

## JUST WORDS

### The Stories of Working People In Our Community

#### Episode 45: Omar

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

The birth of a child will cause even the most seasoned parent to stop and reflect.

For a 21 year old named Omar, who had spent time in prison for committing a violent crime, whose life seemed to lack any sense of goals or direction---the birth of his son last January was a catalyst of tremendous change on the inside.

But on the outside—he had to navigate the process of redirecting his life from the streets, from criminality, from the gang—a complicated, delicate task.

I mean—well once you get into it, there is not too many ways out of it. There are ways to get around it or stay away from some of the guys who are not influential towards your life. Well in order for me to think positive or to do positive things I had to be around positive people. That's the hard part that's real difficult, because I would be penalized for not being around, for not interacting, and we call that MIA. It's probably guys that are angry with that decision, you have to be out of sight, out of mind, you have to disassociate yourself from that environment and move out that environment. That's the first step. Even though I am still in the city, I am out the environment, which means I am inside the house. I got my play station set up, I got my food cooked already, I got my water, my hot and cold water. And my mother was trying to tell me this long time ago, You have everything you need, what you need outside? Now that I realize she was right and now I realize she has a point, I do not go outside. I just stay in the house, because there is nothing out there for me.

**Omar is a recent graduate of a program called STRIVE, that provides job readiness training and career case management. He now works at STRIVE as a receptionist. In the workforce and off of the streets, Omar is free to begin planning his next steps in life.**

I have decided to go back to school next spring. I am going to start with community college, that's BCCC, and I am going to try and work my way up, I want to go to Howard University. I want to study computer technology because that is also running the world. Psychology also.

**And as for what Omar wants to do with his life? He's begun to dream big.**

My dream is to become a businessman because corporate America is the biggest thing that is going on, it is what a lot of people are trying to get at. And that is what I want to be, an entrepreneur and work for myself. Real estate, I want to own houses, I want to um...I want to try and make my own strive because I have a passion, I am developing a passion to help other people like people helped me.

**Omar has a lot of work to do both personally and professionally to accomplish the things he wants. He's taken the first steps on this remarkable if tentative journey, and we'll check in with him, along the way.**

**Music: Air, *Playground Love***

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

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