

Organising in Jail: a guide

The prison system controls us, among other ways, by controlling the space we inhabit, the way our time is structured, and the information we can send and receive. We can take by organising, as much as possible, our own space, time and information.

Information/communications:

- ?? Find out who has been arrested, which affinity groups are in jail, who if anyone is missing or has been isolated. Consolidate the information so that in one or two phone calls it can be communicated to our legal team and support people.
- ?? Organise our own system of lines or lists to use telephones. Transmit messages for others.
- ?? Use legal team to communicate with others of our groups held in other locations.
- ?? Liaison people can find out gaol schedule and post it.
- ?? Remember, information from the guards, however nice they may seem, is not necessarily accurate. DON'T SPREAD RUMOURS! Verify information.
- ?? Share information and stories about the action among ourselves.

Space:

When possible, organise our own space in jail: a meeting corner, a quiet corner, a healing space, a workshop space etc.

Use the time:

The time we spend together in gaol can be enriching. We can organise workshops, classes, nonviolence trainings, political discussions, strategy and theory sessions, games, rituals, exercise sessions, music, talent shows, quiet times and of course, meetings. Remember not to become obsessed by meetings.

Don't become panicked by their timetable. We can take the time we need to do what we have to do.

Suggested jail orientation:

(When you have the opportunity to meet.)

- ?? Collect information on who has been arrested, who is isolated, everyone's medical needs, etc.
- ?? Develop strategy for getting that info out to supporters.
- ?? Update on information on the action, legal issues, negotiations.

- ?? Roles and responsibilities in the group – caretakers, liaisons, etc.
- ?? Clustering – make sure everyone has an affinity group or buddy.
- ?? Feeling sharing – perhaps a round on how we each deal with powerlessness
- ?? Jail culture: *Who are the guards? The other prisoners? General population – an opportunity to learn and organise, not a fate worse than death!*
- ?? Strategies of the guards and police:
 - Intimidation: fear and pain*
 - Divide and conquer*
 - Isolation*
 - Singling out leaders, instigators*
 - Good cop/bad cop*
 - Lies and disinformation*
 - Veneer – looking good in public, stacked negotiations*
- ?? Legal system review – stages of the process, what to expect next
- ?? Process review – consensus, etc.
- ?? Jail tales – share previous experiences (with great caution, remembering conversations are probably monitored)
- ?? Questions, feeling, fears
- ?? Evaluation/closing

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