



Transforming Lives and Healing Communities

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MINORITY YOGA TEACHERS TO MENTOR GANG-INVOLVED YOUTH

Oakland, California... The Niroga Institute announced today that its first graduating cohort of Integral Health Fellows (IHF) will mentor high-risk youth attempting to put their gang involvement behind them.

The Institute's Executive Director and founder, Bidyut (BK) Bose said, "This collaboration is targeted at reducing juvenile crime and violence, and keeping our vulnerable youth from dropping out." The IHF program is a partnership between the Alameda County Public Health Department, the Bay Area Black United Fund and Niroga Institute. This 2-year program trains minority young adults to become Certified Yoga Teachers, prepared to teach their communities Transformative Life Skills (TLS), a multi-modality intervention including yoga, breathing techniques and mindfulness.

The first cohort of 13 Fellows graduated in May; a fresh cohort of 14 students is starting their training on September 26, as last year's cohort of 15 students begins its second year. Each Fellow has committed to doing at least 100 hours of public service. Fellows will be paired with youth and young adult participants of Project New Start, complementing and enhancing a tattoo-removal program of the Alameda County Public Health Department. One IHF graduate said, "I received so much from the program, I can't wait to give back to my community."

"This is a tremendous transformation of our young adults and excellent resource for building community capacity," said Quamrun Eldridge, Deputy Division Director, Community Health Services Division. "We believe TLS will empower our high-risk youth and young adults to move forward for a healthier lifestyle," Eldridge continued.

Niroga Institute was founded in 2005 to teach Transformative Life Skills (TLS) primarily to children and youth in schools and alternative schools as well as Juvenile Halls, many of whom come from low-income, and often broken homes. Niroga's Yoga Corps, over 125 trained TLS teachers, are teaching over 100 classes a week and reaching thousands of vulnerable youth annually in the Bay Area. "Independent researchers have shown that TLS lowers stress and increases self-control and self-esteem; and emotional self-regulation affects everything we do," says Bose. Niroga programs are being viewed as a front-line prevention and intervention strategy for education, mental health and violence reduction. One incarcerated youth in Juvenile Hall said after a class, "Wow, if everyone did yoga, there would not be so much violence in the world!"

Niroga Institute is hosting a benefit brunch on Saturday, October 3 from 10:00 to 12:30 at the First Congregational Church, 2501 Harrison Street in Oakland.

For more information on the Niroga Institute, go to: www.niroga.org

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