

# The Upstart

Issue # 1

@Calipatria State Prison

2019

On May 16<sup>th</sup> 2019, a couple of exciting events simultaneously occurred on D-Facility here at Calipatria. First, pizzas were passed out for a charity event that was a win / win for us. We got the luxury of some real Domino's Pizza and local non-profits got major support from us here at the prison in the form of a donation. This particular "food sale" was sponsored by CGA (Criminals & Gang Members Anonymous) & AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), two of the most important self-help groups offered here in our prison. A big 'Thank You' goes out to the Staff & Sponsors who volunteered to help pass out pizzas. The second major event happened in the middle of it all, the new Secretary of CDCR, Mr. Ralph Diaz made an appearance. Mr. Diaz was humble enough to throw some gloves on and get down and dirty passing out orders directly to inmates himself. I recognized the Secretary immediately, he showed up with our Assistant Warden 'Whitman', Chief Deputy Warden 'Pollard', Public Information Officer 'Bustamante', and IGI correctional officer 'Garcia'. The opportunity arose for an interview with Mr. Diaz, when asked how he feels about his visit to our institution and his participation in the food sale he said, "Any opportunity for us to let the inmates experience life like they used to is worth it".

The food sales at this institution support the immediate community around us. Each event brings between \$50,000 and \$100,000. The entirety of the profit is donated to various charities in and around the Imperial Valley. Of course we are always excited to have some real food and get away from the regular delicious meals from our institutional dining halls. The total amount raised for this event was \$80,348.50, the profit was exactly \$30,273.50, which was equally split among

personally was fortunate enough to sit down with a representative of each non-profit and hear first-hand what it is they do, and where the money is going. I noticed that most of the charities represented were geared towards helping the youth. Most inmates, myself included, have this passion for youth... maybe it is because we wasted ours. Giving back is the secret ingredient to change, and is also the best way of taking care of yourself, by doing something for someone else. For those of us in

prison who owe a debt for all of the bad, it is priceless to be a part of something good like this. Some of these folks were emotional when thanking us for our contributions. So if you've ever wondered how these things work, there you have it. Thank you again to all the volunteers and participants who made this happen. -Cory

*"Any opportunity for us to let the inmates experience life like they used to is worth it"*

*-Ralph Diaz  
Secretary CDCR*

eight different charities in our local community. (Imperial Valley Shop with a Cop, Calipatria Little League, Calipatria High School Trust Fund, Bill Young Middle School Athletics, Brawley Feed the Need, Cody's Closet, The Village at Brawley Union High School, and Imperial Valley Cancer Support Center). I



**FOOD SALES!!!**



### Intro

In the process of actualizing this idea to create a newsletter here at Calipatria, we learned a big lesson, timing is everything. Now is the time.

This is the forum for Calipatria's "D" facility that encourages and promotes education and positive change. We intend to keep the population interested and informed. We're striving to stay ahead of the game by giving you a clear heads up on the happenings around us. This is all about us making it our business to take full advantage of the recent changes in the system. This is about being accountable to ourselves and each other. Through this platform we will be highlighting all the positive programming and educational opportunities available in our facility. We would like to thank Warden W. L. Montgomery, A/W Whitman, CRM Hernandez, PIO Bustamante, Captain Acevedo, Captain White, and Rabbi B. Lew for the support of this publication.

We will include submissions from students / participants in every aspect of self-help, educational, and religious programs offered. We intend to not just provide information on what's available, but a connection and a pathway for you to get involved. Our main objective is to reach those of you with one foot in and one foot out. If you are sitting in the cell struggling, we've got your back. REACH OUT!

Change for us demands intensive work... rise up with us in our quest for knowledge and positive change.

-Cory Sullivan

### Mission Statement

We at "The Upstart" want to be clear in our vision so that we do not set ourselves up for failure. We would like to set this up as a stepping stone on our way to a future where our old distorted attitudes and perceptions are replaced with truth and success.

Being clear in this vision we have come to realize that one must set goals alongside something much larger than ourselves. That, my friend; is our community!!

Education is crucial in reaching our goals. Whether it is returning to society, our families, or just a better set of opportunities, it entails some form of re-education, preparation and training. Let's be honest; our first plan did not afford us too many bankable options.

For these reasons and more, this issue is focused on creating a new ripple effect through education. We are informing you on what some of our "D" facility community members are choosing to participate in; and how they are choosing to make a difference. If you are interested in any of these opportunities; seek them out. You are not yesterday's decisions; even if some want to keep you in that box. You can expand your mind and learn new things which will enrich your environment. You are tomorrow's success through the decisions you make today. Cast that pebble and create a new ripple. --Joel Baptiste

**In accordance with COR 3250 the opinions expressed herein are the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the facility or department.**

## **Contents:**

- Pg. 1: Pizza Sale for Charity & Meeting the Secretary of CDCR
- Pg. 2: Contents, Intro and Mission Statement
- Pg. 3: LWOP Alliance by: Ruhani Bustamante
- Pg. 4: Creative Corner
- Pg. 5: Programs Available on "D" Facility and Contacts
- Pg. 6: Words from the Rabbi and Chapel Schedule
- Pg. 7: Imperial Valley College
- Pg. 8: Anti-Recidivism Coalition
- Pg. 9 & 10: Article and Interview with James Daly
- Pg. 11 & 12: Youth Offenders/ Andrew Gonzalez
- Pg. 13: Creative Corner
- Pg. 14: The Upstart / Back Page

# LWOP ALLIANCE

By: Ruhani Bustamante

Having an LWOP sentence may seem zombie-ish, like the "walking dead"... a meaningless life. Existing in a separated class so far removed, forgetting what life is or was. Realizing a distorted vision of others, they have hope and we don't. LWOP... each one of us knows the feeling of being stranded on our own island, alone and consumed by hopelessness. Rescue ships come and go, passing by, never giving a second thought to our desperation. It's a mindless state and one in which it's easy to become careless. In fact it can be dangerous.

Nearly one year ago that was my mentality in its essence. Since then something amazing happened, the processes of zombie transformation were reversed, a zombie suddenly awoke, I became "un-dead" for real. I noticed a change when another LWOP inmate began to make noise, running around and shaking others attempting to wake them. It was nonsensical at first, all

I heard was "raaahhh, raaahhh, raaahhh!" typical zombie sounds which usually were a call for brains.

When the LWOP Alliance was formed and made official, after weeks and weeks of attending I began to notice the sounds these zombies were making were different, and the way this zombie was feeling was different. Through this new group specific to me and my LWOP brothers, zombies were becoming human again, life was breathed back into the lifeless. I began to really "feel" this experience. Instead of faces with dead expressions, smiles and hope replaced frowns and bitterness. Warmth overtook the cold state my body was in for so many years. "Raaahhh, raaahhh, raaahhh" became, Remorse, Empathy, Sympathy, Compassion, Spirituality, Change, Hope, Second Chances, Awareness, Mentorship, Life, Pro-Socialization, and Positivity. This thing that we are now a part of is bigger than us alone, it is

something to live by and live for. We are taught all the "meat & potatoes" of Recovery, Commutations, Board Prep, Psychotherapy, Relapse Prevention, and Life Skills at a college level.

Thanks to the creators of this group and the hard work of its members the "walking dead" have transformed into a collective group of men healing from the pressure of despair and hopelessness. We now identify as the LWOP Alliance, our mission is to not be Victims of circumstance but to be Creators of our own success. It is our goal to Rehabilitate, Earn Credibility, Network, Motivate, Build Community, Educate, Move Forward, and Create. Each step further away from the death trap only we know.

If this is you stuck on an island not comprehending anything outside of "raaahhh, raaahhh, raaahhh", open up your mind. Life is real and the future is in fact possible.

*"The LWOP Alliance was created on D-Facility at Calipatria State Prison by LWOP inmates for LWOP inmates. Immediately after the initiation of this group it was acknowledged by the administration and made an ILTAG. The curriculum was designed and created by Joel Baptiste, Jose Ortega, and Cody Coats. There is a manual that has been made into a book so that the LWOP Alliance and its principles can reach yards all across the state and be effective for all LWOP inmates. Life With Out Parole as a punishment is a hot issue as an argument of morality and injustice, it is being fought against by advocacy groups across the state of California. Whether it's right or wrong, it has been proven to be misused by prosecutors. The requirement for a sentence of LWOP is a special circumstance of any kind used by the prosecutor as an enhancement, usually to a 187. It is not necessary that you be proven as the primary (shooter) for the issuance of a sentence of Life With Out Parole." - Cory*

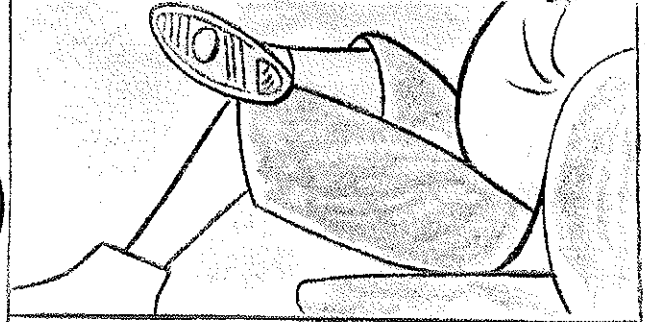
# CREATIVE CORNER



Artwork by: Chuck Esmay #D86924



Comic Art by: Nick DiMaggio #T71343



# Programs Available on "D" Facility & Contacts

A "2016" FORM, IS NOW THE PROPER WAY TO SUBMIT REQUESTS FOR SELF-HELP GROUP WAITING LISTS. THESE FORMS ARE AVAILABLE IN YOUR HOUSING UNITS.

## SELF HELP

(USE A 2016 FORM)

CONTACT: CRM F.  
HERNANDEZ

- ✓ AA
- ✓ AA/NA
- ✓ ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE
- ✓ ANGER MANAGEMENT
- ✓ ARC - BPH PREPARATION
- ✓ ARC - CRIMINALS AND GANG MEMBERS ANONYMOUS
- ✓ ARC - YOUTH OFFENDERS PROGRAM
- ✓ ATTITUDE RECONSTRUCTION
- ✓ AVP ILTAG
- ✓ AVP WORKSHOP
- ✓ BRIDGES TO FREEDOM
- ✓ CGA
- ✓ FATHERS BEHIND BARS
- ✓ LIFE WITHOUT A CRUTCH
- ✓ LWOP ALLIANCE
- ✓ SPANISH NA
- ✓ STRAIGHT LIFE PROGRAM
- ✓ VICTIMS IMPACT



## FACILITY "D" EDUCATION

(USE A 22 FORM)

COASTLINE & IVC -  
COLLEGE COORDINATOR:  
MR. J. CASTRO

TABE & GED & VEP -  
COORDINATOR: MR. YEE

- ✓ ABE 1,2, &3
- ✓ GED
- ✓ VOLUNTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM
- ✓ IVC IMPERIAL VALLEY COLLEGE (ON SITE)
- ✓ COASTLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (CORRESPONDENCE)

## FACILITY "D" VOCATION

Contact: J.D. ANAYA

- ✓ AUTO BODY AND PAINT
- ✓ AUTO MECHANICS
- ✓ COMPUTER RELATED TECHNOLOGIES (LEVELS 1,2,&3)

## BEHIND THE WALL

(USE A 22 FORM)

CONTACT: J.D. ANAYA

We offer two classes a day twice a day from 8:15am to 11:30am and from 12:15pm to 15:30pm. Currently we are running LTOP, SAP, & Re-Entry Monday thru Friday in the am. In the pm we run SAP along with a set of CBT based classes.

### CBT (RE-ENTRY)

5 YEARS TO EPRD OR LESS

- ✓ SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- ✓ ANGER MANAGEMENT
- ✓ CRIMINAL THINKING
- ✓ FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

### LTOP

LIFERS 5 YEARS TO BOARD OR LESS

- ✓ SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- ✓ ANGER MANAGEMENT
- ✓ CRIMINAL THINKING
- ✓ FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
- ✓ DENIAL MANAGEMENT
- ✓ VICTIM IMPACT

## THE STRAIGHT LIFE PROGRAM

"The Straight Life Program has changed my life. I understand now the importance of having someone give you advice, growing up I didn't have anyone to talk to. This program has given me integrity. A lot of these kids we talk to are troubled, however they just want someone to be there for them. How do I know this? I was that kid. Straight Life has been around for almost ten years now. It's a program that brings troubled youth into the prison for a reality check. The Sponsor is John G. and there is heavy staff support. I go to so many different self-help groups and learn bits and pieces from each one to apply to my life to be a better man. This group specifically has had the most impact on me, I am proud to be a part of this group and have learned the importance of giving back. Straight Life has given me a chance to heal from my own youth and the experiences I've had. I remember going to a camp similar to Straight Life called Scared Straight when I was a kid. We don't necessarily use that approach in Straight Life, we use unconditional positive regard and try to share "real love" instead of "tough love". What I've learned in Straight Life is how to use the tools I've acquired with direct counseling to kids who could use it. There is a "vetting" process where we interview potential prospects. You must be clean for one year, and be trusted by your peers to work with these youngsters. It has been an amazing experience for me. The Straight Life Program is something special we do on this facility and I would like to thank Mr. John G. for supporting us." -Jose Amaral

# WORDS FROM THE RABBI & CHAPEL SCHEDULE

How often do we become angry about inconsequential things in our lives? How about holding onto resentments and grudges of no significance? Almost always, when we take a step back, we realize that what leads us to these emotions and reactions are the most trivial matters conceivable.

About 3,500 years ago, a young man was (falsely) imprisoned. Prior to his incarceration, his whole life had been fraught with strife, danger, and sacrifice. But he never complained. He realized, without a doubt, that his whole life was orchestrated by G-d, and not only did he not despair, he went out of his way to affect his own miserable environment. This young man was Joseph (read more about Joseph in the Torah/Bible in Genesis). Because G-d was with him, he rose in stature and is eventually put in charge of the other prisoners.

One morning Joseph noticed that two of King Pharaoh's ministers imprisoned with him were troubled and sad. Instead of ignoring them Joseph converses with them and is able to put them at ease. It was through this small act of kindness that he was able to literally help and save the entire world. This seemingly small act teaches us an extremely powerful and timely message: We constantly come across events that seem out of the ordinary, but in reality, these events are orchestrated by G-d who is challenging us to transform the (un)ordinary to the extraordinary. This could be a simple act of goodness, a simple hello, a simple smile, a simple hug, simply showing up and being present. We each have the capabilities of offering something to someone, strangers included.

And while we may not all be Joseph's, we all have the same potential as Joseph. While those around him, the nay-sayers, had feelings of sadness and depression, his attitude was that of hope and making a difference, notwithstanding his own present situation. Imagine what each of you could accomplish with the talents you have been given. Imagine if you put your mind to positive thoughts and action. Imagine the inspiration you can give others by being true to your essence. Imagine the feeling of being able to potentially change the world by the minutest of actions. These are not abstract ideas, these are realities well within your grasp, you just have to transform the imaginary into the reality.

Joseph was able to withstand and overcome adversity because he had a strong foundation. He also recognized that he was but a mere tool in G-d's vast orchestrated plan. Throughout our lives we acquire many tools to help us deal with the various tasks G-d has chosen for us. It is our job to decide which tool is necessary for which job and to make sure we use the tool in a proper fashion.

This episode also teaches us another insightful and powerful lesson: forgiveness. This is the first recorded moment in history in which one human being forgives another. There is a misconception that forgiveness condones bad behavior, the reality is that forgiveness is the path to mental and emotional freedom. We no longer have to hold ourselves oppressed based on what someone else did to us. When we hold onto grudges and resentments, it's like drinking poison and expecting the other person to get sick.

Resentments and grudges are two of the main culprits that perpetuate cycles of self-abuse and victimhood. Stowed away inside you like parasites, they deplete you of your G-d given life force and separate you from your inherent worth, your joy, and the love in your heart. Holding a grudge doesn't make you strong, it makes you bitter. Forgiving doesn't make you weak, it sets you free. Being in a forgiving mode is the healthiest thing for yourself, for humankind, the entire world, and for redemption. Think of small acts of goodness and kindness that you can do. Even with a slight effort you can make a big difference. And most of all, forgive others, not because they deserve forgiveness, but because you deserve peace. --Rabbi Benzion Lew

<b>Saturday:</b>	
0600-1530 hours	Native American Sweat Lodge -- Primary
0900-1100 hours	Asatru -- Primary
0830-1000 hours	Protestant Worship First Service -- Primary
0830-1000 hours	Spanish Protestant Christian Lifer's Class -- Secondary
1000-1130 hours	Protestant Worship Second Service -- Primary
1000-1130 hours	English Protestant Christian Lifer's Class -- Secondary
1140-1315 hours	Protestant Worship Third Service - Primary
1140-1315 hours	Prison Ministry Grant -- Primary
1330-1530 hours	Protestant Worship Fourth Service -- Primary
1330-1530 hours	Messianic Shabbat Service -- Primary
<b>Sunday:</b>	
0900-1100 hours	Vanairu -- Primary
0830-1030 hours	English/Spanish Jehovah's Witness -- Secondary
0830-1030 hours	Choir Practice -- Secondary
0830-1030 hours	Protestant Communion -- Primary (4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday)
1400-1530 hours	Buddhist -- Primary
1400-1530 hours	Reformed Christian -- Primary
<b>Monday:</b>	
1000-1115 hours	Guitar Worship Music Class -- Secondary
1000-1115 hours	Ask the Rabbi -- Primary
<b>Tuesday:</b>	
0830-1130 hours	Spanish Jehovah's Witness -- Primary
0830-1000 hours	Grace Chapel Spanish Bible Study -- Secondary
1000-1130 hours	New Life Bible Study -- Secondary
0830-1130 hours	Morning Catholic Mass Retreat -- Special Service
1230-1530 hours	Afternoon Catholic Mass Retreat -- Special Service
1230-1330 hours	American Indian Talking Circle -- Secondary
1230-1330 hours	Islamic Taleem -- Secondary
<b>Wednesday:</b>	
0830-1130 hours	Prison Fellowship TUMI Training -- Primary
0830-1130 hours	Prison Fellowship TUMI 'Fight the Good Fight of Faith' -- Primary
1230-1530 hours	Baptist Service -- Primary
1230-1530 hours	Reformed Bible Study -- Secondary
<b>Thursday:</b>	
0830-1130 hours	Catholic Mass -- Primary
0830-1000 hours	Spanish Choir -- Secondary
1000-1130 hours	Prayer Group -- Secondary
1230-1530 hours	English Jehovah's Witness -- Primary
1230-1400 hours	Catholic Choir Practice -- Secondary
1400-1530 hours	Rastafarian -- Primary
<b>Friday:</b>	
0830-1000 hours	Protestant Spanish Service -- Primary
0830-1000 hours	Kemetik -- Netarian Service -- Primary
1000-1115 hours	Non-Denominational Bible Study -- Secondary
1000-1115 hours	Discipleship Class -- Secondary
1230-1330 hours	Muslim Jummah -- Primary

# Imperial Valley College

Few things have a greater impact on how a student performs than why they are performing. Education has the power to shift feelings of helplessness and ignorant thoughts into foundations of power and understanding. Education is like a super highway that leads to opportunity.

So when stakeholders and administrators, both at Imperial Valley College and Calipatria, were wondering "how" we were going to perform, we students were busy hashing out the "why". The why for me came in two distinct forms. First, I saw it as a way to prove that I exist, a voice that is recorded forever in my transcripts. As our semesters came and went I started to develop a new sense of pride and accomplishment, my voice became a voice of success. Secondly, the harder I worked, the more of my life I was able to re-construct. Re-construction and awareness became my road back home. Home wasn't a physical destination as much as it was a state of peace and understanding.

As a cohort we fell in love with learning, we needed to understand what that meant and how to do it in a way that worked for us, we did that by working together as a cohort. Learning and internalizing the values, beliefs, and norms of other social groups made us want to become functioning members of society. I felt embarrassed by my ignorant past and it created a certain obligation. When I started to understand and draw correlating lines between things like delayed developmental stages and crime, the entire world seemed alive to me, I understood myself and created a platform to launch off of and take back my future. I became an active member of a new society that we were building.

I am so proud to be a member of the first graduating IVC cohort here at Calipatria. All of the men in this cohort produce at such a high level I always had the feeling that I needed to give my very best so that I wasn't the one to drop the ball. In December we will receive our degree, some of us are on our way to the California State University, Los Angeles, bachelor program. Other members of our cohort are on their way to drug counseling programs and training facilities. Whatever the destination, I know success will follow each of these men, why? Because they know the formula.

For prospective IVC students here at Calipatria, we have left you with a concrete how. Because of the success our cohort achieved with state recognition (Presidents Honor Roll), funding is no longer an issue. Finding professors who are willing to come into prison and teach you is no longer an issue. Our collective commitment to succeed created a dramatic rise in efficiency scores for professors who have been teaching for twenty years. Great professors like Shinn, Canez, Wyatt, and Green are waiting to help you blaze your path into the future. We leave you with the bar set very high, a solid foundation.

What will your contribution be? Collectively, what will you achieve? Continued success, a bachelor program here at Calipatria, possibly? There are no longer any doubters only opportunities! -Joel Baptiste (Class of 2019)

2019  IVC

# ANTI-RECIDIVISM COALITION

The following interview was conducted on August 20<sup>th</sup> 2019 on D-Facility. David Amaya is an X-Lifer who paroled from this yard and now works for ARC and CDCR as a mentor and teacher. He is here teaching CGA, BPH, and YOP every other week and helping men change their lives.

**Cory:** How does it feel coming back through these gates, after paroling from this yard?

**David:** It feels good knowing that I can come back and give hope to the brothers that I left behind. Let them know they are not forgotten and hopefully inspire them to make the needed changes in their lives.

**Cory:** Tell us a little bit about what ARC has on its agenda this year? For Calipatria and in general.

**David:** We're expanding the system in the dayrooms and hand selecting coordinators that can really help men with their specific problems, whether it's drugs, gangs, anger, or whatever... we're putting together a community building workshop, to get all executive bodies from all self-help groups involved. Our idea is a universal system all encompassing. And of course we are continuing our groups in visiting on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

**Cory:** What was your release date?

**David:** June 25<sup>th</sup> 2015, I still remember that like it was yesterday, being popped out at 8:15. All the work and education releases were walking by me while I was waiting on the wall, the brothers were asking me how'd you do it, I said go to church; it was God's grace. That was amazing bro.

**Cory:** How long have you been off of parole?

**David:** I've been off parole one year and one month. I got off two years early, I had five years... they gave me an honorable discharge because of my involvement in the community. I had steady employment and continued going to CGA, AVP, and Church groups. I also co-founded a youth diversion program.

**Cory:** How much time did you do?

**David:** 25 years on a 15 to life sentence.

**Cory:** It's motivating for a lot of these lifers around here to work with you and follow your example, any advice for these guys?

**David:** Dude those are some good questions bro... the only thing is this... just know you guys are needed out there and it's not about being perfect, it's about doing the work every day to become a better person for yourself and loved ones.

**Cory:** So what's life like out there in this technologically advanced world?

**David:** Google maps gets you wherever you're going now, but I don't trust it cause it gets me lost and leads me into gang infested neighborhoods.

**Cory:** How has this experience, learning the principles of CGA and applying them to get out, then coming back in to teach CGA affected your life personally?

**David:** In a nut-shell it's made me a better father and it's made me stronger as a person. To live the role as someone with purpose. It's helped me realize why I was blessed with a release date. These steps and principles led me to Christ. I remember walking on the track in front of five block conversing with God and asking him, if He wants me to spend the rest of my life in prison, I want to do it serving Him. Six months later I got a release date and two years later I was coming back into prisons to teach. That was His plan.

**Cory:** Dave you look like you're hungry, do you want a sandwich break? Would you like a state sandwich with some mustard packet's?

**David:** Hell yeah! but I would rather have a peanut butter and jelly packet, ha ha ☺.

**Cory:** Thank you for your time bro we all appreciate you and all that you do, any last words of encouragement for "D" Facility?

**David:** Just know that once we open our hearts and find true peace, our path and purpose in life becomes a lot more clear.

**! Jonathan Sylvan is the coordinator for ARC and was an original part of the "Core 9", a group of leaders advocating for positive change on this facility !**

Working with Abel Aranda and Jose Macias as the yard coordinators for ARC on this facility, we have been hands-on in organizing and sustaining the day room groups and hand selecting and interviewing potential facilitators. It's important to ARC, and to us, that the right men are in these leadership roles so that real work can be done. I personally am the coordinator for YOP (Youth Offender Program), Abel Aranda is the coordinator for CGA (Criminals and Gang Members Anonymous), and Jose Macias is the coordinator for BPH (Board Preparation Hearing). David Amaya gives us the ability to make ourselves accountable by making decisions that are best for the yard and what ARC is doing here. Coming up we have Attitude Reconstruction, BPH, and Addiction Lifestyle courses in the dayrooms. Facilitators have already been selected for Attitude Reconstruction, this group is new on the yard and the curriculum was designed out of a self-help manual and restructured to work for us in prison. After Attitude Reconstruction was made and self-generated for about a year, ARC acknowledged it and sponsored the program. As for myself, I've been a student and then a teacher within each program supported by ARC. I have learned the cycle of addiction and how it works, also I have learned how to apply the techniques in the lessons of CGA. The lifestyle addiction was way more relatable for me, understanding the destruction helped me change my views and distorted beliefs. It was the work I did in these classes that made me into the man that is now able to be a coordinator, and knowledgeable enough in the material to teach the class. We have been talking to David about the potential for doing an event on this yard, not sure what it'll be yet but our vision is to do something big that will impact the entire population. If you want to get involved just contact the facilitator in your housing unit. I want to thank ARC and David Amaya and my fellow coordinators and each facilitator involved, for supporting me and supporting the program and making this possible. Also I would like to thank my supervisor Mrs. Torres and Cpt. Acevedo for the encouragement along the way, pushing me in the right direction. -J. Sylvan



## How Times Have Changed

By: James Daly

I HAVE SPENT ALMOST FOUR DECADES IN PRISON. I CANNOT THINK OF A TIME WHEN PRISONERS HAVE HAD SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES AND BEEN PRESENTED WITH SO MUCH HOPE. I HAVE LITERALLY WASTED AN ENTIRE LIFETIME BEHIND THESE WALLS. I WISH FORTY YEARS AGO I HAD THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES BEING OFFERED TODAY.

WHEN I FIRST ENTERED THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS IN 1980 THE PENDULUM HAD SWUNG IN THE OTHER DIRECTION. THERE WAS ZERO "REHABILITATION" IN THE NAME OR THE PLACE. THE VOCATIONAL TRADES THAT DID EXIST WERE HARD TO GET INTO BECAUSE MOST WERE SLOWLY BEING ELIMINATED. TO MY KNOWLEDGE THERE WERE NO "SELF-HELP" GROUPS.

AS FAR AS PRISON GOES IT WASN'T TOO BAD BACK THEN, IT WASN'T TOO GOOD EITHER. IT WAS A DIFFERENT TIME. FOOD WAS FAR BETTER THAN WHAT WE GET TODAY. THE PRISON BACK THEN WAS RUN BY THE PRISONER, AND IT WORKED WELL. IF YOU WANTED A JOB, BED MOVE, OR A FLOATER TV PLACED OFFICIALLY ON YOUR BED CARD YOU SIMPLY TRACKED DOWN THE PROGRAM CLERK IN CHARGE OF THAT ACTIVITY, PAID HIM, AND IT WAS DONE. BASICALLY THE OFFICERS HANDLED THE SECURITY ISSUES AND THE PRISONERS TOOK CARE OF THE DAILY OPERATIONS OF THE FACILITY. IN SHORT IT WAS A MUCH EASIER TIME FOR GUARDS AND INMATES ALIKE.

WITH THAT BEING SAID, THE 80'S WERE VERY MUCH LIKE THE WILD WILD WEST, AT LEAST IN TRACY AND FOLSOM WHERE I SPENT MY TIME BACK THEN. THIS WAS BEFORE PELICAN BAY AND ALL THE RELATIVELY NEW PRISONS. I BELIEVE IT WAS 1984 WHEN TIME MAGAZINE NAMED FOLSOM THE MOST VIOLENT PRISON IN THE COUNTRY. I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THE GOOD CAME WITH THE BAD.

FROM 1990 THROUGH 2017 I WAS INCARCERATED IN THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS. TWENTY FOUR OF THE TWENTY SEVEN YEARS I WAS IN THE FEDS WERE SPENT DOING AN INDETERMINATE SHU PROGRAM. WE HAD NO PROGRAMS THERE, IT WAS ALL SINGLE CELL AND COMMUNICATION WAS DIFFICULT AT BEST. WHEN IT'S ONLY YOU INSIDE THESE CONCRETE WALLS YOU GET TO KNOW YOURSELF REAL WELL. AS THE YEARS PASSED IT EVENTUALLY BECAME TIME FOR TRUE INTROSPECTION. I GRADUALLY FOUND OUT THE HARSH TRUTH OF REALIZING I DIDN'T LIKE THE MAN LOOKING BACK AT ME IN THE MIRROR. I WANTED MORE THAN THE LONELY LIFE OF EXISTENCE THAT I HAD LIVED FOR SO MANY YEARS. THERE JUST HAD TO BE MORE TO LIFE. I WANTED MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY KIDS, I WANTED A CHANCE TO HOLD THEM IN MY ARMS. I GOT OUT OF THAT BOX. I KNEW THAT IF I EVER WANTED TO LEAVE HERE I HAD TO DROP OUT... SO I DID.

ON APRIL 28, 2017 I WAS TRANSFERRED FROM FEDERAL CUSTODY INTO THE CUSTODY OF CDCR. AFTER ALL THAT TIME IN THE FEDS I SHOWED UP IN CDCR TO BEGIN MY FOUR CONSECUTIVE LIFE SENTENCES. UP TO THAT POINT I WANTED TO BECOME A BETTER PERSON, THE ONLY RESOURCES I HAD WERE SELF-HELP AND PERSONAL FINANCE BOOKS THAT I WOULD READ IN MY CELL. WHEN I CAME

BACK I WAS LITERALLY SHOCKED TO DISCOVER HOW MUCH CDCR HAD CHANGED SINCE I WAS LAST HERE. WHAT I HAVE FOUND AND LEARNED HERE IN CALIPATRIA IS A WORLD AWAY FROM WHERE I CAME FROM. LAWS HAVE CHANGED AND LIFERS ARE ACTUALLY GOING HOME. THERE ARE SELF-HELP GROUPS AND VOCATIONAL TRADES AVAILABLE. PRISONERS ACTUALLY HAVE THE SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SERIOUS CHANGE.

IN 1990 I STARTED THIS TERM WITH NO HOPE AT ALL. THERE WAS NO REASON FOR ME TO BELIEVE THAT I WOULD EVER BE RELEASED SO LIFE AS I KNEW IT WAS OVER. FOR THAT REASON I EMBRACED CHAOS AND VIOLENCE WITHOUT ANY REGARD FOR THE CONSEQUENCES. AS A RESULT I SPENT TWENTY FOUR YEARS OF MY LIFE COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM ANY SEMBLANCE OF NORMALCY. IT TOOK NEARLY TWENTY NINE YEARS BUT I FINALLY FOUND HOPE. HOPE THAT I MAY DEVELOP A MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH MY KIDS, FAMILY, AND FRIENDS. AND HOPE THAT I MAY EVEN ONE DAY BE GRANTED PAROLE. I'VE DECIDED I'M NOT GOING TO WASTE ANOTHER MINUTE OF MY LIFE. I FULLY INTEND TO RIDE THIS WAVE OF HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY AS FAR AS IT WILL TAKE ME. WHAT I HAD BEEN DOING WASN'T WORKING. SO IF WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN DOING HASN'T BEEN WORKING, WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO? I AM OFFICIALLY OVER THE ALTERNATIVES. IF YOU'RE DEEP WITHIN THE GAME YOURSELF AND YOUNG, OR JUST LOOKING FOR GUIDANCE, I'LL ASK AGAIN; WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO? YOU CAN WASTE AWAY IN PRISON FOR THE BEST YEARS OF YOUR LIFE LIKE I DID OR YOU CAN WAKE UP AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE YOU. IT'S UP TO YOU.

**The following interview was conducted in D4 housing unit by Joel Baptiste. Mr. James Daly, the man who wrote the above article recently came fresh off a 27 year term in the Federal Bureau of Prisons, he came through CDCR reception and here to Calipatria. He has been gradually socializing into a prison community where men are serious about recovering and rehabilitating from drug and gang lifestyles. I have personally watched him go from "culture shocked", to motivated and seriously involved. He is "one day at a time", acclimating and getting with the program, so to speak.**

### An Interview with James Daly

By: Joel Baptiste

JOEL: THIS YARD HAS BEEN YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH HOPE, WHAT EXACTLY DOES THAT MEAN IN REGARDS TO YOUR PAST?

JAMES: COMPLETELY CHANGED MY LIFE. I WENT FROM NO FUTURE TO A SITUATION WHERE I LOOK FORWARD TO LIFE WITH MY DAUGHTERS. I LIVED LIFE BY THE SWORD AND I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD DIE BY THE SWORD.

JOEL: WHY DO YOU THINK IT IS SO DIFFICULT FOR SOME TO SEE? WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?

JAMES: I THINK THAT AS PRISONERS WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF NEGATIVITY. FOR GUYS LIKE US CDC WAS THE ENEMY, ALWAYS! WE ALWAYS SAW THE WORST IN PEOPLE, THE NEW CDCR IS TOUGH FOR

EVERYONE TO GET ACCUSTOMED TO, STAFF INCLUDED. I THINK THAT EVERYONE HERE HAS MADE SOME REAL PROGRESS IN WHAT THE FUTURE COULD LOOK LIKE AND I AM WORKING HARD TO BE A PART OF IT.

JOEL: WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED HERE HOW DID YOUR POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION START? DID YOU GET DUCATS FOR GROUPS OR WHAT?

JAMES: I MET THESE TWO GUYS WHO WERE TALKING ABOUT THESE NEW PROGRAMS AND ALL OF THE STUFF THAT THEY WERE DOING AND IT WAS THE SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAT I WAS LOOKING FOR WHEN I DROPPED OUT. I KNEW I WANTED A DIFFERENT LIFE BUT I HAD NO TOOLS OR IDEAS ON HOW TO GET THERE. I WAS SO FRUSTRATED WITH TRYING TO GET INTO THESE GROUPS THAT I ALMOST GAVE UP MANY TIMES. I AM VERY IMPATIENT AND I AM SURE THAT I WAS GIVING MIXED MESSAGES.

JOEL: COMING OUT OF DECADES IN SOLITARY WAS IT HARD ASSIMILATING INTO THIS YARD?

JAMES: OH MY GOD! SO HARD, I WOULD RATHER BE A FLY ON A WALL THAN IN A GROUP OF PEOPLE HAVING A CONVERSATION. MY DESIRE WAS THERE BUT I HAD NO SOCIAL SKILLS. I KNEW THAT I NEEDED TO PUSH MYSELF, SO I DID.

JOEL: WHEN DID YOU SPOT YOUR OWN FLAWS, HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

JAMES: AS SOON AS I GOT AROUND PEOPLE I NOTICED THAT I HAD LOST A LOT OF MY SOCIAL SKILLS. I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT WHEN I WAS TALKING TO SOMEONE WHO HAD A DIFFERENT OPINION ON SOMETHING THAN I DID I WOULD GET IRATE, IT REALLY TOOK ME OFF MY SQUARE. I KNEW THAT I NEEDED TO BE ABLE TO HAVE A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE FACE TO FACE AND BE OKAY WITH THEM NOT SEEING THINGS MY WAY.

JOEL: YOU MEAN YOU ARE NOT ALWAYS RIGHT?

JAMES: EXACTLY! WHEN I WAS IN ISOLATION FOR A FEW DECADES THERE WAS NO OTHER OPINION THAT MATTERED BUT MY OWN.

JOEL: SO WHAT HAS THAT BEEN LIKE FOR YOU?

JAMES: FRUSTRATING! I WANT TO CHANGE AND I WANT TO DO IT RIGHT NOW, MY IMPATIENCE KICKS IN AND REALLY COMPOUNDS THIS PROCESS. THERE'S A SPOT I KNOW I NEED TO GET TO, I JUST WANT TO BE THERE ALREADY.

JOEL: AS YOU SPEND TIME IN THESE CBT GROUPS ARE YOU HONESTLY SEEING ANY RESULTS?

JAMES: SOCIAL INSIGHT FOR LIFER'S CLASS HAS FOR SURE REALLY HELPED ME GROW. RENE ESTRADA HAD US WRITE THESE AUTOBIOGRAPHS. IT WASN'T UNTIL THEN THAT I STARTED TO SEE THE EXTENT THAT PROBLEMS IN MY PAST MANIFESTED INTO THE PROBLEMS I WAS FACING TODAY. IN AN AVP WORKSHOP I HAD ANOTHER LIFE CHANGING MOMENT... FOR A LONG TIME I WAS GETTING NOTHING OUT OF ILTAG GROUPS, BUT THEN I WENT TO A WORKSHOP WITH JEN AND JULES (AVP COORDINATORS), I WAS HIT IN THE FACE WITH SOME SERIOUS STUFF. WE DID THE DINNER TABLE EXERCISE AND I HAD NEVER SEEN SOMETHING THAT POWERFUL. I WANTED TO GO BACK EVERY DAY. THEN CAME THE CONSENSUS EXERCISE, OF COURSE I NEEDED EVERYONE TO SEE THINGS MY WAY! RIGHT THEN I HAD ANOTHER "AH HA MOMENT". I COULD CLEARLY SEE WHAT I NEEDED TO WORK ON.

JOEL: SO WAS IT BECAUSE YOU WERE OPEN OR WHAT?

JAMES: I THINK IT WAS THE ATMOSPHERE THAT JEN AND JULES SET. I WANTED TO GET THIS STUFF OUT, I WAS UPSET THAT I LET THAT DINNER TABLE GO BY WITHOUT DOING IT MYSELF.

JOEL: SO WHERE ARE YOU AT NOW?

JAMES: I CAN SEE SUCCESS, I WANT TO BE JOE CITIZEN! I NEED TO TACKLE COMMUNICATION SKILLS, I AM STILL LOOKING FOR THOSE LIGHT BULB MOMENTS. MY KIDS HAVE ALREADY NOTICED A DIFFERENCE AND THAT FEELS GOOD. AT FIRST I DIDN'T SEE THE USE IN ALL THE METHODS, I AM NOW SEEING THAT IT IS A PROCESS AND EVERY PART OF THE PROCESS HAS ITS MEANING. AT FIRST I DIDN'T SEE IT. I DON'T THINK THIS WOULD WORK AS WELL ON THE MAINLINE, TOO MANY STUBBORN DISTRACTIONS. WORRYING ABOUT PERCEPTIONS AND SUCH.

JOEL: WHAT ARE SOME OTHER THINGS THAT HAVE HELPED YOU, OR SOME THINGS YOU'VE NOW BEEN ABLE TO DO AS A RESULT OF YOUR CHANGE?

JAMES: WRITING, HANDS DOWN! WRITING HAS FORCED ME TO GET IN TOUCH WITH MYSELF AND MY PAST. JUST TALKING ABOUT MY EXPERIENCE IN ADX WAS SO CATHARTIC. IT WAS ALMOST LIKE WASHING IT AWAY, JUST BY

HASHING IT OUT ON PAPER, GETTING IT BEHIND ME. SINCE I GOT HERE AND STARTED DOING THE WORK I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN WRITING BOOKS THAT ARE GEARED TOWARD HELPING AT RISK YOUTH. I JUST COMPLETED A WRITING PROJECT WITH THE FORTUNE SOCIETY AND UNLOCK TOMORROW. I REALLY CAN'T TELL YOU HOW GREAT IT FEELS TO BE INVOLVED IN HELPING SOMEONE ELSE, TO THINK THAT SOME OF MY WRITING MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE'S LIFE IS REALLY A GREAT FEELING.

JOEL: SO WE ARE LOOKING AT WELL OVER 30 YEARS HERE IN THE SYSTEM, WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

JAMES: WHEN I FIRST CAME INTO THE SYSTEM IT WAS CDC, NO R. I WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT IF THESE PROGRAMS WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE I WOULD HAVE HAD A DIFFERENT OUTCOME. I DON'T REMEMBER SELF-HELP EVEN EXISTING IN THE 80'S WHEN I FIRST CAME IN. I JUST CAME INTO CDC AND GOT WORSE. REHABILITATION ENTAILS A MENTAL SHIFT NOT JUST PHYSICAL TRAITS. I AM FOCUSED ON COGNITIVE PATTERNS, I WANT TO MASTER THESE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN MY DOWNFALL. I WANT TO BE A SUCCESS STORY.

JOEL: WHAT IS THE BEST THING YOU HAVE LEARNED ABOUT YOURSELF?

JAMES: VIOLENCE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THE ANSWER. WHEN I AM ANGRY OR I FEEL DISRESPECTED I CAN SWALLOW MY PRIDE OR MOVE ON TOWARDS MY GOALS. IT TOOK YEARS FOR ME TO LEARN THAT VIOLENCE IS NOT WORTH THE PRICE THAT IT COSTS. I VALUE MY LIFE AND FREEDOM MUCH MORE THAN SOME VARIABLE THAT I DON'T EVEN KNOW. IN THE END I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT MY ACTIONS NOW GAIN THE RESPECT THAT I USED TO SEEK. I AM ALL ABOUT MAKING THE RIGHT DECISIONS NOW.

JOEL: WHAT'S YOUR LIFE LIKE NOW?

JAMES: IT WAS A WHOLE LOT OF STRESS TRYING TO STAY ON TOP OF WHERE YOU WERE IN THE PECKING ORDER, AND THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING TO BE DONE. NOW I HAVE VERY LITTLE STRESS, THE STRESS I HAVE NOW IS ONLY THE STRESS I CREATE FOR MYSELF AND I AM EVEN LEARNING HOW TO MITIGATE THAT. I AM FIGHTING FOR A SPOT IN THESE GROUPS, FOR POSITIVE REASONS, I WANT A BETTER LIFE FOR MYSELF.

JOEL: WHAT HAS BEEN ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE MOMENTS IN THIS JOURNEY?

JAMES: DEFINITELY HOLDING MY DAUGHTER FOR THE FIRST TIME SHE WAS BORN NOVEMBER 1990, I DIDN'T GET TO HOLD HER UNTIL 2016. THAT FIRST VISIT AND MY SECOND VISIT WITH MY OLDER DAUGHTER ARE HANDS DOWN MY FAVORITE MOMENTS SINCE COMING TO PRISON ON THIS TERM.

JOEL: LET'S GO BACK TO WHEN YOU HAD JUST TEN YEARS INTO THIS SENTENCE, WHAT WAS ON YOUR MIND WHEN YOU WOKE UP? WHAT'S THE PLANS FOR THE DAY?

JAMES: EASY, HOW TO SHINE OR ADVANCE IN MY POSITION, PLOTTING ON OTHERS, AND ADVANCING THE GANG.

JOEL: HOW DID THAT WORK OUT FOR YOU?

JAMES: 24 YEARS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, STABBED, CARRIED OUT ACTS THAT ARE UNSPEAKABLE. STRESSFUL DAILY LIVING, TIMES WHEN THE DOOR RACKED, I DIDN'T KNOW IF I WAS COMING BACK. TIMES WHEN THE DOORS RACKED I KNEW OTHERS WOULD DIE, HOW I MADE IT WITH ONLY A FEW HOLES AND GREY HAIRS IS A MIRACLE THAT I WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND.

JOEL: TODAY YOU WAKE UP, SAME THING? WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? WHAT'S THE AGENDA?

JAMES: HOW CAN I BE A BETTER ME, HOW CAN I MAKE CERTAIN THAT I WON'T COME BACK TO THIS LIFE. I AM HUNGRY FOR POSITIVE CHANGE NOW SO I AM FOCUSED A LOT ON PREVENTING RELAPSE BOTH WITH DRUGS AND VIOLENCE.

JOEL: WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON, WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

JAMES: WELL YOU AND I ARE WORKING ON A BOOK ABOUT SOLITARY CONFINEMENT. I AM VERY PROUD OF THE WRITING I HAVE BEEN PUTTING IN, I LIVED THIS LIFE AND THERE ARE A LOT OF LESSONS THAT CAN BE TAKEN FROM IT. IT CAN'T ALL BE FOR NOTHING.

## The Upstart

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# Youth Offenders

## "BOUNCE BACK"

By: Andrew Gonzalez

What's up gentlemen! My name is Andrew Gonzalez. I'm 25 years old and I've been incarcerated going on eleven years. I was a juvenile tried as an adult, and was facing two life terms. Fighting this case as a kid is an experience I will never forget. Fortunately I had a team of advocates fighting for me, and through them I was able to stay optimistic. I was fifteen years old and at an all-time low when I was booked and given a #, it felt like life was definitely over. I fought my case for two and a half years, a majority of that time was a drawn out process of continuous postponements. My trial took six working days. Deliberations and my verdict were completed within about an hour, and before I knew it the trial was over and I had lost.

So at the age of seventeen I was sentenced to 40 years to life for 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Attempted Murder, on top of that I was given 70 years in enhancements. I take responsibility for what is mine, it's the way I was raised; still it seemed a little bit excessive. I'm not trying to justify or minimize the fact that I committed a callous act. When I was found guilty I remember I was completely numb. It was like some type of

nightmare, this courtroom. I quickly glanced over at my mother and spoke without sound, "I love you, stand strong, it'll be OK". Deep down inside I knew that it was over, I was mature enough to face the facts. My future was going to be prison walls, small cells, and war zones. Directly following my sentencing hearing, while alone in a small holding cell, my wheels were spinning and blood was rising up into my eyes, I felt rage. What I could not feel was sympathy, it was not an option. Looking back on that silence inside of that cell during this moment is nostalgic, a monster was forming and I was becoming everything I never wanted to be. I had acquired a new identity through this whole experience and all the odds were against me.

At eighteen I was processed through Chino State Prison reception. It was unfamiliar to me and the first vision of prison is forever imprinted in my mind. My attitude was tainted by my own reality, I became careless and the consequences of every action were irrelevant. I became defiant and dauntless with what I was faced with, life from here on out was absolutely without meaning... so I thought. Of course this was my first time in prison and honestly I was not prepared for what was to come. Prison became my training ground,

the blueprint to all evil is written into the code that is "prison", this is where evil dwells. I was taught to believe in and invest all of my time in criminal & gang activities. My fears became my thoughts and those thoughts became my actions. Never did I think that eventually I would be accountable for all of it and learn how to explain the causative factors of why I became this way. I was raised in an environment dominated by gang violence and criminals. My natural habitat was high risk it was always dangerous and peace and refuge did not exist in this place.

I was raised by the system and within this system I had to learn how to be a man. My socialization into prison was the most difficult and pivotal time in my life. I lacked a true role model who could properly school me and show me the ropes along the way. I carried myself, I wouldn't let anybody in - I have trust issues from losing my brother and being let down throughout my youth. Throughout this process my family was there as much as they could be keeping me grounded with their support. My mentor was Scott Budnick who has always encouraged and supported me. Throughout our friendship Scott would always badger me about going SNY. Eventually that was the decision I made, never

would I have predicted when it happened that it would be the most grown man decision I could make. When that day came Scott witnessed the beginning of a new man. I would always hear Scott's voice in my conscience, "don't give up my boy, stay focused". Thanks to him I'm correcting my lifestyle and criminal behavior, I've adopted a new belief system. Transitioning into this new identity was difficult and at times I still struggle. When SB260 and SB261 passed I knew I had a chance to go home. That's when I got serious about self-help and enrolled in college. I slowly became accustomed to this new identity, it takes work and that work was done through my writing and discipline in my studies. I didn't like wasting time once I made the decision to change. I started identifying the factors of my youth and dealing with the underlying issues that are liabilities to the success of my future. I am grateful that because of SB260 and SB261 I'm not going to do 100 years before I am eligible for a chance to

present myself to the board and prove myself suitable for parole. I respect the new "incentive" approach. Give me a chance to "earn" a parole date, that is all that I ever wanted and that is what I am working for, that is my motivation.

During this little journey I am on I have encountered people that I thought would never change, ones that have been deeper in the game than I ever was. Some of these guys changed and have become my motivation and inspiration. Seeing these examples pushed me to really start focusing on my own change. I understand now the concept of how correcting your past is necessary before you can attack your future. I need to "unlearn" some things before I go worrying about new knowledge. Being at Calipatria I was fortunate enough to run into some of Scott's people (extended family). These dudes believe in me and have involved me in some of their projects, it has taken hard work. It's kept me grounded and connected to the big picture and what's really

important. I am eager to share my story and am taking full advantage of the opportunity. All of us in here have had that experience with rock bottom, it's something we all have in common. I've done my best to harness those feelings of pain and use them to motivate me in my change. I used to be young, hopeless, and discouraged... there came a point where I had to claim victory over this war inside my head. Realizing the gift of free will and using it to transform is a beautiful thing. I don't know if you have noticed but there is this new "modern" movement of positivity and change and I am a part of it. Let it radiate throughout California and the rest of the world and we may just be on to something here.

Above all, don't lose hope, cultivate the mind, heal your spirit, and redeem yourself. Bounce Back! Thank you for this opportunity to share my story and be involved. Shout out to Scott Budnick. Thank you for believing in me when I hadn't yet believed in myself. And like I said before, Bounce Back!

*The prison system in California is full of stories like the one you just read. Recently there's been some long overdue changes in law for those accused of crimes that are under eighteen, or even below the age of twenty five. Science has proven that the brains frontal lobe isn't fully developed until the age of twenty five. The frontal lobe portion of the brain is responsible for your ability to make sound decisions. When SB260 and SB261 passed it really changed the game. As long as you were twenty five or younger on the date you committed your crime, no matter what your sentence is (as long as it's not LWOP), you'll go before the board after serving twenty five years. For cases like this one these measures are awesome, Andrew would have otherwise had to do the one hundred years plus before eligibility for parole. Then SB1391 came after SB 260 and SB261 and made it impossible for prosecutors to try 14 & 15 year olds as adults, that went into effect January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. Gone are the days when prosecutors can take a case like this one, destroy a young life forever, and call it a victory. There is a new trend in politics to get behind prison reform and we are in support of that. We support it as it has forced changes to issues like this one that defied common sense and lacked compassion. Hope must be on the table and youth must be protected and preserved by our laws. Andrew doesn't have any recourse with SB1391 because it is not retro-active, however because of SB260 and SB261 Andrew is what's known as a "youth offender". A measure is set to go on the ballot this year that will qualify Andrew to earn milestone credits towards an earlier "youth offender parole hearing" if it passes, it will put him before the board sooner than later. I met Andrew about three years ago and was impressed with this kids determination, when I met him I knew he was extraordinary. He has been working hard with us and we have been working hard with him and that is what it's all about. In the next issue of "The Upstart" we will provide a 'Legal News & Politics' section that will have updated valid information on upcoming changes in law. -Cory*

# CREATIVE CORNER

## "Life Is What You Make It"

By: Cedric Nichols

Life is what you make it! What we do determines how we live, our success in life. I personally came to the realization that life isn't just living, it's also doing. We can go to sleep every day without having done anything, our lives will be "empty". We will have nothing to show for it. Now if we wake up and dedicate ourselves to something worth living for, that's when we become a success in life, when you're part of something bigger than you. Success is the payout of action and effort, you must set your mark, aim at it and achieve it. You must plan for it and really work at it, and want success in order to succeed. You must crave success, the more you get... the more you'll want. There is no limitations to positive accomplishments, every goal needs action and motive. Hard work and dedication go hand in hand. Understanding the possibilities builds confidence in knowing it can be done. Our future and our lives depend on our choices today. Today determines our tomorrow, so remember... life is what you make it...



**STAY**

**HUMBLE**

## There Was No "R" In CDCR

By: Elvin Esmay

On the first term there was no R In CDCR.

We learned of an honor amongst thieves,

a loyalty to unknown brothers,

fighting to be noticed and earning bones,

In and out of the hole like it is the thing to do.

On the second term still no R in CDCR.

We promote honor amongst thieves,

loyalty to a few known brothers,

fighting and stabbing to keep a reputation,

going to the SHU, a prison inside prison.

On the third term still no R in CDCR.

We learned there is no honor amongst thieves.

Taking advantage of the ones who just don't know,

a new vocabulary and a heart as hard as nails,

no fighting only stabbing to keep up a reputation,

seeing your old cellie in the SHU.

During the fourth term they add an R to CDCR.

Nothing but bad habits, learned behaviors,

locked up in the SHU never getting out,

a decade later learning who you really are,

a change is in the works opportunity afforded.

The R is for rehabilitation.

AA/NA, Alternatives to Violence,

learning to change behaviors,

earning college degrees,

seeing through new eyes...

## "It's Never Too Late"

By: Edward Lee Gandy CDCR# C-63197

I'm a 56 year old man that's been in and out of prison since the age of 17. I never thought about or cared to get a general education. Only going up through sixth grade on the streets, I got to a point where I didn't think I would ever get it. Would it really even matter at my age? Then I came back to Calipatria State Prison and something changed in the way I saw myself and others, I started to get it. My education became important to me once I started doing the work in GED class. The teacher really did care about her students and she has a unique way of teaching. She believes in me and in us and her name is Mrs. Ransome. If it wasn't for this teacher I really don't think I would have been able to get my GED. Most of all she taught me that it is never too late, I want to pass that message on and encourage those of you who have yet to receive a GED, go do it.

Thank you Mrs. Ransome for being the best teacher ever!!!

*"Suffering is necessary until you realize it's unnecessary."*

-Eckhart Tolle

# The Upstart // Back Page

**WANTED**...ARTWORK - POETRY - SONG LYRICS - CARTOONS - STORIES - CREATIVE WRITING - ETC. NO ILLEGAL, IMMORAL, OR GANG-RELATED MATERIAL. BY SUBMITTING, YOU CONSENT TO HAVE YOUR WORK PUBLISHED IN THE UPSTART.

**ATTENTION STAFF:** The main objective of this newsletter is to properly inform the inmate population and promote positivity. Any department that is interested in submitting something is encouraged to contact us and utilize the newsletter to put out information.

## **CONTACTS FOR INFO ON LAW & PRISON REFORM & SOBRIETY / SELF-HELP:**

Anti-Racism Coalition  
1320 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street Suite #260  
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P.O. Box 5521  
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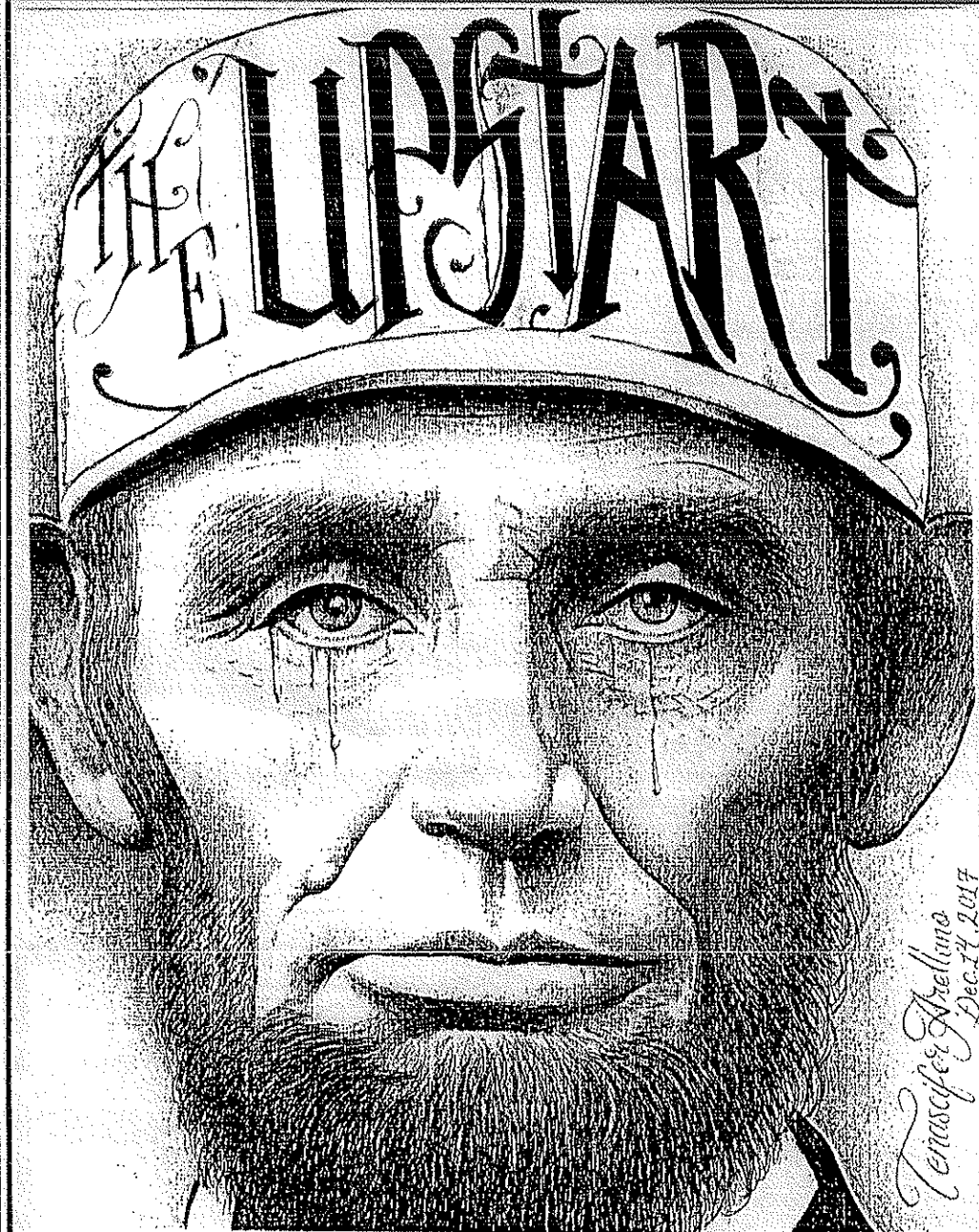
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NA Behind the Walls  
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## **ARTWORK BY: TENASCIFER ARELLANO**



**THE HIGHEST FORM OF INTELLIGENCE IS THE ABILITY TO CHANGE**