

No Justice!

Project UNSHACKLE'S Community Partnership in New Orleans

In New Orleans, Project UNSHACKLE is working with Women With A Vision, an organization supporting women's health and well-being with a focus on harm reduction, social justice and self-care. Together, we are organizing a city-wide coalition to address the structural issues fueling women's vulnerability to imprisonment and HIV, particularly among young women of color in the sex industry.

Know the Issue

Our inaugural campaign is focused on the latest strategy for criminalizing sex workers in New Orleans: prosecuting sex work under the 203-year-old 'crimes against nature' law. Under this law, women are forced to register as sex offenders for 10-years, with 'sex offender' appearing on their photo identification cards.

Those charged with and prosecuted under this law are disproportionately poor women of color, even more marginalized in the post-Katrina New Orleans. Most of these women are struggling with drug and alcohol addiction, and are cycling in and out of the criminal justice system. Prosecution under this law has emerged within a climate of persistent lack of access to services, violence against women, and lack of respect for women's health, all of which make women more vulnerable to HIV.



Organizing to Win

New Orleans' Women With A Vision has been doing on-the-ground support work and outreach for years. Combatting this unjust sentencing law as part of their long-term commitment to address the web of injustices women are moving through.

Working with existing New Orleans sex worker outreach programs, we will implement a comprehensive needs assessment survey this summer to map the policing and prosecution strategies used to try sex work as a 'crime against nature,' as well as other issues impacting women's overall safety, health and well-being. With the women we connect with, we will craft a picture of the issue to be presented to key stakeholders, including leaders from HIV prevention programs, women's health initiatives, legal advocacy projects and faith communities. This body will form an ongoing coalition to develop and implement a plan for community mobilization.

In the short-term, we know that the coordinated community-building process of New Orleans stakeholders will itself help to mitigate women's HIV vulnerability by providing new avenues for linkages to care. And in the long-term, our advocacy work will bring lasting change to the structural environment in which women experience their health and HIV risk.

Learn More

For more information on Project UNSHACKLE's work at the intersection of HIV and imprisonment, please go to <http://www.champnetwork.org/unshackle>.

For more information on Women With A Vision, please go to <http://wwav-no.org/>.