

**MICHAEL G. SANTOS:** Inside Look. By Soul Man. Photo taken at FPC: Lompoc by fellow inmate.

Cuban-American author Michael Santos has been in federal prison since 1987 serving a 45-year sentence for a continuing criminal enterprise conviction. The Seattle native did his best (or worst) Scarface imitation as a youngster but during his 19 consecutive years of incarceration he has tried to use his time productively and atone for his errors. By penning several books showing what incarceration is all about (the latest, "INSIDE: Life Behind Bars in America," comes out this year on St. Martins Press), Santos has made his case for rehabilitation. But he is not eligible for release until 2013.

"As a long-term prisoner," says the 42-year-old Santos, "I recognize that writing provides the only opportunity to reach beyond these boundaries that hold us physically. I want to



connect with the world, to somehow reconcile and demonstrate my eagerness to return to society with dignity intact. Writing helps me. I find it therapeutic, a way of allowing my mind to leave these oppressive communities and join the society that I long to return to at some point." Currently at the federal prison camp in Lompoc, California, the penitentiary veteran has three other books out at present: "About Prison" on Wadsworth Publishing, "Profiles From Prison" on Greenwood/Praeger Publishing and "What If I Go To Prison?" on American Professional Services, a company started by his wife of 5 years, Carole. With his best efforts Santos is making his connection to the world from the belly of the beast.

"I am not a fan of the prison system," Santos says. "I am convinced that if one were charged with the responsibility of designing a system that conditions men to fail in society, that person could not do better than the concept of imprisonment. In learning how to live in prison, the individual simultaneously learns how to fail in society. Tax payers receive a poor return on the 60-plus billion dollar investment they make in these human warehouses."

And Santos isn't just some hyped-up George Jackson wanna-be railing against the system. He's schooled himself on multiple levels. "I earned an undergraduate degree in human resources management from Mercer University while I was held at USP Atlanta and later while at FCI McKean I earned a Master's degree from Hofstra University." And his academic pursuits were all completed by correspondence work and paid for by his family as the federal system has no viable college programs offered. Despite the obstacles Santos's first book, "About Prison," is being used as a supplementary text by professors in universities across the

nation. "They use it for courses in corrections, criminal justice, sociology and the like," Santos says.

This has led to Santos receiving a considerable amount of correspondence from college students and professors who read his work. "I'm grateful for the privileges I have of contributing to their lives. I want to contribute to the lives of others, while at the same time feel as though I am bringing meaning to my own life." And with his books, and more importantly his Web site, [www.michaelsantos.net](http://www.michaelsantos.net), Santos has set up a network of support with which he works to help others understand the prison system and develops strategies for growth through confinement.

"I always have believed that the pen is mightier than the sword," he says. "I've studied the federal prison system and the people it holds from the inside. As a man who has lived his entire adult life in prison, I try to provide commentary and analysis. People who read my work learn about the prison system from the perspective of the prisoners." And Santos has no plans of letting up. He

plans to write a book per year until his release.

"Since 2001, I have worked exclusively to write for my Web site and for the books that I struggle to bring to the market," Santos says. "Release is still eight years away. I continue my efforts to refine my communication skills, nurture my marriage and build upon my network of support."

*For more information on Michael Santos and his literature, visit [www.michaelsantos.net](http://www.michaelsantos.net).*

