

sisters



IN THIS ISSUE: NEW TECHNOLOGY CENTER • HEALTH AND WELLNESS FORMALLY INTEGRATED

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of CYWD,

As you may know Lateefah Simon, our director for the past 9 years recently transitioned to pursue her collegiate dreams. After a ten-year tenure with CYWD, mostly directing programs, I've been selected by our board of directors to take on the reigns as Executive Director. Thrilled by this challenge, I am excited to jump into the tasks that lie before me.

I walked into CYWD almost 10 years ago looking for hope, a legal job, and a place to take the pain I'd developed from my experiences on the streets and juvenile justice system and turn it into power—and I found a home. CYWD was the space where I grew into a confident practitioner, educator, and young leader. In this new leadership role, I will work tirelessly each day to ensure that other young women who are on the fringes have a place to realize their dreams and reach their fullest potential.

While CYWD will not continue to grow in scale, I believe we can increase our depth and strength. I am currently working to ensure that the talented young women on staff, women who've literally grown up with CYWD, have the tools, support, and the community to facilitate powerful and meaningful opportunities for our sisters on the streets, in jail cells, and those who battle the realities of aging out of foster care.

While change is difficult, 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. As the days turn into weeks, and months turn into years, I ask you to remain close supporters of CYWD's profoundly important work. Your love and generosity keep our doors open. Thank you for believing in me. Your support and love for our work are critical to our continued success.

Sincerely,
Marlene Sanchez

CELEBRATED LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

MARLENE SANCHEZ: CYWD'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



From left to right: CYWD alumna Norma Galvez, Executive Director Marlene Sanchez and Sisters Rising Program Coordinator Melanie Willingham-Jaggers.

CYWD became one of the nation's first youth-run non-profit organizations in 1997, when the founding executive director, Rachel Pfeffer left the agency and the young women served by the organization assumed responsibility for its direction. Marlene Sanchez was one of those young women. Now, in her third month as Executive Director for CYWD, Marlene is up the fort and programs are thriving. The 25-year-old Xicana came to CYWD the same way the majority of the young women did—from the streets and juvenile hall lock up.

Back in 1996 when Marlene spent most of her time away from school hanging out on

Mission Street, she was approached by women from the Street Survival Project, the original outreach program at CYWD, who were passing out condoms and offering jobs to young women on the streets.

"I remember thinking, why are they offering me, of all people, a job?" Marlene says reminiscing about her first experience with CYWD.

Raised in the Mission by Mexican-born parents, who met while working at a San Francisco factory, Marlene experienced firsthand the effects of incarceration from a very young age. During the 80s, the drug econo-

continued on next page

CELEBRATED LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

continued from previous page

my had a huge effect on immigrants, who were tired of making little to no money working at factories that exploited them. The option of making money through the underground drug economy was a choice many families in poverty felt obligated to make.

After her mother was deported to Mexico, Marlene's father had no choice but to do just that – enter the underground street economy in an effort to support his 3 young children and save enough money to get his wife back. Though she returned to San Francisco, Marlene's father was convicted in 1989 for drug trafficking and sentenced to 20 years in federal prison. He was incarcerated for most of Marlene's life. "I remember the day I found out. Something inside of me kind of died. That's when I realized I lost my father," she says.

Marlene says it was a common thing. Most of the young people she grew up with in the Mission had absent fathers. They were either locked up or deported. It was the family's turmoil that led Marlene to the streets. Her first contact with the system was when she was 13-years-old and locked up for fighting at school. The principal automatically called the gang taskforce, which entered her into a database that labeled her a gang member, even before she was one. Since then, she had 14 contacts with the system and served a total of two years locked up.

Marlene serves as symbolism for one of CYWD's most valued guiding principles—to answer first and foremost to young women who have had involvement with the juvenile/criminal justice systems and underground street economy. Young women, who have these experiences, come to CYWD for support with their personal transformation in an effort to create community leaders not only for tomorrow, but also for today. As Executive Director, Marlene is living CYWD's mission to grow and develop leadership for society's most hard to reach women.

—Kamren Curriel

•••

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

We work to ensure that young women who have been homeless, incarcerated, involved in the juvenile justice system, or otherwise severely impacted by poverty have the power to achieve self-sufficiency and become positively engaged in their communities. All of our programs have been designed using a holistic approach that recognizes each young woman as a whole person who already has the experience and strength necessary to become a powerful leader and agent of change.

CYWD OPENS STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY TRAINING CENTER

In February 2005 CYWD opened doors to a new state of the art technology center in more than 1,500 square feet of new office space. Equipped with 10 new Dell computers powered by Intel Pentium 4 processors and Microsoft XP operating systems, a new color printer, a donated MAC G4 and an Agfa Arcus scanner which can accommodate an original size of 11x14" as well as transparency slides, young women are well on their way to receiving the kinds of hands on technology training that will make them more competitive in today's workplace.

In collaboration with neighboring Girl Source, program staff and CYWD program participants receive hands on training twice a week using Microsoft Office Suite, Adobe Acrobat, and the Internet. Staff is increasing their proficiency in these areas so that they are better positioned to train the young women who cycle in and out of our programs during the year. The young women are being prepared to conduct online research to produce fact sheets for their peers in locked facilities and those reentering the community and they are learning the fundamentals of web page development.

Beginning in mid May, the young women will also be receiving nuts and bolts training on

how to use Photoshop CS, Quark, and Mac OS to obtain the skills necessary to manage and update our website as well as lay out and design CYWD program materials including the *Know Justice* handbook, a know your rights resource guide; *Hook Ups*, a referral and resource guide for young women on the streets; and the forthcoming *Not Without Our*

Babies survival guide for pregnant and parenting young mothers involved in the juvenile justice system.

Young women are already putting their newfound knowledge to use each week by developing resumes and cover letters, conducting online housing and employment searches, and researching issues that confront incarcerated young women. Using an "each one, teach

one" peer to peer training model, young women are training other young women exiting the juvenile and criminal justice system on how to optimally utilize the computers and their companion software.

The technology center is filling a void for many of the young women we work with who wouldn't otherwise have access to computers and the internet. Please consider helping us! We're still in need of a 20" Mac flat screen monitor with DVI connection and a digital projector.

—Maya Dillard Smith

THE NEW TRAINING CENTER HELPS YOUNG WOMEN DEVELOP RESUMES, SEARCH FOR HOUSING AND JOBS, RESEARCH JUSTICE ISSUES AS WELL AS LEARN VALUABLE SKILLS.

COMMUNICATIONS MAKEOVER!

CYWD is getting a new look this summer. As interest in CYWD's methodology continues to grow, community stakeholders, systems administrators, and the philanthropic world call us upon as subject matter experts about girls in the juvenile justice system. We've been encouraged to brand our identity so that we are a recognizable force not only by name, but also by look and feel. We are working to optimize our virtual presence in the online world and serve as a repository of information about incarcerated girls and young women, girl specific programming, cultural competency, and effective collaborations between system administrators and community based organizations.

We're getting a new logo to reflect the vitality of CYWD. Our programs are thriving and the organization is strong. In June, we'll be launching a new, more interactive, user-friendly website. The site will outline our programs and approach, highlight testimonies from program participants and community stakeholders, spotlight alumna success stories, profile current program participants, provide community resources including a calendar of events, enable users to purchase publications and request training and make it easier and hopefully encourage increased giving online. Check our website periodically to snatch a peak! www.cywd.org —Maya Dillard Smith

From "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise.

Wellness Coordinator
Aisha Bilal (left) and
program participant
share a healing
moment through
story and laughter.



SISTERS RISING IS IN FULL SWING!

Now two-thirds of the way through the nine-month employment-training program, Sisters Rising is in full swing. Over the last 6 months the Sisters Rising interns have distributed 3,000 copies of *The Hook Ups*, the best way we know how—through street outreach in the most depressed neighborhoods throughout San Francisco.

In March CYWD co-sponsored International Women's Day events in San Francisco in partnership with Mission girls, Loco Bloco and the historic Women's Building—a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-service center for women and girls in the heart of the Mission District.

The three-day event was inspiring and empowering. This year's theme, *Telling OUR Stories*, showcased women's stories through a variety of artistic expressions including art installations and theatrical storytelling. CYWD staff and participants, Melanie Willingham Jagers, program coordinator; Susanna Majano, staff intern; and Tiffany Trammell, program associate received rave reviews for

DISTRIBUTING *HOOK-UPS*,
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY,
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

their melodramatic performances in the powerful play entitled "Indestructible." This year's IWD events drew one of the largest audiences ever and by all accounts this was one of the most memorable in recent history.

As the program winds down toward our graduation ceremony in late June, the young women will continue their skills building and personal transformation. They will also launch their community engagement project, which takes them to the streets of San Francisco to survey and study emerging community concerns that they want to address. Stay tuned to learn more about their exciting project! —Melanie Willingham-Jagers

TRAINING INSTITUTE ON THE ROAD

Since the launch of our national training institute last may, CYWD has taken its message coast to coast reaching more than 10,000 people nationwide. In just the last two months alone, the speaking engagements, training and workshop facilitation, along with keynote addresses and panel discussions have taken us to several prestigious east coast universities. On March 12th, CYWD participated on a panel at Harvard Black Law Students' Association's annual spring conference. The panel, *From Injustice to Empowerment: Examining the Effects of the Criminal Justice System in the Black Community*, explored the social, political and economic impact of the prison industrial complex within Black America and delved into alternatives to sentencing. In addition to CYWD, the Sentencing Project and the Southern Center for Human Rights were represented among a host of judges and attorneys from around the nation.

Just a few weeks later, we were back on the east coast, this time in New Hampshire. CYWD was guest speaker on multicultural issues for the University of New Hampshire's annual Social Work month activities. Then we landed in the Big Apple to participate on a panel discussion at Barnard College to discuss CYWD's role in the feminist movement.

It has indeed been an exciting year and this is only the beginning of many speaking engagements the Center will be doing over the next year. Our training institute enables us to share our message with the world, develop our public speaking skills, travel to new and exciting places, and raise money to support our innovative programs. We offer a variety of services including training on the CYWD model, girl specific programming, cultural competent programming, the status of girls and young women in the juvenile justice system and much, much more. Please contact us to learn more. —Stephanie Sabini

CYWD FORMALLY INTEGRATES HEALTH AND WELLNESS

CYWD has always embraced a culture of healing, sisterhood, and peer support. Currently CYWD is developing a wellness program to formally integrate health and healing into our curriculum. Since receiving support from California Endowment, we've been hired a Wellness Coordinator to oversee the development and implementation of the

INTEGRATING PHYSICAL,
EMOTIONAL, & SPIRITUAL HEALTH

wellness program. The young women who participate in our programming have been instrumental in providing thoughtful feedback that is guiding the planning process. Who better to tell us how to serve them, other than the people we are trying to serve?

CYWD is a safe place for young women to share their stories, gain employment, and experience a positive and healing community. The wellness program is only an extension of the work we already do. Every young woman who enters the green door of CYWD feels the energy of love, understanding, and safety. The idea of wellness is a central piece to the work of CYWD. In order for the young women we work with to transform their lives, we must assist with their personal healing and growth. We must engage the young women in their own healing, thus creating a sense of ownership over their personal healing process. We believe in the transformative power and possibility of healing, sisterhood and love.

The wellness program will integrate pieces of physical, emotional, and spiritual health into our curriculum. We are working with the young women to identify key areas of their health and/or wellness concerns. As this program develops, look for a renewed sense of well being in our staff and young women program participants. Be well!

—Falilah Aisha Bilal



SETS YOU FREE

A poem by Susanna Majano, Sisters Rising Intern

Come under my wing so that I can take care of you

Come under my wing so I can give you what you need

Come under my wing to keep yourself alive

Come under my wing to change your tears of pain to tears of joy, to change your abandonment to support, to change you low chin to smiling eyes, to change your oppression to possession of your own life

Come under my wing to stop lingering as a follower and become a supervisor of your destiny

Come under my wings I'll teach you how to fly, high above all your old ways of being

A servant, an addict, a man's toy, a victim, higher than being nothing but a number in this twisted population of system where the government does nothing but pretend to care and robs you of your dignity, ancestry, and truth

I will teach you how to fly and take you under my wings to fly above all that, to become greater than just a leader representing non-profit organizations so we can take back what was stolen

Let me take you under my wing, the wings of the Center for Young Women's Development where the real justice is.

thank you

FUNDERS

Annenberg Foundation
Blue Shield Foundation
Bothin Foundation
California Endowment
California Wellness Foundation
Department of Children Youth and their Families
Ford Foundation
Goodman Family Foundation
Juvenile Probation Department (TANF)
Kimball Foundation
Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
Ms Foundation
Pottruck Family Fund
Public Welfare Foundation
Richard and Rhonda Goldman Fund
River Rock Foundation
San Francisco Foundation
San Francisco Foundation Lee and Perry Smith Fund
Susie Tompkins Buell Foundation
The Funding Exchange
Three Guinness Fund
Tides Foundation (Underdog & Themis Funds)
Van Loben Sels/RembeRock Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation
Women's Foundation of California
Youth Justice Funding Collaborative
Zellerbach Family Foundation

board

Lenore Anderson, Esq.
Board Chair
Olis Simmons, Vice Chair
Kimberly Brandon, Treasurer
The board's recruiting; interested parties should contact Marlene Sanchez 415/703-8800 x1001.

staff

Aisha Bilal
Kamren Curiel
Shirlese Garrick
Brandi Norwood
Stephanie Sabini
Marlene Sanchez
Tiffany Trammell
Melanie Willingham-Jaggers

Photography by Lynnly Labovitz.
Graphic design by Christine Wong Yap.

**THE CENTER
FOR YOUNG
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT**



ph 415/703-8800
fx 415/703-8818
www.cywd.org

1550 Bryant Street
Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94103

cywd