

At the third gathering in Montreal in 1987, ICOPA changed its focus from prison abolition to penal abolition. This important change and distinction has affected the work of many justice advocates since that time. Why the shift from prison abolition to penal abolition?

Ideological and practical concerns arose from our focus on prison abolition. Within the offender-focused ideology there was little concern for redress of the harms done to them. As well, many people concerned with victimization opposed the principle of prison abolition based on their concerns about 'the dangerous few'. Their arguments were spoken with a passion that was convincing. (Friend Ruth Morris addressed these concerns in her pamphlet *What about the Dangerous Few?*)

Several years ago I was invited to a gathering and feast hosted by the Native Brotherhood. I remember vividly the excitement I shared with my children as we entered and were greeted with hospitality and care. There was singing and dancing and a wonderful meal. Elders spoke and coffee was shared. While we realized we were being carefully monitored by Correction Officers, there was a feeling of friendship and warmth, of trust and safety in the room. My children were being spoiled by many of the men I had known and worked with in AVP for many years.

At one point I found myself with a few people - some prisoners, some volunteers - lightly bouncing ideas around, sharing discussion and stories about children, and about silly encounters with 'the system'. Someone commented that 'insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome' (an idea fostered by Einstein) and our conversation turned to the question: "Who understands punishment more fully than prisoners?" I turned to a quiet man. I'll call him Peter. He is one of the most punished prisoners in Canada, someone well known to many people in Corrections. Peter had served more than 25 years inside, most of those years spent in either a Maximum Security Prison or "The SHU" - a super-maximum unit used to incarcerate, separate and torture the most 'difficult' prisoners.

"Punishment. You know something about that, right Peter?" I said. He sat quietly for a few moments, then turned towards me and spoke words I hope I never forget. "Punishment?" He said, "If punishment worked, I'd be St. Peter by now." I continue to honour Peter for this teaching. It articulates the need for

penal abolition more clearly than any philosophical discussion. Punishment just doesn't work to lead us to a safer, more compassionate family, neighbourhood, or nation.

Philosophers, practitioners, and ex-prisoners at ICOPA decided that their concern for justice was more clearly expressed as opposition to the social and societal use of punishment, as a means of addressing crime. Punishment at any level strives to inflict harm upon someone who has harmed. It uses retribution and revenge as its motivators, implying that humans, whether children or adults, learn best through the imposition of pain or suffering. Punishment as a practice calls us to inflict pain or harm upon another. It does not honour The Divine within.

While harm and conflict will continue to be a part of the fabric of human experience, responding with punishment or prisons only adds to collective and individual pain. It challenges us to imagine and adopt creative and compassionate responses when we inflict, experience, or witness hurt. There must be integrity between justice processes and the desired outcome. We want to work to heal harm. Justice cannot be reached through additional hurt and injustice.

Quakers Fostering Justice is striving alongside other justice advocates for penal abolition. Some of this work is accomplished through partnership with other faith communities. Together we work to educate Friends, legislators, those who work in the field, and the public about our vision of justice. Our hope is that Quakers in Canada will understand the continued evolution of our concern - from prison abolition to penal abolition.

We also consciously work to advocate for the needs of those harmed by crime, by listening to and by working on their concrete concerns for safety and healing. We witness their lamentation, offer companionship, or facilitate when they request reconciliation and restitution. We know that we have a great deal to learn from those who have been hurt. They are capable and wise, and with support are the best at determining what they need so they and the community can move toward peace.

Friends will continue to imagine and adopt creative responses to harm. We will work to lift up and meet the needs of those most hurt by harm. We will continue to work toward the implementation of prisons that honour both the need for security and the need for