



## Remembering Bodacious Bob

**E**ditor's Note:  
Legendary  
AVP California  
facilitator Bob  
Barnes died on  
July 16, 2019  
after several  
years of failing  
health. Below are some memories of  
Bodacious Bob along with a reprint of  
his parting message to the AVP family.



**Ann Sieber:**  
*Back in the 1990s, I was attending an out door gathering at a large national Quaker conference. Mostly these gentle Quakers stood around chatting, drinking a little tea or eating cookies. However, Bob Barnes sat on the ground cross-legged with a hand-lettered placard reading something like, "Every 30 seconds a woman is raped in the world." He had a drum in his lap, and he'd hit his drum every 30 seconds to reinforce his message.*

*I knew Bob Barnes a little, a thin man in his 60s from northern California, with former hippie-looking beard and clothes, one of those semi-known Quaker elders, "weighty Friends" we call them. We are both facilitators in the Alternatives to Violence Project, and he'd even stayed overnight in my house when he was passing through Houston. I knew he was a tax resister, living under the official poverty level so as not to pay any income tax, since a sizable proportion goes to war, and Quakers have a testimony of peace.*

*I had a nice time at the gathering, knew enough people to talk about matters beyond a surface level. But Bob sitting there with his poster and drum was kind of a bummer. He cast a slight shadow, sort of a feeling in the chest of "uh oh" in the midst of*

*a sunny day. After a bit of this uh oh feeling, I decided the thing to do was to go join Bob. I sat down cross-legged next to him. He greeted me in a quiet friendly way. We both sat in the silence that Quakers are old hands at, and I took in the message of his poster and his drum. It felt a lot better to be sitting with him, than warily edging my way around him, ignoring/not ignoring him. After a bit of silence he started a conversation, pausing every 30 seconds to look at his watch and sound a drumbeat. It wasn't nearly as scary being on the ground as a witness to his message as it looked from the crowd.*

*Of course, we weren't doing anything. But then of course, it is not just the activists on the ground who do something, but those who spread the word, those who keep prayer and vigil, those who comfort and tend to the activists when they come home, those who keep the poverty and misery of the world in their consciousness, perhaps with a drum beat every 30 symbolic seconds.*

**Stephen Matchett:**  
*One of my first facilitations was a community Basic in Nevada City in 2005 for which Bob and I were the whole team. I remember when I got to the hotel ballroom where the workshop was to be held, he had festooned the walls with posters and scraps of paper bearing AVP and other nonviolence-related statements and trivia, and that, in place of the Treasure Hunt I used to occupy participants as they arrived, the first activity on his agenda was a sort of scavenger hunt, where you would answer a list of questions on a sheet by going around and consulting*

*the sheets posted on the walls. He also confessed to me that weekend that he thought his facilitating days might be over because of his hearing loss. To paraphrase Mark Twain, however, any news of his retirement was exaggerated, since according to our online workshop-reporting database he went on to facilitate another 64 workshops between 2005 and 2016, in 17 different institutions and communities – and that was just in California! As far as anyone knows, Bob, who began facilitating AVP in the 1980s or '90s, still holds the record for most countries visited for AVP, and possibly most programs started in new locations. He was truly our Johnny Appleseed.*

**Steve Gelb:**  
*Bob was a deeply compassionate man. I didn't know him well but had the pleasure of interviewing him for our AVP history group at the Philadelphia AVP USA Gathering. He told me that at the end of his first prison workshop, a participant said to him, "please don't forget us, everyone else has." That was 35 years before, but Bob had tears in his eyes as he recounted the story.*  
–Smiling Steve Gelb

**Bob Barnes:**  
*To all of you lovely people,*

*It is with both sadness and the memories of multiple times in multiple places I write. Sadness of having contracted emphysema and accepting there is no way out of that alive. Such is life: If you have been born, so will you die. There is nothing "wrong" about death: it is an integral part of living. For me it's another adventure to*

*(continued on page 2)*

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be taken on, like the series of unknowns when I first entered San Quentin Prison, having never been even close-by such a place, having never crossed paths with a convict or an ex-convict, no concept of what prisoners and officers would be like. So I put on my hat of "What can you and I do together to meet our common goals?" and went ahead.

And that opened a flood of riches for me! To be showered with the honor being present to those changes that many workshop participants showed is completely beyond my ability to find suitable words. To work with and learn from these AVP people both inside and outside the walls has been a privilege I never dreamed of. But here it was! I have no idea I could possibility top that.

And so now I say "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!".. .It has been an extraordinary pleasure knowing you.



Photo by Johannes Plenio from Pexels

## Learning About Violence

by Courteous Curtis Nuñez

**W**hat is violence to you? As a participant in AVP you'll have a different idea than someone who hasn't experienced a conflict resolution workshop. Then your idea might be more limited, as was mine before I took AVP.

I was serving my thirty-first year in prison when I was introduced to AVP in 2014. Men who were seasoned facilitators pulled me in and I can state with 100 percent certainty that I am today a returned citizen of my home county, Los Angeles, in large part because of my involvement with the AVP family. Yes, family. This is what happens when you share a Basic workshop with 25 men. By Sunday you are family.

Back to my original question, "What is violence"? Have you thought about it or brainstormed about it? AVP taught me what violence is to other people and that is what matters most to me. And I hope this would be true for you. Let me explain,

In my mind I may say to myself, "as long as I don't hit you I'm not using violence against you." But in my workshops I learned from other men, all who had been

convicted of serious crimes, that violence is not only physical, but also emotional and psychological. The physical is only a small part of violence. This changed my mind-set and how I act out in situations. I began to think differently and this allowed me to consider new perspectives.

AVP provides 12 Guides, (not steps) that can open us to Transforming Power. For me it was especially important to understand how we can learn to forgive. Through the ability to understand we can empathize with anyone. AVP played a major role in leading me to the place of reconciliation. I realized that conflict began inside of me, and it was that which led to the manifestation of the conflict outside, with others. That's where these Guides eventually led me—to resolution of the conflict within myself. AVP exposed me to men and women who provided me with other viewpoints and Guides to the power to transform.

I close by asking "What is your Transforming Power"? If you don't know you will find out, as I did when you take part in AVP.

## Houses of Healing – Inside

by Competent Kenneth E. Hartman

For years prior to paroling in 2017, I was privileged to be a *Houses of Healing* facilitator inside of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The program was created by Robin Casarjian and is supported by The Lionheart Foundation.

*Houses of Healing* is based on the concept of “emotional intelligence,” by which the student-participant comes to understand that there is a Self inside of them that is their core, around which a series of sub-personalities are arrayed that come into being in response to the events of their lives. These are the parts of their being that serve as a lampshade around the inner light of their Self.

Through a series of videotaped instructional films for each week, in which Ms. Casarjian explains the program, and a set of structured exercises that the on-site facilitator conducts, the student-participants are provided with tools to help them find their own way to a more peaceful and emotionally literate approach to living. Various forms of meditation are introduced during the course, as well.

Ms. Casarjian, whose life story is nothing short of heroic, stresses throughout the short instructional films and in her amazing book *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner’s Guide to Inner Power and Freedom* a deceptively simple mantra: “be gentle with yourself.”

As a certified AVP facilitator and a *Houses of Healing* facilitator, I think the biggest difference in the respective programs is that AVP leans more toward group dynamics while *Houses of Healing* leans more inward. I love both programs, and I think they are very complementary.



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## In Praise of Merry Marion Bogan

by Jokin’ Joseph Weathington

I’m an inmate at California State Prison-Los Angeles County in Lancaster. I participated in the very first Basic, Advanced, and T4F workshops when AVP came to A Yard in August, 2015. I received my Gold certificate as a facilitator in March, 2016, and graduated as a Team Coordinator in December, 2016.

AVP is the most awaited, in-demand workshop on A Yard. My life has been deeply affected by AVP and words cannot adequately express how I feel about working with, and being mentored by Marion Bogan.

I admire her wisdom, leadership and commitment to giving back.

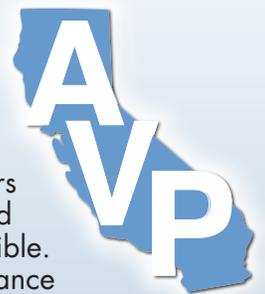
We call her “our Harriet Tubman” because she guides us through a tunnel to freedom, not just beyond these prison walls, but to freedom of choice, of mind, and freedom of self to release old baggage and turmoil. She helps us dig deeply into our selves and tap into our humanity.

Marion has helped me see the world beyond my own isolation, and to learn that every day brings an opportunity for a fresh start, a new chance to listen deeply to others, to speak to them from my heart.

Every day offers a chance for a new experience, a chance to feel, a chance to be open and touch the heart of another, a chance to

be free and to be my authentic self. Every day brings hope that trees will grow taller, flowers shine brighter, and happiness is possible. Every day is a chance for me to grow, to build, blossom, and, especially, to love. Marion helped me see that every day has a chance to be beautiful.

Marion Bogan is a unique woman, a beautiful soul, and an awesome human being. She is compassionate, caring, honest, and understanding. She is a treasure to us all on A Yard and an asset to AVP.



## An Experimental Workshop on Diversity at SATF, Corcoran

by Joyful Judy Nason

In June we held an experiment at an AVP workshop at SATF (Substance Abuse Treatment Facility, Corcoran), in which several diversity sub-groups were accommodated together in the same Level 2 Special Needs Yard Basic workshop.

One subgroup consisted of four totally deaf men and their two professional sign language interpreters. Other subgroups included three exclusively Spanish-speaking men, a blind man, and a man confined to a wheelchair due to an amputated leg. In addition, there were nine other “normal” participants, six inmate facilitators, and me. We had accommodated all these differences before, but never all together, and we looked forward to the challenge. I shouldn’t have worried about how it might turn out.

Our facilitating team was eager to make it work and had prepared

well to handle the anticipated challenges and to make workshop activities of all kinds as fully inclusive as possible. Special thanks to Calm Cesar, who did most of the organizing and gave up his chance to be the Full Lead for a third time so he could translate, and also to the other translators: Get-it-Done Garza and Recovering Ray, and also to River Reo, who made all the agendas. The Spanish-English interpreters worked hard, sitting beside their individual hearers and also facilitating. The extra buzz of voices was accepted since it was seen as supporting inclusion rather than distracting side talk.

The professional sign language interpreters enjoyed being in the workshop and took part in some activities themselves. They took turns translating, sitting across the large circle from the four inmates with deafness, and they each translated for two inmates in small

group activities. The interpreters carried alarms, freeing me to leave the room occasionally when necessary. A facilitator was responsible for helping the blind participant, and the man with one leg hopped around cheerfully and participated in all the Light and Livelines.

Although the workshop moved a little slowly due to the inclusion accommodations, it was successful and had full participation. Most notably, I think all the participants have a new appreciation of the possibilities for inclusion and of the value of accepting inmates who are physically different. In particular, several expressed surprise and appreciation to get to know the non-hearing inmates as real, likable people. AVP works, as usual.



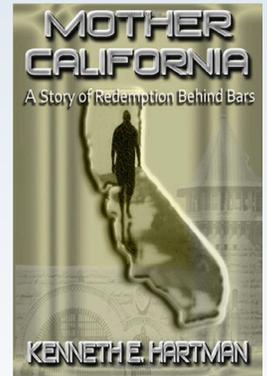
## Essential Reading:

### Kenneth E. Hartman, *Mother California: A Story of Redemption*

Returned citizen Kenneth E. Hartman is a writer, AVP facilitator, and life coach. Elsewhere in this Newsletter he introduces the AVP community to the Houses of Healing program. Kenneth's own prison memoir is a gripping and valuable read. The Amazon website described it this way:

*"The fierce and affecting memoir of a convicted murderer, whose growing self-awareness enables him to understand his crime and achieve redemption. In 1980, Kenneth Hartman murdered a homeless man in a Los Angeles park after a drug-fueled binge. Sentenced to life without parole by the state of California, Hartman was soon considered a potent force by the system's most brutal convicts. To the hellish chaos of a maximum-security prison he brought his own limitless propensity for violence—he often spent months at a time in solitary confinement, "the Hole." After years in the cold embrace of the state prison system, Hartman discovered a vocation for writing; he also met, through a chance phone call, the woman he*

*would marry and have a child by. With poignancy and self-awareness, Hartman chronicles the anarchy and brutish moral code that rules in some of the world's most infamous prisons, where physical punishment is the only form of control. Over time, Hartman evolves into a sentient being; follows his newly discovered spiritual and literary inclinations; and learns to deal with his demanding responsibilities as a family man. The final chapter describes his development of the Honor Program, which helps motivated prisoners escape the ravages of incarceration. Mother California is the story of a man who did not succumb to the darkness of the only world left to him. It offers definite proof that there is no such thing as a life beyond redemption."*



## Heather Ann Thompson: Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy

Review by Smiling Steve Gelb

Many of us understand that the Attica prison uprising and subsequent massacre was instrumental in the birth of AVP. But we're unlikely to know about the conditions inside Attica that sparked the uprising, the role of inmate leadership in seeking a just, non-violent outcome to the standoff with prison authorities, and how Governor Nelson Rockefeller's presidential aspirations influenced his disastrous decision-making, leading to many unnecessary deaths. This Pulitzer Prize winning

history is a compelling examination of the intolerable preconditions at Attica, the dynamics among inmates during and immediately after the uprising including their attempts to mediate the conflict with law enforcement, and the mayhem of the final assault. It illuminates also the long judicial aftermath, as surviving prisoners and family members of slain officers fought for truth and justice against a tenacious cover-up.

Photo by Larry Farr on Unsplash

The AVP California Newsletter appears four times a year and is edited by [Steve Gelb](#), [Rabia Khawar](#), and [Jason Guinn](#). We welcome your comments, submissions and suggestions.