



# VANGUARD INCARCERATED PRESS

Volume 8, Issue 1

inside  
february/march

Pages	Table of Contents
1&4-5	<b>Dear God: A Prayer from Prison</b> – Dorothy Maraglino
1&5	<b>Desistance in Aging Out of Crime and Re-Interpreting Life</b> – Dana Gray
2-3	<b>Letter from the Editor</b> – Joan Parkin
6	<b>Nuances</b> – Glenn Cornwell
7	<b>It's A Wonderful Life (Sentence)</b> – D. Razor Babb
8-9	<b>Used for Hands-On Training</b> – MarQui Clardy, Sr.
9	<b>The Uncaged Writer: Perspectives from the Cellblock</b> – D. Razor Babb
10	<b>From the Inside Editor's Desk</b> – Jamel Walker

## Dear God: A Prayer from Prison

By Dorothy Maraglino

Central California Women's Facility

Trigger warning for mentions of sexual assault, self-harm, and suicide.

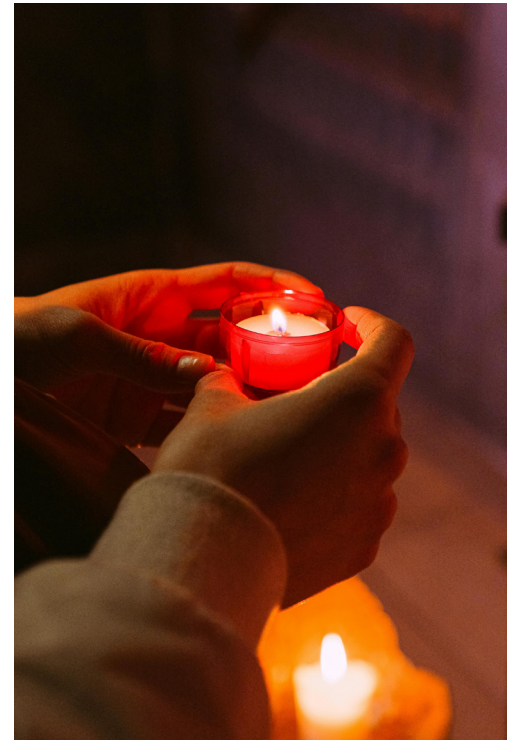
Dear God, are you surprised as I am that I am sitting in a jail cell accused of murder? Who is going to tell Daddy? Who is going to take care of my house? I'm six months pregnant, and I don't want to have my baby in this nasty cell. I am so afraid to touch anything. How did this happen? Are you there? Please help get me out of this before my baby comes. -Amen

Dear God, I rode to court and heard all the horrible things. I did not recognize the person they were talking about. In the bus, on the way back, people

**"I'm six months pregnant and I don't want to have my baby in this nasty cell."**

chanted "murderer" and threatened to rip my baby out of me and kill us both. Such hatred. I'm so lost. I don't want to hate like that. Please don't let this change me. -Amen

Dear Heavenly Father, I bow before you a sinner. You alone know all my transgressions. You know all I have done in secret and in the light. As per your word, I deserve death for the least of my sins. I ask you to seek my heart. Hear my plea. Grant me your mercy. Set aside your wrath. Deliver me from the end I deserve. Cleanse my heart of my sins through your son's sacrifice. May my sins be blotted out so all you see is the debt paid. Deliver me from the guilt of my failing. Renew my faith and my joy in salvation. Lend me your strength so I may not stray far from your face. Do not depart from me. Lord, please do not abandon me. Do not remove your Holy Spirit from me. *Continued on page 4*



## It's Something in the Water

By Anonymous

Debra K. Johnson Rehabilitation Center

Greetings, comrades and convicts around the world! I'm from Tennessee, and I want to thank the *Vanguard Incarcerated Press* (VIP) and say I'm glad to see more incarcerated women's stories showing up. Lots of folks forget there are women prisoners, but we go through the same stuff as the men and sometimes worse. Our stories matter, so thanks to VIP for giving us our own voices.

This is about how bad our facility is here at the Debra K. Johnson Rehab Facility. Let me tell you about our water problems plus a little more. I'm up on the third tier, so water goes through miles of pipes before it gets to me. When it comes out of the sinks, it's brown! It's orange-brown, and that's okay if you like your water chunky style, but most of us don't think it's safe at all. I've been here for

three years, but many of the girls are long-term. They've been here ten or twenty years or more, so they've seen some stuff. My first prisoner-mentor was an OG who told me how bad things had changed since she came in. She explained:

"I got to this prison in '97, and the water was still okay back then. It was pretty clear

**"When [the water] comes out of the sinks, it's brown!"**

even in the top floor cells, but by 2005, it was getting really gross. All of us girls got together and set up meetings between prisoners and the brass, but no one ever did anything. They just keep telling us they're working on it, but nothing ever happened. Finally, in 2010, some special agents came in from the Tennessee State Water Department, and they did some kind of studies. We all thought that was it and that we would get clean water again, but nope. They just came through here and took all their notes and interviewed a bunch of us girls; then they straight up disappeared! They just keep lying and covering up for each other, and nothing ever changes. We're still drinking mud up out the sink."

My other girlfriend was on the... *Continues on page 5*



# Welcome to the February/March Issue!

By Joan Parkin

**H**appy New Year! Or at least, let's hope so. While 2024 brought significant losses, there were also some notable gains. Unfortunately, we witnessed the reversal or curtailment of many criminal justice reforms, signaling a troubling shift toward stricter policies and a harsher "law and order" agenda.

In Oregon, criminal penalties for certain drugs were reinstated, driven by public concerns over rising drug use and the societal challenges accompanying it. Similarly, Louisiana enacted legislation allowing 17-year-olds to be tried as adults for specific offenses, reversing previous protections for juveniles.

In California, voters approved Proposition 36, rolling back parts of the 2014 Proposition 47. This measure reclassified certain repeat offenses as felonies and imposed stricter penalties for theft and drug-related crimes. The implications of Prop 36 are deeply concerning. It expands mass incarceration by lengthening prison sentences, often trapping people who have "aged out" of their crimes after decades behind bars. We're now warehousing a growing elderly prison population, a practice that is both costly and inhumane.

Proposition 36 doesn't address the root causes of crime, and its impact on real lives is devastating.

**"Proposition 36 doesn't address the root causes of crime, and its impact on real lives is devastating."**

Adding to the regressive trends, New York deployed the National Guard in its subways during the holidays to protect people and property. This heavy-handed measure exemplifies a return to aggressive law-and-order tactics.

But it wasn't all bad news. There were some criminal justice reforms enacted in 2024 that offer hope:

- Maine invested \$4 million to establish public defender offices, significantly improving access to quality legal representation for those who cannot afford private attorneys.
- The U.S. Sentencing Commission introduced amendments aimed at promoting fairer and more consistent sentencing practices across federal courts. This is especially significant in addressing the stark racial disparities in the system. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the federal prison population comprises 34.8% Black individuals, 31.1% Latinx, 29.9% White, and 4.2% others. These reforms could be an important step toward greater equity.
- Maryland implemented juvenile justice reforms, including the use of electronic monitoring for juveniles accused of violent felonies. This shift focuses on rehabilitation over incarceration, offering young people a second chance.
- The Women in Criminal Justice Reform Act mandates programs to address the health and gender-specific needs of incarcerated women. Women remain one of the most overlooked populations in the justice system, and this legislation could ensure their grievances are addressed on a larger scale. In this issue the article "It's Something in the Water" by Anonymous exposes the putrid water at Debra K. Johnson Rehab Facility they are supposed to drink and the diseases that are occurring at an alarming rate. So far no one is listening to their many grievances, and they are forced to boil the water to make it potable. She says, "When it comes out of the sinks, it's brown! It's orange-brown,

and that's okay if you like your water chunky style, but most of us don't think it's safe at all." She insists that "Lots of folks forget there are women prisoners, but we go through the same stuff as the men and sometimes worse. Our stories matter, so thanks to VIP for giving us our own voices."

These reforms demonstrate a commitment by some policymakers to improve the system, but the setbacks of 2024 highlight an alarming trend of militarization and stricter sentencing.

Looking ahead, the return of Donald Trump to office exacerbates these challenges. As a staunch "law and order" advocate, Trump may not only hinder federal reforms but also pressure state prosecutors and judges, further entrenching the carceral state.

As we step into 2025, the battle for meaningful criminal justice reform remains far from over. While the gains we've made demonstrate what's possible, the losses underscore the urgent need for vigilance, advocacy, and sustained struggle. These setbacks also reveal the inherent limits of reforms in achieving lasting, fundamental change.

Take the case of Pell Grants. Once widely available to incarcerated individuals, they were eliminated in 1994 under Bill Clinton's Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, commonly known as the 1994 Crime Bill. This decision was driven by political, social, and economic factors, showcasing how reforms—no matter how impactful—can be revoked. While Pell Grants have since been restored, we must ask: will they remain under threat in a new political climate, particularly under a Trump presidency?

This is a stark reminder that reforms, while meaningful and life-changing, are inherently vulnerable to political whims. It's why we must approach the carceral state from an abolitionist perspective—understanding that reforms can help but will always fall short of addressing the root causes of systemic injustice. Abolition calls for a world where we don't attempt to solve social problems by locking people in cages but instead work toward transformative solutions.

So, whatever your personal New Year's resolutions may be, let's make a collective one. Let's commit in 2025 to help make VIP a fearsome weapon against this brutal system. Join us in the fight for fundamental change—because it's the only way to truly win. \*

**"While the gains we've made demonstrate what's possible, the losses underscore the urgent need for vigilance, advocacy, and sustained struggle."**



**LETTER**

— from the editor

Joan Parkin is the Director of the *Vanguard Incarcerated Press*, the author of *Perspectives from the Cell House*, *An Anthology of Prisoner Writings*, and co-founder and former director of Feather River College's Incarcerated Student Program where she is also a Professor Emerita. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the Vanguard News Network and teaches college English in prisons. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Boston University and PhD in Comparative Literature from The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. She was the coordinator in Chicago for the Death Row Ten, a group of wrongfully convicted death row prisoners who were tortured by former police commander Jon Burge, many of whom won pardons by Governor George Ryan in the victorious abolition campaign that led to historic death row commutations.

## Our Mission

The *Vanguard Incarcerated Press* (VIP) wants to do more than shine a light in the darkest corners of America's prison system; we want to build a bridge between the incarcerated and the community through our newspaper. Prisons by design isolate and dehumanize incarcerated persons, leaving them with few resources to connect with a larger community.

A newspaper produced by incarcerated persons working with educators and social justice activists on the outside has the potential to create communities of readers and writers who are no longer isolated from each other but joined by the relationship to our newspaper. When an incarcerated individual sees his/her/their name in print, they know that they have joined a broader conversation of contributors to and readers of the *VIP*.

Our parameters are simple, anyone with a story about prisons or the criminal justice system can submit for consideration. Of course, themes appear around the viciousness of the system, its racism, barbarity and absurdity. While maintaining an abolitionist framework of the system, we remain inclusive of the vast array of voices that make up the carceral landscape. As abolitionists, we plan to join these incarcerated voices in the larger conversation about prison abolition.

In partnering with other organizations, we join forces with the broader abolitionist movement. Our goal is to join our writers and readers in a larger movement to challenge conditions of confinement and the inequities that oppress disenfranchised masses and resist positive change.

## Who We Are

The *VIP* publishes hard-hitting news and commentary written by the incarcerated themselves, depicting prison life, human rights issues, and critiques of the criminal legal system. We seek to expose injustices lurking in America's prisons, empowering a community of incarcerated voices along the way. We are enabling those voices to be heard, without censorship, and creating a community forum where our contributors can engage in civil debate, oppose the brutalities of the carceral state, and challenge the status quo, all in the pursuit of systemic change and prison abolition.

## Disclaimer

The purpose of the *VIP*'s monthly publication is educational, providing incarcerated writers with a platform to improve their skills as journalists and exposing our readership to a diversely sourced representation of authentic inside voices. For this reason, the *VIP* does not censor the content submitted by its contributors; the views and perspectives represented in articles from our contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the *VIP*, its affiliates or employees.

## A Note on Language

We are staunchly committed to maintaining our anti-censorship policy, as outlined in our disclaimer. However, as of this issue, we are updating our policy on language going forwards: we will change all instances of the word "inmate" to person-centered language, such as "person in prison" or "incarcerated individual." We do this to acknowledge that many incarcerated people find these terms dehumanizing and to meet the current standards of other incarcerated journalism organizations, such as the Marshall Project. We ask that all of our writers uphold this new policy going forward, or we will edit this language in your piece for you before we publish it.

## Announcement

Due to administrative changes at the Davis Vanguard, we will now be releasing an issue every other month instead of monthly. We apologize for the delay you may experience in receiving the *Vanguard Incarcerated Press* and we hope you will be patient with us as we strive to produce the best product possible.

In other news, Sophie Yoakum will be stepping down from her position as Production Manager to focus on her full-time job. Evelyn Ramos will be taking over starting with the next issue.

## Staff & Editorial Board

### Editor-in-Chief

Joan Parkin

### Production Manager

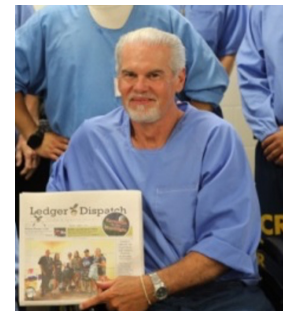


Sophie Yoakum

### Inside Editors



Angie D. Gordon  
*San Quentin State Prison*



D. Razor Babb  
*Mule Creek State Prison*



Jamel Walker  
*Mule Creek State Prison*

*Dear God: A Prayer from Prison continued...* Uphold me and restore me to my place as your child. I praise you for your loving kindness. I praise you for your righteousness. I praise you for being the final Judge who decides my ultimate fate. I surrender my all to you and cast myself at your mercy. Bless me Father so I may once again be of use to you. Use me or your purpose. -Amen

Dear God, please be with me tonight. I left my tiny baby at the hospital alone. No one is here to be with her, and I am back in this cold cell. My arms ache for her, and I fear my heart will not last the night. Lord, I want my baby, PLEASE. -Amen

Dear Heavenly Father, I just got back from the hospital. My latest suicide attempt has failed again. Why won't you just let me die? Even those who would be sad would also sigh with relief if I died. Please stop saving me. -Amen

Dear Heavenly Father, through the trial, I learned so much ugliness and the loss of such a young life. Oh Father, the family heard, and I know their heart was torn more than mine. I ache for my friends who stand accused and can't bring myself to accuse either of them. Only one is guilty but both say it was not them. Father, I ache for the family, but I don't know them. My friends are more personal to me, and I know them enough to know they are both in pain. I love them, Lord, and that won't stop. I am hated for loving them and was condemned for crying for my friends. I miss my daughter as the family misses theirs and as my family misses me. Lord, life hurts too much. Please make it stop. -Amen

Lord, I lost my case, and it was because I refused to speak or act. The result is that I will now be separated from my daughter for the rest of my life. I can live with the rest, but this is the hardest. How did I choose silence over the chance to be with her? I know I am wrong, but I could not make myself speak up. I am damned. Please don't let my little girl be damned too. -Amen

Lord, today I tried to explain to my family why I didn't speak, but they are so angry. I cannot blame them because I am angry at myself, too. I cost my parents their daughter, and now I pay for losing my own daughter. Everyone has lost someone. There is nothing I can do now. Please be with my family and let them find a way to forgive me if they cannot find their way to understand. I am too exhausted to say more. -Amen

Dear Heavenly Father, HELP!!! -Amen

Dear Heavenly Father, Today I saw some people claiming to be your children but Father, these people rarely act like they know you. I was so upset that people would be so hypocritical and misrepresent you. How dare these people publicly declare you when their daily actions denounce everything you are? My anger rose until I heard your still, small voice say, "Go ahead, my child, go ahead and cast the first stone." It was then I had to admit I am not one to judge. So, Lord, I ask you to forgive me for the times my actions and words conflicted and misrepresented you. Please help me always to remember I'm your child and to always act like it. I will stand up for the principles and values you teach. Bless you and praise you for all you do for me. In the name of the Father and Son. -Amen

Dear Heavenly Father, I heard the sentence of Life Without the Possibility of Parole. Lord, I knew my fate before the jury left to deliberate but did not understand fully what that fate entailed. I am sitting in a room with a Velcro dress on suicide watch. I am told this is standard procedure for the sentence here. I am too numb to consider taking my life. The past few years I have exhausted my attempts with no success. Now I

just lay here. Lord, my family is not so numb. They do not have years of jail to drain them of everything. They had hope. Be with them tonight. -Amen

Dear Heavenly Father, I am losing my numbness, and I awoke in a cell with eight people after spending over three years alone. It's too much! Please make it stop! The noise, the smells, and everything is too much. Bring back my numbness. Please! -Amen

Lord, please shut this bitch up before I lose it and get a write up. -Amen

Lord, I am told that as an LWOP on Close-A status, I may not get a job off the yard. I may not go off the yard unescorted even to medical appointments. I may not transfer to the small-

**"It's too much! Please make it stop! The noise, the smells, and everything is too much. Bring back my numbness."**

er prison that offers two-person cells, and I'm basically told to shut up do my time and disappear as best I can in a sea of three thousand people.

Lord, I started cutting again today on my legs so no one will see. It helps me not feel like jumping out of my skin. I promise to keep them clean, but please don't let any get infected. -Amen

Lord, a girl committed suicide today by hanging herself from the window. Everyone talks about how sad it is, and I feel jealous of her resolve. I might need help, but I don't want to talk to anyone about what I am feeling. -Amen

Lord, please let my dinner stay down. -Amen

Lord, please make this mean officer go away and let the nice one come back. -Amen

Lord, please let a shipment of toilet paper and pads arrive before this little bit runs out.

Lord, my neighbor overdosed. If you will allow it, please let her recover with her body and mind intact. -Amen

Lord, please don't let the pepper spray cloud reach this far. I forgot to bring my asthma inhaler with me today. -Amen

Lord, please don't let the officers see those girls fighting. It is raining, and I don't want to sit on the rain-soaked ground. -Amen

Lord, I got word Grandma died. She lived a long life, but she was my best friend. She had such hope we would see each other again on earth. Lord, she never got to meet my daughter. My heart feels like it is being squished. Please make the pain stop. -Amen

Lord, can you please let someone email me? I am so lonely. -Amen

Lord, please let someone help with my quarterly box this month so I can get a few luxury items. -Amen

Dear Heavenly Father, I have gone years without really talking to you. It is unclear if you left me or I left you. Daddy says you never move, so I guess it was me. I am in a tiny cell and at the end of my rope. Last week, I was raped. After some hairy situations that followed, I am now in protective custody, which is the same as the jail within the prison. They would not let me have a cell alone, and I don't know my roommate. Lord, I have been here enough to know that this will label me for life here. They won't let me stay here forever, and I am living in fear every day. I am afraid to close my eyes in front of my roommate. I don't know when I am awake or having nightmares when I close my eyes. Please help. -Amen

Lord, I am making an effort; still, all I feel is anger. There has been no news about my daughter since I came to prison. There are members of my family I have never heard from. My friends who relied on me often have never been in touch. I feel like I am disappearing. -Amen

## **“Lord, today I looked in the mirror and did not recognize my face.”**

Lord, they announced that LWOPs can apply for resentencing, so I did. I can't bring myself to hope. They exclude LWOPs from every type of relief. It feels like the whole world wants us dead and gone but wants us to die the slowest way possible. Just letting you know I did apply. -Amen

Lord, today I looked in the mirror and did not recognize my face. There are days I can't remember my name. It feels like I am losing myself. Maybe this is what Life Without Parole means. They call it the slow death or death by incarceration. I wish death was quicker. I lost my daughter, my home, most of my family and friends, and now my identity. Lord, I don't know what I am asking because I don't seem to care what comes next. --Amen

Lord, I got news today that my dad is on hospice from Covid. Please don't take him. I am not strong enough for this. This is something I can't survive. Please God, don't take my dad. -Amen

Lord, thank you for the miracle treatment that saved Daddy. I will never ask for anything ever again. Thank you! -Amen

Lord, just letting you know I am still here. Are you? -Amen

Lord, my roommate lost her grandfather to Covid today. I feel guilty for my blessing when you saved Daddy but so grateful. All I could do was hold her while she cried. Will this illness kill us all? -Amen

Lord, I see so much pain, abuse, and heartache besides what I experience myself. It makes me not want to get up. I am not sure what to do. -Amen

Lord, Mom was diagnosed with cancer. We are running out of time. Please don't let her die before I get home. -Amen,

Lord, I am back in the county to be resentenced. The Appellate Court acknowledged I was not there and even dropped half my charges. It's almost over. Daddy is in his eighties, and Mom is close behind. I am so excited that I will be home in time to spend their final years together. I should be able to get my daughter so they can meet her. I have my parole plan ready, and there is a chance for a real life. I am about to turn forty-nine and my friends and family are planning a huge fiftieth when I am home. It's finally happening. Thank you -Amen

Lord, I don't understand. The judge read the denial, but it wasn't about me. He said I was guilty of charges that aren't mine and cited evidence that was not against me. He sent me back to prison as an LWOP. What if mom dies before this gets fixed? What if I lose Daddy because he loses Mama? My daughter will be twelve soon and doesn't know me. There are fewer and fewer people who write, and now I am losing more. Lord, I am drowning again. Please let me know if you have a plan. -Amen

Lord, I am back in prison, and the counselor reviewed all my exclusions based on my LWOP sentence. I can't get a job with joint venture, which is the only way I could pay off my restitution in my lifetime. No participation in the tattoo program. No transferring to the smaller prison until I am over fifty. No juvenile parole. No elderly parole. I stopped listening after that. Basically LWOP = NO, but advocates tell us LWOP = HOPE. Which is it, Lord, because I am losing my fight. -Amen

Lord, Mom had to stop chemo. I can't believe a court error might stop me from seeing her before she dies. Dad's health is not good either. If you take them, I don't think I would even care if I went home. If you take them, please take me too. -Amen

Lord, I am here. Are you? \*

*There's Something in the Water continued...* prisoner/administration committee. She went to all the meetings and asked why none of the guards ever drank water from the fountains. They all bring water bottles! She said, "The sergeant even told me we shouldn't be drinking this water. He told all his people to bring in their own water because what comes into the prison is contaminated. We're not even on the same water supply as the town next to us. The folks who live there get all their water from the main municipal supply, the pipes under the city, but all our water in this pen comes from a reservoir two miles away. What's that about? But no matter how many meetings we go to or even if our families write letters to the prison or the government or whatever, no one cares or does nothing. I think they're trying to kill us, if you want my honest opinion. I've been here almost ten years now and seen half a dozen girls come down with all kinds of diseases in their kidneys or liver, but they were healthy when they got here. It's definitely our grimy, infected water, and it's serious."

None of the girls I know drink the tap water anymore. We boil our water to make ramen or put a gallon away to drink daily. There's one big industrial faucet outside where the water seems cleaner, so some girls fill their jugs there. Lots of girls even just shower once a week because they're afraid to get skin rashes just from washing their bodies. But that's not even the worst part.

There's a darker side, too. Before my last cellmate was paroled, she finally told me the truth about stuff that went down during the COVID lockdowns. No one got let outside for anything, so she and her cellmate couldn't get to that main faucet, and then they got desperate. This is what happened to her: "You know that one guard that works at night? The pervy cop? So me and my old cellmate 'Stacy' asked him one night if he'd give us a couple of his water bottles, and he said, 'What are you gonna give me?' We just laughed it off, but we really needed water the next day, so we told him we'd make a deal. Thank god he didn't ask us for nothing too crazy; he just wanted us to give him a little dance or whatever, some strip tease, but it was still humiliating. At 4 am, he puts two bottles on the table by the office; that way, if we got caught picking them up in the morning, it just looks like we're stealing, so we can't point the finger at him. That went on every night he was here for over three months. It felt kind of like we were being raped in a way. We never told anyone else about it, and we didn't talk about it between ourselves. 'Stacy' moved out as soon as we got off lockdown, and now we don't even talk to each other anymore. It was traumatic. I tried to tell the psych about what I was going through from all of that, but he didn't want to hear it. He said there was no proof because we never filed a report, so it wasn't his problem. They all protect their own, you know?"

## **“No one should deal with abuse like that just to get fresh water.”**

I got here right after "Stacy" moved out three years ago, but my cellmate just told me her story last month. She's gone home now, but I still see "Stacy" around. Nobody should deal with abuse like that just to get fresh water.

I know there are lots of problems in men's prisons, too, same as everywhere. I'm sharing some of what women go through because our stories do not get enough attention. It's not just "all good on the girls' side," and we're all in this together. Stay strong, folks. \*

## **“But no matter how many meetings we go to or even if our families write letters to the prison or the government or whatever, no one cares or does nothing. I think they're trying to kill us...”**

# Nuances

By Glenn Cornwell  
*California Medical Facility*

I must admit arriving at California Medical Facility Vacaville (CMF) was an answered prayer for me. Since I'd already done time here from 1985 to '87, I felt like the Vacaville of old was far better than the Death Row of today. In many ways, I was right, but even so, much of CMF has changed. Back in the day, I was housed in P2, but now I'm across the hall in N2. I can look across the hall and see all the doors open over in P2 with no inmates living there. To my left, there was a giant dorm with new arrival inmates living there on bunk beds. Now, there's an area for C.O.'s to stop people going and coming. Behind him, there's a long hallway with two wings. One's an office with several interview rooms and varied classrooms, while the other has at least a dozen different rooms for you name it. Everything from hobbies to watching movies. It looks like it's been there forever, but I'm sure there was a wall there blocking the back of the dorm.

Half of Vacaville was a reception center for new arrivals. The V, T, U, and W wings were on that side, while N, P, J, and M were mainline. Both sides had their own giant yards. Now, not everyone is allowed to go on the big yards. Some of us have yards between our buildings. My yard is between N and M. Far smaller than the big yards, but it would take about five East Block yards at San Quentin to make one of the small yards here. Plus, the yards at S.Q might have between eighty and one hundred people on each. The most people I've seen on the yards here are about fifteen. Still, several people here are considered program failures for one reason or another. I work hard not to get pulled into other people's dramas. So far, so good.

Sometime between 1987 and now, someone decided to chop Vacaville into different sections like a pizza. Back in the day, we could go anywhere and visit other sections and wings. Even go into other cells and kick it. Now, we can't even go into other cells on our own wings. Unlocks every half hour drive me crazy, even for showers or just to get out of our cells. It's far better than the East Block at SQ but vastly different than the CMF I remember.

I do enjoy the groups and am also in the Computer Related Technology Class I literally dreamed about before California even talked about ending Death Row. Since I've been incarcerated on this beef since July 1993, I never got the chance to learn about computers. But I've always thought computers are the wave of the future, at least since I saw the first Terminator, which made perfect sense to me. We all might agree that mankind is the biggest problem here on Earth, which includes me, of course.

**"Living around people with release dates is kind of strange. Several of them act like they don't care about getting out. They don't really recognize the blessings they have."**



There are also dorms behind the yard on our side. I'm told there are people there with LWOP who have release dates. It's interesting when you think about it. Life goes on. Last week, I took four tests and scored decent marks. I must not have been alone. Our teacher gave us all a week off.

Living around people with release dates is kind of strange. Several of them act like they don't care about getting out. They don't really recognize the blessings they have. At the same time, Lifers here can see themselves free any day. I tend to focus more on dealing with whatever's in front of me daily. There was so much hatred surrounding this case I can only look down the road one day at a time. At one point, I was the poster child for Three Strikes and You're Out! I was on the local news 566 times because of a change in venue exports. Fortunately, I didn't get the feedback the state wanted, so they turned their attention to the Polly Klass killer. Strange when you think about it. They gave me a robbery-murder sentence where a money-carrier was shot one time and died on the spot—a special circumstance murder which carries life or death. Three strikes was about twenty-five to life.

**"So many people I've known have died, and I tend to enjoy life one day at a time."**

There is hope for many people here. I tend to live in the now and do the best I can. So many people I've known have died, and I tend to enjoy life one day at a time. One thing I can say is that even though Vacaville has changed in many ways, it's still far better than East Block. Hands down!

If I had a Genie with three or three hundred wishes, none of them would find me back on East Block at San Quentin's Death Row. The fear and PTSD runs deep.

Still, the reality of my personal situation is that this system could drive over my appeal, take me back to San

Quentin, or bring the execution chamber to CMF and execute me. As long as my status is death, that reality will be lurking somewhere in the back of my mind. But then again, every living thing on the face of this Earth must also suffer a taste of death. The sad commentary is that most people living free with busy lives don't think about death until they're eye to eye with it. But that date is far more certain than the state executing me. In fact, even those powerful people who manufactured this case and covered up the evidence will have a taste of death when the Soul comes up to their throat. Hopefully, the Most High is just. \*

**"As long as my status is death, that reality will be lurking somewhere in the back of my mind. But then again, every living thing on the face of this Earth must also suffer a taste of death."**

# It's A Wonderful Life (Sentence)

By **D. Razor Babb**  
*Mule Creek State Prison*

Every Christmas, network TV airs the black-and-white classic *It's a Wonderful Life* with Jimmy Stewart. There is a memorable scene where George Bailey (Stewart) is offered a job by Mr. Potter, the town's most wealthy (and greedy) resident. Bailey asks for time to think it over, and as he gets up to leave, he shakes Potter's hand. In that instant, as Bailey stares in disgust at the hand he had just offered Potter, he suddenly experiences an epiphany. He wipes his hand on his trousers and tells Potter that he doesn't need time to think; the answer is "No!" It was as if that handshake allowed him to read Potter's mind, and he knows all he needs to know.

On the last Saturday of September, I experienced a George Bailey moment. The Secretary of the California Department of Corrections was on this yard that Saturday morning, there to celebrate the inauguration of the Prison Seminary Program, a multi-year curriculum of bible study & training with graduates earning the equivalent of a bible college degree, the first such program in the state. As a reporter for the local prison newspaper, my job was to interview the secretary. Dressed in khaki shorts and a black short-sleeve shirt, he could have been easily mistaken as someone attending a neighborhood weekend barbecue. In fact, the seminary celebration included a hotdog barbecue and motorcycle showing, compliments of Soldiers for Christ, a Christian-based organization that ministers to prisoners and others. The secretary couldn't have been more accommodating, agreeing to an impromptu interview in the shade of a handball court amid throngs of prisoners milling about. He patiently answered questions, some more thoroughly than others.

One area of particular attention was the implementation of the new California Model, a humanistic penology method based on the Scandinavian prison system. It is a controversial and profound carceral system designed to reduce violence, stress, and recidivism. It is a worthwhile and thoughtful approach to incarceration meant to treat prisoners more humanely and upend the old 'us versus them' custody mentality and culture. The secretary visited Norway in 2021 with a contingent that included members of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), victims' rights group members, former prisoners, and others. It is an effort at penal reform led by AMEND from the University of California San Francisco and includes other countries and states. California Governor Gavin Newsom announced this state's intended transformation to the new model based on the Scandinavian system in March 2023.

The secretary has been vocal about the transition and said the new model won't require any new funding. It is a matter of maximizing funds the department has already allocated to the department -- \$14.5 billion in the current budget. The secretary was pleased to point out that the department has twelve thousand incarcerated students in college programs, and more classes are being added. A few days earlier, he attended the ten-year anniversary celebration of community colleges within the DOC, now in one hundred prisons and jails. Noting the abundance of elderly and handicapped prisoners on the yard, he pointed out that the department is expanding facilities designed for ADA (Americans with Disabilities) care. He was pleased to share that parole grants have increased from 4% twenty years ago to 24% now. When confronted with the fact that many of the elderly and handicapped prisoners in the yard have been incarcerated for thirty, forty years, or more have attended many, if not all, of the rehab groups available, and we wondered if there are any discussions or considerations on releasing some of these long-termers, the secretary faltered. Upon repeated questioning, he admitted that

no plans are being discussed or in place to reduce the overall prison population, which currently hovers at around 92,000.

Another area of contention was the fact that the CCPOA, through affiliated victims' rights groups and Political Action Committees, routinely pursues legislation to increase sentencing and support mass incarceration. At the same time, the governor's office and the DOC appear to promote programs such as the new California Model, which seems to contradict the CCPOA's efforts. As the conversation shifted from forward-thinking carceral philosophy and feel-good platitudes to tough-on-crime political lobbying and the troubling specter of mass incarceration, the secretary began looking around, perhaps for some friendly face to dislodge him from uncomfortable topics. Understandably, mass incarceration is anything but comforting. Sensing his unease and understanding that it takes more than a single person to change a system that took hundreds of years to develop through race and class stratification, inequity, bigotry, and elitism, we shook hands and weaved our way through the crowd, headed our opposite ways.

Later, as I munched on the complimentary barbecue hotdog provided through the generosity of outside missionaries, I contemplated on the interview, on the celebration and meaning and purpose behind the event, its relation to the new California Model, mass incarceration, and the synchronous events which had transpired to enable current circumstances. And I thought about that handshake at the end of the interview, considering the secretary's words and meaning, precisely when he said, "There is no target for population reduction," and the point about the department having expanded ADA capabilities. This was my George Bailey moment. In an instant flash of insight, I realized that while it is politically expedient to have the secretary of corrections proclaim support for positive programming, one can't help but be chilled by the cold realization of a much more pragmatic intent and motivation of the Department of Corrections and its leader.

In short, what's the purpose and mission of the DOC? It is, quite simply, the survival and perpetuation of the Department of Corrections, appeasing their union members (the most powerful union and political action force in the state), and validating the need for prisons and the \$14.5 billion budget to fund mass incarceration in California. We get hot dogs and motorcycles if we are good prisoners and program and don't cause trouble. Let's come to the light from the dark side, cross over from the violence, drugs, and gangs of the general population to a programming, "non-designated" facility (formerly known as Sensitive Needs Yards or Protective Custody). We get college and bible school. If we buy into the public relations narrative of the California Model, a system designed to benefit custody staff as much and more so than prisoners, we will earn favors and certificates and ribbons. But let's not get crazy and start talking about sentence or population reduction or decarceration. I, and the other 92,000 California incarcerated, are enmeshed within a carnival side-show public relations campaign designed on a political realism philosophy of "appearing" to have moral intent and ethical consideration while perpetuating the worst human rights violations this country has engaged in since reformation. They served bottled water with the hot dogs on Saturday maybe to wash down the bad taste of being fed pro-prison propaganda.

Many of us appear to be hypnotized by the soothing words of the California Model, allowing us to sleepwalk through our twilight world of denial and acceptance while turning a blind eye to the harsh realities we face in a system designed to fail most of those it proclaims to benefit. In the end, it is up to all of us as a community to rally to the aid of one another, just as the citizens of Bedford Falls finally rallied to help George Bailey in his most desperate time of need. \*

# Used For Hands-On Training

By MarQui Clardy, Sr.  
Laurenceville Correctional Center

**“S**o, Mr. Clardy, today we’ll be doing a quick biopsy,” says the young resident as he enters the examination room. “We’re going to make a small incision and remove a sample of the cyst. We need to gather some information on it before we can remove it.”

I reflexively tense against the cushy leather exam chair in which I’m seated, a mixture of confusion and frustration jotting through me. “But I’ve already had two biopsies, and they were very painful,” I inform him. “I’m supposed to be having surgery today. I’m ready to get this process over with.”

This annoys me, but I dare not let it show. Prison has instilled in me a weird self-consciousness: a need to suppress negative emotions around civilians so they won’t think I’m a danger to them. Even worse, I’m in a hospital. The looks I’ve gotten from people from the

moment I was escorted in—ankles shackled, wrists cuffed, iron chain wrapped around my waist, two armed guards flanking me—run the gamut from curiosity to disdain to

**“The last thing a patient wants to hear before being operated on is that there’s been a ‘slight mixup.’”**

fear. It makes me feel like a monster. This resident undoubtedly harbors some biases about prisoners as well. To keep from fueling those biases, I bottle my frustration, I’m overly polite, and I speak extra softly, hoping he’ll see me as a regular human and not a monster.

Brow furrowed, bewilderment written all over his face, he flips through my medical chart before excusing himself from the room. I’m left with my escorts, sitting across from me in small, plastic chairs, tapping away at their cellphones. They don’t socialize with me. I’m just a package to be picked up, transported, and dropped off. Nothing more.

Minutes later, the resident returns with another young doctor whom he introduces as his co-resident (I soon learn that this new resident is the senior of the pair, so I’ll refer to him as Senior and the former as Junior).

“Change of plans,” Senior announces, pulling on a pair of latex gloves. “So we are doing your surgery today. I apologize for the slight mixup.”

The last thing a patient wants to hear before being operated on is that there’s been a “slight mixup.” I want to tell them they need to get their shit together because my health, and possibly my life, is on the line. That’s what a civilian might do, and justifiably so. But I’m a prisoner. So again, I bottle my vexation and say nothing because I want these doctors to know that I’m a regular human, not a monster.

After they anesthetize my gums and set up their equip-

**“To keep from fueling those biases, I bottle my frustration, I’m overly polite, and I speak extra softly, hoping he’ll see me as a regular human and not a monster.”**

ment, the real fiasco begins. Referring to a large monitor displaying an x-ray of my jaw—where the cyst is located—Junior makes an incision into my gums while Senior holds a suction tube in place.

“Uhhh... I’m not seeing anything here,” Junior mutters after about five minutes of cutting. He glances at the monitor. “Am I in the right spot?”

“Yep, should be between twenty-six and twenty-eight.”

“Well, I’m not seeing it. I’m gonna go in a little deeper.”

Thanks to the anesthetic, I’m not in any pain. However, there’s an immensely uncomfortable pressure on my mouth as Junior jams the scalpel in further. Imagine having your jaw hitched to an F-150 while accelerating at full power.

“...Still not seeing it,” Junior grumbles another five minutes later.

Senior offers him an electric drill called a bur. “Here, try this.”

By the second, it’s becoming more apparent that these residents haven’t performed this operation before. They’re in way over their heads. I peek at the guards. Both have put away their phones and are locked in on my surgery, mouths wide open. You’d think they’re watching an episode of *Botched*.

Junior, now armed with the bur, is jackhammering my jawbone like a construction worker. Every muscle in my body is constricted. My buttcheeks are clenched tightly enough to suck the cotton out of my seat.

After several more minutes of chattering amongst one another, consulting the X-ray, cutting deeper, re-checking the X-ray, and even more drilling, the residents are interrupted by one of the guards. “Maybe y’all should call somebody else in because this is taking too long,” she quips.

Thank God, I want to yell, grateful for her intervention. I’m sure her impatience has more to do with her own physical discomfort than mine. We’ve been in this room for more than half an hour. That tiny chair is probably chafing her wide hips. Still... super grateful.

“Yeah, maybe you’re right,” Junior concedes. “Hang tight, Mr. Clardy. We’ll be right back.” Both residents unmask, lay their tools on a tray, and shuffle out of the room.

Maybe ten minutes later, a middle-aged man with hairy arms and Mediterranean features enters with the residents trailing him. He introduces himself as the attending physician and immediately takes command of the operation. “Why isn’t the patient in the proper position?” He circles to the head of my chair and pulls a lever, reclining me flat on my back. “Pull the tray across his chest and adjust the light closer to his face,” he orders Junior. “You, enlarge the x-ray,” he commands Senior.

His assertiveness is indescribably reassuring,





considering the bumbling aloofness of the residents. He easily locates my cyst and begins the process of excising it while barking orders and lecturing them on the procedure.

"I, uh-hh-didn't drill there because I didn't want to, you know, hit the mental nerve," Junior stammers in what sounds like an attempt to save face.

"The mental nerve isn't here; it's over there," the attending counters, tapping a finger about an inch to the left of where he's operating.

Within a few minutes, my surgery is finished. The attending instructs the residents to suture me up, then hastily exits the room.

Junior grabs a roll of dissolvable stitches and a pair of needle drives. He goes to make an insertion, but-

"Wait!" Senior interrupts, grabbing Junior's arm. "Don't start there. Go here first, then do that part. That way, it won't bubble up."

What does he mean "bubble up?" I wonder, shooting Junior a glare. Shouldn't he know what he's doing?

And then it hits me: this is a "teaching hospital." I'm these residents' hands-on training. Senior is literally teaching Junior how to properly suture—using my gums for practice—and the attending just used me to teach them how to perform this surgery. I'm gut-punched by how truly insignificant I am as a prisoner. Is this the Department of Corrections' idea of adequate medical treatment? Surgery by residents who weren't prepared because they thought I was there for a simple biopsy? Who couldn't even find my cyst? I'd been worried about reassuring them of their safety around me, while all along it was my safety that was in jeopardy with them operating on me without knowing what they were doing. What if the guard hadn't urged them to bring in the attending physician? How much longer would they have continued butchering my gums? What irreparable damage could they have done?

**"When I was sentenced to prison, no one told me that part of my incarcerated would entail my body being used for medical residents' training."**

I'm reminded by a book by Allen Hornblum entitled *Acres of Skin: Human Experiments at Holmesburg Prison*, which is about a dermatologist named Albert Kligman who conducted hundreds of experiments on prisoners

to further medical research. The book's title comes from a quote by Dr. Kligman in 1966 about his first time entering Holmesburg Prison. He stated: "All I saw before me were acres of skin. It was like a farmer seeing a fertile field for the first time."

That such atrocities occurred in the '60s isn't shocking but in 2024? Who could've imagined? When I was sentenced to prison, no one told me that part of my incarceration would entail my body being used for medical residents' training. Angela Davis noted long ago that "prisoners have served as valuable subjects in medical research, thus positioning prison as a major link between universities and corporations." But forgive my naivete for expecting a more moral and ethical standard of treatment for prisoners in modern times.

Junior and Senior will both go on to be better doctors, thanks partly to me: the prisoner who simply wanted to be seen—and treated—as a regular human. I can only hope that there will come a day when medical residents at similar teaching hospitals that contract with prisons will look down at the prisoner reclined before them, his arms and legs restrained while they practice surgical procedures on him as if he's merely a cadaver, and question their own humanity. \*

---

## The Uncaged Writer: *Perspectives from the Cell Block*

---

By **D. Razor Babb**  
*Mule Creek State Prison*

Early 2019, nearly a year before anyone had even heard of a Covid pandemic, Dr. Joan Parkin spent a chilly January weekend in prison, Mule Creek State Prison to be exact. As an English professor at Feather River College, cofounder of the Incarcerated Student Program that enabled in-person college classes in California's prisons, and soon-to-be-founder of the Social Justice Prisoners Journalism Club, which would allow Feather River College students to act as interns for the prison newspaper *The Mule Creek Post*, Dr. Parkin had been granted special permission to visit the newsroom over the weekend. It was more than a social call, however. Joan Parkin had been collecting stories from incarcerated students for ten years, many of which were about their experiences of being incarcerated and how education had lifted them up. Along with editors from the *Post*, she spent the weekend pouring over stacks of mostly handwritten pages, rereading, sorting, and editing selections that would be included in her compilation anthology of prisoner essays entitled *Perspectives from the Cellblock*.

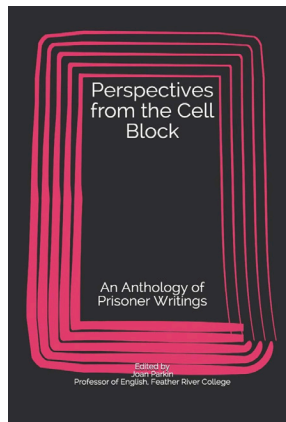
It is no routine matter for a civilian to be granted access to prison grounds on a Saturday-Sunday, but anybody who knows Joan Parkin also knows when she is around, nothing is routine. Her unique and dynamic presence seems to energize the room, inspiring others to elevate their game to try and keep up. As an educator, activist, and social justice advocate, she has amassed an impressive resume of accomplishments, not the least of which is being instrumental in freeing death row inmates and helping get the death penalty abolished in Illinois, organizing and hosting an education roundtable event at

Mule Creek that is still talked about to this day, and most recently leading the Vanguard Incarcerated Press (VIP) as director to uplift incarcerated voices across the country, promoting much needed social justice in the nation's prisons.

*Perspectives from the Cellblock* is the kind of book that leaves a mark on those who take the time to get lost in its pages. It is filled with stories of desperate lives and desolate circumstances, many where authors found redemption and revitalization through education and inspiration from Parkin herself. It's the kind of writing

that reveals the vulnerable, human side of writers who have been branded inhumane and/or experienced the most inhuman events. VIP is intimately familiar with how writing can change lives for the better; through the written word, we discover our humanity emerging from beneath the layers of scar tissue that have disguised who we really are and what the truth of our authentic selves reveals. Through the self-exploratory searching of the writing process, we may begin to understand that when we ignore our own truth, we become, as James Baldwin says, "immobilized in the prison" of our "own undiscovered self."

In an effort to raise awareness, over the next months, we will share the finer points of writing, publishing, and prison journalism in works such as *Perspectives from the Cell Block* in "The Uncaged Writer" column. It is a world anyone with a pen and paper, imagination, and a dream can access. We'd like to help you in your writing, publishing, and journalism journey, and we invite you to join us as we explore the infinite nature of the creative process. VIP looks forward to your questions and inquiries, and your submissions. *Perspectives from the Cell Block* (ISBN-10: 1700186647) is available on Amazon. All profits from sales will go towards the VIP. \*



# From the Inside Editor's Desk

---

By **Jamel Walker**  
*Mule Creek State Prison*

Is it just me? Am I the only incarcerated person who thinks it is just bizarre that, after 206 years of felony disenfranchisement in this country, 76 million people voted to place a convicted felon in the White House? During this election cycle, I've heard disenfranchised incarcerated felons argue on behalf of a fellow convicted felon who retains his right to vote despite thirty-four felony convictions. He retains his right to vote because, unlike you or me, he is not currently incarcerated or on probation or parole. I wonder, have they not heard our forty-seventh President on the campaign trail consistently advocating for incarcerating "violent felons" for the rest of their lives?

Is it just me? Am I the only incarcerated person who thinks it is odd that our felonious forty-seventh President has not — and will not — advocate for the abolishment of felony disenfranchisement? Am I the only one who wonders, if voting is our most fundamental right, why does every state in this country, except Maine, Vermont, and the District of Columbia, have felony disenfranchisement laws? Am I the only one who wonders why we have felon disenfranchisement laws in the first place?

Felony Disenfranchisement has its roots in the US Constitution. The Founders included a provision in the Constitution allowing states to enact their own laws regarding voter qualifications. Article 1, § 2 states, "The People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the state Legislature." In the Colonial Era, the primary reason for disenfranchising a citizen was as a sanction for violation of social norms of morality. Post-Civil War, five Southern states enacted felony disenfranchisement laws in reaction to the passing of the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing former slaves the right to vote. Although it prohibited denying American citizens the right to vote because of their race, similarly to the Thirteenth Amendment's exception clause for duly conviction of a crime, there was a similar exception written into the Fourteenth Amendment. Section 2 of the Amendment disenfranchised any citizen for their "participation in rebellion, or other crime." For all my right-wing conservative constitutionalists out there, unlike the Thirteenth Amendment's language relegating those "duly convicted" of a crime to slavery and involuntary servitude, Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment has no such requirement. It denies the franchise to citizens for their "participation in rebellion, or other crime."

Pre-Civil War, Connecticut was the first state to pass its felony disenfranchisement law in 1818. By 1850, eleven out of thirty-one existing states passed laws that provided for felon disenfranchisement by stipulating a loss of one's right to vote upon a felony conviction. By 1870, no more than twenty years later, twenty-eight of the thirty-seven existing states had passed such laws. Currently, forty-eight states have varying degrees of felony disenfranchisement. The degrees of disenfranchisement are separated into the following three categories:

States that disenfranchise individuals during incarceration due to a felony conviction. In these states, formerly incarcerated persons can vote immediately upon release, even while on parole or probation. They are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, and Washington.

States that disenfranchise individuals during incarceration,

including while on probation or parole, due to a felony conviction. Their voting rights are restored upon successful completion of parole or probation. Sixteen states fall under this category: Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

States that disenfranchise individuals during incarceration due to a felony conviction whose voting rights cannot be restored until completion of their sentence of incarceration, period of probation or parole, and compliance with additional qualifying criteria such as the payment of court fees, fines, and victim's restitution. Eleven states fit this category: Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wyoming.

Is it just me? Am I the only one who believes, with the unprecedented election of a felon to the highest office in the land, there is no longer a reasonable, acceptable justification for denying any felon their most fundamental right? Just think, if California's approximately 94,000 incarcerated individuals had the right to vote, they would have voted "Yes" on Proposition 6 and had a chance to end their involuntary servitude in California's prisons. I hope it's not just me. I'm just saying.\*

---

Jamel Walker is serving his 40th year of a life without parole sentence. He has earned a Bachelor's of Arts in Communication Studies from California State University - Sacramento, and is a graduate student at California State University - Dominguez Hills, working on his Masters of Arts degree in the Humanities, with an emphasis in Abolition and Liberation. He is a Certified Literacy Mentor, a Certified Human Services Paraprofessional, a social and racial justice advocate, penal abolitionist, journalist and writer.

---

## Join the Conversation

---

We have received a number of contributions on the Dynamic Security pillar of the California Model. We appreciate all the insight and considerations submitted by our readers.

Moving the conversation forward, we now want to focus on another pillar of the California Model, **the pillar of Normalization**. This pillar represents the department's desire to make an incarcerated person's inside experience as close as possible to the world they will face once free. This means changing the prison environment so that it is less of a foreign institutional landscape filled with razor wire and gun emplacements, correctional hardships, and headaches; instead, the department intends to move towards more of a makeshift community setting with increased freedom and movement, better access to current technology, and less punitively constructed spaces.

Of all the pillars, could Normalization represent the greatest impetus for deconstructing the harmful mechanisms by which prison is hardwired? Or, could Normalization instead merely serve to hide the worst parts of prison by convincing the outside world that the endless production of institutional harms is somehow abating?

We ask our readers: Can normalization work, and if so, how? What efforts have you seen on this front where you are? Where is it superficial, and where do you see its possible merit? For our non-Californian readers: do you desire Normalization at your institution, and is it even possible?

**Please send us your response to this prompt in 100 words or less.** We value your perspectives and are eager for you to join the conversation. Let's continue to learn from each other.

## Subscription Information

The *VIP* is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to incarcerated readers; likewise, we share digital copies of the *VIP* to our supporters on the outside. If you are interested in being added to our mailing list, please use the following contact information:

Inside readers, send subscription requests to the address listed at the bottom of this page.

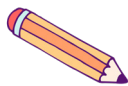
Outside readers can find copies of the *VIP* on our website [www.DavisVanguard.org/vip/](http://www.DavisVanguard.org/vip/) or email us at [outreach@davisvanguard.org](mailto:outreach@davisvanguard.org) to be added to the list to receive the newsletter electronically.

## Call for Proposals

Solitary Watch is accepting proposals for grants to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated journalists through the Ridgeway Reporting Project. The grants, ranging from \$500 to \$2,500, will fund stories that have yet to be told about all aspects of solitary confinement, for publication in news outlets nationwide.

To receive the full application instructions, including deadlines for each of the next two funding rounds, write to: Ridgeway Reporting Project, Solitary Watch, PO Box 11374, Washington, DC 20008. Please do not send proposals without first reviewing the full application instructions.

## Write To Us



The *VIP* accepts submissions, either as manuscripts or query letters, from currently incarcerated writers. We are interested in content covering prison and the experiences of the incarcerated. For a more detailed coverage of the content we are looking for, please send us a self-addressed stamped envelope and we will forward you a copy of the *VIP*'s Official Style Guide.

All submissions making factual claims must include their sources and appropriate citations for referenced material; likewise, content which includes interviews with incarcerated people's names, likeness or quoted words must adhere to departmental requirements governing media interviews with incarcerated people.

Generally, we are looking for the following types of articles:

- Carceral Narratives
- Profiles/Interviews
- Investigative Reporting
- Op-Eds
- Prison Culture Analysis
- The Criminal Justice System
- Humorous Anecdotes
- Special Event Coverage
- Program Coverage

Please send **your submission, a short bio, and your preferred pronouns** to the mailing address listed at the bottom of this page.

Note: We appreciate all of our writers for sending us their submissions. However, due to the high volume of submissions we receive, we apologize that we are unable to respond to every letter we receive. In addition, **do not send us the original copy of your submission if you would like us to send it back.** We are unable to send your submissions back to you. And importantly, **we do not pay for articles.** All our writers are volunteers. We are a small staff with a small budget, and we want to thank our writers and readers for being patient with us.

## Support Our Work

The *VIP* is a nonprofit publication written and edited by incarcerated people. We distribute our bi-monthly issues to incarcerated readers free of charge; we also provide mentorship services for both incarcerated journalists and scholars. Through the education and equitable empowerment of the incarcerated, we work tirelessly to disrupt the oppressive and violent social hierarchies in prison, striving to create meaningful opportunities for change and personal growth in the lives of those on the inside, but we cannot maintain this important work without the gracious support of our allies and community partners.

If you believe in what we do and have the ability, please make a financial contribution to our cause. For those who are unable to contribute financially, please help us promote the *VIP* and share it with a broader audience, bridging the gap between the prison and the community.

To make a donation and learn more about the work we do, please visit [www.davisvanguard.org](http://www.davisvanguard.org). Checks may be made out to The *Davis Vanguard*, with *VIP* in the memo, and mailed to the address listed on the right.

## Our Sponsors



Sparkplug Foundation

## Mailing Address

Send all mail inquiries to the following address:

Vanguard Incarcerated Press  
PO Box 4715  
Davis, CA 95617

Return Mail:  
Vanguard Incarcerated Press  
PO Box 4715  
Davis, CA 95617

