

THE CATALYST



CONNECT

INSIDE YOU'LL FIND UPDATES FOR OUR MEMBERSHIP AND WAYS TO CONNECT. ALSO - WE ARE LOOKING FOR WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO INCLUDE IN FUTURE PUBLICATIONS OF OUR NEWSLETTER. PERSONAL NARRATIVES, POETRY, CREATIVE WRITING - ANYTHING YOU'RE WILLING TO SHARE! BY SUBMITTING YOUR WORK, YOU ARE CONSENTING TO IT BEING INCLUDED IN FUTURE NEWSLETTERS. PLEASE SEND ANY WRITTEN WORKS, IDEALLY 350 WORDS OR LESS, TO OUR TEAM LOCATED AT:

1175 EAST BAKER STREET E-19
COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA 92626

TRANSFORM

SUCCESS STORIES IS BUILDING A WORLD FREE OF PRISONS AND PATRIARCHY. WE SEE INDIVIDUAL AND SYSTEMIC ACTS OF HARM AS SYMPTOMS OF PATRIARCHAL BELIEFS THAT CAN BE TRANSFORMED. THE WORK WE DO IS BASED ON TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES, WITH VALUES ROOTED IN FEMINISM, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERSONAL INTEGRITY. WE BELIEVE IN LOVING OTHERS WITHOUT DISPOSABILITY. IN OTHER WORDS, WE DON'T BELIEVE IN THROWING PEOPLE AWAY. EVER.

HEAL

FREEDOM HEALS. WE ARE INTERESTED IN HELPING YOU UNLEARN BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS THAT MIGHT STAND IN THE WAY OF YOUR FREEDOM. CHECK OUT THE BACK PAGE FOR RESOURCES THAT CAN SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES IN YOUR GOALS. WE ALSO WANT TO EXPRESS A "THANK YOU" TO THOSE ALUMNI AND CURRENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS FOR CONTINUING TO SHOW UP FOR YOURSELVES AND GIVING THOSE AROUND YOU THE HOPE TO HEAL.

2022 Graduations

FIRST AND FOREMOST...

We appreciate your engagement and support. We do this so we can be free. Mentally and physically. While serving life in prison I wished for space to be heard, a place of resources for the current needs of those both inside and out. Please feel free and empowered in helping us create this by writing us and giving your input in what's needed to best support your success.

Let's keep building fam!

Hugo

Success Stories Program alumni coordinator

California Facilities Closing

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) announced it will begin the process to close Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) in Blythe, by March 2025. Similarly, there has been a recent announcement regarding the pending closure of the California Correctional Center (CCC) in Lassen County. As we hear about these closures, we're both excited and concerned. We're concerned about how the funds gained from closures can be reinvested in abolitionist solutions such as healthcare and housing rather than prisons and police. We're also concerned with how harmful transfers and overcrowding of prisons is affecting those who are currently incarcerated. Lastly we are concerned about freeing more people, until all prisons are closed. We believe liberation requires personal change as much as it necessitates systemic change. Organizations like CURB (Californians United for a Responsible Budget) are leading the efforts in tracking prison closures and have a plan to close 10 prisons by 2025.

Additionally, the CDCR will exit the \$32 million, annual lease with CoreCivic for California City Correctional Facility, terminating the contract in March 2024, effectively ending the use of that facility as a state prison. The department is also planning the deactivation of certain facilities in six prisons, including: Folsom Women's Facility; Facility C in Pelican Bay State Prison; West Facility in California Men's Colony; Facility A in California Rehabilitation Center; Facility D in California Institution for Men; and Facility D in California Correctional Institution. Should a significant need for capacity arise in the future due to a natural disaster or other serious need, this option gives the State the possibility to re-activate these facilities at a later date.

Here's to the organizers who make it more possible for the vision of abolition to be a reality.

This year our alumni family grew!



Congratulations to all the new family from Centinela, Calipatria, Chuckawalla, Ironwood, Oakland Tech High School, University Heights Middle School, Chicago Young Lords, Homeboy Industries, The Ella Baker Center and San Francisco Juvenile Hall.

Welcome to the family!



WWW.SUCCESSSTORIESPROGRAM.ORG

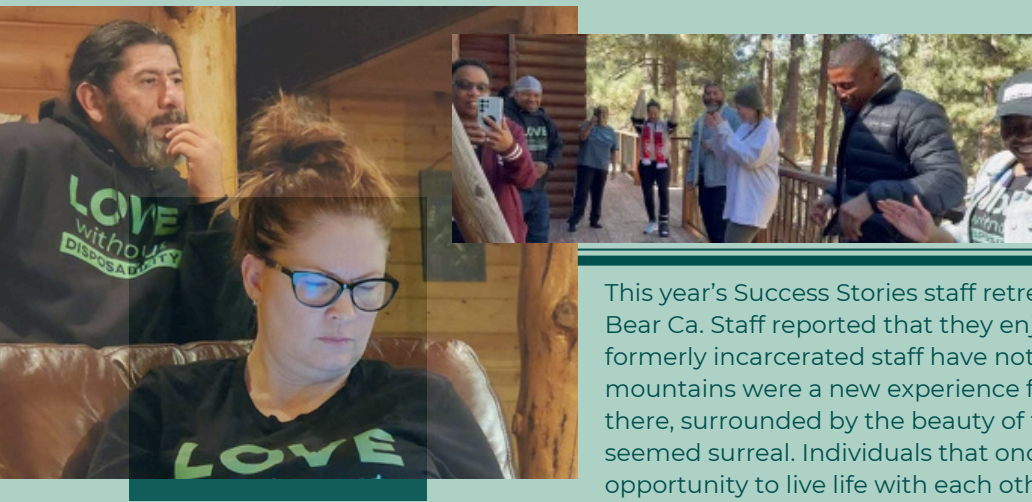
WRITE US!

1175 EAST BAKER ST E-19, COSTA MESA, CA 92626



Calipatria SSP Alumni





BIG BEAR STAFF RETREAT

This year's Success Stories staff retreat was held in the beautiful mountains of Big Bear Ca. Staff reported that they enjoyed inhaling the cool, crisp air. Many of SSP formerly incarcerated staff have not had the opportunity to travel, so these mountains were a new experience for many of them. Other staff said that being there, surrounded by the beauty of the mountains, in community with our team, seemed surreal. Individuals that once spent time doing time, some for life, have the opportunity to live life with each other now.

The retreat was a time to set organizational goals for the new year and to cast a collective vision of where we believe Success Stories can best serve our communities. As a team, we brainstormed what we will prioritize and the internal systems we need to fine tune in order to meet the needs of our participants and to grow the capacity of the program. We created opportunities to give feedback and to solicit each person's perspective on what they thought were places for growth individually and organizationally. These types of conversations are authentic, vulnerable, and aren't always easy to have. We collectively grew to realize that conflict, which is complex and can be difficult to navigate, gives us such rich opportunities to lean in, listen, learn, and grow. Since it is such a constant in life we are working on normalizing conflict and relating to it with curiosity, perspective, and optimism. Each team member brings so many experiences, education, frames of reference, assumptions, and even trauma to the table. These things add value to our program as we have a deep understanding that our participants also have needs that echo our own; safety needs, healing needs, and community support that include accountability spaces that are free of punishment and shame.

This retreat solidified our belief that relationships are the cornerstone to our success. The love and commitment for each other has always been the secret sauce in being successful in creating the space for ALL to be true to what's needed, what's working and what is waiting to be transformed.

MEET OUR NEW STAFF MEMBER, INDIGO

It is a pleasure to introduce Indigo Mateo, SSP's new Communications Manager. Indigo Mateo is a writer and creative powerhouse who first learned about the work of Success Stories during a prison visit in 2017. She is an artist and singer who is passionate about spreading the work and message of Success Stories through storytelling and media editing. She is also the founder of Soul Showers, a healing space for survivors of sexual violence.

Indigo says that she wakes up every morning with the question, "what kind of person do I want to be?" It wasn't difficult to interview Indigo with her positive energy and a warm smile. Indigo was proudly born and raised in New Jersey. Indigo learned about Success Stories after watching the documentary, *The Feminist on Cellblock Y*, shortly after moving to California. When I posed the question, "what stood out about Success Stories to you?" Indigo responded by enthusiastically describing moments of drawing inspiration from people coming together and speaking about experiences that people don't usually speak openly about. Indigo added, "Success Stories creates spaces in which transformation is possible." Indigo doesn't deny that accountability is a personal thing. Of course, Indigo couldn't end the sentence without adding that "accountability heals the world."

When asked what Indigo would say to our community of people who are incarcerated, she lovingly stated "Don't be anyone's best kept secret, don't give up on yourself, and don't gaslight yourself into believing that what the system says about you has anything to do with your worthiness."



FREEDOM STORIES

WELCOMING HOME SID AGUILAR

Sid Aguilar is from Wilmington and was sentenced to 35 to life. He served 17 years of that sentence before being found suitable for parole. Being out for only 5 days, he takes a breath of freedom and smiles at life. He opened up by saying, "this feels like a dream too good to be true." He expressed gratitude for being able to take Success Stories just months before he went to his parole hearing. "The mentorship that Success Stories gave was exactly what I needed in order to walk into that boardroom and speak from the heart", Sid said. One of his biggest obstacles since being out has been learning technology, but he proudly confesses that groups like Success Stories has helped him be comfortable with asking for help.

He opened up by admitting that he grew up never going anywhere beyond his comfort zone which was his neighborhood. "I see life from a different lens now that I explore all of Los Angeles county", he expresses with a joyful grin. He was placed in a transitional house that he wasn't comfortable in, but, fortunately, his growth in communicating his needs helped place him in a better place. This reminded me of how important it is to communicate our needs. Many times the assumption of a "no" stopped me from ever trying. He was in a transitional house that he was uncomfortable in, but, because he had grown in his ability to communicate his needs, he was able to advocate for a move. This is such an important reminder; so often we assume a "no" and it stops us from even trying.

Sid wholeheartedly expresses to everyone within those walls... "never give up hope...find your purpose in life because that's going to be your drive. It's through serving others that I found my purpose and that has led me into something better; something outside of myself. He gives full credit to Success Stories who introduced him to the book "Will To Change" by bell hooks. This is the book that taught him that he is a human with valid emotion. It was then that doors opened. This he admits was and continues to be the reason why he is home



"The mentorship that Success Stories gave was exactly what I needed in order to walk into that boardroom and speak from the heart"

FERNANDO PARADA, WELCOME HOME!

Fernando was recently released after 20 years of a 27 to life sentence for 2nd degree murder. Born in Los Angeles and raised in the Palm Springs area, Fernando spoke openly of how alcoholism led him to killing a human being.

In our conversation, he expresses gratitude for a re-sentencing hearing that led to an early parole hearing; something that was a testament to changing laws and powerful programs. He named that prop 57, a law that gives time off sentences for attending groups, was pivotal because all of his transformation, learning and work translated into the reality of freedom earlier than expected.

Fernando held on to bitterness and resentment throughout his first years in prison. He expressed that he lived a double life of "using" and then attending groups where he said he was not. It was recognizing this self betrayal that began to open up the door of genuine change.

A visit from his step-dad changed his jaded perspective on people. Their deep conversation where they explored a lot of "whys" allowed him to mend that once broken relationship. Unfortunately, his step-dad passed, but that breakthrough left behind the fuel for Fernando to keep moving forward with a positive energy and hope. The loss of a loved one created the space for him to have empathy for the family of the human life he had taken. This accessing of emotions ultimately freed him in more ways than one.

It was writing his 10 year plan in Success Stories that helped him prioritize and became clear about his vision and future. Fernando has played a strong role in Success Stories as a Facilitator. Society has gained another ally in the battle against toxic masculinity and patriarchy. When asked what he would say to those that are still inside he responded with, "continue to do the work, take time for self reflection and think about what kind of person you want to be". Welcome home Fernando!



Resource Page

Get in touch with
your top 5

Self Publishing:

UBuildABook,
3075 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362

BookBaby
7905 N. Crescent Blvd
Pennsauken, NJ 08110

Sell your artwork at:

The Prison Art Gallery
1600 K St. N.W., Suite 501
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 393-1511

Art For Redemption
PO Box 231
Mountain Grove, MO 65711

Job Agencies For Parolees:

Jails to Jobs, Inc.
3641 Mount Diablo Blvd.,
#1164
Lafayette, CA 94549

Honest Jobs
hjfounders@honestjobs.co
(424) 566 - 7780

My Jobs Corner
9 E. Loockerman Street
Suite 311 Dover, DE 19901

Legal Assistance:

Uncommon Law
Tel: (510) 271-0310
Fax: (510) 817-4918
Address: 318 Harrison Street,
Suite 103, Oakland, CA 94607

Al Otro Lado
(Immigration Assistance/
Resources)
511 E. San Ysidro Blvd., # 333
San Ysidro, CA 92173
Contact Info
+52 664-208-8994
619-345-4693 (fax)

Prison Book Program (Free
Legal Books)
c/o Lucy Parsons Bookstore
1306 Hancock Street, Suite 100
Quincy, MA 02169
Prison Law Office (FREE legal
services, no U.S. citizenship
needed, currently and
formerly incarcerated eligible)
General Delivery
San Quentin, CA 94964

Assistance In Visiting Transportation:

Get On The Bus (free)
Southern California Office
2350 West Beverly Boulevard,
Suite 200
Montebello, CA 90640
Phone: (818) 980-7714
Fax: (818) 980-7702
Office Email: info@crjw.org
Information Email:
info@getonthebus.us

ONE FAMILY TRANSPORTATION
(affordable prices)

E-Mail:
[info@onefamilytransportation.c
om](mailto:info@onefamilytransportation.com)
Phone: (800) 370-1235

Family Express
Program Coordinator
Kristal Corona: (818) 980-7714
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Email: avalosj@crjw.org

BOOKS

All About Love by bell hooks

The Will to Change by bell hooks

Feminist Theory: From Margins to Center by bell hooks

Fighting Words by Patricia Hill Collins

New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander

We real cool by bell hooks

When They Call You A Terrorist by Patrisse Cullors and Asha Bandele

Decriminalizing Domestic Violence by Leigh Goodmark

Beyond Survival by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

The Prehistory of Sex by Timothy Taylor

The History of Sexuality by Michel Foucault

Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prisons by Michel Foucault

Freedom Dreams by Robin D. G. Kelley

Words of Fire by Beverly Guy-Sheftall

Are Prisons Obsolete? by Angela Davis

Golden Gulag by Ruth Wilson Gilmore

We Do This 'Til We Free Us by Mariame Kaba

“The crisis facing men is not the crisis of masculinity, it is the crisis of patriarchal masculinity. Until we make this distinction clear, men will continue to fear that any critique of patriarchy represents a threat.”

- *The will to change*, bell hooks

