

# JENGBA



## Newsletter

You're not Alone

Issue 55

CHRISTMAS EDITION

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### Greetings Inside Campaigners and **JENGBA** Supporters

Phew what a crap year! I can't even begin to imagine how difficult the lockdown has been for so many of you. We have had some messages that have drawn positive experiences from lack of socialising, but I would imagine for many, specially the younger prisoners it has been torture.

Just in case you weren't aware, **JENGBA** have been supporting Kevan Thakrar a joint enterprise prisoner serving 35 years (who was not at the scene of the crime) of which over ten years have been in the Closed Supervision Centres (CSCs).

The MoJ describe the CSCs as "a multi-disciplinary risk management approach to deal with highly disruptive and high-risk prisoners." However, Kev describes them as "torture units designed to inflict massive psychological harm". Kev has had to endure this ordeal simply because he was the subject of a racist attack by Prison Officers which, when they took him to court for assault, HE won and was acquitted. The punishment meted out to him ever since is a direct response to the fact they didn't get a 'result'. Many of you will know about Kev, but you will now have a better idea of what he has experienced and he is still assaulted by constant strip searches even though he is not allowed to socialise with any other prisoners on the CSCs. Kev's struggle has been an immense one but he has held it together and is an inspiration to us all. We must use the COVID response by the MoJ to demand sentence reductions for prisoners especially JE ones.

There is a new film out called 'No More Prisons' and it is extremely good. The film-makers are striving to get a distributor for it but JENGBA are doing our own one off screening on 11th December with Q & A contributions after from Jimmy McGovern (our patron who wrote 'Common' about JE and is currently writing a 3 part film on prisons called Time) Fran Robertson (producer of Guilty by Association screened on Panorama) and John Crilly. The film is the best commentary I have seen on the actual conditions of prisons and who we send to them and I am in it discussing the now 1200 JE prisoners we are supporting. Hopefully, they will get it onto a platform you will be able to see.

If you have been following Steve McQueen's Small Axe's productions on Sunday evenings you may have seen the first one Mangrove 9. This was particularly poignant to me and my family as we grew up in the area (Irish) where so many Afro-Caribbean settlers also did in Notting Hill. But the incredibly powerful story resonated even more because it is based on the racist assaults by the police to the Mangrove Restaurant on All Saints Road (Shout out to Inside Campaigner Rickel Adams whose family still run the Record shop opposite) – 12 times from January 69 till June 70. The community decided to hold a peaceful march to the local police station. 150 people marched to be met by 200 police officers with 500 standing by. The police used violence against the crowd and the Mangrove 9 were charged with inciting a riot and encouraged by their lawyers to plead guilty! They represented themselves in court supported by QCs and won – the judge agreeing that the police displayed racial hatred towards the defendants in December 1971. Almost 50 years ago and nothing has changed. Anyone who knows Steve McQueen point him in our direction!

## STORIES OF INJUSTICE

Last week, on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November, we launched the report *Stories of Injustice – the latest document to catalogue the injustice of joint enterprise*. In this report, the voices of women convicted and punished under JE are heard loudly for the first time. Over the last two years, we (researchers at Manchester Metropolitan University) have been working with women in prison serving JE punishments and JENGBA to build an understanding about how many women are convicted using these laws and the wider context of the events and convictions that led them to be in prison.

Whilst it's no surprise that women are serving long sentences in prison for crimes they haven't committed – we know this from the cases, the evidence and the campaigning that JENGBA inside and outside campaigners have been calling out for the last decade. What has surprised people is the number of women serving sentences, that so many are for murder and manslaughter convictions, that all are 'secondary' parties and that the law still hasn't been fixed (of the 109 women 16 were convicted since Supreme Court ruling in 2016). Also the women's cases reveal that not only is the legal system flawed in its use of joint enterprise, but in too many of these cases the criminal justice and welfare systems in this country have failed to protect and support girls and women when they have been suffering from violence, harm and poor mental health. All of this failure of the state is silenced, our collaborative work seeks to address this silencing – exposing and calling for change.

As ever with JENGBA, lots of work behind the scenes meant the report landed strongly. There was coverage across news media – BBC news, Today Programme, Independent, Telegraph, Daily Mail, Spectator...all the politician's and Judge's favourite reads! This is important as it begins to (re)generate momentum and questions around the legitimacy of these laws. Then on Thursday, an online event attended by over 150 people created a space for families of the women to speak on their behalf about the injustice and pain these convictions cause for individuals and families. Their testimonies were the 'sucker punch' the MPs that were in attendance needed, to wake up and know this is NOT fixed – these convictions are still happening and the many many miscarriages of justice have not been righted.

In the New Year, we will build on the commitments made by MPs in the session, such as Shadow Justice Secretary David Lammy's acknowledgement that *'understanding that sadly unlikely to be solved by courts, will have to be solved by legislation...we've got to fix this!'*

To our sisters inside, we did it – you have been heard.

*In solidarity with all JE prisoners, Becky Clarke and Kathryn Chadwick.*

And speaking of Anniversaries, next year 2021 is 40 years since the Brixton Riots and 10 years since the nationwide Riots after the shooting of Mark Duggan in Tottenham. The then DP Keir Starmer saw that the Courts remained open 24 hours to prosecute the rioters, predominately with joint enterprise because they often didn't have actual evidence in what people did – sound familiar?

We met with Starmer when he was DPP when he said JE was political and "his hands were tied". Then we met with him again when he was MP and he was singularly disappointing. This is because we now believe he along with the Labour Government of Blair, Straw and Falconer were the modern architects of how joint enterprise was reintroduced to be 'tough on crime' along with the disastrous IPP sentences. Straw admitted IPPs were wrong but has done nothing to address them retrospectively leaving 1000s in a cruel limbo. JENGBA will strive to get a similar apology and Justice for JE prisoners and reports like 'Stories of Injustice' on women and joint enterprise is another arrow in our bow to do just that!

We've had Andy Slaughter MP promise to try to get it on the Parliamentary Justice Select Committee Agenda and Kim Johnson MP also agreed she would try to get the issue on Parliamentary Women and Inequalities Committee.

Next year will be an important one for us and once allowed we will organise the biggest march yet and we will get it out in the media. Stay strong and look after each other.

PEACE

Gloria and all the JENGBA family.



Hi JENGbA inside-campaigners!

Only me again. Well, I obviously wish each and everyone one of you the best shit xmas possible. And will definitely be thinking of you all during this period (more than usual).

Well guys!! I want to tell you about Jack Merritt again (who you will recall tragically – to say the least – lost his life while trying to help prisoners) and his amazing legacy. We all know that money has been raised vicariously via JACK for JENGbA before. But Jack's legacy is further showing its power. And I am proud to tell you about just one (very important one) in particular who is also close to me (from nick) and whom I had the pleasure of watching bond with Jack in his role as Learning Together co-ordinator.

But more so as just friends. Jack was good at that. Making YOU feel like you were the most important and special person in the room. And even more amazingly was that it was real, genuine friendship. Immediately he made you his friend, you quickly grew to trust JACK MERRITT.

And, most importantly JACK instilled these feelings in YOU.

So, guys! I introduce to you 'Rosca'. My friend, Jack's friend and just a good guy. Like me, and all of you Rosca came to see the waste he had made of his life in CRIMINALITY. What JACK did with Rosca (and me and many more) was simply allow Rosca to see his possibilities, his worth in society. Jack showed us and many more now supporting JENGbA (because of Jack highlighting the injustice of JE) that there was good in the world. That there were people who will fight for you.

Anyway, I digress! Rosca has been able to make an amazingly touching tribute to Jack (and Saskia Jones too, always) by way of what Rosca does best, music!

Rosca's song is simply called "JACK" albeit it is so, so much more meaningful and speaks of Jack's anger at the injustice he became aware of while working in different prisons. He also 'raps' about hope, which Jack has given him. And changing as a person wanting to simply do good in the world. To fight injustice and discrimination on all levels.

Rosca has had the worst sort of life as a child fleeing the democratic republic of Congo due to his father being in politics. He endured refugee camps for years with just his siblings, some of whom sadly didn't make it through. He came to England with no English and was regularly bullied. Leading like most to the (false) security of a gang. This led where it led a lot of us, jail. Rosca then met (me! Ha!) Jack in HMP Grendon and changed his life from there through a lot of determination and initially Jack's support upon his release.

Rosca was stopped from entering London Bridge last year when he too was on his way to the event at Fishmongers Hall where Jack lost his life in the attack. Amazingly Rosca has channelled his grief into his tribute song "JACK" and, further more he has like Jack, donated a percentage of all monies raised from the track to JENGbA and other causes close to Jack's heart. Some of you may know Rosca, or Jack, or even me??

And hopefully will know that we are all still fighting for you ALL. And, recently we have had some amazing events which have been so effective and gathering more and more support and OUTRAGE at what has happened to you all. We also have another amazing event brought about again through the legacy that is JACK. Two totally random student film makers have been inspired to make a film due to hearing about Jack, his death but essentially his legacy. The film is amazing and again we have been honoured with launching it on the JENGbA website. AS WITH ROSCA'S SONG IT IS AVAILABLE ON YOUTUBE. Rosca's song is also available on all other music platforms.

Please ask your loved ones to buy/download Rosca's track (xmas No.1..?) and to join the link, share, retweet both Rosca and our film launch on 11 December. I will be on the panel alongside our Glo, our patron Jimmy Mc Govern and we also hope to have Jack's dad, Dave Merritt taking part too. A tribute to his strength and virtues which were clearly so ever present within Jack. And, obviously want to quickly mention Jack's amazingly strong, caring mum, Anne Merritt. Stay positive right now guys. Though it appears nothing is progressing? JENGbA is in fact currently 'making noise' in all the right places and alongside our new (young) arm 'Cosign 200' we are gathering more and more support. Stay strong and never stop hoping guys! NO JUSTICE! NO PEACE!!

John Crilly



How has **JENGbA** helped families since 2010?

The **JENGbA** meetings have been very useful. It is where we can discuss new developments, how we can keep fighting the injustice of joint enterprise and keep up the momentum of challenging joint enterprise. (Dad)

Obviously it is really sad that other people are going through what I'm going through but knowing I can talk to other **JENGbA** families and have their support means everything to me (Partner)

I have made lifelong friends through **JENGbA**. My partner first heard of them through another prisoner who is a partner of a **JENGbA** prisoner. (Partner)

I met another **JENGbA** family on a visit and we now visit together. They live in the next town. That saves me a lot of money. We have really supported each other. Being able to speak to someone who does not stigmatise me or look down at me means so much to me (Partner)

After we lost the appeal I was in deep depression because I put all my hopes into the appeal. I thought the Court of Appeal would be able to see that my son was innocent and that he did not foresee the crime. Every day was a struggle for me and that is when I found **JENGbA**. They gave me motivation to keep fighting and never ever give up. Speaking to others who also find themselves in this unfortunate situation gave me huge strength. (Mum)

**JENGbA** is the only voluntary organisation that has helped me and my family on an emotional and practical level since my son's conviction (Mum)

My daughter has been in prison over a decade now, the family meetings in prison are run by prison staff. I always feel more supported by **JENGbA** where I get honest advice. (Dad)

I can talk to other people in the same position and know I am not judged. (Wife)

Gloria even came and visited me in prison, I really appreciated that (Prisoner)

No-one else can give me the accurate quick response I need to navigate the prison system with visits, moves etc. (Sister)

**JENGbA** have been a Godsend to me, they understand my fears and worries about my loved one in prison. (Mum)

## COSIGN200

Cosign200 launched in October this year. We are an alliance that works with UK criminal justice campaigners to amplify and educate young people on their causes, in the hope of catalysing true and continuous social change. Our goal is to mobilise young people into being active citizens that critically engage with the criminal justice system.

Through video recorded interviews with **JENGbA** relatives, we have been sharing the stories of those convicted under 'joint enterprise' on our Instagram page, and it has blown!

Our first video has had over 12,000 views on our IG page and was reposted to 4.6 million people via Imjustbait. To date, it has had over 200,000 views and climbing. Through this we have had an interview with Raphael Rowe - presenter of the Netflix series 'The world's toughest prisons' and have had newspapers republish the lies they peddled about this case.

We are continuing to get in touch with your loved ones to share your stories of injustice. Tell everyone you know to follow @cosign200 on IG and twitter.

Gloria Dei, Co-founder



Big thanks to Dior, Kasey and Halle  
For our lovely Christmas drawings

## Contact Us

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The office phone has now been fixed  
so do add to your pin if you wish.  
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