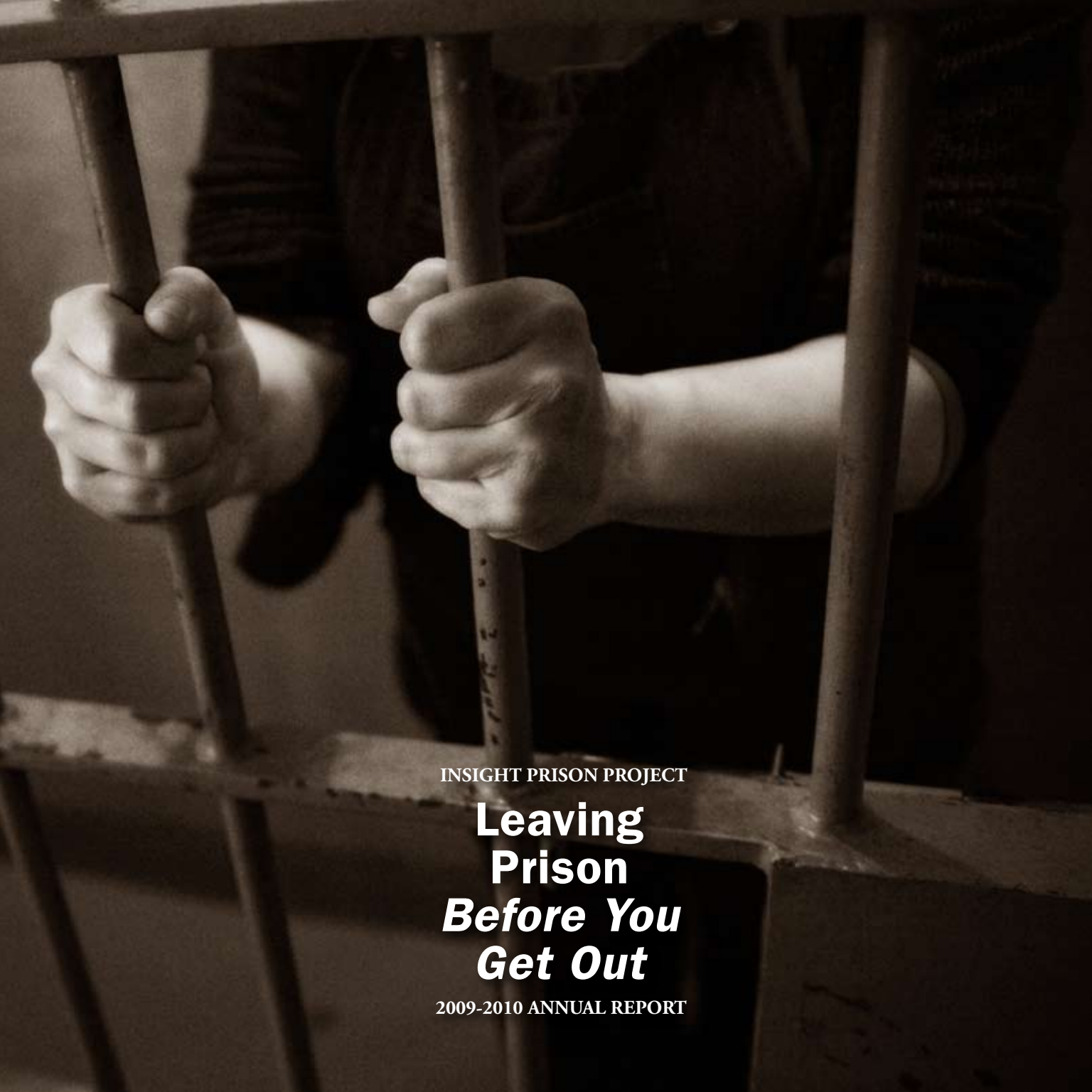

INSIGHT PRISON PROJECT

Leaving Prison *Before You Get Out*

2009-2010 ANNUAL REPORT

Vision

Insight Prison Project envisions a vibrant and just society that inspires individual transformation beyond the walls of both personal and institutional incarceration.

Mission

Insight Prison Project transforms the lives of those impacted by incarceration through programs designed to develop behavior inspired by insight, accountability and compassion.

Purpose

Since 1997, the Insight Prison Project has been dedicated to reducing recidivism rates and improving public safety by conducting highly-effective in-prison rehabilitation programs that provide prisoners with the tools and life skills necessary to create durable change.

INSIGHT PRISON PROJECT

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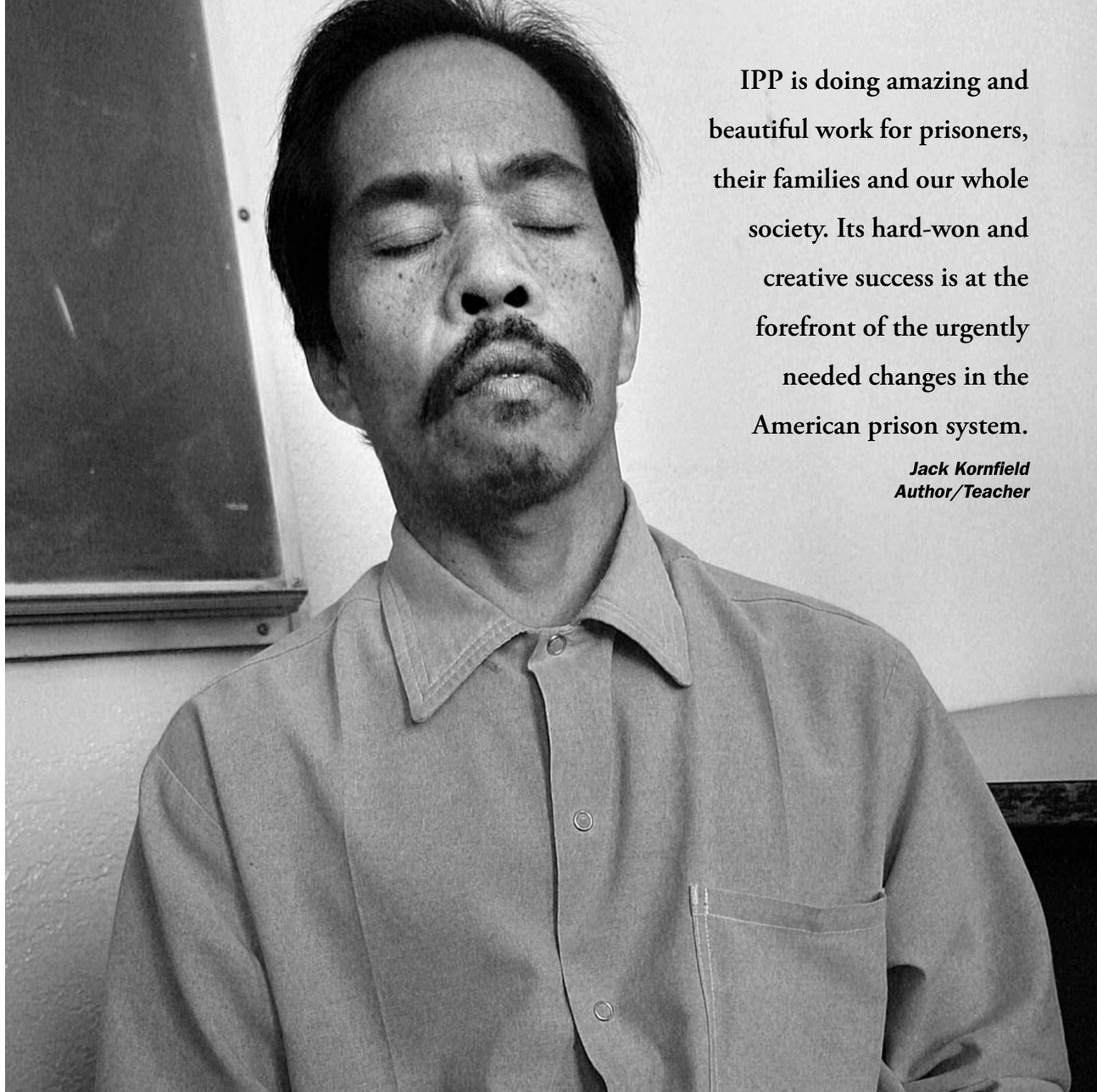


IPP is doing amazing and beautiful work for prisoners, their families and our whole society. Its hard-won and creative success is at the forefront of the urgently needed changes in the American prison system.

Jack Kornfield
Author/Teacher

a letter from Jennie K. Curtis *Executive Director*

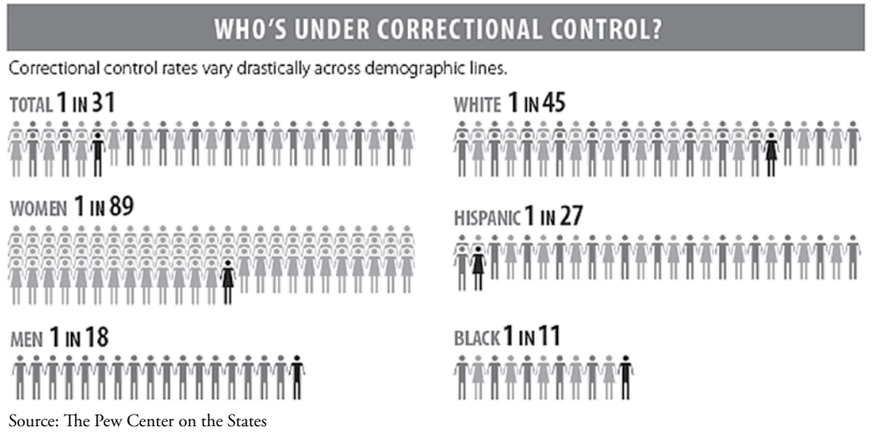
There are two ways of spreading light:
to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it. **Edith Wharton**

Since the beginning, holding a lamp up in one of the dark places in our culture has been the driving force behind IPP.

As providers of in-prison programming, we do our best to hold up the light. Our funders, the few, the brave, the proud are the mirror. The men we are privileged to serve, some of whose faces are captured in this report, are mirrors who become lamps. The survivors who courageously engage with us in this work to heal the harm that has been done are also spreading light.

A recent report from the Department of Justice reports that one of every 15 people in this country will serve a prison term during his or her lifetime. Given that 95% of those who are incarcerated return to society, that means 14 of the 15 will arrive back in our neighborhoods. I for one would prefer to welcome a candle holder home.

Your support of our work makes it possible to hold up a lamp in the dark places and in our neighborhoods. We are grateful to be in your company.



Source: The Pew Center on the States

A Few Facts

- IPP started in 1997 with 1 class for 14 inmates
- Today, 9 of the original 14 are free men
- IPP offers 18 classes to 300 inmates per month in San Quentin

2009-2010: A Few Highlights

- VOEG Pilot at the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center, co-facilitated by formerly incarcerated men
- VOEG Facilitator Trainings: 2 Trainings for 36 Trainees, co-facilitated by currently & formerly incarcerated men
- 5-day bilingual training of IPP's Integrated Curriculum to U.S. State Department & Guatemalan Non Governmental Organizations for prisoner & ex-gang member rehabilitation and re-entry

Our Promise to Survivors

Insight Prison Project is dedicated to meeting survivors where they are, supporting them in their healing and creating surrogacy opportunities for them to participate in facilitated dialogs with offenders who have committed similar crimes. Our work has taught us that in many cases survivors and offenders hunger for opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue. It is only through nuanced discussion about the anatomy of the grief, shame, loss and self-loathing that are frequent byproducts of human exploitation, that both offenders and survivors can find a new understanding of themselves and others.

I resolved to redirect my efforts into building an organization, a non profit that would hold a lamp up in one of the dark places in our culture, a place where we discard human beings, label them as our prisoners and forget about them. An organization built upon the belief that we can only find our human dignity in caring for each other.

Race, class and economic differences evaporate as we spend time with each other, getting past the idea of one another and connecting with who we really are.

Jacques Verduin
Founding Director

Voices of IPP Graduates

From Sterling Scott, one of the Original 14 *My involvement with IPP helped me to become free long before I was released from prison, and because I embraced IPP's regenerative process, "Each One, Teach One" philosophy, I continue to use my life experience to reach and teach others to recognize their humanity. Some might say that the process was successful but everyday that I wake-up and take a breath of freedom I say that the process is no less than amazing!*

From Jon C. *IPP has helped me attain the tools I need to get on with my life, now it's a lot of work but worth every minute of it. I have never known the peace of mind that I have today. I like who I see in the mirror. I just wanted to let you know that the work you're doing there at San Quentin can change lives.*

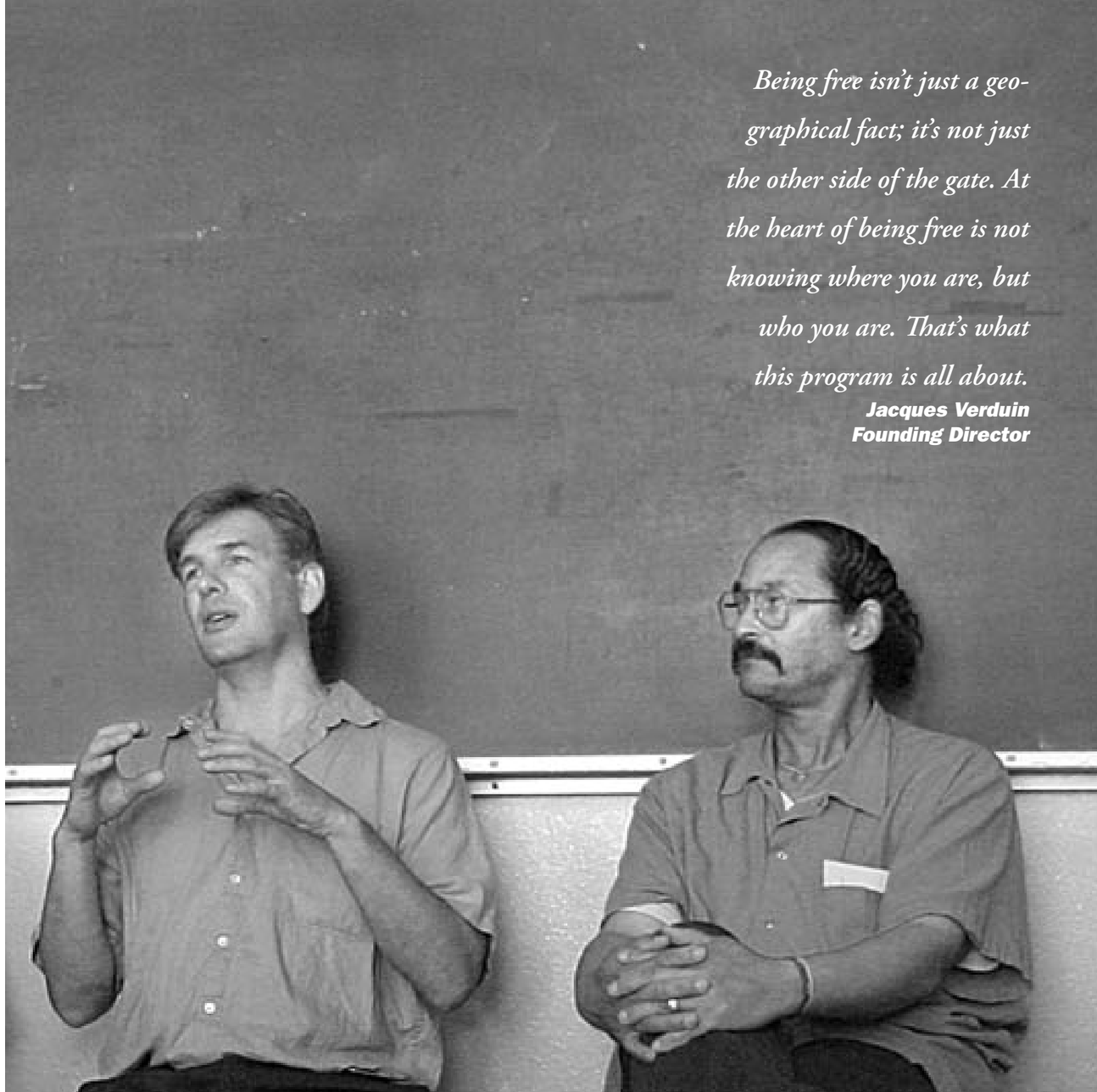
From Donald B. *IPP has given me the ability to think; to pause and come up with a decision which could be a life-changing one. It has given me the ability to witness my feelings and emotions, and to understand I can experience them and not react, but respond.*

From Mike K. *In the five years I was incarcerated, the IPP classes were the most positive experiences I had in prison. They represent an oasis of positive energy in an atmosphere of intolerance.*

From Joseph A. *I have learned to find freedom in myself, finding ways to make choices, learned to be a parent and a role model, learned tools to control my temper … I will be going to school to become a juvenile counselor to teach young adults that life in prison is no life. I thank you for all of these changes.*

From Michael S. *In my opinion, the program has thrown a pontoon to a bunch of swimmers who do not believe they're going to make it 'cause they can't see the shore. I am very grateful to all of those who spend their valuable time with us.*

From Frederick B. *If I have to say what I take with me, that's easy. I can FEEL now and you know what, that's OK! I am responsible for myself. Thank you so much for showing up in this black hole.*



Being free isn't just a geographical fact; it's not just the other side of the gate. At the heart of being free is not knowing where you are, but who you are. That's what this program is all about.

Jacques Verduin
Founding Director

IPP Programs and Courses

Violence Prevention

This is an in-depth journey into understanding violence, including gender and cultural conditioning (e.g. race and gang affiliations) that create stereotypical models of behavior which often validate the use of violence. The program helps offenders to understand both the origins and impact of their anger and develop the skills to track and transform strong impulses before acting on them and perpetuating acts of violence. The goal of the program is to assist participants in developing practical skills to recognize what "triggers" them into violent and destructive behavior and make alternate choices.

Victim Offender Education Group (VOEG)

Using the principles of Restorative Justice, IPP offers VOEG as a voluntary intensive 36-week educational program for inmates who wish to better understand themselves and how their life experiences and decisions led them to prison. Participants are asked to evaluate how their crimes have impacted their victim(s), their families and their community. VOEG is a highly successful program that trains offenders to understand and take responsibility for the impact of the crime(s) they have committed. Each group is led by an IPP staff member or volunteer and an inmate peer facilitator. The program has been replicated in 5 CDCR men's prisons, Homeboy Industries, and several women's venues.

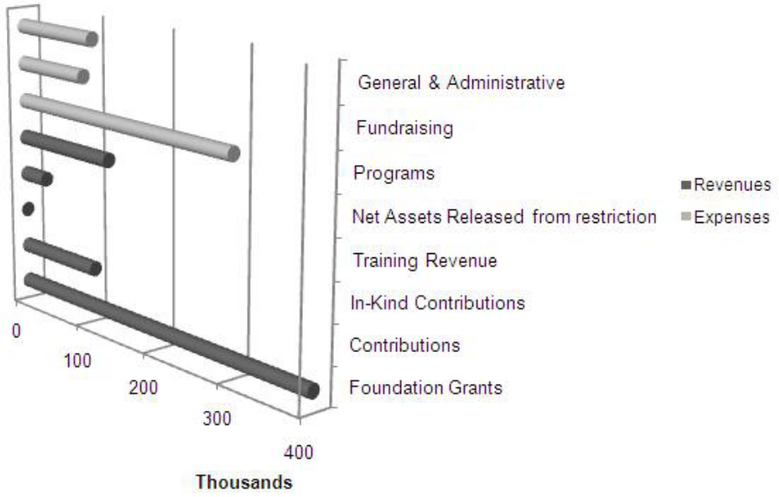
Insight Out

Many men are in prison because of violent crime committed when they were young. IPP seeks to use the wisdom of the paroled OG's (Old Gangsters) as mentors and father-figures for troubled youth. IPP graduates like Pat Mims and Phillip Seiler leave prison with a deep-seeded commitment to serve the communities from which they once took. The program works with East Bay non-profit agencies, law enforcement and parole services, juvenile justice programs and schools who are seeking ways to stem the tide of violence and keep youth out of prison.

Complementary Courses

These courses are designed to support participants in the VOEG and Violence Prevention programs and include yoga, meditation, emotional intelligence, crisis intervention, and others.

Gratitude to Donors



All of this is about public safety. Most of these guys have obvious gaps in their personal lives that drew them to prison in the first place, so if you can do some intervention while you have them in here, so they don't create more victims when they go back out, now you've achieved something.

Robert L. Ayers, former Warden San Quentin State Prison speaking about IPP Programs

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Len Weisberg
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Our apologies for those we may have inadvertently left unnamed.

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Threshold Foundation Restorative Justice Funding Circle

According to a report soon to be released by the National Council on Crime & Delinquency (NCCD), inmates who participated in IPP programs for more than 6 months approach problems in more rational and effective ways. This includes being less likely to: act impulsively, become angry, and attempt to control their relationships through violence.