

Life after Life [A Collective Dedicated to De-criminalization & De-carceration]

Internship Description: The *Life after Life Collective* is an action workgroup of both the *2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy* and *QPIRG McGill* (see below for our mandate and approach as well as annual budget). We are currently hiring a new project co-coordinator for a short-term paid internship to work with other collective members from mid-June until mid-September 2012. Priority will be given to current members of the *Life after Life* collective and/or girls, women, queer, and/or transgender people who are formerly incarcerated and/or in conflict with the law. The position can be held by one individual or shared. Two people can apply together and submit one cover letter as long as they submit two separate CVs. If you decide to collaborate with another individual, please make sure to indicate how you intend to split the job tasks and the stipend payment.

Application Deadline: Monday, June 4, 2012 @ 5 p.m. Please e-mail your individual or collective cover letter and CV to Lena Palacios, *Life after Life* Co-coordinator, at compalena@hotmail.com. Include (ATTN: Life after Life Internship) in the subject line. Only those who are selected for an interview will be contacted.

Benefits: *The co-coordinator(s) will*

- receive a \$1000 honorarium from *Life after Life's QPIRG McGill* summer stipend funding;
- oversee a \$2500 budget from both the *2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy* and *QPIRG McGill*;
- work at the *2110 Centre* and have access to a computer, printer, phone/fax, and B & W photocopying;
- collaborate with current *Life after Life Collective* members to carry out our top five goals for 2012-2013 (see below for additional information about our goals);
- and receive all necessary or desired skills and technical training that can be offered by *Life after Life Collective* members and by the *QPRIG McGill* and *2110 Centre Workgroup* liaisons during the summer

Responsibilities: *The co-coordinator(s) will*

- work independently a minimum of 4-5 hours per week from mid-June until mid-September;
- schedule, organize, and co-facilitate bi-monthly working meetings and potluck socials for collective members;
- meet the *2110 Centre* workgroup staff liaison and/or board member of *QPIRG McGill* for updates about the progress of the project/get support *at least once a month* during the summer;
- present *at least two oral reports* to both the *QPIRG McGill* staff liaison and/or board member *and* the *2110 Centre* workgroup liaison in mid-July and again in early September;
- network with grassroots prison abolitionist groups and formal social services throughout Canada that are led by and/or serve girls, women, and gender-nonconforming people in conflict with the law;
- maintain an accurate and updated database of our network members' contact information and list of services provided to currently and formerly incarcerated girls, women, and gender-nonconforming people in conflict with the law;
- collaborate with collective members to draft, finalize and distribute through our network a call-out for creative contributions to our "Surviving on the Inside-Out Resource Guide";
- build relationships within *Joliette Institution* (e.g. with the chaplain or volunteer coordinator) and schedule 3-4 workshops with women led by collective members (FYI: due to non-association policies you do NOT have to visit the prison yourself if you are formerly incarcerated/in conflict with the law);

- ensure all collective members have submitted the appropriate clearance forms and have been approved by the Joliette institution;
- reserve a rental car for 3-4 round-trips to *Joliette* using *Communauto*'s *Le Lièvre* package and ensure that we stay within our transportation budget;
- contact three publishers to schedule 2-3 interactive book launches/forums which will take place between Nov. 2012-March 2013; books and activist speakers have already been identified;
- coordinate 2-3 book launches/forums in collaboration with the *Prisoner Correspondence Project* and Concordia's *Co-op Bookstore* as well as with *QPIRG McGill* and the *2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy*.
- And reserve spaces for book launches/forums by working with the *2110 Centre* workgroup staff liaison and *QPIRG McGill* board in early September.

Our Mandate: *Life after Life* is a community based organization located in Montreal. We are an intergenerational collective run mutually by girls, women, queer, transgender, and feminists. Our aim is to build a viable community for people coming out of punitive state institutions who need a space to heal and support each other, and nurture their leadership. We are committed to de-criminalization and to de-carceration and to troubling any common sense notion that prisons are normal, necessary, or that those who are living "inside" prison walls are somehow different from those living "outside." We center an intersectional, critical race feminist, trans-inclusive and anti-oppressive praxis. By learning together in social action, we may be able to transform ourselves and each other by challenging the distortions of the mainstream media, educational institutions, and legal system.

Our History: Ideas for this group emerged from numerous discussions, including one specific conversation on the realities facing criminalized women during a *Blue Print* workshop at the *2110 Centre for Gender Advocacy*. Through various interactions and experiences with group homes, child protective services, mental institutions, jails, and prison, those involved in this group have acknowledged how the Prison Industrial Complex in Canada is criminalizing and incarcerating ever growing numbers of poor and racialized girls, women, transgender and gender non-conforming people. *Life after Life* aims to find new ways of organizing and building community that center upon and draws from those girls, women, transgender and gender non-conforming people who have been directly affected by state violence. We are not a social services agency and do not see ourselves as "victims in need of services" dependent upon the state. We do, however, understand ourselves as capable of creating community and supporting each other. Our goal is to promote the holistic development of criminalized girls and women, inspiring them to establish strong leadership roles in local communities.

Our Approach: Our mandate is to be as organic, spontaneous and creative as possible. It's why we believe in the transformative power of cultural mediums such as dance, media, music, poetry, spoken word, filmmaking, cooking, etc. The activities and issues are determined by the participants themselves, a point that reflects how our collective is grounded in the primary principle of self-determination with respect to each participant's personal, spiritual, and political empowerment process. We believe in process and consensus-based development, not necessarily in an explicit end goal. If participants want to learn how to style hair, we will learn how to style hair, period. If participants want to take a break from talking about policy change, we will take a break and paint our nails instead; these artistic pursuits are not goal-oriented. Our approach recognizes that in order to maintain a responsive and responsible sense of community for our leadership, we cannot privilege any activity as more or less legitimate.

Our Top Five Goals for 2012-2013: The overall plan for our collective is to build a solid organizational and structural foundation that is sustainable in the long-term. Our first goal is to collaborate with formerly and currently incarcerated collective members to create a “Surviving on the Inside-Out Resource Guide” by, for, and about incarcerated girls, women, transgender, and gender non-conforming people. Before we create a general, Canada-wide call-out for written and artistic submissions, we will create an arts-based popular educational workshop that will be delivered at a variety of open and closed facilities populated by incarcerated girls and women throughout Quebec. Our workshops will harness multi-media consciousness raising, offering all participants a chance to experiment with creative writing, digital media, dance, and popular theatre. Inherent in this goal is our desire to help build a space where girls and women can work to produce, share, and transform knowledge that truly reflects what it means to survive and thrive inside/out. Funding for travel costs related to this outreach is being sought, specifically, through this application.

Our second goal is to solicit creative writing, poetry, music lyrics, artwork, photo diaries, collages, rants, anecdotes, advice, tips, etc., from currently and formerly incarcerated girls, women, and transgendered people on the topic of surviving (or not) and thriving (or not) once released back into the “outside” world. We plan on offering \$50 honoraria to each individual or group that contributes to this call-out. In addition, we plan on soliciting contributions from community advocacy groups and social services organizations whose mandate coincides with our own. The funding for honoraria is also being sought from *QPIRG McGill*, however contributions offered from social service groups will not be granted honoraria unless they are grassroots community organizations whose organizational mandate and grassroots fundraising efforts support prison abolitionist movements. Our collective will also research currently available community and/or print-based resources that assist girls, women, transgender and gender non-conforming in the inside/out. These resources can consist of subsidized housing, legal assistance, harm reduction, activist organizations and peer-to-peer support groups, the ongoing collection of this information will be made available as a resource library that members can consult.

Our third goal is to publish and distribute this resource guide to individual contributors, open and closed facilities, group homes throughout Canada, as well as to our community partners. We are seeking funding to photocopy the first batch of 150 publications through the Summer Stipend. We will also research potential grassroots publishing avenues available within Canada, with focus on securing free distribution channels. Eventually, we will place this resource online and update the resources quarterly.

In Fall 2012 and Winter 2013, *Life after Life* intends to coordinate with the *Prisoner Correspondence Project* and incarcerated women in Joliette and other institutions to develop correspondence relationships amongst Concordia students, McGill students, and incarcerated girls, women, transgender, and gender non-conforming people. We recognize the limited opportunities for incarcerated people to communicate and develop links with those living in the greater community. Further, we view this project as an outlet for student participants to challenge their conception of the inside/outside, and ultimately, intend to foster an understanding of trends in female and trans criminalization and incarcerated women’s and trans resilience.

Our fourth goal is to pair the launch of the *PCP/Life After Life* correspondence project with two book launches/workshops, featuring the forthcoming books of Beth Ritchie (*Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*), Andrea Ritchie (*Violence Every Day: Police Brutality and Racial*

Profiling Against Women, Girls, and Trans People of Color), as well as the recently published collection *Queer (In)Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States* by Joey Mogul, Andrea Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock. This event would provide students and activists with an opportunity to speak with each other in an interactive, workshop-style forum. The funding for these events has been successfully sought through the *2110 Centre*.

Our fifth and final goal for the 2012-2013 year is to build our organization, specifically in relation to funding and recruitment. One key example is the *Engrenage Noir* project, a new program to support community activity art projects, from whom we will apply for funding. Lastly, in order to continue engaging with student community, we will submit a community project proposal to the *Community-University Research Exchange (CURE)* aimed at hiring student interns to create a blog for *Life after Life*, as well as engaging in other media justice work related to the realities of incarcerated girls, women, trans, and gender non-conforming in Canada.