

Sisters Unchained (SU)



FOUNDED: 2021 incorporated as 501(c)(3),
2015 launched programs
CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET: \$400,000
CONTACT: Ayana Aubourg, Co-Executive Director
PHONE: 857.756.2989
EMAIL: ayana@sistersunchained.com
WEB: www.sistersunchained.com

Investment Opportunity

Sisters Unchained is seeking an investment of \$1.46 million for 2023 and 2024 to increase the number of young women involved in its intensive summer and afterschool programs, to expand the *Ride for Families* program that provides free transportation and accompanied visits to loved ones behind bars, to locate space that will accommodate the expansion and to more than double the number of people engaged in public awareness campaigns to highlight issues facing young people with incarcerated parents.

The United States has the largest prison population in the world. Approximately 7 percent of all US children have had a parent incarcerated at some point. Children are suffering the consequences of their parents' sentences and the nation's tough-on-crime practices.

- 1 in 4 students in Boston Public Schools has a parent who is incarcerated.
- Black children are 9 times and Latinx children are 3 times more likely than white children to have a parent imprisoned.
- Children with incarcerated parents experience a myriad of traumas, and often have unmet mental health needs.
- 65 percent of families with an incarcerated family member cannot meet the cost of basic needs.

Women bear the brunt of the costs—both financial and emotional—of their loved ones' incarceration. Mothers, grandmothers, and sisters are the primary caretakers of children whose parents are imprisoned.

Sister's Unchained (SU) supports young women and their families who have been affected by parental incarceration. It fosters healing and develops leadership skills of participants by building a community of peer support. SU provides intensive programming, assists with family visitation, and engages young women to advocate for community-based sentencing alternatives.

Two-Year Goals

- Increase the number of youth leaders through paid internships (sisterships) from 50 to 80
- Increase the number of family members who visit incarcerated family members annually from 70 to 200
- Increase the number of people reached/engaged in community campaigns to raise awareness from 260 to 600 per year
- Secure a permanent space for offices and programs

Ways to Invest

FINANCIAL

- \$70,000 to support the salary and benefits of a program manager
- \$8,000 to support a public awareness campaign
- \$2,500 to support the cost of one young woman for a SU summer internship
- \$250 to support a family's visit to their loved one in prison

IN-KIND

- Apply to join the Board of Directors
- Host a job shadow and/or intern experience for a young woman
- Provide pro bono graphic design and legal services
- Provide space for group meetings

Leadership & Governance

Ayana Aubourg and Vanessa Ly are the co-directors and founders of SU. They initially came together in 2015 to lead a pilot *Coding for Justice* program for girls with incarcerated parents. They continued to organize projects for girls each year, and in 2021 SU became an independent 501(c)(3). Both women have personal experience with family incarceration and are driven to support their younger sisters. Currently, SU has a governing board of two members. SU is actively seeking to expand the board over the next two years.

SISTERS UNCHAINED'S MODEL



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Just as abolitionists in the 19th century sought to end slavery, Sisters Unchained is part of a movement to abolish policies and practices that have led to mass incarceration.

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AYANA AUBOURG,

Co-Executive Director, SU



VICTIMS TO LEADERS

Focus on Women Empowerment – Building a Lifelong Network

SU creates a strong network of love for young women of color who have experienced parental incarceration. With a multipronged approach, SU fosters an environment for open and safe exchange of ideas and feelings, political and self-awareness and healing, and sisterhood.

Developing Transformative Leadership – Healing and Education

The summer and fall intensives bring together cohorts of 12-15 young women to build community and knowledge. The curriculum focuses on improving mental health and fosters artistic expression through visual arts, poetry, digital media, and other mediums for creative outlets. SU collaborates with experts to provide alternative forms of healing, including gardening, dance, yoga, and healing circles.

Participants are exposed to the history of the prison industrial complex, including how sentencing policies have led to a system that has shaped their individual and collective experience. During and after SU intensives, participants facilitate workshops and lead collaborations with community-based organizations. Sisters receive mentoring for school, planning for higher education, and/or training.

Connecting with Parents – Maintaining Bonds Behind Bars

Having contact with incarcerated parents through visits has long been considered important for family wellbeing during and following incarceration. However, the cost of travel can be prohibitive for most families. SU's *Rides for Families* coordinates transportation for children and their families to visit their incarcerated parents. In addition to transportation and meals during the trip, SU provides emotional support for children and family members after visits.

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Sisters Unchained is a second home to me. Through SU I've grown to feel more comfortable and free to say what I need and feel. I have a group to support me.

DAMARIAH,
SU participant

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SOCIAL JUSTICE PIONEERS

Collaborating with the Community – Uplifting Voices

SU members undertake multiple public awareness campaigns throughout the year in partnership with other community groups. They lead workshops for youth and adults, including for women in reentry programs. SU members' past projects range from a ballot initiative to restore voting rights for incarcerated people, to creating public art installations that raise awareness of criminalization of young people of color, to documenting their stories and showcasing their work at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

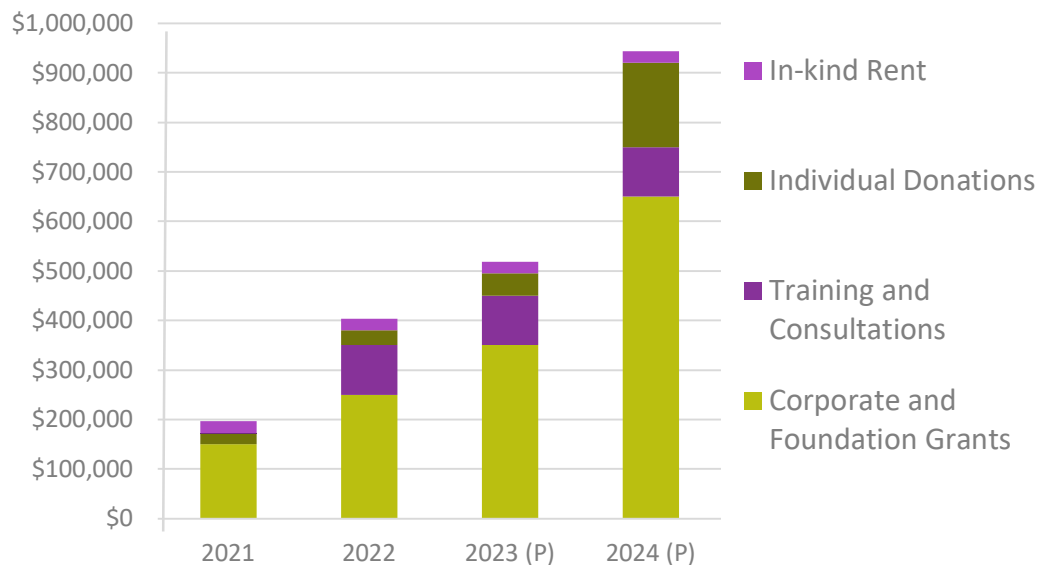
Advocating for System Change – Creating Community-Based Alternatives

SU members advocate for community-based sentencing, which allows parents to stay with or have more contact with their children instead of incarceration. Parents who stay connected are more likely to succeed at treatment for substance use disorders and less likely to return to prison. By staying connected with their parents, children can experience healthy development and attachment, which contributes to good mental health. Community-based sentencing also decreases profit to prisons and jails and keeps parents connected to the workforce. In the long term, SU is committed to abolishing a criminal legal system fixated on punishment and profit and helping to build people-centered solutions to justice.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sisters Unchained is a young organization with a small staff and has been successful in gaining foundation grants and individual contributions. For example, SU's current program space at the Old Oak Dojo is fully donated. As a newly-incorporated organization, SU is undergoing a phase of organizational development that will allow it to build the infrastructure and outcome measurement system that will position SU for increased foundation and individual support.

Revenue by Source



Key Investors

- THE BOSTON FOUNDATION.
- LENNY ZAKIM FOUNDATION
- OLD OAK DOJO (IN-KIND PROGRAM SPACE)

Partners

- AGITARTE
- DANZA ORGÁNICA
- NEW BEGINNINGS REENTRY SERVICES

Janasia's story: Finding Connection and Voice

Janasia's father was incarcerated when she was four years old. He worked hard to be a presence in her life, but she suffered from being separated from him. When she was a teen, her father was released and it was he who connected her to Sisters Unchained.

When she joined SU, she was a nervous young teenager. Through the program, she developed strong bonds with other girls who understood her experience, she began to feel more comfortable "in her skin", and gained the confidence to speak out in a group.

Over eight years in the program, she advanced from participant to facilitator to program assistant. Today, Janasia is a role model for other younger women leading workshops on public speaking and community organizing.



PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Below is a summary of the key measures that Sisters Unchained will track to demonstrate progress, create internal accountability, incorporate lessons learned, and adjust strategy as necessary.

	FY 2022	FY 2023 (P)	FY 2024 (P)
PROGRAM PERFORMANCE			
Number of youth program participants (Sisterships)	50	75	80
Number of family members participating in <i>Rides for Families</i> (visits to incarcerated family members)	70	120	200
Number of community members engaged	260	400	600
Number of public awareness campaigns	2	3	3
ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING			
Number of staff members	3.5	4	6
Board members	2	5	7
Secure new space to accommodate offices and program activities	–	–	Move to new space
Total revenue	\$400,00	\$520,000	\$944,000

SOCIAL IMPACT

The \$80 billion spent annually in the US on corrections is cited as the total cost of incarceration, but this figure considerably underestimates the true cost of incarceration by ignoring important social costs, especially for children.

SU has immediate impact on young women's mental health that leads to better educational outcomes and a strong connection to a supportive network of women. On a macro level, SU's efforts are building a movement for community-based sentencing which will result in a more rehabilitative, cost effective, and equitable system of justice.

Below is the summary of the social impact that SU aspires to have on participants by 2024. As a newly-formed organization, SU does not have existing past year indicators to report.

INDICATOR	2024
Participants will develop the communications skills to use their voices to advocate in multiple settings	90%
Participants will increase their self esteem and confidence	90%
Families with incarcerated parents will maintain a relationship and stay in communication with each other	4+ VISITS PER FAMILY
Participants will have an education plan for post high school	98%
After completing the program, participants will continue to draw support from the SU network to foster their healthy personal and professional development	90%