



Someday We'll All Be Free: Patrisse Cullors and Luis Rodriguez - Part 1

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[00:00:35] This podcast is being presented in two parts. You are listening to part 1. How's everybody doing tonight.

[00:00:46] Wait a second, wait a second, wait a second, I will try that again. How's everybody doing tonight? There we go.

[00:00:55] We have such a beautiful program laid out tonight and we also have incredibly tight time frame. So is it all right if I do housekeeping and then we'll start our official open but I want to say it's a cold Friday night. You could be anywhere and I'm so delighted that you came to the library to talk about abolition. So thank you very much. This is a podcast so you will be heavily encouraged to make some noise so.

[00:01:24] Make some noise in the library.

[00:01:28] Do you happen to have a cellular device.

[00:01:32] I would like you to silence your cellular device but promise me that you will use it to promote the conversation that we're having about Decarcerating. That's the conversation we're having tonight and in order for us to have impact and civic engagement it means engaging. So if you have Twitter or Facebook you can use the hashtag [criminal justice](https://twitter.com/criminaljustice) to join the conversation.

[00:01:59] In a moment I'm looking for my friend Wesley B Roach. We are going to officially start the program. I think that everyone is comfortably seated.

[00:02:11] More people may come in if that's the case. We may open up the overflow room. But in the meantime if you can get comfortable and you may have noticed that there is incredible art behind me. Did anybody get a chance to check out the Creative Justice art display. Yes. Yes. This evening is very much about celebrating creative justice and putting them in conversation with a veteran freedom

fighter, Luis Rodriguez. Louise have you all been. You think you could give it up for creative justice and Luis. Louise is a veteran freedom fighter and there have been really terrible wildfires in L.A. and I know his community has been affected and I'm very happy that he made it safely to Seattle so please give him a warm round of applause. All right, and I would love to bring Wesley Roach up to the stage. We have three co-hosts for tonight and Wesley is one of them.

[00:03:16] And Wesley we'll start our hour opening acknowledgement. Thank you Wesley.

[00:03:27] Thank you very much. Glad to be here today. Good see everybody. Glad you made it and showed up on a Friday night. Really appreciate it. Welcome to the night's program. Someday We'll All Be Free. My name is Wesley Roach. I'll be one of your co-hosts tonight. I work locally with a nonprofit called Heal for re-entry helping it enhance Aboriginal lives for re-entry. We work closely with the state of Washington to support incarcerated and recently released indigenous folks and Native Americans coming out of the prison systems and help them to find their way in success and balance within our communities and as part of that we revisit the prison systems we go in with a drum group and we we connect with people on their way out. And it's a really good program to be a part of I'm also a photographer and videographer for my own company and I also am a one third about Indigenous podcast called break dances with wolves here in the local area. Thank you thank you.

[00:04:25] [inaudible] Some of y'all know that I'm sorry all right.

[00:04:31] But I'd like to start out tonight's programming just by acknowledging that we are on Duwamish land. We are on Native American territories, occupied Native American territories, and in doing that I come from the plains land. But I wanted to offer a song an opening this up as we think tonight about mass incarceration and what freedom means it's important to recognize, it's important to stay connected to history and culture. Native peoples have been here for a long time. We have our own stories our own histories our own vision. And I just want to acknowledge that and open this space up with the song

[00:06:52] Thank you very much. [drumming] [music] Thank you very much, appreciate it.

[00:06:56] Now doesn't Wesley B Roach know how to start a program about getting free.

[00:07:02] Can we give it up for Wesley.

[00:07:11] The library is really pleased that we have fierce leaders to be part of this program tonight. So we have Wesley and in a moment you're going to meet two more people Michelle Storms is our moderator for tonight and we also have Jerrell B. Davis also known as Rell Be Free. I mentioned earlier that tonight's program is co presented with the legendary youth program Creative Justice. This last year has been tough and I was thinking about it because last year we did a year round topic and it was on homelessness and you may have noticed that we're still dealing with a housing crisis and sweeps. So when we do our year round topic we're looking at equity and inclusion. And last year we were able to connect with 7,000 community members to talk about homelessness. Tonight you in this

room we are closing out the conversation on criminal justice in 2017 but that topic will live on and in order for us to raise awareness. We need your help so we'll be doing a social media campaign and having this conversation tonight.

[00:08:19] And I want you to know when we say the hashtag Criminal Justice and tagging the library what we're really trying to do is to have a larger conversation in the city. I have some talking points that I want to rush through because we're short on time but I want to read them carefully because there are many people to think tonight. So how is my sound. Can you hear me OK? Great.

[00:08:43] In spring of twenty eighteen, we're going to have an art exhibition from Creative Justice. And tonight you get to see a sneak peek of that. So that's part of the culminating of the conversation that we're having about criminal justice but also abolition. Our goal with this year social media campaign and talking about criminal justice was to really find a way to connect with the most affected in tonight's closing program. We're gonna think a lot of people we have to start by saying that this program was made possible with support by the Seattle Public Library Foundation. We want to thank all of our donors and supporters but I also want to say that community partnership and strategizing for equity and inclusion has deeply shaped our criminal justice series and its focus on the most affected.

[00:09:33] So if you happen to be one of our community stakeholders I think I saw Nick Allen.

[00:09:38] I'm pretty sure I saw a Cabman Cahill. I think I saw David Hawkins Junior. If you happen to be one of our community stakeholders Naomi Karen there are many many names. Would you please stand up or raise your hands so we can acknowledge him and thank you for your contribution

[00:10:05] To our partners for the series include creative justice fight. Is Andy still here. We have to give a big thank you to fight. They've been amazing and I think they are carrying this work on in twenty eighteen

[00:10:18] As also the black prisoners caucus and Village of Hope Community passageways Seattle office of civil rights, 4Culture, Social Justice Fund Northwest, and Intiman. We also have some special thanks that go to Aaron Counts, Nikkita Oliver, Heidi Jackson, Dalton Mostly Jojo Agone they shook Hawkins camp on a bare cabin Cahill [inaudible] Mary Flowers Gary Canty Perry Andre Specific car Brandon Wong Karen touring Naomi Ishtisaka just like a minty long [inaudible] Earth Dean Spade, hi you and me Kim Denise Miller Katherine Henrickson and so many more I also want to acknowledge our library staff and marketing and community engagement who've worked on the social media campaign.

[00:11:23] I also want to give my personal thanks to Orlando Lugo.

[00:11:30] Orlando is a fierce cultural worker and I'm so glad we have him at the library. He did essential work in spearheading the social media campaign and a lot of organizing work a lot of meetings.

[00:11:40] I also want to thank my boss Valerie wonder she has allowed me to hold trust in most affected communities while working to transform this library so we can address and end institutional racism together. And I'm very grateful for that Allyship.

[00:11:57] So thank you Valerie.

[00:12:04] So we're about to do two important things. Wesley is going to come back to the stage and introduce Michel E. Storms who is our moderator for tonight and then we are going to watch their many video clips in this Mercury in retrograde. Will you all be gentle with us if technology just doesn't work. Please do be gentle. We are going to show a clip. From Patrice Cullors Patrice is gonna close us out again if technology works for us. We're going to show a clip from her project which was produced by Intiman on Power from the Mouths of the Occupy. The video gives us about 2 minutes of a glimpse in a young woman's experience in a Seattle public school and it also helps us think about the school to prison pipeline and how it harms our young people and what we can do to solve it is our job tonight.

[00:12:56] So let's think about that. I want to know that it's hard to talk about prisons and social violence.

[00:13:03] So if you find that you are triggered I hope that you will take care of yourself and I also hope that we can hold ourselves with compassion because community can be compassionate and that's how we get through.

[00:13:15] So we get ready to play that clip and then bring Wesley up.

[00:13:20] Thank you. One day at school three white first graders decided they were going to pick on me. I don't know if I was in a bad mood that day or what but I ruined their day.

[00:13:54] I remember going to the principal's office sitting next to the White girl I remember. I wasn't nervous. I did nothing wrong. I was protecting myself from three first graders against one kindergartner. White principal came in sat down and made himself comfortable. Then he asked what happened the other girl said I didn't do nothing wrong. I was just my mom business. No, you started it calms down and proceeded to ask questions examined us for a while.

[00:14:29] He noted about the other girl herself scratches and I only had one. He asked me if I gave those to her. I said probably. I think I got suspended for a day. I don't really remember since I was so young but I do remembering wondering why it happened to me and why nothing happened to them for what they did to me. Later that school year I started walking out of classes. I remember. Walking down the empty white halls with marble floors that echoed when you walked.

[00:15:07] Feeling lonely uncared for and unloved but the thing that really struck me said no one came looking for me.

[00:15:19] No one gave a recess to ask me I was sitting alone.

[00:15:25] And that made me vulnerable for a school I was being sexually touched and I had no one to tell later.

[00:15:34] Later, next school year and first grade there was an incident where the teacher took me by my arms and dragged me out of the classroom. My mom then pulled me out of the school sadly this is only a little bit of my story with the Seattle public schools but because I have such a loving caring supportive family I am successful without Seattle Public Schools and I'm now a homeschooled. But this is still happening to young black children in Seattle Public Schools. What are we going to do about it?

[00:16:16] The library's criminal justice system serious. It started with a January dialogue about the school to prison pipeline. As the movement for decarceration and abolition grows it prompts reflection on the impact of mass incarceration. I'd like to introduce Michelle Lee Storms and have her share insights on mass incarcerations.

[00:16:34] Michelle Storms is the deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union and former assistant dean for public service and executive director of the William H. Gates public service law program at the University of Washington School of Law. She has been a statewide advocacy coordinator at Northwest Justice Project and Columbia Legal Services where she coordinated civil legal aid advocacy, family law youth in education, housing Elder Law, Indian law, and right to counsel issues.

[00:17:00] Her deep commitments are to peace liberation and social justice like to introduce Michelle. It is really beautiful to see this crowd out here on a Friday night to talk about

[00:17:21] One of the most important things affecting us. Am I sounded OK back there? Incarceration I think it said in there something I was going to talk about the 40 years of the impact of mass incarceration but it comes down to something very simple.

[00:17:37] There is a huge harm to society to all of us is a huge harm to people who are behind bars and a huge harm to all of us. And I'm going to say a little bit more about that but we actually have another little video clip that is gonna be informational educational for you I hope because as it turns out the U.S. leads the world in locking people up. So some of the really huge things that I and there's a lot of huge things that I see out of that very short clip with just some numbers for you and one of them is that the rise in people who are incarcerated has been 400 percent since 1980.

[00:18:14] Kind of makes you wonder what happened. What is happening.

[00:18:17] And then the fact that if you are incarcerated you are most likely an African-American man between the ages of 31 and 45 who has committed a non violent drug offense.

[00:18:30] What is happening. It doesn't make sense.

[00:18:35] We have 5 percent of the world's population in the United States and 25 percent of the world's prisoners. We have the communities most impacted by this are Native American, African-American, and Latino. 60 percent of prisoners are people of color at every life stage youth adults communities of color feel the impact of incarceration and women bear the brunt of so much of that. The incarceration costs both financially and emotionally often of their loved ones incarceration although as you see many women are also incarcerated in 63 percent of the cases family members on the outside were primarily responsible for court related costs associated with conviction and are the family members primarily responsible for these case costs. Eighty three percent are women but the tragedy and the devastation of this mass incarceration goes way beyond statistics and numbers. It's about what is happening in people's lives. When I think about my own cousin who didn't get to see his baby's first smiles or his baby's first steps, that daughter of his who doesn't have a daddy in her life that mother of that daughter who is just angry when I think about the men that I've had the pleasure and honor of meeting and talking to through the black prisoners caucus up at Monroe and these are people who many of them very many of them got sentences of 30 years 40 years life for crimes committed when they were 16 or 17 years old when they were adolescence.

[00:20:05] When we know about the brain science and developmental issues and yet they are locked away for the rest of their lives, so no matter if they want to make amends if they have grown as a human being it doesn't matter and what we lose as a society is the potential of those people of those men in this case and the wisdom that they gain and that they've gained through their time. We're not rehabilitating. We are enacting cruel and unusual punishment on those behind bars and on all of us because it is all of society's loss and we don't give people who've been incarcerated skills to help them come out today come out and they there have exorbitant fines they have to pay. We have multiple barriers to their employment and to their housing. So this is what the impact is.

[00:20:52] It is real and it impacts every single one of us I actually want to bring Wesley back to the stage and along with the wonderful Rell Be Free.

[00:21:03] Jerrell Davis to cover the three points of our evening mass incarceration juvenile justice and abolition. Thank you for your attention.

[00:21:21] What's going on here. My name is Jerrell Davis I go by Rell Be Free and I want to give a quick introduction to who I am. Let me know where I'm at with the mic is good right here. OK. So I work in the south in Seattle. How many are familiar with Rainier Beach. Word I worked out so I work at Rainier Beach High School. I have an organization a number of us that group in the area start this organization called Wall Block Washington: building leaders of change. We work in the school as well as with teachers and students. On top of that I work with an organization called the Rainier Beach Action Coalition.

[00:21:53] Let me hear you say RBAC [Areback.] So it's your head now. RBAC [Areback] and we've been doing work in the neighborhood. And just to just to get a pulse of the room. Are there any

People's Party members in the room. We've got a few folks. Word up word up. So those are some of the organizing bodies that I've been a part of. I continue to be a part of. And this prison abolition work is very real. We want to center the most effective tonight though and so I want to get a pulse of who's in the room. Do we got the Southend in here. Is the Southend in the room? OK. We got the Southend out here. What about the CD. The central district. We are here what they call it now South Capitol Hill? Nah, we can call it the CD where is CD yet we've got the north in here. Pioneer Square maybe yeah. Okay I got one. Maybe we have half a person from Pioneer Square. OK so what we want to do tonight is center the most affected in this conversation.

[00:22:58] And so I want to honor and elevate anybody in the room that has been formerly incarcerated in the room. Can we just acknowledge them right now. If you could raise your hand so that we can show you some love those have been formerly incarcerated. Yes. Give that love I see in our communities we have a practice of not acknowledging our family and uplifting them and elevating them and it's a night it's gonna be about not only their experience and how it affects us but how we can change ourselves as well. So moving forward you'll continue to rock with us.

[00:23:35] Yes. Glad to have Jerrell with me.

[00:23:43] One thing we wanted to mentioned was we really we really want to take this opportunity as a community to take a look at mass incarceration and abolition and what those can look like and what the and visualize those that really think about not only not only those things in themselves with the impacts they have and they've tied into into things like native Native Genocide, legacy of European slave traders trafficking people from Africa, classism against poor folks, xenophobia, imperialism. There's a number of things and ways that this things take shape and affects our communities in a very real way. And in a moment we'll share some more facts with you on that. Well at this time I'd really like to share some lovely lovely community portraits from our our community photographer Naomi Ishisaka was here today. She's very talented at documenting community events and community par takings. And we're very honored to have her here today as we said the three topics. Can somebody shut out the three topics that first when you heard?

[00:24:46] Mass incarceration. It's not a joke. For some reason when we talk about a 400 percent increase in incarceration rates, people think that word is hyperbole. It's not a joke. It's very real. Was that second when we mentioned? Juvenile justice. We're going to be seeing some presentations from creative justice in a moment after this portion. And I'm going to be learning about their experience seeing how they're using their expression to bring that to light and illustrate that experience was that third one. Abolition. I was reading about Harriet Tubman this morning. You all know that abolitionists are anti police but not just the police it's the entire system of policing. You understand. And when we start to put our mind to an idea that we can have communities without police if you allow your mind to get to that creativity then I think that our society is going to end up being a little better. And so what we want to do in this time is bring y'all some statistics some facts please if you have your phones you've got a notepad. Take notes. Write them down. Take a picture of it send a text to somebody. We're gonna have an opportunity for us to interact with these facts and with each other. I mean we're going to break these down a little bit.

[00:26:00] An estimated 200,000 thousand youth are tried, sentenced, and incarcerated as adults every year across the United States.

[00:26:10] Across King County native American across King County native American youth make up just 1 percent of the population.

[00:26:18] But inside the detention center they make up 7 percent of detainees. It's reported that police are five times as likely to arrest black youth than white youth and black youth are five times more likely to face court time when schools have high enrollment by students of color.

[00:26:39] They tend to have increased surveillance and police presence.

[00:26:42] Schools with racial minority student populations of more than 50 percent were more likely in some cases up to 18 times more likely in schools with lower minority student enrollment to strict security measures you know that youth as young as 11 years old can legally be charged as an adult in the US this practice is known as auto declines, auto declines and it disproportionately affects youth of color. Racism can play out in youth sentencing.

[00:27:18] How about that? Trying youth as adult is a criminal injustice practice known as auto decline. In 2005, one hundred percent 100 percent of auto decline were youth of color. The rate is still disproportionately high. At 85 percent in 2015. For more information on this report we'll give you all those details a little bit later.

[00:27:44] According to DOJ report on Seattle Police Department SPD must ensure its officers understand that a person is free to walk away from police and free to disregard a police request to come or stay. Inappropriate pedestrian encounters may disproportionately involve youth of color.

[00:28:02] Now let that sit for a second. I think we're going to bring up the. I want to bring up some of these statistics that we just show.

[00:28:10] But I want those. Everything you just heard. Just sit with that for a second. Think about what you just heard.

[00:28:17] And as you reflect mentally I want to give you the opportunity to turn to somebody it's called a turn in time. So there's probably some mile to your left and right. Can you look to your left or right.

[00:28:27] Thank ya'll who listen. To those that didn't. We don't talk to ya later OK.

[00:28:31] We want you to have a conversation with somebody for about two minutes OK. Tell them something that stood out to you. What jumped out was it a number. Was it a face that showed up to

you so take about two minutes to turn to someone next to you and share your experience and what is what struck a chord with you from those last few statistics that we heard. We'll bring you back.

[00:28:57] That was amazing. He said Watch this. I don't think it's going to work. Yeah. You impressed me today. So after that talk I'm glad you guys got to explore with your neighbors this topic this conversation is very important for the community to be involved and you are the community and the people that are sitting next to you are the community as well.

[00:29:18] So we want to know what you talked about and do we have any volunteers maybe youth volunteers that just a couple that might want to share what stood out to them in the conversation so far.

[00:29:33] I'm going to ask for people that were to share, I'm going to ask that you do use the mic because we on the podcast. Thank you brother.

[00:29:40] Do we have any more people that would like to share out one maybe the thing that stood out to me was the last thing you mentioned about police being required to inform people that they can walk away. Because I've never heard that I've seen so many interactions where it's just that power dynamic like even if you do walk away they'll find a reason to say that you were doing something where they needed to detain you. So it's kind of like legally we may have that option but it's still, it's still what do you do.

[00:30:16] So y'all must have just learned a bunch of stuff that's must have been what it was. Was that. Raise your hand if that was news. Well we just went. That was news to you.

[00:30:24] Word up. Raise your hand if that was not news.

[00:30:29] I don't know how that those numbers are working but that's OK. That means some people learn some stuff and some people got other things. What we're doing right now is very important and it excites me. I'm a young person. I'm 25. Folks tell me Look I'm 17 but I want to make some noise and I want ya'll to practice. We all do a practice real quick. How many are know what given love means?

[00:30:53] Ok I'll give you an opportunity. To make some love now chill out one sec OK. We don't make love by clapping it up so I'm gonna bring up creative Justice youth.

[00:31:04] But first before I bring them up I want y'all to practice how y'all going to give them some love. You hear me? So let me hear your practice. Give him some love. One time.

[00:31:12] Let me hear that. [clapping]

[00:31:21] We got to work on that. I got that from Momma Nicki. OK. That wasn't good enough. That was not good enough. This time is for real though. So I want y'all to make some noise for Creative

Justice youth, as they're gonna walk up to this podium right here y'all noise give some love to Creative Justice.

[00:32:04] Oh yeah. That was it. Thank you. So we're going to introduce these folks. I want to tell you a little bit about creative justice how many are familiar with creative justice. Yeah. Shout out to Kayo and Aaron. Using the power of art to share our struggles and articulate our potential creative justice is building a stronger community here in King County. The program offers an arts based alternative to secure confinement in which in court, involve young people remain out of jail and in the community where they collaborate with mentor artists. Together they consider the root causes of incarceration and other issues impacting all of us. Creative Justice asks juvenile, asks the juvenile justice system to behave differently by viewing our youth with a wider lens trusting the community to address its own needs and celebrating the strength and creativity of young people who are trying to navigate a very complex world. Young Artist from creative justice have performed or exhibited locally at Gallery for Culture, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, shelf life stories and presented at the Open Engagement Conference in Chicago. They currently have a photo series exhibiting at MOHAI. One more time y'all make some noise for these young folks. Cardi A Bus

[00:33:37] 16 years old enjoys the process of creating. He appreciates being able to sit down and make something from nothing and then communicate with the community about it. He thinks society should be better off if more young people were recognized for their creativity and vision.

[00:33:55] Applause.

[00:33:59] We also have Faisal, provincial age 17 appreciates the way art helps him get away. He said Art puts me in a different state of mind. It feels like I'm doing something you say is connected with creative justice because it makes him feel comfortable and at home when he creates with other people and we've got the queen on her throne.

[00:34:25] Ms. Jasmine Speed age 19 was born and raised in Seattle Washington a multiple a multidisciplinary artist she loves to write poetry sing and draw. And her goal in life is to unite the people. Make some noise about

[00:34:53] Hello hello. Okay so I'm going to do this poem for you guys that actually put together last night okay.

[00:35:02] I call it They. Twelve year old I had no idea what was going on. My mom and I were eating at Azteca. That's when she got the call. She wouldn't say a thing when I asked her what was wrong. We left in the middle of our meal. I saw the news truck and police swarmed at my grandparents home. Jasmine don't look you don't need to see that a couple of days go by and I noticed my best friend, my brother is gone. So I'm asking me and my mom when he'll be back. While I was left without an answer, he was left with no choice but to plead first with constructive arguments then persuasion sadly pleading guilty was last but glass Glenna said then and then I'm sorry excuse me I can I guess.

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[00:35:48] Need some love guys.

[00:35:51] Ok. So while he was left without an answer or while I was left without an answer he was left to plead with no choice or he was left with no choice but to plead first with constructive arguments then persuasion. Sadly pleading guilty was last and least they knew he hadn't done a thing. Just so eager to close the case they weren't thinking about a ripple effect or my nephew. He was supposed to raise he'll never or we'll never have our family back still in in the same where it's still ain't the same to this day lost it all because of them. I'd literally give my last breath if it meant no one would go through what my family did ever again.

[00:36:28] Thank you.

[00:36:43] These are some of the pictures that we took during processing. And basically there we were just told to write.

[00:36:50] Well we were asked to write posters about basically like what incarceration by just basically just let your mind go free and put it onto a poster. And so as you can see here there's some they say black lives matter. There's some of them. There was one they had a cookie on the piano with the poster that said Trayvon Martin.

[00:37:11] So that basically the inspiration behind these posters that are just cycling through. That's not an issue is what is. So basically we just took pictures to just this like capture some of the feeling that were going on in just like put them into like a piece. Here's what that's what we basically created and got out of that.

[00:37:48] Okay. So I'm going to talk to you guys about my journey in creative justice. Um my first day at Creative Justice was pretty life changing honestly. Um I went in expecting people to just uh you know be uh basically just doing their job.

[00:38:07] You know what I mean. Um there's some troubled kids in front of them so they're gonna just do what they need to do to get their paycheck and you know send these kids on their way right.

[00:38:17] But no um they threw a uh black book at me and gave me a uh gave me a um a prompt and that prompt was um I Am and we had like five 10 minutes to write you know.

[00:38:36] And off the bat I was just like shocked. I was like woah you know. And um I felt the love I felt the the care even though literally these people had just given a book to me and said write about who you are. Basically you know. And um I stayed with creative justice until um I was off probation which was probably like um I want to say almost a year into my probation or maybe like six months. But um after I got off probation I wasn't done with creative justice. You know uh it was mandatory for me to go to those classes I got a stipend I got you know bus tickets whenever I needed it. Um but it wasn't about the money it wasn't about no bus tickets. It was about you know making a change and

changing my life. And you know figuring that. Uh maybe this wasn't the road that I wanted to go down and maybe you know this was the road I wanted to go down and um actually care or have these people that care for me you know. And I didn't feel that before because these are people who I'd never seen a day in my life. But they they took it you know they took time to learn who I was. Besides you know these uh cases I had on my belt you feel me. And it was just the most amazing feeling in the world and um I want to I literally want to be the person that they were for me. I want to be that person I want to you know hand a kid a black book and say write. Um who. Who you are, you know and change their life you know it's really meaningful and it's a big thing. And uh there should definitely be more things like this this changed my life and without creative justice I would definitely probably be in jail right now. Definitely.

[00:40:30] Thank you.

[00:40:41] So I started creative justice last summer on my football. The session started on July 11th.

[00:40:50] So I was with my cousin one day and she was just like I got an event to go to and I don't want to get on the bus for myself. So you're coming with me.

[00:41:00] And I got there and I was like OK. And we're entering and it was there culminating evening for their session. And I'll just sit back watch it and I was like I kind of want to do something like that.

[00:41:14] And so I remember going to court one day and Kate Hurley was like I have you. I'm putting you on the roster for a program called Creative justice. I think you should go. It should I help you which was probation situation and move that forward along.

[00:41:29] So I was like Oh yeah I was going to X didn't know who to ask about that but I was kinda already thinking about looking into that so it was just like different it wasn't like you could tell that like people there actually cared about what you were going through and I it was they cared about us being a human not just you as I being like Jasmine say just like some that they do to get paid.

[00:41:59] It's like before before that before it's their job before it's anything else it's like we're it's a community and it's just like a safe space for you to go to and like the is to be around some cool people and just kick you for two hours kind of.

[00:42:17] So that's kind of been my experience analysis.

[00:42:23] And Aaron I remember the like one of the first things that he told me he was like you know just come for the money in the food and if you like it you like it, if you don't then that's all right. And now like almost a year and a half later I'm still there pretty much every Tuesday and Thursday and it's like when I'm not there it's like damn I like missed out.

[00:43:05] So we uh created a campaign called Free The Youth so it's pretty like.

[00:43:15] Man I don't know where to start about this campaign. You know there's so much to do when you think about freeing the youth you know that has such a broad term but we we really just want like and it's so hard to just say like you know we just want, we just want, justice we just want the right.

[00:43:33] Like I shouldn't have to just say that you know that shit just irks me.

[00:43:41] I wants to say something I don't like. I just keep on hearing from the youth and like I was like also part of that church and this is like you know there's really not even a reason for youth jail because it's like you know they're not criminals or children they're not he's not he's not he that he's okay. He will. You got it you got some young boy like selling weed. He's not doing it just because that's what you want to do. He needs financial assistance. There's a difference.

[00:44:19] It's been a really interesting um like campaign when it comes to free the youth because when we went to the open engagement the way that we uh the way that we introduced that campaign and we're telling them what we were doing it was really deep. That was like one of the most interesting performances I've ever done.

[00:44:42] We um actually had everybody come in and uh I acted as an audience member and as if I were not associated with criminal or creative justice at all. And these two were security guards and they processed everybody in to the like seating area there. Everybody got their picture took and had their own Polaroids had to like keep their hands at their sides and shut up when they said shut up and like um actually this lady left the performance uh because I got escorted back for talking, right. And like we did it so well that she left she felt as if she did something wrong herself because she was talking with me and you know she happened to be white. I was black you know and they took. We were both conversating, saying you know and they took me in for that to that to happen right there.

[00:45:37] You know it just shows that little. They all. It only takes a little bit to um see where you go go wrong.

[00:45:45] You know like. Or to see the difference between people it only takes a little bit you know.

[00:45:51] And it only takes one one step at a time when, once, you know, you call was not a thing anybody could partake in the change everybody can assist, you know. so as you were saying we a bunch of like three different artists from one session came together made a song and with that song we made a video. Now it's about to play. My lyrics not a game.

[00:46:25] My brain and not my money baby night and day. Look, this is not a game. Niggas kill a nigga did not his team haven't been here [inaudible.]

[00:46:34] Hands up don't shoot niggas shooting these guns but don't know how to shoot for young man niggas doing some I'm right and wrong with the content at the same time all these niggas no money it's my time to shine. I've got it don't let my mama told me Be patient and bitch and thinks that

my brother's gonna grow up now they don't use it to kill. They like can get shut and drop now you don't have to have these niggas kill for fun because they don't have the heart you need to get in the goddamn bitch you can go up with the flows like that but I want bank rolls. Free the Youth. Speak the truth. Be the change, yeah. Lead the way. Save the day. We can fight back. Let me free. Let me soar. Let me be me. I make mistakes. So do you. Choose wisely.

[00:47:27] My nigga got a daughter but he ride with that chocolate black [inaudible] and God is from his father and do I be tasting get that guala [inaudible.] No no. He might get caught up. Even worst, he might be shot up but is it his fault.

[00:47:40] Or is it a product of the environment he was brought up, of being ignored in chase the future, understand his name to past his time to go for you brother godson were you a fuck,[inaudible] would enchant scream fuck the police he had a leak [inaudible] on his solo now was also fucking. Now my nigga you've been a mess up he told me so trying to gas up you rage I do but his cash stuck, dead man's image your brother died last month to the fishes she don't matter much but he worked hard but they ain't had enough at this point I said I had enough hopped out the whip started breathing tough walked up, really did his dirt on after reading my colleagues the description of his shirt.

[00:48:19] Damn. [music]

[00:48:24] Free the youth. Be the truth. Be the change. Yeah. Lead the way. Save the day. We can fight back. Let me free. Let me soar. Let me be me. I make mistakes. So do you. Choose wisely. [music]

[00:48:39] Free the youth, yeah. Free the youth. Free the youth, yeah. [music]

[00:48:55] Everybody got choices this way that way you choose one. Everybody got voices it's your problem if you don't speak enough I've got to do this for the silence ones. Everybody put your lighters up for the young one bloodshed due to violence stop the violence so you pray that you are free I am. Free the youth, yeah. Free the youth. Free the youth, yeah. [music]

I been at this shit, young commas adding up. Just another dollar young nigga never had enough. Leaning off the porch, born again again my numbers up. I need all the profit Yeah nigga never had enough [music]

[00:49:48] I been at this shit for plenty time my commas, numbers adding up, just another dollar Yeah nigga never had enough my mind going to space for a no fuck niggas now, cut me a check when I run around town so I can fuck with me now free my brothers so my brothers can fuck with me, free my brothers locked up in Puget Sound screaming so they plan now to bounce beat the case go another round they've been shooting on a sacred ground. I been roaming since the ultra sound. why they kill it stop it not as an ally but my brothers like not a cover it up and because I'm a different father why they kill it stop it now it has been another one my brother is like another cover up and make it I'm a

different color. Why they killing all up [inaudible] brothers. Free the youth, yeah. Free the youth. Free the youth, yeah. [music] Free the Youth!

[00:51:51] Makes some noise real quick I know you just made some noise make some more noise that's the expression at its finest your expression at its finest ya'll. This concludes Part 1. Listen to Part 2 for the conclusion of this podcast

[00:52:10] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.