

SEPTEMBER 2013 ACTIONICOPA.ORG UPDATE

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OCTOBER 2013**

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JUNE 13 - 15, 2014

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
ALGONQUIN TERRITORY / OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA

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BUILDING AWARENESS, DEVELOPING STRATEGY, TAKING ACTION

CONFERENCE PLANNING

Hi everyone,

In the four months since the last update there have been a number of significant developments that will shape the discussions at ICOPA 15. For instance, nearly 200 migrants to the Toronto region were recently involuntarily transferred from detention spaces located near their loved ones and communities to the Central East Correctional Centre in rural Lindsay, Ontario. To resist their forced migration, as well as their conditions and duration of confinement they have initiated a hunger strike, which needs all of our support (see <http://endimmigrationdetention.wordpress.com>).

As I write this, Kingston Penitentiary, a human warehouse established in 1835, is closing its doors. Normally, prison closures are a cause for celebration in abolitionist circles. However, as noted by prisoners from nearby Collins Bay Institution, the transfer of KP's population - which includes individuals receiving 'care' in the wing of the facility that operates as the Regional Treatment Centre for the Ontario Region - to units located on their penitentiary reserve and elsewhere will contribute to crowding and the erosion of their access to scarce resources at a time when the Canadian prison population climbs (see <http://epic.noblogs.org/displaced-disturbed-and-disrupted-statement-from-collins-bay-inmate-committee/>).

In correspondence written to the ICOPA 15 international steering committee by a volunteer who recently entered other federal penitentiaries in the Kingston region we learned about the deteriorating conditions of confinement there. Prisoner labour pay being deducted by 30% to 'cover' their room and board whether single- or double-bunked, further restrictions on the ability of prisoners to purchase goods for things like hobbycraft that provide them with a creative and emotional outlet, as well as changes to the grievance process that governs their complaints are among the indignities being implemented as part of the Conservative Government of Canada's punishment agenda.

These are just the stories emerging from prisons located only a few hours drive from the venue for ICOPA 15 and there are countless many more examples of repression and resistance in Canada and other carceral nation states.

ICOPA 15 provides us with an opportunity to transform pain into an opportunity to come together - in body

and/or spirit – to reinvigorate ourselves for the many fights that are ahead. To prepare for the conference a local organizing committee is in the process of being formed and will meet on October 8th to discuss how we can create the space and provide some of the resources necessary to support this unique conference. Items on the agenda for discussion include:

- Organizing political and social events;
- Developing and collecting resources for people affected by state repression;
- Booking spaces to hold conference sessions and events;
- Arranging for child care and/or a conference program for children and youth;
- Arranging for volunteer translation;
- Arranging for ways to connect off-site participants to the conference (e.g. live-streaming, Skype, blogging, tweets, etc.) and ensuring prisoner participation (see the article below);
- Documenting the event (e.g. alternative and mainstream media coverage, audio and video recordings, archiving of documents tabled, etc.);
- Arranging for meals for participants (e.g. lunches at minimum);
- Assisting conference participants with getting accommodations (e.g. booking residence rooms on-campus at lower rates than local hotels, seeking billet providers, etc.); and
- Planning fundraising events and campaigns to get people from elsewhere to the conference and to generate momentum and excitement locally, nationally and internationally as we get closer to the event.

If you are living on unceded and unsundered Algonquin Nation Territory and would like to participate in the October 8th meeting please contact Andrea Hughes – who is now responsible for all ICOPA 15 local organizing committee correspondence – via email or at the mailing address noted below for more details.

While the local organizing committee is taking the lead on logistics for the conference, as well as local political and social events that delegates can take part in, the bulk of the agenda will be determined by the proposals received from individuals and groups from elsewhere in Canada and the world. Among the confirmed conference participants are the members of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies who propose to organize workshops on the criminalization and incarceration of women and girls. Other proposed sessions include an alternative media workshop by a collective of prison radio stations, plays written and performed by current and former prisoners, a prisoner art exhibition, documentary and film screenings, and a panel of individuals subject to (in)security detention regimes.

In the next few months, ICOPA 15 organizers will continue to reach out and invite individuals and groups working on issues related to prison justice, settler colonialism, white supremacy and the mass incarceration of Indigenous and racialized peoples, the criminalization of women and gender, the use of the prison as a catch-all to respond to social problems as framed hegemonic forces (e.g. ‘illicit’ drug use, mental health, poverty, sex work, etc.), the school to prison pipeline, migrant detention and deportation, (in)security detention and killings, the policing and criminalization of political dissent, the continued expansion of corporate and state surveillance, and other forms of repression.

Our hope is that these discussions will help refine our collective message about what is costly, unjust, immoral and ineffective about the growing role the prison industrial complex plays in shaping thinking and responses to complex conflicts and harms. We also look forward to collectively renewing our vision of what communities and accountability to each other looks like.

Now that the planning for ICOPA 15 is ramping-up you will find regular updates on our progress at <http://actionicopa.org>. As the conference date rapidly approaches we are also going to be producing this newsletter on a monthly basis so that prisoners who have expressed an interest in taking part in debates about abolitionism and the future of ICOPA are involved. That is all for now.

In solidarity,
Justin

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PRISONERS ON PRISONS SESSIONS

Greetings to all,

My name is Sarah Fiander and I am a fourth-year student at the University of Ottawa studying criminology and gender studies. One of the requirements of my program is to complete a work placement related to my field of study, which I have chosen to carry out at the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP). Being enrolled in two distinct but inextricably linked programs has allowed me to develop a critical perspective of the prison industrial complex, the penal process and all those affected by it. I hope to continue on to graduate studies next fall and intend to focus my research on penal abolition and prisoner advocacy.

One of my placement objectives is to ensure that the voices and experiences of those most directly affected by carceral nation states – prisoners – are able to participate in ICOPA 15. As noted in the call for the general participants and contributions (see <http://www.actionicopa.org>), the conference aims to bring all those affected and opposed to the intensification of control in our lives together to:

1. Share their first-hand experiences with state brutality and tactics of resistance;
2. Discuss alternative responses to complex community issues that are often met with costly, unproductive, and unjust interventions; and
3. Build transnational alliances that will develop strategies to resist state repression and advocate for social justice worldwide.

Individuals and groups are invited to submit essays, papers, short stories, music, poetry, artwork, other alternative medias, proposals for ICOPA policy positions and resolutions, and everything in between. Submissions may address any theme related to imprisonment, the penal system, the prison industrial complex, or other forms of carceral control.

In keeping with previous *JPP* sessions at past ICOPA conferences, select submissions written by current and former prisoners will be reviewed and considered for publication in a future issue of the journal. In the months ahead we will also seek to establish links with other publications that feature works by prisoners (e.g. The Abolitionist Newsletter, 4struggle magazine, The Real Costs of Prisons) to disseminate the contributions written behind prison walls as widely as possible where permission from authors is obtained.

Submission proposals must include your name, address, contact information, title, and a short summary of 150-250 words describing the contribution you plan to make. Full written submissions should aim to be less than 2,000 words to facilitate its presentation at the conference. The deadline for submission proposals written by prisoners is March 1, 2014. The deadline for full submissions written by prisoners is May 1, 2014. Please note that the deadline for proposals for all other contributions is December 1, 2013. All proposals and full submissions written by prisoners may be sent via email at jpp@uottawa.ca or by mail to the *JPP* at the address noted above.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at anytime.

I look forward to hearing from you,
Sarah