

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 47: Donny

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

Last week we heard from Donny, a young African-American man who grew up in east Baltimore.

He told us the story of how he turned to selling drugs when he was only 14 as a way to gain financial independence and autonomy from his mother, a single parent with who he was having problems.

Because see my mother was so wrapped up with trying to make sure our lives were better in the future that, you know, I guess as a parent you don't look at it until you see you that your young had kids and they just working working and don't spend time and they start noticing and wonder, was I that kind of parents? There was never no trust between me and her. I think, and this is just my personal opinion, it had a lot to do with the men she dealt with too. Because you are trying to look for a father figure for your son. I think she dealt with a lot of men who bring her down, who didn't meet her standards. And in the process of that, of her trying to meet a man and trying to manage working, I slipped off, went my own way, because a lot of the men I didn't like. But what could I do.

So Donny slipped off, and went his own way. But where did that that search for autonomy take him?

I was still in school I was in the ninth grade, 10th grade matter of fact. I got into a fight and as a result of that was that I got not expelled but they put me into the school called Woodburn, kids with behavior problems, because they said I had a temper. That is when I started really selling cocaine, heroin. In the year of 99 I got incarcerated. My father came and got me, my mother told me to call him because she wasn't going to come get me. So I called him and he came and got me. After he got me, they let me out. Him and his wife and his family so um, I went to court, my mother told the court system to keep me. I was 16. she told them to keep me. Her theory was , you better off locked up then on the streets dead, or you know, in a real jail where you never coming home, so...and I ain't agree with that and that brought a lot of animosity and hatred. When I say hatred I mean my feelings of, just emotionally abandoned. Not saying that I didn't love my mother but I didn't want any dealings with her at all, so I was a juvie. I was in Boys Village first, I sit there six months waiting for my placement. They sent me to bowling brook preparatory school. Stayed out there for almost 18 months and everything was good out there was far as just getting away from the city. I always say I would have winded up dead anyway because I was doing a lot of devious things.

Donny didn't wind up dead. But he was in the juvenile system until he was almost 21. What happened when he got out? Join us next week, to find out.

Music: *Young Son* by Brand Nubian

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

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