

**Title:** The Power of Peace: A Program Assessment

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**Abstract:**

This small scale study investigated what would happen when men at a dangerous maximum security prison, Hays State Prison in Trion, GA signed a “Peace Pledge.” Following the example of men like Gandhi, King, Mandela and Jesus of Nazareth, they set out to see if they could live in peace with the men that reside in Georgia’s toughest prison. “40 Days of Peace” began on the 25th anniversary of MLK Day in 2011 and would continue for the following forty days. These men chronicled their success, struggles and failures in journals; these are bold men, some of whom are former gang members serving life sentences. This study examines the Peace Movement that they unknowingly started and that would continue to spread in their facility based on the “Seven Peace Doctrines” that they committed to. As these men began to live by these simple, but powerful principles, and they began to prove that peace was a possibility even in places where people say that it cannot happen. Word began to spread throughout the prison and both inmates and staff alike began to talk about “40 Days of Peace.” Instead of being labeled as “weak”, these men began to get a new kind of respect from their fellow inmates.

**Keywords:** prison, prison reform, peace, Hays State Prison

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### Forty Days of Peace (Section 1)

Peace and prisons are two words that we usually do not use together, yet this program attempts to do just that. Prisons are places where we send the offenders in our society in the name of creating peace for the general public. Yet, when the offenders have served their time and are invited to rejoin society, how can we expect them to behave peacefully when the environment to which we sent them in the first place is anything but peaceful? Should we be shocked and surprised that when they return they still are unable or unequipped to conform to our societal norms as far as behavior and expectations go? Not at all, unless we try something different, something that has not been done before, teach them to live peacefully while they are in prison. That is exactly what the Peace Project attempts to do at Hays State Prison in Georgia, and has had a measurable amount of success in doing so. Change in a correctional environment is neither something that comes naturally or easily. However, change is inevitable and necessary if we are going to have a chance of improving the quality of life not only for those offenders in the correctional system, but for those who have the opportunity to reintegrate themselves into society (Cummings, 2012; Byrne & Hummer, 2007).

### Background on Prisons in GA (Section 2)

The Georgia Department of Corrections use state prisons to house violent or repeat criminals and nonviolent offenders who have exhausted all other forms of punishment. Judges in Georgia may sentence offenders directly to prison or offenders may be sent to prison as a result of revocation proceedings (GA Department of Corrections, 2012). There are 31 state prisons in Georgia, three of which are designated for women. In 2010, Georgia state prisons had a capacity of 37,224 and had on hand 39,205 offenders. In 2011, Georgia state prisons had a capacity of 36,586 offenders and had on hand 39,177 (GA Department of Corrections, 2012). According to

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the annual report in 2010, the demographic breakdown of offenders in all Georgia prisons was as follows:

<b>Total Prison Population</b>	52,291
Age Under 20	1,038
20-29	16,171
30-39	15,463
40-49	12,110
50-59	5,880
60-69	1,399
70+	230

Annual Report – GA Department of Corrections, 2010.

Gender – Male	48,570
Gender – Female	3,721
Race – White	17,155
Race – Black	32,868
Race – Hispanic	2,065
Race – Asian	106
Race – Other	97

Annual Report, GA Department of Corrections, 2010.

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According to the annual report in 2011, the demographic breakdown of all Georgia prisons is very similar to that of 2010:

<b>Total Prison Population</b>	53,341
Age under 20	1,096
20-29	16,428
30-39	15,758
40-49	12,020
50-59	6,237
60-69	1,529
70+	272

Annual Report, GA Department of Corrections, 2011.

Gender – Male	49,751
Gender – Female	3,590
Race – White	17,752
Race – Black	33,069
Race – Hispanic	2,306
Race – Asian	127
Race – Other	87

Annual Report, GA Department of Corrections, 2011.

Georgia offenders are assigned to a security level after a review of several factors such as the offender's sentence, the nature of the crime, the offender's criminal history, and the offender's history of violence (GA Department of Corrections, 2012). The three classification levels are: close security, medium security, and minimum security. The classification level of the

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prison in this study, Hays State prison, is close security. Close security prisons house offenders who are escape risks; they may have assaultive histories, and may have detainers for other serious crimes on file (a detainer is a request by another law enforcement agency to hold an offender pending other charges or actions). These offenders never leave the prison and require supervision at all times by a correctional officer (GA Department of Corrections, 2012).

Hays State Prison is a close security facility for adult male felons that opened in 1989, was renovated in 2009, and houses some of the state of Georgia's most challenging offenders. The stated mission of Hays State Prison is, "To provide its offender population with a variety of structured programs intended to minimize recidivism and initiate an effective re-entry program" (GA Department of Corrections Facilities Report, 2011, p.34). Hays State Prison has a capacity of 1698 offenders. It is comprised of 11 general population dorms, consisting of 62 beds per dorm for a total of 682. One Fast Track building houses 256 offenders. There are five Special management Unit dorms consisting of 171 beds. Hays Annex consists of 8 dorms with 50 beds per dorm for a total of 400 beds. Hays Annex also has Quonset Huts with 170 beds. The outside fire station has 10 beds and the infirmary has 9 beds. Hays State Prison houses approximately 600 level II mental health offenders throughout the institution (GA Department of Corrections Facilities Report, 2011, p. 34).

### Program Description (Section 3)

The goal of the program is to restore redemption and hope to offenders; and to our knowledge the first of its kind in this type of setting and environment. On January 18th 2011, following the example and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Kit Cummings inspired twelve inmates at Hays State Prison to sign a peace pledge (Attachment A). Although this prison is known for frequent violence, brutal assaults and gang activity, within months there were

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hundreds of inmates who had followed their lead. Shortly thereafter, Kit Cummings and his associate Gary Burke developed an Inmate Peace Council and also began working with officers and staff to lay a foundation for lasting peace.

Having committed themselves to the “Seven Point Peace Pledge” (Appendix A), they started a powerful peace movement that is currently spreading to other state prisons around the country. Many said it was impossible to create any type of a peaceful environment in a prison; as it turns out it wasn't-- universal laws and principles work wherever they are practiced. If it can happen there, it can happen anywhere.

The objective of the program is to give inmates a noble purpose, which will help prepare them to re-enter society; and to keep adolescents off the streets, in school and out of gangs. The first step is to take the Peace Initiative, which is already showing significant and measurable results in the decrease of violence in Georgia's most dangerous prison, to more state prisons as well. As peace begins to spread throughout these correctional facilities and men realize greater freedom, then the programs already in place that deal with faith, education, anger management, relapse and recovery, life and job skills, and re-entry preparation will become more effective and productive (Cummings, 2012).

This in turn will lead to more men returning to their communities and becoming responsible citizens and faithful fathers. As long as violence, gang involvement, and brutality are the norm in these maximum security prisons, then true rehabilitation remains a pipe dream for most. As more men learn to do "good time" while behind bars, preparing themselves to make real contributions to society, then when they return, our communities will become safer, children will get their fathers back, and new role models will be discovered and developed.

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### Methods (Section 4)

Cummings is an author, coach and teacher by trade and he was volunteering his time going to visit inmates at Hays State Prison in 2009. Cummings wanted to find a way to truly rehabilitate inmates in prisons across America. With much planning and input from those who have successfully ministered to the prison population in a similar way – Kairos Prison Ministry of Georgia – Cummings developed his program and called it The Power of Peace Project. The main objective of the program was to get the men who participated, to live in peace for forty days inside of Georgia’s most violent prison. After many months of individual conversations with inmates there, recognizing the desperate need for positive change in the lives of these men, Cummings approached the warden with starting a support group for those most in need there. What he wanted to do was to implement a basic cycle of change based on an understanding of the inmate culture and the basic principles of nonviolence influenced by Dr. King, Nelson Mandela and Gandhi.

Using his gifts of motivating and inspiring to share ideas of peace and change grounded in nonviolent principles, Cummings met with the twelve men who formed the initial group participating in this program once every two weeks. The men were given journals to chronicle their daily struggles and to have an outlet to the resistance that they faced in their hostile daily environment as they committed to following the Seven Point Peace Pledge (Appendix A). A momentum began as these men began to live by these simple, but powerful principles, and they began to prove that peace is possible even in places where people said that it could not happen. As they began to journal, and practice a lifestyle of non-violence, other men began to watch and become curious. Word began to spread throughout the compounds, and people began to talk about “40 Days of Peace.” Instead of being labeled as “weak” these men began to get a new kind

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of respect. A new peace movement had begun, and the administration and staff began to take note.



Initial Power of Peace Project participants with Kit Cummings, Hays State Prison, 2010

Before long there were hundreds of men on the compound that were following their lead. Cummings helped the men to form a “Peace Council”, where they invited ranking members of all the major gangs at the prison to begin negotiations for peace. After the “peace talks” began, they saw an entire month go by where there were no stabbings at the prison. Up until that time, at Hays State Prison stabbings were a weekly if not a daily occurrence there. Development, action, outcome, analysis and revision are the critical steps in this cycle of change. These men proved that nonviolent peaceful principles can work wherever they are practiced. By reframing peace and nonviolent actions as strong behavioral indicators versus weak, they were able to empower the participants to be change agents and in turn, these men received positive reinforcement not just from the core support group with Cummings, but from their peers and the prison staff.

### Theoretical Framework (Section 5)

Restorative justice principles focus on repairing hurt and harm through dialogue that takes place between the offenders and the victims (Barusch, 2012). Using this framework, crimes are seen as wrongful acts committed against individuals or communities as opposed to the state. Therefore, reconciliation and reparations must take place between individuals and communities in order for reconciliation to be achieved. The Seven Point Peace Pledge that the participants make a commitment to following, is grounded in restorative justice principles (Appendix A). For example, with restorative justice, the crime control lies primarily within the community – this is addressed in the Seven Point Pledge by principles one and seven. Principle one states, “I will do my very best to live in peace with everyone I meet” and “I will treat all people with the respect with which I wish to be treated” (Appendix A).

Another principle of restorative justice is that accountability is defined as assuming responsibility and taking action to repair harm – this is met by principle six which states ‘When I am wrong, I will promptly admit it and quickly make amends’ (Appendix A). This behavior places the emphasis on dialogue and negotiation between the offending party and the victim. In the restorative justice theoretical framework, punishment alone is not effective in changing behavior and is disruptive to community harmony and good relationships – this is evidenced in the Seven Point Peace Pledge in principles two through five. These principles hold the person accountable for their behavior, acting in a respectful and socially appropriate way no matter what negative behavior they are faced with (Appendix A).

We can also see evidence of social learning theory at work here in this program as inmates are learning a skill set that will enable them to experience behavioral and symptomatic change. This is evidenced by principle three and six in the Seven Point Peace Pledge (Appendix

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A). Principle three states “When provoked, I will not retaliate” (Appendix A). Most of the journaling that was completed by the participants mentioned this principle as being the hardest behavioral change to adapt to but also being the most impactful in the prison environment. By completing the 40 Days of Peace Program, inmates will have a cognitive reframing of automatic thoughts about presenting problems in their prison environment to facilitate change in that environment.

### Discussion (Section 6)

Hays State Prison does not release data on specific inmates; therefore what we have to assess the program is qualitative data. The journals that the inmates kept during their time in the program, the experiences that they shared in their group meetings with Cummings and the anecdotal data that was shared by the prison staff, are all important in providing insight into the effectiveness and the impact of this program. Cummings also kept an informal blog on the project’s Facebook page to record his reactions to the meetings he attended with the inmates - <https://www.facebook.com/ThePowerofPeaceProject> . The following are excerpts from those reactions notes from the meetings at Hays State Prison:

What a truly fascinating day... My partner Gary and I went into ALL 15 dorms at Hays State Prison and delivered 15 individual messages on PEACE (I've never preached so many messages in a row to so many different audiences-- three straight hours)... We got some great receptions, some heckling, encountered some hatred, a few veiled threats, and also tremendous support. The amazing thing was that by the end of EVERY message, we had the inmate's attention and respect. MANY men signed onto our Peace Movement,

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and so the story continues... Stay tuned, and give PEACE a chance. – June 25, 2011.  
(Cummings, 2011)

The latest news from Hays State Prison? The warden has agreed to allow my partner and I to begin working with the officers as well. We agreed that lasting peace will only be possible if BOTH sides learn to work together better-- amazing development... Ask and you SHALL receive. - August 3, 2011. (Cummings, 2011)

Yesterday was so inspiring up at the prison... It was our first Peace Meeting since the killing two weeks ago, and I was curious to see how it would affect our attendance (movement was locked down and now has been slowed significantly)... Not only did the men come, but they burst into applause when I told them that we were in this for the long haul and more determined now than ever. These are some of the bravest men I know-- they have to stay there; I get to leave... Please pray for PEACE at Hays State Prison. – September 10, 2011. (Cummings, 2011)

What a great day up at Hays State Prison... Men are beginning to DREAM again: we actually have some of our inmates working on a full musical production-- written, directed and performed solely by inmates for the general prison population... This was unimaginable just a few short months ago. God is moving in this dangerous but fascinating place. (Stay tuned) – September 23, 2011. (Cummings, 2011)

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Something truly amazing is happening at the Maximum Security Prison that has become our Field of Dreams... Yesterday, as men from different gangs, races, and faiths gathered for our Peace Initiative Meeting, one man came in that everyone knew. He is the leader of one of the biggest gangs in the prison and known among inmates throughout the GA correctional system. As he spoke, you could hear a pin drop... He began to shed tears in front of his brothers AND his enemies and called for CHANGE. It was one of the most powerful moments I have experienced to date. Don't stop BELIEVING. – October 1, 2011. (Cumming, 2011)

Miracles abound... Today at our Peace Initiative meeting at the prison, I allowed a Black Muslim leader to address the inmates (a large gathering of men from different faiths, races and gang affiliations). His message was powerful and he shared about his conviction to respect ALL men-- Jews, Christians, Muslims and gang members, because of who HE is, not who they are... Then I witnessed him walk to the front, reach out his hand, and embrace a leader from the white, Arian Brotherhood (Neo-Nazi, with facial tats to prove it). He said: "I have nothin but love for you my Brother." In front of friends and enemies alike... Who says HE doesn't do miracles any more-- they're happening EVERY day. – October 14, 2011. (Cumming, 2011)

Off to find a miracle... Today we begin a four day weekend up at Hays State Prison. 30 volunteers and 30 pre-selected inmates will spend the next 72 hours together (with a little sleep in between). The transformation that takes place is truly remarkable. You'd be

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amazed what a little love can do to the hardest heart. (Oh, and the inmates change some too.) – October 20, 2011. (Cumming, 2011)

Great day up at the prison. We announced the next phase in The Power of Peace Project. We will have a series of "Great Debates" as individual dorms will "battle" one another. A dorm will choose a representative and he will square off against another inmate in a debate forum in front of the whole group. We choose the topic, set the rules, and assign positions... In the end, the inmates will learn to use their minds and words to persuade and resolve conflict, rather than resorting to violence. We will use a round-by-round championship model... I can't wait! – November 18, 2011. (Cumming, 2011)

Just returned from the prison... Pray for the mighty men of our "Peace Council" there. These men are trying to restore peace after a gang war broke out over the last couple of weeks that sent 74 men to the infirmary for medical attention in just ONE day. Our brothers there are fighting for peace in a very dangerous place-- but fighting with the weapons of non-violence... One day soon "Redemption Song" will be heard ringing through the hills of North Georgia-- songs of FREEDOM! – December 9, 2011. (Cumming, 2011)

What an inspiring day up at Hays State Prison... Today was "Family Day" for all the men in the Faith & Character Program, and we had a graduation program (complete with caps & gowns), breakfast and lunch, and a great time meeting their parents, wives, brothers and sisters, and beautiful little children. These times are absolutely the happiest

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times for these men that are doing very long, if not life sentences. To watch them hug their loved ones and show off their little children truly warms the heart. You feel a hope and joy on this day in that dangerous place that rarely if ever happens there. These men are real, and human, and there is still PLENTY of love inside of them. May God bless these “men of peace” at this maximum security camp. – December 16, 2011. (Cumming, 2011)

Important day up at the prison. The Deputy Warden allowed us to call out specific inmates of our choosing that happen to be very influential in their respective dorms. We had an impromptu “Peace Council” meeting and brainstormed as to how we can change the momentum and begin to bring peace to some of the most violent dorms on the compound. I respect these men so much. They take a stand in a very dangerous place, and are willing to stand out for peace and positive change. Some of the ideas that came out of today’s meeting could very well lead to a significant shift... Keep the prayers coming-- we feel the power! – December 20, 2011. (Cumming, 2011)

Powerful class up at the prison today... We taught SEAL Training techniques to inmate leaders about how to stay calm under pressure, control emotions, and visualize success on missions. It is all about Goal Setting, Arousal Control, Mental Rehearsal and Self Talk (or GAMS, as we call it). They were VERY engaged and now have new, more effective tools at their disposal to be able to better handle conflict in a tense and dangerous environment... All in all, a successful day. – December 30, 2011. (Cumming, 2011)

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A great day at Hays State Prison today... One of the highlights of our "Peace at Hays Meeting" was the sharing of good news about how the Peace Movement is gaining momentum: The men in C-1 Dorm pulled together some money and purchased a large quantity of store goods. They sent the items to D-2, which is one of the most dangerous dorms on the compound. This act of good will was done to encourage those inmates in D-2 that need peace, and to make a charitable gesture as an act of good faith-- one of the dorms that has been behaving the worst was able to enjoy a "feast" today, because of their brothers who are behaving the best... When it was announced, all the men broke into applause. Then we spoke about what motivated the men of C-1 to make such an unselfish decision and how other dorms should imitate their faith... Peace is on the move at Hays. Stay tuned. – January 27, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

I stand completely amazed at what I am witnessing at this maximum security prison... Wednesday there was a stabbing in one of our best dorms-- which could have been a real problem for our Peace Movement. Instead, today over half of the inmates in that dorm came to our Peace Meeting and addressed the warden publicly, regarding the incident. They apologized that it happened on their watch, committed to him that it wouldn't happen again and explained all the things that these men were doing to create peace in that dorm. These men have decided that they WILL NOT tolerate violence where they live-- a far cry from where they were just a year ago... I pray that PEACE continues to spread – April 20, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

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Wow... What an amazing day at the prison where we began what has become a national prison peace movement... The Power of Peace Project, Inc. (our 501c3) is currently working with the leadership of the three most powerful inmate "organizations" at this dangerous camp, and we are beginning to discuss real, attainable peace... As we waited to get into our space for our weekly "Peace at Hays" meeting this morning, the prison was put on lock down as a gang member who had been stabbed multiple times was carted out AFTER we had arrived. Afterward, our meeting took a powerful and serious tone as one of the most influential convicts at this prison spoke about raising the "kids" (young men) that are showing up in these prisons, and then I spoke of Purpose and Power. Peace is within our sight... Come and see us-- maybe YOU can find some Peace too. – September 7, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

Major developments in our Prison Peace Program: a third Georgia prison has requested our "40 Days of Peace" program, and two more states (KY and NC). That now puts us in GA, OH, KY, NC and South Africa... – September 10, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

Unbelievable day up at one of the prisons where we serve. Largest gathering we have had on a Friday morning in well over a year... But it wasn't the size of the group, but more importantly, WHO was there. The five top leaders came and brought their crews. If I was ever going to feel vulnerable-- it would have been today. But I didn't... Surrounded by leaders with powerful influence and their enemies in the same room, I felt a powerful force moving throughout the group. Everyone was respectful and very attentive, and there wasn't an officer in the room for the entire hour and a half. These rival gang leaders are

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now seriously discussing peace in Georgia's most dangerous prison... Now tell me that God is not healing the land. – September 28, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

We only do this twice a year, and I'm SO excited that the time has finally come once again-- because I NEED it... We will spend the next three days with 30 inmates that have been chosen from among the general population at Hays State Prison: 12 White, 12 Black, 5 Latino, and 1 Asian... We will spend 12 hours a day together laughing, crying, talking and becoming FRIENDS... and God will show up again: when, how and among who HE chooses. The best part is that He ALWAYS shows up and never the same way twice... This is my tenth weekend like this, and I still get butterflies in my stomach. (He'll show up for YOU today too) – October 26, 2012. (Cummings, 2012).

Wow... Here are just a few highlights from behind the wall today: an inmate who recently got off of death row after 22 years, loses his voice from singing songs for the first time in over two decades... an inmate weeps openly in front of maximum security convicts over the fact that his son turned eleven today and he couldn't be there to celebrate with him... and an inmate who lives a very obvious alternative lifestyle is comforted by a group of inmates, as he cries over his recent suicidal feelings... God is definitely up to something. (and no, you CANNOT learn about these amazing transformations by watching "Hard Time" and "Gangland" on TV-- we only witness God's Moves up close and personal) – October 27, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

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Very powerful meeting today up at one of the maximum security prisons where we serve... We met with several leaders of the most powerful inmate "organizations" on the compound and discussed how we can better teach/train the "90's Babies" (inmates that were born in the nineties) who are tearing up the prison and wreaking havoc. Don't believe everything you see on TV-- some of these gang leaders are really trying to make a difference and bring about peace in this dangerous prison. Stay tuned, and pray for PEACE. – November 2, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

I'm SO proud of the men in white on the "inside" where our Power of Peace Project is alive and active (in a maximum facility up in North, GA). There is a gang war that has most state prisons in GA currently on lock-down. The "Men of Peace" leaders at our prison said NO to the war, and YES to Peace-- they are now off of lock-down and there is peace there presently... Please pray that it remains-- what these convicts are doing is truly historic. – November 26, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

What an amazing day at Hays State Prison in North Georgia... Considered the #1 Gang Prison in the State of Georgia, and right in the middle of a state-wide "Gang War" in the prison system, we were able to take 41 at-risk, inner city high school boys up there for a day that they will NEVER forget. Although there was a killing at one of the other prisons just yesterday because of this war, Hays is running smoothly and peacefully because of the "Peace at Hays" leadership that has been raised up through The Power of Peace Project. Two of our inmate leaders delivered a powerful and inspirational testimony to the group, and then we took them on a tour down to "The Hole." This Special

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Management Unit is where convicts are sent when they get into trouble, or need protective custody to stay alive. These young men spent about 20 minutes back there. While all the cells were locked, the inmates could still see them and yelled whatever they wanted, as the boys stood in line. Some shouted threats, others invitations, and some tried to talk some SENSE into them. Our “Inspired Straight” program includes a bit of “Scared Straight” to get their attention, and it WORKS... On the way out the Lieutenant, who runs much of the security at this camp, said that the current Peace at Hays was due to our program. Actually, it is due to God’s power and intervention, but I am thrilled to be a part of something that is changing this “Little World.” Please pray for these Warriors of Peace! – November 28, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

Ok, so here’s what happened... On Friday we had a special “feast” for some of the guys at Hays State Prison (because He said “when you have a banquet, don’t just invite those who ALWAYS get invited to such things, right?). Gary prepared a Special Fish Fry, and we invited 12 guys that we know really well from our “Power of Peace Project.” These are leaders, and several are leaders of particular “organizations” if you know what I mean... Well, the word got out I guess, because we had MANY more show up than we had invited. So we had ourselves a potential problem. And some of these guys were real “bad guys” that we don’t even know, and half of them were from the rival, Muslim organization (some would call it a "gang" up there). So what would YOU have done? This wasn’t an easy situation... One of our main leaders stepped forward and said, “What we have is what we have, but we will not turn ANYONE away. We’ll just all have to SHARE.” (You have no idea how rare that is in a hi-max prison— to share?) All I can

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tell you is that we only had a certain number of fish; EVERYONE ate until they were completely satisfied; there was laughter among enemies; and there was one piece left over... A genuine first century miracle? That's up to you to decide. (But this was a day these men will NEVER forget, and neither will I) – December 17, 2012. (Cummings, 2012)

Another amazing day at the maximum security prison where MIRACLES happen... A high ranking leader of one of the most powerful gangs stated publicly at our Power of Peace Project Meeting: "The violence is no longer as much between warring gangs, which is huge progress; now it is mostly inside our own organizations, and we just need to deal with it appropriately-- and we have the power to do that." You have no idea what a BIG statement that was, especially spoken in front of other leaders who used to be his enemies. We have shifted into a new phase, as we ALL seek lasting peace in this dark and dangerous place... God is definitely up to something. – January 4, 2013. (Cummings, 2013)

Just got the news that the first of the original Twelve Peacemakers, who signed the historic, original "40 Days of Peace" pledge in our very first maximum security prison (Jan 18, 2011) has been released! Way to go Big Gerry, we love you man! Your journey has not been in vain... Now, carry on the good fight. – December 18, 2013. (Cummings, 2013)

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### Evaluation

The Power of Peace Project is a great example of a program that is grounded in restorative justice principles and achieving a measure of social justice for those who participate in it. The next steps for this program would be to identify a way to measure recidivism and to document its impact on micro, meso and eventually macro levels. The Power of Peace Project is now a registered 501(c)3 organization and thus far has operated its programming in a cost effective manner with efficiency. The manner in which some of this nation's most hardened criminals have taken to a message of peace, hope and change, and started to make behavioral changes in facilities that were the most resistant to this type of change, is beyond amazing. If these men can learn to take responsibility for their actions and learn to hold one another accountable using nonviolent and peaceful means, what excuse does mainstream society have? None. The Power of Peace Project is the type of program that can truly help men make the behavioral changes they need and develop a skill set that will help them to re-enter society with a more healthy mental perspective.

### Conclusion

Cummings is taking these same nonviolent peace principles into the toughest environments and alternative high schools. Adolescents are dropping out at alarming rates--gangs, bullies, drugs & alcohol, and teenage pregnancy are tearing our children's dreams apart and stealing their future. It's time to stand up and make a difference. Prevention is the key, and perhaps we can redirect some of these young people before we end up meeting them in the prisons or on the streets.

The Power of Peace Project has now expanded into a community development project which includes a student development program, anti-bullying campaigns in several alternative

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high schools; a media company; corporate motivational programs; along with empowerment activities and organizational conflict resolution programming. The latest development is an explosive peace movement that has emerged in the Michigan Dept. of Corrections where nearly a thousand inmates have committed to peace and to becoming role models not only to inmates across the country, but to a young generation that has seriously lost its way. The "Muskegon Experiment" is working and inmate violence is dropping rapidly. Tough kids in inner city schools are following their lead and bullies are becoming peace makers.

**For the next 40 days,**  
I commit myself to the following  
**Seven Point Peace Pledge:**

1. I WILL do my very best to live in peace with everyone I meet.
2. I WILL NOT provoke or disrespect anyone.
3. When provoked, I WILL NOT retaliate.
4. When cursed, I WILL NOT curse back.
5. I WILL NOT lie, cheat or steal.
6. When I am wrong, I WILL promptly admit it and quickly make amends.
7. I WILL treat ALL people with the respect with which I wish to be treated.



Taken from: <http://thepowerofpeace.org/> and “The Power of Peace Project: Forty Days of Peace”

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