

SHANNON COPELAND

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IncarceratedWorkers.org

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Criminal justice reform advocate with over 15 years of lived experience inside Florida women's prisons, combined with extensive paralegal training, legal research, public speaking, and organizational leadership. Proven ability to document systemic harm, educate the public, influence policymakers, and support returning citizens through reentry, advocacy, and community-based work.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Lived experience—informed advocacy and policy analysis
- Legal research, paralegal support, court filings and mitigation
- Grievance systems, documentation, and accountability strategies
- Public speaking, legislative testimony, and media engagement
- Coalition building, movement organizing, and leadership
- Reentry navigation, benefits assistance, and peer support

ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

- Wrongfully convicted and incarcerated in Florida women's jails and prisons (2002–2021), developing deep lived expertise on conditions of confinement, human rights violations, and systemic failures.
- Paralegal and legal researcher during incarceration; filed thousands of grievances and legal pleadings in state, federal, and appellate courts.
- Successfully achieved dismissal or reversal of dozens of disciplinary reports for self and others; secured a three-year sentence reduction through mitigation.
- Author of 'Prison Life,' a documentation of prison conditions cited by the Journal of Law and Social Deviance (2016).
- President, Florida Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee; former North Florida Director, Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants.
- Featured participant in the documentary 'Becoming Michelle,' exposing conditions in Florida women's prisons.
- Regularly invited speaker at national conferences, convenings, and legislative forums; testified before Florida legislators, local delegations, and county officials.
- Completed Fellowship, National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls (2025).

- Justice Ambassador, Prison Fellowship (2025).
- Scholarship recipient and attendee of national convenings including Clean Slate Initiative, IWOC Conferences, Florida Restorative Justice Association, DATA Research Conference, and others.
- Invited speaker, Abolition Symposium (San Francisco, April 2026); invited attendee, TimeDone Leadership Summit (Houston, February 2026).

COMMUNITY & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Founder, Pets & Pads – pet and house-sitting business; property management and client coordination.
- Airbnb property manager.
- Elder care provider and long-term caretaker.
- Volunteer and supporter of women’s recovery and reentry programs.
- Red Cross Volunteer Coordinator (2005); organizer of blood drives and community service initiatives.
- Active community and faith-based volunteer; Farm Share food distribution.

EDUCATION

- Bachelor of Science, Microbiology – University of Florida (1999)
- Paralegal Certificate – Blackstone Career Institute (2011)
- Certificates in Digital Marketing, Accounting & Budgeting, Entrepreneurship – Miami Dade College (2022–present, scholarship-funded)