

THE PAROLE BOARD IS RACIST Cont.
Ti Lamusse

Given the Parole Board works in a system that is more broadly institutionally racist against Māori, it's unsurprising that Māori are much more likely to serve their full sentence than Pākehā. In 2018, Māori made up 58% of the people who served their full sentence. In the same year, Māori were approximately 51% of the total prison population. In other words, the Parole Board adds another level of institutional discrimination. At the big picture level, the Board is taking a prison population that is disproportionately Māori and locking up Māori for even longer once they are in prison. For our women prisoners, the situation is even more concerning. In 2018, Māori women made up 84% of all women who served their full sentences.

As a fundamental principle of liberal democracy, we are taught that justice is blind and that all people are treated equally. This is not the case for the Parole Board or the criminal justice system. The consistency of the institutional racism across the criminal justice system is remarkable, although unsurprising. Māori are more likely to come into contact with police (and have force used against them). They are also more likely to be arrested, prosecuted, remanded in custody, found guilty, sentenced to imprisonment (and for longer).

As the statistics above also show, the Parole Board extends the effective sentence of Māori compared to Pākehā by simply granting them parole less often. The Parole Board is another injection of adrenaline into the racist criminal justice system.

However, some New Zealanders are simply not concerned by this apparent breach of the principles of equality of justice. For them, their fear of crime, stoked by groups like the Sensible Sentencing Trust and its friends in the media, is overwhelming. As a result, they see no issue with people spending longer in prison, even if it plays out in a racist manner.



"The Parole Board is another injection of adrenaline into the racist criminal justice system."

While their fear for safety is valid and should not be dismissed, racist mass imprisonment is no solution to it. We should all be concerned by our racist criminal justice system. This present government, along with preceding governments, has funnelled billions of dollars into a prison system that undermines public safety and increases the likelihood of violent crime.

On top of the exorbitant costs, longer prison sentences do very little to keep our communities safe. Scientific studies have consistently shown that longer sentences do not act as a deterrent. Prisons are also ineffective at rehabilitation. Often, the purpose of denied parole is to provide the person with more time to rehabilitate. This is a pointless use of resources and causes unnecessary suffering when the evidence consistently demonstrates that rehabilitation is most effective outside of prison.

While this is a system that disproportionately affects Māori, it hurts us all. We all pay the cost of a broken criminal justice system that throws money into cages and fails to keep us safe. It is also not only Māori who suffer from this senseless lengthening of prison sentences by the Parole Board. Since 2010, Pacific people have been even less likely than Māori to be released on their first Parole appearance, although they reached parity in 2018 as Māori parole success rates fell more rapidly than Pacific rates.

This crisis also affects Pākehā, although to a lesser extent. In 2010, Pākehā were released on first appearance 26% of the time. By 2018, that had reduced to 16.8%. In other words, while our racist criminal justice system disproportionately affects Māori and Pacific communities, poor and working class Pākehā are also swept into the increasingly punitive system, while we all pay the costs.

It may be tempting to argue that the worsening institutional racism of the Parole Board is caused by a few bad apples on the Boards. It is possible that there are some members of the Board who hold racist attitudes toward Māori. However, the magnitude of the racist outcomes of Parole Board hearings is simply too great to be blamed on a small number of members. There is a much wider, institutional issue at play.

That being said, even the Parole Board as an institution is not entirely responsible for these issues. While it takes racist prison statistics and makes them more racist, it also acts within a legislative framework that was enacted with the purpose of making it harder to be granted parole. In other words, much of the blame for this racist system is in the hands of the 120 members of parliament. Their previous action or current inaction have worsened this crisis. It is only through radical, sweeping change that the profound injustice of this racist system be addressed.

— Ti Lamusse is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at the University of Auckland, studying the New Zealand Criminal Justice System.

WORDFIND

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Table with 4 columns: Ake, Comrade, Decarceration, Did, Fads, Fan, Freedom, Hapu, Iwi, Joke, Kaupapa, Kea, Kererū, Kiwi, Lab, Lack, Lad, Last, Mana, Maths, Pride, Reo, Ripecta, Rosa, Sea, Tane, Taranaki, Tikanga, Wahine



"It is our duty to fight for freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."

- Assata Shakur

TAKE NO PRISONERS

ISSUE 02
APRIL 2020

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Prisoner Risk and COVID-19

Jess Lim

New Zealand has imposed a total lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19, but this has left prisoners across the country threatened by the virus. There have been no cases of COVID-19 reported in New Zealand's prisons. But some of the steps the Department of Corrections has taken to stop the virus have reduced freedoms inside prisons, including banning outside visits and suspending all private and volunteer visits, release to work programmes and community reintegration activities. The success of these steps lies solely on the prison guards, who will be the only potential entry point for COVID-19 in prisons.

"All prisoners who are symptomatic and at-risk of Coronavirus should be able to access hospital-level care -This is literally written into the Corrections Act."

There are a few questions to consider what this might mean for prisoners. First, Corrections has said it would address "disappointment" resulting from the total suspension of visits and activities by helping prisoners maintain increased contact through telephone calls and emails. All prisoners are supposed to get a \$5 phone card each week and will be able to print and receive more emails, according to National Commissioner Rachel Leota.

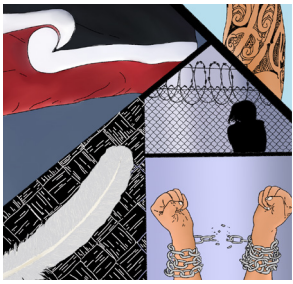
Obviously, halting all work without pay cuts down on prisoners' incomes, forcing their families to make up the difference. As a result of this, there will be potentially reduced access to hygiene products and other essential items during the lockdown. These goods are necessary for prisoners to protect themselves from the pandemic. Phone cards, too, are a poor replacement for cutting off all human contact. A prisoner calling a cell phone can speak to someone on the outside for only 14 minutes.

This is not a substitute for separation from whānau and loved ones. Article 3.4 of Corrections' "Hokai Rangī" plan claims that the Department will strengthen the family connections of prisoners - is providing a 14 minute call once per week a real connection? People Against Prisons Aotearoa says no, and calls on the Department to use their billion dollar budget to provide free phone calls for the duration of the lockdown.

There have been mixed messages around the extent that prison guards have been complying with their obligation to wear masks and adhere to the 2m social distancing rule. People in prison have written to us through the Prisoner Correspondence Network to let us know that guards on their unit are walking around coughing without masks on.

The Department is playing with the lives of prisoners, risking a situation like in New York State prisons where 1 in 14 prisoners has COVID-19. Corrections makes you live in double-bunked cells because of how overstuffed our prisons are with Māori the working poor. Let us know how well you're able to maintain a 2 metre "social distance" from your cellmates - we reckon it's impossible.

Isolation for sick prisoners (solitary) was introduced as a way to contain sickness. As from a recent statement from a Corrections report, any prisoner who has been displaying 'flu-like' symptoms will be put in isolation. This is a massive oversight in Corrections' strategy. Isolation is not a substitute for medical care, which prisoners should access if they are showing symptoms of the flu or a cold. All prisoners who are symptomatic and at-risk of Coronavirus should be able to access hospital-level care - This is literally written into the Corrections Act. Yet we're hearing that there has been reduced access between prisoners and their case managers, and that all in-house consults are being carried out by a nurse, and that doctors visits are suspended. This is not only a violation



PAPA People Against Prisons Aotearoa

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

To request more information about something you read here, or to submit an article, poem, drawing, comic, or other piece that you would like considered for publication in the newsletter, send a letter to:

TNP, PO Box 5870, Victoria Street, Auckland 1141

TAKE NO PRISONERS is a free publication of People Against Prisons Aotearoa (PAPA) through the Prisoner Correspondence Network Aotearoa (PCN).

PRISONER CORRESPONDENCE NETWORK (PCN):

If you would like to apply for a penpal, send your name, PRN, date of birth, address, and an introduction (about yourself) to:

PCN Aotearoa PO Box 5870 Victoria Street Auckland 1141

NOTE: This is NOT a dating service.

COVID-19 FEEDBACK

We reckon the Department of Corrections needs to release all remand prisoners and all prisoners below high-security rating into emergency accommodation immediately, make phone calls free so prisoners can maintain family ties during the lockdown, provide free soap and hygienic products, and ensure guards are wearing protective gear at all times to keep you safe from the virus. What do you think?

We want to hear from you. The Prisoner Correspondence Network and People Against Prisons Aotearoa welcome your response to this article or anything written in this newsletter.

Have you experienced difficulties accessing basic health care or personal health items?

Have all prison guards adhered to the procedure of wearing facemasks?

Has the 'increased access' to phones and emails been givento you?

Are you happy with the way Corrections has responded to the pandemic?

IF YOU HAVE FEEDBACK, PLEASE WRITE TO:

PCN Aotearoa PO Box 5870 Victoria Street Auckland 1141

YOU CAN ALSO EMAIL US AT: contact@pcn.nz

FEEDBACK FROM ISSUE #1

We were very excited to launch our first Issue of *TAKE NO PRISONERS*. We want to thank everyone who sent us their feedback and told us their stories of struggle. We'd love your feedback on this issue as well!

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"I found the contents interesting, sad, hopeful, and truthful"

— Joseph

"The interview with Jared Ware was very interesting and informative, it was nice to know what is happening in other countries around the world. I have always known America's prison system has been tough in most states in America, a place I would hate to be serving my sentence"

— Simon

"Some years ago, I personally advocated for chalk paint to be applied to the walls of holding cells in our prisons. This was done. That was great, except that no chalk was ever supplied; not even on the canteen list. This kind of thing is so typical of our prisons. We are not allowed toothpicks, so I use chicken bones. We are given pin boards but not allowed pins. So we stick things to the wall with toothpaste. There is no brain in Corrections, or the present [Minister] of Corrections"

— John

AGAINST ARMED RESPONSE TEAMS: STOP COPS FROM CARRYING GUNS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Emmy Rāketē and Jess Lim

The police's six-month trial of their Armed Response Teams in Manukau Count, Waikato and Canterbury is coming to an end. But this doesn't mean the cops won't try to keep patrolling poor and brown neighbourhoods with guns. Armed Response teams consist of a minimum of three police officers armed with automatic rifles and tasers, with the possibility of including police attack dogs.

If frontline police are armed with firearms, they will use those firearms in tense situations.

Do you want this for your communities? Stats collected by the police themselves show that firearm crime has not risen in the past 6 years. Still, the armed response teams were called out at a rate of 50 times higher than the armed offender squad were, almost always for things as trivial as routine traffic stops. Do the cops need machine guns to do this stuff? We don't think so.

Statistics from the police show that Māori are almost 8x more likely than Pākehā to be the victims of police violence. Statistics also show that tasers were used in 25% of all cases involving people with mental illness, compared to 16% for the rest of the population. The cops are racist and they know it. A poll of Māori showed that fear of police shootings is dissuading people from calling in emergencies - this trial will make law enforcement more frightening and less responsive than it already is.

This trial has introduced heavily armed police squads into the community without any justification. It is well documented that police armament doesn't reduce rates of violent crime, nor does it make frontline police officers any safer.

In an open letter to outgoing Police Commissioner Mike Bush, People Against Prisons Aotearoa joined organisations like

"The focus needs to shift from punitive measures and harsher policing to addressing the causes of crime – poverty, alienation, and racism."

JustSpeak to say: the Armed Response Team trial has created a lot of fear and concern for communities across Aotearoa, and the police now have an opportunity to open a genuine conversation with the public, not only about firearms but the wider relationship between cops and the communities they are supposed to serve. This conversation is important, because law enforcement strategies need to be informed by what works, and international research has shown that armed police fail to make communities safer. They work for us, but the police seem to have forgotten that.

Trialling armed response teams is taking law enforcement in the wrong direction. We are massively overinvested in criminal justice, while many communities cannot access the support and services they need to live with dignity. The focus needs to shift from punitive measures and harsher policing to addressing the causes of crime -- poverty, alienation, and racism.

Routine armed police patrols mean there will be more police guns in brown and poor communities, and that means there will be more police bullets in brown and poor people. People Against Prisons Aotearoa says no to police armament. Write to us with your opinion and we'll make sure people on the outside hear what you have to say.

— Emmy Rāketē is a People Against Prisons Aotearoa member and teacher from Auckland.

INTERNET ACCESS

Part 01

TEN REASONS YOU SHOULD HAVE INTERNET ACCESS...

01. First and foremost, communication with whanau and friends is crucial for everyone. It's how we stay sane and maintain support networks. It's not just about keeping up to date with major events. It helps remind us that we're all

connected, and have a place with each other.

02. No one uses letters anymore. Post offices are closing all across the country, the stamps are expensive, and it takes days to get replies. Most younger people still have to look up how to correctly label letters. Which brings us to the next point...

03. Everyone uses email, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and iMessage to communicate now, except for

incarcerated people. Excluding people from these networks means that only the most dedicated will stay in touch. It makes talking to prisoners a special effort, rather than just another korero. It means you have to learn how these all work when you get out, cutting you off from your family and violating the Department's obligation to strengthen these ties while you're locked up.

04. Communication aside, the internet gives you access to almost all human knowledge to date. Courses, books, videos and software are all available, with the bulk being low cost or free. When you're

stuck in a box, drawing from and contributing to that pool of knowledge can be a lifeline.

05. Finally, the internet makes it easy to find and work with advocates, supporters, political representatives and journalists. If a group has no public presence, it has no public protection. It becomes easier to forget that they exist, or forget that they're even human. The internet can forge empathy with incarcerated people, by allowing a platform for you to speak up about prison conditions using your own voice.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE:

INTERNET ACCESS

Part 02

and FIVE REASONS CORRECTIONS DOESN'T WANT YOU TO HAVE IT...

06. You might enjoy it, and in their mind you're there to suffer, not to have fun.

07. You might use it to shine a light on mistreatment in prison and force the wider public to confront the grim realities of the prison system.

08. You might use it to harass a victim. This is the one they will fall back on if questioned on this—but if that was the case, why do even minimum-security prisoners also miss out on internet access?

Nobody should ever be revictimised, but the internet isn't any different to the phones in this regard, and Corrections recognises how important phone use is to rehabilitation.

09. You might use it to coordinate a legal case and be a right pain in the ass to them, like Arthur Taylor.

10. You might use it to coordinate a workers' union across the prisons to fight for your rights as prisoners and as members of the exploited working class.

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WHAT DO YOU
THINK ABOUT THE
RESTRICTION OF
INTERNET ACCESS
IN PRISON?

IF YOU HAVE FEEDBACK,
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LETTERS FROM LOCKDOWN

Last year we published a booklet of letters from prisoners, who wanted to share their experiences in solitary confinement. This is part of our campaign to end the practice of isolating people against their will. We want to amplify your voices on this issue and make it harder for politicians, policy makers, and people outside to ignore how much solitary confinement hurts people.

THIS IS HENARE'S STORY.

Dear PAPA,

My story begins on 9 May 2016, when I was taken to Spring Hill Corrections Facility to begin my sentence. I arrived in tears and in shock about what had just happened in court. I was automatically taken to Spring Hill's "At Risk Unit." I had no idea what it was, nor did I know what segregation or mainstream were. I was taken straight to At Risk, where I was stripped of my clothes, my underwear, and my dignity. I was stripped naked in front of three guards, two men and one woman, and I was made to wear a tunic with no underwear. Then I was taken to a single cell and locked in for exactly 48 hours, not knowing what I was entitled to after the 48 hours had passed. I was asked if I would like to go to a TV room for an hour, and as this was my first time in prison, I had no idea what prison was like or how it was run. On day three I was taken from my cell and told that I was going to board a bus and was to head down to Waikeria Prison, but was told by Corrections staff that I would be returning to Spring Hill in exactly seven days.

I arrived at Waikeria, was immediately taken to the At Risk Unit, and locked in a cold, dirty, dark, windowless cell. It made me feel even more depressed than I already was. I had been officially diagnosed under the Mental Health Act as suffering from anxiety and depression. The staff at the At Risk Unit are not trained in mental health issues, nor are they trained nurses. For six weeks I was held in the At Risk Unit with no sheets, no pillow, no underwear. I wasn't told that I could write letters to anyone, or that I could make purchases with the P119 service. During those six weeks I tried to tell Corrections staff as well as nurses that I was no longer at risk. On numerous occasions I said to them that I would like to go back to my unit and that I

was never actually at risk of harming myself or others in the first place. I was told that the only way you can transfer is to go back to Spring Hill, because I was not a Waikeria prisoner, and the only reason that I was at Waikeria was because all the isolation cells at Spring Hill were full. I asked every day when I would be returning and was told "a few days" every day for six weeks.

While I was in that unit, there was a female guard on duty most days. The first time I came in contact with her was within the first week that I was there. I could hear her being nasty to other



prisoners, swearing at them and calling them names. One day she asked me if I would like to go to the yard. I said no because it was a very cold day and about to rain. She said to me, "OH BIT OF A F*GGOT ARE YOU?" I didn't reply to that, as I felt embarrassed. She made me awful about myself. The next day she came back, banged on the door with her foot, looked through the glass at me and said, "Hey f*g, you going to the yard?" I looked at her and she was grinning back at me through the glass. Again,

I didn't answer. Instead, I just rolled over and faced the wall, and because I did this she yelled out as loud as she could, "F*GGOT IN CELL 12 IS CRYING LIKE A BABY" and laughed. Honestly, I just wanted to die. A Corrections staff member who treats a mental health patient the way that she did should not be working in a prison. I tried to ask other guards and nurses what her name was so I could put a complaint in, but no one would tell me. I asked for a complaint form but was told that none were printed out. There was nothing else I could do about it. Every day she was on duty she would antagonise me, and other guards on duty would simply turn away.

That was my experience with At Risk. I would never put myself in that situation again, and I would never wish that on my worst enemy.

If you would like to share your experiences in solitary confinement to be published anonymously, please write to us at: PO Box 5870, Victoria Street, Auckland 1141	If you're having suicidal thoughts, you can call LIFELINE , which is a 24/7 phone counselling service, at 0800 54 33 54
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THE PAROLE BOARD IS RACIST

Ti Lamusse

The prison and remand systems, courts and police are institutionally racist and this means Māori get imprisoned at an alarmingly high rate. The Parole Board is no different. New Zealand is currently experiencing a crisis of imprisonment. However, not everyone in this country is feeling these effects evenly. Rather than simply a crisis of imprisonment, there is a crisis of institutional racism that has taken every opportunity to lock up Māori and Pacific peoples at a rate that far outstrips Pākehā.

This was a major theme in the recently released He Waka Roimata report from the government's Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group. In the report, the Parole Board came under considerable criticism for its unfairness, punitiveness and lack of transparency. However, newly published statistics that People Against Prisons Aotearoa's head of research gathered through the Official Information Act paint an even darker picture of the Parole Board.

One of the final steps of the journey through the criminal justice system is usually an appearance in front of the New Zealand Parole Board. The Parole Board is responsible for deciding whether or not a long-term prisoner is 'ready' to be released from prison.

Statistics released to Ti Lamusse under the Official Information Act about these decisions over the last 17 years are a shocking indictment of the Board. The statistics clearly demonstrate how the Parole Board acts as a crucial cog in the machine of institutional racism and mass incarceration of Māori and Pacific communities.

When the Parole Board was established in 2002, for the first couple of years only a handful of people served the full maximum sentence handed down by a judge. In 2003, just five people served their full sentence, which rose to 91 in 2005. By 2018, the number of people who served their full sentence ballooned out to 597.

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