

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

We're sending you strength and love as we transition into 2021. Here are some messages from folks back home:

You are loved and you are not alone. Together we can. Están amad@s y no están sol@s. Junt@s podemos. - Valérie Berta

You are loved, valued, and have so many on the outside advocating for you. Keep growing, learning, and evolving! Stay positive. God bless! - Jessica

You inspire me to keep doing the work! You are amazing and I am so proud of you. Happy New Year and God Bless xx - Mairead

you got this, it can be very overwhelming but i know the toughest battles go to the strongest people. never give up, keep your head, have faith and have hope. never give up <3 - Annet

## OUR RECENT GRADUATES

In the last quarter, we've 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!**



## RAC CREDITS UPDATE

Our team is actively working to ensure that CDCR honors RAC credits earned through our Correspondence Course throughout the state of California.

We are committed to keep pushing and applying pressure on CDCR to get what is best for our brothers and sisters inside, and we know that RAC is a critical component to getting you home. Your perseverance is our motivation. Stay tuned for more information next quarter!

## 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

## 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 facilities or are transferred, 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: