

## Greetings Success Stories Program Alumni

and welcome to your 3rd quarter newsletter! This is a space where you can find the stories of people you know, information that propels you, and a network of supportive voices. It is where you can find a space to express your own ideas and triumphs, as well as publish insights that can benefit our growing community.

In this issue we're highlighting two Alumni whose stories reveal the incredible growth of our community. We're also providing some tips on how to begin building and managing your finances, no matter where you currently are. And as an invitation to you, we're including some sections we would like you to add your voice to.

## PROGRAMMING UPDATES

### COMMUNITY PARTNERS

As Success Stories has grown in popularity, so has the group of community partners willing to support our visions. For those of you about to come home, we have a host of volunteers who have created one-day workshops geared to helping you get the skills you need in order to reach your goals. These include:

- LinkedIn account profile set up and management. This will enable you to introduce yourself to the digital community in a professional and stylish manner.
- Email account setup and management. This will help you build the email etiquette that will help you be more effective when you communicate online.
- Resume building. Who doesn't want to sharpen up their resume?
- Financial mentoring. Folks want to help you make the most out of your first steps of reentry by giving you some game in regards to opening a bank account, retirement account, building credit, and more.

**We want to provide you with the tips and advice you need to honor your true self and top 5. Looking for something specific? Write to us at the address below.**

### FINANCIAL TIPS

In case you haven't heard, there is a way to build credit while you are still incarcerated.

**1.** For those of you who have loved ones who trust you and are responsible with their credit, they can help you get a head start with building credit by adding you as an authorized user to their credit account. You wouldn't have access to the credit card itself; however, their payment history will begin to reflect on your credit history in as little as 45 days.

**2.** Also, if you can spare around thirty dollars a month, a company called Self can help build your credit as well. You see, there are different types of credit that affect your credit score and many people only focus on one—credit card credit. However, many of you want to buy a car or a house some day, right? Well, in order to accomplish that, you will need to develop loan credit. Companies like Self help to provide you with loan credit by allowing you to make small monthly payments to them that they in turn report to the credit companies. The money you send to them is returned to you, minus a fee, at the end of the term.

These two options allow you to build your credit score with a more holistic approach. What's more, you can do it no matter what your current liberation status is.

### LEGAL TIPS

Getting out is our gateway goal, so any accurate information about proposed legislation that can hasten our release is desired. Initiate Justice provides exactly that, for free, through their newsletter. **To receive their newsletter and to learn more, write to:**

**P.O. Box 15836, Los Angeles, CA 90015**

### QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? WRITE TO US AT:

Success Stories Program 1175 East Baker Street E-19 Costa Mesa, California 92626

# CONTEST WINNERS

Our supporters voted on social media for their favorite art works and written pieces, **and the winners are...**

## ART SUBMISSION WINNERS



**1ST PLACE** David Carson, CTF  
*Bone of My Eye*  
Pen and charcoal



**2ND PLACE** Michael Nieto, CTF  
*Untitled*  
Acrylic



**3RD PLACE** Wei Miao, SBCJ  
*Introspection*  
Painting

## WRITTEN SUBMISSION WINNERS

**1ST PLACE** Antonio Santillan, SCC  
*How my Top 5 Ruined Prison for Me*

"Every morning I wake up to a loud speaker, blaring whatever announcement the cops feel necessary to be sharing at 5:30am. That, along with the lights being turned on full blast, is my alarm clock. I am a 38 year old convict and I am incarcerated. For now, this is my home. Unfortunately this is the first time I've been to prison...."

**2ND PLACE** Christopher Diep, OCJ  
*Unborn &*  
Horacio López, CTF  
*Dreams of hope*

"As a pup, I tortmented my mother by asking, "where is he, when will he be home?" How does a mother tell her only five year old child that his father is never coming back? Like a deserted soldier, my father didn't fulfill his obligations. The wound continues to resonate through my veins but this pain blossomed into a clear vision of fatherhood."

"On this canvas I paint a special world, it is a place of enchanted fantasies, and make believe of endless dreams filled with hope that live inside my head...I think of it as being filled with harmony, as a beautiful magical benevolent land. It is a place where transformation of past scars, hurts, and pains are healed by LOVE..."

**3RD PLACE** Kenneth Moore, CMC  
*MY TOP FIVE*

"From the earth to the turf and back again"  
Why did the reve one four twelve appoint Dirty Red to the dirt? Dam that hurt, What am I missing? Dam I'm gonna miss him, The mighty D.R. has gone back to be with the Almighty, Is this what it took to keep you still a steal box, to Keep you off the block?"

**FOR COPIES OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS IN THEIR ENTIRETY, WRITE TO SUCCESS STORIES AT:  
1175 EAST BAKER STREET E-19, COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA 92626**

# SUCCESS STORY

## TYLER EPPS



Success Stories Program's Transformational Coach **Tyler Epps** is an example of how far we've come as an organization. Born in Ohio, raised in North Carolina, and currently residing in New York, Tyler is expanding the work of Success Stories Program throughout the east coast.

Growing up, Tyler based his identity on his skill in basketball. His tribe of friends, his future, were all related to the sport and culture of basketball. The payoffs of this path included many things, including a scholarship at a prestigious university; however, an old injury from high school flared up, requiring five back-to-back surgeries, that ended this path and his identity. He states, "without basketball...I fell into this sort of depression where I felt that I couldn't really kick it with my homies. I got depressed."

Tyler attempted to find himself through many mediums. He lived at a Buddhist monastery, on a sailboat in the Bahamas, and finally made his way to New York by taking a job in a holistic learning camp. He explained that during this time, he became acutely aware of integrity and of the moment when he wasn't living in it. "My practice centered on awareness – how dishonest I was being, how fraudulent I was living. I developed an awareness where I couldn't lie to myself," Tyler said.

He found the courage to do so after his triplet sons were born.

***"I knew what integrity was before, but I found the courage to be integral after they were born."***

Tyler has found that courage to be rewarding, allowing him to dedicate energy to the people and things that matter most to him, rather than wasting energy on unhealthy relationships and inauthentic pursuits.

When asked how he maintains this commitment to courage, he says, "By staying aware that I still have the power to be in alignment with what I feel is right and wrong; by trying to catch things before they spiral too far; by noticing the moment things get out of line and bringing it back, and bringing it back." When asked what he would tell his younger self at the beginning of his commitment to integrity, Tyler responded, "This life is a journey; accept the highs, accept the lows, find what's valuable, and understand what integrity means, then commit to that."

### HELP US STAY CONNECTED TO YOU

If you move, please return this slip so that we can ensure you continue to receive our newsletter and other resources. Please send back this slip with the info below:

Name:

CDCR #:

Current housing address:



# SUCCESS STORY

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## TRINIDAD FLORES



Success Stories Program's Transformational Coach **Trinidad Flores**. Trini joined the team in May and has been focused on maintaining connection with participants through our correspondence program.

Trini grew up in Riverside, CA, where his mom's side lived and his dad's side in Wilmington-San Pedro area. He used to travel back and forth at a young age. When Trini was 6 years old, he lost his mom to suicide and with that, the concept of what love was tarnished forever. Love was no longer in existence – it was there and then once it was gone Trini was never getting that same affection ever again.

With that loss of love, all of these different thoughts flooded Trini's mind – how to be as a child, how to be as a man, how I should behave. His go-to was violence to get what he wanted. "At the age of 15, I committed 3 attempted murders; by 16 years old, I received a life sentence; at 17 years old, I was in High Desert – a level 4 – not having any direction other than to perpetuate more violence to elevate my status to who I thought I wanted to be." The only way Trini believed he could be accepted was through more violence. He

masked a lot of issues, his emotional needs, and didn't want to get close to people. Trini was caught up in a cycle of numbing what he didn't want to address.

In 2014, Trinidad learned about Success Stories from Roy Duran and participated in the 12-week program with Richie and Hugo as facilitators. If it wasn't for Success Stories, which helped him to address emotional unmet needs and learn to be compassionate, Trini says he wouldn't be free today, after doing 24 years. He paroled July 30th, 2020.

When asked about obstacles faced since completing the program, Trini said it's been building community:

***"My old way of being was to have distrust and believe that others were out to hurt me; I didn't want to get close to risk being hurt again after losing my mom. I started to open up and build with others, and I saw the benefits. Social pressures are also an obstacle. Seeing close friends and people you want to spend time with but realizing that they want to conform to patriarchal norms."***

As a message to folks inside, Trini said: I miss you guys, I love everybody. I had to get to know what's going on in your own mind, how you're feeling, and confronting old beliefs. The biggest thing is knowing that we're like a family – that after 12 weeks, there's more support. We're really invested in you and helping you get where you want to be in your life.

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## YOUR PARTNERSHIP

Our Alumni Network has been created, **for you and by you**, to continue building the communities we create during the 12-weeks of Success Stories Program.

If there are particular topics you're interested in reading about here, works you'd like to contribute, or other recommendations – please write to us at: 1175 East Baker Street E-19 Costa Mesa, California 92626