

The Hum Podcast

Episode 32: “They Throw Us To Not Deal With Us”

[Theme music fades in]

Bianca: Even after I got out, I'd get sent back because I'd have to be stealing to eat and I'd be selling drugs and trying to get by and I got raided and went back to jail on more trafficking charges 30 days after I got out from doing eight months. I had my first and last rent made and I was just going to be done with it, you know what I mean? Like I just ... That was it. I was trying to get help with my addiction issues and it was just every which way I was getting turned away and none of them could help me, not a single soul because I was on drugs, and the whole point of me calling was to get into these places so I could be safe and clean afterwards and just kept hitting dead ends.

[Music increases in volume]

Gilad: You are listening to The Hum.

[Music fades out]

Simona: Here's a stat that will likely shock you. Women are the fastest growing prison population, not just in Canada but worldwide. A documentary titled *Conviction* attempts to understand the statistic by documenting the experiences of a few incarcerated women and embarking on a collaborative project that reveals the inner workings of a broken system. The film recently had its world premiere at Hot Docs and we're joined here today by Nance Ackerman, one of the three filmmakers of the project, as well as Bianca Mercer, one of the participants from the documentary and also someone who has struggled with incarceration herself here in Canada. Welcome today.

Nance: Thank you.

Gilad: Nance, I guess our first question for you is why did you decide you wanted to make a film about women in prison and what was it like for you establishing trust with the participants in this film?

Nance: I wanted to make a film, I actually wanted to make a film about Senator Kim Pate. She was the head, she was ED of Elizabeth Fry. I met her way back in 2000. I'm a photographer. I did a photo of her for a book I was doing and I met her and I couldn't believe the work she was doing, always wanted to make a film with her and it was actually one night pouring rain and I was listening to CBC talking about the death of Ashley Smith, the young woman who killed herself in prison while

the guards watched and Kim was on the radio at the time. I remember sitting there just balling my eyes out. I was just losing it and I picked up the phone and called her right after the interview and said, come on, we have to do a film, and then I met the two other, the co-directors, Ariella and Teresa. Ariella Pahlke and Teresa MacInnes, and the three of us were talking about this statistic, the number of women rising, incarcerated women and we basically just said, we all are inspired by Kim and the work she does and we decided to do the film.

Nance: The only way you can make a film like this to me is to work with the people inside. It's not like, everyone says, you gave them a voice. Man, they have a voice, they have a huge voice. All we did was give them the technology and the permission because otherwise they weren't allowed to speak until we came in there. Basically, it was just, we were conduits and we wanted them to collaborate and we gave them all the tools we could. Basically art tools, music tools and filmmaking tools and they-

Gilad: Providing the space in the platform I guess to let that magic happen. I'm curious about trust actually for both of you. Bianca, what was it like having a filmmaker come in who's wanting to document parts of your life, very intimate parts of your life. What was that like for you with trust at the very beginning?

Bianca: The very beginning it was just ... Someone asked me this earlier, we didn't even really have to have trust. It was, we already had a story to tell and just needed that one opportunity to tell it and just ran with it and as we grew and kept working with Ariella and Teresa, Nance, we just grew a close bond with these three women and now we're here and it's great.

Simona: I have a question to you, Bianca. When I guess the opportunity was posed to you, did you think that this is the journey that it would take? Did you think this is what you would be doing at the end of it?

Bianca: No, I actually, when I first heard about it, we had to be sentenced and out of the 36 months I did in jail, only four months of them I was sentenced. I just locked out literally, I think it was 10 days before they started the project, I had gotten sentenced and the captains and the guards, they knew that I was doing poems and writing and stuff like that. They were like, you should be involved. It's just artsy thing and we're just going to have some shoots and do a documentary and we started off but the first days I actually wasn't there. I was locked in my cell on a disciplinary thing, so I did not think that I was going to be part of it at all but I was luckily enough to be sentenced and able to do it and just seeing how us just sitting there in jail painting and just talking about our histories and what we want, and I didn't think it would have turned into this. It's crazy seeing it now and watching it, it's just like wow. It's nice.

Simona: Now you're an advocate for the de-imprisonment movement, such as calling for governments and policy to shift from investing in building new prisons and prisons in general to shifting resources into the community so we can intervene before people get to prison. Can you guide us through what that would actually look like? The big picture. What you would want to see it actually unfold?

Bianca: Well, right now, well, during the film we had created, if you guys seen it, it's from the ground up and basically how I described it would have been a three-step place where you go in and a lot of women when they first go to jail, they're coming off of drugs, they don't know that they have mental illness, they're having the breakdown from going without medication that they need and some of them are infectious diseases and all kinds of other things. The first stage from the ground up would be a rehab medical stage where we figure out what's going on with this person and get their individual program started and they work with people directly a lot, and then the second stage would be more personal privacy programming and you start to work on those issues that you found and after you're clean and sober then you can get into it more invasive or however you want to go and how fast you choose to open up to these people.

Bianca: And then the third stage be more long-term living and education and work and getting back into society, and having all this one stop shop program because back home, I don't know if it's the same way here, but back home we have mental health over here, addictions over here, incarceration and law over this way and it's just, you get an appointment over here one day and then you have to rush down the other side of the city for another appointment and it's always six months down the road, you don't know if you're going to live there, you don't even know if you're going to have a phone, so it's all complicating and from the ground up would literally be just this one stop shop for everything. All those things are available for these women, even for women that just want to come and just to live there and even if they don't have anything issue or they're trying to get their children back and they can't. They need a positive place to rehabilitate and get back in society.

Bianca: It's just one stop where you can figure all these different issues out and that's what we need. That's what they use our jails for and it's obviously failing, so why don't we take the money and put it into from the ground up and put all our resources and come together as one because even our nonprofits they're not really working together. They're trying to get their own money in their own pockets and they're not really putting their heads together and trying to solve the problem. It's the same as corrections and all the government, what's going on there, so I just don't see why people wouldn't want to save money in the long run and actually fix the problem instead of making it bigger and harder and more complicated to get around. I just don't get that part.

Gilad: You hear an idea then you're like, shit, that makes so much sense.

Nance: Total sense.

Gilad: That's just the natural logical thing to do. You mentioned earlier about obviously the prison system isn't making sense and it's a very cyclical thing. People are getting out and coming back in. Do you mind sharing a little bit more about the things, at least for you, that led you to coming back in? Where is it that the system failed you in particular?

Bianca: Oh goodness. I actually did, like I said earlier, 36 months total in a provincial jail and only four months were sentence.

Nance: Sentence on remand. Some people may not know.

Bianca: Yeah. I was remanded for the other 32 months and that's basically you're on trial, you're waiting for trial, you don't have means to get out of jail or anyone to help bail you out and the money or they just ... No one could help me get out of jail, so they just let me sit there and wait for my trial. It's just automatically, even after I got out, I'd get sent back because I'd have to be stealing to eat and I'd be selling drugs and trying to get by and literally I got raided and went back to jail on more trafficking charges 30 days after I got out from doing eight months so I had my first and last rent made and I was just going to be done with it, you know what I mean? I just, that was it.

Bianca: I got sent back to jail, they took all the money from me. I got out of jail, had to do it all over again, ended up finding out about my pregnancy. I was trying to get help with my addiction issues and it was just every which way I was getting turned away. In the film, you can see me dialing where I'm falling asleep at the bench and I am dialing all these places. I'm not dialing just one detox I'm not ... I'm calling E Fry, I'm calling every single resource that I can think of. Every homeless shelter in Halifax like Marguerite Center, Barry House, Adsum House, none of them could help me, not a single soul because I was on drugs and the whole point of me calling was to get back, in a detox and then get into these places so I could be safe and clean afterwards and just kept hitting dead ends.

Bianca: It wasn't even corrections that was making it hard for me to do ... It's every single resource that's out there. Corrections, they're just a mess. Then our justice system is a mess also. They see that I needed help and instead of helping me, they just left me on my own and it's struggle, but I end up going back to jail for another robbery after I just did eight months for robbery and I was pregnant and when I went to jail, even trying to get to the hospital and get my appointments, I was severely sick while I was in jail. I had obstetric cholestasis, my daughter end up dying from meconium which is a bowel movement inside and is very

poisonous for a baby. It was caused by distress, which is obviously because of the obstetric cholestasis, but even that error, even in our medical for a baby where it's like ... I was failed there too. That's why I don't understand our systems. They're not working. You keep reaching, you go back to jail and that's just what I was doing. It was just cycles. One after the other, I just kept getting failed. No one was listening to me and I knew what I needed. I just couldn't get there.

Gilad: You mentioned in the movie there's that part where you're literally dialing and you fall asleep, and I want to ask you a question, Nance. As a filmmaker, as an artist, how hard is it for you sometimes to separate the art from the emotion? I ask that because as we mentioned before the interview, we do a lot of work here with underserved communities at JAYU, and I'm curious to know how hard is it for you sometimes to not want to drop the camera or the equipment and to jump in and help. Is it hard to set up those barriers between the art and the real life?

Nance: Well, fuck the barriers I'm sorry. I don't do that. You can ask B. I don't, I mean, I was at her place when she was getting arrested and I'm fighting to ... I did not ... I'm not a good one to ask about the quote journalistic and objectiveness which I think is total-

Simona: Say it.

Nance: Bullshit. I think it's total bullshit so I wasn't there to be objective, I wasn't there ... I was a fly on the wall because I wanted people to see, we all wanted people to see what they were experiencing but because she was, had her own camera, she was setting up her own camera and dialing herself and I was helping her get numbers and stuff like that, we didn't show that in the film, but I was helping and drove you to detox like three hours away and there was no, not putting down the camera and I mean I think there's a huge part of this film that there was a lot that was on the cutting room floor but I think there was also was a lot that happened when the cameras were off and those were the parts, I mean we all just, in the end it's really, yes, it is about our justice system, yes it is about our society but in the end we made the film for the women and we did everything we could and we're still doing everything we can to make their lives better.

Bianca: It's crazy when you look at the film too. She was there when, I guess me and you worked a lot together. A lot of what you see of me, if it wasn't myself shooting, it was her. You see the time I'm falling asleep on the bench and I'm trying to dial and then you see that when I'm getting walked out of my apartment building in handcuffs because Athia's father, he was allowed around me but they put a no contact on my pieces of paper because we were still going to trial and I was on bail after I had my daughter and all that and I called Nance and I was like, police

are at my door. I have eight o'clock curfew. I'm wondering if someone could come and talk to them and say, if I let him leave, will they let me stay? And they're waiting for a warrant outside my apartment and Nance shows up and I can hear and she's like, will you just leave and come out and I was just like, no, I have eight o'clock curfew. They're going to wait until eight o'clock when I have to open the door.

Bianca: That was what I was doing. I was just sitting there in [inaudible], able, huh? Able to go back to jail. I was just talking to my camera, just getting it and I was just like, I just couldn't believe that she was really outside the door. She's like, well we might as well get it on camera. This is life. This is real.

Simona: That was probably that moment where you're just falling asleep and you look so tired and you still keep going, was like that thing, that light bulb moment that says, this is what I need to say to people when they say, well you do the crime, you do the time, right? You take the sentence, you did the thing, right? But no one ever talks about all the other shit that leads someone into the cycle and it's so hard to get out of it. One of the things I felt so proud and so happy when you were getting your shit and just walking out. What is that first breath of non-prison air or what is that first ... What are the first few moments of freedom feel like?

Bianca: It's so weird. It really is. It's actually really scary. It's not even ... It's almost not even enjoyable because you're in a zone where everything's taken care of and there's no stress. You don't have to worry about turning your own lights off, someone does that for you. It's actually really nervous. Getting out and actually not breathing in recycled air is great, but the true nature of it is just like, where am I going to go? What am I going to do? Who am I going to ask for help? Who do I even have left? Who didn't I fuck over from before? It's just all these questions are in your head and it's scary.

Nance: It's a real statement on society, right? You feel safer in prison?

Bianca: Yeah.

Nance: That's just messed and that's what we found. We kept thinking, oh my God, they feel safer and they have, what's it called before you get out, you get really nervous and it's like a week before you're let out they get the jitters and everybody is-

Bianca: Short timing.

Nance: Short timing and it's like they all get really, really anxiety comes up.

Bianca: Yeah. We just shut down. Most people that are short timing, they sleep like 24 hours. I'd say the last 30 days is when you start short timing and it's just you're scared. [crosstalk] Yeah. Some girls that are in that type, for me it was selling drugs and robberies just to get by it. It's just I don't want to do that again. How many times I've had to fight, how many times I've been robbed, how many times I've been up against men, it's just-

Nance: Where are you going to sleep?

Bianca: That's what I was going to go back to. When I walked out those doors and I'm saying I don't know what I'm going to do or where I'm going to go. I knew in the back of my head but it's just like, fuck-

Nance: You don't want to go there.

Bianca: I got all this clean time in and I'm brand new. I have a mentality right now that's positive but I ultimately know that I don't have the resources or the help.

Gilad: A system almost against you in a way too, right?

Bianca: Yeah. It's definitely built against you.

Gilad: This is a question I want to throw to both of you. When we talk a lot about the cost of prison, people often, especially in the media I find are fascinated over dollars, but what are some of the other costs associated with prison that we don't talk about? I mean some of the things that emerged in the film was mental health. One stat that we learned when we were doing a lot of research was that most women in prison are actually mothers. What happens to the children when these mothers are incarcerated? What are some of the other costs associated with imprisoning women that isn't necessarily a dollar story?

Bianca: Yeah, it's crazy. Most of us women that are in jail, we have children and most of us women in jail have mental health issues. When you get out and start with medical, you see when Caitlyn gets out and she only had five days worth of medication-

Nance: Or she'd been diagnosed. That's the other thing, she'd been diagnosed with borderline but she actually has PTSD which is what most of them have.

Bianca: Yeah and how her mother said when she got off that medication, it ... No one could help her pay for it anymore and they couldn't afford it, so it just set her off track and she was self-harming again and it just messed her up in the long run. We get kicked out the door with a bus ticket and a couple days of her medications and see her by, you know what I mean? And they're back in at no

time and the children, every time we put a mother in jail, where do you think the child is going? You know what I mean? It might not look like jail but ultimately they can't leave. They're being told what to do, their lights are being turned off by someone else, so they're in jail too and that does cost money.

Bianca: I'm not sure the exact costs but just not even money-wise, the emotions they go through as from my own personal life, I grew up in a system so I already been a ward of the court when I was a child and it's ... It just sets you up for failure in the long run. If you're known as a foster kid and you're in the children services, it's just like, yeah, this kid's going to be bad. You know what I mean? This kid's going to be a bad influence when they get older. You just get labeled as a child and you just brushed off and not taken serious so yeah, I see mothers-

Nance: Talk about work too. How it's affecting your work, trying to get a job?

Bianca: God, yeah.

Nance: Trying to get a job after-

Bianca: I think twice now or in the last three years that I've been fired because just some Jane Doe calls and says, Bianca has a criminal record and when I'm during the interview, they don't ask me and I'm not going to be like, hey, I'm dah, dah, dah, dah, you know what I mean? So they hire me and literally a week later someone calls and says that she has a criminal record the size of China. Why is she working there? I'll never come back there. She's there. Just somebody that doesn't like me and I will get fired on the spot.

Simona: When I was watching, I think it could have been a bit different for you and I, but when I was watching that film I kept thinking about, as a woman in prison, getting my period, having mood swings, just the things I need to feel comfortable, you don't get to have. You don't get to have the hot water bottle and the blanket and the duvet. What is it like going through the normal regular things that a woman goes through but being in prison?

Bianca: It's pretty crazy actually and just being on your period, that's hard. You have to ring a buzzer and ask for your hygiene products and wait till they feel like bringing it to you and if you don't get them, you literally have to wait and just getting clean underwear is a struggle. I've seen girls go to seg and fight with the guards just over underwear. That's our right. That's your job to do it, just do it and they don't. They give us a few tampons, they won't give us a box. We have to ask. We get two or three at a time. That's just a struggle.

Bianca: Even while I was pregnant, just to go to my appointments, they would dress me in full orange suits that said CNFC on the back, handcuffed, shackled, in a

wheelchair, because I wasn't allowed to walk in my big pregnant belly through the IWK hospital and everyone's just staring at you. It was just, you don't even want to go. You don't even want to get out of bed. That's how I felt. I've seen women that were so mentally just not there. They needed some serious help and just didn't even know they're on their period. They were just walking around and they're soiling, you go and pass out trays, you pick up trays for them, there's jobs to do cleaning. You can just see their sheets just covered in blood, their own blood because they just don't even know. You know what I mean? It's sad.

Gilad: Nance, I wanted to ask you a question just around this film and the work that you're doing. Sim, you and I were talking a lot about this. I do a lot of social justice work and even through this podcast we're exposing ourselves, Sim and I, to a lot of stories that aren't always easy to hear and even through our Human Rights Film Festival, I mean every year Sim, you also sit on our programming committee, we're reviewing like 300 human rights documentaries that aren't always easy to take in, even through the work we do with our youth and sometimes it's really hard to take on those stories. I'm curious to know, do you ever feel the weight of that work sitting on you because your film is a social justice type of film and if so, how do you cope with that? How do you deal with that? It's more of a self care question I guess around the work. How do you stay balanced doing this stuff?

Nance: Stay balanced.

Gilad: Do you stay balanced?

Nance: Have I ever been balanced? I think that would be a better question. No, I mean, I've been doing this ... I'm a documentary photographer. I've been doing hard-hitting social documentaries. I did cotton land, I did ... I'm working on a project in Afghanistan right now. I covered wars in the middle East. I mean, I'm pretty used to this stuff. I don't know, I just don't make it about me. I guess I just spend so much time worrying about them that I don't ... And I don't sleep. Sleep's bad for me. I don't know. It's not a self care thing. I have a really supportive husband. I have amazing supportive co-filmmakers and when you get inspired that these guys, like Bianca and Trina and Caitlyn and Laura, can get up in the morning and can do what they do. I just don't have a lot of time to worry about me.

Simona: I want to go back to the moment where we were talking about the reason a lot of these women keep coming back is the mental health issue and that's still something that is definitely not discussed publicly or even just in depth. How have you, since your release, how have you been working in supporting just better mental health for yourself?

Bianca: I had, well, when I was going to school it's covered so I was seeing a therapist and talking that way but to actually be diagnosed with anything, I've never been diagnosed with anything. I know that obviously there's something, I probably for sure have like battered wife syndrome or PTSD and anxiety and all those things but I've never been on any kind of medication. Taking care of my mental health is something I'm definitely wanting to do, it's just where do I start. In Nova Scotia and I see and talk to people that have been on waiting lists. Even my own little cousin, she just turned 17 the other day and she's been waiting to get in. She is very low self esteem and depression and she still hasn't gotten in and she's been waiting like two years. If I start now, there's really no point. I could go to my doctor, but he'll just write a prescription for clonazepam and send me on my way and I'll end up not taking them and ...

Nance: Yeah, healthcare in Nova Scotia is really in crisis.

Bianca: Yeah.

Nance: Massive crisis. I mean.

Bianca: They don't want to admit it but it's definitely in crisis. I don't really know where to go to get help regarding any kind of mental health issues. You could see in the film how many times I'm getting mad and I'm like, my boyfriend is sitting here, he knows too that I can ... She definitely knows. It's like one day I'm just calm, cool and collective and you can say just one thing and it's like boom, and I'm screaming and everyone's taking cover. I don't care who's there and it's bad. It's gotten me in jail. It's bad. There's definitely work I have to get done on myself and I am on the process, but it's just such a long process.

Nance: We're going to help.

Gilad: It's a lifelong process so for many of us and I think only now as a society are we starting to de-stigmatize conversations around mental health. It's something that I feel like even the most normal looking person with the cleanest rap sheet is still struggling with mental health on some sort of level and it's-

Nance: It's about identifying it though. It's about, the problem is, is even in the making of this film, remember when you were by the car and you were talking about stuff and she actually said some stuff out loud that we didn't end up putting in and it was like, it's like she heard herself say it and it was like, Jesus, how long have I been repressing this? And it was really tough on you and so it's all this identifying that you actually have repressed some pretty horrific memories from childhood and I think that's the problem with ... That's to me the problem with our society is that we're supporting this repression, because it's not acceptable to just lose it. It's not acceptable to burst into tears and say, oh my God, my

uncle did this or my cousin did this and there's so much more work to do.
Nineties, at 95% of the women in prison-

Simona: Yeah, we've had this -

Nance: ... have had childhood sexual and physical abuse. And then what's the solution is throw them in seg when they start cutting themselves, as if seg's going to help. I mean, we would go into prison and it was amazing. We'd spend four or five hours with them and we'd step out the door and I don't have addiction, aside from the tequila, I don't have addiction issues and you'd step out the door and just be like, I need a fucking drink. I need something. I need something bad for me. I want to drink, I want to smoke, I want to do something that's bad for me and we've been there for four hours. I mean, how the hell is that serving anybody? And the guards are all like, well, not all of them, but most of them, especially Tanya, the one in the film, they're like, what do you do? What the heck do you do? Because they're not qualified to deal with it so they slam them in seg and often they're asking to go to seg. That's what ... Because it's like you can't, the noise, man, the noise in there.

Simona: What's seg?

Bianca: Sorry. Segregation.

Nance: Segregation.

Simona: Okay.

Nance: It's like-

Bianca: Closed confinement units now, CCU, they're calling it.

Nance: Yeah, they renamed it.

Simona: Oh rebranding.

Gilad: They rebranded. I love it.

Bianca: The same things but yeah, I've been-

Gilad: With a new logo.

Bianca: Yeah, I've been to seg a few times and I've asked to go to seg, I've refused to leave seg. I went on hunger strikes just to get what I wanted and what I needed and I had to do that while I was pregnant. I'd go down seg and you'd be sitting

down there. I'd be getting nosebleeds. It's so dry and hot. Seg is the most messed up place. All my time I did, I've done with Caitlyn Hill, who's also in the film and we grew a good bond through doors. We didn't really get to see each other often but she spent, out of her whole 15 months, she did it in segregation like-

Nance: 15 months, she did nine months in seg. Nine months straight in seg.

Gilad: Wow.

Bianca: Yeah. I'd go down there and I'd get the clean seg and she'd be down there and you could just see that she was going through an episode because she wouldn't even have pupils. When Caitlyn freaked out, it was just all black and she wouldn't remember a thing. I remember, oh my God, this is horrible. The guards, she actually got assault charge on a guard because of this but the guard kept saying, I was in my cell locked in and she was like, what are you going to do? What are you going to do? What are you going to do? And Caitlyn's like, leave me the fuck alone. Leave me alone. Leave me alone and she's like, come on, do something, you got to do something and she's nagging her on and you could just see when Caitlyn come out of her cell, her pupils were huge.

Bianca: She took whatever she had and just started throwing it at this guard and then they're bringing her out and it's just like, all you hear is this guard nagging this severely mentally ill person in jail. It's just like, what the heck are you doing to this person? Help her. I know it's not your job to help her, but it's also not your job to punish her while she's already being punished.

Gilad: In the middle of an episode nonetheless.

Simona: Yeah.

Bianca: An episode and she's just having a day, let her be in her cell and slam her door. There's 12 women in the room, some of us double bunk, we don't mind. We'd rather her be in here freaking out than down seg by herself hurting herself. It's just, it's crazy. We're living constantly with women that have been abused and raped as children and women that are on drugs and coming off of drugs and women that are so severely mentally ill that they're eating our cleaning supplies. This is a place where they just throw us because they don't want to deal with us. It's not that we can't get the help, it's just we just-

Nance: You're being warehoused.

Bianca: Yeah, we're not offered it. We don't know where to go to get it. I get so frustrated when I talk about these things because I've seen so much sick and

disgusting things happen. I got strip searched over 1300 times in eight months, in seven and a half months, sorry and that's not okay. Marking that down every single day that you're in there and how many times in a seven and a half and eight month sentence that many times I'm having to bend over and cough in front of somebody, after already being abused as a child and an adult. There's something wrong as if these systems that they think that putting us in there and making us comfortable with it and then kicking us out with nothing just to bring us back, and it's just torture with your mind and it's what society, it's like ... I don't know. It's like-

Nance: Well it's torture.

Bianca: Yeah.

Nance: It's torture.

Bianca: It's seriously-

Gilad: What you're describing here is clearly a system that is broken. Clearly a system that doesn't work. This is like the million dollar question, which I'm not sure there's an answer to but what can we as Canadians or we as a country do to fix this system that is so fucked up. That is doing stuff like this and also, sorry, the second part to that, I'm just curious, are there any, because we talked about de-imprisonment at the start of the show. Are there any models anywhere out there in the world outside of this country where imprisonment or de-imprisonment is something that's actually working? Is there something to work toward? An example for us?

Nance: First of all, prison's prison. Unless for the most egregious people that need restriction for their own safety and for most people do not, I don't know what the 90% of the people do not have to be incarcerated. If the systems that guarantee livable income and free PharmaCare and she'll list it all up, if the funding for women, what is an average of \$100,000 a year is reallocated, you just need to reallocate it. As Canadians, you just have to demand from your politicians, listen, I want my tax dollars not going, they're building a new fucking prison in Cape Breton. It's for women. They're building a new prison.

Bianca: We already have four.

Nance: How about you build some housing? How about you build a detox center that these women can afford or that's free? [Crosstalk] An actually loving, caring detox center-

Bianca: A round up, exactly.

Nance: ... where their kids can visit, build that. Don't build a prison. That's what they're doing. If we just get the politicians, just inundate them with emails, say enough's enough. I want my money going here. Not to prisons.

Bianca: It's crazy because it's one thing that needs to fix it is shut down prisons. We're wasting billions on putting us in jail just to watch us go back. It's not fixing the problem, it's just creating a bigger one. Then not only is it creating a bigger one but our future generations and our children that are watching us going to jail are going to go to jail, hands down there and already in the system. They're already there. You know what I mean? They're already in group homes. They're already being transferred everywhere. They already hit the age of 16 where no one wants to adopt a 16 year old boy or girl because their parents are in jail for life for killing the man that abused them or killed the man that touched their child or it's just like this ... It's a constant cycle-

Nance: It's poverty. It's poverty.

Bianca: Yeah. Stop investing in something that doesn't work and start putting our money into something that does.

Gilad: Thank you to the two of you for taking time out of your very, very busy schedules. I know you're only here for a couple of days in Toronto, Bianca, so thank you.

Bianca: Thank you.

Gilad: Thank you Nance for joining us here today.

Nance: Thank you. It was cool.

Gilad: Please go out and see *Conviction*. Thank you so much guys. Take care.

[Theme music fades in]

Simona: Thanks.

Bianca: Thank you very much.

Nance: Thanks.

Gilad: My name is Gilad Cohen.

Simona: I am Simona Ramkisson.

Gilad: This podcast is edited and produced by Brandon Fragomeni and Alex Castellani. Our associate producer is Ron Ma.

Simona: This is an initiative of JAYU, a charity that shares human rights stories through the arts.

[Music fades out]

Gilad: If you enjoyed this podcast, help us make more of them by donating whatever you can. Visit us online at jayu.ca/donate.