

[UNTITLED]

SARITA MILLER[∞]

Sarita Miller recounts founding Daughters magazine, and discusses her history with addiction, abuse, and mental health struggles, and ultimately her incarceration.

I have been incarcerated in the Pennsylvania prison system for eighteen years now, serving a life without parole sentence. I never thought in a million years I would be a founder or advocator of anything. But God had other plans.

My background is one of child abuse, dysfunction, addiction and poor mental health. That combination of ungodly nurturing resulted in me growing into a young adult who understood neither right from wrong. I accepted everything negative as just a way of life. The streets had become a refuge and I embraced its hatred for me. After all, that's what I was accustomed to. My first encounter with cocaine was at about fifteen; I was pregnant by sixteen and strung out by nineteen.

Frankly speaking, all of my relationships back then were abusive, resulting in me being shot in the back when I was only 26. It really doesn't surprise me as I look back that I ended up in prison. I was a time bomb ticking. To be quite honest, transformation didn't happen overnight nor did it come without much resistance from myself. Facing my ugly was no easy task! However, with the help of God, and my willingness to WANT to change, I have become a better me, a new me with much more work in progress. I accept it all.

I use my gift of courage to help other women like the former me, and believe me, it is no easy task. In December of 2020, *Daughters* magazine was launched. It is available online and currently distributed to 600 inmates within the DOC in PA. This publication was founded to give women incarcerated a voice to express their needs, issues and struggles.

Becoming a founder and editor has been a rewarding experience. It allows me to share my testimony of my past struggles with abuse, addiction and mental health, giving me an outlet to let go. The amazing co-founders of this magazine, Etta and the Let's Get Free organizers, believe in women incarcerated; without their support, the wonderful work we are doing would not be a reality. This venture has given me the confidence to be a part of other projects within Pennsylvania and to work with several organizations.

I'm also very interested in advocating for equality for people of color and poor communities. I'm ashamed to admit that I just realized how important it is to vote, especially for people of color. There is power in the Black vote. I was always taught that it doesn't matter if you vote or not. That is a lie from hell. Getting the right representatives in office makes a huge impact on both our communities and the cities in which we live.

[∞] Sarita Miller is the editor of *Daughters* magazine. *Daughters* is for every incarcerated woman who is enduring the hardships and the oppression of being imprisoned. You can get in touch with Sarita and read the first two issues of *Daughters* at <https://letsgetfree.info/2021/04/30/daughters-magazine/?amp=1>.

In Philly, there was a protest in front of Rep. Amen Brown's office in which Ms. Patricia Vickers, cofounder of the Human Rights Coalition, spoke out against HB 1587 which Brown introduced.¹ It attempts to stave off gun violence and would enhance mandatory minimums for people for former gun charges. This bill definitely targets communities of color. It boggles my mind when I often stress about how to deter our youths from falling into this trap set for them. We need more leaders that are willing to challenge this system of racism. For me, it's learning how policies work, another thing I never thought I'd be interested in.

I have young sons and two grandsons growing up – I want them to be prepared and ready. My vision and dream is that one day the human race can share God's earth equally, with peace and respect. That our children can be free to be children, and hatred can be shipped to an island in the middle of the ocean with all the rats and roaches. If it were not for my tragic life, I would not be in a position to help others nor would I have the passion to speak up or speak out.

¹ See Katie Meyer, *A West Philly Dem Is Going Tough on Crime. Progressives Say His Bill Is 'Terrifyingly Awful'*, WHY (June 15, 2021), <https://whyy.org/articles/a-west-philly-dem-is-tough-on-crime-progressives-sy-his-bill-is-terrifyingly-awful/> [<https://perma.cc/PJC2-XLX7>].