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CHOWCHILLA, CALIFORNIA 93610

VOL. 1, ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 2024



Program graduates present their certificate of completion in addition to a certificate of acknowledgment from the California State Senate, signed by Senator Anna M. Caballero.

Photo by Monique Williams

ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER RELIGIOUS GROUP REVITALIZED AT CCWF

By Kanoa Harris-Pendang

The Central California Women's Facility Asian Pacific Islander (API) Religious Group held their first rebirth Luau on July 1, 2024. The event provided an opportunity to celebrate the group's current membership and to explore one another's cultural backgrounds.

The group restarted this year after almost a decade hiatus. API elder Simaima Ohuafi led the effort. Born on the friendly island of Tonga in 1978, Ohuafi was raised in the U.S. by her father, who instilled in her Tongan culture and traditions. Ohuafi's goal was to revamp the group with a focus on education and creating unity between individuals from the many countries and communities represented under the API community.

The API designation refers to anyone who comes from or traces their heritage to the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent. According to the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs, approximately six million API people call the state their home. That's around 15% of the population, the third largest census grouping after Hispanic and white.

It is hard to say just how large California's incarcerated API population is since the CDCR data collection has only tracked four demographic categories historically: Hispanic, Black, white

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS GRADUATE

First incarcerated individual peer support program in the nation begins right here at CCWF

By Amber Bray

On July 24, 2024, Central California Women's Facility honored the inaugural cohort of Peer Support Specialist (PSS) graduates with a celebration in the B-side visiting room.

Launched in late 2023, the PSS program trains incarcerated participants to provide a wide range of support to new arrivals in the Reception Center, to general population residents, to residents of the Skilled Nursing Facility, and to the CCWF staff in general. The rigorous training required 82 hours of education. In their new role, PSS graduates will facilitate groups and provide information on many

subjects, including reentry and health-related issues.

The B-side visiting room was decorated in shades of purple, with a balloon arch and centerpieces of handmade lilac flowers on each table. At the beginning of the festivities, music played as Melissa Untalon-Espino, CCWF's Protestant Chaplain, took photos of graduates and their guests.

Warden Anissa De La Cruz was the first speaker. She expressed pride that CCWF is the first institution in the state to implement a PSS program, thereby fulfilling a promise of the California Model (CM). De La Cruz stated that the PSS graduates are "role models, which

is a big responsibility. But I have no doubt you will all do your jobs well." She also commended the family and friends in attendance, noting that individuals at CCWF can do what they do because they are supported by loved ones.

Edmond Montgomery, assistant deputy director of California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS), thanked the team who put the PSS program together, devoting countless hours to creating and overseeing the curriculum. Montgomery stressed that the curriculum CCHCS staff produced is "applicable with community standards," which will ensure transferable skills once graduates are released. Montgomery then

2

COMMENTARY

Rethinking the meaning of a sensitive case

4

ACTS OF KINDNESS

Creating Pennie's Rainbow

7

COLLEGE

Tips for student success

8

A NEW NEWSPAPER

Introducing CCWF Paper Trail

COMMENTARY

Every Case Is a Sensitive One

By **Jamie R. Harrison**

“Drugs, Debts, Dykes, and Delicates”—a warning of sorts, told to prison newcomers about what they should avoid.

These elements are, in fact, common to the way of life inside of a women’s prison.

I began learning this lesson 20 years ago, when I arrived on a life sentence. I came into prison like a wrecking ball of judgments and preconceived notions. I regretfully admit that I antagonized other women for their cases and lifestyles. I chose the code of the streets, mimicking the stories I heard growing up. The formerly incarcerated men I hung around told tales about enforced order and regimen, dropouts and alleged “hits.” The stories captivated me. What surprised me more was the detest these men acquiesced to after participating in the worst behavior— for their own security, safety and status.

A women’s prison, I quickly came to realize, did not follow the same politics as the men’s. Women here are not racially segregated. In fact, people of the same race fight one another over status and girlfriend drama. We are not limited or controlled by a “head honcho.” However, there are groups of women led by criminal and addictive thinking, who terrorize the prison community for so-called disrespect and debts.

And in recent years, with easier access to information through technology, there has been a drastic increase of women who dehumanize their peers by weaponizing their cases. This is, I believe, the only political configuration in the women’s prison.

The sad truth is that individuals who degrade another human usually do not want to admit the monstrous truth of their own lives.

I question the integrity of growth and the power of rehabilitation when it comes to these circumstances. Talking with others who have done extensive self-growth, like me, I have come to a crossroads. I once was the abuser of humans, wearing a cape as a facade; I want to now wear the cape of truth and awareness. Through my vulnerability, I hope that others will share their voice and give a little sanctuary to those not yet ready to stand. Allow me to bridge the way and share a little compassion in the world of prison politics.

At the age of 14, a cousin and I molested each other. When I was 16, I sold drugs to mothers who abused their children, and in their addicted state, I kidnapped their kids and called them unfit. At school, I sold drugs to other kids. I kicked in doors at mothers’ houses and physically beat up mothers while children slept in the next room. I attempted to kidnap my nephew at six months old, endangering him. I fought a pregnant woman because she owed me money. I victimized Mr. Ronald Hayward, a veteran with dementia, taking his personal property by force and fear. Melinda, Lonny, Larry, Stephanie, all direct victims to my assaults, robberies and terror. Each one of these people was an adult, yet still a child or baby to their

mother. Although my charge is burglary, am I not a sensitive case?

Take a moment to reflect on the events in my life. Does your opinion of me change knowing my background? By no means am I saying that things that have happened are acceptable. What

I am saying is that people matter and rehabilitation matters. We must allow people to process the “why” in their own life.

Anyone who endangers, humiliates, hurts, or invalidates another human is by this characterization a sensitive case. Who are we to demean people according to paperwork? The way to true freedom from skeletons and demons is to know what you have done, and allow others to do the same. In doing so we might change the culture and bullying that encompasses the women’s institution. This is the true politics; making the world a better place.

“Each one of these people was an adult, yet still a child or baby to their mother. Although my charge is burglary, am I not a sensitive case?”



CCWF Paper Trail EST. 2024

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Let Them Eat Cheesecake

By Sagal Sadiq

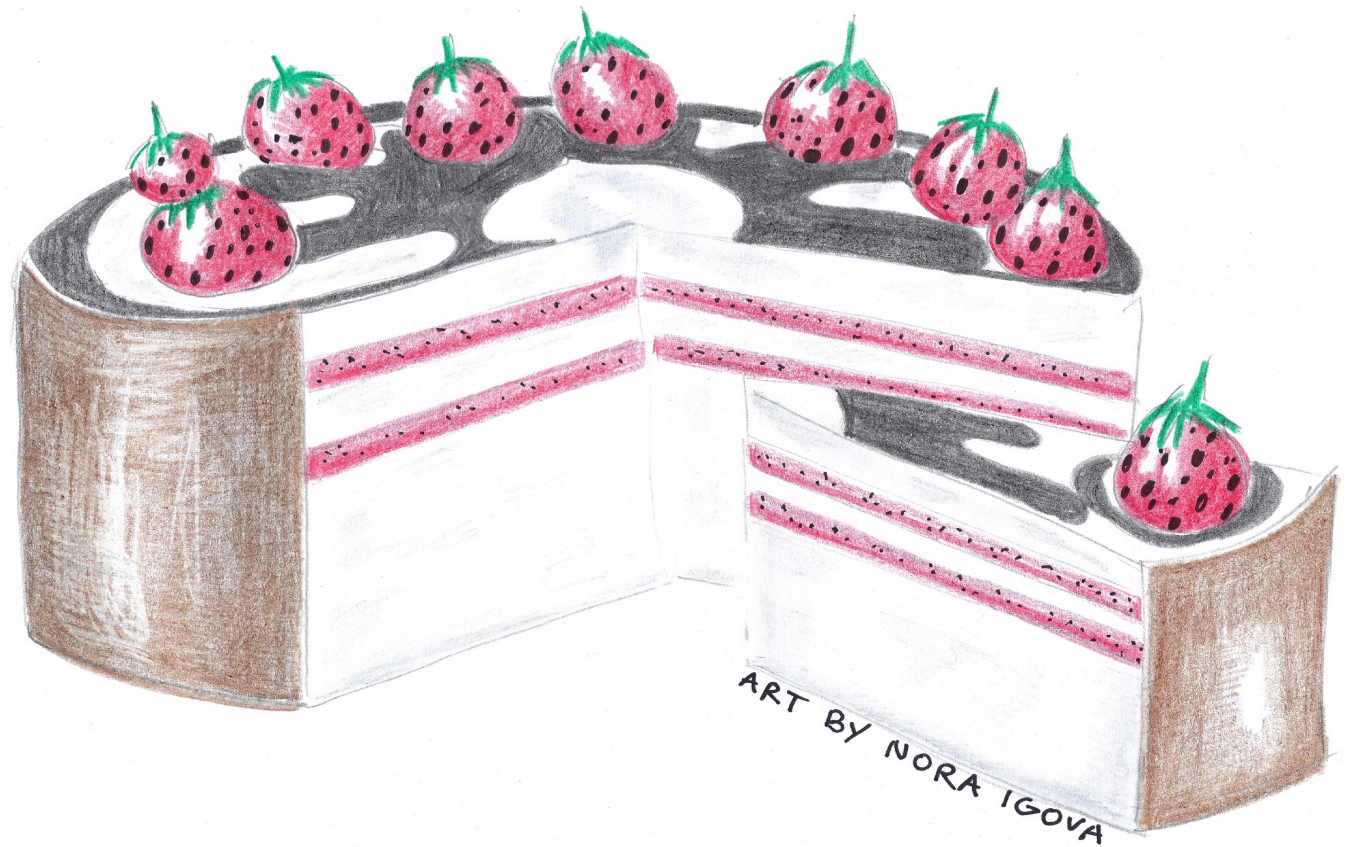
Jane Doe wakes up at 5 a.m. She showers using Dove Extra Fresh moisturizing body wash. She applies Secret Outlast solid deodorant. And finally, she enjoys a soothing cup of coffee flavored with french vanilla creamer, while eating an English muffin. What makes this seemingly regular grooming ritual noteworthy? The lady enjoying these creature comforts is an incarcerated individual and every product she is using is from the free world.

The residents at Central California Women's Facility have no access to free-world items, except those pre-approved and available for sale once a quarter through special fundraiser sales. The concept is simple: sell substantially marked-up free-world items to residents and donate the proceeds to a designated charity.

All prisoners yearn to be free. Barring that, they need to at least feel free. That fleeting feeling can be attained through simple things—hygiene items that leave an elusive scent on the skin, or free-world baked goodies. And for the denizens of CCWF the belle of the baked-goods ball is cheesecake. One bite transports. And that is what makes Costco fundraiser sales so popular here at CCWF.

The facility held the first Costco fundraiser sale of the year on May 18, 2024.

"I can't wait for the cheesecake," said Cassandra Hamm, a resident of Unit 512, as she spent the evening prior to the sale cleaning out the huge bins used by residents to haul their precious cargo from the gym back to their units.



“All prisoners yearn to be free. Barring that, they need to at least feel free. That fleeting feeling can be attained through simple things—hygiene items that leave an elusive scent on the skin, or free-world baked goodies.”

The excitement begins as early as the Thursday before the weekend of the sale, with people wondering what order the housing units will go in, each wanting to go as soon as possible. The bins typically used for a unit move or canteen shopping are collected the evening before. They are cleaned out, labeled, then packed carefully in the hallways where incarcerated individuals can keep an eagle eye on them. More often than not, people share bins and consequently they get piled high with goodies.

As soon as the housing officer announced it was our turn, the race to the gate began. Like commuters hurrying to a bus stop afraid to be left behind, the pace was brisk. The weather was warm. The sky was cloudless. Was it just me or did the

sun look like a giant cheesecake? I saw residents with walkers practically sprinting like Usain Bolt at the Olympics.

Fueled by the power of cheesecake, but all that hurrying was for naught. We were stopped by the locked gate that led to the Main yard. There, an officer, with a long list of all potential sale participants, had to grant residents passage or they could not go any further. I felt bad for one particular young lady whose name somehow did not make it on the list and was turned away. She walked back toward the units visibly upset.

At long last we made it through the gate toward the gym following carefully placed signs with arrows guiding us towards our destination, a departure from previous sales.

Entering the gym, the vibe was all Costco; the air was cool in sharp contrast to the heat outside. Around the perimeter of the gym, food items were separated from hygiene items. Tables were arranged so that at any given time, at least 10 people were being serviced. The high ceilings and spaciousness of the gym's

interior made it feel remarkably like the real Costco. For a split second I was there. I was free. Freedom must taste like cheesecake.

What a treasure trove of treats. Piles upon piles of precariously perched packages, the most precious ones of all occupying peak positions - at the top.

No Costco customer service representative could ever come close to providing the type of service provided by the resident workers, all volunteers hand-picked by the community resource manager.

Day after day of working with delectable goods may render Costco employees immune to the charms wielded by baked goods. To the incarcerated persons however, the allure of cheesecake is akin to the siren call of home.

Freedom rang that day with every imaginary ching of a non-existent cash register, with every delighted ohh and every joyful ahh, with every triumphant "chunka-chunka" of hard plastic wheels on tarmac wheeling treasure back to their collective units.



FEATURES

PENNIE'S RAINBOW

By Nora Igova

How do incarcerated individuals reduce their anxiety when they are locked in a room with seven others who are dealing with their own devastations?

Trying to cope with the uncontrollable became a familiar scenario for Pennie Marie Ince, a new arrival to Central California Women's Facility. Pennie is a small-framed, middle-aged woman with big, curious hazel eyes, dark chestnut hair and bangs hanging heavy over her square Austin Powers-looking glasses. A timid smile accompanies her round penny face. Pennie wears her hair in a low ponytail with a few unruly strands that usually do not make their way into her hair tie.

Pennie arrived at CCWF on December 23, 2023, with a Life Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOP) sentence. Grieving the impact on the community and the loss of her freedom is a very personal journey for her, filled with devastating moments, intense emotions and anxiety. On the day of Pennie's sentencing, she dropped to her knees with disbelief and heart filled with agonizing pain. She attempted suicide and had a stroke. "I was devastated," Pennie said, "and lost hope. This experience took away all my pride."

Learning to cope with the uncontrollable variables of prison is an added challenge on top of all other the obstacles and devastations an incarcerated individual goes through. When the prison doors are slammed closed, anxiety rises. All the negative "what if" possibilities surface. These uncontrollable variables include doors being locked and not being able to come in and out of the cell, lockdowns, controlled feeding, waiting at gates for hours sometimes to get to an appointment or work, not knowing if one will ever see their family again, not knowing if one will be retaliated against by being the voice for others, not knowing when one will be able to get hygiene products, not being able to reach family and friends, not knowing how others are going to react due to their own devastations in life, and not knowing if one is going to spend the rest of their life behind bars.

Pennie's mental health needed support and understanding. She was told that her emotions would give her the information she needed to cope with life; however, she did not know what to do with that information. She reached out to Mental Health (MH).

"Meds [from MH] help me not go totally crazy," Pennie said. "When I

miss a dose of my medication, I feel trapped and uncontrollable anxiety possesses my body." She was not getting, however, the understanding and support that she needed.

There are different suggestions out there about how to cope with uncontrollable situations.

“What if we just notice and are aware of the person next to us, and practice human kindness?”

One of them, recommended by CCWF's Dr. Danielle Gonzalez, is boxed breathing (inhale count to four, hold your breath count to four, exhale count to four, hold your breath count to four, and repeat), which helps visual learners picture a box and regulate their breathing.

Another suggestion is to notice how you are handling anxiety and stress and try to think about the things that are within your control. Think about things that will bring you meaning and purpose, small things.

"My roommate Mai keeps me sane," Pennie stated. "She got me a cloth-made stuffed mushroom for my comfort, so I have something to hold when I feel anxious. I named my mushroom Magic. And it looks like the Mario Brothers mushroom, white and green with white spots. He makes me feel like home."

Another purpose Pennie has found is to lose some weight and get in shape.

Last but not least is smiling at people. "You just don't know how you might brighten someone's day with a simple act of kindness," Pennie added. "It is okay to feel what you are feeling, and it is definitely okay to say that to yourself."

All of these suggestions are easier said than done, especially when you're surrounded by people who are too preoccupied with what they can control, including you trying to box breathe to reduce anxiety. "Shut up with all that counting!" one of Pennie's roommates once shouted. That abrupt and piercing sound startled Pennie when she was trying to box-breathe quietly in a corner. She felt the need to bring her body to a crouching position, covering her ears with both hands, wishing to go away.

The biggest thing that calms Pennie's anxiety is walking the yard. Unfortunately, the recreation yard does not open on a consistent basis. The yard being closed means she is stuck in a 15' by 15' room that contains four bunk beds, eight lockers, a bathroom, shower, table, chair, and two sinks. It leaves a very small walking area. Having eight bodies in the cells increases the level of frustration due to the multiple attitudes displayed at random hours of the day. In order to relieve her anxiety when stuck in the room, she paces back and forth from the door of the cell, around her bunk, to the window and back in the shape of an arc.

Pacing became her only route of relief in a tension-filled environment. "It was driving them crazy," Pennie said, "until they saw how it really affected me when I was trying to sit still and cope with my anxiety." One of her roommates said, "Hey, we can all be unhappy, or we can be collectively happy by doing something about it and compromise." Another roommate chimed in with a solution.

"She is walking the arc, as she is walking on rainbows, all smiling and joyful. I would rather have her smiling and joyful than all stressed out stressing us out. She paces anyway. Why don't we make it a happy place?"

They collectively decided, according to Pennie, to paint a vibrantly colored rainbow on the cell's floor, on Pennie's usual route. It was official: Pennie got her own rainbow. The rainbow looks like a horseshoe. The brightness of the colors of the rainbow exude joy. The red, the orange, the yellow, the blue, and the purple are rich in texture with glittery sparkles all over. There are two fluffy white clouds at each end of the rainbow to keep it steady. That became not only Pennie's happy place but everyone else's happy place as well.

"My pacing used to drive my roommates crazy," Pennie concluded, "but now it's part of me being in the room. My roommates became my support system, and that is the best mental health support I can ask for."

This simple compromise and act of kindness is a perfect example of CCWF residents supporting each other with their struggles. The collective act of creating the rainbow was such a gift in the drab surroundings. Cultivating these kinds of connections is priceless. What if we just notice and are aware of the person next to us, and practice human kindness?

Ground yourself, place your oxygen mask on, check your own bandwidth to see what you have to support others, be the listening ear and empathize so you can be of service. That is the fastest way to experience the ultimate freedom and walk on Pennie's rainbow.



A Note from the Warden

Most of my career has been at men's institutions. I remember working in a housing unit as an officer back in the early 2000s, and while processing the mail, I would see a newspaper titled San Quentin News. Curious to know what it was about, I read a few articles. It was, of course, about San Quentin State Prison. Some articles were about politics and some about sports. Then I noticed it was written by the incarcerated population. I was impressed with its quality.

Fast forward a few years later. I am now sitting in the warden's seat here at CCWF. And in my regular mail delivery is the San Quentin News. All the wardens receive a copy of it. It is much larger now than it was when I was an officer. Flipping through it, I've often asked myself, like I always do: what about the women?

Women make up a small percentage of the incarcerated population and often go unheard. I have made it my mission to give the population of the women's prison a voice. Part of that means making space for a newspaper at CCWF, its own newspaper.

I've imagined that establishing a newspaper within CCWF can have a profound impact on the lives of the incarcerated population and the broader prison community. Such a program provides an outlet for self-expression, allowing incarcerated women to share their stories, thoughts and perspectives. Writing gives incarcerated



Warden Anissa De La Cruz

“The CCWF population's wisdom, knowledge and heart have made possible the improvements I've seen in the department during my 23+ years of service. A media center is significant because it gives the population a voice, where for so long, they were silent. A women's media center, for the people, by the people! A beautiful endeavor and accomplishment.”

Lt. Monique Williams
CCWF Public Information Officer

individuals a way to process their experiences, make sense of their past and imagine a future beyond prison walls. This creative process can foster a sense of purpose and direction that is often missing in a prison environment.

It also offers valuable educational opportunities. Through writing, women can enhance their literacy, communication and critical thinking skills—tools that are crucial for reintegration into society. Whether they aim to pursue further education, secure employment or contribute positively to their communities, these skills can open doors to new possibilities. The discipline and confidence gained through writing can empower them to make positive changes in their lives.

Beyond individual benefits, it can help build a stronger sense of community among the population. By sharing their work, women can connect

with one another, reducing feelings of isolation and fostering mutual support. This sense of camaraderie can help create a more positive atmosphere within the prison, contributing to overall well-being.

This also builds the bridge between the prison and the outside world. By sharing their work beyond the prison's walls, incarcerated people can challenge misconceptions and provide insight into their lived experiences. This can promote greater understanding and empathy from the public, leading to more informed discussions about the issues facing incarcerated women.

As I write this, I feel proud and hopeful that the dream of a paper here at CCWF has come full circle. I look forward to the articles being published and a future where we no longer must ask, what about the women?

COVER STORY: PEER SUPPORT GRADUATION
...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

introduced PSS graduate Mesha Dean, who performed an inspiring praise dance for the assembled guests. When Dean concluded his dance, the entire room erupted in applause.

Public Information Officer Lt. Monique Williams gave a presentation on the CM, explaining its objectives and goals. Williams stressed that the CM draws inspiration from states and countries that have implemented similar programs. The CM focuses on dynamic security, normalization, peer support and ensuring CDCR becomes a trauma-informed organization. In order to achieve these ideals, CCWF has implemented staff

training and normalization through beautification as well as events, graduations and other programs.

Several graduates spoke about their journeys through the program. They offer a great deal of thanks for Olivia Frantz, Health Program specialist II. Mary Kruppe said the PSS “job helps to build community one interaction at a time.” Alissa Kamholz observed that the PSS training allows “the R in CDCR” to be implemented. Elizabeth Lozano stated, “this is our living amends.” Cleo Martinez-Costa thanked the staff for relying on the PSS graduates and said, “I won't disappoint you.” Kandice Ortega noted that the incarcerated population had been doing peer

support work and “now we have a title.” With tears in her eyes, she expressed her gratitude that her parents can celebrate her milestones and not her setbacks. Williams then summed up Ortega's sentiment, stating, “The population is out there healing each other—let's get 'em paid for it.”

The PSS graduates were surprised by a visit from Joyce Dale, a representative for California Sen. Anna M. Caballero. Dale created certificates that recognized the graduates by the California Senate, signed by Senator Caballero, and called each graduate by name to receive one.

Janna Tassop, a mental health representative from CCWF, thanked the graduates and staff, noting how much positive feedback had been received about the program.

“You are making a profound difference,” Tassop said.

As a gesture of thanks, she presented each graduate with a pink, peach and white “freedom spirit” rose. As each graduate received their flower, they took a moment to smell it, their joyful expressions showing how fragrant it was.

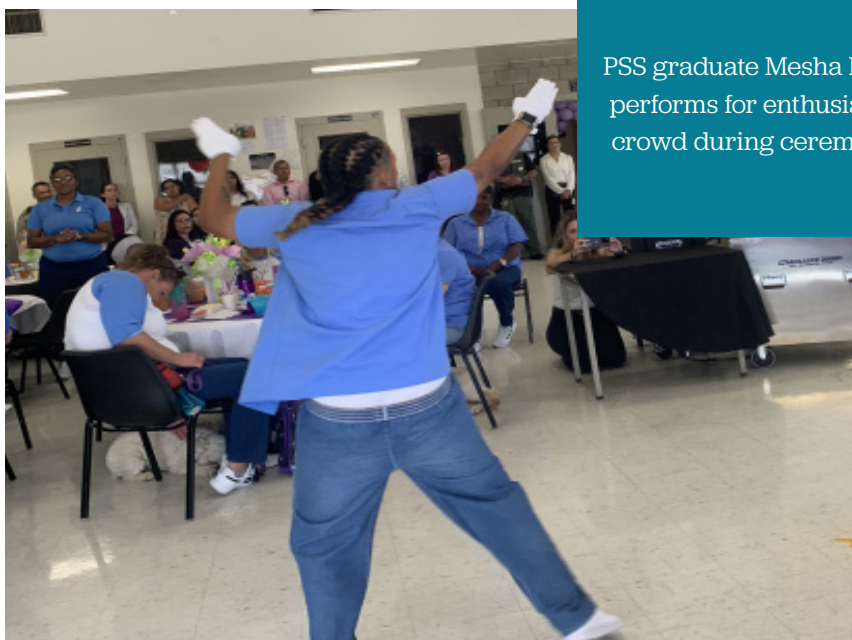
Lt. Nicholas Hammet presented the graduates with their completion certificates. He said that assisting with the training program and supervising the PSS

was “one of the most enjoyable experiences of his career.”

Statewide Chief Nurse Executive Affi Tamuno-Koko addressed the graduates, stating that CDCR is the only department of corrections in the nation that is doing peer support for the incarcerated population, and CCWF is the first facility to implement it, which was greeted with tremendous applause and cheers from the audience. Tamuno-Koko shared that “not only have we met community standards with the PSS curriculum, we exceeded them.... today we're making history that will transcend these walls.” CCWF's Healthcare CEO Roy De La Cerda came to show his appreciation to staff and peer support specialists for laying the foundation for the rest of California.

Graduate Brenda Barrera's mother, Patricia Godinez, and aunt, Brenda Magallon, expressed their extreme pride at Barrera's accomplishments. Magallon remarked that her niece is “teaching our family to look at life differently,” while Godinez couldn't stop beaming at her daughter.

There was so much support for the graduates that there was only standing room for many administrators - staff from healthcare and housing units, facility captains and associate wardens, all lined the back wall of visiting in order to take part in the festivities.



PSS graduate Mesha Dean performs for enthusiastic crowd during ceremony.

Photo by Monique Williams

NEWS

COVER STORY: API GROUP REVIVED
...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and other. However, California Assembly Bill 943—passed in 2023—will require the CDCR to prepare and make publicly available more detailed, racially and ethnically disaggregated demographic data, starting Jan. 1, 2025. The various ethnic groups now organized under the category of “other” will be invisible no longer.

There are so many cultures that fall under the API umbrella, and the CCWF group hopes that more people will join them. They currently have an intimate roster of 17 members, with representatives from the Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Tongan and Vietnamese cultures.

The group members meet weekly to educate one another about their ancestry, traditions and beliefs. Members are invited to learn one another’s cultural dances, songs and traditions. Each participant brings something to the table and walks away with a deeper knowledge and understanding of their peers. Michelle Jones, who is half Japanese, recently shared an interesting story about her grandmother, who had immigrated to the U.S. from Osaka, Japan, as a youth. According to family lore, she lied to enter the U.S. in order to get on her favorite TV show, “American Bandstand.”

The day started for the close-knit community with prayer following familiar greetings, smiles and hugs. Hawaiian music played softly as everyone trickled in, enjoying the bright decorations. Four tables sat connected in a row in the center of the room, each topped with a colored tablecloth and tropical, and pineapple centerpieces with utensils wrapped in napkins at each seat.

As tradition, though totally unplanned, would have it the youngsters sat together at one end of the table and the elders followed suit at the other. As the servers were preparing lunch, talking and laughter drowned out the music.

It didn’t take long to get a game of modern charades going. After the teams formed, the battle began. The feeling was all so familiar to the participants.

“I was around my own kind, not having to put on a mask,” Mia Sagote said. “I felt comfortable and as if I was around cousins I have not seen in a long time. Even though we were not raised together, we come from similar cultures.”

Once the food was served, everyone bowed their heads for grace. The group enjoyed a spread that included fried chicken, tri-tip, Hawaiian bread, watermelon, coconut, guava and apple drinks. They hope to have a more traditional luau meal in the future. Members ate and socialized, telling stories of being home with family. Bits of native tongue could be heard, followed by giggling.

THE MANY CULTURES OF API



With a huge smile on her face Leylani Simmons said, “It felt like home when I started eating with my hands!”

All of a sudden the group sang in harmony a beautiful Samoan song called “Ie Lava Lava” they had been practicing for months. The song describes the garments Samoans wrap around their bodies to show respect for their culture. Cheers erupted after three rounds of singing, the tempo speeding up each time. A sense of pride, joy and amazement filled the air.

True to Pacific Island tradition, in which younger family members show respect by cleaning up

after a family gathering, Faalele Patea got up and started cleaning and taking down decorations as the day was coming to a close. She expressed how this day brought back memories of being at home helping her parents. As she reflected on her words, tears filled her eyes and another memory was made for everyone.

In closing, Ohuafi expressed her feelings of connectedness. “I feel spiritually guided and supported by the administration and warden,” who herself identifies as Filipino-American, Ohuafi said. “Warden [Anissa] De La Cruz makes me feel like she’s culturally aware and cares about us.”



Photo by Monique Williams



Photo by Monique Williams

API luau celebrants includes, from left to right, Faalele Patea, Simaima Ohuafi, Rabbi Paul Gordon, Kanoa Harris-Pendang and Michelle Jones; second picture Leylani Simmons and Ursula Gomez.

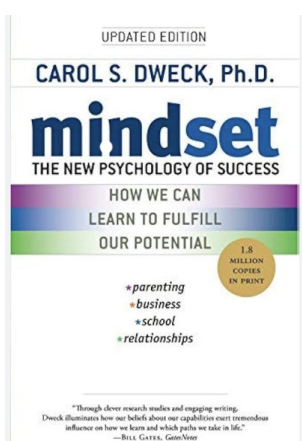
4 TIPS... to THRIVE IN THE CLASSROOM

By Brenda Bowers

My college experience has not been an easy one. I faced many challenges with course assignments. I wanted to give up many times, often feeling as though I wasn't smart enough. Or, that my thinking was entirely different from others', and it is. I don't easily retain information and my study habits are horrible. When I signed up for college, I felt like I was setting myself up for failure. Once I was enrolled and found that the work was too hard, I didn't ask for help, for fear of looking stupid.

But after getting my first "A," I was proud of myself. The fact that I had the ability to excel caused me to stay the course and not give up. I learned a lot of things, based on personal experience and on expert research. Here are four tips if you are hoping to succeed in becoming a successful college student:

1. ADJUST YOUR MINDSET



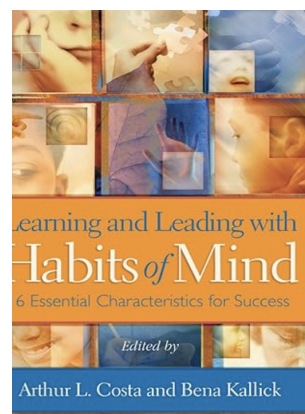
Many students go into college with a fixed mindset, meaning that they see their intelligence as unchangeable, for better or worse, and that's it. As such, challenges become threatening and setbacks are viewed as failures. This was the case for first-time Lassen Community College student Deserae James. "When I enrolled, I didn't see myself as smart enough to be a successful college student. I constantly self-sabotaged and told myself I would fail," James said. A growth mindset can be a way out of this kind of self-defeating thought. A growth mindset allows individuals to see their mistakes as an opportunity to grow. It makes it easier to face challenges head-on. Students with growth mindsets believe that intelligence is something that can be improved through education and effort.

If you are interested in learning more about learning mindsets, check out the book "Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, by Carol Dweck."

2. STAY PERSISTENT

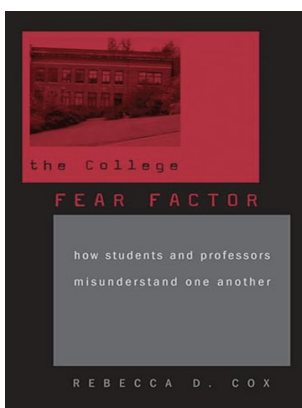
Being a college student has many challenges as well as rewards. One of the big challenges is staying persistent. The persistent student does not give up easily. They stay on task and develop structure for themselves. Persistence leads to positive outcomes, which in turn can feed persistence. That's the case for Feather River Community College graduate Nancy Rodriguez, who told me that "the feeling of accomplishment kept [her] persistent."

If you want to know more about developing persistence, check out: "Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind: 16 Essential Characteristics for Success," by Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick.



3. ASK FOR HELP

Students are often apprehensive when it comes to asking for help, be it from their peers or their professor. But it's better to know than not to know, so put yourself out there, like Fresno State student Tamara Bassett. "Whenever I have questions," Bassett said, "I go to my peers. We formed a pretty strong study group and we rely on each other. We help each other."



If you'd like to know more about overcoming apprehension, check out: "The College Fear Factor: How Students and Professors Misunderstand One Another," by Rebecca Cox.

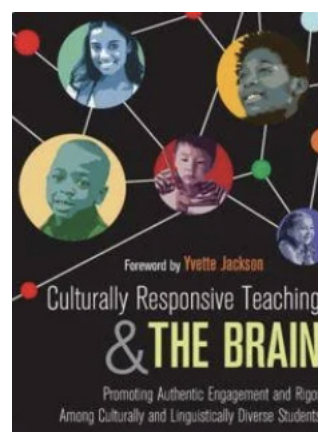
4. LOOK FOR CULTURALLY-RESPONSIVE TEACHING

English learners and students of color are often denied equal opportunities to develop cognitive skills needed to become independent learners. Culturally responsive teaching is a powerful tool, because it aids dependent learners as they gain the cognitive skills necessary to develop a higher way of thinking.

If you'd like some insight on how teachers can themselves learn to better support poverty-stricken students of color, check out the book "Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students," by Zaretta L. Hammond.

If you were anything like I was, I encourage you to get out of your fixed mindset and view your apprehensions as opportunities instead of fears. To those reading this article- don't give up, stay the course!

And if you are interested in signing up for college, the accompanying story will help you get started.



How to Get Into College at CCWF

By Amber Bray

Higher education is a laudable pursuit for any individual. As the old saying goes, "knowledge is power" and nowhere is that more evident than in a prison. After all, once we know better, we do better. If you are at Central California Women's Facility and would like to enroll in college, how do you do that? What do you need to do in order to qualify for college?

The first requirement is that an individual must have a high school (HS) diploma or general education development (GED) certificate on file with the education department. If individuals do not have a GED or HS diploma and would like to earn one, they can submit a form 22 to Assistant Principal M. Quintana to explore being placed in an education classroom. If individuals earned a GED or HS diploma prior to coming to CCWF, they can submit a request to obtain their educational transcripts in order to ensure they are on file.

Once a GED or HS diploma is on file, the individual can request to be placed on a college program waiting list. CCWF has four community college programs available for the incarcerated population where individuals can earn their Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degrees: Coastline, Feather River, Lassen and Merced. Coastline, Feather River and Lassen offer correspondence courses while Merced offers face-to-face instruction four afternoon/evenings per week.

In order to be placed on a college program waiting list, interested individuals must submit a form 22 to the college program coordinator of their choice. The college coordinators for Merced are G. Fry and S. Janssen. The college coordinators for Coastline, Feather River, and Lassen are L. Fore and D. Lavagnino.

CCWF also has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) program available via Fresno State University. In order to be placed on the waiting list for this program, interested individuals must have their AA or AS degree on file and have completed the "Golden Four" classes for transfer to a California State University. The Golden Four are: statistics, critical thinking, written or oral communication and a science class with a lab component. Additionally, Fresno State is now requiring individuals to take ethnic studies prior to matriculation, so the Golden Four now seem to be the Golden Five. Anyone meeting the requirements to be placed on the waiting list for Fresno State should submit a form 22 to L. Fore and D. Lavagnino.

Happy learning!

COMMENTARY

WELCOME TO CCWF PAPER TRAIL

By the Editorial Board

Have you ever seen an issue of the San Quentin News and wondered why San Quentin Rehabilitation Center has a newspaper and Central California Women's Facility doesn't? Or wished you could find out more about a recent court decision or a policy that was enacted and aren't sure where to look? Or wondered about the experiences of those who have gone before you at CCWF about how to prepare for the board, or how to get into college, or how to be a better parent, or generally how to thrive in an environment that is so often hostile to human flourishing? Or wanted to be able to share your experiences and opinions with those around you? Or just wished that the residents at CCWF had a louder voice?

For these reasons and more, CCWF needs its own newspaper. And that's why we're here. CCWF Paper Trail is a brand-new monthly newspaper written by those incarcerated at CCWF—the largest women's prison in the world—for other residents and the staff at the institution.

We understand the need because our editorial board is made up of community members and leaders who have served a cumulative total of 104 years inside, most right here at CCWF. That's Amber Bray, editor-in-chief; Kanoa Harris-Pendang, manag-

ing editor; Sagal Sadiq, features editor; Delina Williams, news editor; Nora Igova, art & layout designer and Diana Lovejoy, journalism guild chairperson.

We are joined by other CCWF leaders—members of inmate leisure time activity groups and individuals who are passionate about writing and serving our community—who signed up for the inaugural CCWF journalism guild training: Unique Bishop, Brenda Bowers, Joanna Gomez, Jamie Harrison, Megan Hogg, Elizebeth Lozano, Tomiekia Johnson, Christine Loyd, Mychal Macias, Chappinette Martin, Heather Miller, Otilia Pineda, Kristin Rossum, Ohuafi Simaima and Coleen Torres. Chances are good you'll see their names appearing as contributing or staff writers and photographers in future issues.

Together, we will showcase and represent the people who live and work at CCWF. We plan to motivate, inspire, encourage change, provide hope and share our lived experience. We also seek to highlight changes within these walls, bring awareness to the wider world about what happens here, our accomplishments and our struggles.

Our goal is to represent all communities, cultures and sub-cultures within the institution. We want to show that CCWF res-

idents care about giving back to society and utilize restorative justice principles to do so.

Because CCWF Paper Trail is a journalistic endeavor, we aspire to do all the things we've outlined with fairness and integrity, as objectively as possible. Our work is guided by the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, which calls on writers to "to seek the truth and

“Together, we will showcase and represent the people who live and work at CCWF. We plan to motivate, inspire, encourage change, provide hope and share our lived experience.”

report it, to minimize harm, to act independently and to be accountable and transparent.” The tools of journalism are important to a community, for reporting on events and for providing commentary on issues. We're going to lean into our responsibility to provide information to everyone at CCWF who wants to hear it, since individuals at CCWF may have been overlooked in the past.

Collectively, we have some lofty ideas for the types of stories we

want to offer our readers. There are scheduled events at CCWF we want to cover. There are people, places and issues we want to feature in longer stories. We plan to give tips and explain policies. We want this paper to contain news you can use, that helps meet the needs of the population. We will make space for your commentary too.

In order for us to do the best job for you, our readers, we request that you submit feedback to us. Critique us so we can serve you better. If you like something we've done, share that. If you have an idea for a story, let us know. If you disagree with a story that has been published, write a letter to the editor to talk about that. You can find the submission guidelines in this issue, on page 2. We want to create the best possible newspaper we can in order to represent all of us to the best of our ability. We see this as a two-way street and welcome your feedback and input.

Moving forward, if you are interested in the possibility of joining our team, there is a pathway for that. Future journalism guild classes will be offered within the media center to train interested individuals to become contributors. If writing or reporting seems interesting to you, we hope you will join us in order to continue the legacy we're in the process of creating! Contact one of our editorial board members for more information.

You can read CCWF Paper Trail in a few different ways. The newspaper will run as a print insert in the San Quentin News. You can also read a digital version on the tablets through the Edovo app. Free-world readers can check out our website at www.ccwfpapertrail.org and follow our work on social media.

This is an exciting and historic moment for CCWF and for California—the first time incarcerated women have an official voice. Join us on our path to shine a light on our community.

The inaugural journalism guild cohort poses with their reporter's notebooks at the CCWF Media Center launch, which took place on March 25, 2024.



Photo by Monique Williams

Paper Trail editorial board members Amber Bray (left) and Nora Igova (right) converse with journalism guild member Kristin Rossum (center) in the CCWF Media Center.

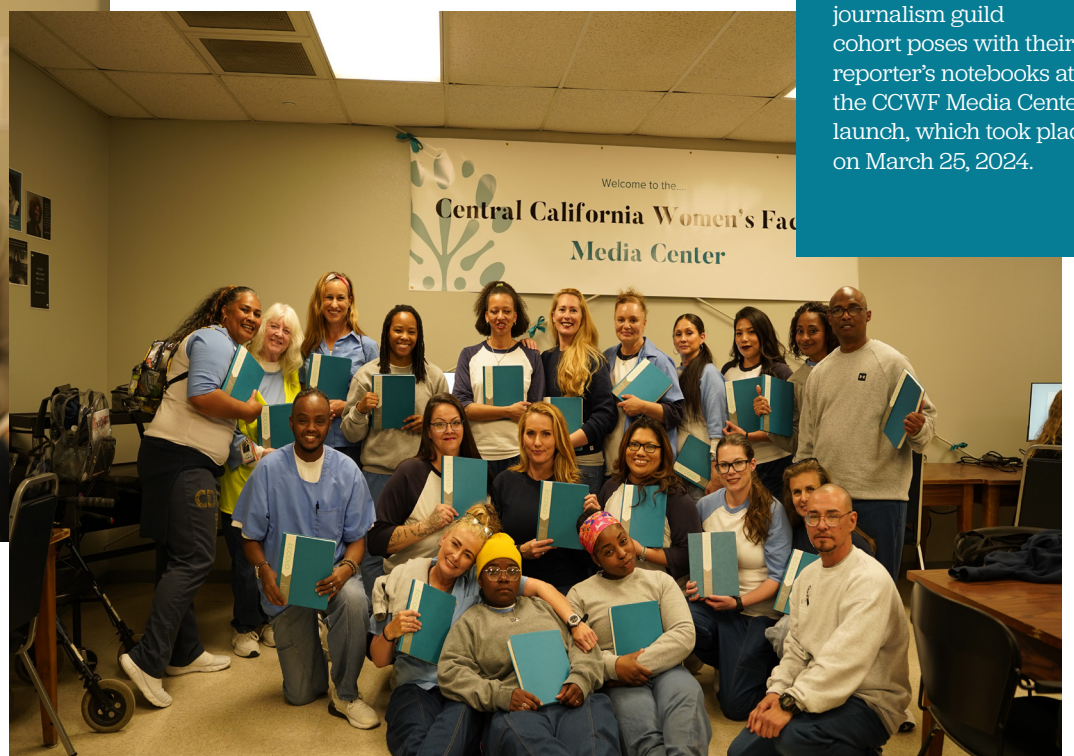


Photo by Monique Williams