

A pilot workshop at The Fortune Society

By Kenetic Khalil

AVP didn't start in Kenya. AVP didn't start in Germany, or Costa Rica, or South Africa. AVP started as an idea in a place and time when new ideas were needed.

My point is that AVP has spread from Green Haven to all over the world because it was given to each and everyone of us as a gift to be enjoyed, and then eventually passed on to others. I am proud to say that that gift was passed on to a group of men at the Fortune Society, a residence and organization supporting people in reentry from prison, located in Long Island City, Queens August 2-12.

The task wasn't easy. Due to the amount of days (Mon.-Fri. for two weeks), times (5-8pm each day), and the facilitators' schedules, just getting on the same page was difficult. But we persisted and in the end it was all worth it.

The purpose of going to Fortune with AVP was to open up the door for a long-term program there. The beautiful thing about AVP is that it is multifaceted, which gives it a flexibility that orthodox "anger management" workshops can't offer. The idea of having AVP at Fortune was to offer a variety of workshops to address the various needs of Fortune's clients.



Carolyn Polikarpus

Fortunately, we were able to work out an agreement to do one pilot workshop to see how that would work and then, hopefully, we would be able get a long-term agree-

ment in place. However, for now we all can be happy that we have been able to give the life-changing present of AVP to eleven more participants, and in turn we have been able to expand our AVP family a little bit more.

Kenetic Khalil a.k.a. Alvaro Cumberbatch has been facilitating AVP since 2004 and served as the Inside AVP Coordinator at Green Haven. He was released in February of this year and is seeking to implement AVP in different agencies throughout the city.

AVP/NY's Annual Gathering!

at Long Point Camp
on beautiful Seneca Lake in western NYS

October 8-10 weekend.
(Friday to Sunday)

See details and **registration materials** in the enclosed flyer.



Carolyn Polikarpus

Fortune Society participants and facilitators.

Facilitators: Delightful Dave Solano (white shorts), Kenetic Khalil Cumberbatch (with tie) and Attuned Al Entzminger (back row, far right).

The Green Haven challenge...

Inside facilitators at Green Haven raised \$50.00 to donate to AVP/NY. The GH outside facilitators, inspired by the generosity of the inside team, have contributed \$270.00 to date. We challenge you to be inspired by the commitment shown by Green Haven facilitators!

We deeply appreciate all contributions made, particularly in this challenging economy.

Contributions may be earmarked for scholarship and transportation for formerly incarcerated people to attend AVP/NY, AVP/USA and AVP International gatherings and conferences.

Reaching Poughkeepsie youth, Vassar students and community leaders with AVP

By Nurideen Islam

Over the course of the last year, I have been incredibly blessed to work with a significant amount of young people during the several AVP workshops held at the Family Partnership Center in Poughkeepsie, NY. Jubilant Judy Meikle, Marvelous (Robert) Martin, Movin' Mary Mulligan, and Just Joy Meikle each served on-team to help start the program. The workshops have been sponsored by REAL Skills Network (providing snacks, meals and transportation funds).

REAL Skills Network is an after school program run by Teaching Tree Arrington. Tree has the ear and trust of the youths of Poughkeepsie. His REAL Skills Network has given AVP access to a plethora of enthusiastic participants.

Tree explains his vision for the workshops: *"Poughkeepsie is a town with five colleges or universities and a 64% failure rate among high school youth. Of the 36% that do graduate high school, 70% are white and of the 30% that are kids of color, two-thirds are female. I want to bring college students and people with Nurideen's life experience together with these kids with promise."*



Now-or-never Nurideen (speaking) with Teaching Tree Arrington (center right) with two participants.

In the spring of last year we held a basic with more than thirty youth. Then we did a basic at Vassar College. In October we did a training for facilitators with two youth, seven Vassar students and six adults from the community. In November two adult apprentice facilitators and two youth apprentice facilitators and I did a basic with twenty participants from 13 yrs. to over 40. In March of this year we held another basic with twenty-seven, mostly youth, participants and four apprentice facilitators: one adult from the community, one Vassar student and two youth.

The workshops have been a learning experience and heartfelt journey for all involved. At a glance, the workshops can be summarized as insightful, introspective and at times intense.

The array of opinions and emotions surrounding the question "what is violence?" were far more reaching than I've experienced in prior workshops. Participants' stories of challenges and triumphs with violence were impactful. It hammered home the forgotten adage "never judge a person until you have walked a mile in his or her shoes," which in and of itself, is in synch with basic AVP philosophy "we listen before making judgments."

Although we clearly differentiated between AVP and therapy, the timely discussions, community building exercises and light and livelies were a necessary release of emotions. A writer once stated "the world breaks all of us, but afterward many are strong in the broken places." I can say for certain that AVP made an enormous impression on some participants.

"I've spent a lot of time considering how much I could have benefitted from AVP had I experienced it earlier in life. The arguments, the fights – all could have been avoided, or at least better resolved, if I had the skills learned through AVP."

But I don't dwell on shoulda-coulda-woulda thoughts for too long. I eventually realized that AVP is something that can never be late. The skills I acquired are lifetime skills, which will be useable until the day I die.

The work of those who facilitate AVP workshops is imperative, as well as honorable – honorable because it's imperative, I suppose. Men like Nurideen ensure that youth around the city of Poughkeepsie, as well as other parts of NY, choose an alternative to violence through dialogue, understanding, and compassion. As someone who has seen and experienced what happens in the absence of that alternative, all I can do is appreciate AVP and other initiatives that equip people with new outlooks on conflicts and conflict resolution." —Raymon Azcona (Positive Pookie) is a Vassar student.

Hungry Hensleigh Crowell, a recent graduate from Vassar says, *"AVP was engaging and fun. I was able to bond with everyone in the group. After the workshops I was left with a lot of issues to think about and I gained a fresh perspective. As human beings we get into patterns, but AVP allows you to see and think about violence."*

We plan to continue with more workshops, training more youth to be facilitators. A Landing Strip and an active Area Council are also on the horizon in Poughkeepsie.

Nurideen Islam, a.k.a. Now-or-never Nurideen will graduate next month from Star Career Academy, a professional culinary school. He took his first workshop at Eastern prison in 1989. He is out less than three years.

From AVP New York Board Council Co-Presidents:



Bridging the Chasm

For those who come to AVP as civilians in prison workshops the same thought comes to most of us at some point. As we see the power of AVP to help guide those stuck in a negative track onto a positive path, we wish that each one of these men or women could

have found this path *before* coming into prison. As the understanding and skills develop, it becomes clearer to many that this big chasm that is prison could have been bypassed on the way to a healthy and constructive life style.

And so it's inspiring to see the work with young people blossom and grow. This is where it needs to start—planting the seeds of a positive way of life and the creation of positive community. Kids are our future...if we want to be part of creating a safer, saner and more peaceful future, the kids are the place to begin. And how many of the men I've worked with through the years have spoken of wanting to "work with the youth" when they go home. So each time a new program for youth comes into being, there are more opportunities for those going home to realize that dream.

Currently we have the program that is taking root in Poughkeepsie (see Nurideen Islam's article on page 2) and Mike Arterberry's Power of Peace that is based on AVP principles successfully changing young lives in schools and communities with high levels of violence

(for more information see www.youthvoicescenter.org). There are so many possibilities that can still be explored: the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) detention facilities in NY are in the news these days and would seem to be fertile ground. Schools struggling with issues of violence are everywhere.

The other side of that chasm of prison that runs through too many lives is the reentry transition. The more we can support our folks when they come home and the more we can create AVP opportunities for those home from prison to do the wonderful work of AVP in their communities the stronger we all grow. The workshop at the Fortune Society (see Khalil Cumberbatch's article on page 1) is an opportunity for both our AVP brothers who've come home to use their sharply-honed facilitator skills as well as the participants most of whom are on parole to experience the magic of AVP and take the high road. Fortune Society would like to bring AVP into their Alternatives to Incarceration programs (ATI) for those diverted from the justice system. These are all great opportunities for returning facilitators to get involved with.

We create an AVP family in our prison communities and families don't end with a change in circumstance. So it's encouraging to read about AVP growing on both sides of that chasm---before and after prison. Let us continue to be a bridge that carries us all safely to the other side.

—Carolyn Polikarpus, a.k.a. Triple C



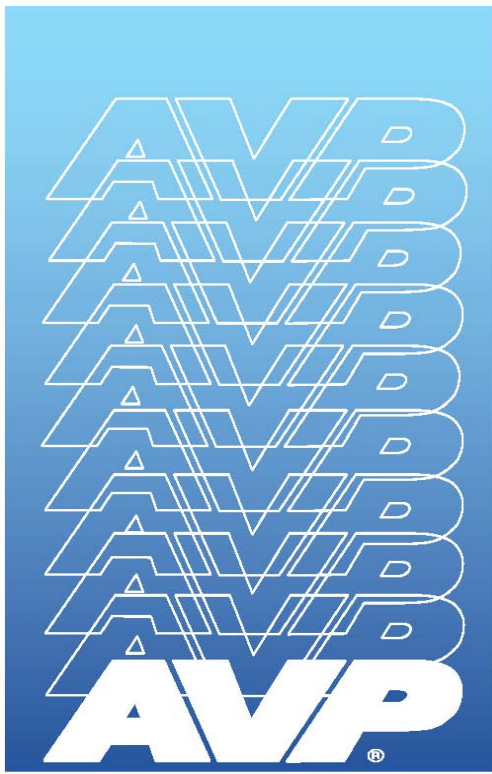
Leadership roles for people who have been incarcerated

On both the local and national levels AVP has been encouraging participation in leadership roles for people who have been formerly incarcerated. On our local state level, we hope that this change will lead to a board with close to 50% representation by

formerly incarcerated men and women. However this means an ongoing commitment from all of us to challenge leadership in a positive way to stay committed to change and growth. Long term we hope to impact national AVP leadership in the same way.

raising and scholarship. Access to locations where leadership meetings take place can be a daunting financial burden to anyone formerly incarcerated or not. Imagine that I really plan to be committing to going to the AVP/USA Conference in May of 2011: When should I start the process? Today should be your answer!!! Let us know you are going, let's plan a fundraising webpage, and book those tickets early and in a group if needed. Just because we might need some scholarship help, does not mean we can't be wise stewards of the funds we are blessed with. I will look for you at Seneca Lake in October and San Francisco in May 2011.

—Ray Rios, a.k.a. Radical Ray



ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT

AVP/NY's Annual Gathering!

at Long Point Camp
on beautiful Seneca Lake in
western NYS

October 8-10
(Friday to Sunday)

**Registration materials and
program enclosed.**



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ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT / NEW YORK Year-to-date 2010 Workshop Summary Report

ALBION Prison (Women's) Workshop count: 3 Participant count: 32	ELMIRA Prison Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 33	SULLIVAN Prison Workshop count: 2 Participant count: 22 Facilitator seminar day: 1	NIAGARA FRONTIER AC Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 12
ARTHUR KILL Prison Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 8	GREEN HAVEN Prison Workshop count: 14 Participant count: 116 Apprentices trained: 17	WENDE Prison Workshop count: 3 Participant count: 36	WESTCHESTER Area Council Intergen. workshop count: 1 Adult workshop count: 3 Participant count: 41 Apprentices trained: 7
ATTICA Prison Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 66 Apprentices trained: 10	GREENE Prison Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 7	WOODBOURNE Prison English lang. wksp count: 4 Spanish lang. wksp count: 1 Participant count: 62 Apprentices trained: 14	
AUBURN Prison Workshop count: 9 Participant count: 120 Apprentices trained: 8	GROVELAND Prison Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 60	CATSKILL Area Council Intergen. workshop count: 1 Participant count: 16 Youth apprentices trained: 15 Adult apprentices trained: 1	YTD 2010 PRISON WORKSHOP TOTALS: Prisons served: 17 Prison workshops: 88 Participant count: 1,135 Apprentices trained: 83
BEDFORD HILLS Prison (W's) Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 69 Apprentices trained: 9	MID-ORANGE Prison Workshop count: 2 Participant count: 20	GENESEE VALLEY AC Intergen. workshop count: 1 Participant count: 10	YTD 2010 COMMUNITY WORKSHOP TOTALS: Community workshops: 10 Intergenerational: 5 Adult workshops: 5 Participant count: 124 Youth apprentices trained: 15 Adult apprentices trained: 8
BUTLER Prison Workshop count: 5 Participant count: 59 Apprentices trained: 5	OTISVILLE Prison Workshop count: 2 Participant count: 29	MID-HUDSON Area Council Intergen. workshop count: 1 Participant count: 26	
EASTERN Prison Workshop count: 3 Participant count: 36	SING SING Prison English lang. wksp count: 14 Spanish lang. wksp. count: 2 Participant count: 224 Apprentices trained: 20	NEW YORK CITY Area Council Intergen. workshop count: 1 Adult workshop count: 1 Participant count: 19	