

# 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