

# WOMEN'S PRISON NETWORK



ISSUE #32 - FALL 2023

## &lt; Editor's Note &gt;

Welcome to Issue #32 of Women's Prison Network, a zine by & for women, trans & youth prisoners on Treaty Lands with Canada.



In every Issue we strive to provide a safe space for creative expression, informative news & support resources. These zines feature art, poetry, stories, news, observations, concerns, & anything of sincere value to share.

Health & Harm Reduction info will always be provided, of course - Yes, Do Be Safe!

## Quality &amp; Quantity:

Items printed are those that are common for diverse readers, so no religious items please.

Artwork: Black pen (tat-style) works the best.

Cover Artist will receive a \$25 donation.

Writings: only short poems, news, stories, ...

Items selected are those that fit nicely & allow space for others (½ page = 300 words max).

For author protection, letters & story credits will all be 'Anonymous' unless requested.

'Women's Prison Network' is published 4 times per year.

It is sent out for free to Women, Trans & Youth in Prisons in Canada.

If you are on the outside or part of an organization, please consider a donation!!!

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## &lt; Artists in this Issue &gt;

Cover: Kill Joy



## &lt; Donations for this Issue &gt;

Very special thanks out to:

You !

*Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms*

- The right of life, liberty and security of person (Section 7).
- The right not to be arbitrarily detained (Section 9).
- The right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment (Section 12).
- The right to be equal before and under the law (Section 15).

## &lt; Ancestral Territorial Acknowledgment &gt;

We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which Prison Free Press operates is the Traditional Territory of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

~ 'Dish With One Spoon' Wampum ~

We can't change prisons without changing society, we know that this is a long and dangerous struggle.

But the more who are involved in it, the less dangerous, and the more possible it will be.

- Claire Culhane

Quebec court authorizes class action against new isolation system in federal prisons

A Quebec Superior Court judge has authorized a class-action lawsuit on behalf of federal prisoners in Quebec who were held in segregation units for more than 15 days after November 2019.

Lawyers for Daniel Fournier, the representative plaintiff, say he was subject to cruel and unusual punishment when he was held in segregation units for 40 consecutive days in 2019 and 2020, never knowing when he would be released back into the general population.

The transfer "caused the plaintiff to experience symptoms of depression and increased anxiety attacks; he now requires psychological counselling," Fournier's lawyers Justin Wee, Justine Monty and Alain Arseneault wrote in their request for a class action.

"Detainees placed in solitary confinement can suffer psychological and physical disorders that can be long-lasting and irreversible from the very first day of isolation," they write.

"Prolonged isolation has negative consequences on the detainee's reintegration into the prison population, on his rehabilitation and increases the risk of recidivism.

The federal government argued against allowing the class action, telling the court that Fournier doesn't have grounds for a lawsuit as an individual, let alone as part of a class action.

Justice Department lawyers argued that significant changes were made to segregation units in November 2019 after courts in British Columbia and Ontario found that solitary confinement for more than 15 days was unconstitutional.

Court documents indicate they said inmates held in the new facilities, called Structured Intervention Units, are able to spend four hours a day outside their cell, including two hours during which they have opportunities to interact with other people.

This means, they argued, that the new system doesn't involve solitary confinement - defined by the United Nations as being alone in a cell for at least 22 hours a day - and that even extended periods in an SIU are constitutional.

New standards for isolation aren't being met Fournier, who is currently serving a 14-year sentence for robbery and using a fake firearm in

the commission of his crimes, was transferred to an SIU after he threatened to harm himself and others.

Because the medium-security prison where he was being held didn't have an SIU, he was placed on restricted movement - a type of lockdown with similar conditions to the SIU - for three days before his transfer to a maximum security prison where he would spend another 37 days in the SIU.

The government argued that he was placed in the segregated facility because of his own actions and was generally allowed to have four hours a day outside his cell.

Included in the evidence introduced by Fournier's lawyers were several reports that found the new standards aren't being met.

Almost 80% of inmates in SIU facilities, according to one of the reports, were regularly unable to have four hours outside their cell every day and nearly 40% were never given four hours outside their cell at all.

In his July 28 decision authorizing the class action, Justice Christian Immer found there were arguable questions about whether periods of detention in SIU or restricted movement of more than 15 days violated Charter protections against cruel and unusual punishment.

He also found there were questions about whether those periods of detention violated the Quebec Civil Code. But he rejected a portion of the lawsuit which argued the periods of segregation had violated Fournier's Charter rights to life, liberty and security of person.

The authorized class action lawsuit, which will now be heard on its merits, includes all federal prisoners in Quebec who were detained in a SIU or placed on restricted movement for more than 15 consecutive days after the new system came into effect on Nov. 30, 2019.

Jacob Serebrin  
The Canadian Press  
Aug 08, 2023

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Anything less than the truth is a lie.  
- Tamara Starblanket

No person is your friend who demands  
your silence, or denies your right to grow.  
- Alice Walker

## An incredible victory: Ontario to stop using jails for immigration detention

Ontario said Friday it will stop allowing the federal government to hold immigration detainees in its jails, effectively putting an end to the controversial practice across the country.

The decision comes after seven provinces have already cancelled their agreements with the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), beginning last summer with B.C.

Quebec made the same decision earlier this week, leaving Ontario, home to roughly half of all immigration detainees in the country, as the last major holdout.

"This is an incredible victory," said Hanna Gros, a researcher with Human Rights Watch, which has long campaigned against the use of jails for immigration detention. "It's a monumental win for human rights, for migrant and refugee rights." Canada's use of maximum-security provincial jails to hold immigration detainees - who are not charged with a crime or serving a sentence, but can be detained indefinitely - has for years drawn condemnation from human rights organizations, including the United Nations.

It was the subject of a recent Toronto Star investigation, which found more than 80% of immigration detainees held in Ontario's jails last year were detained solely on the grounds they were "unlikely to appear" for their deportation, not because they were considered dangerous.

In more than half of the five dozen cases reviewed by the Star, detainees had reported mental health issues, and they were often subject to punishing conditions, including frequent lockdowns and solitary confinement.

The use of jails for immigration detention has been under particularly sharp scrutiny over the last 18 months, as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International lobbied individual provinces to cancel their agreements with the CBSA.

After B.C. announced its decision last July, other provinces followed suit.

(Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I. and the territories are the only jurisdictions that haven't officially cancelled their agreements, but together they accounted for less than 1% of detentions last year.)

A spokesperson for Ontario's Solicitor General Michael Kerzner said the decision came after a

months-long review.

"Ontario's correctional institutions should be focused on providing care and custody to individuals serving custodial sentences or on remand, not on immigration detainees, which is the federal government's responsibility," Hunter Kell said in an emailed statement.

As per the terms of the agreement, Ontario must give the CBSA a year's notice before termination, so the decision won't take effect until next June.

Immigration lawyers interviewed by the Star welcomed Ontario's decision, but criticized the CBSA and the federal government for not stopping the practice themselves.

"The fact that the CBSA did nothing until the provinces forced their hand is inexcusable," said Jared Will, who has challenged the constitutionality of Canada's immigration detention system and represented several detainees in court. "In the many years that this has been a live issue I have never heard an intelligible justification for the practice, which has been found to constitute cruel and unusual treatment and is a brazen violation of Canada's obligations under international law."

Subodh Bharati, another lawyer who has long argued against the use of jails for immigration detention, said he felt "relief" and "joy" about Ontario's decision, but said he has "no faith" the federal government is "suddenly going to start respecting the human rights and Charter rights of those caught up in the immigration system."

Bharati, who has filed a class-action lawsuit against the federal government on behalf of immigration detainees held in jails, noted that Ottawa continues to defend the practice in court. Public Safety Canada directed questions for this story to the CBSA, which did not respond.

Immigration detainees are non-citizens who have been arrested by the CBSA and detained on one or a combination of three grounds: if the agency believes they are a "flight risk" or "unlikely to appear" for their deportation; they are a "danger to the public," typically due to criminal convictions for which they have already served their sentence; or if their identity is in doubt.

While the grounds for detention are reviewed by the quasi-judicial Immigration and Refugee Board, the CBSA alone decides whether a detainee is sent to a maximum-security provincial jail or an immigration holding centre, a less restrictive detention facility specifically for

immigration detainees. There is no external oversight of that decision.

Jails account for roughly half of all days spent in immigration detention.

Ontario's decision comes four months after a coroner's inquest into the death of Abdurahman Ibrahim Hassan, a refugee from Somalia with severe mental illness who spent three years in a maximum security jail in Lindsay, Ont., before he died in a Peterborough hospital following a struggle with police officers. The inquest jury's top recommendation was to end the use of jails for immigration detention.

With nearly every province now refusing to allow the CBSA to use its jails, it's unclear what the agency will do with the immigration detainees it considers to be too "high risk" for the immigration holding centres.

Some lawyers and human rights advocates worried the CBSA would turn to federal prisons or make the holding centres more restrictive, rather than reducing detentions overall.

"The agency's track record on this issue is no cause for solace," Will said. "But Ontario's decision certainly presents an opportunity for them to do the right thing."

Brendan Kennedy

The Star

Jun 16, 2023

Canadian prisons need international oversight to prevent human rights violations

Today, Canada will receive an assessment of its human rights record as part of the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Every UN member state undergoes a UPR assessment, which invites "relevant stakeholders" such as national human rights institutions to provide documentation about the human rights successes and failures of the state under review.

In that spirit, the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) made a submission to the UPR that focused on "situations where people are deprived of their liberty." Ultimately, the CHRC recommended that Canada ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT), which would enable "ongoing and enhanced independent oversight, monitoring and reporting in all places of detention" to ensure that Canada meets its human rights commitments in facilities such as jails and prisons.

We at the John Howard Society of Canada (JHSC), an organization committed to protecting the human rights of incarcerated people in this country, support the CHRC's call for Canada to ratify the OPCAT. We believe that oversight from an international body is needed in this country because we frequently hear from incarcerated people whose human rights have been violated, including from people whose treatment in Canadian prisons amounts to torture.

According to the Canadian Criminal Code, torture "means any act or omission by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person." Yet the application of this definition isn't straightforward in jails and prisons, which are by nature punitive and violent but also secretive. Excessive institutional violence, including torture, is often hard for outsiders to identify and easy for officials to rationalize.

Consider, for example, Canada's continued use of solitary confinement. In 2019, the Supreme Court found that administrative segregation, a form of solitary confinement used in Canadian prisons, was cruel and unconstitutional. According to the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Rules 43 and 44), prolonged solitary confinement, which many imprisoned people experienced in administrative



segregation, met the definition of torture. And so, to great fanfare, the federal government passed Bill C-83, which introduced structured intervention units (SIUs) to separate prisoners and, in theory, ensure that they were not isolated for extended periods of time.

Yet a 2021 report found that prolonged solitary confinement continued to be used in Canada's prisons, and imprisoned people tell us that the practice persists today. The structured intervention units were only a rebranding that obscured torture; like a new dust sheet covering an old chair, it served to soften the rough edges and distort the details.

At JHSC, we hear from Canadian prisoners who have been subjected to other cruelties that meet the definition of torture, but their experiences go largely unreported. Sometimes, these cruelties form a pattern, indicating that they aren't isolated acts of brutality but are instead, at some level, established practices.

For example, some imprisoned people tell us that guards have refused to provide them with their prescribed medication, including for pain. Although seemingly passive, withholding pain medication constitutes torture under the Criminal Code because it is the intentional infliction of "pain and suffering" through "omission."

Imprisoned people have also described how guards at some facilities have intentionally locked prisoners who are known enemies, such as rival gang members, between two safety doors, caging them together to coerce them to fight. This practice, called "double dooring," is used by guards to intimidate, coerce, or punish disobedient prisoners. Double dooring did receive some media exposure in a 2017 report about harassment at the Edmonton Institution maximum-security prison, but in that case, it was only discussed as a practice used by guards to intimidate other guards. That this cruel practice has a history of being used against imprisoned people has gone largely unrecognized.

OPCAT's review of Canada's detention facilities would help protect imprisoned Canadians against these and other forms of torture and cruelty because international oversight can affect domestic policy. International attention to segregation and racial violence in the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, helped force U.S. politicians to pass legislation like the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act.

Ultimately, ratifying the OPCAT would help safeguard this country's human rights obligations as established in agreements such as the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and clarify Canadian values both domestically and internationally. It would also give Canada the moral authority to demand that other countries be similarly transparent to international oversight. That, after all, is what Canadian leadership on the world stage should look like.

Catherine Latimer  
Globe and Mail  
Aug 7, 2023

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Isolation cells in women's prisons used almost exclusively for Indigenous prisoners

Isolation cells in federal women's prisons are being used almost exclusively for Indigenous prisoners, according to statistics collated by a government-appointed panel that show Indigenous peoples are seriously disadvantaged by a prisoner segregation regimen introduced in 2019.

The government established Structured Intervention Units (SIUs) after courts in B.C. and Ontario ruled that a previous seclusion method, called Administrative Segregation, was unconstitutional, in part for its disproportionately harmful effects on Indigenous prisoners and the mentally ill. The panel's most recent statistical update, posted on the Public Safety Canada website last week, indicates that those harms persist.

"For one of Canada's most vulnerable groups - Indigenous prisoners - the promise of the Structured Intervention Units has not been realized," the panel report states. "This demands immediate attention."

Under Administrative Segregation, prisoners spent upwards of 22 hours a day in a cell the size of a compact car for periods routinely exceeding 15 days - circumstances the United Nations considers "torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." In 2019, the government replaced Administrative Segregation with Structured Intervention, which requires prisoners who need to be separated from the general prison population to be offered

four hours a day outside their cells and at least two hours of meaningful human contact.

The panel found that 24 out of 25 women - or 96% - held in the new isolation areas in 2022 were Indigenous.

"The placement of women into these Structured Intervention Units is very infrequent, but when it does happen, it's almost always an Indigenous woman," said Howard Sapers, chair of the Structured Intervention Unit Implementation Advisory Panel. "When you see a number like that, it just bears examining because that certainly wasn't the policy intent."

In both men's and women's institutions, Indigenous peoples made up 44% of prisoners held in SIUs on Jan. 1, despite comprising 4.2% of the overall Canadian adult population and 32.4% of the total Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) prisoner population.

And once they're sent to an SIU, Indigenous prisoners are more likely to remain there for an extended period. About 63% of Indigenous inmates who land in an SIU spend 16 or more days there, compared to 54% for non-Indigenous prisoners.

That figure is particularly troubling, said Mr. Sapers, considering Indigenous prisoners spending long terms in SIU cells are more prone to deteriorating mental health. Sixteen per cent of Indigenous prisoners held in SIUs for 16 or more days showed a decline in mental health. That rate was 11.4% for the non-Indigenous prison population.

Multiple studies have found that the harms of segregation are particularly acute for young people. Yet, 38% of Indigenous prisoners in SIU cells were 29 or younger, according to the panel.

"If you have a younger population who have probably experienced a number of early childhood adverse events, and then layer on top of it the most restrictive and isolating form of custody, neuroscience would suggest that we shouldn't be surprised that their mental health would be deteriorating in these forms of custody," said Mr. Sapers.

CSC says it is actively working to improve conditions for Indigenous prisoners. Earlier this year, it created a new position, Deputy Commissioner for Indigenous Corrections, which has been given the responsibility of improving relationships with Indigenous peoples.

A CSC spokesman said SIUs are used as a last resort and in a culturally sensitive manner.

"Before authorizing the transfer of an Indigenous inmate to an SIU, CSC considers their Indigenous Social History and seeks to identify culturally appropriate alternatives in consultation with Elders or Spiritual Advisers," said spokesman Jordan Crosby in an e-mailed statement.

Mr. Crosby said Stony Mountain Institution in Manitoba built a sweat lodge and cultural room for its SIU prisoners, and staff at B.C.'s Kent Institution developed a painting program for Indigenous inmates in its SIU regimen.

"Results indicate that our efforts are yielding positive outcomes as Indigenous inmates are more engaged in spending time outside their cell and completing their programs and interventions," he said.

Mr. Sapers, who served as Canada's prisons ombudsman from 2004 to 2016, said he's used to seeing CSC respond to problems with a flurry of plans and priorities.

"But at the end of the day, we don't see dramatic changes in outcomes," he said. "The jury is out. It's not to say that CSC isn't putting effort into meeting these challenges, it's just to say I need to see the evidence that the work is gonna pay dividends."

Patrick White  
Globe and Mail  
May 28, 2023

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When you are doing time,  
you have the time to realize  
how art can keep you free.

- Welmon Sharlhorne

A drawing - whether it becomes a window,  
a mirror, a weapon, or a tool - is always also  
a lifeline.

- Andrea K. Scott

I am in a beautiful prison from which  
I can only escape by writing.

- Anais Nin

If I don't speak,  
this silence is also going to kill me.

- Rehana Hashmi

Woman says she was left homeless and nearly trafficked when 2-day sentence ended 11 months in jail

*An Inuk woman says she was left vulnerable and nearly trafficked within days of her release from jail - showing the Manitoba justice system needs an overhaul, an advocate says.*

Jessica LeBlanc spent 11 months at the Women's Correctional Centre in Headingley, awaiting her court date, where she was sentenced to just two days for resisting arrest.

She was released on a Friday after 5 p.m. and said there was no transition or release plan made for her.

"They repeatedly release women to nothing," she said. "Just out on the street with a bus ticket."

While in jail, LeBlanc, 29, was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was on medication, she said. She left jail with no money, no health card, no prescription for her mental illness and nowhere to safely spend the night.

"They had not given me the money from the job that I had as a trustee in the jail," she said.

"I had three days of the [medication] that they had provided me in jail, which they had stated was mandatory, and I had the clothing that I was arrested in."

She said she was dropped off with a bus ticket in Unicity that evening and was left to fend for herself.

"It was very concerning that they would release someone so late at night and especially on a weekend, when there's no business hours for any [mental or social] services in the cities," she said.

Homeless shelters were an option but they were already full by the time LeBlanc got downtown.

4 days on the street

She spent the next four days sleeping on the streets.

Within days, she had been picked up by a man who took her to a hotel, where they spent a week before he took her to live in an abandoned home for another three weeks.

She believes he was trying to sell her into the sex trade.

She eventually found a safe space after seeing a St. Boniface Street Links van driving around and calling for help.

They helped her find housing and a part-time job, and she started to get her life back on track.

LeBlanc said she never could have imagined she would end up where she is.

She is a university graduate and before the COVID-19 pandemic, she was working and travelling the world.

When the pandemic hit, she got kicked out of her apartment and was couch surfing to stay off the streets.

If it happened to her, it could happen to anyone, she said - and she wants the justice system to change before another woman ends up hurt or dead.

Marion Willis said LeBlanc's story is too common.

"I think about the murdered and missing Indigenous women's files, and when you really think about Jessica's situation and just how vulnerable she was made when she was released, it's not hard to understand how so many women go missing and sometimes meet their demise," Willis said.

LeBlanc was continually failed by a system that should have protected her, she said.

Many of LeBlanc's legal issues happened because she struggled with undiagnosed and untreated schizophrenia, Willis said, but instead of getting treatment in a proper facility after she was diagnosed, LeBlanc remained behind bars.

During those 11 months, no one looked ahead to make sure there would be supports in place for her when she was released, Willis said.

"[She] ends up being made extremely vulnerable by the very system that is charged with upholding the safety and security of all citizens, including Jessica," she said.

Willis said her team has worked with too many people who are left with no plan after they serve their time. Ultimately, it leads to people becoming homeless, living in encampments and often falling back into the wrong crowd and reoffending or becoming targets, she said.

"The system, in the end, often forces the most vulnerable women to seek safety in the most dangerous places and with people that are also dangerous, and that's a big part of Jessica's story. That's shameful," she said.

"The justice system set her up to actually be exploited and to even be killed on the streets, and that's the piece that gets me."

The province would not comment on the specifics of LeBlanc's case, but a spokesperson said



*Manitoba Corrections staff work closely with inmates on their release plans.*

#### Release plans

The spokesperson said inmates are released from custody with medication to allow for transition to primary care, but Corrections does not provide prescriptions as there is "no longer any ability for the justice system to supervise or provide medical care."

The release plan includes shelter options and support in the community, the spokesperson said in an email.

"This includes working with inmates to get them a Manitoba health card or with another jurisdiction to provide options for a primary card upon release."

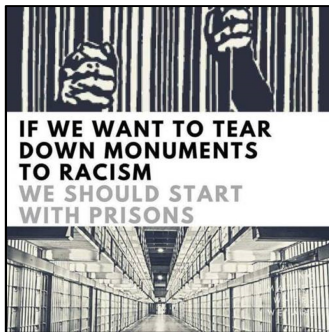
However, LeBlanc said that never happened.

The spokesperson added that Manitoba Corrections does not help inmates find housing at a shelter, saying "once they are released they are free. There are other social supports in place but once they are released, they are like every other Manitoban."

Brittany Greenslade

CBC News

Jul 18, 2023



My silences have not protected me.  
Your silence will not protect you.

- Audre Lorde

Those who do not move,  
do not notice their chains.

- Rosa Luxemburg

#### Untitled

As we live our lives  
Scurrying – without a moment to relax  
Time slips through our fingers  
Like so much melted wax  
In a world where 'Hurry up!'  
Is a constant refrain  
Make every second count –  
Only the moments remain

- KEW

#### Criminals

If you're not at work, school, or program  
You don't belong out in the yard  
Between the hours of  
9am - 4pm

So go to your house  
And please don't misbehave  
For if you do, you'll get a charge  
Then you'll have a fine to pay

No giving tattoos, or piercings,  
Or trading of your drugs, they'll say  
Follow our rules  
And all will be okay

For some this is easy  
Quite easy to do  
For others though, breaking the rules  
Seems to be their thing to do

In the end though  
We're all the same here  
Criminals at heart  
For that's what got us here in the start!

- Jessica Seymour

No matter how old a mother is,  
she watches her middle-aged children  
for signs of improvement.

- Florida Scott Maxwell

What you have become is the price you paid  
to get what you used to want.

- Mignon McLaughlin

Black Canadians suffer racism in the justice system. Efforts are needed to address it

We're all familiar with the popular depiction of *Justitia*, the Roman goddess of justice: With a scales in one hand and a sword in the other, Lady Justice's eyes are covered with a blindfold, a powerful metaphor for the idea that justice is blind, that it's delivered without regard to one's personal status.

Except the blindfold originally represented the exact opposite. Initially intended as a criticism, the blindfold was added, possibly by 15th century artist German Albrecht Durer, to signify that Lady Justice was ignorant of the injustice inherent in the system.

That seems a more apt metaphor given the results of Canada's first Black Canadian National Survey, released last week by York University's Institute for Social Research. The survey, which canvassed the opinions of thousands of people between March 2021 and August 2022, reveals that Canadians of all ethnicities believe our justice system is rife with racial bias.

Perhaps most disturbing, 90% of Black Canadians said that racism in the system is a serious or very serious problem, while 82% of Indigenous people felt similarly. And roughly two-thirds of Asian Canadians and other non-white people agree.

Distrust of the justice system is, however, not limited to members of visible minority groups, as 65 per cent of white people believe racism is a serious problem.

Interactions with the police undoubtedly influenced Canadians' views of the system, and those interactions were by no means equal: While just 5% of white Canadians reported being stopped unfairly by the police, that number rose to 22% for Black Canadians and 10% for non-white and Indigenous people.

And while men of all ethnicities reported higher rates than women, Black men fared the worst, with nearly one in three across the country, and in Ontario, reporting an unfair stoppage. In the coastal provinces, more than 40% of Black men had the same experience.

Lorne Foster, York University's Research Chair in Black Canadian Studies and Human Rights and one of the co-authors of the survey report, calls those numbers "stunning."

Certainly, we don't know what led respondents to believe the stoppages were unfair. But we do know that other data confirm the results of the survey - and some of those other data come from the police themselves.

Indeed, just over one year ago, then Toronto Police Chief James Ramer announced the results of a review of police reports: Black people weren't just overrepresented in contacts with the police; they were 60% more likely than others involved in police contact to experience police use of force.

And the racial disparity in use of force remained even when controlling for other factors, such as the type of offence investigated, the number of times the subject had had previous contact with police, and whether the police believed the subject possessed a weapon.

After eliminating these other variables that could explain the disparity, only one remains: Race.

Ramer acknowledged as much, stating "there is systemic discrimination in our policing," and he apologized "unreservedly." Now an apology is a good start, but it's only a start, and must be followed by comprehensive action.

To be sure, the police aren't alone in their disparate treatment of Black Canadians and other racial minorities. Police are, inevitably, singled out given their role on the front line of the justice system.

But they're not the only ones guilty of bias. Much has been written, for example, about the gross overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prison, and Black people are similarly incarcerated at disproportionate levels.

When it comes to the justice system, then, racial bias is a systemic problem. And rectifying that will require not just apologies, but a concerted, thoroughgoing effort to eradicate the racism that threatens the very ideals animating and inspiring our system, and our society.

You can see those ideals, in physical form, at the Supreme Court of Canada in Ottawa. Flanking the entrance are two statues: *Veritas* (truth) and *Justitia* to the east. But this Lady Justice has her eyes wide open. This is the ideal we must work toward now, a justice system fully aware of its own injustices, and resolutely committed to eliminating them.

Star Editorial Board  
Jun 22, 2023

## Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI)

*Book Clubs for Inmates (BCFI) is a registered charity that organizes volunteer-led book clubs within federal penitentiaries across Canada. Currently, BCFI is facilitating 30 book clubs from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.*

*BCFI runs French and English language book clubs for men and women incarcerated in minimum, medium, and maximum security facilities. Book clubs are usually made up of 10-18 members who meet once a month to discuss books, both fiction and non-fiction of literary merit.*

*Every month, hundreds of inmates participate in book clubs across the country and each year thousands of brand new books are purchased, read, and discussed.*

Book Clubs for Inmates  
720 Bathurst St.  
Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4

## Prison Radio

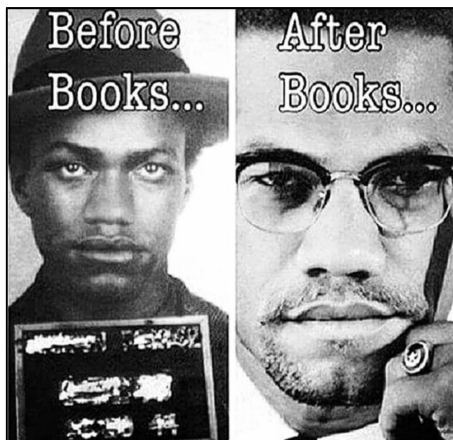
- Halifax – CKDU 88.1 FM  
Black Power Hour – Fri 1:30-3 pm  
Youth Now! – Mon 5-6:30 pm
- Montreal – CKUT 90.3 FM  
PRS – 2<sup>nd</sup> Thurs 5-6 pm & 4<sup>th</sup> Fri 11-noon
- Guelph – CFRU 93.3 FM  
Prison Radio – Thurs 10-11 am  
Call-in 519-837-2378
- Vancouver – CFRO 100.5 FM  
Stark Raven – 1<sup>st</sup> Mon 7-8 pm
- Kingston – CFRC 101.9 FM  
Prison Radio – Wed 7-8 pm

*This program features content produced by CFRC volunteers and by other campus and community radio broadcasters, including CKUT Montreal's Prison Radio and Vancouver Co-op Radio's Stark Raven programs.*

*The last Wednesday of each month, CPR features 'Calls From Home', sharing letters, emails, voice messages and music requests by and for prisoners and their loved ones.*

*Prisoners and their loved ones are invited to contribute music requests, messages and suggestions for the program.*

*Write: CPR c/o CFRC, Lower Carruthers Hall,  
Queen's University, Kingston, ON, K7L 3N6  
Email: CFRCprisonradio@riseup.net  
Call: 613-329-2693 to record a message or  
music request to be broadcast on-air.*



I have often reflected upon the new vistas that reading has opened to me. I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. As I see it today, the ability to read awoke inside me some long dormant craving to be mentally alive.

- Malcolm X



### Toll-Free Support Line for SK Prisoners

*For prisoners in Provincial jails & Federal prisons in Saskatchewan.*

*Funds will be used to help inmates purchase call packages to keep them connected to their family, help out with canteen for necessary things & for transportation home. Maintained by prisoner advocacy groups Beyond Prison Walls Canada and Inmates for Humane Conditions.*

☎ 1-866-949-0074 ☎

### Jail Accountability and Information Line (JAIL) for prisoners in OCDC

*The Jail Accountability and Information Line takes calls from prisoners and their loved ones from 1:00pm to 4:00pm Mon to Wed. This line tracks issues experienced by people incarcerated at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre.*

☎ 613-567-JAIL (5245) ☎

### Jail Hotline for MCC, OCI, TEDC, TSDC & VCV

*The Toronto Prisoners' Rights Project (TPRP) provides prisoners with free links to advocacy, referrals, information, and support through the Jail Hotline. This hotline is run by volunteers. It will take calls on:*

**Monday - Saturday  
9-11am & 2-4pm**

☎ 416-307-2273 ☎

#### Why a Jail Hotline?

*Prisons and jails carry out human rights abuses every day because they do not think anyone is watching. We are here in solidarity and struggle with prisoners.*

#### Who Should Call This Hotline?

*Please share the hotline with your loved ones inside. We cannot accept calls from other prisons or jails or from people in the community.*

*If you need to contact us outside of the line, you can message us on social media or an email to:*

**TorontoPrisonersRightsProject@gmail.com**

### NEW! Jail Hotline for EMDC

**Mon - Wed - Fri - Sat  
9-11am & 2-4pm**

☎ 519-642-9289 ☎

### Prison Visiting Rideshare Project

*The Prison Rideshare is an ongoing project of Bar None to connect people with rides to visit their friends and loved ones who are in prison in Manitoba.*

*If you or someone you know is interested in getting a ride to visit one of southern Manitoba's prisons, if you are interested in volunteering, or for more info contact: barnone.wpg@gmail.com*

*Rides can also be arranged by phone or text message: 204-599-8869 (It's ideal to request a ride at least 5-7 days in advance).*

### Incarcerated in Canada? Need Information?

*Write On! is an all-volunteer group whose goal is to support prisoners in Canada by researching the information you need, such as:*

*General legal info, prison rules & policies, resources, programs, services, etc.*

*Write to us at:*

**Write ON!  
234-1110 Cumberland St,  
Toronto, ON, M5R 3V5**

*In 2020, the most recent year for which data is available, about 77% of people in Ontario's jails were in custody awaiting trial.*

### Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP)

*"Reading aloud is the single most important thing a parent or caregiver can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning"*

*"Reading is the gateway to future success in life and in school"*

BCFI's commitment to the successful re-integration of inmates and to stronger, healthier communities includes the development of Children of Inmates Reading Program (ChIRP). The mandate of ChIRP is to build and enhance a healthier parent/ child relationship, develop literacy and listening skills, increase vocabulary and attention spans for children and promote a presence of a parent and books.

For the past 10 years, Carla Veitch, a children's educator, has been successfully developing and operating a parent/child reading initiative. Twice a month, Carla, along with another volunteer, enter the institution and offer men the opportunity to select a book for their child and then read that book into a recording device. The book and recording are then mailed to the child.

This initiative provides a direct connection for the child with his or her incarcerated parent. In addition to the opportunity of hearing a parent's voice, the reading initiative underscores the value of reading and the importance of books. For a number of the participants, reading aloud to their child has not been part of their pattern of parenting, nor was it modeled for them as part of their early childhood years.

Children are never responsible for their parents' choices. At the same time, they are the hidden victims not only in the justice and correctional system, but also within our larger community.

Book Clubs for Inmates  
720 Bathurst St.  
Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4  
[www.BookClubsForInmates.com](http://www.BookClubsForInmates.com)

I postpone death by living,  
by suffering, by error,  
by risking, by giving, by losing.  
- Anais Nin

Don't agonize. Organize.  
- Florynce Kennedy

### Penpal Program for Gay, Queer, Trans Prisoners

The Prisoner Correspondence Project runs a penpal program for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and queer prisoners in Canada, pairing them up with gay and queer and trans people outside of prison for friendship and support.

We also coordinate a resource library of information and resources related to health, sexuality, and prisons - get in touch with us for a list of resources we have, or for details.

If you want to be paired up with a penpal, please send a short description of yourself & interests to:

Prisoner Correspondence Project  
c/o QPIRG Concordia  
1455 de Maisonneuve W.  
Montreal, QC, H3G 1M8

Please indicate French or in English. Veuillez  
svp nous indiquer anglais ou en français.



### Nov. 20 is Transgender Day of Remembrance

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR), is an international event commemorating people killed due to anti-trans violence. In the last year, 375 trans or non-binary people have been killed globally.

And it's a Canadian problem too: 74% of trans youth in Canada have been harassed at school, and 37% have experienced physical violence.

## Facts about HIV and HCV

*With some exceptions, HIV and HCV infection is generally more prevalent among women than men in prison, particularly among those who have a history of injection drug use.*

*In a study of provincial prisons in Quebec, the HIV and HCV rate among incarcerated women was, respectively, 8.8 and 29.2 percent, compared to 2.4 and 16.6 percent among male prisoners.*

*In a study of female prisoners in British Columbia (B.C.), self-reported rates of HIV and HCV were 8 percent and 52 percent, respectively.*

*In a 2007 nationwide survey by CSC, the HIV and HCV rate among federally incarcerated women was 5.5 and 30.3 percent, compared to 4.5 and 30.8 percent among federally incarcerated men. Aboriginal women reported the highest rates of HIV and HCV, at 11.7 and 49.1 percent, respectively.*

*While the majority of women in prison are voluntarily tested for both HIV and HCV, the provision of pre- and post-test counselling has been reported to be poor, and in some cases, non-existent.*

*Women in prison are more likely than women in the general population to have faced violence and abuse; therefore, counselling accompanying HIV diagnosis is particularly important. Women in prison have concerns about the privacy and confidentiality of their HIV status.*

*Women have reported being forced to draw unwanted attention. Women (37.0%) reported being HCV-positive. Aboriginal women were identified as a particularly high-risk group because they reported the highest rates of HIV (11.7%) and HCV infections (49.1%).*

*These data highlight the need to ensure that culturally appropriate, effective interventions that decrease risk-behaviours and increase utilization of harm-reduction measures are offered to meet the needs of Aboriginal women.*

## Important Hep C Update!

New treatments with excellent success rates are now available!

*These are in pill form and have little or no side effects. The downside is the cost of course: \$1000+ per pill.*

Vosevi is a combination of sofosbuvir, velpatasvir and voxilaprevir. These three drugs are combined into one tablet. It is taken once a day with food for 12 weeks.

Federal Prisoners: Great news, now you can start your treatment while inside!

Provincial/Territorial Prisoners: Only BC & ON provide treatment. Elsewhere, you will have to wait till you get out.

- When released, get right on welfare or disability.
- Federal health care programs like NIHB & IFH may cover costs.
- Go to a Clinic and get your blood test done so you can get into a Treatment Program at no cost to you.

There are 2,700 with chronic hep C in Federal prisons.

There are 4,380 with chronic hep C in Prov/Terr prisons.

All Federal prisoners with hep C are now eligible for treatment.

BC & ON Prov prisoners with hep C are now eligible for treatment.

Hep C = 18-30% of prisoners  
HIV = 1-5% of prisoners

Do Not Share or Re-Use:  
needles, ink, ink holders, rigs,  
- anything in contact with blood! -

**BLEACH DOES NOT**  
**KILL HEP C**



K.I.P. Canada - Family Visitation

*Kids with Incarcerated Parents (K.I.P.) was founded in 2011 to support the needs of the over 15,000 children in the Greater Toronto Area that have a parent in the criminal justice system.*

*K.I.P.'s Family Visitation Program provides weekend transportation from Toronto to correctional facilities in Southern Ontario for children and families to visit imprisoned loved ones.*

*During our trips, K.I.P. provides free snacks and refreshments, offers a variety of games and activities, and plays movies.*

*Our bus is a place where youth and families have a chance to talk about their experiences of having a loved one inside and receive support from mentors and other riders.*

*Our Family Visitation Program is free for anyone 18 years old and younger. If you are interested in participating in our program, please call or email K.I.P. to register today.*

*For more information or to book a seat on the bus please contact Jessica or Derek Reid by email at:*

*info.kipcanada@gmail.com  
or by phone at: 416-505-5333*

## A Child of an Incarcerated Parent

### The Reality

- Every year over 150,000 adults are remanded into custody which results in approximately 180,000 innocent children who suffer from the traumatic effect of parental incarceration
- Over 5,000 children are impacted by parental imprisonment in the GTA
- The number of children affected by parental incarceration only increased with the passing of the Crime Bill C-10

### The Need

- Despite the growing prevalence of these innocent victims the resources available are minimal
- The cost and lack of accessibility to correctional facilities restrict child-parent visits. Consequently, some children can never visit their incarcerated parents

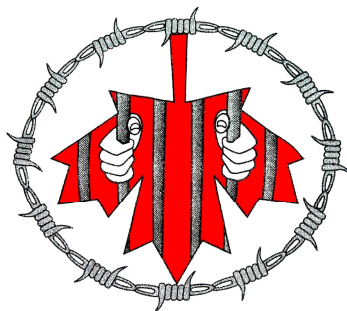
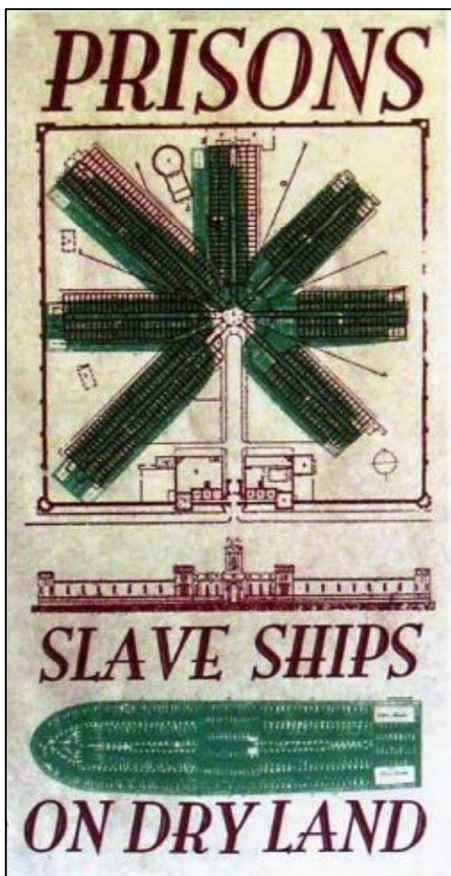
### The Impact

- Children of incarcerated parents grieve the loss of their parent
- These children are four times more likely to be in conflict with the law
- Social stigma of incarceration causes some families to avoid discussing the absence of a parent

Research suggests that parental incarceration has a detrimental impact on children. These innocent children suffer the traumatic experience of being separated from their parent. Following parental imprisonment, children are faced with a myriad of challenges including:

- feelings of shame, grief, guilt, abandonment, anger
- lowered self-esteem
- economic instability
- social stigma and isolation
- disconnection from parent
- insecurity in familial and peer relationships
- school absenteeism, poor school performance
- difficulty in coping with future stress & trauma
- compromised trust in others including law enforcement

[www.kipcanada.org](http://www.kipcanada.org) ~ 416-505-5333



Women's Prison Network  
Fall 2023 - Issue #32

PO Box 39, Stn P  
Toronto, ON, M5S 2S6

*visit, download, print, donate:*

WomensPrisonNetwork.org  
info@WomensPrisonNetwork.org

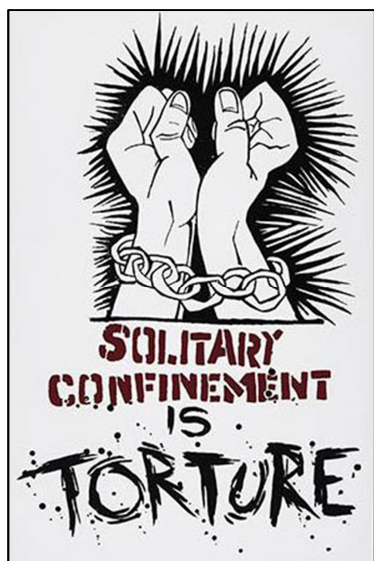
> Mar > Jun > Sep > Dec >

Winter Issue #33 is mailed out:

Dec 1, 2023

Send in your work before:

Nov 1, 2023



## PRISONERS JUSTICE DAY

🌀 In Remembrance 🌀

- August 10 -

There are more than 200 Unnatural  
Prisoner Deaths in Canada.

- Each and Every Year -

We maintain a PJD 'In Remembrance' page  
on our website for Prisoners who have died  
in Federal and Provincial Prisons, Remands,  
Lock-ups and Parole in Canada.

If you wish to have someone remembered  
there, send us a note or email and we will  
honour your request.

PJD@PrisonFreePress.org