SISTERFIRE
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

WE EXTEND to all of you a warm welcome to SISTERFIRE.

SISTERFIRE was conceived as a celebration—an acknowledgement of women as vital carriers of culture. This festival is a demonstration of commitment to social change and hope. Since its inception in 1982, SISTERFIRE has more than doubled in size, and now encompasses two days of activities. Such growth would not have been possible without the concerted effort of a broad spectrum of community workers. This multi-racial, multi-ethnic, cross-cultural display of women’s talent, brought together by diverse facets of our community, is the material expression of Roadwork’s philosophy.

We face many challenges in America today. Violence against people of color escalates; racism triumphs in the marketplace and in the courts; weapons of annihilation and death receive maximum funding, while our elected officials deny basic human rights by slashing programs benefitting ordinary workers, and people of few means; tolerance that breeds homophobia and the abridgment of civil rights is sanctioned by “national leaders”; police power and repressive legislation broaden, while our freedom to dissent and gain access to information is curtailed; militarism is now more than ever the posture of the day. Women often bear the brunt of this anti-human assault.

SISTERFIRE praises the cultural expression of women fighting in liberation movements around the world and here in the U.S. We praise women’s work in the home, and the nurturing and love they have always given their families...their communities. SISTERFIRE is a salute to all women, working people, minorities and the poor who stand fast against dehumanizing political and economic systems.

Culture, in its most valid form, expresses a mass or popular character. It cannot, must not be defined and perpetuated by an elite few for the benefit of a few. Culture must, of necessity, reflect and chart humanity’s attempt to live in harmony with itself and nature. So it was with the songs, literature and art of the labor movement ’30s and the civil rights movement ’60s—so it is with the New Song Movement and the political formations born out of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggles; so it is with new concepts of religion leading to Liberation Theology; all of it popular cultural expression confronting and dealing with impediments to human progress.

Whether it is the weaving of fabric or the kneading of bread, whether through the intricacies of philosophical thought or the simplicity of a praise song, whether it is passing on language or retaining history, SISTERFIRE acclaims the contributions women have made to advancing our culture...people's culture.

This is a women’s festival held in an urban environment, making it more accessible to everyone who wishes to attend. It is significant that we come together near Washington, D.C. We want to proclaim that women will not let this or any administration strip us of our rights or our humanity.

We acknowledge the hard work all of us, women and men, have contributed to this festival. We are building bridges between the women’s movement and other movements for progressive social change. We are playing with fire, and we want nothing less from this event than to set loose the creative, fierce and awesome energies in all of you.

The Women of SISTERFIRE