



# VALUES OVER VIOLENCE INSTITUTE

## Toward justice in the workforce

### Executive Summary

Youth who have witnessed, been victims of, or perpetrated violence live with scarred memories. In an environment of few jobs, few summer recreational activities, and questionable role models in gang leaders, violence spreads. Rising murder rates, increasing teen suicide, and other forms of violence are now seen as public health crises, demanding antidotes. Violence is not just an urban phenomenon. We are part of a larger whole, with strong ties to the Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, who is taking this approach to suburban areas to talk of the violence of racism, of bullying, and the universal quest for forgiveness and reconciliation. The VOV Institute focuses on the urban areas of Greater Boston.

**The Values over Violence Institute-** Incorporated in 2016, the Institute promotes training in the ESPERE curriculum, promotes healing from trauma through positive action, and secures resources to promote peace. The Institute works to provide job and job training networks which can give positive alternatives to persons coming out of prison, juvenile detention, through its association with Pathway to Redemption. Our current focus is the City of Boston, notably, Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Hyde Park, and Jamaica Plain.

The **Values over Violence Project** is a program to train youth and adults to examine their emotions, learn to identify events which trigger anger, rage, and depression, and look at choices about how to handle these events. The Values over Violence Project is a Boston-based version of the curriculum developed by ESPERE, the School of Forgiveness and Reconciliation, in Bogota, Colombia. The ESPERE materials have a proven track record in reducing violence not only in Latin America, but also in many countries, including the United States (Texas and Oregon.)

By learning this curriculum, participants overcome tendencies toward aggression and depression, students can take the next step, job readiness training. Beyond that, when ready, they can begin to learn marketable skills. Values over Violence also explores ways to get employers to furnish jobs for graduates of the program.

There are a number of successful job readiness programs, as well as training programs for those who can acquire a skill. These programs can take a person who has learned to control his/her aggressive behavior and provide a real alternative. Significant partners in this program include Future Hope Apprenticeship Program, Pathways to Redemption, People's Academy, and other organizations.

#### **Our track record-**

- Board member Rev. Dr. Rodney L. Petersen and Board President, Robert A. Lewis, trained 27 clergy and community leaders in the Espere Curriculum from March-May, 2015 at the Mattapan Public Library. See organizations involved in the credits below.
- Under the leadership of Robert Lewis and Paris Swindle, the group organized a bike-a-thon and basketball tournament for youth, September 2015
- Five of those trained went on to train youth and others: Deborah Street and Paris Swindle, VOV Vice President and Executive Director, respectively taught the program at Oliver Wendell Holmes School, Summer, 2016; Aisha Porcher taught a course at the Family Independence Initiative, Jamaica Plain in the Fall, 2016; Judith Foster taught at the Healing Empathy Redemption Oasis (HERO) IN 2016. Portions of the curriculum were taught at the summer youth program of the Sustainability Guild, Summer, 2015, under the leadership of Jhana Senxian.
- Secured financial support from the Episcopal City Mission, the Boston Foundation, Christ Church Cambridge, and other donors. VOV Institute is seeking 501(c)3 status, and is fiscally conducted by Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, 474 Centre Street, Newton MA 02458, an interfaith organization.
- Opened an office in Hyde Park, at 1895 River Street, in October, 2016.

**The Values over Violence effort seeks funding to.....**

1. Train trainers in using the curriculum of forgiveness and reconciliation.
2. Recruit students for the program.
3. Attract students by offering incentives such as sports opportunities (a basketball tournament and a bike-a-thon are planned) and stipends.
4. Give the Values over Violence curriculum during the summer of 2015 with the supervision of trainers from #1 above.
5. Enroll participants who graduate from the VoV program in job readiness programs
6. Enroll graduates of #5, if interested, in skills training programs
7. Mentor graduates in their job search, using existing job placement organizations, such as the Urban League, Action for Boston Community Development, and the Massachusetts Employment Service, as well as construction firms.

**Participating Organizations in the initial training:** The Black Ministerial Alliance, Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries, Future Hope Apprenticeship Program, TenPoint Coalition, Mattapan-Hyde Park Economic Development Corporation, Pathway to Redemption. *Will you join us?*

**Email for more information:** [info@coopmet.org](mailto:info@coopmet.org) **Or follow us on our blog:** [coopmet.wix.com/valuesoverviolence](http://coopmet.wix.com/valuesoverviolence)

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MEMBERSHIP IS NOW OPEN. FOR INFORMATION, EMAIL [flintparis@aol.com](mailto:flintparis@aol.com).

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