**“DE-CARCERAL FUTURES:**

**BRIDGING PRISON AND IMMIGRATION JUSTICE”**

**09 – 10 May 2019**

**Queen’s University Faculty of Law**

***Co-sponsored by the Faculty of Law and the Departments of Cultural Studies and Philosophy at Queen’s University and by the Ethics, Society, and Law Program at Trinity College, University of Toronto***

The Canadian context for immigration detention is contradictory: on the one hand, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) sanctions the detentions of over 6,000 non-citizens per year via an expanding architecture of prison-like buildings and techniques; on the other, Canada is devoting $138 million over 5 years to its National Immigration Detention Framework (NIDF) to gather evidence and re-examine how it detains migrants and asylum seekers. A serious consideration of de-carceration and abolitionism is absent altogether in Canada. We think this gap is partially attributable to scholarly and activist conversations being unduly concentrated in the criminal, not immigration, context. It may also be the result of piecemeal reform being advocated for as the ‘more strategic’ solution to a highly complex problem.

Therefore, the time is ripe to demystify, unpack, and rethink Canada’s contradictory embrace of immigration detention and to apply lessons learned from other liberal-identified states. The NIDF’s stated goal is to create ‘a better, fairer system that supports the humane and dignified treatment of individuals while protecting public safety.’ It prioritizes ‘four pillars’ of partnerships, mental health, transparency, and ‘alternatives to detention’, and promises a much-needed oversight body to review detention officials’ actions. Simultaneously, however, the Government of Canada is expanding *all*three of its dedicated immigration holding centres (IHCs); ‘tagging’ former detainees with remote monitoring ankle bracelets; and pursuing detention-related expansion through promises made to the United States in the Safe Third Country Agreement, and the Safe Borders and upcoming Northern Borders Strategies. In light of these revelations, we argue that the piecemeal reforms offered in the NIDF cannot ensure accountability, let alone respect, for the human rights of detainees and their communities.

The workshop will thus identify and address how both official reform efforts like the NIDF alongside most scholarship sidestep complicated but vital issues in detention justice. Examples include legal aid deficiencies, segregation without legal remedies, stratified employment and educational opportunities and access, and release for undeportable people like stateless persons. There is also a pressing need to challenge the racialized and gendered nature of who gets arrested, demobilized, and detained in the first place, a spatio-legal issue in Canada where detention is concentrated in Ontario. The workshop will document, interrogate, and rethink the laws, policies, and lived experiences of detention; however, its participants are committed to going one step further by drilling down to the socio-legal apparatus that undergirds the normative support for incarcerating asylum seekers and other migrants both in Canada and abroad.

Therefore this two-day workshop will cross disciplines and sectors in a collaborative effort to provoke new thinking across normative, policy, and legal boundaries on how to reduce, if not abolish, immigration detention. Presenters will include academic and non-academic researchers, former detainees and detainee advocates, postgraduate and law students, and representatives from community-based organizations. An op-ed co-authored by the workshop convenors will be pitched to *The Conversation*, to coincide with the launch of the workshop on May 9, 2019. A public keynote will engage the wider community and a ‘Walls 2 Bridges’ workshop will teach participants how to engage anti-penal pedagogies. Select scholarly papers will be refereed for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, including at least one contribution earmarked for a postgraduate student’s research. The Faculty of Law will host the papers in anticipation of the workshop. Afterwards, and with the consent of participants, the website will be publicized in order to diffuse the research and conversation to the broader public. Supplementary dissemination platforms will include podcasts featuring the presentations from the workshop as well as “live” interviews with the speakers.

*De-Carceral Futures* will prompt a new direction in the debate about detaining asylum seekers and other migrants. It is a first and much-needed step in the migration studies literature as well as the broader public conversation about detention and its aftermaths. The workshop's outputs, impacts on participants, and research findings will provide impetus for ongoing collaboration towards a more just treatment of migrants and asylum seekers in Canada and around the world.

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