



HEAR FROM HER

Lauren Johnson

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

I've been free from the system for nearly 7 years. I'm not quite an abolitionist, but I do wonder if we didn't have such an expansive prison system, we might learn how to deal with our problems as a society. I see the deeply rooted connections between crime and poverty and am baffled by the way we choose to punish people instead of working to fix the actual problems that drive crime and poverty.

I've been incarcerated as a person with no children and as a mother. The latter was definitely the hardest. I missed a lot in a very short time frame. Knowing the impact your absence has on your children and the people who step in to care for them in your absence is hard.

Prison did nothing for me to prepare me for reentry. They gave me an individualized treatment plan because they were mandated to do so, but I never got into any of the programs they suggested on that plan because the wait list to get into anything is very long, and I didn't qualify for most of what is available.

My darkest day wasn't in prison, it was in jail. The day I had to leave the hospital after having my baby to go back to jail and leave him with my aunt is probably the day I would characterize as one of the most difficult in my life. I can't recall ever hurting that much in any other situation. I was placed in a medical holding cell alone and couldn't stop crying.



Who is Lauren Johnson?

Who am I? The existential question that sometimes or often alludes us. I am a fallible human in charge of three little humans that are growing up so fast my head spins. I am someone who wants to fight injustice and am often torn about the way to approach the fight.

I am someone who has reaped rewards because others have invested and supported me to be able to do some pretty awesome things, someone who stands on the shoulders of giants, someone who sees the humanity in not just people who have been imprisoned, but also in the people I disagree with which is interestingly more of a challenge.

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