

MARCH 2013 ACTIONICOPA.ORG UPDATE

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RESISTING CARCERAL NATION STATES: THE FIFTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PENAL ABOLITION (ICOPA 15)

JUNE 13 - 15, 2014

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
ALGONQUIN TERRITORY / OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA

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BUILDING AWARENESS, DEVELOPING STRATEGY, TAKING ACTION

WHAT IS ICOPA?

The International Conference on Penal Abolition (ICOPA) is a bi-annual gathering of activists, academics, journalists, practitioners, people currently or formerly imprisoned, survivors of state and personal harm, and others from across the world who are working towards the abolition of imprisonment, the penal system, carceral controls and the prison industrial complex.

With different groups engaged in prison abolitionist struggles across the world in the 1960s, 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, most notably in Europe and North America, the Quaker Committee on Jails and Justice in Canada determined that there was a need to establish an international forum where the politics and practices of prison abolitionism could be discussed. With the initiative of many and the efforts of conference founder Ruth Morris, the first ICOPA was held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in 1983.

Since that time ICOPA meetings have been held in Amsterdam, Netherlands (1985), Montreal, Canada (1987), Kazimierz, Poland (1989), Bloomington, Indiana, United States (1991), San Jose, Costa Rica (1993), Barcelona, Spain (1995), Aotearoa, New Zealand (1997), Toronto, Canada (2000), Lagos, Nigeria (2002), Tasmania, Australia (2006), London, United Kingdom (2008), Belfast, Northern Ireland (2010), and St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago (2012). At these conferences, discussions amongst participants have often focused around the following questions: What is to be abolished? How is abolition to be achieved? What alternative can be created to address the needs of those affected by conflicts and harms that are currently criminalized and punished?

The mission of ICOPA is to: 1) motivate the abolitionist community while increasing solidarity; 2) provide a forum for the flow and exchange of ideas advancing abolitionist goals; 3) contribute to public sensitization and education on abolitionist issues; 4) address questions of viable alternatives to the prison industrial complex; and 5) acknowledge and involve those most affected by penal policies, people who are imprisoned and those connected to them.

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FOR ICOPA 15

Carceral nation states across the world know no bounds as they work to sustain economic, gender, sexual and racial inequality. In the Canadian context, the carceral nation state has used exclusionary practices in a stated effort to keep 'us' safe from 'them' – the 'criminals', Indigenous peoples 'in need of civilizing' and 'assimilation', 'problem' drug users, 'bogus' refugee claimants, 'threats' to national security, political 'dissidents', and other dehumanized and demonized populations.

People currently or formerly imprisoned, victims of state and personal harm, activists, advocates, artists, academics, journalists, professionals, along with others from around the world are invited to take part, in person or by proxy, in ICOPA 15 on Algonquin Territory / in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. During this international conference participants will come together to: 1) share their first-hand experiences of state brutality and tactics of resistance; 2) exchange ideas on how to think about and respond to complex community issues that are often met with costly, unproductive, unjust, and violent interventions; and 3) build international alliances and develop strategies to struggle against state repression and work towards social justice in our world.

The organizing committee invites proposals for individual submissions and sessions at ICOPA 15 featuring art, film, music, photography, plays, poetry, short stories, spiritual and healing activities, essays, papers, reports, workshops, proposals for ICOPA policy positions and resolutions, and everything in between. Proposals can address any theme related to imprisonment, the penal system, other forms of carceral control and the prison industrial complex, including those listed above.

Please include in your package your name, address, contact information, proposal title and a summary of 150-250 words describing the proposed contribution. The deadline for submissions is September 1, 2013. Please send your submissions via email to icopa.canada@gmail.com or by mail to:

ICOPA 15
c/o Justin Piché
Department of Criminology
University of Ottawa
120 University
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 6N5

SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO ATTEND ICOPA 15

With the support of the Friends for Prisonless Society, a fund setup by ICOPA founder Ruth Morris, the local organizing committee for ICOPA 15 will review travel and housing support applications for those interested in participating in the conference. This support will be distributed based on the availability of funds and housing billets, as well as the financial need and nature of the participation of the applicant. The deadline for travel and housing support applications is November 1, 2013. The application forms are available at actionicopa.org or by sending a request to the mailing address listed on the bottom-left of this page.

ICOPA OUTREACH

Recognizing that prisoners contribute insights gained through their carceral and life experiences, ICOPA is in the process of developing outreach initiatives designed to enlist and encourage the participation of "exiled voices" in discussions related to the abolition of prisons, the penal system, carceral controls, and the prison industrial complex. This newsletter, which provides information to prisoners about ICOPA 15, is one example of how we wish to connect with the incarcerated going forward. If you have any feedback on this newsletter or have other ideas on how ICOPA can work with and support those who are in prison, please send an email or letter to the addresses listed on the bottom-left of this page.

GET INVOLVED IN ICOPA'S RENEWAL AND VISIONING EXERCISE

In the lead-up to ICOPA 15 we are initiating a conversation about how to build upon this unique global conference and chart a renewed vision that speaks to the concerns of those engaged in abolitionist struggles and their allies. Abolitionists from around the world are encouraged to engage their networks and hold discussions to: 1) Identify who is engaged in abolitionist work in their local community, region and nation state; 2) Document the issues that are the focus of their related thoughts and actions; and 3) Describe what role they would envision for an international abolitionist forum, and what they would hope to gain and share by taking part in such a network. In holding these conversations we encourage submission of pieces in any format to the email and mailing addresses listed on the bottom-left of this page, which will be posted on actionicopa.org and circulated using social media networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) to stimulate our on-going dialogue on the future of this international abolitionist forum. The submissions will also be summarized in our bi-monthly newsletter that is available on our website and is mailed to our imprisoned allies.

Be a part of the discussion.
Initiate a conversation.
Share your vision of what ICOPA can be.

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