

WORKSHOP

ABOLITIONIST ACTIVISM FROM PRISONERS' RELATIVES PERSPECTIVES

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The proposal for this workshop is based on my personal experience as an abolitionist and a relative of prisoners and many discussions with other women, self-identifying as abolitionist or not, who are experiencing / have experienced prison system.

Prisoners' relatives are the secondary victims of penal system. But they are under-represented in the abolitionist movement – at least from our experience (mostly in France).

The objective of the workshop is to raise three questions:

What prevents prisoners' relatives from participating in abolitionism activism?

How to integrate prisoners' relatives views into the analysis developed by the abolitionist movement?

How can concrete solidarity among us (prisoners' relatives) be built?

I propose the following points (not limitative) to be discussed (in small groups or all-together):

- Sharing (either individual or collective) experiences of resistance and mobilizing as prisoners' relatives: organizing a collective, direct confrontation (within visiting rooms, refusal to cope with security procedure...), prison administration harassment...
- Obstacles to our own organizing: how to overcome the power relations that exists among prisoners and that can prevent us to join other prisoners' relatives? How to make our relatives supportive of our movement?
- Our experience (either great or terrible) in the abolitionist movement;
- Obstacles to our participation in the abolitionist movement (to name a few: activism as a subculture; gender, class and race power relations; pressures, especially over visit privileges, in case our activism is known by prison administration...);
- The challenge of being an activist while experiencing emotional difficulties: how to make enough space in our activism for those who need to take a breath or to find emotional support?
- Sharing experiences of integration of the struggle in our life (rather than having to integrate activism in our life): being an activist (as it is routinely understood: evening meetings, demos, etc.) is time-consuming and does not fit with most prisoners' relatives' lifestyle. How do we bring the struggle into our lives? Example: sharing transportation to the prison visit, dissemination of "tips" among new visitors...

The workshop targets prisoners' relatives and their time speaking will be prioritized, but everybody else is welcome.

The workshop facilitator is fluent in both French and English and will try to facilitate multilingual

exchanges (at least in French & English).