



CHOOSING YOUR DIRECTION:
Navigating Your Path Home



Saturday, October 5, 2024

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Walking in My Shoes



Dear Conference Attendees,

Conference Date:

Saturday, October 5, 2024

Chairs:

Warden Geneva Holland
Hon. Julia B. Weatherly
Shawn M. Flower, Ph.D.

Conference Coordinator:

Lisa Pierotte

2024 Steering Committee:

Ellen Bredt
Briana Brinkley
Hon. Monise Brown
Rachael Campbell
Mary Joel Davis
Vivian Day
Laurie Denham
Mary Pat Donelan
Cadee Eberhardt
Sabrina Evans
Chief Genieve Goodall
Hon. Llamilet Gutierrez
Tyrina Hardiman
Leslie Johnson
Sonja King
Lauren Lambert
Major Renee Liddell
Richard Mattingly
Casey McKeel
Rev. Cheryl Mercer
Virginia Ngugi
Asst. Warden Tikaya Parker
Donna Rojas
Melissa Russell
Hon. Cathy Hollenberg Serrette
Denise Smith
Gavata Smith
Kaeshawn Stewart
Tholyn S. Twyman
Roseanna Vogt

Welcome to the 2024 Women Moving Forward Conference! The National Association of Women Judges and the steering committee volunteers are excited that you are here. We know that returning home after incarceration is a challenge. There are many issues for you to anticipate. The fact that you have chosen to attend this conference means that you are already thinking ahead. This year's theme is *Choosing Your Direction – Navigating Your Path Home* because it is up to you to navigate your decisions, rely on your strengths and avoid the pitfalls.

Our conference will open with a keynote speaker, Dr. Topeka K. Sam. Since her release from federal prison in 2015, she has worked to improve the outcomes for incarcerated women and girls. Lamont Carey, the Executive Director of the District of Columbia's Mayor's Office of Returning Citizen Affairs (MORCA), will present "Steps to Successful Reentry" based on lived experience.

After lunch from Biddle Street Deli, Donna Rojas from the Office of the State's Attorney for Prince George's County has designed an interactive program, focusing on the challenges you may encounter when you return home, and a frank discussion about how to handle them.

Our afternoon is filled with workshops and experienced speakers on five different topics. Ending the day, Mary Joel Davis will bring us women who will share how they navigate their release in "*Walking in My Shoes.*"

The Women Moving Forward Conference website, www.wmfmd.org, contains a wealth of guides to resources in the community. After your release, you can go to the website and get information to help you locate services and support.

We wish to thank Virginia Ngugi, the staff at MCIW, and our MCIW steering committee volunteers for their work and assistance with this conference.

Sincerely your Co-chairs,

Hon. Julie Weatherly Warden Geneva Holland
Shawn Flower

CONFERENCE SPONSORS

LEADERSHIP

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Gerry & Kathleen Albanese

PATRON



THE LUVU PROJECT.
In Memory of Carolyn C. Mattingly



FRIEND



Judge Julia B. Weatherly

GOOD WILL

**Honorable Monise A. Brown * Mary Pat Donelan
Leslie E. Johnson * Honorable Brenda Murray
Donna Rojas * Cathy Hollenberg Serrette * Marjorie Yasueda
Circle of Angels Initiative * Kenwood Garden Club**





NAVIGATING CONFERENCE DAY

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Preparation

- Review your workshops and course descriptions in advance.
- Get enough rest the night before.
- Prepare your heart to receive instruction.



Workshop Conduct

- Participate in workshop discussions.
- Respect and listen to other's opinions and thoughts.
- Take brief notes of main points.



SUCCESS



Conversation Starters

- A warm smile and a friendly greeting go a long way.
- Prepare your questions before you speak.
- Listen attentively



Application

- Highlight points you plan to use.
- Review conference material regularly.
- Discuss points with friends and family.



AGENDA

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Time	Location	Activity
9:00 a.m. - 9:20 a.m.	Gymnasium	Welcome
9:20 a.m. - 9:50 a.m.	Gymnasium	Keynote Address: <i>Dr. Topeka K. Sam</i>
9.55 a.m. - 11:05 a.m.	Gymnasium	Plenary Session: <i>Lamont Carey</i>
11:05 a.m. - 11:50 a.m.	Gymnasium	Lunch
11:50 a.m. - 12:35 p.m.	Gymnasium	Speaker/Activity
12:45 p.m. - 1:40 p.m.	See Workshop Schedule	Workshop I
1:50 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.	See Workshop Schedule	Workshop II
2:55 p.m. - 3:10 p.m.	Gymnasium	Hand in Evaluation/ Receive Gift Bag
3:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.	Gymnasium	Walking in My Shoes: <i>Renee Matthews & April Smith</i>
3:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Gymnasium	Closing Ceremony



Dr. Topeka K. Sam

Founder of Ladies of Hope Ministries, Inc.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

@TheLOHM

Dr. Topeka K. Sam is the Founder of The Ladies of Hope Ministries, Inc. (@TheLOHM) and founder and President of EPIC Financial PBLLC, TKS Ventures LLC, and Faces & Voices Inc. She serves on the board of directors for The Marshall Project, Operation Restoration, Pure Legacee, and United Justice Coalition. She is a strategic advisor for RBIJ and HARP. She is the Co-founder and Visionary Officer of FRSH.

Since her release from federal prison on May 5, 2015, Topeka has served as a 2015 Beyond the Bars Fellow and a 2016 Justice-In-Education Scholar both from Columbia University, 2017 Soros Justice Advocacy Fellow, 2018 Unlocked Futures Inaugural Cohort Member, 2018 Opportunity Agenda Communications Institute Fellow, Director of #Dignity for Incarcerated Women Campaign and Senior Advisor for NYUJ.

She hosted "The Topeka K. Sam Show" on SiriusXM Urban View Channel 126 for three years and is now developing scripted and unscripted series as an Executive Producer for TV & Film, inspired by her fight to change the many problems that plague female incarceration.

The United Nations appointed Topeka as the Goodwill Ambassador for Social Justice (Incarceration Reform) of the Global Festival of Creative Economy in 2020. In December 2020, Topeka received a full presidential pardon for her dedication to helping women turn from a path of despair towards a path of redemption.

On May 5, 2022, Google.org presented her with the first Social Impact Award at the Variety Magazine/Lifetime TV Power of the Women Summit. Later that month she also received her Honorary Doctorate in Divinity from New York Theological Seminary.

Dr. Sam has worked and continues to work selflessly and relentlessly in her fight for the dignity, decriminalization, and decarcerating of women and girls.



NAVIGATING THE STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL REENTRY

Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens Affairs (**MORCA**) Executive Director **Lamont Carey** oversees the coordination and advisement of all reentry affairs in the District of Columbia. A native of Washington, DC, he has been involved in various facets of reentry for the past 17 years. He has worked with legislators, nonprofits, philanthropists, and other groups focused on policy, prevention, and successful reentry. He has used his experiences with the criminal justice system to fuel his passion for helping others recognize and overcome barriers to increase their opportunity for success.



REENTRY ROLE PLAY

This session will equip participants for life after release. It builds confidence in tackling job interviews, housing applications, and navigating relationships. Participants will develop practical communication skills, enhance problem-solving abilities, and practice social and emotional skill-building.

But first, let's shake things up with a Dance Break! We would love everyone to participate in our move, groove and recharge. No matter your style, whether it's a little shimmy, or full-on dance moves, let's get those bodies moving and those smiles glowing! It's about fun, connection and enjoying the moment.

Donna Rojas, aka Coach Rojas, has over 20 years of experience in public administration, program coordination, project management, public health, case management, and training/coaching. For more than nine years, she was actively engaged on the "frontlines," working with pre-and-post released incarcerated individuals in local correctional settings in Maryland. Donna has been dedicated to improving the lives of justice-involved individuals by delivering passionate and inspirational education and reentry programming. She is utilizing those services and more through her company, DRojas Consulting, a company that focuses on the successful reintegration of returning citizens from the inside out through professional consulting and technical assistance to governmental and non-governmental agencies and diversion programs.



WORKSHOPS

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Navigating the Healthcare System: Steps to Take Now and Every Year to Stay Healthy



Description: Women's Healthcare is an umbrella under which a plethora of conditions, choices, decisions and treatment options are found. It's important that women hear from a female practitioner who can help them to address practical approaches to self-advocacy with proactive measures to secure a healthy future post-release.

Presenter: Dr. Chimene Liburd, MD, MBA, FACP is a physician executive & healthcare consultant, Vice President of Clinical Operations and Chief Medical Officer, Medicare Advantage for Anthem, Inc. Her mission is equitable access to healthcare for all.

Mindfulness Through Journaling



Description: As an educator, learning specialist and an advocate for health and wellness to enable women to live their best life, Keisha Byam-Simmons believes that one of the best ways to empower and advance women is with pen and paper. This interactive presentation encourages women to journal and review their life experiences which can pave the way for personal transformation to a life of purpose and greater fulfillment.

How to Get and Keep a Job



Description: Post release employment challenges can best be tackled with the proper guidance, information and strategies from a Human Resource (HR) expert who can share expertise on the best strategies for gainful employment from both sides of the table-HR & recruiting.

Presenter: Ms. Diane Quinn brings over 25 years of HR experience, having worked for AT&T, Verizon, & DC Government. She has national certification as a SPHR (Senior Professional in Human Resources) and currently serves as Employer Specialist at Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington. Diane leverages her expertise and knowledge to provide returning citizens and other Participants, one-to-one assistance and "person centered support" on their journey to gainful employment.

WORKSHOPS 12

Legal Wellness: Post Judgement Legal Issues

Description: In your past life, you may have made some poor financial decisions that resulted in a legal judgment against you. In this session, you will learn what a judgment is, the impact of judgments and garnishments on financial wellbeing and some ways to prevent garnishments or ease their financial burden.

Presenters: Aja Mallory and Courtland Merkel from the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service.



Navigating Your Path Home

Description: You have a few dollars, some personal belongings, and WMF information, but now what? Come hear from two women, one of whom has lived experience, on how to identify resources, how to filter resources, and how to make these resources work for you. Learn what you can do now to identify resources and what you can do once you return to your community, including how to build your support network.

Presenters: Anne Pack, Co-Founder and Director of Advocacy for Prepare for Parole and Reentry

Shannice Anderson, Community Engagement Coordinator, Office of the Public Defender.



Financial Health (Double Session Workshop)

Description: Thinking about finances and credit scores can be overwhelming, but your understanding is important to building financial success. This workshop will help you understand the importance of a good credit score, learn about personal finances, and how to create a budget.

Presenter: Ann Holmes, University of Maryland College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, Assistant Dean for Administration and Finance



**are you
ready?**



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WALKING IN MY SHOES

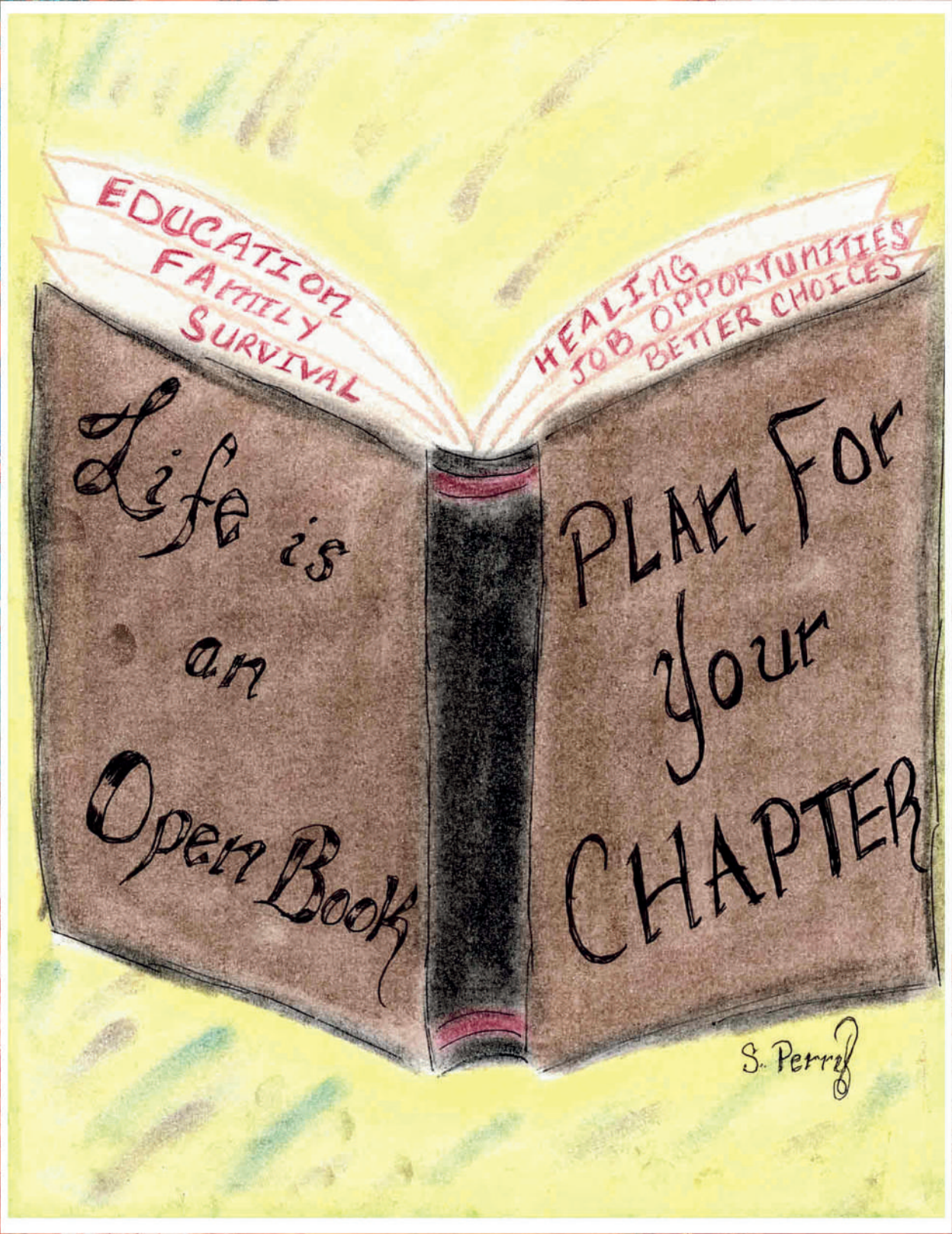
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On April 6, 2020, the Commissioner asked me, “How soon can you pack, Renee?” I started to cry. I would be going home after 25 years in prison. I was a model prisoner, even though I was convicted and given two life sentences for something I didn’t do. I read, wrote poetry, drew, painted a mural, taught youth bible study, tutored pre-GED classes, and graduated from a four-year Bible Institute. The Warden and I created a “Quiet Place” for prisoners to study, read, draw, and think. I prayed every day and tried to do something different from the day before.

Before my incarceration, I graduated from Wilberforce University with honors. I worked as a bank teller and at Walt Disney World. I have a daughter who is my heartbeat. She is now 33; she was 5 when I was arrested. Currently, I work at Johns Hopkins University, and I also spend as much time as I can teaching others about the injustice of how women are treated and sentenced and sharing my experiences of childhood trauma and domestic violence. In 2021, Ms. Magazine reported on my story. I have also presented at Cornell and University of Maryland legal clinics, community organizations, and non-profits.



Renee Matthews



EDUCATION
FAMILY
SURVIVAL

HEALING
JOB OPPORTUNITIES
BETTER CHOICES

Life is
an
Open Book

PLAN FOR
your
CHAPTER

S. Perrey

WALKING IN MY SHOES

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I have experienced three tours at MCIW: a three-year sentence, followed by seven years, and then an 18-month sentence. Today, I take pride in being a homeowner and have thrived as a tradeshow carpenter for the past 20 years. Celebrating a decade of marriage, my journey includes the profound loss of my daughter in 2017. Despite this, I am grateful for the opportunity to raise my 14-year-old grandson, who is making a positive impact in our community as a 4-H STEAM Ambassador. His achievements, including recognition from Nickelodeon and Baltimore Magazine, have led us to remarkable places, including an invitation to the White House. Additionally, I serve as a dedicated team mom for his football team.

My message to you is to remember that even when one door closes, countless others will open, often beyond your imagination.



April Smith



CHOOSING

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Carlita Brown

My name is Carlita Brown and I have participated in the Women Moving Forward Conference since its inception in 2009. I have served as a setup/breakdown assistant, equipment manager, performing dance artist, to becoming a member of the steering committee and keynote speaker following my August 2020 release.

I am now the Reentry Manager for Pivot Workforce Development and a newly published author of two books. I speak on podcasts, radio programs, and so much more.

I hope what I have been able to accomplish inspires you to be better.

PUS'HER

Preparing Us Strategically Helping Everyone Regardless

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Pusherlife.org

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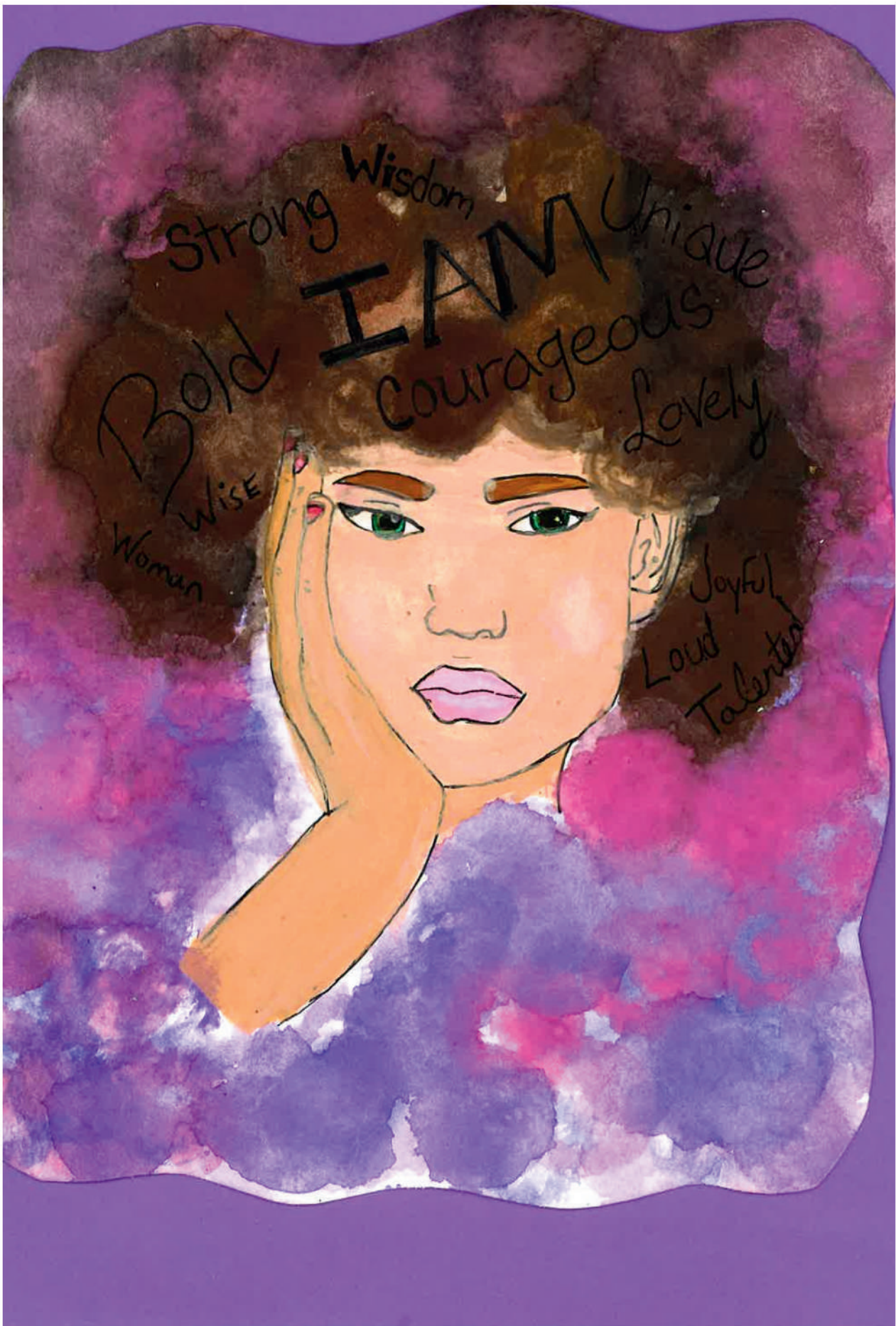
Diana Harker 9/25/97



Jody Boyd

I was released from the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women on September 10, 2019. I completed the Marian House program which helped me transition to the community after serving 32 years. I have worked for the Chill Station where we made Clergy Robes for the state of Maryland. When the grant expired, I was then hired by Petco as a Solutions Specialist for a little over three years. I have just been hired by Marian House to be a House Manager for the family program.

Words cannot express my gratitude for being given a second chance to be a productive Maryland citizen.



Strong

Wisdom

Unique

I AM

Courageous

Lovely

Bold

Wise

Woman

Joyful

Loud

Talented



Luana Phelps

I was incarcerated for 26 years. I went home in May of 2020 on Home Detention (HD). I was on HD for six weeks and then I was able to go to work. I kept my job as Kitchen Manager for Travel Centers of America until we bought a house in Salisbury, Maryland. I am still working over 40 hours a week. I am on probation but I only have to call in every three to four months.

Trust me when I say that being free is all in what you make it. If you want to stay on the outside then do what is needed. It's not that hard.

CONTACT US!

Website: www.wmfmd.org

Email: coordinator@wmfmd.org

