

Obden Mondesir 00:00

With that, I'm going to pass the reins on to Adam and Ava.

Carole Eady-Porcher 00:05

Okay.

Adam Johnson 00:09

Okay, so I'm just gonna start off by saying the date. It's Wednesday, July 19 2023. My name is Adam Johnson and I'm here with--if you could just both say your names, please.

Carole Eady-Porcher 00:20

Carole Eady-Porcher.

Ava Sullivan-Thomas 00:23

And Ava Sullivan-Thomas.

Adam Johnson 00:25

Alright. And so just to start this off, the first question we have is: could you tell me the year you were born and where?

Carole Eady-Porcher 00:33

I was born in 1959 in Charleston, South Carolina.

Adam Johnson 00:42

And what was it like living in Charleston at that time?

Carole Eady-Porcher 00:44

Um, well, I had nothing to compare it with back then because I lived there all my life. I didn't grow up with my parents, I grew up being raised by my grandparents. I wasn't a very happy person or child because I wanted to be with my parents.

Carole Eady-Porcher 01:08

Also, my grandfather had a lot of animals and we lived in the city and most of those animals were in our backyard or in our home. And I felt like--I felt unique, because most of the time when, when kids grew up with, you know, a lot of hunting dogs and cats and turtles and rabbits and fish, and, you know, a raccoon, they're usually live in on a farm, or they live in the country, but I lived in the city.

Carole Eady-Porcher 01:34

So Charleston--there was some happy times, but for the majority of time, when I look back, I always seem to remember--gravitate toward the traumatic events, rather than the good times.

Carole Eady-Porcher 01:34

So it was stigmatizing. Because, you know, neighbors and classmates would always want to know--they were always curious. And I found it an embarrassment. And it was also, you know, when I was

growing up, I was--there was a lot of molestation and sexual abuse in my--in my life, and that of my brother and so--

Carole Eady-Porcher 01:55

But it was stigmatizing. Because, neighbors and classmates would always want to know why we had so many animals--they were always curious. And I found it an embarrassment. And also, as I was growing up, I was--there was a lot of molestation and sexual abuse happening to me, and it also happened to my brother.

Adam Johnson 02:09

And I know in your pre-interview, you mentioned that you moved to New York City. What led that move?

Carole Eady-Porcher 02:15

What led to it?

Adam Johnson 02:17

Mm-hm.

Carole Eady-Porcher 02:17

Oh, I graduated high school couldn't wait to get the hell out of there.

Adam Johnson 02:24

And why New York City specifically?

Carole Eady-Porcher 02:28

Well, my--my dad was in New York. I had some other family in New York. But mostly, I wanted to just leave the city [inaudible] the small city, you know, what I considered the country.

Carole Eady-Porcher 02:40

And I wanted to come to the big city after coming on vacation--vacationing and seeing--and going through Midtown and seeing Times Square and all those tall buildings. Suddenly, I could not live in Charleston anymore.

Carole Eady-Porcher 02:53

I wanted to sing. I could--I had a pretty talented voice. And I figured if I moved to New York, because that was the city I saw in the back of a lot of the sleeves on the albums either Los Angeles or New York.

Carole Eady-Porcher 03:08

I figured when I saw those buildings, okay, this is where it's happening, and this is where I'm going to move to. So I came to visit that summer, and I had decided, as soon as I could go back, get all my things, I could--I would move here and live here.

Adam Johnson 03:21

And could you talk a little bit about what your first few years in New York City were like?

Carole Eady-Porcher 03:27

I struggled that first winter because I didn't know about New York winter. I didn't have warm winter clothes--you know, I had my winter clothes but winter in Charleston and winter in New York was two totally different things.

Carole Eady-Porcher 03:41

I had no boots for the snow. I had pretty warm coats, but I just had no idea. You know, I heard of snow and I seen Charleston snow but I just had never seen New York snow and it was a lot of snow.

Carole Eady-Porcher 04:00

And so--but, but you know, I got a job. Not--maybe two weeks or so after moving to New York. I started working at McDonald's and got me a room in Queens and I would visit my family in the city or in the Bronx on the weekends. And that was cool.

Carole Eady-Porcher 04:17

You know, when I first moved to New York, my dad was arrested. I didn't know that he had gotten arrested right after my high school graduation.

Carole Eady-Porcher 04:27

All we knew was that we weren't hearing from him and one of my aunts got worried and made some calls. We discovered that he was incarcerated. He'd gotten arrested on a drug charge.

Carole Eady-Porcher 04:37

So I went to see him maybe once or twice, and then he came home maybe a year later. By the time he came home, I was pregnant. I had met a guy and I was pregnant and I was trying to find--I was moving from that room to an apartment and had my baby.

Adam Johnson 05:03

And I'm sorry, what year was this?

Carole Eady-Porcher 05:09

This, okay, I moved to New York, the end of '78. My dad was locked up for most of '79. He came home in December '79. And I had my baby on January 1st of 1980.

Carole Eady-Porcher 05:22

And I wanted to live alone with me and my child and [you know] my boyfriend coming around. [Well] my dad needed a place to stay, so he came to stay with me. I wasn't--I didn't like that, because I felt like I shouldn't be responsible for helping him get on his feet when I felt like he didn't really take care of me and my brother back there in Charleston, you know, he did the minimal.

Carole Eady-Porcher 05:40

I didn't know it was because he was hanging out, and he was like, living this fast life. And he was selling drugs and hanging out and doing this and doing that. And, you know, that fast life just doesn't afford you the--most of the time the--the conscience, I would say, the stick-to-itiveness to take care of your kids, rather than hang out and make a name for yourself in the streets, you know.

Carole Eady-Porcher 06:05

I was--I wasn't--I wouldn't say I didn't know he loved me. I just thought he didn't love me enough. You know, I remember, you know--wow, I've never sh--I don't think I've ever shared this before. I remember once when I was a little, little girl.

Carole Eady-Porcher 06:24

Not long after he moved to New York, he came home for Christmas. And I remember my grandmother being very excited about him coming home and my brother was sleeping. I couldn't sleep because it was Christmas.

Carole Eady-Porcher 06:37

And I knew my dad was coming. But also, I wanted to see Santa Claus. And the stories that I had read said that Santa Claus comes down the chimney, right.

Carole Eady-Porcher 06:49

But my grandmother was burning the fire in the fireplace and I kept wondering, when was she going to turn off the fire in the fireplace so Santa Claus could come down? I kept saying, 'Grandma, you got to cool the fireplace--you got to turn the fire off so Santa Claus can come down.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 07:03

She was like, 'Go to sleep, go to sleep,' you know, but she kept walking back and forth because our room was [at] the front where she could see out the window and look out and see if my dad drove up. She's--she's a mom, her kid's on the road coming from New York to Charleston, and she's worried they're taking too long, she's hoping there's not an accident, they had no trouble, etc.

Carole Eady-Porcher 07:21

So she kept walking back and forth. And between her walking back and forth and my excitement that Santa Claus is coming so I'm quiet, but I'm still awake So--but I remember eventually he came and I heard Grandmama say, 'Oh, they're here. They're here,' and she was so excited, 'My baby's here!' and - so I'm excited too.

Carole Eady-Porcher 07:21

But I'm pretending to be asleep--asleep when they came in. And I remember my dad came--you know, saying hello to everybody, I could hear them. And then he came into the room where me and my brother were sleeping.

Carole Eady-Porcher 07:43

[Narrator edits post-interview] He sat on the edge of my brother's bed for a while. And I didn't know what he was doing. But I just, kept pretending to be asleep.

Carole Eady-Porcher 08:01

And he came sat on my bed and he was caressing--he began caressing my face, just caressing my face like a father does to a child that's sleeping. And no matter what, I've always remembered that.

Carole Eady-Porcher 08:14

So even though he was this gruff, stern guy that, you know, as a father--I realize he learned that from his dad, his--my grandpa, who was also that type of father. And so I realized that, you know, that they thought that was the way that you'd be a father, that your kids [should] be afraid of you or something, but when they're sleeping you make sure you go and you touch them and you hold them and stuff like that, so.

Carole Eady-Porcher 08:40

Yeah, I think that might be the first time I've ever told that story in all the times I've told my story over the years. Eventually I moved out--my--oh, eventually I brought my brother from South Carolina to New York as well.

Carole Eady-Porcher 08:57

After I had my daughter because I was, you know--my grandmother says she wanted me to get him--we were pretty close and she wanted him to stay out of trouble so she said--she told him, 'Go to New York and live with your sister; she seems to be fine.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 09:08

You know, I don't know why I seemed to be fine. I was in an apartment with a brand new baby, you know, my dad's there as well like, 'Go, yeah, go to your sister and your--and your dad,' you know, and so we did that. It didn't work out that well. I didn't really liked it. I really wanted to be on my own. I didn't mind Ray being there but my dad was bringing different women in and I felt uncomfortable with that when the women would ask me questions about his dating habits, even my stepmom, Betty who had two sons by him.

Carole Eady-Porcher 09:29

It was--I still had some anger from my dad by him even leaving us down there like that even if he--if he really loved us, I didn't want to live with him. So, I moved out and I got another apartment and left them there. And that didn't--it didn't work out so well for them, either.

Carole Eady-Porcher 09:39

So my dad and Ray were not getting along and Daddy would lock him out of the apt. and eventually, my brother ended up getting arrested for a robbery and was sentenced to, like, two to four or something like that. It was--to me, it was a very long time.

Carole Eady-Porcher 09:52

And I was very-sad; I felt guilty because I left him with my dad knowing they didn't really get along well. I, I felt angry that, you know, that this happened to him. And I also felt angry at him that he would allow himself to get caught up in something that would take him away from me.

Carole Eady-Porcher 10:11

You know, after we were able to escape South Carolina,, I was able to leave and I was able to [send] for him. Then I felt guilty as well,, again, because of the molestation that happened in the south,, I was molested by a cousin first.

Carole Eady-Porcher 10:30

And when I stopped him from molesting me, or sexually abusing me, he--he sexually abused my brother, and I had never told anybody what he did. So I felt like if I had told someone, that they would have stopped him from coming around and he wouldn't have done that to my brother.

Carole Eady-Porcher 10:43

But at the time, I was a child, I was fourteen, then fifteen and had never heard of a guy molesting a boy. I barely knew about what was happening with me. Like, you know, why is this happening to me? I just thought maybe it was just something about me.

Carole Eady-Porcher 11:04

Because I knew it wasn't happening to my cousins, and they used to live there, and they would come and visit and stuff like that. I just thought it was something that had to do with, the reason why my mom and dad left me and my brothers because something was wrong.

Carole Eady-Porcher 11:20

Because, you know, there was something wrong with me, I was a bad girl. You know, my--my mom. I remember having gotten a burn on my stomach when I was a little girl. And my mom told me, 'Don't--make sure your dad doesn't know about this when he comes home from work.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 11:32

And I ended up--because it was painful--I let my dad see it. And he beat my mom up that night because--but it was an accident, but he beat her up. And then my brother--I remember my brother was sitting by a window and a kid--another kid told him to look out the window. My brother was about two going on three.

Carole Eady-Porcher 11:50

And the kid pushed my brother out the window. And my dad thought that was her fault, too. Even though she was there with us, and he wasn't, but she wasn't that [near] in that room. She was on the other side of the room.

Carole Eady-Porcher 12:04

And then I told--and--and the kid told my brother, 'Look out the window,' and he looked--he pushed him. And I just remember turning around saying, 'Mommy, so--Jerry push Ray out the window,' and--wow.

Carole Eady-Porcher 12:15

Anyway, so um, all that stuff all those kinds of stuff run through my head, especially back then in those early years in New York after having escaped it but not knowing what to do with those thoughts that were always running--continuously running through my head. I thought I left that shit in South Carolina.

Carole Eady-Porcher 12:42

Actually, when I moved to New York I thought--I thought that when I left Charleston that I was going to be able to reinvent myself as a singer in New York. And I changed my name--in Charleston, they called me Carole--Carole Eady, you know, but they called me by my whole name when I was--all through middle school and high school Carole Eady and I just loathed that because it was another way that I was unique. Like, everybody else had a first name and a last name and for some reason my classmates called me by my, my, my whole name Carole Eady, Carole Eady. But sometimes they would, like, just say it so fast that they didn't even say Carole Eady they would just say, 'Caa-eady, Caa-eady.' And then, you know, it's like, people would say, 'Why y'all call her that?' They said, 'That's her name, her name is Caa eady.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 13:47

You know, and--and I just want to get away from Charleston. It was that it was the bullying, it was the embarrassment, it was the shame, it was the anger about--about the, um, the abandonment by my mom and, and my dad as well because my mom was on the other side of town but she was drinking--um she was drinking and she couldn't take care of us.

Carole Eady-Porcher 14:10

So I just wanted to get away from Charleston. And just be a different person and no one would know me, no one would know how I grew up, you know, in that house.

Carole Eady-Porcher 14:19

You know, with those dogs, all twenty-seven hunting dogs and chickens and ducks and all that shit in the backyard. No one would know that about me and um--so I changed it so people thought my first name was Eaydie. --and for a time, everyone in New York knew me as Eady.

Carole Eady-Porcher 14:36

And what else--I got a job, a great job, working at telephone company, but I really thought like I said, when I left Charleston, that you know, I would leave all of that behind. The pain of the molestation, the pain of getting pregnant by a family member after being sexually abused.

Carole Eady-Porcher 14:52

The pain of coming up on my cousin molesting-- sodomizing my brother in the backyard, all that stuff that, you know, just with my head over and over again. I had started smoking weed in the south and--I loved to get high. I loved that feeling.

Carole Eady-Porcher 15:09

But it wasn't enough to help me forget. If anything, you know, marijuana might give you that melancholy feeling, like you remember the stuff but then you're like, 'Yeah. All right, yeah, I remember that, but okay.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 15:30

Sometimes I would get a hold of some weed that would, like, give me a pickup--I remember that, too, but. It was--it didn't last, you know, those those thoughts still pervaded my mind.

Carole Eady-Porcher 15:43

And I found that as I got older, I realized that I needed somebody--I needed some kind of help. But people my color didn't get that kind of help.

Carole Eady-Porcher 15:56

People that look like--we didn't get that kind of help, I would watch TV and see people sitting or lying on a sofa with the psychiatrists. . And I would say to myself, 'That's the kind of help I need,' but didn't know how to get it.

Carole Eady-Porcher 16:13

Ah, nobody talked about that in my community. Nobody talked about depression, nobody talked about sexual abuse. Nobody talked about abandonment, like it was alright if your--if your parents left you as long as they left you with someone good to take care of you, especially like grandparents.

Carole Eady-Porcher 16:33

But nobody thought about the fact that you know, maybe these kids don't want to be in a house where they're raising dogs--their whole life is these animals and they live in the city, you know. So, when you ask me why I left Charleston, it was a mixture of all of that.

Carole Eady-Porcher 16:50

And, uh, and those first few years in New York, sometimes they were happy. You know, having that beautiful little girl, getting mixed up--getting, getting involved in the music scene, meeting people that, you know, it was directly down to the music scene down in lower Manhattan and hanging out with people who had music out, singing with them, like, even if we were singing, like, mic night at a club or whatever, like Kenny's Castaways in the Village, the Village Gate, but--going for auditions for music--you know to sing, and--but when I go for those auditions, and they wouldn't call me back to do a solo or sing on a record, the depression would come back, really this big, this great big [inaudible], like, 'Oh, my God is getting ready to happen, it's getting ready to happen I have an audition, I have an audition. And I know the song and I love the song--I used to sing this song when I was a young girl--Doctor's Orders!' And--and when the guy couldn't figure out--he kept telling me he wanted me to go--do--do--go off and do a riff.

Carole Eady-Porcher 17:58

And I didn't know what that was, like, I was from South Carolina, I didn't know what he wanted. So I just kept singing it in my best voice and say-- he's saying, you know, 'Just take it on, take it on,'--I didn't know what he meant. And he says, 'Oh, yeah, this isn't gonna work out because you don't really have what I want', you know, 'You're a great singer, but you're not--you're not getting what I want and I can't teach that to you,' or, 'You know, you have to get a little bit more experience in the business and then you'll understand this.' So it was a big let down.

Carole Eady-Porcher 18:21

That happened more than once, you know, like I would--I was writing music as well. And I would give somebody my music and I was hoping that you know, they would give it to somebody else. Or they would connect me with somebody who could help me.

Carole Eady-Porcher 18:33

I was writing the lyrics and music in my head I was recording it, like, on a tape recorder but I needed somebody to help me write them out like sheet music so that I could present it to a company or something, but that wasn't happening.

Carole Eady-Porcher 18:47

So a lot of the times guys would tell me that they were able to help me and they would listen to my music and stuff like that. But a lot of times I could tell from the situation that they just wanted to get me in bed.

Carole Eady-Porcher 18:58

And that was, you know, an, uh, another point of contention, another point of depression that they didn't--I felt like they didn't think I was worthy, you know, and they just thought that I was good for a lay.

Carole Eady-Porcher 19:11

And they would say, tell me like, 'Oh, if you come over, I'm gonna listen to your music,' and 'Yeah, I think we got something good going on here,' or whatever, and then I wouldn't hear from them. I wouldn't sleep with them, and I wouldn't hear from them.

Adam Johnson 19:27

Thank you for sharing all of that.

Carole Eady-Porcher 19:29

Yeah, thank you. Yeah, I tried to push those-- those, it would seem like that way, but might be nothing like--I'm like maybe I had gotten used to sexual abuse and all that stuff. And it might seem like it's easier.

Carole Eady-Porcher 19:48

It would be easy to talk about that stuff that essentially--but it's so much easier to talk about the sexual abuse than the [inaudible], because that was like a dream. You know, like maybe I could be somebody other than that person who had gone through all that stuff by becoming just a singer.

Carole Eady-Porcher 20:07

[Narrator edits post-interview] Because I could really sing. And, it's like the one thing that I had that they couldn't take away from me, they had taken my innocence and my happiness and my virginity and hurt my brother with the same thing, you know, he did it to my brother, and they couldn't take my ability to sing--my talent.

Carole Eady-Porcher 20:30

But even that wasn't good enough. Like just my talent wasn't good enough. So, depression, I got involved with a guy, Tommy, and I fell hard for him because he was exotic.

Carole Eady-Porcher 20:44

He was Jamaican you know, he had dreadlocks taught me about the Rastafarian lifestyle, I got this new way of eating, you know? Jamaican rice and peas and fish tea and soup and cocoa bread and--and Jamaican patties, and I had unlimited access to weed And I just like, 'Oh! Here's a new way to live, then.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 21:10

You know, and that was nice for a while until he started hitting me. It's like, wow, I thought this was going to be something different. And now it's like--I'm just really feeling this from your simple questions. Wow.

Carole Eady-Porcher 21:30

And then I stayed in a relationship with him for a couple of years. And then, it was always--if he would hit me I wouldn't go to work. I didn't want anybody to see, like, if I had a knot on my head or swollen lip. And, couple of times women would ask me on my job, 'Why you take so much time off? You must got big money, you always taking time off.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 21:51

Like, no, eventually I just was like, 'Yeah, my guy, he keeps hitting me and I don't want to come to work, you know, if I have my--if my eye is swollen or my lip is swollen.' You know, and they're like, 'Why you let him do that?'

Carole Eady-Porcher 22:03

And I was like, 'Well, what am I supposed to do? I fight--I fight back. But he's stronger than me.' And they're like, 'Yeah, you could've, are you--are you married?' 'No,' I said, 'no, he just lives with me.' Like, 'Put his ass out! You need to put him out. Yeah, you could just tell him get--' I said, 'I always put him out, but then he always comes back, because I love him, et cetera.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 22:22

And they were like, 'No.' So they stayed in my ear, and then we went on a vacation to Paradise Island in the Bahamas together, the women from my job.

Carole Eady-Porcher 22:40

And while I was down there, I met some--I met this guy and really liked him a lot. You know, I didn't sleep with him or anything like that, but I really liked him a lot. And just liking him a lot made me realize that this part of my relationship, the loving, had been--was gone. [Narrator edits post-interview] Tommy had beaten it away.

Carole Eady-Porcher 22:53

Based on all the beatings, you know. I thought I still loved him, but I didn't really love him. I was just lonely. And that's why I kept him around. And when I came back, I told him, I didn't want him there anymore. And he beat me up one more time.

Carole Eady-Porcher 23:06

But this time, I knew this was the last ass whooping I was going to get from him. And then then when he tried to get back in the next time, I didn't let him back in. And I actually did start a relationship with this guy.

Carole Eady-Porcher 23:17

Darrell, he lived in Portland, Oregon. He was Chair of Black Studie sat Portland State. And I really liked him, we would travel and meet up with one another like if he had a conference, if I was going home to Charleston, he would meet me there and stuff like that.

Carole Eady-Porcher 23:31

And it was really, really nice, seemed like it was like love at first sight, just very strong relationship on both our parts. But he lived so far away from New York. So the relationship was sort of doomed because I was a depressed woman.

Carole Eady-Porcher 23:47

And he was really hard, a very hard working guy, you know, he had a fa--he had some kids, he had a couple of kids in Oregon. So he didn't--he couldn't--and he worked--he was like the Dean or the Chair. He was the Chair of the Black Studies Department at Portland State. So he had a really good career there.

Carole Eady-Porcher 24:03

But he wanted me to leave New York and come to Oregon to live. And I still had this dream of singing. So, you know, I made the decision that we were gonna have to just maintain the relationship long distance because I couldn't leave New York. I really want to sing. I really--and he was like, 'You can sing here.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 24:26

And, no, I couldn't sing there. Not like that, because I didn't know anybody in Oregon. And in this long--long distance relationship, the loneliness, the depression came back. Started hanging out with women from my job after work, and eventually, they introduced me to cocaine.

Carole Eady-Porcher 24:47

And that's how I got started using drugs. Eventually, we were hanging out in after-hour clubs after work and it was good to be accepted, these women, they liked me a lot.

Carole Eady-Porcher 25:02

They thought I was funny, they thought I was friendly and nice, and they were that way with me. And so I didn't want to lose them. And so I decided to try the cocaine, because everybody had these dollar bills going around the club and I wanted to be accepted.

Carole Eady-Porcher 25:16

For a--I wanted them, to like me, I didn't want them to think that I was better than or anything like that. And I didn't really like cocaine, had that--made your throat numb. And the bitter stuff--feel, taste dropping down your throat. And But I did it anyway.

Carole Eady-Porcher 25:33

And eventually, I felt it. And once I felt it, that was the beginning of the end, I started spending my money on cocaine as well. Sometimes I didn't even hang out with them anymore. Once I found out where to buy it, I would just buy it and go home and get high by myself while watching TV or listening to music.

Carole Eady-Porcher 25:53

Eventually, I began to run out of money because I couldn't, work, pay my bills, and buy cocaine. So listen, I'm not paying no bills, I'm doing cocaine. And then, there was this crazy thing that happened up the--up the block from where I lived, where, where I was buying cocaine--the Jamaicans up on the up on the corner, and somebody got shot.

Carole Eady-Porcher 26:17

And somebody called me and said, 'Carol, somebody got shot up there, why don't you you go see who it is.' And when I went up there, there was this guy lying on the ground. And I didn't know him, but he had a freebase pipe in his hand.

Carole Eady-Porcher 26:29

And I recognize that, admit that he had--that something--that he did something and they put that pipe in his hand as a--as a lesson for anybody else that was going to take their money, you know, I guess he was selling drugs to them. And he was stood up.

Carole Eady-Porcher 26:46

And so that scared me and I stopped sniffing. I stopped, you know, I told the girls like, 'I'm not going to do that stuff no more,' y'know, the kill--that stuff kill--gets people killed. And I did stop for a while.

Carole Eady-Porcher 26:55

But eventually, somebody introduced me to it--came to my house with a lot of drugs again, and I had forgotten that fear. And I started using and this person was freebasing. And so they taught me about freebasing, and stuff like that--my cousin, as a matter of fact.

Carole Eady-Porcher 27:13

And then once I smoked, and felt the drugs that way, for the first time, my life changed instantly. I remember I had gotten my check, like, from the state, like my income tax return. And I remember just staying at my cousin's house and running back and forth to the spot to cop drugs all night long.

Carole Eady-Porcher 27:39

Even though I had to go to work the next day. I just copped and copped and copped until all that money was gone. It was crazy. And I didn't see anything wrong when I was having a great time. I didn't know that, once you get started, you're caught. It was just every time I finished the drugs, I was like, 'Okay, let's get some more, let's get some more, let's get--' I didn't know that was going to be my new life.

Carole Eady-Porcher 27:57

But it was my new life. Eventually, that money ran out, I had to go home, get some rest, I could go to sleep. But then as soon as I got to work, I remember I was thinking about those drugs and how good it felt to be able to get high like that. And so as I got off from work, I proceeded to start using again.

Carole Eady-Porcher 28:16

And then it was like, okay, maybe I won't even go to work today. I'll just stay home and get high, and that's what happened. And before I knew it, by a couple of weeks I had lost my job because I just wasn't showing up for work, or showing up late, or was even showing up and falling asleep at work and I was a telephone operator--and you got to be like [snap].

Carole Eady-Porcher 28:36

And so eventually, once I lost my job well now I'm free to get high whenever--except I got my little girl around, and I'm afraid I'm running out to go get high.

Carole Eady-Porcher 28:52

People come into my house to get high and I'm afraid something's gonna happen to her. I don't want anybody to touch her. So I take her from my house and take her to my aunt's house to take care of her--she was like the babysitter you know, family member that, where my daughter would go to spend time. And then, like, after that, it's like, life just went downhill.

Carole Eady-Porcher 29:10

I started selling all my stuff, my jewelry, my electronics, my camera, some of my albums, my treasured--my music. Y'all know I treasured my music. But everything had--everything was will subject to be gone because I had to use. What are you gonna ask me, Ava?

Ava Sullivan-Thomas 29:34

Just to confirm, this was in 1984 that this was happening?

Carole Eady-Porcher 29:40

By then, mhm.

Ava Sullivan-Thomas 29:41

Okay, thank you.

Carole Eady-Porcher 29:42

Yep, I started using in '84 Yeah. Started sniffing. Yeah, maybe like late in '83, something like that--around that time. And then I stopped and then I picked it up again in '84.

Carole Eady-Porcher 29:54

And by maybe April or May I--by maybe April or May I lost my job. And I was using, I remember all through the summer, it was horrible, it was horrible. But once I got my daughter safely to my aunt's house, I was like, 'Okay, I'm just going to do this for a little while and then get myself together and I'm gonna get my baby,' but I couldn't find any way to get help.

Carole Eady-Porcher 30:16

I went to the doctor and I told her I was using cocaine and I couldn't stop using and I asked her could she help me, could she give me a program? And she said, 'No, there's no program. You just stop using,' you know, she says, 'Where are you getting the drugs from?'

Carole Eady-Porcher 30:29

And I said, 'Oh, people come to my house and they bring it.' She says, 'Well don't answer the door, when they come to your door, just say no, you know, don't answer. Don't let them in and then you just stop using.' But evidently, she didn't know the power of addiction.

Carole Eady-Porcher 30:44

And remember, my brother was away, there was nobody to help me, my--by this time, my father had moved back down south, from the apartment I left him in, he moved back down south to be around my ailing grandmother. And I just proceeded to use and Ray came home in '86--1986 from being incarcerated.

Carole Eady-Porcher 31:07

And when he saw me, you know, he was terrified. And he was trying to help me as well to get off the drugs but he didn't--he couldn't figure out what to do, either.

Carole Eady-Porcher 31:19

He was staying with me but eventually I was taking money from him like when he fell asleep, you know, if he was working, I would, spend his money. I remember once I took his chain from around his neck while he was asleep--a gold chain and I pawned it with the Jamaicans and he--and when he woke up and told me you know, my chain is missing, I said, 'Oh, I don't know,' I said, 'maybe somebody that came in took it.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 31:40

And one of the guys remembered seeing me bring the chain--or heard somebody say something about it. That Eady, you know, Dread--they used to call me Dread, I had dreadlocks back then, too--brought a chain to pawned and where, where would I have gotten such a chain? And my brother--and he told my brother, my brother went and got his chain back.

Carole Eady-Porcher 31:57

And right after that, soon, like a day or two, he moved out, you know, and left me in my apartment. He still loved me, you know, he took care of me, he would come and check on me, would always make sure I had something to eat, give me money to get high so I wouldn't be in the street--but he just couldn't live there anymore.

Carole Eady-Porcher 32:14

Because, he was trying to establish himself and I wasn't gonna be able to allow him to do that, because I had to use,, and he didn't take it personally. He loved me. He knew that it was but he--I remember once he came to see me and I was high and stuff, and he just started crying and saying, 'Lord, please help me to help my sister.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 32:36

And, and I started crying too. I was like, 'Okay, no, please stop crying. I'm gonna stop, I'm gonna stop, I'm gonna stop, please, just Ray, please don't cry, please.' That was my little brother and I loved him and I couldn't stand to see that.

Carole Eady-Porcher 32:49

And I really meant it, that I was going to stop using, and I did try to find treatment. But I couldn't, I didn't know where, went back to the doctor, went to church--nobody that I knew was, was trying to stop.

Carole Eady-Porcher 33:04

It was all new--a lot of drugs around, by this time it had--it had morphed from freebase into into crack cocaine. And that stuff was everywhere. And you could buy it for like \$5, \$4, \$3, \$2. And nobody--and there weren't a whole lot of people trying to get--trying to stop, [narrator additions post-interview] with the advent of crack, it had become so much easier to use now, so I couldn't figure out where to get help.

Carole Eady-Porcher 33:29

I remember once, I was so desperate to stop and so terrified, I called the police on myself and told the police that I needed help, and the ambulance took me to the emergency room. But as soon as I came down, I left and they told me I had to leave the hospital, there was nothing wrong with me, just stop using--I was right back off to the races.

Carole Eady-Porcher 33:51

It was a horrible way to live. Around--around '88. No, around '87, I lost my apartment. I was hanging out either in the street or living with some people that I got high with who hadn't lost--a lot of us were losing our apartments. We lived in Noonan Plaza.

Carole Eady-Porcher 34:14

And a whole lot of the women in the plaza and young guys had started getting high and they decided they were going to clean this plaza. So they started evicting us even though it was Section 8. We were supposed to go to welfare and get, and get rent and some of us could make it to the welfare office to apply.

Carole Eady-Porcher 34:31

Some of us couldn't, and so we get evicted. And, you know, that's what happened to me. I got evicted because I went to the welfare office to get the rent. And I fell asleep and I didn't get it and stuff like that.

Carole Eady-Porcher 34:41

So here comes my first arrest. I'm coming out of a building and I see a kid with \$5 and I take the \$5, tell the kid that that was my \$5 and give me that \$5--he gave it to me and he told his mom, his mom had me arrested for a robbery.

Carole Eady-Porcher 34:58

So I ended up--I got arrested but they let me out on my own recognizance. And then I got arrested for fighting someone. You know, he had--I thought he had my ID and he wouldn't give it back. So I was fighting and someone called the police and I got arrested because when they checked the system, I already had an arrest, and warrant because I didn't go back to court.

Carole Eady-Porcher 35:21

Eventually, I found out I was pregnant with my second child, Jahmil. And during that pregnancy, around seven months pregnant, I got re-arrested on a warrant because like I said, I hadn't gone back to court.

Carole Eady-Porcher 35:36

And I was, I was placed in the maternity ward. And I applied to bring my child back to jail with me, because they were telling me I was going to get a year, and do eight months. And, said, 'Okay, well, I'll bring Jahmil back, to the nursery from the hospital with me after I have my baby.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 36:00

I applied for the nursery. And, um, I went into labor on--two days before Christmas,. I got arrested--I think I got arrested on, like, Halloween, at seven months pregnant. And by Christmas, you know, it's time for me to have my baby.

Carole Eady-Porcher 36:13

And I went into early labor on Friday, and Christmas was Sunday. And when they brought me out of Rosie's to take me to the hospital, at like, nine months pregnant, even when I went to further checkups, they would always handcuff me, big belly, they would handcuff me in the front, but they still handcuffed me. And I would walk through the hospital, you know, for my checkup with the doctor, my maternity visits and obstetric visits.

Carole Eady-Porcher 36:46

I was so embarrassed because I'm not--I'm not high, and I got this big belly, and I'm handcuffed, you know. And so when I went to have the baby, they did the same thing and handcuffed me when I was in labor.

Carole Eady-Porcher 36:58

I remember sliding back and forth across the van seat because I'm trying--I'm like, I'm holding on and having labor pains and everything. And when I get to the hospital, I say, 'Oh, once they put me in a wheelchair,' I'm figuring, 'Okay, they're gonna take the handcuffs off now because I'm in labor.' But no, they didn't.

Carole Eady-Porcher 37:14

And then I got upstairs into the, on the floor, and the doctor asked them to uncuff me, so I could get undressed, and she could check me and stuff like that, and they uncuffed me, but then they cuffed one hand to this gurney, this bed, this birthing bed.

Carole Eady-Porcher 37:29

And the doctor examined me and she said, 'Oh, well, you're having pretty hard labor pains. But you're not, you're not dilate--you're only like two centimeters, centimeters dilated.' And so she's like, 'We're going to give you an epidural to lessen the pain, because you're not going to give birth to this baby anytime soon.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 37:49

And I said, 'Okay.' That was good because, I was having a lot of pain. Um, and so I started to fall asleep with the medication, you know, I would wake up a little bit like when I got a leave a pain, but I wouldn't really feel--I would fall right back asleep. Until someone woke me up to say, 'Okay, mommy, come on. It's time. It's time to start pushing.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 38:13

And I realized that I was still handcuffed to his bed. And the--and the doctor was telling this corrections officer, 'You need to let her, let her go so she can slide down.' And he just uncuffed me and then recuffed me lower down on the bed.

Carole Eady-Porcher 38:30

And I ended--the doctor's, like, 'Well, mom, it's time start pushing,' and I just pushed and I remember I could--I couldn't even feel it. I felt the pressure. But she was telling me 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, you're alright, you're okay, you're good, just keep pushing.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 38:43

And I was like, 'I don't feel it,' and it was like, and she--and 'She's coming, I see her head!' And then I remember opening my eyes and looking at the doctor. And when I looked at the doctor, over the doctor, right behind him was a corrections officer standing there watching me give birth to my daughter.

Carole Eady-Porcher 39:09

Anyway, like, the next day, my brother came to see me. He was so happy to see my little baby, you know, she looked just like me. Not--and they told him he couldn't stay because I was incarcerated, like that. Basically, he's the [inaudible] case.

Carole Eady-Porcher 39:28

And I was like, 'No, no, no, this is a hospital, it's not jail.' And they were like, 'Oh, yeah, but--we don't know what the rules are, but we just know that, I don't think he's supposed to be here, you know. You should--'

Carole Eady-Porcher 39:36

So anyway, he left after kissing me and the baby and stuff. And the next day, they--the doctor examined me and he came and-- they discharged me. And all of a sudden the corrections officer was

telling me, 'Okay, get dressed,' and she told the nurse to come and get my baby and I was like, 'No, no. No, I'm not. No, I'm taking my baby with me. What do you mean, take my baby?' And she was like, 'No, we don't have any paperwork for your baby, you have to leave the baby here.' And I was like, screaming 'No,' and she, like, just held my arm while the nurse took the baby out of my shackled arm.

Carole Eady-Porcher 40:11

That was a very traumatic event. Once again, here comes this horrible, horrible thing happening to Carole. I decided I'm going to stop using drugs, I'm going to get a place, I'm going to take care of my baby, and I'm going to get my older baby Katrina back as well. I'm going to take care of Jamil and Katrina, I'm going to stop use--I had no desire to use drugs.

Carole Eady-Porcher 40:32

But what they did to me that day, by taking my child and forcing me to leave her there at the hospital because they didn't have any paperwork. It was Christmas. And this corrections officer didn't even want to take the time to find out about the program. All she wanted to do was go home.

Carole Eady-Porcher 40:53

And she said, 'I don't care. I want to go home to my own family, it's Christmas. And if she really wanted her baby, she wouldn't be in jail.' And it hit me like a ton of bricks. Yeah, she's right. What made me think that a crackhead like me could become happy again?

Carole Eady-Porcher 41:13

You know, why would I think they were gonna give me my baby and I'm gonna be taking care of her in the jail out--like it's not, like, I'm not even really in jail, and be normal? And I internalized what she said and, like, no where the hell does she get off, thinking she's going to take care of the--get, get this baby and--no, she shouldn't even be in jail.

Carole Eady-Porcher 41:37

And so the depression came back. And a few days later, they--a week or two, I don't remember--they told me okay, they got everything straightened out, and I could bring my baby back. But that's--what they did to me that day, immediately all I wanted to do with medicate that pain.

Carole Eady-Porcher 41:58

And so I just started, just like, wanting to use and thinking about when I got out of there. What I would--how I was gonna cop and I was gonna get high. And by, and by having me having had the baby, I can work. I started working in the kitchen, enrolls in [inaudible] from jail, and I started putting my money together.

Carole Eady-Porcher 42:20

And I just kept saying, when I get out of here I'm gonna use and my brother was bringing my daughter to visit me. I loved her--I still loved her, but that bond, that excitement, and that feeling of wanting to be a mom was like, perhaps I can do both.

Carole Eady-Porcher 42:36

Maybe I can get high and I could take care of her because I haven't gotten high in a long time. So I probably won't be getting high the way I was before. And I'll be able to take care of her this time, like I did when early on I was using and I had Katrina. But that's not what happened.

Carole Eady-Porcher 42:49

When I got released from jail. I didn't even go right to get my child, I went straight to the spot with my bag of clothes from Rikers and everything and went and got high, went--stopped to the store and got the apparatus to smoke.

Carole Eady-Porcher 43:04

And I went straight to the spot. And I started using and I used all day long until I ran out of money, even had a seizure. And I didn't go get Jamil till the next day, but by that time my brother was like, 'Are you alright? What's going on with you? When'd you get home?'

Carole Eady-Porcher 43:18

I say, 'Oh, they didn't let me out till just now.' And, 'I thought you were supposed to come home yesterday.' 'No, they let me out today.' But all I wanted to do was, like, 'Can you give me some--I'm gonna take the baby and I'm going to stay with my friend, but can you give me some money?' And that's what I wanted to do, I got--I went right back off to the races.

Carole Eady-Porcher 43:34

And so a couple of weeks later, he came to visit. He came a couple of times, and one time I was sitting outside and another time he came I was sitting out there with the baby but I was sleeping and he just rolled the baby--said 'Look, I'm taking my niece, you're not able to take care of her and I don't want anything to happen to her.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 43:54

And I was like, 'Okay,' and he gave me some money, and I just said, 'Okay, good.' I don't have to worry about her now because when I would go to get high, she would be crying because she wanted her Pamper changed or she wanted a bottle.

Carole Eady-Porcher 44:05

And if I was at somebody's house, that means I had to leave and go home and get that stuff and I would--and I was getting high and I'd be like, 'She'll be alright even if I run out of diapers.' It was horrible, it was horrible. I was horrible.

Carole Eady-Porcher 44:20

In just a couple of weeks, a couple of weeks I just-- everybody was like, 'Oh, she's using with that baby, that--' I think somebody called my brother. Anyway. Yeah. So my brother came back and got my daughter and I began to use again I was in the street and had nowhere to live.

Carole Eady-Porcher 44:41

And that lasted for quite a few years. That was like from '89, because I got out in June of '89. The baby was born on Christmas and I got out June of '89. I proceeded to use and then I got pregnant again,

and-I told my brother wasn't going to have the baby because I wasn't take--able to take care of Katrina and I wasn't taking care of Jahmil and he's like--and I was like, 'I'm gonna have an abortion.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 45:10

And he said, 'No, you can't have an abortion, you just need to get your life together.' But he promised me if I had the baby, he would take care of the baby because he didn't want--he was like, 'If you have an abortion,' he said something to me, like, 'You have an abortion, your body's gonna--you're gonna be a walking graveyard.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 45:26

[Narrator additions post-interview] And then he threatened to call my grandmother in South Carolina and tell her that I was thinking about having an abortion. I was angry and figured he was trying to make me look bad. So I called her myself and told her I couldn't take care of the baby so I wasn't having it. Surprisingly, my grandmother, she actually took--she was actually on my side, just like, 'Well, if she's not taking care of her kids, why would she have another one?' You know? 'Is he going to take care of--' Rather than him calling my I beat him to the punch.

Carole Eady-Porcher 45:43

[Narrator additions post-interview] 'I said Grandma, Ray keeps threatening me and I can't have, you know, I haven't--I'm not able to take care of the kids. And he don't want me to have an abortion.' And My grandmother had my back. She agreed with me, but I had the baby because he said, 'Well, if you do this horrible thing, you know, I'll never speak to you again.' And his words haunted me. "After having the abortion at 15 after the sexual abuse, I felt so bad I had prayed and asked God for forgiveness and promised the Lord I'd never do it again. By my brother talking about graveyards and shit, it spooked me and I thought I was going to be the one dying if I went back on my words to God.

Carole Eady-Porcher 46:22

I had the baby. And he came and got the baby from the hospital, he took the baby to let my cousin take care of her because he had--by this time, he had a couple of kids of his own, too. Proceeded to use some more.

Carole Eady-Porcher 46:29

And by 1996, because this is '91 I'm having this, this third child, Teniesha, after Jahmil was born in '88. And in 1996 I got pregnant again. It was 'early, early '96. So, whatever--I got pregnant again and I had this baby, my son Gregory in September.

Carole Eady-Porcher 46:49

And I--by this time, I'm tired of living that life. I'm really, really trying to get clean--I had actually tried to get clean with with Teniesha. First Jahmil, well I thought--but that was by arrest and when I got pregnant by this, the third child, I went into the women's shelter. I heard about the women's shelter and shelter for women, you know, we--who were pregnant and, and treatment and all this stuff. And I didn't get treatment but I got into the shelter and I went back to school.

Carole Eady-Porcher 47:22

Like, I had gone to school when I, when I first came to New York for a year. And I decided while I was in the shelter I'm gonna go back to school, I'm gonna get a job, I'm gonna take myself--take care of myself, my kids. But right next to the shelter was a sup--was a store, a bodega and they were selling drugs out of there. I would see drugs and people and, and women in the program was in the shelter, were using and eventually I started using again. I stopped school and ended up in, back in the Bron--this was in Brooklyn, I ended up back in the Bronx, on the block, pregnant, using.

Carole Eady-Porcher 47:57

And when I gave birth, she was tox-positive. And my brother eventually came to the hospital and got her when they released her. And when I got pregnant, and-- again, and 'again, in '96 I did the same thing. But like I said, I was really ready to get myself together, but--well, I didn't.

Carole Eady-Porcher 48:20

I kept trying to get into treatment, but one thing or another would come up. My brother was really angry, he wasn't even speaking to me, one of them. The other one would tell him, 'We gotta go check on our sister.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 48:33

And eventually, I just went into labor and I gave birth to this child and they took this child, too. And my brother had the child over by his house, so I didn't have to go into treatment because I could go over there and see the child, you know, and see my son and I was seeing my other daughter because my cousin didn't know where I was hanging around.

Carole Eady-Porcher 48:52

So, you know, I thought I wanted to get clean but, you know, drugs didn't make it easy. Until I got arrested selling two cracks to an undercover cop. And I asked the judge when I went to court to, to give me treatment. And, you know, initially the judge said, 'No,' you know, 'You're four to nine, I'm gonna offer you three and a half to seven.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 49:16

And I was like, 'That's a lot of time, and I got a brand new baby, and I gotta get my--I'm gonna stop using, I promise, if you let me go to treatment.' He's like, 'No, everybody wants to go to treatment. You know, if you wanted treatment you would have went to treatment before you got arrested,' you know?

Carole Eady-Porcher 49:29

And so I kept going back and forth from Rikers Island to court like once a month and the judge would say, 'Is she ready to accept this plea?' And my lawyer would ask me, 'Are you gonna accept?' And I'd say, 'No, I want treatment.' And the same thing would happen every time and then, around--I got arrested in February, around May--no, around June.

Carole Eady-Porcher 49:50

I saw an article in the law library and newspaper and it discussed how women--discussed how women who were in jail and had children in the--in the child welfare system--that most of these women had had sexual abuse as children, or were in relationships where they were being beaten, or they were in

relationships where a guy was, was controlling her apartment and bringing in drugs--either selling or cutting , and bagging up the drugs in her apartment, and because her name was on the lease, when these apartments got raided, it was usually the woman who went to jail.

Carole Eady-Porcher 50:32

[Narrator edits post-interview] And the article further discussed the sexual abuse, and subsequent depression that women suffer, being a contributing factor in why women, try and eventually become addicted to drugs, even if they have children, or may give birth to children without being able to abate the addiction.

Carole Eady-Porcher 50:45

[Narrator additions post-interview] It was incredible! I was reading my own story on that page and could not believe that someone could see what it was that caused my downward spiral. It was also the first time I heard the term "disease of addiction". Suddenly I didn't feel like the worse person in the world. I shared the article with the other women who were in the law library. I took that article, and I made three copies. I wrote a letter to the -to the judge, really--and made a copy for the DA [district attorney] because in the law library the clerk told me you have to give the copy to the DA--but first of all, the women were saying, 'Carole, don't do this. What are you doing? Why are you sending that to the courts? A? Because I want to go to treatment.' They said, but suppose you don't get the program and now you have written to them that you are guilty?

Carole Eady-Porcher 50:53

I was like, 'No, I'm telling the judge my story. I'm telling him the only reason I was selling drugs was because I needed to support my habit, because I had to use, because I was depressed. And because, I was addicted to drugs based on the fact that I, I came up here and I didn't get what I wanted and my dreams and, and my father left me, and my mom left me, my grandfather mentally abused me, you know, with these animals, his, his son sexually abused me, my cousin sexually abused me, I was beaten, my mom was beaten--and just like my dad, I got involved in New York's fast life and ended up addicted, all that stuff that they talked about in the article.

Carole Eady-Porcher 51:51

[Narrator additions post-interview] We now know that children who grow up in households with domestic violence can grow up to either perpetrate the same violence or get in relationships with people who beat them, or children who grow up in a house with an alcoholic, as adult children of alcoholics, they may get involved with a person that just reminds them of the person who, they grew up with, because the dysfunction may seem normal.

Carole Eady-Porcher 52:10

And it's just a cycle that continues because much of the time, the children whose mother ended up in jail for the most part, not the dad, mostly the mother, they will end up in jail as well. They may end up addicted as well.

Carole Eady-Porcher 52:19

And I was telling the judge in that letter, 'Please let me go to treatment because I don't want my children to follow me down this road.' I said, 'My mom was an alcoholic, my grandpa was an alcoholic, my dad, who left me down there, he used drugs, he sold drugs, and I don't want my children to end up in jail or using drugs.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 52:41

And I took that risk and I sent that letter to my lawyer, the DA, and the judge, and when I went back to court, the ADA, granted me treatment.

Carole Eady-Porcher 52:51

And I went upstate in New York for treatment and a couple of programs. And then I came back downstate, and attended the Crossroads Program for Women at the Center for Community Alternatives. One of the only gender-specific programs at that time that basically was for women.

Carole Eady-Porcher 53:10

And I started to get treatment after being up in the mountains upstate for over 20 months between those two therapeutic communities—Phoenix House and DayTop—I didn't really get the treatment I needed until I came back downstate to that program. I needed the identification I got from other women like myself in order to begin healing.

Carole Eady-Porcher 53:29

[Narrator edits and additions post-interview] And my life just totally changed. I was scared when I came back to the city. Then I was afraid when I completed Crossroads. I was happy when the judge congratulated me and gave me my disposition six months later - time served on a misdemeanor after I completed 26 months of treatment altogether, but I was still a little afraid. I was like, 'Who's gonna help me stay clean now? Who's going to take my weekly urine? And my counselor said, "You". I was said "Ohhhh." I think it was then that I really got it that I was really free, I was clean and I now had a new life ahead of me to pick up. Not return to the old one as I had been believing.

Carole Eady-Porcher 53:49

Life changed after that program, where I found that I needed identification. Like, when I was hanging out with those women after work it was because I wanted to be accepted, as a member of the Narcotic Anonymous the Twelve-step program, they accepted you but just because of who you were, because you identified automatically, because you earned that seat by, by all your years of addiction, and they helped me to understand that I belonged there. [Narrator additions post-interview] I'd learn to follow directions at Crossroads and at Phoenix House. My counselor told me go to a meeting, raise your hand, and let everybody know that you just completed treatment and that you need help. And get some phone numbers and you will call those numbers and -you'll get some people that are going to call you and they're going to take you to meetings, and they're going to help support you so that you don't have to use.' And that's what happened, you know, my life totally changed.

Carole Eady-Porcher 53:49

And then, you know, and I was like, 'Oh, I don't know if I can do that.' They just told me, you know, 'Go to a meeting, raise your hand, and let everybody know that you're coming home from treatment and

that you need help. And get some phone numbers and continue--they'll take you, they'll take you to meetings, they'll get--you'll get some people that are going to call you and they're going to take you to meetings, and they're going to help support you so that you don't have to use.' And that's what happened, you know, my life totally changed.

Carole Eady-Porcher 54:24

And I didn't have to do anything to be here. I didn't have to use drugs, I didn't have to buy anybody drugs. I no longer had to say 'yes' when I really wanted to say 'no'. And I began to see the light on the horizon, you know. I went to computer school and, learned how to use a computer.

Carole Eady-Porcher 54:48

I was living in a women's shelter, a recovery shelter to gain housing. Right after that up I started working with the City of New York as a temp. And I went--and I decided to go to school, because at that program for women, I made connections with women, and I was able to help my sisters by telling my story and being honest, and--they were able to do the same, you know. During our groups the ladies would refer some of their questions to me or ask my opinion about certain things and they would sometimes take my advice. And one day my vocational counselor, Ron McManus said, 'Carole, you'd make a good counselor.' I thought so too.

Carole Eady-Porcher 55:42

And so I decided to go to school to become a counselor, but,, once I got to John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and was taking addiction studies and all those other classes, I was like, 'Wow, I really like this, maybe I won't just get my certificate or my associate's, I stayed for my bachelor's.

Carole Eady-Porcher 56:01

[Narrator edits post-interview] And then in my fourth year instead of graduating, I went into the double degree program, and I graduated in 2006 instead, with both my Masters and my Bachelor of Forensic Psychology degrees. And also during my studies, CCA [Center for Community Alternatives], that program where I got all that help, they asked me to join their board.

Carole Eady-Porcher 56:23

[Narrator additions post-interview] And I met a woman there on the board, Paula asked me to come to a CUNY law conference and tell my story. And I did, and when they asked me if there was anyone else that I knew that could talk about similar issues on the same panel, I suggested Tamar Kraft-Stolar, who was the Director of the Women in Prison Project at the Correctional Assn. And she came and talked about the collateral consequences of incarceration.

Carole Eady-Porcher 56:42

[Narrator edits post-interview] And then another woman, Annette Dickerson talked about prison phone justice--how families were being charged--no--being fleeced by the telephone company and the Department of Corrections. Their incarcerated family members had to call home collect, and they were charging them \$7, \$8, \$9, \$10, \$20 for a phone call. And I started working with them on a campaign to get rid of that, with the MCI phone company was MCI that was running that program and eventually

they did get rid of those crazy surcharges and the family members sued and won a great deal of money in refunds.

Carole Eady-Porcher 57:23

[Narrator additions post-interview] But um, they were all part of the Coalition for Women Prisoners and the Women in Prison Project at the Correctional Association. And I joined and became a member of the Incarcerated Mothers Committee, and there was a domestic violence committee as well that I joined, but my heart was in the legislation that I felt affected me and my family the most - being shackled while I gave birth and the Adoptions and Safe Families Act that was used to take my son away from me even after I had finished treatment and was working and living in the shelter to acquire housing to reunify my family.

Carole Eady-Porcher 58:11

[Narrator additions post-interview] I was just really attracted to this coalition--to this committee for formerly incarcerated mothers because they were pushing all these campaigns that affected women. The domestic violence bill to have women's history of DV to be included in court cases where a woman was being charged for an assault or causing death to her DV perpetrator. The anti-shackling bill for detained pregnant women so they would not be chained while in labor or giving birth, and ASFA,

Carole Eady-Porcher 58:19

And they were talking about this Adoptions and Safe Families Law, that was in play when I came home from treatment., I wasn't able to get my son from my family, because they had decided they wanted to keep him, and this law said if your child was in the system for 15 to 22 of the most recent months, your child welfare system (and your family) could petition the courts to terminate your rights so they could free your child up for adoption.

Carole Eady-Porcher 58:22

That's what happened even though my family said they were going to take care of my son till I got home. By the time I came home from being upstate for 20 months, they decided they wanted to keep him.

Carole Eady-Porcher 58:31

And so the Coalition for Women Prisoners had all these committees and these campaigns--the domestic violence for women committee had one where they were working to have women who lashed out at their abusers in the middle of a fight and ended up hurting them or killing them and not go to jail anymore. You know, that's what they were working on.

Carole Eady-Porcher 58:32

But I was more invested in the issues that affected my family and how it caused me to lose sight of the fact that I wanted to come home and take care of my baby, as well as with my last child getting clean and going to treatment for him--or a part of that was a part of it--and then to ultimately lose him because I ended up having to sign--being coerced into signing an open adoption where I wouldn't get him back, but I would be able to visit with him and have him on holidays and weekends and stuff like that. And

then soon as I signed those documents, my family moved down south and so I felt like, you know, I got--you know, I was tricked.

Carole Eady-Porcher 59:35

So those were the those are the campaigns I wanted to work on--ASFA and anti-shackling.. I wanted to make sure that other women didn't go through what I was feeling because I was still feeling it. You know, especially when I went to go have a--visit my son and they wouldn't show up, or they would say, 'Oh, you need to come all the way down here,' I had to drive all the way down to Virginia to see my son or take a train down there, you know. When he was--when I signed those documents he was living right here in New Jersey and in Philly?

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:00:04

So that's what I did. I got involved with the--with that committee and I worked on that--on those two campaigns. And in 2009, we got the Anti-Shackling Bill passed. And in 2015, we got the amendment to revise the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:00:26

So that--first with the anti-shackling bills in 2009, it was that any woman who was in labor or giving birth would not be shackled when she left the jail to go to the hospital or while giving birth. But the corrections programs--the correction centers in jails and state prisons were not following the mandates.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:00:53

They were still shackling women for a long time, because they kept saying stuff like, 'Oh, we have to shackle them, it's for our own safety, they're going to be trying to escape, they might have some guy come and, try to get them out while we take them out to the hospital. If they're not shackled, they can get away.'

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:01:09

And it was, it was just ludicrous. But in order to get them to fully follow the law, we had to go back to court, we had to revise the campaign where no woman was shackled if she was pregnant, all through labor after--during birth and giving--after giving birth for 60 days, for two months.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:01:31

[Narrator additions post-interview] And we got that revised in 2015. And a couple of months later, we got the amendment of the ASFA [Adoption and Safe Families Act] put in place where now judges could decide whether they were going to return your kid, they no longer had to follow ASFA's stringent timeline that left little wiggle room for parents who were incarcerated or in court-mandated treatment. It no longer depended on how long your child was in care but whether or not you were continuing to see and plan for a future with your children. Judges did not have to give regard to that 15 to 22 months. If you were in treatment, and you were working, and you were still--and you were trying, working on getting your kid back, and you were visiting with your child like I had been. I had been visiting my child since he was--since I got out of jail.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:01:58

I--matter of fact, I started seeing him while I was in jail because the ACS child protection specialist had to bring him to see me a couple of times. And I had been planning for my child and I didn't relapse, I changed programs two or three times, but that was because that's what happened with me but they were just looking for that certificate of completion.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:02:17

And because of that, like, so--the judges were now--are now able to look at the family. If the child has siblings, you used to--terminate a parent's right, you term--you're also terminating those siblings' rights, because that, like my son's adopted family was able to move from near New York all the way down there, and so my son's sisters didn't get to see him as often as they would have liked to see him, you know?

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:02:45

So, I've been working and doing advocacy for one campaign or another--Clean Slate, Drop the Rock, Turn off the Tap, RAPP [Release Aging People in Prison], you name it--over the years since I've learned about advocacy, because I feel like it's my way of giving back.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:03:04

I love being an advocate for these various injustices. It builds my esteem, it makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I'm beating, like, I'm beating the establishment. You know, I'm helping other men and women to not go through some of the trauma that went through. And it makes me feel, as well, that maybe all that trauma I went through was for a reason.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:03:26

You know, from--even from when I was a little girl and all the, you know, everything. It just makes me feel like my story matters, my pain matters, the trauma matters, you know. I can use that story and help somebody else identify and help them to get clean.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:03:46

I can use that story to help lawmakers understand what they put us through when they don't do this and they don't do that. I can help the police to understand you know, when, when they treat us a certain way, how it accumulates in us.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:04:09

You know, being in pain and maybe deciding, when we get back outside that we said we wasn't coming back to jail but we come back because of the pain we need to medicate, recidivate, relapse, I just feel like it makes me feel like like it all mattered and I was put here for a reason.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:04:31

Which, when I was growing up and as a young woman, I didn't feel that way--I felt worthless. I felt useless. I felt unloved. And I just wanted my life to mean something.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:04:50

You know, when I came to New York and I wanted to be somebody different, or when I was--I remember once being in a bathroom praying to God and asking him to forgive me of my sins and let me--and make me a new person, and let me be born again, I thought that meant that I was going to be a totally new person.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:05:08

When I looked in the mirror, I was still Carole. I just thought--I just always felt trapped in this horrible life, and I thought that God didn't love me. And he had people picked, and he had some of them that got a good life, and some of them didn't.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:05:23

And I wanted nothing to do with God by the time I got to the twelve-step program, but that program is based on a higher power. So I had to learn to forgive not only just forgive myself, I had to learn to forgive God, because I just thought that he turned his back on me and my brother and allowed everything bad to happen to us.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:05:43

And I didn't understand why. And now, I don't feel that way anymore. With my work--and being able to align with other people doing the same work and being able to identify with other people's pain, and other people's need to see laws change.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:06:01

I just feel--I would still wish it didn't have to have to happen, but I am grateful to be in recovery and to have been able to go to school and learn sociology, psychology, all that stuff. So I am able to put it in place. 20 odd years later, I still attend therapy, I take antidepressant medication.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:06:36

And I make N.A. meetings and I do my work. I have my job. I've been on my--on the job I got when I finished computer school in 2020. I'm still with the City of New York today, I've got 22 years of working here with the City. And I do a lot of volunteering and a lot of overtime at different agencies helping people and it feels good, it really does. So with that. Do you all have any more questions that I haven't answered?

Adam Johnson 1:07:17

I know you touched on your involvement with the CWP, could you touch real quick on what you've done with WORTH--Women On the Rise Telling Herstory?

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:07:24

I was with WORTH--I was, I was--we worked with the CWP I met Tamar at the CWP and the committee was there but they also introduced me to WORTH, and with WORTH, I traveled. I, yeah, thank you for reminding me. Did a lot of traveling all over the United States and even to Austria.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:07:42

Talking about, you know, my story of being shackled, or my story of having my son removed from my care even after I'd completed treatment, and helped people in other states use our legislation to get the anti-shackling bill or to get--to ask for laws changed in their own states, because that's a national law, but each state has adopted its own version.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:08:05

And there was a lot of different states--actually today there's still 13 out of the 50 states that still do not have any type of anti-shackling legislation, they still shackle women, even pregnant women, even women giving birth, all the way through. And we want to help those states as well.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:08:24

[Narrator additions post-interview] I've traveled to conventions, conferences, colleges, churches, you name it, we've traveled to make sure our message is told so that other people know that there's a way out and that they can get help. We have presented at Angela Davis' Critical Resistance Conference in Oakland, at Morehouse Medical School, at CUNY Law, at Brooklyn Law, at the New School at NYU and Columbia, just all over the place- Albuquerque, Miami, New Jersey, Connecticut. I went to the International Symposium in Saltzburg and others went to Switzerland or Norway. And there's a movement to remove shackling from--of women, pregnant women, all over the United States--actually, all over the world. In Norway, they don't shackle women.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:08:47

They have such a human--a humanized manner of incarceration, there, you know, you stay in touch with your family in Norway. They teach you, let you go to school, they give you a job, they pay you a live--a wage so you can put your money away so when you come home, you're able to get a place to stay. You are truly being rehabilitated there, not spending the rest of your life being punished for something you have learned from, but can't change.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:09:23

They--you have insurance, they take care of you, they have mental health, they have doctors, you know, it's a totally different way--the justice system in Norway is so much different, and I'm hoping that one day, you know, especially with this the work that I do now with the women in--the Women's Community Justice Program and Justice for Women Task Force that we soon get the Rose M. Singer jail closed and that the [four borough] model of incarceration is completed and they close Rikers Island because it's a horrible place to be.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:09:44

And that's the work I'm continuing to do right now. I'm using my story still, from 2006 until now, 16, 17 years later, I'm still telling my story, because there are still people who don't know how horrible the criminal justice system is. There are still people out there that don't know that women get shackled when they're giving birth in some states here in America, or that women can go to treatment or go to jail to come home and get their rights to their child severed and the siblings get their rights to their brother or sister severed as well.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:10:14

And you got to work your way back into it. If, that is if they don't get your child--allow your child be adopted. So um, yeah, that's the work I do. That's the work I do and thank you for asking me to share it with you.

Adam Johnson 1:10:36

Alright, well, thank you so much for sharing. Ava, were there any more questions you wanted to ask?

Ava Sullivan-Thomas 1:10:43

I didn't have any more questions, no. Thank you for sharing.

Carole Eady-Porcher 1:10:46

Thank you both for being inquisitive and curious and I hope that you are able to, use these stories to further your desire to be the change that you want to see in the world. Thank you.

Adam Johnson 1:11:01

Thank you, so I'll end the recording now.