

Phaphama Initiatives

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The Effect of the Alternatives to Violence Project

I joined the Alternatives to Violence project (AVP) in 2002 that was the time I attended basic, advanced and training for facilitators workshops. When I joined this organisation I had issues and emotional conflict within myself and was facing the challenge of how to resolve them. I took back myself to where I grew up. I grew up in Kwa Zulu Natal and when I entered school at primary that was where I had my first taste of violence. The older kids at school they used to bully me and took my pocket money and when I reported that at home my mother would beat me and say that I must learn to stand up for myself. I ended up beating up other kids and resolving conflicts with my fists. Whenever there was violence directed at me I retaliated with violence. So when I attend AVP for the first time in 2002 I came into a realisation with the help from other participants and facilitators that even before trying to solve your problems you need to identify the root cause of it. It was a challenge that I needed to face and overcome without pressure from anyone and at my own pace. Everything like falls into place like taking care of myself so that I can be able to take care of others.

The second challenge was very hard for me even to talk about it to other people. I was full of hate, anger and bitterness. At the age of 14 I've joined one of the political parties and my school was mostly influenced by the party. With my background of being violent myself it was suitable for my status of being bully, using power to those people who are powerless. As the youth we were not taught that other youths from other parties are not enemies because we are fighting for the same thing of being free in this country. So when I came to Gauteng in 90's it was different thing from what I experienced back at home, before we were fighting but not with so much anger, hate and death wish to other people. It was a real change for me. I was there in City Library Gardens where people were killed by anonymous gunmen and I was unharmed but it fuelled my anger and hate towards other people who were in opposite parties to mine. When I saw someone wearing a political t-shirt or saying something about other political parties I will see a red flag. I've bottled up a lot of emotion in my heart and when the media reported that someone has been shot or burned from opposite parties I was smiling and saying that is my revenge, not thinking that behind that t-shirt there is a human being, a sister, a brother, a father, a mother who are being loved by their families.

When I attended basic it was very easy for me to start focusing on myself as an individual and to affirm myself at what I was good at. The real exhilarating time was when I attended advanced because that was the time to deal with my challenges like why am I bitter, where does it come from and who do I blame or I direct my hate to. Am I on a path to self destruction? That was the time that I realised that pointing fingers at each other is just a waste of precious time. With the space which was created in that workshop of being safe and comfortable it was easy for me to point to the root causes of my anger, violence and hate and which way to take to healing step by step. I can't lie and say it has been easy to change myself. I've been taking it slowly as it comes day by day. I was trained to be a facilitator in October 2002. I've started to facilitate in 2003. Each and every workshop that I'm facilitating for me it's like a healing process and I'm absorbing and learning more positive things from other people when they are sharing their experiences. You feel that you are the piece that is fitting in the jigsaw and you are needed out there.

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