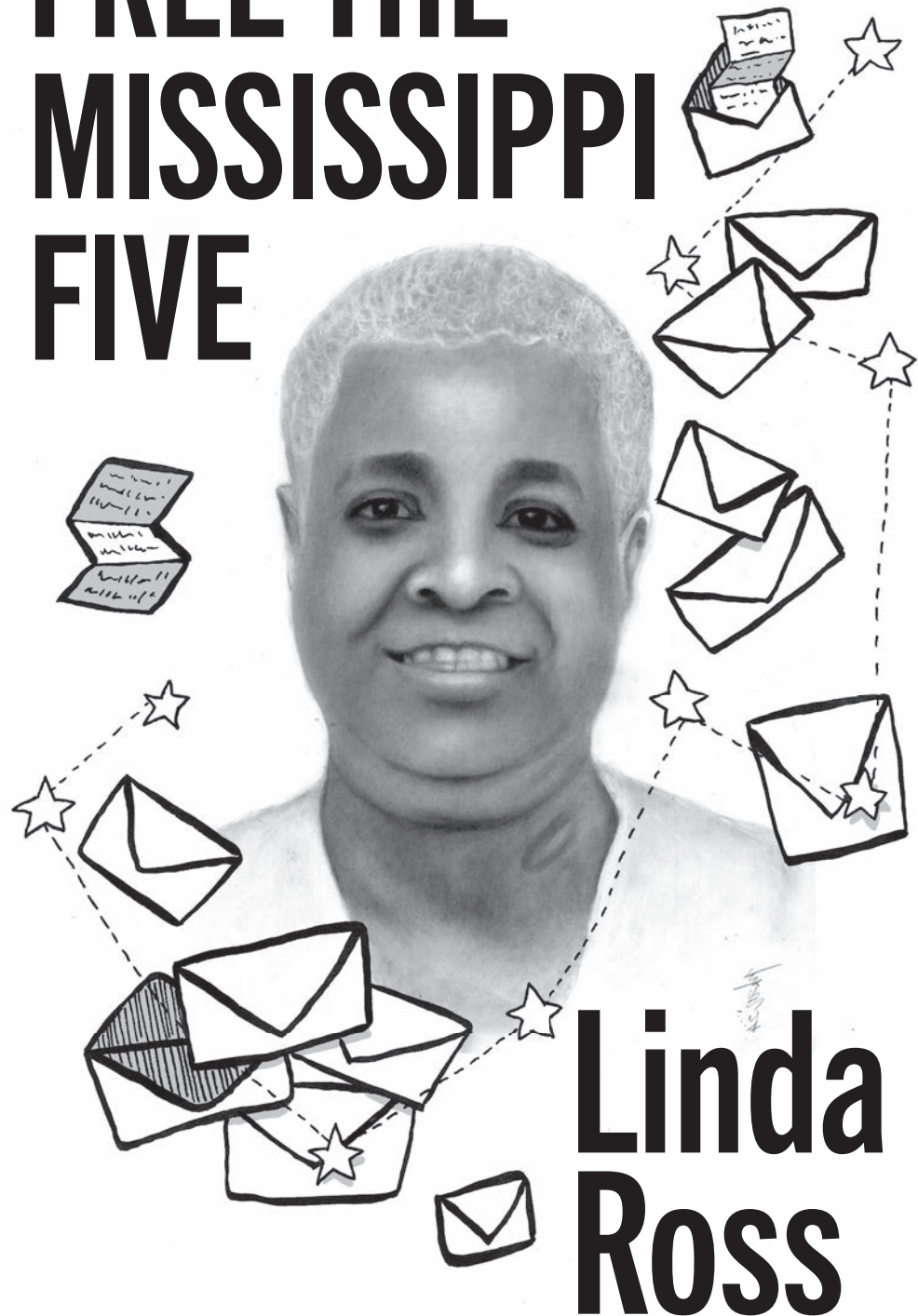


WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Write to Linda:
Linda Ross, #23967
CMCF 720
PO Box 88550
Pearl, MS 39288

**Learn more about the campaign to
Free the Mississippi Five:**
<https://www.studyandstruggle.com/MS5>

FREE THE MISSISSIPPI FIVE



**Linda
Ross**



"I do want to get out and give back, help somebody. My grandma always loved to feed people. I'd like to open up a shelter for homeless people and feed them."



*Linda has helped many of her sisters inside
find a relationship with God.*

And she's done plenty for herself, too.

"I didn't start healing from the hurt that other people caused until I got here, and then I still bled on a lot of people that didn't even cut me. I made a 360 degree turn in my life. And prison didn't give me any incentive to do that. I did it because I wanted to do better. I want to learn and find out who I was.

I have grown into a more conscious person and have awareness of other people's feelings. You know, be good, love people, and do what's right.

And all my achievements, of course, I got 24 certificates on that wall."



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

"Can I ask you about your relationship with the other five?"

"Oh, those are my sisters. Those ladies: my strength, my friends, and my sisters. It always made me cry. It's like, if I could do their time for them I would.

I've seen them go through hardship and being denied time and time again. So I know how they feel. So it saddens me and grieves me to watch them grow old in here. They have been there for me, as I have been for them. I just think about it because you know their families are doing time with them and enduring all the hardships, disappointments, and letdowns.

You just can't beat the infamous parole board. They're exempt and they are immune."



“My sister, she owns land. We are close, very close. And she’s been—oh my god—when I told her that I made parole the last time they told me I got my freedom...

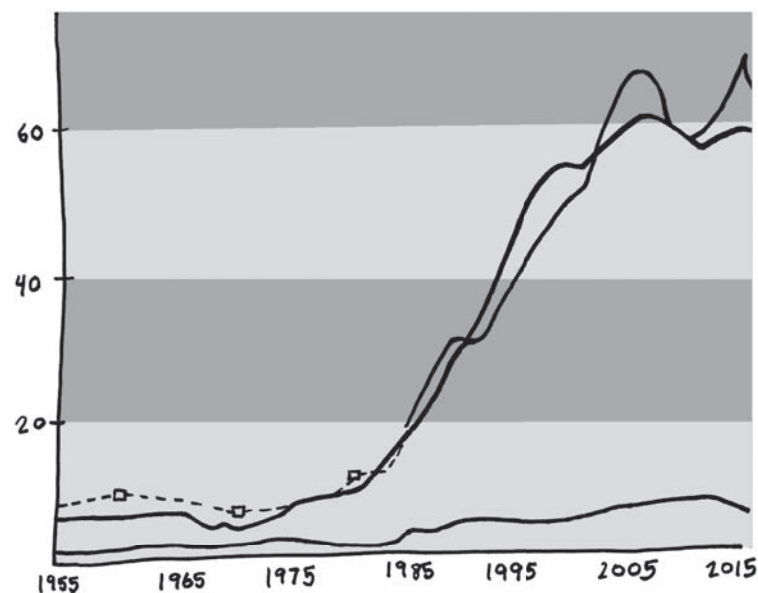
My sister cried the whole 15 minutes when I told her I was coming home, and it didn’t happen.

My bed... everybody’s waiting on me.”



Linda was convicted in 1990 as part of an unprecedented rise in women’s incarceration.

Between 1980 and 2021, the number of incarcerated women in the United States 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/>]

In 2023, Linda Ross celebrated her 61st birthday.

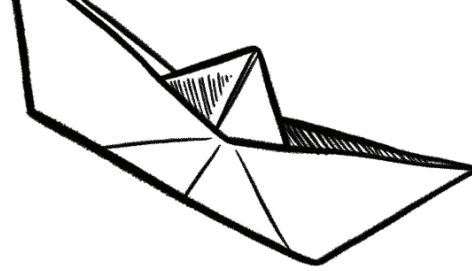
"My name is Linda Marie Ross. I was born in Independence, Louisiana. My birthday was yesterday, as a matter of fact.

I turned 61.

I had a lovely birthday. We ate good and rejoiced and we had fun. You know, you just try to maintain and keep stability."



"For how long I've been locked up I may be a little institutionalized, but not so much that we don't know what's good and how we are being treated, and what we need as elders and convicted females."



"I hadn't seen my mom because she has a bad heart. She's 83 and I wouldn't have my mom traveling down here. She said, 'I wouldn't be able to leave you out of that place, leave you behind, I would probably have a heart attack or a stroke.' It's just, you know, it's horrible when you have family that love and care about you.



My mom's holding on. She says I'm going, I'm waiting, I'm trying to live and staying strong and I want to see you out."



In August of 2023, Linda's family had a reunion in Georgia, with relatives from Rochester, Florida, and Chicago.

"We just had our family reunion and everybody was there on FaceTime and wishing I was out, because you know I'm the life of the party. I'll never get a chance to go fishing with my grandmother, my dad. But I got new nieces and nephews, a host of them. They love me, have never seen me, and they write me.

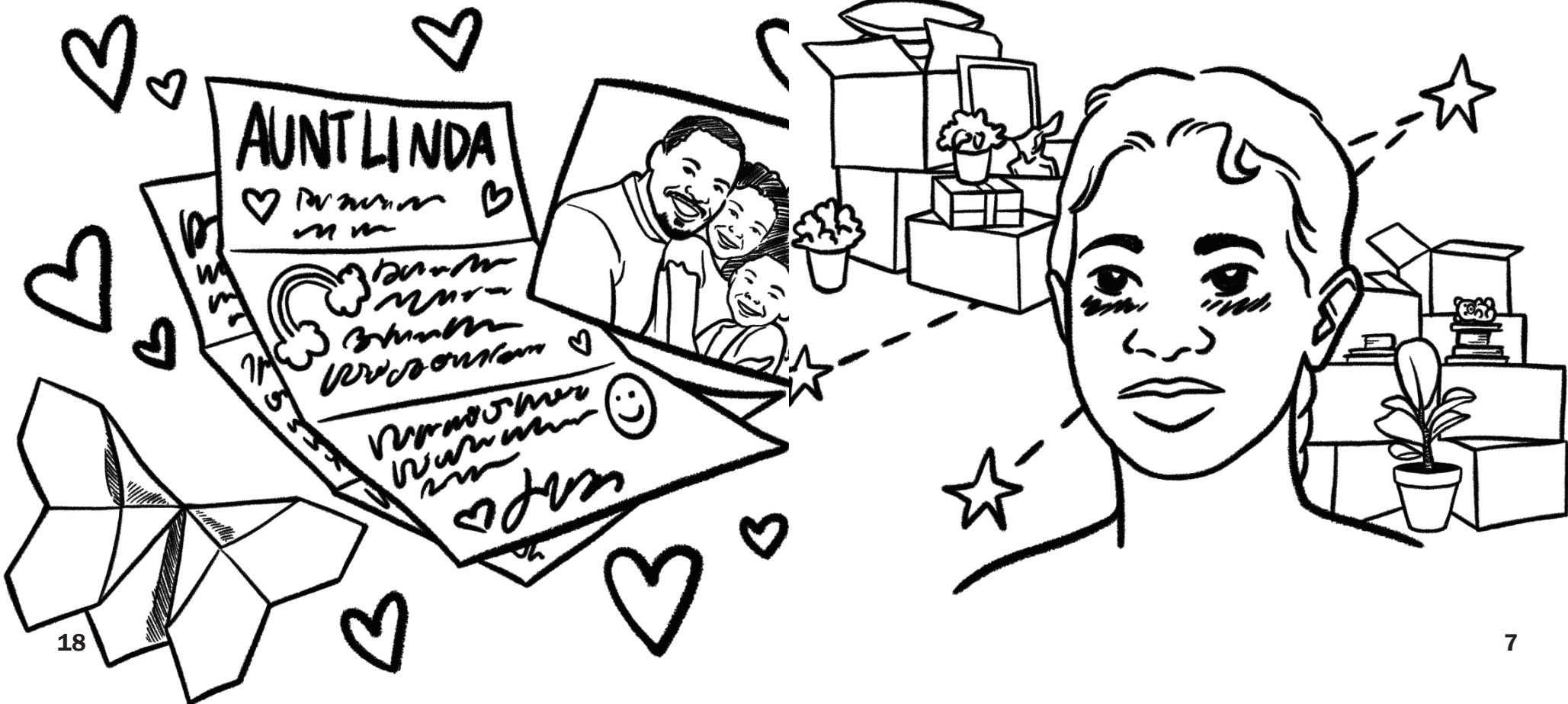
We have a rainbow family. And we all have a mixture of all types of genders and sexualities and whatever else they want to do that makes them happy, you know."

Linda moved around constantly as a child—between New Jersey and California, Mississippi and Illinois, and back again.

"When I was three, I moved to Morristown, New Jersey, with my mom.

My step father Leo Carter was good to the children—us—and he was mean to my mom. I don't know if it was jealousy or what.

We lived in New Jersey until I turned 12. And then she finally escaped. She left her house there in New Jersey, and she moved back to Mississippi down here with my grandmother."

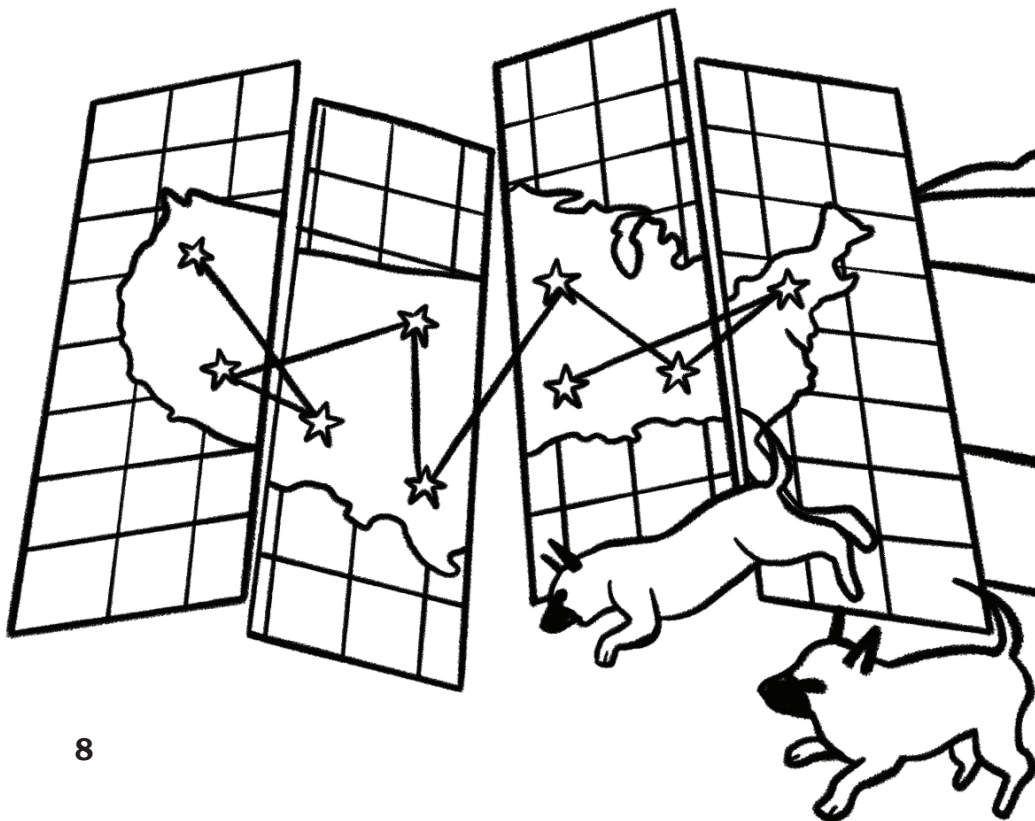


"Then Leo convinced my mom to reconcile with him.
So we moved back to New Jersey when I was about 13.

My mom left New Jersey for the last time and moved
to Rochester.

I left there and moved to Chicago where my [biological] dad
stayed. Was bouncing around, came down here. Stayed here but
ended up moving around between 17 and 18.

I was crying and howling and hiding and being moved and over
in all different locations."



Linda was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. She accepted a plea deal based on what her attorney and the DA told her. It was her understanding that she would make parole once eligible.

"I just wanted to get started on my sentence and just wanted to get going and do my 13 years, go for parole and get out.

And that didn't happen."

Linda has earned her high school equivalency and completed more than 25 educational, vocational, religious, and therapeutic programs. She enrolled in college classes and is working on her Associate's Degree. Yet, she has been set off 7 times by the parole board, for a total of 27 years.

"I was 27 years old and misdiagnosed as being mentally retarded and psychotic. I have overcome many challenges by choosing not to accept that evaluation as final. I am now 61 years old, have been refused treatment for HEP C since 2003, am in need of a double hip replacement, as well as shoulder and knee surgery. I have used my prison time wisely and achieved my GED.

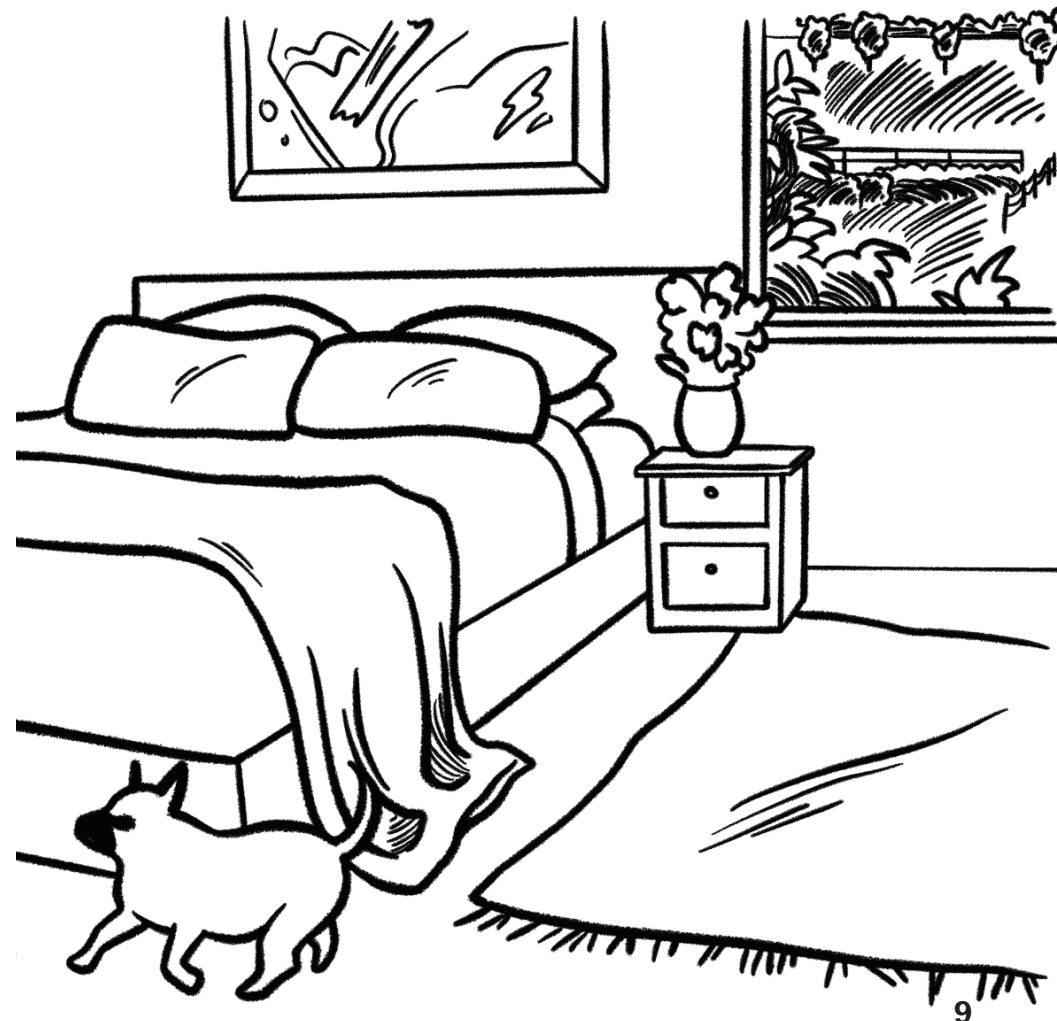
I'm proud of the things that I am doing now, you know, and I had to do it in prison. If the parole board don't acknowledge that, they don't care about a rehabilitated good citizen going into society. They set me off and set me off and set me off.

That's why it is so overcrowded. If you keep filling a glass of water and you don't pour none out, the drink is going to overflow."

Now she has a room waiting for her.

"My [nieces and nephews] all live in Rochester, New York right now with my mom and Wendy. My oldest sister, who's named Eloise, lives in Jamestown, Pennsylvania.

That's where I would like to get out. She has my room fixed up. She bred pups and she sold them and made enough money to buy land in Pennsylvania, built a house from the ground up."



She has always loved and needed fresh air.

"I caught my charge in 1989. Then I went to the Maximum Security Unit (MSU), a solitary confinement wing, and stayed there for 9 months.

I was so glad when I got to go outside. I was thanking God I had made it so that I could smell the fresh air, birds, just—whatever."



Linda was engaged in sex work and was attacked by a man after demanding payment. Her self-defense resulted in his death.

"I had a complex.

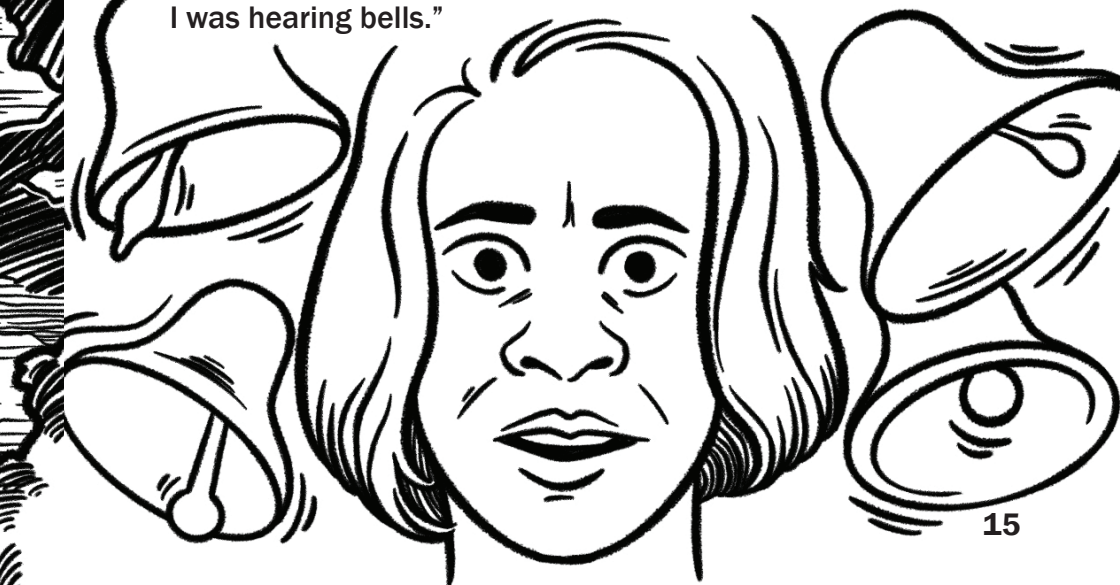
I didn't fully know what I wanted to do in life. I got caught up by hanging with people with bad reputations. And older people. Not only older, way older people. I liked to be around them because they were smart and they could tell me something that I didn't already know.

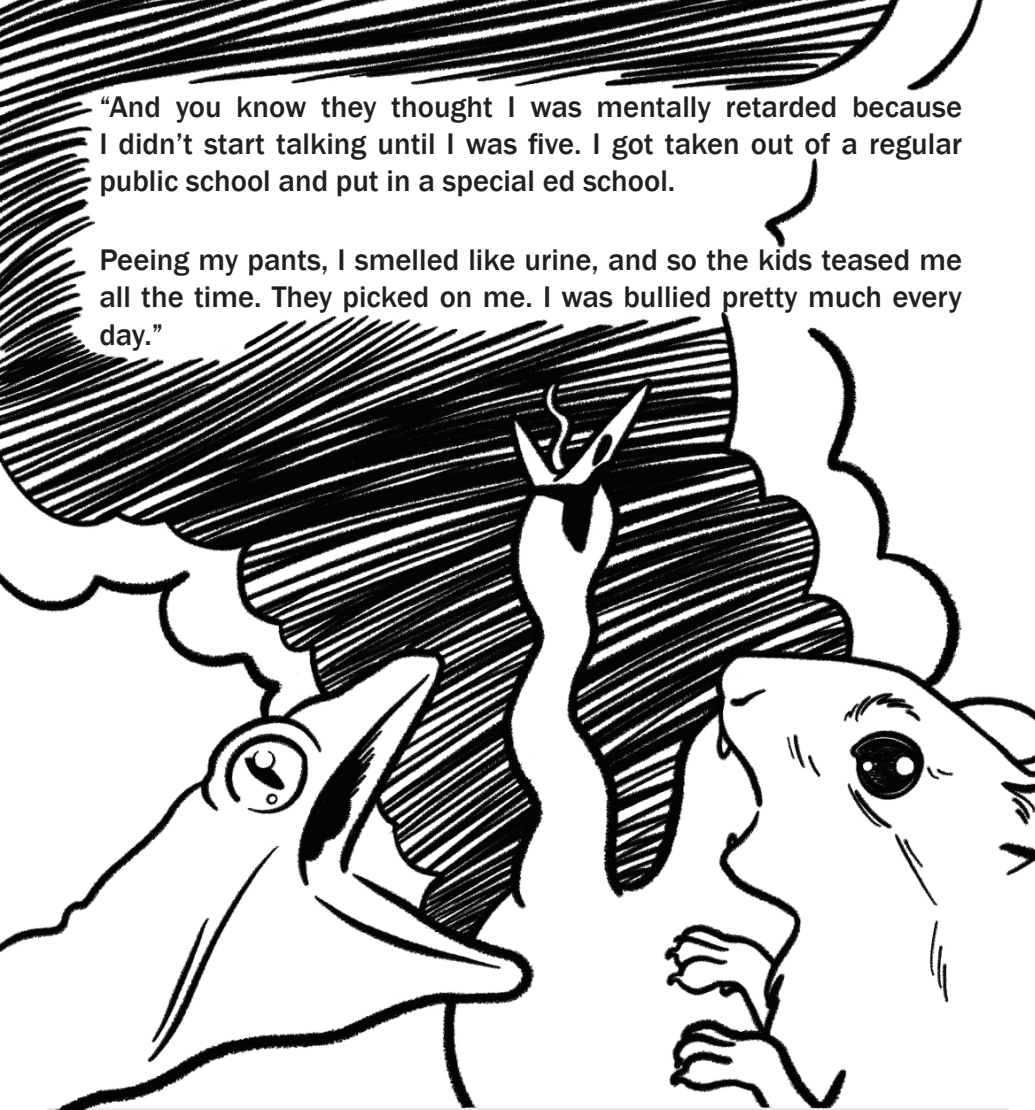
I had just turned 27 and I caught these charges.

This guy, he walked up and said, "Is that all you can do with that thing?"

Next thing you know we got into his truck and went to his house.

He gave me \$2 and I said, "I'm not leaving until you give me the \$20 that you promised to me." My brain, I couldn't wrap it around what I was doing or what I should be doing. I didn't go there with no weapon and I didn't go there to hurt him. I was hearing bells."



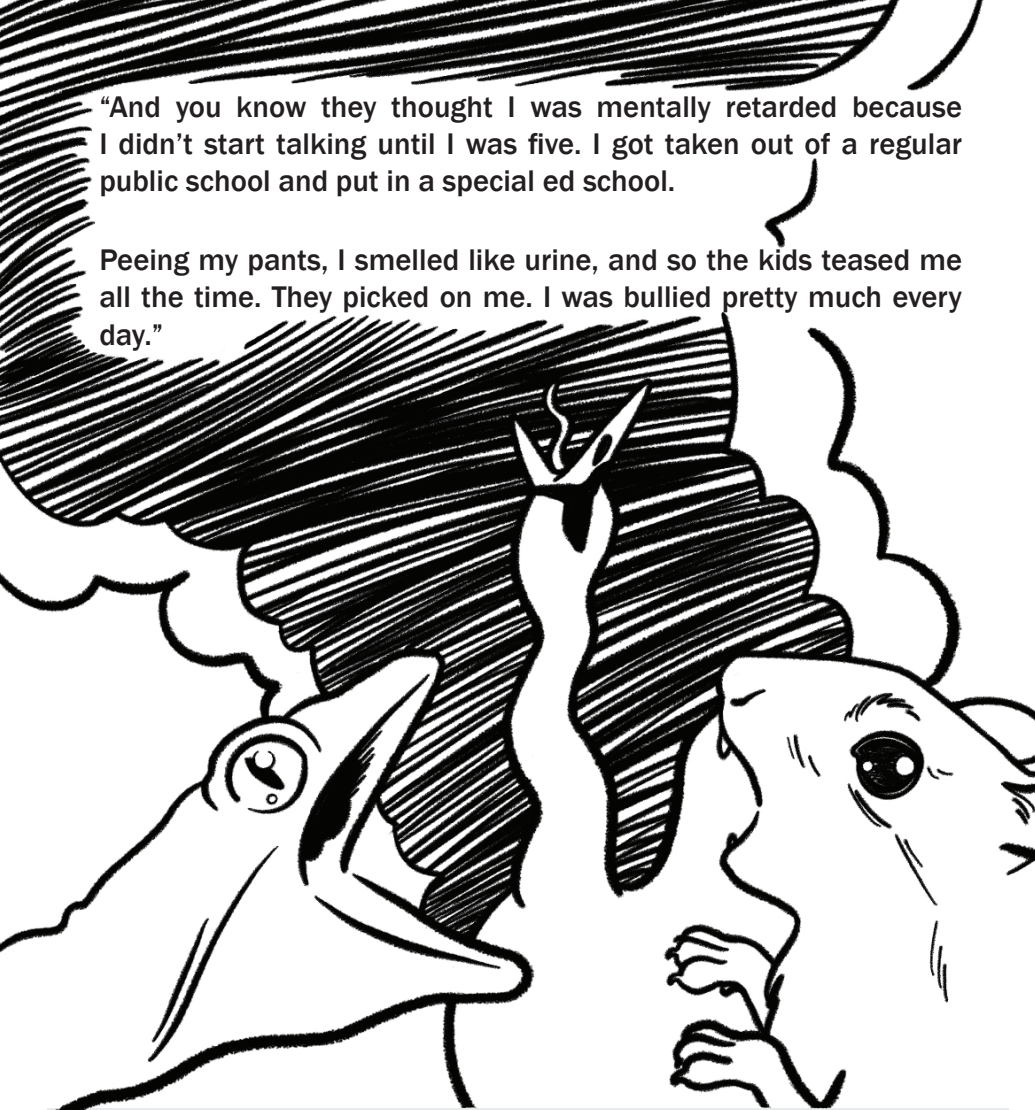


"And you know they thought I was mentally retarded because I didn't start talking until I was five. I got taken out of a regular public school and put in a special ed school.

Peeing my pants, I smelled like urine, and so the kids teased me all the time. They picked on me. I was bullied pretty much every day."

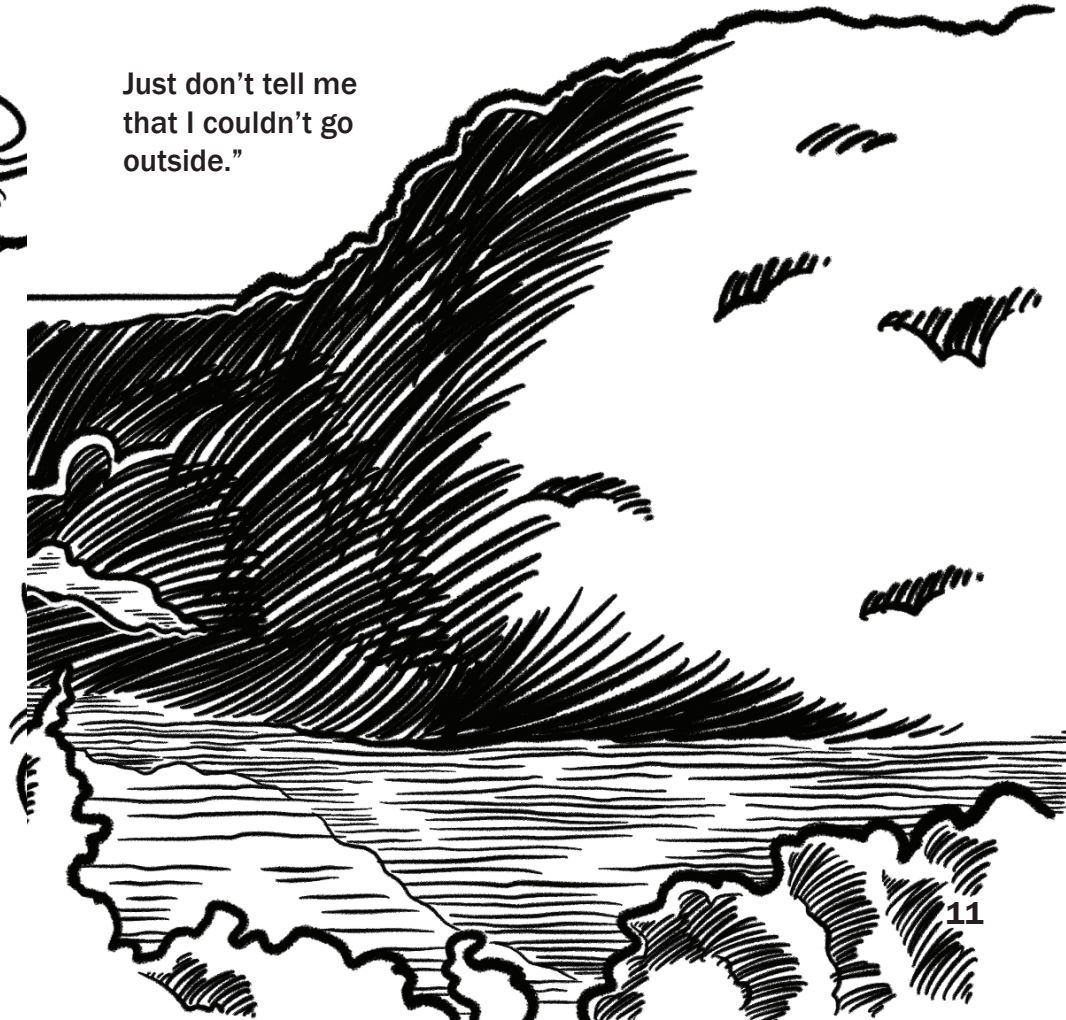
According to one study, women in prison have significant histories of trauma, poor mental health, and high rates of substance use disorders. In what some have termed the "abuse to prison pipeline," the vast majority of people in women's prisons were survivors before their incarceration.

[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).]



"I wanted to go outside because that was one of the punishments that I would always get as a child. My sisters were hung up on material things like toys and things, my mother would take their toys and stuff like that. I didn't care what you took from me—bicycles, radios, whatever.

Just don't tell me that I couldn't go outside."



Linda's movements throughout her childhood were driven by physical and sexual abuse, which impacted every part of her life.

"I couldn't say no S words. I remember like squirrel and square. Just different words I didn't pronounce right. My mind was staying in fear and stuff all of the time. I always stayed in fear of something."

"I grew up in a very abusive household. I think I peed in the bed until I was like 11. I was scared to sleep and I was also scared to go to school because I felt that one day I'd go back home with my mother laid out in a pool of blood. And that was the violence that went on in the household. It was just bad."

Unaddressed trauma has been found to affect children's emotional and mental health as well as their academic success. As one paper points out, "neurobiological, epigenetic, and biosocial studies have shown that traumatic experiences and conditions in childhood can diminish comprehension, memory, trust, language abilities, and the ability to self-regulate."

[Micah E. Johnson, "The Effects of Traumatic Experiences on Academic Relationships and Expectations in Justice-Involved Children," *Psychology in the Schools*, 55, vol. 3 (March 2018): 240-249.]

"I got molested when I was three. I think until I was 11, I was being molested."

I did the things I had to do and went to school and listened to my mom and tried to do what I could but growing up in that household, it was horrible. You never knew what was gonna go down next. And my step-father was a policeman. He took care of us, but he was very abusive to my mama."

Studies have found that police perpetrate violence in the home at rates nearly double the general population, a figure which is likely underestimated. Even the International Association of Chiefs of Police identified domestic violence by police as a problem that "exists at some serious level."

[Philip Stinson and John Liederback, "Fox in the Henhouse: A Study of Police Officers Arrested for Crimes Associated with Domestic and/or Family Violence," *Criminal Justice Faculty Publications* (2013) and Lindsey Blumenstein, "Domestic Violence Within Law Enforcement Families: The Link Between Traditional Police Subculture and Domestic Violence Among Police," Master's Thesis, University of South Florida (2009).]

