

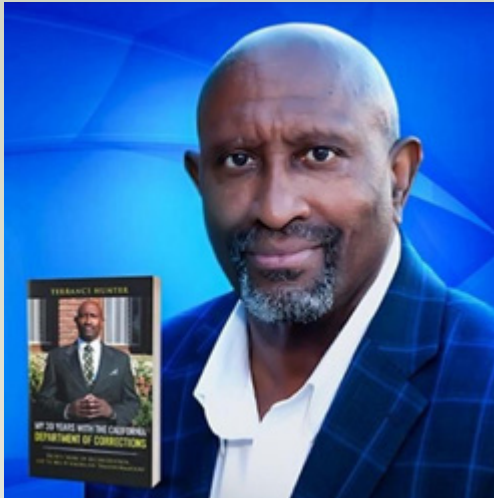
AVP CALIFORNIA NEWS

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.

