



ACTION UPDATE

DECEMBER 2017

FOR DECADES, SEXUAL assault in the entertainment industry largely flew under the radar. Then the Harvey Weinstein story broke, and it changed everything. Every day, it seems, new survivors are speaking out about yet another sexually abusive man in Hollywood, no matter how influential.



The ripples from the Weinstein scandal are now spreading to other corners of society. We have learned about rampant sexual misconduct in different fields, from media to sports, the tech world to Capitol Hill.

And yet, even in this unprecedented moment of awareness, the sexual abuse that happens in our prisons and jails remains hidden. The people who endure this violence do not have access to reporters, Facebook, or sometimes even a lawyer.

Prisoners are exceptionally vulnerable to abuse, and staff perpetrators literally hold the keys to their freedom, which gives them more power even than a Weinstein.

But there's another reason prisoner rape is not a public scandal on par with abuse in Hollywood: an unacceptable lack of compassion for people behind bars.

We must fight to counter the common perception of inmates as unworthy of respect and dignity. Right now, we have a golden opportunity to do so, and to build an anti-sexual abuse movement that values all survivors equally.

Lovisa Stannow
Executive Director

Imagine a Weinstein with the Key to Your Home

Sexual Assault and Harassment are Dominating the Headlines. But We Must Not Forget Survivors in Prison.

WHEN YOU'RE LOCKED up, reporting to a prison officer who raped you is perilous. The dangers include being beaten up, written up, or thrown in solitary. Rosa, who was sexually abused by staff in two different facilities, faced those risks and much more when she spoke out. One of the abusers, a jail captain, told Rosa that he would move her to a new facility, far away from her young daughter, if she dared file a complaint. It was not an empty threat; his colleagues would go to any length to protect him.

Rosa's experience parallels the accounts from victims of Harvey Weinstein, the Hollywood mogul who is alleged to have

committed dozens of sexual assaults. Like the captain who raped Rosa, Weinstein wielded tremendous power over his victims. He might not have been able to send them to segregation or add years to their sentence, but his authority was such that he could ruin their careers. And Weinstein had his own network of enablers — people who worked behind the scenes to cover up the abuse or simply looked the other way.

At the same time, the violence endured by Rosa — and thousands of incarcerated women like her — is fundamentally different. As JDI's Executive Director, Lovisa Stannow, explained in a recent op-ed for the *Los Angeles Times*, Rosa's abuser was a Harvey Weinstein with the key to her home — except her home

See Weinstein with the Key to Your Home, continued on page 2



In a Los Angeles Times op-ed, JDI's Executive Director, Lovisa Stannow, shifts the spotlight to the thousands of women who are raped behind bars every year. You can read the op-ed at www.justdetention.org/latoped

Strong Leaders = Safer Facilities



With JDI's help, John Barkley — pictured with (left to right) Lt. Iris Chambers, Warden Marian Boulware, and JDI's Cynthia Totten — is changing the attitudes of South Carolina's prison staff.

CONTRARY TO POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS, making prisons safer is actually quite simple. In fact, the way to do it can be summarized in one word: leadership. When prisons are badly run, sexual abuse thrives; when they have capable, dedicated leaders, this violence can be stopped.

That's why one of JDI's core strategies is to identify and support strong corrections leaders — like John Barkley.

As the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Coordinator for the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC), John leads the agency's efforts to keep prisoners safe. It's a job he doesn't take lightly: "My role is just what it says in my title — to eliminate rape within these facilities. If someone in our care feels unsafe or gets hurt, that means we've failed. It's a black mark on our department."

In 2013, JDI launched a project in South Carolina to help ensure that prisoners are safe. Working closely with John, we revamped SCDC's policies, including by making them more responsive to the needs of inmates. Together, we created an investigations protocol where the default is to believe prisoners when they report an assault. After some initial pushback, staff are buying in — and prisoners are noticing. "You don't just earn someone's trust by putting out a policy," John explained. "They've got to see it. I believe our work is paying off. Inmates are coming to us."

John and his colleagues believe prisoners have a rich set of skills and are deserving of respect; as such, they were eager to try inmate peer education. Piloted by JDI nearly a decade ago, peer education is an effective way to build an awareness about how to stay safe — and how to seek help if you are not. Since SCDC's peer education program kicked off, in 2015, a core group of prisoners have run prevention trainings for thousands of people entering the system — many of whom are vulnerable, scared, and unaware of their right to be safe from sexual abuse.

Hearing about these rights, and about the agency's duty to protect them, from fellow prisoners puts many new arrivals at ease. "The impact of this information coming from an inmate is huge," said John. "When inmates hear something from me or any other staff, it's different. They know I'm getting paid to do this."

JDI's groundbreaking project with SCDC — which was funded by a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant — will end next year. But John and his staff are committed to ensuring that the progress they have made endures long after we're gone. And that, in a nutshell, is why staff culture change is so significant. In the future, SCDC staff won't need to rely on JDI's expertise to handle a report of sexual abuse compassionately. Instead, they'll know instinctively that it's the right thing to do, they'll know how to do it, and they'll know that it works.

Weinstein with the Key to Your Home

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was a tiny, windowless cell, far away from anyone who could help.

As a prisoner, Rosa could not get basic health care, let alone speak with a loved one, to help her cope with the trauma. Nor could she easily connect with a journalist who might call attention to her plight, or tell her story on social media. The #MeToo hashtag, which has been trending worldwide, is off limits to prisoners.

This isn't to say that some survivors are more deserving of empathy than others. Sexual assault is never okay, period. Rather, our point is that the fight to end rape must embrace all survivors, and especially those who have been deprived of a voice.

Rosa's abuser was a Harvey Weinstein with the key to her home — except her home was a tiny, windowless cell.

Building an anti-sexual assault movement that is inclusive of prisoners will not be easy. But it is possible. At JDI, we are helping connect thousands of incarcerated survivors with outside rape crisis advocates. We are fighting to ensure that prisons and jails give inmates safe ways to report abuse, so that nobody is faced with the unacceptable options available to Rosa — suffer in silence or report the assaults to your rapists' colleagues.

This is work where our commitment to human rights gets tested. Prisoners, often dismissed as "common criminals," have so little going for them. Many don't naturally trigger admiration or compassion; some have committed terrible crimes. And yet, if every person has equal value — if human rights are universal — choosing to do nothing when faced with government officials raping those in their custody is simply not an option. We must find the courage to care.

“JDI-South Africa Opened My Eyes”

In South Africa, Prison Officials Are Starting to Embrace Their Role in Stopping Sexual Abuse

IN SOUTH AFRICAN prisons, which are plagued by sexual violence, corrections officials have typically treated survivors who come forward with indifference, if not contempt. “Most of the time, the officers would do nothing — some would even laugh,” said Mfundo, an officer at Leeuwkop Correctional Center in Johannesburg. “We thought sexual abuse was just part of prison life. It just wasn’t something we took seriously.”

The type of mindset described by Mfundo is one of the reasons why rape has flourished in South African prisons. When officers don’t even pretend to care about safety, it emboldens predators. But recently, flippant attitudes among staff have started to shift. Officers like Mfundo are recognizing that it is their duty to protect the dignity of all people in their care.

The spark for this change is a landmark JDI-South Africa (JDI-SA) collaboration with the Department of Correctional Services (DCS), which runs South Africa’s prisons. Back in 2013, JDI-SA and several partners began working inside Leeuwkop to train staff on the basics of prison safety — everything from how to communicate sensitively with gay and transgender inmates to understanding what it means to give consent. The project is part of a broader effort to help Leeuwkop implement the *Policy to Address Sexual Abuse*

in DCS Facilities — a roadmap for stopping prisoner rape that JDI drafted and DCS finally committed to adopting earlier this year.

During JDI-SA’s trainings, Mfundo and his colleagues were forced to grapple with the difficult realization that they had not been doing enough to protect prisoners. As Alex, one of Mfundo’s colleagues, explained, “JDI-SA opened my eyes. They made me aware that every day abuse was happening in front of me. And they taught me that I could prevent it.”

In a sign of their commitment to prisoner safety, Mfundo and Alex joined Leeuwkop’s Friends Against Abuse committee. Named after the pioneering initiative at a Cape Town prison (see right column), the committee gives dedicated officers a leadership role in teaching their peers about sexual abuse prevention.

JDI-SA recently launched a project to help ten more prisons adopt the *Policy to Address Sexual Abuse*. Staff at these prisons are proving eager to gain the tools they need to stop this violence. “Sexual assault has no place in this facility,” said one officer in Cape Town, echoing his peers at Leeuwkop. “It’s something that we have to end. And, working with JDI-SA, I believe that we can.”



Renowned advocate Chris Malgas (left) is helping JDI-SA launch staff committees to keep inmates safe. In the above photo, Chris walks with JDI’s Lovisa Stannow and JDI-SA’s Prince Nare through the corridors of Pollsmoor prison, where Chris worked for decades.

Friends Against Abuse Rises Again

CHRIS MALGAS IS a legendary figure at Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town. He began working in corrections in 1977; four decades later, in the final week before his retirement, he and a JDI team spent the day together at the prison. Nearly every person we passed — prisoners and officers alike — was eager to talk, aware that they had precious little time left with him.

One of our last stops was the main prison yard, a concrete square where dozens of men were idly chatting or kicking around a soccer ball. One man called out to him, asking about Friends Against Abuse, a Pollsmoor-based organization Chris and two of his colleagues founded back in 2004. The group fought for prisoners to be treated with dignity, and they began transferring vulnerable inmates out of Pollsmoor’s most dangerous units.

Sadly, Friends Against Abuse was too far ahead of its time; DCS demanded that they stop their work. But while the organization itself ceased to exist, the work did not. On the contrary, Chris’s legend only grew stronger. His insistence that prisoners have an absolute right to be safe made him renowned throughout the South African corrections community.

And yet, that day on the yard, a wave of sadness crossed Chris’s face. He knew that the fight wasn’t over. “Friends Against Abuse will rise again,” he promised the men, the determination clear in his voice.

Chris has kept that promise. Last month, Chris and JDI-SA started launching Friends Against Abuse committees inside several South African prisons. So far, Chris’s way to enjoy his retirement has been to travel the country with JDI-SA, training officials on bringing a culture of human rights to their prisons, so that they can carry forward the work he started.

“My goal is to change the face of South African prisons forever,” he explained. And if anyone can, it’s Chris Malgas.

No More Rubber Stamp Audits!

JDI Leads the Push to Fix PREA's System of Oversight



The Metropolitan Detention Center, in Brooklyn, is rife with sexual violence. So how did it pass an audit? Read our Washington Post op-ed on what went wrong: www.justdetention.org/wapo-oped

THE METROPOLITAN DETENTION CENTER (MDC) is a nightmarish federal prison in Brooklyn. MDC's brutal conditions — including widespread staff sexual abuse — have been documented extensively by advocates, journalists, and a Department of Justice probe. Yet the prison somehow earned perfect marks on two recent independent audits. Those audits specifically assessed the prison's progress in preventing and responding to sexual harassment and assault, in accordance with the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. Shockingly, the second auditor visited MDC only days after a *New York Times* exposé of staff raping women in their custody.

What happened at MDC is part of an alarming trend: prisons that JDI knows to be incredibly dangerous are passing their PREA audits with flying colors. In Texas, for example, more than one hundred prisons came away unscathed after an audit, and only two failed. This might be believable in another state, but not Texas. In the time period when its facilities were getting top marks for their good practices, we continued receiving heart-wrenching letters from Texas prisoner rape survivors — letters that painted a picture of a state whose facilities are nowhere close to PREA compliance. Without a good monitoring system, the PREA standards become

toothless. Awful prisons can get audited and face no consequences. That's not oversight — it's a rubber stamp.

Fortunately, the audit process can be fixed. In a recent op-ed for the *Washington Post*, JDI's Lovisa Stannow identified practical steps to ensure that the audits live up to their potential. The op-ed, which was published in the wake of the MDC scandal, also put bad auditors on notice: you might not be monitoring prisons — but we are going to monitor you.

Spotlighting bad facilities — and bad PREA auditors — is just one part of our strategy to make U.S. prisons and jails safe. With support from the Office for Victims of Crime, we are developing resources aimed specifically at helping auditors do their jobs. For example, PREA mandates that prisons work with rape crisis centers. Many prisons do not take this requirement seriously — a red flag that most PREA auditors fail to spot. In September, we released a community questionnaire that will help auditors connect with local rape crisis advocates, to check if they have been contacted by their local prison.

In the coming months, JDI will continue pressing corrections leaders, government officials, and auditors to repair the system — and we will hold them to account if they do not.

Sending Holiday Hope to Survivors

JDI IS GEARING up for our *Words of Hope* holiday card campaign. Last year, our supporters' kindness was on full display: you wrote more than 13,000 compassion-filled messages to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse.

Sending a few kind words may seem like a small thing, but it means everything to survivors. Edward, an inmate in Florida, told us that he cried tears of joy when he received the cards. "If you only knew what I just went through and how I was feeling today before I got your package of love," he told us in a letter. "It really touched my heart. What a beautiful gesture."

Starting November 30, you can write holiday greetings through our website: www.justdetention.org/hope

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