

## JUST WORDS

### The Stories of Working People In Our Community

#### Episode 33: Darryl

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

**For the past three weeks , 35 yr old Darryl has told the story of his journey from the street, to prison, to fatherhood...we've listened as he spoke about the awakening he underwent while incarcerated, and how he emerged from prison less than a year ago a markedly different man.**

**His personal transformation wasn't the only change...when he got out of prison...he saw a difference in the corner, and the kids that hung on the corner.**

When I was coming up, you didn't hear about youth dying, 13 14 years old. Everything I turn around there is a child on a shirt. Born, 1994. It's a shame. You can't wear certain colors in certain neighborhoods and you walk through a certain neighborhood with the wrong color on, you may not make it out of that neighborhood. Everywhere you go, teddy bears on the tree. I'm riding down Monroe street. On the left side was teddy bears that have been there. But today I am riding down Monroe street, directly across the street, teddy bears. And I said, someone must have gotten killed there. Now, you come around, you see youth on the corner all hours of the night, parents nowhere to be found. The older generation used to sit on their steps and the youth had respect for them. These days, they don't sit on the steps; the youth don't have respect for anybody. The youth don't have respect for themselves. It's scary out there.

**Many people have dismissed these kids as a lost cause, too late to be redeemed. But Darryl has found his calling at Reclaiming our Children and Community center in West Baltimore.**

I have a knack to connect with youth, 'cause I feel like I walk their walk, talk their talk. So I let them know, I've been there-but you got me to talk to now. Call me anytime of night. A lot of these youth don't have an outlet. You've got to get them involved. You got to keep their attention. You can not lecture these youth, because they are not going to pay you no attention. They know when you are real and when you are fake, and they will respect it-that is why they come in here, Hey how you doing. They know, they understand. That is why I can connect with a lot of them.

**But even with the depth of Darryl's connection, he knows it will take a great deal more.**

See most of the time they be on the corner because there is nothing else to do, nowhere else, nothing else to do. Let them experience other things. If you doing this 24/7 on the corner, that's all you know. So what are you going to do tomorrow? Go back to the corner. If you give them other outlets, then they have choices. Right now there is no choice, because they have nothing to do. Where the rec centers at? Gone. No more basketball. When I was coming up, we had BandB out, project survival. And you know the main thing we need to do? We need to come up with a way to make these youth think being different is cool. Because you got a lot of youth that is scared to be themselves.

**So many of us look back at our youth with nostalgia. Such emotion is unthinkable to Darryl as he struggles to help these kids.**

I wouldn't want to go back and be that age for nothing in the world. Never! Because they got the deck stacked against them. They've got the deck stacked against them. And it's a shame.

**If you want to help with your time, money, or other resources, call Reclaiming our Children and Community Project at (410) 528-1558.**

**Music: Immortal Technique, *Caught in the Hustle***

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

Through a grant by the Open Society Institute-Baltimore. Visit them on the web at [www.osi-baltimore.org](http://www.osi-baltimore.org).