

The National Defense Center for Criminalized Survivors provides specialized support to defense teams to address the challenges faced by criminalized survivors. Rooted in understanding of the systemic issues that lead to survivors' criminalization, our aim is to defend their rights and dignity, and help prevent their further victimization

## MISSION

BWJP's mission is to promote change within the civil and criminal legal systems to enhance their effectiveness in providing safety, security, and justice to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), their families, and communities.

## OUR IMPACT

Too often, criminalized survivors do not receive the resources and support they need, even from programs that assist other survivors. Policies often exclude justice-involved survivors from critical services, often due to the problematic assumption that being a victim of GBV and being arrested are mutually exclusive. That's why we:

### Engage With Survivors

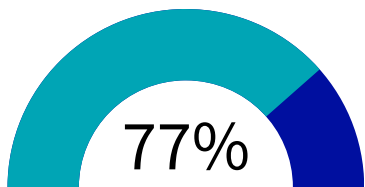
We respond directly to survivors through our helpline and Survivors in Prison Letters Program. Providing essential resources and support to ensure survivors are not alone in their pursuit of justice.

### Expand Awareness

We work to dispel misconceptions about criminalized survivors. Raising awareness within and beyond the GBV field to emphasize the context of abuse and the systemic failures leading to their criminalization.

### Educate for Social Change

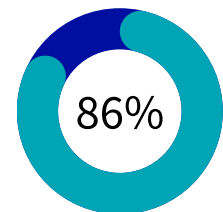
We provide comprehensive training and support to defense teams, advocates, and other system professionals. Empowering them to improve outcomes for criminalized survivors and advance a more just and equitable legal system.



77% of jailed women report experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

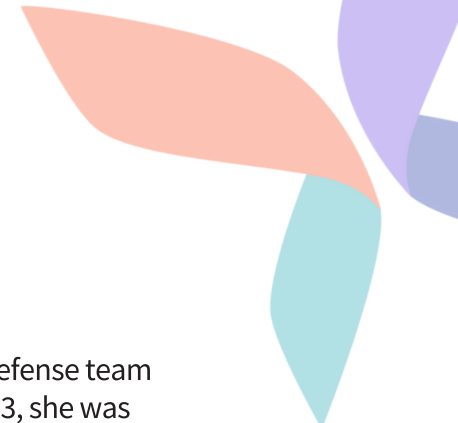


The imprisonment rate for Black women in 2022 was **1.6 times higher** than for white women.<sup>2</sup>



86% of jailed women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

We thank our partners and funders for their unwavering support in our shared mission to create safer, more just systems for all survivors. To learn more, visit [BWJP.org](http://BWJP.org).



## Catalyst for Change

For over two years, the National Defense Center for Criminalized Survivors supported a defense team representing a survivor charged with killing her abusive partner. Finally, in December 2023, she was acquitted. Too often, the justice system overlooks the complexities of gender-based violence, leading to wrongful incarceration. We advocate for the rights and dignity of incarcerated survivors, ensuring their voices are heard.

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## Resource Highlight

### Guilty Pleas

If you are a defendant deciding whether to take a plea bargain, you may have lots of questions. You may find that there are many well-intentioned people (friends, family, advocates), who are advising you about what to do. This memo will help you talk with your attorney about the pros and cons of accepting a plea deal.

### Myths and Misconceptions: Criminalized Survivors

Myths and misconceptions about domestic violence and victims of intimate partner violence are widespread and often negatively impact victims and survivors.

While these false narratives can lead to barriers for all survivors, criminalized survivors are at particular risk of being harmed by mistaken beliefs about domestic violence. For example, misinformation can undermine a survivor's legal defense, limit options to seek safety, or be used by the victim-defendant's partner as a tool to further abuse.

### Evidence of Battering and the Defense of Duress

As in any other area where specialized knowledge is needed to help educate judge and jury (e.g., ballistics, eyewitness identification), a domestic violence expert is often needed in cases involving victim defendants asserting duress.

Evidence concerning the defendant's experiences of abuse is relevant to a duress defense in much the same way as it is relevant to self-defense. In duress, as in self-defense, evidence of abuse is relevant to the reasonable person analysis.