



The female returnees who attend the Circle also inspire me with their courage and strength. In a society which has only relatively recently *begun* to acknowledge the equality of women, these women have had to overcome enormous obstacles just to end up sitting there, sharing stories from their lives with us, twice a month.

What is discussed there is deeper than skin. People talk about the things they are forced to do and the things they are forbidden to do, all the prejudice they face as former prisoners, and I stop taking my many freedoms for granted. I appreciate what I have: how I can go to sleep when I want to, eat anything for breakfast, walk around Green Lake whenever I want to commune with nature's beauty. And I don't have to get permission for any of it.

I like the Community Circles because everyone seems to listen to everyone else. That's pretty rare. When it's my turn to talk, I have the feeling that everyone is listening to me, really listening. I don't feel any judgment coming my way. I have never felt a speck of judgment in a Community Circle. That means there is lots of room for love and appreciation.

Community Circles help me to feel connected to other people who are just like me. I feel calmer and less lonely after the Circle is over. And very proud to be human.

**~Programs in Washington State Prisons~**

**Monroe Correctional Complex**

- **Basic NVC Class** (bimonthly)
- **Ongoing Intermediate training** (weekly)
- **Training for "inside facilitators"** (monthly)

**Minimum Security Unit**

- **Basic NVC workshop** (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the Month)
- **Continuing NVC class** (Tuesday Nights)

**Twin Rivers Unit**

- **2-Day Basic NVC wkshp/2-day Themed NVC wkshp** (alternating on 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of each month)
- **Continuing NVC class** (Wednesday nights)

- **Inside facilitators** (monthly)
- **Mindfulness Class** (each Monday)

**Washington State Reformatory**

- **Basic NVC Class** (4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month)
- **Continuing NVC class** (Thursday afternoons)

**Washington Corrections Center for Women**

- **2-Day Introductory NVC wkshp** (4 weekends in 2012)
- **1-day Themed NVC wkshp** (10 dates in 2012)
- **Mindfulness Meditation** (12wk class, once/quarter)

**~Public Events~**

- **Community Circle** - open to all  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays 6:30 to 8:30pm
- **Full Circle Mindfulness Group**  
1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays 7 to 9pm
- **Creating a Compassionate World Through Communication** with Janice Eng - open to all / Cost: \$20  
1<sup>st</sup> Fridays 7 to 9pm

**~January~**

- Friday the 6<sup>th</sup> **NVC Intro Class** with Janice Eng  
7-9pm at Freedom Project office / Cost: \$20
- Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> **Intro to the Teachings of Marshall Rosenberg** w/ Janice Eng/Evan Gorsline  
9:30-4:30pm Cost \$95-125
- Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> **Freedom Project Anniversary Party at 88 Keys** (315 2nd Ave S, Seattle)  
6-10pm Live Blues Band (see details below)

**~February~**

- Saturday, Date: TBD **Welcome Home Ceremony**  
Welcoming returnees back to the community.  
Open to all recent returnees & their adult guests.  
Time: TBD / at Freedom Project office
- Mon/Tues the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> **Immersion NVC**  
with Kathleen McFarren

**Freedom Project office** 3644 Albion Pl N, Seattle

**Freedom Project Eleventh Annual Anniversary Party**

*Come enjoy an evening of blues music with us*

**MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2012, 6-10pm / at 88 KEYS** (315 2nd Ave S, Seattle)

**Featured Speaker:** Tuere Sala, Seattle City Prosecutor sharing her inspiring stories of change

**Silent Auction / Featured Blues Artist:** Elnah Jordan

**ADMISSION: \$15** (donated to Freedom Project) / **ALL AGES WELCOME**

Your attendance helps men and women in prison and after release learn a proven way to engage the world through Nonviolent Communication. Learn more about how members of our community are shifting into positive action roles and responsibilities to help make the world, and our community, a better place.



- ◆ **Making a Difference** by Board President Fran Howard
- ◆ **Poetry from Inside**
- ◆ **Returnee Interview**
- ◆ **Corrections Center for Women in Gig Harbor**
- ◆ **Why I Like Community Circles** by Simone LaDrumma
- ◆ **Freedom Project Calendar**
- ◆ **January 16 Fundraiser**

**Making A Difference** by Fran Howard, President of the Board

One of the basic tenets of Nonviolent Communications is that *everything we do is for the purpose of getting a need met*. And among the many core needs that are universal to all people is the *need to matter*. We all want to know that we are valued by someone and that what we do *makes a difference*. It is hard to get that need met by ourselves alone. We need each other.

We live in challenging times ... uncertainty, loss of jobs, troubled young people, conflict and wars. The "Occupy Wall Street" movement that is sweeping the country and the world is further evidence that many people today are feeling cut off, alienated, betrayed by institutions they thought would protect them. The people who "sit" and "march" hope that what they are doing will make a difference, and there is some evidence that change is happening. I spent a day at "Occupy Seattle" and I was inspired by the peaceful, yet powerful nature of the protest and the energy that was generated by people who took a stand for something they believed in, without knowing what the outcome of their actions would be.

Freedom Project is no stranger to discouragement and being in a place of not knowing what the next step should be. National and personal budget cuts have impacted our donors' ability to support us, resulting in a need to re-think our priorities. The way ahead for Freedom Project has not yet been determined. We do not know what our future will look like, but what I *do* know is that when we do not lose faith, when we stay in community and pay attention to guidance that comes from those "whisperings" from within, it will unfold in a way that benefits us all. That does not imply sitting back and waiting. It requires hard work and commitment ... not necessarily to keeping everything as it is, but being open to new possibilities and following our hearts and our heads.



Flying by the seat of our pants is sometimes exciting, but can also be scary. Most of us do better with a plan. Your Board and Staff have been working diligently for several weeks creating a Strategic Plan for Freedom Project for the next year, 3 years, and 5 years. Each one of you reading this can find a place in the implementation of this plan where you can contribute, matter, make a difference.. We need you to help further our mission of creating a more peaceful world that so often seems troubled, lost, and full of violence. *We need you* to become a volunteer in the prison, to be part of Community Circle, become a member of the Board of Directors, to financially contribute generously on a regular basis.

*You need* to stay connected ... to yourself and to others, seeing the beauty in both, knowing that all people have worth no matter what they have done. And that when we lift one person we lift ourselves. When we all do our part, I think we will be amazed at what we can accomplish.

What drives us is a powerful force for good that resides in each of us. Many call this force Love. Alexander Smith said it so well when he wrote: *"Love is but the discovery of ourselves in others, and the delight in that recognition."* So, Yes! We all need to keep Love alive. And *Yes! You do make a difference!*

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**Donations of Any Amount  
are Most Welcome**

**Poetry from Inside** by Rebecca Long  
Washington Corrections Center for Women, April 20, 2010

*State of Mind*

Moving from Psych  
To the General Population  
I said  
With great surprise  
Medium Security feels like prison!  
A mentor said  
Reality check! This is prison  
I challenge that notion  
No. I reject it  
Because  
There are many ways  
In society  
Not to feel free  
To be tied  
Ball & chain  
To a relationship  
A job  
An addiction  
A thought  
A behavior  
Or a role we've willingly assumed

There are many ways  
Here  
To feel free  
To be ourselves  
Unencumbered by past constraints  
To search  
To learn  
To grow  
To be  
As an action verb  
There were many times  
In society  
When I did not feel free at all  
There have been many times  
Here  
Amid clanging doors  
Razor wire  
Cease Movements  
Rigid structure  
Rules that disallow so many things  
When I feel very free  
Free as a bird  
Floating on Through

Free to choose  
My next destination  
Who I want to be  
How I want to be  
Free to choose  
How I let this place affect me  
And what I take away  
In society  
I was free  
I didn't realize  
Free to choose  
Something different  
Something healthy  
In prison  
I do realize  
I *can* choose  
I *am* free  
In prison  
I've come to realize  
Freedom  
Is a state of mind

**Informal interview with WCCW returnee and Freedom Project volunteer, and returnee Rebecca Long**

*How long have you been out of prison?* Four months.

*When were you first introduced to NVC?* In prison, when I was in the mental health unit there was a weekly group on NVC. I was immediately intrigued by the possibility of living without judgment- both being judged by others, and letting go of my judgment. The weekly format gave us time to absorb the concepts and I quickly saw NVC as what I'd always been missing in my interactions with others- a way to connect with their experience in order to hold everybody's needs. Soon after, I started attending basic NVC workshops and theme days on anger, guilt, etc.

*How did NVC influence you?* I have a strong intention to live in a healthy way to honor the hurt I have caused and I see NVC as a key. I don't see NVC as a communication model, I see it as a way to approach life, a way to think, a way to be. When I started doing NVC basic and theme days, I also started mindful meditation. Continued exposure to Freedom Project volunteers and modeling their behaviors reinforced my intention. The volunteers meet everyone where ever they are and are so welcoming.

*I know you are an office volunteer here at Freedom Project. What kind of things are you doing to help out?* I sent out donor thank you letters, have been updating the website, making event flyers, making templates for correspondence and am leading the Freedom Projects participation in the annual Giving Fair at the Greenwood Senior Center.

*What does Freedom Project mean to you now?* Since I've gotten out I've been surprised at how much I have struggled with the transition. I am still working on finding employment and providing for myself. My association with NVC and Freedom Project keeps me meaningfully engaged and moving forward. It reminds me of what is important; connecting with myself and with others.

**Washington Corrections Center for Women in Gig Harbor**

Housing 850 incarcerated women, there are more violent infractions per capita at the Washington Corrections Center for Women in Gig Harbor (WCCW) than at any correctional institution in the state of Washington. In this setting, an innovative and vibrant project, the Women's Village, was launched in Feb 2011. Directed by Associate Superintendent of Programs Margaret Gilbert, the Village was initiated by a group of women incarcerated at WCCW with the support of mental health counselor Robert Walker. The Village is responsible for all non-religious volunteer programs, including the Freedom Project non-violent communication and mindfulness programs.

***Womens Village mission statement: To encourage and foster an atmosphere of change in our community, by harnessing our unique strengths, together as individuals to create a new culture based on the pursuit of personal excellence!***

Women choosing to participate in the Women's Village start with a program called 3-2-1. The 3-2-1 program requires attendance at orientation sessions, accountability circles and self-help workshops. So far 120 women from a general population of 850 women have been through the orientation.

Values identified The Village: Respect, honesty, compassion, diversity, education and usefulness. To support these values, the Village is made up of a Council with several subcommittees that submit proposals for programs. For example, the *Family Support Subcommittee* is working to facilitate parenting groups and host workshops on family dynamics. Other subcommittees include *Health and Wellness, Education, Peer Support, Environmental, Morale Building, Re-entry, Violence Reduction* and *Spirituality*.

Freedom Project offers weekly mindfulness meditation classes and practice groups as well as monthly workshops in Nonviolent Communication (NVC). Beginners take a two-day intensive workshop in the basics of NVC, after which, more advanced one-day workshops, focus on a particular theme, such as anger, empathy or gratitude. Participants in Freedom Project programs learn new skills, which they can apply in their relationships, with co-workers, family and friends---during their incarceration and after release. As a result of participating in these programs, participants report acquiring an increased self awareness and sense of responsibility for their actions, as well as an enhanced sense of compassion for others. After attending a workshop, some women have said that their behavior has shifted; instead of blaming others or reacting with violent words or actions, they remembered what they learned and were able to turn around situations that might otherwise have escalated into violence.

During an orientation session for 8 new arrivals at WCCW, one of the Village presenters, said, "If you know where you are now is not where you want to be when you leave," then the Women's Village is an opportunity to change. Here are some other quotes which she shared: "The easiest thing to do about something we don't like is to change it." "If you're not willing to make the world a better place, why should anyone else?" "Know that you can change the world; that people watch you every day and they are influenced by you." "Your greatest reservoir of power is within you." And finally, "The Village is intended to change the norm, which requires a paradigm shift, changing individual belief systems, to create a culture which values respect, honesty, compassion, diversity, self-empowerment, education and usefulness"

***Both the superintendent Jane Parnell and the Director of Operations for the Washington State prison system have expressed that in the course of their careers (each spanning 25+ years) they've never seen anything that compares with the success of the Women's Village. In the last 6 months, the number of violent infractions at WCCW has been cut in half.***

Freedom Project's volunteers working in WCCW include Sue McCarthy, Sura Hart, Katherine Betts, Valerie Kreuzer, Ruby Phillips, Callista Brown & Kristi Rozdilsky.

**Why I Like the Community Circles** by Simone LaDrumma

I like the Community Circles because what I hear there affirms my faith in humankind.

I like the Community Circles because they start with five minutes of mindfulness and silence -and somehow those five minutes create an atmosphere of connection and open-heartedness.

I like the Community Circles because it's the only event I attend that has more men than women (!) And the men, I'm referring to the returnees now, talk about things I don't usually hear men talk about - like what happiness means to them and how joyful they feel in spite of the challenges they face, and how they can sometimes be scared, and sad. Men talking about their emotions. Wow! (continued on page 4)

