



On This  
**Mother's Day**  
Did You Know....



**THE REBECCA PROJECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

*RAISING THE VOICES OF VULNERABLE FAMILIES*

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# *...Pregnant Women in state and federal prisons labor and give birth in shackles*

## **GIVING BIRTH IN SHACKLES: ONE MOTHER'S STORY**

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In September 2000, the state of Ohio sentenced Arnita to sixty months at the Franklin County Correctional Center in Columbus, Ohio for conspiracy to distribute, a nonviolent drug offense. Ten months after arriving in prison, Arnita gave birth to her son, Waki. Waki was born in shackles. **Federal Marshals placed shackles on Arnita when she left her cell to travel to the hospital, and these shackles were not removed until she returned to the correctional facility two days later.** During Arnita's C-section, her leg was in metal shackles, chained to the bed. Arnita remembers the attending physician asking the Marshal, "do you really have to keep these shackles on?" The Marshal responded, "yes, it's procedure." Arnita stated that "during my two-day stay at the hospital, the handcuffs were always on, even when I went to the bathroom."

## **MOST OF THESE MOTHERS ARE NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS, WITH NO PAST HISTORIES OF VIOLENCE**

In our federal prisons, and most state prisons, restraints are routinely used on pregnant women while they are in labor and when they deliver their children. The routine use of restraints on pregnant women in labor and birth constitutes a cruel, inhumane and degrading practice.

**In 1997-98 alone, more than 2,200 pregnant women were incarcerated and more than 1,300 babies were born in prison.** In 2007, the Bureau of Justice Statistics states that, on average, 5 percent of women who enter into state prisons are pregnant and in jails 6 percent of women are pregnant.

*Ending the cruel practice of shackling pregnant women in labor and childbirth is a Mother's Day gift that we can give to honor all mothers and their struggles, to ensure that women give birth with safety, and to allow all our children to come into the world safe, healthy and with dignity. Please support the effort to end this cruel practice in our federal and state prisons.*

Respectfully,