

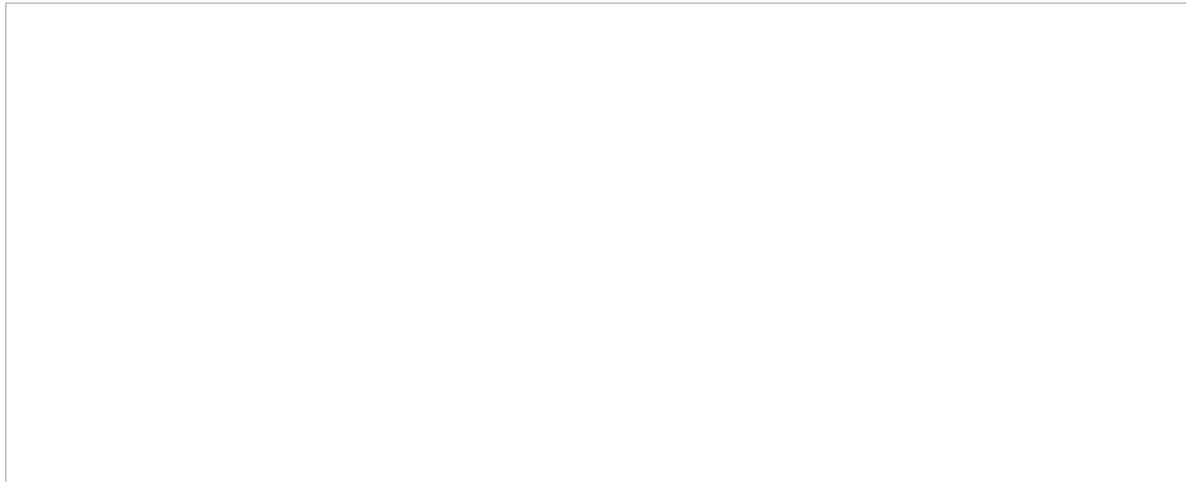
Ohio Justice and Policy Center

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://ohiojpc.org/2017/05/13/reflection-sasha-naiman-mother-attorney/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

by [Marais Jacon-Duffy](#) | May 13, 2017 | [Blog](#)



A few days ago, my daughter turned 3 months old. Today marks my first Mothers Day. From this new vantage point, I have given much thought to the role of motherhood in a family, the tremendous bond I feel with my child, and the influence of mothers in society.

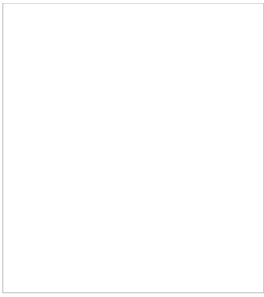
I am troubled, now more than ever, by the obstacles that our criminal justice system creates for mothers. [Mass female incarceration](#) as well as Ohios ever-expanding limitations on women with criminal records in the community creates collateral damage. Women are disproportionately likely to be primary caregivers for children, and children rely on mothers to provide safety, housing, and financial stability.

Our Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections [reports](#) that over 4,000 women are locked away in Ohios prisons. Forty-four are pregnant. Most others (studies show ~60%) have children outside of the prison walls. In the community, mothers with criminal records also face a different kind of wall: legal barriers limiting gainful employment, stable housing, family reunification, volunteering, and more. They are subject to collateral consequences of criminal convictions over 900 penalties in Ohio law that restrict all aspects of life and motherhood.

Today, I am thinking about my clients motherhood-stories and the stories of their family members. I am reminded that women experience pregnancy behind bars and are placed in leg irons and waist chains during transport to delivery. I am reminded that mothers miss their childs first steps or first day of school, while serving sentences for crimes stemming from addiction, mental health issues, or their own victimization in abusive relationships. I am reminded that Ohio women sit in jail because they cannot afford their bail on Mothers Day. I am reminded that mothers have to spend less time with their children while working two jobs because they cannot get decent wages with a criminal record. I am reminded that, even after many years of sobriety and successful, law-abiding behavior, a woman cannot gain custody of her child or grandchild because of her old criminal records. I am reminded that a single mother of four cannot get safe, stable public housing for her family because of a single decade-old offense. Today, as I see my daughter smiling, I wonder how others experience Mothers Day and every day of motherhood.

In my work, I get to meet some amazing mothers. Whether seeking CQEs, record sealing, or expungement, my clients are motivated by their children. They want better jobs, continuing education, good housing, and financial stability because they are driven by the same bond I am discovering for the last three months. They want, above all else, to be role models and provide the best opportunities for their kids. And, as much as these mothers are motivated by their children, I know that their children are motivated by their mothers successes and determination.

With this backdrop, I offer one overarching conclusion: discourse on criminal justice policy, prison conditions, alternative sentencing, reentry, and social services must include discussions on motherhood. While I consider OJPCs role in this discourse, I gain inspiration as I look at my daughter on our first Mothers Day.



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