

Mike Misuraca

CDCR# BZ8631

California State Prison-Los Angeles County

14 April 2026

Prison Transparency Essay

Transparency as defined in the outside world usually involves an open awareness of others' issues. Within the gray, dismal, chain-linked fences of incarceration, this concept of communication is lost.

Understanding briefly life in prison

Unlike the movies that show a glorified and often distorted view of prison life, day-to-day experience between the incarcerated and prison staff is not so cut and dry. What often happens is a scenario like this: an inmate is ripped from the conveniences that the outside world enjoys, such as instant access to loved ones. He or she then must face the daily burden of patience that comes at a hefty price. A part of this routine difficulty is the inmates are lied to too often. The correctional officers that punch in and punch out at certain allotted times could care less about the inmate's needs. Even when the issue is something serious, such as having access to even proper bathroom facilities. This is where the M.A.C. reps come in.

How M.A.C. reps are guided smoke screens

First, who is the M.A.C. representative in prison? According to the San Quentin News, a popular (in-house) prison newspaper, M.A.C. stands for Men's Advisory Council representative.

The M.A.C. Rep usually is elected by race. The Others race has a rep, the Whites have a rep, the Mexicans have a rep, and Blacks have a rep. I represented the 'other' race between March, 2025, and April, 2026. My job was to act as a liaison between the inmates in my housing unit and the prison administration, which often included the warden.

Some key aspects of being a M.A.C. rep:

The M.A.C. rep's role consisted of the following generally:

- **Purpose:** To improve relationships between prison populations and prison administrations.
- **Establish:** Under Title 15 (Rules and Regulations of all California prisons), the warden is to create a "council" for each race to address their collective issues.

- **Structure:** Inmates are usually elected by their peers and assigned roles such as chairman, secretary, etc.
- **Limitations:** M.A.C. reps are not to intervene on personal grievances by inmates.

The powers of these representatives are limited, of course, due to the status they hold as being inmates themselves. However, they can, and in my case, do have a positive impact when used in this type of setting properly.

Some key aspects of being a M.A.C. Rep

In a perfect world what I will mention next was supposed to improve relations among the inmates and prison staff, but often it only further frustrated both sides. The M.A.C. rep's role consisted of generally:

- **Purpose:** To improve relationships between prison populations and prison administrations.
- **Establish:** Under the Title 15 (Rules and Regulations of all California prisons) the warden is to create a "council" for each race to address their collective issues.
- **Structure:** Inmates are usually elected by their peers and assigned roles such as Chairman, Secretary etc.
- **Limitations:** M.A.C. reps are not to intervene on personal grievances by inmates.

The powers of these representatives are limited of course, due to the status they hold as being inmates themselves. However, they can and in my case do have a positive impact when used in this type of setting properly.

Interaction with inmates

Many times, due to the California prison politics system, the M.A.C. representative comes from an established penitentiary gang. The gang usually serve their own self-interests rather than the entire housing unit's. Thus, major problems such as plumbing often go unresolved. Men suffer.

However, the times when unaffiliated members of the housing unit are elected as representatives, the chances of unit problems being solved highly increase. For example, the prison administration has a tendency to be more receptive to inmates' requests for solutions.

The supposed monthly M.A.C. meeting

Every month from the associate warden's desk, a M.A.C. meeting was to take place in the housing unit we were assigned to. At this time, we shared our messages from the inmates in our housing units with the prison staff. It was an opportunity to exercise transparency between both parties. Unfortunately, what often happened was what we called a *no-show*.

For whatever reason, we were never told why we would have to wait another month to share our pressing issues with the administration. We just had to sit on our hands until we were called to the visiting building (where the meetings were held) and be patient until that happened.

In my experience as a rep, it was not easy being tolerant of the prison admin's absence at these monthly meetings. When serious matters like broken toilets and showers caused tensions to boil over among the 180 inmates stuck together in a hot dorm. Other problems that needed to be addressed included black mold and poor ventilation within the facility that caused serious health matters to occur.

When the meetings did happen. The prison staff would listen to our issues. Nodding their heads in unison, they then tell us it would take additional months to make repairs. It was like talking to the wall, but worse. Towards the end of my time at California State Prison-Los Angeles County, I had given up all hope to make a positive impact for my fellow inmates. That had been my initial goal when taking the job in the first place. Yet, the position I held was another goodwill formality. It was a way to make it seem like the prison administration *cared*.

Conclusion

My experience as a M.A.C. representative and being incarcerated in prison for 13 months showed me that there is a hidden agenda on both sides of the spectrum. The inmate, of course, leads a life of crime and knows not to reveal his true intentions to those who now hold him captive. On the other side, the prison staff want to make sure their shift runs as smoothly as possible while doing the least amount of work as possible. Then add in the undercurrent of stress and fear that this type of environment generates; solving anything productive for the inmate is almost impossible.

If I had the capability (the power of a politician) to affect real transparency within prisons across California, the first thing I would do is vet the warden and their immediate staff for psychological deficiencies. As a person who experienced living in a prison not once, but twice, I've seen the need for empathy from the staff.

I've witnessed firsthand when one guard is friendly and helpful and another is cold and indifferent. It's literally the difference between a smooth, well-oiled engine and one that barely runs and is about to seize up. The prison environment notices this effect too. The energy inside the housing unit is like night and day.

Imagine if the head of the prison administration had the empathy to truly relate to those he/she takes care of. However, I understand baby steps are needed to knock away the shadowy agendas on both sides in order to truly effect change in these negative environments.

Honesty is a big asset to transparency. It's also what can turn a once hardened criminal like myself into a productive, lawful, insightful individual who cares about others enough to share with them today.

Works Cited

“MAC Representatives And What They Do”-San Quentin News, March 1st 2016 by Angelo Falcone.