

ACTION UPDATE

OCTOBER 2020

BACK IN FEBRUARY, I ANNOUNCED that I would be stepping down as JDI's Executive Director in June, after 18 years with this remarkable organization. Then the pandemic hit, turning the world upside down. Our Board of Directors asked me stay until the end of the year, to ensure that we found the right person to take the helm of JDI.



As it turns out, the Board did not need to look very far. I am thrilled to share that in September, after a national search, the Board appointed Linda McFarlane, our Deputy

Executive Director, as JDI's next Executive Director. I've worked with Linda since 2005, when she joined JDI to run our then-new project to bring direct services to prisoners in California. The program she established had a transformative impact — the first of many initiatives that owed its success to her extraordinary leadership.

Linda is one of my favorite people in the world. She is poised to lead JDI during what is a difficult, unsettling moment for incarcerated survivors. As you'll read in these pages, JDI's staff is meeting the needs of survivors who are more marginalized than ever. With Linda in charge, this dynamic team will continue its incredible human rights work, taking on whatever challenges come next.

The movement to stop prisoner is made up of the bravest people I know. Thank you for giving so much to this fight, and for being the amazing human rights champions that you are.

Lovisa Stannow
Executive Director

Welcome, Linda McFarlane — Our New Executive Director!

A veteran advocate and JDI's longtime Deputy Executive Director, Linda brings three decades of experience advocating for rape survivors

THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT to end prisoner rape is set to embark on a new chapter, as Linda McFarlane takes up the reins as the next Executive Director of Just Detention International. Linda is hardly a new face: she has worked at JDI for 15 years, serving as our Deputy Executive Director since 2008.

Linda's achievements include developing our groundbreaking prison safety initiatives that today are the gold standard for addressing sexual abuse behind bars. She succeeds Lovisa Stannow, who held the position of Executive Director since 2004 and presided over JDI's emergence as the undisputed leader in the fight to stop sexual abuse in all forms of detention.

"Linda has a nuanced understanding of JDI's mission, an unrivaled track record of advocating for incarcerated survivors, and a clear-eyed vision for building on our many accomplishments," said Russell Robinson, the Chair of JDI's Board, who oversaw the national search for a new Executive Director. "I have no doubt that our movement will continue to thrive, and grow even stronger, with her at the helm."

After joining JDI in 2005, Linda first made her mark as a gifted coalition-builder. Through a mix of diplomacy and steely determination, she brought together advocates and prison officials — two groups that often don't see eye-to-eye but whose cooperation is essential for ensuring that prisoners get the care they

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JDI's newly appointed Executive Director, Linda McFarlane, pictured here at a JDI Survivor Summit in Washington, DC. As Deputy Executive Director, Linda spearheaded bold projects to prevent and respond to sexual abuse inside detention facilities.

JDI Mourns the Passing of David Kaiser

As JDI's Board Chair, David led the organization to new heights and widespread recognition as a human rights powerhouse

WE ARE DEVASTATED BY THE LOSS of David Kaiser, former Chair of JDI's Board of Directors, who passed away in July. After joining the Board in 2004, David was elected Chair in 2007 — a role that he held until stepping down in 2019, after receiving a sudden cancer diagnosis.

David was instrumental in raising the profile of JDI and in bringing the crisis of sexual abuse in detention into the public consciousness. When he joined the Board, the organization — then known as Stop Prisoner Rape — was defiant but tiny. Today, JDI has two dozen staff members and offices in Los Angeles, Washington, DC, and Johannesburg, and is renowned as one of the world's premier organizations fighting for prisoners' rights.

"Any nonprofit organization would have loved to have David," said Lovisa Stannow, who was



David Kaiser, who served as JDI's Board Chair for 12 years, was deeply committed to prisoners' rights

JDI's Executive Director throughout David's tenure as Chair. "But he chose to join the fight to end prisoner rape — a human rights endeavor that doesn't bring you any prestige at all. He didn't care. David thought that sexual abuse in detention was an abomination and — crucially — a crisis we can end."

One of David's most important contributions to our work was a series of in-depth articles about sexual abuse behind bars for *The New York Review of Books*, written jointly with Lovisa. Laying bare the systemic nature of sexual abuse in detention, they sharply criticized officials who were failing to stop the crisis, while underscoring the humanity of the people who were being harmed. Comprising eight essays overall, online and in print, the series brought unprecedented visibility to an issue that otherwise would have remained in the shadows.

"If you want to look U.S. injustice in the eye, you have to acknowledge the horror playing out in our prisons," David once said. "More than 200,000 people are sexually abused in U.S. detention every year. JDI has stuck with this enormously unpopular cause, and is transforming our prison system."

Never one to claim credit, David downplayed his part in JDI's success. But his role in making our prisons safer is undeniable, and his legacy as a champion for the rights and dignity of people behind bars will endure. We will miss him.

JDI has collected David's and Lovisa's groundbreaking *New York Review of Books* articles on our website. You can read the complete series at www.justdetention.org/NYRB

Our New Executive Director

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Linda speaking at an event for rape crisis advocates in Michigan

deserve. Her signature successes were *Paths to Recovery*, a program to offer confidential rape crisis services to people serving time in California prisons, and the *Miami-Dade Inmate Safety Project*, which led to a policy overhaul at one of the largest jail systems in the country. These trailblazing endeavors stimulated improvements in facility culture and have been replicated nationwide.

Linda's role as an authority on sexual abuse prevention and response was recognized when the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission tapped her to serve on expert committees to support the drafting of national standards. She has testified at government hearings on sexual abuse in detention, and appeared on national media outlets, including CNN and National Public Radio.

"Linda is fearless, compassionate, and a true visionary," said Lovisa, who has worked closely with Linda for 15 years. "She pioneered programs that many thought would be impossible: confidential rape crisis counseling, inmate-led sexual abuse peer education programs, and human rights training for prison staff, to name a few — all of which have become national models."

You can read Linda's Executive Director Statement on JDI's website, at www.justdetention.org/ED-statement

Lifting Up Strong Prison Leaders

PRISONER RAPE IS A CRISIS THAT has plagued this country for decades, if not centuries. The reason this abuse flourishes is not a mystery. It's not because prisoners are bad people or because of overcrowding. Instead, it boils down to prison culture — and specifically to a corrections mindset that for far too long has given short shrift to the values of respect, accountability, and human rights.

But culture isn't fixed. With the right person in charge, any prison can be safe. Recognizing the transformative role of prison leaders, JDI has launched the Great Wardens Project, an initiative to work directly with top prison officials to create facilities where people are able to serve their time without fear of violence and abuse. The project, which is

supported by Arnold Ventures, will draw on the wisdom and experience of a unique task force — comprised of bold, innovative wardens with a track record of stimulating a healthy culture inside their facilities — to release materials and launch trainings aimed at inspiring their peers.

"Many wardens are small-c conservatives, accustomed to doing things a certain way," said Tara Graham, JDI's National Program Director. "Most wardens have risen through the ranks and have significant custody experience, but they have often had little opportunity to develop visionary leadership. That's where the Great Wardens Project comes in. There's tremendous potential among wardens to transform prison culture — we're going to help unlock it."

Speaking Up to Keep Kids Safe

IN AUGUST, JDI ASKED OUR supporters to demand that the government protect kids in custody by releasing vital information it has collected on sexual abuse in youth detention facilities. This information is essential to our work to stop abuse — yet the government simply isn't sharing it. You stepped up in a big way. Hundreds of JDI supporters wrote to top Department of Justice officials to demand the release of vital data from its surveys with children and teens in detention.

And then last month, our campaign got another boost when scores of incarcerated

survivors joined in, sending letters of their own. Drawing on personal experiences, survivors shared how reporting sexual abuse in detention is difficult and often dangerous, especially for children, and that the government's refusal to publish what it has learned from these kids is a shocking betrayal of their trust.

So far, we've yet to receive a response from the government. A ton of crucial information remains locked away — information that could help other vulnerable kids stay safe. We're not going to quit until the government shares it.

Survivors Need Our Support More Than Ever

THE CORONAVIRUS IS WREAKING havoc inside prisons and jails. There is no social distancing behind bars, hand sanitizer is forbidden, and a huge proportion of detainees have underlying health issues that make them vulnerable. The little protective gear that is available is usually reserved for staff. As one survivor, Michelle, said, "Now we sit here, each and every one of us, wondering when it's our turn to contract Covid-19."

JDI's lifesaving support to prisoners has continued uninterrupted. Our staff field hotline calls from prisoners, write letters to survivors about their rights, and train advocates and corrections staff on how to protect people in custody. We also joined advocates nationwide calling for the release of incarcerated people — while pushing for public health measures to ensure the safety of the people we know are unlikely to be let out.

JDI's Commitment to Ending Anti-Black Violence

WE ARE OUTRAGED BY the systemic violence committed against Black people by law enforcement. The killings of George Floyd, Tony McDade, and Breonna Taylor are simply a few recent examples of the country's long and brutal history of racist policing. JDI is committed to ending systemic racism, recognizing that we cannot address prisoner rape without also fighting anti-Black violence in all its forms.

State-sanctioned violence against Black people is endemic, in our streets and in our detention facilities. At JDI, we deal every day with the horrors of prisoner rape — a crisis that also disproportionately affects people from Black communities. Like abuse by police, sexual violence in detention has its roots in an effort to control Black people and strip them of their humanity. In a pattern that has repeated itself for centuries, Black people are targeted for arrest, often brutally, and then sent to prisons that are cut off from society — and plagued by abuse.

We cannot address prisoner rape without also fighting anti-Black violence in all its forms.

While JDI's work focuses on sexual abuse that occurs inside detention facilities, we believe that anyone who has been stopped by the police is, in fact, detained; even though that person may not be inside a jail cell, they are not free to leave. As such, their treatment by law enforcement falls firmly within JDI's mission to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention.

In June, we joined hundreds of civil rights allies in demanding federal, state, and local action to end police brutality. We will continue our work to end anti-Black violence, and the culture of impunity that allows it to thrive.

Celebrating the Movement to End Prisoner Rape

This year marks JDI's 40th anniversary. To honor this milestone, we asked five members of our Survivor Council to share what our work means to them. So many people have been a part of our movement, and you can find more remembrances from survivors — and from supporters like you — on our website: www.justdetention.org/JDIat40



Sexual abuse in detention is oppression and it is tragic but above all it is unnecessary — and this is where JDI comes in. I wrote to them while I was locked up and when I got a letter back from them, it was like “whoa somebody cares, I am not alone.” Now that I’m out, I see the important work JDI does from this side of the wall — and the word “amazing” is not enough. — Rodney Roussell



Happy anniversary to this tremendous organization. JDI has been a source of strength in my healing process. I’m proud to have joined JDI in helping survivors find their voice and break the walls of silence. — Stephanie Walker



JDI is truly in a league of its own, and has been for 40 years. I’ll never forget how they stood by me when I needed them. What an honor it is to be part of this movement of people fighting for what’s right. — Troy Isaac



When I was sexually abused in detention, JDI was there for me. They helped me get counseling behind bars. Being able to speak confidentially about what happened was the greatest feeling in the world. — Nicole Wolfe



JDI believed in me when no one else would. Their support gave me the courage to speak out, to keep fighting for my rights and to stand up for the rights of others. Happy 40th, JDI! — Frank Mendoza



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YEARS OF
FIGHTING
PRISONER
RAPE

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