Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction: “All us women have a story within us” 1

1 Mildred
Life Narrative: “Society is coming to prison” 11
Reading Narrative: “I have discovered a love for the law” 16

2 Sissy
Life Narrative: “There’s a time to be silent, and there’s a time not to” 23
Reading Narrative: “If you can’t relate to it, then read about it” 33

3 Olivia
Life Narrative: “It was a bad road that I was on” 45
Reading Narrative: “If I’m going through a struggle, I know that’s the book to go find” 50

4 Denise
Life Narrative: “I can’t even imagine my day without a mall” 59
Reading Narrative: “Who is this writing books that knows the things I know?!” 73

5 Bobbie
Life Narrative: “I’ve been overcoming all my life” 92
Reading Narrative: “Everybody don’t end up with a prince” 97
6 Melissa
Life Narrative: “They’re trying to brainwash me and rebuild me” 105
Reading Narrative: “From her life story to mine is not that much difference” 118

7 Valhalla
Life Narrative: “I’ve been like a ball that someone threw and I’ve been bouncing around ever since” 129
Reading Narrative: “The books I’ve read are like my friends” 139

8 Jacqueline
Life Narrative: “I refuse to be another statistic” 147
Reading Narrative: “I wanted his strength to jump out of the pages into my life!” 154

9 Audrey
Life Narrative: “That’s a chapter that’s closed” 161
Reading Narrative: “What fueled this fire for the fire to come all the way over to here?” 176

10 Deven
Life Narrative: “Society, it’s a boys’ club still” 180
Reading Narrative: “I need to know what’s gonna happen next!” 184

11 Solo
Life Narrative: “That’s a soul that you’re stepping on” 197
Reading Narrative: “Freedom for me was an evolution, not a revolution” 211

Afterword: True Stories about Prison 227
Appendix: Study-Related Materials 241
Notes 249
Bibliography 259
Index 263