

New York Times: Cuomo, Using Pardon Power, Gives Pair a ‘Second Chance’

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DEC. 31, 2014

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced on Wednesday that he had pardoned two men, saying that each deserved “a second chance without fear of being separated from their families through deportation.”

In granting the pardons, Mr. Cuomo was exercising his clemency powers for the second time since he took office in 2011; he issued three pardons in 2013.

One of the men pardoned on Wednesday was Antonio Argibay, 62, a longtime architect in New York who said in a phone interview that he had been convicted in a drug case in the mid-1970s and had served about 42 months in prison. Mr. Argibay, who is from Cuba and now lives in Montclair, N.J., earned a master’s degree from the Pratt Institute in 1980 while under parole supervision, the governor’s office said.

“I’m very emotional right now,” said Mr. Argibay, a permanent resident of the United States who runs his own architectural firm in Manhattan. “I’ve been seeking redemption for 39 years.”

The second pardon went to Alvaro Khalil Cumberbatch, 33, of Springfield Gardens, Queens, who was convicted of first-degree robbery in 2003 and was released from prison in 2010, the governor’s office said. He currently works with organizations that help former convicts re-enter society, including the Fortune Society, and owns a social media consulting business, the governor’s office added.

Mr. Cumberbatch declined an interview request made through the governor’s office. But JoAnne Page, the president and chief executive of the Fortune Society, said that her organization had worked with his lawyers in seeking the pardon, and that he had wide support in the community. She called Mr. Cumberbatch a “poster child for what really good work in re-entry looks like.”

“He just did so much that you hope people would do against the usual odds, everything from working a job, building a consulting business, being there for his family, helping other people,” she said, adding that Mr. Cumberbatch, who came to this country from Guyana as a child, was taken into custody by federal immigration authorities last year, and released in October.

The governor, in his statement, said that “the positive contributions to society by both of these individuals in the years since their release support the case for justice to be delivered through clemency.”

Mr. Cuomo’s office said that clemency applications had fallen sharply in recent years, to 171 in 2014 from 1,269 in 2010. The governor’s office also announced the creation of a new website, ny.gov/clemency, as a resource for clemency applicants.