

# Artist's Statement

TADIA RICE

*Writer. Performer. Recording Artist. Playwright. Poet.*



I give voice to women whose words have been quieted, whose spirits have been crushed, whose hearts have been broken, whose lives have been dehumanized.

The voices are often grounded in loss, sorrow, and despair. It's an unbearably painful reality inside Hawai'i's overcrowded ugly, and only, prison for women. Surviving endless mourning, woven together by regret and shame, shackled inside a punishing place, the chorus is collective, singing unheard verses of a song in the key of repentance, locked away from society, locked out of the economy, locked up in prison cells. Confined are grandmothers, mothers, sisters, nieces, some old, many young.

The voices became a harsh discordant cacophony as I interviewed more and more female felons for nearly a decade. While at times seeming unreal and unbearable, their stories are poignant reminders that anyone, given certain circumstances, can end up behind bars. The common thread is childhood trauma, violence, addiction, homelessness, and repeated sexual assaults. Their stories range from drunk-driving accidents that killed best friends, to being convicted of the murder of a man as she protected herself from beatings, forced prostitution, and rape by other men - in a state without a self-defense law.

The stories are endless.

Once you know the faces of these women you understand how it could have been you. Such life-changing circumstances can happen to the best of people, and the worst. What did they do... how did they get there... what happened inside... what happens when they get out?

Whether in the inside or outside, all are working with the goal to re-enter society in whatever way they can, to piece together a different, better life for themselves and their children.

Listen to their voices.