

THE JUSTICE FUND

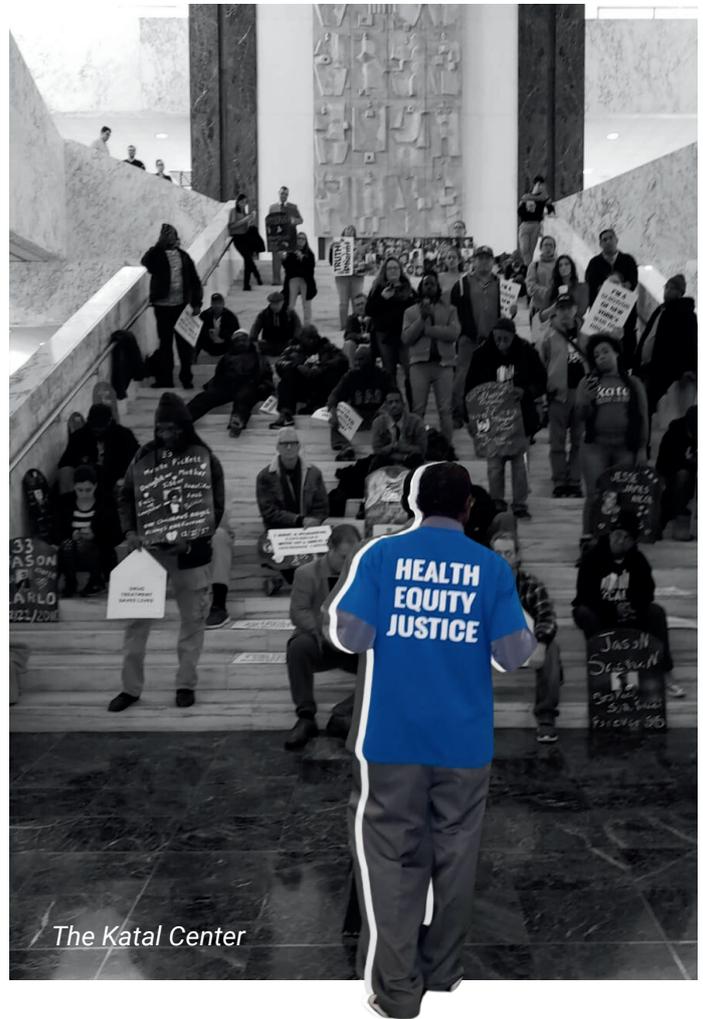
*Advancing a Family-Centered Paradigm to
Criminal Justice Reform in New York*



In Memory of Russelle "Rusti" Miller-Hill, Justice Advisory Committee (JAC) member

In 2018, The New York Women's Foundation launched the Justice Fund, a collaborative fund that provides resources to organizations working to reduce the involvement of women, girls, and gender-expansive people in all aspects of the criminal legal system. It was the first collaborative fund to apply a gender and racial lens to the work of dismantling mass incarceration and establishing community-led alternatives in New York City.

While The New York Women's Foundation had a long history of investing in alternatives to incarceration and research, the Justice Fund was the first effort to mobilize funders to work to close the Rose M. Singer Center, the women's facility at Rikers Island. Today, the Justice Fund also supports new paths to safety, well-being, and economic opportunity through grant-making, support for leaders and community organizations, and creation of a funder community.



SHINING A LIGHT ON WOMEN'S INCARCERATION

The number of women in the American justice system has grown exponentially, with a

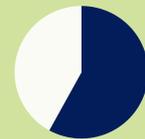


increase in the number of women in the American justice system between 1980 and 2021.¹



80%

of women held in jails awaiting to see a judge after an arrest



58%

of women serving time in prisons

are mothers incarcerated far from their loved ones.

Women are also more likely to have a history of abuse, trauma, disability, and mental illness that these facilities are not prepared to address. Both women and girls in detention are far more likely to identify as lesbian, bi, or gender non-conforming.²

When family members are incarcerated, the women left behind face multiple responsibilities, including supporting the household financially, maintaining family communication, and helping their loved ones restart their lives post-release. The consequences of incarceration make finding work, housing, and financial support even more difficult.

1. Incarcerated Women and Girls, The Sentencing Project, 2023.

2. Women's Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie, Prison Policy Initiative, 2023.

To reduce incarceration, we need a new paradigm that considers the criminal legal system's impact on families and communities. Holistic and intersectional investments can help dismantle multi-generational and systemic effects on communities of color. The women and gender-expansive leaders of color who are directly impacted by the criminal legal system are authorities on its far-reaching failures from family court and pre-trial detainment to prisoner treatment and reintegration. Their voices should lead the search for solutions.

Read More From The Foundation

Women In Justice

In partnership with John Jay Institute for Justice & Opportunity (formerly PRI)
nywf.org/Women-InJustice

A New Path to Justice

In partnership with Vera Institute
nywf.org/new-path-to-justice

COLLABORATIVE INVESTMENT AT A HISTORIC MOMENT

Our grantee partners have fought for landmark victories that reduce systemic reliance on mass incarceration, including New York City's commitment to closing the Rikers Island jail complex by 2026 and the Mayor's Plan for closure. Initial funding from The New York Women's Foundation also launched the #BEYONDRosies Campaign to close the women's facility on Riker's and expand alternatives to incarceration. Our investment supported a story collection and impact series uplifting the experiences of women, trans, and gender-expansive individuals within the criminal justice system.

Today, leaders who have benefitted from the Justice Fund's focused, long-term support can be found in every advocacy space. Other accomplishments include:

- *Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act* to provide more lenient sentencing for survivors.
- Elimination of cash bail for most misdemeanor and non-violent felony charges.
- *Less Is More Act* to reduce the re-incarceration of people on parole and other parole reforms that continue a punishing system instead of rehabilitation and stability.
- *Clean Slate Act* to allow some individuals to seal past criminal records and start a new life.

Despite these victories, advocates face many challenges: a growing narrative that falsely connects reform to rising crime, delays in closing Rikers Island, and cuts to critical services and programs in prisons, jails, and communities – while funding for traditional policing increases.



A COMPREHENSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

Since 2018, the Fund has awarded over \$7 million to 36 organizations. The Justice Fund supports emerging efforts by women and gender-expansive individuals impacted by incarceration. We invest early in transformative organizations and remarkable leaders—often before they come to the attention of other funders. Over the years, the Fund has built a trusted network of community organizations, research institutions, and civic leaders that can make large-scale change happen.

In 2024, the Justice Fund will focus on supporting leaders and community-rooted organizations advancing gender justice within the criminal justice space. We will advance our family-centered paradigm for decarceration through:

- **Advocacy and community engagement:** ensuring local voices, leaders, and allies are working together and are included in policymaking;
- **Rebuilding community infrastructure:** providing access to housing, economic opportunities, education, and health care to prevent involvement in the criminal justice system and to support women whose families have been impacted by incarceration;
- **Holistic, intersectional programs:** engaging the entire family in prevention and re-entry with legal assistance, wellness, family reunification, and parenting support;
- **Leadership development and capacity building:** including training on nonprofit management, fundraising, communications, and organizing to strengthen the fields of gender and racial justice and the performance of institutions leading the work;
- **Thought leadership and research:** publishing the impact of the Fund's first five years and exploring how other systems, such as child welfare services, intersect with criminal justice.

EXTEND YOUR IMPACT AND LEARN WITH US

The Justice Fund advances philanthropic supporters' collective impact by pooling and strategically deploying resources for women-led solutions. Our expert program officers work closely with grantees, supporting leaders who are blazing a trail for women-led reform nationwide. Funding partners convene regularly, allowing donors to connect with colleagues and engage in strategic discussions informed by direct conversations with grantees.

The Justice Fund remains committed to closing Rikers and creating alternatives to incarceration. We invite you to join us as we use our expertise, relationships, and resources to prevent criminalization and ensure that community voices shape the path forward.



CURRENT AND FORMER GRANTEE PARTNERS

A Little Piece of Light
Alliance of Families for Justice
Bronx Defenders
BronxConnect
Brooklyn Defender Services
Center for Justice at Columbia University
Clemency Coalition of New York
College and Community Fellowship
Communities United for Police Reform
Correctional Association of New York
Exodus Transitional Services
Freedom Agenda
Girl Vow
Good Call NYC
Guns Down
Justice for Families
JustLeadership USA
Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice
Ladies of Hope Ministries

LatinoJustice PRLDEF
National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly
Incarcerated Women and Girls
New Hour for Women and Children Long Island
New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence
Project
Osborne Association
Purelegacee
Red Hook Initiative
Rise Magazine
Robert F. Kennedy Center for Human Rights
SOUL Sisters Leadership Collective
STEPS to End Family Violence
Sylvia Rivera Law Project
Theatre of the Oppressed NYC
Transgender Law Center
VOCAL-NY
Women's Community Justice Association
Youth Represent

ABOUT THE NEW YORK WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

The New York Women's Foundation creates an equitable and just future for women, girls, gender-expansive individuals and their families by investing in bold, community-led solutions to ignite action for gender, economic, and racial justice. Since 1987, The Foundation has invested \$125 million in over 500 organizations, creating a vibrant community of grantees, philanthropists, advocates, innovators, and change-makers.

TAKE ACTION WITH US

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STAY CONNECTED

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 The New York Women's Foundation

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