



ARC Members Joel and Michael in a panel discussion with Elizabeth Calvin at the Human Rights Watch Voices for Justice Gala at SF City Hall November 9, 2017

MESSAGE FROM ARC

Dear Family,

We know from conversations with our members that the holiday season can be an incredibly difficult time for our incarcerated brothers and sisters. During this time, we want to remind you that you're not alone. There is a community of ARC staff members, formerly incarcerated members, partners, and supporters who are thinking of you throughout the holiday season and continuing to create opportunities for you to come home and be successful when you come home. We hope you can think of the many supporters you have on the outside to bring you some joy throughout the holidays.

In this December issue of our newsletter, we highlight recent successes and developments at ARC that we believe will bring you hope for the new year. We highlight several criminal justice reform measures that became law in late 2017. We also interview ARC's Hope and Redemption Team, made up of seven former Lifers who are leading rehabilitative programming in six Southern California prisons to ensure that individuals are prepared to take advantage of recent policy changes. We interview two ARC members whose sentences were commuted by the Governor in 2017. And lastly, we highlight a new partnership between ARC

and Wonder Woman Director Patty Jenkins that has brought to attention to criminal justice reform, as well as hope and purpose to hundreds of incarcerated women and girls.

We hope these stories provide you with a reason to remain hopeful. Over the next year, we encourage you to stay committed to working on yourself, in any way you can, so that as new opportunities arise, either from our policy work or new programs, you will be ready to take advantage of them. We look forward to continuing this work together in 2018.

Feature Two

GOVERNOR BROWN SIGNS HISTORIC PACKAGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM LEGISLATION



ARC Members Raul and John speaking with the California Governor Jerry Brown

We are thrilled to inform you that on October 11, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a series of bills that will bring hope to thousands of incarcerated men, women, and their loved ones across California. ARC Founder and President Scott Budnick recognized the significance of these bills, saying, "[t]hese smart-on-crime bills, many [of which] passed with a bipartisan vote,

embrace the concepts of public safety, accountability, and redemption."

ARC co-sponsored four of these measures (SB 190, SB 312, SB 394, and SB 395) and worked hard alongside extraordinary advocates throughout the state to educate legislators about the importance of these specific justice reforms and other critical

pieces of legislation. In the process of walking the halls of the State Capitol to advocate for these measures, ARC members demonstrated what is possible when we provide hope and invest in human life. We believe that these living examples of rehabilitation and redemption had a huge positive impact on legislators and Governor Brown, as they considered these reforms.

SB 190 ends the harmful, unlawful, and costly assessment and collection of administrative fees against families with youth in the juvenile system. SB 312 restores a youth's ability to seal his/her juvenile court record, and therefore increase their chances of finding and maintaining stable employment and other opportunities. SB 394 gives individuals serving life without parole for crimes they committed as youth the opportunity to



Imagine Justice concert July 21, 2017

have a parole hearing after 25 years of incarceration. SB 395 safeguards young peoples' constitutional rights by requiring that youth under 15 years old consult with counsel prior to waiving their Miranda rights.

These bills build upon ARC's previous advocacy work in providing second chances to young people in the system and now serve as a foundation for extending the conversation of hope and redemption to those who were young adults when they entered the system. "California's children and youth deserve the hope and opportunities these new laws will give

them," said Senior Advocate and ARC Board Member Elizabeth Calvin.

This is an exciting time for justice reform work in California. We are enthusiastic about the ways in which opportunities for redemption are being spread throughout California's prison system. The enactment of these laws also places California at the forefront of criminal justice reform work nationwide. "Our futures are all bound, and California's leadership on this issue can benefit the State while helping guide the country," commented Bryan Stevenson, Founder and Executive Director of Equal Justice Initiative.

Feature Two

HOW A JOURNEY BACK INSIDE LEADS OTHERS OUT

In early 2017, ARC received funding from CDCR to develop a regional team of formerly incarcerated staff members that would lead rehabilitative programming and reentry support in six Southern California prisons -- Kern Valley State Prison, California State Prison - Corcoran, Ironwood State Prison, Calipatria State Prison, California State Prison - Centinela, and Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility. Led by eight former Lifers, the Hope and Redemption program launched in August 2017. In the story below, Director of Inside Programs Sam Lewis and Hope and Redemption Team Members discuss the creation of the program and share what it's been like going back inside.



ARC Director of Inside Programs Sam Lewis at the first graduation for the Hope and Redemption Team at Calipatria State Prison

How did the idea of Team Hope and Redemption come about?

"Team Hope and Redemption was an idea I initially mentioned to ARC Founder Scott Budnick three years ago. Scott was asking me how I was able to transform my life from one of a dope dealing, high school dropout, and a gang member into the devoted, tenacious, and compassionate person I am today. I told him that first came the desire to change. I remember knowing I wanted to change, but at the time I didn't know how, and I knew this to be the case for others like me. At that time, there weren't a lot of self-help groups, but I was able to get involved in the few that were available, thus my journey began.

Eventually, along with other Lifers, I began to help develop programs that would address various character defects, and these programs helped me change and become the responsible and compassionate man I am today.

After sharing this with Scott, I brought up the idea of former Lifers being able to go back to facilitate the same groups that helped me change, with the intent of helping others transform. Scott asked me if I could find former Lifers that would be willing to do this kind of work, while maintaining a high level of integrity, compassion, and commitment. I was certain I could find many that had all of those attributes, so today you have the Hope and Redemption Team." – Sam

What was it like for you to go back into prison as a former Lifer?

"The first time I went back into prison it was extremely emotional for me. Walking into the belly of the beast of my own free will was slightly intimidating. My mind quickly flooded with the memories of when I first walked into prison. The sounds, the smells, the atmosphere, and most of all, the people. When I saw the faces of so many I had left behind, my heart instantaneously filled with compassion and the fire that fuels my passion for this work. Every time I go back into prison my passion for this work is reenergized." – Sam

Knowing the struggle of proving to the Parole Board that you were fit to reenter society, what would it have meant to you to have something like Team Hope and Redemption?

"Going before the Board of Parole Hearings and endlessly struggling to prove that I was fit to reenter society seemed at the time to be impossible. After a rigorous journey through nine Parole Board Hearings and a court order, I was finally found suitable for parole. To have had something like the Hope and Redemption Team would have meant that I would not be denied parole nine times, and proving that I was fit to reenter society would



ARC Director of Inside Programs Sam Lewis at the first graduation for the Hope and Redemption Team at Calipatria State Prison

not have seemed to be impossible. More importantly, it would have given my family and I hope for a life outside of those walls.” – Sam

What motivated you to join the team?

“My motivation for joining the Hope and Redemption team came from my personal belief that former Lifers could be a powerful inspiration and motivation to current Lifers seeking positive change.” – Sam

“When I was incarcerated many people assisted me in my journey of change and transformation. I vowed if ever given the opportunity I would return to prison and help those with the desire to change. Scott and Sam created the Hope and Redemption Team and I immediately applied for the job.” – J'Mel

What thoughts ran through your head the night before Day one in a facility as a Team Hope Redemption member?

“Doubt. I remember wondering if we would even be accepted or if our work would be effective.” – J'Mel

What thoughts ran through your head at the beginning of the first day?

“How amazing it was to be back in the prison I actually paroled from. I was now in the prison facilitating programs and having an opportunity to hear how grateful the men are.” – David A.

What thoughts ran through your head at the end of the first day?

“That I was glad I chose to be a part of this team and thank God they let me back out.” – Jacob

What do you enjoy about doing this work?

“What I enjoy most about this work is giving back. paying it forward. I grew up in an environment where many believed in the phrase, the game is to be sold and not told. Literally information and knowledge was sold or selfishly kept away from the unprivileged.” – J'Mel

What has been your most rewarding moment in a facility as a Team member?

“Seeing the hardest of the hard work across racial lines in an effort to help the next man gain clarity and insight.” – Eugene

“Watching and listening to a man talk about how he finally appreciated all the things his mother did for him when he was growing up. He explained how he took everything she did for granted and started to resent her for cleaning houses to support him and his siblings. Now he understands the sacrifices she made for them.” – Jacob

“When the men open up for the first time in

their lives and share their painful past.” – David G.

“My most rewarding moment is when we're getting ready to leave and they all take the time to come up to us and shake our hands and thank us for coming. That feels amazing to know we bring them so much joy.” – Cesar

What has been your most challenging moment in a facility as a team member?

“My most challenging experience has been seeing the pain in the eyes of men that want change but don't know how to change.” – Sam

“The most challenging moment was when a Correctional Officer called me an inmate. Also, as a form of discouragement, a staff member said we were wasting our time coming back in to help.” – J'Mel

What has surprised you the most?

“How uninformed most of the Lifers are about several aspects parole process.” – Jacob

“What has surprised me the most is how naive most of the men are when it comes to understanding what is required to be found suitable for parole.” – Adam

What does success as a Hope & Redemption Team member mean to you?

“To me, success means impacting men in prison in such a way that they actually become rehabilitated and become successful in society.” – Adam

“Success for me is providing hope and allowing those that earned the right to redeem themselves.” – J'Mel



Members Jose and Sam sharing perspectives with Common

Feature Three

A NEW HERO FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

In August 2017, Director Patty Jenkins reached out to ARC to co-host two screenings of her most recent film, Wonder Woman, at a juvenile camp for girls and a women's prison. Released just two months earlier on June 2, Wonder Woman earned over \$800 million worldwide, making it the highest grossing live-action film to be directed by a woman. Patty, who has been a strong supporter of criminal justice reform since directing the 2003 film Monster, wanted to ensure that incarcerated women and girls had an opportunity to see Wonder Woman, and attended the screenings herself to speak to them about empowerment and overcoming adversity.



Wonder Woman director Patty Jenkins honored for work with ARC at Variety's Power of Women

Just after 9am on Saturday, September 16, nearly 50 incarcerated girls made their way into the gym at Camp Scudder in Santa Clarita. While most traveled just a few hundred yards, from the housing units at Camps Scudder and Scott, a few dozen arrived by bus from Dorothy Kirby Center, leaving as early as 7am to make the trip in time.

Once inside, it was clear that this wasn't a typical day at the probation camp. Earlier that morning, staff and volunteers had been working for hours to set up a special screening of Wonder Woman for the girls. The room was decorated with red, blue, and gold streamers. A Wonder Woman emblem, cut from gold construction paper, hung above a table in the back of the gym, where snacks, bags of candy, and a popcorn machine had been set up. At the front of the gym, several rows of chairs were lined up facing a large screen. The girls were led into the gym in three groups and took their seats. Staff and volunteers passed out popcorn, candy, and sodas as the lights dimmed. And then the movie started.

Wonder Woman – the highest-grossing superhero origin story of all time and the highest-grossing live action film to be directed by a woman – opens with scenes of Amazonian women in training, female

warriors preparing for a future battle with Ares, the God of War. The film immediately introduces viewers to several dozen women heroes, even before introducing its title character. For the girls at Camp Scudder, these weren't the last female heroes they'd meet that day.

In the summer of 2017, Patty Jenkins, the Director of Wonder Woman, reached out to ARC with the idea of hosting screenings of the film for incarcerated women and girls. The first screening took place at Camp Scudder. The second was held on a Sunday evening in late September at California Institution for Women (CIW) to an audience of more than 200 incarcerated women.

Patty Jenkins and actress Lucy Davis, who starred in Wonder Woman, attended both screenings to meet the women and girls. After the movie ended at each screening, Patty and Lucy answered questions on the film and their career paths, and shared their motivation for becoming involved in criminal justice reform.

Jaki Murillo, a member of ARC who had been incarcerated in both Camp Scudder and CIW, attended each screening.

"Patty sharing her personal journey, that led

her to directing this movie, sparked a creativity and a sense of self in the girls in Camp Scudder. She reminded them of their passion, who they wanted to be as kids, what they had forgotten," Jackie recalled.

She continued, "Patty triggered something totally different in the women at CIW. They saw themselves in the movie. There were tears and excitement. When they heard Patty share her story and what led her to CIW, it sparked a connectedness between the women. I saw the different groups of women come together to cheer her on. To me, the island in Wonder Woman was everything. That island was the community of women I left behind in prison. That island is our community of women. We are Wonder Women and Wonder Girls."

A few weeks after the screenings, on October 13, Patty shared her work in a very different setting at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills. The room was filled with actresses, producers, directors, and philanthropists. Variety Magazine had selected Patty as an honoree at its annual Power of Women event for her accomplishments and her work with ARC. At the event, Patty told the audience, "I didn't grow up thinking I would be all about prison, but once you get near it, you start to see the people who truly deserve another chance and they can't get it." She continued, "Everybody deserves to be that superhero, no matter whether they started out in a juvenile detention center or on the island of Themyscira. I'm excited to be a part of it."



Wonder Woman Director Patty Jenkins at Camp Scudder on September 16

Feature Four

WHEN TIME REWRITES ITSELF

On August 18, 2017, California Governor Jerry Brown commuted the sentence of nine individuals, including five ARC members. ARC member Esteban Nuñez spoke with John Rodriguez on his extraordinary experience.



ARC Members Raul and John with California Governor Jerry Brown

Describe the events leading up to the commutation.

Initially, I didn't think much of the petition. Deep down I had accepted that I was going to earn my way out of prison through the parole board process. I was sentenced to 22 years. Having the chance to go home after 15 years was more than I could ever hope for.

When I was filling out the paperwork to apply, I didn't even mention it to my family because I saw it as a long-shot. Then came the interview. I still didn't allow myself to expect that it would be granted. I didn't want to hang onto something that could hurt me if it didn't happen. But all sorts of thoughts started flooding my mind. It was difficult to think that there was a chance, I felt like I hadn't done enough to deserve the opportunity. I continued to do the things I was doing, attending self-help groups, playing softball with the YOP team, and focusing on school, hoping it would distract me from the petition. I just let it go because I knew it was out of my control.

When and how did you first hear that Governor made it official? What thoughts came to mind when you knew you were coming home sooner than you planned?

I remember being called to the program office right before count time, which was odd. When I entered the office, I saw the

Warden and the Captain. They asked about the petition, which I had filled out a while ago, and if I had heard anything yet, which I hadn't. They then called their Sacramento office and spoke with the Governor's Chief of Staff. I knew then what the call was regarding, and my mind and heart began racing. I didn't know what I was going to be told.

I thought I might be told, "Okay, we reviewed your petition and we have decided to leave your sentence as it is." I suppressed the idea of going home early. Given how things have played out in the past, I tried to remain realistic. But surprisingly the reality of going home sooner, did come and it overshadowed the negativity that dwelled inside of me. Before I was given the news, all I could think about was, "why me?" I already had a release date. I knew eventually I would be going home. I met so many good-hearted people, who showed me how to care and how to share personal pieces of myself to others. The people I loved and shared so many memories with, would be left behind, they would be lost in this abyss of grief and desperation.

When your friends/family found out that your sentence was commuted, how did they react?



ARC Members Raul and John in front of the California State Capitol

One reaction that really impacted me came from my mentor's wife. She was getting her nails done at the salon, when someone had called her and disclosed to her that I was coming home. She began to scream then cry in front of everyone in the room. People began to look at her like she was crazy but once she was able to talk, she described the situation to the others and quickly had the whole nail salon sobbing. Everyone was full of joy. Things like this do not happen, not even in the movies. You're used to perpetually waiting and being misled. Not with this news.

What have you found to be the most challenging since you've come home?

What's been most difficult is understanding where I am. The scariest part is feeling like prison never happened, it seems like a blur. It feels like I came home and immediately picked up where I had left off. There's a balance that I have to get used to because physically, I'm free, but one can become distracted by the outside world. I had and have a clear sense of who I am and what I want to do, but it's easy to lose sight of those important, inner conversations that you have with yourself. That's the challenge to not forget who you are, and that's not an easy thing to do once you're out.



ARC Members Raul and John on their way to the California State Capitol

Tell me how you first heard about ARC. What was your first impression? And what attracted you to the organization?

I first heard of ARC before it actually became an organization. I met Scott Budnick through one of my high school teachers. He used to visit me in New Folsom, and was always interested in and questioning how serious I was about my education. He offered to help me transfer to Ironwood State Prison, which is known for its college program and abundance of self-help groups, but under the condition that I continued to program, allowing my points to drop. After about two years of programming and staying focused, my points dropped and I was almost instantly transferred to Ironwood.

What stood out to me about Scott and ARC was the focus on rehabilitation. A few years ago, real self-help groups and education programs didn't exist in most prisons. I knew I was fortunate, and I had made a

commitment to my mentor and Scott to take education seriously. I didn't know it at the time, but I was one of a group of guys that were sent to Ironwood. We could have easily screwed up opportunities for those who followed us. We were young, and the assumption then was, if you're a youthful offender, you're going to screw up. We were the first of many youthful offenders, besides the forgotten IYO program, to be given an opportunity to prove ourselves. We saw this as just a chance to do differently ourselves, but Scott saw Assembly Bill 1276 and the start of a Youth Offender Program. That's what drew me to ARC. It wasn't about one individual to him but about creating opportunities for the population. In everything he did, there was a bigger picture.

Tell me about some of the people you've met while being a part of ARC.

I'm a very reserved person I normally stick to myself. I didn't personally know this staff member, I would see her in the office, had walked past her a few times, exchanged smiles and hellos, but nothing more. Yet after attending some gatherings, while on a retreat, I actually spoke to her and in speaking with her I truly felt that she understood my situation. This was a first for me, to know that someone genuinely cares so much for those around them. She listens, and that's not an easy job not just anyone can do it. I spoke to her about my uncertainties, my questions, my fear of forgetting who I am. I was in awe to know that these questions and thoughts are not just of those who have been recently released. These are people ordeals. She, too, has the same questions and concerns. She helped me understand that it's perfectly normal to have these thoughts, and having them means you care and are continuously trying to better yourself. That small conversation after an uphill hike made me feel welcomed like I belong.

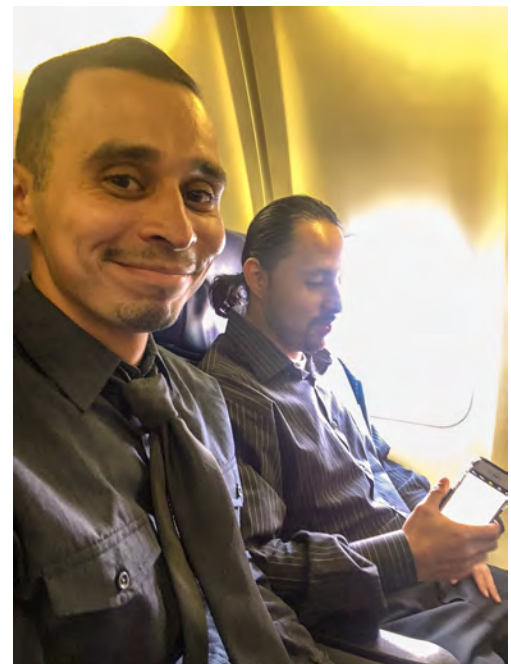
What does ARC mean to you personally?

I view ARC as place where the change doesn't stop. I say this because many set the idea of getting out as the pinnacle of their

dreams. When that day does finally come, what do you do? You don't stop there. Coming home is just a short rest-stop. ARC is that home you can go to when nobody else seems to relate. It's where you recharge and get motivated to continue on your path. That's why I visit every week.

What else can you tell me about being home? What was your first day home like?

My first day home was, and at times still is surreal. It felt weird to wake up and not have to worry about rolling off the rack, not hear, "get ready for chow," wait for a door to open, follow a line in unison to be fed, carry a spoon in my pocket wrapped with toilet paper. Those things didn't exist anymore. No yellow lines to tell you you're out of bounds. What was tough was temporarily leaving behind those that you love and built relationships with. I created family in there and friends that understood me. It hurt to know that I had woken up at the time I pleased, prepared coffee, sat in a chair and ate with a metal spoon while they followed the same programmed day. It was hard to believe that I was really out, almost as if someone would come out of nowhere and say, "Okay, this was a prank. Time to go back now." But it wasn't, and I was out. I'm grateful for it. I know I was fortunate.



ARC Members Raul and John on their way to the California State Capitol

LIFE IN COLOR

In the following essay, ARC staff member Jose Gonzalez reminds our incarcerated family members to never lose hope.

What an interesting time we are living in. I've been out a little over 2 and a half years and I can still say I'm amazed at how fast the world is changing around me, around us. There are times I laugh out loud in disbelief, like when I'm watching a movie or sports on my iPhone while sitting at a coffee shop. I laugh simply because it has a clearer picture than any 13-inch Zenith color television screen I ever owned while living the seemingly gray PIA life.

When a complaint erupts from behind my lips, I remember those black and white feelings that amplified the colorless life around me. The crystal-clear memories of those emotionless walls, saturated with a lifetime of grief and blood, still haunt me. The same walls that confined me and so many others for years, dulling our logic with animosity and sadness. We wore out countless soles on our white shoes walking for decades in endless circles around a track with our heads in a fog of ignorance. Like a legion of resentful zombies judging the people who pointed their fingers at us, we spent our whole lives pointing our fingers at everyone and everything that called us out on our behavior. Making excuses and hiding from the light of truth and responsibility, we snapped our jaws at each other or anyone willing to reach out a hand of assistance.

A shameful reaction from those of us who were still denying what we had done, or how we had lived. We turned our faces from the hard labor of deep introspection, and, instead complained about the wrongs done to us: the way a spoiled child complains about doing the work, we either didn't want to face this hard work, or wanted someone else to do it for us. These were the "Dark Ages" that many of us lived in while serving our time in the California Department of Corrections. Back when the word "life" actually meant you were going to spend a lifetime in prison and when "hope" was a four-letter meaningless word.

Things have changed, however, in ways I still can't fathom. The California legislature has come to recognize that when you pay your debt and work on correcting your mistakes, you should be acknowledged for

it, and earn an opportunity for a new chance. Crowds of powerful and relentless advocates have pounded on the door of the Capitol forcing changes to these cold and punitive laws. Opportunities have been created for those who for years ruminated over losses and only knew failure. The way of seeing the world from the inside changed. SB260, SB261, Prop 57, AB1308 (and the list will continue), have paved the way for anyone doing the work to have an honest opportunity for parole. The chance of returning to loved ones has become a realistic possibility. Those who have been paralyzed by isolation, and watched with sadness as the years passed with no chances of outside reunification now enjoy a new sense of hope. Then the unimaginable happened, the survivors of crime, the ones we harmed in our crimes, began to forgive, the ultimate gift for the those doing the necessary work.

For those of you who are frustrated or who simply do not remember these gray, violent, and hopeless times within the California Department of Corrections, simply ask the individuals around you, the ones with older numbers. They will tell you. Things are different – maybe not completely better, but there is a bright light now that we hope will never go out. Now is the time to make your effort worth it, to realize your potential and the second chance that is right in front of you. Remember who you were, before you began the life that led you to prison, and compare it to who you became. I can understand that some of you are hesitant to believe and some may not really have the same chance that others have. To you I say, I understand and I empathize. I remember

the times of people paroling, hearing them talk about a life I thought I would never have a chance at living. SB260 eventually changed that for me. I did the work I needed to do so that when I walked into the Board of Parole Hearings, I was granted suitability. Take advantage of the programs available and the relatively peaceful prison environment that allows you the space to do the work and meet the parole criteria halfway like many have so far. In the end, once we achieve yet another milestone in our never-ending focus on prison reform and address something that could affect you, you will be ready.

What an interesting time, indeed. I end this with a mental image of yours truly standing in a crowd – and I mean a crowd – of more than a hundred people, in line at 7:00 in the morning on a Saturday to buy blue-tinted Yeezy's. The complaints I hear are hilarious, that it's cold outside from someone wearing a \$500 jacket, or that the \$8 coffee someone purchased is too hot. It's easy for people to not realize or forget how good they have it. They just don't know what it's like to stand in a line at the same time in the morning, in rain, snow, or extreme heat just to buy some pork rinds only to learn that they sold out because you're third draw, and first and second draw bought them all. I chose not to join in on the complaints that day. I closed my eyes and thought about the blue-tinted shoes that awaited me. I smiled and waited.

Stay strong, stay focused, and never lose hope

– Jose G.



ARC Members Jose, Jerome, Joel, David, Michael, and Esteban at the Human Rights Watch Voices for Justice Gala at SF City Hall November 9, 2017

Anti-Recidivism Coalition
1320 E. 7th Street
Suite 260
Los Angeles, CA 90021



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 compromised 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 the Anti-Recidivism Coalition

Los Angeles: Anti-Recidivism Coalition, 1320 E. 7th Street, Suite 260, Los Angeles, CA 90021

Sacramento: Anti-Recidivism Coalition, 1414 K Street, Suite 150, Sacramento, CA 95814

If you write ARC a letter, please include some general information that will assist us in determining how to best serve you, and that will aid ARC with their advocacy efforts. Please answer the following questions:

- Are you serving a determinate sentence, serving a life sentence, or a life without the possibility of parole sentence?
- Do you fall all under SB9, SB260, SB261, or Prop. 57?
 - If so, please specify on the envelope.
- Have you had a suitability hearing? If so, how many have you had?

Also, please keep ARC updated if you happen to transfer out of your current institution. This will ensure you continue to receive the ARC quarterly newsletter.

