



Reflecting on Inside-Out at 20

Hello Inside-Out Family,

I do not know if you recall me, but I distinctly remember most of you because of the impact you had on my life when I participated in your Inside-Out training at Graterford Prison. It was a pleasure to see some of you during the Inside-Out 20th Anniversary Conference and Celebration. I am sorry I did not get to see and talk to all of you. It is an honor to have this opportunity to reach out to you all to thank you personally for the impact you had on me.

Additionally, I want to share the wonderful news about my release from prison in February of this year, after serving 31 years. To say I am happy to be out is an understatement. You can only imagine what it feels like to be released from prison after going in as a juvenile and serving more than three decades of my life. I am overjoyed. But even beyond that, I am getting to continue the work I loved doing while inside, and seeing the ways in which this work impacts others. This means a great deal to me.



I remember many of you describing the impact that the Think Tank had on your life after your week-long training. Well, I want to tell you about how that impact was reciprocal and the profound effect you all had on us, and on me in particular. Besides the particulars of the training, I often looked forward to lunch, when we had the opportunity to really communicate and share personal experiences and talk about literature we enjoyed.

You see, more than any one thing, prison can be a dark place, but your presence there provided us with hope. You allowed me to live vicariously through your experiences and you helped me to imagine what possibilities existed beyond the prison walls. This was invaluable for me, and it is truly one of the beautiful dimensions of the Inside-Out experience. The idea that we can come together in a dark place to share our diverse perspectives and shared humanity is priceless. Thank you all for impacting my life!

In many regards, my experience with you all has truly allowed me to understand the value of Inside-Out. It is also the reason I continue to use the Inside-Out methodology in any work I do with the Center or outside of Inside-Out, and the reason I desire to continue being a part of the growth of this program. I say that because, as much as I know there is ongoing talk about ending mass incarceration as we know it, we don't know when the effects of this practice will end.

But, what we do know is that many of those affected by this practice may be forced to linger in prison, sometimes without hope. Inside-Out has the ability to foster a sense of hope and agency within individuals – inside and outside. It is for these reasons that I feel I must support the program and strongly ask others to do likewise.

I am specifically asking you all to support the continued growth of Inside-Out financially because of the many lives in the future that will be impacted in a profound way from this experience. Your support of this program helps us expand what we already do and allows us to get creative in taking the Inside-Out pedagogy and method of dialogue to other institutions and spaces.

Please consider making a one-time or recurring donation to the center through our website: insideoutcenter.org/our-supporters.html. This will support our work and allow us to continue moving “beyond the walls that separate us.”

Again, it was wonderful seeing some of you at the conference. Please be in touch with the Center to keep us updated on all the wonderful work you're doing and ways in which we can support you.

Warmly yours,

John Pace