



CREATING A SCANDAL – Prison abolition and the policy agenda

23, 24 & 25 July 2008 - Kings College London

15 July 2008

Howard League for Penal Reform hosts twelfth International Conference on Penal Abolition

The Howard League for Penal Reform is hosting the twelfth International Conference on Penal Abolition (ICOPA) to be held at King's College, London, from 23rd-25th July 2008. This is the first time this renowned conference on penal abolition has been held in the UK.

The movement for penal abolition has garnered support for centuries, with past champions including Thomas Buxton and Victor Hugo. The first ICOPA was held in Toronto in 1983 and attracted 400 people from 15 countries. Since then, it has been held biannually around the world, with themes ranging from the politics of imprisonment to post-carceral resettlement.

The Howard League for Penal Reform is proud to be hosting this event, which boasts an impressive line-up of international speakers from the worlds of both academia and activism.

Director of the Howard League for Penal Reform, Frances Crook, said: *"This is a timely opportunity to focus the global debate on what the criminal justice system can and should do. The commercialisation of justice has now turned it into a transaction rather than a service. ICOPA will bring together experts from all over the world to push the agenda for a penal system that is centred on communities and restoration, not budgets and warehousing criminals."*

The theme for 2008 is *Creating a Scandal: Prison Abolition and the Policy Agenda*. Speakers include Moazzam Begg, former Guantanamo detainee and spokesperson for Cageprisoners; Imran Khan, leading human rights lawyer; Thomas Mathieson, University of Oslo; Raphael Rowe, BBC journalist and ex-prisoner; and Julia Sudbury, co-founder of Critical Resistance, Mills College, California.

Topics discussed will include prison and the politics of poverty, the role of privatisation and capitalism in penal policy and penal abolition, and the impact of media and public opinion on the penal agenda. Plenary speakers will be complemented by break out sessions, during which contributors from around the world will present papers on topics such as female imprisonment, deaths in custody, young offenders, prison investment, prison gangs and torture.

The conference includes the first ever reading of a new play, 'CUTS', by renowned playwright, Antoinette Moses. This is a play that examines how women are inappropriately sent to prison for self-harming and how they are suffering from mental illness because there are not other places for them to go.