

## THE ROLE OF PEACEMAKING IN PENAL ABOLITION

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2015

### *Abstract*

The decision at ICOPA 2 in Amsterdam in 1985 to change the conference name from the International Conference on *Prison* Abolition to the International Conference on *Penal Abolition* represents an extension of ICOPA's focus from the problem of incarceration to the problem of resorting to punishment, responding to violence with violence. Penal abolition moves in two dimensions: the political and the cultural.

Political forces are grounded in what those who are punished most by the state—prisoners—tell us, and by those who are punished and threatened more by state violence at all levels of the criminal justice system—as black and brown lives are in my home country. They can have significant short-term abolitionist effects, both on incarceration levels and on treatment of those who are policed and incarcerated.

The durability of political abolition of state punishment—of incarceration especially—depends on members of any society becoming familiar and comfortable with talking through their grievances, directly and safely, with those they blame and fear, and in Roger Fisher's terms "get to yes!" on how to proceed. I call studying and learning to follow this practice "peacemaking." Here, I draw especially on issues the political forces raise about the violence of incarceration, of prosecution, and of policing to illustrate how principles of peacemaking are and can be applied, breaking the punishment habit.