

***PRISONER REHABILITATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF PHOENIX
ZULULAND'S WORK IN ESHOWE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES***

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As these run-on sentences show, there is no room for me to call this *my* work. It is ours. So consider this my VDSP (Very Dependent Study Project).

-Tommy

Abstract

South Africa's prison system is riddled with issues like overcrowding, corruption and lack of resources. Prisoner Rehabilitation Programs across the country are working to deliver correctional services that are deemed as a right by the White Paper on Corrections 2005. Phoenix Zululand is one such organization. Organizations like Phoenix face a number of issues in delivering affective rehabilitation services to prisoners. The following paper discusses these issues, how Phoenix deals with them, and what effects Phoenix has on offenders, ex-offenders, and prison staff.

For two weeks, I worked as a facilitator of a Healing Through Art program for Phoenix and sat in on other programs. I took notes on the prison facilities, the daily life of offenders, the work Phoenix does, and offender's responses to that work. I also interviewed facilitators, ex-offenders, a prison official and participants in Phoenix programs to get a sense of what impact Phoenix has.

Phoenix Zululand's success as an organization cannot be measured in recidivism rates or seen on a spreadsheet. The impact of the organization can only be expressed through the testimonies of the people who have been involved in its programs.

Introduction

Fyodor Dostoevsky once wrote "The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons." If this quote holds any truth, South Africa is anything but civil. The country's high crime rate and weak economy have left the Department of Correctional Services with massive issues of overcrowding and a lack of resources, leaving thousands of prisoners subject to human rights violations. As South Africa struggles to afford the basic rights promised

to its citizens in the country's progressive Constitution, prisoners get pushed to the bottom of the list.

Like many developing countries, South Africa is faced with a laundry list of social problems that are inextricably tangled up in one another. This web of issues makes it virtually impossible to know exactly what steps should be taken to solve any one alone. High poverty rates lead to high crime rates, which lead to higher incarceration rates, which in turn subject offenders to environments that make them more likely to reoffend, which costs the government more money, which means there is less left over to help alleviate the poverty. Positive feedback loops like this one exist in many aspects of South African society, and solutions are very hard to come by. In chicken and egg situations like these where no one initiative can solve everything, the best course of action is to just start somewhere.

That is where non-government organizations like Phoenix Zululand find themselves. When the government is crippled by the recession and corruption, it becomes the duty of ordinary citizens to provide the services that the government cannot. However, NGOs need help too. This is especially true of NGOs that provide rehabilitation for prisoners. There is a severe lack of research done on prisoner rehabilitation programs and their impact on the psychological well-being of prisoners and recidivism rates. In addition, prisoner rehabilitation programs often find it difficult to get funding because of the stigma that follows prisoners around. Non-government programs are playing a vital role in the lives of thousands of prisoners, but more information on prisoner rehabilitation needs to be available so that programs can carry out their work more effectively and so that they can get more exposure in the public eye.

I wanted to be a part of this initiative. While choosing my ISP topic, I struggled with my purpose here. I did not want to make this paper about my own learning experience, but rather a

means by which I could do good. Although at times I felt foolish and self-righteous for choosing a topic based on its potential to make an impact, I reasoned that something small is better than nothing at all.

After visiting the Eshowe Correctional Facility for the first time, it made me angry that they did not call it a prison. The people living there were clearly not being offered the resources they deserved. I decided that this was a place where I could offer something. My objectives for writing this paper were to get a sense of what kind of work a prisoner rehabilitation organization does, study the kind of conditions that offenders have to live under, and assess the impact that an NGO like Phoenix has on the people in the programs, the people that have graduated from the programs, and the officials at the prison where the programs are run, while facilitating a musical expression program for the juvenile males. I wanted to know if prisoner rehabilitation programs have a long-lasting impact on the people in them, and whether or not they succeed in achieving the goals they set out to do.

This paper starts with a literature review of some of the research done on the implementation of prisoner rehabilitation programs in South Africa in order to give the study a context. The second section explains the methods I used in order to carry out my research. The third provides a brief context to the remainder of the paper, as it explains the history, structure, and day to day operations of the organization Phoenix Zululand. The next section focuses specifically on its work in the Eshowe Correctional Facility, as well as a discussion of the facility itself and its relationship with Phoenix and the DCS. The fifth section draws on observation and interviews in an attempt to assess Phoenix's impact. This section is further divided into subsections to emphasize the perceived impact from the perspectives of people in different roles: Facilitators,

ex-offenders, prison staff, prisoners, and my experience as a facilitator. Following this section are the conclusions I have drawn after conducting the study, and suggestions for further research.

Notes

Although Phoenix Zululand refers to itself as a "program", I have chosen to replace this word with "organization" to provide clarity. Although Phoenix is a program, it also offers programs, which are referred to as such and discussed in depth in this paper, to offenders and families.

As the literature review and the section on Phoenix's impact grapple with, Restorative Justice, as defined by the DCS and contemporary professionals in the field of prisoner rehabilitation, is not an accurate description of the services that Phoenix provides. Because Phoenix refers to its vision in this way, however, I have chosen to use the same term when writing from Phoenix's perspective, where as in other cases, "rehabilitation", perhaps a more appropriate word choice, is used to refer to the same type of work. Ultimately, however, it is useless to squabble over what to *call* Phoenix's services because they will be discussed and defined in detail throughout the course of the paper.

Literature Review

In order to give the reader the background necessary to fully engage with the material in this paper, I have provided the following review of literature. It covers the current state of South African prisons, what the government has done to change this state, and how rehabilitation initiatives are helping.

South Africa is one of the most progressive countries in the world in terms of policy. When it comes to implementation of that policy, however, the government consistently falls short. South Africa's Department of Correctional Services took up the torch of broken promises when it

adopted The White Paper on Corrections in South Africa as its primary document for "directing the management and service provision of the department over the next twenty years and beyond" in 2005 (White Paper Preamble). The White Paper takes much of its philosophy from the 1996 constitution and holds that the corrections process should be one that upholds human dignity, provides "humane treatment" for all offenders and is focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment. However, it asserts that rehabilitation is not an act but rather an ongoing *process*, "a societal responsibility to which all sectors / institutions of society – including the Department, as only one but very significant player – should contribute" (White Paper Preamble). It is convenient for the DCS that this statement is included in the White Paper because with the numerous issues plaguing the South African prison system, the department has not been able to deliver rehabilitation services effectively, leaving NGO's and other prisoner outreach programs to pick up the pieces.

"Rehabilitation" falls into that magical category of words that are used so often in politics that they almost lose their meaning. When one delivers rehabilitation to prisoners, what is one *actually* delivering? From a psychological perspective, Sandy Hoffman, a counseling psychologist that works primarily with prisoners, asserts that rehabilitation is "a process of learning to be oneself and to be recognized as a unique person, meaningful to others because of both difference and common ground" (1). Hoffman believes that all violations stem in some way from the need to be recognized (8). She asserts that good rehabilitation programs are ones that create a sense of self for the participant and instill a belief that he/she has control of their own destiny.

The White Paper takes the idea rehabilitation a step further, defining it as "The result of a process which combines the correction of offending behavior, human development and the

promotion of social responsibility and values" (Section 4). However, the vagueness of this definition makes it almost meaningless, and it begs the question: What does it mean to "correct offending behavior"? Lukas Muntingh provides a more operational definition that can be used as a basis for work in the field. He writes: "A rehabilitation intervention targets some specific aspect of the offender with the purpose of reducing the likelihood of him or her reoffending" (6). Muntingh goes on to say that the ultimate goal of rehabilitation should be the (re)integration of offenders into society. Reintegration entails not only education, life skills training and self-control, but also employment, mental and physical health, housing and family relationships. If a supportive framework cannot be built around an offender after he/she is released, the offender may be inclined to reoffend, which often tears down any progress that rehabilitation initiatives make. Thus, without setting reintegration as a goal and creating a path toward it, rehabilitation can do little more than provide offenders with temporary comfort. The DCS acknowledges this logic by stating that "Social reintegration is seen as the most challenging aspect of rehabilitation as effective reintegration is crucial to combating recidivism. For the Department, social reintegration is an integral component of the sentence plan that must become part and parcel of case management" (White Paper, section 21).

If the goal of rehabilitation is to prevent offenders from recidivism and integrate them back into society, The White Paper's policies consistently coincide with that goal. The White Paper describes the DCS's plan for the delivery of rehabilitation services as needs-based. Each individual offender's specific needs should be assessed "as soon as possible after admission" based on the concepts of corrections (involvement in programs that target offending behavior), development (education and training needs), security (right to safety in prison), care (physical and emotional well-being), facilities (humane living conditions), and after-care (support after

release). Each offender should be given a CSP, or Correctional Sentence Plan, based on their individual needs (White Paper, section 20).

In 2007, the DCS released a booklet entitled "Correctional Programmes Targeting Offending Behaviour." The booklet describes specific measures that DCS has taken in order to deliver rehabilitation services to offenders. The DCS offers seven correctional programmes that each deal with some aspect of rehabilitation, and it is mandatory that offenders serving more than two years take one. However, it is emphasized that rehabilitation must ultimately come from the offender's willingness to acknowledge that he/she has done something wrong and desire to change. The programs are Anger Management, Crossroads Correctional program, Sexual Offences, Pre-Release Program, Substance Abuse, Restorative Justice Orientation and New Beginnings. The subjects covered in these programs range from dealing with emotions to plans after release and are offered based on the assessment of each offender. Each program should also be evaluated by both facilitators and offenders, as well as Quality Assurance Committees established by the DCS at Regional and Area levels (Correctional Programs 24).

As the drafters of South Africa's Constitution know well, however, there is a big difference between progressive policy and progressive practice. A piece of paper with hopeful words means nothing to an offender if he/she is still sitting in a cell for twenty hours a day with no access to psychological help. Julia Sloth Neilson reports on the state of South African Prisons two years after The White Paper was implemented in her article "The State of South Africa's Prisons." Sloth-Neilson writes that South Africa's prison population is over 160,000, while its approved capacity is set at only 114,000. The DCS claims that prisons are 163% overcrowded (382). Neilson cites that fact that South African facilities house both convicted and unsentenced prisoners, a practice that is uncommon internationally, as a cause of overcrowding (384). In fact,

without counting South Africa's 45,000 unsentenced prisoners, the population would be within capacity. The DCS maintains that because unsentenced prisoners are not allowed to participate in rehabilitation programs, it does not have the ability to process them so they should be left to another department (Sloth-Neilson).

Victor Dankwa also points to public demand that sentences be harsher as a cause of overcrowding because longer sentences means more people in prison for longer amounts of time (85). Mandatory minimum sentencing has also been cited as a cause for overcrowding. Minimum sentencing has been implemented for so many different crimes that the percentage of prisoners serving more than ten years has gone from 19% to 49% since minimum sentencing became policy (Sloth Neilson 389).

Overcrowding is the cause of many problems in prisons. According to Dankwa, thousands of prisoners across South Africa face conditions that span from being locked up twenty three hours a day to not having a clean facility to bathe and use the toilet, to being packed in a cell with ten other people, to no hot water or electricity. Judge Bertelsmann, the Inspecting Judge of Prisons, was even quoted as saying "It is no exaggeration to say that, if an SPCA were to cram as many animals into cages as our correctional services are forced to cram prisoners into a single cell, the SPCA would be prosecuted for cruelty to animals" (Danka 83). With the conditions in prisons like these, it would be impossible to find a space in which a rehabilitation initiative could operate with any efficiency and the extent to which a program would even be able to get through to people living in such lamentable environments is questionable. Again, the only suggestion of addressing these problems in The White Paper is in the executive summary, where it says, "The Department regards overcrowding as its most important challenge. Overcrowding does not only have significant negative implications on the ability of the Department to deliver in terms of its

new core business, but constitutional provisions also oblige Government to act urgently on the matter." Although the Department made a remission of sentences in 2005 which released several thousand prisoners, Sloth Neilson regards this as a temporary fix and asserts that the prison population should rise again relatively quickly (384).

So how will the DCS respond to these issues? Unfortunately, the section on implementation in the Correctional Programmes handbook is not so much an explanation of how the rehabilitation programs will be delivered despite these problems as much as it is an explanation of how they will be run once they are established. The only thing the report says is "Implementation of Correctional Programmes is a challenging prospect. Training and dissemination is considered the great challenge facing implementation in the field of correction" (25). There is nothing that follows on how these challenges will be met, the report just goes right into what officers and offenders will be trained to do. Although vagueness can often be used effectively to deal with issues on a more case-by-case basis, the DCS appears to use it in The White Paper and their handbooks in order to avoid discussing internal problems with the department and in order to hide the possibility that they really don't know exactly how they will establish these programs. South Africa is already plagued by a laundry list of problems and a tight budget. Amanda Dissel writes, "While there is no empirical evidence of the extent of recidivism in South Africa, estimates put the recidivism rate at between 66 percent and 94 percent" (172). Dissel points to South Africa's high recidivism rate as "an indication that rehabilitation has not been a focus in [South Africa] nor has it been achieved. Even when states have accepted the vision of rehabilitation, they have, perhaps, been consumed by more urgent concerns, such as the daily living conditions in prisons" (172).

The White Paper states that although each offender is entitled to certain inalienable rights, the department holds that it can only guarantee those rights within the capacity of its resources. It is very probable that this statement was included because the DCS does not, in fact, provide for many of those rights to be upheld, especially the right to rehabilitation. Chesne Albertus says it best: "The DCS in practice appears not to provide adequate resources to give effect to the legal obligation to reintegrate inmates" (15). The DCS's budget for 2009-2010 was R13.2 billion. It allocated 33.4% to security, 26.2% to administrations costs, 13.4% to facilities, 12% to care, 8.4% to corrections and only 6.6% to development and social reintegration(Albertus 15). This figure alone demonstrates the major disconnect between policy-making and implementation that plagues many aspects of contemporary South African politics.

There is little information on the Correctional Programs set up by the DCS because the DCS operates its programs through a host of other organizations and departments that are not affiliated with one another. Therefore, it is very difficult to find an exact number of programs that DCS has set up directly (Lushaba). However, as evidenced by the living conditions of thousands of inmates and the high recidivism rates facing the country, it is clear that the DCS is not doing enough to uphold its vision of a prison system based on rehabilitation and not punishment. thus, the task of providing rehabilitation for inmates often falls on the shoulders of NGO's and other groups.

There are a host of NGO's that have been succeeding where the DCS has failed. Perhaps the most famous of these organizations is NICRO (National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders). NICRO, established in 1911, has an impressive lists of programs aimed at everything from crime prevention to non-custodial sentencing to reintegration. The

organization operates under the assumption that everyone is able to choose their own path, and attempts to instill in offenders a sense of agency that they have lost or may have never had.

An important program to highlight is the Tough Enough Programme, which focuses on offender reintegration. According to NICRO's website, the Tough Enough Programme offers offenders an opportunity to actively participate in life skills workshops and works with the families of participants in order to create a healthy environment for the offender when they are released and a plan for the future. However, the program requires participants to sign contracts with NICRO in order to ensure their commitment and show them that they are in control of their lives. NICRO also has a program evaluation process and a client satisfaction survey to ensure that offenders and their families are satisfied with the services being provided by NICRO. The organization has served hundreds of thousands of offenders, many of whom have never offended again (NICRO).

Another well-known NGO in South Africa is the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI). CSPRI does not work directly with offenders, but instead aims to improve human rights in South African prisons "through research-based lobbying and advocacy, and collaborating with civil society" (CSPRI website). CSPRI publishes studies on current issues in the prison system and reintegration initiatives in order to raise awareness among the civilian population in hopes that it will reduce both crime and recidivism. Julia Sloth-Neilson and Lukas Muntingh, both of whom work for CSPRI, have written extensively on the state of South African Prisons and Prisoner Rehabilitation, respectively.

Another program which focuses on reintegration as an ultimate goal for offenders is Khulisa Crime Prevention Initiatives. Khulisa is an NGO that truly exemplifies the extent to which rehabilitation is a community effort. Over the last 14 years, Khulisa has developed programs at

youth clubs to educate children about "art, music, dancing, crafts, life skills, health skills, and the basic principles of a sustainable business" (Khulisa website). Khulisa has also established programs for offenders that attempt to reconnect participants with their family by creating a dialogue between the two. Khulisa's "My Path" program has three phases: "Understanding the Real Me", "Me and the World" and "Preparation." The first phase involves facilitated sessions using workbooks in order to allow offenders to learn about themselves and and prison life in order to find their own creative abilities. The second phase is focused on the individual in relation to the world and where they see themselves in it when they get out of prison by goal-setting, stress management and communication skills. Phase three discusses starting a small business and managing a budget, as well as talking with community members and family (Khulisa Website).

NICRO, CSPRI and Khulisa are just three of the many prisoner rehabilitation programs in South Africa that are working toward reducing crime by rehabilitating offenders. The remainder of the paper will focus on another rehabilitation program, Phoenix Zululand. Although the term rehabilitation is often used to mean many different things, it is evident that the DCS does not at this time possess the resources to deliver it successfully. While the DCS with issues like corruption, overcrowding and a tight budget, rehabilitation services are provided by NGO's like Phoenix Zululand. However, there are many more gaps to be filled. Many rehabilitation scholars, including Muntingh, Sloth-Neilson, Dissel and Hoffman assert that more research needs to be done on crime prevention initiatives and prisoner rehabilitation-related statistics. However, as Muntingh points out, it is often difficult, and perhaps even wrong, to quantify the successes of rehabilitation programs because many of their effects are emotional and hard to standardize. By making "reduction of repeat offending and effective reintegration of offenders

into society" the measure rehabilitation programs' success, the DCS may be putting the desires of "civil" society before the needs of offenders. The fact is, there will always be prisoners, there will always be shortcomings of government initiatives, there will always be a need for members of the community to succeed where the government fails.

Methodology

My method of data collection was a combination of observation and personal interviews. Nonceba Lushaba, Director of Phoenix Zululand, was an indispensable resource in setting up interviews with people who have/had been involved with Phoenix in some way or another. With Ms. Lushaba's help, I was able to interview three full time Phoenix facilitators, two of whom are ex-offenders, two ex-offenders who graduated from one or more Phoenix programs, one prison official, one man who volunteered with Phoenix for a number of years, and two offenders that are currently enrolled in Phoenix.

The interviews were largely conversational, as I often could not ask standard questions to each participant because each of them had a different relationship with Phoenix. In general, however, the questions I asked focused on what Phoenix actually does in the Eshowe Prison on a day to day basis and what the perceived effect of its work is.

I asked people that were participants in Phoenix programs about their background, their life before and after Phoenix and the differences between the two (if any), the impact that Phoenix has had on them, what they understand about the work Phoenix attempts to do, how they feel about Phoenix in general, and where they see themselves in the future. I wanted to get a sense how offenders saw themselves in relation to the programs they were in, and if they felt that Phoenix programs have done something to affect their lives.

In my interviews with Phoenix facilitators, I tended to ask them questions that had more to do with the logistics of Phoenix. I asked them about the role they played in programs, what their ultimate goal was in facilitating, what rehabilitation means to them, and whether or not they feel their work makes a long-term impact on participants.

Ex-offenders were asked about their time in prison, how they felt during that time, what Phoenix helped them with, and where they are now, and to what extent they felt that Phoenix helped them get there.

I asked the head of the case management committee in the prison what his interpretation of Phoenix's mission was, as well as things like, "What does Phoenix mean to the prison?" and "What is the perceived difference between a Phoenix graduate and an offender that has never been in a program?"

I asked all interviewees what issues they had with Phoenix, what challenges Phoenix presented, and if there was anything Phoenix could improve on.

There were several issues in using interview as a method of data collection. One of the most common challenges I faced was the language barrier. Although most participants spoke fair to excellent English, expressing one's self in a second language instead of a mother tongue can stunt the message one is trying to convey, and oftentimes I may not have gotten the same depth of information as I would if I spoke IsiZulu. In one case, the language barrier become such an inhibitor that we had to ask Nonceba to translate for us.

Another issue I had was the bias of my interview sample. Because most of the offenders, ex-offenders and prison officials I interviewed were introduced to me through Phoenix facilitators, they were all people who had a good relationship with the organization. Thus, the results I got from the interviews may have been skewed in Phoenix's favor and may not accurately reflect the

opinions of most people that have gone through Phoenix programs. In addition, I tended to interview offenders that were more outspoken and responsive in programs because they spoke English very well and were easy to approach and build a relationship with. Interviewing people who excelled in Phoenix's programs may have also prevented me from getting an accurate picture of offender's opinions.

The fact that prisoners are a vulnerable population also became an issue in the interview process. Because I did not want to cause painful memories to come back to the interviewees while they were in such an unhealthy environment for emotional and mental well-being, I often refrained from going too deeply into their past and how they arrived in prison. I also did not want to embarrass the offenders or make them feel inferior by dwelling on such a small negative piece of their vast and multi-faceted identities.

Although I conducted nine personal interviews, the majority of my data were collected through observation and note-taking. Because I did most of my research in a prison, I was forced to abide by the rules established by the Head of Prison, which made interviewing people a difficult challenge. DCS policy is vastly limiting to researchers, for both good and bad reasons. Because prisoners are a vulnerable population, certain regulations are in place to ensure that their rights are protected. However, oftentimes these regulations are abused to prevent researchers from publishing information that might reflect poorly on the DCS.

Before I entered the prison, Nonceba briefed me on what I would and would not be permitted to do while I was there. She made it clear that I was never supposed to tell the Head of Prison that I was doing research, and only say that I was learning about and evaluating *Phoenix Zululand's* work in the prison instead of the prison itself. Otherwise, prison officials might have demanded to review my research I might not have been allowed in. The DCS has recently been

exposed for a number of gross human rights violations, so officials have become very strict when it comes to research. Throughout the duration of my work in the prison, I had to make sure all the research I was conducting was centered around Phoenix, and that any information I was collecting about the prison itself directly correlated to that research.

The constant awareness that I could only record things in the prison that directly related to its work with Phoenix deeply influenced my methodology. I was unable to ask offenders what the biggest problems in the prison were or about specific incidents that happened with prison officials because officers were always nearby. During my interview with INSERT NAME, I was unable to ask him anything outside of what his work entailed and how he felt about Phoenix's presence in the prison.

Another issue I had was the refusal of correctional officers to be interviewed. During my work in Eshowe, I noted multiple times how correctional officers seemed eager to praise Phoenix and then push me along. Phoenix staff tried several times (around six or seven), to schedule interviews with correctional officers on my behalf. Each time, they agreed to be interviewed but then cited a commitment as the reason they could not do it when the time came. One officer continued to reschedule interview time until it was too late and I had to leave. Each time I tried to call to do a phone interview, the prison secretary said he was busy.

Because of these restrictions, note taking became a much more effective way to collect data. When I went into the prison every day, I would take notice of things like the procedures facilitators had to go through, the way officials interacted with offenders, and the conditions in the prison. After I left, I would record what I could recall in my notebook.

I was also able to take notes during a few of the Phoenix sessions. Before the session began, the facilitator or myself would explain why I was present and ask the offenders if any of them

minded if I watched the class and took notes for a paper I was writing. If I wanted to write about something an offender said during a session, I would ask him if I could quote him in my paper and keep his name anonymous.

To supplement the research on the emotional effects that Phoenix has with the more concrete work they have done, I took notes on papers Phoenix had published about events they have had, their mission, and speeches they gave at conferences.

Limitations of the Study

Like any observation and analysis of some aspect of reality, my study is vastly limited and flawed. One of the most important shortcomings of my research is a lack of data. I was unable to interview everyone who has been involved with Phoenix, so the range of opinions I recorded about the organization may not be at all representative of the population at large. In order to properly assess the impact of an organization such as Phoenix, one would have to hear the stories of thousands of people that Phoenix has touched.

As mentioned in the methodology section, my interview sample may have been biased because I chose to interview people that, for the most part, have excelled in Phoenix. My own personal bias in going into this project was probably a cause of this phenomenon. I chose this topic because I wanted to help promote Phoenix's work, which subconsciously may have led me to interview people who seemed like would give positive responses.

What's more, for the sake of convenience, I tended to interview people who could express themselves more easily in English than some of their peers. The ability to speak English may have given these individuals a vastly different experience than others who cannot speak English, which may not have been properly addressed in my research.

Because I did a case study, the results of my research may not be applicable to any or all rehabilitation programs in South Africa. This research is based on one organization only, and therefore may be less useful to the community than a survey of many organizations.

A third issue with this study is that it deals perhaps too much with vague data. It is difficult to standardize and measure the success of an organization that provides emotional support because emotions are rarely concrete and are often fluid and subjective. It was challenging to get standard results from every person I interviewed because even when I asked the same questions people interpreted them in vastly different ways and responded accordingly. Try to measure the "impact" of something is an ambiguous and difficult task that sometimes does not even make sense to attempt.

Phoenix Zululand: The NGO

In order to understand the impact that a prisoner rehabilitation organization on offenders, it is necessary to first understand how the organization operates. Accordingly, the following section describes how Phoenix was established, the organization's philosophy, its goals, how and why it attempts to achieve those goals, and some of the logistical and ethical challenges it faces. An understanding of the realities of working with offenders, dealing with the DCS, and of the resources that Phoenix has to work with is essential in assessing the legitimacy and weight of its impact on the community.

Inception and History

Taken from an interview with Nonceba Lushaba, Director of Phoenix Zululand

Phoenix Zululand is a non-government restorative justice organization. Phoenix was founded by Richard Aitken and Jane Argall in 2003, who both reside in Eshowe. The inspiration for the organization came from Richard and Jane's religious background as Quakers. In the Quaker

tradition, a great emphasis is put on the responsibility citizens have to imprisoned people.

Richard and Jane took this ideal a step further and decided to found an organization that would go beyond just visiting prisoners. Although neither of them had degrees or professional experience in psychology, therapy or any kind of rehabilitation, they began drafting a constitution and potential programs with the intention of becoming certified as an NGO.

In South Africa, non-government organizations are officially certified as such by the Department of Social Development. In order to get certified, an organization needs to apply by submitting a constitution. The constitution of a potential NGO must explain the objectives of the organization, the proposed places of operation, and how the organization will be managed and maintained. This includes the establishment of a Board of Management which will run the organization.

Certification is vital for the survival of an NGO because they are completely reliant on donors for funding, and without official certification they lack the ethos and legitimacy to attract potential investors. In order to sustain its status as an NGO, Phoenix is required to submit an annual report of the work its done for a given year, as well as a financial report detailing its allocation of funds. Phoenix provides similar reports to its donors so that they can monitor how their money is being used and feel a desire to continue donating (Lushaba 11/4).

Philosophy and Structure

According to Phoenix's constitution, the organizations objective is "to promote Restorative Justice." The constitution defines Restorative Justice as "work with people in the communities in the aftermath of crime." Because crime can have deeply effect individuals, their families and communities, and the offenders themselves and on their families. "Therefore," the constitution states, "Restorative Justice seeks to redress the harm done to each of these parties, and directly to

empower each to make decisions about reparation and future behavior rather than having such decisions merely imposed by courts or professionals" (Phoenix Constitution 2).

In practice, however, Phoenix's work is centered more around offenders during their time in prison than anything else. According to a Phoenix pamphlet, there are four principles that guide the way Phoenix runs programs. Firstly, Phoenix strives to "put into the hands of offenders ideas, processes, and things that will enable *them* to refashion, revision the way their families and their communities perceive them" (9). Phoenix also attempts to bring the voices of those typically unheard in society to the forefront of the community, and allow them to tell their stories in a celebratory way, "without monitoring or cautioning" (9). Lastly, Phoenix tries to uphold a positive relationship between civil society and the state.

In an attempt to carry out these objectives, the NGO has worked in ten different prisons in the Zululand area, and currently runs programs in eight of them. They are: Eshowe, Medium B, Qalakabusha, Mtuzini, Malmoth, Nkandla, Vryheid and Stanger. Phoenix's mission in running these programs is to provide life skills to inmates in order to set up a framework around which program participants can build a life after prison. Using these programs as a vehicle, Phoenix also attempts to provide strategies for coping with the emotional burden of being imprisoned (Lushaba 11/4).

Since its inception, Phoenix has created five programs that are each administered in one or more of the ten prisons at any given time. The programs are run by Phoenix's three types of facilitators, which are peer facilitators (inmates who have excelled in a previous Phoenix program and are asked to facilitate their own), full time facilitators (ex-offenders who now run programs) and community-based facilitators (people who are paid or volunteer their time and skills for a varying length of time depending on the person) (Phoenix 2). Between the five

programs in the ten prisons, Phoenix serves around 800 participants each year, including the families of offenders who participate in family conferencing.

Programs

Starting With Us, developed by Jane Aitken, is designed as an intensive 2-3 month program that focuses on helping offenders cope with being in prison by providing them with a variety of personal skills. As the program's name suggests, Starting With Us is in many ways the basis for the other programs, a diagnostic of where different offenders are in their lives and a funnel towards Conversations in Families. Nonceba Lushaba says of Starting With Us, "Some people come in after years of serving their sentence, others are just beginning. All the participants are in different phases of acceptance. So we ask, 'where are you?' " (11/4). Facilitators of Starting With Us strive to instill in participants a measure of acceptance of their current circumstances while simultaneously giving them hope for the future. On a day-to-day basis, this is achieved through a host of activities that range from breathing exercises (to cope with stress), to talking about the impact of one's decisions, to making schedules and plans for life after prison. In my interview with Lushaba, she noted that in prison "everything is scheduled: mealtimes and bedtimes are decided for you" (11/4). Starting With Us is the first step in preparing inmates for the stressful time when all the decisions will be their responsibility again.

Healing Through Art encompasses a variety of different programs aimed at allowing participants to express themselves as a means of therapy while simultaneously teaching them art skills. Healing Through Art programs have been facilitated by a number of different people, including community members, ex-offenders and international students. Programs have been based around everything from music, to drawing and painting, to sculpture, to drama. Voices

Beyond the Walls, an offshoot of Healing Through Art, gives participants a chance to create a drama performed for the radio.

According to Richard Aitken, founder and former director of Phoenix, the philosophy behind Healing Through Art is that of Narrative Therapy. Narrative Therapy operates under the idea that allowing one to tell their story to someone who is listening, without the fear of being judged, can be immensely therapeutic in itself. Healing Through Art facilitators strive to create programs that do not "propagate moral injunctions", but rather allow participants to communicate. Thus, facilitators do not analyze participants' work for meaning or relevance, they simply serve as a witness to participants' expression.

Although I could not observe a Groundswell program, a Phoenix pamphlet describes it as "A project of environmental learning to awaken inherent knowledge of trees and plants and their value in society." The program is run in Empangeni. Phoenix works in collaboration with WESSA (Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa), working with participants to create a tree nursery. The program is designed to show participants the value of being a good citizen and give them a sense of agency.

Doors to the World, created by Vivianne Garside, was designed as a discussion-based English class with the purpose of educating participants about current events while they develop their English skills. By debating about things like South African politics, natural disasters, global warming, sustainability and other contemporary issues, participants are challenged to use English in a productive way that gives them a sense of authority and keeps them up to date. As evidenced by the articles that Nonceba passes out to her group each session, it is clear that for many participants the program is one of their main sources of information.

Conversations in Families is perhaps the most influential program that Phoenix offers. The program asks participants to engage with the difficult issues of life after prison and how they will rebuild family relationships. Facilitators lead discussions about what responsibilities offenders feel they have to their families, and what they will need in terms of support when they are released. The program culminates in Family Conferencing, which brings the families of offenders into the prison in order to create a space for dialogues. Although the dialogues are loosely structured by Phoenix, participants and families are given freedom to talk about whatever they need to. The aim of this program is to set up a plan for offenders and families in order to make the reintegration process smoother and lessen the chances of reoffending.

Phoenix also has started a host of other small projects. One of these is an art gallery in Eshowe that exhibits the work of prisoners. Many of the pieces are for sale, and a large portion of the sale goes to the artist.

Starting With Us, Healing Through Art, Groundswell, Doors to the World and Conversations in Families are the five programs which Phoenix uses to carry out its objective to deliver rehabilitation to offenders. By focusing on the ability to cope with life in prison, the expression of feelings, the learning of life skills, starting a process of healing, and creating a plan for the future, Phoenix strives to create a comprehensive framework for offenders to succeed. However, Phoenix faces a large number of barriers and issues that can prevent the organization from providing rehabilitation in the way that its philosophy and theoretical structure strive to.

Challenges and issues within Phoenix

Outside of its work with the prison, there are many challenges that hinder Phoenix's ability to effectively carry out its goals. A great number of these challenges are rooted in a lack of funding.

Due to the recent global recession, major donors that Phoenix has relied on in the past have pulled out, leaving Phoenix employees scrambling to find replacement donors.

The lack of funding at Phoenix manifests itself in a number of ways. One of these ways is a lack of resources. Because Phoenix does not always have enough money to buy paintbrushes, fabric, notebooks, and other supplies, some skills that are beneficial for inmates cannot be taught. In a Doors to the World discussion, one inmate said, "One day I will be out. I will need a means of surviving. People will ask me, 'what can you do?' There are good brick layers here, good carpenters, they are willing to teach other people. We have teachers, but we are short of materials. If we can get some help we can learn" (Field Notes 15/4).

Another way that a lack of money stunts Phoenix is in its ability to expand. Phoenix does not have the capacity to pay for more than a few employees to work full time, which means that taking on a larger workforce is out of the question. Although many community facilitators decide not to receive monetary compensation for their services, much of the work Phoenix requires payment because it takes up so much of employees' time. In fact, when funds are scarce, some full time workers need to switch to part time in order to find other jobs to supplement their income from Phoenix. This results in Phoenix having to cut back on the number of programs it runs until it can other sources more funding. In the past, finding money has become such a problem that Richard Aitken has had to pay the money to keep Phoenix afloat out of his own pocket (Lushaba 11/4).

Without a reliable source of cash flow, Phoenix cannot sustain a standard set of programs in a standard number of prisons. Instead, Phoenix relies on the help of volunteer facilitators. However, volunteers often jump into running programs without prior experience or much training, which can cause programs to be disjointed and disorganized, and may even cause

situations where harm is done to program participants (the disjointedness of programs is also largely affected by the way Eshowe prison is run, which will be discussed later). In a personal experience, I neglected to notice that one of the participants in my program was feeling left out because I just thought he was an introverted person. When a co-facilitator pointed out the problem to me, I felt terrible that I did not have the insight to see that he was hurt and still contemplate the damage I may have done. A professional would be much less inclined to make the mistake I did.

Phoenix also cannot provide the full scope of what Restorative Justice entails because of their monetary shortcomings. According to Nonceba Lushaba, Phoenix simply does not have the capacity to systematically provide programs and job opportunities for offenders once they have served their sentences. On occasion, Phoenix staff have helped offenders by giving them a place to stay or offering them jobs at Phoenix or other places, but oftentimes the best the organization can do is prepare families for the return of the offender.

Lushaba also cites a lack of self-reflection and evaluation as a weakness of Phoenix. Phoenix does not follow up on inmates' successes and failures after prison because it does not have a link to any community corrections programs. Community corrections programs take an offender's file and oversee it after the offender is released. This failure is part of a greater trend of the lack of research being done on recidivism in South Africa.

Lushaba feels that there are not enough internal gatherings at Phoenix, meetings of employees to discuss future plans and review previous programs. "We need to do a better job of evaluating facilitators instead of just training them." As the new director, Nonceba hopes to allocate some funds into setting up a peer review system for facilitators (11/4).

The last, ever-present challenge that Phoenix faces is a none of its employees have an education in corrections or psychology. Without degrees, facilitators do not have the ethos to analyze any of the program participants. Occasionally, the lack of educational background may even cause facilitators to do damage where a certified psychologist would not.

These challenges and obstacles each present different problems for Phoenix that sometimes prevent it from delivering service effectively. Phoenix uses different methods to deal with a number of these issues, as will be discussed in the coming sections, but many are ongoing and remain unresolved.

Work in the Eshowe Correctional Facility

Eshowe is the first prison Phoenix started working with. The facility has four sections: One for adult males, one for juvenile males, one for adult women, and one for juvenile women, all of which host Phoenix programs. The prison is a medium-level security facility, and offers educational programs established by the DCS. However, the prison does not have a psychologist and does not offer any rehabilitation programs. Although conditions are much worse in many other South African prisons, Eshowe does have to deal with moderate overcrowding. For example, in the juvenile male section where I worked, roughly 80 inmates were housed in just five cells. Meals are served three times a day, and usually consist of porridge for breakfast, six slices of bread with some sort of spread for lunch, and cabbage, meat and other vegetables for dinner. Inmates are allowed in the prison yard until between 3 and 4pm, when they are locked up for the night. During the day they play games, exercise, practice dances and other activities, attend school classes, and participate in Phoenix programs (Field Notes 6/4).

The DCS employs a national commissioner that has jurisdiction over all the prisons in South Africa. The country is split into regions, and each region is split into areas, with a commissioner

for each. The area commissioner has authority over all the prisons in the area, but each individual facility is run by a Head of Prison. With most decisions, however, the Head of Prison has the final authority and full power to do as he or she, but mostly he, sees fit. Area commissioners are typically only consulted when something is wrong, when there is a complaint, or when a decision made by the Head of Prison is appealed. As Nonceba puts it, "you have to go to the Induma before you can talk to the Inkosi" (11/4).

In order to start a program at the prison, a Phoenix facilitator needs only to inform the Head of Prison of their intentions for the program, who they will be working with, which facilities they wish to use, and how long the program will last. The Head of Prison then makes revisions to their plan where necessary and then approves the program.

Inmates are chosen for programs in a variety of different ways. Sometimes correctional officers give facilitators the names of inmates they want in the program. Other times facilitators recruit people for a program in conjunction with officers by simply walking around and telling inmates about the program to see if they are interested. Phoenix staff also give presentations at prisons in order to inform inmates about the work they do and encourage them to get involved. According to Nonceba, some inmates join as skeptics, and come away with something, while it is clear with some that they are just doing the program to get the certificate.

Each inmate that participates in a Phoenix program has a report written about them by a facilitator. The reports are not an assessment of the inmates' performance in the program, they are just a collection of observations about how an inmate acts, what he/she says, and what perceived effects the program had on him/her. Phoenix keeps a record of each report, and puts a copy in each inmate's file. Inmate's files are reviewed when they are up for parole, so Phoenix's reports are considered when an inmate's case is being reviewed.

Challenges with the prison and the DCS

Working in the Eshowe Correctional Facility, or any prison for that matter, comes with a long list of barriers and obstacles. Perhaps the greatest of these obstacles is a lack of space and time. Phoenix only has one small classroom to work with in the adult male section. In the female sections, programs are run in the dining room or the prison yard, which often leads to conflicts with other groups that want to use the space. The lack of space prevents Phoenix facilitators from going in as often as they would like because there is simply nowhere to run programs. Despite this issue, however, there is no lack of desire for more programs. In one of the sessions, a participant suggested, "We can meet in the passageway" (Field Notes 15/4).

Besides the lack of space, the rigid schedule of the prison also deters Phoenix from running programs. Most offenders usually do not wake up before 9:30 or 10:00am, and lunch is served between 11:30 and 12:00am. Offenders are locked up for the night around 3:00pm, which only leaves approximately three or four hours in a day for Phoenix to run programs. According to Nonceba Lushaba, facilitators usually only get an hour or two to actually work with participants, and oftentimes, because of staff shortages or other issues in the prison, the offenders cannot be let out and Phoenix has no choice but to cancel its plans for the day. Because Phoenix has to base their schedule completely on the prison's schedule, programs can become disorganized and participants may lose some of the progress they have made.

Lushaba also said Phoenix's short-lived presence in the prison leaves the rest of the day for offenders to be broken down (11/4). Loss of memory, concentration, and a realistic view of life outside of prison are all consequences of being imprisoned that stand in the way of rehabilitation (Lushaba, Nhlebelo and Lushaba 4).

Another way this "breaking down" of offenders occurs is through their relationships with prison officials. Richard Aitken asserts that prisoners have to constantly grapple with being seen as "rubbish" (8/4). Lushaba asserts that this feeling can come from prison staff simply because they are in a position of superiority. In a Phoenix session, Siyabonga "Funky" Zungu recalled an incident where a warder abused his power for no reason. Funky asked a warder if he would open a gate so that he could "talk to that chap." The warder thought the word "chap" was some kind of slang curse word, and "went off on [him]" angrily yelling at him not to curse and refusing to open the gate. Funky said that he sensed that another warder looking on knew what was happening, but did not confront the other warder in front of Funky because he did not want to challenge the other warder's authority. This is just one example of how having power can cause people to make the wrong decisions.

This phenomenon is not unique to offenders. Phoenix Zululand itself also bears witness to the abuses of power at Eshowe. Every time I walked into the prison with a female facilitator, one or more male prison staff members would either insinuate something sexual or suggest that she go out with them sometime. When I asked one why she did not report it, she replied that it would take weeks to review, would be difficult to prove and would be a setback for Phoenix because afterward the Head of Prison would place a lot more restrictions on the organization. She said that it was better for everyone if she just smiles and deals with it.

The Head of Prison also limits how often facilitators can enter the prison, the things they are allowed to bring in, and what the offenders are allowed to do. Although this is certainly not an abuse of power, and is for the protection of facilitators, sometimes prison staff take it too far. According to Lushaba, the HOP constantly reminds facilitators that they are working in a prison and that the prisoners are very dangerous people. Although the White Paper has specific

regulations and requirements for each prison, many correctional officers at Eshowe do not take it as the final authority. "People just don't follow it" said Lushaba (11/4). As a result of this "a criminal is a criminal" mindset, some programs are not approved and resources that would aid in the growth and rehabilitation of prisoners are cut off.

Offenders themselves also sense the undertones of opposition to Phoenix that the prison staff exude. In one of the Doors to the World sessions I sat in on, without any prompting, the conversation quickly shifted from the tsunami in Japan to problems that the warders cause for Phoenix. "We need to make the members of the DCS understand the meaning of rehabilitation," said one participant, adding that "it's still prison. There is no correctional center." Another talked about mismanagement, saying that the people in managerial positions were not qualified. "We are suffering because of politics," he added. Many of the group members believed that the prison leaders cause problems for people trying to conduct educational programs because if they are educated they are a "threat" and harder to control. Another participant stated that if Phoenix facilitators were the managers of the prison, they would not feel so threatened (Field Notes 15/4).

Perceived Impact of Phoenix Zululand

Despite the challenges Phoenix faces, the organization has continued to work in Eshowe for the past eight years. In those eight years, it has served thousands of program participants and affected peoples lives in a number of different ways. How much of an impact on others does Phoenix really have?

An objective like, "promoting Restorative Justice" is an objective that is easily met. Because of its vagueness, one can never tell when an objective like this is completely fulfilled. As soon as someone enters a prison and begins an honest dialogue with an offender, has he/she not promoted Restorative Justice? If Restorative Justice and rehabilitation are not a means to an end

but rather an ongoing processes, then organizations like Phoenix present us with a philosophical conundrum: if a positive impact is being made, but perhaps less of positive impact than is feasible, should we still consider it a success? As the literature previously reviewed asks, what should we use as the measuring stick of success when it comes to rehabilitation? In the field, what are the practical goals of Phoenix Zululand? This section explores the thoughts and feelings of people who have been involved with Phoenix and their perceptions of how Phoenix has affected themselves and others.

Perspective of Phoenix Facilitators

Interview with Nonceba Lushaba and Observations

Nonceba Lushaba is the director of Phoenix Zululand. She worked under Richard Aitken until April of 2011, and has been working with Phoenix for over five years. She has facilitated a number of programs, including Starting With Us, Conversations in Families, Healing Through Art, and Doors to the World.

According to Lushaba, Phoenix impacts offenders in a number of different ways. One of the most concrete of these ways is the reports Phoenix produces. When the parole board reviews an inmate's file, it is usually only filled with the negative things about that person. In most cases, a good file is a file without much in it. By writing observations about each inmate that participates in a Phoenix program, Phoenix is able to show the parole board a side of inmates that it otherwise would not see. A positive Phoenix report could be the difference between granting a deserving offender parole and denying them a second chance. In fact, more and more often in Eshowe and other correctional facilities, participating in a Phoenix program is becoming a requirement to be eligible for parole. This is a testament to the insight that a Phoenix report brings to the table.

Lushaba also hopes that Phoenix helps to prevent recidivism. She noted that it is doubly hard to get a job with a criminal record, and that the time after prison can be more challenging for an offender than their time in prison. All of a sudden one is given complete freedom, the ability to choose everything and their life, and that realization can be overwhelming when one is used to having no freedom and everything decided for them. Lushaba says that Phoenix combats this problem by helping participants write resumes, working with them to plan small businesses or budgets, and giving people relationships with their families in order to reintegrate them into the community.

Phoenix has the ability to take participants "from a point of hopelessness to a belief that an impact can be made" by giving them responsibilities and showing them how those responsibilities affect others (11/4). She cites peer facilitating as a perfect example of this phenomenon.

She recognizes that no one at Phoenix is professionally trained, but she does not necessarily see this as a problem. "It just means we can't analyze things. All we can do is talk about things."

For Lushaba, it does not make sense to measure Phoenix's impact because it is largely qualitative and unquantifiable. "Little stories make it worth it," she said. When an offender's parents refused to visit him convinced them to participate in Family Conferencing, or when a facilitator took a father's place at his daughter's wedding because the father was in prison, that is what Phoenix's impact is. "Our results are in the number of reports we do" said Lushaba. It's not about who stays out and who goes back in, but how many people go through the programs (Lushaba 11/4).

Facilitators also feel that Phoenix has a great impact on the DCS and the Eshowe Prison. Many facilitators have talked about how the HOP allows Phoenix to work in the prison because

it reflects well on him. By law, each prison is required to host a certain number of events, show development within the prison, and provide psychological services for inmates (Field Notes 12/4). However, the area only has one psychologist for all of its prisons, so Phoenix provides a lot of the services that are required of the prison. This is convenient for Eshowe because correctional officers do not have to do anything to meet these requirements. As Lushaba says, a program is likely to get approved if the Head of Prison does not have to do anything besides "shaking hands and taking a picture" (11/4).

Testimonial from Don White

Don White is an attorney that volunteered with Phoenix for four years. He got involved with the organization after seeing a Phoenix brochure at a church service and contacting Richard about helping. Don would come in once a week for a couple of hours and facilitate a Healing Through Art program. He feels that he has had a positive impact in the lives of the some people in his programs, if not all. He described his sessions as "sometimes lively, sometimes silent enough that I would have to fill it." He felt that although many were enthusiastic about learning art, about 25% seemed as if they were only there to get the certificate. Despite this feeling, he never wrote a report without saying the participant should be released on parole. When asked about his lack of qualification in the field of corrections and the ethical implications that come with writing such an influential report, White responded that he did not have a problem with it. He said that he just wrote what he saw in his participants, and never tried to analyze their psychological states.

Don's evidence of Phoenix's impact is the response of his participants. "There are also a few who are extremely grateful, who have really changed." His goal in facilitating was to make his participants feel valuable because many have never been told that they "are worth it." People

need to feel valued because “if you can’t value yourself, you will never value anyone else.” Don hold that art gives people the ability to things that they have trouble verbalizing, which is especially important for prisoners because the environment they are in does not promote self-expression.

Don has impacted the lives of offenders in other ways too, however. He has allowed two offenders to live with him when they were released on parole, one of whom stayed with him and worked for him for three years (his story will be discussed in the next section). It is facilitators like White that embody the combination of emotional support and guidance in reintegration that Phoenix attempts to deliver to offenders.

Interview Nkosinathi Shandu

Nkosinathi is deputy director of Phoenix Zululand, and has been working with the organization for five years. He became involved with Phoenix in 2006 when he participated in a Starting With Us program while he was in prison. Richard asked him to be a peer facilitator, and when he got out he “just kept working.”

Nkosinathi sees the success in Phoenix when he facilitates Starting With Us and Conversations in Families. “Phoenix changes the minds of people, to not commit crimes again.” When asked what Phoenix’s big issue is, Nkosinathi smiled and just said, “DCS.”

Perspective of Ex-Offenders/ analysis

Interviews with Thembaletu Nhlebela, and Siphon Shukela (pseudonym)

Note: Thembaletu is a Phoenix facilitator as well, but has been included primarily in this section because the focus of her interview was more on her personal experiences with Phoenix that they were about her impact as a facilitator.

Thembaletu Nhlebela is a paid facilitator of a variety of programs at Phoenix, as she has been since 2006. Nhlebela was introduced to Phoenix while she was serving a sentence for stealing. She said that before Phoenix, her plan when she got out of prison was to continue stealing. “Phoenix made me feel important,” she said. When she would skip out on sessions, the facilitators and other group members would tell her that they are not a group without her. It made her feel important. “They tell me, ‘you are so important.’” Thembaletu was offered the position of peer facilitator after participating in Starting With Us, and eagerly agreed. Although she works full time for Phoenix, she is quick to assert that even if she were not working at Phoenix, she would never go back to stealing. She sets an example for others. “you cannot stop someone from reoffending, you can just make them see how important they are. Whenever someone does something good, commend that person. Pick bright spots on people, not dark spots.” When asked if Phoenix makes a difference, Themba slapped my arm and said, “Of course it makes a difference! It changed my life!”

TRANSLATED BY NONCEBA LUSHABA:

Sipho Shukela is an ex-offender who currently does a variety of odd jobs like construction and painting. Sipho had a ten year sentence, but got out on parole after six. He was first introduced to Phoenix by Don White, who facilitated an arts program he was in. He said that the program was an eye-opener, opening his mind to things he was not aware of. Even when he walks down the street now, Sipho takes visual photos everywhere and then uses them on canvas.

Sipho had a relatively smooth transition out of prison, at least in comparison to other inmates. He stayed with Don for three years, exchanging his services as a handy man for a place to live. During that time he found jobs working on houses, doing roofing and things of that nature (White).

Sipho said that he did not have any family issues after being released. He lived shortly on his family's homestead, but now he has a place of his own. He says that he is in a good place. He is able to find work when he needs it, he can meet the needs of his family.

Both Thembaletu and Sipho's success are a testament to the aid that Phoenix provides in the reintegration process. Although Phoenix does not keep track of its participants after leaving prison, Nkosinathi Shandu and Richard Aitken both assert that Phoenix rarely gets reports of program participants reoffending. This is an amazing feat considering that South Africa's recidivism rate is estimated to be well over 60%.

Perspective of Prison Staff/ analysis

An Interview with Mr. Brown, the Head of the Case Management Committee and Observations

Mr. Brown is the Head of the Case Management Committee at Eshowe. The Case Management Committee is responsible for looking at the records of each inmate at Eshowe, assessing each file, and recommending inmates for parole. In some cases, the committee is even given the power to grant parole independent of the parole board.

Mr. Brown had nothing but good things to say about Phoenix. When asked if he sees a difference between people who have been in Phoenix programs and those who have not, Mr. Brown replied, "Phoenix teaches prisoners that what they have done is wrong." He went on to say that before they are involved with Phoenix, they are aggressive, while after they participate in a program "you can talk to them." He said that since Phoenix has started running programs in the prison, more inmates have begun to attend church service, which is good thing. When asked if there are any challenges or problems that happen with Phoenix, said "no," there are none.

Based on my interview Mr. Brown, it seems that his perception of Phoenix's impact on offenders is only in relation to his work. By teaching prisoners that what they have done is wrong, it makes them more accepting of prison rules and more cooperative because they are more likely to feel that they deserve the treatment they get. Mr. Brown's wording of offender's transformations after participating in Phoenix suggest that the important thing is not that they get help, but that "you can talk to them", which means they can be reasoned with and they are easier to manage. At no point did he mention the perceived emotional state of offenders in Phoenix, or what benefits Phoenix programs have for the people they were actually created for. Mr. Brown did not say whether or not he felt the programs gave them hope or if they seemed happier after being in programs. However, his observation that more inmates have attended church since Phoenix came suggests that maybe he does see a greater sense of hope in the inmates.

It took three times to interview Mr. Brown, and when I did all of his answers were very short and very positive. When we met with the Head of Prison, Nonceba quickly explained what projects we wanted to do, and he responded by nodding and approving. Their conversation took place in IsiZulu. He then thanked us, in English, for the work we were doing and told us how much it means to Eshowe that we decided to come in. The whole meeting could not have taken more than two minutes. Throughout my time in the prison, I was never once asked what I was doing or checked up on by prison officials. From observation, it appears that correctional officers have a very hands-off relationship with Phoenix. Although this situation allows Phoenix a little more flexibility with its programs behind closed doors, the lack of serious engagement with Phoenix also suggests that the staff at Eshowe is not as committed to rehabilitation as the White Paper mandates.

Perspective of Program Participants/ analysis

Interview with Funky and Observations with Doors to the World

Siyabonga Zungu, or Funky as most people call him, is an inmate in the adult male section of Eshowe. Although I was given permission to divulge the crime he committed and the length of his sentence, I judged that the potential ethical issues that come with discussing that information outweighed the insight it would give the reader into the kind of impact Phoenix has. However, a distinction should be drawn between offenders serving short sentences and offenders serving long sentences, as their psychological states may be vastly different. Therefore, I find it of note that Funky is a third of the way through a sentence of over ten years.

Funky was exposed to Phoenix Zululand by a fellow inmate in 2010. The first program he enrolled in was Starting With Us, and he claims that it "changed [his] life." After the program ended two months later, Funky was asked to be a peer facilitator, and enthusiastically agreed. When asked what motivated him to become a peer facilitator, he replied, "It is good for me because I always want to help people." He said that the point of Phoenix is to provide Restorative Justice and rehabilitation, and that he loves being a facilitator for fellow inmates because he can "change their way of thinking to a positive one, and give what is best for the inmates." He went on to say, "That is what Phoenix has brought for me."

While observing and talking with Funky, it was clear that the emphasis he put on the ability of Phoenix programs to change one's attitude came from personal experience. Funky described his life in prison before Phoenix as one without direction. He said that he was looking for something that would change his life. "Not that I'm a bad person," he said, "but I have had bad experiences.

Phoenix has made life seem a lot better, has changed my mindset and the way I'm thinking" (Funky 15/4).

From how he describes his current situation, he definitely seems to have found a purpose. Besides facilitating a drama program and co-facilitating a Doors to the World program, Funky is also studying for a degree in politics (Funky 15/4). In Doors to the World, he is an active participant and leader. At one of the sessions I sat in on, I noted how Funky verbally sparred with Noncheba, myself and the other members of the group over a host of political issues. As seems characteristic of the Doors to the World program, the enthusiasm of some of the participants quickly shifted the conversation from national landmarks to corruption in government and problems with education. As we began discussing an atom smasher in Switzerland, Funky openly asserted that he felt it was a waste of money because so many people are starving. The group then began arguing about why people are starving, about how corruption cannot be solved because even the evaluators of corruption in government are themselves corrupt, how the DA is not a threat to the ANC even though the ANC has not delivered and how we can't invest in the youth by focusing on education because the adults that teach them are not educated.

Although three or four of the participants always seemed to be the ones talking, I observed that the body language of the other group members suggested that they were actively listening, as they shifted their eyes toward whoever was talking and laughed along with the conversation. Although the discussion was heated, each participant remained completely respectful, saying things like "This is just my opinion..." or "I respect what the others are saying, but..." I noted that the energy in the room was more active and engaging than any college class I have ever been in.

Midway through the discussion, one of the participants asked, "Okay, so what are we doing here, on the inside, to solve these problems?", which sparked a discussion about voting, writing letters to government officials. This question made Phoenix's impact on this group clear. The sense of agency, self-worth and confidence that it takes for someone to ask a question like that suggests that Phoenix has instilled in some of its participants a feeling that their opinions are worthwhile and that they do have the power to change their lives and the lives around them (Field Notes 8/4).

Even if this sense of self-worth was not inspired by Phoenix, the organization certainly promotes its growth. There is evidence in the Doors to the World discussion that took place on April 15th. During the session group discussed ways that they could start their initiative, independent of Phoenix. They expressed the need for more programs started by offenders, and discussed ideas about a mission, a course of action and how they would present it to the Head of Prison. Nonceba challenged them with possible future obstacles like finding space to run their programs and ways to get community members involved. It remains to be seen whether or not anything will come out of this initiative, but the fact that the group members felt enough motivation, confidence and sense of agency to want to do something like create their own programs to help other offenders is something profound. The group expressed the desire to create a program that could sustain itself after they had left so they could make an impact on future prisoners. "We want this thing to work, we want action," said Funky. It is hard not to attribute some of the inspiration for the inmates' potential program to Phoenix Zululand.

Interview with Sphamandla and Observations with Starting With Us

Sphamandla is a 28 –year old inmate in the juvenile male section of Eshowe. He has participated in five Phoenix programs, including Starting with Us, Conversations in Families, an

English program, a basic business skills program, and a Healing Through Art program. He has four and a half years left of his sentence.

When Spha enrolled in his first Phoenix program, he did it because he wanted to “experience something new.” He feels that Phoenix is important for prisoners because it is a tool to share ideas and get to know other people. In the Starting with Us program, Sphamandla is a group member who challenges others and is not afraid to think outside the box. During a Starting With Us session, the group was prompted to discuss sexual situations and gender issues. While many of the group members felt that women should not be allowed to date other men if they have a boyfriend, Sphamandla was quick to point out a double standard, arguing that the others completely condone men dating more than one woman (Field Notes 12/4).

While Phoenix does not give participants ideas, it does allow for a space where participants can share ideas with one another. Spha asserts that Phoenix “gives [him] a chance to test abilities, new ideas and new things.” He also mentioned that Phoenix gives participants a way to “maintain their minds.”

In the business skills program, Sphamandla learned about starting one’s own business, maintaining a balance, and how to gain capital. Conversations in Families allowed him to talk with his parents and brothers about his situation in prison and what he will need when he gets out. When asked if Phoenix has changed him, Spha replied, “I don’t believe in change, just in upgrading yourself. I have upgraded. I am in a different stage than I was previously” (Magubane 20/4).

Not all Phoenix participants excel like Funky and Sphamandla, however. In all of the programs I sat in on, there were always one or two group members who were not engaged or who were having side conversations (Field Notes 8/4). Ultimately, as Lushaba asserts,

rehabilitation has to come from the participant's willingness to engage with the material. "There are always a few inmates who are just in it for the certificate" and don't come away with anything (Lushaba 11/4). While some may gain much less from the programs than others, however, their presence in the program is still better than the alternative.

Personal Observations as a Program Facilitator

For the two weeks I was in Eshowe, I worked as a facilitator of a Healing Through Art program. Once cleared by the HOP, Ntombi Lushaba helped me recruit nine males in the juvenile section to participate in a musical and poetic expression program centered around hip-hop. The participants came into the program with all different levels of fluency in English, experience in writing poetry and knowledge of hip-hop.

The group members participated in a number of that pushed them to have confidence in themselves and express their feelings while simultaneously learning about hip hop and poetic devices. Activities included things like standing in front of the group and saying one thing they like about themselves, calling themselves a certain and having other group members explain why the particular object is a metaphor for that person ("I am gold" or "I am a gun" means he is valuable, shining and rare or he is dangerous, impulsive or explosive), participating in rhyming games, creating songs by having everyone add a part with their voice, and writing a variety of different poems about themselves.

The program also encouraged participants to work together to create a hip hop song on a topic of their choosing. Participants wrote verses, structured the song, came up with a refrain, played the piano, and performed the song in front of the entire male section of the prison.

Perceived Impact of the Program

The program seems to have affected the participants in a number of ways. Although I do not think my work vastly improved anyone's writing skills, I do think it gave the participants an opportunity to discover the skills they already possessed and pushed them to use them. Without Phoenix At the end of every session, each participant was required to write in their notebook about anything they chose. At first many did not feel they had anything to write about, and a few would stop before the time was up. By the end of the program, however, every participant wrote for the whole five minutes and even brought in poems they had written without being assigned to. The program, as many other Phoenix programs do, gave participants a platform to find things that were already inside of them.

In addition to encouraging participants to develop their writing skills, the program gave the participants an opportunity to build confidence and a sense of self-worth. At the beginning of the program, some participants refused to do one of the exercises, which was standing up and speaking in front of the group about anything they chose for thirty seconds. By the last day, the whole group was chanting the refrain of a song they wrote in front of over a hundred men. The chance to create a product as a group seemed to give many members of the group a feeling that they matter.

However, the group dynamics also produced the opposite effect on occasion. In one instance, a group member did not want to perform because other members had snickered while he recited his poem. This made the participant feel left out and inferior to some of the others.

An often under appreciated effect of the program was fun. Creating the song seemed to take the group members' minds off the heavy weight of imprisonment, if only for a little while. I neglected to see the importance of fun when I observed a Starting With Us program. The only agenda for the session was to have the participants paint each others' faces. When I asked the

facilitator why she did do something more constructive, she replied that the prisoners need days like that. It can't all be academic (Field Notes 12/4). The hip hop program was certainly not all academic.

Perhaps the most influential result of the program was that it allowed prisoners to express themselves. Participants chose to write about freedom as the theme of for their song. They entitled it "My Body's Caged but My Mind is Free" (See Appendix B). The participants wrote deeply emotional lyrics, painting a desolate and lonely picture of prison, but offering hope for the future. "All hope escapes this world every time I think at night/ I could be out there watching my brother ride that bike." Lines like these pervade the song that the inmates wrote. At the same time, however, the inmates offer comfort: "I'll complete my sentence like a sentence that is written,/Then I'll be whole like an apple that was never bitten." These two excerpts alone illustrate the difficult circumstances that Phoenix Zululand deals with and the ability it has to overcome them. More impressive than Phoenix's impact on offenders, though, is the offenders' ability to impact themselves and others despite their circumstances.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Study

As I began my work with Phoenix, I quickly realized that the original goal of my ISP was silly. I wanted to measure the success of Phoenix Zululand, but that is an impossible task. Phoenix has touched too many lives in too many vastly different ways to even begin to quantify its impact. While recidivism can be a helpful marker of good being done, it is in no way a bearing on the success of prisoner rehabilitation programs and in no way encompasses all that they accomplish. The best way see Phoenix's impact is by talking to the people the organization has touched, or even going to Eshowe and helping in the prison.

Although Phoenix faces many challenges that it cannot help, such as the power dynamics in prisons and the lack of space and time afforded it, there are many issues that are within Phoenix's power to resolve. In order to get more funding from donors, Phoenix needs to create more publicity for itself. A cheap and effective way to accomplish this would be to develop its lackluster website. Although the internet is not widely accessed in South Africa, it is a basic and efficient way to access information in the US. Having an impressive website to send potentials to could allow Phoenix to show themselves to more companies and grants and get more funding.

Another strategy that would help Phoenix carry out its objectives more efficiently would be to have offenders do the reviewing and evaluating of facilitators and programs. Instead of focusing on internal evaluation, Phoenix could get a picture of their work from the people who are affected by it most.

For the resources it has, Phoenix Zululand does an outstanding job. The testimonials of the people included in this paper, offenders, ex-offenders and prison staff, serve as evidence to the this job. More research needs to be done on rehabilitation programs in South Africa and their

impact on offenders and the political forces of the DCS. This information is vital in lobbying for prison reform and making new advances in South African Prisons.

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Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions

How did you first get involved with Phoenix?

What is your relationship with Phoenix Zululand?

What do you think Phoenix is trying to do?

How (if at all) has Phoenix affected your life?

How do you see Phoenix's impact on the lives of others?

What are some of the problems or issues you see with Phoenix?

Why is Phoenix Zululand important?

Supplement for Facilitators

Why do you work at Phoenix?

What are some of the things you do for Phoenix on a day to day basis?

Do you enjoy being a facilitator? why?

Supplement for Offenders

How long have you been in prison?

Which Phoenix programs have you been in?

Why did you choose to participate?

Supplement for Prison Staff

What are your job responsibilities?

What does rehabilitation mean to you?

Do you see a difference in offenders that have worked with Phoenix and those who have not?

What does a certificate from Phoenix mean to the parole board?

Supplement for Ex-Offenders

What does your life look like now? how has Phoenix affected it?

Note: Most interviews became largely conversational as they went on, so many of these questions were either not asked or explained in a different way.

Appendix B

My Body's Caged but my Mind is Free

Intro, Brian

Sometimes, we don't realize what we have until it is gone.
To do our part we've got to sit tight,
And not hate
But wait for that second chance,
'cause that second chance comes once in a lifetime.
Yeah, yesterday we made mistakes
but today we choose not to make the same mistakes we made yesterday.
'Cause that's the past
Where the long journey has started.
Yeah, some may say we deserve to be behind bars
But who are you to judge us?
Only God has the right to judge us
'cause you ain't innocent as you claim to be
But guilty as I am.
In the future,
We'll prove you wrong
All you negative thinkers
'Cause we are positive on the other side.
So the way I see it
Plus is stronger than minus.
And to life,
Here we come
'Cause this time we are tough
As Muhammad Ali was in that boxing ring.

2x

My body's caged but my mind is free
My body's caged but my mind is free
My body's caged but my mind is free
(No matter what you do)
You can't contain me!

Ndumiso

He started as a caterpillar.
Dad didn't know that all he needed was a babysitter.
If it was that he wouldn't need to be in this cocoon.
It's all walls and darkness,
I can't even explore up in this damn room.
It's like I'm stuck in Hell
Or maybe under ground
'Cause from my family I cannot even hear a sound

I'm goin' crazy but I'm free up at the same time
'Cause I can feel the change like I'm a fresh cut dime.
It's amazin' ain't it?
Every day a star is born.
So I just gotta make sure my heart is never torn.
I'll complete my sentence like a sentence that is written,
Then I'll be whole like an apple that was never bitten.
But that's the obvious,
Never have to guess my status.
I'll be jumpin' to the sky and you'll be thinkin', "madness."
I think it's time that Red Bull grew wings.
I'm just a butterfly, gotta see some better things.

My body's caged but my mind is free
My body's caged but my mind is free
My body's caged but my mind is free
(No matter what you do)
You can't contain me!

Sam
I'm trapped under this wall.
I'm angry because I fell into this hole
It wasn't my intention
Believe me guys,
It wasn't my intention.
Bad temptation leads us to this road,
Now my whole world revolves around this lonely wall.
When you look around
You're on your own.
It's a shame guys.
This is miserable.
I feel pain that is unbearable
When I look around.
This is terrible.
I cry whenever I reminisce about my life outside
That's what we all do when we get time.
All hope escapes this world every time I think at night.
I could be out there watching my brother ride that bike.
Here am I stuck underground with no light
Walking in this dark hole.
There is even no street pole to light the road that I walk on.
You feel neglected
guys I know we get addicted.
It's unfair, they all run away
Even my friends.
The only one close to me is my dad.

He woke me up when I thought I was dead.

Byron

So much anger, pain and suffering.

Attain peace? I am struggling.

My life ain't that nice

Give it some time.

Gimme some dice,

Here's a knife.

I hear you got a baby girl.

Ain't that a shame.

I wonder what's her name.

I hear she's fine.

I can't wait to make her my dime.

I have a bullet I want you to meet

So you can fall to my feet.

I'll always wipe the tears from my mother's eyes

She'll always be the apple of my eye.

This player needs to find a new name

'Cause better days will be the game.

My body's caged but my mind is free

My body's caged but my mind is free

My body's caged but my mind is free

(no matter what you do)

You can't contain me!