



HEAR FROM HER

Katie Ford

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

If I could wave a magic wand and change the criminal justice system overnight, I would make it a system that more fully and meaningfully embraces the principles of restorative justice, meaning that the objective of putting people in jail or prison would be to immerse them in programs and services that empower them to stop harming themselves and others in society.

If the focus of the correctional system is to punish, we are only traumatizing an already traumatized individual. This is exacerbating the issue, not correcting it.

So many of the women I meet in prison are struggling with addictive behavior and being in abusive relationships. These two things keep women caught up in an imprisoning cycle of violence and criminal behavior. At the root of this cycle is unresolved trauma that needs to be healed. This is why I believe healing needs to be the focus of any correctional effort in women's prisons.



Note: Katie is the Executive Director of Truth Be Told, a nonprofit whose mission is to provide transformational programs through self-discovery for women who are or have been incarcerated, resulting in self-worth, accountability, and positive contributions to society.



Why are organizations like Truth Be Told so critical for incarcerated women?

By and large, our correctional system in this state remains focused on punishment and security. Rehabilitation feels like an afterthought. I believe this to be true when I observe the majority of rehabilitative services offered in prison being provided by volunteer organizations, not by a financial investment from the system.

We are not a religious program or ministry, which makes us very unique among prison volunteer groups. We offer safe space that is open to women regardless of personal belief systems. We welcome women from all walks of faith, even those who've lost faith or have no faith. When you remove the dividing barrier of religion— when a woman feels unconditionally accepted for who she is— that's when the opportunity for real rehabilitation and healing presents itself.

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