EXCELL NETWORK · ALCATRAZ ISLAND · JUNE 27, 2025

Voices from The Rock

Excell Network · Alcatraz Island · June 27, 2025

Julio,

I deeply appreciated the opportunity to support the Excell Network students on their trip to Alcatraz. The Incarcerated Speaker Series was an amazing event offering a unique perspective! And I learned something new about each of the participants even though I have heard them speak at other events.

Alcatraz was equally impressive. The venue and displays highlighting mass incarceration were so well curated. It presented a complex history in easy-to-understand ways and revealed the true course of our Criminal Justice System. Wow! A very impactful way to present this information.

It was a great day on "The Rock!"

Regards,

Russ Peterson

> *“It presented a complex history in easy-to-understand ways and revealed the true course of our Criminal Justice System. A very impactful way to present this information."— Russ Peterson”*

A heartfelt thank you to the National Park Service for their incredibly generous donation of tickets to Excell Network. The experience was meaningful, inspiring, and something our participants will not soon forget.

One of the most powerful moments of the day came after our panel discussion. Two audience members were moved by the testimonies they heard and found the courage to share that they, too, had experienced incarceration. It was a beautiful reminder that when we tell our stories with honesty

and hope, we create space for others to heal, connect, and believe that change is possible.

This is exactly the kind of community we are building—one rooted in restoration, belonging, and second chances. I'm grateful to be a part of it.

John Cunningham Jr.

Excell Network Student

> *“When we tell our stories with honesty and hope, we create space for others to heal, connect, and believe that change is possible."— John Cunningham Jr., Excell Network Student”*

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share my story today. It was truly an honor to be part of this event and to represent the power of second chances alongside such an inspiring community.

It was also a privilege to speak at Alcatraz Island. Being able to share my journey at such a historic location made the experience even more meaningful.

Thank you to everyone who helped organize the event. I appreciate all the time and effort that went into making it a success, and I'm grateful to have been included.

Billie Le

Excell Network Student

> *“It was truly an honor to be part of this event and to represent the power of second chances alongside such an inspiring community."— Billie Le, Excell Network Student”*

Julio,

Firstly – thank you to YOU for all what you do.

My friends, my husband and I, felt truly honored to be a part of support for Excell Network's event at Alcatraz. Truthfully thank you to the National Park Service and the Alcatraz administration for a kind gift to Excell Network so that important event could take place at the Island. Additionally, the event was very well organized with friendly personnel – our heartfelt thank you.

Krystyna Amborski

> *“My friends, my husband and I felt truly honored to be a part of support for Excell Network's event at Alcatraz."— Krystyna Amborski”*

Alcatraz Staff,

I wanted to extend my heartfelt thanks for allowing us to share our stories to everyone who happened to be on the island that weekend. This was extremely important because seeing individuals living their rhetoric is important, especially when in tandem with hearing about the horrors and realities of mass incarceration, recidivism, and the families of those personally involved. Your decision to allow us a safe space to speak will be remembered for a long time.

Best,

Wayne Jordan

Excell Network Student

> *“Your decision to allow us a safe space to speak will be remembered for a long time."— Wayne Jordan, Excell Network Student”*

Hello, my name is John M Schoppe-Rico.

I wanted to thank National Parks and its amazing staff for the opportunity to attend the incarceration series event. I was very pleased with the event and staff. I wanted to say thank you for believing in us and allowing us to share our testimony and inform people about Julio and the Excell Network and how it is giving back and helping to better lives and community. I was given the opportunity to make amends with family members that I invited to attend the event. Family members and kids I hadn't seen in many years due to my incarceration. They enjoyed the event and the testimonies.

Thank you for the support and helping us to restore dignity on all levels and thank you to the Excel Network and its staff for all they do, and making this possible.

Sincerely,

Mr. John Schoppe-Rico

Excell Network Student

> *“I was given the opportunity to make amends with family members that I invited to attend the event — family members and kids I hadn't seen in many years due to my incarceration."— John Schoppe-Rico, Excell Network Student”*

Hello Julio,

Thank you, all the people at the Excell Network, the National Park Service and the Alcatraz Administration, for a more than memorable visit to Alcatraz! We appreciate the personal help from you and your time in answering questions and directing us there.

Everyone with the Park Service and Alcatraz administration was very helpful, especially helping my friend with mobility issues. Without that help we would not have been able to see and learn as much.

The Excell Network presentation of each of the students opening their lives to us was inspiring. Each explained how they are overcoming their own personal struggles and how they are changing their lives. At the end of the presentation, I felt confident that each student would be successful in

their studies and work lives.

Sincerely,

Chuck Marqueling

> *“At the end of the presentation, I felt confident that each student would be successful in their studies and work lives."—Chuck Marqueling”*

Hi, Julio. Thanks for inviting me along and that was my second time, but the first time was when our beloved Stan Chatfield was working there as Alcatraz's historical interpreter.

This time after our presentation I got to walk around some more around the island by myself, but I'll always remember having a special tour conducted by my buddy Stan.

Anyways, I walked up the Alcatraz inclined roads and saw a path where it said flower garden, so I came across a sign that said Alcatraz Rose and then asked for a volunteer guard of the rose's story.

Alcatraz Rose's story is so inspiring I only wish I discovered knowing about it before our Excell Network Program presentation.

I managed to write a simple poem that I hope you can pass along to them.

"Alcatraz Rose"

Very Sincerely,

Bo Sengsavang

Excell Network Student

> *“Like that rose, I rose. Not because the soil was gentle, but because resilience is a wild thing. It grows where it shouldn't — it blooms when no one is watching."— Bo Sengsavang, Excell Network Student”*

I just want to personally express my gratitude to the National Park Service and particularly the Alcatraz team for hosting the Formerly Incarcerated Speakers Series, and especially for the generous donation of tickets to the Excell Network so that we could all attend the remarkable presentation on June 27 featuring our Excell Network students and graduates.

It was an inspirational event. Their stories of their transformation from anger, envy, resentment, exclusion, poor choices, addiction, crime and incarceration to finding God, love, joy, a real sense of re-entry and belonging to a community was very powerfully articulated.

It was a very moving and joyous presentation. More so, I think, because of the extraordinary setting, inside Alcatraz prison!

I also very much liked the introduction by the Park Ranger who emphasized the importance of the American Indians that occupied the island in the late 1960's so that it was not sold to developers who might have built a casino there.

Thank you, again. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely,

Madeline L. McKay

Juvenile Justice Ministry Volunteer

> *“Their stories of transformation — from anger, addiction, and incarceration to finding love, joy, and belonging — were very powerfully articulated."— Madeline L. McKay, Juvenile Justice Ministry Volunteer”*

To all the National Park Service employees and other supporting staff,

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the professionalism and kindness in the way the staff interacted with me and the other participants and spectators. I had a wonderful time, as I have in the past.

I enjoy how smoothly everything ran. After I went down the hill to return to the ferry one of the park rangers invited me and a few others for a personal tour. I was impressed at how well this young lady was very knowledgeable and personable. We went up to the steps, some of the gardens and into the cell blocks and down to the dungeon. As a man who spent 39 years in prison I had mixed emotions in the cell blocks. Yet she was kind, respectful and accommodating to everyone.

It was an amazing experience. I watched on the faces how visitors and tourists appreciated our stories. I want to thank you with deepest gratitude for that opportunity to affect people and to present my story.

I look forward to the opportunity through the Excel Network to continue the work.

Sincerely,

Thomas Wynn

Excell Network Student

> *“As a man who spent 39 years in prison, I want to thank you with deepest gratitude for that opportunity to affect people and to present my story."— Thomas Wynn, Excell Network Student”*

Although I have lived in San Francisco almost 60 years, I visited Alcatraz for the first time on Saturday, June 27. The welcome by the entire staff on the island — in the buildings, on the walkways, in the bookstore — was polite and friendly, it made each visitor feel individually special. I regret that I did not pay more attention to the Indian occupation during the 70s, and I purchased

We Hold the Rock

by Troy Johnson. The audio tour of the cell blocks was clear and very well done, better than most of the audio tours I have experienced while travelling in Europe. I was struck by the historical significance of the island and motivated to learn more. Special thanks to John, our guide for the agenda, who was informative, helpful and enthusiastic. A day not to be forgotten, thank you Alcatraz.

Marie Sheridan

Juvenile Justice Ministry Volunteer

> *“The welcome by the entire staff on the island was polite and friendly — it made each visitor feel individually special. A day not to be forgotten."— Marie Sheridan, Juvenile Justice Ministry Volunteer”*