MESSAGE FROM
SCOTT BUDNICK

Dear Family,

In the midst of dramatic and unsettling changes happening at the national level, I write to you in this new year filled with hope. For our incarcerated brothers and sisters, who are receiving this newsletter by mail, a new year can feel like just another day on the calendar, no different from the countless days that have passed. I want to encourage everyone – both inside and out – to think differently and to embrace hope.

Because of your commitment to a fairer justice system, California voters passed Proposition 57 in 2016. Now, beginning in 2017, many of you will have a meaningful opportunity to turn your lives around and earn your way home sooner. Since the passage of Prop 57 you, your families, loved ones and allies have reached out to ARC wondering how Prop 57 will impact the lives of those incarcerated in California. Governor Brown recently released his annual budget, outlining some of the ways that he expects Prop 57 will dramatically change our justice system. The Governor expects that Prop 57 will:

- Increase and standardize good-time credit earnings, which are earned when an incarcerated individual avoids violating prison rules.
- Allow incarcerated individuals, with the exception of life-term inmates sentenced to life without parole and condemned individuals, to earn milestone credits. These credits are earned when an individual completes specific education or training programs with attendance and performance requirements.
- Increase the amount of time an individual can earn for milestone completion credits from six weeks per year to twelve weeks per year.
- Create new, enhanced milestone credits for one-time significant earned academic and vocational achievements, such as Associate of Arts or Bachelor’s degrees, high school diplomas, and career technical education certifications.

Enhanced milestone credits will be applied retrospectively for credits earned during the individual’s current term.

- Establish new achievement credits for people that have sustained participation in other rehabilitative programs and activities. Individuals will be able to earn up to four weeks of achievement credits in a 12-month period. Credits earned by life-termers will be credited towards their Minimum Eligible Parole Date.

To be clear, these are not the final regulations. We are eagerly awaiting an official draft of regulation from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). As soon as we receive this draft, we will work closely with members and coalition partners to provide feedback and public comment to ensure that CDCR develops fair and authentic incentives for self-improvement. We will also work to ensure that rehabilitative and educational programs are available throughout CDCR, and not just at a few select institutions, to give every one of you a fair chance to change your life.

By this point, you should also know that ARC is always trying to find new ways to bring hope to as many of our incarcerated family members as possible. This year, we’re working with other community groups to provide support for two measures that will finally end Juvenile Life Without Parole in California. Our hope is that people who were sentenced to Life Without Parole as juveniles will have the opportunity to have a parole hearing and, ultimately, come home.

In the meantime, we encourage you to remain hopeful, to embrace change, and to move intentionally and tirelessly towards self-improvement. Over 2017, we will continue to organize regular outreach trips to bring hope to prisons across California. We will also begin sending newsletters inside – like this one – to remind you that there is a community waiting for you to come home and prepared to support you.

Scott Budnick
**BUILDING A CAREER:**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH ARC MEMBER LORD ANTWANE**

In August 2016, ARC launched a 12-week training program, in partnership with Los Angeles Trade Technical College and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. The program leads members directly into union apprenticeships in the building and construction trades. Below ARC Member Scott Conner interviews Lord Antwane, a graduate of the program’s pilot cohort, who is now an electrician with IBEW Local 11.

*Why did you want to join ARC’s pre-apprenticeship program?*

For me, it was a shot to do something positive, something that I knew was going to take me far in life as a career, and a chance to provide for my family. It was a chance to become a role model and the productive citizen I wanted to be coming out of prison.

*What was your experience like in the program?*

I loved it, man. It was hands on. I got to learn a lot. I learned some great tools and had some great help. The program started with a Life Coach teaching us basic life skills and refreshers on how to succeed in a career and be the best man for the job. Then, from there, we got hands-on experience on a job site and laying foundation work. It was all around a great experience. I went in there with a great group of guys and 20 of us graduated. We’re all going to become union members because of this program.

*What is your current job?*

I’m currently an electrician with Local 11. Right now, we’re doing a 700-unit apartment complex on Wilshire and Bixel. It’s a big job – I’m working with about 50 electricians – and I’m doing everything over there. I’m pulling wire. I’m seeing it all. My co-worker Thomas Reese – give him a shout-out. We’re both over here. We both graduated from the ARC program, and now we’re both succeeding.

*How did you feel on Day One of the job?*

It was like the first day of school. It was all nerves. I was thinking, can I hang with the big boys? Can I succeed with the best of them? The greatest thing about being a union member is that the union takes care of their guys. If you don’t know something, they’re willing to teach you. They always want you to be safe. I can go to my foreman, I can go to my journeyman, I can go to some of my co-workers and if I have a problem with this, they show me how to get the job done and get the job done safely, correctly, and professionally.

*How has the pre-apprenticeship program prepared you for your job?*

The first two weeks of the program taught me skills I use every day. It’s the life skills part of it – being able to work productively with your team and be assertive as a leader within your team. Play your role. Get the job done. I’m always early. I’m one of the first guys to get here. It’s all about carrying myself in a productive and professional manner. My co-workers don’t see my background. They see a guy who is professional and a lot of that comes from the tools I learned through the pre-apprenticeship program.

*What’s surprised you about the job?*

That it never ends. (Laughs) But you know what? I enjoy it. I get my hands dirty. I get home beat up and tired from work and I enjoy it because I’m getting an honest paycheck. I put in an honest eight hours. It’s something I pat myself on the back about every day – like man, I earn my paycheck and it’s a good living wage. You know sometimes I look back at seven months ago, where I was, in prison, versus today and it surprises me. Because life is so different – that’s what surprises me right now.

*Do your co-workers know about your background in the criminal justice system?*

Some do, some don’t. I keep that sort of close to the chest. I don’t mix and match. You know, I am a convict, a felon, whatever you want to say. But that’s not all I am. I’m an Electrician with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and that’s how I carry myself on the job. And they’ve treated me great. From the first day on the job I was a brother. I was an IBEW brother to them and that’s all that matters.

*Where do you see yourself in five years?*

I see myself as a journeyman electrician putting a down payment on my first house. That’s my goal. That’s what I’m working towards right now. I want to take this opportunity to put all the pieces together, to really succeed in life. That’s what I see myself doing – succeeding in the trade and getting ready for the remainder of my life. I have this great jumping start through this program. So many times in my life all I wanted was that chance. It was this chance right here that broke the ceiling for me. I appreciate it because it’s a game-changer for me. When people see Lord, they don’t see Lord the convict anymore. They see a union guy. That’s all I wanted in life. I wanted to be a role model to people in my family and my community. And I just want to say thank you to ARC and everyone who made this possible for giving me that chance.

Thank you to program partners Los Angeles Trade Technical College and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, as well as ECMC Foundation, the Rose Hills Foundation, and all of ARC’s generous funders for making this program possible.
ARC ON CAMPUS

Four ARC members working towards their undergraduate degrees share elements of their journeys to higher education.

HOWARD CHUNG
Intern at ARC
Incarcerated 2 Years
Senior at UCLA
Major: Religion

JOSE GONZALEZ
Inside Coordinator at ARC
Incarcerated 20 Years
Senior at Cal State LA
Major: Psychology & Political Science

KENT MENDOZA
Member Coordinator at ARC
Incarcerated 5 Years
Sophomore at East LA College
Major: Political Science & Business

ADRIAN VASQUEZ
Job Developer at ARC
Incarcerated 20 Years
Junior at Cal State Long Beach
Major: Sociology

What did you think college life would be like before you stepped on campus?

H.C.: I dropped out of high school and never had any real reference point to imagine what college life would be like. I had an end goal and college was a necessary part of the formula to accomplish my plan, so it didn’t matter if college was going to be hard, easy, fun, boring. I was committed to the process.

J.G.: Before stepping on campus, I thought college life was like the movies. I didn’t take into consideration how hard it would be. Certainly much harder than I expected. There’s work, traveling, friends, family – so many distractions. And school outside of prison is on a whole different level. It’s a lot of work, but so rewarding in the end.

What did you think college life would be like before you stepped on campus?

K.M.: I started going to school when I was first incarcerated. But once I graduated from high school, I couldn’t go any further. From the age of 17 to 20, I couldn’t advance in school because of my immigration status. Instead, I filled my time reading books and self-educating. I feel like everyone deserves that chance for education – no one should be excluded. Nevertheless, I didn’t let my circumstances hold me back and I took it upon myself to learn all that I could. I knew education was the only way to succeed in life. So I hit the books, and that really helped me once I got out and into college because I was ready.

A.V.: I saw education as a way for me to escape the reality of prison – it was a way for me to expand my mind. And I understood that in order for me to go home, I had to take higher learning and show the Board of Parole Hearings that I was in the process of changing. It was difficult because I didn’t start college until my tenth year of incarceration. Prior to that, I didn’t even know that college was offered until I was transferred to Folsom State Prison. At the time, it was a Level Three prison – I was surprised to learn that people were going to college. I thought the program would be for youthful offenders. Then I was transferred to a different institution where no education was offered. Out of 1,000 people on the yard, there were only about 15 going to college. We had difficulties getting books, getting proctors. I did as much as I could until I was transferred again.

Given that you have now taken college classes on the outside, what advice would you give to those men and women who hope to pursue higher education when they come home?

H.C.: My best advice to incarcerated men and women who hope to pursue higher education when they come home is do not compare your benchmarks and milestones in life to others. If you’ve been incarcerated, you have a unique wisdom and a drive to succeed that a lot of other folks don’t have. That skill naturally kicks in when times get tough – and have no doubt, times will get tough. But with the right support system and patience to do things right, you’ll succeed. You just have to put in the work.

J.G.: Learn to delegate your time. Prepare now, take as many classes in prison as possible. Push yourself. Take more classes now so you get into that mode of pushing yourself.

A.V.: Be ready. Out here, it’s not the same as sitting in a cell doing your homework. It’s totally different. It’s more demanding, more challenging. But you have more access to resources. Keep an open mind. In there, take your golden four – Math, English, Philosophy and Speech. Knock those out, don’t avoid them, and keep pushing. Get the highest GPA you can in there. Your GPA counts – it’s what helped me get into a four-year university.
HEALING THROUGH COMMUNITY

ARC began organizing retreats to provide formerly incarcerated members with experiences they never dreamed possible. Surrounded by nature, members have the opportunity to create deep connections with a positive, supportive community. Retreats also provide members with moments of serenity, away from the stressors of every day life, offering them space to heal from trauma and to reflect on future goals.

When we have shared images and stories from these trips with our incarcerated brothers and sisters, they often recognize a former cellmate, or a member they were incarcerated with, motivating them to stay committed to change, and reminding them to remain hopeful that they, too, can one day experience these retreats.

CATALINA CAMPING TRIP - AUGUST
26-28, 2016

Every year, ARC brings more than 50 members -- many of them just recently released from incarceration – on a three-day camping retreat to the Little Harbor campsite on the quiet backside of Catalina Island. Upon arrival to the island, members hike six miles along the coast to the campsite, immediately providing them with an opportunity to support and motivate one another. During the day, members hike, swim, snorkel, and kayak. At night, they participate in healing circles around the camp fire to strengthen their connection to the community. This year, members also had the opportunity to connect with partners from The California Endowment, the Juvenile Division of the Board of Parole Hearings, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department.
In July 2016, ARC brought 40 formerly incarcerated men and women – who together served over 350 years in juvenile and adult prison – on a three-day rafting trip covering 26 miles of the American River in the remote wilderness of California’s Middle Fork Canyon. Over the course of the trip, members created strong bonds, learned to work together, and confronted fears, while navigating Level III and IV rapids along the river. When they weren’t battling rapids, members had the opportunity to hike to waterfalls or kayak along the calmer sections of the river. The River Rafting Trip has become an annual retreat used to strengthen the membership and draw new members into the family.

“\nThe ongoing demands of everyday life can easily distract us from our healing process. It’s difficult to heal and grow in places you don’t deem safe, or when you feel you’ll be judged by those around you. This retreat provides the atmosphere where healing can begin or continue, where instead of being judged, you’re comforted, easing your journey towards growth and development.”

–ARC Member Esteban Nunez

The 2017 Annual Member Retreat was ARC’s largest retreat yet, with more than 250 members, partners, and allies in attendance. Held each year at the Canyon Creek Sports Camp in Lake Hughes, CA, the three-day annual retreat offers members and guest opportunities to connect with each other through recreational activities and community meals, as well as opportunities for reflection and healing through workshops and group discussions.
2016 IN REVIEW

At ARC, 2016 was an inspiring year marked by significant growth, including an expansion of our programs and services as well as the opening of a second ARC office in Sacramento. As we prepare to build on this work in 2017, we wanted to update you on the strides we’ve taken over the past year to change lives and build healthier communities across California.

EXPANDING OUR REACH
ARC SACRAMENTO

On September 16th, ARC’s Sacramento Office, located just a few blocks from the State Capitol, officially opened its doors with a launch event featuring keynote speeches from Speaker of the California State Assembly Anthony Rendon, Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg, and Chief of Sacramento County Probation Lee Seale. Since September, ARC Sacramento has served dozens of formerly incarcerated members with reentry services and is conducting regular trips to juvenile facilities in Northern California to support and mentor incarcerated youth.

FIRST SACRAMENTO FUNDRAISER

Sacramento Intern Esteban Nunez organized ARC’s first Sacramento fundraiser, held on November 1st, which drew over 80 participants, including foundation partners, elected officials, leaders from the Sacramento County Probation Department, and ARC staff and members. The event raised nearly $50,000 to support ARC’s work in the State Capitol.

SACRAMENTO JOB READINESS

In December 2016, ARC Sacramento launched its first Job Readiness Program with support from local business leaders and hiring managers from Paraguay restaurants, Hyatt Regency Sacramento, and several Starbucks stores. ARC Member David Rey will be running a workshop in conjunction with Dress for Success, to provide interview attire.

ARC welcomes our first 35 members in Sacramento and looks forward to supporting additional men and women returning home to the region seeking to better themselves and contribute positively to the community.
ARC COUNSELING SERVICES

In July 2016, due to a generous donation from ARC’s Board of Directors, ARC hired its first Director of Counseling Services and began offering in-house therapy to members. ARC currently provides three types of counseling services: individual therapy, supplementary programming, and healthy relationships groups. Because reintegrating into society is a complicated process, these services help members transition more smoothly and develop healthier coping and relational skills. Below are brief descriptions of the new services provided:

Healthy Relationships

Healthy relationships groups are therapy-style counseling groups that meet weekly. Each week a new topic for discussion is addressed, including gender roles, boundaries, relationship support, and effective communication with others, depending on the needs of the group. Building and maintaining healthy relationships is essential to members’ overall wellbeing.

Individual Therapy

Individual therapy addresses members’ individual needs and goals. These sessions are useful for working on individual issues or concerns and can include learning ways to cope with anger, frustration, stress, disappointment, recovery, and/or transitional difficulties. Sessions are conducted by ARC’s Director of Counseling Services, along with three USC MSW graduate student volunteers.

Yoga And Meditation

ARC’s current Supplementary Program is a weekly yoga class. Instruction is provided by USC volunteers. These classes help with improving mindfulness, which helps reduce stress and anxiety, as well as improving flexibility and mind-body awareness.

ARC would like to thank Blair James and our wonderful USC Volunteers for their help and dedication to our members.

MAGNOLIA HOUSING PROGRAM

In September 2014, ARC opened its pilot housing program in Sylmar, through a partnership with Los Angeles Mission College, to provide stable housing, combined with reentry services and educational support to 20 ARC members. Since then, ARC has served 42 members through the program and have increased the program to 38 beds. This month, a little over two years later, we’re excited to announce the opening of our new Magnolia Housing Program! Located in Koreatown and developed through a partnership with Los Angeles Trade Technical College, ARC’s Magnolia Housing Program will serve an additional 22 ARC members, bringing the total number of housing beds to 60.
STRENGTHENING OUR VOICES!

In addition to its direct policy advocacy efforts, ARC works to ensure the voices of system-involved youths are heard in local and state committees. We’re thrilled to report that in late 2016, Governor Jerry Brown appointed three ARC members to California’s State Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Kent Mendoza, Ramon Leija and Miguel Garcia.

Kent, who serves as ARC’s Community & Member Relations Coordinator, is a student at East Los Angeles College and previously worked at the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.

Ramon has volunteered as a reserve firefighter and emergency medical technician at the Riverside County Fire Department since 2016 and has volunteered as a youth mentor at the Regional Access Project Foundation’s Coachella Valley Youth Leadership Mentoring Project since 2014.

Miguel Garcia is a student at the University of California, Riverside and has worked as a legal assistant since 2016.

In addition, Sam Lewis, who is ARC’s Senior Member Services Manager Serves has been appointed on the Executive Steering Committee for CALGRIP (California Gang Reduction, Intervention, and Prevention) and to the Mayors Blue Ribbon Commission on Employment and Equity.

The Board State and Community Corrections (BSCC) uses Executive Steering Committees to inform decision making related to the Board’s programs, including distributing funds and developing regulations. ESC’s help the BSCC to work collaboratively in changing environments, complete work on time, and create positive partnerships critical for success.

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Employment Equity, is an alliance of private and public sector employers committed to providing opportunities for people who have been historically excluded from upwardly-mobile jobs. In addition to suggesting new policies to city leaders to help the formerly incarcerated.

Congratulations Kent, Ramon, Miguel, and Sam Lewis!!

About the Anti-Recidivism Coalition

The mission of the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) is to change lives and create safe, healthy communities by providing a support and advocacy network for, and comprised of, formerly incarcerated men and women.

Founded in 2013, with offices in Los Angeles and Sacramento, ARC provides services and support to formerly incarcerated individuals and advocates for fairer criminal justice policies. ARC provides its membership with mentorship, mental health services, supportive housing, access to jobs and education, and opportunities to advocate for criminal justice reform.

Write to us: Anti-Recidivism Coalition, 448 S. Hill Street, Suite 908, Los Angeles, CA 90013.