

The Center for  
Young Women's Development



*Young Women Working  
to Heal Themselves  
and Their Communities*



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*Young Women's Development*

## OUR VISION

We envision a world in which self-determination and sisterhood are used to support and heal culturally diverse young women in crisis so they can proactively resist the impacts of all forms of oppression.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is 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.



## OUR VALUES

SISTERHOOD

SELF-DETERMINATION

SOCIAL JUSTICE

SPIRITUALITY

## OUR CONSTITUENCY

For over a decade, The Center for Young Women's Development has been working with young women who have been deemed unreachable, untreatable and unchangeable by society and institutions in San Francisco and the nation as a whole. We work with the young woman who has been self-parenting, has no home to go to, has no steady source of income, is not enrolled in school, and is on probation.



*"Our mission and vision inspire me to forge ahead and continue to fight to hold up the walls for CYWD because I am living proof that this place exudes all possibilities."*

MARLENE SANCHEZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AGE 25

## OUR PARTICIPANTS

- 100% ARE EXTREMELY LOW INCOME
- 87% HAVE HAD INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM
- 95% HAVE EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS
- 83% HAVE DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL WITHOUT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OR ITS EQUIVALENT
- 43% ARE YOUNG MOTHERS
- 96% ARE YOUNG WOMEN OF COLOR
- 38% IDENTIFY AS LESBIAN, BI-SEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER, OR QUESTIONING

- Although young women and girls represent almost 30% of the total juvenile arrests, they receive only 2% of services nationwide.
- Girls are 30% more likely than boys to be detained for minor offenses such as public disorder, probation violations, status offenses and traffic offenses – 29% vs. 19%.
- Girls are almost 3 times as likely to be detained for probation and parole violations – 54% vs. 19%.
- African-American girls make up nearly 50% of the population of all girls in secure detention – Latinas make up 13%.
- 7 of every 10 cases involving white girls are dismissed, compared to 3 of every 10 cases for African American girls.
- Up to 95% of young women and girls caught up in the juvenile justice system report physical or sexual abuse.
- Because of the lack of alternative programs, jobs, and housing, young women and girls find themselves locked up or on probation longer for lesser crimes than their male counterparts.



*“The Center is something I feel blessed to be involved with. I figure things can get better for me while I’m here. It keeps me out of trouble and also helps me provide for my kids financially and mentally. It keeps me on game about my own future. I’m definitely going to pass this on to my kids.”*

SHAQUAY JOHNSON, AGE 19

*We believe that every young woman deserves opportunities to learn and grow. We believe young women need a caring and compassionate environment in which to learn about themselves, to acquire new skills, and to advocate for their needs and those of their sisters. We are committed to providing young women a safe space where confidentiality is ensured. We believe that in order to recognize their worth, young women need to be supported in their efforts to grow into stable and centered women in control of their decisions.*



## OUR PROGRAMS

The Center for Young Women's Development is the nation's first employment, leadership, and advocacy program run entirely by and for young women who, in the wake of experiencing incarceration and life on the streets, are working to transform their lives and their communities. All programs are peer-led and run entirely by young women 26 and under, most of whom who have moved up through the CYWD's programs into leadership roles.



### **GIRLS DETENTION ADVOCACY PROJECT**

GDAP helps currently and previously incarcerated young women develop the skills necessary to successfully exit the juvenile justice system, while creating spaces for young women to organize to change the system. GDAP offers workshops in San Francisco's juvenile hall, post release support groups, and organizing meetings. GDAP staff members have provided holistic advocacy training and support to over 500 incarcerated girls. GDAP has built a strong membership body that has led and won successful campaigns.

### **NELLY VELASCO PROJECT**

Run by and for low- and no-income queer young women of color, the Nelly Velasco Project is unique. It offers a safe space for young women who are often marginalized, not only by mainstream youth organizations, but also by organizations serving l/g/b/t/q youth. The Nelly Velasco project combines recreational activities with political discussions and opportunities for self-expression.

### *YOUNG MOTHERS UNITED*

Young Mothers United (YMU) is a support and advocacy group that grew out of GDAP's efforts to advocate for incarcerated young women and young mothers. The group provides child development training, safe childcare and access to one on one counseling sessions with our wellness coordinator. YMU also campaigns and collaborates with state institutions to ensure that the rights of parenting and pregnant young woman in lock-up facilities are not being violated.



### *SISTERS RISING INTERNSHIP*

Our goal is to serve young women by providing well paid, meaningful employment. Our Sisters Rising Internship provides young women with well rounded curricula that encompass job skills training, leadership development, critical thinking, self-care, computer technology, life skills, sexual health, substance abuse counseling, political education, conflict resolution, public speaking, outreach trainings and advocacy training.



### *SISTERS FOR JUSTICE NATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE "THROUGH THE EYES OF A SISTER"*

Through the Eyes of a Sister (TES) brings the voices of young women back into the adult-dominated discourse on young women's issues. TES provides information and training to service providers, community-based organizations, juvenile justice agencies and other peer-led youth organizations on how to more effectively meet the needs of young women in crisis. Our work in the field has produced a valuable methodology for working with vulnerable young women that others have asked us to share. It is a way to provide young women with speaking opportunities, generate the funds needed to sustain our organization and inspire others to take up our work of empowering young women.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

*Many young women in the system suffer from multiple forms of abuse. CYWD serves young women who have experienced domestic violence, assault, rape, emotional abuse, addiction, and other traumatic life events and health challenges. These young women need support services that will help them heal and build healthier lives and communities. CYWD meets this challenge through the following support services:*

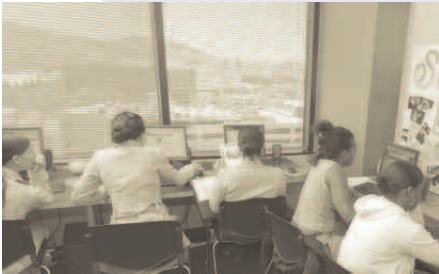
### WELLNESS

We help young women take control of their health through: sexual health education, self-defense training, therapeutic massage, acupuncture, yoga, herbology, mental health services (therapy, psychiatry), altar making, retreats, and more. Our wellness coordinator meets with the young women one on one to develop a plan that uniquely serves their health needs.



### EDUCATION

CYWD recognizes that while employment opportunities and community involvement are critical, program participants



will always face serious limitations in the future if they do not progress academically. Our education advisor assists young women in developing individual, professional and educational plans that outline their educational and career goals. We also hold study groups so

that young women can support one another and they receive one-on-one tutoring to prepare for high school exams, the GED or college exams. They also receive research and technical assistance; help with applying for financial aid, scholarships, and childcare including funds designated for emancipated youth, which constitutes 73 percent of the population with whom we work.

*“We support the Center, not only because of what they do – life-changing work with young women – but HOW they do it. Every program, service, project and product is informed by a set of shared, core values. It’s truly a model program and a beacon of hope and healing for the young women it serves.”*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
POTTRUCK FAMILY FOUNDATION

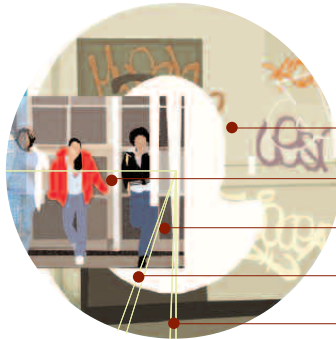
## OUR IMPACT

Young women from CYWD have helped mold city, state, national, and international policy. We drafted the first ever anti-discrimination policy to protect the rights of incarcerated LGBTQ youth in San Francisco, and are helping to oversee its implementation. We are currently implementing a Young Mother's Bill of Rights inside the San Francisco Juvenile Detention Center to protect the human rights of young women who are parenting and/or pregnant. We have spoken before the United States Congress and the United Nations. We sit on city commissions, give input into city initiatives, organize community campaigns, and demonstrate for our rights and the rights of others.

## OUR SUCCESS

We help young women get out and stay out of the juvenile justice system. Of the young women employed by CYWD who were previously incarcerated, more than 90% have successfully completed their probationary requirements. After leaving CYWD, more than 80% of young women who have completed our programs are employed and/or enrolled in educational programs. Over 97% of young women who have participated in our programs say that they are "more confident" and better prepared to meet life's challenges. CYWD alumnae attend Harvard University, UC Berkeley, San Francisco State and New School University.

## OUR FUNDING SOURCES



*Young women in our programs are making their communities stronger, learning to advocate for themselves, and are gaining leadership skills and opportunities for advanced future careers and education. We invite you to support our vision of developing real opportunities for young women.*

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