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A MESSAGE FROM GRIP'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KIM GROSE MOORE



In this issue, you'll hear directly from those who have caused violent harm as well as from survivors of violence, who help to keep the victim experience centered in the minds of our students. You'll also hear from some of our outstanding facilitators, many of whom are GRIP graduates themselves; read poetry and prose; and see powerful artwork from inside prison walls. Behind each story is a Peacemaker and their GRIP Tribe, committed to navigating pain, anger, and past trauma toward collective healing and freedom.

I invite you to read these stories and interviews, and get a glimpse of what peacemaking really looks like. Think about how you can bring these ideas into your life or support someone on their journey. Together, we can expand the circle of healing and make peace a little more tangible for everyone.

Thank you for being part of this journey, for caring about this work, and helping us amplify the voices of those creating change from the inside out.

In peace,
Kim Moore
Executive Director, GRIP Training Institute

Kim Grose Moore began her journey with GRIP as a volunteer Facilitator in 2016, and in 2017 took on the role of Strategic Growth Consultant. Since 2019 she has served as GRIP's Executive Director. A strong believer in the organizing principle, "the first revolution is internal," Kim works to connect inner and outer work towards liberation. She is inspired and motivated to act through spiritual practice, her community, and her beloved family.



Kim surrounded by GRIP Facilitators

TOP PHOTO: MAGDELANA MOORE

Dear Readers,

"What does it mean to be a Peacemaker?" I began to ask GRIP graduates this question a few years ago, chatting on the yard years after they had graduated, or meeting for coffee in their communities once they came home. My former students had a different demeanor, a different way of acting and being, than when they'd walked into the prison classroom on their first day of the Guiding Rage Into Power Program. It was hard to put into words what this difference was. I was deeply curious: from their perspective, *what does it actually look like to make peace?*

Peacemaking is not the absence of conflict, smoothing things over and pretending everything is OK. It is courageous, challenging work, involving internal capacities and external skills to act wisely. In today's fractured world — marked by escalating polarization, international warfare and genocide, systemic trauma, existential uncertainties, and a global resurgence of the violence of "othering" — these skills are urgent lifelines for the future of our children and our planet.

At GRIP, we graduate hundreds of Peacemakers every year: people who have been convicted of serious, violent crimes and who are serving long-term sentences in the carceral system. In the yearlong intensive class, they build a powerful, safe community that allows them the space and time to heal, take accountability, and start using the tools of emotional regulation, mindfulness, conflict resolution, and restorative practices to transform their lives. This in turn ripples out to break personal, multigenerational, and collective cycles of trauma and violence in their families, on the prison yard, and in their communities when they come home.

PROGRAMS OF GRIP TRAINING INSTITUTE

Guiding Rage Into Power

Our flagship program, Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP), is a transformative evidence-based yearlong program designed to help incarcerated individuals evolve into Peacemakers. Students attend monthly 8-hour sessions led by trained Facilitators, and meet weekly in peer-led study groups to reinforce learning. The program, offered in English and Spanish, culminates in a powerful rite-of-passage graduation ceremony, where students publicly commit to their transformation by signing the Peacemaker Pledge.

A Breath of Freedom

A 5-month course introducing incarcerated individuals to mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and somatic awareness, "A Breath of Freedom" was originally developed during the COVID-19 pandemic to support isolated individuals. The program fosters self-reflection and connection, preparing students for the more intensive GRIP Program.

Women's Initiative

The Women's Initiative is a trauma-informed rehabilitation program tailored to the unique experiences of incarcerated women. Launched at Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) in 2023, the program began with A Breath of Freedom and grew to include a full-year cohort of 28 women

in the flagship GRIP Program, graduating in January 2025. GRIP is now training facilitators and supporting a new culture of resilience, agency, and mutual accountability inside CCWF.

Facilitator Training

Each year we train GRIP graduates - some of whom are still incarcerated - and community members to become certified Facilitators of GRIP's healing and restorative justice circles. These Facilitators serve as mentors, role models, and transformational leaders.

Alumni Engagement

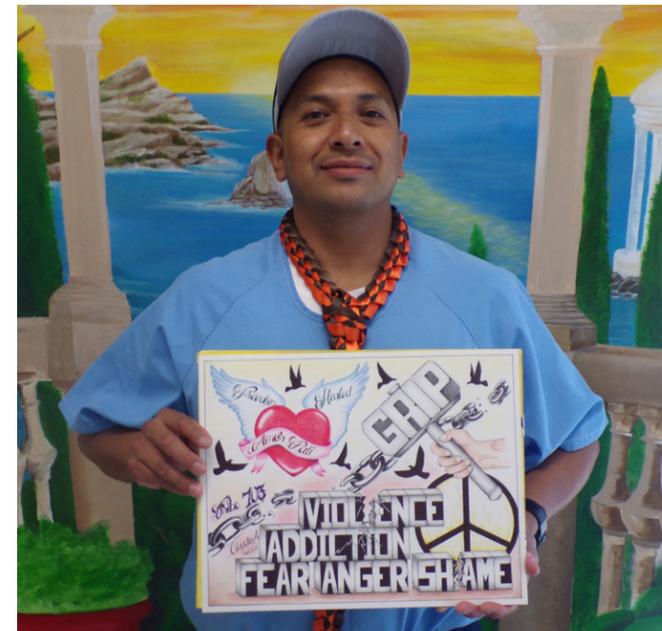
GRIP's Alumni Engagement program offers regular check-ins, peer-led support circles, and leadership opportunities to support program graduates in extending their healing journeys. Alumni who have come home contribute to program delivery and support one another in navigating reentry, employment, and continued personal growth.

Survivor Engagement

GRIP provides healing-centered spaces for survivors of violence, offering a parallel process of restoration and empowerment. Survivors meet monthly for mutual support, and may participate in GRIP's Survivor Healing Circles inside the prisons. These spaces offer a chance for survivors to share their stories, build community, and contribute to the accountability and healing of those who have caused harm to others.

Advocacy

GRIP amplifies the voices of formerly incarcerated leaders to shift public narratives and policy. Through storytelling, legislative advocacy, community education, and strategic partnerships, GRIP advances a vision of justice rooted in rehabilitation, redemption, and human dignity rather than punishment.



Martin Claudio, ASP, Tribe 703

WELCOME HOME

SPOKEN WORD BY FATEEN JACKSON



Fateen Jackson was a student of one of the first GRIP cohorts - Tribe 928 - at San Quentin in 2013, and went on to facilitate many GRIP Tribes before his release in 2019. He now serves as Facilitator Training Manager and Senior Facilitator for GRIP. Fateen is the 2025 co-recipient of the Bernard Moss Peacemaker Award. Fateen authored and performed his spoken word piece at GRIP's 10-year anniversary celebration.

Welcome Home

Welcome my brothers and sisters, my Mrs. and Mr's. My friends and family, my beloved community, I guess this is what it looks like when people say we need to have unity.

Enjoying the liberty of togetherness. A room full of success that's Blessed by the best and forever fresh, no matter what the weather is. (You all are looking mighty nice tonight, I must say)

This (right here) is where God's treasure is. A beautiful array of people, what a lovely fellowship, And Some of us have come from Dire Straits, hardships and heartaches. Where most of us can relate. Especially the ones who have been emancipated from those prison gates. Ya Feel Me?

We have come a long way where our shared journey led us to meet up in this moment and place. You cannot tell me that this is not God's grace that this is not a shared faith.

That this is not Amor Fati in reality, collectively loving this shared fate. Man, Don't this (sh*t) feel great?

that we have turned tragedies into triumph/ defeats into victories, pain into power, and power into positivity, Man, from here on out, freedom could never get rid of me, and I say that gratefully, because, thankfully, the community had a helping hand for me when I got out. I

mean a hand up, not a handout, where we mixed our minds together to determine the best route. Lastly, I'll like to shout out to the ones who are not here, that's why I

took my last tear and turned it into a celebration cheer, for self care. My people whether we are far or near from each other know that you are never alone, and to all my liberated Peacemakers, welcome home, welcome home, welcome home.

AMOR FATI

Amor fati is . . .

- A Latin expression that means loving your fate. *Amor* means "love," and *fati* means "fate."
- An attitude of deep acceptance of the events that took (or take) place in your life. It is the practice of learning to embrace whatever happened, particularly if it was painful.
- A form of radical responsibility that teaches you to take your stance by responding positively to any challenging circumstance and making peace with it.

GRIP Program Flashcard

THE GRIP ORIGIN STORY

JACQUES VERDUIN, FOUNDER



San Quentin Facilitators, past and present

GRIP came to me in a dream and a vision. In a dream I saw the sweeping vista of the American plains and on it a lone buffalo. This mighty bull snorted and scraped the earth, started in one direction and turned back, repeating this pattern in all directions. There was a tragic quality to this scene, the bull so alone. I woke from the dream with a great sense of urgency and longing. There was a poignancy to this scene, the heart of the bull was wanting for its herd. Suddenly it came to me, the life represented by the herd was gone.

The hundreds of thousands of hoofs that once drummed alive the membrane of this nation, instilling the message of belonging together, was no longer. Just as our forefathers decimated these herds, we as a society, as a nation, have lost our sense of belonging to one another.

The vision for the GRIP Program is a response to this need for connection and belonging. It is said that the Navajo believe that he or she who has committed a wrongdoing acts as if they have no relatives. When we feel and value belonging, we become accountable to one another and restore a sense of dignity.

The work of GRIP Tribes is informed by teachings that address the root causes of suffering. Through the curriculum we hold each other accountable, preventing revictimization. GRIP represents a movement that holds up a lamp in one of the dark places of our culture where we give up hope and discard human beings, labeling them as prisoners and alienating them.

The GRIP Program addresses the pain and the shame that is carried around in prisons. Incarcerated people, victims, survivors, along with their families and communities, often experience these things in isolation. No longer alone, we turn to each other in our despair.

As Mother Teresa once said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."



ART BY GRIP GRADUATE VALENTINO AMAYA

Jacques Verduin is the Founder of the GRIP Program and the author of *Leaving Prison Before You Get Out™*, a healing and accountability program for prisoner transformation and restorative justice.

MY PEACEMAKER JOURNEY

REFLECTIONS FROM CHRISTIAN KOHLER

Christian Kohler graduated from GRIP in 2019, as part of Tribe 755 at Correctional Training Facility. He became a Facilitator in 2023 and at CTF also coaches a jogging program and attends Hartnell College, and seminary school.



Starting when I was very young, abuse and violence at home were the everyday norm. I was taught not to cry, not to ask for help, and even not to talk about what was going on within the family. Being vulnerable was not what men do, and that included little boys like myself. The unspoken motto was, "You will get over it - so deal with it."

I remember being bullied in the third or fourth grade. I did not know what to do because I was not allowed to ask for help. Showing vulnerability would only bring more humiliation and pain. One day at a friend's house, I attacked one of my bullies and began to choke him, threatening to kill him if he ever hurt me or my friends again. They never bothered me again. This was reinforcement of my belief that violence could solve conflicts and keep me safe. This was the first time I did not feel so powerless.

At 17 I joined the military and I went down a different direction; I was anything but a Peacemaker. I am proud to have served in the US Navy and I learned so many positive things. I would not change that for anything in the world and I am so thankful to all vets for their service. But I realize that my participation in certain activities mirrored all that I had already learned in childhood. When I entered the military, the same messages continued to reinforce my already distorted belief system that was steeped in violence, especially against those who were different from me. I did what others wanted me to do, even if it meant harming or killing other people.

I also turned to alcohol, drugs, sex, and violence to numb myself, and to bring about a temporary and false sense of happiness. This only added to my inner pain and shame. I was abusive towards my family and kept pushing them away. I did not trust anyone. It all culminated when I committed murder.

During my first 16 years in prison, I continued to operate in the same patterns that got me there. Change only happened when I was accepted into the GRIP Program. That's where I learned about unprocessed trauma, internalized messages, and what it means to sit with pain. The sessions challenged me, made me feel uncomfortable, and opened my eyes to how I lost sight of who I once was, and the harm that I had caused others and myself. This was the first step of my journey to becoming a Peacemaker, and it was not easy. I had to take ownership of myself, get in touch with my past, learn new skills for living instead of just coping. It was the first time that I could allow myself to really feel, to not bottle up my emotions, and to not react violently towards others. I could cry and it felt so good. A burden had lifted, and my true self came forth like a butterfly.

The road to being a Peacemaker continues to have bumps, but what matters is how I respond to events. Practicing mindfulness and using the GRIP toolbox have become habits, new instincts that I have developed through constant training and practice. My fellow tribe members help me so much on this journey. Like a flock of geese, we rely on each other to remain on this path - the journey of living our authentic selves.

My fellow tribe members help me so much on this journey. Like a flock of geese, we rely on each other to remain on this path - the journey of living our authentic selves.

Whenever I felt afraid or vulnerable, I would get extremely angry. Instead of allowing myself to feel fear, I would put on my tough guy persona and attack whoever "made" me feel this way. I was rewarded with the feelings of belonging, acceptance, and love that I so desperately craved. I also felt the need for control. I may not have been able to control what went on inside my house, but outside of it, I was not going to let others control me.



Facilitator Fateen talking with students and guests

GRIP TRIBES: RADICAL INVENTORIES & COMMUNITY BUILDING

Each yearlong GRIP Program starts with rituals. After a welcoming ceremony recognizing the ethnic, religious and gang diversity of the 35 students, we take a radical inventory, beginning with the question: "How much time have you served?" As each student calls out their years of incarceration, the numbers are written on a white board. From this list the group's total number of years served is calculated, sometimes reaching over 1000 years in a single Tribe - a realization that always staggers the group.

The students are then asked to reflect on the crime that led to their incarceration, and estimate the amount of time that passed between craving and using, anger and violence. This is what the GRIP curriculum refers to as the "Moment of Imminent Danger," an intense and brief flash of time before crossing the boundary to commit an act of violence. The group discovers that giving into an impulse and making a life-changing bad decision usually happens in a

matter of seconds - sometimes as few as five total minutes for an entire Tribe.

These numbers bring home to everyone in the room the extraordinary weight of lost potential, lost life. They realize that their work is to learn never again to make that kind of split-second decision and cross the boundary into violence.

The number of collective years served becomes the name of the Tribe, in order to build community and as a reminder of their commitment to accountability, healing, and to one another. The inventory becomes the first page of the "Tribal Book," which also contains the names of victims, family and community members, and fellow GRIP Tribe members. All of the people named in it are evoked and present each time the circle comes together, as a way of acknowledging the sacred healing and accountability work being done and reinforcing the idea that no one does time alone.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MAKE PEACE?

REFLECTIONS FROM RAY PASCUAL

Ray Pascual began his Peacemaker journey at Correctional Training Facility as a 2025 graduate in Tribe 998. He now serves as a Facilitator as part of his personal mission to help others on their healing journeys.

For me to be at peace, I had to unearth and address the childhood trauma that was suppressed in my life. This included issues I had with mistrust, being abandoned, feeling unloved, anger, resentment, being bullied, guilt and shame. I was not at peace for most of my life because I did not want to face the pain of digging into my past. So violence became the norm for me. I am now serving 25 years to life for first degree murder. I did not develop the tools to heal from my childhood trauma until I was accepted into the GRIP Program.

When I was 5 years old, my mother and I immigrated from the Philippines to the United States to start a new life. She divorced my biological father, who emotionally abused her. I was confused and did not understand why we moved, because my mother never told me. I remember crying myself to sleep and suppressing my feelings. My mother would leave with family friends and put me in daycare while she was at work. I felt abandoned and unloved. To make things worse, I was not able to speak or understand English. Kids made fun of me and bullied me, so I kept to myself and sat alone.

I have taken full responsibility and accountability for the crime I committed. In addition, I will continue to honor the victims and survivors of my crime through my commitment to nonviolence and being a Peacemaker.

A traumatic event that altered my life forever was when I had to be my stepfather's caregiver as a teenager. He was bedridden, unable to speak, with limited mobility, and needed around-the-clock care. During this time, I developed deep resentment towards my older brother, because he was not willing to help. My resentment turned into anger, which I kept bottled up inside me. Unfortunately, my stepfather suffered another stroke. I tried to save his life, but he died right in front of me. After he passed away, my brother punched me in the face and blamed me for our stepfather's death. That's



Ray Pascual with Facilitator Erica Forbes

when my anger turned to rage and my brother became my first victim. I viciously attacked him for all the pain and abuse he had caused me. That's when violence became the norm for me. At that point I promised to never be a victim again. I began using violence to cope with my pain, which eventually led to me committing the crime of murder.

During the two decades of my time in prison, I participated in several self-help programs, but something was missing. It was the GRIP Program that gave me what I needed: a safe container, free of judgement and ridicule. I was able to express myself by addressing my childhood traumas through writing assignments that I shared by reading out loud. This process opened up emotions that I had kept bottled up inside me for most of my life. GRIP gave me insight into my "original pain," and has broken my destructive cycle of negativity. As a result, I have begun to heal, learning how to be emotionally intelligent, and how to process my emotions instead of suppressing them.

What does it mean for me to make peace today? It means I am no longer allowing myself to live in the shame and guilt that ultimately led to my destructive lifestyle. It also means understanding the pain and impact that my crime had on the victims and survivors. I have taken full responsibility and accountability for the crime I committed. In addition, I will continue to honor the victims and survivors of my crime through my commitment to nonviolence and being a Peacemaker. Today, I have inner peace and have forgiven those who have hurt me throughout my life. This is what peace means to me.

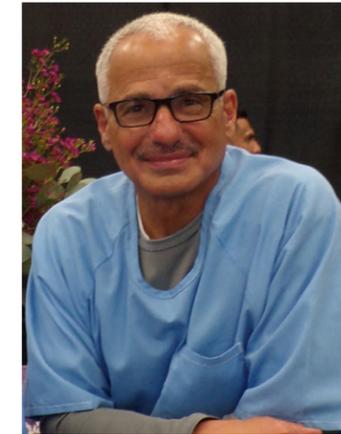
THE BONDS OF PEACE

REFLECTIONS FROM RICKY ORTEGA

Peace ('pēs)

Freedom from disagreement or quarrels; harmony; an undisturbed state of mind; absence of mental conflict; serenity in full peace of mind.

Ricky Ortega graduated with GRIP Tribe 1035 at Mule Creek State Prison in 2020, and was invited to become a Facilitator in 2022. Students frequently express gratitude for the safety and acceptance they feel under his guidance.



On November 6, 2023, GRIP hosted a gathering at Mule Creek State Prison. In attendance were members from the Governor's office, members of the Commutation Committee, and survivors of violent crime who were part of the Mend Collaborative.

At the event I was invited to read my apology letter to the person whose life I callously took on January 9, 1981. As I took my seat in the middle of a packed visiting room, I felt prepared to face my journey through this valley of deep shadow. But as I began to speak, I realized that everything I had learnt in the GRIP Program seemed to have escaped me. Surrounded by governmental officials and people who were interested in what I had to say, I found myself standing on the edge of life, staring into the eye of the storm. I wanted to run and hide from my indignity. But I knew I had to face my reality.

The fences of a Life Without Parole sentence have no openings, yet I felt free for the first time in 44 years of incarceration.

I read about the person I had been when I committed my crime. I read about what justice might look like in others' eyes. I described my truth in detail, and how I'd come to accept my responsibility for that truth. I reflected

on the pain I caused by my actions, and spoke about confronting my unhealed shame. It was an emptying of my soul and my spirit that I never knew could happen.

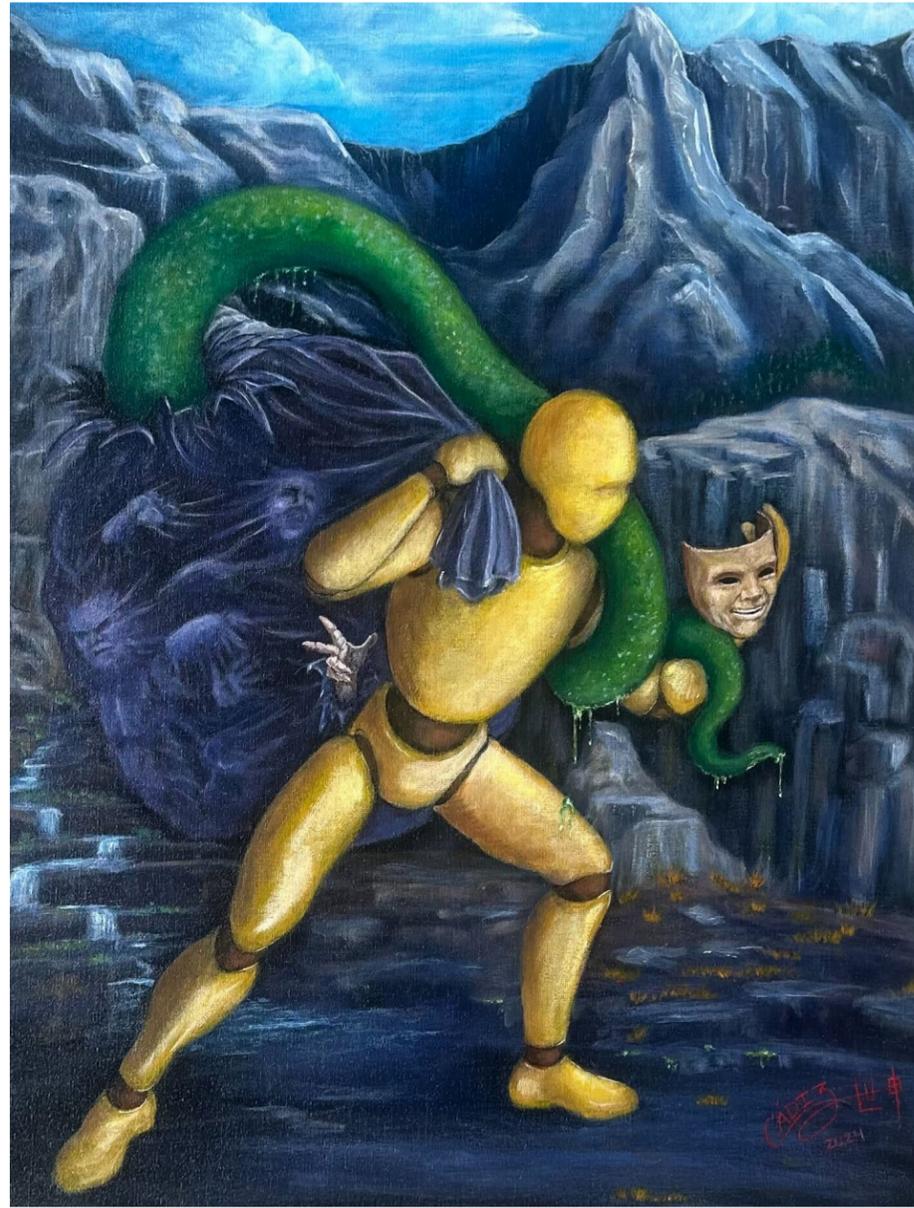
As I walked back to my seat, I felt trapped and alone. I wanted to fly away from this moment like a bird with broken wings. It was at this time I was met by a gentleman, one of

the surrogate survivors who had spoken earlier in the day about the murder of his own brother. As he extended his hand in a gesture of peace, the feelings that surfaced within me were difficult to bear. He told me how touched he was by the courage it must have taken for me to read my letter out loud. His compassion broke me. I felt an awakening of emotions I had never experienced before. Not wanting to look him in the eye, I turned away in a cowardly retreat, unable to endure the heat of sitting in this fire. He clutched me by the shoulders insisting that I face him. He then uttered the words that have continued to shape my life, saying emphatically as he embraced me – "I forgive you."

I felt his words coursing through the deepest parts of my soul. I felt he was saying those words for his personal healing, as much as for mine. His willingness to stand with me in my loss of dignity formed a lasting bond of peace, and has released the demons of shame imprisoned within me. Somehow, we felt connected to one another, a surrogacy, giving birth to a new dawn of healing and the true meaning of hope.

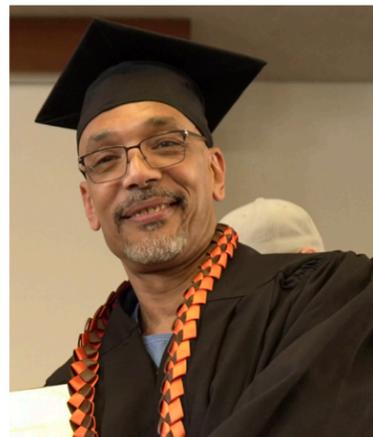
We spent much of the day together. When it was time to say good-bye, I felt like a part of me went with him. The fences of a Life Without Parole sentence have no openings, yet I felt free for the first time in 44 years of incarceration. On that special day, I learned that making peace starts within me and only then can true healing begin to awaken. Making amends is a gift - like a rosebud in springtime, sprinkled with the fresh morning dew. It's a gift that forever forms the bonds of peace.

“THE SHADOW BAG” BY MARK CADIZ



Mark Cadiz became a Facilitator after graduating from the San Quentin GRIP program in 2023. Being of assistance to others in finding their way back to presence motivates Mark to continue with this work. Mark's painting entitled "The Shadow Bag" was inspired by the following excerpt from Robert A. Johnson's *Owning Your Own Shadow*:

The persona is what we would like to be and how we wish to be seen in the world. The ego is what we are and know about consciously. The shadow is that part of us we fail to see or know... These disowned parts are extremely valuable and cannot be disregarded... To honor and accept one's own shadow is a profound spiritual discipline. It is whole-making and thus holy and the most important experience of a lifetime.



REFLECTIONS FROM RAYMOND CORONA & MARK DAIGRE



Raymond Corona graduated in 2025 as part of GRIP Tribe 875 at Mule Creek State Prison. He now serves as a Program Facilitator to support others in their journey.

To cultivate peace with others, I must first cultivate peace within myself. If I am constantly in a state of internal war and chaos within myself, then how can I ever have respect or consideration for the sanctity of all life around me?

GRIP pledge #1 talks about "practicing peaceful ways of interacting with myself and others." For me that means the application starts with self — learning to put the oxygen mask of love and grace on first, so that I am capable of extending these attributes to life around me.

Mark Daigre serves as a GRIP Facilitator at Mule Creek State Prison, after graduating from the Program in 2016 as part of Tribe 455.

My choice to be a Peacemaker starts with my daily meditation. Taking the time to stop and allow my mind a chance to settle itself out for a few minutes each day is the bedrock of my life. This is what makes it possible for me to do my best to meet people where they are, as they are, not necessarily as I would like them to be.

Helping others live in a manner that does not negatively impact others - to live lives of impact and import - is effectively changing the world one relationship, one interaction, one person at a time.



REFLECTIONS FROM COLEEN TORRES & CLINT LIVERMORE



Coleen Torres is part of Tribe 612, the first group of Program graduates at Central California Women's Facility. After graduating in 2025, she became a GRIP Facilitator at the site.

Being a Peacemaker is more than just being somebody who graduated from GRIP - it's the in-depth hard labor and grief I walked through to find true freedom within. Peeling back my layers to make those brutal, shameful connections while being vulnerable and trusting the process. Being a Peacemaker is a lifelong commitment that holds me accountable and prevents me from causing more harm to myself or anyone else.



Clint Livermore graduated with one of the first GRIP cohorts at Deuel Vocational Institution, in 2019. After transfer to the CA Substance Abuse Training Facility, he and others successfully advocated for the launch of GRIP programming there, and he became a Facilitator in 2025.

To make peace is to have the ability to stop the war and violence within myself. It means coming to terms with my past and letting go of my frustrations and my resentments. To make peace is to allow my authentic self to resurface and be reborn.

They say world peace is impossible. But like anything, it will take work. I believe inner peace is the way to all peace. To make peace means facing our past, processing our traumas, freeing ourselves from the walls we've built within ourselves.



To read more stories of transformation, please visit our website.

ART BY ANTONIO ROMAN



QUIT TAKING IT PERSONALLY (Q-TIP)

When somebody insults you, disrespects you, or breaks a promise, you get to choose how you will manage your initial upset and how you will respond so that you are not at the mercy of your unchecked emotions, and you don't react blindly. You can decide to **Q-TIP** the situation and quit taking it personally.

GRIP Flashcard. QTIP is one of the GRIP tools students learn to use to support their personal work.

Antonio Roman became a GRIP graduate at the CA Substance Abuse Training Facility in 2025, in Tribe 1053. One of the GRIP tools he likes to practice is QTIP (Quit Taking it Personally) because it allows him to be aware of what he is feeling and it helps him to relax. He really appreciates the accountability and responsibility that GRIP demonstrates through its practices.



“I AM NOT WHO I WAS” Q&A WITH MOMMA ELLE

One of the saddest things when you lose a loved one is that eventually no one talks about them. So you carry it all inside. The guys listen with compassion and they take the stories of my beloved daughter to heart.



After the devastating loss of her 24 year-old daughter Emily in 2009, Elle Dowdy wondered how her own life could go on. With time she became convinced of the power of love, met and offered forgiveness to Alan, the man responsible for Emily’s death, and through that process discovered GRIP. Since 2019, “Momma Elle” has participated in GRIP’s Survivor Healing Circles.

Elle was interviewed by Tommy “Shakur” Ross, a Program and Communications Associate for GRIP since he was paroled from San Quentin in 2022.

Shakur: Tell me about your daughter Emily.

Elle: Em was in Pacific Beach, California, living her best life. She loved that she could see the beach from her apartment. She worked at a Starbucks where her customers loved her. That day she had dinner with a friend, and was walking home to her apartment a couple of blocks from where she worked. She was in the crosswalk and he had been in a bar at the opposite corner and he’d been drinking all afternoon and got into a big pick-up truck and he didn’t see her. He hit her and threw her 16 feet through the air and she died of blunt force trauma.

Shakur: How did your healing journey begin after Emily’s death?

Elle: The first year, my son Josh and I were in court in California every time Alan was there. The year flew by. But back in Florida, when it hit that she was gone forever, it got really dark. I didn’t know if I could handle the grief. Then I saw a black bumper sticker with white letters, “Love Wins,” in a grocery store parking lot. That little thing turned it all around—her death was a turning point, and seeing that sticker was a turning point, too.

Shakur: That’s also one of the things that you said in the Tribe that I was in: “Love wins.” We associate that with you. Can you tell us what it was like talking to Alan, the man who caused your daughter’s death?

Elle: Life-changing. It was ten years later, in January 2019, when I met him through victim-offender dialogue facilitated by Martina Lutz Schneider at Ahimsa Collective. I knew that it had been his seventh DUI, and I had the feeling there were big stories and there was trauma. I wanted him to share his childhood. I wanted him to look at Emily’s photos from the

hospital. He took full responsibility, no excuses. He came into the conversation gray, ashamed, but left rosy-cheeked and there was a light in his eyes. I’d forgiven him as far as I could. Love, grace, mercy—they’re powerful, life-changing things.

After I spoke with Alan, I told Martina, “whatever this was that I just experienced, I want more of it.” She plugged me into GRIP, and it changed me. I am not who I was.

Shakur: What’s it been like working with GRIP?

Elle: GRIP changed my life. I love it—love what it stands for. I often use QTIP, “Quit Taking It Personally.” It opened my heart. I love the support when we go inside. Never have I been supported like that—where someone asks you, “What do you need?” and means it. It’s taught me I can rest. Even the guys in the Tribe step up and make sure I’ve got what I need. It feels good, like they value what I do.

Shakur: What’s it like sharing your story in a GRIP Tribe?

Elle: The Survivor Healing Circles usually involve two people who share their stories of being harmed. We sit in a circle, do introductions, and have a ceremony. I tell Emily stories, show photos, and read poetry. It’s intimate and it’s quiet. It’s a sacred and safe space.

One of the saddest things when you lose a loved one is that eventually no one talks about them. So you carry it all inside. The guys listen with compassion and they take the stories of my beloved daughter to heart. They refer to her as Em and ask me about her. That is the biggest gift you could give me.



“Momma Elle” surrounded by GRIP staff.

Shakur: How do you support participants owning their harm while holding their humanity?

Elle: I come with a heart and attitude of not being above them and not judging them. They are human beings. I know now how much they’ve endured. I encourage them to go on their own healing journeys so that when they come out they can be whole and be Peacemakers.

Shakur: What was your first GRIP graduation at San Quentin like?

Elle: I keep using the word life-changing, but I’m telling you, these events for me were life-changing. I didn’t really know GRIP at the time, but I felt like I was supposed to be there. I got last-minute clearance. At the ceremony I turned around, and Alan was in his cap and gown, crawling over the guys to get to me. He just hugged me and I said, “Alan, you’re not supposed to do this!” He looked at me and says, “What are they going to do, put me in prison?” He had that really funny sense of humor. I spoke at the graduation and gave Alan his honor cord. My last words were “Love Wins,” and we got a standing ovation. People still remember. So now they call me Momma Elle.

Shakur: What’s the most challenging part of this work for you?

Elle: Oh, going home—leaving and going back into the real f***ing world. You go and you find love, you find this beautiful place, and then suddenly, you’re back in your body again. You’re like, “Wait. Wait, no—I don’t want to be here.” It’s an opportunity to love people, and it’s an opportunity to love people who aren’t normally loved. For me, for my mother’s broken heart, it’s a gift.

Shakur: What’s the most positive aspect?

Elle: Last graduation, a young man’s parents thanked me. They said he had taken “Love Wins” to heart and changed his life. His mom said their family had changed, too. It’s because of the work he did, but he made a choice at one moment in his life, just like I did 16 years ago, to take a chance on the possibility that love was actually a force in the world, that it was something that was real and that could change his life.

Shakur: How do you view healing?

Elle: Oh my gosh, it’s a journey. It’s been more than 16 years since Emily died and I’ve been going inside since the summer of 2019. Every time I go inside - still to this day - every time I go, I’m healed in a different way and filled up in a different way. I think we have to feel our grief. You have to experience it. You can’t put it away or ignore it or at some point you’ll be overwhelmed by it. Grief turns out to be a very good teacher. My healing has definitely changed through this work.



“Momma Elle” and Alan at his GRIP Graduation

just really love the guys. I can say, “I love you. Yes, I understand you did this, and I love you.”

Shakur: One of the things that I really appreciate when survivors such as yourself come in is that it does create some type of surrogacy.

Elle: Yes, I’ve been able to talk to people that’ve done similar harm as what happened to my daughter. When I talk to them, I have the ability to say, “You didn’t harm me doing this, but I forgive you for doing this.” I’m able to let them talk to me about it, tell me about it as much as they want to and I can receive it and I can love them and forgive them.

Shakur: That’s huge, just to be able to receive that. Everything I heard you say, it’s almost as if you’re speaking directly to me in terms of my experience of being able to hear, for the first time, someone who was harmed share what took place on that fateful day or night. To never have a perspective or even think about what a person goes through and then to hear that directly from someone who’s experienced something similar, it began to resonate. That’s what my journey was like. For some people, it’s mind-boggling that you would go inside a prison and do this type of work.

Elle: I love it. I love what I do. For it to have been birthed – and I feel like it *was* birthed for me, this work, in my heart – out of Emily’s death is astonishing. It’s the most beautiful thing that’s ever happened to me.



Brandy Facilitating “A Breath of Freedom” at CCWF

Shakur: What growth have you seen in yourself?

Elle: I was always a shame-based person—bad, not good enough, stupid. On the inside, I realized I had to get distance from that. It kept me from being real. I wanted to be free from the shame. Just being with y’all inside inspired me. GRIP makes me experience everything deeper. The opportunities have opened my eyes to possibilities. It’s changed me significantly.

Shakur: What’s a Peacemaker to you?

Elle: Big question! It’s believing there’s a way to be with people who are in disagreement or at odds. It’s not necessarily how we normally walk. But being a Peacemaker, you entertain the idea that there’s a way through that. Creating peace means taking others’ perspectives and admitting I might not be right. Listening is half the battle. And getting out of your idea that you have the answers.

Shakur: What would you tell the public about people inside?

Elle: You meet people with broken hearts, remorseful people stuck in this place of punishment. They want to say I’m sorry, and they can’t. That’s why Survivor Healing Circles are so important. You meet people who have been broken by life. They’ve been abandoned, abused, and they’re not taught any type of skill to handle the things happening in their lives. Then here they are. When I go inside, I

GRIP Survivor Healing Circles focus students on the impact of crime on survivors like Elle. Below are reflections from others who have participated in these circles.



Excerpts from “My Oldest Brother was Murdered” by Trino Jimenez

My brother Julio was violently murdered in 1986, when he was just 24. He was also a son, a husband, and a father of two boys. Never had I experienced such deep pain, nor could I understand how this loss had come by another human’s choice.

Soon after the crime, a suspect was apprehended. At the trial, all I could see was a cold, callous person who was angry at the world, with no regard for other human beings. This was the picture that was painted—a vicious crime and the man responsible. It left me broken and traumatized.

Much later, I began to wonder about the man responsible for taking Julio’s life. I didn’t want to live or be defined by anger. Finally, twenty-nine years after Julio’s death, I was connected with Victim Services and was put on the path of restoration as I was able to write to the person who had so badly damaged me and my family.

To my surprise, he wrote back and expressed his remorse. What I saw in his letter was a contrite man and not that cold-hearted person I had seen years before. I learned about his past and the ways our system had failed him by not offering true rehabilitation. In 2017, I was able to participate in a victim-offender dialogue. I got to hear the words, “*I am sorry,*” and he could release the guilt he had been carrying for many years. On that day, profound healing came upon two lives.

Through GRIP I have been given the opportunity to tell my story in prisons, sharing my brokenness for the purpose of mending others, something that has brought me great joy. As I share my story, in almost all cases, the men can identify with some part of it—the robbery, the murder, or the insult itself. I have seen authentic men with authentic emotions and empathy moved to tears. This has been a great honor to me. I have a wound that may never heal, but each time I share, I feel I get a stitch on my wound. I hope someday it will be closed completely.

Excerpts from “A Letter from Marylyn”

I was nervous as I walked into the prison, clutching seven pages of my story. I had written it all down, every painful detail, but when I stood in front of those men, I realized that reading from a page wouldn’t do justice to the depth of my experience. So, I put the pages down and spoke from my heart.

I told them about the abuse I suffered as a child, from the ages of 4 to 7. I shared how I was repeatedly hurt by someone who should have protected me. I spoke about the years of silence that followed, the feelings of being unlovable, dirty, and broken that haunted me for decades. I had never received an apology—not from my abuser, not from my family, not from the justice system. That pain had stayed with me all my life.

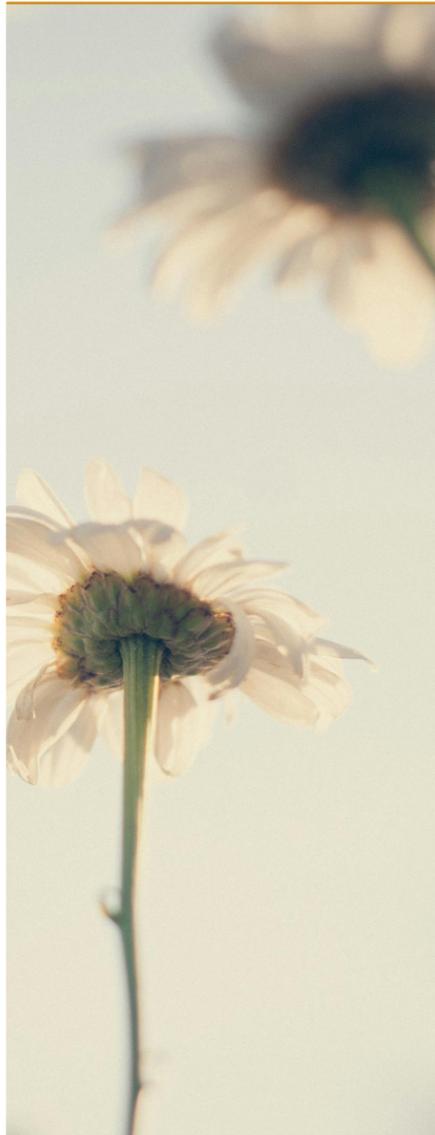
As I finished speaking, there was a silence so profound you could hear a pin drop. Then, one of the men, Cory, stood up. He asked if he could approach me, and when I said yes, he walked over, knelt down, and looked me in the eyes. “Ms. Marylyn,” he said, “I want to apologize to you for all the men who have hurt you in your life.”

In that moment, something inside me began to heal. Cory’s apology was something I had longed for my entire life. It wasn’t just healing for me; it was healing for him, too. We weren’t the only ones crying—everyone in that room felt the power of that moment. It was as if the walls between us had crumbled, leaving only a profound sense of shared humanity.



Art by Antonio Roman

POETRY BY BRENDA “BREE” BOWERS



WHO IS YOUR PEACEMAKER

My peacemaker dares to look at one's self
 My peacemaker doesn't blame anyone else
 My peacemaker searches high and low
 My peacemaker at times goes where the wind flows
 My peacemaker treats others with kindness
 My peacemaker works diligently at mindfulness
 My peacemaker is at times (is) allowed to fall
 My peacemaker has never been without fault
 My peacemaker knows love like no other
 My peacemaker loves nature and its mother
 My peacemaker knows pain and welcomes heartache
 My peacemaker knows when to inquire and when to walk away
 My peacemaker has learned remorse and forgives its enemy
 My peacemaker pays attention to its own unmet needs
 My peacemaker bows deeply at the heart of its peers
 My peacemaker doesn't stop at the thought of its fears
 My peacemaker watches its mouth to not hurt
 My peacemaker knows both the value and impact of its words
 My peacemaker continues to learn and be taught
 My peacemaker listens deeply at the message of its own thought
 My peacemaker knows for certain the error of its own ways
 My peacemaker is living amends in all of its days
 My peacemaker vows to continue to do the work
 My peacemaker is me and I am her.



Brenda “Bree” Bowers is a 2025 graduate of GRIP in Tribe 612. She was part of the first cohort at Central California Women's Facility, where she currently serves as a Facilitator.



ART BY PETER MONTELLANO



Peter Montellano's journey with GRIP began after graduating from the GRIP Program with Tribe 756 at Correctional Training Facility (CTF) in Soledad, CA, in 2024. Because of his sincere commitment to being a Peacemaker, he was invited to become a Facilitator and served in this role until he was found suitable for parole in 2025. He now resides in San Francisco and continues to live by the Peacemaker Pledge.

REFLECTIONS FROM TERESA “TREE” MOSES

Teresa “Tree” Moses joined GRIP in 2024 as a Program Associate and Facilitator. Tree, a voice of advocacy and healing, says, “My heart is knit and woven with the carceral populations, men and women. It's probably rooted in personal experience, being a former lifer myself, and understanding the need for connection, compassion, empathy.”

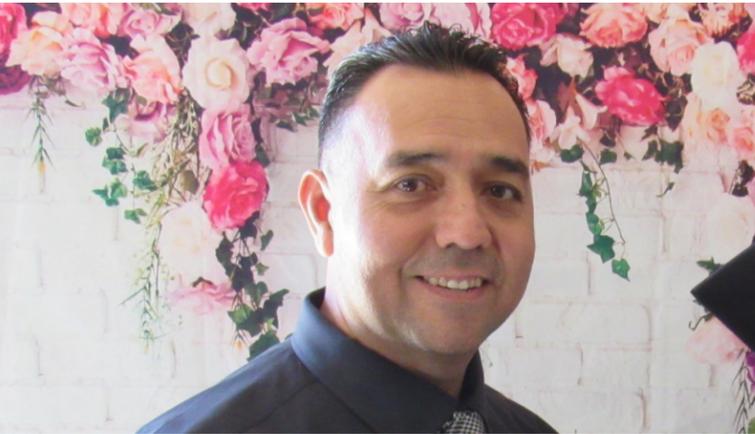
Looking at it from that aspect, now look at our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters, our nieces and nephews who are inside these walls. They can move forward, make the whole beautiful, and they can change the narrative for the next generation, for other communities.

What Should the Public Know About This Work?

I would start with a quote by Terri St. Cloud: “She can never go back and make some of the details pretty. All she could do was move forward and make the whole beautiful.” I would say to the public: what is that thing that you can never go back and make pretty? Because we all have a thing. Some are exposed, some are not. Some are still in the closet, under the bed, locked away, unheard, unspoken, unseen. But what is that thing that you can't go back and make pretty? Understanding that will always open the opportunity for empathy and connection. All you can do is move forward and make the whole beautiful.



“I KEEP COMING BACK” REFLECTIONS FROM ANDRES RODRIGUEZ



then came in there himself to give me condolences. Very unprecedented. It showed me that what Jacques put together with various other men isn't just a gimmick, it isn't just a program. He stood by what he said. Everything that we teach in our curriculum is actually what he showed me that day when he came in and embraced me and gave me his condolences for my mother. That's why I became a Facilitator.

After I graduated GRIP in 2017, I facilitated a couple of Tribes while still incarcerated and awaiting my release. Now I have been continuing as a Facilitator out here in society. I've been facilitating for eight years. What keeps me coming back is not just that unique loyalty, that unique love that Jacques showed me and Rosemary showed me throughout my incarceration and beyond, but what's done in that circle. There's a huge lack of emotional intelligence in society and sometimes under our own roofs. And when you're able to bring healing and emotional intelligence to anybody in any walk of life, and you receive that change, you see that change, it keeps you on track and it keeps you continuing to grow every day. There's always a new height to reach, a new blind spot to wipe away. So I keep coming back for that.

But it's not just that. I made a huge oath and promise to my mom and to Jacques that I would always do the work that was given to me, that I would always pay it forward. You learn it, you live it, and you give it away. Every time I lock hands with somebody or every time I lock eyes with somebody, I silently swear to continue to help them through whatever their difficulties or journeys are.

Every time I lock hands with somebody or every time I lock eyes with somebody, I silently swear to continue to help them through whatever their difficulties or journeys are.

Inside the Circle

One of the most powerful experiences I had with this work was a little over two years ago. I was sitting in a circle with six individuals - literally every figurehead of every gang

faction in prison was in that circle. We're going around and everybody's revealing their traumas and it gets very deep. It's still in the first stages of the whole year, and some guys are still actively involved in their trauma and in their mindset and belief systems.

As we're going around the circle, guys are breaking down, guys are crying, guys are letting it out. Then we come to the last one and I know him as far as his traumas and his crimes. And I was like, "This is going to be pretty bad." And he lets them know, "I'm going to really fully disclose this, because it's not about all of you, it's about me." Internally, my heart dropped, because I knew what he had done. Then he reveals what he did in really deep detail, reading from a five-page thing that he wrote.

I could see some of the others shifting forward and getting real glassy-eyed and I thought, "Someone's going to take off on him. Someone's going to really hurt him right now." I knew where they were going. When he finished, before someone actually made the decision to assault him, I jumped in and de-escalated the situation. The way the guys responded to that is what tells me that the circle is very transformative. It really changed my perspective because I had never seen myself. What I mean by that is I was all those individuals in one. That was me.

After I de-escalated the situation they looked at me in awe and without words. They were basically saying, "Wow, if you could accept this and believe in a person that has done that, then we can as well." They moved forward as well, accepting everybody in that circle and really understanding the work that we were doing. They were just blown away by it. It opened their mind to something else. It was a huge moment of realizing that if you've really internalized the curriculum, if you really internalized this new way of thinking, this new way of living,



Art by Antonio Roman

Transformation, healing, a new beginning, those are just words. I think me just walking around in public says enough.... Just walking as a Peacemaker is the message that I share.

that you could really change people and allow them to grow into the people they were always meant to be. I've done so many tribes now, but that was really the moment for me.

What the Public Should Know About This Work

People in the public have no idea about what really transpires within the walls, within a GRIP circle. If they knew, they'd be knocking on the prison doors to try to go in there and sit in a circle. The public doesn't have what we create in those circles.

Transformation, healing, a new beginning, those are just words. I think me just walking around in public says enough. I say that because I came back home to the place that I terrorized and where I was raided by every agency in the state of California. Just yesterday evening, watering the lawn at my father-in-law's house in the old neighborhood I must've had about 10 people saying, "Hey, neighbor" and "Hey, you're doing well. Good to see you." And me just standing there with the water hose. I've had a couple people tell me, "Wow, I never in a million years." And so I don't think there's any words. Just walking as a Peacemaker is the message that I share.



POETRY AND PROSE BY DENNIS JEFFERSON



Dennis Jefferson's GRIP journey began at San Quentin in 2016, with Tribe 780. He went on to become a Facilitator, and in 2025 graduated from Mt. Tamalpais College as class Salutatorian. Inspired by Bernard Moss and others, Dennis has dedicated his life to actively living out the principles of being a Peacemaker.

Unexpected Lives

When Bernard returned to San Quentin after his release, he was taking action on his purpose - his why, his business. He was committed to the ideal that everyone who has been broken deserves a safe space to heal, a platform where our humanity can finally exhale. Shame is in a constant battle for our worth and potential - it doesn't like to lose. But Bernard had our back.

At one point, we had a GRIP graduate return to prison on a parole violation. Because of the long waiting lists, GRIP doesn't allow students to take the program again. Bernard waived that precedent in service of second chances. Because real, wounded people aren't policy or data points. They are our family, they are in need, and we are the witnesses of it together. We don't leave anyone behind.

I had the privilege of going through the facilitator training sessions in 2019. Bernard would hold a clinic on GRIP's instructional processes. He obviously held a command of the program's content. By recognizing and supporting our redemption, he showed his commitment to the curriculum of the heart: a Jacques-ish ethos. Cycle breakers.

Our Tribal Inventory requires us to state the number of wasted years of incarceration. But what about more abstract numbers influenced by the disciplined service of Peacemakers like our brother Bernard? As we return back to our communities, we are no longer part of the problem. That means one less felony, one less domestic violence case, one less DUI, one less substance abuser, one less broken family, one less parole violation.

The Tribal Inventory also asks how many students did not have positive, consistent male role models growing up. I have always raised my hand. Is it too late to change my answer? Now I do have that male role model. Bernard is now in the curriculum of my heart, and we don't leave anyone behind.

Dance Lessons

Full disclosure
I used to dance
Weary of the day
I couldn't fall apart
The right way
My feet were going left
When I should do right
Why didn't I take heed
When the lessons were easy?

Internal audit
Fix me - or let me lead
This soul is not in
Capable
Right here right now
The music provokes
Even with weakened ambitions
We cheat those who underestimate us

Even with weakened ambitions
We'll go the way of prosperity



REMEMBERING BERNARD MOSS

In July 2024, we lost a beloved member of our GRIP family, Bernard Moss. Bernard was a Senior Facilitator, Prison Lead, and a mentor and counselor to many. He was also a founding student of the GRIP Program and the first graduate to be hired full time on staff. From the beginning, Bernard was a foundational pillar of GRIP, and his leadership and commitment to GRIP values touched countless lives. Bernard always introduced himself simply as "Bernard, Peacemaker."

At San Quentin, Bernard's presence was unmistakable - especially after he had been released and was working for GRIP. People greeted him with warmth, often jokingly asking, "Bernard, you still here?" His response: "I'm gonna keep coming back in until all of you are free." His legacy will continue to shape GRIP for generations to come.

In October 2025, Bernard was remembered at the GRIP Honors fundraising event with the presentation of the inaugural Bernard Moss Peacemaker Award. The annual award honors a GRIP graduate, alumnus, or Facilitator for their exemplary embodiment of Bernard's legacy as a Peacemaker.



For more Peacemaker stories and art,
please visit our website.

THE GRIP GRADUATION

At the completion of each 52-week program, GRIP holds a cap-and-gown graduation inside the prison walls for both students and trainee Facilitators. More than a celebration of achievement, this ceremony is a profound rite of passage. With their families, friends, prison administration, and community members as witnesses, the graduates publicly sign the Peacemaker Pledge, committing to its values for life. Together with their diploma they also receive

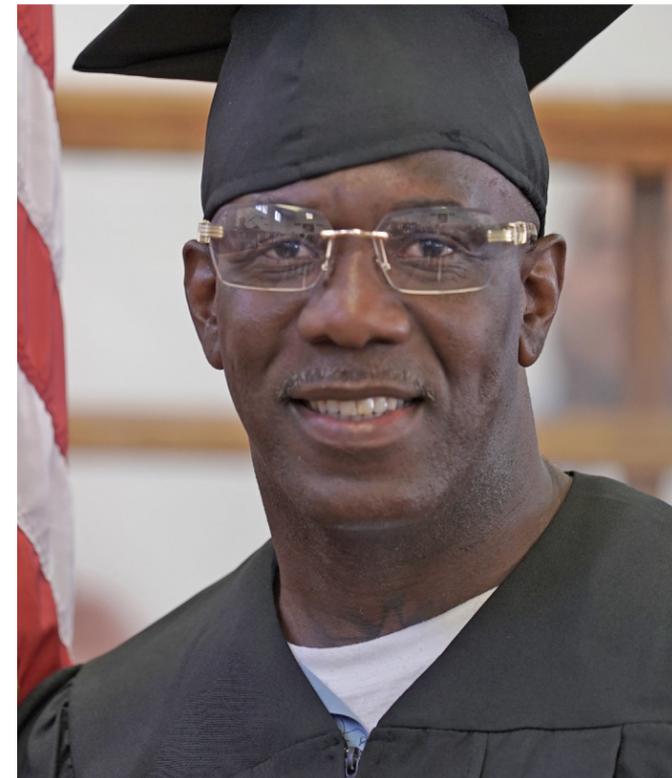
an honor cord, braided by a community volunteer, as a symbol of how we are all interconnected in suffering and in healing. At the end of the ceremony, when they run through a "human arch" created by all the guests, the graduates are symbolically welcomed back into the community as their authentic selves, ready to give back. This sacred event marks the culmination of the transformative GRIP journey.



GRIP Graduates, Facilitators, Families and Guests



GRIP Graduates, Facilitators, Families and Guests



GRIP Graduates, Facilitators, Families and Guests

GRIP Graduates, Facilitators, Families and Guests

THE PEACEMAKER PLEDGE

SIGNED AND EMBRACED BY ALL GRIP GRADUATES

I pledge to:

1. **Stop my violence.** Practice peaceful ways of interacting with myself and others. I pledge not to initiate or perpetuate violence in gang or race fights anywhere in the prison, and I pledge not to verbally instigate and incite violence in such situations.
2. **Pray for or otherwise honor the healing for the people I have hurt.** I dedicate this nonviolence commitment to them.
3. **Respond rather than react,** by mindfully observing my experience through regular practice, so I can make wise decisions.
4. **Treat my physical body with care** by not overworking or creating stress. I will seek to find a balance between time to work and rest. I will strive to eat wisely, exercise, and refrain from the use of intoxicants.
5. **Be true to my word.** I commit to being transparent and truthful, understanding that lying is abusive behavior and that blaming, judging and criticizing are disempowering and create conflict.
6. **Take only those things that are given freely,** not take things that don't belong to me, and live within my means.
7. **Listen to myself.** Seek to understand and communicate the needs underneath my anger and frustration. I take responsibility for managing my emotions, understanding that other people never make me feel the way I feel.
8. **Strive to forgive self and others.** Let go of resentments and apologize whenever it is helpful to do so.
9. **Learn how to foster sincere connections,** express my affections, develop intimacy and not create harm with sexual behaviors.
10. **Strive to establish equality and nurture healthy and authentic relationships with other beings.** Treat everyone equally regardless of their gender, race, sexual orientation, stature, religious background, country of origin, age, or political views, including animals and all living beings.
11. **Challenge my own belief systems,** understanding that there is always another perspective.
12. **Become someone who seeks to understand** rather than someone that seeks just to be understood.
13. **Share with others and not hide** the times that I fail to stick to this pledge.
14. **Be of service to my community.**
15. **Challenge violence firmly but kindly,** in all its forms, whenever it is wise to do so, and stand with others who are treated unfairly, even if that means standing alone.

“I commit myself to a lifetime of nonviolence & peacemaking as if life depends on it, because I understand it does.”