

NEWS AND UPDATES

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In heavy times, joy becomes resistance.

As we close out Black History Month and step into Women's History Month, I find myself thinking about joy. About what it means to intentionally honor Black history, culture, brilliance, and resistance, and to uplift the leadership, labor, and love of women. Too often, the very people who shape our communities are not recognized as they should be. Their contributions are overlooked. Their labor is minimized. Their joy is forgotten. Their influence is absorbed into the fabric of our culture without full acknowledgment. And yet, their impact is undeniable.

Black communities, in particular, have shaped the music we move to, the language we speak, the art we admire, the movements for justice we inherit, and our understanding of love as a force powerful enough to transform the world. That influence lives in our neighborhoods, our celebrations, and our collective imagination.

All of this unfolds in a world that can feel unbearably heavy. We are witnessing war. We are witnessing violence. We are witnessing divisions that fracture families and nations. The headlines can make it difficult to hold onto hope. Which makes recognition and joy not naïve, but necessary.

We have watched artists and athletes take some of the biggest stages in the world and center joy, culture, and love.

Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, better known as Bad Bunny, took the Super Bowl Halftime stage in a celebration of pure, unadulterated joy. For thirteen minutes, he celebrated love. He celebrated unity born from difference. He celebrated culture that refuses to be erased and communities that continue to shape this country in powerful ways.

He brought dancing. He brought joy. He brought love. And he reminded us that love is the only thing more powerful than hate at a time when we needed it most.

None of this is new. For generations, Black leaders, artists, organizers, and communities have proclaimed that love is stronger than hate, and that joy is an act of resistance. Reverend Jesse Jackson reminded us decades ago to “keep hope alive,” grounding movements for justice in faith, dignity, and collective power.

What does this have to do with OAR?

Everything.

Even in the darkest moments of someone’s life, we are working to bring joy to people and our communities. Sometimes that looks like standing beside someone as they return to the community from incarceration and navigate the complicated realities of housing, employment, and mental health needs. Sometimes it means helping someone access alternative sentencing and diversion programs and critical services. Sometimes it is walking alongside families who are carrying the weight of separation.

We work in some of the hardest spaces imaginable. And yet, we aim to do that work with love, with kindness, and yes, with joy.

Because joy is not frivolous.

Joy is resistance.

Joy is restoration.

And of course, we dance.

We hope you are finding ways to move toward joy, too.

Thank you for being on this journey with us.

Elizabeth Jones Valderrama

Liberation Gathering



Register Today!
APRIL 16, 2026

**OAR'S LIBERATION GATHERING:
A VIRTUAL CELEBRATION OF
JUSTICE, JOY, AND LIBERATION**

Mark your calendars for April 16, 2026, and join us for OAR's Liberation Gathering: A Virtual Celebration of Justice, Joy, and Liberation at 7:55 am EST. Don't miss this inspiring event dedicated to fostering positive change, justice, and community.

Inside OAR Tour



You're Invited
INSIDE OAR TOUR

WELCOME CENTER | THURSDAY, MARCH 12



We warmly invite you to tour OAR's newly renovated Welcome Center and experience the space where our shared vision of justice, joy, and liberation comes to life. Thursday, March 12 (see registration link below)

During your visit, you will:

Explore our refreshed and reimagined Welcome Center.

Learn how OAR journeys with individuals and families impacted by the criminal legal system, creating pathways to opportunity through our programs

Hear how our community journeys alongside individuals and families to build stability, hope, and opportunity

This is more than a tour of a space. It is an opportunity to see how dignity, restoration, and hope are woven into everything we do.

You will also be greeted by our Ambassador of Happiness, therapy dog Charlie, who brings joy to our Welcome Center each day.

Space is limited, and registration is required. We look forward to welcoming you and sharing how, together, we are building a community rooted in justice, joy, and liberation.

Arlington County Public Budget Hearing



On Tuesday, March 24, OAR will be participating in the Arlington County Public Budget Hearing, and we would be honored to have you join us.

Speaking times will be assigned closer to the date and will fall sometime between 6:00 and 9:00 pm. Even simply being in the room makes a difference. Your presence helps show that our community believes in justice, dignity, and the opportunity for every neighbor to rebuild and thrive.

Come stand with us

Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 | 06:30 PM to 10:00 PM

Location: Central Library Auditorium, 1015 N. Quincy St., 22201

OAR Zumba Gold Party



Virtual ZUMBA GOLD PARTY



Treat yourself to a joyful workout while supporting OAR!



Saturday, March 28
7:30 - 8:30 PM



Hosted by Elizabeth, OAR's Executive
Director and
Certified Zumba Instructor

Join us for OAR's virtual Zumba Gold class, led by Elizabeth, our Executive Director and certified Zumba Instructor. This low-impact, accessible class is open to all and offers a fun way to move while supporting OAR's work with individuals and families impacted by the legal system. All proceeds directly support our programs, including alternative sentencing, diversion, and reentry services that help create a more racially just and liberated community. Register today and join us for an evening of connection, movement, and purpose. After registering, you'll be directed to the fundraising page to contribute what you can.

"Reforming Criminal Justice" Extra Mile Event



"REFORMING CRIMINAL JUSTICE" EXTRA MILE EVENT

PRESENTED BY ARLINGTON BRIDGE BUILDERS

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026 11:45AM EST



How can we improve our criminal justice system to equitably address the needs of both victims and offenders? Leaders from Offender Aid & Restoration and the Center for Youth & Family Advocacy will explore issues like restorative justice, alternative sentencing, and re-entering society.

Arlington County 2026 Resident Satisfaction Survey



ARLINGTON COUNTY

2026 RESIDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY



Arlington County invites all residents to participate in the 2026 Resident Satisfaction Survey. This voluntary and confidential survey is an important opportunity for your voice to help shape the future of our community. It remains open until March 31, 2026. Share your thoughts and help us prioritize our efforts by taking the survey today. Your feedback is invaluable in guiding Arlington's growth and improvement.

CHARLIE'S CORNER



Hi,
it's

Charlie, OAR's Ambassador of Happiness. Today, I am going to do a program at the Arlington County Detention Facility. My favorite activity is spreading joy and comfort to all the friends I meet.

-Charlie

Give With Confidence



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