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TODAY'S TOPIC: "FORGIVENESS"

HELLO WORLD,

IT'S ME AGAIN, ZAKEE, WRITING TO YOU ABOUT MY EXPERIENCES WITHIN CALIFORNIA'S "FORTRESSES OF FEAR" CALLED THE CALIFORNIA DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION ("CDCR").

THIS PAST THURSDAY (10-9), I FACILITATED A TRAINING FOR ABOUT 25 MEMBERS OF SOCIETY, RANGING FROM CEO'S OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS, LAW STUDENTS, SOCIAL ACTIVISTS, TEACHERS, ETC.; IN ORDER TO SHARE MY FACILITATOR TECHNIQUES WITH THEM IN THE "VICTIM-OFFENDER EDUCATION GROUP" (VOEG) AT THIS PRISON. MY DISCUSSION SUBJECT WAS CENTERED ON "FORGIVENESS". (SEE ATTACHED PROGRAM SCHEDULE)

WHAT I SHARED WITH THESE 25 INDIVIDUALS WAS MY EXPERIENCE AND LIBERATION I FELT WHEN I DID THIS EXERCISE IN MY INITIAL VOEG GROUP, WHICH WAS IN 2009 AND LASTED 68 WEEKS. THE EXERCISE CONSISTED OF WRITING A LETTER TO SOMEONE I WANTED TO "FORGIVE" WHO CAUSED ME HARM/HURT, WHICH I WROTE TO MY MOTHER, AND A "FORGIVENESS LETTER" TO MYSELF.

I EXPLAINED HOW THIS EXERCISE WAS TOWARDS THE END OF THE VOEG GROUP PROCESS BECAUSE OFTEN THE HARDEST STAGE OF HANDLING "TOUGH TOPICS" IS AT THE END: FORGIVENESS AND ACCEPTANCE. FOR MANY PEOPLE, THEY REACH AN EMOTIONAL OBSTACLE AT THIS STAGE, AS THEY BELIEVE THAT TO "FEEL FORGIVENESS" WOULD IN SOME WAY ABSOLVE THE PERSON AND THEIR BEHAVIOR. ALSO, HOW MANY INDIVIDUALS, ESPECIALLY PRISONERS, OFTEN FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FORGIVE THEMSELVES DUE TO THE NATURE OF THEIR CRIMES.

HOWEVER "FORGIVENESS", I EXPLAINED, DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE SHOULD JUSTIFY SOMEONE'S ACTIONS OR BEHAVIOR OR CONCUR WITH WHAT HE OR SHE THINKS OR SAYS. THIS STAGE OF THE VOEG PROCESS IS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION AS IT IS, COMING TO TERMS WITH IT, AND LETTING GO OF OUR OWN DESIRES TO BLAME THE OTHER PERSON, BY REMAINING ANGRY OVER PERCEIVED INJUSTICE, OR TRYING TO JUSTIFY OURSELVES AND/OR TRY TO CHANGE THE OTHER PERSON'S FEELINGS. I FURTHER ELABORATED HOW "FORGIVENESS" OPENS OUR HEARTS AND MINDS AS IT CLEARS OUT ALL OF THE RESENTMENTS, FEARS, ANGER, AND PAINS WE CONTINUE HOLDING FOR SO LONG.

ADDITIONALLY, THE "ACT OF FORGIVENESS" DOES NOT HAVE TO BE DONE "IN PERSON". FORGIVENESS IS AN ACT THAT OCCURS WITHIN US, AND ITS MAIN FUNCTION IS TO HELP US TO MOVE ON. I DETAILED HOW I FOUND IT SO HELPFUL IN WRITING THESE "FORGIVENESS LETTERS", AND HAVE SINCE WRITTEN MANY OTHERS TO PEOPLE WHO HARMED ME, AS WELL AS, TO THOSE I HAVE HARMED, INCLUDING MY CHILDREN, SIBLINGS, FAMILY, MY EX-WIFE, MY IN-LAWS, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, MY VICTIMS WHOM I ROBBED. THE MOST PROFOUND LETTER WAS TO "MYSELF!"

I TOLD THIS GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN HOW MY STORY DEMONSTRATES THE VIRTUE AND POWER OF FORGIVENESS AND HOW IT IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE, NO MATTER HOW MUCH PAIN, HURT, LOSS AND SADNESS WE EXPERIENCE.

THEN I CHALLENGED THEM TO THIS SIMPLE CONCEPT: TODAY, WHY NOT CHANGE HOW YOU RELATE TO THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE? I TOLD THEM "IT IS A CHOICE THAT IS IN YOUR HANDS, AND ONE THAT BENEFITS ONLY YOU. IT IS A CHOICE THAT WILL TOTALLY CHANGE THE QUALITY OF YOUR LIFE." I ASKED THEM TO SEND ALL THEIR LOVE TO THEIR PARENTS, AND EXPERIENCE A REUNION WITH THEM. I SAID HOW I SEND ALL MY LOVE TO MY CHILDREN, WHEREVER THEY ARE, AND FOR LOVE TO BRING THEM BACK TO ME. I TOLD THEM TO SEND THEIR LOVE TO THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, TO EVERYONE IN THEIR FAMILIES, AS I WAS AT THAT VERY MOMENT. I SHARED HOW I CHOOSE FORGIVENESS, AND HOW I TRY TO IMPART IT WITH EVERYONE I KNOW, EVEN IF THEY CANNOT "HEAR ME." WHEREVER THEY ARE, THEY CAN "FEEL IT", I EXPLAINED.

I CLOSED MY LESSON WITH THIS LAST THOUGHT: THE ACT OF FORGIVENESS IS SOMETHING SO PROFOUND AND POTENT. MIRACLES CAN AND WILL HAPPEN IF YOU JUST FORGIVE...

THAT WAS HOW I SPENT MY DAY; HOW DO YOU SPEND YOURS, IN CHASING "DREAMS" OR MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS? DOES WHAT I HAVE TO SAY MAKES SENSE TO YOU?

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE FEEL FREE IN LEAVING COMMENTS OR WRITE ME DIRECTLY. MAY PEACE BE WITH YOU...

Jakee

Insight Prison Project
Victim Offender Education Group Team

presents

FACILITATOR TRAINING

Thursday, October 09, 2014
9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
San Quentin State Prison

Program Schedule

9:15AM	Welcome, Introductions, & Check-ins Facilitated by: Mike "Yoshi" Nelson	
9:45AM	Crime Impact Statement	Vaughn Miles Frankie Smith
10:30AM	BREAK	
10:45AM	Timeline	Nate Collins Michael Tyler
11:30AM	LUNCH	
12:00PM	Abuse of Power	Phoeun "Sane" You James "J.C." Cavitt
12:45 PM	Goodbye Letter	Ron "Yana" Self (Back-up: Mike Nelson)
1:30PM	BREAK	
1:45PM	Forgiveness	Edwin "Zakee" Hutchinson Orlando Harris
2:30	Q & A/Check-Outs	

