



News Release

For Immediate Release

June 6, 2024 – Liberation Fund Prom Spotlights The Impact Of Incarceration On Girls And Gender-Expansive Youth

Event photos and B-roll available from Liberty Hill Foundation via ckassel@libertyhill.org

(Los Angeles, CA) — Dozens of young women and gender-expansive youth from across Los Angeles danced and celebrated at the LINE LA hotel on Friday night at Liberty Hill’s Inaugural “[Liberation Fund Prom](#).” Unlike the hundreds of high school proms across Los Angeles this season, the young people celebrating at this event have had experience in LA County’s youth prison system—and were gathered to celebrate the work to end the incarceration of girls and gender-expansive youth.

“Girls and gender-expansive youth who come through the justice system often miss out on the key milestones that other teens might take for granted,” said **Lisa Small**, Senior Director of Youth Justice at Liberty Hill Foundation. “The Liberation Prom offered a chance to dance the night away like any other young person—but these youth are doing amazing work to change the system, and they’re going to end the incarceration of girls and gender-expansive youth in L.A. County.”

Liberty Hill created the Liberation Fund to ensure that no young woman or young person across the gender spectrum spends time in ineffective and abusive systems when they can be served better in the community. The grant program supports community-based organizations who are experts in youth development, legal advocacy, and organizing to prioritize the unique experiences of girls and GE youth, while simultaneously addressing the systemic failures and practices that harm them. Organizations that joined the Liberation Fund Prom include Young Women’s Freedom Center, Students Deserve, Beloved Community Housing, and Arts for Healing and Justice Network.

“The Liberation Fund Prom” featured a prom-themed dance party complete with all the trimmings. Youth leaders from several of the partner organizations got their hair and make-up prepped for their special night in a “glam suite” at the hotel, and every guest received a flower corsage. After speeches by supportive funders and politicians, the youth leaders were each honored in a “sash ceremony” to recognize their extraordinary work. Afterwards, attendees danced under tinsel-decorated lights.

“I didn’t get to attend my own prom, so it was emotional for me to get dressed up and shine,” said **Ka’lee Matthews**, a youth fellow with Young Women’s Freedom Center, who received a sash

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in the sash ceremony. “The work we’re doing, I’m doing it for my younger sister and for all the girls who are still in the system.”

In addition to providing youth who have been affected by the justice system with a night of celebration, joy, and advocacy, the event included dynamic speakers who addressed the goal of the [Liberation Fund](#) grantee partners— to create a collaborative blueprint that will pave the way for Los Angeles County to become the largest jurisdiction in the nation to end the incarceration of girls and gender expansive youth. Featured remarks were provided by Lateefah Simon, President of the Meadow Fund; Eunisses Hernandez, Los Angeles City Councilmember of District 1; and Nichol Whiteman, Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation.

"The proportion of girls and gender-expansive young people in the youth justice system has increased over the last 20 years," said Los Angeles City Councilmember **Eunisses Hernandez**. "The Liberation Fund is addressing the root causes of incarceration that are unique to this population. They are creating a Care First model that disrupts the school-to-prison pipeline and ends the incarceration of girls and gender-expansive youth in Los Angeles County."

Event curator [By Way of Us](#) supported the event.

“I founded By Way of Us to uplift those who deserve to be celebrated,” said **Sarah Kim**, the founder of By Way of Us. “Women working behind the scenes to make things move. Community members coming together with curiosity and genuine joy. Liberation Fund Prom is the first time that we are bringing our robust By Way of Us community together to amplify a story as powerful and deserving as the inaugural group of ten nonprofits supported by the Liberation Fund. With Prom, we aim to educate our larger community on approachable ways to support incarcerated young women and gender-expansive youth. We’re honored to collaborate with Liberty Hill to further this justice work, together.”

Many individuals offered their time and services in honor of Liberation Fund Prom. Hosted at [The Line LA](#), the evening included DJ sets from [SOSUPERSAM](#) and [Kittens](#), production by [Good Union Co](#), creative by [Corrie in Color](#), boutonnieres by [Offerings Co](#), sash donations by [même.](#), photo booth by [The Lounge Booth](#), hair stylist [Daisy Ontiveros](#), and makeup artists: [Kendall Bennewitz](#) and [Wendy Martinez](#).

For more information on the Liberation Fund please visit our [website](#) or contact Courtney Kassel, Chief Communications Officer, Liberty Hill Foundation, at ckassel@libertyhill.org.

[Liberty Hill Foundation](#) is a laboratory for social change philanthropy. We leverage the power of community organizers, donor activists, and allies to advance social justice through strategic investment in grants, leadership training, and campaigns. We envision a society in which all people have a powerful voice, including those currently shut out of our democracy, people cut off from opportunities because of their skin color, gender or sexual orientation, where they live, or where they were born. We will not rest until society provides justice and equality for all.

[By Way of Us](#) creates a welcoming space to feel safe, seen, and supported. With a focus on uplifting those who deserve to be celebrated, we bring together individuals who encourage one another to build new bonds and make change. Founded by Sarah Kim, By Way of Us produces multiple events a month across Los Angeles and Portland, Oregon, with the purpose of building community. Everything from Casual Tennis (inspiring movement without being precious about skill) to MOM WORLD (events for moms themed around entrepreneurship and community support), By Way of Us events invite attendees to show up as a beginner, forever open to encountering new lessons, perspectives, and friends through shared experiences, skills, and resources.