

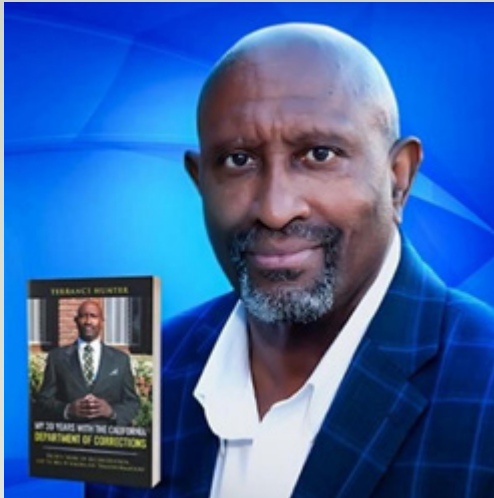
AVP CALIFORNIA NEWS

Autumn 2021



What AVP Has Done For Me

by Terrance Hunter



My name is Terrance Hunter, and on February 25, 1985, while in a state of rage, I shot and killed a close friend. It was my belief he had betrayed me. I was convicted of second-degree murder and received a 17-years to life prison sentence.

Though I was convicted of murder, at the time of my arrest and years following my conviction, I did not believe I was a violent person. I know it must sound absurd to anyone reading this article, that a person who killed another human being, would not consider themselves to be a violent person. Well, at that time in my life, it was my attitude that if someone caused me to become angry, my reactions were justified. In other words, I blamed my violence on people who angered me. I took absolutely no responsibility for my behavior.

However, after approximately 10 years of incarceration, I reached the conclusion, I was a violent person. I was at San Quentin State Prison, at that time. It occurred to me that

I did not want to leave prison with the same mentality I had prior to my arrest. Therefore, I decided to embark upon a journey of self-improvement. I decided to focus my attention on self-help programs that addressed anger and violence. My intentions were to change my attitude, my thinking and most importantly, my behavior.

My journey of self-improvement began with my enrollment in the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Basic workshop. In this program, participants are taught the concept of conflict resolution. In other words, we learn skills that enable us to resolve potentially volatile situations in a non-violent manner. I not only utilized such skills to resolve personal conflicts, but also to resolve conflicts between other prisoners. In essence, I became a non-violence advocate, who spoke out against every form of violence. My participation in the AVP Basic workshop was such a rewarding experience, I completed the Advanced and Training for Trainers workshops, and became an AVP Facilitator. I was sanctioned to facilitate workshops attended by prisoners and citizens who entered San Quentin State Prison, to acquire conflict resolution skills.

At the time of my arrest, I was an angry, bitter, and very resentful young man. I did not have a clue as to why or how I had become such a person. Fortunately, for me, my participation in AVP enabled me to make the connection between my internal anger and how I felt about never knowing my biological father. My involvement in AVP allowed me to explore my past in a manner that otherwise would have never occurred. I am eternally grateful for the insight

and understanding gained from my participation in AVP.

Reaching an understanding of the nature of my violent behavior was the beginning of the transformation of my overall life. Learning the source of my anger enabled me to stop my violence. Furthermore, I came to the realization I can learn from my mistakes and live my life in a fashion that demonstrates my desire to make amends. As a Public/Motivational Speaker, I share my story with both children and adults, so they may avoid the mistakes I have made in life. Understanding the nature and source of my violence, liberated me in a manner that caused me to become more focused and goal oriented.

Two months following my release from prison, I became a member of True Talking Toastmasters, a Silicon Valley Toastmasters Club. I am proud to say, I have served as Vice President of Education, and President of my club. From 2016-2017, I have served as the Toastmasters International Area B6 Director, for the city of Cupertino. As the Area B6 Director of the city of Cupertino, clubs including the ones at Apple and Amazon, were under my leadership.

Since my release from prison, I have co-facilitated several Alternatives to Violence workshops for at-risk-youth, in the city of Salinas. AVP is addressing the drug and gang violence issues taking place in that city. I also have co-facilitated ClubNext Workshops that provide Life Skills for youth, in Chartered Schools and church facilities.

(continued on page 2)

...continued from Page 1, What AVP Has Done...

For the past few years, I have been a Peer Re-entry Navigator Network Facilitator (**PRNN**), with The California Department of Corrections Parole Division. Once a month, my parole officer, his superior and I meet with parolees who also served life sentences. We provide a forum for these men to address any issues or concerns that they may have. Whether they are having difficulties transitioning back into society or experiencing housing or employment difficulties. Helping fellow parolees has been a very rewarding experience.

In 2018, I authored my autobiography entitled, "My 30 Years with the California Department of Corrections." My book is currently being sold on Amazon. <https://www.amazon.com/Years-California-Department-Corrections-Transformation-ebook/dp/B07NSC8PP5>

Regarding my accomplishments, I am most proud of the fact that I am the President/Director, and founder, of my non-profit organization, Empowering the Fatherless, Inc., which I established during COVID-19. Accordingly, the mission of **Empowering the Fatherless, Inc. (ETF)** is to embrace, support and empower the fatherless by equipping them with life skills, effective communication skills, and financial skills, so they may reap the benefits of living a well-rounded and fulfilling life. When we refer to "the fatherless", we are referring to children without fathers, and fathers (including incarcerated fathers) who are also victims of fatherlessness. I am pleased to report my organization is currently offering our services to offenders serving time in Santa Clara County. empoweringthefatherless.org

You may be wondering why I am citing the above-mentioned activities. I would be remiss not to recognize the connection between the success I have experienced since my release from prison and my involvement in the Alternatives to Violence Project. Through the investments that AVP participants and fellow AVP Facilitators have made in me, I was able to confront my demons and address my unresolved childhood issues. In the process, I have been able to amend many of the character flaws, which led to my incarceration. I was able to correct my behavior/thinking and rehabilitate myself through the assistance I received from fellow AVPers, and so many others who assisted me during my period of confinement. AVP played a major role in my transformation that empowered me to confront my self-created deficiencies and become the man I am today. For that, I am eternally grateful.

AVP/CA Virtual Fall Gathering Nov 6th-7th

The Annual Fall Gathering for AVP California facilitators is here again. Due to the onset and spread of the Delta variant, this California State Gathering will be on the Zoom virtual platform.

Come and join us on Saturday November 6th and Sunday November 7th! Connect with facilitators all around California, as we come together to do Gatherings, get updates from local councils and various AVP/CA committees. You will also enjoy breakout sessions on Trauma Awareness and Resilience, QEWR, Social Media 101, Compassionate Witnessing, New Prison Coordinator Guidelines, AVP Visioning and Organizing Volunteers in the Community. We will even have a great movie for everyone to watch on Saturday night! For any questions, please email joycebanzhaf@gmail.com

If you haven't already done so, you can **register for the Gathering here:** [Registration for AVP/CA Fall Gathering](#)

Incorporation of AVP California

At the June 2021 Steering Committee retreat, it was agreed that AVP/CA should move forward with incorporating. Since the beginning of AVP California many years ago, it has remained an unincorporated association. Although incorporating does involve some work and expense, it offers some important advantages. A Task Force consisting of the AVP/CA Treasurer (Groovy Gary) and other long time AVP/CA facilitators (Developing Don, Tenacious Terrill and Genuine Jim) have been working on this and hope to bring the Articles of Incorporation and new Bylaws for consideration at the Fall Gathering. Questions or concerns may be sent to treasurer@avpcalifornia.org.



AVP is a Restorative Practice

by *Marvelous Mark Thomas*



The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) as a practice is a Restorative Practice (RP), because AVP is a collection of practices and values integrated together which aims to build community and beneficial relationships between people. Literally speaking, an AVP workshop incorporates many different restorative practices. Let's compare them:

"The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) facilitates participants' capacity to positively transform relationships by practicing affirmation, communication, conflict resolution and community building." 1-<https://avpcalifornia.org/about-avpca/>

"The IIRP's [International Institute of Restorative Practices] definition of restorative practices also includes the use of informal and formal processes that precede wrongdoing, those that proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing." 2-<https://www.iirp.edu/restorative-practices/defining-restorative/>

During an AVP workshop, participants engage in many activities and practices that can be called "restorative practices". In AVP, we learn about different techniques that can be called "tools." These tools can be used to resolve or de-escalate conflicts and prevent or stop violence. These tools can be also called restorative practices. One restorative tool is "affective statements", such as I-messages. AVP exercises develop skills and qualities that are also used in restorative practices. Both AVP and RP engage in community building, talking-listening circles, dialogue, active listening, developing empathy, practicing reflection, using affirmation, engaging in play, and setting community agreements. AVP seeks to use Transforming Power to

resolve conflicts and prevent violence. RP aims to use restorative power to repair harm and create beneficial relationships. They use different words but have similar techniques and goals.

Technically, AVP is not Restorative Justice (RJ), but it uses many Restorative Practices (RP) that are used in the RJ process, such as community building, and bringing people of a community together to share and listen to each other's experiences. RJ actively utilizes restorative practices when it brings victims (those who were harmed) and offenders (those who caused harm) together in a powerful restorative process that involves cooperative problem solving. The formal RJ process is more effective when "victims" and "offenders" participate separately in restorative practices beforehand.

Social Science validates the beneficial effects of restorative practices. AVP utilizes restorative practices that have been shown to be beneficial and effective in improving human behavior, and reducing harmful behavior such as violence and bullying. Both AVP and Restorative Practices focus on community building at the start and throughout their processes. They focus on building or restoring beneficial relationships and lines of communication between people. Open and transparent communication are essential elements in each practice.

Both RP and AVP:

- Have experiential approaches that help people change their lives.
- Offer a new approach for community groups, social service agencies, schools, youth organizations and all who would like to participate.
- Help people who have done harm learn new skills, values, and attitudes that lead to fulfilling, harm-free, and restorative lives.
- Builds upon a humanitarian base of respect and caring for self and others.
- Both draw on the practical wisdom from cultures and people from all around the world.

AVP/CA 1-800 Number for Returned Citizens

Many previously incarcerated people have been released from prison in the last year and a half. If there are any returned citizens that would like to get in touch with an outside facilitator, they can call the AVP/CA number, 1-800-905-6765, and leave a message saying which facilitator they would like to contact, and leaving their phone number so that the facilitator can call them back. Please pass this message on. Thank You.

AVP International World Gathering Experiences

AVP International held a virtual World Gathering in August 2021 using the Zoom and Qiqo chat platforms. It was a tremendous effort by all of the organizing team, including all the AVP facilitators that provided tech support. This was led exceedingly well by AVP International President, Bronwen Brillante. They had over 400 participants registered from 48 countries around the world. The United States had the highest number of participants at 66, Australia had the second highest number at 31 participants, and 19 people registered from Rwanda. We reached out to a few attendees from around the world and this is what they had to share about their experience:

"The World Gathering was a great success. I was able to spend time with AVP international facilitators sharing, learning and socializing. It was a great opportunity to meet with some of the senior and popular AVP facilitators globally. Thank you to AVP International for providing us this opportunity.
Kind Kumar, Sydney, Australia.

It was a fascinating, although very challenging, experience, to be co-responsible for the Covid workshop. The team was

wonderful and so precious, caring, listening, creative, and understanding. And the experience of knowing that we were together with people from literally around the world, dealing with the frustrations of the worldly system and yet being grateful for such an incredible tool, hearing experiences from so many places, it was all very amazing. The organization, I can't imagine the incredible amount of time and energy it took to put it all together!! All I can say is thank you so very much for the wonderful opportunity!! Peace.
Mystic Marie or Marie Mística, São Leopoldo, RS, Brasil.

The experience was inspiring and uplifting, the sessions were well planned and I have gained a lot from those I was able to attend. Meeting other facilitators from different parts of the world sharing and exchanging ideas on how we can overcome and continue with AVP work despite Covid challenges. Listening to facilitators presenting in their native languages and being able to read from translation was a true reflection of unity and embracing diversity which is AVP Values. Mostly working in gatherings committee empowered me to so much administrative skill and allowed me to adapt to technology

as most of testing of platforms to be used in preparations for the gathering was online, I appreciate all team members of AVPI for the support and mentoring from those who are more experienced in preparation for Gatherings; this painted a picture of AVP as a sustainable society.
Miraculous Miselwa, South Africa.

I am very grateful to Mark Thomas who brought us together through a Restorative Witnessing workshop during the AVPI World Gathering. This was a very safe place where I was able to express and allow myself to process my grief. I am also grateful to the team of facilitators as we supported each other and regularly practiced in our own group before the real session which made me more confident. I was quite nervous because I am not a native English speaker and lack technical skills. However, with the support of the team I was able to do the activities. I really appreciate the courage of our participants who shared in large groups and trusted us. This has given me more confidence to conduct AVP workshops on an international level as well as national level. Once again thank you so much our team and all of the team of AVPI World Gathering Team.
Strong Sita, Nepal.



From Folsom State Prison - Brothers Unchained

by Delightful Dewayne

We at the Alternative to Violence program (AVP), like most of the population here at Folsom, are working our way back to normal operations. Following the 13 to 16 months of modified programs due to the COVID-19. We are partially up and running, and plan to be offering seminars as soon as it is practical and safe to do so.

It is our belief that only through knowledge, understanding, and better choices we can become free!! Freedom is not related to incarceration status; rather a degree of mental development.

I am free, it is on me and in me, and hopefully together we can bring freedom to every person incarcerated here at Folsom state prison.

Do not be bitter, be better.

AVP is for everyone.

Folsom State Prison Facilitator Shares on Alternative to Violence Project

by Kind Keyron

Greetings, I am kind Keyron - the day of April 29, 2008 had become my very worst day upon our earth, where I would be enduring the loss of two separate loves, first the loss of my younger brother just five days after his 35th birthday. The real funny thing is that on this day I said that it was two loves lost, because his death came due to gang violence, so secondly his death came by the very hands of the gang that we both once represented.

On September 12-14, 2008 I was pretty much convinced into making one of the two top choices ever in my life, to attend a three day workshop of a Basic Class of the Alternatives to Violence Project. To be completely honest, because of my brokenness, rage, anger, and state of confusion that I was feeling at the time, coupled with never before doing anything close to this, I truly did not believe that this class could do me any good. How wrong I was would be revealed to me upon the very first day, three things which immediately impacted me were; 1) The Gatherings (topics on real life events); 2) Concentric Circles (listening and speaking for two minutes to complete strangers is very challenging) feelings of uncomfortableness can be empowering; and 3) those Light and Livelies (they will eventually crack through the hardest exteriors and bring forth that missing smile.) Due to the constant interactions with people that you would normally not ever speak to on the prison yard, the workshop really helped me gain back my humanity, because having the opportunity to hear other races tell almost the same stories as yourself, helps to identify others as human beings too, with many of the same Hurts, Habits and Hangups in their lives too.

Then the warmth and kindness from all the outside facilitators coming inside to what can be a very hostile place (prisons) , just to offer their precious time and hope for the good in humanity, and not giving up on people (inmates) who have done and lived very violent lives. This awakening has also paved the way for me to complete both the Advanced workshop and Training for Facilitators workshop and become a Folsom State Prison Facilitator (Nov 21-23, 2008) and living for Jesus Christ.

Bringing AVP-CA Local Councils Together

First Meeting: September 16, 2021

Co-Chairs: Nancy Vimla & Betty McEady

Attendance: 12 facilitators/coordinators representing 5 or 6 active councils

Gathering: One way I would like the Steering Committee to help local councils is . . .

Summary of Gathering: a few major requests or wishes included: (a) continue to support councils to come together to share information and help other councils to grow; (b) provide financial support to councils to organize community workshops and to facilitators who are interested in forming new councils or reactivating old councils; (c) support councils through a statewide marketing campaign to expand beyond prisons and conduct more community workshops.

Summary of recent work of councils:

Representatives from each council described their current activities in their respective communities and in a few prisons; some described their plans to reactivate or redirect their focus.

Next Meeting: January 20, 2022 at 7:15 pm

Councils Interested in Joining this New Committee:
Contact Betty McEady bjmceady@gmail.com or Nancy Vimla vimlanan@gmail.com

Departing AVP/CA Steering Committee Members

Serving on the Steering Committee consists of attending monthly meetings and two or three in-person retreats (pre-Covid) a year, to discuss and provide guidance on many different issues regarding AVP/CA. Members are nominated and then approved by the AVP/CA members during the Annual Gathering. Members of the Steering Committee also serve on one or more of the many AVP/CA SC sub committees; Finance/Fundraising, Special Training, Tech/Communication, Newsletter, Fall Gathering, Local Councils, Nominations and the Prison Coordinators Council. It is a commitment that requires time, effort and a special dedication to AVP/CA.

The AVP/CA Steering Committee would like to acknowledge the SC members who will complete serving their terms on the Committee in November of 2021. We appreciate their generosity in giving of their time to AVP/CA and thank them sincerely for their efforts and contributions.

We asked each of the members who are leaving, to share a few words on their experience of being on the Steering Committee.



Joyce Banzhaf

- 6 year term to be completed
November 2021

*Liaison for Fall Gathering
Organizing Committee &
Nominations Committee*

"The Steering Committee members were consistently inspiring in their thoughtfulness and devotion to the process. I am not big on being on committees but this one was very satisfying."



Guarionex Delgado

- 3 year term to be completed
November 2021

"A really empowering experience I had with AVPCA steering committee was that, during a very emotional and difficult time for the Steering Committee, we used AVP principles

and practices and trusted the process and transforming power to get us through. We managed to deepen our respect and confidence in one another working together for the good of the whole. It was spirit healing and affirming".



Tondria Hall

- 3 year term to be completed
November 2021

*Finance Committee and
Correspondence Distribution*

"One of the most important things I have learned about being on the Steering Committee is that it is not one voice that makes decisions but a multitude of voices that come together as one.

The one piece of advice that I would like to give to any new members interested in joining the SC is to not be afraid to speak your truth and to be the voice for those that are unable to be on the SC but whose opinions should very much be appreciated and shared with the SC".



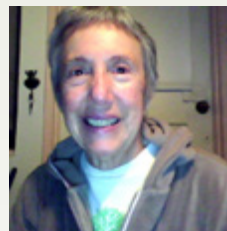
Lydia McClosky

- 3 year term to be completed
November 2021

Prison Coordinators Committee

"I have enjoyed my 3 years on the AVPCA Steering Committee because of the thought, care and

devotion to AVP consistently demonstrated by my fellow SC members. Each brings unique experiences and skills which created a better discussion and decision process. Because we used our AVP Community Agreements, this was one of the most compassionate Boards on which I have served. Serving requires additional volunteer time and needs a good understanding of the many opportunities and challenges faced by AVP California in both prison and community workshops, the support of local councils and the training and support of new facilitators. I am grateful for this opportunity to better understand the importance of what AVP does."



Nancy Vimla

- 6 year term to be completed
November 2021

*Liaison for Special Training
Committee, Fall Gathering Committee,
Nominations Committee*

"Being on the AVPCA Steering

Committee for the last 6 years has been an amazing experience with its ups and downs. When I first arrived, I had never been on any type of advisory board. It was all new!

So much has happened during those 6 years of having monthly Zoom meetings and two or three in-person retreats. I often helped clerk the meetings, helped with minute taking, and helped make decisions for AVPCA. I also clerked the Special Training Liaison after being on the Steering Committee, helped organize and facilitate at Team Coordinator Workshops and Trauma Awareness and Resilience Workshops. And so much more. WOW! My experience was very much enriched being with warm-hearted and dedicated AVPers all serving together for AVPCalifornia. Thank you all, the opportunity to learn, grow and serve"

Upcoming AVP Zoom trainings

Compassionate Witnessing - Weekly on Fridays

Weekly Compassionate Witnessing **mini-workshop** on Zoom.

Fridays, 7PM to 8:30 PM PST. The exercises used in this workshop are similar to the Empathy exercise, the Reflection exercise, the Who Am I? exercise, and the brainstorm exercises frequently used in AVP workshops. Compassionate Witnessing is a practice which involves participants sharing their experiences, actively listening, and restoratively questioning each other in an empathic manner that benefits all involved. If you are interested in attending, contact Mark Thomas: mark.k.thomas777@gmail.com

AVP Basic Virtual Workshop - Oct 2021

A Basic workshop will be offered on Zoom by AVP-Antelope Valley. All times are in the **Pacific Time Zone**. This workshop titled "Peaceful Relationships" will run on **Sat and Sun Oct 9th and 10th from 8am-noon and Sat and Sun Oct 16th and 17th from 8am - noon**. Participants must complete all sessions to receive a certificate of completion. To pre-register, please email avpav@aol.com

AVP Advanced Virtual Workshop - Oct 2021

An AVP Advanced workshop will be offered on Zoom; **Must have completed a Basic AVP**. All times are in the **Pacific Time Zone**. This workshop will run on **Sat and Sun Oct 16th and 17th from 1pm to 5pm and Sat and Sun Oct 23rd and 24th from 1pm to 5pm**. Participants must complete all sessions to receive a certificate of completion. For those interested in becoming a volunteer AVP facilitator, this is the 2nd of 3 workshop training sessions. To pre-register, please email avpav@aol.com



AVP T4F Virtual Workshop - Nov 2021

An AVP Training for Facilitators will be offered on Zoom; **Must have completed a Basic AVP**. All times are in the **Pacific Time Zone**. This workshop will start on **Fri Nov 12th from 5pm to 8pm** and will continue through **Sat and Sun Nov 13th and 14th from 8am to 5pm**. Participants must complete all sessions to receive a certificate of completion. For those interested in becoming a volunteer AVP facilitator, this is the final of 3 workshop training sessions. To pre-register, please email avpav@aol.com

AVP T4F Virtual Workshop - Dec 2021

An AVP Training for Facilitators will be offered on Zoom; **Must have completed a Basic AVP**. All times are in the **Pacific Time Zone**. This workshop will start on **Fri Dec 10th from 5pm to 8pm** and will continue through **Sat and Sun Dec 11th and 12th from 8am to 5pm**. Participants must complete all sessions to receive a certificate of completion. For those interested in becoming a volunteer AVP facilitator, this is the final of 3 workshop training sessions. To pre-register, please email avpav@aol.com

AVP/CA Business Cards

This is a request to all AVP/CA facilitators to destroy any AVP/CA business cards that have the Santa Barbara address on them. Please note that the Santa Barbara address is no longer valid and any mail sent there will be returned to the sender.

Please make sure to order new AVP Business cards with the Stockton address (AVP California, PO Box 78033 Stockton CA 95267-1333). You can email your order for English and Spanish Business cards to distribution@avpcalifornia.org. Please also include your email address and physical address you want them sent to.

This edition of the AVP/CA newsletter is edited by Bountiful Betty McEady, Marvelous Mark Thomas and Radiant Rabia. We welcome your submissions and contributions. Please email us at avp-ca-newsletter@googlegroups.com