



# SistersConnected

The newsletter of RECONNECT



your rights



your voice



your power

## I Changed My Life By Tanya

No one could have told me in 2007 that 5 or 6 years later my life would be completely changed. It was not my choice in the beginning, but as time passed, I embraced the idea of change like it was my own.

Back then, I was an angry bitter person. I was abusing drugs and committing crimes. Even so, no one could tell me that I was not okay. I was functional because I took care of my children, attended PTA meetings and made sure we had some place to live. However, like a house of cards, when I was arrested, my world caved in. For the first time, I had to sit and think about my life, or the lack thereof. It was not a pretty picture. But I did not want to change. I just wanted to get bailed out and go on with my life as I knew it. While in jail, I went to a Narcotics Anonymous meeting and heard from people who lived a life like mine and now had many years clean and sober. Their stories instilled me with hope and the incentive to change. Even though I eventually went to prison for drugs, that desire to change stayed with

*It was not my choice in the beginning, but I embraced the idea of change...*

me and grew. I was determined that when I came home I would continue on the right path.

I have been home for over two years and I have not relapsed into any of my old behaviors. I have completed treatment, substance abuse counseling training, and I am two semesters from my B.A. degree. It feels good to wake up and not worry about the things that I used to do in my old life. I want everyone to know that change is possible if you want it bad enough.

they were supposed to. They were in prison with older adults and forced to be men. My brother shared with me that he did not sleep well and was always having to defend himself. He also saw a lot of abuse inside. Today my brother is very angry and stuck in the past—like a bird stuck in a cage.

*New York is one of only two states in the country—in company with North Carolina—that automatically prosecutes 16- and 17-year-olds as adults. New York also prosecutes 13-, 14- and 15-year-olds charged with certain serious offenses as adults. These young people are subject to lifelong criminal records and drastic consequences including denial of educational loans, barriers to employment, deportation, and loss of housing for both themselves and their families. Children prosecuted as adults have been shown to return to prison at higher rates than those prosecuted in juvenile courts. For more information about the Raise the Age campaign go to [http://www.correctionalassociation.org/current\\_topics/raise-the-age](http://www.correctionalassociation.org/current_topics/raise-the-age)*

## Raise the Age By Belky

I am interested in getting involved in the Raise the Age campaign, which will change the age that a youth in New York State can be charged as an adult. I have a brother and two cousins who were incarcerated at very young ages after being charged as adults. I feel that they did not have an opportunity to grow up the way

Your link to the work and happenings of **RECONNECT** ISSUE 9

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ADVOCACY**  
PAGE 1  
**SPOTLIGHT**  
PAGE 3

**INSPIRATION**  
PAGE 2  
**YOUR SUPPORT**  
PAGE 4

**RECONNECT**  
WOMEN IN PRISON PROJECT  
THE CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NY  
2090 ADAM CLAYTON POWELL BLVD, STE 200A  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10027  
(212) 254-5700 x338  
(212) 473-2807



# Let'sConnect

inspirational messages

## Refection

By Bridgette

### Emotions

By Desiree

Feelings are something.

Sometimes they pass fast. Sometimes they pass slow.

But eventually they roll and play themselves out.

You might not enjoy every feeling.

Believe it or not, pain feelings with a whole lot of tear drops are the best.

This cleanses you.  
Makes you grow.  
Makes you feel brand new.

There is nothing like growing through emotions.

Suffering can either make you grow or go.

I am still here after my first year in Manhattan. I'm originally from Westchester. Now I'm surviving on the Lower East Side with my eleven year old daughter.

I am striving to be better every day. I have learned so much – how to help myself and how to network with others. I am thankful.

## Reflection

By Dawn

I was in the penitentiary for two years. After release, I attended a program to get structure back in my life. In the program, I started attending outside groups to help me stay focused. I also looked for work and housing. The program is giving me a chance to work for them when I finish. Now I know I have a chance. I do not have to go back to the penitentiary.



# ReCONNECT Spotlight



## Speaking Out

By Angela

Can you hear me?

Would you hear me?

Can you give me a fair chance now that I have paid my debt for my mistake?

Can you assist me with a decent job without holding my past mistake against me?

Can you help me with affordable housing so that I may stand on my own, independent and free?

Can you lend me a hand as I try to assist myself but finding no help?

I am a formerly incarcerated woman speaking out.

Can you hear me?

\*\*\*\*\*

### Support the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act

The Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (A. 7874-A/S. 5436) is a bill sponsored by Assemblymember Jeffrion Aubry and Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson that will allow judges to sentence domestic violence survivors convicted of crimes directly related to the abuse they suffered to shorter prison terms, and in some cases, to community-based alternative-to-incarceration programs instead of prison. It also provides domestic violence survivors currently in prison the opportunity to apply to the courts for resentencing. For more information about our campaign go to [www.dvsurvivorsjusticeact.org](http://www.dvsurvivorsjusticeact.org).

### About the Coalition for Women Prisoners

The Coalition for Women Prisoners is a statewide alliance working to make the New York State criminal justice system more responsive to the needs and rights of currently and formerly incarcerated women. For more information about the Coalition's work and committee meetings, contact Jaya Vasandani at [jvasandani@correctionalassociation.org](mailto:jvasandani@correctionalassociation.org).

# Congratulations Fall 2012 Class!

"If you have knowledge, let others light a candle in it."  
*Margaret Fuller*



*Angela  
Belky  
Bridgette  
Dawn  
Desiree  
Gidget  
Tanya*