



ACTION UPDATE

APRIL 2017

LAST MONTH, ONE of my colleagues showed me a piece of art that made my jaw drop. It's made up of eight dazzling panels, separated by borders of fingerprints (see photo on this page). The piece was created by prisoners at the California Institution for Women, as part of JDI's new art program.



The vast majority of prisoners have endured serious trauma — before they were locked up, while inside, or both. JDI's art workshops are a safe place for them to work through that trauma, often for the first time. Take Je'Anna, who was able to release the pain she had kept bottled up for decades. "The art became a window for me," she said. "I was able to look at the outside world without feeling like a failure, to believe that I will be able to return to society and succeed."

Too often, the window referred to by Je'Anna is a one-way mirror. Prisoners look to the outside for support, for affirmation, but get nothing in return. They feel invisible.

At a time like this, when seemingly insurmountable political divisions occupy so much of our attention, we must make an effort to see and honor those who are the most easily forgotten.

At JDI, we will never stop fighting for the right of prisoners to be safe. And I know that you won't either. Thank you!

Lovisa Stannow
Executive Director

A Moment to Heal While Inside

A JDI Project Helps Prisoners Find Peace and Build Community through Art

A PRISONER AT THE California Institution for Women (CIW), Je'Anna sometimes feels as if her life runs on a loop. Wake up at 6:00. Head to the chow hall. Watch a bit of TV. Go to work. Stand for count. Dinner. Count again. Lights out.

Je'Anna's day has followed this same routine since she arrived at CIW in 2015. Except today. On this particular afternoon prison does not seem at all dull or monotonous to Je'Anna. She's seated around a table with eight other prisoners; the table is a colorful mess, with assorted art supplies everywhere. One of the women takes an orange glob of clay, rolling it into several

thin strands, which she applies to the top of a mask that has eyes, a nose, and mouth.

"Check out my new haircut," she says. The woman next to her cracks up, and the laughter becomes contagious, drowning out the music in the background. But for their prison-issued denims, you might think they were at a party in someone's home.

The mask-making activity is part of a new JDI program that brings art into CIW, thanks to a partnership with A Window Between Worlds (AWBW). AWWB is a nonprofit organization that uses art workshops to help people who have been affected by trauma. After participating in AWWB's leadership

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Thanks to JDI, women at CIW are processing trauma by creating art — like the above canvases, made collaboratively by eight prisoners.

Making South Africa's Prisons Safe

WHEN WE ESTABLISHED a sister organization in Johannesburg — Just Detention International-South Africa (JDI-SA) — the goal was to build upon our long history of successful advocacy there.

That's exactly what has happened. Since opening its doors in 2011, JDI-SA has trained scores of corrections officials on keeping prisoners safe, published a paradigm-shifting report on violence behind bars, and, with other civil society partners, launched an online storytelling platform to share survivor accounts.

Last month, JDI-SA racked up its most impressive win to date when the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) — which runs South Africa's prisons — finally committed to rolling out a nationwide policy to address prisoner rape.

Drafted almost a decade ago by JDI, senior DCS officials, and Sasha Gear — then with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and now JDI-SA's Program Director — the *Policy to Address Sexual Abuse in DCS Facilities* is rooted in human rights principles and recognizes DCS' duty to protect prisoners. While having a policy won't in itself end prisoner rape, it provides a roadmap for doing so. For example, it calls for quality rape crisis services and increased protections for LGBT prisoners.

Isak knows better than anyone that these safety measures are sorely needed. He was raped over and over again while awaiting trial in a prison in the Western Cape. The staff knew that Isak, who had never been locked up before, was in danger. Yet no one — not even the medical staff — lifted a finger in support.

JDI had survivors like Isak in mind when we first floated the idea of developing a national sexual abuse policy. DCS' top brass was open to it, and worked closely with us on a draft. But when several key officials left DCS, our momentum ground to a halt.

Instead of giving up, we did what committed advocates do when confront-



Isak, prisoner rape survivor and advocate.

ed with a seemingly intractable challenge. We kept fighting. With our efforts stalled at the national level, JDI-SA embarked on a project to test the policy at one prison: Leeuwkop Correctional Facility, in Johannesburg.

The strategy worked. Using the national policy as a template, JDI-SA is helping to create a sea change at Leeuwkop. Previously, staff lacked a basic awareness of sexual abuse; many felt uncomfortable even discussing it. Now, thanks to JDI-SA's on-site workshops, Leeuwkop has a team of officials who are deeply committed to keeping prisoners safe. They have increased their confidence in talking about sensitive issues — among themselves and with prisoners — and built skills in preventing sexual abuse, and responding when it occurs.

Because of the progress at Leeuwkop, DCS finally felt ready to start implementing the policy nationally — with JDI-SA's help. DCS' embrace of the policy comes too late for Isak. But Isak is celebrating this victory. His priority now is ensuring that no one else ever has to live through that pain. As Isak told JDI-SA, "The greatest tragedy is not what happened to me in prison. The greatest tragedy will be for me and us to fail to stop this from happening to others and to forget about those who are still at risk of violence."

A Moment to Heal While Inside

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training, JDI staff are adapting the art workshops, for the first time, to a prison setting.

Je'Anna and her peers gather for a workshop where they draw, sculpt, and make collages. These art workshops offer more than a respite from the grind of prison life; they give participants a gentle way to process painful feelings, develop a sense of self-worth, and build hope for the future — even while incarcerated. This type of space is sorely needed at CIW, where, as in most women's prisons, the vast majority of inmates are survivors of abuse in the community.

Our aim is to give people a safe place to work through some of their pain and to connect with each other.

"The amazing thing about art is that it lets people express emotions that they might not feel safe talking about with one another," said Desiree Magsombol, a JDI Program Director and one of the workshop facilitators. "It can be dangerous to appear vulnerable and to open yourself up to others in prison. Our aim is to give people a safe place to work through some of their pain and to connect with each other, in an environment that is relaxed and free of judgement."

At the end of the day's workshop, Je'Anna has finished two masks. She explained, "All my life I've been forced to wear a mask to hide my abuse and the shame and guilt the abuse induced." Her first mask represents the negative thoughts she still struggles with as a result of the abuse she has endured in her life — but the second one represents a vision of her inner self as strong, resilient, and nurturing. She's proud of her handiwork. She said, "The workshops bring about clearer awareness that I am not alone in my feelings and that I can feel safe releasing them."

Bringing Holiday Hope Behind Bars

In a Record-Breaking Effort, JDI Supporters Wrote More Than 13,000 Holiday Messages to Prisoner Rape Survivors

EDDIE KNOWS HOW hard it is to spend the holidays behind bars. Serving time in a Florida prison, Eddie has been locked up for more than a decade. He has endured ongoing sexual harassment from officers and other prisoners; fearful of being attacked, he spends most of his days by himself. “I’m afraid to open up to people because the motive behind most of their kindness is linked to a sexual favor,” he told us. “So I stay away and pray for help.”

In previous years, Eddie could rely on care packages from his mother to get him through the holidays. But last May, she passed away. With the New Year looming, Eddie’s loneliness intensified. Every day the call for mail would serve as a painful reminder that he no longer had his mother — or anyone at all — who cared about him.

But then, one day in December, something unexpected happened: Eddie’s name made it into the mail call. When he opened his package, a flood of holiday cards spilled out, each one containing a powerful message of hope. “If you only knew what I just went through, and how I was feeling before I got your package of love,” he wrote. “I cried tears of joy. You made me very happy today. I got mail and

some genuine love. Thank you so much — it’s nice to smile.”

Because of you, hundreds of survivors, like Eddie, were reminded that they aren’t alone. Through our *Words of Hope* campaign, we delivered more than 13,000 holiday greetings from our supporters to survivors nationwide. That’s a JDI record, by a wide margin.

This surge of support also made a difference to Christopher, a survivor of rape in a Louisiana prison. In a letter to JDI, Christopher marveled at the outpouring of compassion. “Those handwritten messages from people around the country are the ultimate proof of support. I can’t believe that I was just sitting in my cell by myself and received something like this.”

Christopher’s appreciation for your heartfelt greetings was echoed by Gregory, a survivor in Illinois. He wrote, “Those words of encouragement brought a smile to my whole heart and soul, which is something I could really use at this time in my life.”

Thank you, JDI supporters, for sharing your compassion with Eddie, Christopher, Gregory, and so many others.



JDI staff and volunteers writing heartfelt greetings to incarcerated survivors at our holiday gathering, held annually in Los Angeles. This year, we delivered more than 13,000 messages to survivors nationwide — a JDI record.

Victory on The Hill!

THERE IS NO DOUBT that, since its passage more than a decade ago, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) has had a profound impact on our prison system. Thanks to PREA, we have a set of groundbreaking national standards for preventing and responding to sexual abuse, which prison and jail staff nationwide are working to put in place in their facilities.

But for all the good PREA has done, it also contained a few glaring flaws. For one, there was no firm deadline for states to comply with the PREA standards. Further, annual reporting requirements for states were minimal; governors simply had to sign a form indicating whether they were in compliance with PREA or not, but not share a full update on their progress. JDI recognized these problems, and we went back to Capitol Hill to fix them. In December 2016 we helped pass a law, the Justice for All Act (JFAA), which will do just that.

JFAA requires states to adopt the PREA standards within six years or forfeit relevant federal funds, patching the loophole that allowed states to put off compliance indefinitely. It also calls for greater transparency into how well PREA is working, requiring states to provide the Department of Justice with annual updates on their implementation efforts. JFAA also creates a one-stop federal clearinghouse for all audit reports — making it easier for advocates to monitor the progress of prisons and jails across the country.

Similar to our efforts to pass PREA, we worked closely with dozens of allied organizations and a bipartisan group of elected officials on JFAA. In particular, JDI applauds the commitment of JFAA’s sponsors in Congress — Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Representatives Ted Poe (R-TX) and Jim Costa (D-CA) — and President Barack Obama, who signed it into law. And we applaud you, our supporters, without whom this victory would not have been possible.

Stop Rape by Police

With Help from Survivors, JDI Seeks to Shine a Light on Sexual Abuse By Law Enforcement

FROM THE MOMENT the cop stopped her, Jayde knew something was wrong. The officer insisted that she was jaywalking, even though she plainly was not. Then he ordered her to submit to a pat search — and that’s when Jayde really got scared. A transgender woman of color, Jayde was aware that just walking at night could be dangerous, and that sometimes it was law enforcement — the people who were supposed to protect her — who posed the biggest threat.

Sadly, what happened next showed why Jayde had every reason to be afraid. The cop groped her repeatedly during the search, all the while denigrating her for not being “a real woman.” Then he told Jayde he was taking her to jail for jaywalking. Terrified, Jayde got in his car.

Over the last few months, JDI has gathered testimony from dozens of survivors of sexual abuse by law enforcement. This effort is part of our new initiative to highlight abuse by officers who have arrest powers — whether an FBI agent, a parole officer, or a cop walking the beat. Right now, our focus is listening to survivors and sharing their stories; our broader aim is to end this violence, and make sure survivors get the help they need.

Launching a project on law enforcement abuse may seem like a departure from JDI’s

longstanding mission to end sexual abuse in detention. But it isn’t. Fighting police abuse fits squarely within our core goals. People detained by a law enforcement officer may not be inside a jail cell, but they are not free to leave. This holds true even when an arrest is illegal, but the person does not feel safe to walk away — or does not know they have the right to do so.

Jayde certainly didn’t feel she could leave. The cop wielded a badge and a gun, and it was late at night, with no one else around. Even if someone saw them, who would believe her word over a cop’s? After handcuffing her, the officer drove Jayde to an abandoned area. He then raped and beat her, before leaving her by the side of the road. He told Jayde that he would hurt her if she ever told anyone about the abuse.

Jayde is far from alone in having suffered sexual assault at the hands of police — though no one knows just how prevalent this abuse is. Unlike prisoner rape, which the government has studied in great depth, there has been no nationwide federal research into sexual misconduct by law enforcement. One of JDI’s advocacy strategies will be to push for such data collection. In the meantime, we will continue to amplify the voices of people who have survived this violence, like Jayde.



Not free to leave: When a person is stopped by a law enforcement officer, even illegally, it can be virtually impossible to get away.

Survivors of Police Abuse Speak Out

JDI HAS LONG relied on first-hand accounts from survivors to guide our efforts to stop sexual abuse in detention. A new JDI initiative to combat sexual abuse by law enforcement will be no different.

Over the past few months, we have gathered testimony from dozens of people about abuse they suffered at the hands of officials who are armed and have the authority to arrest. It is a courageous act to speak out against any sexual abuse, and especially so when the perpetrator wields such power.

You can read some of their stories by visiting our website:
www.justdetention.org/rapebypolice

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