

YOUNG WOMEN'S FREEDOM CENTER

OVERVIEW

SINCE '93

For over 30 years the Young Women's Freedom Center has provided support, mentorship, training, employment and advocacy to systems involved young women of color in the Bay Area.



ABOUT US



Mission Statement

To empower and inspire young women who have been involved with the juvenile justice system and/or the underground street economy to create positive change in their lives and communities.

Vision Statement

We envision a world in which all young women have the support they need to recognize and eradicate all forms of oppression, to heal, and live self-determined lives.

YWFC

THEORY OF CHANGE

Vision

We envision a world in which all young women have the support they need to recognize and eradicate all forms of oppression, to heal, and live self-determined lives.

Area of Work

Personal and Individual Transformation, Relmaging Support, & Economic Opportunities

Leadership Development, Systems Change, & Advocacy

Research, Data, & Strategic Communications

Short Term Outcomes

- Address immediate needs
- Engage in personal healing work
- Strengthen positive relationships
- Build new relationships
- Work toward personal goals
- Increase self-determination
- Build resilience/leadership
- Increase educational and training opportunities
- Support individual and community enterprise
- Increase social capital

- Develop critical consciousness
- Increase leadership and participation in decision-making
- Support the leadership of others
- Strengthen and expand partnerships
- Provide political education to build leadership and power
- Decrease societal dependence on carceral systems
- Engage in local and statewide policy & organizing campaigns
- Decrease recidivism
- Increase successful re-entry
- Divest and critically reinvest
- Create oversight of systems
- Change criminalizing laws

- Document Conditions
- Document Solutions
- Document and share YWFC model
- Communicate wins to amplify movements

Long Term Outcomes

- Increase safety and stability
- Increase well-being
- Increase sense of self worth and leadership skills
- Increase economic opportunities and self sufficiency

- Create a YWFC leadership pipeline
- Increase power and engagement in social justice/ freedom work
- Collaborate and build transformative movements
- Grown campaigns to advance Freedom 2030
- Stop Gender-based violence and create community accountability

- Shift the narrative to increase the understanding of the complexity of system involvement
- Center the power and voice of young women of color
- Grow public awareness and support of our efforts

OUR IMPACT



OUR IMPACT

YWFC has had transformative impact for almost three decades – raising up movement and community leaders, changing the narrative about systems-impacted young women, transforming programs, laws, legislation, public systems and institutions to do less harm and be more responsive to our needs.

The young people that have come up through YWFC have gone on to provide influential leadership in prison reform, violence prevention, women's rights, and economic, racial and gender justice. They have led as public officials, executive directors, foundation presidents and movement and community leaders.

Annually,

79%–85% reduction in recidivism among young women and TGNC people who complete our program;

Up to 90% of those who complete the program maintain employment and reach educational goals at 6-, 12-, and 18-month follow up.



2022 - 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Invested 15,780 hours in leadership development, healing-centered programming, and workforce training for system-impacted girls, young women, and gender-expansive youth
- Delivered 257 hours of youth development programming inside juvenile hall detention, centering education, self-determination, and reentry readiness
- Provided 1,695 hours of court-based and systems advocacy, supporting diversion, release, and alternatives to incarceration
- Achieved an 87.4% reduction in recidivism among program participants through intensive peer support, advocacy, and community-based alternatives



HOW WE WORK



YWFC PROGRAMS



YWFC PROGRAMS

- **Peer Based Community Street Outreach** led by peers
- **1-1 Self Determination Advocacy** (Life Coaching, support, systems navigation, mentorship, and re-entry planning)
- **Culture Circles, Groups, and Programs**
 - **Emerging Leaders in Detention** – weekly workshops for young women in juvenile hall and county jail, 1-1 support, and systems advocacy and support
 - **Freedom Circles** – 12 week support and educational program for young people navigating the system
 - **Young Mothers United** – 12- week parenting, life skills, advocacy program for young pregnant and parenting youth
 - **Beyond Survival** – 12+ week support for young people that have experienced exploitation and survival in the underground street economies
 - **Sibling Circles** – ongoing culture and support circles for young women and gender expansive youth providing opportunities for healing, exploration, topic based issues, advocacy, etc.
 - **Transforming My Hustle** – A 12-15 week course to support young people in finding and maintaining employment and developing entrepreneurial skills and social capital



YWFC PROGRAMS

- **Siblings on the Rise** – Paid internship program training system involved young people as Community advocates, organizers, and peer based advocates
- **Leadership Fellowships** – Paid fellowships for young people to advance their skills as community leaders working on behalf of other young people and our communities
- **Participatory Defense** – a community organizing model for people facing charges, their families, and communities to impact the outcomes of cases and transform the landscape of power in the court system
- **Community Based Research** – Through YWFC's Freedom Research Institute, young people work to develop and implement Youth Participatory Action Research Projects to inform the work, the field, and policy change



Individualized and
customized planning
at all levels!



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Building authentic relationships with young people

- **One-on-One Counseling**
- **Identifying Support Team**
 - **Mental Health**
 - Specialized rehabilitation (support with sobriety/substance abuse, addressing sexual trauma etc)
 - **Employment and/or Training**
 - **Education goals support**
 - **Cultural programming**

COLLABORATION

Collaboration with external stakeholders

To ensure success for the young person, we prioritize support with identifying housing/placement options, such as:

- Return to family with plan that includes programming
- Extended family with plan that includes programming
- Placement (Rehabilitative, Supportive, Transitional)

SANTA CLARA COUNTY CASE STUDY

How YWFC Partnered with Santa Clara
County to End Incarceration of Girls



SANTA CLARA COUNTY CASE STUDY

- Santa Clara forms a Gender Responsive Task force to strategize reducing incarceration, probation terms, and criminalization of “girls” in the county
- Spends two years researching models and does two site visits to YWFC in San Francisco
- Asks YWFC to establish programming in the county
- Secures building, Searches for funding (non-law enforcement) and develops collaboration
- YWFC hires staff members from the community that are directly impacted
- Partners with Presiding Juvenile Judge, Probation, Social Services, Public Defender, Mayor’s Office, and County Executive Office to ensure YWFC can implement full model
- Vera Institute of Justice is welcome to look at 3 years of case files to find patterns → implementing plan based on findings

SANTA CLARA COUNTY CASE STUDY

- YWFC reviews data and develops diversion program based on findings + raises funding to implement full model
 - Begins work in juvenile hall and ranch
 - Advocates for early releases from detention, diversion from booking, and diversion of charges from DA
 - Works with Police to divert calls to YWFC
- Develops plan for emergency, transitional, and other housing options for youth and families
- County successfully reaches zero incarceration of girls for 5 months of the year
- Judges & Probation partnering to implement NCJFCJ role of the Judge recommendations individualized plans and minimized conditions of probation + others
- Young people graduating YWFC successfully become advocates in county, develop new programs like When Young Moms Thrive – a 12 month employment program for young moms and PRIDE a diversion program for LGBTQIA youth in the county
- NYU is evaluating program model for scale
- Deeper community and systems partnerships focussed on goal of reducing criminalization and incarceration in county

EMERGING LEADERS IN DETENTION

YWFC Programs at a Glance

Working to reduce system involvement for women and girls involved in the juvenile and criminal justice system

Goals

- Deepen understanding of self: My life in the context of the world; the world in the context of my life
- Decriminalize self
- System navigation/ Self Advocacy
- Increase self-determination
- Personal and Community Healing

Curriculum: Lift Us Up, Don't Lock Us Down

- Developed by formerly incarcerated young women over the course of 20 years
- Revised and updated on an on-going basis (annually) based on evaluation, surveys, and impact
- Facilitators are trained extensively in methodology and are providing ongoing professional development training and evaluation
- Restorative Justice based: Healing ourselves and communities

SISTER WARRIORS FREEDOM CHARTER



We, women, girls, and trans people of all genders, pledge to strive together until the decriminalization and decarceration of all women, girls, and trans people of all genders and our loved ones and communities is achieved and our families – as we define them – are (re)united.

THIS INCLUDES SECURING THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS:

1. We have the right to self-determination. We must determine what success looks like for ourselves. We have the right to lay our own paths free from punitive and controlling systems, and input and voice around all services impacting our lives.

2. We have the right to be free from sexual, gender-based, and physical violence, abuse, and exploitation perpetrated by our families, partners, community, the State, and institutions. We have a right to defend ourselves from intimate, community, State, and institutional violence.

3. We have the right to make our own medical care decisions and to access quality medical care and on-demand preventative care for our physical, mental, emotional, dental, vision, and reproductive health.

4. We have a right to access cultural, holistic, and professional methods of healing to address the trauma we are exposed to while we are involved in the system and when we leave them. We have the right to access healing prior to coming into contact with systems and as a key to preventing system-involvement. We should not be punished for our pain, exploitation, and trauma. We need healing, not punishment when we self-medicate for our trauma and grief.

5. We have the right to be treated with dignity regardless of our legal or immigration status, past history of arrest or incarceration, or classifications given by the State or institutions.

6. We have the right to redeem ourselves to break the cycle of abuse and violence. We have the right to heal, to own and make amends for our mistakes, and the right to resources and support to seek transformation on our own terms. We claim the right to be free from discrimination based on our own or intergenerational histories of arrest and incarceration.

7. We have the right to economic opportunities. In order to escape cycles of poverty, exploitation, incarceration, and abuse, we need employment and other economic opportunities that recognize our value, transferable skills, and dignity.

8. We have the right to be declared free from any debt to the justice system and to our confidentiality when we have completed our time. We should have equal pay for our labor while inside to comparable work on the outside.

9. We have the right to access education, knowledge, and technology while incarcerated, as we re-enter, and move through systems that will allow us to keep up with the world we anticipate returning to post system-involvement.

10. We have a right to permanent, safe, and affordable housing that does not feel like the institutions that have harmed us. We deserve homes where we can rest, be at ease and are safe, and where we can raise our children and build our families. We have a right to be part of deciding our placement within jails, prisons, transitional housing, foster care, and/or group homes – including transferring to other facilities or placements.

11. We have the right to access (touch, hear, and see) our children, family, and loved ones when we are in the systems that criminalize and control us. We have a right to inform who cares for our children while we are unable to due to incarceration, houselessness, poverty, or other conditions. We have a right to get support and resources to stay connected to and reunite with our children as soon as we are able to.

12. We have the right for our gender and sexuality to be respected and to be free from limiting conceptions of masculinity and femininity and the gender binary, to access hormone therapy and not have it withheld, to express our gender and sexuality while inside systems, on the streets and in our homes without fear of homophobic and transphobic discrimination, harassment and/or assault.

13. We have the right to be consulted when institutions want to create, revise and eliminate policies, legislation, rules, or laws that will impact the way we experience systems. We are best positioned to identify alternatives to incarceration, criminalization, and family separation. We should have oversight over the systems and institutions that most impact us.

FOR THE DECRIMINALIZATION AND DECARCERATION OF WOMEN, GIRLS, AND TRANS PEOPLE OF ALL GENDERS, AND (RE)UNIFICATION WITH OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.



SISTER WARRIORS FREEDOM CHARTER



FOR THE DECRIMINALIZATION AND DECARCERATION OF WOMEN, GIRLS, AND TRANS PEOPLE OF ALL GENDERS, AND (RE)UNIFICATION WITH OUR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

ADOPTED AT THE SISTER WARRIOR FREEDOM COALITION FOUNDING CONVENING IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA ON FEBRUARY 2018, UPDATED AUGUST 2019.

The South African Freedom Charter was written in 1955 as a compass for the movement against racial apartheid. For 40 years it inspired the long-struggle to end apartheid, finally won in 1994. Inspired by this movement, we, as formerly and currently incarcerated and systems-involved cis and transgender women and girls and GNC people, have written and adopted our own Freedom Charter to guide our movement to end the mass incarceration and criminalization we experience and of our children, families and communities.

WE, CIS AND TRANS WOMEN AND GIRLS, AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE PEOPLE WHO ARE FORMERLY AND CURRENTLY INCARCERATED, SYSTEM-IMPACTED, SEXUALLY EXPLOITED, DECLARE TO THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD:

- That the prison, policing, and family separation systems are rooted in histories of the colonization of indigenous people, slavery, Jim Crow laws, and continue to reflect racial apartheid in the United States;
- That these and other public systems are designed to maintain this systemic inequality and that poverty is a key driver of incarceration, family separation, and recidivism;
- That cis and trans women, girls, and gender-expansive people experience gender-based and sexual violence not only perpetuated by individuals but by these and other systems that are rooted in histories of slavery, colonization, patriarchy, homophobia and transphobia;
- That we are punished for the ways we survive the abuse, violence, and exploitation we experience and the

historical trauma and oppression of our families and communities;

- That family separation is a continuation not a healing of these histories;
- That our families and communities have been denied our humanity, basic human and civil rights, and healing;
- That only a society based on equity, transformative justice, the recognition of full human rights, the protection of and access to basic needs for all – without discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality, class, immigration status, ability or age and that seeks to reverse intergenerational poverty and historic trauma – can call itself truly democratic and free, and realize liberty and justice for all.

And therefore we, cis and trans women, girls, and gender-expansive people who are formerly and currently incarcerated, systems-involved, and sexually exploited and our loved ones, families, communities, and allies adopt this Freedom Charter.

Those most impacted by incarceration and systems of criminalization and family separation are the rightful leaders of the movement to realize its goals.

youngwomenfree.org