

**Ear Hustle**  
**Episode 103: Five Mirrors**  
**April 03, 2024**

**Raymond:** Hi, my name is Raymond. I'm here at the listener get together in Oakland, and it's great to see the team that puts Ear Hustle together. [in Swahili] Kipindi Kinacho Fuata cha Ear Hustle. Kinatumiya luga namada ambayo kauwa haifai kawatuote. tafadhali kuwa makini. The following episode of Ear Hustle contains language and content that may not be appropriate for all listeners. Discretion is advised.

[background noises]

**Greg:** *What you got? What? What's that shirt say? Not [unintelligible [00:01:04]*

**Nigel:** *Oh. Isn't it cute? My niece made it for me.*

**Greg:** *Oh, is that right?*

**Nigel:** *With bleach.*

**Greg:** *With bleach?*

**Nigel:** *Yeah. Isn't that cool?*

**Greg:** *Super cool.*

**Nigel:** *She's a smart little one [Greg laughs]. Okay. Can you start by introducing yourself?*

**Greg:** *My name is Greg Eskridge. I've been in prison since June 14th, 1994. So, that's over 29 years. I was 20 years old when I came to prison, Nigel.*

**Nigel:** *And how long have we known each other?*

**Greg:** *No, man. Nyge, we've known each other since 2012.*

**Nigel:** *Yep. So, that's like 12 years.*

**Greg:** *It's a long time.*

**Nigel:** *It has been 12 years.*

[upbeat music]

**Nigel:** *I've been wanting to do this story forever because I talked to you 12 years ago.*

**Greg:** *Wow.*

**Earlonne:** *That's Black Splenda.*

**Nigel:** [laughs] *Black Splenda. Exactly.*

[laughter]

**Nigel:** Why is he called Black Splenda?

**Earlonne:** Because he's tall. He's real dark. Is he a milk dud?

**Nigel:** Milk duds are more milky.

[laughter]

**Nigel:** He's a junior mint.

**Greg:** Aha.

**Nigel:** [laughs] It's because he's splendid, right? I mean, that's the idea. He's splendid.

**Earlonne:** So, he was Black Splenda and you were White Splenda?

**Nigel:** Yeah. Which was a little joke between us about people who care maybe a little bit too much about how they look. Which was weird, Earlonne, because how did I look when I come into prison, how do I look?

**Earlonne:** I mean, you know, you had your prison blues on, your prison clothes on. [Nigel laughs]

**Nigel:** I think the word you used was scruffy.

**Earlonne:** Scruffy. Yeah, scruff.

**Nigel:** I was really wondering if you were going to remember to call him Splenda.

**Earlonne:** Oh, Black Splenda? Yeah. Yeah. That's my big noy. That's my big noy. When I go in, I always look forward to seeing Greg.

**Nigel:** Mm-hmm.

**Earlonne:** Good dude that was part of the starting of the radio program and all that.

**Nigel:** He's one of the last guys still there.

**Earlonne:** As far as the radio program, he IS THE last person.

**Nigel:** Yeah. So, any guesses what this episode's about?

**Earlonne:** Mmm, let me think. It's about some type of minutiae.

[laughter]

**Nigel:** What makes you say that, Earlonne?

**Earlonne:** Some nuanced-- some nuanced angle.

**Nigel:** Okay. All right. Any other thoughts before we dive in?

**Earlonne:** Uh, [pauses] No.

**Nigel:** All right. Should we keep playing?

[upbeat music]

**Nigel:** *I remember I asked you if you could make a list of everything you owned.*

**Greg:** *Yeah.*

**Nigel:** *And I have that list right here.*

**Greg:** *You still have it?*

**Nigel:** *I still have it. So, I'm going to ask you, if you don't mind, to just read it. [laughs] It's going to take you back in time. Actually, can I just describe it? It's an eight and half by eleven sheets of paper folded in half. And there's just writing on one side of the half of paper. Read it to me, please.*

**Greg:** *This is kind of a throwback.*

**Nigel:** *Yeah. Wait, wait. Do you recognize it? Do you remember doing it?*

**Greg:** *I do remember doing it. I remember we talked about it, but it's just crazy to really just see it and have it in my hand and that's my handwriting.*

[upbeat music]

**Earlonne:** I didn't want to say "that list."

**Nigel:** [laughs] But you kind of nailed it when you said minutiae.

**Earlonne:** Okay.

**Nigel:** Because that's what that list is about.

**Earlonne:** Indeed. Indeed.

**Nigel:** Will you remind listeners what we're doing in this episode?

**Earlonne:** So, usually at the beginning of the season, we usually start or at the end of the previous season, we usually list out what we want to do for the next season. This season, there was a wrench thrown in the game [Nigel laughs] that Nigel and I had to come up with a story that neither one of us knew anything about.

**Nigel:** Exactly.

**Earlonne:** So, when we sit down to track, when we sit down to talk about it, everything is going to be fresh to me. So, this is our improv.

**Nigel:** Exactly. And then when it's your turn, I'm not going to know anything about the story-

**Earlonne:** You might.

**Nigel:** Really?

**Earlonne:** Nah.

**Nigel:** No. I've done so well not asking anything about it, and you know how curious I am. So, I'm very proud of myself. So, this story that I've been working on starts with a list that I had Greg make 12 years ago.

**Earlonne:** Wow.

**Nigel:** Twelve years ago, I asked him to make a list of everything he owned. I mean, it's wild that he could do it, that he could write down everything that he owned. And what I love about lists in general, and Greg's in particular, is that they can be like a portrait of a person. It's this minutiae of someone's life that tells you who they are. And, Earlonne, I am so excited to share this with you.

**Earlonne:** Okay. I mean, I'm waiting. I'm waiting.

[laughter]

[scintillating music]

**Nigel:** I'm Nigel Poor.

**Earlonne:** I'm Earlonne Woods. And this is Ear Hustle from PRX's Radiotopia.

**Nigel:** Okay. So, here's Greg's list of everything that he owned 12 years ago.

**Greg:** *Let me see, okay. A sweatsuit, four t-shirts, two tank tops, four pair of boxers, six pair of socks. I have a hat. Two sets of CDCR clothing. Some shorts, ankle braces. Two pair of shoes, a watch, necklace, some soaps, toothpaste, deodorant, dental floss, Q-tips, tweezers, fingernail clippers, toenail clippers, shampoo, body wash. There's a hotpot, a fan, a television, a discman with headphones and CDs. Thousands of photos, box of letters, several books, stationary pens. A model car, boat puzzles. Food items, soups, rice, oysters, clams, chips, candies, cookies, oatmeal. Zoom zooms and wham whams. [laughs] Some things on the list have not changed.*

**Nigel:** *I remember a few things from when you showed me this list. One, I'd never heard of zoom zooms and wham whams before.*

**Greg:** *Yeah.*

**Nigel:** *What are zoom zooms and wham whams?*

**Greg:** *So, zoom zooms and wham whams are basically food items that we describe in prison, like candy and cookies and chips. And so, instead of just naming all these items, we just break it down and just say, "Give me some zooms and some wombs."*

**Earlonne:** He said some wombs.

[laughter]

**Nigel:** I know this is also old because I had never heard of zoom zooms and wham whams before and I loved when he said that. So, Earlonne, I know you're a snack dude.

**Earlonne:** I used to be a snack dude.

**Nigel:** I know.

**Earlonne:** I am a snack dude. I'm a snack dude.

**Nigel:** So, what were some of your favorite zoom zooms and wham whams?

**Earlonne:** Hoo. It was funny because Snickers.

**Nigel:** Really.

**Earlonne:** It was like Snickers. I don't even eat Snickers no more. But when I was on the streets in the past, me and my boy, Furman, we got up on a Snicker cheesecake one day, and my God, that thing was fire.

**Nigel:** [laughs] That sounds so sweet.

**Earlonne:** Because, you know, it's a cheesecake. And then, they crumble the Snicker on top of it. So, we thought we was being slick one day and went and bought a whole one. And yeah, that was too much.

**Nigel:** So, what about on the inside?

**Earlonne:** Yeah, I mean, definitely Snickers, Reese's peanut butter cup, 3 Musketeers. I can keep going.

**Nigel:** Mm hmm.

**Earlonne:** Of course, when you order packages or you go to the store, you've got to get your iced honey buns, you got to have your munchies food. You need them sweets.

**Nigel:** What are your zoom zooms and wham whams now?

**Earlonne:** [sighs] I try to stay away from zoom zooms and wham whams. It's kind of hard. But I think, number one, it ain't even a zoom zooms or wham whams. It's just sunflower seeds, which is just an old snack or just something to pass time, I guess.

[trippy music]

**Nigel:** Was this a complete list at that time?

**Greg:** That was a pretty much complete list.

**Nigel:** And how does it feel to seeing it now?

**Greg:** There wasn't a lot of stuff. Seems like [laughs] I was- It seemed like I had just the basics.

**Nigel:** Yeah. Did you feel that you were deprived of things back then?

**Greg:** Not necessarily deprived of things. I think I just always wanted to maintain just a small amount of stuff back then.

**Nigel:** Yeah.

**Greg:** You know.

**Earlone:** He was Feng Shui with that list.

**Nigel:** Oh, yeah, totally. He was Marie Kondo before that was even a thing.

**Earlone:** Before it was a thing, yeah. He was just basics. But it could be too because I think we all had just transferred to San Quentin and usually when you transfer, you got to transfer light. You're supposed to only have six cubic feet. They don't allow you to take everything you got.

**Nigel:** So, it's interesting, if you read this list, it tells you two things. One, that he's a new arrival at San Quentin. But Greg says it also speaks to something else, which is that the prison he had been at before was a level 3.

**Earlone:** Which is a higher security than San Quentin level 2.

[scintillating music]

**Greg:** One of the first things I think can attribute to this list being so small is the fact that when I arrived to San Quentin, I just came from a level 3 prison in Donovan State Prison. And there, in those environments, you pretty much maintain a small amount of property. Because back then, I was still in my criminality, so I never knew when I would be sent to the hole. And you don't ever really want to have a lot of property, because for searches, when officers come in, it's just too much stuff for them to search. So, back then, that mentality was just keep it simple, the bare essentials.

**Earlone:** I mean, you don't want the cops coming into your cell searching your shit. So, you try to keep the bare minimums because you really want the officers in and out.

**Nigel:** Mm-hmm. So, I think it's interesting to think about that little list. And he's talking about back in his criminal mentality, he didn't have a lot. And now, he's in a different place in his life. So, this list also talks about time passing. It marks a particular time in his life that he's just not a part of anymore. So already, there's so many clues about him.

**Earlone:** Yeah, no, definitely.

**Nigel:** So, do you have an idea where this story's going?

**Earlonne:** I have no idea where this story is going. Maybe it's going to what the future looks like, where did that list go to? I don't know.

**Nigel:** Yeah. Yeah. So, a few weeks ago now, I went into San Quentin and asked him to make a current list of everything he owns as a way that we could talk about where he was 12 years ago and where he is now in 2024.

**Nigel:** *What's amazing is now I'm looking at this list [laughs] and it's two full pages, two eight and a half by eleven pages full of stuff. It doesn't even seem like this could be the same person.*

**Greg:** *I know. It's crazy to even look at that list.*

**Nigel:** *Okay, so 2012, now 2024. This is a difference that twelve years can make.*

**Greg:** *A big difference 12 years can make.*

**Nigel:** Yeah. So, just be ready, you're about to hear his current list.

**Earlonne:** Should I lean back? Okay, so. [laughs] okay.

**Greg:** *So, there's a television, a radio, a CD player with an EQ to go along with it, an MP3 player, 10 CDs, a CD holder, five pair of headphones, two tablets, a watch, and three batteries, two lamps, a clock, two fans, two hotpots, a battery charger with eight AA batteries. Seven pair of shoes, shower shoes, two pair of boots. 30 books, 16 ink pens, a glue stick. Two fingernail clippers, pencil sharpener, four pencils, two erasers, two handkerchiefs, two dictionaries, one phone book, four daily planners, two calendars, six black markers, one calculator, one whiteout, six notebooks, six packs of cough drops, 3492 photos, 26 envelopes, 19 stamps, 8 greeting cards, 2 graduation tassels. Four rolls of toilet paper, six bottles of floor wax, five bottles of cleaning agent, a rain suit. A neo laptop.*

*Box of black plastic gloves, three rows of small plastic bags, two packs of paper towels. Three puzzles, seven paperclips, nine rubber bands. Three face masks, two earplugs. Three pillows, three blankets. Two coats, two mesh bags, one seven-day pill container, eight band aids. Six photo albums, three combination locks, four stress balls. There's an exercise band. Oh, let me flip this over.*

**Nigel:** *Oh, my God. It's double sided. [crosstalk]*

**Greg:** *I did not know it was double sided.*

**Nigel:** *I totally love this.*

**Greg:** *Five mirrors, three pair of hair clippers, a sewing kit, four highlighters. One silver chain, one beaded necklace. Eight packs of dental floss, ankle brace, a knee brace, two light bulbs, a back brace, two hats. Eight toothbrushes, 12 toothpaste, 7 deodorants, 16 bars of soap, three hairbrushes, four jars of hair grease, two wave caps, four bottles of eye drops. One pair of sunglasses, [laughs] three chap sticks, four bottles of lotion- [crosstalk]*

**Nigel:** Okay. We're not even done yet.

**Earlonne:** Well, two things, three things, maybe. [Nigel laughs] One, he leaking on toilet paper, four rolls. That ain't enough.

**Nigel:** Oh, really?

**Earlonne:** Yeah, that ain't enough.

**Nigel:** Okay, and what about all those braces? ankle brace, knee brace, back brace.

**Earlonne:** Well, see, Greg was very aggressive on the basketball court. So, you know what I'm saying? I can see that as being like one of those things you need as time goes on.

**Nigel:** Exactly. Clearly, time has gone on.

**Earlonne:** That's definitely a lot of stuff.

**Nigel:** That's not all. You want to hear the rest of it?

**Earlonne:** Yes. Yes. I mean, I am on the edge of my seat.

**Nigel:** [laughs] I'm so glad to hear that. Okay, we will be right back.

[upbeat music]

**Earlonne:** We're back with the list of everything Greg Eskridge, aka Black Splenda, owns in his cell as of 2024.

**Nigel:** Yeah. So, sit back and relax, because he's still going strong.

[upbeat music]

**Greg:** *Two soap dish holders, one toothbrush holder, five packs of Q-tips, seven bottles of fragrant oil, which we call smell good, one cocoa butter stick, one Vicks Vapor Rub, two mouthwash, body washes, two shampoo, one baby oil, two foot cream, tweezers, baby powder, clipper, cleaner, and oil, tiger balm. Two hand sanitizers. Four bowls, two spoons, two forks, mouthwash, three pair of eyeglasses, four masking tape, multipurpose wipes, 30 lidocaine pairing boxer shorts, 12 pair of socks, gloves, six beanie caps, eight pair of Shein t-shirts, three sweatsuits, six sheets, four pillowcases. 18 bottles of seasoning, a box of sugar, soy sauce, two jars of jalapenos, a mac and cheese, eight boxes of oatmeal, three snack crackers, two jars of peanut butter, Velveeta cheese, 26 protein bars.*

*Now, the final page. Two boxes of drink mix, three boxes of flatbread crisp, box of red beans and rice, two cups. Two rulers. 17 bottles of vitamins, a TENS machine. Two rulers, two pair of workout gloves, three washcloths, three towels, four pair of blue pants, four pair of blue shirts. A deck of playing cards, eleven bags of peanuts, eleven bags of microwave popcorn. Five packs of cream cheese, three plastic storage bins, box of granola bars. 36 shredded beef, 52 mackerel filet, 41 oysters, nine pouches of menudo, 17 pouches of chicken, 37 Top Ramen soups, ten bags of white rice, seven sausage, 22 packs of pink salad, 14 sardines, two bags of refried*

*beans, 12 packs of black beans, three bags of chips, one bag of cereal, 16 pouches of octopus, two packs of mushrooms, three dried squid.*

*There's my work card, my identification card, thermos, and seven photo duckets.*

**Nigel:** What did you think of that list?

**Earlone:** He has enough to endure a pandemic like all the toothpaste, all the soap, yes.

**Nigel:** He's really prepared.

**Earlone:** Yes.

**Nigel:** So, I mean, what does that list say about him?

**Earlone:** Oh, it says that he's-he's-he's-- I don't want to say institutionalized because that's not the word. He's a seasoned prisoner. You know what I'm saying? He knows what he needs. Like, a newer prisoner might not have all that stuff.

**Nigel:** Yeah. I mean, when I heard this list, I was like-- especially because I knew the first list, I could not believe how much stuff he had. It seemed over the top to me. But I mean, is that your reaction to it? That it's a lot of stuff?

**Earlone:** No, that's just again, that's a seasoned prisoner's list. A seasoned person that's in there. Don't depend on the store happening. Because it may happen, it may not. So, I think it's more-- and it's not just the store. Of course, your family is able to send you packages.

**Nigel:** That's what I'm going to say. This is also someone who has resources.

**Earlone:** Yeah. When you have resources, it's a lot easier.

**Nigel:** Yeah. I mean, that's why I want to go back to this idea that these lists tell you-- or, the minutiae tells you so much because we can build a portrait of Greg without even really knowing him based on what you know about things that people do in prison.

**Earlone:** Right.

**Nigel:** We can tell about how long he's been in prison, what his interests are. As you said, he's a seasoned-- What'd you call him? A seasoned prisoner?

**Earlone:** A seasoned prisoner.

**Nigel:** Yeah. So, there's a lot here that expresses what his experience is, even though there isn't the typical information that you'd want to build a bio on somebody. So, it's fascinating.

**Earlone:** Or he might prefer to say a seasoned convict.

**Nigel:** Oh, not a seasoned incarcerated person?

**Earlone:** No, a seasoned convict.

**Nigel:** *First of all, I have so much respect that you did this in detail. Most people would not do that. So, thank you so much. A shocking difference. [Greg laughs] I mean, are you surprised to see this in this?*

**Greg:** *I'm extremely surprised. Like, whoa, this is a lot of stuff. [laughs]*

**Nigel:** *What has changed in your life in the 12 years between this really scant list of items and this quite robust archive of everything in that tiny cell?*

**Greg:** *So, here in San Quentin, it's a lot different. I think I've definitely got a little bit more comfortable. I definitely don't have that criminal mentality, so going to the hole has not been an option for me. But I think the biggest thing is the fact that over the last few years, I've had a lot of friends go home. And whenever someone paroled, they leave behind all of their property, they just pass it out to various people. And everybody's just giving me all of their stuff. And so, now I find myself-- when I was doing this list, I was like, "Man, I see I have too much stuff in here because everybody went home and left me all of their belongings."*

**Nigel:** There's something really bittersweet about that. He's getting more stuff, but he's getting more stuff because his time is outlasting the time that all of his friends had or people he worked with.

**Earlone:** Yeah, that used to always be his conversation. He used to be on me, like, "Everybody bouncing on me. I don't want to be the last person standing." You know what I'm saying? And I think-- like we said earlier, I think he is the last person standing.

**Nigel:** And he is becoming that person. And I was wondering, when you're younger and you see older people, whether you're in prison or not, you're like, "That's never going to be me. I'm never going to be that older person." But Greg is becoming that older person that's been in prison a long time, and young guys are now looking at him like, "I'm not going to be here in 30 years." And, Earlone, it's true for you and me also, I mean, we are turning into those older people that we used to see.

**Earlone:** Nyge, you mean you or is it a me and you situation?

[laughter]

**Nigel:** We're both more than, as I like to say, half a C note. [laughs]

**Earlone:** Well, I mean, again, it all depends on your timeline. You know what my timeline is at.

**Nigel:** Okay, so you're less.

**Earlone:** I haven't even hit my thirties yet. What are you talking about?

**Nigel:** I'm going to let you live in that beautiful fantasy world.

**Earlone:** Please, please. [Nigel laughs]

**Nigel:** But his list is definitely the list of an older man, and that's what comes across to me. I mean, his skin still looks great.

**Earlone:** Oh, yeah. Old Black Splenda.

**Nigel:** He's still Black Splenda.

**Nigel:** *This is like a young man- your first one's like a young man's list.*

**Greg:** Yeah.

**Nigel:** *I hate to say it. This is like a middle-aged man. You should have a recliner lounge.*  
*[laughs]*

**Greg:** *I need it with all these back pains I'm experiencing. [laughs] So, I'm 50 now. So, what, I probably was my late thirties back then?*

**Nigel:** *You were in your late thirties when I met you.*

**Greg:** *Yeah, late thirties back then, Nyge. And as a 50-year-old man, I mean, you're supposed to have more when you get old.*

**Nigel:** *Yeah. There should be this kind of progress. If you were outside, it would be the same thing.*

**Nigel:** What I'm wondering is, looking at these two lists, do you have more support on the outside now than you used to?

**Greg:** *Yeah, there's definitely a lot more support. And like I say, a lot of the people I've known have went home. Now, a lot of family and friends in the world have passed on, and friends inside of prison have went home, and they've stayed in contact. When you're in prison, you know what it takes to survive inside a prison. So, when everyone goes home, they're like, "Hey, we got you. We're going to send you money put on your books, packages." I'm the last one pretty much left. So, I have a whole community of formerly incarcerated people sending me packages and food.*

**Nigel:** Did you note one area where Greg had the most amount of stuff? One category that was very full.

**Earlone:** Cosmetics?

**Nigel:** Exactly. Greg has a lot of cosmetics.

**Earlone:** You saying it says something about him?

**Nigel:** Like we said, his nickname is-

**Earlone:** Splenda.

**Nigel:** Splenda, which suggests maybe a little bit of vanity?

**Earlone:** Uh, either that or he just one of them cats that take care of themselves. I think every time Greg steps a foot out that door, even if he's probably playing basketball, he's going to be out there glistening.

**Nigel:** Exactly. Exactly.

**Nigel:** *I note you have five mirrors. [Greg laughs] Why do you have five mirrors? [laughs]*

**Greg:** *I got to see myself from every angle. No. [laughs] So what I do with the mirrors are I put them together side by side, and make one big mirror.*

**Nigel:** Okay. Okay.

**Greg:** *Because they're so small, but together they make one big mirror. [laughs]*

**Nigel:** *What is the most outrageous thing that is on here in its amount, when you look at it?*

**Greg:** *Seven pairs of shoes, five pair of headphones. Five pair of headphones, two ears. [laughs] That's ridiculous. 16 ink pens, Nigel. And those are the ones in my cell. I still have probably 30 down here in the media center. I'm getting rid of all that stuff.*

[scintillating music]

*Four bags of detergent, three hairbrushes. So, well, two I've had for a long time. Two are sentimental. So, since I have short, wavy hair, when I wash my hair, and then I put the first layer of hair grease in my hair, I have one brush that's a little harder than the other one. One brush is a little coarse. And so, I brush my hair to get the wave pattern into my hair, and then I use the softer brush to go over the pattern and pretty much just smooth it and lay it down. So, that's why I have two. It's a method to this. Nyge, you just can't wake up and look like this, Nyge. [laughs]*

**Nigel:** *No, no, you can't. No, you can't. [Greg laughs]*

**Nigel:** *I also see somebody who cares about how they look.*

**Greg:** *Definitely care about how I look.*

**Nigel:** *Someone who takes good care of themselves. Definitely somebody who wants to have food security.*

**Greg:** *Yeah, absolutely. And that was a big issue for me. Food security was a big issue for me because growing up homeless, I didn't always have security with food. And the way I take care of myself today is because when I was younger, I was unable to truly take care of myself because I was homeless and running away. And so, I didn't have clean clothes. I couldn't bathe, I couldn't comb my hair. So, my hair was- we called it nappy or coarse back then. There was no getting haircuts back then.*

*And so, now I really take pride in my appearance. Not because I just want to think I'm some model or just some [laughs] I'm just vanity. It's personal for me because I'm able to take care of myself and I'm more healthy mentally. And I feel good when I can look in the mirror in my appearance as well.*

**Nigel:** *Also, this is somebody who works and has, to me, purpose because you have a lot of, like, you've got your day planner, a calendar, notebooks, pens, whiteout, paperclips. This is definitely somebody who's prepared to get work done. So, that comes across too. And that's*

*true. I mean, you do a lot of different things here. I find this list is not only comprehensive, it feels very healthy. I don't know, it seems like somebody who's- I hate to say this, you're in prison. It seems like somebody who's living a pretty good life. Is that weird to say? Or maybe the-*

**Greg:** *Not necessarily weird to say, because I think I'm doing the best that I can under these extreme circumstances and it's okay.*

**Nigel:** *Yeah, I guess I want to reframe what I said about a good life. If I look at this list, it's somebody who's taking care of all of their needs appropriately. Your mental life by having work stuff in school, entertaining, by having-- you've got books and puzzles, photographs which show that you are really connected to probably people on the outside. Hygiene so that you're clean. So, one of the things I love about looking at objects is, I think they tell us so much about-- if you just spend a little bit of time, there's so much information that we get from that this is a completely different person.*

**Greg:** *And also, this it does show a lot of the growth, because back then, I wasn't doing a lot of the things that I'm doing now. Like, I was just getting here to San Quentin, just arriving here, and I was just finding my way with rehabilitation and opening up to new people and new relationships and new ideas, self-help and self-care. Those were things that were foreign to me in those other prisons. And then, you come to San Quentin and everything just opens up.*

**Nigel:** *Yeah.*

[pensive music]

**Nigel:** *So, all that stuff seems really good about the list. But I think there's also a part of the list that makes Greg a little bit sad.*

**Earlone:** *Which part?*

**Nigel:** *Well, yeah, I was going to ask you, what do you think? Do you see anything that might suggest that there's a, I don't know, kind of a flip side?*

**Earlone:** *Well, I mean, like he said his upbringing was a little different. He didn't have a lot. So, a lot of times individuals want to have things around them to feel more complete. Like, have a lot of stuff to feel like they're cool, they're okay. That do happen.*

**Nigel:** *So, if you saw this list, what kind of deductions would you make about this person from reading the list of everything this person owns?*

**Greg:** *I think the first thing I would probably say is this person is entirely too comfortable in prison, truly too comfortable in prison.*

**Nigel:** *What makes you say that?*

**Greg:** *Well, it's just a lot of stuff. I mean, there's a lot of comfort in having a lot of stuff. Like, it makes me just feel secure that I have stuff. Back then, when I was with this list here, the cell was hollow, and you can just hear the echo bouncing around the walls. But with this list here today, that echo is gone. The stuff has drowned out the echo and it's very comfortable to know that I'm self-sufficient. I don't really have to go and ask people for things. I think everybody in*

*prison just wants tangible items, like things to just have, because this is an isolated, lonely place, and we don't necessarily have the physical connections that we want. And so, these items somewhat replace that physical intimacy that we may be deprived in certain areas. Just having all this stuff, it does make you feel good.*

**Nigel:** *So, you said about this list shows you that you're too comfortable in prison.*

**Greg:** *Yeah.*

**Nigel:** *What does that feel like?*

**Greg:** *On one end, it feels like I'm going to be in this place for a long period of time, and I have all of these things to be able to sustain that long period. And that's not what I want. I'm going to start giving some of this stuff away.*

**Nigel:** *You are?*

**Greg:** *Oh, definitely. I've already started giving some stuff away. Shoes, if I could find somebody that could wear a size 13, I'm definitely going to go out there during the basketball season and just take like five pair of shoes out there and just give them to some of the youngsters who may not have shoes. And definitely some of the headphones. The food's not going anywhere. That's staying with me. [Nigel laughs] But as far as all these extra items, I don't need all this stuff, because I do want to travel light now. I do want to have something that represents this old list now because it's going to be for a different purpose. Now, I'm planning my exit strategy.*

**Nigel:** *So, do you think this list, as it is now, suggests somebody who's not trying to get out of prison?*

**Greg:** *I would definitely say someone who plans on doing a significant amount of time inside of a prison.*

**Nigel:** *So, is it almost bad luck to have too much stuff?*

**Greg:** *It's interesting you say bad luck, because I definitely feel like this stuff is going to keep me in prison, and I need to get rid of it.*

**Nigel:** *Were you surprised that he said that? That this list shows somebody who's too comfortable in prison?*

**Earlonne:** *I wouldn't take it as too comfortable because when you're in prison with a life sentence, that's what it is. So, I would just take it as a person that, again, is seasoned in being inside and know what's needed and know what you need. I wouldn't take it that you're too comfortable.*

**Nigel:** *But he says he is.*

**Earlonne:** *Right.*

**Nigel:** *Yeah. So, does it surprise you?*

**Earlone:** Well, he wasn't necessarily saying it about himself. He was saying it about the list.

**Nigel:** But I think he's saying it about himself. Like, the subtext of this list is this is somebody who's too comfortable in prison.

**Earlone:** Yeah. I knew people that had way more shit than that.

**Nigel:** Okay.

**Earlone:** You know what I'm saying?

**Nigel:** Yeah.

[upbeat music]

**Nigel:** *So, if I come back to you in a month and you give me your list, it's going to look very different than this?*

**Greg:** *It will not be all of these pages.*

**Nigel:** *So, it's three pages.*

**Greg:** *It is more than three pages now because it's one side, and then there's a line down the middle, and then there's another side. So, this is actually 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and a half pages of stuff.*

**Nigel:** Earlone, you probably know this, but when we recorded this, Greg was in the process of going to the board.

**Earlone:** Okay. Okay.

**Nigel:** I mean, going to the board is dicey. You never know what they're going to say. And so, after 29 years, he's starting that process of going to the board and hopefully letting them see that he's done enough work and that it's time for him to get out.

**Earlone:** Right.

**Nigel:** And I was really curious if he gets a positive response from the board, is there anything that he would actually take with him? What do you think? Is there anything he would take with him?

**Earlone:** [laughs] Yes, I believe there's a few items he's going to take.

**Nigel:** Mm. Yes. What do you think?

**Earlone:** Pictures of course. Those 3000 pictures is going home. All his letters are going home, especially letters that are special that there's people that are probably not even on this earth anymore. And you also take a phonebook.

[laughter]

**Nigel:** Very smart.

**Earlonne:** You take a phonebook. Even though, in prison, you know everybody's number by heart.

**Nigel:** What's my number?

**Earlonne:** Your number is 415-555-34-something-something.

**Nigel:** [laughs] You got some numbers right.

**Earlonne:** No, I'm saying 555 because that's the number they put on TV all the time, 555.

**Nigel:** [laughs] That's pretty good. That's pretty good.

**Nigel:** *Are you going to take any of this with you?*

**Greg:** *The only thing I'm taking is personal items, like family photos and phonebooks. Anything personal, like legal work, stuff like that.*

**Nigel;** *Yeah.*

**Greg:** *But as far as these items, this food and this stuff, I can't wait to be able to walk around and just give all this stuff away. Give a radio to somebody. I'm just going to just bless random people that I don't even know. I'm just going to just walk around and be like, "Hey man, you want an mp3 player? I don't want anything for it. Here, you can have it. You want this Super 3 radio?" That's a specialty item in prison because they don't sell them anymore. I've had it for a long time. "Here, you can have this. Here, you need a TV. Here you go. You take all this stuff."*

**Nigel:** *That's going to feel good, don't you think?*

**Greg:** *Can't wait.*

**Nigel:** So, wait, how did you feel giving your stuff away?

**Earlonne:** Oh, I gave two fucks about that shit.

**Nigel:** So, there wasn't like, "I'm really- this is going to feel good to give someone I really care about X"?

**Earlonne:** I mean, I gave away a few things to individuals. It's a good feeling to be in that position to give something away. That means you've come a long way and you're about to enter into that new chapter, into that new world. So, yeah, it's a great feeling to give stuff away because everybody's waiting to be in that position.

**Nigel:** Earlonne, can you imagine what it would look like if we had to make a list of everything we own today? [laughs]

**Earlonne:** The important stuff or just-?

**Nigel:** Everything just like Greg did. Everything you own in your apartment and your storage, you have to put on a list.

**Earlonne:** It'll take a cool little minute. I mean, it took me a cool minute to just take pictures of certain things I had. So, I can imagine.

**Nigel:** It's a huge undertaking. But when I think about it, there's smaller ways you could do it. Like, say you could make a list of everything you carry in your bag or maybe all your clothes. Or for you, all of your shoes.

**Earlonne:** Ha, ha, ha. This sounds like you trying to take this to some type of listener challenge or something?

**Nigel:** Totally. And I hope someone grabs this idea and runs with it. And if you do it, please send us pictures and, of course, the list.

**Earlonne:** All right, come on, you know some people going to jump on this. Get ready for that list.

**Nigel:** All right. [crosstalk]

**Earlonne:** You're about to get a lot of them [Nigel laughs]

**Nigel:** Okay. But the other thing about Greg's list and the reason it's a little emotional for me, is that those 12 years between his two lists, that's the same period that covers how long we've worked together, how long we've known each other.

**Earlonne:** It's a full circle. It's a full circle with everything that we all created in the media center. This is the last person that's standing that was part of the original cast.

**Nigel:** Yeah, I like that you said that, because it also reminds me that it's a time capsule or a circle of a lot of things. It's the time period where we met. It covers that. It covers the change of San Quentin in those 12 years. Also, what you're saying really importantly about people getting out. And it feels like personal for, if I can say, our group of people at San Quentin, a chapter closing for sure.

**Earlonne:** Yeah, definitely. And you know, one of the things I do look forward to is a reunion of everybody. Maybe we all can just get dressed up and just go to some restaurant.

**Nigel:** Can we go to Harris'? That's going to be expensive.

**Earlonne:** Who's paying that bill?

[laughter]

**Nigel:** Because you know what? It will not be a small group.

[pensive music]

**Greg:** My name is Greg Eskridge, and right now I'm in the Ear Hustle studio talking with Nigel.

**Nigel:** Yeah. Hey, do you have any updates for us.

**Greg:** Nigel, you know, I actually do.

**Nigel:** Lay it on me.

**Greg:** March 5th, I was granted parole.

**Nigel:** And what does that mean?

**Greg:** After 30 years of incarceration, I'll be going home within the next few months. Hopefully this summer, I'll be a free man.

**Nigel:** Amazing, because when we were talking, that was not a known.

**Greg:** It was a definite unknown.

**Nigel:** Yeah.

**Greg:** Definite unknown.

**Nigel:** It's super exciting. And of course, I'm curious. We talked about the list of everything you own. Is there anything that you will actually take with you when you walk out those gates?

**Greg:** The only thing I'm still going to take with me is like phonebook of course, and family/friend photos. That's it. Everything else I'm going to leave behind like everybody left all that stuff behind to me.

**Nigel:** So, it really is like the next chapter. Everything you said about what you would take and the excitement about giving things away, now it's real.

**Greg:** Man.

**Nigel:** Wow.

**Greg:** 30 years.

**Nigel:** 30 years, Greg.

**Greg:** I still can't believe it. I still can't believe it, Nigel. Up until that parole hearing, I would wake up in the middle of the night and I was like so stressed out, filled with anxiety. And now, I still wake up in the middle of the night but I'm like that little kid that knows he has a bike under the Christmas tree and just can't wait till Christmas day to ride through the neighborhood. That's how I feel now. All excitement.

**Nigel:** It's great. I'm really looking forward to it.

**Greg:** I'm so excited about everything that comes with freedom. Like, it's crazy to even think about it.

**Nigel:** It will be a day to celebrate for sure. So, this is going to be the last time I'm ever going to be able to ask you to do this because you're going to be busy and then you're going to be out. Can I ask you to read the credits for this episode, please?

**Greg:** Absolutely.

**Nigel:** Thank you.

**Greg:** With pleasure.

**Greg:** Ear Hustle is produced by Nigel Poor, Earlonne Woods, Amy Standen, Bruce Wallace and Rahsaan “New York” Thomas. Shabnam Sigman is our managing producer. The producing team inside San Quentin includes Derrell Sadiq Davis, Tony de Trinidad, and Tam Nguyen. The inside managing producer is Tony Tafoya.

Thanks to Acting Warden Andes at San Quentin, Acting Warden Williams and Lieutenant Newberg at the California Institution for Women for their support of the show. Thanks also to this woman here.

**Lieutenant Guim'Mara Berry:** I am Lieutenant Guim'Mara Berry, the Public Information Officer at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, and I approve this episode.

**Greg:** This episode was made possible by the Just Trust, working to amplify the voices, vision, and power of communities that are transforming the justice system. For more information about this episode, check out the show notes on Ear Hustle's website, [earhustlesq.com](http://earhustlesq.com). You can also find out more about the show on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube [@earhustlesq](https://www.instagram.com/earhustlesq).

**Nigel:** Earlonne Woods sound designs and engineers the show with help from Fernando Arruda, Harry Culhane, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, and Darrell Sadiq Davis.

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**Nigel:** We've got bonus episodes and live chats, where we chatted up with the listeners about the show.

**Earlonne:** Something we always wanted to do and it is very exciting.

**Nigel:** It is super fun. You can subscribe at [earhustlesq.com/plus](http://earhustlesq.com/plus) or in the Apple Podcast app.

**Earlonne:** Nigel, let's clear something up real quick.

**Nigel:** Yes, please.

**Earlonne:** Ear Hustle is still free to all who want to listen.

**Nigel:** Always will be.

**Earlonne:** We're just offering some extra stuff to those of you who subscribe so we can pay a few bills.

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**Nigel:** I'm Nigel Poor.

**Earlonne:** I'm Earlonne Woods.

**Nigel:** Thanks for listening.

**Earlonne:** I want it to be like that, 60 minutes. "I am Earlonne Woods." [Nigel laughs]

**-End of Episode-**

[Transcript provided by [SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription](#)]