

# One Number Can Count

*Angie Perron*

Sometimes when I look in the mirror, I see not just my face staring back at me but a number. I wasn't always that way. I had a job I loved, a nice apartment, a boyfriend, and two beautiful kids. I was one of those everyday people. My world suddenly began to change: the father of my kids, gone; my job, gone. The only thing left was me and my kids.

After 6 months of looking for a job, the hole I was digging just kept getting bigger. I made a decision for my family; I went to apply at the State for help. Just getting out of my car in the parking lot was difficult, never mind walking into the building. I sat in a drab room with ugly chairs, and no one looked at me. They just sat there blank, waiting for their number. A woman walked out from behind the big, locked gray door and called my name. I got up and walked over to her. As she stood there looking at me holding a folder with my name on it, I realized that she was not looking at me; she was looking through me. The only me she saw was the one in her hand, the brown folder with my number on it.

People I don't know see this number along with the others. They just see what's put on paper and make decisions based on it. I don't usually have control over these decisions, but they always affect me one way or another. Like the time they took away the yearly allotment we could use for car repairs, registration, and inspection. I had to do without my car for four months because I couldn't afford the repairs to pass inspection. But I still had to complete all my required responsibilities even though I was twelve miles away from school.

In the past two years, there have been all kinds of ups and downs in my life. I've gone back to school, gotten my GED, and learned new skills to better my life. I'm straightening out my life even though sometimes I still feel like a number on that file. Being just a number, you don't always count. But I know one place where I can count.

That is within my own life. I'm not a number; I'm a person, and it is me and my family that needs to count.

We need to depend on each other. We need to work together. But there are some decisions in life that are made without our families being considered. They're made in Washington, D.C., or in state or local government. And that's why I vote, so I have a say in who is making those decisions for me. I want to know that they see my face and the many faces of the others like me. Remember that feeling of being a number that doesn't count? Do you want to be somebody who doesn't matter by not voting? Or do you want to make your own decisions by voting and being that one number that does count? What are you going to do?

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*Angie Perron lives in New Hampshire. This article is from the CD, "Their Decisions, Our Stories," A project of the Better Questions, Better Decisions Voter Education Initiative, 2004. For more voter stories, go to <[www.rightquestion.org](http://www.rightquestion.org)>, click on Voter Education Materials, and follow the links to the video.*

