

Winter, 2013 / 2014

From the inside out...

AVP Facilitators at Green Haven prison speak to us through their writings here—from the inside out about the change AVP has brought—from the inside out.



Greetings AVP family,

Ten years ago I walked into a room where I had the chance to be in an AVP Basic workshop. I NEVER left that workshop the same. At the end of that workshop I learned what it was to be content. I learned how to communicate, and most importantly I learned about transforming power and to always trust the process. What I now know is the magic of AVP.

AVP has changed my life from the inside out. AVP has given me an opportunity to transform my skill far beyond I've ever imagined. For that I will be forever content and forever committed to AVP. AVP thank you for showing me that I am stronger than my past.

—*Terrific Tyson, Dominic Dupont,*
Inside AVP Coordinator at Green Haven



AVP continues to be one of the main motivating factors in my life on bringing about CHANGE!

"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes," as quoted by William James. Through the transforming power of AVP this quote comes to existence in my life and helps me to always do my best to refrain from participating in acts of violence here in prison, in my home and in my neighborhood. By building a community based on honesty, respect and caring in here, has taught me to be patient and risk being creative rather than violent and persistent to help build the communities that I once helped to destroy. AVP is a reconstructive tool in building and change and plays an important part in transforming lives in and out of correctional facilities. From the inside out, AVP makes a difference...

—*Anointed Anthony, Anthony Abreu*



AVP family, AVP has helped me tremendously. I am grateful to be a part of its continual existence. I am better equipped in handling conflicting situations. I also enjoy working with people, helping others, promoting social health. I clearly see how my life is better for AVP.

—*Disciple David, David Schicchi*



AVP has empowered me with the capabilities to transform power and resolve conflicts by reaching for common grounds, establish my own self respect so that I can respect and care for others.

—*Righteous Raheem, Eric Cruz*



Why AVP?

Because I finally found something that cracked the wall around my inner energy and allowed me to see that other person I always wanted to be...that person I am now. It worked because I was ready for change, for Transformation.

About Transforming Power, it works for those who want it to work, for themselves and others; for those who want to "find a non-violent path" to solving conflicts because they see the benefits of "thinking before reacting;" because they found a way to "respect themselves," therefore "caring for others."

I met many facilitators who "walk the walk" and show their dedication to AVP. Through their influence, it has allowed me to change from someone who was known as a "monster" into someone who can be loved. Ask my families: my "real world" one and my "AVP" one. I have been Blessed to have finally broken the bondage of not being able to love and care for someone. Now I am someone who is totally capable of making someone happy if I ever go home.

Why AVP? Because it works!

—*Blessed Buddha, David Robles*



AVP has changed me in so many ways. First of all, I did not know how to deal with conflict in a positive manner.

I learned how to reach for that which is good in others. Most of the time I did not listen before I made my judgment about people. My life was so messed up that I did not know where to turn or who to talk to until one day I met this good brother, Khalil, who introduced me to AVP.

I would like to thank my AVP family members: Contagious CC, Kind King, Terrific Tyson, Fabulous Fields, Mindful Mo, Blessed Buddha, Easy Ed, Sincere Siame, Terrific Tex, Charitable Chris, Rambunctious Rob, Magnificent Malik, Mighty Mel-Mel, Scientific Starkim, Reliable R.

—*Positive P.O.P., Darnell Dexter*

From the inside out... (cont'd.)

I Have No Stones to Throw

I've made choices I shouldn't have made,
for they really turned out wrong.
I'd start on the right path,
but somehow end up lingering way too long
on the wrong roads.

I didn't know how to deal with my emotions,
I would react violently, instead of talking it out.
But please don't judge me,
for I am aware that only God can judge and
I have no stones to throw.

I've known some hearts I've broke in two,
from being insecure and having misplaced pride.
When it came to choosing between
family and friends or street life,
I chose the wrong side.
There've been times I've run past a hurting friend,
when I should've stopped and walked real slow.
I was out of control,
the street had me hemmed,
so I am well aware
I have no stones to throw.

I grew up fast,
done all kinds of things,
many things that might have not been right.
Overwhelmed
I asked for help,
I was not heard,
I ended up in prison,
the door was slammed shut tight.

But God had other plans, when I got to Green Haven Correctional Facility, I got with AVP. In AVP I learned about Transforming Power and the four building blocks, the cornerstones of AVP.

Transforming Power is the ability we have to change a negative situation into a non-violent resolution. The four building blocks are made up of: Affirmation and Self-Esteem, Communication, Community and Cooperation and Conflict Management.

Yes, some behavior is hard to take,
regardless whatever issues,
it just goes against the grain.
In AVP, we also learn that hate and anger
will only eat away at you and
cause you both some pain.

Now picture the world using Transforming Power
and living by the four building blocks.
Through the magic of AVP
we'd care for one another,
our love would just flow,
we would free our hands
and lift each other up
and we would all have no stones to throw.....

—Gracious Gee, George Borges



AVP has changed my life and my family as in 1996 I became a part of AVP. It was the most fun I had ever had in my life. I met a woman named Jumpin' Jill, [AVP Outside Coordinator] Auburn [prison] and it's 2013 and I am still going strong. AVP keeps me alive in good positive spirits.

—Sincere Siame, Steven Johnson

I don't want to infringe on anyone's trademark or violate any copyrights but "walking the talk" is truly the gift that keeps on giving.

Voter registration cards, drivers' licenses and diplomas are symbols of empowerment in our society and like so many people who are entitled to vote but for whatever reason don't or people who end up with careers that have nothing to do with their degree there are a great many facilitators who are not committed.

I understand the fear of the unknown. "I'm supposed to give up all I've attained and move in a completely new direction? What if things don't work out?" Quite frankly in my book, you can't be half a facilitator. In a prison setting everyone has plenty of time to observe everyone else. If you're insincere the whole facility knows and the participants don't take the workshop seriously.

Committing yourself to walking the talk empowers you and in turn you inspire others to empower themselves. In short, it empowers the community.

Violence and non-violence have one thing in common: if the means are available you'll probably resort to them.

Once you start walking the talk you'll feel the emotional recharge you get from a good workshop almost every day. It'll change your life from the inside out.

—Kind King, William King



What I learned from AVP is: "If you wish to see the best in others, show the best of yourself."

—Kool K., Kief McNeely



Some of the Inside Team at Green Haven Prison

From the inside out... (cont'd.)



Being in prison for so long one notices how people tend to walk around, hiding behind masks. The reason for that could be vast but eventually the disparity between words and actions become clear.

Being an AVP facilitator, I am in awe at how the AVP magic takes hold of people and for three days, allows them to set aside the masks and witness each others' humanity. How similar we all are in one way or another. Concluding a workshop, guys go back to population as if intoxicated, anxious for the next workshop. Some guys probably will not return, maybe feeling a little discomfort with the masks coming off, but most will and do return. After the second dose, they see it was not a fluke and walk away desiring more, wondering, "what is it about AVP that has this effect on people?"

Well that happened to me and countless other fellow facilitators. We had the blessing of meeting people that believe in the AVP process and demonstrate it by their actions. These type of facilitators are powerful influences and become examples of what we could become. Of course, we don't need people imitating other people. Each of us are unique and have our own journeys in life to take. But with the vision and tools AVP hands us, as we internalize the principles and concepts, each of us will evolve into that better person residing within.

"Think before reacting, ask for a nonviolent path, expect the best, caring for others and respect for self" are all concepts that have been slowly shaping and molding my views. The more I contemplate those concepts and meditate on the experiences I receive in each workshop the more conscious I become about caring for others and attempting to practice the rest of the AVP concepts. The irony is that the more I try to help others, the more I end up helping myself.

I have met plenty of facilitators who, although they were not perfect, left an indelible mark within my heart. I was blessed to have met them and I hope to one day meet up with them again to facilitate in community workshops as well. That is the effect AVP has in those who truly believe in the process. It amazes me how, from prison, a group of prisoners came together to better the lives of others and the effect is still being felt today—not only in New York prisons but around the world as well.

Now, with us as facilitators at the helm, let us not dilute the experience for those who have not experienced the AVP magic. Let us take the responsibility of continuing the legacy by preparing ourselves, taking it seriously, training and risk giving of ourselves so that others could receive the same experience and blessing we did. Let us not wait until we are free from prison to benefit from this because – actions speak louder than words.

Do any of my fellow facilitators have anything to add?

—Mindful Mo, Yul Morales

AVP/USA Annual Gathering

Miami, Florida, May 24-27, 2013

By Jill McLellan, *Jumpin' Jill*, AVP/NY Board President

I attended the AVP/USA National Gathering in Miami FL last May along with a number of facilitators from and connected to AVP New York. Diligent Dawn Addy and Expressive Eduardo Diaz ably led this effort which went quite smoothly despite many weather-related delays. Ninety facilitators participated from US, New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, Cuba, Burundi, Nigeria, Indonesia and Brazil, and the connections made with facilitators was so enriching.



Jill McLellan with Bernard Lafayette at the Gathering.

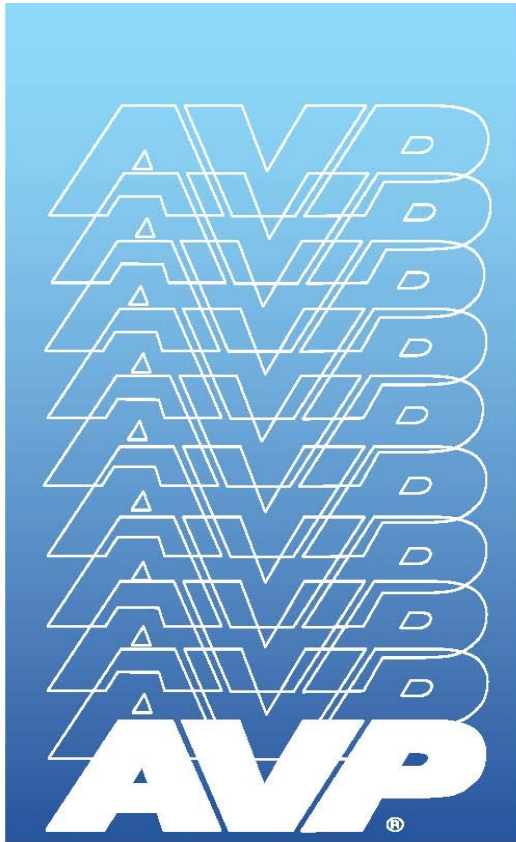
Dr. Bernard Lafayette spoke movingly about early workshops that evolved into AVP as we know it today. He told an amazing story: He and facilitators incarcerated in Green Haven went to Goshen Annex for Boys to present a workshop and returned at lunchtime to Green Haven. Since they were not on the count to receive lunch, the inmate facilitators stood on the street outside Green Haven with Lafayette while others in the group went to buy lunch for everyone. What a surprise for CO's and staff who left at lunchtime that day!

The highpoint for me was the day spent in Homestead Correctional Institution (HCI) with the women involved in AVP there. The forty inside facilitators, many of whom are lifers, warmly welcomed us. We were awed hearing stories of the impact of AVP around the world thanks to our many foreign visitors.



Homestead CI AVP Facilitators with AVP/USA Annual Gathering Attendees.

Some of the inside facilitators told a story of transforming power at HCI: One July night the air conditioning broke down in dorms with small or nonworking windows. Temperatures were high and fights were breaking out. One facilitator started teaching the women in her dorm the light and lively Dum Dum Da Da and soon all in the dorm were singing, clapping and laughing. The AVP facilitators in the other dorms taught it to the women in their dorms and it spread throughout the facility. It helped that at least one quarter of the women had taken at least a basic workshop. The sense of pride, love and support for each other among the HCI facilitators was evident the whole day but especially strong after this story. When we weren't engaged in exercises, we learned about each other's families, hopes and dreams and shared recipes and beauty tips.



AVP NY, NJ, and Virgin Island Facilitators
AVP/USA Annual Gathering, May 2013, Miami, FL

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2013 Workshop Summary Report

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

ALBION Prison (Women's) Workshop count: 3 Participant count: 30	GREEN HAVEN Prison Workshop count: 27 Participant count: 368 Apprentices trained: 53	ALBANY Area Council Workshop count: 2 Participant count: 22 Apprentices trained: 7	NIAGARA FRONTIER AC Workshop count: 4 Youth participant count: 37 Adult participant count: 25 Mini Youth workshop count: 6 Mini Youth part't count: 136
ATTICA Prison Workshop count: 12 Participant count: 144	GREENE Prison Workshop count: 12 Participant count: 110 Apprentices trained: 8	BRONX Area Council Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 3	WESTCHESTER Area Council Workshop count: 9 Participant count: 88 Mini Youth workshop count: 10 Mini Youth part't count: 155
AUBURN Prison Workshop count: 16 Participant count: 287 Apprentices trained: 9	GROVELAND Prison Workshop count: 11 Participant count: 134 Apprentices trained: 14	CENTRAL NY Area Council Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 9	AVP / NEW JERSEY Community Workshop count: 2 Participant count: 30
BEDFORD HILLS Prison (W's) Workshop count: 2 Participant count: 16 Apprentices trained: 9	OTISVILLE Prison English lang. workshop count: 7 Spanish lang. workshop count: 2 Participant count: 207 Mini workshop count: 3 Mini participant count: 66	ELMIRA Area Council Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 18 Apprentices trained: 4	AVP/NY & NJ 2013 PRISON WRKSPs: Prisons served: 16 Prison workshops: 168 Participant count: 2,159 Apprentices trained: 148 Inside facilitators: 187 Inside support: 37
CAYUGA Prison Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 82 Apprentices trained: 8	SING SING Prison English lang. workshop count: 27 Spanish lang. workshop count: 7 Participant count: 319 Apprentices trained: 10	GENESEE VALLEY AC Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 30 Mini workshop count: 1 Mini participant count: 10	AVP/NY & NJ 2013 COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS: Community workshops: 32 Adult participant count: 249 Youth participant count: 68 Mini Youth workshops: 16 Mini Youth part't count: 291 Apprentices trained: 20 Outside adult facilitators: 108
EDNA MAHAN Prison (W's) (NJ) Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 82 Apprentices trained: 10	SULLIVAN Prison Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 51	MID-HUDSON Area Council Workshop count: 3 Youth participant count: 31 Adult participant count: 15 Apprentices trained: 4	
EASTERN Prison Workshop count: 10 Participant count: 114	WENDE Prison Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 40	NYC Area Council Workshop count: 2 Participant count: 9 Apprentices trained: 5	
GARDEN ST YOUTH Prison (NJ) Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 90 Apprentices trained: 14	WOODBOURNE Prison Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 85 Apprentices trained: 13		