

PLENARY ADDRESS



A Life of 1,000 Wounds: Dismantling Hate and Trauma with Our Humanity

SAMMY RANGEL, MSW, CSAC

Sammy Rangel is an author, peace activist, speaker, trainer and father. His autobiography, "Fourbears: The Myths of Forgiveness," chronicles his life from the physical and sexual abuse he endured as a child to his path of self-destruction that culminated in a 15 1/2-year prison sentence.

In 2012, Sammy founded Formers Anonymous, a national self-help group based on the 12-step model for people addicted to street life and violence. In May 2015, he participated in the TEDxDanubia Conference: Balance On the Edge held in Budapest, Hungary, where he spoke about the power of forgiveness.

He is co-founder and former executive director of Life After Hate, an organization that supports men and women to leave violent far-right extremist and white supremacist groups. In 2017, he was honored in a special tribute to Everyday Heroes in the Global Campaign Against Violent Extremism awarded by the United Nations to Sammy. Sammy holds a master's degree in social work from Loyola University-Chicago. He previously served as program director for a youth outreach program in his hometown of Racine, Wisconsin, for 16 years. He is also a second-degree black belt, practices mixed martial arts, and is a singer on a Native American drum.

The presentation will highlight best practices and current strategies on working through issues of hate, aggression and historical trauma, as Sammy, a formerly incarcerated gang leader whose life was transformed by experiential psychotherapy, tells his story about how action methods changed his life. He will talk about his work today that guides men and women away from violent far-right extremism as co-founder of Life After Hate and his professional experience working with addictions, reentry after incarceration, domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault through crisis intervention outreach, clinical work, and inpatient treatment centers. He will share extraordinary cases of compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation. He will identify and review counterproductive narratives and replace them with productive counter narratives that can impact and improve the lives of professional care givers as well as the people that the professionals are serving.