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SUMMER 2023 ISSUE 2 VOL. 2

# THE LOHM

#REWRITINGHERSTORY



## Empowering Women Behind and Beyond Bars

Greetings from The Ladies of Hope Ministries (The LOHM). We hope this newsletter finds you in good health and spirits. As women who have walked similar paths, we stand together, unwavering in our commitment to empower, uplift, and support each other on our journeys to sustainable lives beyond incarceration.

We are thrilled to share the latest updates, stories, and resources that speak to our mission of empowering women and girls to build sustainable lives post-incarceration. As we come together to share stories, wisdom, and resources, we are reminded of the incredible strength and resilience that lies within each one of us. Our journey toward empowerment continues, even within the confines of the criminal legal system.

Remember, your past does not define your future; you have the power to shape your destiny.

To all the women currently incarcerated, we want you to know that you are not alone. The LOHM community stands with you, embracing you with compassion and understanding. We, too, have walked a path impacted by the criminal legal system, and we believe in your capacity to overcome adversity and create a meaningful life beyond these walls.

Read about Ayana Thomas's remarkable journey from incarceration to becoming a successful entrepreneur. Her story proves that determination and creativity can pave the way to a brighter future.

Finding Strength Through Education: Loreen's pursuit of education led her to new opportunities and a deep sense of empowerment. Her story is a testament to the transformative power of learning.

As we continue our journey toward empowerment, let us remember the strength that comes from unity. We encourage you to share your stories, aspirations, and advice with The LOHM community. Your voice matters, and your experiences can inspire others.

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# Black Business

## Month Spotlight:

### Ayana Thomas and Grieving Back to Life

#### From Incarceration to Inspiration

Ayana's journey is a testament to the power of resilience and the human spirit's capacity to triumph over adversity. Having served three years in the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Ayana's personal experience with the criminal legal system ignited her determination to create positive change. She founded [Grieving Back to Life](#) to address a crucial yet often overlooked aspect of the lives of women impacted by incarceration – the profound grief and loss they face.

#### A Beacon of Hope

Ayana's story is not just about overcoming her challenges; it's about using her experiences to guide others toward healing and growth. As a grief and bereavement counselor, Ayana has taken the pain of her past and transformed it into a platform for change. Through Grieving Back to Life, she aims to help justice-impacted women navigate their grief, trauma, and losses. Her vision is clear: to assist women in finding perspective on their pain, reclaiming their peace, and moving forward with purpose.

Grief is not only the loss of someone you love, but it is the loss of many significant things we lose in our lives, such as our freedom," said Ayana.

#### Redefining Grief and Empowerment

Grief, as Ayana eloquently puts it, isn't solely about the loss of loved ones; it's the loss of freedom, identity, and countless other essential aspects of life. Grieving Back to Life's mission is to provide these women with the tools they need to work through their pain, set meaningful goals, and find success despite their struggles. Ayana's living example serves as a powerful reminder that progress and happiness are attainable, even in the face of the most challenging circumstances.



#### Changing the Conversation

Ayana's work isn't just confined to her organization; it's about changing the broader dialogue around grief and empowerment. By bringing the collective grief of incarcerated women into the spotlight, she's dismantling the stigma and fostering a supportive community. Through her resilience, dedication, and commitment to her cause, Ayana is actively making the world a better place for everyone.

In honor of Black Business Month, we celebrate Ayana and her outstanding work with Grieving Back to Life. Her journey from incarceration to empowerment is an inspiration to us all, reminding us that where life breaks us, we can emerge stronger, wiser, and capable of profound change. As she continues to uplift the voices of her sisters impacted by the criminal legal system, she is an embodiment of the spirit of resilience and the driving force behind a brighter future for all.

**"I am not only here to help set goals, but I am a living example of what grieving through your life and your pain looks like. You can still have a purposeful life. You can still be successful in your pain. Grief is hard. Finding help doesn't have to be.**

**- Ayana Thomas**

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Ayana Thomas is a Faces of Women Imprisoned (FOWI) 2021 Alumni. FOWI is a first-of-its-kind training program to prepare justice-impacted women and girls to be professional public speaker.

# The Digital Age

## The LOHM X Grow with Google

### Empowering Justice-Impacted Women in the Digital Age

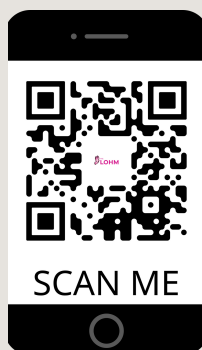
At The LOHM our mission is to uplift and empower women to overcome challenges, embrace their potential, and achieve their dreams. It's with immense pride and inspiration that we share the remarkable success story of Loreen Paeyes a shining example of how determination, faith, and the power of digital learning can transform lives.

Loreen, a participant of the Pathways 4 Equity program who completed Phase 1 Grow with Google (GWG) training, has not only found her voice but is using it to create positive change.

In her own words, "GWG digital training has had a monumental impact on my future and career goals in becoming a writer." Loreen's aspiration to become a published author is driven by a deep desire to help women affected by trauma, fear, and depression. As a testament to her resilience, Loreen is dedicated to sharing her strategies for overcoming adversity and fostering hope, determination, and strength.

The heart of Loreen's success story lies in her effective use of the tools provided by Grow with Google's digital training. She has embraced the Google Suite with enthusiasm, particularly harnessing the power of Google Docs. Loreen's first book, aimed at empowering women to triumph over life's challenges, is taking shape within the virtual pages of Google Docs. She credits this platform for not only allowing her to create and edit her manuscript but also for seamlessly integrating her collaboration efforts with other writers and professionals.

Google Drive has become her virtual library, housing her precious documents and photos securely. With Gmail, Loreen navigates the world of online communication with ease, staying connected and informed. This newfound confidence in using digital technology has catalyzed her creativity and productivity, propelling her toward her dream of becoming a published author.



### GROW YOUR DIGITAL SKILLS

Grow with Google is helping me to become more confident using digital technology and has a huge impact on my future, and career goals in becoming a writer.

LOREEN PEAYS



#WomenEntrepreneurs

Loreen's dedication to learning and growth is a testament to the effectiveness of the GWG digital training. Through this program, she's not only developing practical skills but also embracing a forward-looking mindset that positions her for success in an increasingly digital world.

We are thrilled to witness Loreen's remarkable journey. Her story exemplifies the impact that thoughtful digital training can have, opening doors, and breaking down barriers. Loreen's commitment to helping others while advancing her career goals is a living embodiment of the core values of The Ladies of Hope Ministries.

As we celebrate Loreen Paeyes' achievements, we are reminded once again of the transformative power of education, technology, and the unwavering strength of the human spirit. We eagerly anticipate her contributions to the world and look forward to witnessing the positive ripples she will continue to create in the lives of those she touches.

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

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# LOHM NEWS

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## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



### Empowering Second Chances: The LOHM Founder Dr. Topeka K. Sam's Journey from Prison to Purpose

In a remarkable journey that exemplifies the resilience of the human spirit, The LOHM Founder Dr. Topeka K. Sam recently visited the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) Danbury - a place where she once found herself incarcerated. This poignant homecoming was not just a reminder of her past, but a testament to the transformative power of healing, redemption, and second chances.

Dr. Sam's story is one of hope and determination. Her visit to FCI Danbury allowed her to share her own experiences of overcoming adversity and rebuilding her life after incarceration. Through her non-profit initiatives, a fintech company, and real estate projects, she has not only found personal success but has also made it her mission to empower others who have been impacted by the criminal legal system.

Her initiatives provide education, training, and financial tools that empower individuals to take control of their economic futures, fostering a sense of independence and self-worth.

Dr. Sam's journey is a testament to the incredible potential within every individual, regardless of their past mistakes.

Her story reminds us that everyone deserves a chance at redemption and transformation. As we witnessed her return to FCI Danbury - not as an incarcerated woman, but as a symbol of triumph - we're reminded of the power of resilience, forgiveness, and the importance of extending a helping hand to those who are working towards a better future.

## Hope House Prince George County

**The LOHM's safe space designed to offer transitional housing for women affected by incarceration and trauma**

We are thrilled to announce the opening of Hope House Prince George County (PGC), a sanctuary thoughtfully crafted by The LOHM. This haven is dedicated to providing comprehensive support, guidance, and secure housing for women who have faced incarceration and trauma, fostering a holistic environment for their reintegration journey.

By offering a safe and supportive living space, access to vital services, and a nurturing community, we enable our house guests to focus on various aspects of their reentry process, all with the unwavering support of our devoted Housing Coordinators.

Hope House has a longstanding commitment to aiding women in securing meaningful employment, accessing educational opportunities, facilitating daily reunification, and embarking on journeys of healing through trauma-informed care services. The HOPE framework, is a four-stage program that addresses crucial aspects such as healing, employment, education, financial literacy, and securing long-term housing.

Stay tuned for more updates and stories of empowerment from Hope House PGC. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of justice-involved and trauma-impacted women.

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For more news, resources, and other program opportunities visit our website:  
[www.thelohm.org](http://www.thelohm.org)