

# DECEMBER 2013 ACTIONICOPA.ORG UPDATE

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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 SUBMISSIONS AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Since its first gathering in 1983, ICOPA has been a bi-annual meeting of academics, activists, advocates, artists, journalists, professionals and practitioners, current and former prisoners, victims of state and interpersonal harm, along with others conducting work oriented around abolishing imprisonment, the penal system, carceral controls and the prison industrial complex. We expect 150 delegates to register for and attend ICOPA 15 at the University of Ottawa.

As of 1 December 2013, 37 paper proposals (12 of which were written by prisoners), 8 full workshop submissions, 3 pieces of artwork, 2 films and 1 play were submitted for consideration. As we have planned to accommodate up to 27 sessions (note: a maximum of 3 sessions will take place concurrently), we have room for approximately 10 more sessions. With this in mind the *general deadline for proposal submissions has been extended to 15 February 2014. The deadline for proposal submissions by prisoners remains 1 March 2014.*

Members of the local organizing committee comprised of activists and advocates based in Ottawa, as well professors and students from the University of Ottawa, are reviewing proposals to ensure that they are abolitionist in orientation and contribute to meeting the mission of ICOPA (see page 2). Members of ICOPA's international steering committee, composed of past conference participants, will also be consulted. A preliminary draft conference program will be made available shortly after 15 February 2014. A subsequent conference program will be finalized and distributed shortly after 1 March 2014. During this process, those who submitted proposals for contributions will be kept updated on the status of their submissions.

ICOPA 15 will feature a wide-range of contributions that will make visible the lived realities of imprisonment and other forms of state repression, discuss alternative ways of conceptualizing and responding to the problems appropriated by the penal system and its appendages, and share strategies for social change. The conference will include *plenaries* that will bring all delegates in one location to discuss the broader struggles individuals and groups involved in resisting state repression endure. *Concurrent sessions and workshops* will feature experiential accounts and research disseminated in various formats including art, film, music, photography, plays, poetry, short stories, spiritual and healing activities, essays, papers and reports. There will also be refreshment *breaks, lunches* and *social activities* throughout the conference where delegates can meet informally to discuss what they have learned and build relationships to seed the ground for future collaborative action. Among the social events planned is the second installment of "Breaking the Silence - Artists for Justice: Open Stage and Art Exhibition" to be held on 12 June 2014, which is being organized by the members of the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project (see <http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/crm/criminalization-punishment-education-project>). *Meeting rooms* will also be provided for participants to hold smaller discussions or to take a break from the proceedings - which will be emotionally exhausting at times given the subject matter - as the need arises. An *information room* accessible to all throughout the event will have copies of published documentation and research produced by participating individuals and groups available for viewing.

As ICOPA 15 takes shape, the local organizing committee is confident that these meetings will be a good venue to: 1) share first-

hand experiences and knowledge 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 state interventions; and 3) build international alliances and develop strategies to struggle against state repression and work towards social justice and peace in our world.

## FACILITATING PARTICIPATION IN-PERSON AND AT A DISTANCE

The mission of ICOPA is five-fold: 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 the public sensitization and education of abolitionist issues; 4) addressing questions of viable alternatives to the prison industrial complex; and 5) acknowledge and involve those most affected by penal policies, people inside carceral institutions and those connected to them. Connecting to those most affected by state repression at ICOPA meetings is necessary to advance knowledge concerning what is to be abolished, how abolition is to be achieved, and the development of viable alternatives to address the complex conflicts and harms that are currently criminalized and punished or (not) addressed through other damaging means.

It is with this in mind that the fourteen previous ICOPA conference organizers have strived to make the meetings as accessible as possible, particularly for those who are most affected by state policies and practices that reinforce ageist, classist, genderist, sexist, and/or racist beliefs and social structures. This tradition will continue at ICOPA 15 by not charging registration fees to delegates, although participating individuals and groups are encouraged to make a monetary contribution if they have the means to do so. Where possible, the International Foundation for a Prisonless Society – a fund setup by ICOPA founder Ruther Morris – will help defray the costs of travel and housing costs of conference presenters who do not have professional funds or other means to attend the meetings. Those who require support for travel and accommodations are asked to submit applications by February 15, 2014 (the forms are available for download on the CONFERENCE webpage at <http://actionicopa.org>). The local organizing committee will also try to arrange for billets upon request. Throughout the conference, refreshments and lunches will also be provided for all participants as funding permits.

Given the international scope and focus of the conference, many interested persons and groups will not be able to participate at ICOPA 15 in-person. As such, a number of initiatives to connect those who are unable to travel to the conference are planned.

Prior to the conference, a number of documents will be posted on the ICOPA website (<http://actionicopa.org>), including: 1) a resource guide that identifies and describes the activities of individuals and groups working against state repression with an abolitionist orientation in Canada and across the world; 2) the conference program; 3) presentation abstracts and presenter biographies; and 4) materials produced by participating individuals and groups that will be tabled at the event. Website updates will be promoted via the ICOPA Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/ActionICOPA/230248387037061>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/actionicopa>) feeds to generate sustained interest in ICOPA 15 in the months leading-up to the meetings.

During the conference, student volunteers from the University of Ottawa will work to make the proceedings accessible to audiences who are unable to travel to the event. Live streaming and Tweets of all plenaries and sessions, as well as blog posts and press releases summarizing the main themes emerging from the presentations and debates during each day of the conference, will be among the tools used for these purposes.

Following the conference, selected presentations recorded by student volunteers will be posted on the ICOPA YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/icopacanada>). Two scholarly journals, *Champ pénal / Penal Field* and the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* have also committed to publishing special issues on abolitionism featuring selected papers presented at ICOPA 15. Discussions are also planned with non-academic venues to disseminate other contributions made by conference participants. Most importantly, a detailed report summarizing the conference proceedings and collaborative projects that emerged from the meetings will be produced. This report will be sent to prisoners and provide avenues for the incarcerated to contribute to the development of ICOPA and help set the agenda for its activities going forward.

## CONTACT

To get more information about ICOPA 15 or to submit contribution proposals, as well as travel and housing support applications, please direct all correspondence by email to [icopa.canada@gmail.com](mailto: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