

To whom it may concern —

The info. below is worthy of sharing with other BTB bloggers who would benefit from a greater — more compassionate — self awareness. This correspondence course is not limited only to segregated prisoners so feel free to make the address available to all prisoners with time for introspection.

For the Love of Truth.

Houses of Healing a self-study program for Death Row and the SHU

By Marcus Henderson
Journalism Guild Chairman

Some of California's most segregated prisoners are finding self-forgiveness and introspection through The Houses of Healing Self-study Program.

Death Row prisoners and those housed in segregated housing units (SHU) facilities are offered a 14-week correspondence course. San Quentin, Pelican Bay and Corcoran state prisons are among the facilities where the program is available.

"Through group sessions and independent work, prisoners learned how to deal constructively with conflict and hostility," said Robin Casarjian, executive director

of Lionheart Foundation and founder of the program.

"They learned ways to break lifelong patterns of dysfunction in order to find greater emotional balance, a sense of self-esteem, and the power to choose positive behavior," he added.

More than 450 men have voluntarily registered for the course since 2017, she noted. As a part of the course, the segregated participants read the *Houses of Healing: A prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom* by Casarjian herself.

The participants have to dedicate at least 30 minutes a day to do "self-work." The work includes reading, writing and stress reduction exercises

like meditation and relaxation.

"Some women and men aren't actively looking for emotional and spiritual healing, but when the guidance to do the work actually becomes available to them, they choose it," wrote Casarjian in her book.

"We can't choose what we don't yet know exists," she added.

The book has "Pause and Reflect" lessons, where the participants are asked to think about their childhood, a time they felt guilt about a situation and what motivated that behavior.

There are exercises such as "A letter of Forgiving to Yourself" and "A Look into Your

Future."

They receive new assignments once a week for the 14 weeks.

"The idea of prisoners forgiving themselves is as unacceptable to many as the actual commission of a crime," Casarjian said. "Many people believe guilt and the threat of additional punishment are the driving forces that will stop future violence and criminal behavior."

"But history has shown us, this threat doesn't work." She noted that no matter how much shame and guilt a prisoner feels, recidivism rates are still high. It can also create low self-esteem in the prisoners and that can fuel violence.

She sees self-forgiveness as a deterrent to crime.

"Self-forgiving, like all healing, is a process—not a one-time event. It is not a superficial act of saying, 'Yeah, I did such and such, now I'll forgive myself.' In many cases, true self-forgiving takes time, courage, and a depth of honest looking that not everyone is ready or willing to do," Casarjian said.

The course requires the participant to have a fifth-grade reading level and a commitment to doing the internal work. At the end of the course, selected assignments are submitted and reviewed by Lionheart staff or volunteers. Then, a certificate

of participation is issued and signed by Casarjian.

This Houses of Healing program is strictly for prisoners in segregated housing units. It's in accordance with a new directive by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, meant to create and deliver rehabilitative programming to all prisoners.

The program is also available in Spanish and at other prisons across the nation.

To register for the program if you are in a segregated housing unit contact:

(The Lionheart Foundation)
HOH SS
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