



Episode 4: The SHU
First aired July 26, 2017

Earlonne [00:00:01.06]: [Jazzy talking in background] Are you ready to record?

Nigel [00:00:02.09]: Yeah, we need to. It's getting late.

Earlonne [00:00:03.27]: Um, okay. Hey, Jazzy! Hey, hey, hey. Can we get about 10 minutes so we can get this line out?

Jazzy [00:00:11.22]: No problem, man.

Earlonne [00:00:12.25]: Hey, good lookin' out.

Jazzy [00:00:13.23]: Yep.

Nigel [00:00:13.21]: Thank you. [door closing]

Earlonne [00:00:17.11]: You're now tuned in to San Quentin's 'Ear Hustle' from PRX's Radiotopia.

Listen Alert [00:00:22.06]: The following podcast contains language that may not be appropriate for all listeners.

Female [00:00:27.22]: [upbeat music] 'Ear Hustle' is supported by MailChimp. MailChimp is the world's largest marketing automation platform. 15 million customers from small e-commerce shops to big online retailers use MailChimp to reach customers and grow their business. There's always a way to do better. MailChimp reports show you how well you're connecting with your audience, what they're clicking on, and what they're not. They even give you customized tips for improvement, and you can check in from anywhere with their mobile dashboard. Get started for free at [MailChimp.com](https://mailchimp.com). MailChimp, build your brand, sell more stuff. [shuffling, jazzy music] Support for 'Ear Hustle' come from Bombas. 4 years ago, two guys quit their jobs to make a difference in the world with socks. They learned socks are the most requested items at homeless shelters and realized there was a gap in the market for a better sock. They spent two years thinking about every single detail to engineer the perfect sock and Bombas was born. For every pair Bombas sells, they donate a pair to those in need. That's over 2 million pairs of socks so far. Bombas offers a money-back guarantee and 20% off your first order. To support 'Ear Hustle' and order your new favorite socks, go to Bombas.com/hustle. That's Bombas.com/hustle.

Armando [00:01:46.07]: I'm Armando Flores and I served 26 years in solitary confinement. Being in the SHU for so long, it will affect you in many ways. You know, from not being able to finish a sentence to forgetting what you're talking about during the sentence.

[intro music]

Earlone [00:02:11.08]: I'm Earlone Woods.

Nigel [00:02:12.22]: Earlone is serving a 31 year to life sentence for attempted second-degree robbery, and he's the co-host and co-producer of 'Ear Hustle'.

Earlonne [00:02:21.18]: And that's Nigel Poor. She's a visual artist who works with incarcerated men here at San Quentin, and she's the co-producer and my co-host, and together we're going to take you inside.

Armando [00:02:36.00]: [menacing music] There's only three ways out the SHU: debrief, parole, or a pine box. Me, I accepted the fact that I was gonna get out of there in a pine box.

Nigel [00:02:50.10]: We're going to be hearing about the SHU on this episode, so maybe we should first explain what the SHU is.

Earlonne [00:02:56.04]: The SHU is an acronym that stands for the Security Housing Unit. It's the hole, the box, the dungeon, and in some states, it's called solitary confinement, and the one we're talking about is not here at San Quentin. It's at Pelican Bay State Prison in Northern California, near Oregon.

Nigel [00:03:11.10]: I'm trying to conceptualize spending decades in an 8 by 10-foot space. I've seen the regular cells here at San Quentin and they are friggin' small.

Earlonne [00:03:20.23]: In the cells at Pelican Bay, everything is cement and metal. There's one cement slab that's your bed and another that's your desk and stool. The cell has no windows and no view of the outside world.

Nigel [00:03:31.22]: How the hell does someone function there?

Earlonne [00:03:35.05]: All minds ain't strong enough for it, I can tell you that, because when you're in Pelican Bay SHU, you're dealing with total isolation. I mean, total isolation. No human interaction. Your anxiety levels are high. You're dealing with loneliness. It can be brutal. But, the interesting thing about it is that your mind can trick you into adjusting to your

immediate condition. That's what's a trip.

Nigel [00:03:59.10]: It seems like the mind would just be thinking about survival, almost like the brain would be responding to the injury of the body being confined.

Earlone [00:04:08.25]: I believe I experienced that in two separate SHUs.

Nigel [00:04:10.28]: I am definitely going to ask you about that, but first let's listen to what some of the guys we talked to had to say about their time in the SHU.

Earlone [00:04:18.27]: The guys we talked to are out of the SHU and back on the mainline. That's why we're able to holler at 'em. Between them, they have a combined 60 years in the SHU. One thing we wanted to ask them was what was it like to go into the SHU.

Nigel [00:04:33.16]: Isaac Flores has been in prison for second-degree murder since he was 17. He's been here for 32 years and spent 18 of those years in the Pelican Bay SHU, which is about a six-hour bus drive from here. [lock buzz]

Issac [00:04:50.20]: When I left San Quentin, I stay awake the whole ride because, uh, I like to see the sights. [driving noise] Don't know when you're going to see them again. I mean, driving to Pelican Bay, you overlook the whole institution because the drive in, on the right-hand side, is the mainline, so you can see the windowless cells. You can see the facility. On the left-hand side, you got the SHU.

Richard [00:05:20.19]: My name's Richard Johnson. I did a total of 19 years in solitary confinement.

Earlone [00:05:27.02]: So far, Richard has done 22 years in prison on a

drug conviction.

Richard [00:05:31.22]: [beeping] When I got off the bus, they stripped me down, took off all my clothes, and I had to walk down the corridor literally naked. I don't know why they did this. I guess it was part of the humiliation process.

Nigel [00:05:47.09]: Here's Isaac again.

Issac [00:05:48.23]: Threw us in a cell butt naked and we're sitting [laughs] we're sitting there and we just look at each other. We're both in the cell just looking at each other. We're like looking face to face like, "Man, it's just too much."

Nigel [00:06:03.01]: Isaac did have a cellie during some of the time he was at Pelican Bay, but he did 14 years on single cell status.

Earlone [00:06:10.12]: Some guys do have cellies but many of them don't based on administrative determinates, meaning either they could have had too many cell fights or killed a previous cellie or something to that effect. Or, they were gang leaders, and in those situations, they were placed on single cell status.

Nigel [00:06:26.23]: Gus Lumumba Edwards has been in prison for 39 years for first-degree murder in the commission of a robbery. He did 8 1/2 years in the Pelican Bay SHU and he said he didn't know what to expect before he got there.

Gus [00:06:39.02]: I was a little nervous. I was a little nervous because you heard the old stories and myths about the dogs running in on you and remote yard that moves up to the back of the building. There's a lot of tales about Pelican Bay. Until you get in there and you really see that you're not going nowhere no time soon. [strumming beat]

Issac [00:06:57.19]: The first day I woke up, basically said to myself, "Damn. This is it. This is the rest of the life right here. You're never going to get out the SHU."

Richard [00:07:08.25]: The cell had electric door and there was no wall. It was like a grated piece of metal with little holes in it where you can look directly in the cell and the cell had no windows. The whole cell was white, and I found this peculiar because there was no, no colors, all white. I was just sitting there and I was saying, "Is this it?" I mean, I saw no future. How do I spend the next 20, 30 'til I die in this cell because I was, I wasn't prepared for it.

Nigel [00:07:41.24]: E, what did you do to feel prepared for the SHU?

Earlone [00:07:44.26]: When I was waiting to go to the SHU, it was guys telling you all kinds of crazy stuff of how it would be in Pelican Bay. You know, the security is so tight that you can't even get letters in the mail. When your mail come, the office bring a projector. They project it on the wall in front of your cell. You can only read it once. You have to read it fast and that was it. And then, they was like, "The showers are on wheels. They roll it down to your cell and you step out, you step into the shower." So, you're thinking like, "This shit is fixin' to be fucked up." You know, like, damn.

Nigel [00:08:14.14]: That makes it sound so weirdly futuristic.

Earlone [00:08:16.20]: Right, right, right, right, right. But, I'll tell you this, it was all some bullshit though because nothing those guys told me was true. The reality of the situation was like this, when I got there, there was nothing in the cell except the mattress. They gave me a blanket. They gave me a roll of toilet paper, a pencil, two pieces of paper, a tiny ass toothbrush that could be swallowed by mistake, tooth powder that taste like chalk, a extra

thin motel size soap. Those were the provisions for a week. We didn't have no books, no radios, no TV, no nothing, just basically what I carried in my mind.

Nigel [00:08:50.19]: So, were you alone or did you have a cellie?

Earlone [00:08:52.27]: Fortunately, I had a cellie. If you don't have one, then there's no physical contact unless you have a doctor visit or a cell extraction where you are forcefully removed and that's not something you want, but some people might want that interaction.

Nigel [00:09:05.13]: What? Just to get some kind of touch?

Earlone [00:09:07.08]: Just to touch, to wrassle, to feel alive maybe.

Nigel [00:09:11.01]: I've heard that and I've actually always wondered if that was true.

Earlone [00:09:14.05]: That is true.

Nigel [00:09:15.03]: Uh, personal experience?

Earlone [00:09:16.20]: On a cell extraction?

Nigel [00:09:18.09]: No, doing that to get some kind of-

Earlone [00:09:19.23]: Nah, nah. Not me. I, I didn't, I didn't, I didn't beg for touch that much. I didn't need that much touch.

Issac [00:09:29.14]: So, you know, I didn't have someone to shake their hand or, you know, playing, or just messing around, punching on each other or, you know, just human contact, even visits. The only way you had contact with people is, the doors are like a honeycomb, bunch of little holes

and your pinky finger barely fits through the hole and just a little tip. So, when one of your friends come by and says, "What's up," he'll stick his fingers through there and just like touch his finger. So, that's the only contact you have. [ringing noise]

Nigel [00:10:01.27]: But what about visitors in the SHU?

Earlonne [00:10:03.22]: Yeah, you can have visitors. I'm gonna let Richard explain what that's like.

Richard [00:10:07.26]: In the SHU visit, you come out. You're handcuffed and they put you in this little cage and there's a phone on both sides of the glass. So, the closest contact is you can put your hand up to the glass and the other person put their hand up and that's a sign of affection. Or, you put your hand to your heart. They want to remove all this from you. So, you wants to remain as human as possible.

Earlonne [00:10:32.15]: Of the men we talked to, Armando Flores, who's serving time for second-degree murder spent the most time in the SHU, 26 years.

Armando [00:10:40.04]: I have daughters who have literally had to see growing up behind a window. You know, they're in your thirties now but, you know, I have grandkids also who I've never got to hug or anything. [clock ticking]

Nigel [00:11:00.09]: How did you fill the void that comes with all that isolation?

Earlonne [00:11:03.07]: Like I say, when I got there, I didn't have anything. All I basically had was my imagination. So, me and my cellie, we told each other stories. We went back to when we were three. After that, we went to see who can tell the best lie. Then, we wrote screenplays to see who could

write the best movie.

Nigel [00:11:19.00]: Screenplays, like what?

Earlonne [00:11:20.28]: [bright, tinkling music] My screenplay was about my fantasy life where everything went right, where I made my momma proud, never went to jail, married my high school sweetheart, went to film school, but I still have my roots in the hood, and sadly, I had to kill off my character.

Nigel [00:11:35.03]: But why did you have to die?

Earlonne [00:11:36.08]: What you learn about screenplays is you control that environment. It's like you're the god of that world. It's the only thing that you can control in the SHU. So, why not kill off my character and then resurrect him in part 2?

Nigel [00:11:48.06]: I should've known that E wouldn't die.

Earlonne [00:11:50.02]: [laughs]

Nigel [00:11:52.07]: I have to say, even listening to this, I can't wrap my mind around being there for months.

Earlonne [00:11:58.04]: Naw? Just curious, where you gonna go when you leave here tonight?

Nigel [00:12:01.19]: Uh, I'm gonna go home.

Earlonne [00:12:03.00]: That's why you would never be able to wrap your mind around this because you're going home.

Richard [00:12:11.04]: I would talk to my neighbor. He was a devout racist.

For some reason, we would just talk. I mean, I just thought he was crazy because he had a problem with everybody: whites, blacks, Mexicans, police. I don't really think he was racist. I think that that's what he hid behind. He had the swastikas and all that, but when you talk to him, he'd tell me about his daughters and his kids and all this stuff. If you hate somebody, you're not going to talk about that type of stuff with them.

Issac [00:12:45.19]: There's only so much to talk about because you run through your life stories, but after so long, you run out of things to say, where you find yourself repeating the same story over and over and over, and you don't even know it. And, out of courtesy, they don't even say, "Oh, you already told me that." It just, it passes the time because you guys are conversating. So, even if it's the same story, you gotta say it again, talk about it again, like you never heard it before.

Richard [00:13:13.13]: [repetitive beat] There's times I think that I was losing my grip on reality. Because every day is a different day. You have different moods, mood swings. I have seen people tap out. I mean tap out, just give up.

Armando [00:13:31.21]: Being in the SHU for so long, it will affect you in many ways. You know, a lot of times in the SHU, we talk about the SHU syndrome. You know, from not being able to finish a sentence to forgettin' what you're talking about during a sentence. Sometimes, you can't even carry a full conversation with somebody.

Richard [00:13:57.05]: [rolling beat] Being locked up in that cell, you have to be creative. I learned how to write. I began by writing articles to different papers, such as the 'San Francisco Bay View', and then I started writing for the 'Oakland Post' as a regular columnist. To this day, I still write articles for the 'Oakland Post'. You know, because if you wasn't creative, it would sink you. Never give up. Never allow anyone to make you less than what you are. That's the true intent of isolation is to belittle you, demean you,

dehumanize you, to make you less a person than what you are.

Earlone [00:14:45.11]: After being in there for a few years, the slightest change in routine can get to you.

Richard [00:14:50.15]: I had been in that particular cell, I would say, at least five years and it was pure white.

Earlone [00:14:56.16]: [strumming music] One day, a correctional officer put a poster on the wall outside of Richard's cell. He could see it through his door. He doesn't remember what it said. All he remembers is that it was black.

Richard [00:15:06.16]: I found it very hard to deal with because for all these years I've been looking at a blank white wall. Then, he come in one day and put this poster up. It just disrupt everything. I'll be walking around in the cell and I would think somebody was staring at me, looked to the left and I would see the, the poster. When you moved, the poster moved, like it was staring at you.

Earlone [00:15:31.16]: On the way to the shower one day, he moved the poster.

Richard [00:15:35.21]: I caught myself put it up front, but I didn't. I put it in front of somebody's cell and the brother got highly upset. He moved the poster in front of my cell. And I said, you know, "I didn't think that, you know, you would be tripping like that." I thought I was the only one tripping and come to find out, he was tripping too because it disrupted his normality as well. [muted scream]

Nigel [00:16:01.02]: This really shows how the senses are affected when everything's stripped away. And I can't help but wonder, can you really come back from an experience like that?

Earlone [00:16:10.08]: Well, that was kind of too deep for me, because I only did like a year in the SHU. So, my senses was kind of heightened to the effect where if the door opened or something was going on, some noise, I'm going to go investigate.

Nigel [00:16:23.19]: So, you were still really keyed into change.

Earlone [00:16:26.04]: Exactly. But, if I had been there for decades, I probably, I don't know.

Nigel [00:16:30.03]: I mean, I think that's the thing about this story. You can't possibly know what it's like if you haven't had this experience.

Earlone [00:16:35.00]: Exactly. [muted scream]

Nigel [00:16:39.19]: Richard spent 19 years in the SHU, Armando 26 years. Isaac did 18. Gus did 8 1/2, and they spent so much time in there because they were validated gang members or affiliates of a gang.

Earlone [00:16:52.04]: Right. Prison officials were worried that gang affiliation would lead to violence among the general prison population. So, they were sent to the SHU on indefinite detentions and the only way they could get out was by debriefing.

Nigel [00:17:03.14]: Debriefing sounds innocent enough but it's not.

Earlone [00:17:06.25]: Debriefing is just like snitching. Nobody wants to be labeled that because, if you debrief, you're forced into protective custody and it's not just you that's in danger. The same gang that you're debriefing on can retaliate against your family. These guys were unwilling to debrief and that's why they spend so much time in the SHU.

Nigel [00:17:24.07]: But they're out now and back in the general prison population at San Quentin.

Issac [00:17:31.11]: [rising music] If it wasn't for the hunger strike, I'd still be sittin' in the SHU right now.

Earlone [00:17:36.18]: There were a couple of different hunger strikes, but the last one was in the summer of 2013. The men in the SHU in Pelican Bay organized to protest the harsh conditions of life inside the SHU. It is estimated that 10,000 California prisoners joined the strike, as well as family members and politicians.

Gus [00:17:54.17]: One thing about the hunger strike is that after about six days of not eating, you can taste what's on the inside of your system that you never tasted in your mouth before. That was a weird sensation that had me wondering that's the only thing I'm gonna survive on is what juices or liquids that's in my stomach that I'm tasting in my mouth.

Richard [00:18:18.14]: My sense of smell increased because they would bring the food into the pod and you could smell it coming down the corridor. For me, it just empowered me not to 'cept it.

Issac [00:18:32.10]: A lot of the food they serve in Pelican Bay is junk. No flavor, small portions, don't taste right. So, on the Fourth of July, we're on a hunger strike and they bring in a good meal. Doubled up, ice cream, milk. And they're talking about, "Who wants extra trays? We got extra trays here. You guys want to eat today? Got these hamburgers, got hot dogs." You know, so they're trying to sweeten the pot.

Gus [00:18:58.29]: A lot of us lived on 1 cup of water each day, and I do mean 1 8-ounce cup of water.

Richard [00:19:06.05]: Some inmates went to like 60 days. A lot of the

strikers was willing to die. Just thinking about it brings back memories of almost dying.

Issac [00:19:20.26]: During the hunger strike, lost all energy. After about 6, 7 day, it was just a struggle just to get up in the mornings.

Gus [00:19:30.12]: They tried everything to break the spirit first, but going into it everybody was united in this, and it worked.

Nigel [00:19:41.18]: The hunger strike and other protests worked because prison policy changed. In California, inmates are no longer sentenced to the SHU on indefinite detentions.

Earlone [00:19:50.27]: Right. They don't have to spend decades in the SHU. The maximum now is like 5 years in Pelican Bay or Corcoran or anyone of them prisons. [haunting music]

Nigel [00:20:00.11]: So, when you got out, what were you thinking?

Earlone [00:20:02.17]: When I got out the SHU?

Nigel [00:20:03.07]: Yeah.

Earlone [00:20:04.17]: It was like that theme music was on when I got out. [singing, piano notes] Doo, doo, doo, do, doo, doo, do, doo, doo, do, do, da, do, do, do, do, do, hey, hey. I hit the yard with my yellow crocassacks on and everybody was like, "He fresh out the Bay. He fresh out the SHU."

Nigel [00:20:21.14]: I don't know what the hell you're talking about. [laughs]

Earlone [00:20:23.18]: What part?

Nigel [00:20:25.04]: None of it.

Earlone [00:20:26.19]: [laughs] All right, all right. Look. Crocasacks are slip-ons. They're canvas shoes. They were like Vans, but they were bright yellow with white bottoms. And, I can say this, if nobody respected me, they respected those shoes because they came from Pelican Bay SHU. It was the only place you can get them. They were pretty much like red bottoms, Jimmy Choo or something, because they were famous.

Nigel [00:20:50.10]: So, what did you miss?

Earlone [00:20:51.25]: What did I miss? Like, what you mean?

Nigel [00:20:54.06]: Well, I mean, you were gone for almost a year. So, what did you think about? What was the first thing you wanted to do?

Earlone [00:21:00.18]: The first thing I wanted to do, I wanted to smoke a joint to take my mind away from the SHU. [laughs] Why are you, why you looking at me like that Nig? That was 25 years ago. That was the climate.

Nigel [00:21:12.26]: OK. All right. All right, but what else? Did it feel like being free?

Earlone [00:21:17.21]: It was sort of like a paroling, but you're paroling back to the yard. I mean, I could use a phone again. I can have contact visits. I stayed out of my cell probably like all day, but I can say that my freedom was short-lived because 59 days later, I went back in the SHU on a new beef.

Nigel [00:21:34.04]: Oh, come on.

Earlone [00:21:34.25]: [laughs]

Nigel [00:21:35.00]: That's not even 2 months. How did that happen?

Earlone [00:21:38.16]: [rhythmic beat] Nig, your co-host was a fuck-up. I was 22 years old. I was rebellious back then, and CDCR had a place for my ass to think about my actions, which was the SHU. I know looking at me today all polished and shit you're like, "How could this be?" But, I grew up. [door unlocking]

Issac [00:21:58.29]: [rising music] Now that I'm out the SHU, I'm not anti-social, but I have a hard time really socializing with people as far as communicating, especially with free staff. With inmates, convicts, it's easier because we all grew up in here or we all know what prison life is.

Armando [00:22:19.07]: I'm so used to the world of the SHU and I grew up in that SHU. So, it was just normal to me. [conversing voices] I mean, after being there for so long, you can't help but kind of miss it, you know. You're used to that little tranquility you got there and you come out to a place where, you know, there's nothing but chaos going on all day long. You know, it becomes overwhelming at times.

Gus [00:22:49.19]: In the mainline, they have too much idle time to engage in foolishness. They're not thinking. In the SHU, you can teach yourself. You can learn about yourself. You can understand problems more deeply.

Issac [00:23:02.29]: Imagine going to the zoo and they open all the cages to the animals and you just got all the animals running around. That's how this mainline is. I watch TV and I see like New York when they go to the subway and it's rush hour. That's what it's like here. You got people just bumping into each other, cutting in front of each other. Where I came from, there was a lot of respect, "Excuse me. Pardon me." People were real respectful. Here, people are real discourteous. But, at the same time, this prepares you for life on the streets. [descending beat]

Nigel [00:23:41.20]: So, they got out of the SHU, but they're still in prison.

Earlone [00:23:44.16]: Yeah. They still in prison. But since they ain't in the SHU, they can do a lot of stuff like go to the yard, take college courses, feel the rain on their body, walk around, go to the library, all that.

Nigel [00:23:56.15]: And visits from relatives, friends, girlfriends where you can actually sit in the same room and even touch each other.

Earlone [00:24:03.22]: Exactly.

Armando [00:24:09.11]: [men talking, laughing] After 26 years, I came out and got my first visit from a girlfriend. Man, that was quite a moment. [laughs]

Richard [00:24:22.00]: I was afraid, after being denied so long, being in the company of a female, I was truly nervous.

Gus [00:24:30.25]: So, just to have touched her was an unusual feeling after being away from her for 8 and 1/2 years.

Armando [00:24:38.20]: Being able to kiss her and hug her and touch her.

Richard [00:24:42.28]: It had me stimulated to the point to where she had to walk in front of me to just help me sit down.

Gus [00:24:48.28]: After I sat there for a while looking awkward, I began to come down a little bit. Smelling her perfume, sitting close to her, and I reached out and touched her hand. It's like, like shocking.

Richard [00:25:04.06]: Your heart get to beating at times. I was sweating, you know, and um, first kiss was amazing.

Gus [00:25:11.19]: I leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. Awkwardly.

Armando [00:25:16.09]: I was nervous. It was like the very first time being with a girl.

Gus [00:25:22.02]: It felt good. It was like I was in a dream.

Richard [00:25:24.16]: I felt like I was 15 years old, to be honest. It was a good feeling though. It left me with a smile on my face that stayed with me the rest of the day. I'm still, uh, you know, still feeling the effect.

Armando [00:25:38.27]: Oh yeah. [voices fade]

Nigel [00:25:45.05]: So, Earlonne, when these guys talked about their visits, they sounded so happy. And, is it really possible, after all that time in the SHU, that they can experience that kind of joy again?

Earlonne [00:25:55.10]: Yeah. The thing about visits is, once you're out there with your family for that short period of time, you're kind of like free. You're in the moment. You catching up, talking, laughing, joking. I mean, it's a family reunion and you're not thinking about prison. It doesn't matter how long you've been inside, when you're with your family, your friends, your loved ones, all the prison grind and rigor is, it just melts away. [pleasant music] So, yeah, it's all good.

Nigel [00:26:23.00]: But then, what happens when your family leaves and you have to head back in?

Earlonne [00:26:27.13]: Now, that's a whole different story because, from the time you maybe kiss your loved one, hold their hand while they're leaving, you know that break away when they got to go and you're holding on and your arm's stretched out and they let go, and you can't see 'em no more 'cause they close the door. Up until all that is good, but once they close that door and you can't see them no more, back to prison. But, when

you walkin' out that visiting room, like Richard say, he still feel good. You know, you still, it's lasting because you received that touch. [soothing guitar riff] So, what do you think about the guys in this story?

Nigel [00:27:13.01]: Well, I think people are way more flexible than we imagine. I hear what they've been through, and there's no way I can imagine it. And then I can sit across from these guys and they're just people. They seem like they've adapted but God knows what's the lasting effect of their traumas are.

Earlone [00:27:27.29]: I see them and I know they have been through more than the average prisoner. And, in my mind, I don't know how they did it. I mean, look at it this way. Think about all the things you did from 1989 to 2014. [silence] Now, imagine that most of those 26 years was in one room. [tinkling beat, vocalizing] Thanks to Armando Flores, Gus Lumumba Edwards, Richard Johnson, and Isaac Flores for sharing their stories with us. We also want to thank fellow prisoner John 'Ya Ya' Johnson for assisting with this story.

Nigel [00:28:05.01]: Our sound designer is Antwan Williams, who also resides here at San Quentin. Pat Mesiti Miller is our outside production advisor. Curtis Fox is our story editor and the executive producer for Radiotopia is Julie Shapiro.

Earlone [00:28:18.29]: Big thanks to Warden Ron Davis and every episode has to be approved by this guy here:

Sam Robinson [00:28:24.02]: This is Lieutenant Sam Robinson. I'm the public information officer at San Quentin State Prison and I approve this story.

Julie Shapiro [00:28:30.16]: [upbeat music] Thank you for listening. Hi, this is Julie Shapiro, executive producer of Radiotopia. On behalf of the small

but mighty team at 'Ear Hustle', we want to thank Casper for supporting the show. Now, working in the podcast industry, I don't actually get much sleep. There's all that listening to do, but with my new Casper queen mattress on the bed, I'm just going to have to make it a priority to sleep more because it's just that comfortable. The Casper is an obsessively engineered mattress at a shockingly fair price. It combines supportive memory foams to create an award-winning sleep surface with just the right sink and just the right bounce, and it's designed, developed, and assembled in the USA. Casper offers free shipping and returns to the US and Canada. You can try Casper for 100 nights risk-free in your own home. If you don't love it, they'll pick it up and refund you everything. 'Ear Hustle' listeners can get \$50 off any mattress purchase by visiting www.casper.com/earhustle and using the code earhustle. That's one word. This offer only applies to the purchase of a mattress. Terms and conditions also apply.

Nigel [00:29:40.02]: [outro music] Next time on 'Ear Hustle'.

Earlonne [00:29:42.06]: We are halfway through the season, so our next episode, we're gonna do some Q&A. Nigel, you have a gang of postcards over there in a nice little folder. Which ones are we gonna answer?

Nigel [00:29:53.19]: Well, we've gotten so many, but I think we're gonna start with one from Dan in Canada who wants to know: If you could change one thing about life in prison, what would that be?

Earlonne [00:30:07.05]: For me, that one is simple.

Nigel [00:30:09.06]: Don't answer it now.

Earlonne [00:30:11.10]: [laughs] Tune in to our next episode. Remember, you can find us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, and visit our website: earhustlesq.com. That's earhustlesq.com.

Nigel [00:30:28.04]: 'Ear Hustle' is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collection of the best podcasts around. Radiotopia is made possible with support from the Knight Foundation. Hear more at Radiotopia.fm. I'm Nigel Poor.

Earlonne [00:30:43.00]: And I'm Earlonne Woods. Thanks for listening.

Radiotopia outro [00:30:54.01]: Radiotopia from PRX.

Female [00:31:02.00]: Thanks for listening and thanks to Adzerk for providing their ad serving platform to Radiotopia.