



HEAR FROM HER

Tanya Hale

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

In November of 2015 I was diagnosed with Stage 2 breast cancer and I spent the next 3 1/2 years undergoing treatment while in prison.

From the beginning of my battle with cancer, I was not given access to appropriate facilities or medical care. The sites of my initial biopsies became infected when guards would not allow me to keep my wounds clean.

The medical unit I was placed in during chemotherapy was filthy and I was handcuffed and shackled without water while waiting for treatment at the hospital.

I was over-radiated and denied medication for the open wounds on my neck. Once those wounds healed, I had a mastectomy in April of 2016. In June I learned that my cancer had returned and in August I was granted medical reprieve.

Before my release, I had been denied parole twice. I believe that TDCJ knew I was being treated inhumanely and wanted to keep me locked up in order to avoid a lawsuit or public awareness about how I was treated.

I worked in the law library and lived in a faith-based dorm. I was sentenced because I could not pay expensive parole fees, but they said I was not rehabilitated enough to release.

I want my story shared.

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I hope that sharing what has happened to me can stop it from happening to anyone else.

What changes would you like to see for women in prison?

We were told not to hug or touch - any physical contact was treated as a sexual offense. That needs to change, because people need that contact. Everyone needs support and simple human contact, especially while going through treatment.

Anyone fighting cancer should be given access to clean living conditions, regular showers, appropriate medical care, and contact with their loved ones. Incarceration should never strip a person of these basic necessities, especially while undergoing treatment. Incarceration should not strip a person of their dignity. That is not rehabilitative and it is not humane.

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