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Straight Time

The Battle for Drug Treatment in California Prisons

by Joe Domanick

KERRY WOODS COMMITTED HIS LAST STICKUP ON A Saturday morning in 1994, after a long night snorting crystal meth and guzzling three pints of peppermint schnapps. Sitting in his pickup, not far from his home on the Mexican border, the apple-cheeked, wholesome-looking, 38-year-old Woods had watched the sun set, alternately blissed out and



Photo by Slobodan Dimitrov

brooding about a recent layoff and his desperate need for money. It was that combination of high and low which always sent him back to his old ways. By morning, as the sun rose into the California sky, Woods had made a decision.

What then transpired turned out to be his singular version of *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight*. Grasping a sawed-off .22-caliber bolt-action rifle, he strode into a doughnut shop, pointed at the cash register and demanded its contents. The clerk appeared to cooperate, but dropped the money as he handed it over. When Woods stooped to pick it up, the counterman pepper-sprayed him dead in the eyes. His take, had the robbery succeeded, would have been \$50. Instead, Woods got an eight-year sentence in a state penitentiary.

Even though that meant eight years away from his wife and stepdaughter, Woods never felt he'd gotten a bullshit rap. He'd caught the fear in the eyes of the people in the shop. And he knew that he hadn't really been after the money. The thing he'd coveted was the sweet euphoria that surged through him when he got high, and that rose to an exquisite intensity when mixed with the adrenaline rush of putting himself at risk. The search for that moment had resulted in at least five felony convictions, but in that he wasn't alone.

In a state with an astounding prisoner-recidivism rate of over 65 percent, repeat offenses are often linked to drugs. In 1997 -- when more than 17 percent of the state's former inmates were sent back to prison for committing new crimes, and a staggering 51 percent for violating parole -- most of those returnees tested dirty for drugs. Several recent national studies, in fact, have pegged the percentage of prison inmates with a serious alcohol or substance-abuse problem at somewhere between 75 percent and 85 percent.

news

Straight Time

For the last decade, policymakers have been adamantly opposed to providing substance-abuse treatment in prison. Joe Domanick looks at a treatment program that defies the trend.

OffBeat: Sterling silver; altar ego; rolling hunger; sex, laws and videotape.

Dream Deal

It took two years of negotiating — and a last-minute shift in fortunes — but activists with the Metropolitan Alliance have wrested a jobs program from the DreamWorks film studio. Bobbi Murray dissects a groundbreaking deal.

Suing the CIA

Mom tackles the agency. By Jim Crogan

The Silent Scourge

Forcible rape remains one crime category that has refused to go down. David Cogan looks at the persistence of a pernicious crime, and L.A.'s refusal to respond to the damage done.

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At R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility just outside of San Diego, Kerry Woods is trying to break out of that cycle of euphoria, crime and incarceration. Daily, he visits two drab wooden trailers separated by concertina wire from the rest of the prison's vast gray gravel exercise field, and from most of Donovan's 4,400 inmates. The trailers hold the counseling center and classrooms for the Amity Foundation of California, a little-known outside treatment agency working with an experimental therapeutic community of 200 volunteer inmates. Until very recently, Amity's tiny program and several others -- accounting for a population of fewer than 500 prisoners -- were the only places in California's vast behemoth of 33 state prisons and 38 camps where an inmate could receive intensive drug counseling, focus on changing his or her behavior, and prepare to live in the outside world. The program represents the first steps by the California Department of Corrections to confront the link between drugs and violent crime and to deal in a nonpunitive way with a tiny fraction of its 35,000 drug offenders. There are now, however, causes for optimism. Over the past two years, treatment programs have been established for some 5,000 prisoners, as the California Department of Corrections and the state Legislature attempt to deal with prisoners' problems in other than a primitive way.

OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES, DRUG ARRESTS AND A \$100 billion war on drugs have replaced America's War on Poverty, and California has helped lead the way. In 1980, about 7.5 percent of California's 23,000 inmates were incarcerated for drug offenses. Today, of California's 158,000 inmates, over 25 percent of the men and almost 35 percent of the women are imprisoned solely for drug offenses. And almost 60 percent of the prison population has been sentenced for nonviolent crimes frequently related to drugs. To put it another way, the number of California inmates imprisoned for assault with a deadly weapon or for other assaults and batteries at the start of 1996 was approximately 11,500. More than three times that many were incarcerated for drug offenses.

Despite that, for more than a decade the voices of hard-line prison professionals were allied against drug treatment for prisoners. Local law-enforcement officials, such as former Los Angeles District Attorney Ira Reiner and ex-LAPD Chief Daryl Gates, to name just two of many during the 1980s, began talking about the hopelessness of adult rehabilitation and the need to write off the current generation and concentrate on the young kids. Others, such as conservative UCLA professor James Q. Wilson, questioned the very notion of rehabilitation: "Empty a prison in California," he says, "and ask yourself: What are these people going to do? They are not going to give up crime." In short, once an addict and a criminal, always an addict and a criminal.

The perception wasn't helped by the track records of conventional treatment programs, as John Ratelle, the warden of R.J. Donovan, recounts. "I'd seen a lot of programs," he says, "where inmates laid around all day, continued to use, manipulated untrained correctional counselors, got their day-for-day credit -- and then got out and went back to drugs and crime."

Amidst that pessimistic climate, the Amity Foundation got its start. "Therapeutic communities," where addicts work to help each other reinvent themselves while quitting drugs, had been tried in prisons as early as 1961, when one was established at New York City's Terminal Island correctional facility. But the more modern roots of today's movement began in the late '70s, in New York, with a program called Stay N' Out. After that program spread to Delaware, its success began catching the attention of a small

number of law-enforcement professionals as something that was working. Then, in 1987, Amity began an experimental program in a Tucson, Arizona, jail.

Even as the Tucson program was getting established, one of its founders, Rod Mullen, approached Jim Rowland, a former probation officer from Fresno who had risen through the ranks to become California's director of corrections. Although Rowland was then working for ultraconservative law-and-order Governor George ã Deukmejian, he nevertheless agreed to allow Amity to create a small pilot program at Donovan in 1990, funded by the Department of Corrections. Even that modest step was a milestone.

It was also an eye opener, especially for Donovan's warden, John Ratelle. A white-haired man who looks like a U.S. senator in a Frank Capra movie, Ratelle was highly skeptical of Amity. In 1992, he ordered a surprise urine test of all Amity's prisoners. "I knew that I had 200 guys with serious drug problems, all living together and not isolated from the main yard," says Ratelle. So if they "wanted to get drugs, they could. I assumed that 25 percent . . . would turn up dirty." But only one participant "was positive for drugs -- marijuana. I was shocked but I was very impressed. That was the single most important event . . . in convincing me that the program was really working."

WORKING, THAT IS, AGAINST ALL ODDS. THE STORY OF Randy Journey -- a Donovan prisoner and Amity volunteer -- illustrates how daunting those odds are. Journey still grows dreamy-eyed when he recalls a long-ago acid trip he took on the Colorado River, and how he caught the moment and stayed gloriously locked within it as the river flowed a shimmering silver. He can also recount with deadpan amusement how he's walked the yard with some of the biggest celebrity names in the criminal world during the 20 years -- half his life -- he's spent in California prisons: former savings-and-loan executive Charles Keating; Charlie Manson's acid-tripping dupes Tex Watson and Bruce Davis; and Onion Field cop killer Jimmy Lee Smith.

Journey grew up the black-sheep son of a retired white cop in the small Imperial Valley town of Brawley, which, as Journey tells it, was the number-one stop for the high-grade heroin being smuggled from Mexicali during the '60s and '70s. He got hooked early on, and has subsequently never spent more than 90 days in a row outside prison walls. To support his heroin addiction, he always committed the same crime: Pretend he was the owner of a legitimate business, order materials and parts from lumberyards and machine shops, forge a bill of sale, then fence the goods for half price.

Over his years in prison dating back to the mid-'70s, Journey, a sad-eyed, potbellied, balding man, was given two different California Department of Corrections "N" numbers. The "N" stands for narcotics, and indicates that someone should receive drug treatment. So twice he was committed to the California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) in Norco. As Journey tells it, "CRC was a joke. There was no rehabilitation. Nothing at all to help a drug addict." His stays there were spectacular failures: He was sent back to Norco 10 times more for testing dirty. Every time he was released, even before he got to the sally-port gate, all Journey had in mind was that first fix. "I'd failed," says Journey, "before I even got out."

Until recently, 99 percent of California's prisoners received no guidance to help them re-enter the outside world. Dumped cold back into their communities, the vast majority of released prisoners were almost guaranteed

to fail. "When you leave prison, they give you \$200 gate money and essentially tell you to figure out the rest," says former Donovan inmate and now Amity counselor Charles Goshen, "so all I'd be thinking about was who I was gonna rob when my \$200 was gone."

"Two hundred dollars isn't much," points out Ricardo Hinojosa, like Goshen an ex-Donovan prisoner and Amity veteran. "Not when you have to buy shoes, socks, underwear and a jacket, pay for your transportation home and look for a place to live. By the time you show up at the parole office, you've got \$10 or \$15 left. And they pretty much tell you, 'Good luck.' There's only about 42 beds in all San Diego County for paroled prisoners, and shelters, particularly in cold weather, are always filled. So if you don't have a family, there's really no place to go. Some dope at that point will certainly take the chill off your back."

For Amity's inmates, that's the ultimate test: surviving their release from prison. No matter how optimistic the results of John Ratelle's urine testing, or how straight the prisoners manage to stay while still inside, they must eventually carry the lessons of Amity back into civilian life. The task of weaning inmates from drugs is difficult enough; Amity also has the more daunting challenge of arming prisoners against the temptations and despairs of life outside the wall.

The trust that prisoners like Journey, Hinojosa and Goshen place in Amity is personified by another inmate who shares their troubled history. Mark Schuettinger also did time at CRC before cleaning up. He is now an Amity consultant. "I was 25 when I quit an 11-year heroin habit," says Schuettinger, a slim man in his 40s with long, swept-back hair and the look of a casually dressed English professor. "I was committed to CRC twice in the late '70s, when all this talk about how nothing works for drug addicts was taking hold. And a big part of that emerging consciousness was the failure of places like CRC. They were supposed to be giving treatment, but I never did anything the whole time I was there except pass my GED -- they were big on that -- lift weights, and make good drug connections from Ventura all the way up to San Francisco. The staff was tremendously overworked, with one counselor handling 80 guys. [The Amity ratio is 18 prisoners per counselor.] And they were all Department of Corrections people, who, in my opinion, were inadequately prepared. It was really just another prison, but CRC, nonetheless, was always used in this state as an example of how treatment didn't work."

SCHUETTINGER'S PROMINENT ROLE IN AMITY REFLECTS the program's genesis, when it and other therapeutic communities arose out of the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the late 1950s, Charles Dederich Sr., a self-destructive alcoholic of gargantuan appetite, started his own A.A. group in his small beachfront apartment in Venice. He was a garrulous former salesman for Gulf Oil, a man so full of himself, as the story goes, that he was thrown out of his local A.A. chapter because he wouldn't stop talking and give anyone else a chance. Soon, drug addicts joined the alcoholics at the meetings and stopped using drugs -- something that was then unheard-of. Up until that time it was generally thought that alcoholics could clean up, but not junkies. The two federal hospitals dealing with addicts -- at Lexington, Kentucky, and Fort Worth, Texas -- had been dismally unsuccessful in trying to cure them.

Out of those Venice meetings grew a community known as Synanon, established when Dederich and the others bought a little storefront and started living together. The group's fundamental philosophy was the same as

A.A.'s -- when addict A helps addict B, addict A, the helper, gets better. He gets his life together by helping others. Synanon differed from A.A., however, in that people were now living together, and in a confrontational atmosphere. The order of the day was to tell someone they were full of shit when you thought they were full of shit, and demand total honesty.

The original members of Synanon were a rough crew -- chronic junkies, hookers, ex-cons -- whose efforts succeeded, though the group itself eventually disintegrated into a dangerous and scandal-plagued cult. From them, the concept of therapeutic communities grew into a movement during the rebellious counterculture of the '60s. An exploding rate of drug addiction had become a hallmark of the times, and the medical and psychiatric establishments -- which had so utterly failed in the treatment of addiction and alcoholism over the preceding 40 years -- continued their irrelevancy.

In that vacuum, a new therapeutic community movement developed, using the early years of Synanon as a model. Many of its pioneers were recovering addicts, who insisted that the leaders emerge from within the community itself. The philosophy broadened beyond the precepts of A.A. and group confrontation, and took on elements that Dr. David Deitch* (himself an early member of Synanon, and now a clinical professor of psychiatry at UC San Diego and a consultant to a newly established therapeutic community in the bloody state prison at Corcoran) describes as "humanistic and behavioral psychology, the Essences and other early religious sects, the Methodists, Calvinists and Zen." The movement's broad goal was far more ambitious than mere freedom from substance abuse; it was personal transformation through the development of self-reliance within a supportive, humane community. This was to be achieved through personal and group encounters, seminars, psychodrama, community rituals, and written and oral exercises. Each member would progress individually, from one benchmark to another. Once healed, the ex-member was obliged to be part of a wider social transformation. Out of the congealing of all these aspects grew the now universally accepted drug-treatment methods used by such therapeutic communities as Day Top, Phoenix House, Walden House and the Amity Foundation.

Rod Mullen, now Amity's CEO, was once a Synanon student volunteer. A veteran of the free-speech and civil rights movements in Berkeley in the '60s, Mullen became deeply impressed with Synanon's racial harmony, the concrete changes it made in people's lives and its model of addicts aiding themselves by aiding other addicts.

Everyone who works for Amity has been through the Amity program and has a background similar to the inmates'. Before she stopped using seven and a half years ago, Veronica Sluss had been a longtime heroin and cocaine addict, a prostitute, a thief, a residential burglar and a fencer of stolen goods. Through Amity, and after a mandatory placement by the courts, she changed her life. Today, Sluss is one of 12 Amity outside counselors at Donovan. Thin and birdlike at 41, wearing loose clothes and no makeup, her long brown hair combed straight back over her shoulders as if to neutralize her femininity, she cuts a vulnerable figure. But standing before seven denim-clad prisoners in one of the counseling trailers, she has the authority of hard experience.

Importantly, other leadership roles are filled by inmates. In addition to attending groups run by Amity staffers, some of the more senior inmate members also run their own groups. Among those teachers is the man who dropped acid on the Colorado River and spent half his life in jail, Randy

Journey. Others are literally lifers -- men like Ramon Canas. Standing in the Amity trailer one day, Canas drapes his thick arm protectively around the shoulders of a frail, angelic-looking 18-year-old Mexican kid in prison for assault with an automatic weapon. "He's been here for two weeks, and we're going to make something of him," says Canas paternalistically. A large, powerfully muscled Chicano whose close-cropped hair and wire-rim glasses accentuate his soft-spoken demeanor, Canas is doing 25 to life for first-degree murder, and has been in prison for 13 years. For six of those years, Canas has been one of half a dozen lifers working with the Amity staff as prisoner peer counselors in charge of their own caseloads.

"The lifers," says Mark Schuettinger, "have been a key ingredient in our program's success. They're very sharp, they've spent years honing their minds and studying everybody in the whole place. As lifers, they also have real status and, in Amity, a meaningful social role that enables them to be more than just a con waiting to die -- because, realistically, they're never going to get out. They've gone through enough changes during treatment to be emotionally honest about the atrocities they've committed, and to show how they're now taking responsibility."

For prison counselors Canas and Veronica Sluss and for Mark Schuettinger and Randy Journey, leadership involves some subtle politics. "One of the difficulties with the prison therapeutic communities that emerged in the early '70s was that the ex-addict, ex-con staff was often hostile to the corrections staff," says CEO Mullen, "which quickly made them unwelcome as a result."

"The key issue for us has been the balancing act the counselors have had to maintain in supporting the prison staff while not being considered sellouts by the prisoners. They have to keep their identities as former down-and-out convicts that inmates can identify with, while clearly establishing that they are no longer that person. We've had to create an alternative culture respected by both the corrections officers and the inmates within Amity and out in the yard." A measure of their success has come with Amity's expansion: At least four former Donovan inmates have become Amity counselors at other state prisons.

Another hallmark of that "alternative culture" has been the program's racial harmony, strikingly at odds with the racially charged atmosphere of most prisons. The Amity community is about 40 percent black, 40 percent Chicano and 20 percent white. Making that diversity work took a lot of time and effort, according to David Deitch. "You can bet that when they started, every prisoner was watching for any hint of favoritism. If you're a counselor in this kind of program and you spend more time with black guys than others, that will be noted. Convicts have nothing but time to watch and calculate."

Two of Amity's six lifers -- one black and one white -- became close friends early on in the program, and helped establish the tolerant tone. "Here in Amity," says inmate Ken Adams, "all the races are mixed together. There's no such thing as a black telephone sign-up, white tables, Mexican showers; no one worries about playing cards with another group. I can talk to anyone I want and not have to worry about someone asking me why I was talking to a black guy."

Adams is a walking testament to racial diversity -- his ancestry is a mix of Korean, Hawaiian and European. The group he attends in the Amity trailer includes among its seven members blacks and Mexicans, as well as a white man -- Kerry Woods. It's led by Veronica Sluss. On a spring afternoon, Sluss

listens intently as Mark Dumas leans forward in his chair and addresses the other members. "I saw my brother on TV last night," says Dumas, an intense, reed-thin, 38-year-old African-American. "He'd just been caught with two guns and a bunch of crystal meth in El Cajon. Now he's facing a sure 25-to-life on a third strike. Me, I'm here on a second strike. If I come back again, my world until the day I die will be that acre out there in the yard." The others nod sympathetically, clearly understanding Dumas' desperation.

Seated across from Dumas is Anthony Bell, a former Five-Trey Avalon Crip out of South-Central. At 36, Bell has the foreboding look of Sonny Liston in his prime, except that while Liston's eyes were famously dead, Bell's are always busy taking you in, reading you with just a touch of amused contempt. He'd gotten by a most of his adult life dealing dime and quarter bags of coke and heroin, and pulling robberies and burglaries. One day during a botched stickup of an Inglewood jewelry store, he shot the security guard in the head and, after being captured in a high-speed chase, found himself facing an almost certain murder rap. Miraculously, the bullet missed the guard's brain, and he lived. "Otherwise," says Bell, "I'd be sitting in death row now, thinking about suicide." Instead, he's doing 11 years, and trying, he says, "to open up to people and get away from violence. Now I'm here to work on my behavior. I have three kids -- two girls and a boy by two different mothers -- and I need to be out there for them."

THE VAST MAJORITY OF MEN IN THE Amity program are drawn from a tough Level 3 high-security prison population. Most have classic hard-luck convict tales and ugly buried memories; come from debilitating broken homes rife with physical brutality, alcoholism and drug addiction; and have been in and out of jails and prisons since their midteens.

"People always say that drug use is a choice," says Mark Schuettinger, "but when you hear the family histories of our guys through the generations, you can only think that they made the obvious choice." They are, according to Donovan's warden, John Ratelle, "some of the most incorrigible inmates in the correctional system and some of the hardest to work with."

"People think there's no hope for people like us," Charles Goshen later points out. Goshen is a huge, hard-eyed Amity counselor with an extraordinarily violent past who was one of the first prisoners to go through the program at Donovan. "They're concerned about trying to save the next generation. But how are you gonna do that when a majority of kids in places like South-Central, where people like Anthony Bell and I grew up, come from dysfunctional families? Where everybody they look up to has been locked up? Who helps the mom and dad trying to get well? You can't just push that aside and put the kids in foster homes. How do you think the kids will turn out? You can bring a professor or doctor or lawyer as a role model to talk to them, but for many kids growing up in the inner city, their lives are far-fetched. They can much more relate to someone like me or Anthony. I can see the damage that's been done to my kids and my brother's kids. I work with it every day. I'm totally -- directly -- responsible for not only my five kids but also seven of my brother's kids. One brother is dead, and the other has a life sentence in prison. What if Amity hadn't come along and said, hey, if you want it, we have some tools over here that can change your life? Then you'd have 12 kids who are not going to make it in society."

Ken Adams sits kitty-corner from Bell. He had been a "fine-dining chef" in San Diego County ("the speed capital of the world") before he started regularly using and dealing crystal meth about eight years ago. He loved the high, and he loved the dealing -- the power that "holding that big sack of

meth" gave him among people desperately wanting to score. He was also making what he describes as "a good living," buying a pound of methamphetamine for \$8,000 to \$10,000, breaking it down and reselling it for about five times that amount.

The first occasion he did time at Donovan for dealing, he'd heard about the Amity program but thought it was a bunch of bullshit -- "the rat program," as it was called in the yard. Now, he tells the group, he intends to stay clean once he's paroled. "I've been offered drugs many times in the yard," he says. "They're smoking it, and I want to say, 'Man, give me a hit,' but I don't, because I want to hear my kids tell people, 'My daddy used to be a drug addict, but look at him now.' My wife's dead. I'm tired of prison, I've got to stay out of here."

In their quest to change their lives, the men in Adams' group have a slim but natural advantage: They are old enough that their days of committing multiple crimes are largely behind them. It's an advantage not shared by all in the Amity program. Standing outside the trailer as Veronica Sluss' group exits is a 26-year-old native San Diegan named Charles Crossley -- a hulking pale-brown man with French braids and a long, powerful chin. "This is my homey, Monte," says Crossley, nodding toward the shaved-headed Moore, whose youth and good looks glow through his ridiculously oversize prison blues. Crossley and Moore are different from Randy Journey, Ken Adams, Kerry Woods and Mark Dumas -- they're young, not sliding into middle age with the realization that it is time to change or die.

Crossley and Moore still have 20 years of crime, gangbanging and hurting people, 20 years of rolling in and out of jail, 20 years of using and dealing PCP, 20 years of wasted life ahead of them should they choose that path. Both have been not just active gang members but "known shooters" -- the guys who pull the triggers -- and occasional targets, too. ("You name them, I've used them," says Crossley of guns, "9mm, 10mm, 50 caliber, AK-47, Mac 11s, Tec-9s.")

Moore's mother was shot and killed in a retaliatory gang shooting aimed at him. Just one year out of his teens, he has spent eight or nine years incarcerated. Crossley is now doing his third term in prison. Each had been hardcore for a decade. And when Crossley returned to prison this last time, there was still "nothing better than having my homies talk about me in a hardcore kind of way."

To dismiss him and Moore as pathological deviants is to miss the point. All their lives, in fact, they've been overachievers, but in the world of gangbanging. Crossley's mother died of cancer, and he never really knew his father. Moore's father deserted him as well -- when he was 3. He was raised on welfare by a crack-addicted mother who had no time for him. What they needed, they both got from the gang.

Now, as Crossley tells it, he's "got a new family" -- Amity. "I used to call Amity people faggots and punks," he says, "but now those same people are there for me, helping me out, giving me pull-ups. I don't go to the yard anymore, there's nothing there but negativity. I'm paroling out in 60 days. Without Amity I'd just be getting out with the same old plans, doing the same old things and throwing my life away."

TO HELP PAROLEES LIKE CROSSLEY EASE into the outside world and stay there, Amity's program includes a post-prison halfway house called Vista. It's a crucial transitional steppingstone -- prisoners who go through a

halfway-house experience after a prison program like Amity are far less likely to re-offend than those who don't. About one-third of Amity inmates go on to Vista, a 40-member residential community living in a 10-room Spanish Colonial mansion set in a wooded campus in northern San Diego County. Seated on an oversize circular couch in the mansion's rustic, high-beamed rec room on a spring day in 1998, is one of Amity's, and Vista's, success stories: Ricardo Hinojosa. Hinojosa's white teeth and thick, slicked-back hair belie his 40 years. Only the prison tattoos that cover almost every inch of his bare arms indicate his decades of doing time.

Hinojosa was raised in one of the toughest gang-plagued, drug-infested areas of San Diego. When he was 5, his mother abandoned him and her four other children. At 13, he went to jail for smashing an uncle with a baseball bat. He started sniffing spray paint, and at 16 -- after chasing a woman down a busy street brandishing a samurai sword and with silver paint splattered all over him -- Hinojosa wound up interned in a mental hospital. Finally, when he was 20, his sister, a dissipated longtime dope fiend, turned him on to heroin, and for the next 16 years heroin was his life. To the dealing and PCP manufacturing he'd already been into, he added robberies, burglaries and purse snatchings to support his habit. Whenever he was released from prison, the first thing he'd do -- even before visiting his kids or girlfriend -- was score some drugs.

During his third prison term, Hinojosa joined Amity. About two months into the program, the grandmother who'd raised him died, and Hinojosa took it hard. He received powerful support from his Amity community, from men demanding nothing in return -- no drugs, no money, no one asking him to fuck someone up in the yard. And that was his turning point. After 19 months of treatment, Hinojosa was paroled and entered Vista, where he encountered similar support. As he sits on the rec-room couch and walks Vista's grounds that spring day of 1998, he reflects on the landmarks of his success: He has married a public school teacher and is working in a detox center. He's enrolled in a local community college, where he's majoring in behavioral science. He's remained clean for three years. He's no longer on parole. But his achievements hide the unending difficulties that Hinojosa, like all Amity's participants, faces daily.