



HEAR FROM HER

Margie O'Neal

System-Impacted Women Speak Series
Brought to you by the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

The most predominant issue for women in prison is the lack of job training or education available to them. The women are incarcerated in a one-size-fits-all prison system, designed for men. Women need gender-appropriate programs that will help them succeed when they are released.

The greatest barriers women face post-release are the ability to find employment and housing. It was hard for me to get a job with a felony conviction even though I was qualified for the position. I was fortunate enough to know people who were willing to rent me a place to live.

If I could change anything about the Texas criminal justice system, I would change the idea that going to prison is not punishment, but a time out for self-improvement. From the moment women arrive they should be screened for their educational abilities and offered training they can use once they are released.



Note: Margie volunteers for the Texas Department of Corrections, Meals on Wheels, and Truth Be Told. Margie advocates for changes in the justice system as a member of the Statewide Leadership Council, which brings together community advocates to collaborate on policy changes that will lead to the end of mass incarceration.



What impact on communities and families do you think incarcerating women has had?



The impact on society when a woman is incarcerated is multifaceted. The biggest issue is the children. Children of incarcerated mothers struggle with developing a sense of security.

I feel there were a lot of women in prison similar to me. The only difference was the sentence or length of time served. We all have children and families and made poor choices.

For more information about women in Texas' justice system, visit TexasCJC.org/Womens-Justice