

TRANSFORMING POWER & CARING

A Chance Encounter *Lorig Charkoudian, Ph.D., Executive Director, Community Mediation Maryland*

An account given by Lorig Charkoudian, Ph.D., one life changed in California as Karen Cauble spread AVP to the west coast. Diana Couch, a cofounder of AVP – Antelope Valley, was mentored by Karen and Lorig in the early 1990s...and the ripple continues.

A chance encounter with Karen Cauble changed the entire course of my life. I was 18 and a freshman at Pomona College. I had just started attending meeting at Claremont Friend's meeting house. I was looking around at the brochures and I picked up one that looked sort of interesting -- the AVP brochure for the area.

The contact was Karen Cauble, who at the time was living in San Diego. I called her and said I was interested in the program and asked if she would be willing to come to Pomona College to lead a workshop for students there. She came within a few months and blew us all away.

The workshop created such hope for us about the possibility of non-violence in a very real way. And Karen created such hope and excitement for me about the possibilities that lay for adventure in a life that's dedicated to non-violence and peace and people and humanity. Under Karen's wing, I became a facilitator and Karen then connected me with folks in New York, where I had an opportunity to do workshops when I was home over the summer and enter prison for the first time. When I returned in the Fall, 19 years old, Karen started taking me into prison and I had a chance to experience Karen and those that she had trained in a new way, watching how powerful her love for the inmates was. I saw her commitment to peace and non-violence and how it transformed a group of inmates. Karen mentored me and I became a facilitator. And it was through my work as a facilitator and through connections that I made through being a facilitator, that I eventually got also connected to people doing community based mediation work -- conflict resolution and violence prevention at a grassroots level, which is what I am still doing today. I credit Karen for opening the doors that brought me this and I credit Karen for creating hope and vision for me.

15 years later, I still volunteer as an AVP facilitator as well. And it's still the same powerful amazing work every time I do a workshop. I now run a state-wide program in Maryland, Community Mediation Maryland, which supports the work of 17 grassroots centers around the state doing non-violent conflict resolution, community based mediation, and violence prevention work. And so in a lot of ways, the work that I'm now doing in Maryland now, leads back to seeds that Karen planted.

Karen has planted many seeds over the years and inspired so many people who have gone on and continued planting seeds and continue doing powerful peace work throughout the country and throughout the world. Karen is, in some ways, a Johnny Appleseed for peace, and I'm honored to have had her as a mentor and to have her as a foundation in my life.

