



Episode 13: Dirty Water
First aired March 28, 2018

Female [00:00:00.17]: This podcast contains explicit language and difficult conversation. Listener discretion is advised. [walking sound and acoustic taps]

Sara [00:00:11.28]: My first memory is... I was about three and, um, my mother had come into my room and she was angry with me. I can't even tell you what I did, probably didn't clean up the house or, you know, put my stuff away. She immediately just... I could hear her feet coming, and she was in front of me real fast, real close to me, and um, so close that the, like, her spit, the spit around her mouth was hitting my face. And, she just went into this really strong rage and just hit me real hard. And she hit me so hard that my head turned to the left and there was blood all over my little dresser that had Strawberry Shortcake on it. And, uh, and I was really... That's like my first memory. [into music builds slowly]

Earlone [00:01:15.21]: I'm Earlone Woods. I'm incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison in California.

Nigel [00:01:20.07]: I'm Nigel Poor. I'm a visual artist, and I volunteer at San Quentin.

Earlone [00:01:24.00]: And, together, we're gonna take you inside. [intro music]

Female [00:01:37.16]: [rolling, tapping beat] Thanks for listening to 'Ear Hustle' If you're looking for more stories of the justice system and life inside, subscribe to 'Empire On Blood' from Panoply. Award-winning journalist Steve Fishman spent seven years investigating the case of Calvin Buari. In the 90's, Buari ruled a Bronx intersection known as "the corner on blood" until he was accused of committed a double homicide by a former friend, business partner, and, ultimately, prison mate. You'll hear from the streets, the court, and the prison cell block in a vivid portrait where a man spends 20 years trying to prove his innocence and overturn a life sentence. All seven episodes of 'Empire On Blood' are available on Apple Podcasts or wherever you like to listen.

Earlone [00:02:30.15]: [rhythmic tones] This time on 'Ear Hustle', we're doing something we've never done before. We're featuring a woman.

Nigel [00:02:36.18]: Why did it take so long?

Earlone [00:02:38.11]: As much as I want it to be, this is not a co-ed prison, Nigel. [laughs]

Nigel [00:02:42.24]: [laughs] Ok. Yeah. I guess you're right. There aren't any women who are incarcerated at San Quentin, but there's plenty of women who come in and out of the prison every day.

Earlone [00:02:50.06]: Like you.

Nigel [00:02:50.19]: Yep. Like me, and Sara who we just heard is one of them.

Earlone [00:02:55.03]: We met her at a restorative justice symposium.

Nigel [00:02:57.27]: And, Earlonne, you know, I had never heard of restorative justice until I started volunteering at San Quentin.

Earlonne [00:03:03.06]: Yeah. I had heard of restorative justice, but I had never participated until I got to San Quentin.

Nigel [00:03:08.10]: So, my understanding is restorative justice is when survivors of crimes come inside to meet with prisoners who are incarcerated for that same crime.

Earlonne [00:03:17.05]: Right. Both survivor and offender get together in a circle to share their stories, and it's some heavy shit.

Nigel [00:03:22.28]: No kidding. The idea is to have inmates see the effect of their crime in a very candid way, like you can't turn away from it when the person is right in front of you. You can literally reach out and touch them.

Earlonne [00:03:34.18]: Yeah. I, I've sat in these circles and it's tough. People talking about losing their loved ones. Guys talking about their victims. It's just...

Nigel [00:03:43.00]: It's just honest and raw.

Earlonne [00:03:45.01]: Right.

Nigel [00:03:46.01]: So, E, how did it affect you?

Earlonne [00:03:47.25]: I was embarrassed. I mean, I was embarrassed for being a perpetrator of any crime. It's like you're sitting across from this person and you realize, "Damn. That could be my mama sittin' there."

Nigel [00:03:58.02]: And that's the kind of work that Sara facilitates.

Earlonne [00:04:00.19]: And I tell you, Nig, I've heard a lot of tough stories in my life, but, man, Sara's, I couldn't get it out of my head.

Nigel [00:04:07.11]: Yeah. Me either. And we're going to hear more from her in a moment. Earlonne, the more I learned about her, the more I saw how her story relates to a lot of guys in here.

Earlonne [00:04:16.15]: Yeah, and one of those guys is LA. We asked him the same question we just heard Sara answer. What was his earliest memory?

LA [00:04:27.08]: My first memory has to be that, when I was probably six and a half, seven years old, you know, it's like maybe seven kids in the house at this particular time, and we're all peeking out this window looking at my father. Him and this individual wrestled to the bottom of the steps. And, I could hear my father tell the individual, "Look, man, I don't want to kill you." Dude told my father, "Look, you don't kill me, motherfucker, I'm gonna kill you." And I see my father pull the trigger. You can see the flash from the barrel of the gun. And it was like, wow. That night, my father was arrested, so we weren't expecting him to be home. That next morning, he was at home. I was scared to death of him, because it's like, that changed my whole perspective. You know, he went from being Daddy to, "Damn. This motherfucker crazy." You know, for real. And that's how I looked at him. I'm like, "I ain't gonna do nothing wrong, because I don't want him to kill me.

Sara [00:05:28.13]: [soft, droning music] I had a mother that would just wake up one morning and decide to just call me a bunch of niggers and, and beat me down. And I'd go to school, come home, and I'd have to clean up or do these really unhealthy things. And then, to have... My mom had men in and out of her life. It just, it was a lot of chaos. Um, my mom had this guy friend who was 23. He used to come and bring my mom food and

then my mom would say, "Go. Take Sara. Get this bitch out of my face. Get her out of here."

LA [00:06:36.02]: I was sexually abused by my sisters and their friends. You know, from a little boy at the age of six, I remember my sisters' friends practicing on me so that they would know what to do when it comes to dealing with older boys. Pops had his girlfriend, who was 44 years old. She would come over and spend the weekends with him and my mother. This was the individual who introduced me to certain sex acts. And, back then, it wasn't looked upon as molestation. It was looked upon as an education, because what she taught me, I was able to woo other young women with. It wasn't about just going over just having quick hump or dry hump. It was full-blown sex, baby. It was full-blown sex. [walking, creaking, and muffled voice noises rolling into drums]

Sara [00:07:24.22]: You whole... I watched my hopes disappear at this school when I was raped by three gang members. Why would anybody, especially your own kind, find it ok to sexually abuse a child based on the fact that I had a ponytail and they said I was stuck up? "No, bitch. We just gonna take it from you because, bitch, you think you too good." All I knew was my mom was white and, if I spoke a certain way, she would beat me up. And then I go out in the culture and community that, that ridicules me and beats me down even more because I enunciate my words a certain way. I couldn't win for shi-, for nothing. [heavy beat]

LA [00:08:38.12]: This little friend of mine, she used to come over and spend the night. So, one day, um, my mother pulled me to the side and she told me. She was like, uh, "Look, let me tell you somethin'. If I can sell my pussy to feed you, that little bitch can sell her pussy to take care of you. Don't be having that little bitch over here and she ain't doin' nothin'." So, you know, I was like, "Ok." I really didn't pay her too much attention until my father approached me and my father was like, "Look. Look, man, what you doin' with her?" I was like, "Nothin'." "Like, "Nothin'?" You know and I kinda

hunched my shoulders, and he got on me so bad and made me feel so bad about sleeping her. And he was like, "Man, look, you don't sleep with nobody for nothin'. You gonna sleep with her, make sure you get somethin' and make sure she do somethin' to take care of you." That was my introduction to pimping.

Sara [00:09:24.23]: My mother, you know, she had issues with her own self of identity due to the fact that she was assaulted and sexually abused from her father. My mother didn't have clean water to give me because everyone dirtied hers. You know? So, that's what she ended up giving me.

Earlone [00:09:48.12]: So, you and her was 11.

LA [00:09:51.05]: Both of us were 11 years old, and she started turning dates with, um, matter of fact, one of the gentlemen across the street. And, back then, we being 11 years old, he had to be in his mid-20's. I would say mid-to-late 20's. You know, he wasn't paying nothin' but like 20, 30, 40 bucks, you know, to have sex with her and have her, you know, do little promiscuous sex acts. But, to a kid that's 11 years old, I thought I was really doin' somethin'. You know, to have sex with her and have her, you know, do little promiscuous sex acts. But, to a kid that's 11 years old, I thought I was really doin' somethin'. [rolling beat with claps]

Nigel [00:10:38.14]: E, when we started working on this episode, we were saying it's a story about pimps and prostitutes.

Earlone [00:10:43.26]: Yeah. That didn't go too well.

Nigel [00:10:45.09]: No.

Earlone [00:10:46.00]: When we first started talking to Sara, she asked what questions we have for her. And we started readin' 'em off like, "How old were you when you met your pimp? How did you adjust to what your

pimp wanted from you?

Nigel [00:10:56.24]: What was it like to meet this pimps in prison? And, she set us straight about the language we were using like stat.

Earlonne [00:11:05.00]: No, she checked us.

Sara [00:11:07.01]: Two things I feel is important to set the precedents before we continue the conversation. One - a pimp, to me, is something that our society has glorified and actually made it comfortable to accept sexually assaulting and raping people. Two - a trafficker makes an individual be held accountable for being a violent predator, an intentional, violent predator. I was 11 years old and there was an intention when he intentionally learned my route and then came in as a father figure, developed a relationship with my mother - my mother being broken, so he knew that was a win. So, as we continue this, that is how I will always refer to the individual, as my trafficker. [pulsing music, then car driving sounds]

I met GG at 11. GG is the guy who trafficked me. I was coming home from school. He picked me up. Right, right catty-corner to my house. You know, this man convinced me to get into his car over some ice cream. Now, he knew what he was doing. Right? So, I get the ice cream, and then he takes me to his house. He undresses me, he molests me, and sends me home, well, drops me off. Right, and says, "If you need anything," like it's normal, "If you need anything, just call me and I'll be there for you." You know.

LA [00:12:49.11]: This game is a fast-paced game and it's a serious game. [deep, droning beat] You go to the local high school right now. You got some little girl that's walking around wearing off-brand shoes, wearing off-brand clothing, and they're isolated. Those are the people I preyed upon. I was looking for the little insecure girls that didn't nobody want to be bothered with - maybe have some acne problems, maybe a little overweight. And then, you notice the clothes that she wore. She done wore

the same clothes to school twice within that week. Now, you only go to school five days. If you wear the same outfit twice, there's something going on. So, I used to pay attention to that. See, on the spot is where the manipulation starts. What it is is you start spending time with this person. And, say within a couple hours, you've already convinced that person, one - to have sex with you, two - that you gonna change the whole, whole outlook of they life. Now, what I used to tell people was, "Look, why should we be walking around here with Pro Wing shoes on and wearing, you know, Lee jeans and Wrangler jeans? Everybody else got Guess stuff on. We walking around here with this stuff. Look, all we gotta do is I know this old man over here. If you sleep with him, we can both go get a pair of shoes." And that's what it was. They thinkin' they gettin' some new clothes but, to me, I'm dressin' 'em up so they look good for the next trick. [droning]

Earlone [00:14:15.17]: So, nobody ever came to you and said, "I'll take you away from this right now," when you were in the world being trafficked?

Sara [00:14:24.26]: Actually, there was these guys that were in a car and I remember they were like, "Hey! You're too young to be out! What are you doin'? Come on! I'm'ma take you home! Come on!" I was so scared of the consequences I couldn't move. And I just, lost the opportunity. You know, it's, it's crazy. I was in a prison within myself. [ringing, swooping beat]

Earlone [00:15:01.20]: Sara was 11 when she met GG, the guy who trafficked her. He spent two years grooming her and at 13 he turned her out. For the next three years, she was trafficked.

Nigel [00:15:12.15]: What happened next was this, and it's a really intense part of the story. One night, they were at a hotel and GG wanted to have sex with her. He went to the dresser to get a sex toy out of the drawer, and Sara came up behind him and shot him in the back of the head. [deep piano note, beeping]

Earlone [00:15:31.27]: Sara was 16. Killing her trafficker was her escape.

Nigel [00:15:35.24]: Yep. It got her out of that environment, but she was arrested and charged with murder.

Earlone [00:15:41.17]: That left her in a whole 'nother kind of situation.
[droning music]

Sara [00:15:48.14]: It was really intimidating. One - I didn't understand the legal jargon. Two - I didn't know what was happening to the degree, like I couldn't fathom the fact that I was gonna die in prison, you know, or that that would even happen. You know. I was surrounded. Everyone was a man, was a man - the jailers, the police, the judge - mostly white men. [voice wavers] That's crazy because that was more scary than my, my trial was sitting next to my lawyer. You know what I'm saying? 'Cause it's like, "Well, who are you, really?" You know, and the judge, like, like, "Are you one too?" Having the police be so strong and have to tie those chains around your waist and stuff, you know. I think that, that was the most scariest thing for me, because I didn't understand why. Like, what did I do that was so bad in my life to deserve such inhumane and cruel treatment? This is how naive, this is how young I was, and you know, how my brain was thinking. I was sitting in the, before they read you, you know, your time and your sentence and stuff. They had me in this cold cell, and I was like... I had my wrist, you know, shackled to my waist, and I had walked over, like shuffled over, and got some toilet paper, and I had balled them up in like these little balls. And then, I'd shake 'em in my hand and I would tell myself, "Ok, well, if they all land on the slab, I'm gonna stay. I'm gonna get to go home." Like, you know what I mean? "But if one falls off..." Like, I was playing this game with myself as to what my future was going to be. [slow, deep beat]

Earlone [00:18:04.24]: Sara's trial lasted only two and a half days. She was convicted of the murder of George 'GG' Howard and sentenced to life

without the possibility of parole plus four years.

Nigel [00:18:16.11]: Plus four years. That's crazy.

Earlone [00:18:18.29]: I know.

Nigel [00:18:19.20]: And, you know what else is crazy, the jury wasn't allowed to hear that she killed GG because he was her trafficker.

Earlone [00:18:26.04]: Nig, the girl couldn't win.

Nigel [00:18:28.00]: Truly.

Earlone [00:18:28.24]: 12 years into her life term, her sentence was commuted, but it still took seven more years before she was released on parole.

Nigel [00:18:36.02]: That was 2013. And when she got out, she started doing restorative justice work. She know lives in Southern California, but we got her to come back and tell her story and also to meet with LA.
[clapping beat]

Earlone [00:18:56.24]: Ok. Here's where we at. Sara served 19 years of her life sentence for killing her trafficker.

Nigel [00:19:03.12]: LA received 229 years to life. So far, he's been in prison for 22 years.

Earlone [00:19:09.11]: We heard both of their stories separately. Now, we're about to put 'em together in the media lab.

Nigel [00:19:14.17]: And we wanted to create the conditions for the sort of conversation that takes place at restorative justice circles where the victims

come face to face with perpetrators.

LA [00:19:23.07]: Yeah. Hi, Sara. How you doin'?

Sara [00:19:25.07]: Hi.

Nigel [00:19:26.15]: We had no idea how they were going to get this conversation started.

Earlone [00:19:29.13]: But, Sara's done this before. So, we just let them go.

Nigel [00:19:32.18]: They spoke for about an hour, and we edited their conversation down for time.

Earlone [00:19:37.04]: Sara started by asking LA how he got into the life.

LA [00:19:42.24]: You know, by the time I was seven years old, I had watched my mother engage in acts of prostitution, sisters engage in acts of prostitution. You know, your mom was sitting up telling you, "Look, if I can ho to feed you, anybody else, bitch, you run into, definitely can ho and take care of you." See, that's the type of household I grew up in.

Sara [00:20:04.14]: So, I hope [clears throat] that by saying this is that the word prostitution itself carries such a negative, like, there's no, there's no need to respect that word. And I hear you refer to your mother, you know, in that, that tone and it breaks my heart.

LA [00:20:21.15]: Look, Sara, let me share this. You talk about me referring to my mother as a prostitute. My mama always called herself a ho. She never said prostitute. I grew up thinking prostitute was the appropriate word to use. My mama started turning dates at eight years old. Her, her introduction to this lifestyle was her being exploited as a child.

Sara [00:20:43.10]: Right.

LA [00:20:43.15]: So, she never felt anything wrong with what she did as an adult. I was told everybody that I ever encountered, that I should be trying to get my paper up out of 'em, and that's what I did. Why am I in prison? For doing exactly what I was taught to do as a child.

Sara [00:20:57.26]: How have you... [clears throat] Have you inflicted violence upon young girls, children?

LA [00:21:07.07]: Yes, I have. Yes, I have.

Sara [00:21:11.00]: Was there violence imposed on you as a kid?

LA [00:21:13.26]: Of course there was. I was beat with extension cords, rubber hoses.

Sara [00:21:19.28]: Did you ever whip anybody like that?

LA [00:21:21.29]: No. Absolutely not.

Sara [00:21:23.23]: What about the girls that worked for you? If they were out of pocket?

LA [00:21:27.15]: The girls that worked for me that were out of pocket, I can honestly tell you this. You know, in that lifestyle, it's like, look, violence is like secondary. You're givin' instructions. You don't do what you supposed to do, you know what follows behind that. It's like, if you didn't want that violence, then you do exactly what you do. Violence, to me, was measured as, if I got to put my hands on you, I don't need you around me. That's the honest truth. I'm sitting in prison with 229 years to life. I haven't killed nobody. It's-

Sara [00:22:01.23]: Why? What do you mean you haven't killed anybody?
[clears throat]

LA [00:22:04.27]: Well, I say that because, I'm-

Sara [00:22:06.27]: Physically?

LA [00:22:08.00]: Physically. Emotion-

Sara [00:22:09.00]: But what about mentally or emotionally?

LA [00:22:10.22]: Emotionally or mentally, I'm guilty.

Sara [00:22:12.15]: Yeah.

LA [00:22:13.02]: I've destroyed a lot of lives. I know that. I can't go back and say I'm sorry. Right?

Sara [00:22:18.19]: Why not?

LA [00:22:19.13]: Because the simple fact I don't have the right to ask for forgiveness.

Sara [00:22:22.11]: Why not?

LA [00:22:22.14]: No. I have the right to accept it if you choose to extend it, but I don't have the right to ask my victims for forgiveness. It's not about me. It's about them and about me doing whatever I can to assist them on their healing journey.

Sara [00:22:33.29]: Why isn't about you when you were victimized too and no one asked? You, you didn't get a chance.

LA [00:22:40.00]: Look, I made a conscious decision to do what I did as an adult. I like to believe that I'm a different person, that I'd do things differently, but the reality of the situation is my past cannot be turned back. I can't unring no bell.

Sara [00:22:55.17]: Have you asked yourself for forgiveness?

LA [00:22:57.23]: Of course I have. That's the easy part, but to go back and receive that forgiveness from a victim... It's like, how do you sit across from somebody and you've ruined their lives and you say, "I'm sorry." What does that really mean?

Sara [00:23:13.25]: It means a lot. I mean, me sitting here, I am that person.

LA [00:23:17.18]: Would you really want, would you really want me to sit across the table from you if you was my victim and tell you that I'm sorry?

Sara [00:23:24.13]: Yes.

LA [00:23:26.00]: Look, I'm sorry, and I mean that from my heart. It's just, for me, I never thought that my victims would want to hear that from me?

Sara [00:23:33.10]: Why not?

LA [00:23:34.28]: Because what I did. I did this. I can't get away from it. Because I was victimized as a child doesn't mean that I had the right to victimize somebody else in my adulthood. That's not cool.

Sara [00:23:48.02]: What did you have in your life to show you that that wasn't the way of life?

LA [00:23:53.02]: I grew up in a household. I have eighteen sisters. Out of 18 sisters, I can't tell you, at least 15 of them chose this lifestyle after they had an opportunity to separate them self. They went back to the lifestyle.

Sara [00:24:11.09]: How?

LA [00:24:11.22]: Because there was no counseling available. There was no nothing available for them to get the resources in which they needed to change.

Sara [00:24:16.06]: That's not a choice.

LA [00:24:18.03]: They chose that.

Sara [00:24:19.06]: That's not a choice.

LA [00:24:20.11]: Hold on. When we're adults, we make choices. We all make choices. I made a choice to do what I did. It took me coming to prison with 229 years to life to get my head on my shoulders.

Sara [00:24:33.01]: Why?

LA [00:24:34.03]: Why?

Sara [00:24:34.11]: Why? Why did it take for you to come to prison? Why weren't you able to do that out there?

LA [00:24:39.20]: Why did it take me...because, in my mind-

Sara [00:24:43.08]: Mmhmm.

LA [00:24:43.19]: I was doin' everything the right way.

Sara [00:24:45.15]: Right.

LA [00:24:46.03]: In my mind, I truly believed in that cause. I truly did.

Sara [00:24:49.16]: Why?

LA [00:24:51.03]: Because it was what I grew up believing in.

Sara [00:24:53.13]: So, you're rooted in what?

LA [00:24:56.03]: Well, bullshit.

Sara [00:24:57.24]: And you think it's a, a choice? There's still a lot of opportunity to explore why.

LA [00:25:10.20]: Why.

Sara [00:25:12.05]: That's your why. I know my why.

LA [00:25:17.07]: And I believe I know mine, you know, but we, two different roads. Can I ask you some questions?

Sara [00:25:27.12]: Sure.

LA [00:25:28.24]: You say you were raped at 13. Were you in the life at that time?

Sara [00:25:33.28]: Yeah, my indoctrination started at the age of 11.

LA [00:25:37.14]: Let me ask you this. When you went home and you told him that you was raped, what was his response?

Sara [00:25:44.15]: I didn't.

LA [00:25:45.21]: Why?

Sara [00:25:46.14]: I ended up kicking in five windows at my school. I ended up at the hospital, and then, from there, trying to kill myself. I didn't speak. I, I didn't even know how to cry. Because he took that away from me too.

LA [00:26:10.27]: What you mean? Were you even in a situation when you were raped and you had to go back and tell him?

Sara [00:26:19.20]: I was raped every time he told me to go out there.

LA [00:26:25.03]: That's really unfortunate.

Sara [00:26:26.21]: That's what happens to kids.

LA [00:26:29.19]: I agree with you 100%.

Sara [00:26:31.23]: It's, exactly, but a lot of times, we don't know that we can say that.

LA [00:26:40.12]: Look, from that perspective and this perspective, that's like, we cover a lot of ground, because you know that side of it, and I know this side. Right? And it's like, I asked you that for a specific reason. Because young boys are taught that, when they're in that game, like, there's no such thing as rape. There is no such thing.

Sara [00:27:05.03]: But that's-

LA [00:27:05.03]: I'm glad you made it abundantly clear that every time a child gets in a car that that child is raped.

Sara [00:27:12.08]: And the trafficker allows that, but yet the trafficker wants to condition the child to think that they're the ones that's gonna protect them, but they're the ones that do the most harm. You can't protect anybody when you're the one that's making them go out there and to be violated.

LA [00:27:32.05]: I'm 100% in agreement with you. I was a grown ass man and I chose to do the things I did, and I stand by that. It's like, I don't look for no empathy and sympathy, and I don't look for no, no lead way out of what I did. I'm not looking for that. It's like, I'm not sittin' here as some victim, "Woe. I got 229 years to life. Woe is me." That's not what it's about. It's about I'm hoping some young man hears that I'm up in here with 229 years to life and choose to do something differently with his life before he get caught up like this.

Sara [00:28:04.18]: So, I'm sure that there are young men and women that could pull a lot from our conversation, because it's a very and uncomfortable conversation. What message would you want to leave with someone who's in the position that you were once in as a trafficker? What would you want to tell them today?

LA [00:28:29.03]: Knowing what I know today, I'm not going for it. I am surprised that somebody didn't kill me. I'm being honest with you. I am surprised that I lived long enough to make it to prison, because running into people that didn't like pimps, don't like pimps, people that I sit in circles with at restorative justice and hearing their conversations, it's like, I'm surprised I'm not dead, and that can happen. We both know that can happen. I tell young men that want to be traffickers, I would rather be a janitor at the school as opposed to being a trafficker. One - it carries 15 years to life, and this ain't easy. Two - you gonna be a sex offender for the duration of your life. Three - this ain't no easy joke. All the dudes that care about you, all the people that pretend to care, when you come to prison and you've been here for more than five years, you're gonna see how people fade away.

Sara [00:29:37.22]: What, what really broke my heart listening to you was your three points were about yourself. How your actions and the consequences that you have is about you still. I didn't hear you once mention the impacts of how it affects another person. And I think that that is a beginning of another journey.

LA [00:30:10.23]: Thank you for bringing that to my attention.

Sara [00:30:15.07]: Just know that I hear what you're not saying.

LA [00:30:19.23]: What am I not saying?

Sara [00:30:21.04]: That's for you to answer. I can't answer it for you but, as another human being, I can hear what you are not saying, and maybe we can have another conversation about that next time. Or, maybe not.

LA [00:30:37.00]: I would hope so. I would hope so. [piano notes and suppressed beat]

Earlone [00:31:00.05]: Restorative justice is painful work and it takes time. There aren't any fast answers or easy resolutions. This is work. This is the work we have to do in prison.

Nigel [00:31:13.12]: We really want to thank Sara and LA for putting themselves out there and for having this discussion. It wasn't easy for anyone. We'll be back after the break.

Female [00:31:38.10]: Thanks for supporting 'Ear Hustle' by listening. If you or your company would like to take this a step further and sponsor the show, just drop a line to sponsor@radiotopia.fm and thanks.

Male [00:31:55.24]: All right. Let me know when.

Male 2 [00:31:56.23]: Now. [door closes] Hey, count time! [bell rings]

Male [00:32:01.05]: Count time!

Male 2 [00:32:02.28]: Hey, count time! [overlapping voices] Wadsworth!

Male [00:32:06.20]: Wadsworth!

Nigel [00:32:08.02]: Since our story today was about a woman coming into San Quentin, we wanted to talk about another woman who comes in - Leila Steinberg. How long has she been coming in?

Earlone [00:32:16.15]: Leila's been coming in since the 90's, and guess what though.

Nigel [00:32:20.02]: What?

Earlone [00:32:20.08]: Leila used to be Tupac's manager. She's officially the shit.

Nigel [00:32:25.18]: She really is, and she comes in here and works with inmate Lonnie Morris to run Mic Sessions, which is this amazing group. And she brings together all these guys, and if you're here, you might hear them doing poetry...

Earlone [00:32:37.14]: Rappin', singing...

Nigel [00:32:39.10]: Playin' instruments. That guy who plays the guitar, and I love that he hits his guitar like it's a percussive instrument.

Earlone [00:32:44.13]: Yeah.

Nigel [00:32:44.20]: It's really amazing.

Earlonne [00:32:45.25]: I've heard a lot of good shit there.

Nigel [00:32:47.05]: And she also brings in other artists from the outside and it gets crazy in here.

Earlonne [00:32:51.20]: And we have no air conditioner.

Nigel [00:32:53.18]: It gets so hot. It just smells like creativity. [laughs]

Earlonne [00:32:55.25]: Smell like a locker room.

Nigel [00:32:57.07]: Smells like locker room with success mixed in. [laughs]

Earlonne [00:32:59.15]: Pungent success.

Nigel [00:33:00.27]: And, we want to give you guys a front row seat to hear what we hear.

Earlonne [00:33:03.28]: So, here's Leila Steinberg with Mic Sessions.

Leila [00:33:08.18]: [background noise] And, for those of you who are new, we're not an open mic. It's a workshop. [noise lowers] Mic Sessions started in my living room in 1989 with Tupac, Ray Luv, and a number of young artists. And I have been coming to San Quentin for over 25 years. [noise lifts] So, part of what we're doing is knowing if people hear what you're saying. We're having conversations.

Calvin [00:33:33.10]: [guitar strumming and beating] [Maserati-E singing] Please feel me. Please feel me. [talking while song continues in background] Coming to Mic Session, you can learn about someone. You, I, I mean, I know you, but music will make me be able to know you. [new

song with guitar begins] [singing] Yep. No lie. [talking] It's a very inspirational event to come to. You know, it's like, you hear other people not physically crying but you know, crying out in their music. [singing] I know I am so far from perfect, but I know I can speak for more than one person when I say I am so tired of hurting. We could change the world forever if we come together. We can break the mold. Yeah, we can break the mold. [talking] Me, myself, I barely kick it with people. I don't even talk in the yard. And, when I come in here, I can feel love because I'm here to pour out. [singing] All around the globe, we can break the mold. It's in our control. You gotta let go. It's frivolous woe. Do better to show the youth something better... [talking] There's people here that ain't never had nobody to clap for them or give them a standing ovation or none of that. So, when they see people do that, even though we are sitting here or standing in prison, it makes somebody feel love. You know what I'm saying? That's what Mic Sessions about, the love we have for one another. You know what I'm saying? So. [singing] We can change the world forever if we come together. We can break the mold. Yeah.

Leila [00:34:59.10]: Everybody now. [group singing] We can break the mold. No lie. Yeah. We can break the mold. [clapping]

Earlone [00:35:10.16]: Big thanks to Calvin Willis for talking with us, and thanks to Maserati-E for sharing his song, 'Break the Mold'. [outro song, bell ringing]

Earlone [00:35:27.07]: 'Ear Hustle' is produced by myself, Earlone Woods, and Nigel Poor, with help from outside producer Pat Mesiti Miller, who also comes in to work with the sound design team. This episode was scored by David Jassy with contributions from Antwan Williams.

Nigel [00:35:41.06]: Our story editor is Curtis Fox and our executive producer for Radiotopia is Julie Shapiro. We also want to thank Warden Ron Davis and, as you know, every episode has to be approved by this guy

here.

Lieutenant Robinson [00:35:53.22]: I am Lieutenant Sam Robinson, the public information officer at San Quentin State Prison, and I approve this story.

Earlonne [00:36:00.21]: Next time on 'Ear Hustle'.

Bucci [00:36:02.29]: What I did was, I made about 15 or 20 my first go around, and I was looking at it, and I showed my cellie my product, and he says, "Huh." It was uncharted territory. [light music] So, what I'd do was I'd take paper and I'd wrap it, and I'd put a little... I'd draw a little bird on there, like a jailbird, made in the USA, handmade, all the way. [beat gets funky]

Nigel [00:36:31.12]: That's Bucci. Tune in next time to find out what he wrapped up in those little packages.

Earlonne [00:36:36.00]: I know what was wrapped up in them packages, Nigel.

Nigel [00:36:38.25]: [laughs] I bet you do. [both laugh] I'm Nigel Poor.

Earlonne [00:36:42.00]: And I'm Earlonne Woods. Thanks for listening.

LA [00:36:53.21]: I don't live and do what's best for me. I do what's best for my children and my grandchildren. That's what's important.

Sara [00:37:01.15]: Well, you're important too.

LA [00:37:06.16]: I would like to believe so.

Sara [00:37:08.12]: I know. You will.

LA [00:37:12.10]: Oh, it's a, it's a real conversation.

Sara [00:37:17.11]: Yeah.

Earlonne [00:37:26.11]: [funky beat] Hey, listeners, guess what. To help kick off season two, we have brand new 'Ear Hustle' t-shirts.

Nigel [00:37:32.11]: And they are awesome.

Earlonne [00:37:34.19]: Too bad I can't wear one inside.

Nigel [00:37:37.01]: I know. I'm really sorry about that, but if you on the outside want to, just go to our website, earhustlesq.com, and order one.

Earlonne [00:37:45.19]: Nig, wouldn't it be cool if you were walking down the street and you saw someone wearing one?

Nigel [00:37:49.05]: Oh, man. I would flip if I saw that, and you know what I would do?

Earlonne [00:37:52.02]: Hopefully, you'd take out your phone and take a picture.

Nigel [00:37:53.29]: I would do that, and I'd probably be so excited, I'd turn the phone around and ask if I could do a selfie with them. And then, I would post that sucker on Instagram.

Earlonne [00:38:01.15]: Who would you like to see wearing one of our t-shirts?

Nigel [00:38:03.15]: People say I sound like her, and someone recently even said I look like her.

Earlone [00:38:07.09]: You talking about that podcast famous host of 'Serial', Sarah Koenig?

Nigel [00:38:11.18]: Mmhmm.

Earlone [00:38:12.08]: Is that who you talking about?

Nigel [00:38:12.28]: That's who I'm talking about. How about you?

Earlone [00:38:14.26]: I would like to see the Queen of England-

Nigel [00:38:17.03]: What? [laughing]

Earlone [00:38:17.07]: Sittin' all proper, drinkin' tea with a 'Ear Hustle' t-shirt on at the upcoming royal wedding.

Nigel [00:38:23.17]: That would be crazy.

Earlone [00:38:24.27]: Or Rihanna. Or Beyonce. Or Dale. Or-

Nigel [00:38:26.23]: Ok. Ok. [laughs] That's enough. Well, if anyone out there wants to be wearing an 'Ear Hustle' t-shirt, go to our website, earhustlesq.com, and get one.

Earlone [00:38:36.20]: And thanks for helping us spread the 'Ear Hustle' love on the outside.

Radiotopia outro [00:38:45.26]: Radiotopia from PRX.

Female [00:38:53.19]: Thanks for listening and thanks to Adzerk for providing their ad serving platform to Radiotopia.

