

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 31: Darryl

I remember when I was younger, I used to think it was so cool when someone was like, I just come home from jail. I'd be like, wow, he just come home from jail. I was so fascinated with that.

Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

You are about to hear Darryl's story of incarceration. He was sentenced to ten years in prison on narcotics and handgun charges.

His childhood fascination with jail had become a reality.

Let me explain to you something about prison. You may go in somebody. You come in there, after you see a few incidents...Say you go in there, first you see someone getting their head bust open. You be like, woah, you shy away from it. But after awhile, you keep seeing people getting their head busted, you be like, oh well. You might step over someone, just keep it moving. You become immune to that, you adapt. You become an animal, basically.

Despite the violence he encountered in prison, Darryl was able to find reasons to give up the hustling lifestyle.

I gave it up because when I went to prison I had nothing. I had to call on my mother my aunt, I had nothing. All that hustling I had done for years, I had nothing. Then the people that was out there with me, they aint come, they aint help me out. I couldn't get a letter, and I wasn't asking for no money. I said, send me some pictures. If you go out, send me some pictures. Couldn't get that, so can you imagine how I felt in there. Can you imagine. When you first go in, you be so angry, you think, I can't wait to get out there, I am going to do this and that. But then as you sitting in prison you have to grow up like, you know what I am going to do, I am going to hurt them by being successful. Not being on the corner, coming home, getting a job, being successful.

Though Darryl experienced a shift in thinking while in prison, he doesn't credit it to anything the prison did—and he is suspicious of politicians who use tough rhetoric when talking about sentencing guidelines for drug and handgun offenders.

Okay if they care so much about prison put programs in there that can change someone's mind, give the prisoners some choices, some programs. No programs in there. There is no class to get you ready to come home. If they cared that much they would implement some programs. Nobody is ready for outside life after 5 6 years in prison...that is why so many people go back because there is nothing to prepare them. They don't know what to expect when they get back out there. It is a big money business and that is probably why they aren't going to put programs in there. they don't care. They will feed you, house you, and that's it. They don't care. You coming back and that's more money for them. And that's real.

Some programs do exist in Maryland's prisons to help inmates have a successful re-entry into society, but critics say those programs are underfunded and understaffed.

Next week Darryl talks about his re-entry—what happened when he left prison and his thoughts on the increasingly deadly streets in Baltimore City.

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Music: Xclan, "Prison"

Asheru, "Meals to Dinner Time Prelude"

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

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