

Steve Brooks Biography and Personal Statement

Steve Brooks began his journalism career during the COVID-19 outbreak at San Quentin Prison (since renamed the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center) in the summer of 2020. He submitted his first articles to the [Prison Journalism Project](#), based at Northwestern University, which supports incarcerated writers. He served as the editor-in-chief of San Quentin News, a publication produced by the incarcerated at the San Quentin Media Center, between March and December of 2023. Brooks also is a producer for “Ear Hustle” and “Uncuffed,” two podcasts that tell stories from inside prison. He has helped produce video news broadcasts for “Criminal Justice News” and “The Pulse,” which can be seen on the [Friends of San Quentin News](#) YouTube channel.

Brooks offered this personal statement about what journalism has meant to his journey:

“I am honored to be selected as the first incarcerated person to participate in the California Local News Fellowship. Through this fellowship, I plan to continue to develop my reporting skills and fine-tune my voice. I hope to rebuild my image, continue to make amends to those I have harmed, and contribute to society.

My goal is to tell stories about a subset of human beings that rarely get told, those of the incarcerated.

When I first came to prison thirty years ago, I crawled into a corner, balled myself up in a knot and prepared to die. As a young person alone on the streets, I made some horrible choices. I moved through the world aimlessly. I foolishly sought power by using a gun, seeking out a fast buck and preying on vulnerable people. I had given up hope of a future, believing I would die young.

But something came alive inside of me in prison when I started reading and learning how to write. Reading the stories of others was transformative and as I began revisiting my own story as a source of healing, I found that I have a knack for using pencil and paper to capture powerful narratives.

Years later, reading, writing, and particularly journalism gives me a sense of purpose. I am finding my voice and am not afraid to speak truth to power. I know that through journalism, I can represent the voice of the powerless, those without representation or basic human rights. These are the stories rarely told and yet they matter. I hope to capture and share with the world stories about all of our shared humanity. Through my reporting I

hope to open people's eyes to a world of human beings who are suffering and who have long been forgotten."

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