

I am the Mother of this beautiful young lady who stands before you today. My name is Stephanie Woods. I have watched her grow for 33 years and 9 months. Yes when she was 19 years old, she committed a crime. A crime that I was ashamed, and embarrassed about. Because that wasn't the way I raised her, or her sister. I also watched and witnessed her shame and embarrassment first hand as well. Seeing doors that ordinarily would have been open, shut and closed. I have always encourage Yashica to keep her faith and focus in God strong. Only God can open doors and windows men shut. Keep studying , I said, keep pursuing higher education. I saw and felt my child's pain when her application for an expungment was denied. I held and embrace my child, tears streaming down her face and mine. I did, and said what any Mother in our situation would say. Trust in the Lord with all your might, for God will clear and make a way for you. God sees and knows your heart, just as I do. I wipe those tears from her face, and said things will work out for you. And I can truthfully say, today that God has made a way. We would not be here today if God hadn't brought this in the fore front all of you to address. I believe people can change, once they take responsibility with accountability, for the things they have done in the past. With a strong desire to persevere, they can succeed in anything they strive to do and be in a positive manner. But first, they must be given and afforded the opportunity to do so. To go forth and become productive and model citizens.

In closing, Revelations 3:8 says: I know thy works: Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. To paraphrase this: When God leads you to the edge of the cliff, trust Him fully and let go. Only 1 of 2 things will happen—He'll either catch you when you fall, or He'll teach you how to fly.

Thank you very much for your time.