

FREE THE MISSISSIPPI FIVE



**Anita
Krecic**



cover portrait by phan
illustrations by jaime d.
text by the MS5 zine team

The “**Mississippi Five**” originally described five women - Lisa Crevitt, Anita Krecic, Loretta Pierre, Evelyn Smith, and Linda Ross - sentenced to life with the possibility of parole in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Despite their achievements, personal growth, the loss of loved ones outside, and even recantations of key witnesses, **they have been denied parole irrespective of their actions and the people they have become.**

After Jacqueline Barnes was denied parole a second time on Christmas eve in 2024, we added her to our campaign. These six women are now between the ages of 60 and 83 years old. They have collectively been imprisoned over 200 years and denied parole 50 times. In the words of committee member and organizer Pauline Rogers, the parole board continues to act as “judge, jury, and executioner.”

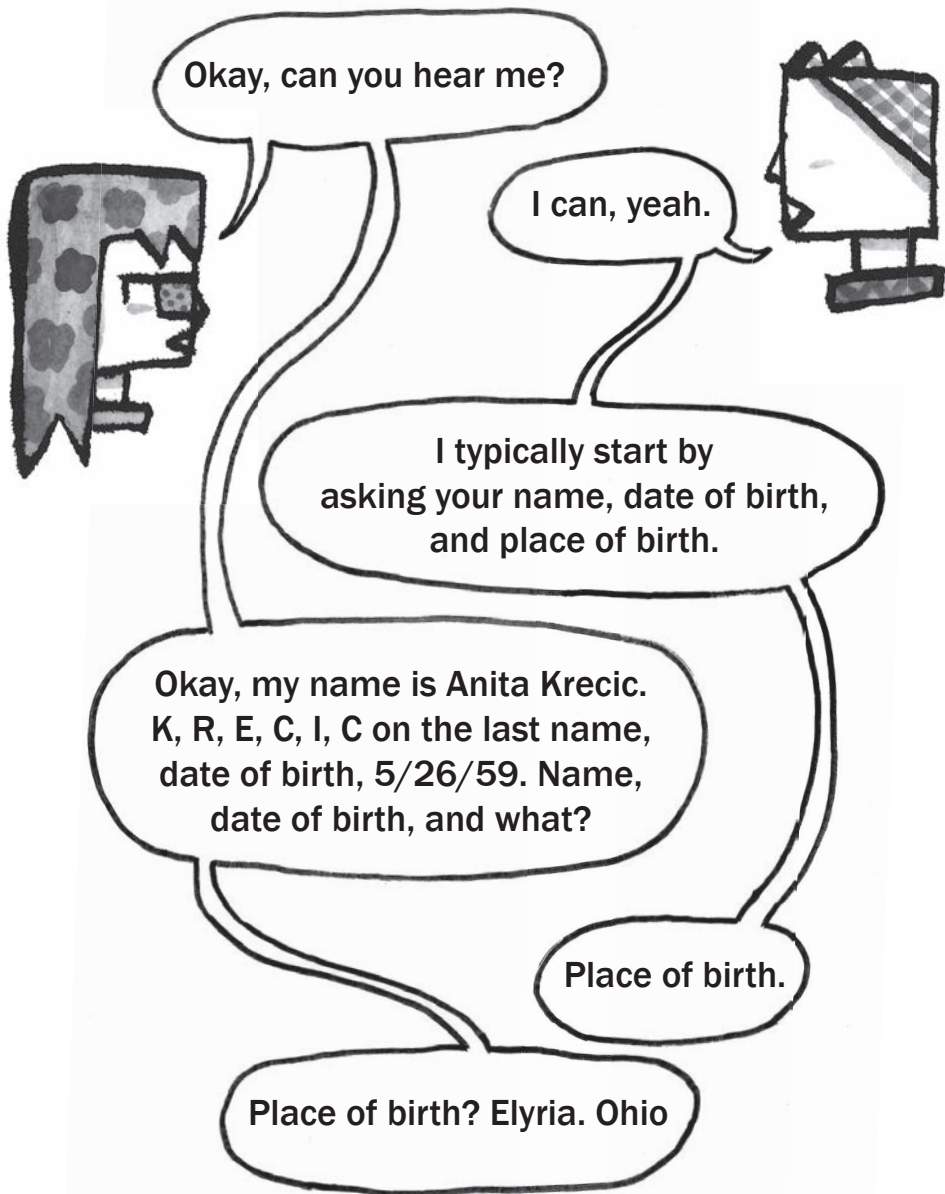
It is time to Free the Five and Free Them All!

This zine is part of a six-part series in the campaign to Free the Five—an effort to bring home the women while raising awareness about parole as a repressive political tool.

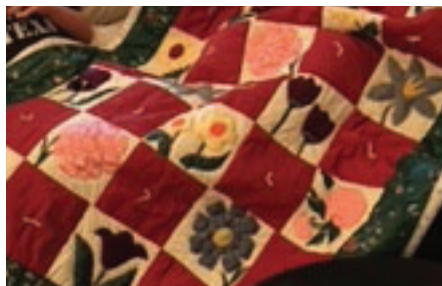
It is based on an oral history interview with Anita Krecic recorded on September 4, 2023.

Want to get involved? Join us:
www.studyandstruggle.com/ms5

[Phone recording: This is now being recorded.]



Anita Krecic is a quilter. These are just a few of the many quilts she has made to bless others.



Flower Appliqued Quilt

Hip Hop Quilt



"Oh, I started quilting a lot after I first got released from maximum security. The lady that worked in the Chaplain Department with us taught me how to quilt."

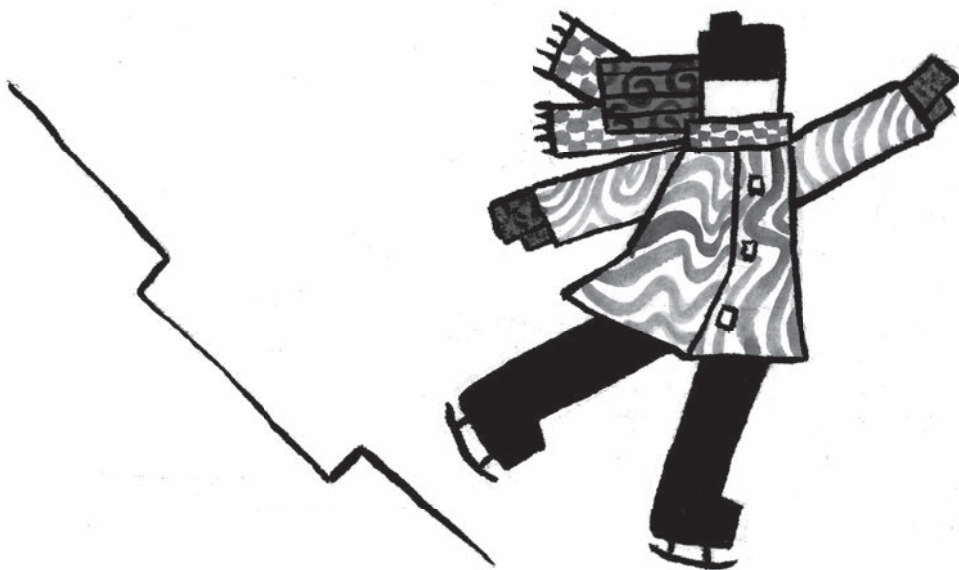


Bow Tie Quilt

Log Cabin Quilt



*Anita was the fourth youngest of nine children.
She loved horses and ice skating.*



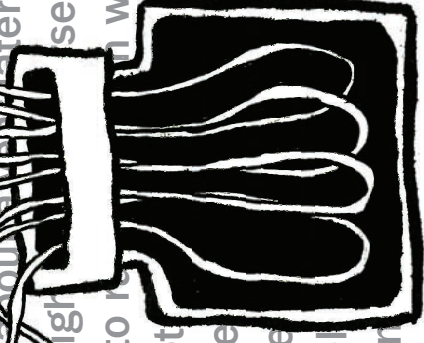
“I was really good at ice skating. I could do so many different things the first year I took lessons, and if I could have just kept going on and on and on, perhaps I could have been a champion ice skater.”

Family photo, Anita is wearing a New Year's hat.



“Because my mom had so many other kids, I feel like I didn’t really have the guidance that I needed, or somebody to cheer me on. And because my mom was always so preoccupied with raising nine kids, we were actually left to fend for ourselves in a lot of ways.”

"But when I was young, I did have a negative experience with an uncle of mine. I was only nine when he exposed himself to me. Appropriately, this was my first experience of sexual abuse. He told me to touch his penis, and then to kiss it, and told me not to tell anyone. He didn't take me anywhere like that, but still the same, it was not good. I went to a public school, and I was a cheerleader at the public school in the evening. I was a friend of a girl whose parents were alcoholics. I was introduced to her boyfriend, and he got us going over to his house. When I was there, I was with her, and she got us going with shotguns, and then they raped me. So, I was going into the ninth grade, and I lost my virginity. Then I assumed this is what was expected of women and that it was cool to smoke marijuana and cigarettes. So, I was with these older guys wanted to take me and my cousin out to get high. I was going to do that, but I didn't know that they were going to rape me. I was going to do that, but they were going to rape me. I told them not to, but they didn't care. She was like two years younger than me, and I was only like 13 or 14. After I told them that, all five of them raped me. I never told my mom or anyone about these rapes, because I felt like I was a slut. I snuck out to be with them and I was afraid of getting caught since we



Anita experienced repeated sexual assaults, starting when she was very young. She began using drugs to cope with what she felt.

“I believe the real reason I kept doing drugs was to cover up the shame and the pain from all the rapes that I was afraid to tell anybody about. I just bottled them up inside and never talked about them to anybody.

And I think that’s what made me continue doing drugs because it helped me cope with the pain, the shame, and all the guilt that you go through with these experiences which I never realized had affected me so negatively. There were other sexual abuses in my late teens. It wasn’t until I came to prison that I revealed all these terrible things to my family, and this set me free emotionally.”

According to one study, women in prison have significant histories of trauma, poor mental health, and high rates of substance use disorders (SUDs). In what some have termed the “abuse to prison pipeline,” the vast majority of people in women’s prisons were survivors before their incarceration.

[Layla Edwards et al., “A systematic review of post-release programs for women exiting prison with substance-use disorders: assessing current programs and weighing the evidence,” *Health & Justice* 10:1 (2022), <https://healthandjusticejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40352-021-00162-6>]

Anita's drug use continued; she didn't tell her family about the drug use or sexual abuse she'd experienced until after she was arrested for her involvement in the death of a state trooper.

"I was a working girl. I worked my whole life. But I went along with him (Tracy—who was my boyfriend at the time.)

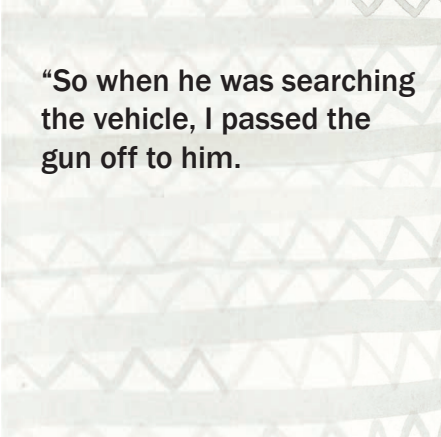
He was trying to get me to rob this lady at an ATM and I said I can't do that. So we argued up and down about it.

He punched me, kicked me, and cursed me out because I wouldn't do what he told me to do. He always called the shots like when we got pulled over before the shooting.

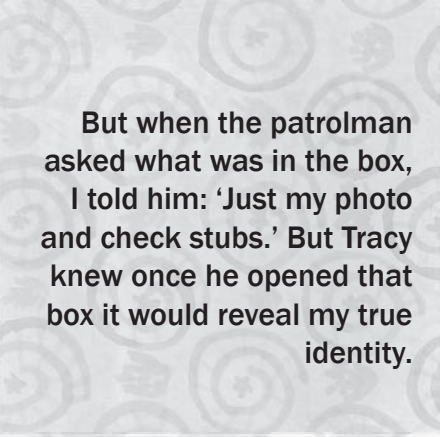
He was telling me: 'Hide the gun in your purse.'

He said, 'If he takes us to jail, I'll hide [the gun] in the cruiser on the way to jail.'

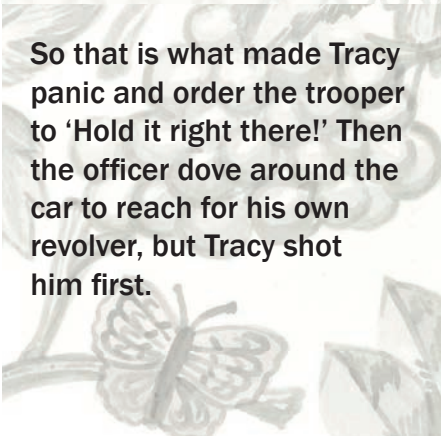
So he had me believing that he was going to hide the gun in the patrol car. I believed him like I always did."



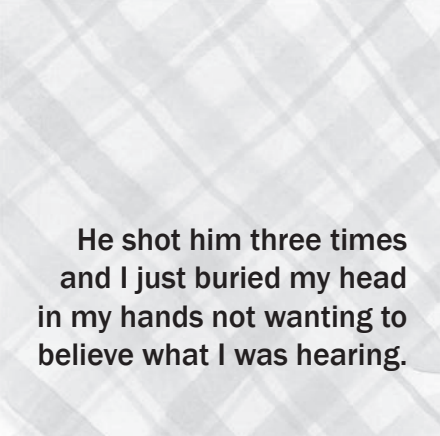
“So when he was searching the vehicle, I passed the gun off to him.



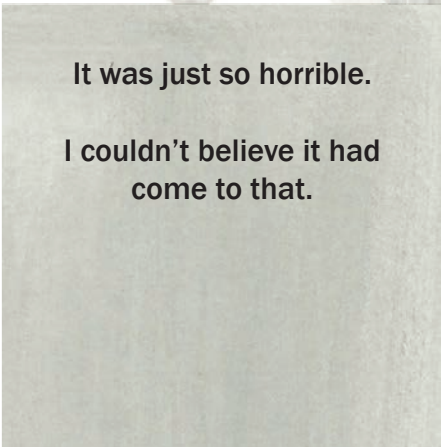
But when the patrolman asked what was in the box, I told him: ‘Just my photo and check stubs.’ But Tracy knew once he opened that box it would reveal my true identity.



So that is what made Tracy panic and order the trooper to ‘Hold it right there!’ Then the officer dove around the car to reach for his own revolver, but Tracy shot him first.

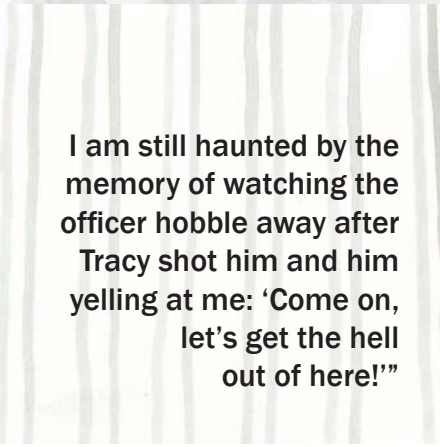


He shot him three times and I just buried my head in my hands not wanting to believe what I was hearing.



It was just so horrible.

I couldn’t believe it had come to that.



I am still haunted by the memory of watching the officer hobble away after Tracy shot him and him yelling at me: ‘Come on, let’s get the hell out of here!’”

**“I want people to know that I’m immensely sorry.
I’m not that same person.”**

*In jail she found a spiritual connection she felt
had been missing her whole life.*

“After learning the officer died, I was so devastated that I poured my heart out to God; I was so sorry. I asked God to forgive me, help me, and save me, but I didn’t even know what it meant to be saved. I had grown up in a Catholic church and was taught to pray to the saints, so I never knew Jesus personally.

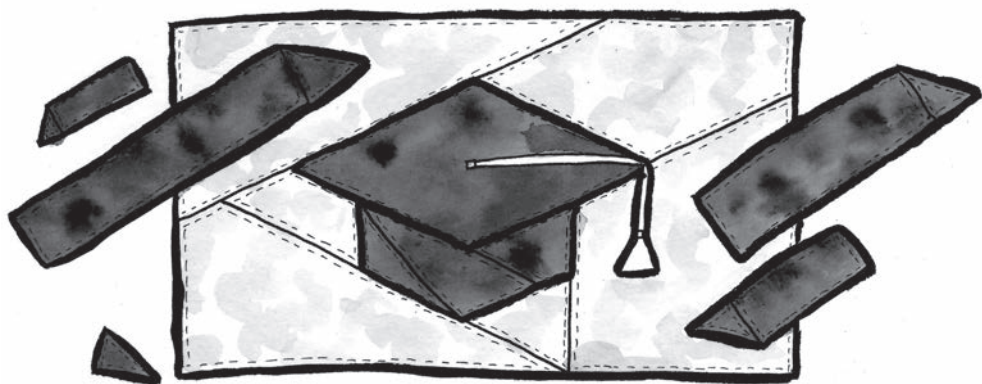
But, my mom sent a bible to the jail and He revealed himself to me. I came to know him personally in a way I never did. It was life-changing for me. But since Jesus had delivered me from smoking and drugs, I gravitated towards positive things.

I only regret it took a death to wake me up spiritually because I was so hard headed and stubborn. It was truly a transformational experience for me. I disconnected from anything negative and became interested in many hobbies like making cards, painting t-shirts, learning Spanish, making jewelry, and making quilts.”



Anita learned to quilt very shortly after being transferred into general population. She was fascinated with quilts and enjoyed making them for family members.

But, in 1998, the prison banned crafting, so she was no longer able to work hobby crafts or quilt. However, she began taking the available vocational courses, completing Buisness Technology, Industrial Sewing, and Computer Repair.

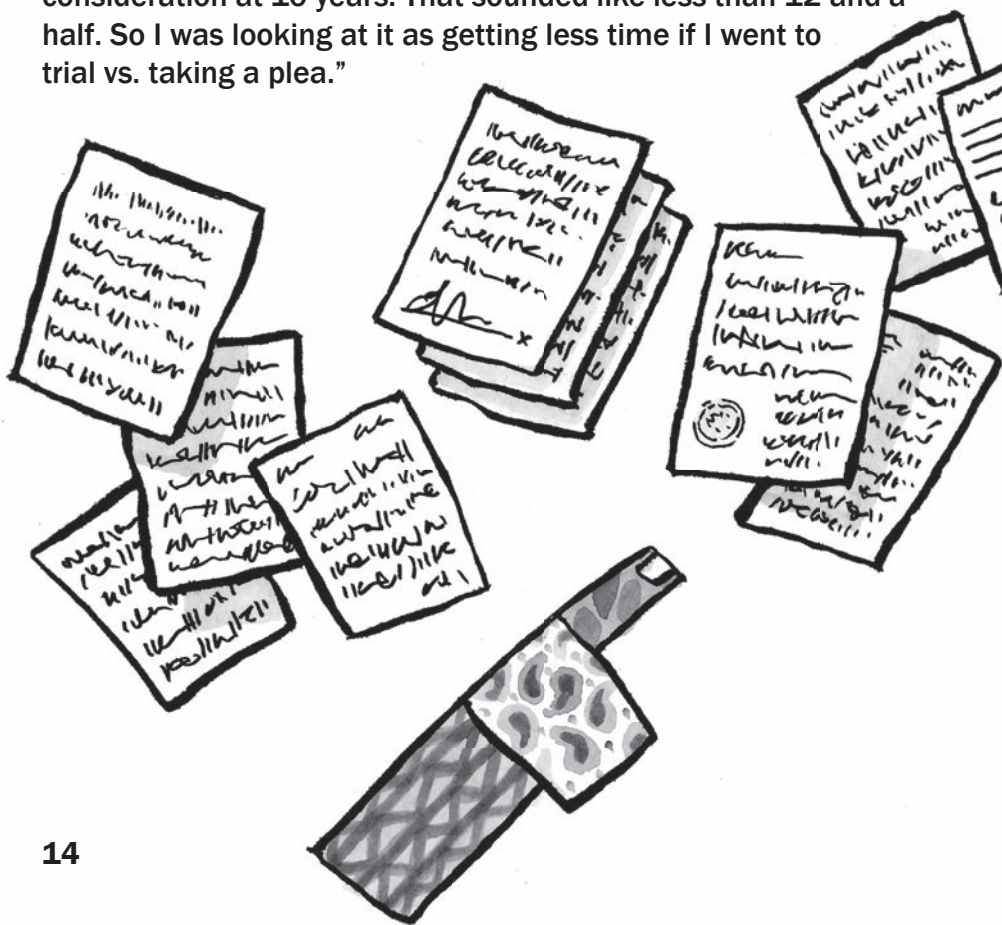


“After repeatedly being denied parole, I decided to try my hand at secondary school by pursuing a bachelor’s in Interdisciplinary Studies with an emphasis on Legal Studies. Halfway through I switched to the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary program through Leavell College to become a practical field minister, which I am currently enrolled in today.”

Anita, like many people, didn't fully understand parole when she was offered a deal to plead guilty to manslaughter. She refused the deal because she assumed if she took her chances and went to trial, she would still be eligible and make parole after ten years.

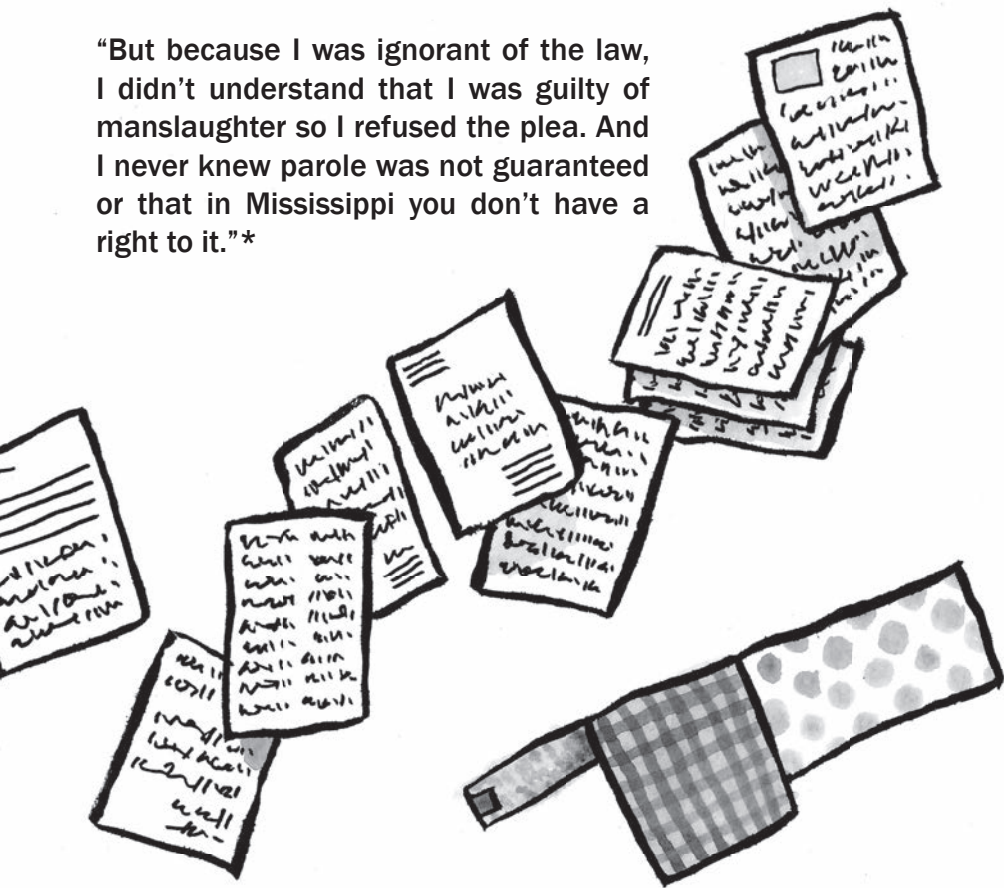
"My attorney didn't explain to me the meaning of manslaughter (the unintentional killing of a human being), but I realized—long after the fact—I was precisely guilty of this. My actions contributed to a death, even though it wasn't intentional on my part.

I thought, why take a plea? I'll take my chances and go to trial because if I'm found guilty, I'd only get life with parole consideration at 10 years. That sounded like less than 12 and a half. So I was looking at it as getting less time if I went to trial vs. taking a plea."





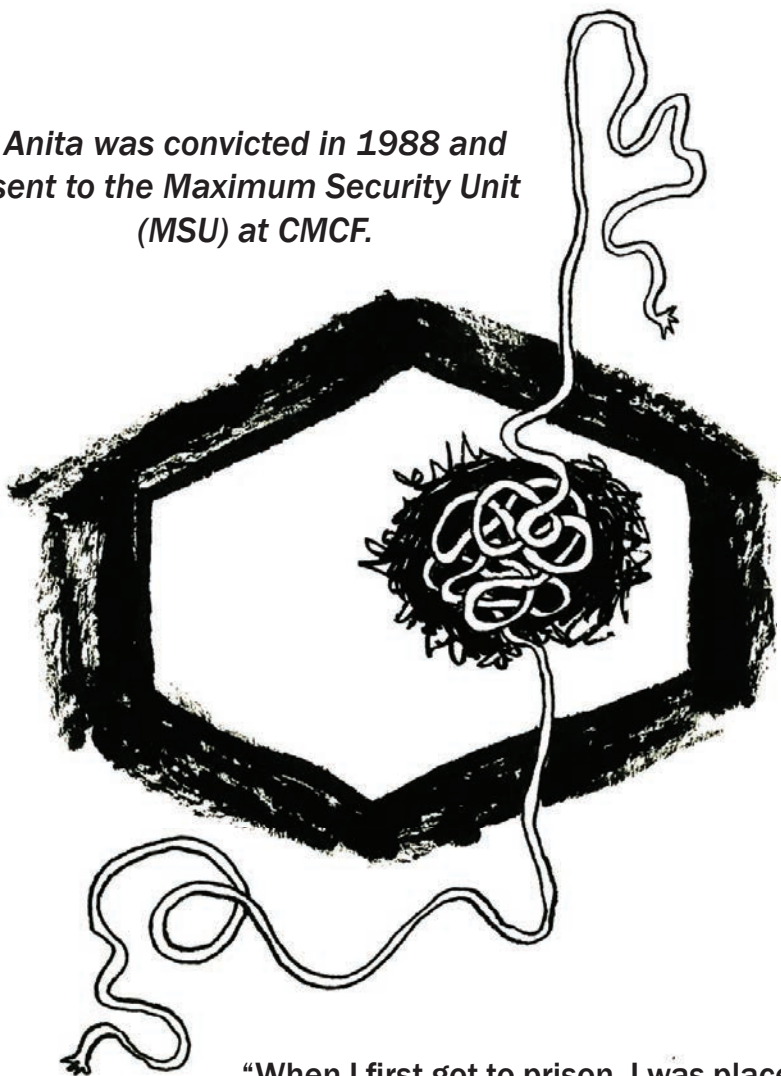
"But because I was ignorant of the law, I didn't understand that I was guilty of manslaughter so I refused the plea. And I never knew parole was not guaranteed or that in Mississippi you don't have a right to it."*



If Anita had pled guilty to manslaughter, she would have been released in 1999, having served 50% of a 25-year sentence.

**Here, Krecic is referring to a 'liberty interest.' Although some state constitutions include a liberty interest which gives people a right to parole, Mississippi's does not.*

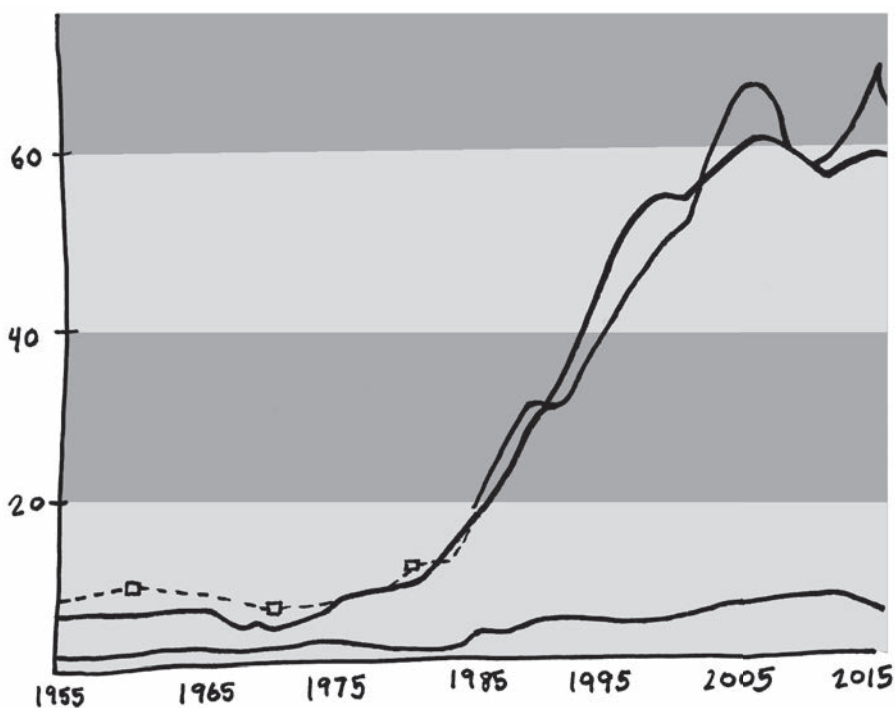
Anita was convicted in 1988 and sent to the Maximum Security Unit (MSU) at CMCF.



“When I first got to prison, I was placed in MSU. It was mandatory that lifers spend one whole year there before transitioning to general population. At one point I had contemplated suicide because I felt I had nothing to live for and didn’t know how I could go on.”

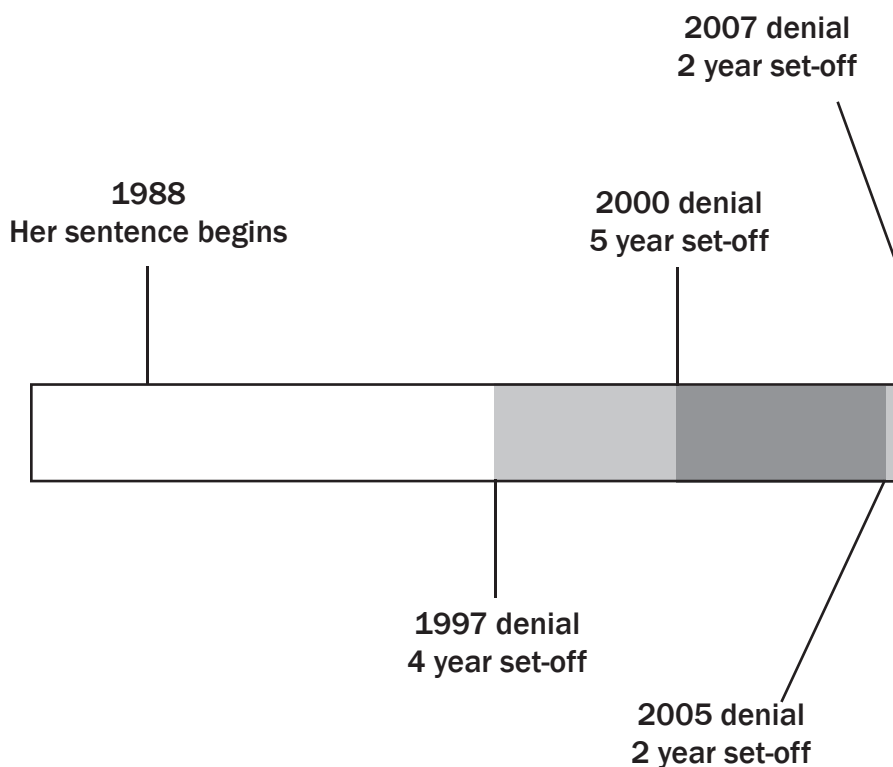
Anita's conviction was part of an unprecedented rise in women's incarceration.

Between 1980 and 2021, the number of incarcerated women increased by over 525%. Women's imprisonment has outpaced men's twofold during that time. The majority of those in state prisons have been convicted of what are considered violent crimes.

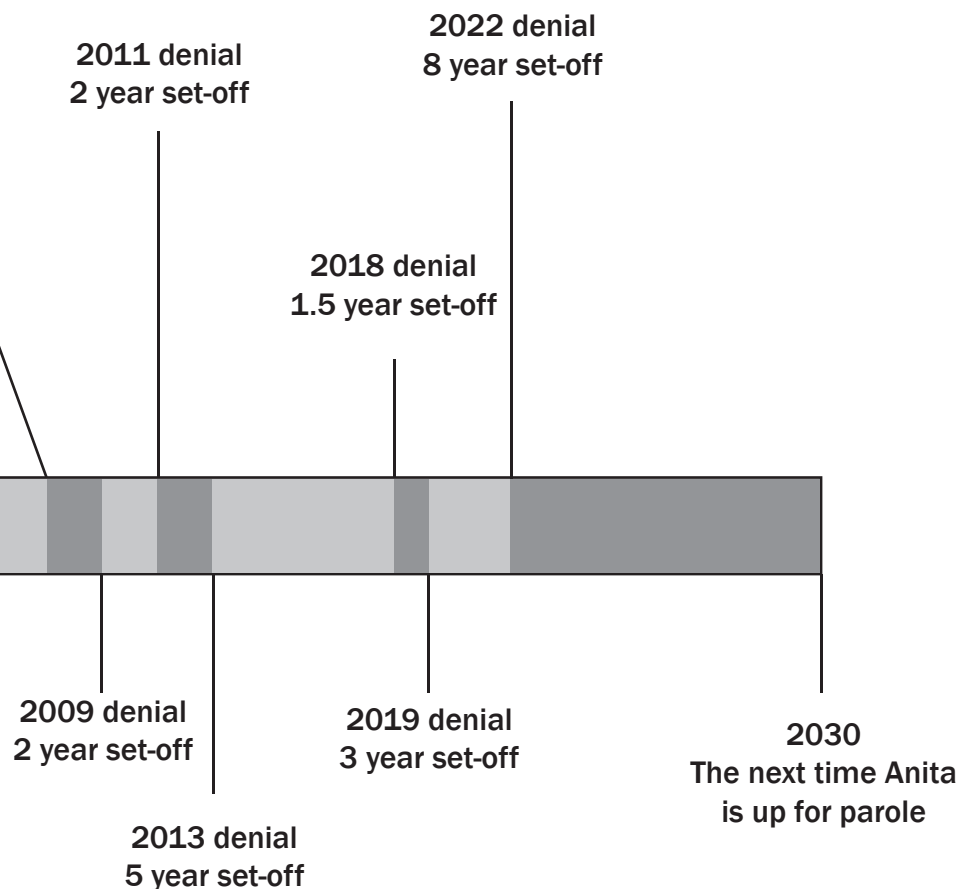


[Image based on graphic from Wendy Sawyer, "The Gender Divide: Tracking Women's State Growth," Prison Policy Initiative, January 9, 2018, https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/women_overtime.html; data also gathered from Niki Monazzam and Kristen M. Budd, PhD, "Fact Sheet: Incarcerated Women and Girls," The Sentencing Project, April 3, 2023, <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/incarcerated-women-and-girls/>]

Anita has been denied parole ten times by the parole board. In all her years of incarceration she has never had a single physical altercation with anyone. Her conviction was her first, and she has been free from drug usage and rule violation reports for decades. She has successfully completed virtually every program the prison has offered.



Anita's judge and jury could have sentenced her to life without parole. But they didn't. Yet, the parole board has acted arbitrarily and relentlessly, giving her an additional 34 set-off years. Her last set off was the longest. She is not set to reappear until she is 70 years old.



In the last 30 years, 70 women sentenced to life in prison have been paroled in Mississippi, serving an average of 15 years.

Why are the Mississippi Five not being paroled?

At all ten parole hearings, the parole board has cited the same reason for denial.

"Serious nature of offense."

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"Serious nature of offense."

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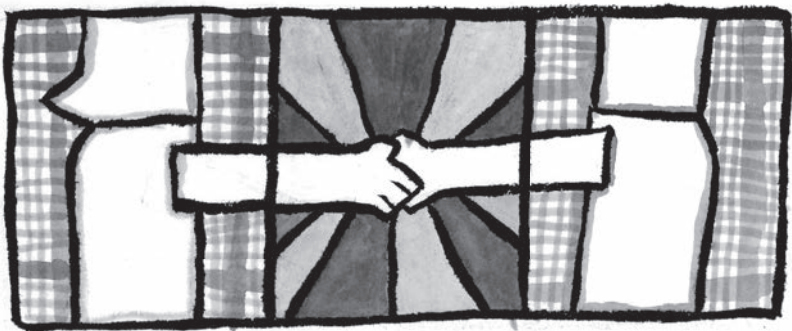


**“Their aim is to
punish you for the crime
over and over again.”**

In 2017, a key witness in the state's case against Anita admitted she had fabricated her testimony for leniency in her sentence. Even though Anita has been denied the possibility of repairing the harm she's done, she herself has reconciled with the woman who lied at her original trial. She's a living example of responses to harm, and ways toward repair, that don't include incarceration.

“[During the parole hearing] they interrogated me on things that I supposedly said to my co-defendant about the shooting, because they had a girl testify against me in my trial. She made false statements. They were still relying on these false statements from 1987 at my '07 parole hearing—and the statement she made was so vicious...she said I told him to shoot the officer. And then she said that I told him to ‘kill the M.F.’ She made two more statements saying that I said to ‘take him out’ or ‘finish him off’ when he was shooting him, and I never did that. I would never do such a thing.

But the same lady that made all these statements recanted her testimony in 2018 and apologized to me when she came to prison. So she gave my attorney an affidavit saying that she did it. She made it all up to get a lenient sentence to get out of her charges. So anyhow, it was never even true, but the parole board was still relying on these false statements from my trial.”



“She did make it right”

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
COUNTY OF RANKIN

AFFIDAVIT OF MILDRED "MARIE" PERRY

1. My name is Mildred "Marie" Perry. I am over the age of 18, am mentally competent, and provide this affidavit, all of which is based on my own personal knowledge, voluntarily and of my own free will.

2. In the late 1980s, I was incarcerated in Biloxi, Mississippi, ~~on a drug charge~~ ^{M Perry} and was facing a lengthy prison sentence. Anita Krecic, who was awaiting trial for being an accessory to the murder of Mississippi State Trooper Bruce Ladner, was housed in the same jail as me.

3. I told authorities that Anita Krecic admitted to me that she told her co-defendant, Tracy Hanson, to shoot Officer Ladner, and I testified to the same at Anita Krecic's trial. However, Anita Krecic never told me that she said or did anything to assist or encourage her co-defendant to shoot or harm Officer Ladner in any way. She never said or did anything in my presence that suggested she had done so, and no one ever told me that she made the statements I attributed to her. My testimony and statements to the contrary were completely false.

4. I fabricated my testimony against Anita Krecic in hopes of obtaining leniency for myself. I did not tell the prosecuting attorney or other authorities that my testimony was false. I did ultimately receive leniency for my testimony against Anita Krecic.

5. I am currently incarcerated at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility in Pearl, Mississippi. My MDOC inmate number is 41050. Anita Krecic is also incarcerated here. I have acknowledged to her that my testimony and statements against her were false. She forgave me. Neither she, nor anyone else, has promised me anything in exchange for giving this statement, and no one has threatened or coerced me in any way. Rather, I give this statement of my own free will in hopes that telling the truth now will help clear my conscience and perhaps offer some comfort to Officer Ladner's family, and to Anita Krecic and her family.

Further, Affiant sayeth not.

Mildred Marie Perry
Mildred "Marie" Perry

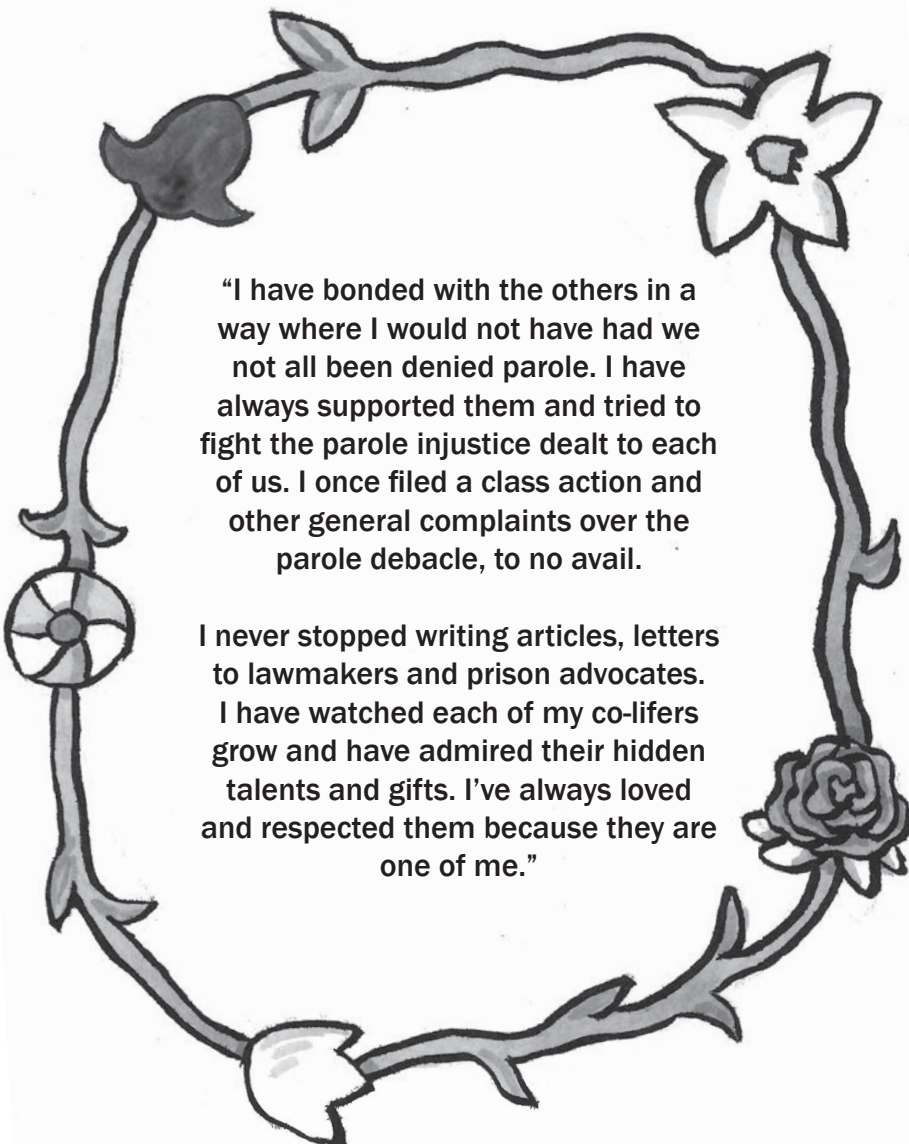
SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO before me this 27th day of October 2017

Let. ch
Notary Public

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: Oct 2, 2020

EXHIBIT "A"

Anita knows she's not the only one experiencing the torment of parole denials over and over and over again. She and the Five look out for each other and consider themselves a part of each other.



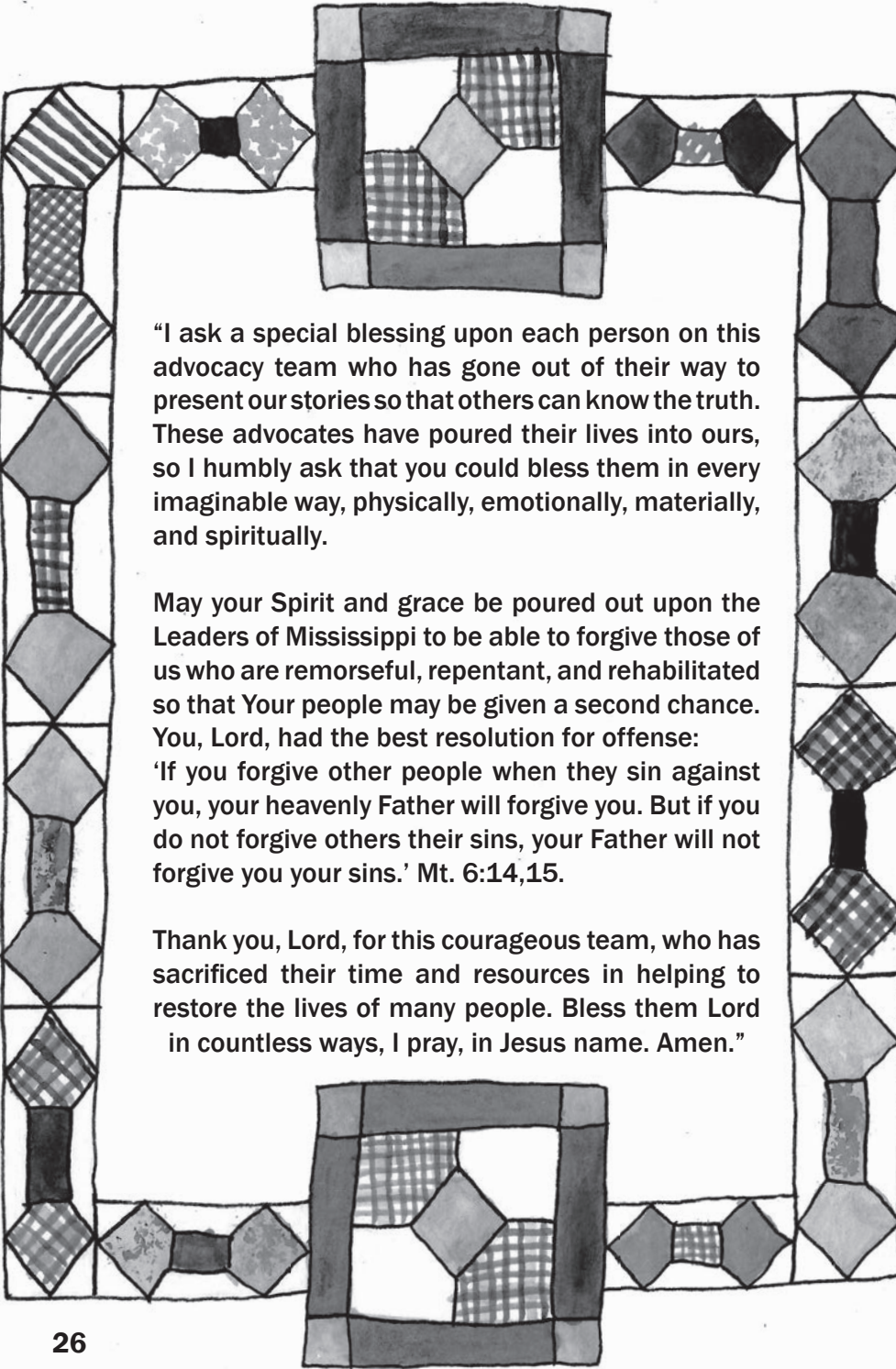
"I have bonded with the others in a way where I would not have had we not all been denied parole. I have always supported them and tried to fight the parole injustice dealt to each of us. I once filed a class action and other general complaints over the parole debacle, to no avail.

I never stopped writing articles, letters to lawmakers and prison advocates. I have watched each of my co-lifers grow and have admired their hidden talents and gifts. I've always loved and respected them because they are one of me."



“Lord, I want to thank you for these prisoner advocates who you have given to the Mississippi Five to help fight against this parole injustice. You know our hearts and know that we are sorry for the mistakes we made that led to someone losing their life. Though we can never bring back the lives that were taken, we have worked hard to correct our lives and warn others not to follow the paths we took. Rather, we urge others to look to You, Jesus, who will lead them down the narrow road leading to heaven.

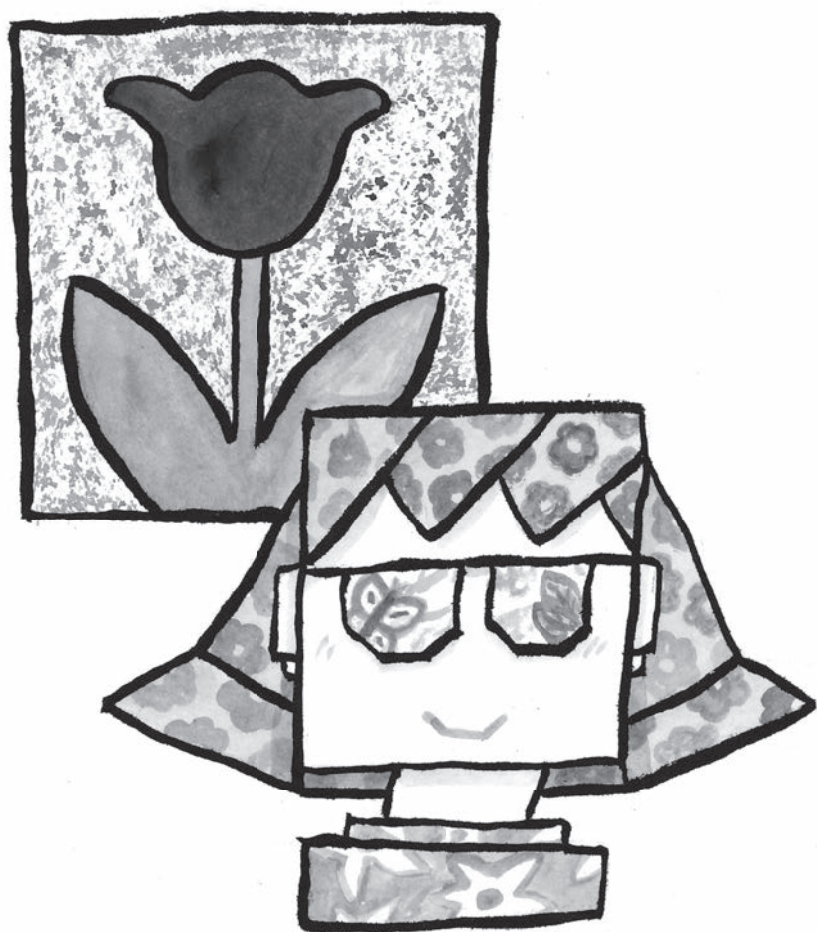
I thank you for forgiving me and for providing this advocacy team to see the changed people we have become and to believe in us. I continue to pray daily that I will be forgiven for the murder committed by my co-defendant and I, and that you will bring healing and restoration to all who were struck by this unforeseen tragedy.”



"I ask a special blessing upon each person on this advocacy team who has gone out of their way to present our stories so that others can know the truth. These advocates have poured their lives into ours, so I humbly ask that you could bless them in every imaginable way, physically, emotionally, materially, and spiritually.

May your Spirit and grace be poured out upon the Leaders of Mississippi to be able to forgive those of us who are remorseful, repentant, and rehabilitated so that Your people may be given a second chance. You, Lord, had the best resolution for offense: 'If you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive you your sins.' Mt. 6:14,15.

Thank you, Lord, for this courageous team, who has sacrificed their time and resources in helping to restore the lives of many people. Bless them Lord in countless ways, I pray, in Jesus name. Amen."



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**Learn more about how you can get involved in the
campaign to Free the Mississippi Five:**
<https://www.studyandstruggle.com/ms5>

Write to Anita:
Anita Krecic, #44712
CMCF 720
PO Box 88550
Pearl, MS 39288

