

CRIME, PUNISHMENT & VIPASSANA by Rachelle Ayuyang

A BUDDHIST MEDITATION PROGRAM THAT WAS FIRST IMPLEMENTED IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES IN INDIA 27 YEARS AGO HAS MADE ITS WAY TO AMERICAN JAILS AND PRISONS. VIPASSANA IS A NEW THERAPY FOR THOSE WHO ARE CAUGHT UP IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.



*Vipassana participants at a course held at the North Rehabilitation Facility of the King County Jail, in Seattle, Washington.
Photo courtesy of Rick Crutcher.*

"It is a rigorous and disciplined course," says Vipassana teacher Rick Crutcher. "What we have found in jails and prisons is that inmates have a strong incentive to change their lives. They don't have delusions. They know they messed up." Crutcher has helped introduce Vipassana programs to North American correctional facilities. The first one was set up at North Rehabilitation Facility (NRF) in Seattle, Washington.

"We began Vipassana courses at the correctional facility in November 1997," explains Lucia Meijer, the superintendent administrator of NRF. "While other institutions have tried various meditative practices, this was the first time this particular technique in the tradition of SN Goenka and his teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, was brought to a North American correctional facility." >>