

SCREENING GUIDE



BEYOND SURVIVAL

WOMEN & JUSTICE PROJECT AND KASHIF PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH SURVIVORS JUSTICE PROJECT AND CREATIVE BIONICS "BEYOND SURVIVAL"
CAMERA BY NAOMI SAITO SOUND BY EJ MARKLAND ANIMATION BY OSBERT PARKER PRODUCED & EDITED BY COLIN ELLIOTT DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY GREGG CONDE
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS CHANELLE ELAINE VERONICA NICKEL PRODUCED BY JAYA VASANDANI TAMAR KRAFT-STOLAR
PRODUCED BY KRISTIE LUTZ DIRECTED BY ANNALISE LOCKHART

WWW.BEYONDSURVIVALFILM.ORG

**Thank you for organizing a Beyond Survival screening!
Below is some important information to help with your efforts.**



Film Length

The run time for Beyond Survival is 64 minutes.

Please play the full film, even if transitional announcements/activities happen during the closing credits. Playing the film through to the end is an important way to recognize the many people, especially survivors, who are a critical part of the DVSJA effort.

Promotional Materials

Please use the following language and the official film poster for your screening:

Beyond Survival was produced by Kashif and Women & Justice Project in partnership with Survivors Justice Project.

Official poster:

BeyondSurvivalFilm.org/screenings

Tech Support

Kashif can provide the film file for your screening.

Email klutz@wearekashif.com with technical specifics with as much lead time as possible - please try to give at least 2 weeks before the screening date.

Social Media

Please tag Kashif on any social media posts about the screening.

@wearekashif

About the Film | BeyondSurvivalFilm.org

Beyond Survival is a documentary that tells the story of New York’s Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act (DVSJA) and the powerful leadership of currently and formerly incarcerated survivors in creating change. Through compelling interviews with legislators, judges, advocates, and survivors of abuse and long-term incarceration, the film narrates the 10-year Coalition for Women Prisoners campaign to pass the DVSJA and spotlights critical efforts to implement this groundbreaking sentencing reform.



Beyond Survival was produced by Women & Justice Project and Kashif in partnership with Survivors Justice Project. The documentary was filmed over three years and has been screened at universities, law schools, attorney trainings, DV convenings, film festivals, advocacy events, and community gatherings.

In 2025, Beyond Survival won Best Documentary Feature at the Imagine This Women’s International Film Festival and was officially selected for the San Quentin Film Festival, where it was made available to people in California’s prisons.

Our hope is that Beyond Survival helps the DVSJA live up to its promise to free survivors and reduce our devastating overreliance on prison. We hope it amplifies the voices, expertise, and leadership of survivors directly impacted by incarceration. And we hope it contributes to critical allied efforts, both in NY and nationally – including broader sentencing reform, parole reform, and clemency – and spurs conversation about the need to end gender-based violence and shift our criminal legal system away from punishment and incarceration towards repair, accountability, and healing.

About the DVSJA

It's about humanity. It's about compassion. [The DVSJA] was meant to be a lifeline, a beacon of hope for those of us that are ensnared in the cycle of abuse. Lives and futures hinge on us understanding that survivors... deserve to be heard and acknowledged and granted the chance to rebuild their lives.

- **Tammara “Kisha” McCoy**
Survivors Justice Project
Outreach Specialist, Center
for Justice Administrative
Assistant, survivor



There is such a deep connection between violence and harm that women endure and the direct path to incarceration it creates. This is where our system continues to fail survivors.... [The DVSJA] didn't ultimately result in thousands and thousands of applications, sadly. We said it all the time, we knew it. There's a lot more work to be done.

- **Serena Martin**
New Hour for Women & Children
Executive Director,
DVSJA campaign organizer, survivor

About the DVSJA

The U.S. incarcerates more people and more women than any other country in the world. Over the past 50 years, the women's prison population has skyrocketed 1,500%.

Women of color and women from low-income communities are dramatically overrepresented, a direct result of the criminal legal system's racism and inequity.



3 of 4 women in prison survived intimate partner violence

Domestic violence is a primary driver of women's incarceration. Nowhere is this link more stark than in situations involving survivors charged with crimes related to the abuse they suffered. Instead of offering compassion and support, the criminal legal system punishes survivors, routinely moving forward with arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment.

New York's DVSJA is a tool to challenge this punishment. After a 10-year campaign by the Coalition for Women Prisoners and led by currently and formerly incarcerated women, the DVSJA was enacted in 2019.

The first sentencing reform of its kind in the country, the DVSJA gives judges discretion to sentence survivors convicted of crimes related to abuse to significantly shorter prison terms or, in some cases, to community-based alternatives.

It also allows incarcerated survivors convicted before the Act was passed to apply for resentencing to come home earlier.



About the DVSJA



As a result of determined advocacy by survivors and legal teams, the DVSJA has been used to secure the release of 82 survivors, saving 240 years of incarceration including 20 potential life sentences as of April 2026. Had the survivors been originally sentenced under the DVSJA, over 629 years of needless prison time would have been avoided.

The Act has also been used to reduce initial sentences, although exact data does not exist as courts are not tracking this information.

Additionally, the DVSJA helped spark a national conversation about sentencing for survivors and has inspired efforts for similar legislation across the country. Laws modeled on NY's DVSJA have been enacted in Georgia and Oklahoma, and several other states are actively working on their own survivors justice acts.

While this progress is hopeful, more needs to be done. Some survivors have been denied relief under the DVSJA, some are excluded from the Act's provisions, and many have yet to apply.

While the DVSJA is groundbreaking, it is only one step in the larger effort to transform our criminal legal system and end gender-based violence.

As of April 2026

82

survivors secured
release using DVSJA

240

years of
incarceration saved

20

potential life
sentences avoided

For updated data
visit www.sjny.org

Beyond Survival Interviewees

Assemblymember Jeffrion L. Aubry	State Assembly DVSJA lead sponsor, 2011–2019
Tommy Burns	Survivor who served almost 26 years before being resentenced under DVSJA.
Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson	State Senate DVSJA lead sponsor, 2011–2016
Myeshia Hawkins-Taylor	Survivor who served 7½ years and was denied DVSJA resentencing. Myeshia received clemency in 2023.
Jody Ann Hemmings	Survivor who served 11 years before being resentenced under DVSJA.
Honorable Debra A. James	Justice, NYS Supreme Court, First Judicial Department Civil Branch (Retired)
Honorable Marcy L. Kahn	Associate Justice, NYS Supreme Court Appellate Division, First Judicial Department (Retired)
Serena Martin	New Hour for Women & Children Executive Director, DVSJA campaign organizer, survivor
Tammara “Kisha” McCoy	SJP Outreach Specialist, survivor who served 16 years before being resentenced under DVSJA.
Kate Mogulescu	SJP Legal & Policy Director, Professor of Clinical Law, Brooklyn Law School
Senator Roxanne J. Persaud	State Senate DVSJA lead sponsor, 2016–2019
Alan Rosenthal	Criminal defense attorney and sentencing expert, key advisor on DVSJA legislation
Anisah Sabur-Mumin	SJP advisor, DVSJA campaign organizer, survivor
Monica Szlekovics	SJP Director of Operations & Programs, survivor
Rev. Sharon White-Harrigan	Women’s Community Justice Association Executive Director, DVSJA campaign leader, SJP advisor, survivor

Insight from Experts in the Film

There's a dichotomy of victim and perpetrator...you're either guilty or innocent. That's what our justice system does. It doesn't allow anyone to hold both....The DVSJA is not saying you're innocent, it gives room for people to be held accountable, to take responsibility, but it's saying that we need to understand what brought someone to this place.

— **Monica Szlekovics**, SJP Director of Operations & Programs, survivor

We were providing safe space. We were helping to ensure that our survivors were not just centered, but that they were taken care of before, during, and after the telling of their stories. And ultimately, they sacrificed their anonymity. They had to retell tremendous, terrible trauma in order to free other survivors.

— **Serena Martin**, DVSJA campaign organizer, survivor

Hurt people hurt people, but healed people can heal people. So if we start and lead with that, then we wouldn't have a need for all of these prisons.

— **Rev. Sharon White-Harrigan**, DVSJA campaign leader, survivor

Once I read the paperwork, I wanted change. I deserve change, like I deserve better. Then I started listening. You start listening and paying attention to things in a whole different perspective once you have this knowledge.

— **Myeshia Hawkins-Taylor**, survivor

The day we passed it on the floor, some of our colleagues were there. After such a long time and their steadfast support, that was important to me, that we were able to share in that victory. It's why I've stayed on these 30 plus years, to have that opportunity on an important issue like this.

— **Assemblymember Jeffrion L. Aubry**, DVSJA Lead Assembly Sponsor, 2011–2019

One of the things I try to tell people about government, and certainly about legislation, is it's not a sprint. It's a cross-country run, and you have to have the stamina to do it, and you have to have the commitment.

— **Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson**, DVSJA Lead Senate Sponsor, 2011–2016

I met a lot of women [in prison] who either went through worse than what I went through or similar, and listening to their stories, and myself sharing my story without the thought of being judged, did help a lot.

— **Jody Ann Hemmings**, survivor

I always ask myself how is prison any better? It's the same coercive environment in all DV situations. Someone is always dictating what you should or what you should not do. That's prison. That was [my abuser].

— **Tammara "Kisha" McCoy**, SJP Outreach Specialist, survivor

Insight from Experts in the Film

In my more than 30 years as a judge, I have to say I never saw two cases that were exactly alike. Mandatory sentencing drastically limits what we can consider....It tends to be a cookie-cutter categorization that doesn't allow for the particular circumstances under which a person committed a crime. We now know that the cumulative effects of trauma... can continue long after the physical harms occurred. Courts need to recognize this, or we're just continuing the uninformed biases of the past.

— **Honorable Marcy L. Kahn**, Associate Justice, NYS Supreme Court Appellate Division (Retired)

The DVSJA is groundbreaking, and it was a hard fought campaign to make it happen in New York. There's a lot of work that remains to be done, but we need to see the DVSJA everywhere.

— **Kate Mogulescu**, SJP Legal & Policy Director

We're saying you need to take into consideration the factors that led up to what happened. If the judges are not doing that, then they're doing an injustice to the people of NY. That's what this is about.

— **Senator Roxanne Persaud**, DVSJA Lead Senate sponsor, 2016–2019

Nothing out here will be as difficult as what you go through in there. It was hard, just surviving. But it doesn't take away our humanity. People in prison aren't monsters, they're still human.

— **Tommy Burns**, survivor

The leverage works simply like this: I, as the prosecutor am going to be generous to you. I'm going to let you plead guilty to manslaughter. But in return, you are going to have to agree to a sentence of 25 years. If you don't, you're facing a sentence of 15 to life. That's pretty coercive. It should be an embarrassment to the criminal legal system, but that's in large part how it works....The beauty of the DVSJA is that it's a springboard for educating all the players, defense lawyers, prosecutors and judges about what informed sentencing ought to look like.

— **Alan Rosenthal**, criminal defense attorney, sentencing expert

Women in the US make up 5% of the world's female population, yet 30% of women who are incarcerated [in the world]....What happens in NY or across the country in terms of the carceral population has global implications.

— **Honorable Debra A. James**, Justice, NYS Supreme Court, First Judicial Department (Retired)

When people hear domestic violence, they think it's just physical. It's not. It's all of the above. It's economic, it's psychological, it's verbal, it's emotional, it's spiritual.

— **Rev. Sharon White-Harrigan**, DVSJA campaign leader, survivor

One day we won't need a DVSJA...people who are survivors will be able to remain in their communities without prosecution, with healing resources, family, community, love and safety.

— **Anisah Sabur-Mumin**, DVSJA campaign organizer, survivor

Beyond Survival Film Team

Annalise Lockhart	Director
Kristie Lutz	Producer
Jaya Vasandani	Producer
Tamar Kraft-Stolar	Producer
Chanelle Elaine	Executive Producer
Veronica Nickel	Executive Producer
Colin Elliott	Editor, Media Management & Producer
Gregg Conde	Cinematography
E.J. Markland	Sound Recording
Naomi Saito	Camera Operation
Mohammad Madboly	Associate Producer
Osbert Parker	Animation
Bianca Vargas	Co-Producer
Dungeon Beach	Post Production
Bo Garcia	Additional Camera Operations
Tyson Dai	Additional Sound Recording
Vera Quispe	Additional Sound Recording
Hina Ali	Media Management & Assistant Editor
Zairi Malcolm	Production Accountant
Cristina Gomez	Production Assistant
Katie Smith	Additional Animator
Ines Pinhero	Additional Animator
Lloyd Barnes	Motion Graphics
Keith Major	Professional Photography (Premiere)

From the Director & Producers

*As filmmakers, we worked in deep collaboration with WJP and SJP to bring this film together. I had the honor to hear testimony firsthand of the incredible journey of the DVSJA and the powerful stories of the lives changed by it. At its heart, *Beyond Survival* is about not putting human beings into boxes of victim or perpetrator. It's about understanding that real people, every day, are punished for just trying to survive.*

*The experience of making this film changed my life and has given me the drive to continue telling stories like these. I can't wait for the world to see and be moved by the strength, hope, and determination of the survivors in this film. My hope is that through *Beyond Survival*, we spark more conversation and awareness around what justice really looks like.*

— **Annalise Lockhart**, *Beyond Survival* Director



*When Kashif started working with WJP and SJP on *Beyond Survival*, we recognized the broader impact a film like this could have, especially if we highlighted first-hand accounts of the cycle of violence and harm women experience in our criminal legal system. As filmmakers, we witness the power of personal stories to be the beating heart of transformation, creating pathways that make it easier for others to walk towards justice and equality, or at least to bring a bit more empathy into the world. I have immense gratitude for the process of making this film and to all the interviewees and especially the survivors who bravely shared their stories with us all.*

— **Kristie Lutz**
Beyond Survival Producer, Kashif

From the Director & Producers

It was a profound honor to have been part of the Coalition for Women Prisoners' DVSJA campaign from its launch in 2009 until the law's enactment in 2019.



In our roles at the Correctional Association of NY's Women in Prison Project – which coordinated the Coalition – we had the privilege of partnering with survivors on both sides of the walls who led the campaign, as well as the hundreds of individual and organizational Coalition members who fought year after year for this groundbreaking sentencing reform. For 27 years until its sunset in 2021, the Coalition was New York's foremost advocacy group focused on women in the criminal legal system.

The DVSJA campaign was never solely about passing legislation. It was also about amplifying the leadership and expertise of survivors directly impacted by incarceration, changing the power dynamics of policymaking, and building a supportive community where people from all walks of life could lend their skills to make change. It was about contributing to broader culture and policy change aimed at ending the criminalization of survivors and our devastating overreliance on incarceration and punishment.

We remain deeply inspired by and grateful for the numerous groups, survivors, legal teams, and other advocates who continue work on these issues and on implementing and expanding the Act, a critical next step. Survivors Justice Project (SJP) is chief among them. We hope Beyond Survival contributes to these vital ongoing efforts.



To the DVSJA community – the directly impacted women who led the campaign and continue to lead, the survivors who gifted their insight and vulnerability, the policymakers who fought against the odds, the legal teams who battle in the courts, the hundreds of individuals and organizations that advocated, and the hundreds more who continue to stand up and speak out – Beyond Survival is dedicated to you.

– Jaya Vasandani & Tamar Kraft-Stolar

Women & Justice Project Co Directors, Beyond Survival Producers

Discussion Questions



1. A main goal of the film is to spotlight and honor the leadership of currently and formerly incarcerated survivors in the DVSJA effort. Why is it critical for people directly impacted by an issue to have a central role in addressing it?
2. The DVSJA recognizes that the same person can be a victim and someone who has caused harm. Why do you think our criminal legal system and society so often fail to hold this complexity?
3. How has the film changed or deepened your understanding of the connection between domestic violence and women's incarceration?
4. Discuss how and why incarceration has a disproportionate and devastating impact on women of color and women from low-income communities.
5. What is mandatory sentencing? Why is it so problematic?
6. What does the criminal legal system get wrong about the effects of DV on a survivor's actions? What would a more just response look like?
7. Read through the powerful insights shared in the film on p.8-9. Pick one or a few and share your thoughts.
8. The Coalition for Women Prisoners' DVSJA campaign took 10 years to succeed. What does that say about how policy change often happens? What do you think sustains people working for social change over the long haul?
9. DVSJA eligibility includes survivors whose experiences don't fit into the stereotypical scenario of a survivor defending herself from an abuser's attack. Why is it important to include a broad range of experiences and offenses?
10. What are concrete ways to support survivors and challenge injustices in our criminal legal system? Some action items are listed on p14-17.

Learn More & Take Action

Resources for Survivors / Advocates

SJP's DVSJA Resource Guide

sjpny.org/dvsja-resource-guide

NYS Coalition Against DV Directory

nyscadv.org/find-help/program-directory.html

NYSCADV advocates role training

nyscadv.coalitionmanager.org/eventmanager/onlinetraining/details/38

National Defense Center for Criminalized Survivors

Collect call line for incarcerated survivors
9am – 5pm: 267-876-7027

24-hour DV Hotlines

NYS: 800-942-6906 or 711(TTY) National:
800-799-7233 or 800-787-3224 (TTY)

Support for DVSJA Legal Teams

NYS Office of Indigent Legal Services

nysils.questionpro.com/a/TakeSurvey?tt=QaQQCBMLG80EChRPeIW9eQ%3D%3D

NYS Defenders Association

nysda.org/resource/resmgr/dvsja/dvsja_flyer_final.pdf

DVSJA Legal Resources

NYS Office of Indigent Legal Services

ils.ny.gov/mode/268/dvsja-resources

NYS Defenders Association

nysda.org/page/DVSJA

NYS County Lawyers Association

nycla.org/course/the-abcs-of-dvsja-domestic-violence-survivors-justice-act-cle-on-demand-061522/

Practising Law Institute

pli.edu/catalog/podcasts/pursuing-justice-the-pro-bono-files/episodes/-sentencing-justice-for-incarcerated-domestic-violence-survivors

Lawline

lawline.com/course/the-domestic-violence-survivors-justice-act-learning-from-nys-new-law-to-challenge-the-incarceration-of-survivors

National Defense Center for Criminalized Survivors

bwjp.org/our-work/national-defense-center-for-criminalized-survivors/

Learn More & Take Action

Learn More: DVSJA

Survivors Justice Project

DVSJA training: sjpny.org/contact
DVSJA data: sjpny.org/dvsjadata

DVSJA statutes text

Alternative sentencing:
nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/PEN/60.12

Resentencing:
nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/CPL/440.47

Women & Justice Project Infographic

[womenandjusticeproject.org/
incarcerated-women-domestic-
violence-trauma-and-incarceration/](http://womenandjusticeproject.org/incarcerated-women-domestic-violence-trauma-and-incarceration/)

Learn More: Campaign & History

Articles

When Abuse Victims Commit Crimes:
[theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/05/
new-york-domestic-violence-
sentencing/589507/](http://theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/05/new-york-domestic-violence-sentencing/589507/)

DV Survivor-Defendants: New Hope for
Humane & Just Outcomes:
[ocbaacp.org/wp-content/
uploads/2020/03/March-SBJ.DVSJA_.pdf](http://ocbaacp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/March-SBJ.DVSJA_.pdf)

Learn More: Campaign & History

DVSJA Campaign Videos

Why We Need the DVSJA:
youtube.com/watch?v=L3oATcfDGxA

Strength of a Woman:
youtube.com/watch?v=zZAv7JsNH0Y

1985 DV hearings at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility

[youtu.be/cG2f9bkIu28?
si=J7b4bjwhNmMIsEkH](https://youtu.be/cG2f9bkIu28?si=J7b4bjwhNmMIsEkH)

Organize a Beyond Survival Screening

Request a screening

sjpny.org/contact

View upcoming screenings

beyondsurvivalfilm.org/screenings

Get Involved in Filmmaking

Kashif's filmmaking program

[wearekashif.com/programs/the-
brownsville-initiative](http://wearekashif.com/programs/the-brownsville-initiative)

Kashif's screenwriting workshops

[wearekashif.com/programs/writing-
dope-shorts](http://wearekashif.com/programs/writing-dope-shorts)

Learn More & Take Action

Learn More: DV & Incarceration

Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation
Beth Richie, 2012

Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered, Black Women
Beth Richie, 1996

Sexual Abuse of Women in United States Prisons: A Modern Corollary of Slavery
Brenda Smith, 2006

Color of Violence: The INCITE! Anthology
Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, 2016

Incarcerated Women: Domestic Violence & Trauma
Women & Justice Project, 2024

womenandjusticeproject.org/incarcerated-women-domestic-violence-trauma-and-incarceration

From Protection to Punishment: Post-Conviction Barriers to Justice for Domestic Violence Survivor-Defendants in New York State
Avon Global Center for Women & Justice at Cornell Law School and Women in Prison Project of the Correctional Association of New York, 2011

correctionalassociation.org/other-reports/2011-report-from-protection-to-punishment

Doubly Punished: Survivor Stories for Justice
Herstory Writers Network, 2018

herstorywriters.org/justice-for-dv-survivors

Learn More & Take Action

Support Our Work



WJP works in deep partnership to advance the leadership and build the power of women and gender expansive people who are currently and formerly incarcerated to transform the criminal legal system. WJP's central principle is that directly impacted people are and have the right to be experts and leaders in changing the criminal legal system.
womenandjusticeproject.org/donate



SJP is a collective of activists, lawyers, social workers, students, and researchers - many of whom are survivors of domestic violence and long-term incarceration - working for the decarceration of survivors through robust implementation and expansion of the DVSJA. SJP serves as the primary resource on the DVSJA in NYS and nationwide.
sjpny.org/giving-page



Kashif Incubator is a visionary force in media incubation, funding, and production, forging new creative and economic pathways in content creation. Kashif develops, funds, and produces stories with BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, gender non-conforming, and disabled filmmakers. Beyond Survival is Kashif's inaugural feature-length documentary.
wearekashif.com/support

