

THE WORD IS OUT

: a newsletter of the Prisoner Correspondence Project

Winter 2011-12, Issue 7

First off, we'd initially intended for this to get to you just before the holidays (hence the card). There were a few logistical difficulties along the way, so our apologies.

For this issue, we bring you updates on some of the political legislation and legal decisions that have recently come up or are coming down the pipeline. Some of it's good, some of it's bad, and some of it's just plain ugly.

In addition, we bring you a (rather large) second installment of our interview with out prison activist and former prisoner Laura Whitehorn. Her thoughts range from HIV prevention work, to social vs. political prisoners, to the state of the Left today. It's a fascinating read, and we hope you get as much out of it as we did.

As always, if there's stuff you'd like to see included in the newsletter (like your art, hint hint) don't hesitate to get in contact. Until then,

Your Friends, In Solidarity and Struggle,

The Prisoner Correspondence
Project

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SINCE WE'VE BEEN GONE

Well folks, it has been awhile since we've been gone and what a while it has been. To be honest friends, what we've mostly been busy with here in Montreal is the basic up-keep of things. This summer was a wild one, with the postal strike (we <3 CUPW) lasting all June, we were inundated with letters for the rest of the summer. So our backlog of pen-pal and resource requests from inside members is due to both this increasing amount of mail that we received over the past few months as well as our limited internal capacities. While we are all so jazzed that there is continues to be so much interest in the project, we are also struggling to catch up. Until we have a handle on the requests already in our possession, we have decided that, unfortunately, it is beyond our capacity to accept new pen-pal requests. However, if you've already completed the initial form letter, but don't have a pen-pal, don't worry, we are completing all out-standing requests. Bear with us and please don't be discouraged. This fall we recruited new and enthusiastic volunteers, and we are busy coming up with strategies for how to manage the growth of the Prisoner Correspondence Project.

Other than trying to keep up with filling your resource and pen-pal requests we have been trying to maintain a public presence in our queer communities. In July we participated in weekly pickets at the United States Consulate in Montreal to support California prisoners who were on indefinite hunger strike in the long-term isolation unit at Pelican Bay, trying to win some modest improvements to their conditions. During Montreal's fourth edition of Pervers/cite, our annual alternative pride festival, we screened the film, RELEASED: 5 Short Videos about Women and Prison. This film by Alex Juhasz about queer women and prison made some profound statements about women, prison, artistic collaboration, and the nature of documentary media. In an attempt to participate in Prisoner Justice Day on August 10th, one member of the Prisoner Correspondence Project was featured in a radio interview on Prison Radio to raise awareness about the project. Finally, just to conclude August on a politicized note we co-hosted an evening of discussion and letter writing for California prisoners.

The event featured background information and analysis on the 3-week hunger strike that swept 13 of California's 33 prisons this July 2011, an update on where the prisoners' campaign was going and letter-writing to hunger strike participants.

In September two enthusiastic members of the project facilitated a new workshop called "Penetrating the General Population - the crim-

inalization of HIV" during the training of volunteer sexual health educators at local youth organization, Head & Hands. This workshop was an interactive and discussion based session that situated current social and political debates over HIV disclosure within the history of criminalization of HIV/AIDS.

October had us busy renewing our budget and attending to all things fiscal-related, not to mention training our new volunteers and organizing our first of, hopefully, many open-house afternoons.

More recently, in November we presented our "Kings, Queens, Criminal Queer" workshop at Queer McGill. This workshop and discussion charts the legacy of criminalization on queer and gender nonconforming communities. It outlines the legal status of queerness throughout history, and the implications these histories have for queers and trans people today. The workshop provides an opportunity for participants to talk about experiences of marginalization within the current legal landscape in Montreal / Quebec / Canada, while providing an overview of local organizations that respond to processes of criminalization and a conversation about strategies of intervention. To bring cheer to this otherwise dreary month we threw ourselves a dance-party fundraiser. "So Homo" was a raging success, as we managed to raise much needed cash and awareness about the project while shakin' it on the dance floor. Finally, we're co-presenting a book launch with Certain Days, the political calendar committee and Kersplebedeb Publishing as well as QPIRG Concordia of "Captive Genders: trans embodiment and the prison industrial complex". This event featured a presentation by a trans guy incarcerated in Joliette (a Montreal area women's prison) speaking about his experiences in a gender-segregated prison environment, selected readings from the Captive Genders anthology, excerpts from the Prisoner Correspondence Project's article Imprisoned Pride, featuring the voices of currently incarcerated queer prisoners, speaking to their experiences behind bars and words from Amazon Contreras, a jailhouse lawyer, trans activist and prisoner at Corcoran, California.

**Us. at So Homo
Rae, Josh, Andrea,
Cason, Marty, Kristin,
Cee, Claire, Noam,
Kim, and Julia**



OMNIBUS CRIME BILL

So there's a really bad thing happening in Canada right now. It's called Bill C-10, or the Safe Streets and Communities Act. It's unapologetically punitive, and it comes from Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative (kind of like Republicans) majority government that got elected last May. Harper and his buddies believe that "the Canadian people" feel unsafe, and that the only way that these Canadians can feel safer will be to mandate longer prison sentences. For the last couple of years, Harper has been promising to be "tougher on crime," and has been building prisons all over Canada accordingly.

It's been a nightmare.

The fact that the Conservatives have a majority in Parliament right now is significant, because it means that they can pass whatever they want through Parliament, and the votes of the opposition parties will be too few to stop it. The first thing that the Conservatives promised to pass when Parliament's session started in September was a mega-bill that combined nine awfully punitive bills into one, called an "omnibus" bill or Bill C-10. It contains the following bills:

The Protecting Children from Sexual Predators Act

Formerly Bill C-54, this act would:

- Establish new mandatory minimum penalties for existing offences related to child exploitation
- Increase maximum prison sentences for four of these offences (to reflect their "particularly heinous nature")
- Create two new offences: 1) to ban anyone from providing sexually explicit material to a child for the purpose of committing a sexual offence against that child, and 2) to ban anyone from using any means of telecommunications (e.g. the internet) to make arrangements with another person to commit a sexual offence against a child

The Increasing Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act

Formerly Bill S-10, this act would:

- Provide mandatory minimum penalties for serious drug offences when they are carried out by organized crime or target youth
- Increase the maximum penalty for the manufacture of drugs in Schedule II of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (like marijuana) from seven to 14 years
- Move date-rape drugs and amphetamines to Schedule I, thus resulting in higher maximum penalties

Protecting the Public from Violent Young Offenders Act

Formerly Bill C-4, this act would:

- Make the protection of society the primary objective of the Youth Criminal Justice Act
- Ask the Crown to consider adult sentences for youth convicted of serious violent crimes

The Ending House Arrest for Property and Other Serious Crimes by Serious and Violent Offenders Act

Formerly C-16, this act would:

- Propose amendments that would restrict the use of conditional sentences (like house arrest) for offences like manslaughter, arson, sexual assault and drug trafficking, among others

One of the most controversial elements of the bill is in the "Increasing Penalties for Organized Drug Crime Act," in which the Act will establish mandatory minimum sentences for "serious drug offences." The bill regards the possession of even 6 marijuana plants to be a serious drug offence. Outrageous, right??? Many prestigious organizations (Canada's Medical Association, Bar Association, etc.) have all come out condemning this aspect of the bill.

The things that people are talking about most in the mainstream media are cost, and proof. The Conservative government has refused time and again to estimate how much this crime bill will cost, in terms of prison housing. But one thing's for sure, this bill is going to be hugely expensive. All that Conservative spokespeople can say is that "it will cost less than having unsafe streets." Not a very satisfying financial estimate. In Canada, people who get sentenced for less than 2 years go to provincial prisons. A lot of the increase in prison populations will hit provincial prisons hard. So the federal government gets to vote on this bill, and the provincial prisons will be paying for it. So at this point, the provincial governments of Quebec and Ontario have stepped up and are saying they refuse to pay for it!! Word is still unclear on whether they can constitutionally do so

But what matters more than cost is how monumentally fucked up these bills are, and how they will increase the amount of people going to jail, and the amount of time they will be in jail for. Let's take a couple of examples: one proposed change to the Violent Young Offenders Act is to "simplify pre-trial detention rules to help ensure that, when necessary, violent and repeat young offenders are kept off the streets while awaiting trial." In other words, it's going to be more and more common for youth to be held in remand prior to trial rather than be out on bail. In other words, they're either going to have an overcrowding problem or they're going to have to build more jails. Or take a provision in the so-called Increasing Offender Accountability section, allowing police to arrest someone without a warrant when they think the parolee is breaking their conditions. This will, obviously, make it all the more easy for cops to jump to conclusions, arrest someone when they feel like it, and have them wait around in jail while the injustice system can figure out whether they really did break their conditions. Again, more people in jail, for longer.

In Canada, Native people make up 19% of the prison population while they comprise only 3% of the national un-incarcerated population. When asked whether these harsh new laws would apply to Native people too, Conservative politician Rob Nicholson said, "they apply to everyone in Canada." But obviously, that's not true. They will most apply to the people who are already at risk in the system, who are already the most fucked over by racist and colonialist profiling.

Hopefully, there will still be room for judges to make rul-

ings that sneak around the legislation. That is how judges have always dealt with legislation they don't like, and there are many liberal judges out there who are smart enough to find ways to subvert these laws.

There is no proof that crime is on the rise, as the Conservatives say it is. In fact, there are piles of statistical evidence showing that crime is actually on the decline in Canada. What do Conservatives say in response to this? This is what Stephen Harper said in a public address in 2008: "Some try to pacify Canadians with statistics. Your personal experiences and impressions are wrong, they say; crime is really not a problem. These apologists remind me of the scene from the Wizard of Oz when the wizard says, 'Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain.' But Canadians can see behind the curtain. They know there's a problem. And they know it was caused by a generation of lawmakers who embraced the bizarre notion that the rights of criminals outweigh the rights of law-abiding citizens."

This is who is leading the country. Someone who compares facts to wizardry. Who only cares about personal experience. Well, we have to make him see that prisoners have personal experiences too. And nobody's rights are more important than others'.

There have been national and local campaigns to fight Bill C-10, and people are very hopeful that Quebec and Ontario's official refusals to implement the bill will kill it in its tracks. We really hope so too.

QUEER CHEERS FOR CALI

Hayy, Cali, hayyy!!! Transgender folks living in California have two wins with the new Gender Nondiscrimination Act (AB 887) and Vital Statistics Modernization Act (AB 433)!

The Gender Nondiscrimination Act now openly states that gender identity and expression are protected at work, school, medical facilities, housing, and in general public spaces. Before this new version of the law, anti-discrimination laws regarding trans people were unclear and many folks weren't sure what rights they actually had, and how/where they were protected. This law makes it clear that any discrimination experienced in these places is illegal.

Before the Vital Statistics Modernization Act, anyone trying to obtain a court-ordered gender change would have to receive approval by a judge to determine whether or not they underwent 'clinically appropriate treatment' to justify the legal change. This new law removes judges from the process of decision-making and states that 'appropriate treatment' is to be determined between the person and their doctor, not the judge. As well, this law allows for transgender immigrants in California to apply for a legal gender change while simultaneously applying for asylum in the U.S, instead of waiting for the usual one-year review period. Go California! Now onto the other states... (From ColorLines: "Score! A Transgender People's Victory in the State of California")

The Increasing Offender Accountability Act

Formerly Bill C-39, this act would:

- Keep the families of victims better informed about the behaviour and handling of offenders
- Authorize police to arrest, without a warrant, any offender who appears to be breaking their release conditions

The Eliminating Pardons for Serious Crimes Act

Formerly Bill C-23B, this act would:

- Replace the word "pardon" with "record suspension"
- Make certain people ineligible for a record suspension, including those convicted of sexual offences against minors and those convicted of more than three offences

The International Transfer of Canadian Offenders Back to Canada Act

Formerly Bill C-5, this act would

- Propose amendments to the International Transfer of Offenders Act, which would establish additional factors in deciding whether an offender would be granted a transfer back to Canada — particularly if he/she was likely to endanger public safety or otherwise engage in criminal activities

The Supporting Victims of Terrorism Act

Formerly Bill S-7, this act would:

- Permit victims of terrorism to sue the perpetrators or supporters of terrorism, including foreign countries that the Canadian government has listed as having provided support to terrorism

Protecting Vulnerable Foreign Nationals against Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation Act

Formerly Bill-C-56, this act would:

- Make it possible to deny work permits to people who are vulnerable to abuse or exploitation, including exotic dancers, low-skilled labourers and victims of human trafficking

INSITE TRIUMPHS

Insite is a safe injection site located in the downtown east side of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Since opening its doors in 2003, Insite has provided a safe and supportive space for people to use and inject drugs.

The clinic is a place where people can connect to health care services in general as well – from primary care to treat disease and infection, to addiction counselling and treatment, to housing and community supports.

It is North America's first legal supervised injection site, and it has its enemies! The Bush Administration, Canada's Conservative federal health minister, and the RCMP (Canada's federal police force) have all published statements that Insite should be closed and condemned for its open policy toward drug users.

There have, however, been piles and piles of scientific research indicating that Insite helps people stay safe while doing drugs. And finally, on September 29, 2011, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled unanimously that the Insite clinic can and should stay open. On top of that, the Court ordered Canada's health minister, Leona Aglukkaq, to allow other injection sites to open when they applied to do so.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's awful Conservative government is unhappy with the decision, and has said that it will carefully review it. But the Supreme Court supremely doesn't care! Insite triumphs!

GAY HOMOSCOPIES, OR, HEY, WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you are looking more adorable than ever before! And, it's not just because you are an astrological baby, it's because the stars are really working for you these days. My advice, Aries, is to really use your childlike charms to your advantage. Get what you deserve. Baby your way into every opportunity this winter and you will stay warm, sweet, and gold.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Cosmic forces are aligning in your favour Taurus! Congratulations. Everyone knows you are strong, solid, and a pure catch (queerly!), but in the coming weeks, you will get everything you want without really having to try. Watch out, though, because while things might fall quite easily into your lap, you will have to let that fine lap of yours safeguard and cherish all that it receives. Take nothing for granted and you will live without astrological regrets.



Gemini (May 21-June 21)

Dear Gemini, if you were a penguin, you would actually be a pair of penguins, frocking in the gay snow in all combinations of gender arrangements, fairy dust rainbows, flying swans, and homo bliss. Your penguin partners, however, might soon get tired of all your tuxedoed attention seeking domineering and overwrought antics. What I'm suggesting, Gemini, is to move further from Mars and to really CHILL OUT. Draw on your introspective side to get you through the winter, you will still come out on top in the spring.

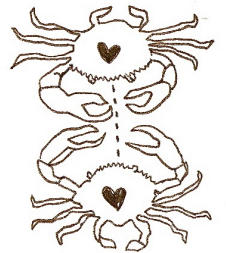
Cancer (June 22-July 22)

Dear Cancer, with each rotation of the sun and with each new moon, you become lovelier, hotter, babelier, and more romantic. What I'm saying here, Cancer, is that everyone around you is likely fighting for the slightest piece of your Cancerian pie. Don't give it up too easily (not that you would). Balance the attention of others with the needs of yourself and you will be twinkling and sparkling all winter long.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo! Why are you so effing magical? What is it that you keep doing with Saturn that makes us all turn into tiny ballerinas in pink tulle and little slippers with a flawless bun whenever we so much as think of your face? You have us all spellbound Leo. All I ask is that you keep us that way. Without you we won't ever make it to spring.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, your slight but quite winning neurosis is quite a turn-on these days for everyone in sight. And, since you love making lists, I will make one for you in exchange for all the dirty thoughts you've given me over the past couple of retrogrades. Ready? 1) You are perfect 2) Believe in Perfection 3) Make a list of all the things in your life that make you feel gay 4) This list will be perfect. Perfect like you.

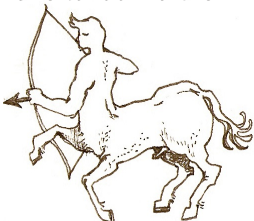


Libra (September 23-October 24)

Every Libra is different, but there is one thing you all have in common: you're hot. Seriously ****ing attractive. Heads turn when you enter a room. Strangers are captivated by your graceful presence and charming demeanor. You love the attention, Libra, and you deserve it. Remember this as the winter chill descends and you're tempted to put away your flirty fabulousness until next spring. Don't quit cruising just cuz there's snow in the streets.

Scorpio (October 24-November 22)

Your classic characteristics, Scorpio, can be summarized in three words: intense, intriguing, and intuitive. The smoldering sensuality that you exhibit year-round is evidence that you've got the first two down pat. But as the sun moves out of your sign and into Sagittarius, you may have to look further inward for illumination. In short: remember to trust that gay ol' gut of yours!



Sagittarius (November 23-December 21)

My first queercrush was a Sag. I found myself enamored with her ambition, talent, and stunning good looks... but equally intimidated by them. I never mustered the courage to confess my feelings (though she might have gotten the hint by the time we finished drunkenly making out on her birthday). The point is: you may be unaware, but your fierce Sagittarian fire draws people to you like homos to a Madonna song. You've got more babes daydreaming about you than you can possibly know.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You'll be hitting your stride near the end of December, Capricorn, and your momentum will have you prancing gaily into the New Year. When the weather outside is dull and dreary, rainbows will radiate from within you. If you're in the habit of making New Years resolutions, may I suggest they look something like this:

*take more lovers; make more friends;
be even more magnificent than ever.*

You'll have no trouble sticking to them.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Ok seriously, Aquarius? You are overwhelmingly rad. Because you're so brainy, creative, compassionate and determined, you can't help but excel in all of your endeavors. You dance in the drag show AND sew the sequin-y costumes. However, even the most energized Aquarians need a little downtime. Being busy seems to make you shine bright, but don't forget to save some glimmer and shimmer for yourself.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

It's shaping up to be a long winter, Pisces, but you are poised to survive it swimmingly. At first it might appear as though ice is forming over the surface of your love life, but don't dismay! Things are heating up down below. In fact, a steamy gay whirlpool is headed your way - to catch you up and take you for a real spin. Once Mercury moves out of retrograde it's all going to happen. You'll sea!



FEATURED RESOURCES: TJLP AND CATIE

Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois

TJLP is a rad Chicago-based organization providing "free, zealous, life-affirming, and gender-affirming holistic criminal legal services" for folks on the inside and outside in Illinois. Their legal services aim to help low-income and street based transgender and gender non-conforming folks who are disproportionately singled out by the criminal legal system. TJLP also provides educational information, resources, and trainings for lawyers and social service providers. They also run a monthly name change mobilization at the Daley Center (Cook County Civil Court) to help folks through the process of changing their names in Cook County.

To contact TJLP you can call 773.272.1822, email info@tjlp.org, or mail them at:

The Transformative Justice Law Project of Illinois
2040 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647

While TJLP can only provide services for folks in Illinois, they respond to every letter they receive and will try to refer you to other helpful resources/organizations if you aren't eligible for their services. TJLP also provides a detailed list of allied organizations and online resources for general information, "how to" guides, and sex work/er rights. If you have access to the Internet (or a penpal who does), check out their website for more information: www.tjlp.org.

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange

CATIE is a Canadian organization that provides free, confidential information about all aspects of HIV and hepatitis C—prevention, medications, nutrition, supplements, side effects, and complementary therapies. If you have any questions at all regarding HIV and hepatitis C, you can call them toll free (within Canada) at 1.800.263.1638, or long-distance from the U.S. or Canada at 416.203.7122, or you can email them at info@catie.ca.

If you are in Canada: CATIE's publications can be shipped to you directly from CATIE, free of charge. You can call them at 1-800-263-1638 or write to them at the address below in order to get a list of their publications (it's very long!), and to order the publications free of charge!

CATIE
555 Richmond Street West, Suite 505
Toronto, Ontario M5V 3B1

Unfortunately CATIE only ships to people incarcerated in Canada. But we can request CATIE's resources and mail them to people in the U.S, as we've already begun doing. It will just, unfortunately, be a slower process. So if you're in the States, write us asking for CATIE's resource list, and once you've received it from us you can let us know which resources you'd like to receive. Then we'll order the resources for you and mail them to you!

For those of you with internet access, CATIE's website address is: <http://www.catie.ca/en/home>

RESOURCE LIBRARY

All resources are provided free of charge to prisoners. To request resources, please send us a list clearly writing the name and how many copies of each item you would like to receive. If you are requesting more than 5 or 6, they will be sent in batches over several weeks so please indicate which are the highest priority. As always, if there is something you would like to see in the resource library that is not there, don't hesitate to ask and we will do our best to track down a copy.

Emotional Self-Care

Support (Sexual Abuse & Survivorship)

In a time when sexual assault and abuse are an increasing problem; even in so-called radical and punk communities, and when most women have been sexually abused in one way or another, Cindy Crabb (Doris Zine) brings us a document showing ways to prevent sexual violence and support survivors of sexual abuse.

Taking Care of Your Body and Mind

A pamphlet on safer slashing / safer cutting in prison put out by PASAN

Survival in Solitary: A Manual Written By and For People Living in Control Units by California Prison Focus A collection of writing, poetry, and information about coping with solitary confinement and life sentences

Trying to Understand Self-injury

A short zine written by Black Ice Press, about disassociation, and the reasons why folks might choose to use self-injury to cope

Safer Sex

Beyond Appearances/Au Dela des Appearances For prisoners, sex workers and other "high risk" communities, on HIV/AIDS issues, including prevention. Pour des prisonniers/eres, des travailleurs/euses du sexe et les autres communautés a risque elevee, sur le VIH, y compris la transmission.

C it's No jKoke: Hep C/C'pas un Joke: Hep C A guide explaining how to transmit Hep C, including tips on safer tattooing, sex, and drug use. Un guide en expliquant comment transmettre le Hep C, y compris la tatouage, le securisexe, et les drogues

Queersafe A zine (not specific to prisons) about safer sex for queer men and women, different sexually transmitted diseases, and taking care of specific body parts put out by Head and Hands in Montreal

Turnover: A Collection of HIV Prevention Comics Turnover, through comics and illustration, explores issues of youth and HIV transmission, barebacking, and

physical and emotional wellness.

Risk in Prison Two articles written by Matthew Jones (incarcerated) and Liam and Bridget from the Prisoner Correspondence Project (non incarcerated) talking about the concept of "risk", and "risky sexual behavior" in prison

You Improvise to Survive: Addressing Sexual 'safety' for Queers Inside and Outside of Prisons A short compilation put together by the Prisoner Correspondence Project of the first submissions we received for the Fucking without Fear resource series.

What if I'm HIV positive? A general, non-prison specific resource about what you should know if you test HIV positive

Safer Barebacking (not prison specific) An article about how to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV/AIDS and other STD's/STI's when fucking without condoms

VIH y el joint (Spanish only) A basic resource sheet put together by PASAN about reducing the chance of transmitting HIV in prison

The Bottom Line (not prison specific) A gay man's guide to anal health: how the ass works, what it does, how it relates to other parts of the body, and how to get maximum pleasure from sex with minimal pain or damage.

Hepatitis C Infosheet Basic information on the virus

Hepatitis C Peer Support Group Manual (non prison specific) Tips and tricks for starting a support group

Hepatitis C Pamphlet Newly diagnosed, the basic facts, treatment options

Reading This Can Save Your Ass Safer rimming tips

Getting Together-Use Your Head When Giving It Safer blow job tips

AIDS and Hepatitis C: Straight-up Facts / HEP C Tipsheet A one-page overview of how you can transmit, and, avoid transmission of Hep C and HIV/AIDS in prison.

50 Things You Should Know About HIV & Safer Sex (abstract)

Living with HIV

What Causes / Defeats AIDS AIDS Project Los Angeles, Annual Report 2006.

Living with HIV: Starting Points Informa-

tion on HIV and AIDS, how to stay healthy, what does CD4 count and viral load tell you, next steps

Positively Healthy (not prison specific) A gay man's guide to sex and health in Canada

A Practical Guide to Complement Therapies For people living with HIV

A Practical Guide to Herbal Therapies For people living with HIV

A Practical Guide to HIV Drug Side Effects For people living with HIV/AIDS

A Practical Guide to HIV Drug Treatment For people living with HIV

A Practical Guide to Nutrition For people living with HIV

HIV and Hep C Coinfection Answers some basic questions about living with HIV and Hepatitis C.

HIV Disclosure A legal guide for gay man in Canada

HIV Viral Load Testing Introduces the viral load test and answers basic questions about how it fits into a treatment plan

If We Have To Take Tomorrow Is a collection of writing about same-sex and same-gender desire, and HIV/AIDS by and for gay black men.

To Be Left with the Body This collection, put out by AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA) is dedicated to poetry, prose, and photography written by and for HIV positive folks about the marginalization and criminalization of queer and HIV positive communities.

Corpus: Volumes 4, 5, 6 Corpus, put out by AIDS Project Los Angeles, and Gay Men's Health Crisis, is an HIV prevention publication that brings together health information, politics, creative work, and essays all on issues related to HIV/AIDS, and where health and AIDS intersects with other other issues faced by gay and queer communities: incarceration, racism, policing.

Issue 4 is about women's relationships to gay men and AIDS;

Issue 5 is about rural gay identity and AIDS;

Issue 6 is the International issues, and explores shifting global responses among gay and queer men to AIDS.

The De-gaying of AIDS & Reclaiming Culture / La Deshomosexualizacion del SIDA Available in both Spanish and English, these short essays speak to how

AIDS has been de-gayed, and the effects of this on, among others, prisoners and communities of colour.

Gay Boy Talk: Stopping HIV Infections Among Young Gay Men (Also available in Spanish, Not prison specific) The purpose of this article is to discuss the importance of influencing discourse about homosexuality at the social and cultural levels in HIV-prevention efforts targeting young gay men. The discussion is based on Sexual Stories, a study which sought to understand the interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts in which behavioral risk for HIV infection occurs among young gay men.

Our Events

Imprisoned Pride: How Queer and Trans Prisoners Get Out of Mainstream Pride Movements A zine put together by the Prisoner Correspondence Project (us!) that is a transcript and photos from an event we organized in summer of 2008, during Montreal Pride festivities; an anthology of writing by queer and trans prisoners about pride.

You Improvise to Survive: Negotiating Sexual "Safety" for Queer and Trans Folks, Inside and Out A short compilation put together by the Prisoner Correspondence Project of the first submissions we received for the Fucking without Fear resource series. These submissions were the focus of several workshops and events we have put on with folks on the outside

Beyond Prisons, Towards Community Strategies The transcription of a panel we held in the fall of 2009 on supporting work within and against prisons

Erased Histories: Community Responses to HIV/AIDS The transcription of a panel of different (mostly gay and lesbian) community activists about their work around HIV and AIDS in the earlier days of the epidemic, including how AIDS issues interact with courts, cops, and prison issues.

Building Abolition Futures The transcription of a panel from spring 2010 about how sex offender panic is linked to homophobia and the recent push for sex offender registries

Resource Lists

The Word is Out! Issues 1 to 6 Our very own Prisoner Correspondence Project newsletter. Includes featured resource, prisoner art and writing, callouts for our different projects, and a list of all our services.

Cellcount A general newsletter / list of services and resources offered by PASAN, the Prisoner HIV/AIDS Support Ac-

tion Network. Also includes tips on safer drug use, etc. We will send you the most recent edition, though you can also request backissues (Canada)

Black and pink A monthly Newsletter put out by Black and Pink, a USA based open family of LGBTQ prisoners and "free world" allies who support each other.

A Resource List for the Incarcerated Native American Includes listings for newspapers for Native American prisoners, book program listings, legal resources, and education programs for prisoners (USA)

The Criminal's Handbook A list of halfway houses and re-entry resource across Canada, region by region (Canada)

Bisexual Resource List National organizations that work on issues faced by bisexual communities (USA)

Queer and Trans Zine Resource List A list of addresses and contact information for self-published 'zines

Prisoner Resource Guide Includes primarily books-to-prisons chapters and legal resources (USA)

Prison Book Programs: National prisoner resource List Expanded version of the prisoner resource list (USA)

Locked Out Resource for LGBTQ prisoners (USA)

Stella's Info Pamphlet on their Services (En Anglais et en Français) A resource list of the services offered by Stella, a Montreal-specific sex worker organization.

Resource List for Straight / Non-queer Inmate

Montreal Resource for LGBT Youth Canadian Publication for Prisoners List of Prisoner Correspondence Resources

Legal Resources

TGI Justice Project A brief overview of the programs and services offered by the Transgender, Gendervariant, and Intersex justice project, and how to contact them (USA)

The Sylvia Rivera Law Project An overview of SRLP, its mandate and programs, and ways to contact them for more information (USA)

Jailhouse Lawyer's manual A handbook of legal rights and procedures for use by people in prison. 36 chapters informing prisoners of their legal rights and how to secure these rights through the judicial process.

Pennsylvania Legal Aid and Pro Bono Organizations Resource List

The Criminal Handbook: for Being on the Punitive End of Justice This self-published book was written and sent to us by C Watts, who is currently serving

his sentence in Southern Ontario. The book covers all of the ins and outs of the Canadian criminal justice system, from specific information about how arrest warrants work, to legal aid, to basic rights of prisoners like phone-calls, to the different levels of security levels in Canadian jails.

Tattooing

Tattooing and You: The Safe-guards Within Prison Walls A pamphlet / guide on safe tattooing inside prisons, things to consider, and materials to use

Think Before You Ink Prisoners perpetual calendar

Drug Use

My Crack Kit/Mon Kit Crack A short guide (pamphlet size) showing how to safely use crack, and reduce the risk to your body and your lungs. Un guide démontrant comment utiliser du crack, en minimisant les risques et le dommage au corps et aux poumons.

Trans Health Information Project: TIP Guide to Hormones and Self-injection

Guide DOPE: Travail du Sexe, Drogues, Alcool et Autres Substances (Français seulement) Un guide (non particulier au milieu carcéral) comprehensif au sujet de la reduction des mefaits en utilisant les drogues et des autres substances

Safer Shooting A postcard with short descriptions about how to shoot up safely with injection drugs.

Be Kind to Your Veins A guide to caring for your veins while fixing in prison, where to shoot up, etc, put out by PASAN

Keeping Fit A prisoners guide to syringe care, cleaning your needles, and what to do to take better care of your body while shooting up in prison

L'injecteur Un outil de promotion de la santé et de défense de droits fait « Par et Pour » les personnes qui consomment des drogues. Au-delà des thèmes relatifs aux infections transmissibles sexuellement et par le sang (ITSS) et aux drogues, l'Injecteur aborde d'autres sujets qui intéressent les personnes UDII, comme: la culture, le cinéma, l'art, l'histoire, la spiritualité, l'alimentation, le sexe, la santé etc.

Coming Out/ LGBTQ Identity

African Americans Coming Out A basic, non-prison specific guide to coming out for gay and lesbian African Americans

A Resource Guide to Coming Out (Not prison specific)

FTM International: The Chest Issue The organizational and resource issue of the

magazine FTM International, includes resource list for female-to-male trans folks
Trans Factsheets and general information about trans identities and terminology
Intro to Intersex Activism: A Guide to Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Allies A short guide for people who are interested in knowing more about intersex identities and intersex activism

Out of the Closets and Into the Libraries: A Collection of Radical Queer Moments A 'zine put together archiving different moments in queer / gay history and snapshots of queer struggle (not prison specific)

Tim Tum, A Trans Jew Zine Concentrates on the struggle with being a transgender young man, issues of identity, and visibility among both queer and heterosexual groups. Highlights being a boy in Jewish American culture, and the struggle for identity when interfacing with normalizing power that attempts to gender you inappropriately.

Making the Lives of Transsexual People Visible: Addressing the Politics of Social Erasure An examination of how social institutions and theoretical approaches have led to the erasure of transsexual (people who identify as members of the other gender) and transgendered (a broad term for a range of groups that do not fit into the current two-gender system) experiences and begins to counter this through developing research and a detailed analysis of the forms of marginalization and oppression facing transsexual and transgendered people.

Sex Que(e)ry Que(e)ry is a collaborative zine on queerness, sexuality & gender. It was made at the University of Chicago

Bent Bars From our sister org in the UK, a compilation of stories or coming out in prison

Getting Together The ins and outs of dating & relationships for gay and bisexual men.

Shoutout Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia, and Heterosexism A booklet designed to educate young people on issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. Included in the publication is a series of autobiographical stories describing the first-hand experiences of those challenged by these issues, as well as educational information and resources.

Hormones

Hormones Without a Doctor A comprehensive guide to street hormone use / hormone use without a doctor. Includes a pill and patch identification guide, what dosage to take pills, and other general tips about safe hormone use. Mostly MTF

Gender Anarchy: A Translesbigay 2 Spirit Zine Issues March 2007 or December 2008 A short zine put together by US

transsexual prisoner about trans issues and hormone access in US and California prisons

TranzLezbos A short zine, including poetry, for transsexual lesbians, put together by trans lesbian prisoner Lofofora, who is on the inside in California.

Hepatitis C and Hormone Therapy (Aussi disponible en français) A pamphlet about how you can transmit hepatitis C while injecting hormones (not specific to prisons)

MTF Hormone Therapy / Traitement Hormonal Homme a Femme Some basic information about taking hormones for people who are thinking of transitioning male-to-female

FTM Hormone Therapy / Traitement Hormonal Femme a Homme Some basic information about taking hormones for people who are thinking of transitioning female-to-male

FAQ on Transitioning / Questions Frequentement Posees sur la Transition de Genre A basic guide that answers frequently asked questions about transitioning, hormone use, and gender transition

Tracing this Body & New Flesh Struggles An article about kink and radical politics written by a trans woman

Smut

Penetration A short story about fisting
Meatus: A Pornzine for Queers Outside the Box A collection of erotic writing about gay bio men

Reversed Seduction Short erotic fiction by longtime correspondent and contributor premothea. A younger female inmate develops a plan to seduce her beautiful friend with a titillating surprise ending

Read Me a Story New pieces by Pro-methea

Women & Feminism

Pocket Guide for Women Living with HIV (Not prison specific) A pocket guide for HIV-positive women that provides up-to-date information in plain language about a wide range of issues often faced by women with HIV. Topics include healthy living, nutrition, getting care, treatment basics, relationships and pregnancy. It also addresses street drugs and touches on hepatitis C co-infection. (by Positive Women's Network)

Corpus: volume 4, Corpus, is an HIV prevention publication that brings together health information, politics, creative work, and essays all on issues related to HIV/AIDS, and where health and AIDS intersects with other other issues faced by gay and queer communities: incarceration, racism, policing.

Issue 4 is about women's relationships to gay men and AIDS;

Never Innocent: Feminist Trouble with Sex Offender Registries and Protection in a Prison Nation (by Erica R. Meiners) Using recent work by anti-prison theorists and community-based activists who are working against the prison industrial complex, this article links prison abolition to feminist frameworks to question escalating sex offender registries and community notification laws that are the state's response to sexual violence against children and women.

Tenacious Art and writings from women in prison

Women Prisoners' Resource Guide A list of addresses and contact information for incarcerated women.

One Woman's Struggle By Kebby Warner, a short zine about one woman's struggle with the DOC, medical neglect, and about being a mother

Women in Prison: How It Is With Us Author, Assata Shakur was a member of the Black Panther Party who went underground to evade police repression, joining the Black Liberation Army. She was captured in 1973 and held as a political prisoner until 1979 (one year after this article was written), when she was broken out of prison by a unit of the Black Liberation Army. She made her way to Cuba where she lives to this day, despite increasing pressure from the United States for her extradition.

Sex Work

Audacious: The Reality of Being a Transsexual or Transvestite Sex Worker / Audace: etre Transsexuelle ou Travestie, 'est Loin d'etre des Drolleries qui Nous Amusent a la Tele dans la Serie Cover Girl An article written by a member of the Prisoner Correspondence Project about her experiences as a transsexual sex worker dealing with the Montreal policing, court and prison systems.

Hey Girls! Safer Sex for Sex Workers / He les filles! Le Securisexe pour les Travailleuses du Sexe

Send Requests to:

Prisoner Correspondence Project
c/o QPIRG-Concordia
1400 de Maisonneuve Ouest
Montreal QC
H3X 1M8
CANADA

INTERVIEW WITH LAURA WHITEHORN PART II

In the last issue, we brought you the first part of an interview with prison activist Laura Whitehorn. Since the 1960s, Laura Whitehorn has been active in anti-racist and anti-imperialist political struggles. Laura joined the Weather Underground Organization and later spent over 14 years in prison for a series of property bombings that protested racism and the imperial policies of the U.S. government. She's been an out lesbian most of her life and, since 1999, she's been out of prison. Laura now works at POZ, a magazine for HIV-positive people.

PCP: From the time you started editing POZ magazine, what sort of shifts or developments have you seen in HIV/AIDS-related prison justice work? How have shifts in the AIDS activist movements outside of prison had an effect on the kinds of work we are seeing happening (or not happening) inside prisons?

LW: That's really a huge question. But first of all, to say that I edit POZ magazine makes it sound like I am the editor which I'm not, I'm just on the staff. It was started by men with HIV in 1994. Or at that point they had AIDS. [Note: Poz magazine can be read online at www.poz.com.]

But anyway I think there are a number of ways to answer that. One way is that because there are now medications that allow people to live instead of dying these horrible deaths immediately after your immune system fails, that has changed AIDS activism across the board. Number two, a lot of the AIDS activism on the outside is about pressuring and working with drug companies and the federal government and state governments trying to get – in the United States there's something called AIDS Drug Assistance Programs, or ADAP, which pays for medication for HIV when people can't pay for them themselves.

And there are huge waiting lists now for ADAP in many states, because of course that is not where federal funds are going. So that's a huge issue about poor people in the US, and how they can afford their meds. So a lot of activism has to do with that.

But there's another field of activism that is not exactly what you're talking about but is related, which is activism against criminalizing HIV transmission. I was part of starting some consciousness raising about that in 2000. I collected all the cases that I could find of people who had been prosecuted or sent to prison for "criminal transmission of HIV" and I did a survey of them. And as much as I could find out of 101 cases – which is all that I had time to find before the magazine came out – only 5 of those 101 cases even had a possibility of transmitting HIV. I mean, people were being prosecuted for things like spitting, or like having sex with a condom, or being positive and getting a blow job. And that is still going on now. And in the United States finally – you know we're now 11 years after that article came out – we're finally seeing some organizing around trying to stop using criminal statutes to prevent HIV transmission and instead using public health education.

So that's one area that I think might start to interest people on the outside who have HIV in the issues facing prisoners. But as you know – I knew this when I was in prison and I know it now that I'm out, you know I've known it all my life – people don't want to see what's going on behind bars if they don't have a family member, if they haven't been in prison themselves. So it's a constant effort.

However, in the field of HIV activism there actually is more attention to people in prison than in other areas of activism that aren't specifically prison-

centred. People who are activists around HIV or Hep C on the street are actually more likely to include prisoners in their consciousness and in their work than people who are working on some other issue, say global warming or something, where they don't even think about how the environment impacts people who are in prison. And that has continued at a slow pace.

But there's some really great work in the United States, for example in Philadelphia there's a group that started as ACT UP that has always had a component that was people in prison with HIV. So they have all these programs that are about what people do when they get out of prison if they have HIV. It's called Philadelphia Fight, and they have a program called Project Teach. So I don't know, I think it's a very mixed bag. There's not a lot of real militant activism in general in this country at this point in history, and that's reflected in the lack of HIV-related prison justice work in the larger Left. Also, one other thing I want to say is that, when I got out of prison, all of the political prisoners, my codefendants, all the people I met, all the people still inside who are political prisoners did some form of AIDS work because it's part of social justice work. And when I got out of prison, I expected that people in the Left in the United States would mention HIV, the disproportionate impact on poor communities, on African Americans, you know, etc., etc., as part of their analysis about the state of imperialism and colonialism in the United States at this moment. And it wasn't happening and it's still not happening. It's seen as a separate issue, and people don't understand it as a political issue. And that's a big problem which reflects how the broader Left sees the issue of prisons.

PCP: We are in the process of developing safer-sex resources that address the restrictions in prisoners' ability to practice safer sex in prisons, and the kinds of strategies people have developed to gain autonomy over their sexual health.

We do some technical work to get facts from various outside health organizations, but we then write callouts and send them into prisons to solicit prisoner experience and knowledge

about conditions in prison. How do you think that groups like ours can make their HIV/AIDS prevention work more relevant to the prison context?

LW: Well, I assume that you guys go in and visit prisoners. And I think that's the best way to do it, is to go in and talk to prisoners. I don't know what the prison system is like in Canada but in the United States it's really complicated because every prison has its own rules. For example, I've visited a number of people in the New York state system, every prison is different in terms of like what guys are allowed to get in the mail, and you know, what's available on the commissary. And one of the things that we found when I was inside, was I was going crazy trying to find what could be used that was a lubrication that didn't break down latex. You know because we could get from the medical department latex gloves, examination gloves. That was so easy. But then, you know, when you're having sex you want to lubricate the thing. And we could not find out from anyone – they would tell us all these things that we couldn't get. We couldn't buy hand lotions that didn't have mineral oil in it, and things like that. And so we had to figure it out for ourselves. And we finally found something by accident when someone was having surgery -- there was something for doctors and patients who were allergic to latex to use. It's called Surgilube, and the clinic had it in little packets.

So I think the main lesson of it was that the prisoners themselves are the ones who have to help with this and that you have to do that by visiting, by discussing and understanding what they want and need in their situation. If safer sex education is to have any meaning, it has to be adapted to –and by – the people who will be affected. I remember some really great discussions about safer sex in prison where I learned things about my fellow prisoners' lives on the outside, and then we could have talks that could actually be helpful to their ability to protect themselves from HIV and other STIs once they were released. And the same was true for treatment: we were able to talk helpfully about how to avoid going off meds, or returning to harmful patterns of behaviour, after release,

because we weren't telling the other women what to do, we were working it out together. When my friends from outside tried to help with our AIDS awareness and support work inside, it was the same way. They needed to let us design the plans based on the conditions we lived in. Otherwise, the plans would be useless. Any education and organizing has to be guided by the conditions and wants and needs of the community to whom it's addressed. Listening is the first step.

PCP: In doing prison justice work, we've noticed that there can be a divide between political prisoner and "social" or "non-political prisoner" support work. For instance, our group focuses on supporting queer folks on the inside, and our mandate does not specifically include a political prisoner focus. What are your thoughts on this divide, and how prison justice or prison abolition groups have been organizing within this framework?

LW: That's another one that's been a thorny issue. My own position is that if you talk about political prisoners in a way that makes it sound as if we experience things that social prisoners don't, "we get our mail separate," that kind of thing, which I have seen leftists do when they talk about political prisoners, then if I were a social prisoner or a social prisoner organizing group I wouldn't want anything to do with that because it is elitist bull. All prisoners are subject to all kinds of security procedures that make life inside unpleasant. But there are many similarities between people's situations, firstly if you look at how people became prisoners in the first place and how much, for example, the people who are political prisoners began our organizing in many cases organizing around prison conditions - before we were in prison.

You know I was organizing around Attica and the New York state system 20 years before I went to prison. The divide gets created I think because of a need to focus and allocate resources. And I think it's just a matter of people opening up their minds to what it means to be a prisoner and what it means to be a political prisoner. It's really not that different, except that in some cases when you're a political prisoner you have it harder

because you're singled out for certain kinds of security treatment, and in some ways you actually have it easier because very often if you represent a political community you have the support of those people.

I always say that in my analysis you can not talk about political prisoners and social prisoners separately, because for example in the United States, social prisoners, now, represent the government's response to the struggles of the 60s. Because that was when you saw a huge rise in the number of people incarcerated in this country and the reason was to terrorize communities. Communities were flooded with drugs, which was largely done by the police and the government, and then locked up in huge numbers so they can't be on the streets going against conditions in their communities. Then you lock up the people who are ideologically trying to deal with those social issues, or are leaders of the struggles, and you take away the leadership and so therefore you leave communities that are incapable of struggling for their rights because their brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers are in prison, and the leaders of the political organizations are in prison.

One other thing though is that I think it's really important for people to get to know each other and for people not to use these categories as abstractions, but to think about who we're talking about. Because when you're doing queer work it's important to recognize that there are queer political prisoners as well. Also, Julia Sudbury who's a professor now in California at Mills College wrote a really interesting paper about how the cutting edge political issue in terms of prisons right now is about transgender prisoners of colour and I really recommend that article. It's called Maroon Abolitionists: Black Gender-oppressed Activists in the Anti-Prison Movement in the U.S. and Canada. The language is a little academic, but the whole concept is the fact that the queer community has changed, and that one of the most threatening things to the system right now might not be lesbians or gay men it might be transgender queers. And so a lot of those people I think who are transgender can be active against the projects on the outside and then end up going to prison and play a political role.