

SISTER WARRIORS FREEDOM CHARTER

THE CHARTER WAS ADOPTED
AT THE SISTER WARRIOR
FREEDOM COALITION'S
FOUNDING CONVENING IN
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, IN
FEBRUARY 2018.



In 2017, hundreds of women, girls, and gender-expansive people from across California gathered to envision true freedom for themselves, their families, and everyone. Inspired by the South African Freedom Charter, we drafted the Sister Warriors Freedom Charter.

We pledged to strive together until we achieve freedom for all, including the decriminalization and decarceration of all women, girls, and gender-expansive people, and our loved ones and communities, 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 to input and voice our input and opinions about 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 systems 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 be safe, 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.

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 a healthy and sustainable environment and planet and to access nature, our ancestral lands, and the resources we need to tend to them.

14. 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 insight over the systems and institutions that most impact us.

