

Just Detention International

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://justdetention.org/jdi-remembers-survivor-advocate-joe-booth/>

Campaign and Advocacy

Our movement to end prisoner rape lost one of its most powerful advocates on February 22, 2021, when Michael Joseph Booth passed away. Joe, as he was known to friends, was one of the movements most recognizable faces a fearless spokesperson who shared his story of being raped in prison to raise awareness of this violence and champion the humanity of survivors.



Joe Booth was a true hero in the fight for safety and dignity for incarcerated people, said Linda McFarlane, JDI's Executive Director. He had a unique ability to reach people who were hesitant to address prisoner rape or to work with incarcerated survivors leading them to a place of empathy and understanding. I have no doubt that he inspired countless advocates who are now committed to ensuring that incarcerated survivors get the protection and support they deserve.

Joe joined JDI's Survivor Council in 2012, but his involvement with us started two years earlier, when he was incarcerated in a California state prison. He wrote a letter to JDI after being raped and tortured over a period of four days by his cellmate, who had a history of targeting openly gay inmates like Joe. The crucial support Joe received from JDI and his local rape crisis center was a theme in his public speaking, especially to advocates who were beginning to work with incarcerated survivors. Joe was often featured in media coverage of sexual abuse in detention, and he was a mainstay at national sexual assault prevention conferences and policy forums. It's amazing to know that because I shared my story, people in our government are more likely to listen the next time a survivor reaches out to them, Joe said in 2016, after speaking at a White House meeting on criminal legal issues affecting people who are living with HIV and who are LGBT. That's why I'm going to keep telling my story and why I won't stop telling it until we end prisoner rape.

All of us at JDI are grieving Joe's loss, said McFarlane. He was both incredibly kind and deeply committed, and we were so lucky to have him in our movement. We will honor Joe's memory by continuing the work to fight prisoner rape.

