. The boy wondered, had he done something wrong to evoke such strong reactions? He was alone in the five-bedroom house. His four brothers and sister were away. He sat in the den next to his parents' bedroom. The absence of his siblings made the shock of their aggressive outbursts all the more intense. What could he do? His little body tried to brace against sporadic convulsions of anticipation. As his first years of life unfolded, vigilance and super-sensitivity to the behaviors of others would shroud his mental growth and development in insecurity, abandonment, and fear.

The brain has a wonderful way of protecting itself against sustained stress. It detaches from overstimulated regions, releases natural opiates, disables pain, allowing the rest of the neuro-network to function, though under duress and impaired. Emotional shutdown equals disconnection. Disconnection from others, from self, from God, and from hope of realized potential. Disconnection is pain. By age 5, the boy conceded that he did not belong, people were cruel, and the world was a hostile place and that — if he wanted to survive — he must isolate and depend on no one but himself.

Unsocialized and feral, the boy stumbled through childhood and early adolescence with neither purpose nor direction. Driven by instinct — the need to escape the past and satisfy base desires, and the impetuosity of youth and lack of impulse control — he was resistant to change and defiant against offers of help. No one could be trusted. Instead, he was attracted to and gravitated toward another of similar circumstances and experiences: an older boy named Raven.

Raven was unlike anyone the boy knew. Charismatic and slick, Raven had an aura of control and of knowing where he was going. Esteemed by girls, respected by peers, he always seemed to have money and promise of a good time — all the qualities the boy admired. The boy saw Raven in the neighborhood, and then they ended up in a detention class together in elementary school. Though much of his history was unknown, Raven was a refuge from the abuse and neglect — disconnection — the boy experienced at home. He found unconditional acceptance, a place to belong, and smiling approval. The boy awoke each morning excited to leave his home and hang out with Raven. His evolving little world centered in, revolved around, and steadily progressed toward emulation of Raven's persona. Beginning at around 7 or 8, they attended the same elementary school where the boy was often bullied. Raven rescued the boy from feelings of insecurity, abandonment, and loneliness, and set him on a pedestal where he delighted in the attention, purpose, and direction Raven supplied.

Raven was streetwise. He taught the boy how to ditch school, smoke weed, drink Old English 800 beer, pop pills, snort cocaine, steal tennis shoes, hotwire Mustangs, flirt with girls, be tough, dress nice, walk cool, look hard, and assimilate the ways of the streets. He gave the boy an identity of his own. The boy loved him; he would have killed or died for him. Even after temporary placements in juvenile halls, boys' homes, camps, and the California Youth Authority for various criminal activities, he always found his way back to Raven. Apart from Raven, life had no value. The boy dreamed of being a perfect replica of Raven. He felt empty, lost, and confused without him.

The fact that Raven was a ruthless criminal, substance abuser, social outcast, and destined to an early grave or life imprisonment were not important to the boy. Raven helped him forget his past and offered him hope of a future. A temporary reprieve from what it meant to be a paralyzed, helpless, abandoned child in hope of becoming someone worthy of being. The boy was in Raven's debt. He was blind to all his faults because Raven saw him ... he mattered to Raven ... and that's all that mattered to the boy.



Are you a GRIP graduate preparing for release, with questions about reentry, etc.?  
GRIP's reentry coordinator position is open; contact BonaFide at (415) 659-8406





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/bph](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/bph)  
**(916) 445-4072**



Division of  
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Lose an hour in the morning, and you will spend all day looking for it.

— Richard Whately

# Get Your Materials In On Time

By Maya Emig, Post Columnist

IN THE PAROLE suitability hearing process, sometimes situations occur and hearings are postponed or continued. Perhaps the commissioner is sick, or there is a riot at the institution, or some other unforeseen circumstance. Those continuances/postponements can take upwards of five or six months to reschedule, notify the parties, and reconvene. However, having your hearing delayed because you brought your documents with you the day of the hearing, so the panel continued the hearing matter because you did not submit your documents in a timely manner is avoidable, and is costly to you and your freedom. Get your documents in on time.

Recently, a person came to their hearing with 20 pages of documents that included important relapse prevention plans — and the panel continued the hearing because of those late submissions. While this was a thoughtful decision by the panel so those documents could be thoroughly reviewed, it was an avoidable and costly delay attributable to the parole candidate.

If you are a Last-Minute Larry or Last-Minute Lisa, impose hard deadlines for yourself and stick to them. If you are creating relapse prevention plans at the last minute and bringing them into your hearing, think about what that conveys. Relapse prevention plans are living and breathing documents which really should be created years in advance and updated after each new class you attend, and each time you try a coping skill and it does not work, and each time you try a coping skill and it *does* work. For those times when you have a coping skill that does not work, remove it from your list, and seek out and try other coping skills. For those times when you have a coping skill that does work, move it up further on your list of go-to coping skills.

I tell clients their deadline to send documents is a month in advance, and keep track of the day they put their documents in the mail. The parole board's recommendation is at least 20 days in advance. My deadline is so that when I review the contents of my client's 10-day files with them (about a week before a hearing), and there are documents that are missing, I am addressing the issue with the board and not left wondering about the United States Postal Service.

"USPS is now delivering just 83% of First-Class mail on time during the current fiscal quarter," according to "As USPS Institutes Network Reforms, Mail Delivery Hits A 3-Year Low," by Eric Katz in the Feb. 22, 2024, *Government Executive*, "its worst rate in three years. That is down from 86% in the first quarter and 91% in both the fourth quarter of fiscal 2023 and the same period last year."

I also encourage all of you to read *The California Parole Hearing Process Handbook* written and published by the Board of Parole Hearings this March. Its 131 pages of useful guidance and information are available at [www.cdcr.ca.gov/bph/wp-content/uploads/sites/161/2024/03/pv-CA-Parole-Hearing-Process-Handbook-For-Publication-03-08-24.pdf](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/bph/wp-content/uploads/sites/161/2024/03/pv-CA-Parole-Hearing-Process-Handbook-For-Publication-03-08-24.pdf).

Pages 22 to 26 is titled "Documents Submitted by the Incarcerated Person or Their Attorney." It covers important topics regarding parole packets and their contents under headings such as General Guidelines for Submitting Documents, Things to Avoid, Documents Likely to be Relevant to Parole Suitability, Deadlines for Submitting Documents, and How to Submit Documents to the Board.

Under the section "Deadlines for Submitting Documents," it states the following: "As a general rule, documents should be submitted to the Board as soon as possible once a parole hearing has been scheduled. Incarcerated persons who have not yet been scheduled for a parole hearing should wait until their parole hearing is scheduled before submitting documents to the Board. Incarcerated persons and their attorneys should submit relevant documents to the Board, postmarked or emailed a least 20 calendar days before the hearing. This allows the Board to receive and process the documents and incorporate them into packets provided to the hearing panel before the hearing. This also allows the hearing panel to properly review all the documents. ... If documents are not timely submitted or are submitted on the day of the hearing, the hearing panel may ask why the documents were not submitted earlier. Incarcerated persons and their attorneys should be prepared to explain why the documents should have been submitted earlier. A hearing may be postponed if the hearing panel determines it needs more time to review any relevant documents."

As stated above, "documents should be submitted to the Board as soon as possible once a parole hearing has been scheduled." For your parole packet, this allows the clinician preparing your risk assessment to review your plans, insight statement, remorse letters, and other pertinent documents. This would be advisable if you have already met with an attorney, feel confident in your parole packet, or have already been through the hearing process. Don't forget: "Documents submitted will not be returned, so individuals are encouraged to make copies before submitting documents."



(Art.com)

# An Imperfect Path Home

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

SENTENCED TO 15 years to life for second-degree murder, Rick Ezell entered prison at 22 years old. While in orientation at the Mule Creek State Prison on Facility A, he reminded himself, “I have a game plan. I am going to do all the groups, education, and focus on staying out of trouble; I am going to align my purpose with my goals.” Despite the lack of incentive for people serving life sentences he was determined. He began attending rehabilitative programs while focusing on attaining his GED certificate.

Ezell soon realized the best-laid plans could have flaws. Prison life was harder to navigate than he anticipated; he clashed with a wide variety of personalities and attitudes, from fellow residents to staff. Within the first couple of years, he received two rules violation reports for physical altercations. He began to understand that he needed to “address the underlying things with my anger.” In spite of the infractions, Ezell still managed to make it to Level III; however, his troubles did not end with this move. He received another rules violation report for willfully resisting a peace officer. He did not realize it at the time, but he was unable to own his faults in the matter, and continued to minimize and rationalize his behavior.

It was not until Ezell began to attend GRIP (Guiding Rage Into Power) on Facility E that he started to address the fundamental issues surrounding his anger. “I wrote about my childhood, from that perspective, and my parents not being there,” said Ezell. He began to learn about mindfulness, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence. “I was able to understand myself,” he said. “The tools gave me the ability to respond responsibly, instead of reacting.” With these tools, he was able to

demonstrate emotional control when attacked by a new arrival. Ezell recognized his triggers and felt his body tense. “I responded, not reacted,” he said. He was able to back up and allow staff to respond.

After his first Board of Parole Hearings appearance and three-year denial, Ezell accepted that he was still not being fully accountable. “I was still in denial,” he said, “blaming everyone but myself.” This led him to seek a course in rehabilitation that would directly address denial, which is when he found denial management. Through collaboration with April Eckhart, a program analyst with the community resource manager’s office, he completed the corresponding workbook and earned a certificate. His roommate at the time, Luke Scott, created a program around the curriculum, which is now offered on Facility E. Ezell credits the correspondence course with helping to realize he was trying to protect himself from facing his faults, and being able to hold himself fully accountable. “I don’t think you can see your true potential until you opened up the humility in your heart,” said Scott.

The path we take is not always a straight line; one may encounter many bumps along the way, as Ezell did. However, with determination and perseverance you too can succeed. “Hope kept me going,” said Ezell.

On April 25, 2024, Rick Ezell was granted parole. His parting advice to those who may wish to follow in his footsteps: “Do everything you can to know yourself today, as tomorrow’s never promised.”

# Understanding Your CRA

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

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

Here is the final part of this series on understanding the CRA.

## Reviewing Your CRA

Once the CRA is received, you should carefully review the written document and not simply obsess on the risk rating.

- Note if there are errors in the facts of your history and incarceration laid out in the report. Be sure the facts of your case are correctly stated.
- Study and be prepared to discuss issues noted in the CRA, such as addiction issues, anger issues, denial, lack of accepting responsibility, lack of or insufficient insight, or parole plans.
- Be prepared to discuss these issues with the parole panel and offer mitigating information to the panel.
- Be sure to make your attorney aware of these issues as well, so that they can assist you in addressing them at the hearing.
- At the end of CRA is a section titled “Risk of Future Violence Case Formulation and Opinions.” The issues noted in this section, under the “Most Relevant/Salient” headings, are the areas the clinician feels are most important for the board to note and discuss. Pay attention to these items, as these are the areas the panel is especially probing.

## If You Think Your CRA Is Wrong

If there are three or more factual errors that materially affect the risk rating outcome you may request a new CRA interview.

- These factual errors must in some way impact the conclusion of the clinician as to your risk rating.
- If you find those errors you can write to the Board of Parole Hearings and Forensic Assessment Division, note those errors (citing specific pages in the CRA), and relate how those errors have impacted the risk assessment.
- There is no guarantee you will be granted a new CRA interview.

To request a new CRA, write to:

Board of Parole Hearing. Legal Division  
P.O. Box 4036  
Sacramento, CA 95812

Be sure to note CRA REVIEW on the envelope.



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

**LIFE SUPPORT ALLIANCE**

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](http://LifeSupportAlliance.org)

# Medicalized Brutality

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

**I**N A JULY 3 television airing of *Amanpour & Company* on Sacramento's KVIE, author Aisha De Jesus, who wrote *Excited Delirium*, told her interviewer that California and Colorado recently passed legislation prohibiting the use of "excited delirium" as a cause of death. Many in prison had use-of-force encounters with law enforcement, like George Floyd, whose cause of death was, in part, classified as attributable to excited delirium.

For years, "excited delirium" was used by medical examiners as a cause of death usually for those who had an encounter with law enforcement where force was used. Other than the Association of Medical Examiners, who recognized "excited delirium" up until a year ago, no other professional association — including the American Medical Association — has ever recognized this condition according to De Jesus. De Jesus said there was no test for it. It's not quantifiable or measurable by any scientific method.

The origin of "excited delirium" came from law enforcement back in the 1980s when they allegedly observed individuals high on cocaine would go into a state of excited delirium and spontaneously die even without physical contact with law enforcement. It then extended to individuals under the influence of other drugs like methamphetamine and even pharmaceuticals. The overwhelming commonality among these men and women was that there was force and restraint used on them, when autopsies showed injuries consistent with use of force or signs of asphyxia. De Jesus said 56% of these deaths were disproportionately of those who were black and Latino.

There have been numerous cases where hogtying was used as a method of restraint. Euphemistically, it's called "PMR" (prone maximal restraint), and courts have admitted expert testimony suggesting such a method of restraint can cause asphyxia (see the 2018 case *Good v. City of Southaven*, for example).

De Jesus said law enforcement even went so far as to theorize that blacks are more susceptible to excited delirium than other races despite no evidence to support this. These observations are reminiscent of the days when sugarcane plantation owners gave their slaves cocaine to increase productivity only to later lament that many of them became stir-crazy and ran away. The racially tinted observations by law enforcement — of an alleged condition that has never been medically accepted or scientifically validated — somehow made their way into the lexicon of medical examiners who are medically trained and licensed physicians. As they work more closely with law enforcement, perhaps that's why they are the only group that recognized such a cause of death. Nevertheless, even they abandoned it a year ago.

According to De Jesus, many other states are currently considering removing "excited delirium" from allowable classifications of death.

## Effective Communication

By Dortell Williams, Post Reporter

**M**Y EARLIEST LESSONS in human communication were in a dysfunctional home where yelling, cursing, belittling, and name-calling were the norm. Hanging out in the streets, I was subjected to more yelling, name-calling, and constantly being cut off in mid-sentence. The interruptions weren't from disrespect or lack of interest; we were exhibiting the signs of impulsivity, lack of discipline, and an inability to actively listen. We also tended to assume what the other person was going to say, which is a 50-50 crapshoot at best.

In prison, it is more of the same. One of the biggest challenges on the inside for someone who has learned to effectively communicate is to complete a simple sentence. Everyone seems too impatient and too impulsive to let a complete thought play out. The irony is none of us are going anywhere fast. Most of us have too much time, yet listening is the hardest wall to knock down.

Surprisingly, it was a correctional officer who gave me one of my most memorable lessons in courteous communication. In an attempt to be polite, I walked over to two correctional officers engaged in conversation. I said, "Excuse me," and proceeded to ask my question.

One of the officers stopped me. "No. That's not how it goes, dude," he said. "You ask 'Excuse me,' then wait for permission to speak. Otherwise, you're still interrupting. You're still being rude."

It was a thought-provoking interaction, yet it made sense. I later learned that this courtesy allows the speaker to finish the sentence and mentally mark where the thought ended to resume after the interruption. Yeah, I get that.

Malcolm X said that communication is simply to understand and be understood. He also said that if you tell someone something and they don't understand, it's on you. In other words, you have to take responsibility to communicate effectively, patiently, clearly.

Yet speaking is not the only way to communicate. We communicate with our body language, how we walk, with our hand gestures, and how we wear our clothes. We make statements about ourselves by the posters on our walls, the stickers on our personal effects; these all tell others something about us.

As social creatures, our faces are probably our biggest public communicators — consciously or unconsciously. When we're angry, we are telling people, "Now is not a good time." When sadness is on our face, we invite compassion, intervention, and care. When we smile, we invite a welcome; we are communicating good, contagious vibes.

There is also a credibility aspect to our communication. When we fail to keep our word, we are communicating to others that we are untrustworthy, unfit for anything more than an acquaintance, if that. We cut off our own resources, opportunities, and possibilities just by failing to keep it 100%. I'm not hooking up anyone I know with a liar. That's a hard pass.

Another detrimental communication style is pressuring. No one likes to be pressured. I have learned to put my ask out there. If the person declines, I have to respect that. If I'm really passionate about the ask, I might respectfully try to persuade them. Yet there is a fine line between *persuasion* and *coercion*.

In addition, the skill to read faces has served me well because I know that life is 50% perception and 50% reality. How we are perceived is why we are even having this conversation. People will often communicate to you, though unwittingly, by their facial expressions.

Above all, the idea is to keep our conversations positive. If people walk away when they see us coming, they are telling us something. Prison is toxic enough without the constant negative interactions we bring to others with all the gossip, complaining, and superficiality. One way to keep positive is to add some substance to our conversations. Substance comes from exploring the world

(continued on page 16)

(from *Effective Communication*, pg. 15) through books, educational television, and self-help content. That's where iron sharpens iron and we become conduits to one another's growth. That's where you call home and your folks say, "There's something different about you." That's where the Board of Parole Hearings declares, "We find you suitable for parole."

That is the power of effective communication.



Chauncey Crowder (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

## A Good Fit

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

**E**ARLY IN 2024, at the Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, California, a new Facility E Library Technical Assistant (LTA) advertised to fill a critical customer service-oriented clerk position in the library. The proactive LTA stated she wanted to make visits to her venue "as comfortable and welcoming as a visit to a library on the outside." Out of 24 candidates, 15 were interviewed for the key position.

A notable applicant was Chauncey Crowder, 46, who more than fit the need for the open position. With prior library clerk experience, he was articulate and had prior peer mentoring experience, a plus in the library. In the interview, Crowder spontaneously noted his desire to assist those inexperienced in complicated legal research and computer use; many on Facility E are elderly. His comments indicated a vital attribute to the job. Coupled with his prior positive performance evaluations and laudatory testimonials in his file, his workplace ethics appeared exemplary and he was hired.

Noted by Gary Whiteside, a regular library user, Crowder's success is obvious: "I've seen him [Crowder] working in the back area when he heard a request for help on the computer way up front," Whiteside related. "He gave his book search to an-

other clerk and spent 10 minutes with the old guy on the computer, teaching him how it worked." Delegating for efficiency is a rare practice among incarcerated workers; Crowder obviously had prior experience.

"Yeah, I worked in a warehouse for over 10 years on the outside. I guess I picked up some good habits from by bosses back then," Crowder said.

His exceptional work ethics have been noted by the Facility E LTA, "He does a great job. I'm lucky to have him working here."

## Developing Workplace Ethics to Prepare for Parole

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

**Y**OUR DAY-TO-day contributions to dorm or cell cleanliness, dedication to workouts and sports on the yard, and general good behavior in the day-room are not documented by anyone, anywhere in your central file. When you send a biographical presentation to the parole board, simply telling them "I am a sociable person and a good worker" is not enough. You must show them evidence of your demeanor and work ethic by providing solid evidence of good behavior. If you don't have proof — find it; present it.

Your job performance is regularly noted and evaluated on a work supervisor's report. Listed under 10 "factors" on this important document are social categories like attitude toward coworkers, supervisors, and staff; as well as effort displayed in assigned work; teamwork; and creativity on the job. In addition, there is space for a narrative, also written by your supervisor, to elaborate on special projects you worked on or talents you display at the job site — or what areas of improvement you need to address.

How do you feel about your job? Is your current occupation simply a place to go kill time, gain good conduct credits, or bring home a paycheck? Or is your job as meaningful to you as a family visit? When you are tardy and exhibit poor job attendance, or display a careless attitude toward job responsibilities, this can hurt you immensely at a parole hearing. Your employability upon release is a major motivator for your eligibility for freedom. Examine your C-File in advance of your hearing and check which factors you need to address to improve your work ethics, thus, offering an encouraging board presentation.

Your job performance reviews are not simply handed out like a school report card at the end of the semester — you must request copies from your supervisor to find out how you are doing. Do this at the end of every quarter, and request those for the past year. Examine these reports closely.

Depending on the quality of your supervisor, you may receive verbal on-the-job corrections or compliments of your behavior and these issues inevitably captured on your reviews and examined by board members. When corrected by your supervisor, take note of the matter and focus on rectifying the issue if it is negative. If you do not address the problem, you can be assured the issue will appear in writing on your performance ratings and end up as part of a board hearing. Tell your work supervisor how important your job review is to you.

Another caution: Many old-school supervisors look at job performance evaluations as a necessary evil. They will lazily grade their employees as "Average" performers and let it go at that. This prehistoric approach is frequently accompanied by comments like, "If I grade a worker 'Above Average' or 'Excellent', he won't have anything to shoot for next quarter..." If you want to excel in the workplace and impress the board, talk plainly to your supervisor and strive to improve your scores. Get those coveted above-average ratings. Encourage your boss to use the "Supervisor's Comments" section to elaborate on your interest in positive work performance and ethics, possibly reflecting your future employability. Even the fact you are advising your boss how interested you are in improvement is important.

A lack of job type selection in the department should not affect the board's evaluation of your work history; however, more credit may be given to their considerations if your positions were educational tutoring, the prison industry authority, or a clerk in a program office. This is a simple fact of life. Custodial and yard maintenance work are just as valuable to prison operations as a captain's clerk. Overcome this potential disadvantage by relating the merits of a humble job, like a building porter or laundry worker, in your board presentation. If you enjoy the organization and structure of daily cleaning tasks and the importance of hygiene, or the side benefits of friendly contacts with staff, explain to the board how you gravitate to these positions.

Be sure to take advantage of your provable outstanding work ethics by showing the board. Treat your job and positive work ethics as the sole, direct evidence the board can evaluate regarding your daily demeanor; the only telling you should do is, "I don't have to go to work; I *get* to go to work."

# Saints Around the World

(November 1 is All Saints Day)



Mata Amritanandamayi, *Hinduism* (Wikipedia.org)



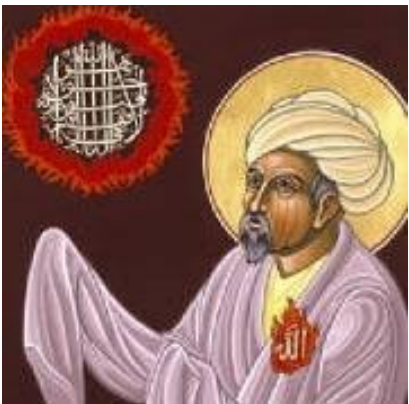
Hillel the Elder, *Judaism* (Patheos.com)



Akiva ben Yoseph, *Judaism* (Britannica.com)



Joan of Arc, *Christianity* (Catholic.org)



Mansur Al-Hallaj, *Judaism* (Barakainstitute.org)

Walk in simplicity and uprightness ... for it is there you will find the science that creates saints. —St. Julie Billiart

# My Grandmother's Fish

By Ed Atherly, Mule Creek State Prison

SOME OF MY best childhood memories were created during visits to my grandmother's house in Hollywood. Visiting her meant getting to spot celebrities while I hiked Runyon Canyon all day. It meant strolling the Walk of Fame and taking in a double feature at the El Capitan or Chinese Theatre. I had some great experiences visiting my grandmother. As I look back and reflect, however, those adventures paled in comparison to the lesson that I learned from my grandmother's fish.

In her study, my grandmother had an enormous freshwater fish tank. It occupied the length of an entire wall. In it resided two behemoths, massive oscars, with beady red eyes and chunks of flesh ripped from their foreheads; the cost of many a fish battle I presumed. I would spend countless hours staring into that tank watching as they swam slowly, occasionally glaring at me with the eerie confidence of great white sharks. These oscars were indeed equally as imposing as their habitat. To this day, I have yet to see oscars so large. There was something about the size of those fish that fascinated my young mind.

Back at home, we also owned a fish tank and two oscars. Ours, however, were relatively small by comparison. Yet, I was determined to own oscars just as massive as Grandma's. I would take my allowance, go to the pet store after school, and purchase as many feeder fish as I could, believing that if I just fed them a hearty diet of goldfish, then my oscars would grow big and strong. Much to my chagrin, after several months of feeding, the only thing expanding about them were their bellies. Surely, my grandmother must have owned a special breed of oscars.

I finally disclosed my intentions to my parents and inquired, "Why won't my oscars grow like Grandma's?" My parents told me the secret behind how Grandma's oscars got to be so big. They said it was because her tank was bigger than ours. I asked why the fish simply wouldn't grow first, and then once they became too big for the tank, we could invest in a bigger aquarium and put them in there. They told me that oscars only grew in direct proportion to their environment. Accordingly, if we owned a bigger tank then I could expect the fish to grow. I find that this lesson has special resonance of late.

My own subjective experiences as a human being have been profoundly shaped by the environment in which I lived and worked. Thankfully, I spent most of my early adult life in professional environments that were conducive to my growth. Unfortunately, that often causes the environmental culture shock of prison to be that much more glaring. At times, I feel like a traveler stuck in a foreign land, unable to speak the language. I have been fortunate to carve out spaces where I can both individually and collectively engage with subjects that offer me the growth benefits of simultaneous intellectual stimulation and emotional regulation. Conversely, there are times when I attend a group, for example, that proves potentially more harmful than beneficial, or a class where the discourse with my classmates is so banal that I feel I could tear my hair out — if I had any.

Our lives can often feel like tiny fish aquariums: pressure-filled and restricting. Whether our tanks resemble stone walls and iron bars, a dead-end job, or a toxic relationship, we wrestle with the nagging suspicion that our own growth is being restricted by our environment. I have learned not to resist that feeling, but to embrace it. It means you may be outgrowing your aquarium and it is time for a change.

For those of us impacted by it, we may find our desire for more fertile environment validated by the prison system's transition to the California Model. However, completely changing the environment will take time, and patience is required. It is not an easy task to grow inside of fish tanks that we have outgrown. If your ability to seek out a tank better suited to support your growth is just not feasible, then I encourage you to continue to grow in all the places no one expects you to.

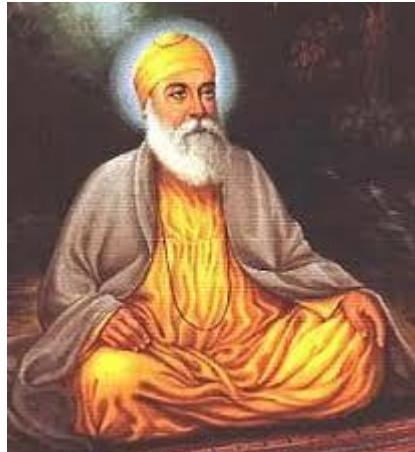


(Not his grandmother's fish) (AquariumScience.org)

# Saints Around the World



Therese of Lisieux, Christianity (Wikipedia.org)



Guru Nanak Dev ji, Sikhism (dlshq.org)



Mirza Husayn-Ali Nuri, Baha'i (Historica.Fandom.com)



Rabi'a of Basra, Islam (NewWorldEncyclopedia.org)



Ignatius of Loyola, Christianity (FranciscanMedia.org)

# "The Welcoming Prayer"

By Brian Warner, Mule Creek State Prison



Praying Hands, 15th century Albrecht Dürer, crayon on paper.

SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, spiritual masters have taught that silence is where one meets God. Silence is God's language. The Prison Contemplative Fellowship founded by Ray Leonardini at the Folsom State Prison brought that wisdom within our walls. He teaches people how to gain insight and healing by practicing silent prayer in his book, *Finding God Within: Contemplative Prayer for Prisoners* (Lantern Books, 2018).

Spending time in silence lets one disconnect from the endless stream of thoughts that run through the brain. Over time, the practice helps buried memories emerge. These insights allow character defects and triggers to be examined. It's through this process of introspection that God brings healing.

"The Welcoming Prayer" is one way to enter into silence. It can also help mindful thought govern responses to stressful situations throughout the day. When one sees daily encounters as points for personal growth, it becomes easier to detach from unhealthy expectations that peers and society impose. A friend and long-time practitioner of centering prayer observed that "The Welcoming Prayer" can help one "feel how your body is feeling before you can name it." This is how distressful emotions can be "welcomed," then managed.

It took the trip to prison, encouragement from my sisters, and much prayer and reflection before I learned how to start my life over. In the process, I discovered a vocation in writing and painting.

Experts in trauma suggest that prayer can play an important part in the healing process, whatever road you are on. Check out Leonardini's book; try the practice and see for yourself.

## The Welcoming Prayer

Welcome, welcome, welcome.  
I welcome everything  
that comes to me today.  
I welcome everything that comes  
because I know  
it's for my healing.

I welcome all  
thoughts, feelings,  
emotions, persons,  
and situations.

I let go my desire for  
affection, esteem,  
approval, pleasure,  
survival, or security.



The Welcoming Prayer, © 2024 Brian Warner, watercolor on paper



# ANGEL TREE

Prison Ministry

Applications are available in the chapel. Don't forget to sign up for a special gift for your children!

# Saints Around the World



Ba'al Shem Tov, Judaism (Blogs.bu.edu)



Francis of Assisi, Christianity (NCRegister.com)



Hildegard von Bingen, Christianity (EpiscopalChurch.org)



Siddhartha Guatama, Buddhism (LionsRoar.com)



Maximilian Kolbe, Christianity (Newsletter.CompanionsOfStAnthony.org)

# Chasing Rehabilitation

By Dortell Williams, Post Reporter

**I** REMEMBER CROSSING paths with the sociologist as if it were only days ago. The day was bright and clear, a perfect day for my jog around the cracked and broken asphalt track at the California State Prison—Los Angeles County in Lancaster.

The sociologist emerged from the Administrative Segregation door sporting gray slacks and a gray and purple-checkered dress shirt. After commenting on the beauty of the day, I seized on the moment by asking for the definition of “rehabilitation” as we walked in tandem. To my utter surprise, the sociologist laughed right there on the spot. “There is no definition of rehabilitation in prison,” he retorted emphatically. Indeed, *rehabilitation* is an elusive word for those chasing it.

Only 11-14% of those interviewed by the Board of Parole Hearings are found suitable. Many more leave prison never having challenged themselves in that regard. They never enjoyed the benefits of self-reflection, growth, and personal transformation.

According to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, to rehabilitate means “to restore (a handicapped person, for example) to useful life through education and therapy; to reinstate the good name of; to restore to a former rank, privileges or rights of.” Of course, some of us were never habilitated in the first place; we are starting completely from the bottom — those raised in gangs, drug and theft rings, mentored in criminality from a young age. Nevertheless, there’s hope for us all.

Personally, I don’t use the word *rehabilitation*. As exemplified by the sociologist, the definition of that word is too often abstract, shallow, and (apparently) laughable in some contexts. Still, people seem to grasp the concept of transformation more readily. To humanize it, I use the phrase “personal transformation.” I base my personal transformation on social values.

Unfortunately, too many of us in prison learn the definition of the anti-social before we learn its antonym. I recall my reaction when I first learned that I was deemed anti-social. I was in denial. I rejected the label wholesale, rationalizing that I had family and friends with whom I enjoyed good relations. I wasn’t *aso-*cial, I was *anti*-social: acting against social norms, committing crimes.

*Pro-social* means the exact opposite of *anti-social*: acting in ways that contribute and are conducive to society; helping others, accepting others, respecting our neighbor’s property. Being pro-social also means following the rules of our environment, being sociable, being contributing members of our community — the polar opposite of selfishness.

I learned I was selfish in 1989, the year I was arrested for murder. Boredom in the Los Angeles County Jail led me to read my first book in its entirety. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Malcolm showed me that I was the problem, not everyone else. I also noted how he did his time. He read, he studied, he bettered himself.

With that guidance instilled, I then read the Bible. The Bible is one place I was able to get a sense of morality, reinforcing my mom’s teachings, and overshadowing the criminal culture my father had bred.

Finally, Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Simon and Schuster, 1984) helped me develop coping skills and the resilience needed to withstand the toxicity of prison for the past 34 years. Countless college classes only deepened my understanding and transformation.

For those who have the privilege and challenge of a parole hearing, it might help to know that the crux of the question: “Who were you then and who are you now?” The new person is the representation of your personal transformation. Yet your transformation is bigger than the parole board. Your personal transformation represents a shining arc from failure to success, from the old anti-social person who took from society to the new pro-social person who now has endless potential and capacity to transform any world you enter: home, work, even the world itself.

**Sources:** *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd edition. bph.ca.gov/parole-statistics.

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TheMarshallProject.org



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

The

# Alchemist

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

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

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

Several elements represent a career, occupation, or trade, and every one of them requires the discovery of the **Man** first. Can you create **Doctor**, **Farmer**, **Fishermen**, **Firefighter**, **Hunter**, **Sailor**, **Scientist**, and **Warrior**?

Hint: You may have to make **Hero** for one of the elements.



(VectorStock.com)

# Psych View

## What Programs Have You Not Participated In?

By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

**D**O NOT BLOW off suggested existing programs and run on about “redesigning” the institution. That may result in being viewed as entitled or at least rude. If programs are available, and have been suggested to you, and you have the ability to get to them, you need to do so. If you don’t like the programs, ask yourself why. What do you need to change, in yourself, to make them work for you? Focus on elements that you can take away from them, rather than negativity. Bring something to the table, and you will take something from it, even if the only thing you take is improved patience with other people.

A lot of activities in life are stressful and may require concessions. We don’t all enjoy doing our taxes, for example. Part of living in a society with others is getting along and, at times, doing things we don’t like to do. That is part of being mature and reasonable. If you can’t be mature and reasonable, you will not appear to be someone who can function in society and you probably won’t be a good candidate for parole.

Sexual offenders, in particular, fear the stigma of attending treatment groups offered to them. This is a mistake. You may believe you are serving a limited sentence, only to find yourself hospitalized involuntarily due to the lack of compliance with treatment. While treatment may not guarantee your release (I know individuals who have pursued it with sincerity), it is better to try.

There are many reasons why a program may not be available to you. Even in those situations, an effort to make good use of your time should be made.

I hope that I’ve addressed most of the possible problems, but it’s likely I have not. This is a slight rewrite from the first edition of my book. As I become more aware of situations and possibilities, the material can change. I expect you to try to evolve, and I will do the same.

## Exactly Whose Fault is It, Anyway?

By Daniel Larson, Feature Reporter

**W**HE THE INCARCERATED spend a lot of time with faults: my fault, their fault, the San Andreas Fault. It’s easy to point the finger. This is not just us confined humans. It’s everyone. Most of us had jobs before prison. We know that plastic finger of blame is pointed quickly, away from one toward another. It’s everyone. Mostly.

If we take a second and think about all this faulting, we come to the granddaddy of all faults: Selfishness. It gets everyone, knows no boundaries, and the thing is this: Selfishness is at the root of 90% (my estimate) of most all human interaction problems. Check out your own personal list.

My list was jealousy, addiction — lately anger is a trigger. I say I was addicted. Really though, I thought only about myself. My high. My fleeting pleasure from the drug.

Did it affect my family? It did. I selfishly put my needs above the needs of my family. Maybe the kiddos would have rather I be home at night to play board games (prior to the computer age), go over some homework, or just enjoy each other’s company. My addiction rooted in selfishness came first. I made hundreds of excuses. All of them good ones. All of them lies. The kicker was that they knew it. Your family knows. They knew — Dad lied. So, what to do?

Well, here we are in this grand experiment. Why not try to attempt to live our lives unselfishly. Try to eliminate one thing — so go big. Go for being unselfish. Some here do. Being unselfish is a choice, be it you, us, staff, or a citizen. For me it starts with a thought: I think I will be unselfish. But with what?

In prison, this is the warning some give: “Don’t confuse kindness for weakness.” Which means, “Don’t overlook my power to do.” Is that unselfish? Be careful. Know that greater than the power to do is the power not to do.

Everyone in prison has been that guy off the bus. That bus still runs, and one day it’s likely to be here again for all of us. We have a legacy that will remain after we leave.

Me? I think I’m pretty stingy with material things. But I do work every day on being unselfish with my attitude, ear, and bad advice. I fail. The process isn’t perfect. But every day I begin anew with the thought: “Today, I will be unselfish.” Hopefully, it will change my behavior and actions. Can’t hurt anything to try. It’s like selling encyclopedias door to door; not every house will get one. But for every “no” you hear, you are one door closer to “yes.”

What do you think? Let us know.

# Those Who Came Before

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

NOVEMBER IS NATIVE American Heritage Month, an observance to bring awareness and appreciation of the first human inhabitants of North and South America. While most experts believe these first humans came from Asia to the Americas some 15,000 years ago, others think it may have been as early as 35,000 years. Regardless, by 12,500 years ago, these First Peoples were living on both continents, from the east to west coasts, stretching from the ice-covered lands of the arctic to the southern tip of South America.

On a hot July afternoon, Michael “Strong Bear” Frederiksen and I waited for an escort to R&R to pick up third-quarter packages — that’s when the subject of this November observance came up. We stood in front of the Red Tail Hawk Lodge on Facility E when Strong Bear mentioned that the Mule Creek State Prison was built atop an ancient Miwok village. He mentioned there was a patch of old rock on the minimum yard containing grinding stones the Miwok used to process acorns, one of their main sources of food. Strong Bear suddenly pointed upward to a bald eagle as it flew northward. I had not seen a bald eagle in four decades, and it was an awe-inspiring sight. Yet, to Strong Bear, there was a deep spiritual connection to the majestic bird and its powerful spirit. It was a sign, and it happened as we were having a conversation about the Miwok who lived on this very land. I felt it, something akin to the sacred, and with this a desire to tell their story.

Marty Natividad is the Native American spiritual leader at Mule Creek. He is well-liked and deeply respected by the lodge members on each of the facilities, men who come from various tribes throughout the coun-



Members of the Red Tail Hawk Lodge. From Left—Joseph Davis, Michael Frederiksen, Kenneth Brown, Jose Monsivias, and Pedro Garibay. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Natividad told us what he knew of the Ione Band of Miwok Indians; however, he was keen to emphasize that the ancestors were still on the lands now occupied by the prison. He and Strong Bear explained that the spirits of the ancestors were in the very rocks, animals, and plants around us, for everything has a spirit.

For thousands of years, the Miwok lived peacefully in hundreds of small villages in Northern and Central California, around the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, the San Francisco Bay area, and in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. There were three groups of Sierra Miwok: Northern, Central, and Southern, and they made up the greatest number of Miwok people who lived in over a hundred villages in the foothills of the west slope of the Sierra Nevada.

According to Ione Miwok oral history, the tribe originally inhabited the Buena Vista Peaks, which are located just south of Ione, at a time when water covered the floor of the Sacramento Valley. They were predominantly hunter-gatherers who moved their semi-permanent villages (rancherias) to follow their food sources.

Prior to first contact with Europeans in the 1500s, the Miwok numbered approximately 22,000. By the 1850s, there were approximately 3,000 (today the number is around 3,500). This early contact with Europeans brought epidemics from diseases for which the Miwok had no immunity. Add to this the Spanish mission system that enslaved Native Americans by the thousands and took their land. Then came the California Gold Rush of 1849, which brought utter devastation to an already decimated Miwok people through a genocide that became the unwritten policy of the state of California. American gold miners killed the Miwok at will and took their land. The survivors scattered across the region where many worked as farm and ranch laborers in order to exist. Capt. John Sutter also enslaved Native Americans as early as 1839 when he built his fort. He is said to have raided the areas around Ione in order to capture and enslave this source of free labor.

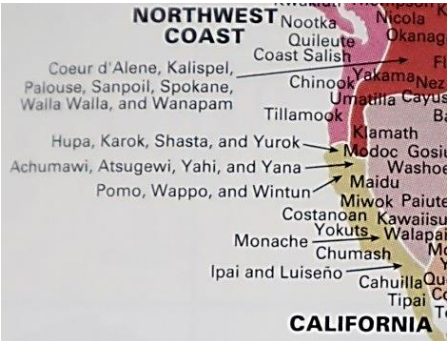
Because of all the violence done to the Native Americans, the U.S. government made three treaties with the Ione Miwok; however, Congress failed to ratify the treaties and kept them secret until 1905. As a result, the Ione Miwok were forced off the land, denied their rights, and made homeless.

In 1915, the Bureau of Indian Affairs conducted a census and determined 101 Miwok still lived in the vicinity of Ione. From these were formed the Buena Vista Rancheria, the Jackson Rancheria, and the Ione Band of Miwok Indians. A 40-acre rancheria was proposed for the Ione Band, but it failed to materialize and the people settled on the site anyway.

In 1972, the U.S. government gave the land to members of the Ione Band, but not to the tribe. After much legal struggle over ensuing decades, in 2015 the federally recognized tribe of the Ione Band of Miwok Indians received 228 acres of their own. The tribe is now led by an elected council, currently chaired by Sara Dutschke Setshwaelo, and conducts its business from Plymouth, California.

A walk on the yard is a different experience today than it was a few weeks ago. One can feel the presence of the Miwok ancestors; one can imagine them walking this same ground for thousands of years of peaceful existence. Here they had everything they ever needed, and they never thought to take more than the land could give. Those who came before us lived in harmony with their surroundings and took care of the Earth as any good steward would do. The world could learn from their example.

Sources: Britannica.com; Generative AI; google.com; nps.gov; Wikipedia.org.



(The World Book Encyclopedia, 2017)



Getting a Driver’s License

**Dear Walter:** What is the process like for having to get a car and driver’s license after being in prison?

**A**FTER SO MANY years without a driver’s license, I’ve had to go through the whole process again. I took the written test in May (100%!). Now, finding help to take the driving test is a problem. So, I went to the bank, and they gave me the business card of Enterprise, a dealership they regularly work with. I tried to get them to use the test drive as my DMV driver’s test. That didn’t work, but they said I didn’t need a license to buy a car. So I’ve applied for a bank loan via the dealership. If approved, they will pick me up; I will select a car and sign for it. They will deliver the car. I will then find a licensed driver to come with me to the DMV for the driving test. If I must, I’ll pay someone \$50 to \$100 to help me — all solved!

I’m mandated for a year of transitional housing, so if I’m staying here, I will go to truck driving school. The DMV is advertising for truck drivers; they are saying you can earn \$1,500 to \$2,000 a week as a truck driver.

**Walter Lewis** served 45 years of an 18-years-to-life sentence before being released in 2024 under the elderly parole process. He is currently on parole in the Sacramento area. Write to Walter with your questions about parole: Mule Creek Post, % MCIC Associate Warden, attn.: Ask Walter, P.O. Box 409090, Lone, CA 95640



# A Life in Transition

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

**I**N JULY 2024, the *Mule Creek Post* interviewed Hollie Garrett III, former resident of the Mule Creek State Prison and recent parolee. Garrett, a California State University, Sacramento alum, is now several months into his first post-incarceration year in the San Francisco Bay area.

**MCP (Mule Creek Post):** What are the disciplines you acquired in your rehabilitative experience that, in retrospect, best prepared you for your transition to the larger community?

**HG (Hollie Garrett):** It was all about my faith in the process of change — faith, discipline, and consistency. I feel that my greatest asset is the professional level of interpersonal communication that I developed over the years. My ability to communicate effectively is an asset that sets me apart from many of my peers.

**MCP:** How have you benefited from your commitment to academic enrichment?

**HG:** My education hasn’t greatly benefited me as of yet, except it has put me around places and people that have offered me their encouragement and support since I’ve been home. Outside of that, my accomplishments look good on paper, but I was lacking experience. Now that I am gaining the on-ground experience in combination with my educational background and accomplishments, I will eventually be able to choose the career and salary I want. My accomplishments also give me credibility that increases with time, as I continue to let my success outshine my past mistakes.

**MCP:** Please describe the types of psychosocial support that the disciplines and community of your spiritual faith have created.

**HG:** Since I have been home, I have been attending different men’s wellness groups in search of a community of men that think like me. I wasn’t going to find that in the ‘hood. As a Project Rebound student, I found it comforting to have a support system of people who I could talk to and seek help from. Their doors are always open. These were people who believed in me and put all their resources behind me to see me be successful.

**MCP:** What is an area of rehabilitation that you would revisit and strengthen given your transitional experience and present circumstance?

**HG:** I don’t think that I would need to revisit any areas of rehabilitation. I think I did all the work that I could on myself there. Now that I am home, I can take the work I already did and refine it.

**MCP:** Do you have any advice for incarcerated people about to be released?

**HG:** I think all incarcerated people should live their fullest lives while they’re in there. Look for ways to improve and express yourselves. Any time spent not in preparation to be successful of the outside is wasted. The best way to prepare for success outside is to be successful inside. Start working on your goals right now. Don’t wait. Take advantage of the time you have to learn yourself, and, prepare for a future outside of prison.

**MCP:** What has been your greatest surprise upon your return?

**HG:** My greatest surprise is how well life is going for me. I have regular stresses every day, but I have had successes at every turn. The support I have gotten from people who want to see me be successful is overwhelming.

**MCP:** What has been your greatest joy?

**HG:** My greatest joy has been the time that I have been able to spend with my family. Also, just being consistent in myself, and remaining true to who I said I was.

**MCP:** Do you have any message for incarcerated college students?

**HG:** I looked at college in prison first as a way to get out of there. And while it was serving that purpose, I began to see it as a way for me to stay out of there and live a successful life. There are many resources and support systems for formerly incarcerated students as well. Take full advantage of these opportunities.

**MCP:** Has the society that you returned to changed, or did you change?

**HG:** My take is that society has not changed. I definitely have changed so my environment feels different. When I first came home, I felt so out of place. I wanted that old feeling back. That comfort. But, I realized that I spent over 10 years very intentionally choosing to be uncomfortable as a motivation to get out of prison. So, I’m still choosing to live like that as I build my life over from the ground up.

Hollie Garrett  
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)



La abogada **Maya Emig** se especializa en libertad condicional y ley de convicción posterior. Anteriormente estuvo en el California Parole Advocacy Program, en donde ella representó a miles de candidatos a libertad condicional (parolees) en asuntos de revocación. Ella también tiene amplia experiencia representando a prisioneros sirviendo cadena perpetua (“vidales”) en audiencias de consideración para libertad condicional. La Sra. Emig ha hablado en The Today Show y Dateline sobre los asuntos de elegibilidad de los vidales. La Sra. Emig se graduó de la UC San Diego y la McGeorge School of Law.

## Entregan Sus Documentos a Tiempo

Por **Maya Emig**, Post Columnist

**E**N EL PROCESO de audiencia de idoneidad para la libertad condicional, hay ocasiones en las que ocurren situaciones y las audiencias se posponen o continúan. Quizás el comisionado este enfermo, a haya un motín en la institución, o alguna otra circunstancia imprevista por la que se posponga a continúe la audiencia. Esas continuaciones/aplazamientos pueden tardar más de cinco o seis meses en reprogramarse, notificar a todos involucrados y que se vuelan a reunir. Sin embargo, un retraso a su audiencia porque trajo sus documentos el día de la audiencia y el panel continuó con su asunto porque no presentó sus documentos de manera oportuna es evitable y costoso para usted y su libertad. Entregue sus documentos a tiempo.

Recientemente, una persona acudió a su audiencia con 20 páginas de documentos que incluían importantes planes de prevención de recaídas. El panel de audiencias continuó con dicha audiencia debido a esas pre-

sentaciones tardías. Mientras que fue una decisión reflexiva del panel para que esos documentos pudieran ser revisados exhaustivamente, fue una demora evitable y costosa atribuible al candidato de la libertad condicional.

Si eres alguien que deja las cosas para el último momento, impone plazos estrictos y respétalos. Si está creando planes de prevención de recaídas al último minuto y los está presentando, piense en lo que eso transmite. Los planes de prevención de recaídas son documentos vitales que realmente deben crearse con años de anticipación y ser actualizados después de cada nueva clase a la que asiste, y cada vez que intenta una habilidad de afrontamiento, y no funciona, y cada vez que intenta una habilidad de afrontamiento, y funciona. Para aquellos momentos en los que tenga una habilidad de afrontamiento que no funcione, elimínala de su lista y busque y pruebe otras que tal vez funcionen. Para aquellos momentos en los que tenga una habilidad de afrontamiento que funcione, muévela más arriba en su lista de habilidades de afrontamiento.

Les explico a mis clientes que la fecha límite para enviar los documentos es de un mes de anticipación, y que realicen un seguimiento del día en que enviaron sus documentos por correo. La recomendación de la junta es de un mínimo de 20 días de anticipación. Cuando reviso el contenido de los expedientes de 10 días de mi cliente con el (generalmente una semana antes de su audiencia)—y faltan documentos—estoy abordando el problema con la junta, en lugar de estar pensando en el Servicio Postal de los Estados Unidos.

“USPS ahora a tiempo solo el 83% del correo de primera clase durante el trimestre fiscal actual,” su peor tasa en tres años. Eso es menos que el 86% en el primer trimestre y el 91% tanto en el cuarto trimestre del año fiscal 2023 como en el mismo periodo del año pasado,” de acuerdo con un artículo en el *Ejecutivo Gubernamental* del 22 de febrero de 2024, titulado “Mientras USPS Instituye Reformas en la Red, la Entrega de Correo Alcanza Su Nivel Más Bajo en 3 Años,” por Eric Katz.

También los alientos a todos a leer el *Manual Del Proceso de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional de California*, escrito y publicado por Junta de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional este marzo. Incluye 131 páginas de orientación e información útil, disponible en [www.cdcr.ca.gov/bph/wp-content/uploads/sites/161/2024/03/pv-CA-Parole-Hearing-Process-Handbook-For-Publication-03-08-24.pdf](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/bph/wp-content/uploads/sites/161/2024/03/pv-CA-Parole-Hearing-Process-Handbook-For-Publication-03-08-24.pdf).

La sección 2.11 del manual se titula “Documentos Presentados por la Persona Encarcelada o Su Abogado” (páginas 22 a 26 del manual) y cubre temas importantes relacionados con los paquetes de libertad condicional y su contenido, bajo nombres como Pautas Generales Para la Presentación de Documentos, Cosas Que Se Deben Evitar, Documentos Que Probablemente Son Relevante Para la Idoneidad de la Libertad Condicional, Los Plazos Para Presentar Documentos y Como Presentar Documentos a la Junta.

En la sección “Plazos Para la Presentación de Documentos”, se establece la siguiente: “Como regla general, los documentos deben presentarse a la Junta lo antes posible una vez que se haya programado una audiencia de libertad condicional. Las personas encarceladas que aún no han sido programadas para una audiencia de libertad condicional deben esperar hasta que se programe su audiencia de libertad condicional antes de presentar documentos a la Junta. Las personas encarceladas y sus abogados deben presentar los documentos pertinentes a la Junta, con matasellos o correo electrónico a los menos 20 días calendario antes de la audiencia. Esto permite a la Junta recibir y procesar los documentos, e incorporarlos en los paquetes proporcionados al panel de audiencia antes de la audiencia. Este también permite que el panel de audiencia revise adecuadamente todos los documentos. Si los documentos no se presentan a tiempo o se presentan el día de la audiencia, el panel audiencia pueda preguntar porque los documentos no se presentaron antes. Las personas encarceladas y sus abogados deben estar preparados para explicar por qué los documentos no pudieron haberse presentado antes. Una audiencia puede posponerse si el panel de audiencia determina que necesita más tiempo para revisar cualquier documento relevante”.

Como se indicó anteriormente, “los documentos deben presentarse a la Junta lo antes posible una vez que se haya programado una audiencia de libertad condicional”. Para su paquete de libertad condicional, esto permitiría que al médico—al preparar su evaluación de riesgo—revise sus planes, declaración de información, cartas de arrepentimiento y otros documentos pertinentes. Esto sería aconsejable si ya se ha reunido con un abogado, o se siente seguro con su paquete de libertad condicional, o ya ha pasado por el proceso de audiencia. “Los documentos enviados no serán devueltos, por lo que se recomienda a las personas que hagan copias antes de enviarlos” (pág. 26).

**FAMILIES UNITED TO END LWOP**  
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**LOS ANGELES, CA 90047**



# Los Rios College Status

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

A NEWS STORY about Los Rios College and its future within “local correctional facilities” appeared on Yahoo.news on the GTL tablets throughout the California Department of Corrections on July 9, 2024. The story rolled over so quickly that many (most) were unable to read it and were left wondering what it was all about. Los Rios encapsulates Folsom Lake College.

The story, written by Emma Hall for the *Sacramento Bee*, centered on the investigation of nine Los Rios faculty members at Mule Creek regarding the distribution of student-written letters. The letters were meant to be shared with Los Rios’s student senates “expressing concerns and criticism about the program.” Student claims included that “they did not have proper counseling needs and classes were taught without books and computers” along with other concerns. Program alum Angelo Ward (now released and studying at Sacramento State) said, “It’s like our voices don’t matter because we are incarcerated.”

The investigation is of the “physical transportation” of the letters, which might violate prison regulations requiring a prison warden to approve the transport of letters. Program coordinator Kalinda Jones said that the program has operated for years, and “There’s no distributing student letters. It’s a student work they did for a project in class where they were advocating.” The “letters” were sent via email to student senates in December 2023.

Veronica Jones, the prison reentry faculty coordinator said, “I would never imagined I would be investigated because I was cc’d [copied] on an email.” Folsom Lake English instructor Josh Fernandez said, “The law is for people who are actually transporting personal letters outside of the prison ... not for people teaching.”

The investigation, now com-

pleted, found no evidence of any wrongdoing by any Los Rios employee. During the investigation, faculty contracts to work inside the prison expired and new contract negotiations weren’t finalized in time for fall or winter classes; however a small selection of Folsom Lake classes returned in the fall of 2024.

# Mule Creek Author a Winner of USC PEP Essay Contest

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

IN MARCH OF this year, Dymitri Haraszewski submitted his essay “Growing Gills” to a national contest. In April, he received a congratulatory letter informing him that he was one of the winners.

More than a few writers on Facility E at the Mule Creek State Prison in Ione submitted work to the University of Southern California (USC) Prison Education Project’s National Systems-Impacted Writers’ Contest. Most of the 600 writers from around the country who entered received polite postcards of rejection. Just 13 made the cut, and Haraszewski will receive \$100 and five copies of the soon-to-be published chapbook containing the winning essays.

In addition, Harszewski received Honorable Mention from the Tufts University Re-Sentencing Project.

“As a long-term prisoner, I’ve found that writing for publication is one of the few ways I can keep at least one toe in the world outside these walls,” said Harszewski. “Here on MCSP’s ‘E’ Yard, we are blessed to have writing workshops held by El Dorado County’s poet laureate emeritus, Lara Gulate, to whom I am forever grateful for exposing us, the incarcerated writing community, to countless opportunities I’d never have discovered on my own. With her encouragement, I’ve gotten some of my unorthodox scribbling into literary journals, and even been honored with publication, plus some prize money, in a pair of writing contests sponsored by USC and Tufts University. I hope my experience will inspire other incarcerated writers to stay with it!”

Here’s an excerpt from “Growing Gills,” Harszewski’s essay submission to USC’s Prison Education Project (PEP):



(Photo by J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

Prison is more than just a place where the bodies are caged. The physicality of prison is only incidental when it is understood as a condition of being, and particularly, of *being* without being anywhere at all. ... I am no part of this place, and with heartbreaking clarity, I begin to truly understand the meaning of the word ‘alienation.’

And one from “Tenzin’s Song,” one of the poetry submissions to Tufts University:

I recently was told that I’m no wit like Oscar Wilde;  
Nor will I ever be.  
I cannot disagree.  
I can only be me,  
And somehow this alone must be enough.

# What’s New in Voc at MCSP?

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

THE BIGGEST NEWS, according to Vice Principal D. Davis, is that vocational welding at the Mule Creek State Prison will soon provide certifications. This comes as the result of hiring welding instructor Wenzel, an industry-certified welder with 25 years of real-world experience.

According to Davis, the next two years look to be an interesting time at Mule Creek, from the hiring of Wenzel, to certification programs, and the push to make certification available for computer-related technologies soon.

Part of the excitement is centered around the laborer’s program that will be starting soon on Facility A. The program has the goal of helping participants learn skills necessary to be employed as a laborer after release from prison. For incarcerated people interested in participating in a vocational program, speak to your correctional counselor to be put on the list.

Missteps

In the October 2024 edition, page 25’s article “The Development of Humility” failed to provide the name of the publisher of the referenced book for readers to find on their own; *Counting the Omer* was published by Meaningful Life Center in 1996.

Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp  
Post Reporter



WITH ALL OF the stories in the news concerning the war between Russia and Ukraine, this is a good time to shed some deserved light on their tangled, complicated history. Nikolai Gogol's *Taras Bulba* was first published in 1835 and was the cornerstone of a new, uniquely Russian literary tradition. Up until that time, Russian literature was heavily influenced by French and German literary works. It was Gogol, along with his contemporary and friend, poet Alexander Pushkin, who together established this new tradition.

The story centers on the title character, a Cossack leader who spurs his fellows to begin to overthrow their Polish overlords through revolution in the 16th century by sword and rifle. Chapter 6 covers some memorable battle scenes. These are wild-living, hard-drinking warriors who value honor and courage above all else except their Russian Orthodox faith.

In those days prior to the Marxist revolution of 1917, Ukraine was called "Little Russia," and was long thought to be an indivisible part of greater Russia. That may well be part of what fuels today's conflict.

In 1962, Hollywood released a film version of this fine story by the same title, starring Yul Brynner in the title role, with Tony Curtis playing one of Taras' sons. This is a story filled with bravery, honor, and truth, as well as betrayal. Some of Gogol's personal prejudices find their way through pen to paper in this tale of Poles and Jews that may be hard for some to accept, so beware that when the novel was written in 1835, these sentiments were common at the time.

*Taras Bulba* is available through the GTL tablet's library app.

# Investing in Education and Workforce Development

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

THE DECISION TO resume access to California state-sponsored college programs for incarcerated students began with a 2015 study, "Degrees of Freedom: Expanding College Opportunities for Currently and Formerly Incarcerated Californians." The study was conducted and published by a team of public policy researchers led by Debbie Mukamal of the Renewing Communities Initiative — a joint venture formed by the Stanford Criminal Justice Center at the Stanford School of Law and The Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Law and Social Policy at the University of California School of Law.

In recommending the resumption of state-sponsored college programs, the intent of the authors was clear: The State of California was predicted to experience a 6% shortage of the college graduates with bachelor's degrees required to support our estimated workforce development needs. The deficit would eventually exceed 1 million candidates. The risk to the thriving California economy and the tax base that it supports was potentially dire.

Simultaneously, the report estimated that 96% of all of California's prisoners would be returning to their respective communities at the end of their terms. Their rate of recidivism, as calculated, predicted that six out of every 10 prisoners would return with either a parole violation or new conviction within three years of their release.

The Renewing Communities Initiative approach was sober and intentional. They argued — and their research concluded — that when incarcerated students had access to higher-quality educational programs, their rate of recidivism was substantially reduced. Their study and recommendation was aligned with the contemporary philosophy of justice reinvestment as defined by Faye Taxman in her 2014 study, "Justice Reinvestment in the United States: An Empirical Assessment of the Potential Impact of Increased Correctional Programming on Recidivism."

Justice reinvestment is a data-driven approach to improve public safety, reduce corrections and related criminal justice spending, and reinvest savings in strategies that can decrease crime and strengthen neighborhoods. The purpose of justice reinvestment is to manage and allocate criminal justice populations more cost-effectively, generating savings that can be reinvested in evidence-based strategies that increase public safety while holding the offender accountable.

In response to the report, in 2016 restoration of access to California's community college and university educational programs by incarcerated students was both funded and mandated by the state legislature. So how are we doing in 2024? At the Mule Creek State Prison approximately 25% of the incarcerated population is enrolled in California's college or university programs.

This prison-to-education pipeline includes over 100 earned associate of arts degrees, and five earned bachelor's degrees at the Mule Creek State Prison campus of California State University Sacramento (CSUS). Several more CSUS students have completed their requisite studies and are awaiting confirmation of their bachelor's degrees. There are 23 students currently enrolled at CSUS Mule Creek, with a substantial and growing list of qualified candidates and new enrollees. There are, at present, a handful of students enrolled in the California State University Dominguez Hills Master's of humanities program.

At the Mule Creek State Prison, as throughout the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), the prison-to-education pipeline is in full force and effect. To describe the People of the State of California's investment in the education and workforce development of incarcerated students as the charitable activities of a free college program would be a misnomer, and an oversimplification of an important public policy initiative.

The financing and resumption of state-sponsored college programs within CDCR is the intentional implementation of restorative justice policy. It is justice reinvestment. It requires all parties involved in the restorative transaction to

generously invest the types of resources available to them: time, talent, and treasure. It restores incarcerated individuals to the People of the State of California in service of the needs of the common good.

**PEN America Prison Writing Program**



**588 Broadway, Suite 303  
New York, NY 10012**



Submissions by incarcerated writers can be sent to:

**Prison Journalism Project**  
490 43rd Street #360  
Oakland, CA 94609

Follow the Prison Journalism Project (and prisoner-written stories) on social media:

on Twitter and Instagram:  
**@prisonjourn**  
on Facebook:

**@prisonjournalism**

They may also sign up on the PJP website for *Inside Story*, a monthly e-newsletter.



### San Quentin News



## California Prison Publications

**Publication:** *Destinations*  
**Publisher:** Salinas Valley State Prison, Facility D [Soledad]

**Publication:** *Here & Now*  
**Publisher:** Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility [San Diego]

**Publication:** *Mule Creek Post*  
**Publisher:** Mule Creek State Prison [Ione]  
**Year started:** 2018  
**More information:** Online publication. Go to [www.ledger.news](http://www.ledger.news) and click on the “Archives” tab, then search alphabetically for *Mule Creek Post*.

**Publication:** *San Quentin News* (and *Wall City* magazine) [San Quentin]  
**Publisher:** San Quentin State Prison  
**Year started:** 1940 (current publication began in 2008)  
**More information:** Online publication.

**Publication:** *Solano Chronicle*  
**Publisher:** California State Prison–Solano [Vacaville]  
**Year started:** 2021  
**More information:** Online issue

# Prison Newspaper Project

By Max Grinstein, Prison Journalism Project Editor

A version of this article was originally published by the Prison Journalism Project. It can be found at <https://PrisonJournalismProject.org/Prison-Newspaper-Project>.

ON MARCH 24, 1800, the first issues of *Forlorn Hope* rolled off the presses and into the hands of eager readers at New York City debtors’ prison. Though its incarcerated staff initially sought to use *Forlorn Hope* to advocate for debtor emancipation, the paper’s purview soon expanded. Across its spirited pages, readers could find articles on issues as varied as temperance, slavery, and capital punishment.

*Forlorn Hope* shuttered after only six months. But the publication has had a lasting legacy as the first in a long line of U.S. prison newspapers. Since the 19th century, incarcerated journalists have founded hundreds of prison publications in U.S. jails and prisons. Collectively known as the prison press, they have ranged from upstart mimeographed newsletters to established gazettes with organized staffs and outside support.

The goals of the prison press have shifted over time and geography. Some publications are inward-facing, intended primarily for incarcerated audiences. Others seek for their stories to spur activism among outside readers. Yet nearly all prison newspapers have aimed to inform, entertain, and educate their readers and staff alike.

Indeed, there are notable examples of prison press succeeding in this regard. *San Quentin News* (San Quentin State Prison, Calif.) has boasted a 0% recidivism rate among its incarcerated staff since 2008. One publication, *The Prison Mirror* (Minnesota Correctional Facility, Stillwater, Minn.), has been around since 1887. And it was articles in the Louisiana State Penitentiary’s *The Angolite* that led the state to ditch the electric chair in 1990.

But the prison press has not been without its challenges. Prison publications often maintain a tenuous relationship with prison administrations, who may seek to use them as a mouthpiece. Court decisions limiting incarcerated free speech narrowed the scope of their coverage. And budgetary constraints as the U.S. prison population ballooned sunsetted many stalwart publications. From a time when nearly half of prisons had a publication in 1935, only six remained by 1998.

Amid continued threats to the prison press due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Prison Journalism Project (PJP) launched the Prison Newspaper Project to preserve and amplify a remarkable part of the U.S. journalism tradition. Our centerpiece resource, the Prison Newspaper Directory, is an active list of currently operational prison publications.

In order to be listed, publications must offer information that is thoughtful, useful, and obtained from reliable sources. Additionally, we require publications to be at least a year old and to publish at least two issues per year. PJP has obtained copies of two issues of each publication listed and maintains correspondence with their incarcerated staff. We update the directory once a year. If you have information about other newspapers or magazines that belong on this list, please reach out to us at [pjp@PrisonJournalismProject.org](mailto:pjp@PrisonJournalismProject.org).

Spotlighting prison newspapers is central to our mission of training incarcerated journalists and amplifying their stories. As we continue to develop the Prison Newspaper Project, take note of the efforts of prison press staff across the country to strengthen their communities through journalism.

Most of all, though, prison newspapers provide an invaluable archive of the murky world behind bars — one which, through combined effort, is beginning to be revived.

### Prison Newspaper Directory

Prison Journalism Project’s prison newspaper directory is an active list of currently operational prison publications. In order to be included, a publication must be prisoner-produced (even if it is with corrections department supervision) and offer information in a way that is thoughtful, useful, and obtained from reliable sources. Entries are organized by state and then alphabetically. Whenever possible, we’ve provided contact information and links to online issues or digital archives.

With special thanks to Kevin Sawyer — a journalist, PJP contributing editor, and former associate editor of *San Quentin News*, who contributed his own research to this list — and PJP Prison Newspaper Project editor Max Grinstein.

# Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S  
WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee  
Post Columnist

## Positive Affirmations Part 3

Thoughts when someone berates you or makes you angry

IT'S TEMPTING TO blame someone else for your negative feelings; however, being angry is like drinking poison and hoping it will hurt the other person.

We have a choice in the way we process what's going on in the world around us. If you're looking for something to be unhappy about, there will be no dearth of opportunity. A driver cuts you off in traffic, a clerk in a store is rude or inept, your client cancels a meeting at the last minute, etc. When these things happen, and they will, what you "say" to yourself and how you react will determine your mood. If it's negative, the "face" you're displaying to the rest of the world won't be a happy one.

I finally came to the realization that if someone else's actions upset me, I can:

- Find an effective way to address it with him or her;
- Change the way I internalize what he or she is doing;
- Let it go — he or she may be having a bad day; or
- Stew about it, get angry, and make myself miserable.

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

A Good Start to Credit  
By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

THE FIRST GOAL for you should be to achieve a credit score of at least 740. The average FICO score in America in 2017 was 694. I don't like being average and neither should you. I want you to be above the average. I want you to be top tier so that you don't have to pay more in interest charges and fees. Have you ever seen what the CEOs of banks and credit unions earn? It's not unusual for them to pull in a quarter million to over ten million dollars a year. Is it your desire to help make them richer by paying more in fees and interest? Or do you want to keep the extra cash in your own account? This is why your goal is to have a credit score of 740 or higher, so that you don't pay extra to pad corporate profits.

The average FICO score of homebuyers is 728. That's better than the average of 694, but it's still not at our goal of 740 (after you have achieved a 740 score, your next goal is 780).

You have the power to build your credit profile the right way, so that within a year, you have a top-tier credit score that brings you respect. Without this knowledge, you might become like those who find themselves with a stack of plastic cards, far too many bills, an unknown collection account, and an embarrassingly low credit score. It can take months to a year to dig yourself out of a situation like that.

In next month's column, we'll look at a good plan to put you at the top right from the get-go.

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



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™*

Awareness Into Domestic Abuse

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

AIDA  
American Indian Domestic Abuse

Help Wanted:

Mule Creek Post writers needed.

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

Send a Résumé and Writing Sample to:

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

| Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1, 2023 to Sep. 2, 2024) |          |   |          |        |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---|----------|--------|--|
| ●Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)                              | \$10.76  | → | \$10.59  | -1.6%  |  |
| ●ConocoPhillips (COP)                                                | \$117.00 | → | \$113.79 | -2.7%  |  |
| ●CVS Health Corp. (CVS)                                              | \$93.19  | → | \$57.24  | -38.6% |  |
| ●Edison International (EIX)                                          | \$63.62  | → | \$87.03  | +36.8% |  |
| ●Lumen Technologies (LUMN)                                           | \$5.22   | → | \$5.25   | +0.6%  |  |
| ●Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)                                      | \$112.00 | → | \$177.12 | +58.1% |  |
| ●ONEOK Inc. (OKE)                                                    | \$65.90  | → | \$92.36  | +40.2% |  |
| ●Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)                                             | \$41.29  | → | \$58.47  | +41.6% |  |

# Creative Arts Program

The white chrysanthemum / Even when lifted to the eye / Remains immaculate.  
—Matsuo Basho

## Creative Crossroads: Haiku

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter  
and Steven R. Waters,  
Mule Creek State Prison

THE ART OF poetry can help us articulate our pain and anger in constructive ways, helping us to find our purpose in life as well as to find meaning in suffering. Creative writing is cathartic, a safe way to express anything we may have bottled-up inside. A small group gathers every Tuesday in the Facility E hobby room with Lara Gularte, poet laureate emeritus of El Dorado County, to engage our creativity through prose and poetry. June was a month filled with exploring traditional Japanese forms of poetry including haiku, senryu, and haibun. This month we will discuss the haiku. If you are interested in writing haiku, here are some basic facts:

A haiku is a very brief Japanese poem of 17 syllables in three lines: 5-7-5. Haiku are traditionally nature-based and often focus on a seasonal theme. They do not rhyme. Juxtaposition (compare and contrast) is an essential element of this form of poetry, for example, by closely connecting two contrasting images, or by comparing unexpected similarities.

They also employ a cutting word, known as a *kireji* in Japanese. There is no English equivalent to a *kireji*, so English writers will sometimes use a dash or another form of punctuation that causes a break or pause, offering readers a chance to reflect on the connection between the two parts.

The goal of a haiku is to suggest a lot with a little. These are tiny poems with big meanings. It is to offer a moment in time, comprised of two distinct thoughts or images in a way that the combination of these elements creates something new and unexpected, which is often revealed by the final phrase or thought.



Cypress, 16th century, Kanō Eitoku, 67 in × 181.3 in, color on paper with gold leaf, Tokyo National Museum. (Wikipedia.org)

Here are but a few examples from Gularte’s poetry class.

- A hole in the ground  
Fills with rainwater quickly —  
Love goes much deeper.  
-Steven Waters

Littered with remains  
An unforgiving desert  
Laughs loud in death’s face.  
-Steven Waters

Eight-legged insects  
Adrift, flowing in the air  
Visiting shirt, face, hair.  
-Jason Davis

The ocean is warm,  
But dive deep and it is cold.  
What about our love?  
-Patrick G.

One’s greatest asset,  
The good favor of another.  
— Authentically be.  
-Patrick G.
- A lone beetle scurries  
To the safety of the grass.  
A sole comes down, SPLAT!  
-Jason Davis

Eating ugly food  
Not fit for human consumption.  
What does that make us?  
- Lilith Taija Orion

The walls hold secrets  
in the mortar that holds them.  
The rubble will tell the tales.  
- Lilith Taija Orion

Long white needle clouds —  
Contributions to nature  
From modern jet planes.  
-Dimitri

Here upon my knee  
The little fly sits in peace —  
We all need to rest.  
- Dimitri

If you are interested in joining the writers on Tuesdays — under the guidance of Lara Gularte — then send an Inmate Activity Group Request (Form 2016) to the CRM for Creative Writing or Poetry. The only requirements are being open to trying new things, and participation by sharing your work. Bring pen, paper, and imagination. You might surprise yourself.



Mural by Shane Grammer (Courtesy of CNN)



Poet and teacher Lara Gularte

## The Creative Arts Program

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

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

# Running Out of Everything

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

**A**LREADY A GALLON of high-end bottled water can cost almost as much as a gallon of gas at the pump. Notice we are talking about high-end water, not cheap contaminated tap water.

On April 24, *USA Today* published an interesting story, and if we're paying attention, it's a warning. There are 70,000,000 people in America drinking water from toxic systems where PFAS (forever-chemicals) have been found at levels that require reporting to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This is according to the new data the EPA released in its ongoing five-year review of water systems across the nation. These PFAS — an abbreviation for *perfluoroalkyl* and *polyfluoroalkyl substances* — are nearly indestructible chemicals that have been widely used across industry for decades. These chemicals build up in the environment as well as in our bodies.

Drinking water has been taken for granted in our modern culture. But no longer. It may soon be the reason nation rises against nation, for we can survive without oil but not without drinking water. What if oil hits \$250 a barrel? Who cares what oil costs if drinking water hits \$20 a gallon?

Another *USA Today* article written on April 24 reported a man-made famine is possible that could take the lives of 7,000,000 in Sudan in 2024. This is the result of a planned genocide brought about by the deadliest civil war in world history.

With 10.7 million people already displaced, Sudan has the largest child refugee crisis in the world. The suffering may be off-camera for now, but it won't be if babies are starving by the thousands. Water and food are essential to human existence — we all know this to be true. However, there is another truth — human beings have caused most of these catastrophic events and it's just as true that human beings can turn this tide of destruction.

A couple years ago, the *Mule Creek Post* reported on a startling 30-page article *National*

*Geographic* posted to the world's nations. The authors warned all humans on the planet of the disappearance of our insects worldwide. The report cautioned that on some parts of the globe as many as 72% of existing insects have mysteriously disappeared. Here's the long-term reality of the problem: No bugs — no pollination. No pollination — eventual worldwide famine. Humans have caused most of these cataclysmic events by the chemicals they dump in the soil as well as in the waterways and oceans. Therefore, it's going to take humans cooperating together to solve these soil and water problems.

There's hope on the horizon. The CBS television newsmagazine *60 Minutes* reported on a group's "ocean-farming." It is simply marking off 30 or 40 acres of ocean surface and planting rows of kelp, seaweed, and other life-sustaining crops, thus circumventing the contamination of the soils in many nations. Lines are sunk into the ocean's rich nutrients. Then plantings are tied to the lines with topside buoys marking where these lines go down 100 feet or so to various crops designated every 25 feet. Divers reap the harvests in a never-ending season of growth.

The Chinese word for *crisis* has a two-fold meaning: "danger" and "opportunity." It goes without saying that we are living in dangerous-yet-wonderful times. We are the generation of innovation. If we will purposely band together in unity rather than separating through myriad divisions, we have the potential of being the greatest body of human beings the planet has yet to encounter.

On the other hand, we could well be the final generation should we fail to unite our minds and hearts for the good of this amazing world. We don't have to run out if we decide to run together. The ball is in our court, Earthlings.

## Puppies, Puppies, Puppies!

By Mark Daire, Post Columnist

**A**T THE END of July 2024 — and in record time — the Infinite PawsAbilities dog program on Facility D at the Mule Creek State Prison added a Puppy Program. Taking some two months to conceive and produce, and just four days to get approved, the program came about through the hard work and dedication of Cherie Flores as well as the support and active engagement of Mule Creek staff and administration.

Facility D Capt. C. Elston is one of the administration officials who support the day-to-day work and overall mission of Infinite PawsAbilities. "The Puppy Program promotes nurturing through allowing participants to be ultimately responsible for another being," said Elston. "And," she added, "who doesn't love puppies?"

Infinite PawsAbilities diverts puppies and dogs from shelters in Amador and Stanislaus counties, as well as one of the highest kill-rate shelters in the state located in Modesto — shelters that are often at 200% capacity — filling a need that many shelters have in part because puppies are more susceptible to a variety of diseases, like parvovirus, respiratory ailments, and distemper.

Dalton Carlson, lead trainer with Infinite PawsAbilities stated, "Having puppies is in many ways easier than grown dogs, as they have not yet learned any behavioral habits, good or bad, and in general puppies are awesome. Being both cute and amazing, puppies are able to touch the soft spot at the center of the most hardened convict, melting hearts and providing a kind of therapy that isn't available in any other arena while incarcerated."

In general, everybody on the yard, incarcerated and staff alike, are encouraged to interact with the puppies. The request from those in the program is that you always ask the handler if it is OK to touch their dog, and for any special instructions when doing so. With grown dogs, this can be even more important as they can, as a result of coming from a shelter, have behavioral issues that may need to be addressed while engaging with strangers.

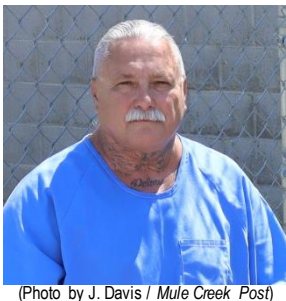
One of the biggest issues with training puppies over dogs is just the amount of time and effort that must be invested by the trainers. Puppies require a lot of time and patience. Even something as basic as potty training can be a challenge for puppies as well as trainers. The people who choose to participate in the program should be commended for making positive change in the lives of the dogs, themselves, and those around them.

If you would like to participate in the Infinite PawsAbilities Program, as either a puppy or dog trainer, please send a Form 22 to CCII Pierce on Facility D, and an interview will be scheduled. Those found eligible will be placed on the waiting list and rotated in as positions become available. The only restrictions are that applicants must be write-up free for at least one year, and have no crimes against animals and some sex crimes.

If you would like to adopt a puppy or one of the adult dogs on Facility D, please contact Cherie Flores at [InfinitePaws.org](http://InfinitePaws.org) regarding donations, information, and adoptions.

# Coming In From the Rain

By Ricky A. Ortega,  
Post Columnist



(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



SPRINGTIME IS THE season of growth and new beginnings. Like raindrops falling in a lush rainforest — the heavens water the earth and the land puts forth its fruit. These showers sprinkle life upon flower-covered hills — creating colorful bouquets of lavender rose accented by splashes of baby’s breath. But the rain falls differently behind prison walls — where the concrete melts the morning mist and shadowed clouds darken the sky. It’s a place of captivity where drops aren’t free to dance nor quench the thirst of desert plain.

Caught in the thunderstorm of prison life, Michael “Strong Bear” Frederiksen has spent the last 29 years searching for shelter. On Jan. 26, 1995, he was sentenced to 88 years to life. Once believed invincible and fed by a violent gang mentality, he found himself in the clutches of troubled youth. “I took on the victim stance, which is what we call in rehabilitation where I blamed everyone except me,” said Frederiksen. “Everyone else needed to change in order to fit me. And I actually believed in that misconception,” he confessed.

Frederiksen, known for his booming baritone and heart of gold, is no stranger to a life of hard knocks. But it wasn’t until 2018 — when he attended Victim Awareness — that he began to accept responsibility for the people he hurt. “Understanding what it means to victimize innocent people is what changed me,” admitted Frederiksen. “I realized that I was the one who was messed up, not society. I’m the one that needed to change.” So change is what he set out to do.

On June 25, 2024, Frederiksen stood at the plaza gate on Facility E, at the Mule Creek State Prison, and waited for his parole board hearing. It was a big day for the 62-year-old, a day that could determine the rest of his life. However, he was prepared and confident as he waited to be escorted to his moment in the sun. “I’ve thought about this day for 29 years,” said Frederiksen. “I knew I did the work, but as I stood at the gate an hour went by and I started to question myself. I’ve had disappointments in my life and I began to wonder if I was good enough. But as soon as those old belief systems started to emerge in this difficult situation, I thought about all I have learned in my self-recovery and I instinctively began to regulate my emotions. It was then that I realized I was ready. This was my time,” he stated.

This was also a big day for many of the residents on Facility E who waited with great anticipation for the outcome. There were waves of best wishes across the yard — people of all walks, races, and ages — wishing the best for this gentle giant. It was especially the love of his daughter, Sonja, the love of his life who helped him get to this point. “She taught me what it means to love and she modeled how to give back to something you believe in,” he said.

“I was nervous at first about the chance for him to come home,” said Sonja. “But also hopeful for a new chapter for my dad.”

At 4:20 p.m., Frederiksen walked back through the gate onto Facility E after being found suitable for parole — and soon to be a free man. Embraced by the community he once terrorized, he expressed elation for the chance to give back to people he once took from.

“It was a mixture of disbelief and excitement,” said Sonja. “Twenty-nine years is a long time, and I wasn’t sure the day would ever come. But then the excitement kicked in. I’m really looking forward to have him back in my life,” she added.

For Michael “Strong Bear” Frederiksen, storm clouds will often remind him of the darkest time of his life. But for now, it is truly the time for him to come in from the rain.

**Editor’s Note:** On Friday, Oct. 25, 2024, Michael “Strong Bear” Frederiksen paroled. As he left the yard and was escorted to R&R, several members of the Red Tail Hawk Lodge sang him out of sight.

# Postscriptum

AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL Convention in 1787, Benjamin Franklin told a story about a French woman who had been having a conversation with her sister one day. She remarked how strange it was that she had never met anyone but herself who was correct on every single issue. In case the meaning behind the parable was missed, apparently he pointed out that everyone present at the convention was that French woman.

This month we’ll see the results of elections around the country, on a local level but also our highest level. It has been a bitter election cycle, filled with accusations, name calling, half-truths and lies, personal attacks, and so much more by those running on both sides of the aisle. And of course, this carries over into the voters as well, who have gone so far as to burn ballot boxes, attack election officials, and to shoot at election offices and even candidates themselves.

As a people, we’ve come a long way and overcome a great deal. But we can’t seem to get past the notion that, as individuals, we are the only ones who know how things should be done. The spirit of compromise and negotiation has been missing for a long time now, as has faith in the motives of those with other points of view.

As we come to grips with whatever the next four years will look like, let’s try to remember the good that is happening all around us, and that is present in the hearts of our neighbors. Our cover story this month is a brilliant example of people who are reaching out to others in an attempt to build community and a stronger, more positive world. Forget about the French woman — let’s go back to being Americans together.

-JC, Editor-in-Chief



**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

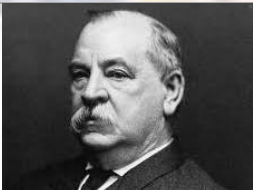
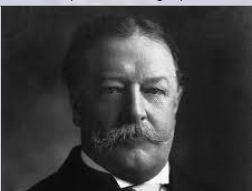
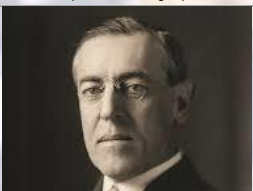
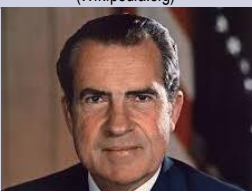
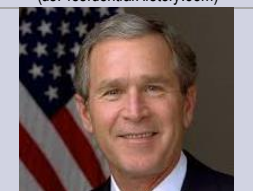
LifeSupportAlliance.org

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PRESIDENTS

**Sources:** U.S. Constitution, Article II and Amendments XXII and XXV; WhiteHouse.gov; *World Almanac and Book of Facts* (2021); *World Book Encyclopedia* (2017)

The president of the United States is in charge of the executive branch of the government. They oversee all administrative agencies and act as commander in chief of military forces. A candidate must be a natural-born citizen of the United States, at least 35 years old, and have lived in the country for at least 14 years. A president may serve no more than two terms. The general election determines which delegates will represent the state in the Electoral College, consisting of 538 delegates, each with one vote; a candidate must receive a majority (270 votes) to win the election. If there is no majority, the House of Representatives elects the president.

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <div>George Washington 1789-1797<br/>(usPresidentialHistory.com)</div> |  <div>John Adams 1797-1801 (WorldHistory.us)</div>                          |  <div>Thomas Jefferson 1801-1805<br/>(Wikipedia.org)</div>                      |  <div>James Madison 1809-1817<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>               |  <div>James Monroe 1817-1825<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>                 |
|  <div>John Quincy Adams 1825-1829<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>            |  <div>Andrew Jackson 1829-1837<br/>(Britannica.com)</div>                   |  <div>Martin Van Buren 1837-1841<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>                     |  <div>William Henry Harrison 1841-1847<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>      |  <div>John Tyler 1841-1845 (Wikipedia.org)</div>                        |
|  <div>James Knox Polk 1845-1849<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>             |  <div>Zachary Taylor 1849-1850<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>                  |  <div>Millard Fillmore 1850-1853<br/>(Britannica.com)</div>                    |  <div>Franklin Pierce 1853-1857<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>            |  <div>James Buchanan 1857-1861<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>              |
|  <div>Abraham Lincoln 1861-1865<br/>(GoHighBrow.com)</div>            |  <div>Andrew Johnson 1865-1869<br/>(usPresidentialHistory.com)</div>      |  <div>Ulysses S. Grant 1869-1877<br/>(Wikipedia.org)</div>                    |  <div>Rutherford Birchard Hayes 1877-1881<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div> |  <div>James Abram Garfield 1881-1887<br/>(Wikipedia.org)</div>        |
|  <div>Chester Alan Arthur 1881-1885<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>        |  <div>Grover Cleveland 1885-1889/1893-1897<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>     |  <div>Benjamin Harrison 1889-1893<br/>(Wikipedia.org)</div>                   |  <div>William McKinley 1897-1901<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>          |  <div>Theodore Roosevelt 1901-1905<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>         |
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|  <div>Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1933-1945<br/>(Wikipedia.org)</div>   |  <div>Harry S. Truman 1945-1953 (History.com)</div>                       |  <div>Dwight David Eisenhower 1953-1961<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>            |  <div>John Fitzgerald Kennedy 1961-1963<br/>(WhiteHouse.gov)</div>   |  <div>Lyndon Baines Johnson 1963-1969<br/>(Wikipedia.org)</div>       |
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