



Newsletter of the

Alternatives to Violence Project / New York

Spring 2009



### The AVP-USA 2009 Annual Gathering

Come share the dream on May 22 to 25, 2009 in New York

Come to Adelphi University on Long Island, New York for the AVP-USA Annual Gathering over Memorial Day Weekend. We have an exciting program with a keynote speech on Restorative Justice, an off-Broadway play, *The Castle*, a Resource Network on re-entry, and a multitude of mini-workshops.



**Barb Toews** will set the tone for the Saturday program with her insights on **restorative justice**. Barb is a leading authority on the subject and author of *The Little Book of Restorative Justice for People in Prison*. She applies restorative justice in prison settings, incorporates

the philosophy into offender and offender family programs and collaborates with incarcerated men and women as they develop their own restorative projects.

**Re-entry** will be the theme for Sunday. The **Off-Broadway play** *The Castle* stars four people who relate their journeys of crime, deprivation, and transformation. One of the four, Angel Ramos, facilitated AVP workshops in prison. Following the play, Re-entry Resource Networking will feature re-entry related programs from throughout the New York area.

**Mini-Workshops** On Saturday and Sunday there will be dozens of workshops to choose from including new workshops on parenting and racism.

**Trauma Healing and Advanced Facilitation Skills** are two full-day programs that will be offered on Friday.

More information and registration materials inside.

### Last paper mailing of AVP/NY's newsletter.

Due to AVP/NY budget cuts and environmental concerns, this issue of our newsletter will be our last paper mailing in the near future. We will print future issues only for facilitators inside the walls and people without e-mail.



Future issues will be distributed electronically—posted to **our new website**: [www.avpny.org](http://www.avpny.org) and sent to our list. If you'd like to receive the electronic version, please send me your e-mail address if I do not already have it. If you do not have e-mail, please let me know that too.

Shirley Way, AVP/NY Office Coordinator  
avpnyso@aol.com  
800-909-8920 or 315-364-8210



Sincere Barmore

AVP/NY's Annual Gathering, Long Point Salvation Army Camp, Seneca Lake, NY, October 10-12, 2008

### A huge Thank you!! to all who made financial contributions in 2008!

Last year, we added 52 new donors to our base and took over \$22,000 in direct public support, less than \$2,000 shy of our goal. We are immensely grateful to all (inside and out) who were able and moved to contribute.

### We need your continued support!!

Our operating and program expenses for our 2009 budget are \$35,120. Please do what you can. Thank you very much!!

# Transforming Power: How AVP affects my life

By Clifton K. Williamson (Malik)

I am a protégé of Auburn's AVP community. I attended my first AVP workshop in Auburn prison in 1999. I took my T for F (Training for Facilitator) workshop, and received my gold certificate in 2001. In the spring of 2008 I became Auburn's AVP Inside Co-coordinator.

Like many AVP participants who are serving long sentences in prison, I went from adolescent to adult within prison walls (18 – 31 years old). While my incarceration has not stopped Time from moving forward, it has caused an abrupt halt to aspects of my personal human development. AVP has contributed to the continuation of my personal development: self-awareness, social and emotional maturity (the sympathetic and selfless humility), and community (the sense of belonging to the whole, and embracing the duty to others).

## THE AVP ENVIRONMENT

In a place as extremely negative as prison, AVP offers people, through bi-monthly workshops and weekly support groups, a positive environment of growth. The support and encouragement we receive from each other and from volunteers nurtures and fortifies our best-selves.

Some “tools of violence” are replaced with new tools of “non-violence,” while other “tools” are merely transformed (i.e. language, behavior, attitude) into instruments of good.

*One merely needs to exercise faith in the non-violent process in order to be a recipient of good-fortune.*

The combination of caring people and reformative-tools define AVP's alchemic environment. One merely needs to exercise faith in the non-violent process in order to be a recipient of good-fortune.

AVP's proffered alternatives to violence are sufficiently dynamic to adapt to the diverse and evolving face of violence. Beyond its ability to reinstate and extend one's development, AVP also imparts a personal gift to those continuing on the journey of self-development.

When considering the impact that AVP has had on my life, one of AVP's most prized and fundamental tenets comes to mind: Transforming Power.

## AVP's GIFT TO ME

Surely, I am not alone when I say, “I do not view myself as a violent person.” Before AVP became a part of my life, my recognition of violence was limited to its extreme forms. On a scale of one to ten, I tended to only discern violence from six upwards: six being the non-physical verbal abuse, and ten placing life in jeopardy.

*Through TP I became aware of the subtler forms of violence: indifference, negligence, bias and judgment...*

The principles of Transforming Power (TP) were given to me as my enlightening gift. Through my engagement with TP I became aware of the subtler forms of violence: indifference and negligence, bias and judgment (based upon partial knowledge), a scant vocabulary of non-oppressive and compassionate words and phrases, and much more. What made the greatest impression upon me, and convinced me that I needed to look closer at myself, was the absence of a “positive practice” that I consciously utilized to nurture and sustain non-violence and compassion in my life.

Taking a closer look at myself, I quickly discovered and accepted that TP was about my mind: attitude and perception. I discovered that my limited insight on violence prevented me from better managing the violence in my life. With this limited recognition rarely would I ever have sufficient information and facts to make the best available choices in given situations where violence may surface. I am in prison, not for being a perpetrator of violence, but for failing to recognize when Transforming Power could have occurred in my life.

So, the change that I made was to first, “look for the good in others,” next, search for “common ground,” and, last, “expect the best” while keeping an open mind about the many positive outcomes—some of which I couldn't predict. This approach is effective with turning the “table of fortune,” as rarely will we suffer the worse outcomes once the power influencing a given situation has been transformed.

It is this approach that has allowed me to discern the subtler forms of violence in my everyday actions with people. It is this approach that has become one of my conscious “positive practices.” It is the **Gift of Transforming Power** that has given me back control over my life.

Thank you, AVP!!

*Clifton Williamson aka Meticulous Malik is AVP Inside Co-coordinator at Auburn Prison.*

# My Experience: From prison walls and halls to community streets and centers

By *Successful Sincere*



On September 14, 2002, I took the police on a high speed chase! The chase ended when I was shot fourteen times and ultimately convicted of attempted assault on a police officer. I received a sentence of seven years with five years

post supervision. On June 18, 2003, while confined to a wheelchair, I was turned over to the New York State Department of Corrections to begin serving my time. One week later I was moved to Green Haven prison. This was my third felony conviction and I was determined to realize my true potential. I was no longer going to be a spectator in my own life.

I began this process by first taking responsibility for the actions that led me to this point in my life. Yes, I will always know that the police used excessive force to apprehend me. However, I also know that my lifestyle, choices and decisions brought me to the police!

With my new-found determination, I began to utilize the many programs offered at Green Haven. One of the first I participated in was the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). From my first workshop I was convinced that the AVP principles (affirmation, communication, community and cooperation and conflict transformation) could and would assist me in my journey of transforming my life, if I applied them daily.

During my first workshop I had the pleasure of meeting two of my inspirations and greatest supporters: Courageous Carolyn [Polikarpus] and Mentoring Mike [Arterberry]. Courageous Carolyn is the outside AVP Coordinator at Green Haven and Mentoring Mike is a seasoned AVP facilitator and founder of Power of Peace, a community youth program that uses AVP principles. At the end of the workshop, I told Courageous that I wanted to be a part of AVP upon my release. Although she was skeptical at first, she believed in me and encouraged me along with my peers. And after hearing Mike for years, talk about his program and its effect on youth, I told him I wanted to work with him.

On September 12, 2008 I was released after serving six years. Just one month later, I was among the many that attended AVP/NY's Annual Gathering on

Seneca Lake. Two months later I facilitated a mini workshop for twenty youth, aged six to fourteen at the Carver Community Center in Schenectady, New York.

The Carver CC is located in a neighborhood where crime, drugs and violence are common. The day before the workshop, there was a drive-by shooting just three houses from the Center. In spite of this, the workshop was one of the most rewarding I've ever facilitated or participated in! for two reasons: one, because my six-year-old son was a participant and two, because the youth were reluctant to participate because the workshop took away from their scheduled recreation time. Yet, to this day, they are still asking me when I will do another workshop.

From January 23-25 of this year, I co-facilitated my first AVP community workshop in Elmira, NY. The experience was wonderful but totally different from my prison experience. In prison, we met every week to team-build or practice facilitating. For this workshop, we did some of our team-building on two conference calls. And sleeping at a stranger's home (area families hosted the out-of-town facilitators) was a total culture shock for me! The workshop hours were different too. The workshop ended at 10:00pm on Friday and Saturday. Then we met as a team until after 12:00am! And I just have to get used to eating vegetarian food.

Despite these differences, I really enjoyed co-facilitating. Working with good, caring and enthusiastic facilitators is always a plus! I am proud I was able to keep my word and to continue the work that kept me out of trouble in prison.

Now I am employed, part-time, with Youth Voices Center, Inc.'s Power of Peace Program. Yes, I now work for and with my mentor, Mentoring Mike. And, I am currently putting together a community workshop in my own community. As was taught to me, I now pass on to others: **Application is the key!!!**

*Successful Sincere, aka Mark A. Barmore, is a part-time facilitator at Youth Voices Center, Inc. in Schenectady, NY and a volunteer AVP facilitator.*



Shirley Way

**Elmira Community Basic Workshop participants and facilitators (front to back) Courageous Kathleen Gale, Brilliant Beth Cohen, Successful Sincere Barmore, Nonchalant Nick and (not pictured Sure Shirley Way) January 25, 2009**



ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT

AVP/NY  
 P.O. Box 54  
 Poplar Ridge, NY 13139

Note: Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.



*Come share the dream in New York*  
**AVP/USA's 2009 Annual Gathering**  
 May 22—25, 2009 (Memorial Day weekend)  
 Adelphi University, Garden City, Long Island  
*Details inside.*

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**Check out AVP/NY's  
 new website!**  
[www.avpny.org](http://www.avpny.org)



**ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT / NEW YORK**

**Final 2008 Workshop Summary Report**

Note: These statistics represent the workshops reported to the AVP/NY office.

<b>ALBION Prison (Women's)</b> Workshop count: 3 Participant count: 34 Mini Workshop count: 3 Mini Participant count: 16	<b>GREENE Prison</b> Workshop count: 14 Participant count: 133 Apprentices trained: 4	<b>WENDE Prison</b> Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 48 Apprentices trained: 13	<b>NEW YORK CITY Area Council</b> Workshop count: 3 Participant count: 14
<b>ATTICA Prison</b> Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 20	<b>GROVELAND Prison</b> Workshop count: 8 Participant count: 92 Apprentices trained: 11	<b>WOODBOURNE Prison</b> Workshop count: 10 Participant count: 86	<b>NIAGARA FRONTIER AC</b> Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 60 Youth Workshop count: 1 Youth Participant count: 22 Apprentices trained: 7
<b>AUBURN Prison</b> Workshop count: 22 Participant count: 246 Apprentices trained: 10 Facilitator seminar days: 3	<b>MID-ORANGE Prison</b> Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 5 Apprentices trained: 5	<b>ADIRONDACK Area Council</b> Mini Workshop count: 1 Mini Participant count: 12	<b>WESTCHESTER Area Council</b> Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 29 Apprentices trained: 12
<b>BEDFORD HILLS Prison (W's)</b> Workshop count: 11 Participant count: 107	<b>ONEIDA Prison</b> Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 9	<b>ALBANY Area Council</b> Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 14 Mini Workshop count: 1 Mini Participant count: 10	<b>2008 PRISON TOTALS:</b> <b>Prisons served: 16</b> <b>Prison workshops: 135</b> <b>Participant count: 1,479</b> <b>Apprentices trained: 161</b> <b>Mini Wksps / Participants: 3 / 16</b>
<b>EASTERN Prison</b> Workshop count: 8 Participant count: 69 Apprentices trained: 20	<b>OTISVILLE Prison</b> Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 73 Apprentices trained: 15	<b>CATSKILL Area Council</b> Youth Workshop count: 6 Youth Participant count: 87 Mini Youth Workshop count: 6 Mini Youth Participant count: 115 Youth apprentices trained: 24	<b>YTD 2008 COMMUNITY WORKSHOP TOTALS:</b> <b>Multigen/youth workshops: 20</b> <b>Adult workshops: 8</b> <b>Participant count: 269</b> <b>Mini youth or adult wksps: 10</b> <b>Mini Participant count: 159</b> <b>Adult apprentices trained: 25</b> <b>Youth apprentices trained: 25</b>
<b>ELMIRA Prison</b> Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 41	<b>SING SING Prison</b> Workshop count: 18 Participant count: 192 Apprentices trained: 27 Facilitator recognition day: 1	<b>ELMIRA Area Council</b> Mini Workshop count: 1 Mini Participant count: 10	<b>FACILITATORS:</b> <b>Inside facilitators: 186</b> <b>Outside (civilian) facilitators: 112</b>
<b>GREEN HAVEN Prison</b> Workshop count: 19 Participant count: 274 Apprentices trained: 46 Facilitator seminar days: 3	<b>SULLIVAN Prison</b> Workshop count: 5 Participant count: 51 Apprentices trained: 10	<b>GENESEE VALLEY AC</b> Workshop count: 7 Participant count: 38 Mini Workshop count: 1 Mini Workshop participant: 12 Apprentices trained: 7	