

ALCHEMIST RECIPES

The Alchemist feature departs with a cheat sheet of all 390 elements. You're welcome. .... Page 21

YOU'VE GOT TO SEE THESE...

View the photo gallery of some favorite Pokémon for National Pokémon Day ..... Pages 17-19

To Our Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

IN CELEBRATION OF Black History Month, we thank those who fought for the Prop 6 End Slavery in California Act, which failed in November. This would have removed wording in California's Constitution that allows forced servitude to punish crime, and would have disallowed the disciplining of incarcerated individuals for refusing work assignments.

We encourage our readers to support the department's efforts to implement the California Model, and in CDCR Secretary Jeffrey Macomber's words, "helping incarcerated individuals prepare to become better neighbors when they return to our communities." What's going on at your institution?

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Anti-Recidivism Coalition graduates and coaches. From Left: Standing—Denzel, Victor Garcia, Damion Horton, Dwayne Wallick, Dennis Stewart, Richard Cruz, Steven Burns, Frederick Dew, Wesley Mitchell, Eugene Sinohue, Albert Bell, Jorge Gomez, Athain Russell, Don Livingston, Wilber Noble, Tannen Soojian, Emmanuel Mendoza, Victor Renderos, and Wajuba McDuffy. Kneeling and Seated—Richard Ramirez, Matthew Nall, Michael Narbaiz, Charles Nevarez, Eddie Sample, Danny Silva. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

ARC Holds Graduations at MCSP

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

Victor Garcia, Mule Creek State Prison

ON NOV. 26, 2024, more than two dozen graduates of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) received certificates of completion for Criminals & Gangmembers Anonymous (CGA), Emotional Intelligence, and Board Prep (Avatar). In attendance were ARC life coaches of the Hope and Redemption Team Wajuba McDuffy (northern regional manager), Denzel (Facility D coach), and Frank (incoming Facility E coach); Mule Creek's Community Resource Manager Jason Ross and Dr. T. Hollis-Prime; and supporting family members.

Denzel opened up the ceremony with his life story and described making a schedule one would uphold upon release. "This system don't care if you change yourself or not, it will still be here," said Denzel, meaning you have to take rehabilitation into your own hands and do the work yourself. "You should be living suitable every day, even as a lifer or [serving life without



Wajuba McDuffy and Dr. T. Hollis-Prime. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

parole], because changes are coming and you want to be ready for them," he added.

Two graduates, Frederick Dew and Eddie Sample, followed with motivational speeches for the group, reminding everyone that we are here for each other. Here is what family members of several graduates had to say:

Eloisa Ramirez noted that these graduations are important because these guys are looking "to find themselves."

"It is nice to see the change (continued on page 2)



Frederick and Florence Dew celebrate. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



(from **ARC Graduation**, pg. 1)  
in him,” said Heather Mercado, fiancée of graduate Damion Horton. “I’m so proud. I always tell him, he is in a very long line; he just has to wait his turn.”

“I just enjoy all the changes he has made, and am really proud of him,” said Florence Dew, who has now attended the 12th graduation ceremony of her husband Frederick.

ARC is a collection of people seeking change within themselves. During the group process all members sit in a circle; this allows everyone to be side-by-side, with the life coaches on an equal level. ARC provides a curriculum that helps participants achieve the skills to be successful in the journey through prison, preparation for the parole board, and upon release. CGA applies the 12-Step process to the curriculum where the life coaches use their experience to spark conversation that helps others.

This collaboration of shared life experiences leads to a better understanding of the curriculum. Emotional intelligence provides skills in dealing with cognitive restructuring, emotional self-management, and all of our interpersonal communication.



ARC Graduates

Facility A – Nov 21

Alley Rodger, Manuel Cervin, Cordariez Childs, Quintin Cross, Ricardo Esquivel, Albert Martinez, Jose Mendez, Harley Graham, Rudolph Leader, Emery Moore, Jose Maldonado, Andrew Moncada, Michael Rochester, Lisino Castellanos

Facility B – Nov 22

Lyle Crook, Kevin Fitzgerald, Devin Watson, Brandon West, Damario Brown, Mark Foley, Kevin Gunning, Jeffery Hardin, James Rickey, Marcus Arron, Dave McCann, Joshua Nitkin, Richard Peacock, George Perkins, Scott Peterson, Roland Canada, Ramiro Gutierrez, Wyatt White, Leon Williams, John Mitchell

Facility C – Nov 25

Edgar Aguilar, Rickey Huerta, Frank Moppins, Jacob Perez, Christian Rangel, Jason Schamus, Mauricio Johnson, Aaron Yost, Andrew Barrientos, Michael Begaye, Jesus Ruelas, Kevin Ventura, Victor Barragan, Richard Castillo, Juan Hernandez

Facility E – Nov 26

Alfred Dulay, Victor Garcia, Don Livingston, Bryan Matheson, Victor Renderos, Athain Russell, Eddie Sample, Danny Silva, Eugene Sinohue, Albert Bell, Mark Dare, Richard Leyva, Steven Burns, Jessie Moore, Charles Nevarez, Tannen Soojian, Jose Pulido, Richard Ramirez, Dennis Stewart, James Wiggers, Raul Barriga, Marcus Blueford, Richard Cruz, Jorge Gomez, Damion Horton, Wesley Mitchell, Matthew Nall, Michael Narbaiz, Frederick Dew



Eloise and Richard Ramirez (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Facility E Coach Frank.  
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Board Prep/Avatar focuses on the framework of a board packet, sparking the conversation for what works and doesn’t work in the board process through the experience of all the participants.

In 2022, ARC expanded the Hope and Redemption Teams to all 33 prisons in California, with at least one life coach in each facility. To date, ARC has served over 4,000 incarcerated individuals through its training, all while continuing its presence in juvenile halls across the state.

If you would like to participate in any of ARC’s rehabilitative programs, submit a CDCR Form 2016 to the community resource manager.



Steven Burns and Eugene Sinohue proudly show off their certificates.  
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



MULE CREEK POST  
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AND STAFF

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# California Model



## A Time of Need

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

**T**HERE REALLY IS no great time to suffer a stroke; but 2 a.m. on a cold Sunday morning is an especially inopportune occasion, especially when you're locked up. Dec. 8, 2024, was my special time. It started out with a mild tingling on my right side, and progressed to numbness and disorienting dizziness. A previous stroke, two years ago, informed me what was happening. This time, however, with everyone in the cell asleep and locked in for the overnight, dread and foreboding panic accompanied the spread of numbness.

By luck, my cellmate stirred awake and I asked him to alert the first watch guard, Officer DeSantiago, when he walked his rounds. A few minutes later while the room was spinning around me, correctional officers Kolb, Villanueva, and DeSantiago, accompanied by medical staff, rushed in. For me it was all a blur, but I do recall a stretcher and without delay being hoisted up and down in a single motion. I was rushed out onto a medical cart and sped to the Facility E clinic where first watch medical staff quickly determined I needed immediate transport to Amador-Sutter Hospital. Thanks to the quick and competent actions of overnight custody staff supervised by Sgt. B. Lanier, and facility medical staff, I was able to survive the encounter with minimal damage.

Returning to Mule Creek after a three-day stay, Sgt. Lanier unexpectedly showed up at my cell to check on me. Upon reflection of the whole series of events, it occurred to me that not once during the entire crisis had the feeling of separateness between staff and inmate ever appeared. It made me think that perhaps many of the belief systems which permeate incarcerated culture that keep us separated are based on faulty reasoning. Maybe implementation of the new California Model is possible, after all. When it came down to it, when it was important, common humanity prevailed. It was just people helping someone in a time of need.

## A Rehabilitative Culture in Transition

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

**I**N OCTOBER OF 2024, the *Mule Creek Post* interviewed acting Capt. C. Elston regarding the day-long SUM Theological Seminary inaugural event at the Mule Creek State Prison (MCSP) Sept. 28.

**Mule Creek Post (MCP):** I'd like to discuss any thoughts you might have on your attendance at the SUM event.

**Capt. C. Elston (CE):** It's the first time that I've attended anything of that magnitude, so it was a very pleasant experience — but it was very eye-opening, too. It is something that I've never experienced in my 28 years in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

**MCP:** In your heart of hearts, had you been hoping for something like this to happen?

**CE:** I don't know if it was — if I would call it "hope." But, there's always that side of corrections where you hope. You do hope that things do get better within this department. And, it seems like this is that kind of change.

**MCP:** It would seem that love and humanity ruled the day.

**CE:** It definitely did, and that we can all collaborate and be civil, for at least a few hours.

**MCP:** We were both in the chapel with the secretary and director of corrections that day for the meeting after the meeting. What are your thoughts on the California Model of rehabilitation in general?

**CE:** Some of the things that I heard in that room were very, very encouraging. I see the change in people. It's very pleasant to see that — that can change a person inside. I believe there's a place for this within this department. Then again, it's kind of — we're running into uncharted territory.

**MCP:** You said there was a change in people. Was that comment just limited to those incarcerated? Does it extend to staff?

**CE:** I believe so. I worked with Joe Steward, the spearhead of this seminary program, for many years. It's good to see him spreading his word throughout the department and coming back full circle so to speak.

**MCP:** Could you share with us a little bit about your journey within the department?

**CE:** At the end of this month, I've been in this department for 28 years. I've been to five institutions, Levels I through IV. It's been a very interesting ride. As far as the changes, you know, everyone has to have time for an adjustment. With this California Model, of course, it's a big adjustment.

**MCP:** Given that the diagnosis for moral teaching here at MCSP includes a collegiate seminary model, can we discuss any thoughts you might have on the separation of church and state?

**CE:** So, I'm going to be biased here. I was brought up in a very religious family. I think that there is a time and place for separation of church and state, but I think everyone should be grounded with some type of belief. So, this is refreshing.

**MCP:** Can you give us a little chronology on what you know about rehabilitation programs in CDCR?

**CE:** Sure, when I first started in this department, there were a lot of rehabilitation programs. And, that's kind of gone away. I think probably the reason was money. And, maybe there wasn't a strong belief or foothold; but it seems like we've come back to that which is very good. I think everyone needs to have an opportunity. Education plays a big part in that. A person has to be wanting and willing to do that. So, again, it's the embracing of programs, and it's the department wanting to go that way. So, it's come a very long way.

**MCP:** In that vein, what is your personal and professional vision for a present and future California Model?

**CE:** I believe this program will work. However we have to, I guess, roll it out. Again, it has to have acceptance. So, I think that it's just taking hold. There is an embrace of it, but I do think that it's going to take more time and effort.

**MCP:** Is there anything else that you'd like to tell us today, captain?

**CE:** I'm happy to see that the mentality and mindset are changing. It's just amazing to see how many people and their thought processes change with these programs. I'm hoping that more and more programs will come to the institution and that they will be embraced.



Director of Adult Institutions Ronald Broomfield and Capt. C. Elston. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

# The Point of Black History Month

By Sean “Sharif” Neal,  
Mule Creek State Prison

EVER SINCE I was a kid growing up in Los Angeles, I was always told that I was “somebody” by my teachers, aunts, grandmothers and by my own sweet mother who, like other women of her generation, lived through the Civil Rights Era.

I lived in a town called Watts, and in our community Black History Month was a big thing. Our schools would show us videos of the civil rights movement; put on plays centered on the life of our hero, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; and take us on field trips to see the Watts Tower.

As a youth, I remembered feeling really angry at the images I saw of black people being sprayed with high-powered fire hoses and attacked by police dogs for protesting the lack of justice and equality they faced back then. But my teacher, a beautiful African-American woman, said to me, “Don’t be angry, baby. You can’t change the past, but you sure can learn from it.” She went on to tell me that she did not show us those videos to make us angry, but to show us what courage, strength of character, and resilience looked like in the face of tremendous odds.

Her words left a deep impression on me, but for most of my life I had only a superficial appreciation and understanding of black history — until I began studying our history *before* slavery. There are countless works that exist to teach about the contributions and impact black people made in the world.

Blacks contributed to everything from the establishment of the great University of Timbuktu, to medicine, business, science, mathematics, government, military, and the building of great civilizations. But besides *Black Panther*, a fictional tale, there are no movies or television specials that highlight these aspects of black history. In my opinion, this does the world a disservice. After all, the point of Black History Month, as far as I can tell, is to:

- Inform and educate this and future generations of Americans about the history and contributions of black people, to this country and to the world.
- Remind those who have forgotten or wish to ignore the fact that blacks are a noble people whose history of great accomplishments is well documented, long before the founding of America.
- Inspire us all to seek out our own inner greatness by looking at the examples of our predecessors, while appreciating the greatness of others.
- Promote justice and equality for all people everywhere.
- Pass on the torch of freedom to today’s black youth who, without this month of celebration of the heroes of our past, could not hope to become champions of tomorrow.

Here is a partial list of today’s heroes one might celebrate during Black History Month: Barack and Michelle Obama, former Vice President Kamala Harris, Sen. Corey Booker, LeBron James, Jim Brown, Snoop Dogg, the Rev. Al Sharpton, Oprah Winfrey, Winton Marcelis, Colin Kaepernick, and Vince Carter.



First Lady Michelle and President Barack Obama. (Variety.com)

## Presenting A Prime Opportunity

By Sean “Sharif” Neal, Mule Creek State Prison

CONTEMPORARY BLACK LEADERS like Deion “Prime Time” Sanders are the embodiment of the vision our forefathers had when they sacrificed their lives for the right to stand on equal ground with any man.

Originally drafted by the Atlanta Falcons fifth overall in 1989, Sanders played cornerback, wide receiver, and punt returner in spectacular fashion that earned him the name “Prime Time,” electrifying both football and television viewers everywhere with his flashy style of play. During his career he would go on to win consecutive Super Bowls with the 49ers, then with the Dallas Cowboys in Super Bowls 24 and 30. He was named to eight Pro Bowls and, in 2011, he was inducted into the Pro Football and College Football Halls of Fame.

In 2020, he became the 21st head coach for the Jackson State Tigers football team, leading them to two consecutive Celebration Bowl appearances. His success at Jackson State, a historically black college, drew the attention of college football elites. As a result, he was offered the head coaching position at Colorado where he produced the first Heisman Trophy winner in the school’s history. This came in the person of two-way player Travis Hunter, and led to the first winning season since Sanders’ arrival despite having to replace the 46 players and coaches who didn’t want to work with him.

Coach Prime has also produced three potential first-round draft picks in his sons Sheduer (quarterback) and Shilo (wide receiver), and Travis Hunter. It has been rumored that the NFL may soon be Coach Prime’s next destination.



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

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## The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

**I**N PAST ARTICLES, we've discussed synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms. However, we touched only briefly on another group of words that tend to cause much confusion: *homophones*. One dictionary defines *homophone* as "one of two or more words pronounced alike but different in meaning or derivation or spelling such as *pare*, *pair*, and *pear*."

The words *affect* and *effect* are verbs and sound much alike, but have different meanings. *Affect* means "to change, alter, or influence"; *effect* means "to bring about or accomplish." As a noun, *effect* means "the result or consequence."

How about the words *allowed* (a verb that means "permitted or provided") and *aloud* (an adjective that means "out loud or loudly")?

Another pair are *all ways* (an adverb that means "by every method or direction") and *always* (another adverb that means "forever").

Then there are two that sound nearly alike: *accept* (a verb that means "to take, to receive with consent, to admit or agree to"), and *except* (a verb that means "to exclude," a preposition that means "to take exception to," or as a conjunction).

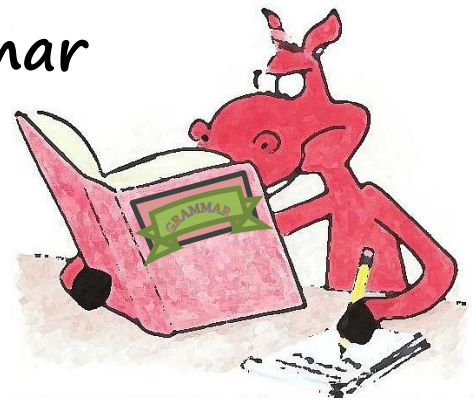
How about *assistance* (a noun that means "to help or the giving of aid") and *assistants* (another noun meaning "the helpers or those who give aid")?

Sometimes we misspell a word that ends up giving the sentence a completely different meaning, such as *calendar* (which means "register for days, weeks, months of a year") and *colander* (which means "a machine that smooths and glazes cloth or paper using rollers").

These are words commonly confused, especially when writing them. We need to learn how to use language for effective communication and avoid confusion. As you can see, there are times when homophones are confusing, which can lead to serious misunderstanding. We'll cover more homophones in coming articles.

**Sources:** *Webster's Dictionary* and *Book of Homophones*

## 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 began a discussion on writing and revising, where we briefly covered the prewriting stage to get you started. This month, we'll begin our discussion of the first draft.

After you have your ideas in some form, it's time to write your first draft. The object is not to have something that's ready to turn in, but just to get all of your ideas down on paper in complete sentences. In this phase, some writers prefer to begin thinking about mechanics, usage, and spelling, and others prefer to worry about the fine-tuning later. Do whatever works for you. Right now, your main concerns are your purpose, your audience, and the format or type of writing that's required.

Almost all writing tries to prove a point, answer a question, give, instructions, provide reflection, or present entertainment. Some types of writing include:

- Narrative (telling a story)
- Expository (explaining or giving information)
- Descriptive (providing a written picture of someone, someplace, or something)
- Informative or explanatory (giving data or some other type of information)
- Expressive (detailing your thoughts or emotions)
- Persuasive or argumentative (attempting to influence others to come around to your way of thinking)
- Analytical (examining material presented to you)

Next month, we continue with our discussion of the first draft and the purpose of the writing.

**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.

## The Uncaged Writer

Accessing Infinite Creativity

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter



**D**ID YOU EVER have a dream where you are writing a story, screenplay, or novel and you wake up with the complete manuscript present in your mind — the whole complex, multi-faceted story fully intact? It is a rare and exhilarating experience, and it can be maddening trying to scribble notes, bleary-eyed and fumbling for a pen and paper in the early morning hours. This is an instance of access to infinite creativity. Einstein is said to have pulled his theory of relativity from the ether, and some of the great novels, symphonies, and creative works of the ages are presented to the author in this manner.

Dr. Wayne Dyer, self-help guru, spiritualist, and author, describes his writing as inspired (in-spirit), coming to him from an infinite field of energy that exists throughout the universe where all information and knowledge is available to anyone who is willing to allow their mind and spirit to access it. We asked some highly creative people for their comments on the creative process.

**Joan Parkin** (educator, author, activist, editor, nonprofit director): "The creative process for me doesn't come from within but from without. It is when I feel the connection of other social justice warriors that I am most inspired towards creativity."

**Emily Nonko** (editor, writer, mentor, social justice advocate, nonprofit director): "In my work supporting people in prison, we run into countless hurdles and challenges. I knew early on that if I got discouraged by every hurdle, we wouldn't get anything done. So I started looking at hurdles as fuel for creativity. 'There's always a way' has become a mantra for me. Limitations for art supplies, for example, fuel creativity when you have to resort to unexpected options. Collaborating by phone, when the tablet doesn't work, is a creative way to get things done. For me, creativity is resistance."

**Kate McQueen** (author, teacher, journalist, historian, nonprofit director): "We as  
(continued on page 6)

(from *Uncaged Writer*, pg. 5)

humans may not learn from osmosis exactly. But intellectual and aesthetic ambiance, I think, a really helpful part of creating. What I read, listen to, see, and otherwise explore always influences me. So, I try to make sure I surround myself with good 'muses' when I'm working on a project."

**Natalye Childress** (poet, editor, journalist, entrepreneur): "I don't have a creative process, per se, but I do my best thinking when I'm on a walk or bike ride, and I do my best writing when I've been reading regularly. So to continue creating, it's important for me to prioritize spending time in nature and reading for pleasure every day."

To engage the creative process is to always be on the path to greater awareness — of ourselves, the world, and beyond. The only limitations to creativity are those that we impose on ourselves. The infinite nature of the imagination has no limitations, nor does the creative spirit. It extends to infinity and beyond, and whatever is beyond that.

## Residents Perform Tragedy of *Macbeth*

By **Dortell Williams**, Post Reporter

**O**N ANY GIVEN day, a tour of the prison yard will yield the full panoply of the human condition. From a man in for stealing a VHS tape — still in for decades under the Three Strikes Law — to those convicted of DUI and even murder. The troupe of aspiring thespians on Facility D at the Mule Creek State Prison sampled the human condition as they rehearsed Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth*. The rehearsal was conducted by Sharon Robinson of the Shakespeare for Justice Program, a sublet of the Marin Shakespeare Company.

Robinson, a petite woman sporting a white fedora, says she enjoys working with incarcerated people because of the ingenuity they bring. This often calls for circumnavigating the normal deprivations of prison; in this case, improvising for stage props that would otherwise be *Macbeth's* castle, or fantasy trees made of chairs atop tables that compose the forest.

Robinson is motivated by the redemptive traits of theater.

Some of those traits translate to employment and life skills. To illustrate, there is the bulk of memorization involved in thespian work, the active listening for cues and timing, and the trust required to exhibit the vulnerability to animate characters. An impromptu survey reveals that most of the participants were unemployed when arrested and have since learned many skills that could transcend prison and lead to success. Theater work requires interdependence, patience, and a high degree of attention to detail. These characteristics prominently exhibit themselves as the troupe rehearsed the improvised 48-page play over 13 weeks. Robinson empowers the group with a great deal of latitude in creative expression while maintaining the core tenets of *Macbeth*.

Of course, like any good theater there are obvious ironies. For instance, the participants playing the murderers were not convincing enough for Robinson. "Could you guys be a little more thuggish? You're supposed to be murderers," she demanded.

When pressed about what is unique about working with the incarcerated class, Robinson responded that there is a particular self-reflection that often emerges from the participants that Shakespeare draws out. She also recognizes that the incarcerated performers are literally pronounced guilty, whereas *Macbeth* was never found guilty externally, but internally he suffered devastating guilt that amounted to the end of him.

Rande Crissinger, a tall man with a slim build, says that participating in the Shakespeare for Justice Program allows him "to not be me for a while." When asked to expound, he adds, "I went against the norms of society and want to escape from that person sometimes. The characters of Shakespeare are the epitome of the human condition, people you wouldn't expect to do unexpected things. I'm a military vet who loves my country, yet here I am in prison."

"For me, it's all about the challenges, stepping out and being uncomfortable. That's how you grow," says Mark Daigre.

Thomas Robinson, a bespectacled and soft-spoken Marin Shakespeare Company volunteer, is intrigued by the process. As outside supporters of the program, he says they were challenged by restricted access to the aspiring group and rehearsal was curtailed by a number of hindrances such as COVID-19 within the troupe, an emergency with one of the directors, and other difficulties.

In spite of the challenges, performance day arrived and the show went on. With a sold-out audience of 14 (limited by security protocols), along with an assemblage of observant custody and civilian staff, the troupe presented impressively with 15th century costumes, authentic-looking plastic swords, and golden paper crowns for Lennox and *Macbeth*. And though the play was about murder, the troupe managed to ad-lib some humor for the enraptured and grateful audience. The unexpected laughs were provoked during the banquet scene as the royal server repeatedly sneaked sips of wine behind the backs of each of the king's 12 visitors.

The show was flawless until the troupe confused one scene, "A Boiling Caldron," with another, "The Palace." Right smack in the center of delivery of the caldron to the stage, there was a sudden air of consternation among half the troupe. No sooner did Robinson's eyes light up in the middle of the stage did she announce, "Someone's imbibed just a bit too much," and thus her swift thinking added yet another comical scene to the play.

In spite of the tragedy, the play ended in good humor and a question-and-answer period was conducted. The attentive audience got the main points of the play, revealing a successful performance, and the troupe invited others to participate in the next tragedy.



# 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



# Prop. 36 Passes

By Rob Sharp, Feature Reporter

PROPOSITION 36 WAS passed by California voters in November. It applies to increased penalties for retail theft and certain specified drug crimes.

For retail theft of items worth less than \$950, with two or more convictions of shoplifting or burglary, any new crime as above will be prosecuted as a felony rather than a misdemeanor (as was previously the case). This includes carjacking as a prior or current offense.

Certain drug convictions — such as for fentanyl, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine — can have their sentences lengthened dependent upon the amount sold or in possession (intent to sell). These sentences can be served either in the county jail or state prison dependent upon a person’s prior criminal history, though generally to be served in state prison.

Another provision of Prop. 36 allows some people to be charged with a “treatment-mandated felony” instead of a misdemeanor. This is similar to the past practice of drug diversion, but is dependent upon successful completion of substance abuse treatment wherein the charges will be dismissed.

According to Initiate Justice, the passage of Proposition 36 “will increase the length of sentences and sends more people to jail and prison for theft and drug-related offenses.” In addition, it “uses an outdated approach that increases punishments for multiple offenses.”

In the end, this is a setback to the progress we’ve made to move away from mass incarceration over the last few years.

Sources: Proposition 36, Attorney General’s Title and Summary; InitiateJustice.org



# A Look at How Mass Incarceration Feeds Injustice

By Eric Seligman & Brian Nam-Sonenstein, Prison Policy Initiative

MONEY IS POWER in the United States and mass incarceration plays a major role in determining who can wield power and who can’t. In this briefing, we compile 10 examples of how mass incarceration blocks progress toward economic justice.



- Incarceration sentences poor people to deeper poverty:** At every stage of the criminal legal process — from pretrial detention, to incarceration, to reentry — already-poor people are faced with ever-harsher conditions of poverty.
- Incarceration impoverishes the families and communities of incarcerated people:** Families of incarcerated people lose household income and assume astronomical new expenses relating to supporting a loved one inside.
- Prisons don’t fix rural poverty — they deepen it:** Towns suffering from unemployment and deindustrialization are often sold the idea that [new] prisons can help turn things around. After California’s state prison at Corcoran was built in 1988, fewer than 10% of the jobs went to local residents.
- Mass incarceration raises the stakes of unemployment for all workers:** In a recent study of labor markets in high-incarceration communities, it was found that the more incarceration there is in a community, the less likely people are to risk their jobs demanding better terms of work, regardless of prior experiences with incarceration.
- Suppressing the wages of formerly incarcerated people harms all low-wage workers:** Limited job options threaten formerly incarcerated workers with deeper poverty, criminalization, and re-incarceration, and makes them especially dependent on those few employers who are willing to hire them.
- Mass incarceration makes it harder for all workers to unionize:** Undermining benefits prevents workers from leveraging their collective power through unions or other worker associations that can safely and effectively make demands of employers. According to a 2020 survey, individuals with a history of incarceration are 85% less likely to join a union.
- Mass incarceration is anti-democratic, suppressing political engagement and representation:** In the same 2020 survey, it was found that 1 out of 44 adults in the eligible voting population lost their right to vote due to a felony conviction.
- Mass incarceration weakens labor unions, removing a key player in broader movements for economic justice:** Beyond providing a gateway for members to build confidence in the possibility of organizing around shared interests to change policy, unions have often provided the actual institutional structure that organizes the public for economic justice.
- Mass incarceration inflames social tensions that undermine worker solidarity:** Labor market research finds that employers more frequently assume criminality in black job applicants, whether they have a criminal record or not. This exemplifies how mass incarceration influences society’s ideas and relationships.
- Mass incarceration hides economic injustice, making it harder to organize against:** While mass incarceration creates some very visible economic injustices, others remain hidden. For example, mass incarceration artificially lowers unemployment rates as incarcerated people go uncounted.

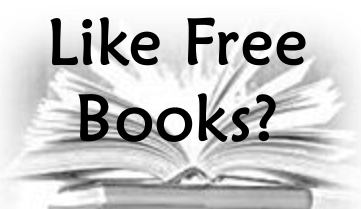
Through a combination of financial sanctions and legal disenfranchisement, criminalized people, their families, their communities, and eventually all low-wage workers become economically and politically disadvantaged.

## Criminal Offender Reform Establishment (CORE)

This group of educators has created customized course materials for incarcerated people to assist them in their process of rehabilitation. The courses are available via correspondence, and charges only for shipping and handling costs. CORE offers the following courses:

- Mind Makeover:** Changing your thoughts to change your ways
- Biological Blueprint:** What qualities you inherited to become who you are
- Self-Awareness:** Nurture your good qualities and eliminate the negative ones
- Goal Gaining:** Setting your goals and making them achievable
- Perspective Personified:** Seeing the world through more eyes than only yours
- Dreaming in Color:** Making your dreams a reality

CORE  
P.O. Box 1361  
West Sacramento, CA 95605  
Email: CORE.educators@gmail.com



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# Garden of Hope

By Jill Plumb, Land Together



(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

**I**F YOU ARE a resident, staff member, or visitor on Facility D, you may have noticed something different recently. There are three new raised beds along the program building planted with herbs and flowers. They are open to the yard for all to admire and experience. You may see some residents having a conversation standing near them, or someone drawing their favorite plant. Others could be writing in their journals or composing a poem. You may



(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

even see birds hovering around them, or bees and hummingbirds enjoying the flowers. When weather allows, you may also see chalk art, created by residents, on the sides of the raised beds.

The idea for this project came from Warden Patrick Covello and Chief Deputy Warden Bryan Holmes. The current Facility D garden, recently named the Garden of Hope, is fenced and only available to those on the Land Together (formerly called the Insight Garden Program) class roster. The warden and the chief deputy wanted to extend the benefits of a garden for everyone on the yard so they could experience the sights, scents, and textures of growing things. They checked in with Community Resource Manager Jason Ross who volunteered to pick up and distribute any soil needed for the project. From there, the discussion continued with Land Together facilitator Jill Plumb until a plan was hatched:



(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

- Decide the size and number of the beds and their placement on the yard
- Check in with the yard captain to be sure the beds could be seen by cameras
- Ask the construction crew on D Yard to construct the raised beds
- Secure soil and plants for the new beds



(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

- Prepare the Land Together participants to be docents of these new planters

Before the beds arrived on the yard, the participants in the Land Together program were asked to consider how these new raised beds, open to the whole yard, would be received by residents. They spent many hours discussing, writing in their journals, and thinking about this big change on the yard. They took a deep dive into the ideas around abundance and scarcity, and how prison life can create a “me first” mindset. Over the past two years, they wrestled with these ideas as the Garden of Hope grew wildly abundant. They struggled with what to do with so much bounty, recognizing that food grown in the garden would not be

allowed to go out to the yard population. The solution? They now donate the produce to Interfaith Food Ministries, a food bank that shares it with thousands of food-insecure people.

As docents and caretakers, the interactions of the participants in Land Together are informed by their experiences and struggles with scarcity and abundance. It is their hope that they can help everyone — residents, staff, and visitors — see themselves as docents as well.

We are entering into a new season on the yard, a season not only about the changing weather, but a season of discovery, cooperation, and joy around these new raised beds and the life within them. And, of course, it’s an opportunity to celebrate the life within each of us.



(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

# Food Wasted

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

**A** NOV. 26, 2024 *Los Angeles Times* article revealed one billion pounds of food is wasted each year adding to climate change through the addition of greenhouse gasses put into the atmosphere.

The article cited as an example how Mexico City alone disposes 420 tons of unconsumed produce each day in landfills. Methane, which is released when organic matter like produce decompose and which traps heat at a much higher rate than carbon dioxide, further contributes to global warming.

It is estimated that one-third of all food produced is never eaten. Ten percent of greenhouse gases are generated by food waste, five times the emissions from the aviation industry. That said, fossil fuels, according to the above article, are still the world's largest global warming contributor.

At the U.N. summit on climate change, leaders called for and signed a declaration targeting reduction of food waste and methane gas. Of the 196 countries that have signed the Paris Agreement on climate change, only a handful have plans to reduce food waste. By donating old but still usable produce to soup kitchens, organizers say this can reduce waste by 25%.

An estimated 316 million pounds of food will be wasted in the U.S. on Thanksgiving alone, the equivalent of half a billion dollars of groceries discarded in one day. In addition to foods thrown away by consumers, food waste also comes from crops destroyed by pests and extreme weather. It takes land the size of China to grow the amount of food wasted each year.

The recent passage of Assembly Bill 660 in California bans sellers from using the term "sell by," and requires them to switch to "use by" or "best if used by" to help prevent food waste.

**Source:** *Los Angeles Times*, "One billion pounds of food is wasted annually," Nov. 26, 2024



## Drilling Deep for Earth Energy

**D**ESPITE A DECADE of yearly climate conferences where ambitious goals were set to limit warming, greenhouse gases are accumulating faster than ever before. Even with massive green energy projects and 12 million new electric vehicles on the road, the efforts to fight climate change are inadequate, according to a study by the United Nations Council on Climate Change.

The amount of heat-trapping gases surged in 2023 after rising by 11% over the last 20 years. Paltry progress has been made in cutting emissions; they are predicted to be a mere 2.6% lower by 2030, far short of the 43% needed to reach net-zero by 2050. Simon Stiell of the U.N. warned, "Current climate plans fall miles short of what's needed to stop global heating from crippling economies and wrecking billions of lives and livelihoods."

Fossil fuels weren't the only cause. The World Meteorological Organization found megafires in Canada, the United States, and Europe released vast amounts of carbon. Since an acre of forest can remove 50 tons of carbon through photosynthesis, millions of tons of CO<sub>2</sub> were not absorbed by the burned trees.

In a hotter world, forests lose the ability to store carbon like they did before. The Amazon rainforest has become a carbon source instead of a carbon sink because of fires and drought. Extra heat changes air circulation while decreasing rainfall and CO<sub>2</sub> removal. Scientists describe this as a "feedback loop" in which natural systems are impacted adversely and end up accelerating warming even more. The last 10 years was the warmest decade in weather history.

In 2023, there were 20 weather disasters with at least \$1 billion each in damages. A flood devastated Valencia, Spain, on October 29, when a year's worth of rain fell in eight hours on soil parched by drought. Streets became rivers where wrecked cars were piled up like a scrap heap. In a "flood feedback loop," heat waves and drought dry out the land, rendering it impervious to downpours, causing runoff to flood without replenishing the water table. This vicious cycle is a wake-up call to the threat of climate change and the urgent need for solutions.

The climate news from Nov. 5, 2024, was mixed. Voters returned Donald Trump to the White House, and he is not focused on climate change. Yet, in the same election, 62% of voters in Washington state voted against repealing the Climate Commitment Act, a law to cut emissions in half by 2030. Called "carbon pricing," it requires polluters to pay for permits to release greenhouse gases. "Cap and invest" means money raised must be spent on what voters want: rebates on electric bills, electric vehicle charging stations, and community solar projects. Eleven other states, including California, have some form of carbon pricing that will keep the momentum going to halt warming regardless of who sits in the Oval Office.

A promising, non-polluting energy source is geothermal, which uses heat inside the earth to generate reliable, zero-carbon, 24/7 power. Using oil field methods, they drill down two miles to reach hydrothermal resources with temperatures between 300 °F and 700 °F. The steam or hot water is piped up to power turbines and generate electricity.

The first geothermal plant was built in Tuscany, Italy, where steam erupted out of the earth in 1904. The largest plant in the world was built in 1960, using geysers in California's Sonoma and Lake counties. Generating 1,517 megawatts (MW), it produces enough power for one million homes. Casa Diablo, near Mammoth Lakes and Yosemite, was the first plant constructed in 30 years and began operation in July 2022 with an output of 30 MW. The Cape Station Project is the newest plant and broke ground just last year in Beaver County, Utah. Fervo Energy is the builder and a leader in the next generation of geothermal technology. It is an enhanced system where cold water is sent down 13,000 feet into 400 °F rocks, then pumped to the surface as steam to run turbines. Using a diversity of technology, it will be a template for future projects, such as Hell's Kitchen, which is going through the approval process. When completed, it will produce not only 50 MW of renewable power, but also 20,000 metric tons of lithium, the metal in demand for storage batteries. The market for geothermal is wide open, fueled by the increasing demand for clean energy solutions. Going into the earth can be a win in the battle to beat climate change before it beats us.

**Sources:** *BBC Science and Environment*, Oct. 28, 2024; "World Way Off Target" MSNBC, Nov. 15, 2024; US Department of Energy, Geothermal Technologies Office.

# From Zero Hope to Abundant Faith

By David Viens,  
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility

**T**HIS STORY WILL inspire you to never stop believing change is possible. My friend and sponsor Brandon Mays served over 30 years in blue as a “three-striker” across the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, struggling with addiction and a need for acceptance on the mainline for most of the time.

I met Mays on Facility G shortly before COVID-19 disrupted our world. He was new to the yard and stressed about going to the parole board for the second time without access to a lifer community to “sharpen the stone” of his recovery. I invited him to join our voluntary self-help circle, which my accountability partner had coined, “Creative Alternatives.”

Mays was extremely likeable and insightful despite still being powerless to his addiction. He was serious about self-help, but couldn’t help himself from emptying his locker whenever something hit the yard. He was one of the first to start medication-assisted treatment. His change wasn’t immediate or easy, but something was abundantly clear after he started participating in his daily group: He had found his purpose; he was going to become a drug counselor upon his release.

Mays earned freedom in January 2023 at his third hearing. Today, he is a certified alcohol and drug counselor, and works at a posh recovery center in Los Angeles. He is happily married and in high demand as a facilitator. His message is “Change is more than a possibility, but a reality if your desire is real. There is a future and a hope to recover your true self through recovery.”

I speak to Mays frequently and am still amazed at his change and the way he is paying it forward to other lifers. A new career, house, car, Harley, and a new lease on life. To those who read these words, he says, “Find your purpose and belief in your higher power and watch your zero hope turn into abundant faith.”

# How to Live a H.O.W. Life

By Mark Daire, Post Columnist

**B**EING HONEST WITH ourselves and others can be difficult due to our past lifestyle, constitution, and beliefs. When working the 12 steps, it is honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness (H.O.W.) that are the most important tools in the process.

## Honesty

You can continue lying to those around you, but being honest with yourself is what matters. Once you stop being honest with yourself, you fail in the recovery process. Part of the wonderful power of our mind is the ability to change what we think, what we value, and how we react. When we find something isn’t true or doesn’t work, we have what it takes to alter our beliefs and responses. As we grow mentally, we can eventually develop the wisdom to see and respond to things as they truly are. This is what it takes to find your way out and never come back.

“There may be many reasons for what we have done, then and now, but in the final count, we are where we are because of the choices we made and, believe it or not, this recovery process is a wise choice.”



The above is taken directly from the Criminals & Gangmembers Anonymous curriculum and can be one of the most difficult parts of the entire program for some people. As criminals we lived lives of dishonesty, deception, and evasion for so long that telling the truth, especially to ourselves, can be one of the most difficult things ever attempted. Being honest can mean that we no longer allow the distorted ways of thinking that we learned in our criminal life to remain in place. Being honest can also mean that we do not

let ourselves build and maintain barriers between ourselves and others in or around our lives. Finally, being honest can also mean that we no longer deceive ourselves about the harmful impact of our past.

## Open-Mindedness

This is yet another obstacle for those who’ve lived lives of dishonesty and criminality. To have an open mind can mean that I am willing to see the way I have been thinking, acting, and engaging with others in a new and different light. Maybe for the first time I can make the decision to accept people as they are, for who they are, instead of who it is that I think they are or should be.

Open-mindedness means that I can allow myself to take interpersonal risks I would never have taken in the past; vulnerability, accessibility, and emotional connection are ways of being that were not allowed in the criminal past lived by many people in prison.

## Willingness

This is another area where people who have lived a criminal lifestyle can feel insecure. “Willing to do what?” one might ask. And the answer might be, “Whatever is uncomfortable or foreign to how I’ve been thinking and acting throughout my criminal life.”

Being willing can mean letting go of restrictive thoughts and attitudes that have kept me from participating in anything that wasn’t sanctioned by my social group. It can mean letting myself have new and novel experiences that don’t comply with the code of conduct I instilled in myself which, in turn, allowed me to create harm in the lives of others. Being willing means that I can make a fool of myself, laugh at myself, and keep moving forward without feeling like I have to go back and clean it up before the homies find out.

Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness can be key to allowing us to get back in touch with the parts of ourselves we have ignored for too long: our spiritual selves. It can also allow us the ability to find joy, not in the suffering of others, but instead in the ability to live in peace and harmony with those around us, regardless of background or affiliation.

Living a life of honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness can be the key to creating good in the world instead of the hurt, harm, and suffering that followed us around in our criminal lives. At the least, living a “H.O.W.” lifestyle can allow us to have new experiences that give a new perspective full of laughter and lightness.

Assistance with reentry planning can be found by contacting Root & Rebound and requesting the 102-page *Reentry Planning Toolkit for People in Reentry & People with Records*

**Root & Rebound**  
1730 Franklin St., Suite 300  
Oakland, CA 94612

SPORTS AND RECREATION



### Your Move

By Sean "Sharif" Neal,  
Post Columnist

*Chess is perhaps the most noble game in the world, played by millions across the globe in search of mental dominance over their opponents.*

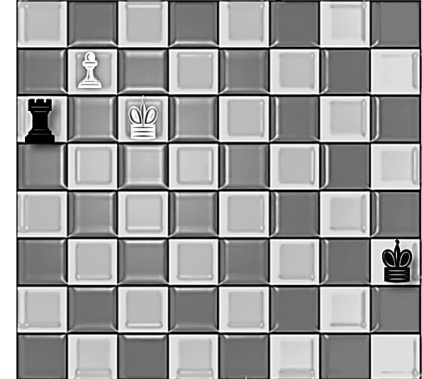
*The exact origins of chess vary, some attributing its beginnings to ancient Persia and India as a means of formulating battle strategies. However, today's chess has evolved to attain a loftier goal: elevating the human mind.*

With white to move next, there will be an unexpected surprise. Can you find the winning move?



Submit your answer to the Mule Creek Post. Solutions will appear in the next issue.

January's challenge:



1 WKc5 Ra5; 2 WKc4 Ra4+;  
3 WKc3 Ra3+; Wkb2 wins!





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

# ADA Exercise Events at Mule Creek

By Victor Garcia, Mule Creek State Prison

RETIRED COACH ANDREW Scholl started the ADA program on facilities D and E, designed to help individuals with disabilities have equal access to gym equipment and to regain lost mobility through motivation, understanding, and knowledge of how to utilize the equipment.

The program is important to help the ADA participants be comfortable in even trying the equipment without some young guy bugging them in the attempt. Individuals could even get help or instruction on using the equipment.

What equipment's available? There are resistance bands, medicine balls of different weights, jump ropes, adjustable pull-up bar, three stationary bikes to ride, and a rowing machine. There are also yoga mats, foam rollers, and a TV showing exercises that can be performed while using water bottles or your own body weight. There are multiple items to help you maintain or build balance and leg strength, such as a Bosu Ball and obstacle course items.

How can members of the community support this program? If you're an ADA class member, show up on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 8:30-9:30 at the gym, even if you only have a few minutes. This program used to have an average of 15-25 members, which is why Scholl added Wednesday to encourage more participation.

What if you're not an ADA member? You have an opportunity to give back to your community by also showing up. Check in with the recreation coordinators on how you can be of assistance to ADA members trying to use the equipment.

## Facility B All-Star Softball

By Kajauna Irvin, Mule Creek State Prison

LABOR DAY 2024 marked the unofficial end of summer, which, in the words of late iconic sports commentator Vin Scully, was "a great day for baseball." More precisely, there was a much-anticipated All-Star Softball Game played on the Facility B recreation yard at the Mule Creek State Prison (MCSP), courtesy of Coach K. Madsen and Facility B Captain Rogers.

The mood was festive, the weather in the upper 80s, warm with a gentle breeze. However, on the softball diamond the action was scorching hot between the East and West All-Star teams. Marking the close of the 2024 MCSP Softball League season (June 1–August 26), this game was one to remember.

The teams were evenly matched and composed of phenomenal softball players who had spectacular regular season records. Team East was skippered by its centerfielder, Punkin Moreen; with wily veteran Steven Stanley as pitcher; big-time slugger second baseman Larry Alford, capped off with other dynamite outfielders. On the West, there was the red hot pitcher Lyle Crook, backed up by a host of talented place hitters and outfielders; and skippered by Thomas Price.

The West won the coin toss, and thus designated the home team with first at bat. The game commenced with the pitcher for the East walking the first batter, striking out the second, allowing a base hit, and getting torched for a three-run homer by Crook. The East rallied back in the bottom of the first inning with a solid base-hit line-drive by Alford, setting up players on first and second base. The next up cracked a three-run inside-the-park homer, bringing the East within one. The score at the conclusion of the first inning was 4-3 in favor of the West.

Innings two through five were a batting slugfest and included spectacular plays. One of the most awe-inspiring was a triple in the second by the West's James Eastland. The second-inning score was West 6 – East 5. The heat began to ratchet up a notch in the top of the third with a leadoff homer by the West's pitcher, Crook. The third-inning score was West 10 – East 7. The fourth inning was a continuation of the previous, with the West's All-Star Crook pitching a quick three-up and three-down, showing off by doing burpees in between batters. LOL! West's second baseman, Ciara Starr, caught a laser for a double play. The fourth-inning score was West 11 – East 7.

The most exciting inning had to be the fifth. The East began to rally back from an 11-7 deficit with a series of line drives and base hits, followed by a three-run homer from the second baseman, Alford. That's when the West went on a scoring blitz. The fifth-inning score was West 18 – East 10.

The game ended in the middle of the sixth under sportsman's "mercy rule." The final score was West 26 – East 10. However, the competitive rivalry will continue next year. The 2024 softball All-Star MVP vote went unanimously to West's Pitcher Lyle Crook. Defensive player award goes to West's second baseman, Ciara Starr.

# Book Review:

## The Court of Silver and Flames

By Dorothy Maraglino,  
Central California Women’s Facility

IN THE SERIES *The Courts Cries* by Sara Maas, the reader will experience an amazing journey through the life of protagonist Fayre and her family; however, it’s the last book of this series that every prisoner should read. *The Court of Silver and Flames* will likely resonate with most incarcerated people.

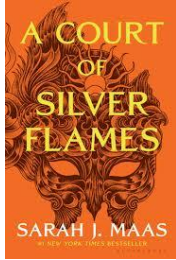
The story deals with family conflict, addiction, PTSD, supporting a loved one as they navigate trauma, finding inner strength, coping skills, finding a life purpose, and the power of choice. When reading this book, find the messages beyond the words on the page. The characters might be fantastical, but they are human in their experiences. They deal with death, murder, criminals, redemption, addiction, conflict, isolation, alienation, anger, self-loathing, forgiveness, and so much more. The story pulls you in and carries right to the end with no boring parts. You don’t even need to read the whole series to enjoy this one book.

My favorite character was a house who had to find a way to communicate without words. It had an existence, darkness, lightness, desires, needs, and wants. Each character is complete and not just two-dimensional. There are some who are dealing with both physical and emotional trauma, but choose different paths to purpose and peace. Read the book and find yourself in one of the characters. You just might find a path you never considered to find your own peace and purpose.

If *The Court of Silver and Flames* is not in your facility’s library, ask your librarian to get it and the rest of Sara Maas’s wonderful works.



Mural by Shane Grammer  
(Courtesy of CNN)



(Amazon.com)

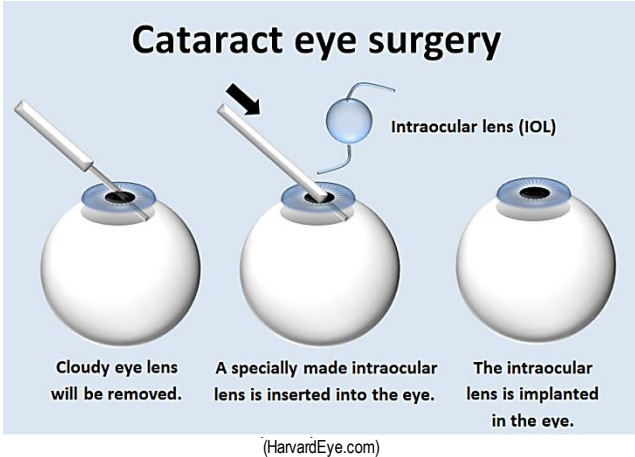
# Seeing Clearly at Mule Creek

By Dale Hurd, Post Reporter

I WAS AWAKE and aware when the surgeon cut a U-shaped incision into my cornea, which created a flap he folded back to expose the lens of my eye. I was aware of the laser breaking up my eye’s lens, and of its replacement with an artificial one. In addition, I was conscious of the flap of my cornea folded back into place, and of the hypodermic needle jabbed into my eyeball to inject an antibiotic cream that looked like a sunspot floating on the surface of the sun — only this spot was in the outer layer of my eye.

According to *Consumer Reports* writer Kevin Loria, everyone is likely to develop cataracts in later life, and cataract surgery is performed over 3 million times a year in the U.S. The symptoms of cataracts include blurry vision, light and glare sensitivity, difficulty seeing clearly in low light, and bright colors that appear faded. An optometrist usually diagnoses cataracts during a routine exam and monitors the condition until it affects vision so much that treatment is required. This is exactly what happened to me at the Mule Creek State Prison during a routine optometrist examination.

After informing me of the deteriorating condition of my lenses, the prison optometrist advised me to have a follow-up consultation. Basically a second opinion, with the cataract surgeon. The surgeon came to the prison and used the



various gizmos and gadgetry in the optometry lab to inspect the inside, outside, and lenses of my eyes. He concurred in the necessity and viability of cataract surgery. The optometrist then started the process that led to the replacement of my damaged lenses.

I met with a medical technician in Stockton who took measurements of my eyes and asked detailed

questions about my medical history. She carefully explained the process before asking if I had any questions. The day before surgery, I was instructed not to eat after 10 p.m., and to only take my hypertension medication in the morning. Transport to Stockton was uneventful, and I waited in the van until called to check in at the front desk.

The medical facility was set up like an assembly line. I was assigned to a gurney and passed from technician to technician until I was wheeled into the surgery theater. The first tech took my name and vitals, checked my meds, asked about any allergies, and confirmed which eye would be operated on that day. The second tech double-checked the info, inserted an IV and began a saline drip.

Next, the anesthesiologist asked about any history of allergies. When my gurney was moved to the surgery theater, the anesthesiologist asked how I felt and administered a sedative via the IV. The surgeon came in and put an eyelid spreader on my face. He asked how I was doing and began the surgery. Afterward, my gurney was wheeled to the recovery area, my vitals checked, and I was given a juice box. With the lingering effects of the sedative, the juice box was delicious.

After discharge, I returned to Mule Creek where I received a follow-up within a few days, and prescription glasses within a few months. I can see clearly now; the cloudiness is gone.

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)

## Self-Awareness & Recovery

SAR is a program to reduce recidivism and incarceration rates by helping adult and youth offenders heal from the emotional wounds they experienced during their early years. Through self-awareness, participants seek to explore the causative factors that led to destructive lifestyles, and through recovery to teach healthy coping skills.

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

The Six Model of Transformation



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

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

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

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



Division of  
Rehabilitative Programs

DRP programs available  
on institutional channels  
21.22.23. and 24

You cannot escape  
the responsibility of  
tomorrow by  
evading today.

— Abraham Lincoln

# 12 Tips for the Board, Pt. 2

By Maya Emig, Post Columnist

**L**AST MONTH, I began this two-part article and provided a few tips to prepare for your comprehensive risk assessment and your parole hearing. Here are the rest of them.

Sixth, develop thorough relapse prevention plans. Work through your issues and spend time dissecting them. Figure out what triggered you, so you will be able to answer questions the panel asks. This is not about memorization, but about knowing why you acted the way you did, what triggered you, and the coping mechanisms you have vetted to stop those behaviors. Read my articles on relapse prevention plans (*Mule Creek Post* Nov-Dec 2023, Jan and Mar 2024) and the five stages of change (*Mule Creek Post* Apr-May 2024) to figure out where you are on your journey to rehabilitation. You will likely be asked about how you will maintain sobriety — have a plan you can articulate and do not simply say “I just don’t plan on using again” or some variation of that.

Seventh, a question that often comes up is what could bring you back to prison. A failing answer is “Nothing could ever bring me back to prison,” and that is often followed with “because ...” This is a short-sighted answer that raises concerns for the panel, because if you are not aware of where your vulnerabilities are, then you certainly do not fully understand yourself and your issues and cannot protect yourself from them. The two areas of criminality behind most people’s return to prison are substance abuse and domestic violence. If you have any domestic violence in your history — make sure you have a healthy relationship plan. Also, a stress management plan with a lot of coping mechanisms you’ll use to manage stress. It’s important you identify areas of vulnerability. Perhaps you have a long history of criminality associated with making fast, easy money — which could mean burglaries, robberies, selling drugs, pimping, or a host of other crimes. If that was primarily how you made your money before, it might be an area that warrants attention upon release.

Eighth, if you have a personality disorder or have been diagnosed with one, you should know what it means. The features of antisocial personality disorder, for example, include a pervasive pattern of disregard for the rights of others, occurring since the age of 15. If you have ongoing mental health issues, you should prepare a mental health management plan. Read my columns (*Mule Creek Post* Jul-Oct 2024) for tips on how to create one. If you are on medication for mental health issues, know the name of it; educate yourself on the medication, and know you will need to manage it when you are released.

Ninth, when discussing parole plans, be prepared to discuss your social support in the free community — siblings, family members, clergy, close friends. Be prepared to discuss where you want to parole to and the transitional homes you have written to and have been accepted. Be prepared to discuss where you will live afterward. Be prepared to discuss employment, job skills, and any financial support you will be receiving. Really develop those parole plans and include professional services out in the community. Truly develop an appreciation for the need for community services to help maintain your sobriety and whatever issues you have, to help you deal with things when you are released into a less-restrictive environment. If you’re a veteran, you have a plethora of services to tap into. Know what they are, and how to access them.

Tenth, take victim awareness classes and work on understanding you have created victims in *all* your crimes, not just the main crime that brought you to prison. Work on empathy and remorse. Write remorse letters from your heart, not something copied from someone else. There is nothing worse than getting called out for this during a hearing. Do your own work!

Eleventh, once you receive your comprehensive risk assessment, read it and try to understand why the clinician rated you as he did. Spend time on the last few pages of your report and look for “Assessment of Risk for Violence: HCR-20-V3.” Go back and read my article on understanding the HCR-20:V3 (*Mule Creek Post* May 2023). Be prepared to answer whether you agree with the clinician’s assessment of your risk for violence. For you to answer that question, spend time understanding the risk assessment tool. The HCR-20-V3 discusses 10 historical factors empirically associated with a person’s risk for future violence. It also discusses five clinical factors within the last three years that have been associated with a person’s risk for future violence, and five risk-management factors empirically related to a person’s risk for future violence.

Twelfth, if you have already been to a hearing, read your previous transcripts to help prepare for your upcoming hearing. Clearly articulate why you were denied at the previous hearing and what you have done to address those issues. Also, use the transcript to prepare for answering questions by the next panel; see how your answers differ with the additional programming and increased insight you have gained about yourself and your criminality.

AN INMATE'S GUIDE TO NAVIGATING  
THE PAROLE SUITABILITY  
PROCESS IN CALIFORNIA

## 36 STRATEGIES of SUITABILITY

BY JOSEPH R. HAYTAS

### Same Begets Same

**D**OING THE SAME thing that got you into prison won't get you out. Without change, don't expect anything different. Even positive conduct pre-prison which is duplicated inside, without more, won't get you out. For instance, an excellent pre-prison work ethic continued inside isn't enough. You have to work on things that got you here.

Facing character defects which resulted in criminal conduct or being in denial regarding criminality can be difficult. We don't like to feel vulnerable and examining areas of dysfunction can be challenging.

As an example, we present a clergyman who was respected in free society and active in community work. However, domestic violence issues brought him to prison. Inside, he continued a spiritual path involved in prison ministry, but ignored addressing domestic violence programming. The board found that it wasn't unusual that he could play by the prison rules, as he had done in society. Because he failed to pursue enlightenment in intimate relationship issues, he was denied.

Change is a must. Failing to work on things which brought you to prison is a good way to ensure a longer stay. When we are stressed, fatigued, or find ourselves in a strange environment or difficult situation, we are prone to resort back to old behavior patterns that are comfortable. This is true even when we know in our hearts that these things are wrong.

It takes effort to change and re-program old thought patterns that brought us down in the past. But that is the effort that will bring you back to the free world. Keep doing the positive things you were doing in society, of course; but that cannot be all that you do. New thought and behavior patterns are developed through groups and programs that address anti-social behaviors that were entrenched into past lifestyles.

Joseph R. Haytas is an attorney and the author of 36 Strategies to Suitability.

# Plea Bargaining

## And Other Attacks On Our Constitutional Rights

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

**P**LEA BARGAINING IS a thief: It steals the right to a speedy trial, promised to every American in our Constitution. Our constitutional rights were won at the cost of American blood and guaranteed by the character and promises of our nation's fathers.

Attorney and author Matthew C. Dash Martins appeared on Kirby Anderson's *Viewpoint*, a radio show that aired on May 16, 2024. During the show, he said, "Everyone should hate plea bargaining." Martins, an accomplished law clerk for two federal judges before becoming a trial lawyer for 28 years, was on Kirby's show to tout his new book, *Reforming Criminal Justice*.

According to Martins, if someone insists on their right to a speedy trial, it's not unusual to hear the prosecution say something like this: "If you go to trial and lose, you are looking at, let's say 45 years, and we have figured out a series of charges that equal x-number of years ... so if you take this deal that we are offering you today, you won't have to risk the higher sentence if you lose at trial."

Now this new number would be less than the 45-year threat, but require the accused to accept on his permanent record the possibility of crimes he never committed. Furthermore, these plea-bargain crimes could cost him life in prison someday if they later count as strikes or priors if he ever appears in court on a new charge. The plea-bargaining game works by adding a battery of ancillary charges, offering the accused, "a deal" in order to coerce him into giving up his constitutional right to a speedy trial (within 90 days).

Keep in mind, we are supposed to be innocent until proven guilty by a jury of our peers. Yet, the threat of additional years looms over the person who may or may not be guilty but insists on a trial. This person could wait for their trial for many years in the county jail by continuously waving their right to a speedy trial and yet be proven innocent in the end. Meanwhile, reputation, family, job, and assets are at risk. Without a speedy trial, the facts melt in the minds of the public, friends slip away, and family suffers; not to mention the financial losses that are seldom made up due to lost influence in the community and opportunities in the work place.

In personal interview after interview with fellow incarcerated on the yard, this reporter learned that the prosecution can use all kinds of threats and offers to get one to avoid trial and take a plea bargain. Your crime does not matter at the bargaining table; all that matters is the amount of time they want you to take. They can make up any charge they want, and that charge will be on your permanent record if you agree to the plea bargain.

Martins opened this radio interview with a dramatic question: "Are we accomplishing criminal justice today in our system?" "One of our constitutional rights is a right to a speedy trial," he stated emphatically. "If someone insists on their constitutional right to a jury trial, we offer plea bargaining to avoid the cost and time of a trial."

A second attorney made an interesting comment as well. "If everyone insisted on their constitutional right to a speedy trial, then the courts would be so jammed up they'd be forced to terminate most of the cases and release the accused." When asked what the results would be, he said, "They'd have to go find them all again and re-arrest them and start the process all over again."

Martins noted that judges decide how to instruct juries and what evidence can or cannot be allowed. According to Martins, defense attorneys are predominately chosen for judges. It's not difficult to see how certain evidence and specific witnesses can be ignored at the judge's discretion. Is this justice?

He went on to speak about the importance of due process, which entails procedural fairness, an opportunity for all evidence to be presented, and impartiality. He continued about the need for a fact finder who is unbiased. Further, he emphasized the need for the punishment to fit the crime. In addition, the need to punish proportionally and to respond proportionally.

The theme of the talk show featuring Martins revolved around "What is real justice?" Martins' book zeros in on what this means. "Justice is giving every man what is due him, both victim and perpetrator, and organizing society in the best way possible for all."

The idea is to be just, on a one-to-one basis, as well as organizing society so that it's just for everyone. This is where government can back what is good for all or only for some, according to Martins.

One of Martins' final comments was interesting. "We can be kinder to the accuser than we are to the accused," he said. The take away was that true justice is a need of justice for all.



## The Old Man and His Horse

*A Chinese story about the usefulness of letting go of judgment:*

ONCE THERE WAS an old man who lived in a tiny village. Although poor, he was envied, for he owned a beautiful white horse. Even the king coveted it. A horse like this had never been seen before — such was its splendor, its majesty, its strength.

People offered fabulous prices for the steed, but the old man always refused. “This horse is not a horse to me,” he would tell them. “It is like a person. How could you sell a person? He is a friend, not a possession. How could you sell a friend?” The man was poor, and the temptation was great. But he never sold the horse.

One morning, he found that the horse was not in his stable. The entire village came to see him. “You old fool,” they scoffed, “we told you that someone would steal your horse. We warned you that you would be robbed. You are so poor. How could you ever protect such a valuable animal? It would have been better to have sold him. You could have gotten whatever price you wanted. No amount would have been too high. Now the horse is gone, and you’ve been cursed with misfortune.”

The old man responded, “Don’t speak too quickly. Say only that the horse is not in the stable. That is all we know; the rest is opinion. If I’ve been cursed or not, how can you know? How can you judge?”

The people contested, “Don’t make us out to be fools! We may not be philosophers, but great philosophy is not needed. The simple fact that your horse is gone is a curse.”

The old man spoke again. “All I know is that the stable is empty, and the horse is gone. The rest I don’t know. Whether it be a curse or a blessing, all we can see is a fragment. Who can say what will come next?”

The people of the village laughed. They thought that the man was crazy. They had always thought he was a fool. If he wasn’t, he would have sold the

horse and lived off the money. But instead, he was a poor woodcutter, an old man still cutting firewood and dragging it out of the forest and selling it. He lived hand-to-mouth in the misery of poverty. Now he had proved that he was, indeed, a fool.

After fifteen days, the horse returned. He hadn’t been stolen; he had run away into the forest. Not only had he returned, he had brought a dozen wild horses with him. Once again, the village people gathered around the woodcutter and spoke. “Old man, you were right, and we were wrong. What we thought was a curse was a blessing. Please forgive us.”

The man responded, “Once again, you go too far. Say only that the horse is back. State only that a dozen horses returned with him, but don’t judge. How do you know if this is a blessing or not? You see only a fragment. Unless you know the whole story, how can you judge? You read only one page of a book. Can you judge the whole book? You read only one word of a phrase. Can you understand the entire phrase?”

“Life is so vast, yet you judge all of life with one page or one word. All you have is one fragment. Don’t say that this is a blessing. No one knows. I am content with what I know. I am not perturbed by what I don’t.”

“Maybe the old man is right,” they said to one another. So they said little. But down deep, they believed he was wrong. They knew it was a blessing. Twelve wild horses had returned. With a little work, the animals could be broken in and trained and sold for much money.

The old man had a son, an only son. The young man began to break the wild horses. After a few days, he fell from one of the horses and broke both legs. Once again, the villagers gathered around the old man and cast their judgments.

“You were right,” they said. “You proved you were right. The dozen horses were not a blessing. They were a curse. Your only son has broken both his legs, and now in your old age you have no one to help you. Now you are poorer than ever.”

The old man spoke again. “You people are obsessed with judging. Don’t go so far. Say only that my son broke his legs. Who knows if it a blessing or a curse? No one knows. We only have a fragment. Life comes in fragments.”

It so happened that a few weeks later the country engaged in war against a neighboring country. All the young men of the village were required to join the army. Only the son of the old man was excluded, because he was injured. Once again, the people gathered around the old man, crying and screaming because their sons had been taken. There was little chance that they would return. The enemy was strong, and the war would be a losing struggle. Likely, they would never see their sons again.

“You were right, old man,” they wept. “God knows you were right. This proves it. Your son’s accident was a blessing. His legs may be broken, but at least he is with you. Our sons are gone forever.”

The old man spoke again. “It is impossible to talk with you. You always draw conclusions. No one knows. Say only this. Your sons had to go to war and mine did not. No one knows if it is a blessing or a curse. No one is wise enough to know. Only God knows.”

## Mindfulness

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

EQUANIMITY HAS BEEN described as the actuality of living a centered life. It can be understood as living — not in extreme emotion — but instead living a life that is accepting of all emotion without being overwhelmed. The story of the farmer and his horse is an example of someone who lives in and with equanimity, someone who is able to recognize “this, too, shall pass” in all things, not just when it feels good.

Over the last year, the possibility of living in emotional-based extremes has been the reality for many in the United States. And, with the election results of November 2024, some people might be tempted to allow an emotional extreme to take over their day-to-day existence. However, today is but a bump on the path that is life if we can move through and past any experience that has the potential to strongly affect our emotional selves.

What looks like a great boon — or great loss — could in the long run be the exact opposite or have no effect on the future whatsoever. Living in this emotional space that allows for “let’s see what happens and not make any decision as to whether this is a good thing,” can be a challenging, difficult, and emotionally healthy place.

Our brains are designed to keep us safe when faced with situations that seem dangerous, unsafe, or even just uncomfortable. They can go on high alert, telling the endocrine system to make a bunch of hormones that allow us to ignore our analytical brain and continue to take action, even if we are injured, and allow the amygdala, where the fight-or-flight responses live, to take over our

(continued on page 16)

(From *View from a Cushion*, pg. 15)

reactions as well, all in an attempt to ensure our survival. In the other direction, when we feel a (sometimes false) sense of safety and security, our brain can send messages to the body and endocrine system to relax, take it easy, disconnect, or even take a nap and recharge. Neither extreme can be considered equanimity, because they are extremes and as such are not an emotional place where wise, success-oriented decision making happens.

Whatever it is that you are feeling right now as we embark on the journey that is the next few years, it might help to recognize that someone you know, love, and communicate with is feeling the same way you are, and someone else you know, love, and communicate with is feeling the exact opposite. Reach out, make that (sometimes very difficult) attempt to connect with those around you, not necessarily to engage in political conversation, but instead to find some other place of common ground, a place where you can be together and remember why you like this person in the first place. It might help to remember that it is our shared humanity — the ability to see past the ideas, ideologies, and identities that separate us — and allow us to make and maintain true connection with those around us.

If you start to feel overwhelmed, reach out and talk to someone about why you think you are feeling the way you are. It is through expressing ourselves and giving others a chance to express themselves that we learn where we connect and help us find commonality, something we all need, no matter what.



# A New Kind of Hard Time

*Making the decision to “drop out” from mainline population to PC/SNY/NDPF is not an easy choice, and many individuals resisted the move for up to several decades. This series explores the reasons individuals chose to remain in the stressful and toxic environment for as long as they did; what prompted them to change; what the actual process looked like for them; and what they see as the benefits and drawbacks of being on “the other side.”*

## If I Knew Then What I Know Now

By Earl S. Breckenridge, Mule Creek State Prison

**I**F I KNEW then what I know now, I would have recognized my life-without-parole sentence (LWOP), at age 18 in 1982, and subsequent placement in indeterminate SHU (restricted housing) for validated gang activity in 1986, were the product of my own making, rather than the consequences of getting caught. Despite what I learned in the homes and stints in juvenile hall, camps, boys’ homes, and Youth Authority; views of myself, others, the world, and my place and role within it was the backdrop of all my beliefs, values, and behaviors. Not feeling loved in early childhood compelled me to seek acceptance, approval, and value wherever they could be found. Ditching school, petty theft, marijuana, and hanging out with the local gang became a refuge where I would not only find belonging, but could remake myself into whatever image I desired. “I could be somebody,” I repeated to myself in the quiet of my mind. “I must blend in and adapt, survive or die, to make my mark in the hood.”



Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible.

—Viktor E. Frankl in *Man’s Search for Meaning* (2006)

If I knew then what I know now, I would have accepted responsibility for all the circumstances of my life, and would have recognized my obligation and privilege to alter the course of my future. All my life, I thought I was a victim of circumstance, of others’ mistreatment of me and neglect in providing for my needs. An unjust world, cruel people, and sense of entitlement justified my rebellious, reckless, and indifferent choices and behaviors. How naïve I’d been to think what happens to me determines my reality rather than how I respond to what happens to me. I was blind to the fact that I was self-centered, prideful, and full of hate, which had been the actual source of all my decisions. Ignorance of this keeps me blaming everyone else, powerless to see that the changes I desired to see outside of me needed to begin on the inside.

There’s comfort and security in collective madness: Sanity is a solitary trek less traveled. If I knew then what I know now, I would have realized who I am, why I am here, and where I am going is inseparable from a faithful relationship with God. I lived my entire life inside the tiny bubble of what I had learned on the streets. My identity, purpose, and destiny centered in, revolved around, and progressed toward the taking of an innocent life and sentence of life without parole. I wandered from childhood, through adolescence, and into young adulthood in rebellion against God’s vision, design, and purpose for my life. I was spiritually lost, emotionally dead, and without hope of anything better ever happening to me. Coming to faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ not only transformed my understanding of my past, but empowered me to realize my potential to be all that God desires me to be, and enjoy life to the fullest.

Internalized, unprocessed trauma and unresolved emotional issues from childhood constrained my values, meaning, and purpose of life to a limited view of myself, others, the world, and my place and role within it. This meant my choices and behaviors, my relationships, aspirations, and goals were not only beneath my potential, but were contrary to a sustainable state of being. I lived in the shadows of life and myself — inauthentic and enslaved — hurting others by omission of good and commission of bad. I dug a grave, jumped inside, and buried myself alive. I’ve since come to understand and prioritize the cultivation, growth, and extension of my soul in relationship to God. Investing time, energy, and attention in spiritual, moral, mental, social, and physical health and well-being culminates in connection, love, freedom, realized potential, and satisfaction of the desires of my heart.

If I’d only known then what I know now...

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

# National Pokémon Day

We couldn't catch them all, but we caught these for February 27.



Pikachu (Pixabay.com)



Psyduck (Wallpapers-Clan.com)



Caterpie (Pinterest.com)



Metapod (PokemonDB.net)



Butterfree (Fandom.com)



Snorlax (Pokemon.GameInfo.io)

# Is Anyone Seeking True Justice?

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

LONG AGO, A wise queen taught her son, Prince Lemuel, about justice as he was growing up to be the king. She said to him, “Open your mouth for those who cannot speak for themselves in their cause, for those appointed to destruction and plead for the poor and needy.”

On August 6, as I walked through the dayroom to go to yard, suddenly there was a yard recall. Midway through the dayroom, I decided to sit down and begin watching the PBS show *Stories from the Stage*.

A god-like figure of a man was speaking; he was eloquent, articulate, and every word he spoke was powerful. He was a state prosecutor from a county in Massachusetts. He told his audience that a criminal prosecutor wields amazing power over the lives of his adversaries. Then he told his own life story as a teen drug user and potential criminal. Yet, his extremely high IQ and his ability to call shots among his peers was interrupted by a mentor who saw his potential and invested in his life with purpose and care.

Soon he was in college, then law school, then working as a DA for the county to which he was once a liability, but now an asset. He spoke of a DA’s ability to save or destroy a life. He said, “There are many who need to be kept away from society, yet there are others who only need an opportunity to redeem themselves.”

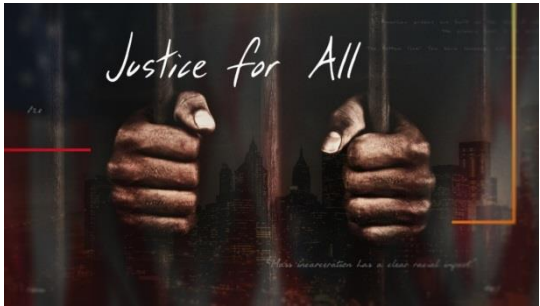
He shared the story of Chris, a teen working at Best Buy. Chris owed money, and under pressure made the poor decision to steal 20 laptops and sell them online. Of course, he was caught. This DA saw what Chris could become with a chance for a redo. He did not send Chris to jail or to court to become a convicted felon. “Once this young man would be branded for life as a felon and do prison time, his life would never be the same.”

This progressive DA said, “In my county, we work hard on our cases, and just as hard on saving some of our cases from being prosecuted so they can live the life they were destined to live.”

Six years later, while attending a special event for the elite and up and coming young business leaders in his community, he spotted a young executive waving and smiling at him from across the room. The young man made his way to the DA. Suddenly, the DA was being hugged by a man crying and thanking him for giving him a second chance at life. As it turned out this young man was Chris. He had become a top executive for a Fortune 500 company with a salary to match. He worked his way to success, rather than disintegrating into a felon with a rap sheet. The charismatic DA went on citing other amazing stories of real lives he and his fellow DAs have worked to salvage.

He went on to say, “We see the value of human beings rather than just seeing people as cases to prosecute.” The speaker from the stage encouraged his audience to check out those running for the office of district attorney. “See if they care about people as much as the notches on their gun for being tough on crime. Be sure they are willing to put the bad guys away and give the struggling first-time offenders a chance to redeem themselves. Be sure they are more interested in people, the voters, the victims, and the potentially redeemable who made a mistake. Be sure they are really more interested in true justice than their résumé and climbing the ladder to their own personal success.”

Here was a daring DA who was willing, along with the other DA peers in his county, to speak out for those who could not speak for themselves. It makes one wonder how many could be redeemed if justice was “true justice” with a greater purpose.



(NBCnews.com)

**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



**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](http://LifeSupportAlliance.org)





# National Pokémon Day



Krabby (Pokemon.com)



Mewtwo (Pokemon.com)



Charmander (PokemonDB.net)



Charmeleon (PokemonDB.net)



Charizard (ign.com)



Machop (Pokemon.com)

# VA Has No Shame, Refuses Aid to Vets

By Dale Hurd, Post Reporter



FIRST RESPONDER ACTIVIST Jon Stewart and U.S. veterans sickened by uranium exposure at U.S. outpost “K2” in Uzbekistan left a July 26, 2024, meeting with Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Denis McDonough, angry at the VA and Pentagon. Their anger stemmed from McDonough’s refusal to act despite the clear mandates of the PACT Act. Stewart and the K2 veterans pressed hard at the meeting but made no headway. Stewart was infuriated and said, “The secretary today said he was the authority statutorily to make the change, to make sure the K2 veterans are covered presumptively,” but McDonough told us he currently intended to take no action.

When *Daily Show* host Stewart appeared before Congress, shaming it into addressing the health care needs of New York’s 9/11 first responders, the *New York Times* covered the event with an analysis piece. This article compared Stewart’s shaming of Congress to legendary broadcaster Edward R. Murrow’s coverage of the pivotal “have you no shame” derision aimed at the House Un-American Activities Committee chairman, Joseph McCarthy. Citing the *Daily Show* host’s testimony before Congress, the *New York Times* media writers Bill Carter and Brian Seeker posed the question, “Does that make the comedian, Jon Stewart, the modern-day equivalent of Edward R. Murrow?” Apparently not. While Stewart was effective in shaming Congress into providing relief to New York’s first responders, he came up empty regarding relief for K2’s first responders.

The veterans’ claims are covered by the PACT Act, a major aid package for veterans signed into law by President Joseph Biden in 2022. For many veterans, the act has made access to care much easier. Yet, the PACT Act has not aided the very first troops deployed in response to Al Qaeda’s attacks in America, the veterans sent to K2. K2 veterans are the military’s “first responders” to 9/11.

U.S. military base Karshi-Khanabad, commonly known as “K2,” is located in Uzbekistan. It was a strategic location used by special operations forces for launching strikes into Afghanistan. In October 2001, just weeks after 9/11, U.S. troops began deploying to K2, bringing the fight to Al Qaeda and the Taliban. K2 is a former Soviet base that was a chemical weapons site, which was highly contaminated with toxic materials. The primary contaminant is yellow-powdered uranium that was kicked up in the dust and moved throughout the installation when the U.S. Army used heavy equipment to push up a protective earthen berm around the base’s perimeter. The radiation level at K2 is as much as 40,000 times higher than the naturally occurring background radiation in the area, according to experts familiar with the data.

A significant number of troops formerly stationed at K2 have died young. For example, Lt. Col. Tim Brooks was one of the first soldiers to deploy to K2 in 2001. He served with the 10th Mountain Division during Operation Anaconda against the Taliban in early 2002. When his unit returned to Fort Drum, New York, in the spring of 2002, he was suffering from debilitating headaches. In 2003, Brooks collapsed during a Fort Drum ceremony as his unit was preparing to deploy to Iraq. Doctors diagnosed him with brain cancer and he died a year later at age 46. Significantly, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was the commanding general of the 10th Mountain Division in 2004 when Brooks died at Fort Drum of brain cancer

The presence of uranium on the K2 base has been known by the U.S. military since November 2001, and is documented on multiple U.S. Army maps, in memos, and in VA briefings. The base and the radiation contamination there were the subject of congressional hearings in 2020. At a level of 40,000 times the background radiation level, exposure causes damage to the kidneys and internal organs, bone problems, cancer, reproductive issues, birth defects, and damage to the glands. For example, former Army Staff Sgt. Mark Jackson, a K2 veteran, has severe osteoporosis, and had to have a testicle and his thyroid removed.

Austin was the Combined Joint Task Force commander for Afghanistan when Jackson was deployed to K2. Jackson’s unit used K2 to go in and out of Afghanistan on missions directed by the Joint Task Force and it was Austin who signed off on Jackson’s Bronze Star. More than 15,000 troops were deployed at K2 from 2001 to 2003. Stewart and the K2 Veterans were asking the Pentagon and the VA to do the right thing and act now before any more K2 first responders die.

Perhaps Stewart should have publically asked secretaries Austin and McDonough, “Have you no shame?”



# National Pokémon Day



Squirtle (Pokemon.com)



Wartortle (Pokemon.com)



Blastoise (Pinterest.com)



Lugia (SonicPokemon.Fandom.com)



Centiscorch (Pokemon.com)



Jigglypuff (PokemonPets.com)

# Healthy Relationships: *Tea Time*

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

*Be yourself, everybody else is already taken.*

—Oscar Wilde

**W**HEN A NEED is not being met, people like Frank Lopez take action. As a member of the LGBTQ community who identifies as non-binary and an advocate, Lopez set out to have the needs of the community met and to feel included in the Healthy Relationships program. Lopez approached Julia Hubbs, founder and creator of Healthy Relationships, and co-facilitator Shawn Hawk, with the idea of extending the program for the community. The idea of a LGBTQ group, coupled with Healthy Relationships, was planted on this day in August 2023. Hubbs recalled Lopez making the pitch, stating, “I was in.”

With the seed planted, residents Fredrick Dew and Lilith Orion began to water it by first looking to improve the language in the original Healthy Relationships workbook, to include pronouns and identities that represented the LGBTQ community. “The level of support we found was overwhelming,” said Dew, the support coming from the community and staff alike.

*Tea Time Together: Live Like You*, was written, Hubbs said, “as a workbook and focus aid to encourage the LGBTQAI+ community to openly and honestly discuss ways to improve intimate relationships.” According to Hubbs, this is seen by many as more than just a workbook, but as an opportunity for growth, guidance, and “for open and real discussions about what a healthy relationship is between people and how to foster and grow these relationships into mutual love and respect.”

“The most beautiful thing about group is it is so organic in the way it has grown,” Orion said.

And now, as the first year has ended and the second year begins, this exclusive program looks to add new faces to the group. For those interested, fill out a CDCR 2016 Form for LGBTQ Healthy Relationships, from 2:30-4:00, (Facility E on the third Saturday of the month, and Facility D on the fourth Saturday). Hubbs looks to empower people to make life changes. “It’s about developing life skills and making healthier choices,” she said.

Through a commitment to empathy, awareness, and decisive action we can support the LGBTQ community, those who face the pressure of often finding no space to be themselves, which is intertwined with the affirmation of their identities. This ensures a future where everyone emerges not only informed, but truly seen and wholeheartedly supported.

In her book *Exhale*, Julia Hubbs reminds us, “In spite of everything you may have been through, remember you are capable of finding your own sense of inner peace and joy.”

## TOPSS Program Secure

Future of CSU Program Stable for Now

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

**I**N DECEMBER 2024, the future of the Transforming Outcomes Project at Sac State (TOPSS) was uncertain. The program provides in-person classes to incarcerated students, leading to a bachelor’s degree in communication studies. TOPSS was being scrutinized by faculty who wanted more tenured and tenure-track professors teaching in the prisons.

Unfortunately, this desire threatened the program itself. According to one professor in the department, Dr. Matthew Stoner, “[Tenure-track] faculty have full schedules on campus and given a choice, most choose not to make the drive [to prisons].” The hoped-for changes to TOPSS’ professors would make it less likely that there would be instructors available to teach classes.

The discussion culminated in a vote taken Dec. 11, 2024, which was tied between the options of continuing the status quo or tabling the discussion for another year. Stoner, who did not vote as he is not a tenured professor at the university, advocated with his peers prior to the meeting. His experience in TOPSS in the fall 2024 semester led to his opposition to the third option, ending the program altogether, and the option of picking up the question again later. Delaying the question, he believes, “serves no purpose except to create ambiguity, and a perception of low commitment” from the program’s faculty.

A second vote was taken a week later to break the tie, resulting in the program continuing for the near future. The vote was to enroll the next cohort of students into TOPSS, securing another two-year cycle of classes. TOPSS, which began offering classes to students at the Mule Creek State Prison and Folsom State Prison in the spring of 2021, has approximately 100 students enrolled between the two institutions, and it graduates approximately 20 every year.



# Vignettes

## Two Acres of Sod

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

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

I WAS IMPRESSED with the sprawling Mule Creek State Prison when I arrived in 2017. The pen is situated in rolling foothills near the magnificent Sierra Nevada Mountains and surrounded by pine, oak, and assorted green foliage. However, walking onto the new Level II yard, it appeared I was back in the Imperial Valley desert: A smooth concrete quarter-mile track and grounds encircled a desolate two-acre plot of bare dirt and sand; there was no grass.

Within weeks, a chain-link fence was erected around the centralized barren parcel and other preparations made to lay a new lawn. The next day, a load of rolled sod was trucked onto the yard, along with eight professional-looking turf-layers, equipment, and a couple of day laborers. These two disheveled worker bees appeared selected from a downtown street corner. The edgy, heavily-tattooed pair quickly wandered off to the fencing next to the track. A few nods at the incarcerated walking by, and some wary whispering, hinted at familiarity. I saw a crew supervisor take notice of the antics, but he said nothing.

The 10-man crew worked efficiently, but the errant pair seemed tense with the prison environment. Shortly after 12:30, the yard teemed with activity, the incarcerated going about their day and the lawn-layers toiling away.

Then a yard alarm blared from the dining hall. Immediately, all those walking the track or in line at the canteen obediently dropped to the ground in a sitting position, as programmed — so did the tattooed pair working on the inside of the construction fence. The rest of the grass-laying team stood bewildered, staring at their weird co-workers.

The next day, I noticed the lawn-layers arrive, hold a short meeting, and then quietly start work — two men short.

# Psych View

## Building a Program in Solitude

AS I'VE MENTIONED before, if you are in solitude (solitary confinement) you must be creative with your program. For most people this is difficult, but for all incarcerated people it is possible. Some examples of solitary activities include meditation, scripture, reading, study, skill building (through crafts, literacy, or art), journals, and correspondence.

If you show up to a parole hearing with no program and claim that you did nothing with your prison time — for whatever reason — you will show that you lack motivation and have failed to take control of your actions and lifestyle. This will not be considered in a favorable way.

If you have a cellmate, the possibilities are exponentially increased for private programs. You could counsel each other and journal about the experience. You could teach each other skills. And, you could socialize. Do not suggest to your board that you failed to program because of your cell assignment. If your cellmate is a problem, ask for a change. The responsibility is yours, and the excuses make you appear lame.

*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.*



# Just Listening Can Open Doors

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

SOME THINGS IN life just seem right, but in the end they don't work over the long haul. One of those things is how we listen to others when they speak. Have you ever noticed how some people start off listening, but the other person says something triggering the listener who suddenly becomes the talker. It gets worse; the listener not only becomes the talker, which means they are no longer listening, but they change the conversation until it's all about them.

We all know the drill; the person who was interrupted is not only no longer being listened to, but they are done — conversation over. Sometimes it gets even uglier. Before you know it, both people are talking at the same time and neither one is listening to the other.

What causes this disconnect between us? Someone once said, "Take a look in the mirror, and notice that you have two ears and only one mouth. Think about it." When we are self-centered, our world becomes smaller and smaller. Yet, when we choose to keep our mouths shut and our ears open, all kinds of options can open up to us. After all, we already know all about ourselves, why not listen and learn something about someone else?

This is a common problem, and it is not really our fault. After all, we were born as a "self"; the problem is, so was everyone else. This makes us selfish or self-centered. We are always looking for the angle: "What's in this for me?" The main problem in life is that taking this self-centered approach just doesn't work well. It keeps our world small and our options limited. When we step out of our self-inflicted bubble, life opens up. Those who learn the fine art of listening seem to be happier, have more friends, and a lot more options in their lives.

Next time you find yourself in a conversation, fight the urge to interrupt or start talking about you. Instead, begin to ask open-ended questions and see just how long the conversation can last with you doing almost no talking. You may actually find yourself interested in someone you thought was a boring person.

The next challenge is our self-pity. We all have problems, yet, in reality, no one really cares about them. Why? Because they are suffering from the same malady we suffer: self-pity. Truth be known, they really don't care. Do you want proof? Ask yourself, "Do I really care about their moaning, groaning, and complaining?" No, and they don't either. As a matter of truth, complaining, criticizing, and condemning everything we don't like in life never draws people to us, rather it repels them away from us. This has proven true according to the all-time *New York Times* bestseller by Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. So why do we do it? We do it because we are self-centered and, when the focus is on us, pretty soon there is no us, there's just me, myself, and I. Like the song says, "One is the loneliest number that there'll ever be."

As a challenge, force yourself to listen longer without putting your two cents in. Then take note how the conversation and the relationship goes. You may just discover that listening can add a whole new dimension to your life.

Learning to listen is the first duty of love.  
—Paul Tillich

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 Recipes

NOW THAT YOU have had the opportunity to see the full list of elements available to you in the game and years to figure out all the recipes, here is a list of how to create each of the 390 elements in the game. Note that these are just one of the sometimes many ways of forming the elements; those marked with an asterisk do not combine to form anything new.

- Air: starting element
- Earth: starting element
- Fire: starting element
- Water: starting element
- 1up = Life + Mushroom
- Airplane = Bird + Metal
- Albert Einstein\* = Energy + Scientist
- Alcohol = Fire + Water
- Alcoholic = Alcohol + Man
- Algae = Life + Water
- Alien = Life + Star
- Aluminum = Airplane + Metal
- Ambulance\* = Car + Hospital
- Aquarium\* = Fish + Glass
- Arable = Earth + Tool
- Arms = Metal + Tool
- Ash = Fire + Tree
- Ashtray\* = Ash + Glass
- Assassin = Man + Poisoned Weapon
- Australia = Country + Kangaroo
- Avian Flu\* = Bird + Flu
- Baby = Man + Sex
- Bacon\* = Fire + Pig
- Bacteria = Life + Swamp
- Bar\* = Beer + Brickhouse
- Barbeque = Fire + Meat
- Bat = Bird + Vampire
- Batman\* = Bat + Man
- Beach = Sand + Water
- Bear = Beast + Forest
- Beast = Earth + Lizard
- Beaver = Beast + Dam
- Bee = Beetle + Flower
- Beer = Alcohol + Wheat
- Beetle = Earth + Worm
- Beetroot = Seed + Sugar
- Belarus\* = Country + Tractor
- Berry = Fruit + Grass
- Bicycle = Wheel + Wheel
- Bird = Air + Egg
- Bitumen = Kerogen + Pressure
- Blood = Beast + Hunter
- Boat = Water + Wood
- Boiler = Metal + Steam
- Book = Feather + Paper
- Borscht = Beetroot + Fire
- Bow\* = Arms + Robin Hood
- Bread = Dough + Fire
- Brick = Clay + Fire
- Brickhouse = Brick + Concrete
- Butterfly = Air + Worm
- C3PO = Gold + Robot
- Cactus = Desert + Tree
- Camel\* = Beast + Desert

- Cancer = Man + Tobacco
- Car = Cart + Combustion Engine
- Caramel\* = Fire + Sugar
- CO2 = Man + Oxygen
- Carmine = Cochineal + Fire
- Cart = Wheel + Wood
- Cat = Hunter + Mouse
- Catdog = Cat + Dog
- Caviar = Fish + Egg
- Cement = Clay + Limestone
- Cemetery\* = Grave + Grave
- Ceramics = Clay + Man
- Champagne = Soda Water + Wine
- Chariot = Cart + Warrior
- Cheese = Fire + Quark
- Chicken = Egg + Life
- China = Country + Dragon
- Chocolate = Cocoa + Sugar
- Christmas Tree = Lightbulb + Tree
- Cigarettes = Paper + Tobacco
- City = Skyscraper + Skyscraper
- Clay = Sand + Swamp
- Clock = Electricity + Hourglass
- Cloth = Tool + Wool
- Clothing = Cloth + Man
- Cloud = Air + Steam
- Coal = Fire + Tree
- Coca-Cola = Carmine + Soda Water
- Cochineal = Beetle + Cactus
- Cocoa = Mexico + Seed
- Coffin = Corpse + Wood
- Coin = Brick + Mario
- Combustion Engine = Gasoline + Steam Engine
- Concrete = Cement + Water
- Continent = Country + Country
- Copper = Gold + Silver
- Corpse = Fire + Man
- Country = City + City
- Crop Circles\* = Arable + UFO
- Dam = Brick + Water
- Desert = Sand + Sand
- Diamond = Tool + Uncut Diamond
- Diet = Man + Yogurt
- Dilemma = Chicken + Egg
- Dinosaur = Earth + Egg
- Doctor = Hospital + Scientist
- Dog = Man + Wolf
- Dough = Flour + Water
- Dr. Zoidberg\* = Doctor + Lobster
- Dragon = Dinosaur + Fire
- Dust = Air + Earth
- E-Book\* = Book + Microchip
- Ectoplasm = Energy + Ghost
- Egg = Life + Stone
- Egypt\* = Country + Mummy
- Electric Eel\* = Electricity + Snake
- Electric Ray\* = Electricity + Fish
- Electricity = Energy + Metal
- Elephant = Earth + Whale
- Energy = Air + Fire
- Ent = Life + Tree
- Explosion\* = Fire + Gasoline
- Fabrege Egg = Diamond + Egg
- Farmer = Man + Seed
- Fat = Man + Pig
- Feather = Bird + Hunter
- Fern = Moss + Swamp
- Finland\* = Country + Sauna
- Fire Elemental = Fire + Life
- Firearms = Arms + Gunpowder
- Firefighter\* = Fire + Hero
- Firefly\* = Beetle + Light
- Fish = Bacteria + Plankton
- Fisherman\* = Fish + Hunter
- Flour = Stone + Wheat
- Flower = Seed + Water
- Flu = Air + Bacteria
- Fondue = Cheese + Fire
- Forest = Grove + Grove
- Fossil = Butterfly + Earth
- France = Champagne + Country
- Frankenstein\* = Corpse + Electricity
- Fried Chicken = Chicken + Fire
- Frog = Lizard + Swamp
- Fruit = Flower + Tree
- Fugu\* = Fish + Poison

- Gasoline = Petroleum + Pressure
- Genie\* = Ghost + Lamp
- Germany\* = Country + VW Beetle
- Geyser = Earth + Steam
- Ghost = Ash + Life
- Ghostbusters\* = Ghost + Hunter
- Glass = Fire + Sand
- Gold = Philosopher's Stone + Silver
- Golem = Clay + Life
- Grape = Earth + Wood
- Grass = Earth + Moss
- Grave = Earth + Corpse
- Grove = Tree + Tree
- Gunpowder = Dust + Fire
- Hen Coop = Chicken + Hut
- Hero = Dragon + Warrior
- Honey = Bee + Tree
- Hospital = Brickhouse + Sick
- Hot Chocolate\* = Chocolate + Fire
- Hourglass = Glass + Sand
- House M.D.\* = Man + Vicodin
- Hunter = Arms + Man
- Hut = Man + Stone
- Hydrogen = Electricity + Water
- Ice = Glass + Water
- Iceland\* = Country + Volcano
- Idea = Lightbulb + Man
- India = Country + Kama Sutra
- Iodine = Algae + Fire
- iPhone\* = Fruit + Phone
- Island\* = Sea + Volcano
- Italy\* = Country + Venice
- Japan\* = Country + Sushi
- Jedi = Lightsaber + Warrior
- Juice\* = Berry + Pressure
- Kama Sutra = Book + Sex
- Kangaroo = 1up + Frog
- Kerogen = Fossil + Pressure
- Kilt = Clothing + Scotland
- Knife = Meat + Tool
- Lamp = Fire + Glass
- Lance Armstrong\* = Bicycle + Cancer
- Lava = Earth + Fire
- Lava Golem\* = Lava + Life
- Lava Lamp\* = Lava + Lamp
- Lawnmower = Combustion Engine + Scissors
- Leech\* = Blood + Worm
- Library = Book + Book
- Lichen\* = Algae + Mushroom
- Life = Energy + Swamp
- Light = Electricity + Lightbulb
- Lightbulb = Electricity + Glass
- Lighthouse\* = Light + Skyscraper
- Lightning Rod = Metal + Thunderstorm
- Lightsaber = Arms + Light
- Lime = Fire + Limestone
- Limestone = Shells + Stone
- Livestock = Beast + Man
- Lizard = Snake + Worm
- Lobster = Scorpion + Water
- Locomotive\* = Cart + Steam Engine
- Man = Life + Golem
- Manure = Grass + Livestock
- Mario = 1up + Man
- McDonald's = Coca-Cola + Sandwich
- Meat = Beast + Hunter
- Mentos = Coca-Cola + Geyser
- Mermaid\* = Fish + Woman
- Metal = Fire + Stone
- Metal Golem = Life + Metal
- Mexico = Country + Tequila
- Microchip = Transistor + Transistor
- Milk = Man + Livestock
- Mirror = Aluminum + Glass
- Mite\* = Dust + Life
- Mold = Mud + Mushroom
- Molotov Cocktail\* = Alcohol + Fire
- Money = Coin + Paper
- Moon = Cheese + Sky
- Moss = Algae + Swamp
- Motorboat\* = Boat + Combustion Engine
- Motorcycle\* = Bicycle + Combustion Engine
- Mouse = Beast + Cheese
- Mud = Dust + Water
- Mummy = Paper + Zombie
- Museum = Brickhouse + Fossil

(from **The Alchemist**, pg. 21)  
**Mushroom** = Algae + Earth  
**Music** = Idea + Sound  
**Obesity** = Man + McDonald's  
**Old Man** = Man + Time  
**Omelette\*** = Egg + Fire  
**Oxygen** = Electricity + Water  
**Oxyhydrogen** = Hydrogen + Oxygen  
**Ozone** = Electricity + Oxygen  
**Panda** = Beast + Tree  
**Paper** = Reed + Tool  
**Pearl\*** = Sand + Shells  
**Peat** = Swamp + Tree  
**Penguin\*** = Bird + Ice  
**Penicillin** = Mold + Scientist  
**Perfume** = Alcohol + Flower  
**Petri Dish\*** = Bacteria + Glass  
**Petroleum** = Bitumen + Pressure  
**Philosopher's Stone** = Philosophy + Stone  
**Philosophy** = Dilemma + Scientist  
**Phoenix\*** = Bird + Fire  
**Phone** = Sound + Wire  
**Pie\*** = Dough + Fruit  
**Pig** = Livestock + Mud  
**Piggy Bank\*** = Ceramics + Coin  
**Pillow\*** = Cloth + Feather  
**Pinocchio** = Life + Wood  
**Pizza** = Cheese + Dough  
**Planet** = Continent + Continent  
**Plankton** = Bacteria + Water  
**Plesiosauria** = Dinosaur + Water  
**Poison** = Mushroom + Tool  
**Poisoned Weapons** = Arms + Poison  
**Pressure** = Earth + Earth  
**Prisoner\*** = Assassin + Time  
**Pterodactyl** = Air + Dinosaur  
**Quark** = Fire + Soured Milk  
**Quetzalcoatl** = Bird + Snake  
**R2D2** = Robot + Star Wars  
**Rain** = Cloud + Water  
**Rainbow\*** = Light + Storm  
**Reed** = Grass + Swamp  
**Robin Hood** = Forest + Hero  
**Robot** = Electricity + Metal Golem  
**Romania\*** = Country + Transylvania  
**Ruby\*** = Aluminum + Oxygen  
**Russia\*** = Country + Vodka  
**Rust\*** = Metal + Water  
**Sailboat** = Boat + Cloth  
**Sailing Ship** = Cloth + Wooden Ship  
**Sailor\*** = Boat + Man  
**Salamander\*** = Fire + Lizard  
**Sal** = Man + Pig  
**Salt\*** = Fire + Sea  
**Saltpeter** = Limestone + Manure  
**Sand** = Air + Stone  
**Sandstorm\*** = Sand + Storm  
**Sandwich** = Bread + Meat  
**Santa Claus\*** = Christmas Tree + Old Man  
**Saudi Arabia\*** = Country + Petroleum  
**Sauna** = Hut + Steam  
**Scarab** = Beetle + Manure  
**Scientist** = Library + Man  
**Scissors** = Knife + Knife  
**Scorpion** = Beetle + Sand  
**Scotch Whiskey** = Alcohol + Peat  
**Scotland** = Country + Scotch Whiskey  
**Sea** = Water + Water  
**Sex & The City\*** = City + Sex  
**Shells** = Plankton + Stone  
**Sick** = Flu + Man  
**Silicon** = Pressure + Sand  
**Silk** = China + Cloth  
**Silver** = Metal + Moon  
**Sith** = Assassin + Jedi  
**Sky** = Air + Cloud  
**Skyscraper** = Brickhouse + Glass  
**Smoke** = Fire + Tobacco  
**Snail\*** = Shells + Worm  
**Snake** = Swamp + Worm  
**Sniper\*** = Assassin + Firearms  
**Soap\*** = Ash + Fat  
**Soda Water** = CO2 + Water  
**Soldier** = Firearms + Man

**Sound** = Metal + Wind  
**Soured Milk** = Milk + Yogurt  
**Spinning Wheel** = Wheel + Wool  
**Stake** = Knife + Wood  
**Star** = Scientist + Sun  
**Star Wars** = Jedi + Sith  
**Statue** = Stone + Tool  
**Statue of Liberty** = Statue + USA  
**Steam** = Air + Water  
**Steam Engine** = Boiler + Coal  
**Steamer\*** = Steam Engine + Wooden Ship  
**Stone** = Air + Lava  
**Storm** = Air + Energy  
**Sugar** = Lime + Reed  
**Sulfur** = Bacteria + Swamp  
**Sun** = Chariot + Sky  
**Sunflower** = Flower = Sun  
**Sushi** = Algae + Fish  
**Swamp** = Earth + Water  
**Sweater\*** = Tool + Yarn  
**Swine Flu** = Flu + Pig  
**Swiss Army Knife** = Knife + Tool  
**Switzerland** = Country + Fondue  
**Team** = Beast + Cart  
**Tequila** = Alcohol + Worm  
**The Beatles\*** = Beetle + Beetle  
**Thread** = Spinning Wheel + Yarn  
**Thunderbird\*** = Bird + Storm  
**Thunderstorm** = Electricity + Storm  
**Time** = Hourglass + Life  
**Toast\*** = Bread + Fire  
**Tobacco** = Fire + Grass  
**Tool** = Man + Metal  
**Totoro** = Forest + Ghost  
**Tractor** = Arable + Lawnmower  
**Transformers\*** = Car + Life  
**Transistor** = Electricity + Silicon  
**Transylvania** = Country + Vampire

**Tree** = Earth + Seed  
**Turtle** = Egg + Sand  
**Twilight Saga\*** = Vampire + Werewolf  
**Typhoon\*** = Storm + Water  
**UFO** = Airplane + Alien  
**Ukraine\*** = Country + Salo  
**Uncut Diamond** = Coal + Pressure  
**Undead\*** = Corpse + Zombie  
**United Kingdom\*** = Country + The Beatles  
**USA** = Coca-Cola + Country  
**Vampire** = Blood + Man  
**Venice** = City + Water  
**Venus** = Planet + Woman  
**Vicodin** = Doctor + Sick  
**Vinegar\*** = Alcohol + Oxygen  
**Vodka** = Alcohol + Water  
**Volcano** = Lava + Pressure  
**Vulture\*** = Bird + Corpse  
**VW Beetle** = Beetle + Car  
**Warrior** = Arms + Hunter  
**Weevil\*** = Beetle + Flour  
**Werewolf** = Beast + Vampire  
**Whale** = Best + Water  
**Wheat** = Arable + Seed  
**Wheel** = Tool + Wood  
**Whey\*** = Fire + Soured Milk  
**Wind** = Air + Air  
**Wine** = Alcohol + Grape  
**Wire** = Copper + Thread  
**Wolf** = Beast + Man  
**Woman** = Man + Milk  
**Wood** = Tool + Tree  
**Yogurt** = Bacteria + Milk  
**Yoshi** = 1up + Egg  
**Zombie** = Fossil + Life  
**Zoo** = Beast + Museum

# Farewell to BPH Executive Director

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

JENNIFER SHAFFER, THE longest-serving executive director of the Board of Parole Hearings, has announced her retirement from public service effective at the end of December. Gov. Newsom has announced the appointment of Scott Wyckoff to replace Shaffer.

Wyckoff has served as deputy legal affairs secretary to the office of the governor since 2022, where he specialized in issues related to the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Prior to this role, he served as general counsel for several state agencies as well as deputy attorney general for California.

The first woman and first attorney to lead the parole board, Shaffer will be ending a 31-year career in public service beginning as counsel for the Assembly Committee on Public Safety. She served as assistant director of the Office of Victims and Survivors Rights and Services; senior assistant inspector general; and the parole board's chief of hearing operations for the northern region. Shaffer pioneered the concept of the board's executive director being the ad hoc public information officer, engaging in numerous outreach events over the years including visits to family seminars and prisons.

When she first took office 14 years ago, Shaffer expressed her intent to help parole commissioners produce "judicially supportable decisions" and stressed the importance of her ideology: Seek first to understand and then to be understood. During her tenure, the parole grant rate increased, the forensic assessment division (responsible for comprehensive risk assessments, or "psych evals") became more professional, and transparency in the board increased manifold. Demonstrating foresight, Shaffer was careful to protect the changes through regulations, legislation, and policy so that progress could not be easily undone by a future director.

Prior to Shaffer's transformative term at the parole board, no executive director had held the position longer than three and a half years, none had been attorneys, and all had been men. The executive director is the administrative head of the Board of Parole Hearings and responsible for managing daily operations, implementing policies, and providing training for commissioners.



Jennifer Shaffer (Courtesy of BPH)



## 12 Consejos Para La Junta (Pt. 2)

Por Maya Emig, Post Columnist  
Traducido por Fabián García,  
Spanish Reporter

**E**L MES PASADO compartí algunos consejos para su evaluación integral de riesgos, y su audiencia de idoneidad. Aquí están los restantes.

Sexto, desarrolle seriamente y a fondo sus planes de prevención de recaídas. Esto puede llevar un tiempo, pero la recompensa es significativa. Cuando trabaje en sus problemas individuales y dedique tiempo a analizarlos y a averiguar que lo desencadenó, podrá responder cualquier pregunta que le haga el panel. No se trata de memorizar, sino de quejigar realmente porque actuó de la manera en que lo hizo, que la desencadenó y los mecanismos de afrontamiento que ha examinado con el tiempo para detener esas conductas. Vuelva a leer mi serie de artículos sobre planes de prevención de recaídas (*Mule Creek Post* nov.-dic. 2023, ene. y mar. 2024) y las cinco etapas del cambio (*Mule Creek Post* abr.-mayo 2024) para averiguar donde se encuentra en su camino hacia la rehabilitación. Probablemente le preguntaran como mantendrá su sobriedad — tenga un plan que pueda articular y diga “simplemente no planeo volver a consumir” o alguna variación de eso.

Séptimo, una pregunta que surge a menudo es que podría hacerte volver a prisión. Una respuesta absolutamente errónea es “nada podría hacerme volver a prisión...” y menudo va seguida de “porque...”. Esta es una respuesta muy miope que

genera inquietud en el panel porque si no eres consciente de donde están tus vulnerabilidades, entonces ciertamente no te entiendes completamente a ti mismo ni a tus problemas, y no puedes protegerte de ellos. Las dos áreas de criminalidad detrás del regreso a la prisión de la mayoría de la gente son el abuso de sustancias y la violencia doméstica. Si tienes algún antecedente de violencia doméstica, asegúrate de tener un plan de relación saludable. Además, un factor protección proactivo sería tener un plan de manejo del estrés que hayas elaborado con muchos mecanismos de afrontamiento que uses para manejar tu estrés. Es muy importante que identifiques tus áreas de vulnerabilidad. Quizás tengas un largo historial de criminalidad asociado con ganar dinero rápido fácil—lo que podría significar robos, asalto, venta de drogas, proxenetismo, o una serie de otros delitos. Si esa era la forma principal en que ganaba dinero para llegar a fin de mes antes de su encarcelamiento; entonces tenga en cuenta que podría ser un área de mayor importancia que amerite su atención al momento de su liberación.

En octavo lugar, si tiene algún tipo de trastorno de personalidad o si le han diagnosticado uno anteriormente, al mínimo, debe saber lo que significa. Las características esenciales del trastorno de personalidad antisocial incluyen un patrón generalizado de desprecio y violación de los derechos de los demás, que se produce desde los 15 años. Si tiene problemas de salud mental en curso, debe preparar un plan de manejo de la salud mental. Lea mi columna denominada (*Mule Creek Post* jul.-oct. 2024) para consejos sobre cómo crear uno. Si está tomando medicamentos relacionados con sus problemas de salud mental, sepa el nombre del medicamento, infórmese sobre el medicamento, y sepa que necesitara controlarlo cuando sea liberado.

En noveno lugar, cuando hable de sus planes de libertad condicional, prepárese para hablar sobre tu apoyo social en la comunidad libre-hermanos, familiares, clérigos, amigos cercanos. También prepárese para hablar sobre al que le gustaría ir en libertad condicional, y los hogares de transición a los que ha escrito y en los que ha sido aceptado. Prepárese para hablar sobre donde vivirá después de que terminen esos 6 meses de vivienda de transición. Prepárese para hablar sobre empleo, habilidades laborales y cual quiere apoyo financiero que recibirá. Desarrolle realmente esos planes de libertad condicional e incluye SERVICIOS PROFESIONALES en la comunidad. Puse esas palabras en mayúsculas a propósito porque esa es realmente la diferencia entre un buen plan de libertad condicional y una que puede considerarse “subdesarrollado.” Desarrolle verdaderamente una apreciación por la necesidad de servicios comunitarios para ayudar a mantener su sobriedad a cualquier problema con el que este lidiando, para ayudarlo a lidiar con las cosas cuando sea liberado en un entorno menos restrictivo. Si es un veterano, tiene una plétora de servicios a los que puede recurrir. Sepa cuales son y cómo acceder a ellos.

Decimo, tome clases de concientización sobre las víctimas y trabaje en comprender que ha creado victimas en todos sus delitos, no solo en el delito principal que lo lleve a prisión. Trabaje en la empatía y el remordimiento. Escriba cartas de remordimiento de otra persona. No hay nada peor que ser criticado durante una audiencia porque el comisionado o el comisionado adjunto leyeron casi la misma carta de arrepentimiento a principios de la semana, o el mismo informe de libro a principios de la semana. ¡Haga su propio trabajo!

Undécimo, una vez que reciba su evaluación integral de riesgos, léala e intente comprender porque el medico lo califico como de riesgo alto, moderado, o bajo riesgo de violencia. Para ello, dedique tiempo a las últimas páginas de su informe y busque HCR-20-V3. Vuelva y lea mi artículo sobre cómo entender la HCR-20-V3 (*Mule Creek Post* mayo 2023). Prepárese para responder una pregunta que suele hacer el comisionado sobre si está de acuerdo con la evaluación del médico sobre su riesgo de violencia. Para responder a esa pregunta, dedique tiempo a comprender la herramienta de evaluación de riesgos. La HCR-20-V3 analiza diez factores históricos asociados empíricamente con el riesgo de una persona de sufrir violencia en el futuro. También analiza cinco factores clínicos dentro de los últimos tres años que se han asociado con el riesgo de una persona de sufrir violencia en el futuro, y cinco factores de gestión de riesgos relacionados empíricamente con el riesgo de una persona de sufrir violencia en el futuro.

Duodécimo, se ya ha asistido a una audiencia, lea sus transcripciones previas para ayudarlo a prepararse para próxima audiencia. Expreses claramente porque se le negó la audiencia y que ha hecho para abordar esos problemas. Además, use la transcripción para prepararse para responder las preguntas del próximo panel y vea como sus respuestas difieren con la programación adicional y el mayor conocimiento que ha adquirido sobre usted mismo y su criminalidad.

If you or someone you know needs help, contact the National Suicide Hotline 988,

Badge for Life, or BLUE H.E.L.P.; or tell a staff member immediately.



# CPR Classes Available at MCSP

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

IN RECENT MONTHS, the Mule Creek State Prison has begun offering CPR training to interested residents. Once a week, medical staff hold a two-hour training session on the basics of how to perform cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, how to work with a partner while providing CPR, and how to assist first responders (including when a defibrillator is being used). Classes are Saturday evenings on facilities A, B, C, and the minimum support facility, and Monday evenings on facilities D and E.

Participants do not receive a certification, but will demonstrate to medical staff that they understand the basics of the procedure in order to be of assistance to their peers. On Facility E, registered nurses K. Angell and E. Griffith monitor students' techniques and provide feedback to ensure effective CPR. Angell says that the training program was first conceived a couple of years ago when overdoses were very high in the prison system. Staff wanted to be able to ensure that basic life support was being provided in case of emergencies while help was being sought from medical professionals. "We're trying to improve resuscitation efforts," she said.

The program is ongoing and open to anyone who wants to learn the basic skills of CPR. Those who are interested should submit a CDCR 2016 Form to the community resource manager.



Submissions by incarcerated writers can be sent to:

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

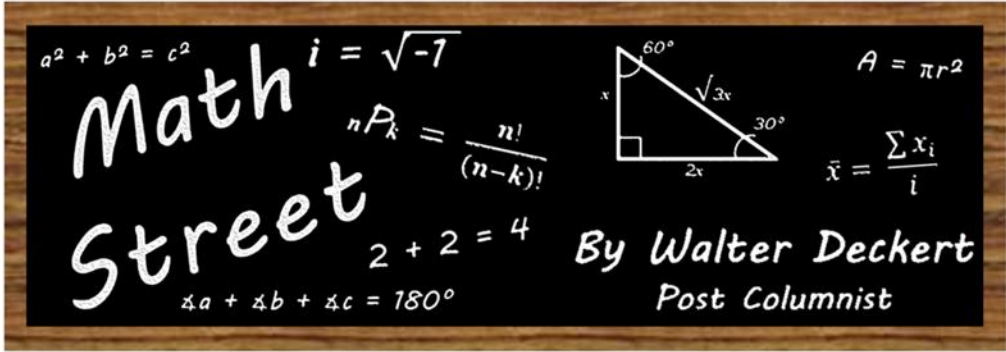
Follow the Prison Journalism Project (and prisoner-written stories) on social media:

on Twitter and Instagram:

@prisonjourn

on Facebook:

@prisonjournalism



LAST MONTH WE started our discussion of word problems and we developed a format to help us organize the information. There are many types of word problems, like the "time/distance/rate" problem we solved last month. This month, let's look at "work" problems.

In the Facility E ADA-accessible showers, there are two nozzles. In one of these showers, the lower nozzle does not spray, rather the water comes out like it does from a spigot. Yesterday, I was filling my mop bucket using only the lower nozzle, and it took three minutes to fill it to the rim. If I only filled from the upper nozzle, it takes 11 minutes because the spray doesn't all go into the bucket. The question is, if I use both nozzles at the same time, how fast can I fill the bucket? We are going to use our six-step model from last month to help us figure it out.

**Step 1:** What do they want to know? They want the time to fill the bucket using both nozzles.

**Step 2:** What do they tell me? Give an estimate. They state the lower nozzle takes 3 minutes; the upper nozzle takes 11 minutes; we are filling one bucket.

**Step 3:** Do we have a formula, table, or picture to help? Think of how much of the bucket will be filled each minute.

| Minute | Amount Filled by Lower Nozzle | Amount Filled by Upper Nozzle |
|--------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1      | 1/3                           | 1/11                          |
| 2      | 2/3                           | 2/11                          |
| 3      | 3/3                           | 3/11                          |
| x      | x/3                           | x/11                          |

Notice we put the time the water is flowing over the total time. Since we don't actually know how long it takes with both nozzles, we use an "x" for the minutes both nozzles will be running.

**Step 4:** Build the equation. We add together the contribution of each nozzle after x minutes, and that equals 1 whole bucket.

$$\frac{x}{3} + \frac{x}{11} = 1$$

**Step 5:** Solve.

$$\frac{x}{3} + \frac{x}{11} = 1$$

Multiply each fraction by the lowest common multiple 33, then cancel.

$$\frac{(33)x}{3} + \frac{3(33)x}{11} = 1(33)$$

Add like terms, then divide to get the variable alone.

$$\begin{aligned} 11x + 3x &= 33 \\ 14x &= 33 \\ x &= 2.36 \text{ minutes} \end{aligned}$$

**Step 6:** Did our answer match our estimate? Yes.

Ta-da! If you have math-related questions or comments about my column, send them to the *Mule Creek Post*.

## The Creative Arts Program

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

**In Facility E Hobby Room:**

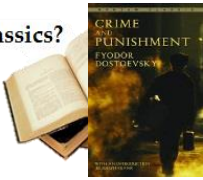
|                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Creative Writing | Tuesdays 12-1:30pm |
| Poetry           | Tuesdays 2-3:30pm  |
| Painting         | Tuesdays 2-3:30pm  |
| Painting         | Tuesdays 6-7:30pm  |
| Art              | Wednesdays 9-11am  |
| Guitar           | Wednesdays 9-11am  |

Cherie Hacker      Lara Gularte

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

## Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp,  
Feature Reporter



**I**F YOU HAVEN'T read this novel by master storyteller Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, then you are missing something special.

Dostoevsky was born in Moscow in 1821, where his abusive father was murdered by being drowned in vodka by his own serfs (servants bound to his land). In 1849, Dostoevsky was arrested for subversion against Czar Nicholas I. He spent four years in a Siberian prison. While imprisoned, he developed epilepsy. Originally, he was sentenced to death, but that sentence was unexpectedly commuted. Those prison experiences and religious conversion formed the basis for his later and greater works.

Dostoevsky completed the novel *Crime and Punishment* in 1866. It opens on a destitute young man, Raskolnikov, as he struggles through a typical day.

The story is written in stream-of-consciousness style and fills in a lot of details for those unfamiliar with life in St. Petersburg in the 1860s, 57 years before the Russian Revolution. The young Raskolnikov struggles with his conscience whether to murder and rob an elderly pawnbroker, and appears to stumble upon unexpected support for either course.

Raskolnikov was violently agitated. Of course, it was all ordinary youthful talk and thought, such as he had often heard before in different forms and or different themes. But why had he happened to hear such a discussion and such ideas at the very moment when his own brain was just conceiving ... the very same idea? And why, just at the moment when he had brought away the embryo of his idea from the old woman, had he dropped at once upon a conversation about her?

This is a wonderful novel, well worth the time to read its 472 pages. You should be able to find *Crime and Punishment* in your facility's library.



# Coping with Adversity

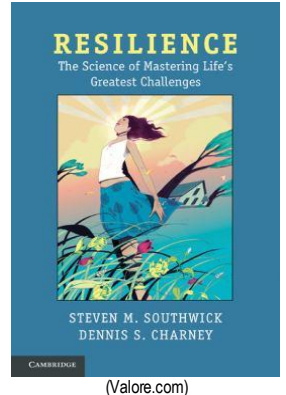
By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive,  
nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

—Charles Darwin

**R**ESILIENCE IS NOT just about getting through a disagreement, but also about learning from it and managing your responses in a way that aligns with your values and well-being. This is an important step toward recovery. Crucial for sustained recovery are the tools to face not just current challenges but also future adversities. This creates a sense of confidence and empowerment.

Studies on resilience have primarily focused on the adaptability of the individual in the face of adversity. However, there is a range of responses to adversity, and how resilience plays an important role. There is no doubt getting through adversity is a struggle. It's one you have to be willing to engage in, believing that you can get to the other side. What follows are strategies of resilience that can help pull a person through, adopted from longtime researcher and psychiatrist Dennis Charney, co-author of *Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life's Challenges*. One horrifying morning a disgruntled former employee shot Charney 15 times. With that he felt compelled to prove his research.



- **Find a role model, someone who has similar experiences as you've had.** Role models are tangible proof that it is possible to get through adversity. Role models act as instruction manuals on how to do what needs to be done. This type of social transfer of information is the oldest form of learning, and our brains are literally wired for it, called the *social behavior network*.
- **Seek and give social support.** The human system is built for social connection, promoting the release of oxytocin, which minimizes reactivity to stress inducing signals. Deliberately seeking the assistance and comfort of others reduces negative feelings and helps stabilize emotions. Giving support is just as beneficial, it provides a sense of purpose, increasing self-efficacy and confidence. Helping others can often distract you from your own discomfort.
- **Challenge your fears.** Avoiding situations related to a distressing experience prevents recovery, limiting the brain's capacity to assess situations and figure a way out to adapt and move forward. Some techniques like deep breathing help, as do exposure therapy and cognitive processing therapy. *Exposure therapy* involves repeatedly facing reminders of such an experience. A short-term treatment, *cognitive processing* helps modify maladaptive thoughts related to traumatic experiences.
- **Face difficult tasks.** Think about it as stress inoculation, thus stimulating active coping abilities reducing fear memories stamped into neural circuits.
- **Be mindful of the present;** liberate yourself from negative self-talk, which acts as a building block to defeat and depression. Having a resilient mind isn't so much about changing the self-narrative as it is changing one's relationship to it, seeing it for what it is — not a rock-solid truth but a bunch of thoughts.
- **Search for meaning.** "In some ways, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning," wrote Victor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning*. Having a sense of purpose pulls people forward; it is a motivational force that operates even in the face of difficulties, serving as proof that some part of you isn't damaged by adversity.
- **Transform your mind.** Cognitive flexibility or reframing — deliberately changing your thoughts, seeing a difficult situation from a different perspective than comes automatically to mind — enables people to know which coping strategy to deploy and when.

These practices strengthen our ability to face life's challenges, helping us rebound from adversity with renewed strength. This allows us opportunities not merely to develop an array of coping skills, but to acquire confidence in our ability to make it through.

**Source:** Hara Estroff Marano, "9 ways to overcome Adversity." *Psychology Today*, vol. no.6, Nov. 2024.



# The BPH and Restitution

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane,  
Life Support Alliance

WE’VE BEEN WATCHING the Board of Parole Hearings’ increasing use of restitution avoidance as the primary or sole reason for a finding of parole unsuitability. To understand how this new consideration impacts parole grants, we’ve undertaken research to evaluate its impact.

We’ve so far looked at a small number of transcripts from hearings, so our results are preliminary. Also, we are not suggesting all individuals we reviewed who were denied parole based on this new factor were improperly denied, even though the only evidence we could find in the record of misbehavior was restitution evasion committed years ago. In each hearing we looked at, the candidate was honest about avoiding restitution, some recently and some long ago. Each ceased doing so once aware of the shadiness of the practice.

Of the cases we reviewed, about 30% received a low-risk rating on their comprehensive risk assessment, and five-year denials were more common in this group than among the overall cohort considered for parole in 2024. Some hearings were brief — a few lasting 20 to 30 minutes — and in a substantial amount of these cases, criminal thinking as it relates to avoiding restitution was the only criminal thinking cited in the record.

The most interesting result was the impact on parole grant rates. When comparing grants for the same period (January through October) in 2023 to those in 2024, we found last year’s rate of parole dropped about 4%. Given that there were no new laws impacting parole and no new groups of lifers requiring different considerations, the only reason that can be seen for the reduction in grant rates is the use of restitution avoidance as a justification for denial. And this is on shaky ground as it is. We believe the use of restitution evasion to deny parole qualifies as an “underground regulation” under the Administrative Procedures Act (§11340.5), as it is not codified as a consideration for parole suitability. Further,

California Code of Regulations Title 15 §3097, the only regulation discussing restitution, makes no reference to free citizens depositing money into the trust account of another inmate based on restitution obligations. The fact that the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (and the Board of Parole Hearings) has turned a blind eye to the practice for such a long time — sometimes even cooperated in it — could lead one to believe that it is at least tacitly approved. It is long established judicial policy that, when vague laws or rules leave the average individual unsure of what is unacceptable, fair notice should be clearly and plainly given before sanctions can be clearly applied.

In November, we posed several questions to the Executive Board Meeting:

- How is it a fair and equitable process to use this new finding to deny parole when multitudes of lifers have previously been granted parole despite having engaged in this “criminal thinking” practice? Where is the nexus to danger?
- What effect will Assembly Bill 1186 have on this concern once restitution is eliminated? Will commissioners continue to question parole candidates about restitution?
- Does the department intend to train staff regarding no longer supporting this practice and giving it the appearance of acceptability?

We continue to review transcripts and compile results, and will report our findings soon. More than one commissioner expressed that restitution avoidance is sort of the “issue *du jour*,” but this is equally concerning as it makes it sound as if reasons for parole denial come and go somewhat capriciously. We don’t believe this is the case, but even the appearance is troubling.

**Editor’s Note:** While no departmental regulations specifically prohibit restitution avoidance, it is in practice prohibited: §3192 forbids the giving or selling of property, including canteen, which is a necessary component of restitution evasion (why have family send money to another person for you, if not to have that person buy canteen that you want and then give it to you?). Penal Code §155.5(b) also makes it a crime to evade the payment of restitution fines. Finally, as parole attorney Maya Emig and parole commissioners have pointed out, it is unethical: We owe a debt to those whom we have harmed, and finding ways around paying that debt is equivalent to not taking accountability for that harm.

## Writing for Publication

### Keeping a Submission/Publishing History Log

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

WHEN YOU WRITE for publication, keeping track of your many submissions and assorted data related to each manuscript can be simplified by carefully maintaining a submission/publishing history log. Recording every step of your article-writing journey is more efficient when you list your material in a well-maintained account, as in the example below.

This sample is very basic. You may want to modify your own log and increase the size of the spaces in each column or row to allow inclusion of contact person(s) name, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers, and possibly running commentary about the journey. Most vital are date(s) an article was rejected or published, and payment if any was received. Use of a highlighter in the journal is also worthwhile for quick reference.

Take it from experience: it is not unheard of to send an article to the same publisher a year after the work was already rejected. The return response letter can be embarrassing and abrupt. Your recipients keep track of these things — so should you.

| Submission/Publishing History Journal                                             |                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title of Article and Word Count                                                   | Submitted to & Date                                                                                                            | General Info & comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| “Peace and War in Prison”<br>(765 words)                                          | Mule Creek Post –<br>11/1/2023<br>Prison Life Magazine –<br>12/12/2023                                                         | Rejected 12/10/2023 –recommended<br>send to Prison Life<br>Accepted/published March 2023 issue:<br>\$150 pymnt rec’d on 4/26/2024                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| “Four Ways to Clarity” (456 words)                                                | Mule Creek Post – 2/6/2024<br>Mad Magazine – 3/18/2024                                                                         | Rejected 3/5/2024 - suggested send to<br>Mad magazine<br>Rejected 3/27/2024 - suggested<br>convert to graphic novel or seek new<br>occupation                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| “Entreaties and Appeals”<br>(986 words)<br>aka “Law and the Innocent<br>Prisoner” | Daily Journal – 11/15/2023<br>Prison Legal News –<br>2/10/2024<br>Reprint submission sent to:<br>Daily Journal on<br>5/23/2024 | Rejection 1/23/2024 - suggested<br>Prison Legal News<br>Accepted/published April 12, 2024<br>edition: \$75 pymnt<br>Reprint accepted by Daily Journal<br>6/3/2024: title change to “Law and<br>the Innocent Prisoner” and word<br>count re-write to 1023 – published<br>in July 22, 2024 issue – \$300<br>pymnt <del>unpaid as of 7/12/2024</del> –<br>pymnt rec’d 8/5/2024 |

# Business & Finances



Leah Ward-Lee



Carolyn Warren



R. Von Villas

## ENTREPRENEUR'S WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee  
Post Columnist

### Address Addictions

IF YOUR DEPENDENCE on alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, sex, social media, or Snickers is getting in the way of your financial success or what you want to do with your life, facing that dependency will be a relief. Even if there are no side effects yet but you know what you're doing will have long-term implications, this might be the time to address the issue.

Addictions behave just like the Instant Gratification Monkey from Tim Urban's TED Talk. Like any change, there's a process you can follow to make and positively approach that change. Depending upon your addiction and its effect on your life, you'll need to decide if you need help, need to quit cold turkey, or just need to get it under control. If you decide to get help, do it. If you decide to quit cold turkey, do it.

Imagine how different your life would be without the monkey being in the way of what you're trying to accomplish. I've found that once I acknowledge that my reason for change is more important to me than the addiction that's getting in the way of my happiness, I have a compelling reason to stick with beating the monkey. I know it's hard to gain traction with the weight of that monkey on my back.

**Leah Ward-Lee** is an international consultant for the airlines and aerospace industries, activist, social justice advocate, and entrepreneurial trainer. She volunteers for Defy Ventures, a prison entrepreneurial training program, and provides pro bono counseling for aspiring small business startups.

**DRIP Investor Directory**  
Horizon Publishing Company  
7412 Calumet Avenue  
Hammond, IN 46324

## Build & Protect Your Credit Like the Pros

### New Grant for Low Income Homebuyers

By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

THERE IS NOW available \$2,500 to be used toward buying a home if your income is below 50% of the median income for your area. Here are the facts:

- This is a true grant from the U.S. government-housing agency. You do not pay it back.
- The \$2,500 goes toward your down payment or loan costs; it is not given to you as cash.
- To see if you qualify, Google "median income for <zip code>." For example, the median income for Wenatchee, WA 98801 is \$70,800.
- If your income is \$35,400 or lower, you qualify for this grant. This is for owner-occupied homes, not rentals or investment properties.

This grant comes from the U.S. Congress-chartered company referred to as Freddie Mac. They provide money to banks and mortgage lenders. You get this grant from any bank or mortgage lender that uses Freddie Mac money. Call and ask, "Do you have the new \$2,500 grant from Freddie Mac?"

To get the grant and buy a home, your credit must qualify and you must be able to afford the proposed house payment. If your rent is the same as a mortgage payment, I encourage you to look into this with a local mortgage broker.

**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.

## The Financial Corner



By R. Von Villas,  
Post Columnist

LAST MONTH, WE discussed the basics of investing in stocks. Now let's talk about how to invest in your future from prison, on your own by mail, and without the assistance of a stockbroker or access to the internet. In our situation, a dividend reinvestment plan (DRIP) is the perfect investment tool.

I invested in my first DRIP in 2002. So simple. I ordered a *DRIP Investor Directory* from Horizon Publishing Co., which lists over 600 companies that offer direct purchase plans. I found stocks that only required an initial investment of \$25 or \$50. I selected a stock and had a friend call the toll-free number for an application, which the company sent directly to me. You can also write for the application, which offered me three options: full-dividend reinvestment, partial-dividend reinvestment, or all dividends paid in cash. I recommend that new investors choose the full-dividend reinvestment option.

There are two investments that — over the past decades — have proven to be profitable for the majority of investors: real estate and the stock market. While we can't do real estate by ourselves, we can invest in stocks. Here's where DRIPs come into play; the potential for future reward comes in the form of profit and as part of your parole plan. The Board of Parole Hearings takes into account the effort you put into preparing for parole. In addition, your family will appreciate the preparations you make for your future success. Of equal importance, you will have the funds available when you parole. If you are a lifer or serving life without parole, these funds will be available when you can no longer work. I know of several investors at the Mule Creek State Prison who, in less than five years, can receive from \$125 to \$200 each quarter if they wanted.

Each month I present stocks I believe are undervalued and have long-term profit potential — the risk-versus-reward of each stock — and the advantage

dividends provide. I look for stocks with a minimum investment that charge no fees to invest. In about 30 days, you can own your first dividend-paying stock.

*All stocks reviewed are for research only. The research was done to give you information about a stock you may be interested in. You must make your own decision to the quality of a stock, and if it meets your long-term financial goal. For transparency, I will tell you if I own or have owned any stock mentioned.*

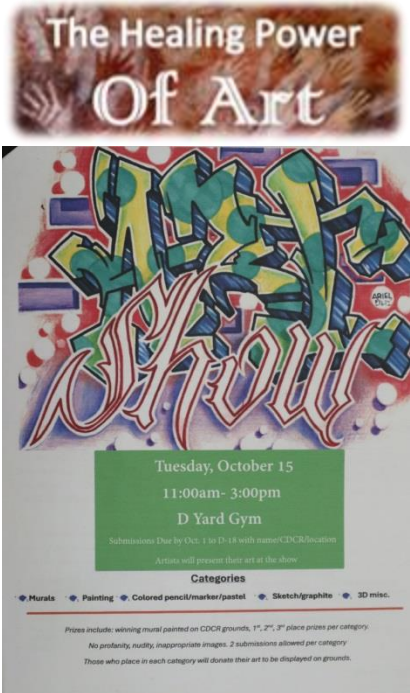
### Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Sep. 9, 2024 to Jan. 6, 2025)

|                                          |         |   |         |        |
|------------------------------------------|---------|---|---------|--------|
| ● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI) | \$10.30 | → | \$8.97  | -12.9% |
| ● Baxter International Inc. (BAX)        | \$38.96 | → | \$29.50 | -24.3% |
| ● Comerica Inc. (CMA)                    | \$54.87 | → | \$62.48 | +13.9% |
| ● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)                 | \$57.75 | → | \$45.77 | -20.7% |
| ● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)              | \$5.84  | → | \$5.66  | -3.1%  |
| ● Pfizer (PFE)                           | \$28.56 | → | \$26.59 | -6.9%  |
| ● UGI Corp. (UGI)                        | \$23.97 | → | \$28.63 | +19.4% |
| ● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)                | \$54.00 | → | \$71.31 | +32.1% |

# Creative Arts Programs

Nothing encourages creativity like the chance to fall flat on one’s face.

—James D. Finley



## Art Brings Community to Prison

By Dortell Williams, Post Reporter

THE VERY STRUCTURE of prison is an unforgiving reminder of where the incarcerated live, an unrelenting prompt that amends are in order. Generous concertina wire crowns the top of security fences and fixed walls of brick slice through and around the Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, California. However, the incarcerated people housed on Facility D were given a reprieve from the cold gray with an opportunity to exhibit an artistic path toward transformation. Indeed, they received a rare chance to borrow the warm feeling of visiting a welcoming museum of



CRM Jason Ross holding a parrot by S. Marquez made from papier-mâché. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Patrons toured ever so slowly the colorful series of seven tables that composed the artistic display of creative submissions. Five categories distinguished the genres: murals, paintings, colored pencils-markers-pastels, graphite, and 3D miscellaneous. Each category was colored-coded and patrons were urged to vote for their favorites.

“All these visitors definitely make this a success,” said a beaming Steve Marquez. “Plus, there were 41 submissions,” added Rene Munoz enthusiastically.

Following a tally of votes, winners were declared by the event sponsors. Recreational Therapist (RT) L. Hindgardner called the names of the winners in each category, while Dr. K. Mitchell pinned the ribbons on each winning work of art. “I admire art and its creation; it’s always interesting to see what the talent looks like,” said Hindgardner.

The vast majority of submissions were created by those in the Enhanced

modern art, otherwise known as the inaugural Mule Creek Art Show.

Entrants to the gymnasium were met with polished floors and large speakers that featured Frank Sinatra crooning “My Way.” The soft whirr of two industrial-sized fans cooled the gym, but not the warm ambiance, and a steady stream of visitors patronized the showcase. Visitors paid homage to the artists and the event: correctional officers, teachers, health care staff, and an endless procession of peers of the incarcerated artists.



Dragon, by Mario Villarael (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Outpatient Program (EOP). Recreational therapists encouraged these men to engage in cognitive activities, sports, art, and writing, to name a few, explained RT A. Arellano.

“First place winner for the 3D category is ... Angel Ponce!” announced Hindgardner.

“Beading helps me with depression, anxiety, and is good for cultural expression,” said Ponce, his face bright with pride. Ponce also won in the paint category.

“I’m eternally grateful for the opportunity to be able to express my passion through art,” said Michael Heath humbly as he took home second place for his sunset painting.

“I appreciate [mental health] staff for supporting us,” said Joshua Vasquez, who placed third for his painting collage of various cartoon characters. “It feels like being back in the community.”

“Yeah, and I really appreciate that Dr. Mitchell and Ms. H. are donating the prizes for the winners,” said Jason Rosacia. According to Rosacia, the prizes consist of art supplies to help and encourage the winners to continue.

“This [event] is fantastic,” said RT A. Knight. “After COVID-19 and staffing challenges, we finally see the [population] more involved; a community atmosphere.”

“This is healthy and benefits the whole community,” said Jeffrey Garrett, a peer support mentor. “It makes our job easier.”



Snake, Steve Marquez (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Winners of the Facility D Art Show demonstrate their prizes. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

(continued on page 29)

# Creative Arts Programs

(from Art Show, pg. 28)



*Knight and Princess*, by Sanchez  
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

People at the EOP level of care tend to be introverted, but on this day everyone was able to forget the dreadful reminders of prison, even for just a short time. Smiles were plentiful, handshakes and hugs ruled the day, and on a pro-social level the event was the epitome of a success.

“I look forward to doing it again next year,” declared Hindgardner.



*Eagle*, Ariel Guizar, (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



*Demon*, by Sean Petznick (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



*Blue Horizon*, by Angel Ponce (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

**Congratulations to all of our Mule Creek artists!**



*Untitled*, by Manuel Campos (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

## The Mural Project at CSP-LAC

By Louis Wilson, California State Prison–Los Angeles County

THERE’S A GROUP of artists on Facility D at the California State Prison–Los Angeles County in Lancaster who are working to change the environment in a positive way through examples of positive role modeling and art.

First of all, I’d like to tell you about the person who goes above and beyond to coordinate the majority of activities here on Facility D, Maurice Williams, who puts his all into helping others maximize their potential. Next is Larry Flores, a man walking by his faith and blessing all those who need help. He is the picture of rehabilitation in the flesh.

Larry Flores, Joel Reyes, and I are involved in the Mural Project here in Lancaster. So far, we’ve painted several large works in the gym, the mental health building, the program office, the library, and on other walls on the yard. We do our best to give our best, using the gifts with which we are blessed. It’s rewarding to be recognized for positive things instead of the negative.

As for me, I plan on using everything I’m learning to succeed in life. If it’s in God’s will to free me from prison, I will use it all to be a productive part of society, giving to be a part of the solution.



Muralists getting started on Facility D.  
(Photo courtesy of Louis Wilson)



The final product. (Photo courtesy of Louis Wilson)



### Creative Arts Program: Guitar

The Creative Arts Program provides instructional workshops in guitar, music theory, composition, and song writing.

**In Facility E Hobby Room:**  
Wednesdays 9-10:30 am

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

# Book Review: *This Life Matters: A Memoir*

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

**T**HIS LIFE MATTERS: A Memoir, by Sean “Sharif” Batiste Neal, debuted on Amazon.com Sept. 3, 2024 in e-book and paperback formats. This memoir is a riveting portrayal of Neal’s life from humble beginnings in 1980s Watts amid gang warfare, drugs, poverty, and childhood bullying; it highlights the social struggle of a single mother raising three kids in extremely difficult circumstances.

Neal takes us on a miles-long walk through the despair and tragedy from early childhood, sharing poignant scenes, including being abandoned by his father at an early age. He describes in vivid detail the “lack of love within the Black community,” and the separation between ethnic disparities leading to isolation, feelings of not belonging, rejection, and abandonment.

Growing up in this environment led to temporary incarceration in juvenile hall at age 16, and a life-without-parole term at 20. Along this perilous journey, people, circumstances, and events contributed to what would ultimately transform a criminal-minded, hardcore gang member into a rehab group facilitator, social justice advocate, reporter, writer, and now published author.

Neal says, “I found myself at a crossroads, making a choice between what had been and what could be. I chose to lean into my gifts in order to transform into a better self in discovery of my life purpose with a devout faith in God, and what true male leadership should be, especially in my family and community.

“I always knew I could write, I just needed the right motivation to get started. My motivation was behind helping youth, but I saw a higher purpose to the writing. I found I could also address the systemic social injustice that denies so many of us the right to basic human dignity. *This Life Matters* is not just a memoir; it is a call to action.

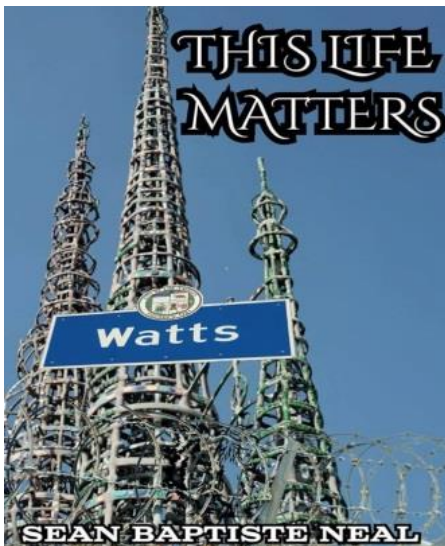
“During the COVID pandemic when we were quarantined and crowded into tight spaces together and shuffled around, I implemented the tips from ‘The 90-Day Novelist,’ a writers’ column in the *Mule Creek Post*, in order to complete a first draft of the manuscript. When I saw that column, something clicked in me. I wrote three pages a day for 90 days, had a complete novel-length manuscript done in that time and I was on my way.

“I was attending college classes, had legal entanglements, was facilitating rehab groups, and I got married in 2023. Plus, I was working on myself, reporting for the *Post* and attending creative writing classes with Lara Gualarte. The re-writes and revisions took time. When my father died in January of this year [2023], I made a commitment to finish what I had started, in 90 days. I was determined to finish the manuscript and publish this year. The entirety of the book is dedicated to my father’s legacy.

“It’s been one of the most difficult things I’ve ever done, but I kept my promise and have proven to myself and my family something important, that I can complete a project that is extremely challenging and labor intensive, something that I feel is worthwhile and beneficial to not only myself, but my family, and the community.

“*This Life Matters* is a tribute to the cause of social justice and criminal justice reform, and is an example of triumph over adversity. My wife and I are planning to celebrate the launch of the book. It is an affirmation that, indeed, this life does matter.”

*This Life Matters* is available in paperback on Amazon.com; the e-book is also available on Kindle.



www.amazon.com



Sean “Sharif” Batiste Neal  
(H Kim / Media Specialist)

## Postscriptum

**E**VERY FEBRUARY, AMERICANS observe Black History Month. And, also every February, someone asks, “Why is there a Black History Month?”

Author Sean “Sharif” Neal answers this question perfectly in his piece on page 4 — the month is an opportunity to:

- Inform and educate this and future generations of Americans about the history and contributions of black people, to this country and to the world.
- Remind those who have forgotten or wish to ignore the fact that blacks are a noble people whose history of great accomplishments is well documented, long before the founding of America.
- Inspire us all to seek out our own inner greatness by looking at the examples of our predecessors, while appreciating the greatness of others.
- Promote justice and equality for all people everywhere.
- Pass on the torch of freedom to today’s black youth who, without this month of celebration of the heroes of our past, could not hope to become champions of tomorrow.

But why a month set aside for this?

Unfortunately, we have to dedicate a month to these themes, because it is unlikely to happen otherwise. In this country, individuals of African descent have lived for generations without receiving the message that their lives and their culture are of value. Setting aside a month to be attentive to the contributions of African Americans is a step to restoring their innate dignity and to allowing them to have pride in who they are.

On a fundamental level, this is necessary for all peoples — all are born deserving of respect and opportunity. And since our world hasn’t gotten around to making a year-round celebration of the dignity and equality of all people, let’s continue the practice of at least setting aside a month to laud the worth of our neighbors.

Happy Black History Month.

-J.C., Editor-in-Chief

**PEN America Prison Writing Program**



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

THE BACK PAGE | What you need to know about

**Sources:** *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (23rd ed.); Ross Perlin, *The Leaning Tower of Babel: What We Lose When Languages Die* (2024); Wikipedia; *World Almanac and Book of Facts* (2022)

There are over 7,000 languages spoken in the world today, but only 10 of them (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English, Hindi, Japanese, Lahnda, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish) dominate half the globe. Linguists group languages into *phyla* (singular: *phylum*) according to their origins, clustering them as “daughters” of a common ancestor (a “mother” tongue). The largest and most studied group is Indo-European, followed by Sino-Tibetan, Niger-Congo, and Afro-Asiatic. Linguists have also identified over 100 “isolates,” languages with no proven connection to any other language.



### Indo-European

Indo-European originated in the Iranian plateau, the northern India subcontinent, and a large portion of Europe. Historians and linguists have recreated a language, Proto-Indo-European, that is considered the common language to all of them (some 450 in total), spoken during the Neolithic or early Bronze Age. About 46% of the world's population speaks an Indo-European language as their first language, about 3.2 billion people.

### Niger-Congo

Niger-Congo is a hypothetical language family spoken over the majority of sub-Saharan Africa; the connection between some of the languages has never been demonstrated. However, if validated as a family, it would be the world's largest in terms of member languages (1,540) and the third-largest in terms of speakers (700 million). Within the family, the Bantu languages alone account for 350 million people. The most widely-spoken Niger-Congo languages (by native speaker) are Yoruba, Igbo, Fula, Lingala, Ewe, Fon, Ga-Dangme, Shona, Sesotho, Xhosa, Zulu, Akan, and Moore; the most widely-spoken overall is Swahili.

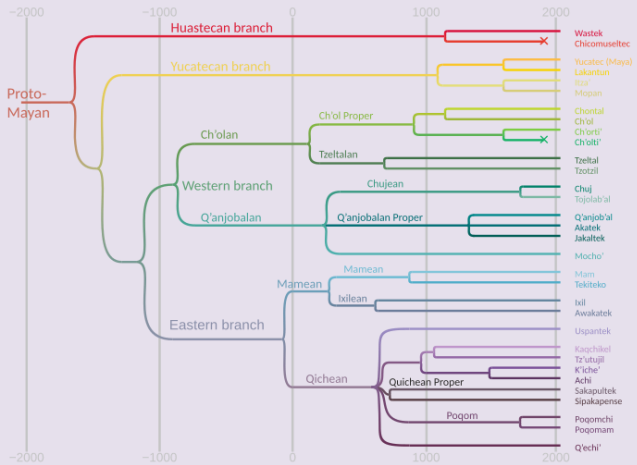
### Afro-Asiatic

The fourth-largest language family is Afro-Asiatic, with around 400 languages spoken by over 250 million people. Most historical linguists agree that the ancestor, Proto-Afroasiatic, originated somewhere in northeastern Africa anywhere between 18,000 BC and 8,000 BC; making Afro-Asiatic the oldest language family.



### Proto-Mayan

Proto-Mayan is the hypothetical ancestor of the 30 living Mayan languages and Classic Mayan. It consists of five main subgroups: Huastecan, Yucatecan, Cholan-Tzeltalan, Kanjobalan-Chujean, and Quichean-Mamean.



### Sino-Tibetan

The Sino-Tibetan phylum (consisting of over 400 languages) is the second-largest, spoken by around 1.4 billion people. Reconstruction of a proto-language for the family as a whole is still at an early stage. It is thought to have originated in North China around 7,200 years ago.



### Arawak

Arawak, or Lokono, is a critically endangered language most commonly spoken in South America (mostly in Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, and Venezuela). There are estimated to be 2,500 fluent and semi-fluent speakers remaining; the language is not transmitted to younger generations as they are being taught the official languages of their countries.



### Algonquian

The Algonquian family of languages—not to be confused with the Algonquin dialect of Ojibwe—is composed of about 30 languages. Proto-Algonquian was spoken around 2,500-3,000 years ago. The family is divided into three groups: Plains, Central (all of which are endangered), and Eastern Algonquian (most of which are extinct).



### Pama-Nyungan

The most widespread family of Australian Aboriginal languages, Pama-Nyungan contains 306 of the 400 Aboriginal. Most languages are spoken by small ethnic groups of hundreds of speakers or fewer; most are endangered in some way, and many have become extinct.

