

NEW RESOURCES AVAILABLE

We've added a resource page to our website that includes:

- **Job Opportunities**
- **Financial Support**
- **Educational Opportunities**
- **Support Groups**
- **and Personal Care Resources**

Please check out
successstoriesprogram.org/resources
for more!

ALUMNI GATHERING

We're ringing in 2021 with our first, quarterly Alumni Gathering! This March, we'll come together remotely with alumni who've returned home to provide support as a group committed to staying true to what's most important to us. We'll be sharing resources, reflecting on challenges and successes, and diving deep into topics that will push us to continue growing.

Staying connected is vital to supporting you upon returning home. Please keep us up to date on any location changes so that we can continue supporting one another.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

WRITE TO US AT:

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

OUR RECENT GRADUATES

This past quarter, we graduated participants through our partnerships with RiseUp Kingston (Kingston, NY), Underground GRIT (Orange, CA), and Project Bridge (Riverside, CA).

Congratulations to all of our graduates!



SUCCESS STORY

Mannie Thomas III



After being sentenced to 32-years-to-life, Mannie Thomas III looks back at the 15 and a half years that he spent in prison and can't help but to think, ***Freedom was a dream and it wasn't like a dream that you can really grasp – it was fleeting.*** No matter the emotional rollercoaster, Mannie stayed focused on what was important to him. Eventually, that fleeting dream of freedom became a reality.

When asked what his greatest obstacle has been since his release, Mannie admitted,

“in prison I felt like somebody else was somehow in control of my life. I now realize that freedom doesn't mean that every situation that comes my way will be in my full control.” Mannie reflected on how this feeling has presented itself, recalling an instance of frustration with the DMV upon coming home. In waiting months for a driver's license, Mannie noticed how that slowed down other opportunities, requiring him to still be dependent on others to a certain extent.

Still, the fuel and motivation for his Top 5 is strong. Recognizing that being in prison helped Mannie build the resilience that pushes him to keep moving forward, even when times get tough. “What motivates me is knowing a lot of brothers and sisters and people that I care for, that do not have this opportunity, are still in prison sitting in a box with a life sentence.” It's this focus on those we're still fighting for that led to Mannie's promotion to Director of Operations. Staying true to all the people still inside motivates us all to continue to deliver to more institutions (in and out of CDCR) than ever before.

When asked what he sees for the future of Success Stories, Mannie responded with an excited smile, “creating a community that is based upon support and healthy ways of making sure that we're creating spaces of inclusion.” The Success Stories team is dedicated to making sure that we make this dream a reality. Acknowledging all the brothers and sisters still inside, Mannie's parting words were: “Live everyday in there like you're going home tomorrow. Much love family.”

HELP US STAY CONNECTED TO YOU

If you move or your contact information changes, 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:

First and Last Name:

Email: **Phone:**

Mailing address: