



Episode 39: Us and Them

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[00:00:00] I'm Adam Foss of Prosecutor Impact. And this episode of Ear Hustle contains language that may not be appropriate for all listeners. Discretion is advised.

Earlonne: What's sup, Nigel Poor.

Nigel: Hey E!

Earlonne: Hey, how you doing?

Nigel: I'm good. So we're social distancing. I'm recording in my closet and you're recording in yours and we're talking to each other on Zoom. So, how's your closet working for you?

Earlonne: Well, it's bigger than that place they had me at San Quentin. [both laughing] How about your closet?

Nigel: Well, I'm going to say I'm actually glad I've bought all these clothes because I think they're keeping the echo down as we record.

Earlonne: And you know, you taught me about photo mapping. So, uh, I'm looking at all those pair of shoes [Nigel laughing] behind...

Nigel: Oh god, I'm so embarrassed. I have [whispering] I think about thirty-six pairs.

Earlonne: But thirty-six pairs is not bad.

Nigel: You don't think it's that bad?

Earlone: No, not at all. I got about that right now and I only been out how long?

Nigel: Oh my god, just over a year? [Earlone laughing] And it's taken me more than half a C-note in years to get all those shoes. [Nigel laughing]

Earlone: Yes. Yes. So that's not bad at all.

Nigel: I really appreciate your support. Okay. Let's get to something a little bit more important than shoes, even though shoes I think are important. So, we're on our own this week, Earlone.

Earlone: Right.

Nigel: No, New York. Just you and me in our closets.

Earlone: That's right, Nige. And we're gonna get to this week's episode in a few minutes, but first we wanted to update you a bit on what's been going on inside during this pandemic. At the time we're recording, it's March 27th. All of San Quentin is on modified program, meaning a lot of the blocks are locked down. So New York can't get down to the media lab. But we did get a call from him last week on March 18th. Back then his cell block wasn't on lockdown.

Nigel: By that time, all visits to California prisons had stopped. Volunteers like me weren't allowed in either. So all education and all other programming, done for the time being.

Earlone: New York told us that to protect one vulnerable population in San Quentin, they were moving people around.

New York: [over the phone] They moved 25 youngsters to H-Unit. And they movin' OGs to North lot, so from H-Unit so can be safer. For everybody over 60, you know what I mean, they tellin' them to sell quarantine. And it's up to them to listen, I guess.

Nigel: Geez, are people giving you a dirty look, like get the hell off the phone.

New York: [over the phone] Nah, I waited in line. [automated voice says, "You have 60 seconds remaining."] When these 60 seconds run out, I'll try to call back. That's when I'll get the dirty looks. [Nigel laughing]

Earlone: What are you doing in the building?

New York: I'm writing. I got some reading and writing to do for school and also some transcripts to transcribe and I got a pile of books and I never read that I've been meaning to read and so have to get read right now. I'm gonna get some rest.

Nigel: Alright. You gonna keep calling us?

New York: Get this line and use my one phone call, man for y'all, man. It's a hell of a sacrifice.

Nigel: Oh no! [New York laughing]

New York: It's all good. It's good, I'll just get back in line, but that line got long.

Nigel: Yeah. Well, if there's other more important, make sure you make them.

Earlonne: Yeah he gone, he gone.

Nigel: It doesn't even say goodbye, it just cuts off?

Earlonne: It just cuts off.

Nigel: That's cold.

[as narrator] And that was actually the last we've heard from New York. Right after that call, his cell block was locked down too, so no one there could use the phone.

Earlonne: But I have been hearing from guys I know in different institutions. I got a call recently from a friend in the LA County jail.

Otis Green III: [over the phone] My name is Otis Green III and I'm up in a California state prison inmate for the last twenty-one plus years out of California three strikes law, I was sentenced to fifty-five years to life. And, um, fortunately I had the opportunities to be recommended by the secretary of the CDCR last few years to have my sentence recalled and to be rescinded. And that happened today. I will have sentenced for twelve years and given time served.

Earlonne: So what's going to be the first thing you do, man, when you hit the bricks?

Otis: I'm gonna get out and I'mma work til I get tired. To where there's nobody to carry me, I can't go there, I gotta come back or this is out of bounds. I'mma just walk til I'm tired. And I'mma sit down at that point and shed a few tears.

Nigel: Otis expects to get out any day, and obviously he's returning to the outside world at a pretty crazy time.

Earlonne: Right. He told me the coronavirus is going to affect his return in some very particular ways.

Otis: Especially being in the County jail for this month and a couple of days and being circulated around a bunch of people who don't have the best of immune systems. And so I'm not sure if I'm even being around people who have been exposed to this coronavirus. And there's two important people in my life. One being my grandmother who was in her eighties that I'm slightly fearful of being able to enjoy or share my joy with her, not knowing if I have been exposed to this. 'Cause then also I have a granddaughter, Natalie, was born two days ago. Is gonna be someone, I'm gonna have to stay away from for, you know, safety precautions. And that kind of dampens my spirits a little bit [automated voice says, "This call is being recorded"]

Earlonne: [00:04:59] My homie Fanon who serving in 210 years to life at San Quentin has a commutation just waiting on the governor signature, and now this pandemic has him fucked up.

Fanon: [over the phone] Being incarcerated twenty-four years right, with a sentence for 210 years to life. At one time feeling hopeless and then, feeling like you got hope 'cause things has changed for me. Then to have this daily virus going around sayin' damn, is this the way it's gon' end? Am I still gonna die in prison? So you get to thinking about that – your end times, you know? You know, if we look at biblical prophecies, in these prophecies, you know, offend moral law and God just wipe out everybody. You know, it's like, dang, like right now, we're in a hopeless situation. They can just lock us up and keep us in the cell.

Earlone: Man, yeah, 'cause you know, social distancing is kind of hard in there.

Fanon: Now, that's impossible because, you know, you got six feet on each side. It's not even six between you and your cellie or your next-door neighbor. You can't do social distancing.

Nigel: We also talked to Miguel Sifuentes before West Block lockdown. We asked him what the mood was like in there.

Miguel Sifuentes: [over the phone] It's kind of like a helpless thing, right? Like resignation. You can't do anything and then people go about their daily lives, right? Even though we can't go to groups. People still hang out on this tier. They're still on the bars like we used to do, right? Like in front of the cell.

Earlone: Right

Miguel: You know, people laugh, laugh and talk about old times. And people talk about how crazy it is, right? Underneath that though, there's fear, you know? Fear for our loved ones out there. There's some fear about what it would do in here. [automated voice, "This call and your telephone number will be monitored and recorded] You know, hundreds of people could get it in a matter of a couple of days. You know, on these first few tiers, there's on every lower bunk, there's the older guy, you know, in the 60s with the cane and the vest and has several underlying issues. And like, they can't go anywhere, right? I think eight to ten beds in the hospital and like by the time they have symptoms; it would probably be too late for them.

Earlone: Like we say, we're recording on March 27th and as of today, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation says it's tested about 200 incarcerated people. So far, one person, someone in Lancaster, in Southern California, has tested positive for COVID-19.

Nigel: Alright. We're going to try to keep you posted on what's happening as his pandemic plays out. But meanwhile, let's get to this week's show, which was produced long before the coronavirus shut everything down when New York and I could still work and record together in the media lab.

Earlone: Let's do it. [ambient noise from inside prison, voices chattering in the background]

New York: What do you call a CO? What do people in prison COs?

[Montage of several voices speaking in quick succession] Five-Oh. Hot Water. Slaps. Turn Keys. Rollers. When a police pulls up on you, like four of them together, I call it Gang Green, just got gangrene.

New York: You are now tuned in the Ear Hustle from PRX's Radiotopia I am Rahsaan "New York" Thomas, a resident of San Quentin State Prison in California. [trappy lullaby beat music begins]

Nigel: And I'm Nigel Poor. Today we're talking about relationships with correctional officers.

[Montage of several voices speaking in quick succession] We call them the Gilligans, you know, Goop Troop. Cluckheads. They call them Cluckheads every now and then. Yeah. What I'm saying, the spin is bars.

Nigel: COs are a huge presence in the life of incarcerated men and women. [New York affirms] And we wanted to know more about what guys in San Quentin felt about them. [beat fades out]

[Montage of several voices speaking in quick succession] Call them the P-I-G. [voices chattering in background] Pig is an acronym. Police-in-green. Uh, I call them Citizens. Yeah, I call them officers when I talk to righteous ones. Uh, correction officer, sir. [laughter]

Nigel: I'll be talking with New York on the inside and with Earlonne on the outside.

New York: Earlonne interviewed a formerly incarcerated person who did the unthinkable...

Nigel: Wait, wait, wait, c'mon. [New York laughs] Don't give away that. Let's hold that for later in the episode.

New York: Alright, you guys gotta wait. But it was so unthinkable, he wouldn't talk about it publicly until he was out of prison. [trappy lullaby beat music comes in]

Speaker 1: They call 'em a lot of things, man, but they just, police, you know what I mean? They just police. They've been a lot of other things in my days, but that's the only thing I can say about it...

New York: So mom, before we even begin, I got a special request.

New York's Mom: What's the special request?

New York: Uh, I personally don't call people in prison inmates. So can I get you to call them incarcerated people when it comes up?

New York's Mom: Mmm.

New York: Uh oh, long silence.

New York's Mom: Now, I hope I remember because you know, y'all was inmates for about twenty-five years [New York laughing] and then I was doing jail time so. Incarcerated peoples?

New York: Incarcerated people. Yup.

New York's Mom: Okay. Incarcerated peoples. [soft synth tone comes in]

Nigel: Alright, New York. I can never get over this. Your mom was actually a CO.

[00:10:03] **New York:** She was a CO. In New York City on Rikers Island. And she retired three-star chief, two levels from the top.

Nigel: Oh my god, she really went up in the chain there.

New York: She was way up.

Nigel: So, she was actually a CO when you and your brother were growing up?

New York: Yeah, but we never talked about it. Not when I was a kid, not when me and my little brother started getting in trouble with the law. Not even when we were both on Riker's Island.

Nigel: Wait a minute. [music ends] You're saying that when you were on Rikers Island, your mom was also working there?

New York: Yep. But because we're family members, they would keep me in a different building. But she definitely was a captain around at a time.

Nigel: Man, I didn't realize that she worked there at the same time you were there. I never thought you crossed over.

New York: Yeah. Even all these years since I've been in prison, we didn't talk about it. Until recently when we called her from the media lab, that was the first time we had a conversation about it. And she was at home in Queens [Nigel affirms] and she told me what it was like to be working as a CO when me and my brother would get arrested.

Nigel: And she told us that when she was working in corrections, as a courtesy, when either you or your brother got arrested, somebody from the jail would actually call her...

New York: ...and tell her what building we were in.

New York's Mom: The first few calls was upsetting. After that it was annoying because I didn't wanna be disrespectful to the person that was calling me, but I wanted to tell him a lot of things. Well, my two sons are not victims. They are volunteers.

Nigel: So by volunteers, your mom meant that you and your brother had advantages that she didn't see other kids in the neighborhood having.

New York: Yeah, we took those for granted. And so in her eyes that made our crimes inexcusable.

New York's Mom: Brownsville was hard. But unlike some of the people in Brownsville, who had parents that were on crack, in jail, didn't have food in their

house, didn't have the clothing they needed, you were an "A" student. The average inmate in jail, fifth grade reading level, that didn't apply to you or your brother. You didn't understand what you had, compared to other incarcerated people. [smooth beat comes in]

Nigel: Okay New York, your mom is one tough person.

New York: She had to be tough. She was playing both the role of my mom and my dad. [Nigel affirms] Plus she was a CO on Rikers Island, which is a freaking zoo, [Nigel affirms] especially back in those days. And so not only did my conduct embarrass her, Nigel, but she had to worry about me every time somebody got attacked...

Nigel: Oh truly

New York: ...and that happened a lot. And then she's probably wondering was I a victim [Nigel affirms] or was I a perpetrator? And so she had to be tough, man. [beat fades out] Just to keep from worrying herself to death.

Nigel: [to New York's mother] Did New York ever see you cry or get upset about his behavior?

New York's Mom: No, because by the – usually New York would never really see it too much because I'm coming down to a courthouse or to a jail. So as a correction person, you're not crying in no jail. Whether you're an officer, captain, whatever, I'm not going in crying in front of other officers. And I'm generally not gonna cry in the courthouse. So I'm going to cry at home. [synth tones come in]

Nigel: We're going to hear a bit more from your mom later, but let's get to the experience that guys here in the California prison system have had with COs and let's start with the battle days when things between COs and prisoners were –

New York: – incarcerated people, Nigel, incarcerated people.

Nigel: Point taken. When things between COs and incarcerated people were really pretty brutal.

Wayne "Mo" Mobley: At the Corcoran Prison atmosphere was us against them. You know, it was us against them.

New York: This is incarcerated person, Wayne "Mo" Mobley talking about a prison that in the 90s was one of the most notorious in California.

Wayne: You know, it's so, it's just so much violence. We not only had staff that was against us...

New York: So is this during the time, the legendary time in Corcoran, when they were arranging cockfights, that time period? [Wayne affirms] [crosstalk]

Wayne: They shootin' in the building, that was a likely possibility. And I seen that several times.

Nigel: Shooting in the building, New York?

New York: Yeah. It wasn't uncommon. Between 1989 and 1995, fifty people incarcerated at Corcoran was shot, seven fatally.

Nigel: Woah. And what about cockfights?

Wayne: Yeah, cockfights are when the COs would let two groups of incarcerated people be in the same place at the same time, knowing they're gonna fight.

Nigel: So intentional?

Wayne: Intentionally setting up a fight. Like, wow, can that really happen? But for me at that particular time, right there, that's just another day in the office. There was no room for error. So we was always on point. [abstract industrial sounds: chains clanging, hammering, voices chattering over radio]

New York: [00:15:00] Back in the day, there was another kind of intentional fight, but this one was actually between COs and incarcerated men.

Nigel: I had heard that there was a time in prison where guys and COs would agree to fight and a CO would take off his, what do you call his...

Ralph "Teddy" Brooks: ...his badge?

Nigel: his badge.

Ralph: Of course.

Nigel: It's true?

Ralph: Yes, it is. I've experienced that.

New York: This is Ralph "Teddy" Brooks. He did time in the 80s and then he returned to prison in the 1990s.

Ralph: Because I thought I was a little tough dude at one time. You know, back in '86 me and an officer, we kept having arguments. He might get caught tearing up my cell, you know, stripping me out. Just to humiliate me, you know? So I just tell him, man, you ain't nothing but a punk. You know, let's go up in here and deal with this. It was in a stairwell. I called him out a few times and one day he said, man, come on, man. Took his badge off. A couple officers stood outside to where we both went in there with the same attitude that you know, I don't care. I'mma show you I'm not going back down from you. Started throwing blows til, you know, one of us gave up.

Nigel: How does it end though? I mean, it must be so much adrenaline and like, machismo filling the space.

Ralph: Well, you know, just one saying, okay, we're good, we're good. It's good. You know? You ain't fighting to break no jaws or bust no noses.

New York: Yeah. That's one thing that's weird about violence, like the mutual respect that can come out of that.

Ralph: Well...

New York: And then, do you understand how that works? I don't understand it.

Ralph: I understand how it works. It works, you know, it's like, you call me out and I'll say, let's go and we go. It's gonna to be a lot of respect there 'cause you show me that you're more mannered than what you show me by you just talking.

Nigel: We couldn't corroborate this particular incident. It took place a long time ago. But we did learn that fights like these between COs and incarcerated guys did take place on occasion. [transition to abstract sounds: voices chattering, fades out]

Charles "Ahmed" Daron: I'm laying in my bunk. It's like five o'clock in the morning and here comes Warden K.W. Prunty. I'm like, "man, ain't you the Warden? He like, "yeah." I said, "what you want with me?" He opened, he done opened up the tray slide now, and he's telling me, "cough up."

New York: This is Charles "Ahmed" Daron. In 1995, he was in Calipatria State Prison in Southern California.

Nigel: He was an East Coast Crip, and that morning the Warden wasn't just getting him out of his cell, he was rounding up all of the members of that gang.

New York: And Charles had no idea why.

Charles: We get out to the front of the building and they strip us out right there and they give us jumpsuits. They got the bus pulled right up at the gate on the yard. [ambient sounds: voices chattering, bus motor humming, metal cuffs clanking]

New York: A bus pulling up on a yard is highly unusual. Normally everyone gets processed through the receiving room. So in this case, something was really up.

Charles: So I get on the bus, it's thirty-six of us. He gets on the bus, the Sergeant, and he says, "look man, I'm not no regular sergeant." He said, "I work for the Director of Corrections." He said, "you guys are going to Corcoran SHU pending investigation. [soft synth tones begin]

Nigel: Here's what was happening: in Calipatria eight COs had been stabbed by five East Coast Crips. And luckily no one died, but it set off a crazy chain of events that later made headlines.

New York: All the East Coast Crips in Calipatria, even the guys from other yards who could not have been involved in a stabbing were put on a six-hour bus ride to Corcoran. When they arrived, Charles realized what was about to happen.

Charles: And it's like eighty cops out there. They got their name tags covered up, they got the gloves on, they got towels around their necks, they out there shadow boxing and the stretching. When the bus stops, you know, when we tell them like, "look man, we already know what time it is." You know what I mean? "Take the cuffs off and we just, you know, let it happen how it happened." They don't want to do that. [somber tones begin]

New York: This was not gonna be a cockfight.

Nigel: Nope.

New York: Nor was it gona to be a fair fight between a CO and an incarcerated man.

Nigel: No. The CO's had something else in mind.

Charles: So sergeants from Corcoran, they get on the bus. And one of them says, "Which one of these big bad East Coast Crips is the baddest?" And the other said my boy Trip Box. He said, "Get him!" You know, "He's got the biggest mouth. He's the one that's been doing all the talking." Right? When they get him off the bus, all them cops rush you. I mean, it's like a swarm all around him. So I'm like, "Damn, look how they doin' the homies. So then the realization hit me that this is probably what's going to happen to me.

Nigel: And it did happen to Charles. His leg irons were taken off. He was thrown off the bus swarmed by COs and beaten.

Charles: You know, if that that was it, that wasn't that bad.

New York: But that was just the start. COs brought him across the yard and into a building.

Charles: I walk up in the building and I see this cat named Peachum. I see him up against the wall, like all out of breath and looking like he was hurt. I'm like, "damn, what happened to him?" And they turned me up in the room. So there's six cops up in the room and the two that brought me. You know what I mean, so I come up in there. First, they all rushed me, they all hit me. And then after a while, they get smart and they had one big old Mexican dude. They like, "let him hit him! He hits the hardest, he hits the hardest." So they let him whoop on me for a while. At one point I was on the ground and they was stomping up and down on top of my head. And finally they drug me up out of here -- I couldn't breathe, all the air was out of me -- to get me up on my knees, but I can't, like I said, I can't breathe. [somber tones fade out]

Nigel: [00:20:20] After that, they threw him into a cell.

Charles: Peachum is already in the cell. So I sit on one bunk, he sit on the other bunk, and I just laid back to catch my breath. We don't even talk. That was the worst ass whoopin' I ever got in my life. [soft music comes in]

Nigel: This incident made news. There were lawsuits and the men beaten by the COs won a settlement. The California department of corrections took action. Eight of those officers were fired. Although after an appeals process, five were reinstated. This was an epic case of violence between incarcerated men and COs. A notorious incident. But it has to be said that aggression between COs and the incarcerated is not a one-way street. It goes both ways. And more often than not, it's on a much smaller, more intimate scale.

New York: What were you like when you first came to prison?

Reggie Thorpe: It was like, I was a 24-year-old man, with the mind of a newborn child.

New York: This is Reggie Thorpe. He is now 44 years old.

Reggie: And it's like I just got pushed out of a womb into a whole 'nother world. I never been in prison and I didn't know how to operate in this world. I had a bunch of time, fifty years to life. I was just young, scared and full of energy and angry.

Nigel: Reggie started focusing his energy and anger on one specific CO who worked up in a guard tower inside the cell block. This CO was a woman and she carried a semiautomatic rifle.

Reggie: A Ruger Mini-14.

New York: Describe to them the first time you saw Miss Banky.

Reggie: Oh, wow. It was this little lady, man. I think she was like five one, five two. She looked like a little kid. I was like, "Man, who is was this little blonde lady working up in this tower?" I used to always want to get out of my cell. And then she'd tell me to go back in. And I'd storm back in the cell and I'd get mad and I'll start yelling and kicking on her doors, calling her bitches, and, and she would just look at you. She wouldn't blink sometimes. She just had this stare like you could see that she was no nonsense.

Nigel: Can you remember any of the things that you would be yelling at Miss Banky?

Reggie: I just really called her a bunch of bitches. Punk bitch, bitch...

Nigel: But just over and over again and then...

Reggie: ...Fuck you, yeah. And kicking on the doors. But I was doing it for hours though.

Nigel: Why her? Cause I would imagine a lot of COs enforce those rules. But was there something about her in particular?

Reggie: It was just, I guess it was her stare. She just look at you with that mini 14 and she'd just look at you like, "Yes, time for you to go back to your cell."

Nigel: So yeah, what was that look saying to you?

Reggie: It was like, "Fuck you. Go back to your cell. You ain't got nothing coming. I don't care about what you got going on. Go back to your cell." And it was *all the time*. She was just – had this stare. I could clearly recall how she was just look at me when I would just be kicking on the doors and screaming. She'd just had this look like, "You're not doing nothing to me. It don't bother me."

Nigel: You know what I – as you're describing it, [Reggie laughing] I'm seeing in my mind is a very strict mother not giving in to her child's temper tantrum.

Reggie: That's exactly what she and I was. And I was acting an ass, Nige. I'm talking about kicking and screaming, like really going ballistic up in that cell. I was like –

'cause right now even thinking about it, it's like, dude, you was really fucked up. It was something wrong with me back then. [synth tones begin]

Nigel: This went on for a long time until Miss Banky was eventually transferred to a new position.

New York: After she left, Reggie slowly cleaned up his act.

Nigel: Basically, he grew up.

New York: Yeah, he grew up. And he started behaving better. He started getting fewer write ups and after many years of improved behavior, in 2018 he was transferred to a lower level prison.

Reggie: And they gave me a job assignment to go work in the vocation. And as I'm on my way down to my job assignment, I see her.

New York: How many years apart from when you were terrorizin' her to when you saw again?

Reggie: Probably like fifteen-year span.

New York: Did you think about her?

Reggie: No, I didn't. I didn't think about her until I seen her again that day. And she looks at me and she got this look on her face. It's not the same look that she had when she was here in a tower with the stare. She looked more petrified. And she was shocked. She started asking me questions in rapid succession, like, "What are you doing here? Where you live at?" [00:24:57] I'm telling you, man, I was overwhelmed because when I seen her face all them days and weeks of kicking on that door and screaming at her just came all in one rush. I told her, I was like, "Man, I was an asshole." I had to reassure her that I'm no longer the same person I was back then. And it was a blessing being able to see her. She said she hated coming to work 'cause of me. And I didn't know that. I didn't know I was tormenting and that lady that bad. She said, "Them years that I stayed in that tower while you was there was probably my worst years I ever did working in this prison." She says she used to wake up in the morning and her day was thinking about, "Man, I gotta go deal with this knucklehead." I don't know if she's all the way healed from that, if she's having nightmares. I don't know that. [beat comes in]

Nigel: Miss Banky is now retired. We got in touch with her to see if she wanted to share her side of the story, but she declined.

New York: Astute listeners may have noticed that with exception of my mom, we haven't heard from any CO's in this episode, which is all about COs.

Nigel: I know, New York, that is crazy. And I've got to say that we have been trying for years to get CO's to talk to us, and we've only gotten like one or two and it's just been brief, right? [New York affirms] On previous episodes. And even if they're retired, like Miss Banky...

New York: They still don't wanna talk to us.

Nigel: I know, it's really tough. Now, the only exception so far has been...

New York: ... my mom.

Nigel: Yup. Mom.

New York: Was it fulfilling job? And if so, what was fulfilling about it?

New York's Mom: Okay. Most COs, I would say, thinks it's the worst job almost ever while they're working it and think it's the best job ever when you're retired. I mean, that's the simplest way to put it. But I actually too, a lot of it depends on where you work at. If once you get out of the housing area with the day to day, inmate contact, the job is like almost like any other job. Once you start to work up front, in an office area, it's not that jail job to you. You're providing services for the inmates. But your daily contact with them is different. And when you meet with them and they're trying to tell you what it is they want, you're tryna tell them how you can maybe get them what they want. Then you have a different rapport with them. [ambient sounds: voices chattering]

New York: What prison did you start your time at?

Jesse Ayres: Wasco.

New York: And what was the relationship like between incarcerated people and the correctional officers?

Jesse: None. There was none whatsoever. It was like if you seen them, you don't even look them in the eye. Just look down, look away. And just follow direct orders otherwise, don't pay any attention to them and don't try to initiate any kind of conversation whatsoever.

Nigel: This is Jesse Ayres. He's been on the podcast before doing stand-up, but this story ain't comedy.

New York: Jesse was transferred from Wasco to Avenal State Prison. And that just happens to be halfway between San Francisco and LA. It also happens to be close to where Jesse grew up.

Nigel: That's right. He was practically in his own neighborhood.

New York: Back on the block. This time the cell block.

Jesse: And a lot of dudes I knew from school, played baseball with football with, knew from the neighborhood. You know, the ones who didn't get into gangs, the ones who didn't get locked up, you know, they became farmers, worked at Walmart, went to the military. [beat begins] Some of the ones who came home from the military got jobs in the prison.

New York: Jesse thought he might know some of the COs at Avenal. [Nigel affirms] And if he did, he planned to mix in a little business with the reminiscent.

Jesse: You know, I was still in my criminal behavior at the time. I was still addicted to drugs and I'm thinking that I'm going to win when I see one of my friends, you know, I'm going to pull up old memories. I'm gonna use this as leeway to get, you know, something brought in.

New York: And soon enough, he found out there was a CO that he knew from when he was fourteen years old. [beat fades out]

Jesse: So I went over to the podium where he was. [ambient sounds: voices chattering] And I see his name tag and he looked up at me and I was like, the shock hit me. And I called him by his first name and I said, "Hey man, I just wanted to say hi." And he put his hands up, you know what I mean? Like I had a gun out or something. [somber synth tones begin] And he started backing away from me going, "Hey, I feel uncomfortable. Please step away from me." And he signaled his partner and he goes, "Tell him to get back." And his partner told me to get back and then my stomach sank, you know, I'm already high, now I'm feeling sick. And I just walked back and I just felt like, I don't know, I must've looked like a ghost. Like all the blood was just rushed out of my face. So I went back to my little dorm area, but I just sat there thinking like, what's gonna happen? What's gonna happen?

Nigel: Okay, New York, we have talked about this on Ear Hustle before. This is a classic case of over familiarity.

New York: [00:29:56] Yep. Prison officials are looking out for it any relationship between outsiders and an incarcerated that might lead to trouble. [Nigel affirms] The problem here is that Jesse might be able to use their shared history to get something out of the officer.

Nigel: Right.

New York: Drugs, contraband, all kinds of stuff. [somber tones end]

Jesse: And the captain calls me in and I'm sitting there and they go, "Well, it's nothing personal. It's just business, you know? And next time you see somebody, you know, keep your fucking mouth shut." They all knew I was trying to get somebody to bring me something.

New York: Jesse now wonders if his old friend may have been getting back at him for something that happened years ago.

Jesse: The last time I had seen him, we were fourteen and we were at his birthday party. And it was just kid stuff, you know what I mean? He was turning 14 and all of his cousins were in the room, and I hit the lights. I said fourteen seconds and everybody just beat on him [mimics sound of punches] and after the time ran out, I turned the light on. He looked at me and he was like, "Man, you fucked up my birthday party."

Juan Carlos Meza: My own personal rapport with officers was basically, I didn't talk to them, they didn't talk to me when I first came in. No trust between me and the officers.

Nigel: Juan “Carlos” Meza has been incarcerated for almost twenty-five years. He started off in a maximum-security level four prison. But when he transferred to Solano, a level three, things started to change for him. For one, he got a prison job.

Carlos M: I ended up working for two officers. One was officer Overstreet and one was officer Hunter. And they were my bosses I worked as a porter in the block. So I work every day. I come out and do my job. He asked me to do something, I do it. There was never any argument. Then one day, this officer pulls me into the office. What's going on? What I do wrong? You know, everything goes on in my head. Like, okay, am I going to get beat up? What's going to happen? Because you know, all these stories we tell ourselves in prison, like, it's about to go down. And I'm scared and I'm sitting there and I'm looking at these two officers and they kind of like, they take good second to pause. And then, Overstreet goes, "Calm down, nothing going on." I said, Oh, what is this? What is going on here?" He's like, "Meza, do you not like working for me?" I said, "What? Do I not like working for you? What do you mean, do I not like working for you?" You goes, "Well, you don't ever talk with me." I said, "Well, no, I don't talk to cops. I don't trust you. You know, y'all set people up in the past and things like this." He looks at me, he goes, "Well, not all officers are like that." And he goes, "Well, just give us a chance. You know?" [beat begins]

New York: So Carlos did give him a chance, and after a while, he began to develop a rapport with officer Overstreet.

Carlos M: [laughing] I know this may sound silly, but if anybody ever seen like the Simpsons where the bully kid's like, "Papa!" When he go by for count, me and cellie would yell, "Papa!" But you know, as much as we joke, he was really like that figure in my life 'cause he was older than me. [beat ends] Uh, this officer had a bald head and a handlebar mustache and he was very much – look like Yosemite Sam in so many different ways. And so one time, I had this paint set and I had found this cut out of a Captain Crunch hat and I painted it all blue with a nice gold, big "C" on it, right? And it was about, I'll say, maybe two feet wide, maybe two and a half wide, [laughing] this big ole blue hat. I hand him this bag. He's like, "I don't know what's in the bag." I said, "Just take it man, take it" and he's like, "What's in the bag?" And so eventually I'm like, "Just take the bag. It's nothing stupid." So he takes it and he has this hat and he's looking at it, he looks at me. He goes, "Man, get outta here, fool." So roughly about, not that day, but the next day, here comes this officer with this Captain Crunch hat on doing count. Oh man, I fell out laughing. [upbeat, dreamy synth begins] I didn't ask for it, but this officer, one of the officers, like got me into who I am today. And I think he, he really, I don't know what he saw in me. Maybe he saw like how I joked with my cellie or how I interacted with other people and he felt like, why do you only put that in one place? But he nurtured this and brought out this side of me that I use now everywhere I go. And I really thank him for that because he got me out of the idea of an us and them.

Nigel: So New York, this just sounds like normal human interaction.

New York: Yeah, like with your uncle or something. [beat fades out]

Nigel: Exactly. But like we heard from Jesse, there's a lot of risk in any kind of friendly relationship between the CO and the guys inside, because even the appearance of overfamiliarity can lead to a problem.

New York: For some guys inside a friendly relationship with a CO can also look very suspicious.

Nigel: [00:35:02] Right. So it's not just the administration that worries about it.

New York: Not just the administration, guys on the yard, like, "What are you doing over there? What are you talking about? Why are you talking for that long?"

[to Carlos] What did you feel about other incarcerated people seeing you having this relationship with correctional officers?

Carlos M: I used to get like really scared, anxious, but then I would say to myself, I'm not doing anything wrong. You know, the idea is that if I'm talking to an officer, I must be snitching. Right? That's why I didn't want to talk to Street to begin with is because of what if people think that I'm doing this and I'm not. I don't want to get stabbed. I don't want to get beat up. I like my face. I don't want it rearranged. [laughs]

New York: Did you ever run into any problems?

Carlos M: I did. I ran into problems here and there. There were guys like, "Hey man, you sit in that office too much." I said, and I would tell him, "You wanna come sit with me? If you want to be there, you could be there." I have nothing to hide. A lot of good memories. In fact, when I left Solano to go to Solidad, you know, the weirdest thing was he shook my hand and then he pulled me in for like a hug. And it was, it was a surreal feeling. Like, I never hugged a cop before and it was just a weird thing, and he was like, man, take care of yourself and be safe. And it was a really profound time for me right then and there because growing up the way I did from house to house, from city to city, I never had any like real substantial relationships with men, like that. And here was one where, you know, he cared and it was, it was life changing, man. [dreamy synth tones begin]

Nigel: Next we're going to go outside the prison to talk with another Carlos. This. Carlos is a former resident of San Quentin, and he told us about something that happened when he was still incarcerated.

New York: Yeah, he did not want to talk about it while he was still inside. But now that he's out, I guess he feels like they won't be any repercussions for him.

Nigel: I'll be back with our co-host, Earlonne Woods, after the break. [beat fades out]

Earlonne: You know, Nige, not that long ago, my place of residence was North block, one of the housing units in San Quentin.

Nigel: I know. And you know what? I'm wondering if you hated it because you were always in the media lab.

Earlonne: I think I just hated being locked and confined inside [Nigel affirms] of a building in a cell. And I enjoyed the freedom of the media lab.

Nigel: And how about the challenge of all the great work we did?

Earlonne: That was cool too, [Nigel laughing] but it was the freedom of the media lab. So, the story we are about to hear took place in West block, which is pretty much a carbon copy of North block.

Nigel: Yeah. It's like this huge concrete building. There's five tiers in it. [Earlonne affirms] And I actually have heard it's bigger than North block though.

Earlonne: Yes, by a few cells. I think when the average person picture a prison cell, that's pretty much what West block looks like.

Nigel: And the story we're about to hear took place in the showers of West block.

Earlonne: And if there's one place I don't miss, it's the showers.

Nigel: Oh god, I'm sure.

Earlonne: That shit was horrific. The water is just flooding sometime and you got to stand in that shit...

Nigel: ... And you're not alone.

Earlonne: You're not alone. It's like fifty other dudes in it. In any case, a few years ago, Carlos Flores was finishing up his shower in West block, and here's what happened.

Carlos Flores: I got out of the shower, butt naked. I'm naked as I came into the world. And I'm drying off and then all of a sudden we had this Vietnam vet guy who was on the first tier in West block. His eye was missing, bad health, you know what I mean? Still kicking though, and just one of these things where you look over and nobody was around. It was just him. There's blood shooting out of the bottom of his leg, like the inner ankle, but massive amounts of it to where he's like, I just hear, "Oh god." And I look: blood spewing out everywhere and I'm like, "What's going on?" So, immediately, I dunno, I just grabbed the trash bag. I know how to make a tourniquet, so I made a tourniquet real quick. I went over naked, wrapping his leg up, and I'm screaming, "Man down! Man down!" And the other officers come, they come running. And they're just standing around like looking at me. And then Dutton comes.

Nigel: Dutton was the sergeant on duty that day in West block. And this guy comes gung ho, like, like no regard for himself, and I'm not saying foolhardy, but like very methodical. Like, here, "Get out of the way." Boom. Took a towel. My brand-new towel. It was brand new and compresses this artery that had clearly busted through skin somehow and was just holding it. Anyways, I stood back, I was just like, wow, you know, blood was pumping everywhere on his suit and whatnot. And I was like, "wow, that's crazy." This guy is like really into it. I could see the concern and the care in his effort for this guy.

[00:40:10] **Earlonne:** You see a lot of shit in prison, but this incident stuck with Carlos and it took on a new meaning a few years later. [ambient sounds: voices speaking over loud speaker]

Nigel: What's your name?

Sergeant Cuevas: Oh, well, Sergeant Cuevas.

Nigel: And can you tell us about what happened on, what was it? April 16th. Wait a minute.

Sergeant Cuevas: No. March 11, 2016.

Nigel: Okay. March 11, 2016.

Sergeant Cuevas: Uh, well, I was assigned to the education department down in Lower Yard in San Quentin. I remember it was just like any other ordinary day, I will say, it became time to, you know, for lunch.

Nigel: I go to the education center every day on my way into the media lab. And it's this one-story building with a ramp leading up to the door, and there's always an officer behind the desk.

Earlone: Yeah, it's a pretty chill place. You know, guys hangin' out between classes, [Nigel affirms] taking in a little sun, out on the ramp.

Sergeant Cuevas: I remember I was eating and somebody came by and wanted to ask me a question, I turn around to face them and wanted to probably talk at the same time as I was I was eating and chewing and stuff. So, I was eating rice, and a piece of steak, you know, remember that piece steak kind of got stuck in my throat.

Carlos F: We're chillin' and then all of a sudden Cuevas appears like flailing and is patting his back or something. And I kinda like went back. I thought he was joking with us.

Nigel: Carlos was hanging out in the education department with his friend [name redacted] [name redacted] is still at San Quentin and he didn't want to be identified in this story. You'll understand why in a minute.

Sergeant Cuevas: I couldn't get, no, not even a little bit of air -- nothing. So of course, after a few seconds, start to panic. 'Cause I couldn't, you know, breathe nothing, make no noise, nothing like that.

Carlos F: So that's when [name redacted] started patting him on the back. He was like touching, like patting him like a baby. And I knew something was wrong because you don't touch a CO.

Sergeant Cuevas: I was really panicking and this time, you know, couldn't even gasp for a little bit air or nothing. So I kind of fell on my knees a little bit because I was ready to pass out. So that's when I felt somebody hit me in the back really hard.

Carlos F: It's one of those moments where you get this sensation of time stopping. You can see everything. Everything instantly slows [atmospheric tones begin] down. I guess, because the senses are heightened. And I walked up behind him and I was like, "Are you serious?" And then I just, Cuevas is a big man, I knew. I couldn't Heimlich him. So he was leaning over the railing with his arms. So I just thought, give

it to him in the back in the middle with my palm. And I thought that the, uh, officers, I'd never touched the CEO, you know, like. I did. I thought they were, um, like plates. That's, those jackets were going to have solid plates. So when I started hitting him, I was expecting to like run into plates, but I ran into, you know, his back, his actual, you know, that Kevlar, I guess that's what it is. It gives you, I guess it'll stop a knife, but I just started hitting him over and over. [rhythmic thumping intensifies and then fades out]

Nigel: Wouldn't it be awful if the last thing you saw was the yard at San Quentin?

Sergeant Cuevas: Yes, of course! You know, I will say, if you're going to die, the last thing you wanna see in your mind is your family, your kids, or somebody like that. Not the lower yard, right? Especially at San Quentin, I'll be like, you kidding me?

Nigel: It wasn't only officer Cuevas whose life was in danger that day. This whole thing took place on the ramp, just outside the education building in full view of armed guards in the watchtowers.

Earlonne: On the ramp, you're in front of like four towers. [Carlos affirms] three or four towers. [Carlos affirms] And they not perceivin'...

Carlos F: You don't realize it at the moment [crosstalk]

Earlonne: What's happenin'

Carlos F: but afterwards, immediately afterwards you're like, I was peeping up at those towers 'cause we had that one, you know, directly across from the education. [Earlonne affirms] But I was just lucky, you know. Because it would have looked like I was stabbing him, no doubt it would have looked like it. And he was just...

Earlonne: ...Flapping around like

Carlos F: yeah!

Earlonne: "I'm losing my life," which he's really dying. [Carlos affirms]

Carlos F: And that motion, you know, that motion of like Buddha palming somebody in the middle of the back, looks like you're bludgeoning them. [synth tones begin]

Earlonne: Carlos and his friend, along with another prisoner, basically saved Cuevas' his life.

Nigel: And it was big news inside the prison.

Earlonne: Yeah. It was even written up in the San Quentin newspaper. [Nigel affirms]

Nigel: But only Cuevas was named. Carlos, his friend, and the other guy didn't want their names in the newspaper because basically they didn't want anyone to know what they had done. [music fades out]

Carlos F: It put me in a predicament where like you aided an officer, you know, like you help save him.

Nigel: Can you explain the feeling? Like why were you having uncomfortable feelings about helping a CO?

Carlos F: Because they're officers. You're a prisoner. Don't help them. There's this dividing line, there was this mindset back in the day where, where things were very hostile. It was like division. There were walls that existed. They were bad. I mean, really hostile. [00:45:00] And I unfortunately had a taste of that and it was not cool. So it kind of messed with my head, helping this guy. It's like, it really was kind of like helping the enemy, you know? And I remember speaking to a couple of guys and I was telling him like, "Hey dude, don't put my name in the paper." And, and like having to be forceful with it. "Don't put my name on the paper on that." And you know, it's kinda scary, you know, how are you going to be perceived that you helped this dude? And in the end, some guys were telling me, "That's good, Carlos, you saved the dude's life."

Earlone: After the Cuevas incident, Carlos got a chrono.

Nigel: Yeah. Can you explain what a chrono was, please?

Earlone: A chrono is like a 128.

Nigel: Yeah. Okay. [sarcastically] Wow. So clear now. [both laughing]

Earlone: So what a 128 or a chrono is [Nigel affirms] is just a written documentation of good, bad, extraordinary ugly, whether you'd been doing good, whether you've been doing bad, or whether you've been just an asshole. [Nigel laughs]

Nigel: The good, the bad, and the ugly.

Earlone: Or whether you just been hella heroic and going above and beyond what's called for at the moment.

Nigel: Okay, so Carlos had his chrono.

Earlone: Right. And that's when he started thinking about Sergeant Dutton and the incident in the shower. And he wanted to talk to Sergeant Dutton about the Cuevas incident.

Carlos F: I got this Chrono and I'm kinda like struggling with it, I'm walking back from the yard and I see him on the wall at the entrance at West block as we're about to go in. And I just like, I'm gonna show him this and explain to him, kind of like, what I'm kind of going through because I seen him do this. So I tell him, "Hey Dutton, can you read this? He goes, "What's this? Snitch kite?" I'm like, "Dude, what the fuck are you talking about? Just read the damn thing."

Earlone: and how many people would have seen it?

Carlos F: There's like people walking by. So I'm like, "Damn dude, you just got to say some stuff like that in front of everyone? Like, come on man. Just freakin' read the damn thing." Anyway, he reads it and there was a couple of officers around and they try to like peekaboo on it and I was like, "No, no" I said, you know what I mean? So

they kind of got mad at me for like checking them, like, "Don't read this. This is only for him."

Earlone: So Dutton read the incident report.

Carlos F: He's like, "why are you telling me?" So I told him, you know, like I've been kinda struggling with what I did and the fear that I was going through. Like what are people gonna say that I saved this dude? And, or they found out what I did.

Nigel: Did Dutton understand what you were trying...?

Carlos F: He did after that because he took a real interest in me afterwards. He would pull me over sometimes like, dude, you know, he would give me some kind of like encouragement on things, you know? And I would just, it kinda took me back, like, having this guy interested in me. And I don't think it was so much because of what I did. I think it was because like he was a mirror to me. I think I was a mirror to him. I think I gave him insight, like, "Dude, you really did a cool ass thing. That was really cool to see that."

Earlone: So it was probably something he had never heard.

Carlos F: Probably, you know, like, do do they get praised for -- that's his job. But I actually seen like the human element, the guy was in the -- it didn't matter about his job. Maybe it did. Maybe it was just a training, but the other guys standing around didn't look like that was their training. It didn't, it didn't look like their training kicked in like his did.

Nigel: Well, no, it sounds like both of you, Dutton and you, both reacted without thinking about it. [Carlos affirms] Like you just saw someone that needed help, Dutton saw someone [Carlos snaps finger and says, "Bam"] that needed help and you jumped to action [Carlos affirms] and it wasn't til after that you start thinking, "Shit." Did anyone give you a hard time?

Carlos F: No. No.

Nigel: But you were worried?

Carlos F: I mean, there'd be ribbing here and there, like, you know, some ribbing, but nobody ever really, I never really encountered any real significant danger. I felt like, thank god. [synths begin]

Nigel: So E, do you know Sergeant Dutton?

Earlone: I don't think I do.

Nigel: Okay. I didn't know him either, but I really wanted to interview him for this episode after we talked to Carlos and guess what?

Earlone: He was happy to come sit down. [both laughing]

Nigel: You've been out of San Quentin too long, if you think that was the case.

Earlone: So he didn't want to talk?

Nigel: Nope. I went up to try to find him in West block, maybe like four times. And finally, finally I reached him.

Earlone: What? He debriefed?

Nigel: Well, he agreed to talk to me [Earlone affirms] and that we could discuss this conversation, but he absolutely would not get on the mic.

Earlone: Progress.

Nigel: It was progress. It was progress. And he didn't exactly remember the conversation. And when I told them about how important had been to Carlos, he was clearly touched by it.

Earlone: Mmm

Nigel: I said to him, obviously you really care about your job, you really care about the guys inside and that you have some kind of, I used the word sympathy, and he very quickly said, "It's not sympathy, it's empathy." Like, "I experience empathy and I see the guys inside here as people. And so when somebody needed help, I didn't think twice. I just jumped in and helped."

Earlone: And that's kind of unusual.

Nigel: But even talking about having empathy is difficult for COs.

Earlone: Right, right.

Nigel: I mean, I got the impression that he was saying that *that* can potentially change the way your coworkers feel about you.

Earlone: It's just opens them up to a lot of different ridicule [Nigel affirms] and opens them up to, "Oh, you're just an inmate lover."

Nigel: [00:49:56] But clearly, Dutton, I mean, he obviously really cares about what he does. And it left me kind of feeling sad about the fact that Ear Hustle does so much to change the way people look at those who are incarcerated, and I feel like we've made a dent with that. We do not seem to be able to break down the wall of talking to people that work there, and they're an important part of the story. And I also just want to say like, I meet a lot of great correctional officers, but even the ones that I have good relationships with, I still cannot get a mic in front of them. [beat begins]

Rhashiyd Zinnamon: Ear Hustle was produced on the inside by Nigel Poor

John "Yahya" Johnson: Boss lady

Rhashiyd: Rahsaan "New York" Thomas

Yahya: and yours truly, John "Yahya" Johnson

Rhashiyd: and my man Pat Mesiti-Miller

Yahya: and on the outside by Earlone Woods and Bruce Wallace.

Rhashiyd: Whaddup, Bruce?

Yahya: Whaddup, b?

Rhashiyd: This episode was scored with music by me, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, and my guy, Antwan Williams.

Yahya: That's my dude right there, [Rhashiyd affirms] and let's not forget about the incomparable David Jassy.

Rhashiyd: Fire.

Yahya: Curtis Fox edits this show.

Rhashiyd: Erin Wade is the digital producer

Yahya: and Julie Sapiro is the executive producer for Radiotopia. [beat ends abruptly]

Earlonne: Actually it's Shapiro, Yahya. *Julie Shapiro*. [beat comes back in]

Rhashiyd: Ear Hustle would like to thank acting warden Ron Broomfield.

Yahya: And as you already know, every episode of Ear Hustle has to be approved by this guy here. [beat fades out]

Lieutenant Sam Robinson: This was in at Sam Robinson, the public information officer at San Quentin State Prison. And I am not in front of Nigel nor New York. I am in my office social distancing as we all should be doing right now. And I have weighed in on this latest episode of Ear Hustle. This one was difficult for me, I think they got a fact wrong in that they say that the only custody staff member that they've ever had an opportunity to speak was New York's mother. And again, that was insightful. I enjoyed that myself. But man, there has been more than one correctional custody staff member that they have spoken to. They have had the insight and thoughts of Lieutenant Sam Robinson since season one. I have shared my heart and soul. So with that, although I think they got the facts wrong, I will say that I do approve this episode and for all of you out there in Ear Hustle land, stay safe. [trappy lullaby beat begins]

Yahya: This podcast was made possible with support from the Chan Zuckerberg initiative working to redesign the justice system by building power and opportunity for communities impacted by incarceration.

Rhashiyd: You can find out more about the show

Yahya: and the people in it

Rhashiyd: on the web at earhustlesq.com

Yahya: or you can follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook @earhustlesq.

Nigel: Ear Hustle is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collection of the best podcasts around here more at Radiotopia.fm

Earlone: Speaking of Radiotopia, we want to thank a few people who contributed to Radiotopia's latest fundraiser. [Nigel affirms] Thanks to Aaron Mazon,

Nigel: Erika Hughes

Earlone: Stephanie Fox

Nigel: Susan Rachel

Earlone: Traynor and Tricia Hansen

Nigel: Trish and Steve

Earlone: Tamara Bruno

Nigel: and Zakkai Melamed.

Earlone: And before we go, obviously things are pretty different in our world these days. We're thinking about all our listeners, but in particular we want to know how the corona virus is affecting incarcerated people and their families.

Nigel: For family members, you can send us an email. That address is info@earhustlesq.com and please make the subject of your email: "Family Inside."

Earlone: And for the folks inside, you can strike us up a kite. Our mailing address is Ear hustle, P.O. Box 883723, San Francisco, California, 94188.

Nigel: Again, that's P.O. Box 883723, San Francisco, California 94188. And please share this mailing address with your loved ones inside. [beat begins] We might just read some of your notes on an upcoming episode. And sidebar, thanks Post Office for still being open.

Earlone: And for everybody inside, please share our address with all your fellow incarcerated people. I'm Earlone Woods.

New York: I am Rahsaan "New York" Thomas.

Nigel: And I'm Nigel Poor.

Nigel, New York, and Earlone: [together] Thanks for listening.

Fanon: March 27, 2020. My name is Fanon Figgers and the Governor Gavin Newsom just commuted my sentence from 210 years to life. I'm appointed to go home and five days. Thank you, Mr. Gavin Newsom. 'Bout to do a whole lot different because my mind is clear. I'm ready to live life as a man supposed to live and make my mother proud, man.

Earlone: How's she felt?

Fanon: My mother proud of me, bro. She was crying, E.

Earlone: You sound like you were crying!

Fanon: Yeah, I am, bruh.

Earlone: [00:55:01] That's right. Right. As we were recording our last narration for this episode, we got the good news that Fanon Figgers, that was serving those 210 years to life under California three strikes law, had his sentence commuted.

Nigel: Things are changing every hour, and some of those changes are great.

Earlone: One more piece of good news before we go, and this one, I should get a beat for. [beat begins] David Jassy, whose music you're hearing underneath me right now, was also on that list of commutations by Governor Gavin Newson. David Jassy, who we refer to as the Swedish Phenom, has been providing dope ass beats for Ear Hustle since our very first episode. If you've heard an episode of our show, you've heard his music. We'll keep you posted on him and Fanon. Until then, enjoy.

END OF EPISODE.