

All-Facilitator Workshop at Green Haven Prison

At Green Haven we have had a tradition of a yearly All Facilitator Workshop (AFW) which is a weekend for the facilitators to build community and work on our skills. We often invite some of our men who have been released to come back in.

Because of the pandemic shutdown it had been four years since the last one. This one was planned as a celebration of rebuilding our community and program. Many of our pre-pandemic facilitators were now in college programs so had not been active in AVP and they were invited to come for one, two or all three days. So there was a big turnout of men in college and no longer active with AVP who were happy to be able to experience the AVP magic if only for part of the weekend, as well as newly trained and active facilitators, some attending their first AFW.

We worked on exercises from the book we haven't tried before, did lots of community building with happy reunions. Several new outside facilitators (volunteers) joined us on Saturday and Sunday: Edith Updike, Bill Smith and Hai-Ping Yeh plus my old buddy, Stellar Steve Bradley who coordinates AVP at Clinton Prison and the federal prison at Ray Brook.

Sunday was our celebration day: Khalil Cumberbatch (Kinetic Khalil) who was inside coordinator from 2006-2009 traveled from Florida to join us along with Yull Morales (Mindful Mo) a long time English/Spanish language facilitator. We missed Dominic Dupont (Terrific Tyson) inside coordinator from 2009 - 2018.



All-Facilitator Workshop at Green Haven Prison

March 17-19, 2023

Top Picture: Whole Group

Bottom Picture: (L to R): Daniel Malak (Miraculous Malak), Helping Hai-Ping Yeh, Jason Quinones (Joy Jay), Carolyn Polikarpus (Contagious CC), Raquan Banks (Remarkable Ra), Robert McLee (Rebellious Robo), Eclectic Edith Updike, Todd Sinclair (Terrific Todd)

Also attending on Sunday were Sean Pica, Joelle Jiminez and Lizette Bamanga of the Hudson Link college program. There was a huge gathering circle, awards given out and a truly festive air.

Our current inside coordinator, Jason Quinones (Joy Jay), went all out for

our celebration lunch...pizza and salad and a luscious cake for dessert. The click-click guys came and took pictures [Polaroids--see above] and we all left with full hearts.

—Carolyn Polikarpus (Contagious CC), Outside AVP Coordinator, Green Haven Prison

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The experience in the "All Facilitators Event" was surreal in the sense that it allowed many facilitators, including myself, to get back in touch with the humanity within us.

Prison can be described as a cold desolate place that produces its own culture, in which, unfortunately, many of us succumb to.

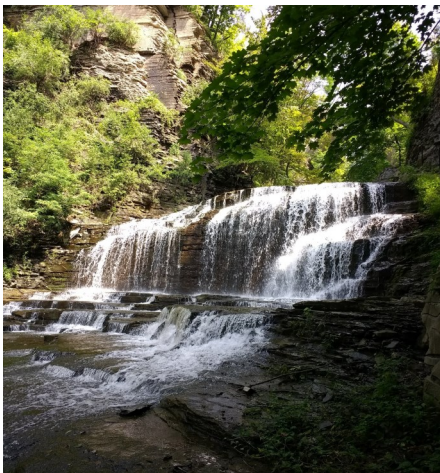
Well, I am convinced AVP is definitely its defector. Going through the workshops and actually seeing the process work was amazing and refreshing. Being in the room with guests from places as far as Canada reinforces the power of Peace.

In the beginning I was only expecting to learn to facilitate and become more socially aware. However, the M&M gathering required more from me. It required me to open up, to get personally involved, which allowed me to address issues that I kept suppressed for a while. Through the process I was able to address and resolve them, but through tears. But I wasn't the only one emotional. I think AVP is the only place I've seen men cry without feeling vulnerable or weak.

This week I only expected to gain knowledge, but I walked away with much more... Family and the reassurance of change.

Thank you. Take care...

—Daniel Forte (*Humble Hamzah*), AVP Facilitator, Green Haven Prison



Trauma

Can you endure the pain, when your father is addicted crack,
Can you endure the pain, when all the possibilities and items he stole, you can never retract.

Can you endure the pain, when every neighborhood you move in, you were forced to fight,
Can you endure the pain, when poverty was an inescapable plight.

Can you endure the pain, when the judge sentenced you to more time than you have been on this earth,
Can you endure the pain, when your incarceration served as an impediment, that kept you from seeing your child's birth.

Can you endure the pain, when your skin color has been weaponized and every where you go, you're considered a threat,
Can you endure the pain, when you're in a prison environment that cause you to incessantly fret.

Can you endure the pain, when you forfeited being in your children's lives because of a rash decision,
Can you endure the pain, when you're the cause of a man's demise, when that was never your intention.

Can you endure the pain, when your incarceration put your mother in a state of depression,
Can you endure the pain, when you could of spared her of that travail, had you took heed to her wise lesson.

I have endured that pain, however, I did not allow these unfortunate circumstances to continue to control every part of my life,
I have change my trauma into triumph by helping other people through their strife.

—James Colvin, (*Cool Colvin*), AVP Facilitator, Wyoming Prison

Love....Death...Time...

Love you have brung me joy as well as pain. You have blessed me with the curse to love unconditionally. It's because of you love — that I'm loyal to a fault.

Time you are the most precious gift that I've given — "because once I give my time to someone, I'm given a portion of my life that I can never get back."

Death — you took away my greatest love. You have caused me a great deal of pain that eclipse a million lifetimes.

Love, my experience with you have forced me to build a wall around my heart. Every time I extend my love - you allow death to pull us apart.

Time, you're like a double edge sword. When things are going good - you seem to never last. But when I encounter hardships the time never seems to past.

Death, you are the only thing that I'm truly certain of... I can run from love... but when it comes to you death... it's only a matter of time.

—Shawn Peace (*Beloved Boobie*), AVP Facilitator, Green Haven Prison

Transformative Healing

My name is Victoria Blowers a.k.a. Valiant Victoria and I am currently incarcerated at Albion Correctional Facility in Albion, NY.

When I first arrived here at Albion in August of 2021, covid was occurring and a lot of the programs were closed down. I had heard from a few fellow peers about AVP and was explained how AVP had helped them. I decided I wanted to sign up for everything and anything that could help me while I was here. So I dropped my tab signing up for AVP1. My mindset at the time was whatever I can do to look good for the parole board I'll do.

So some months later when covid had eased up I had received a tab that AVP1 was being allowed back in the prison. So I signed the paper to join the group and read all the requirements for the weekend group. Still at the time having the mindset of ok I need this certificate. So finally the day came and my friend and I showed up for the group.

As we started that Friday I found myself thinking... what is happening here I thought the class would be like a teacher student thing with bookwork... it was just the opposite. Very hands on and the time was flying by. I found myself laughing and really enjoying myself with my peers and facilitators. So long story short I finished that weekend having so much fun and building relationships I knew I definitely wanted to sign up for AVP2 the certificate no longer mattered to me.

So a few months later I received a letter that AVP2 was approaching and confirming I would like to attend. I checked yes I wanted to and waited for the date to arrive. As the weekend approached I found myself experiencing the negative thoughts of giving up my weekend again. Then back to the thinking of ok well I need this certificate so I'm gonna go and do this!

Once I arrived at AVP2 I was once again glad I showed up! Meeting with all the facilitators Really Rosey, Sturdy Stuart, Curious Caroline and Curious Coran.

Once again it proved to be a success! I was learning to express my feelings and open up about trauma I have never talked about. Doing the variety of Light & Livelies lifted my spirits and opened me up. Doing this also made me realize just how much I had in common with fellow peers and started new friendships within the facility but also with the facilitators. Learning about transforming power and hearing others' stories was what really hit me that weekend. Once again it turned out to be a great weekend and I was glad I had attended. The certificate no longer mattered.

So after that weekend I knew without a doubt that I was signing up for AVP3 the facilitators group. This group is where my story with AVP inside these prison walls truly shines through. That weekend was scheduled for Jan. 6th-Jan.8th 2023.

At this point in my life my family and I were struggling with many issues at home. My dear mother Donna had been diagnosed with cancer for the 6th time throughout her life and was preparing for her surgery with routine heart testing to undergo the 8 hour surgery. That's where the doctors discovered she suffered some heart issues. This was devastating to her and us as a family. She eventually ended up undergoing 2 heart surgeries and her cancer surgery within a month time frame and coming out of her 3rd surgery suffered a stroke. My mother was 74 years old and had suffered many health issues throughout her life but never would give up she always maintained a positive attitude with life. In the end she decided it was best for her to be home and have in house nursing care provided to her. This was devastating as you can imagine. I had been always the one to be there for all her health obstacles. She was recovering well as I would talk with her daily.

So I called my mother Jan. 6th the day I was attending AVP3. It was a Friday. I shared with her as I always did in the past that I was attending AVP once again and she would share how proud of me she was that I was so committed to this program and what a change she could hear on how I responded to life situations. So I

explained again that it was an all weekend group and my calls that weekend would be different than usual because of the times.

So I finished my call that Friday and then the next morning Saturday the 7th went back to AVP for 8am. While in the workshop an officer came in and asked me to step out of the room about 12:15pm. Once out of the room he told me I needed to go to the chapel. I replied what? why? His response was I'm not sure, they called and the reverend needs to see you. Instantly I got tears in my eyes and said what? No they only call people up there when something bad happens at home.

I'll never forget that walk that afternoon from the program building to the chapel, it was raining lightly. My mind confused and wondering what could possibly be wrong. It can't be my mother I just had talked to her and she sounded great! Maybe something has happened to my son or my husband... I arrived at the chapel and walked into the reverend's office and my worst fear had come true. My mother had passed away. I was instantly in denial this lady had messed it up. I called home to my mother's house and my husband picked up the phone. It was true my mother had passed away. My world began to crash. How could this be happening? I talked with multiple family members for the next hour.

And then as I was talking to family I realized what I needed to do. I needed to go back to the AVP group. I needed to be in a positive comforting environment and these people were my team. I felt I had a commitment to fulfill. I had shared with my mother all about every workshop I had done and I felt an overwhelming need to go back. So that's what I did. I walked back to the program building and at this point I had cried so much my eyes were red and puffy, but I didn't care.

I knew what was happening... the transforming power stories I had heard about from other people was happening to me. It was working into my soul. I walked back into my group and as soon as I did I knew I had done the right thing. The

overwhelming compassion and support I had received from my peers and facilitators was just what I needed. I was able to talk and vent to the group and share my feelings. I then composed myself and continued on. Just being around these people was lifting my spirits.

I had my moments for the rest of that Saturday and Sunday, where I would cry and vent. But it's what I needed to do. I felt this great power to just release myself to my higher power and the AVP team. And that would be the best way for me to grieve for the loss I was experiencing. And also I might add to make my mother proud and continue on.

By Sunday afternoon I was given a sympathy card all signed with kind uplifting words. Just another confirmation that my decision to stay in the workshop was the best decision I had made. After graduation that Sunday the love and support I felt was nothing short of amazing. It's really hard to describe in words how cared for I felt.

Since then I share my story as it arises and some of the looks I get when they hear I went back to the workshop after such tragic news. Then they hear me talk about the group and how they supported me. I can't count how many other peers I've shared with and instantly they are like "I want to sign up."

Since that workshop I continued on as a facilitator and I try and share as much as I can to others. The transforming power talk about AVP will always be a part of my life.

I have since made my parole date and will be going home soon. I plan on continuing AVP on the outside. I have to believe that my higher power has always had a plan for me and everything happens for a reason. Prison saved my life and I don't say that lightly. AVP has become a part of my life and helped me grieve the loss of my mother.

And I will forever be grateful for Albion Correctional Facility and the programs provided to me. And I will continue my journey on the outside.

—Victoria Blowers (*Valiant Victoria*), AVP Facilitator, Albion Prison

DEAR SOCIETY...

In NYS there are 40 thousand men and woman locked behind bars.

These men and woman are much more than criminals.

These are Fathers - Mothers - Brothers - Sisters - Sons - Daughters - Nieces - Nephews - Cousins - and Friends.

DEAR SOCIETY....

Listen to their stories of redemption... hear the narratives from professors who witnessed these prisoners graduate with college degrees - same individuals who came into the system unable to read.

Hear the voices of the outside volunteers - talk about seeing broken men and woman heal themselves over the years.

What about the individuals who actually made it out? Successfully transitioned back into society but didn't receive any clout.

DEAR SOCIETY...

These are the stories that our legislators have to hear.

Without these stories our loved ones might never get a Second Chance...

—Shawn Peace (*Beloved Boobie*), AVP Facilitator, Green Haven Prison

AVP Basic Workshop in Port Chester, NY

August 11 and 18, 2023

Facilitators:

Mary Eagleson

Wilfredo Laracuente

Yovanna Claro

Valya Dessaure

Participants:

Mobile Crisis Response
Team from Family Ser-
vices of Westchester



How do Broken Squares relate to the work of a Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT)?

Members of such a team were participants in a basic workshop recently held in Port Chester, and when they had completed the exercise, they saw parallels. When they go out on a call, they have to analyze the situation – it's like finding the pieces of a puzzle and fitting them together. And they can't talk with each other, because the crisis won't wait for that. Each one just has to figure out what needs to be done, what their team-mates are doing, and what they can do to fill in any missing pieces. Same as in Broken Squares.

The rest of the workshop was enjoyed and valued as well. One participant wrote, "I left our AVP training on Friday and worked until 11 pm responding to our community in crisis - and didn't feel exhausted at all. The circle practice during the day gave me such energy, I am grateful!" Another tried out an I-message on her daughter, who often "forgets" to take out the garbage – and "It worked!" she said.

The same facilitators are looking forward to running another workshop for other members of the MCRT in September.

—Musical Mary Eagleson

"On My Own"

Time flows.
Endless river.
Riding the currents, wherever they
may.
Obstacles abound.
Such is life.
Change happens, slowly, but change
none-the-less.
Love comes; goes.
Enemies made.
Heartbreak ensues, teaching lessons.
Wisdom imparted by pain.
Seek redemption, seldom found.
Dreams chased, aspirations pursued.
Rarely attained.
Before long, decades gone.
Nothing to show.
Come home to naught.
Must make a way.
Steep inclines, climb until limbs burn.
Reach the summit... finally.
All things desired, possessed.
Family proud.
Children content.
Spirit overwhelmed with joy.
Made it.
Made it.
Made it.
On my own.

—Michael Rojas (*Blessed Bugs*), *Orleans Prison*

Please support our work !

Our budget for 2023 calls for
\$27,520 in direct public support.
Our income to date from those
sources is **\$9,051**.

We need your support!

To donate on-line go to
www.avpny.org or send a check
to: AVP NY, PO Box 6851,
Ithaca, NY 14851-6851

Thank you very much!!!

"Poison Ivy" (28 yrs later) or "Why Not Me Too"

If you go back to review tabloid headlines
Of decades ago
Then I'm the most evil thing still breathing our world
But if you get to know me and who I am today
It will be hard for you to harmonize
With what you've read of me of yesterday.

A repressed child incest
Grew Poison Ivy stems
No one grew interests
Her life and story didn't matter to any of them
In God We Trust didn't & still doesn't exist in the system.

Coming face to face with my abuser twenty years later
Childhood attacks boomeranged back
In a real bad and heinous way
Drugs, alcohol, sex trade and cocaine came after that
A real badass dominatrix I became
Something broke in me.

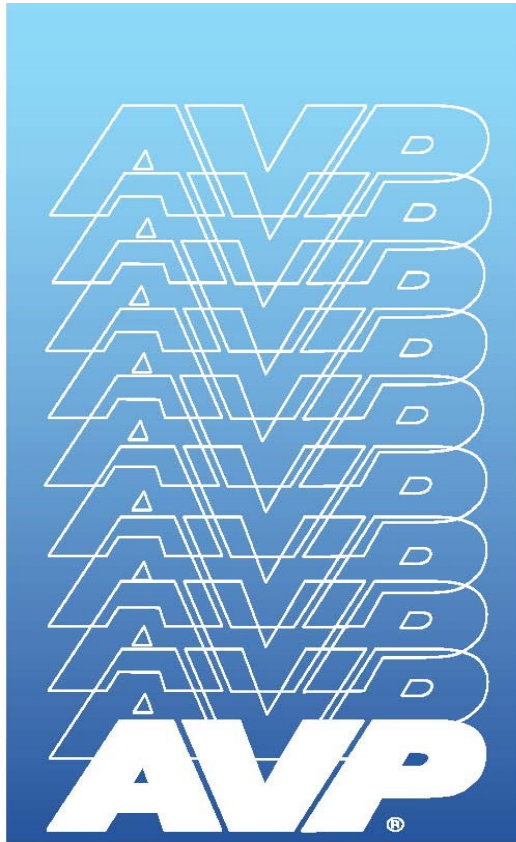
A little-brown-Latina-girl
From Brooklyn, East New York
Living her dream now lost in our unjust world
No one of her color stepping forward for support
Had she been blue-eyed and blonde
No railroading around
A code of professional conduct
Would have been diamond-crowned
Perhaps if she had some cash
She could have passed
Perhaps if they had been black or brown
She would have been home a long time ago.

Twenty-eight years ago, no one cared I was legally
earning six-figures-plus by 21 years old.
No one cared at 25 I landed my dream job as a broker.
No one cared I had no criminal chronicle.
And no one cared it was the recollection of a repressed childhood trauma that
caused my decline. Hindsight astronomical!
All they cared about and saw, was a little-brown-Latina from the Brooklyn streets
of crime.

Feels like a modeling gig with hundreds of polite declines
Twenty-eight years now still doing time
Still facing another three dimes
Still no excuses for the enormity of it all
No one should have died
Due to the horror that came up in mind
But let's get the emotion out
And let's get to the facts
It's been hard not to give back an attack
Try to paint a picture of me
Beyond headlines and rap sheets of decades ago.

If you believe in Second Chances
Here's an inspiring story untold
Still doing it afraid
Still holding onto hope
Still moving forward with faith
Still hoping for real freedom real soon
Take Second Look
Why Not Me Too...

—Ivié DeMolina (*Instrumental Ivié*), *Bedford Hills Prison*



Upcoming Community Workshops

Buffalo, NY workshop:

*Creating Cultures of Peace and Justice (AVP Basic plus)
September 22–24, 2023*

Purchase, NY workshops:

AVP Basic, September 22-24, 2023

AVP Basic, October 20-22, 2023

AVP Advanced, November 17-19, 2023

AVP Training for Facilitators: Jan 19-21, 2024

See www.avpny.org for details.



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ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT / NEW YORK

2023 Year-to-date Workshop Summary Report

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

ALBION Prison (Women's)	GREEN HAVEN Prison	WESTCHESTER CTY Jail	AVP/NY PRISON WORKSHOPS:
Workshop count: 4	Workshop count: 14	Workshop count: 2	Prisons served: 14
Participant count: 35	Participant count: 234	Participant count: 21	Workshop count: 67
Apprentices trained: 6	All-Facilitator wksp ct: 1		Participant count: 929
ATTICA Prison	All-Facilitator part't ct: 43	WOODBOURNE Prison	Apprentices trained: 86
Workshop count: 2	Apprentices trained: 39	Workshop count: 3	Mini workshop count: 1
Participant count: 24	GREENE Prison	Participant count: 55	Mini wksp part't count: 5
AUBURN Prison	Workshop count: 3	CENTRAL NY AC	Inside facilitators: 103
Workshop count: 5	Participant count: 58	Workshop count: 1	Outside facilitators: 36
Participant count: 52	GROVELAND Prison	Participant count: 8	Jails served: 1
Facilitator seminar ct: 1	Workshop count: 4	GENESEEE VALLEY AC	Workshop count: 2
Facilitator sem part't ct: 16	Participant count: 50	Workshop count: 4	Participant count: 21
CAYUGA Prison	Apprentices trained: 5	Participant count: 25	Outside facilitators: 3
Workshop count: 2	OTISVILLE Prison	Apprentices trained: 8	
Participant count: 18	Workshop count: 3	NIAGARA FRONTIER AC	AVP/NY COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS:
Apprentices trained: 10	Participant count: 35	Workshop count: 1	Community wksp's: 11
CLINTON Prison	SING SING Prison	Youth participant count: 12	Adult part't count: 81
Workshop count: 2	Workshop count: 19	WESTCHESTER AC	Youth part't count: 12
Participant count: 20	Participant count: 251	Workshop count: 5	Mini workshop count: 1
Apprentices trained: 10	Apprentices trained: 9	Participant count: 40	Mini wksp part't count: 8
ELMIRA Prison	<i>Note: Workshops at Sing Sing are without outcounts so workshops are only 12 hours in-session.</i>	Mini workshop ct: 1	Apprentices trained: 16
Workshop count: 2	TACONIC Prison (Wmn's)	Mini wksp part't ct: 8	Facilitator Days: 2
Participant count: 23	Workshop count: 1	Facilitator Day part'ts: 21	Facilitator Day part'ts: 21
FCI RAY BROOK Prison	Participant count: 6	Apprentices trained: 8	Outside facilitators: 22
Workshop count: 4	Mini workshop count: 1		
Participant count: 43	Mini wksp part't count: 5		
Apprentices trained: 7			