

## About the Founder



Reesy Floyd-Thompson stood behind her husband, Nivens Thompson, in a Pennsylvania courtroom and watched as her life changed forever, when the judge sentenced them to 12 ½ to 25 years. There was never a question as to if she would keep her commitment to him — she'd made that decision months before when she said "until death do us part." For better or worse, she would never go back to simply being Mrs. Thompson. Now, she was also Mrs. GE-6309, the wife of a prisoner with a different kind of existence.

The first few years of the sentence, Reesy grieved the loss of her husband, the loss of her dreams. She went through the motions of answering the calls, writing the letters, and visiting. She told Nivens everything he needed to hear. She loved him. She would wait for him. She couldn't live without him. Though she didn't believe her own words, she played her part. As the years passed by, the harder it became. Reesy lost herself in the process of keeping Nivens relevant in the world. She straddled the line between Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. GE-6309. She talked about Nivens all the time to her closest friends and family, but sometimes the story of Nivens and his incarceration did not fit in to her life. A new job with a new set of friends and suddenly having a husband in prison was not acceptable. During this time, Reesy searched for support groups for her situation. For a while she participated in online groups, but she couldn't spend her life in front of a computer. Eventually, she found an in-person group for families of the incarceration. As she sat there, she listened as the facilitator mentioned every familial relationship except husband and wife. When was it going to be okay to mention the anger she felt over Nivens' absence or the resentment she harbored for his leaving her alone? Her friends were good sounding boards, but they didn't really understand the loneliness, isolation, or hopelessness she felt. They couldn't feel the frustration of the struggle to maintain an identity, while being swallowed up by all things prison related. During this time, Reesy and Nivens marriage was strained. Going through the motions took its toll on the relationship. She needed a place to vent about a lifestyle in which she didn't know how to adjust.

In 2009, Reesy held a meeting in a local library for what was then called, "The Prisoner's Wife Club." Today, that club is now known as Prisoners' Wives, Girlfriends, & Partners (PWGP). PWGP is one of the few organizations that exclusively address this population. As the founder and president of PWGP, Reesy is passionate about making sure that partners entering this lifestyle have immediate support. Though PWGP helps thousands of people, Reesy is helped most of all. Reesy is an advocate for partners standing up for their relationships during times of incarceration. She understands the hardship imprisonment places on a relationship. She has traveled across the country to meet other prisoners' partners for encouragement and support. She urges partners to be diligent in seeking and sharing the necessary resources to keep their families intact.

Through her work with PWGP, she has partnered with national and regional prison advocacy organizations. She is listed as a family member expert on the pilot program of Norfolk, Virginia's Prisoner Re-Entry Council. In this position, she works with the city to develop programs to assist prisoners upon return to society.

Her prison credentials include: editor for the *InsideOut* newsletter for the Virginia CURE; contributing writer for *Graterfriends* for Pennsylvania Prison Society; creator and editor of popular blog *Mrs. GE-6309 Time* and host of the weekly podcast of the same name; publisher of bi-monthly newsletter *Reesy Pieces*.

Her work has been featured in local, regional, and online publications, including a featured article in the First Person Arts Museum: *Through the Bars: A Workshop on Objects and Memorials for Individual Affected by Incarceration*. She has been interviewed for numerous television and radio shows. She is a certified life coach and marriage counselor. Norfolk, Virginia is her home.



Reesy & Nivens Thompson are eight years in to their sentence. Their marriage is stronger than ever.