

## Re-entry Mediation Story

“I remember going to trial date after trial date as the state’s attorney dragged my mom’s case on for about two years. Once the last date took place, the Judge stood up for my mom’s rights as an American citizen and acknowledged her neglect of a speedy trial. The prosecutors and state’s attorney had to address her that day with her co-defendant. After it was all said and done, I told my mom “see you on the outside once you get released. I’m sorry but I can’t visit you in prison” She understood and agreed she had dragged me far enough. From 2012 until 2017, we communicated via phone and mail, keeping conversations at a surface level and just getting through. Until one day I answered my phone and a “hello” that turned into a good-bye to my fears, and changed my perspectives.

One evening, I received a call that took my “Hello” by the horns and carried me into a new life. Who would have ever thought I would sit face to face with my mom in prison and have a conversation professionally facilitated by mediators? Fear of the unknown was surely an understatement. I never wanted to voluntarily participate in anything associated with the physical building of a prison. I was about fourteen years old when I was formally introduced to my mother. She was serving time at a Maryland detention center. So I was sure I had enough of seeing her behind bars.

The person on the other end of the phone was describing community meditation to me. I remember thinking ok; this is for mom, so you have to do it. I really was not paying attention to the actual conversation as I was watching the clock to get back to my job. However, scheduling took place and I agreed to try mediation. I was not driving at the time, and I was newly hired at a second job, so unfortunately my session date came and I did not show up. I received another call from the mediation office and was very apologetic and I guaranteed that on the next scheduled mediation I would be in attendance.

The day came and I was so excited to see my mom because it had been years. I felt nervous, anxious, full of anxiety, resentment and vulnerable while walking through. They walked me to a private room. We waited a few minutes and through the door she came, I had butterflies and a big smile hiding all my pain. She sat at the table and the session begin.

Tears fell instantly, untold secrets were exposed, vital information from my childhood was discovered and authentic dialogue was present. My mom and I were both tired of running and decided to face life for what it was and give it our best. We made plans about communication, education, employment, and housing. I am tremendously blessed to say we are living out our plans today! She is a full-time student getting paid and earning days off of her time in prison. I recently applied to UB with goals of starting in the spring.

Someday I want to give back to others the way the mediators gave to us. There is no better feeling than the one I received walking away from that mediation.”

*~ Anonymous Mediation Participant*