

**"Close the Doors"**  
**Speech given by**  
**Ruth Shelton**  
**Capitol People First**  
**California State Olmstead Hearing**  
**April 30, 2002**

I have come a long way.

When I was ten years old my parents put me in Sonoma State Hospital.

They had four little kids and another on the way.

This was during the depression.

I lived at Sonoma Developmental Center for over 45 years.

I was asked to live with a foster family in San Francisco.

The Foster Mom died of a drug overdose.

I moved into a Skilled Nursing Facility in Sacramento  
because there was no other place to go.

I lived there for 5 years.

It was certainly not much of a life.

I had no choices about anything.

I was told when to eat. What to eat.

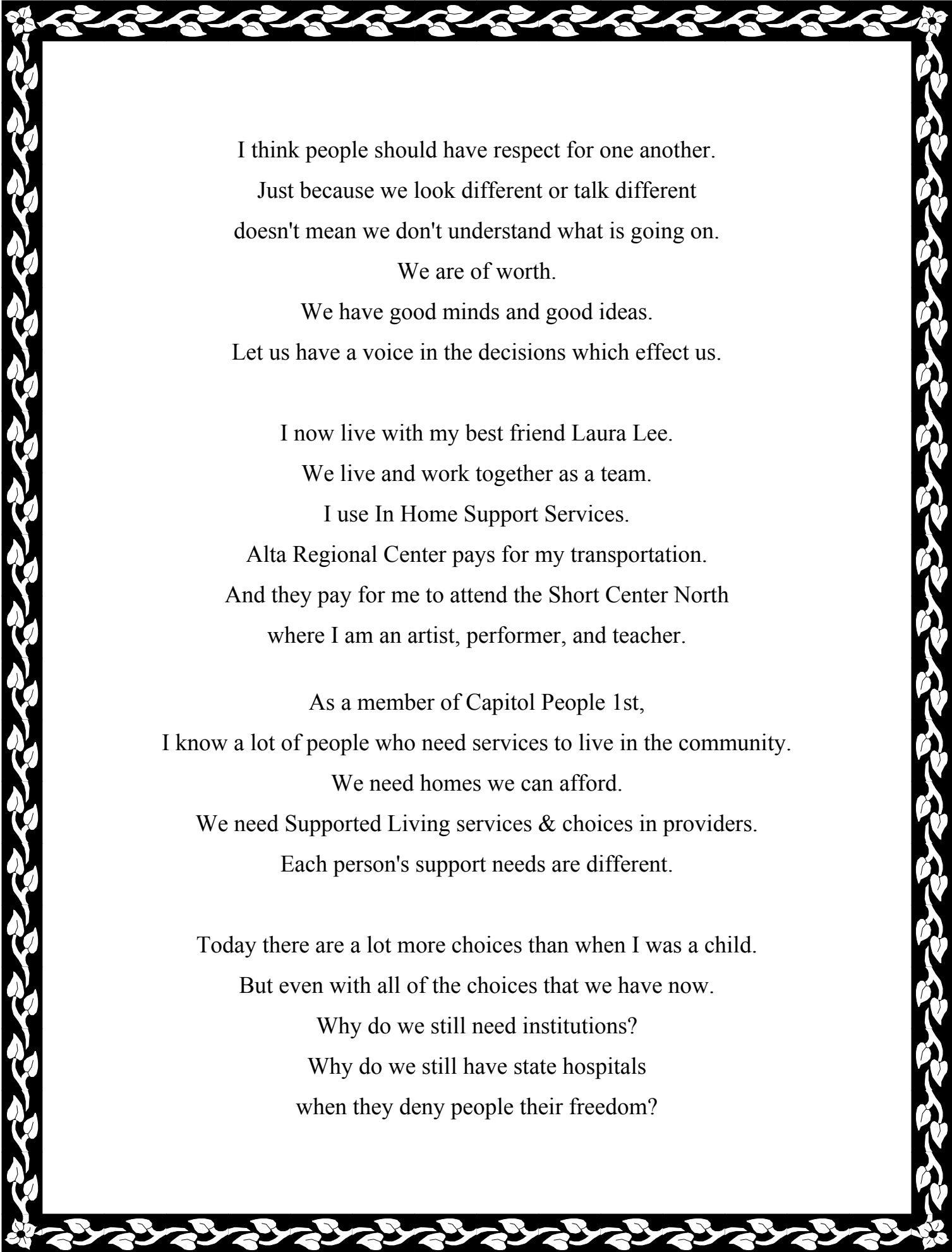
Where to go and when to go there.

They did not know I was an artist.

They did not know that I could sing.

They did not know that I had the right to vote.

But I showed them.



I think people should have respect for one another.  
Just because we look different or talk different  
doesn't mean we don't understand what is going on.

We are of worth.

We have good minds and good ideas.  
Let us have a voice in the decisions which effect us.

I now live with my best friend Laura Lee.  
We live and work together as a team.  
I use In Home Support Services.  
Alta Regional Center pays for my transportation.  
And they pay for me to attend the Short Center North  
where I am an artist, performer, and teacher.

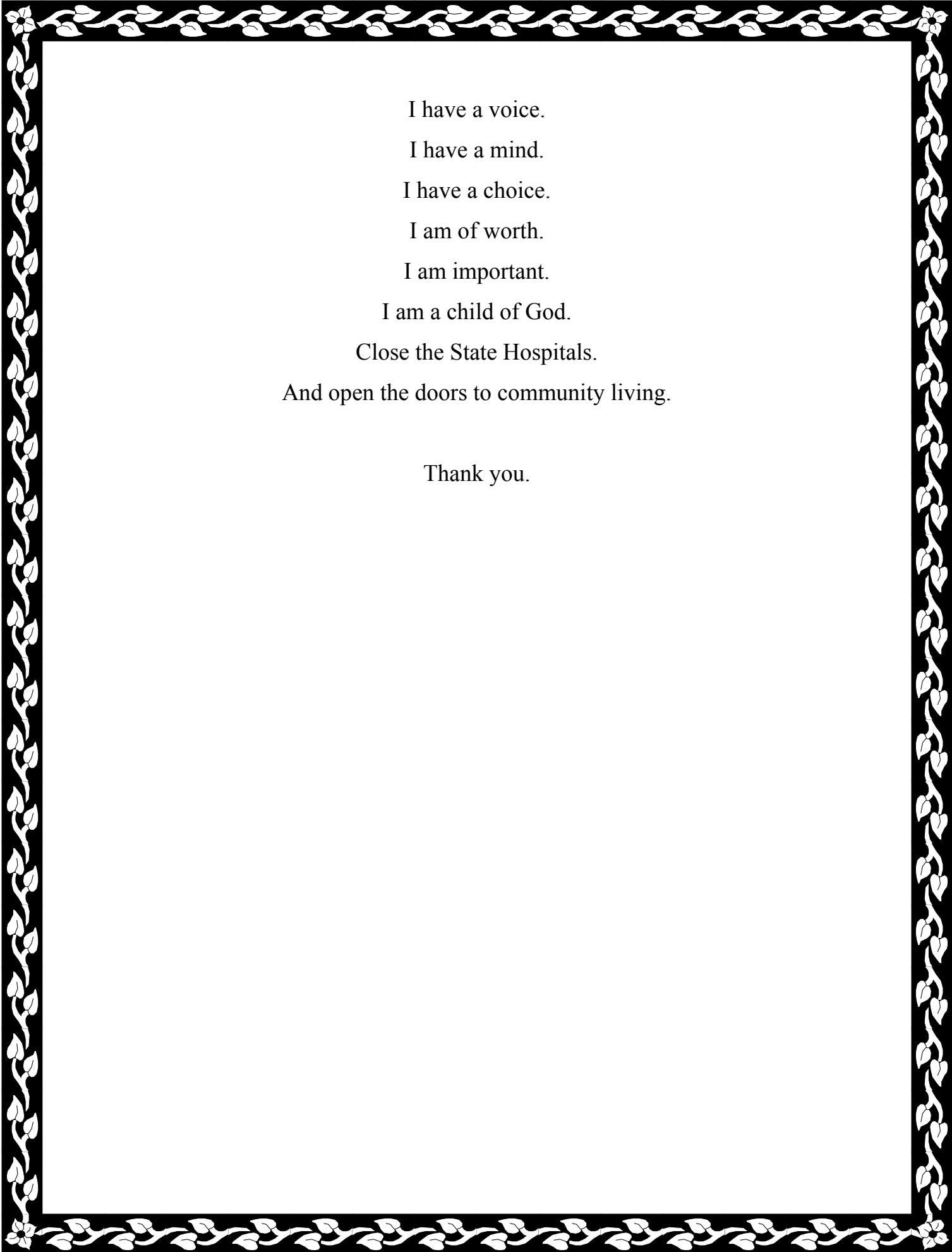
As a member of Capitol People 1st,  
I know a lot of people who need services to live in the community.

We need homes we can afford.  
We need Supported Living services & choices in providers.  
Each person's support needs are different.

Today there are a lot more choices than when I was a child.

But even with all of the choices that we have now.

Why do we still need institutions?  
Why do we still have state hospitals  
when they deny people their freedom?



I have a voice.

I have a mind.

I have a choice.

I am of worth.

I am important.

I am a child of God.

Close the State Hospitals.

And open the doors to community living.

Thank you.