

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

July 18, 2022



Chartered: May 1, 1922

GREETINGS!

With a warm welcome from **LE LEVY** and **PATTY MCGUIGAN**, the meeting was off to a great beginning!

President **KAREN ROHDE** called us to order. She gave a special welcome to **ED**



means not just being close in proximity to others, but being responsible to others, and everyone plays a critical role. She thanked **DANA TOM** and **BEN THRELKELD**

for all they are doing to make sure all of us in the virtual Rotary world can stay connected.



ANNOUNCEMENTS & SOCIALS

MATT DOLAN proclaimed that our **TGIF** for this month will be at the home of **CAROLE WHITEHILL** on Friday, July 29, 5:30-7:30 pm.

Address and details will be in an emailed announcement to members next week.

Places are still open for a **Tree Walk** to benefit Rotary charities on **July 23**, guided by Arborist Emeritus Dave Dockter, finishing with a garden lunch chez **DUANE KALAR**. It's a tax-deductible bargain at \$75. Ask **SALLY TOMLINSON....**

KAREN extended an invitation to attend the Rotary Board of Directors' meetings, second

DANGLER, noting Rotarians were delighted to have him back in person after a long absence. (Ed just celebrated his 93rd BD!)

Rotarian **JOOP VERBAKEN** introduced his daughter Simone Verbaken who is back in

the area after ten years in the Netherlands. Also introduced was Marco Maino who is interested in joining Rotary. **STEVE EMSLIE** welcomed Hasan Musa, who also is considering joining Rotary, and is visiting for his second meeting.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

LEE PFAB shared the Thought for the Day on community via Zoom. LEE said community



Wednesday of the month, 8-9:00 a.m. She thanked Rotarians for their support and donations, which raised a record-breaking \$101,000, allowing Rotary to increase its charitable budget by \$16,000 over last year, and support more charitable organizations. A reminder for members to pay their dues.

HERSH DAVIS and STEVE EMSLIE from Rotary Cranks (previously Rotary Ramblers), Palo Alto Rotary's first affinity group, shared a skit



entitled **Waiting for Gede McGuigan**. The clever skit encouraged Rotarians to download and use ClubRunner,

a great tool for keeping Rotarians connected. They muster at 9:00 am on select Saturdays and Sundays for excursions in the Baylands, Los Altos and Woodside; they ride at a moderate pace and stop for coffee. Check with Le or Patty.

Monthly Service Project: Food packaging and distribution at Nuestra Casa on August 3rd from 2:00 – 4:00 pm and 4:00 – 6:00 pm. Sign up online, every first Wednesday.

PRESIDENTS CLUB

Shoshana Shur joined the President's Club in honor of her father, **GEOFF ZIMAN's** 90th birthday. GEOFF acknowledged his appreciation for his daughter's surprise birthday well-wishes.



PROGRAM

STANS KLEIJNEN introduced today's speaker, **Coss Marte**, who she heard at a TED Talk. .

Coss Marte grew up in New York's lower east side. He started selling drugs when he was 13, when he had a pager, an ounce of marijuana and a dream of being rich. He had made \$2 million by the age of twenty and had twenty people working for him.



Coss was arrested multiple times. His first arrest occurred within that first year, when he was still 13. He was thrown down on the street after a drug sale and arrested. He was accompanied by his crying 9-year-old brother, who at the time was wearing a popular "DARE. to Keep Kids off Drugs" t-shirt.

Coss says he grew up in jail, where he focused on how to become a better dope dealer.



When facing a seven-year prison sentence, a doctor told Coss he was unlikely to survive more than 5 years given his poor health, and would likely die in prison. Instead, Coss lost 70 pounds in six months exercising in his cell and in the prison yard. Initially, others taunted him; then some joined him, and he helped them improve their health, too. Eventually, he lost over 100 pounds. He helped over 20 inmates lose over 1,000 pounds.

While in solitary confinement due to an altercation with an officer, Coss had the idea of starting ConBody. When Coss was released from prison, like most people with a criminal record, he was unable to find a job, so he

actually started the company. He is now the CEO, which has 70,000 clients and has hired over 50 formerly incarcerated people. ConBody employees have a zero-recidivism rate. Coss has also co-founded Second Chance Studios, which trains formerly incarcerated people in audio engineering and video podcasting.

Now, Coss is helping people previously incarcerated for drug trafficking to obtain licenses to sell marijuana. New York is making the required licenses available first to people who have served time for selling marijuana. Coss, noting the cleverness and innovation of incarcerated individuals, said they were in an ideal position to participate in the legal marijuana trade, and were being trained to sell "the best weed available."

Regarding the US prison system, Coss noted that if New York were a country, it would incarcerate more people than any other country in NATO, and a majority of those incarcerated are from just 7 neighborhoods. He also noted the shocking statistics that 1 in 3 Black men will be incarcerated in their lifetimes, compared to 1 in 17 White men.

Coss's little brother, Christopher Marte, who witnessed his first arrest, is now a member of New York City Council District 1, which includes Battery Park City, Civic Center, Chinatown, the Financial District, Little Italy, the Lower East Side, NoHo, SoHo, South Street Seaport, South Village, TriBeCa & Washington Square. He and others are working to defeat plans to build a large jail in downtown Manhattan.

Questions:

When asked about the chances for typical inmate rehabilitation, Coss responded that the biggest issue is opportunity. 76% of inmates return to prison. This drops to 30% if they have the opportunity to work, including prison programs to prepare them for work after release.

Regarding faith-based programs, Coss believes they are effective at reducing recidivism, as

inmates who have strong faith face greater success. He also noted that forcing faith on inmates was obviously problematic. He mentioned a warden in Angola state prison in Louisiana who was infamous for holding Muslim prisoners in solitary confinement until they renounced Islam and embraced Christianity.

Coss explained that his first job after prison was exercise training his mother and her friend in a local park. A random guy from the neighborhood asked how much the training cost and signed up. He happened to be the CEO of a famous real estate company in New York.

Coss believes there is a need to educate formerly incarcerated persons regarding their voting rights (they can vote in New York but not in many other states) and to expend voting rates for the formerly incarcerated to other states.

Coss explained a typical day incarcerated, distinguishing between life in jail and prison. In jail, while awaiting trial, there's nothing to do. You might be in your cell 23 hours per day, with only 1 hour of recreation time, during which people might play cards, dominoes, or have conversations. It is very difficult to do anything. Life in prison was better because there are things to do: work detail, cleaning, school to obtain a GED for those who don't have one, etc. A typical daily routine was wake up; go to the yard for 2 hours in morning; breakfast; programming, work or activities; lunch; another 2 hours in the yard in the evening; dinner; back to your unit to mingle with other inmates; and start over.

When asked about the extent to which race and racism affect the ability to reenter the workforce, Coss was emphatic that the New York prison system is very racist.

Coss says he grew up in a diverse but segregated neighborhood, so the first time experienced racism was in prison. The wardens

are all white, and commonly call the inmates the n-slur. He said he has seen officers with tattoos on their arms of Black babies being lynched, along with swastikas, etc.

CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENTS

KAREN thanked Coss for joining us, and sharing his difficult but inspiring story. She also thanked him for encouraging us to do better to welcome formerly incarcerated people into our communities.

With a temporary cast on her left arm, Karen valiantly rang the bell for adjournment.

TODAY'S VOLUNTEERS

Greeters: **Le Levy, Patty McGuigan**

Room Set-up: **Matt Dolan**

Welcome Desk & Cashier: **Katie Seedman**

Zoom Co-Host: **Dana Tom**

Pinion writer: **Kim Bomar**

Pinion editor: **Ginny Lear**

UPCOMING PROGRAMS/EVENTS

July 25	Francis Fukuyama, Freeman Spogli Institute, Stanford U. Liberalism and Its Discontents
July 29	TGIF: 5:30-7:30 pm. home of Carole Whitehill
August 1	Daniel Ho, Stanford Law and Political Science: Unbreaking Bureaucracy
August 3	Nuestra Casa food packaging and distribution, 2-6 p.m. Details and Sign up online.

