

Press Release *San Quentin News*

## Crime victims join San Quentin inmates in first-ever Victim's Awareness Week event inside a prison

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Nearly 200 San Quentin residents joined with victims and crime survivors on a silent walk around the prison yard on April 28 to commemorate Victims Awareness Week.



Tinisch Hollins (far left) and Ebony Antoine (far right), along with formerly incarcerated Lonnie Morris (in purple jacket) and Miguel Quezada (left of center), join San Quentin inmates for a silent walk to honor victims and survivors of crime. (Vincent O'Bannon // SQNews)

The event, inside a prison, was the first time that incarcerated people took part in Victim's Awareness Week with victims and survivors of crime.

“This day is to honor not only the survivors that are coming in, but we also want to honor the men that are incarcerated here that experienced violence and are survivors,” said Miguel Quezada, who was managing editor of *San Quentin News*. He paroled from prison about five years ago. “We want to create that space for everybody to learn, and reflect and bring community together.”

Quezada co-founded with Rebecca Weiker the Mend Collaborative, a restorative justice non-profit. MC seeks to give voice to survivors and victims of crime as well as address healing, long-term strategies for public safety.

“Today we want to recognize victim’s awareness,” said Landon Bravo, San Quentin’s Chief Deputy Warden (A). “This is very important and impactful to me—to the administration for San Quentin to give back to the society out there that is impacted by crimes that occur.”

Bravo said the event aims to “recognize, honor, and support” crime victims. He asked the incarcerated population to open their “minds, hearts and souls,” and reflect on how crime affects society, including their own families. He added, “show respect” and “embrace” the moment.

Quezada was joined by Californians for Safety and Justice, Broken by Violence and No More Tears, two organizations founded on restorative justice principles that focus on healing opportunities for crime victims and survivors.



From left: Tinisch Hollins, Nicole Gardner, and Lonnie Morris lead the silent walk on San Quentin’s Lower Yard. “I’m here today, because I wholeheartedly believe that healing is the way to keep our communities safe and to repair the harm that’s been done,” Hollins said. (Vincent O’Bannon // SQNews)

“I’m here today, because I wholeheartedly believe that healing is the way to keep our communities safe and to repair the harm that’s been done,” said Tinisch Hollins, Executive Director of Californians for Safety and Justice and the State Director of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice.

Hollins talked about the impact that the loss of family members had on her, her sons and the community.

“I see what happens when healing does not happen,” Hollins said. She pointed to the prison yard and said, “This is not the answer. The answer is healing.”

As a Black woman and mother, Hollins said, “We need you, our fathers and brothers,” referring to the hundred San Quentin residents. She added, “Everything you do here matters and I want to remind you that you have connections on the outside that need you. When you heal, you create opportunities for everyone.”

Ebony Antoine, Executive Director and Founder of Broken by Violence, is also a survivor of crime.

“I’m here because I’m a survivor,” Antoine said. “In 2012, I lost my husband to gun violence – this murder happened in my home, in front of me and my children. I’m excited to be here today amongst the incarcerated population. It’s a humbling experience. It’s really hard to see so many people incarcerated—so much pain, but also much healing available to them.”

Antoine added that the incarcerated people should be focused on “healing because, hurt people hurt people.”

Lonnie Morris, who was formerly incarcerated, added, “The reality is there’s too much pain, too much grieving, too often. We contributed to it. What are we going to do about it?” Morris said that he wanted to make amends, not with his mouth, but with his actions. He added, “If we don’t come together, the pain and grief of hurt people hurt people will continue.”

Hollins added, “Our future depends on what happens here. We are all dependent on you—your story has the power to heal. It’s not written in laws. It’s written in love. Healing can happen here in prison. It can happen at home. It can happen anywhere. So, if we focus on healing, we’ll leave the world a better place.”