

Bay Area Nonviolent Communication's 2015 Safer Communities teaching team - short bios & pix

Benson Scott

I joined Safer Communities in 2011. I'm passionate about helping men in San Quentin prison return to their families and communities, to be empathetic in the face of conflict, and to be able to meet their needs while also meeting the community's needs for safety and security.



John Porter

I'm interested in exploring what my life and world would be without violence. I have been a member of Safer Communities team since 2002, and I am now working with parolees and their families in Oakland.



Lisa Montana

I joined the teaching team at San Quentin in 2013. I'm also a trainer at BayNVC and have a private practice specializing in mediation and conflict resolution. I came to NVC from the corporate world where I witnessed frequent disputes, most of them handled in ways that nobody liked. Through collaborative communication, I have seen wildly antagonistic foes find common ground and move forward together to create solutions that work for everyone.



Meganwind Eoyang

Meganwind is passionate about everyone learning skills that empower them to create a life they will enjoy, especially those with few systemic supports. Co-founder of the Safer Communities teaching team in 2002, teaching in San Quentin prison, Sonoma County jail, she also works in Oakland with parolees and their families.



Renee Soule

Renée Soule is completing her PhD in eco-psychology and is an adjunct faculty member at the California Institute of Integral Studies. She has been part of the San Quentin NVC Teaching Team since 2006.



Sandra Wolf

The teaching in San Quentin is always very alive for me because I strive to adapt NVC so it will be practical and relevant in their circumstances and to find ways to communicate the transformative power of NVC so they can experience it not as just another skill they learn but a new way of being in the world.



Sharran Zeleke

Sharran is a founding member of Safer Communities Teaching Team; teaching NVC in San Quentin Prison since September, 2002, and currently shares NVC with parolees and their families in Oakland. She has practiced vipassana meditation since 1991.



Sheila Menezes

I am a photographer by profession. Working with Safer Communities honors my passion for helping my community build tools and learn skills that inspire compassion and choice to respond (instead of react) to situations - even high-bar and complex challenges of violence, exploitation and injustice. My enthusiasm resides in mediation, conflict/resolution, finding choice and human dignity.



Sheryl Faria

New to the team in 2015, I like working with people to create more awareness and choice in how we relate to ourselves and others. My biggest hopes are about making life more satisfying, peaceful, and free, regardless of the past and our current physical surroundings



Valerie Sinzdak

I joined the Safer Communities team in 2013, and I have also taught introductory NVC workshops in my community and workplace. I am always eager to share this work with new audiences.

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Some current and former Safer Communities teaching team members:



In Front: Mair Alight, Sharran Zeleke, & Carol Chase,

Behind: John Porter, Meganwind Eoyang, Steve Blechman (now with Oregon
Prison Project),
Ross Mendenhall, & Bob Yamtich

Safer Communities team members are taking NVC work in prisons to other parts of the world:



Christine King

I am interested in systemic change using processes of restorative justice, mindfulness, and NVC. Working with inmates in the Santa Cruz county jail (and sometimes in San Quentin prison), I focus on unconditional acceptance and the transformative power of love.



Dave Smith

I have been a Supply Manager for over 30 years. I have been studying Nonviolent Communication since 2004. I started teaching NVC at San Quentin State prison and at a Homeless Center in Oakland in 2009. I started and now head the Massachusetts Prison Project.



Fred Sly, PhD

I am Oregon Prison Project's (OPP's) co-founder, Program Director, and senior faculty member. I am a CNVC Certified NVC trainer with 13 years' experience. My PhD dissertation in Psychology addressed violence in men and the impact that empathy has on reducing violence.



Toni McErlane

In growing my heart, I meet others whose hearts also yearn to grow. Together we navigate the realities of being human, and learn to trust ourselves. I shared NVC in Sonoma County jail. I have gone on to work in restorative justice both within the New Zealand Department of Corrections and as a private consultant.

And we have mentored people working in Texas; Bogota, Colombia; and in South Carolina