

Opinion: Mourning the end of Pacific News Service

By Russell Morse, San Francisco Chronicle

My introduction to Pacific News Service came in 1996, when I was an angry teenager housed at San Francisco's Juvenile Hall. Officially, PNS was a nonprofit news service based in San Francisco, but it had many projects, including the Beat Within, which facilitated weekly creative writing workshops with the kids in the hall. It printed our work in a newsletter, a rare bright spot in our lives.

One week, Sandy Close, the brilliant and brash executive editor of PNS, came in lieu of the regular facilitators. After the workshop, Close grabbed me by the arm as I was shuffling out and asked me, "What's it like being the only white kid in here?" I shrugged. She smiled and leaned in. "Write about that."

It was my first assignment in a now 20-year career in journalism that has taken me from the juvenile justice system to the Ivy League, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a short bout on an MTV reality show.

It ceased operations on Nov. 30.

Read the whole story