

Stefano 26 years old – Building Bridges Programme

Accused of Murder, attempted murder and severe injury

He was very hard at the beginning when he told us his story, what we perceived was that he was tightened to his criminal friends and still connected to them at least psychologically. He said to us that he didn't kill the young man that was involved in a violent fight, he didn't hit with a knife, another one was the killer but he didn't tell the judge during the trial the truth, in fact one of the considerations of the judge was that "he has assumed a conspiratorial behaviour". We tried to convince him to speak out the truth before the judge but he said he couldn't break the code of honour that the criminal relationships and life impose; nothing convinces him to change his mind even when a victim and then a facilitator told him "let's do it for your future wife", he demonstrated to be more loyal to their criminal friends than to her. Apparently the certainties that he had acquired in the criminal life would not crumble, so for us volunteers at a certain point was not so easy to believe that he wanted to change really and detach from the criminal past, at the last session he continued to "cry" that it was impossible to leave certain behaviour, and in that moment a facilitator told him that it was an issue of choice, little by little he could choose to behave in a different way with the help of others, educators, volunteers, his family, his future wife.

After the last session of BB we had an individual follow-up interview with any prisoners and victims.

When we went to the prison where Stefano was, he told us that he was called by the disciplinary committee usually they call to warn or even transfer to another prison or area of the same prison in the most serious cases, the same educator said "Stefano, you have also done the BB program and the committee called you!" Actually the committee had called to congratulate him because he had not responded to the physical and verbal aggressions perpetrated several times by another inmate, Stefano declared that while it was happening he was thinking of us, volunteers. Finally Stefano even in a so severe condition chose not to respond to violence with violence.