

# THE LOHM

#REWRITINGHERSTORY



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**THE LOHM  
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## **WE ARE FIGHTING FOR A FAIR CHANCE**

A note from our Founder and CEO

Now more than ever, it is crucial that we continue the vital work of raising awareness about the challenges women and girls face upon reentry as they seek health care, housing, and employment. For the first time in his presidency, President Biden issued 75 commutations and 3 full pardons; the most of any President at this point in his first term, and also announced a re-entry strategy to aid formerly incarcerated individuals in getting housing, health care, and job and educational opportunities.

At The LOHM, we believe that everyone should have access to opportunities that support career advancement and economic mobility no matter what their record says. Our unapologetic commitment to second chances celebrates yet extends beyond the month of April and is amplified in our daily work to ending poverty and incarceration of women and girls.

**Topeka K. Sam**  
The LOHM Founder & CEO

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# I'm Fighting for a Second Chance

Judith Negron - Pathways 4 Equity Fellow

My name is Judith and I want to tell you a story about a first-generation Cuban immigrant who worked hard to achieve the American dream; becoming an educated, licensed professional, and business owner. Someone who, at the peak of her career, found herself in the middle of a federal indictment, which at trial resulted in a guilty verdict and a 35-year sentence, with an additional 3 years probation.

But God intervened, and through His immense grace and mercy, I received an unexpected blessing in the form of presidential clemency in 2020. This unbelievable gift gave me a second chance at life. I knew returning to the workforce after almost a decade-long absence was not going to be an easy feat. Even worse, being stripped of my professional license, shamed in my industry, and erased from my career.

I had no choice but to reinvent myself and this is how my work in advocacy began.

With over 20 years of experience as an educator, mentor, and counselor to a diverse population in the mental health sector, I had the skills that my education afforded me but as an experienced individual, I had other skills that my adverse life encounters had enhanced me. And as a formerly incarcerated person, I had the lived experience that the system had engraved in me.

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**"This unbelievable gift gave me a second chance at life. I knew returning to the workforce after almost a decade-long absence was not going to be an easy feat."**

**- Judith Negron**



Determined to use this knowledge to maximize my potential, I created The Freedom Glow, a platform to empower others and guide them upon their reentry process; and a means to give a voice to those left behind, particularly to the children of the incarcerated, who are often the silent victims of these consequences. In this form, I have been able to bring a smile to many impacted lives; a smile of freedom, a smile that makes one glow.

As I continue in my advocacy efforts, it is my hope that, through my words and that of other justice-impacted women like me, the criminal legal system takes a deep dive inside its soul and really sets its eyes on becoming a system that is truly fair, just, and equitable for all.

This is my story, and I am forever grateful to The LOHM for making my story possible. This organization not only gave me the necessary tools but most importantly gave me a chance that most would not. A chance that has allowed me to pay it forward and bless others, as I've been blessed.

Thank you,

*Judith Negron*

Judith is a Pathways for Equity Fellow and Epic Ambassador, a Prison-to-Professionals scholar, and mentor, a JustLeadershipUSA Emerging Leaders cohort participant, and sits on the Board of Directors for Evolution Reentry.

The **Pathways 4 Equity (P4E)** program breaks employment barriers by connecting talented women to professional fellowships with advancement opportunities and family-supporting wages.

## Second Chance Month

Every person has God-given dignity and potential, including those with criminal records.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of people who are justice-impacted reenter their communities with high hopes of making a fresh start. We are all more than our mistakes and deserve the chance to thrive – despite and because of our lived experiences.

There's a long list of legal barriers that people with a criminal record face, known as collateral consequences. They affect nearly every facet of life, from employment and education to housing and voting. People can flourish when needless barriers are eliminated, and opportunities to start over feels like a gift to people who seek to live out their second chance.

**“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.”**

**— Maya Angelou**

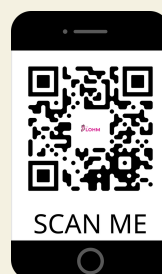


## Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson

**A change has come.**

The United States Senate confirmed the nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson as Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court in a bipartisan 53-47 vote. Justice Jackson becomes the first Black woman ever to sit on the nation's Supreme Court and the first justice to have previously been a federal public defender. America's history is officially being rewritten.

Justice Jackson's elevation doesn't immediately change the ideological imbalance of justice in the American criminal legal system, but her presence will represent a tectonic shift for the Supreme Court in other ways.



**If you are returning home and need reentry services please contact us.**

**ATTN: Santra Rucker  
Post Office Box 11660, 340 South Loudon Ave, Baltimore, Maryland  
21229-9998.**

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# Mother's Day

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## We Honor You

By: Starling Thomas

I am a mother, a previously incarcerated woman, and a child of a mother who was a victim of police brutality and gave birth to my youngest sibling handcuffed and chained to a bed in the Texas Department of Corrections. I know what it's like to grow up with a mother behind bars. I remember the feeling as a child visiting my mother in prison, the separation anxiety, and feeling helpless as I watched her fight for her dignity and freedom. I know what it feels like to spend Mother's Day away from your family, counting down the days until your release, praying that your children are safe, and hoping that one day your family will be reunified in spite of every barrier placed in your path.



85 percent of women in jails and prisons are mothers and most of them were the primary caretaker of their children while they were free. There is a domino effect of burdens placed on incarcerated women and their children. Everyone arrives at Mother's Day with different experiences, but mothers who are impacted by incarceration understand the unique challenges and collateral consequences that the criminal legal system presents to families. Adjusting to parenting behind bars, coping with the pain of separation, and working to rebuild relationships is overwhelming and at times exhausting. Yet, we continue to overcome and persevere through it all, for ourselves and for our children.

Over 20 years later, my mother and I are still healing from the trauma and pain that the criminal legal system often creates for women and their families, especially women of color. It may take a lifetime to heal but The Ladies of Hope Ministries has played an integral role in our healing and provided resources and support to us both that we would not have gotten from anywhere else. I am honored and grateful to be a part of an amazing organization dedicated to helping justice-impacted mothers and children, globally.

To all the mothers who have counted the days until the next visit, we support you. To all the mothers who are bettering themselves for their children, we respect you. To all the mothers who are healing while parenting, working, and striving to overcome obstacles due to convictions and time served, we applaud you. We honor you.

Happy Mother's Day from The Ladies of Hope Ministries!

In Solidarity,

*Starling Thomas*

Director of Communications  
The Ladies of Hope Ministries



# LOHM NEWS

## The LOHM Founder & CEO Topeka K. Sam Receives Google's Inaugural Social Impact Award



Topeka K. Sam, The LOHM Founder with other honoree Queen Latifah

On May 5, 2022, seven years after Topeka's release from prison, she was honored with **Google's** inaugural Social Impact Award, for her efforts toward ending the poverty and incarceration of women and girls worldwide. Google launched its first-ever Social Impact Award and showcased its long-standing commitment to supporting underrepresented small business owners by highlighting local women-owned companies in NYC.

The Social Impact Award was presented to Topeka K. Sam for the impact she's made as the Founder and CEO of The Ladies of Hope Ministries (The LOHM).

As a former director at Dream Corps Justice, and a Google.org grantee, where she led the Dignity for Incarcerated Women campaign, Topeka became a trusted advisor to Google's ongoing criminal justice reform efforts, which led to the company prohibiting bail bond ads on its platforms.

**"This award is for every presently incarcerated and justice-impacted woman and girl. With man things are impossible, but with God, all things are possible."**

**- Topeka K. Sam**



Variety's 2022 Power of Women: New York event honors **Drew Barrymore, Camila Cabello, Kim Cattrall, Queen Latifah, Amanda Seyfried, and Topeka K. Sam**

