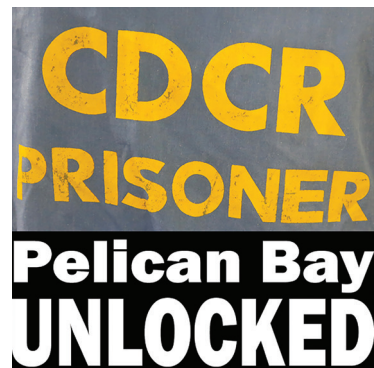


USA

Pelican Bay UNLOCKED

Pelican Bay UNLOCKED is a production of the Audio Journalism classes at Pelican Bay State Prison in California. The classes are part of the Arts In Correction initiative funded by the William James Association. Since 2019, fifteen inmates in the highest security prison in California have been recording their thoughts, discussions, interviews, and poetry in order to “dispel the negative images attributed to prisoners, while displaying the redemptive qualities of our humanity in furtherance of rehabilitation and re-entry.”*



The changes that have transformed California's prisons over the last six years began with the hunger strikes in the Secured Housing Unit at Pelican Bay. Along with offering inmates a (relatively) unfettered vehicle for general expression, it is very much part of the mission of UNLOCKED to record an oral history of this transformative “awakening” by collecting the stories, voices, and remembrances of the men who were there.



Producing segments highlighting some of the programming available to inmates gives the team the chance to work as journalists - researching, interviewing, editing, writing, and presenting.

We don't have a media room. We have a laptop, a USB mixer, and two SM58s.



* “Big” Mike Swanigan, B-Yard, PBSP)



- Because we recorded compulsively for the first six months, production has continued during the Covid-19 shutdown, with new episodes being released every six weeks or so.
- UNLOCKED is the only podcast emanating from a Level 4 prison in California.
- Two students have transferred to lower-level prisons and are continuing their personal stories remotely as they move closer to release.
- One student is making a name for himself as a writer and has even been paid for articles.
- To date, the seven episodes of UNLOCKED have gotten more than 12,000 listens and downloads.
- Because of Covid-19 and the difficulty in getting media of any kind inside the wire, there are some students who have yet to hear every episode of UNLOCKED.
- One of our students has been down for thirty-two years. His exploits as a Crip in the '80s were celebrated in rap songs. His prison record includes multiple assaults, assaults on staff, participation in race riots.
- The man from the previous bullet point is one of the nicest, most thoughtful men we've ever met.

"Where truth meets reality, we are Pelican Bay UNLOCKED..."

