

Abolitionist Futures:

Building social justice not criminal justice

International Conference on Penal Abolition (ICOPA-18)

15 – 18 June 2018 London, UK

Call for Participation and Contributions

Due date for contribution proposals: Thursday 15 February 2018

Angela Davis posed the question “**Are prisons obsolete?**”

We say “**YES!**”

We invite communities and organisers to join an international gathering of people who are working to build a world without prisons. Over four days we will come together to strategise and debate, exchange ideas and build stronger relationships in our shared struggles.

We welcome proposals for:

- Workshops: skill-shares, strategy sessions, teach-ins, trainings, question-and-answer sessions, structured debates, activities for young people and children
- Presentations: talks, panels, roundtable discussions, reflections on organising successes and challenges, academic papers
- Art: music, poetry, dance, story-telling, film screenings, visual arts and info-graphic displays

We seek contributions that address the harms done by policing, prisons, immigration detention, surveillance and other forms of punishment.

We especially welcome sessions that focus on concrete solutions and alternatives, including campaigns for housing, health and well-being, economic and racial justice, community accountability, gender safety, youth empowerment, education, land rights and environment.

We encourage proposals that make connections between the harms of criminal justice and larger systems of oppression, such as racism, poverty, colonialism, gender and sexual injustice and disability-related discrimination.

We particularly welcome contributions from current and former prisoners, detainees and their families.

Conference format:

The conference will open with a public forum featuring local and international speakers on the Friday evening. Saturday and Sunday will be devoted to workshops, presentations, films screenings, artwork and other contributions. Monday will host a symposium for academic papers focussed on what academics can do to support movement building.

We invite contributions that relate to one of the four main themes below:

1. QUESTIONING

This theme is about questioning the assumption that prisons, police and surveillance can make us safe. It is about understanding the harm that the criminal justice system does to people, families and communities. It will ask how and why the criminal justice system was put in place, and whether society could exist without it.

2. RESISTING

This theme will focus on how the criminal justice system can be resisted by people within it and outside of it. How we have resisted throughout history, how people affected by the criminal justice system are resisting now and how we can build resistance for the future.

3. DISMANTLING

This theme explores how we can dismantle criminal justice institutions and change the ideas, attitudes and systems in society that reinforce punishment and imprisonment. It will look at what strategies we can use to move towards abolition and to improve the lives of people affected.

4. BUILDING

This theme is about building effective alternatives to prisons, policing and punishment -- now and for the future. It will explore what society could like without prisons and other criminal justice institutions. It will look at how we can build safe and healthy communities for everyone.

Instructions for Contributors:

Please send proposals for contributions by email to: icopalondon@gmail.com. Please include:

- a) Your name and email contact
- b) A title for your session or contribution
- c) Description of what your contribution will cover (200 words max)
- d) Type of session (i.e. workshop, presentation, art or academic paper, etc.)
- e) If you want a 1-hour, 1.5-hour or 2-hour time slot or space for a display
- f) Which of the four themes your contribution most closely fits within

Proposals from prisoners, detainees and those without email access can be sent by post to:

ICOPA 2018 c/o CCJS, 2 Langley Lane, Vauxhall, London SW8 1GB

For more information (including details about registration costs, bursaries for low-income participants, etc.) please see the conference website: <https://icopa2018.wordpress.com/>

The conference is hosted by: The Harm & Evidence Research Collective, The Open University; the Department of Criminology, Birkbeck University of London; and the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.

Participating and co-organising groups include; Action for Trans Health, Bent Bars Project, Black Lives Matter UK, Empty Cages Collective, INQUEST, JENgBa, Netpol, Race & Class collective, Reclaim Justice Network, Smash IPP!, Stopwatch.