

SPEECH TO ACTCOSS CONFERENCE CANBERRA,

SEPTEMBER 2008

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGE TRADITIONAL OWNERS

I'D LIKE TO SIGNAL FROM THE OUTSET A SLIGHT CHANGE TO THE TITLE OF MY ADDRESS TODAY. ON YOUR PROGRAM IT READS: **THE IMPACT OF PRISON AND THE CASE FOR CHANGE IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.**

WHILE I'M HAPPY TO TALK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF PRISONS UNTIL THE COWS COME HOME – AND MANY OF YOU MIGHT ALREADY HAVE HEARD ME DO THAT – THINGS HAPPENING HERE IN THE ACT AND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD HAVE FORCED ME TO DRASTICALLY ALTER THE SECOND PART OF THAT TITLE – THE CASE FOR CHANGE.

I CANNOT IN ALL CONSCIENCE STAND HERE BEFORE YOU AND TALK ABOUT THE CASE FOR CHANGE IN PRISONS. CHANGE IS NOT WHAT IS NEEDED IN PRISONS. WE'VE BEEN TOLD FOR YEARS ABOUT CHANGES IN PRISONS, ABOUT THE **MORE ENLIGHTENED VIEW** OF AUTHORITIES WHO BUILD AND MAINTAIN PRISONS.

AND WHAT WE HAVE AS A RESULT OF THAT IS **MORE PRISONS; MORE WOMEN AS WELL AS MEN IN PRISON; MORE AND WORSE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES OF WOMEN IN PRISON; MORE OF THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX WHICH SEES GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR GAIN FINANCIALLY WITH EACH NEW PRISON THAT IS BUILT.**

WE SEE MORE PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS, MORE INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN PRISON. WE SEE MORE WOMEN INCARCERATED ON CHARGES BASED ON THE CRIMINALISATION OF SOCIAL POLICY – A RESULT OF OUR CRIMINALISATION OF POVERTY, OF DISADVANTAGE, OF HOMELESSNESS.

I CAN'T STAND HERE IN THE ACT, WHERE THE SO-CALLED 'HUMAN RIGHTS PRISON' HAS JUST BEEN GIVEN THE RIGHT TO STRIP-SEARCH PRISONERS – ONE OF THE MOST ABUSIVE AND INTRUSIVE TREATMENTS PERPETRATED AGAINST WOMEN IN PRISON - AND TALK ABOUT CHANGE. I CAN'T STAND HERE AND TALK ABOUT CHANGE WHEN ONE OF YOUR WOMEN DIED IN THE HANDS OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES OF THIS TERRITORY AND WHY BECAUSE SHE WAS MENTALLY ILL.

AS THE MEDIA REPORTED ON THE 14TH DAY OF JULY 2008

A Canberra woman has died more than a week after trying to hang herself with a seatbelt in the back of an ACT Corrective Services van. The unnamed woman, 42, from the Canberra suburb of Fadden, was taken to Calvary Hospital after the incident on Friday, July 4. The woman died there on Saturday afternoon, ACT police said. THEY GO ON....

The woman, who reportedly has a history of psychiatric problems and suicide attempts, was taken into custody for allegedly breaching a protection order.

ONE MINUTE SILENCE FOR XXXX AND ALL THE WOMEN WHO HAVE
DIED WHILST IN CUSTODY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS.

I HAVE TO STAND HERE BEFORE YOU AS AN ABOLITIONIST. AS
SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES NO CHANGE IN PRISONS CAN PRODUCE A
POSITIVE RESULT. AS SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES THAT PRISONS DON'T
WORK. THAT ONE DAY, LIKE SLAVERY, THE LONG-TERM
INCARCERATION OF HUMANS WILL BE SEEN AS A GRAVE ERROR, A
TERRIBLE EXPERIMENT IN SOCIAL POLICY THAT PRODUCED THE
REVERSE OF WHAT WAS INTENDED.

JUST LIKE CIRCUS OR ZOO ANIMALS, HUMANS DON'T LEARN OR GAIN
ANYTHING FROM BEING CAGED. THE REVERSE: THEY LOSE THEIR
VERY ESSENCE, THEIR HEARTS. IT STUMPS ME THAT, IN A WORLD
WHERE OPEN ZOOS ARE NOW THE NORM, WHERE OLD TRADITIONAL
CIRCUSES NO LONGER KEEP ANIMALS, WHERE CREATURES FROM
DOMESTIC PETS TO CHOOKS TO PIGS ARE GIVEN **FREE RANGE** – THAT
IN THIS WORLD WE STILL THINK LOCKING UP HUMANS WILL MAKE
THEM BETTER PEOPLE. TO ME, IT DEFIES LOGIC.

TO ME, THE WORDS **PRISON** AND **HUMAN RIGHTS** ARE
CONTRADICTIONS IN TERMS. THE TWO WORDS OPPOSE EACH OTHER
LIKE STOP AND GO, YES AND NO, GOOD AND BAD.

PRISONS, BY THEIR VERY EXISTENCE, DENY JUST ABOUT EVERY BASIC HUMAN RIGHT WE HAVE.

AND THEIR VERY EXISTENCE VALIDATES AN IDEOLOGY THAT IS RAMPANT AROUND THE WORLD RIGHT NOW. THIS IDEOLOGY SEES THE MOST DISADVANTAGED, THE MOST ABUSED, THE MOST DEPRIVED - RE-BRUTALISED, FURTHER DISADVANTAGED, MORE DEPRIVED.

PRISONS UNDERSCORE THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM THAT WE HAVE ALL CREATED TO KEEP OUR OWN ADVANTAGED HEADS ABOVE WATER.

THEY ENSURE THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE TO BLAME.

THEY ENSURE THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE PUNISHED – ON BEHALF OF US ALL.

DON'T EVER TELL ME THAT THE YOUNG DRUG-ADDICTED WOMAN WHO STEALS OR THE WOMAN WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS WHO SLEEPS ROUGH UNDER THE BRIDGE ACTS PURELY IN A VACUUM OF HER OWN MAKING OR CHOOSING.

DON'T EVER TELL ME THAT THE SLUMS, THE GHETTOS, THE OFTEN VIOLENT AND DISADVANTAGED SUBURBS OF ANY OF OUR MAJOR

CITIES WERE THE DREAM DESTINATIONS OF THE CHILDREN WHO GREW UP TO CALL THOSE CITIES HOME.

DON'T TELL ME POVERTY, ABUSE, MENTAL ILLNESS AND ADDICTION WERE ACTIVELY CHOSEN BY THE LITTLE GIRLS WHO GREW UP TO BE THE WOMEN NOW LIVING AND DYING BEHIND THE STEEL BARS OF PRISONS.

DON'T TELL ME A LIFE OF URBAN GRIEF AND SICKNESS, OF LONELINESS AND DESPAIR AND MARGINALISATION WERE ACTIVELY CHOSEN BY THE LITTLE INDIGENOUS KIDS OF THIS COUNTRY WHO NOW, AS ADULTS, PEOPLE OUR STREETS, OUR PRISONS, OUR WATCHHOUSES.

THEY DID NOT CHOOSE THEM.

WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE.

WE, THE ADVANTAGED, THE MONEYED, THE WELL, ARE KEPT IN OUR SAFE PLACES BY THE VERY FACT THAT OTHERS ARE CARRYING OUR COLLECTIVE BLAME FOR THE ILLS OF SOCIETY AND OF THE WORLD.

IT IS NOT A COMFORTABLE THOUGHT.

OF COURSE, MOST OF US DO WHAT WE CAN TO AVOID IT.

WE DO THAT BY MAKING THESE PEOPLE, THESE **OTHERS** INVISIBLE,
AND BY SEMANTICS: WE LABEL THEM.

THEY ARE 'BAD'. THEY ARE LAZY, THEY ARE WEAK, THEY ARE
VIOLENT, THEY ARE LESS THAN HUMAN.

AND THEN THE REVERSE TO MARKET THEIR INCARCERATION AND
THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES THEY EXPERIENCE EVERY DAY – BY
CALLING PRISONS – HUMAN RIGHTS PRISON

IN THAT WAY WE CAN ALL GET UP IN THE MORNINGS AND GO ABOUT
OUR DAYS WITHOUT WEeping.

I SUPPOSE I HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT BECAUSE I HAVE
PERSONALLY LIVED AMONGST THE **OTHERS**.

I LIVED MUCH OF MY ADOLESCENCE IN JUVENILE DETENTION AND
SEVERAL YEARS BEHIND THE BARS AND BRICK AND WIRE OF BOGGO
ROAD PRISON.

AND SINCE THEN I HAVE CHOSEN TO STAY AMONGST THE OTHERS AND
FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS AND THEIR DIGNITY THROUGH THE
ORGANISATION THAT GREW FROM MY PRISON EXPERIENCE, SISTERS
INSIDE.

SISTERS INSIDE PROVIDES SERVICES TO WOMEN IN PRISON AND
ADVOCATES FOR THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS.

RECENTLY THIS WORK HAS BEEN BEARING FRUIT IN THE FORM OF A
NEW SPOTLIGHT ON THE LIVES OF WOMEN IN PRISON AND THE
CONDITIONS THEY ENDURE.

IT HAS COME IN THE FORM OF A RESPONSE BY THE QUEENSLAND ANTI-
DISCRIMINATION COMMISSION TO A COMPLAINT MADE BY SISTERS
INSIDE ABOUT WHAT WE SEE AS SYSTEMIC DISCRIMINATION AGAINST
WOMEN IN PRISON, ALONG WITH SIMILAR COMPLAINTS IN OTHER
STATES AND TERRITORIES.

AS WE SEE IT, THE RESULTING REPORTS VINDICATE THE WORK NOT
ONLY OF OUR ORGANISATION BUT ALL THOSE WHO FIGHT THIS FIGHT
WITH US.

THE REPORTS ALL URGE THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS SUCH
ISSUES AS MANDATORY STRIP-SEARCHING, THE DELETERIOUS EFFECTS
ON THE CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED MOTHERS, THE TERRIBLE
PLIGHT OF WOMEN WITH MENTAL ILLNESS, AS WELL AS THAT OF
INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND OF COURSE THE OVER REPRESENTATION OF
INDIGENOUS WOMEN, AND THE LUDICROUS CLAIMS MADE ON BEHALF
OF PRISONS BY THOSE WHO BUILD AND RUN THEM.

THAT IS, THAT THEY WORK.

THAT WOMEN WHO COMMIT CRIMES NEED TO BE LOCKED UP, DE-HUMANISED, DEGRADED, FURTHER DEPRIVED; THAT THEY WILL BE **MADE INTO BETTER PEOPLE INSIDE PRISON**, THAT THEY WILL EMERGE BETTER EQUIPPED WITH TRAINING AND WORK EXPERIENCE AND REHABILITATED.

MANY OF YOU HERE WILL KNOW THAT 60 PERCENT OF WOMEN WHO SERVE A PRISON SENTENCE WILL RETURN TO PRISON AGAIN. AND 88% OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN WILL RETURN

IN MY MATHEMATICS THAT IS A 60 PERCENT AND 88% FAILURE RATE.

THE CLAIMS MADE ON BEHALF OF PRISONS ARE BLATANTLY FALSE.

AND IF ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION OR ORGANISATION RECORDED THAT KIND OF FAILURE RATE THEY WOULD BE SACKED, DISBANDED, GUTTED.

THE TRUTH IS THAT PRISON REPEATS ALL THE EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE AND DEPRIVATION AND HUMILIATION THAT MOST WOMEN WHO GO INSIDE HAVE EXPERIENCED THEIR WHOLE LIVES.

IN FACT, TO THE GREAT MAJORITY OF WOMEN IN PRISON, THE TERM
HUMAN RIGHTS IS A CONTRADICTION.

THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE BEEN COMPROMISED WELL BEFORE THEY
HIT THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

PRIOR TO GOING TO PRISON, 98% OF WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED
PHYSICAL ABUSE.

89% HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ABUSE OR ASSAULT.

A GREAT MANY OF THEM HAVE EXPERIENCED POVERTY, IN FAMILIES
THAT ARE DYSFUNCTIONAL AND ABUSIVE, IN WHICH THEY ARE NOT
VALUED.

THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY AND ABUSE MEAN MOST HAVE A LOW
LEVEL OF EDUCATION, LOW LEVELS OF SELF ESTEEM AND FEW SKILLS.

THE ATTEMPTS THAT MANY MAKE TO SELF-MEDICATE, TO DEAL WITH
THE PAIN OF LIFE, MEAN A GREAT PROPORTION HAVE ADDICTIONS TO
DRUGS OR ALCOHOL.

THEIR HEALTH IS CHARACTERISTICALLY POOR, AND MANY HAVE
MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ADDRESSED.

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS WE HAVE SEEN ABUNDANT AND HEART-BREAKING EVIDENCE OF THAT.

PRISONS HAVE BECOME THE DEFACTO PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTIONS OF OUR COMMUNITIES, WHERE BEHAVIOURS ARE NOT TREATED BUT PUNISHED, WHERE PEOPLE ARE NOT JUST CHEMICALLY RESTRAINED BUT PHYSICALLY RESTRAINED AND ABUSED.

A HIGH PROPORTION OF INCARCERATED WOMEN ARE OF COURSE INDIGENOUS.

AND FOR THEM, ALL OF THOSE THINGS ARE MULTIPLIED.

MULTIPLIED, EXACERBATED, AND GETTING WORSE ALL THE TIME.

SOME ARE FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS, AND FOR THEM THOSE THINGS ARE ALSO MULTIPLIED.

SO WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN PRISON, WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A VERY DELICATE THING INDEED.

IT'S A NOTION MOST OF THESE WOMEN HAVE GIVEN UP ON.

HUMAN RIGHTS ARE THINGS OTHER PEOPLE HAVE. LIFE – AND THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A PRISONER – DOES THAT TO YOU.

BUT THESE ARE NOT JUST RHETORICAL STATEMENTS CONJURED UP BY SISTERS INSIDE OR OTHER GROUPS LIKE THE ONES GATHERED HERE. THESE RECENT INQUIRIES BY ANTI-DISCRIMINATION BODIES AND OMBUDSMEN HAVE CONCLUDED THAT WE ARE RIGHT.

THE CONDITIONS WE TALK ABOUT IN PRISONS, THE NUMBERS OF WOMEN AND MEN IN PRISON, THE LACK OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ARE REAL AND ARE DOING REAL DAMAGE NOT JUST TO WOMEN BUT TO WHOLE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.

IN QUEENSLAND, AFTER COMPLAINTS BY SISTERS INSIDE, THE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMISSION URGED THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS SUCH ISSUES AS MANDATORY STRIP-SEARCHING, THE SHOCKING EFFECTS ON THE CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED MOTHERS, THE TERRIBLE PLIGHT OF WOMEN WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN, AND THE LUDICROUS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM.

IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY, THE OMBUDSMAN HAS RECENTLY INVESTIGATED COMPLAINTS FROM WOMEN PRISONERS AND MADE A RAFT OF RECOMMENDATIONS – 67 - AROUND EDUCATION, REHABILITATION PROGRAMS, THE USE OF RESTRAINTS, SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, THE TREATMENT OF ABORIGINAL PRISONERS, EMPLOYMENT, PRE AND POST RELEASE, TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

WITH MENTAL ILLNESSES OR COGNITIVE DISABILITIES, AND THE
IMPORTANCE OF CONTACT FOR WOMEN WITH CHILDREN.

THE REPORT FOUND THAT IN THE NT, THE IMPRISONMENT OF
ABORIGINAL WOMEN WAS DOUBLE THE AUSTRALIAN RATE IN 2005-06.
A STAGGERING 81% OF WOMEN PRISONERS WERE ABORIGINAL. 87%
WERE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE AS CHILDREN; 74%
EXPERIENCED SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE AS ADULTS.

26% OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN WERE WARDS OF THE STATE AS
CHILDREN; 51% HAD PREVIOUS MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSIS; 52% HAD
ATTEMPTED SUICIDE. 8% HAD NEVER RECEIVED ANY ASSISTANCE TO
DEAL WITH THIS ABUSE.

WANT TO HEAR MORE? 80% REPORTED USING DRUGS OR ALCOHOL, 86%
WERE BIOLOGICAL MOTHERS. ALMOST ALL WERE UNEMPLOYED AT
THE TIME THEY WERE IMPRISONED; ALMOST HALF WERE NOT
RECEIVING CENTRELINK PAYMENTS, AND 43 % WITH DEPENDENT
CHILDREN HAD NO INCOME AT ALL. **NO INCOME AT ALL.**

AND WE WANT TO **REFORM** THE SYSTEM THAT INCARCERATES THEM?
WHY? TO MAKE WHO FEEL BETTER? I CAN TELL YOU IT AIN'T ME – IS IT
YOU???

I'M GOING TO PUT TO YOU TODAY THAT DE-CARCERATION IS THE FIRST OPTION FOR MOST OF THESE WOMEN. NOT PRISON REFORM. NOT TINKERING AROUND THE EDGES WITH A SYSTEM THAT IS AND ALWAYS HAS FAILED THEM. NOT CHANGE....

SHALL I REMIND YOU HOW IT FAILS THEM? LET'S LOOK AT A WOMAN WHO IS A PRIMARY CARER OF CHILDREN – AND THEY ARE THE MAJORITY – WHO IS IMPRISONED FOR THEFT OR DRUG-USE OR FRAUD – THESE ARE ALSO THE MAJORITY.

PRISON MEANS FIRSTLY THAT SHE LOSES HER CHILDREN. SHE MAY LOSE HER RELATIONSHIP, HER FAMILY, CERTAINLY HER JOB, PERHAPS HER HOME, CERTAINLY HER SELF-ESTEEM AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

THAT'S JUST FOR STARTERS. INSIDE, ANY ILLUSIONS ABOUT REHABILITATION ARE SOON DEMOLISHED. IF SHE HAS A MENTAL ILLNESS OR IS LIVING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF ABUSE OR DRUG USE, WHAT HELP CAN SHE EXPECT? IF SHE HAS NO EDUCATION OR TRAINING, WILL THE SYSTEM PROVIDE SOME? IF SHE WANTS TO MAINTAIN SOME HEALTHY CONTACT WITH HER CHILDREN, WHO WILL SHE ASK FOR IT AND HOW WILL SHE DO IT?

ONCE SHE'S RELEASED, HOW DOES SHE TAKE HER SHAME, HER SHATTERED RELATIONSHIPS, HER LACK OF A JOB OR INCOME OF ANY

KIND, HER ABSENT CHILDREN AND INVISIBLE FRIENDS, AND MAKE A NEW LIFE? HOW DOES SHE GET HER KIDS BACK FROM THE DEPARTMENT, GET A HOUSE, SOME FOOD AND A FRIDGE TO PUT IT IN, A JOB, AND THE STRENGTH TO MAKE THE CHANGES SHE NEEDS TO? SHE'S BEEN STRIPPED OF ALL THE WHEREWITHAL TO DO WHAT THE SYSTEM WANTS AND EXPECTS – TO TURN HERSELF INTO A MODEL CITIZEN.

DE-CARCERATION IS THE FIRST OPTION FOR WOMEN IN PRISON FOR NON-VIOLENT CRIMES. BUT ONE OF OUR ENORMOUS PROBLEMS IS THE FEAR-MONGERING FROM POLITICIANS AND OTHERS ABOUT CRIME – IN QUEENSLAND THE POLICE MINISTER, ALSO OUR CORRECTIONS MINISTER, IS NOW PUSHING AN ARGUMENT THAT ABORIGINAL WOMEN ARE MORE VIOLENT THAN OTHERS, THAT MORE WOMEN IN GENERAL ARE COMMITTING VIOLENT CRIME THAN EVER BEFORE.

BUT WHAT CONSTITUTES A CRIME THESE DAYS? WITH OUR NEW LAWS HOMELESSNESS IS A CRIME IN SOME AREAS, AS IS A FAILURE TO MOVE ON OR NOT HAVING TWO DOLLARS IN YOUR POSITION.

SISTERS INSIDE BELIEVES THAT THESE LAWS, AND PRISON, FURTHER ABUSE THE ABUSED. FURTHER DISADVANTAGES THE DISADVANTAGED, FURTHER IMPOVERISHES THE POOR, FURTHER DEPRIVES THOSE BORN TO DEPRIVATION. WE LOCK WOMEN UP FOR

THE BEHAVIOURS THEY HAVE ADOPTED TO SURVIVE POVERTY, ABUSE, DISABILITIES.

WE TELL THEM WE MUST STOP THESE BEHAVIOURS. WE LOCK THEM UP AND REPEAT THE ABUSE THEY HAVE SUFFERED ALL THEIR LIVES.

THEN WE RELEASE THEM TO THE STREETS, IN A WORSE POSITION AND IN A WORSE STATE THAN BEFORE, AND TELL THEM THEY ARE IN CHARGE OF THEIR OWN DESTINIES.

WHAT A JOKE.

YET GOVERNMENT AFTER GOVERNMENT PROPS UP THIS FAILING SYSTEM. WE ALL PROP IT UP. WE ACCEPT IT WHEN GOVERNMENTS LIKE THE ACT'S TALKS ABOUT A 'HUMAN RIGHTS PRISON' – ONE IN WHICH WOMEN CAN BE STRIP-SEARCHED.

WE NEED TO CHALLENGE THIS, TO RATTLE THE CAGE TO SEE WHO IS ACTUALLY IN THE CAGE.

WE NEED TO MAKE THE SYSTEM TRANSPARENT, SO THAT PRISON IS NO LONGER A SUBCONSCIOUS PART OF OUR LANDSCAPE. AND WE NEED TO HAVE SOLIDARITY ABOUT ABOLITION. WE NEED TO HAVE THIS HARD DEBATE.

DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPOSSIBLE, THAT IT CAN'T BE ACHIEVED? THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT TOO ABOUT THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, OVER A CENTURY AGO.

BUT WHAT IF WE TOOK A DIFFERENT TACK? WHAT IF WE PROVIDED EVERYONE WITH ENOUGH RESOURCES, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL, SO THAT EVERY CHILD **TRULY** HAD AN EQUAL CHANCE OF PROSPERING.

IF WE PROVIDED A GOOD BASE-LEVEL OF CARE FOR EVERYONE AND A SAFETY NET THAT TRULY DID STOP PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY CHILDREN, FROM FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS.

WHAT IF EVERY CHILD HAD ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION AND WAS SUPPORTED TO ACCESS IT AND TO ACCESS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND A DECENT STANDARD OF LIVING.

WHAT IF EVERY INSTANCE OF CHILD ABUSE OR POTENTIAL ABUSE WAS CAUGHT AND STOPPED BEFORE IT FLOWERED INTO A MONSTER?

IT'S EASY FOR GOVERNMENTS TO WAX LYRICAL ABOUT THESE ISSUES. THE REALITY IS THAT THE END RESULT OF CHILD ABUSE IN OUR COMMUNITIES ARE FILLING UP OUR PRISONS.

I COULD SUGGEST TO YOU THAT ONE ALTERNATIVE TO THE PRESENT SYSTEM WOULD BE TO IMMEDIATELY EMPTY THE PRISONS OF WOMEN SERVING TIME FOR DRUG-RELATED OFFENCES.

WOMEN ARE IN THERE FOR NON-VIOLENT OFFENCES.

THEY DO NOT NEED TO BE THERE AND WE AS A COMMUNITY DO NOT NEED THEM TO BE THERE.

THEIR CHILDREN DO NOT NEED THEM TO BE THERE.

SO I INVITE YOU TODAY TO JOIN ME IN FEELING THE POINTY END OF THIS DEBATE. TO CONSIDER A WORLD IN WHICH NOT ONLY PRISONS BUT POVERTY AND [PREJUDICE AND DEPRIVATION AND VIOLENCE ARE ABOLISHED. TO FORGET CHANGE BUT TAKE ACTION TO ACHIEVE ABOLITION

TO HAVE A WORLD IN WHICH ALL PEOPLE EXPERIENCE FREEDOM FROM WANT AS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT.

A world, in fact, in which those two words mean something to everyone.

Thank you.

