

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS

Secretary Gary Westcott



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## **Two Correctional Publications Received Historic National Awards**

*Excellence and impact of incarcerated writers and publications focal point of honors*

Baton Rouge, LA – The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections is proud to announce that two inmate-led correctional publications received prestigious awards from the 2025 American Penal Press Contest. The awards ceremony was held Friday, September 19 from 10-11:30 a.m. inside the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center in California and streaming was made available for participating correctional facilities.

The contest garnered close to 200 submissions from 22 individual publications, across nine states. The historic national journalism awards program was made possible because of The Pollen Initiative, which was formerly known as the Friends of San Quentin News, in partnership with Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The awards were first announced in 1965. The awards honor original work and reporting produced by incarcerated writers and newsroom teams who chronicle the realities of incarceration, inform their communities, and contribute to more balanced narratives about the criminal justice system.

“It is an honor that *The Angolite* and *The Cajun Press* received national recognition from the American Penal Press for the impactful writing found in the pages of these two publications that highlight and amplify powerful stories of journalistic value,” said Gary Westcott, secretary, Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections. “These awards are a testament to the incredibly talented men who are incarcerated at Louisiana State Penitentiary and Raymond Laborde Correctional Center.”

Raymond Laborde Correctional Center’s publication, *The Cajun Press*, received the Best Feature Award for the story, “I Can’t Breathe: When a Heart Attack Strikes” by Daniel Deese. The publication began in 1989 and is printed four times per year. Roughly 25 copies are printed for the department and 102 copies for the inmate population. Keith O’Banion serves as the editor, and the hard work and efforts to bring the award-winning publication to life is performed by four inmates and two department staff members. *The Cajun Press* is proudly supported and encouraged by Warden Brent Thompson.

Louisiana State Penitentiary’s historic inmate-edited and published publication, *The Angolite* received the third place honor for Best Magazine. The prison newspaper is produced by a staff of four inmates along with two department staff members. Jeffrey Dale Hilburn is the editor and John Corley is the associate editor. The *Angolite* also received awards for Best Sports Coverage, “Dominant on the Diamond” by Lawson Strickland, contributing writer - first place and third place for Best Photo with Caption, “The Last Ride” by Jeffery Dale Hilburn. The critically acclaimed publication was started in 1953 and has received numerous accolades over the years. Currently six publications are printed per year. The publication has received long-standing support from Warden Darrel Vannoy.

Other inmate-led publications include Dixon Correctional Institute’s *Straight Low Magazine*, David Wade Correctional Center’s *The Wade Wire*, and Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women’s *Unveiled Magazine*.

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