



# HEAR FROM HER: NATALIE BAKER

Interviews with system-impacted women brought to you by the Texas Women's Justice Coalition and the Texas Center for Justice and Equity

"In prison, it's a different way of life, and you have to adapt in order to survive. When I got out, I found I'd forgotten how to function like a normal person in society – how to eat, how to sleep, how to make decisions on my own. If I hadn't found a good therapist specializing in post-traumatic stress, I don't think I'd be the person I am today."

"The system doesn't prepare you for freedom. For the first few years after release, the most difficult aspect was living with the felon label. As a convicted felon, you are forever a second-class citizen, and the social stigma against you is a very real thing."

"Basic civil liberties, housing and certain career paths are suddenly off-limits. Even with my law degree and MBA, it took me a year and a half to get a full-time job, a hardship I was entirely unprepared for."

"Soon after I was released, I served as the Executive Relations Manager of the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP), a nonprofit dedicated to rehabilitating prisoners and reducing Texas' recidivism rate. I then moved to San Diego to live with my now-husband, where I currently do business development/legal affairs for a litigation support firm, as well as freelance for several companies on the side. We also recently welcomed our first child – a little girl!"



## Do people compare your experience to Piper Kerman's (of *Orange is the New Black*)?

"Of all the questions I receive about my prison experience, I probably get asked about *Orange is the New Black* the most. I read her book my first year in and can relate to the whole being-thrown-into-a-foreign-world thing, especially after having come from a relatively privileged life. I can also identify with the amazing people she befriended, because the bonds you make in there truly keep you going.

But, for as much as we had in common, our prison experiences weren't identical by any means. State prison (where I was) is a whole different animal compared to the federal system (where she was)."

Responses originally shared in 2017

For more information about women in Texas' criminal legal system, visit [TexasCJE.org/texas-womens-justice-coalition](https://TexasCJE.org/texas-womens-justice-coalition)

