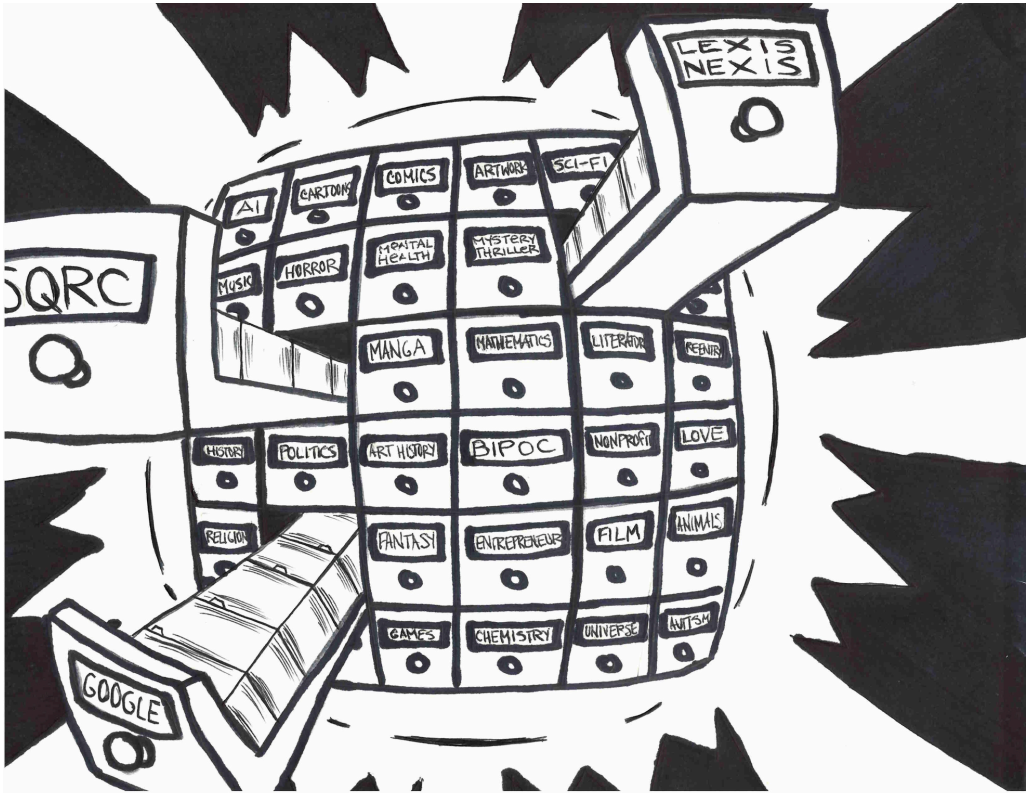


Prison Library Zine Project
Issue 001

Controlled Chaos

Where The Wild Things Read



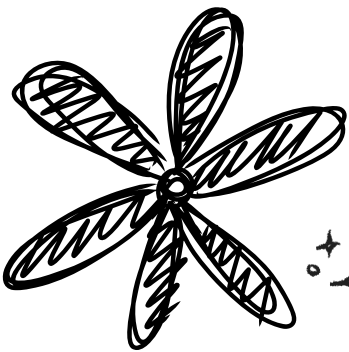
By the Workers of the
San Quentin Prison Library



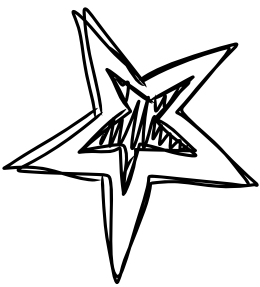
About the Cover Illustration from the Illustrator, George Coles-El, Mesro the Human Sun

My name means "stands with the sun" in Ancient Olmec, and I am a Living Card Catalogue, so I thought to combine a sun with a card catalogue, with a few drawers open like sun rays.

I use the old spelling because, sometimes, my mind harkens back to earlier writing styles when I write.



"Abolition is not absence, it is presence..."
Ruth Wilson Gilmore



This zine contains work from four incarcerated library workers at the San Quentin Prison Library.

They share their dreams, struggles, art and day-to-day lives. Their work makes San Quentin Library a place of refuge, information gathering, and possibility for so many.



Contributors

Jarrold “Deuce” Williams, author and coordinator

Knight, author and illustrator

George Coles-El, Mesro the Human Sun, author and cover image illustrator

Jay, illustrator



Megdi Abebe, up//root zines, project editor and coordinator

Kristi Kenney, Friends of San Quentin Prison Library, director

This project is made possible through support from Library Futures



Jarrold “Deuce” Williams,

Occupation: Recreational Library Clerk

Hometown: Long Beach, CA

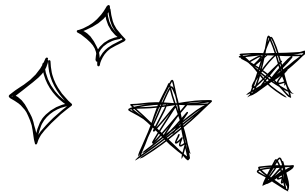
Favorite Books: *Where The Wild Things Are* (*Childhood*) and *Sleeping With Strangers* by Eric Jerome Dickey (*Adulthood*)

Book I Want To Read: *Echo’s Fade* by Jeff Carson

As a recreational clerk at San Quentin's library, I help people find themselves or lose themselves in a great book. Providing this service is something I strive for daily.

As a first-term offender in prison, I believe in second chances at life and the ability to change a person's path. The library is a place where a person can take the steps towards reinventing themselves in a positive way — whether it be learning a new skill or occupying their time constructively by reading.

By facilitating that change, I believe I am serving my purpose.





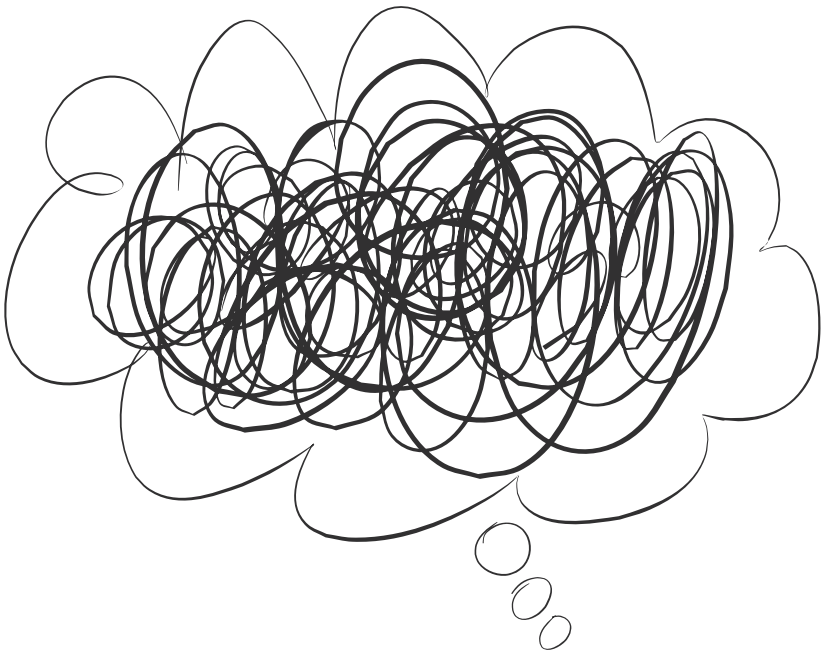
Portrait of Deuce by Jay, a friend

With the help of my supervisors and the incredible Friends of the San Quentin Library, I co-created the monthly Creative Writing and Freeform Writing Contest to promote literacy and writing.

I love coming up with ideas that push for the narrative of change and humanization for incarcerated people.

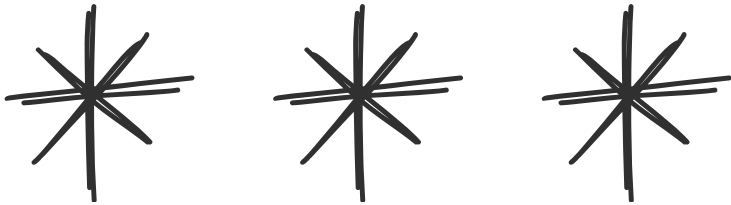
There is nothing good about prison except visits from friends and family and access to books.

Reading gets me through my feelings of being surrounded by 3500 people and still feeling alone.



Our library at San Quentin is like none other because we are blessed to receive so many books through various donations. In turn, we can be a blessing to other prison libraries that desperately need books.

Our books become lifelines to people who struggle with violence and disruptive behavior. Reading saves my life and can save the lives of others, too.

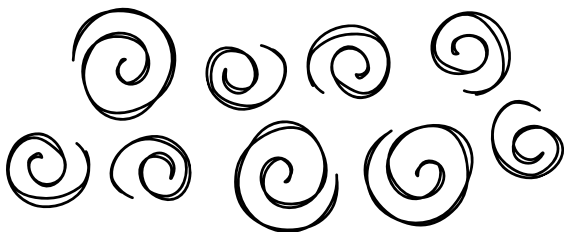


Helping incarcerated residents get lost in the pages of these books releases their minds from the depressing surroundings. Reading allows them to begin their rehabilitation in a positive manner.



A reader may fall in love with a particular writing style and melodic way the words begin to flow in their mind, and the desire to seek out book after book, storyline after storyline, increases.

I find solace that, chapter after chapter, reading creates a different craving that helps kick their addiction.

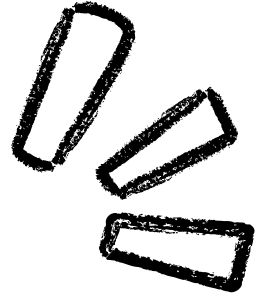
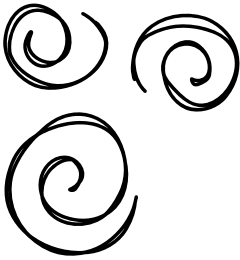


They become part of the story or the main character who saves the day through all the obstacles they face.

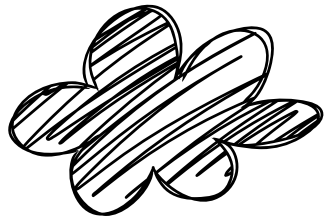
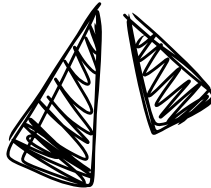
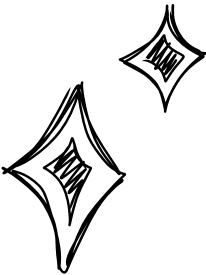
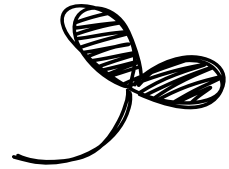
This translates into everyday life, where they begin to feel like the hero who can transform their life from whatever mistakes that were made into doing something that puts some good back into the world.

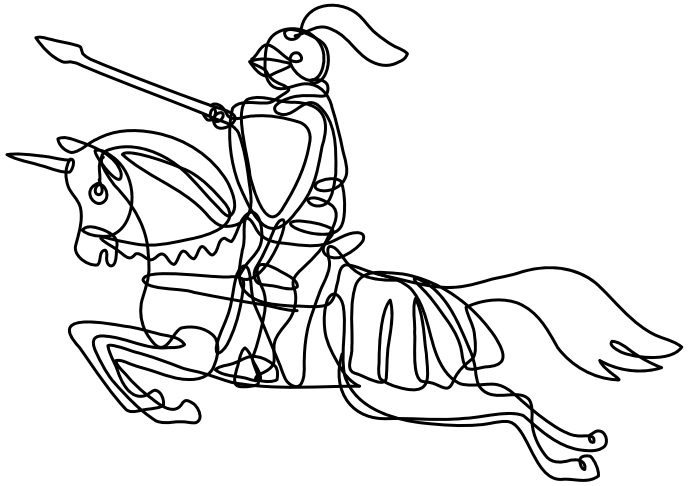
All because of a book.

Jarrold “Deuce” Williams



READING
SAVES MY
LIFE AND
CAN SAVE
THE LIVES OF
OTHERS TOO
- DEUCE





Knight

Occupation: Front Desk

Hometown: San Diego, CA

Favorite Book: Sword of Truth Series by
Terry Goodkind

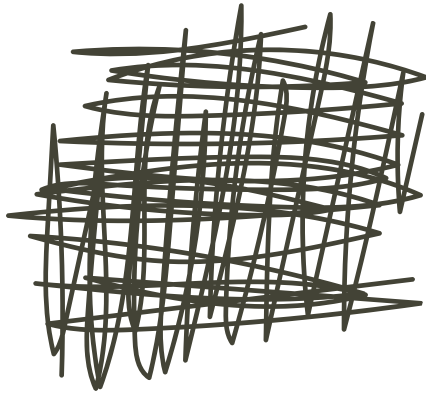
Books I'd like to read: The Mortal
Instruments Series by Cassandra Clare

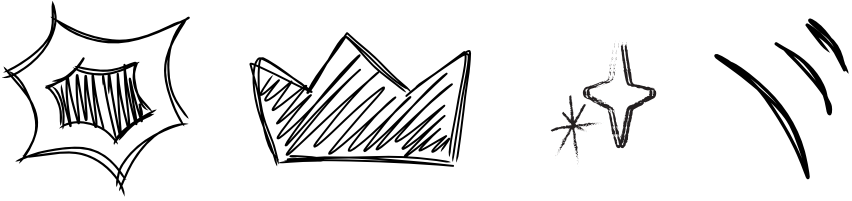


I am Knight and am currently incarcerated in San Quentin “*Rehabilitation Center*”.

When I wake up, I drag myself to breakfast and pray it’s something edible that will give me the energy to serve the great people of this institution.

I do my best to keep fit and not allow myself to become complacent in the dull lifestyle of being an inmate.

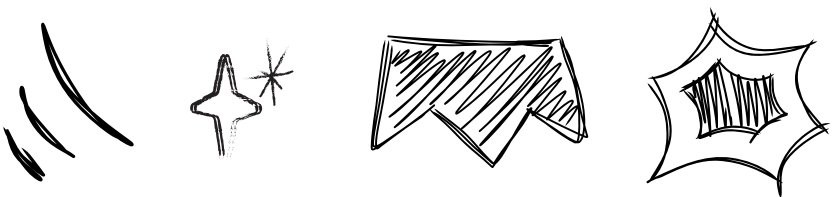




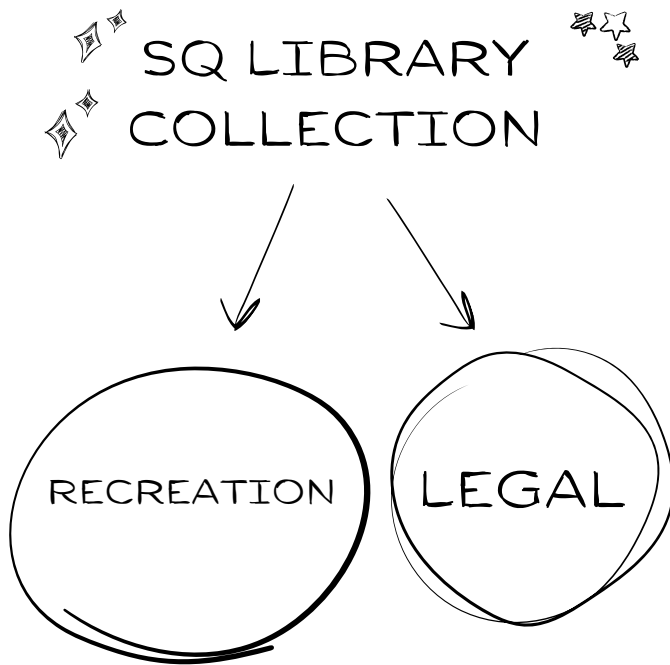
My job at the San Quentin Library is to assist those looking for books. Since I started working, things have certainly changed. Some for the better and some not so much.

Luckily, I am surrounded by good humans at work which motivates me to continue my everyday duties.

I can't complain as it is one of the less violent places to work.

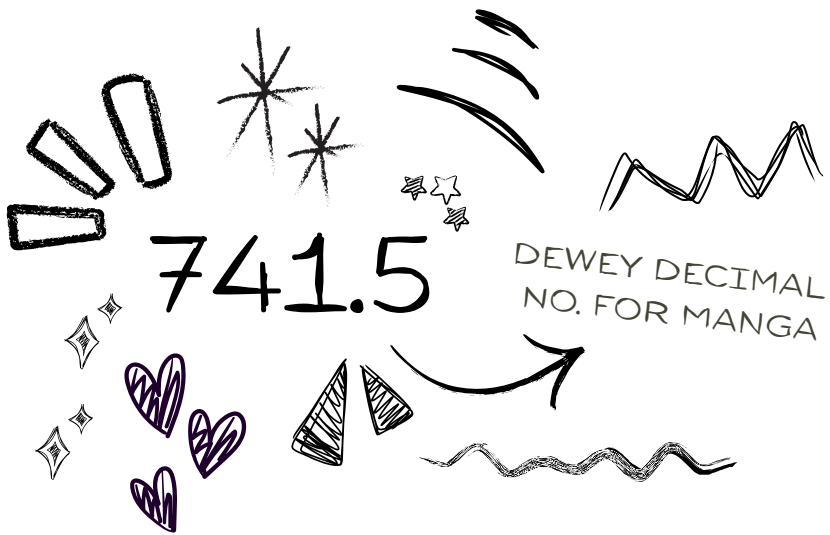


The San Quentin Library is broken into two parts. The recreation side, where I work at the front counter, and the law side. Both play integral roles in the community.



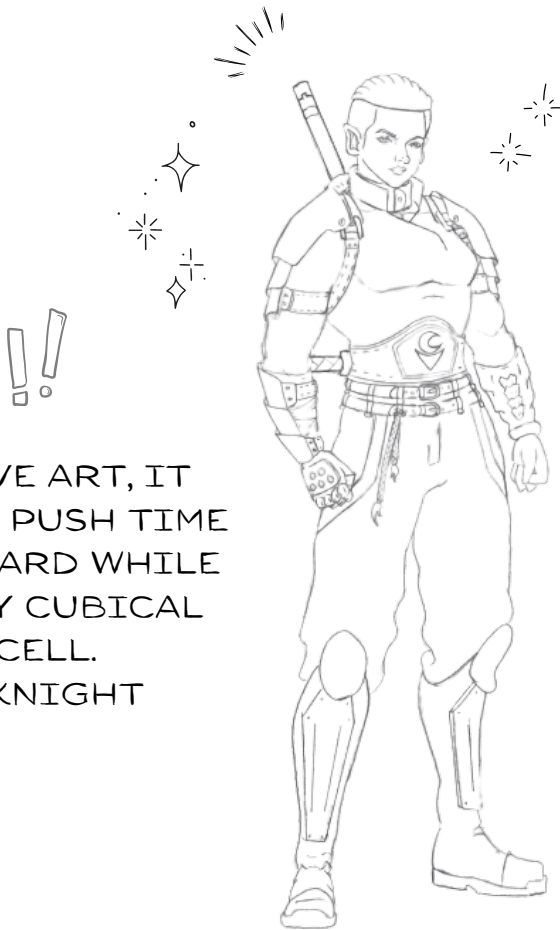
Inmates use the San Quentin Library for a multitude of things, such as studying, reading, relaxing, investigating laws, socializing, fraternizing, sleeping, and dating.

The library has a compendium of books properly cataloged from fiction to nonfiction. I find the type of book patrons seek by genre or category using the Dewey Decimal System.

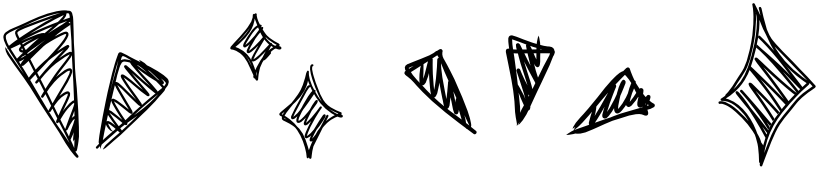


Our most popular genre is urban novels, seconded by Manga (Japanese graphic novels). Our most popular categories are self-help, followed by For Dummies books.

I get really excited when the library throws its biannual book fair. It feels good to participate and be trusted to play my part.



I LOVE ART, IT
HELPS PUSH TIME
FORWARD WHILE
IN MY CUBICAL
CELL.
- KNIGHT



Though it is not always the least rowdy, the library is certainly a safe place.

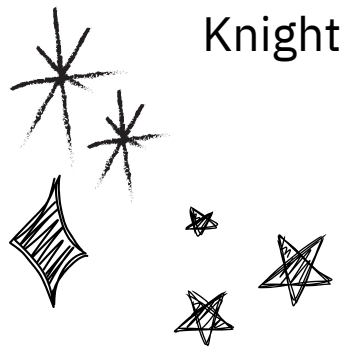
The library serves as one of the last footholds for refuge from chaos, alarms, unruly cellies, and harassment.



I hope that the library is a place of self-realization and self-improvement.

A place where people can learn how to properly communicate with one another.

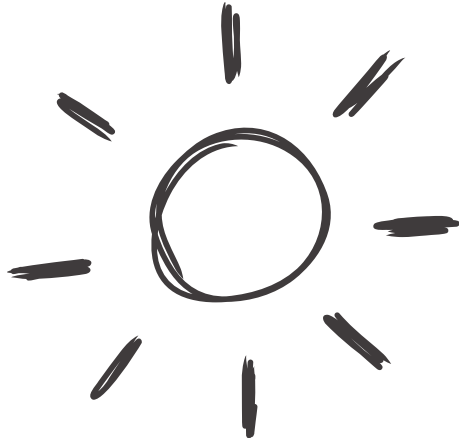
A place that could be for positive criticism, which cultivates a safer, more considerate neighbor for society.





THE LIBRARY SERVES
AS ONE OF THE LAST
FOOTHOLDS FOR
REFUGE FROM CHAOS,
ALARMS, UNRULY
CELLIES, AND
HARASSMENT.

- KNIGHT



George Coles-El, Better Known As Mesro the Human Sun.

Occupation: Front Desk

Hometown: Brooklyn, NY

Favorite Book : Starman Jones by Robert
A. Heinlein (*This Tale Has a Central
Message That One Should Never Give Up
on One's Dreams.*)

Book I Want to Read: My First Bestseller. I
Have Not Written This yet.



I Am Currently Serving 35 years-to-life for residential burglary under California's three strikes law.

I have been working in the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center Library off and on for ten years.

I station myself at the main recreational counter in the library because I am always at the service of the people.

From the front counter, I help people as best I can, from directing people to the law window to finding books, magazines, newspapers, and whatever else they might need.

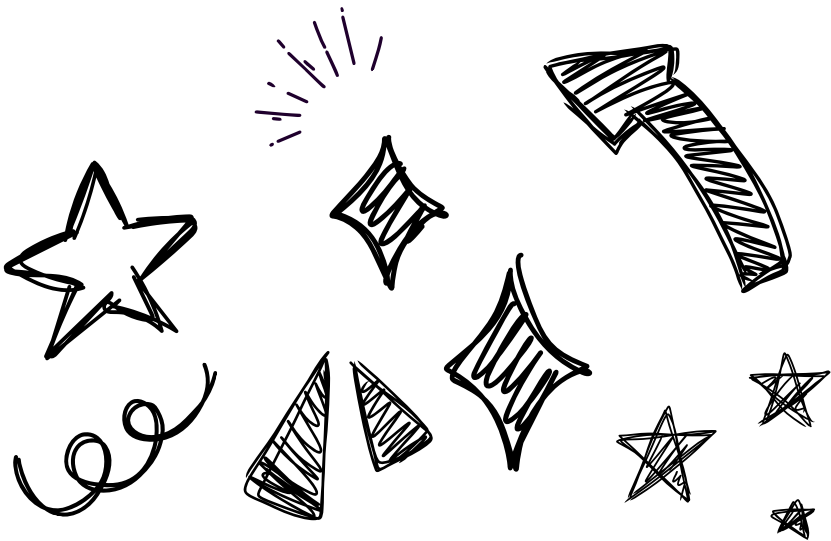
The late great Mr. Douglas Jeffrey, aka
Cool Breeze — may he Read in Paradise —
taught me to walk the shelves because not
everyone knows what they need.

AS A RESULT, I AM A WALKING
CARD CATALOG.



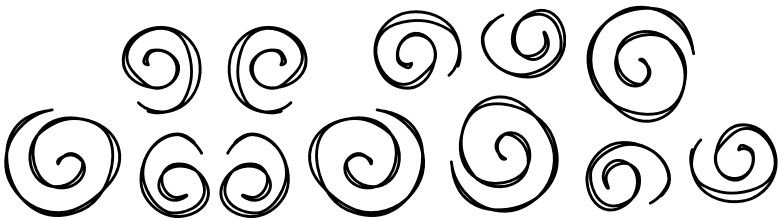
That's how long I've been in libraries throughout my lifetime: since real pull-out-the-drawer card catalogs. So, when people have vague ideas about authors, genres, or subject matter, I can find a selection that meets their needs.

This practice takes patience and an understanding that everyone thinks differently.



So if you need something to read, tutoring, a little direction, or just someone to listen, catch Mesro at the front counter.

I might be writing, drawing, or running my mouth, but please know I am at your service.



I remain, most respectfully, Mesro the Human Sun.

Peace and Blessings.





About the Friends of San Quentin Library (FoSQL)

FoSQL supports the needs of the San Quentin Prison library. They leverage partnerships with bookstores, vendors, and community members to sponsor library programs and fill shelves with current resources.

FoSQL hosts the beloved bi-annual Kids Book Fair, where incarcerated parents can select picture books to send to the children in their lives.

Support FoSQL by visiting friendsofthesanquentinprisonlibrary.com

About up//root zines

up//root zines is a collective of librarians and archivists. We create zines about information work and our communities.

uproot.space

up//root

About Library Futures

We are library workers, educators, lawyers, activists, technologists, and researchers who believe that libraries must lend, preserve, and acquire knowledge in the service of the public good.

libraryfutures.net

**LIBRARY
FUTURES** 

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