



Library podcast

“A Time for Unity”: The Impact of Mass Incarceration on Native Communities

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[00:00:36] We're going to open this up, we're gonna sing a couple of songs and we're gonna say like a little a little blessing for the food and stuff like that and then we're gonna be on our way. And you know when we open this up, and like while we're

[00:00:49] Talking and everything like that. Maybe. I don't know how many people in here. Clearly like people have been thinking about incarceration and things like that. That's on your mind or you wouldn't be here today. Am I right about that? You guys are somehow directly affected by it. You got family members, know somebody that are doing time. That's a big thing. Almost everybody in my family has done time. So I think that like. Coming into the spaces, and I don't know how many people in here are really familiar with ceremonies and stuff like that that indigenous people have and like how that can help us in bringing us back on track do you know what I am saying?

[00:01:35] Like everybody knows when a train gets derailed a lot of bad stuff happens. You know what I am saying? Problems still hold. And so. How is it that you can bring that back on track? And keep this thing still moving. And add more parts to it. I mean, we want these little ones that are growing up to understand they don't have to take that track, you don't have to get off the track. So you know there is work people can do, people who work the

[00:02:15] Elders. People that work with the medicine. And you know we want to do our best to bring that together. So to get a big pop. You know what I mean. Well when we're inside. When

we're in the joint. It looks just like this it's just like it's ending up here. That's why it's one of those here around here.

[00:02:44] A little mix of everything. It's like a little salt and pepper mixed together. So we're in this thing together. Yes. That's my main point of saying that. And as native people we have an understanding of. And, like all of our ceremonies and when we come together and we're going in to sweat to pray you know we all we all say all my relations. Can all you guys say it with me? All my relations. All my relations.

[00:03:11] And when we are saying that we are acknowledging that in some way, shape or form. We are all related. We are all part of the same thing. You know and just because some people come from different places that doesn't mean that the concept of you know we belong over here some of these out here you know that. They came from a different place. We have respect for each other's ways. And so we have to understand that we are all part of the same. And so like when we say that. We mean it we mean we are all related. We are all part of the same. We go into the ceremony. We pray for this. I don't know if all you guys know that. You know what I am saying? So like when we say a prayer and we acknowledge that when we go into the light and the come that we remember. As native peoples of this land, we remember. Whether or not you're from this land.

[00:04:21] So. I would like for us to build something you know and make it how we want it to be. And you know it has to come from the people that have been inside of the, of the penitentions, inside of a jail and prisons to make this, because all the things that I can tell you, you can get some understanding, you can get some knowledge from it. But, without that experience everything you know is from relations. You haven't walked down that path. You ain't heard over the loudspeakers tell you on the main line. You guys ain't heard that. And so without that you know, like when we come to your place of knowledge and experience and understanding. You know I'm not going tell you what happened, and tell him how to do his job. Because he has that understanding. And, so saying all that we as a community not just Native peoples, the API, the Hispanic, whoever else is involved in it. It's like, it's bigger than all of us because it involves all of us, and if we don't come together like we should, and build something so that, people that are, that are young and people that are coming out, because believe this, everybody up in that place they're gonna to come up out of there. One way or nothing. You know what I mean?

[00:06:10] There going to come up out of there. People who did 20 years, 30 years, they're going to come out of there and we have to have something ready for them.

[00:06:20] That. That's why it's so important and like within our communities. You know we are like legs on this table you know in some of the communities you might have 30 people under there, and if you kick out one of those out, and send them to the joint, then the integrity of the table is still there.

[00:06:44] But in this native community and in the Brown community we might only have four, and if you kick one of us out,

[00:06:51] This table is going to fall. That's how important it is. And if we don't and we don't see that.

[00:07:03] A lot of bad things are going to happen. When we sing the song. And I would just ask that each and every one of you guys, remember those guys in there, remember those guys. The people that you don't even know. Because we think about you guys. 18 years ago when I stepped into the joint, that's all we did, pray for everybody out here. Because everything we were going through in there was a routine. Get up, go to the main line, come back, be ready, that's it. That's all we get.

[00:08:20] Well.

[00:10:28] O o o o o. Ow. ow. ow. ow. ow. ow ow ow ow. ow. ow. ow ow ow. ow. ow. ow. ow. ow. ow. ow. ow.

[00:12:06] Ow.

[00:13:32] Man IT'S GOOD TO SEE EVERYBODY HERE. Would YOU GUYS GIVE YOURSELF A LITTLE no applause.

[00:13:38] You know really showing up. I appreciate that.

[00:13:45] My name is George. I'm from the Standing Rock Reservation, the Lakota people. My mom is part Chippewa Cree from Turtle Mountain. So a few things about myself. Or actually before I even get to that I want to acknowledge the people that have come here. To to

support this and to help. I like first to acknowledge Davida. Helping us in that way. All the good things that she brings. I want to acknowledge our other speakers that we have. If you guys could stand up.

[00:14:26] I got my brother Tana right here.

[00:14:31] I've known that brother since I was like this big when I was like 16. First hit column bay. You know. Some of the first people I ever met was in close custody. My guy AJ. Another brother that I met.

[00:14:50] Was getting close to coming out. And a brother David.

[00:15:00] Now that was my rival right there on the handball court. So it's been a long journey all these days. I like to keep it short and sweet but you know I want to give you guys a little bit of background. When I was 16 I just I was living on the east side of Spokane. Kind of down there in the hood and man I made a super bad mistake. Man I mess around it. I took another man's life. I ended up going to going to prison just after my 16th birthday. I got found guilty of second degree murder so they gave me two hundred seventy eight months.

[00:15:56] While it might sound like is a lot for a young young individual. And it was. But they had kids in there they were like 13 14 years old and there with 50 years. You know these guys like some other voices ain't even changed. And. They got these guys in here serving life sentences so you know I try to put that in perspective. Starting a sentence out you know it would you know that this stuff is not it's not like the movies. You know would you guys be on Lock Up Abroad and stuff like that. I like that. No. The only thing that. Saved all of the people in there in one way or another was the culture. Our culture is like a guiding light. You know I when I told you guys about the train you know falling off, off the tracks the tracks the tracks are the culture. That's how important it is. You know our culture has been the only thing that has been a constant. You know many people have tried to erase that culture. In all of our people's. You know in all of our people. I mean you guys in here are Irish. Yeah they try taking that too. You know how many people in here are native. You got you know what I mean. A piece of native. How many people in here are Islanders. So in saying that.

[00:17:58] When I told you that when we're in the joint it is just like this. You got people from. All walks of life. All walks of life in there in these guys I tell you the only thing that has kept us alive and kept us focused on getting out of there. Because you get lost in there is the culture. And so you know like when we were we was talking about doing this and just like bringing

some bring some different individuals to light. You know we thought about what the culture is what the culture is for us natives just being out here even though I'm native out here on these lands. I'm still a visitor. Because my people aren't from out here so. We always ask for permission. We ask for guidance from the people that these lands belong to. And it is kind of weird because when we come out here. A lot of things that we do inside the joint inside the prison. Are from the plain. And like I was at home. I was at home because we had the sweat lodge in there. We had a pipe in there. We had a big drum so it gave me an opportunity to put everything else away. I didn't gangbang. I didn't I didn't do anything like that. Like I ran the streets. And I did some pretty messed up stuff to people.

[00:19:43] Because I was young and I didn't understand I don't understand what that what that that meant. And I had no respect for nothing. You know what I mean. So. If you mix all that together have no respect being young and no guidance. So that's a dangerous weapon. And when I was in there. I learned with some with some other individuals in there. I was kind of blessed because where I landed I had some elders up in there. I had some cats that I had been doing time for 15 20 years you know before I was even born. I was doing time. So. You know my growth in there was. It was good. It was good because I got the opportunity to. Not have to wear a mask. I didn't have to be the hardest guy on the block. I had to do any of it. I could just be me. You know I could be Indian. So. In saying all that. Everybody else didn't have that. Not everybody does in here. And you know where you come from. You know what your culture is. You guys are all ten steps ahead everybody else. And everybody else is trying to catch up to that. You know the people in the joint. Our culture is like everybody's running to it. Everybody's running to it. Everybody wants to be the best singer. Everybody wants to be the best dancer.

[00:21:31] You know that's how important it is. And so. I keep coming back to that because. When people are coming out of the joint out of the work releases. Everybody out here doesn't understand that doesn't understand how important it is. To have to maintain you know when. When I was in close custody we had beads. I mean we had everything man. We had a little room where we had hacksaws in there. You know what I'm saying in the close custody. Will it come out here. Fourth Avenue. Two blocks away. Reynolds his work release. You couldn't have beads. We couldn't go to drumming. We couldn't go to sweat. That blew my noodle. That blew my noodle because everything that has kept me in a right state of mind and focused I didn't have the, the luxury to go to. My movement was restricted. And I say that to you because. All the things that you can teach your kids how to do real good. And you can give them good good manners. But when they hit 13. You take those away. It don't make no goddamn sense. So with us it is exactly the same. And it's exactly the same right now today. And we went down to the work releases a hammer. You guys are going to sweat regularly. You got no end in it in the joint.

[00:23:22] We'll go to sweat every other week every other week. How many times you've been out the fire started.

[00:23:31] 750 movement man I'm out there putting the logs down. It's crazy. We come to the work release. And I'm supposed to be doing right. But you try to take their culture away. You want a race that you don't want me to do that. You want me to go sit in a dispute somewhere. And make money so I can pay you. That's how messed up this is. I know that we got kids in here cars a little bit.

[00:24:03] That does make no damn sense. I might ask you guys. Does that math add up.

[00:24:11] You know I mean everything that like you got if the doctor tells you man eat the vegetables every day. Eat em every day but when you leave work you can't eat them. How would I make you feel. You're taking some away did you need that you need to feel good. And for you to be healthy. So. I tell you this about the work releases. It's not just one. I don't believe that you can go to any work release and find that. You can't go to any work release and find. The things that we do inside the joint readily accessible. To me that doesn't make no sense. To everybody else it hasn't never been to the large. That hasn't never experience it that hasn't never relied on that to be healthy. To be sane. You might not feel it. It's the same as drinking water. You need that. You need that to live because without water nothing will live. And it's not. It's not that I want to come up here and put a bunch of. Stuff on a table is a look at how bad it is. Because it's not all bad. And what makes it not all bad is it all of you are here. I can give you some numbers and those numbers are going to stay with you I guarantee you that. Guarantee you that. And everybody in here. Who do you think. Is the number one people. To get out of prison and go back in three years. Who has the highest recidivism rate.

[00:26:20] Why people. Islanders. Ordained is.

[00:26:38] And how far back we go. How mean you guys know what the first. Penitentiary was built. Do you guys know what the first penitentiary was built in Washington.

[00:26:52] While wala. 1850 1851. Who was the first people in their. All the Indians.

[00:27:08] And so I say that to give you an understanding of how far back this goes. This is not something that like has happened in the last couple of years where they're just locking Indians up. You know what we look at is mass incarceration what does that mean to you. What is

mass incarceration mean to you. Well somebody says it. A lot of people in the joint. As a lot of people go into prison.

[00:27:45] You guys see this one right here. Was that worth say.

[00:27:56] I've known some brothers in there that have been doing time since like the 70s. They did a lot of bad things to other people so that we can have the stuff that we got right now. And I want for you guys to understand that. I want for you guys to know that there is something in our community. That the people coming out of the joint need they don't want it. They needed. And they need it so that they don't go back to prison. Because as I told you. It's like these legs on the table. When these brothers come out Tana comes out AJ. David we went. We wanted these legs on this table. And you guys think thirty six months thirty six months is not a long time. It might seem like it is but it's really not. I know people who have sat in solitary confinement for thirty six months. That looked at the goddamn wall. You know I'm sad. So in 36 months. This leg is going to go back to the joint. And our community is going to be fractured again. Some of the things that we're trying to build out here that we're trying to achieve. One of the main goals. Is to bring understanding. About our ways. To give people understanding about how that helps us. You know. What that brings to our community. And what I'm speaking about is our ceremonies. That's how important it is how many people in here have ever been to a ceremony. Sweat lodge. Sundance. So. Everybody that didn't raise their hand. What would it take for you to go to one of those. What would it take for you to open your mind and open your heart enough.

[00:30:22] To go to that. Anybody could say. What would it take. Invitation. What else.

[00:30:41] I'm sad for all the people who have never been in an adult's.

[00:30:47] Transportation okay.

[00:30:54] So there is a way for each and every one of you guys. To gain more understanding. And how that helps the brothers in there their right now. Is it gives you the experience. To know what it is that those guys need when they come out. To know what it is that they need. That's pretty significant. Because if you can come to me as a joy I know what you need to stay out of prison. I don't think anybody else can do that. That's what I need. I need to be called to the drum. I need to go up in there and sweat. That's what drives me. The people that have the culture and now understand what the culture brings. That's what they need. To be sane. Some of the people in his room you need your kids you need your parents. You know you need that

purpose. And what I'm trying to say is that's what we need. And so when we talk about. The impact of incarceration on us. I can tell you how we can stop that. But it takes more than just me. You know that a lot of people are going to say this but you know we need some white people on the team. I'll be honest with you. Because some of the white people in here can go places and say things that I can't. Or I can well it's not going to have the same effect. My brother Kyle. He said when he said one thing the other day like it blew my mind. But it was so true he said. Of someone like the DLC we say that. They were afraid of somebody like your wife. They were afraid of. Wait. How do you say the scariest person too is.

[00:33:11] The white male. Angry White Male. They don't care about us. so much. But all you like him. and. you. are the scariest most powerful people. in this country.

[00:33:24] Will you come too. You know we have us. We have one thing that nobody else has. The island people. They shared a culture with us. You know we call we call Mexican people like they're something different. But the Mexican people are Indians from the south. And the only difference between US and Mexican people is it up here. The Indians got stuck with the English language. And the Mexican people got stuck with the Spanish. That is the only difference. Well we sit up in the ceremonies you would never tell the difference.

[00:34:06] So let me give you guys a couple of numbers.

[00:34:11] If you guys go to the DLC Web site. Go to the Web site and you look up. Recidivism rates. Who has the highest recidivism rate. You're going to see a number of pops out. Forty three point eight percent. The Native American population. More than anybody else. Who has the most. Drug and alcohol related crimes. The Native American population. Who's number one in violent crimes. The Native American population. Who is the highest. To get killed by the police. The native population. My pops was killed by the police. Not at those numbers right they don't scare you. I don't know what's going to. Because that's I for number one. Heavy hitters. Then nobody else can say that they got. And nobody else is experiencing. I want to say that. The people in this room the speakers the people that. Helped us to gain these spaces. Are the catalyst for much more than just coming up you're talking. Because when we see each other on the street. I'll never forget a face. You're going to know you're going to understand that I got you. I gotcha. Like nobody else got you.

[00:36:12] Nobody else. The people that come out of the prisons got you. Why do they got to. Because the people out here got you.

[00:36:32] I want and we need. People to understand this. People don't understand how important the culture is. What the native population is facing. And I got different speakers up here that are gonna give you a different look. When I talked about the native population.

[00:36:54] It comes in different shapes and sizes and disguises.

[00:37:02] I will ask one of my brothers to come up here and just tell you a little bit about himself maybe how much time he done. Maybe. You know something personal to him. Something that has helped him. Come out of that place. Because not everybody serves 15 20 years. Sometimes five years is a long time. And as you guys do time for five years you've done a lot. You've done a lot on.

[00:37:35] I ask my brother AJ if you come up here. And. Just speak a little bit about himself. Where he from. All the goodness.

[00:37:51] And before he gets up here, let me tell you some about this guy. I'm a I'm a be honest with you.

[00:38:00] The first time that I met this guy he wasn't a nice guy. Wasn't very personable. You've seen it. He was not like, you know the smile that you just got right there?

[00:38:18] I'm smiling now.

[00:38:23] We out here. How you guys doing man.

[00:38:26] My name's Aaron Abrahamson and I go by AJ. I was actually born with AJ. But they just gave me the name Aaron enrolled Port Gamble S'Klallam I got about seven or eight different tribes my bloodline but I'm enrolled Port Gamble my my great grandmother is Luella George. It's good to be here today. It's good to be able to be in front of guys and speak a little bit about myself and the brothers and sisters on the inside because I know a little bit about being locked in a box you know.

[00:39:05] I think it was about a year ago and elder told me because I would always look down about that. People talk about might be working in stuff that should never be done. You should be proud of where you learn how to do your artwork and where you've been you know and it's like.

[00:39:20] This brother told me years ago also it's not where you been. It's where you're going. You know so. You know I fell back in 2009. I was out there on the streets running amuck doing the most. I fell for it was a home invasion robbery burglary you know nothing new kicking in the door one wanted all you had. And like I said it was nothing new. It's just kind of a life that that I'm not the only one that lived a life you know. But nonetheless they they rock me for about one hundred one months. I was sentenced. Sign that deal quick because I walked in with looking at 60 years and it was a hard pill to swallow. I had a baby on the way. It was it was rough. It was rough time right there. I was in the county for three months. Signed that deal send me on my way I'm ready. You know I'm built for battles it's nothing. Let's go. You know but like I said I'm proud of what I learned what I went through. It was really the first time that I had to walk into that penitentiary I went to Walla Walla close custody. I didn't make it into prison. I think. A week for I got my first flight. I still tell people to this day therefore had it coming. But nonetheless I would do the whole.

[00:40:49] Come out. Then I went back come out went to Walla Walla.

[00:40:55] And I was the first time that I honestly believe that I actually.

[00:40:59] That's when I became a man. I was walking through all gates and while the wall men men you go in deep in the prison me you're going in you get that gate you walk through shut. Mm hmm. Mm hmm. You know you're like playing hopscotch. I mean you're you're going deep in that prison. And I remember preparing myself for that. You know I'm going to hit this day room and I'm a walking with my chest out and I know punk me you know I've been fighting on the streets for years.

[00:41:32] You know I'm not. I'm knocked out my first the first grown man and I was like 14. I think you know I was scrapping on on a street fair so I go in there what kind of a hothead and. Ready for battle. You know because that's what I was prepared for. You know you gotta put in work you've got to do these things and I listen to the wrong people man. You know and like he said I mean I probably wasn't a nice guy man. You know I crack a lot of jokes and I'm kind of funny but real firecracker real firecracker man.

[00:42:03] But you know and going in and out of the hole and I'll be honest with you. The one thing that really captured me was that Sontag argument was that drum. It was the medicine.

[00:42:22] It was the ceremonies. It wasn't a county that had this white dude. He goes oh you native only thought I was missing. No no I'm just local neighborhood Indian. You know he's like. He's like oh maybe he'll be doing sweat lodge stuff. And you know you could be sweat Mary. And I was just like what. No urban Indian. I don't know nothing about none of that. I don't know another about my culture. I didn't know nothing about where my people come from. Port Gamble's got all my tribes are from this area from the Puget Sound. You know. So we're longhouse people. You know I didn't even know that. I learned that in prison you know with other natives. You know I didn't know nothing about the sweat lodge in the ceremonies but I was intrigued. I wanted to know I wanted it you know because you know when they lock in a box man they take everything from you. It's cold in here. You know people are weird and they're yelling and talking and it's it's a trip you know and.

[00:43:26] When I come out and I go to sweat. And I want to learn. I want to learn about the sweat lodge and the ceremony of what it is and in how you come to be a part of it in a good way. You know and that's what I did. That's the thing about myself personally is when I want to do something I'm going to do it and I'm going to put all that I have into it and honestly try to pass that along. They have me 10 fire for all the spring and while the last one it really starts to get hot and I was out there with this brother named Two Sticks. I think he was on his 20 something year. He's cool to me but you know he was he had forever near me and he he's he's still there close custody. He's not leaving it. But he showed me how to tend that fire. They showed me how to show me what it represents. That Inipi it's look it's a Lakota teaching. I'm not Lakota.

[00:44:26] I might be kind of tall like these Lakota. You know people think that I might be Lakota but I'm not. I'm a coastal Indian. You know I mean I'm from the right here. You know I've actually got some Duwamish in my bloodline you know so. But I learned them teachings because that was what I had to grasp onto. When you go to prison. One thing I noticed about everybody is you want to grab onto something got to grab onto something. You ain't got nothing. You know. So some people grab on to that. They read the Koran and add their Muslim and they become Muslim. You know some people grab on to Christianity. Some people grab on to violence. Some people grab onto drugs. Some people grab grab onto you got to grab onto something.

[00:45:13] Well. Fortunately I could grab onto the medicine I can hold onto this and take this with me. And so I started to learn about this. This Lakota teaching man I learned about the medicine will the medicine will man is very very very powerful. The medicine will. It represents

the directions you know the north east the south and the West represents the four corners of life the people you know.

[00:45:45] You got white people you got yellow people you got Red people you got black people you know and I'm proud to say this but my children are of all of that. They're all the whole medicine will. They're white. They're yellow.

[00:46:01] They're red and they're black. It's a beautiful thing I look at them all the time like you. Hell yeah I did that you know the point is that the medicine wheel man in it intrigue me man I really grabbed on to that about the people man you know and I learned about the Inipi. Kind of just the thing about close custody because that's where I went straight to close custody. Thing about close custody is they're kind of militant you know. They put me in a unit with North Daniels I don't even know what North Daniels was. I was calling all the north Daniels ss. They don't like that. Don't do that. But you know. So they're kind of militant.

[00:46:49] So like the like North Daniels though before they even crack the doors open for breakfast they've got their bed up against the wall. Packed up ready to go to the hole at any time. You know it's you can cut that tension with a knife man. You know you never know with something to pop off and even them natives in their man are kind of militant. They want you to understand what you're going into. You're not just going into this ceremony with these hot rocks and just you know do your best to not hit the ground. You mean like it's important you understand what you're entering what you're doing. So I had a tend fire for a whole season for all the spring and tend fire and you know I lost my part of my eyebrow and mustache and you know trying to get these hot rocks in there and just trying to you know make it happen and do the best I can and and follow the right leader you know because it's important that you find the right leader man.

[00:47:47] You know there's there's a lot of good in there and brothers that are in there that spend time and they don't want to they don't always want to see you do bad man you know like you said some people in there done some bad stuff some bad things. But as you're in there you learn that this ain't what you want, ain't what you want for your kids to say what you want for your grandkids. This ain't what you want for nobody. I really don't wish jail upon nobody. You know and I ain't going back but. So they taught me these things. They sat me down. They asked me like random questions. Hey, man what does that southeast direction represent? What's the medicine for that? What's that what's that west direction? It's the cedar, man, it's the warrior medicine, man. That's the bear,

[00:48:40] He's over there you know like they question you and they make sure you understand before you go into this Inipi and you swear and you have the ceremony in a good way. And it was within that that I started to slowly learn that's how you got to do it man. You got to do it for the people you've got to understand the people you know. Some would say I know a lot of natives I know a lot of native brothers and sisters that don't really like outsiders coming into ceremonies you know. Sometimes up a lot of times a period is coastal land you know a lot of them don't really like outsiders come to us. And if you went native you ain't welcome. And I honestly believe that that's not.

[00:49:21] Right. I believe that. The grandfathers have given this to all of us as a whole. It's very important that we all. At somebody's ceremonies like you said. If you if you want it it's gonna happen it's gonna come you know and I think that it is for everybody. And in there it's a little it's a little bit different. Not just anybody can come around you know paper check in your mail. You know making sure everything's legit and just it's kind of weird because it's a lot different when you touch down in here. When I first came my first way out here there was all walks of life. Man it was all races in there and it was nice to see.

[00:50:04] Be honest with you you know and as I like I come out of close custody you know that the new wall to wall the world was all. They're still figuring out ironed out all the wrinkles and stuff like that. And gosh where we want to lock down for like two months straight. Was just in their shower every three days or what. Not as long as it wasn't a riot popping off. It was kind of kind of shitty but you know I moved up to minimum custody long term minimum. You know I started learning and I learned how to do B work. You know. I'm go to my own horn too much but I'm a pretty I do amazing B work. I really do. I learned in there that's all that I did. It took over me. That's all I wanted to do was do ceremony and be work. I don't want no vocational classes. I don't want to go and do the G.D.. I don't care about none. I want to do art because that's what I grabbed onto and I got really really good at it. I painted drums.

[00:51:02] I learned how to do just strapping up drums making drums wood burning. I made all kinds of stuff lot of beautiful stuff you know and made a lot of stuff for powwow. I give a lot. You know I always gave you know they said I once heard from somebody I know. That. You measured your wealth is measured upon how much you give. You know we have these Potlatch around us in this area here. You know. You give. I want you to have this. Take this with you on your journey. You know and people notice that.

[00:51:40] That's how I do things because to me it's just something I made because I was bored me and have nothing else to do. So I made some hella cool you want it me and I'm about gifted my first medicine bag. It was black medicine bag it was plain super tradition he gifted this to me his name was Benji. Benjamin Peters because by Benji good buddy he is

Snokomish good brother you don't really well not here but he gave that to me in a good way because of how much I give. You know I was pretty wealthy guy. I give all the time we used to line up, we circle up just like this. And I used to tell them. Any you guys get your GED any you guys take that vocational class you doing something good. I'll make you something filthy. Doesn't matter what I make you everything, everything I make is filthy. Man I wish I was a busy guy. I'll be honest with you. People's ears perk da you know. But honestly man peoples get their GED taken like what's that

[00:52:40] The building maintenance class trying to get some kind of something to grab on to the take which you out there you know. And as I moved up I went to camp. Then like it dinged out. Came back went backwards you know. Step forward into I was a couple of years shy and I was like man you know what. I better quit acting like this. I better like snap out of it. I've got a baby at home. I've rarely seen her. And that's when I met George and actually Tana was my cellmate. Soon as I came off the chain I walked in and was like yes they put me with a Samoan like hitting me with the API. A lot of times I'll put you with your people. But uh I met George and I started noticing what he does for the community in a good way. You know made uh make it outfits. Doing B work doing a lot of great things for the people outside of the prison and I was like. Man I like that. What are we doing next. Let's do it. You know and we linked up and made some. Some cool stuff. You know but it was I think I walked off ninety two months straight. That's a long time. You know it was over seven years. No they say. I think I read it somewhere it was in jeopardy or some. It takes seven years for your body to recreate every cell so every seven years you a brand new person. You know good brother name Frog Marcella Walla Walla. I was complaining and bitching and moaning about looms big moment 20.

[00:54:32] Don't move.

[00:54:33] He's looking at me easy. He could be in it forever. He's an old guy. I'm just like Dude he's like Listen 10 years ago when you was twelve you thought different 10 years from now when you're 32 you're gonna think different. It's the same thing. Gaps are the same thing man. He's like be humble you know be smart. Make these right decisions you know. Even a lot of times I didn't act like it was kind of a snap case reach out real quick or get me one of us get beat up you know. But. That resonated with me. I held onto these things and I tried to understand the best that I could. And I what I do my best to walk this red road that I learned in prison. Man I didn't know nothing about this before I went to prison. The medicine the people all these great things that our culture has to offer the community everybody the whole will you know. You know and I'm proud to say I'm proud to stand here today and be able to just speak to. more than a handful of people. I've never seen or met you know about what I've learned because it's like you said men the culture. It's very very important. It's the only thing we really had to hold on every other day or every other week was a sweat. And sometimes they kind of drag us on a fog line or something or whatever. But point is we had that common law. You got

to give it to us. We got that snowball. You know I was blessed with a transplant there. I was gift I was gifted a I was gifted a pipe. This elder Neill skin a door. Oh man Neil hella grumpy been in there since 78. And he had opportunity to get out to get parole actually because under the old guidelines. But he's so institutionalized that. He told everybody to go f themselves. I don't want to get out. I don't want to go home. I don't want to go to the streets I don't have a home. This is my home.

[00:56:46] He gifted me this tunupa. And he honestly like he'd give stuff out but he didn't give something like this out. Like you. It's a great honor to be able to be able to get gifted to tunupa, a pipe. You know he's like you got to be on the right path. And you know I was like every time that I would kind of like. Get on somebodies helmet. Running the sail. Do whatever needs to be done was always for the circle was always for the people. It was if you were disrespected in the medicine you had to answer to me. And it usually didn't pan out well. And you know what. He liked that he liked that. I always tried to protect the medicine you know the medicine is always going to protect itself the pipe the drum that these medicines that we that we use to cleanse each other. They need me to swear everything it's going to parties going to. It's gonna be all right. It's been here for ever. You know for the beginning. But you like the way I did that. He liked the way I I. He liked my wallet and he gifted me this pipe. And to me that was an ultimate like. I thought he was playing Miss for and giving me not even liked me. He gifted this to me in a good way. And I'll walk with us today. I personally didn't wake it up until I came home because that was the time I felt that it was necessary. But you know. After I get these things.

[00:58:21] I get these I get feathers and you know I earn feathers. You know a lot of times feathers are earned especially in there or it's not like out here you can find a feather on the beach. You can find the eagle feather out to you can you just write a letter to the repository. They'll send you a whole eagle. I got one I got a drawer full of talons and feathers and all kinds of stuff but in their feathers urn man.

[00:58:46] And I had a bunch of them. I made a few fans I'd give them out. I beat them. AND YOU KNOW MY WALK became strong.

[00:58:59] You know. For the people you know.

[00:59:05] You know when I touched down to. Cedar Creek and I linked up with George and Tana and a few others and the great things that we are doing just to pass the time and get ready for the world.

[00:59:20] You know I actually didn't get work release. They weren't giving me that. They gave it to my codefendant but they didn't give it to me. I mean I don't know why I can only assume but I didn't get that. I walked straight out the lady actually honestly gave me forty dollars gave me money when I was signing out a couple of days before and honestly said good luck. I was so offended by that. I didn't like. Fuck you make it look like a you know so I walked out and did my best to prepare for the world. Took a couple of years. You know I wasn't doing I wasn't like trying to. Square up too much. I wasn't trying to fight too much. Stop it. We bounce with you. You smoke weed in you're. I stopped doing that. I stopped doing anything that was negative and whatever it was that was negative coming my way. I've run to my art. I've run to my craft and. I worked out worked out a lot. Man I think I got some sides to me up in there man.

[01:00:32] You know and I loved it. I love doing different muscle groups. I learned a lot I read like the Schwarzenegger book and it was it was good. You know there's there's three things that I walked out of there with and and I can I do my best.

[01:00:46] Like continue this walk with these things one ceremony gotta have it mandatory. I got it. You don't have to go to a sweat lodge to pray man. I pray every day. I pray on my Facebook feed I'll be on a Facebook feed. Many prayers to my grandma but will all my relations you know. So I walked out with ceremony.

[01:01:14] Working out.

[01:01:16] You know that was a major thing with myself. Was it burned energy. You know when I first went to the whole first time I was kind of like freaking out a little bit and talked to my also down the way. I said you know the name was cool because there you go.

[01:01:32] I'm freaking out. I don't know what to do. He said it was just to put it such a border.

[01:01:38] The play some chess. You know it burns energy and it you know I like the way it makes you look. Makes you feel good makes you feel strong. You know. As the ceremonies working out and then.

[01:02:04] Sorry. So no.

[01:02:09] I lost straight at thought. Sorry. I started thinking about some other stuff but you know I walked out with these things and I still try to continue them in a good way.

[01:02:18] On this Red Road and the best way I can as of right now. I just landed a job as a reentry. case manager for reach and you know I'm pretty proud of that because really ultimately that's what I really wanted to do was do reached. I mean what reach was do reentry and helped these brothers and sisters that are on the inside and not go back. I know how to not go back.

[01:02:43] You gotta stay busy stay close to the medicine and stay close to the culture whatever it may be you know. And today I'm honestly proud to be able to tell my story and which way I can. I still I've been out since 2016 and I still talk about prison a lot. I'll be honest with you some of the closest people to me probably notice these things that I still talk about because I was a part of me you know it was it was a major major impact on my life. It was when I honestly felt like I became a man because I was all by myself in there. I had no. Just me just me and the medicine you know and I have my back up against the wall. And I stood tall and I made it through the gauntlet and now I got I got another kid. I got two amazing kids. I got a good job and I'm striving to do better. And you know what I help others do better you know. And that's the path that the Creator has chosen for me.

[01:03:49] You know I always had a hard time trying to grasp and understand why. Did I I've never even been to juvie. I never. I've done a lot of bad things but I've never been to juvie never been to jail. I got cracked off with all this time. First time offender all that.

[01:04:09] I just try to understand why I got all this time and why and why and why why which you know I mean this is the part that was laid out for me. Sometimes you have to go through the worst to get to the best. You know so today's a good day. I wake up every single day. I need know box sign since sincere breathing out recycled air. I am eating that tiny man. Bush it. No more. No more soups and peanut butter and just crap. I'm good. Like I'm out here on this path and I'm doing better and better every day. And I promise you it's comes from the culture. It started with the drum. A start I wanted to sing so bad. As soon as I heard him sing I was like that's what I want to do and that's what I did. I'm quite the singer. You know my I know black line and northern career none rooms. But I love to sing man. And it was the culture that that kept me on track that that. And it still today keeps me going. You know if I don't have anything you know I got I got prayer. You know I can honestly pray to grampa and he go and find the right road the right path for me.

[01:05:44] And I've got to head I started that in prison whether or not I would have found it later on down the road without going to prison. But that was the path that Grandpa laid out for me. The creator laid out that I had to go through this hardship had to eat that nice piece of humble pie and.

[01:06:01] Take that with you. And now.

[01:06:06] Do for others man the medicine wheel man. You know I got that tattoo of my first tattoo on my way out since I've been out. I got the medicine wheel with these feathers on my arm. And it represents the people of all walks of life. And what I learned in there. Now put it on my left arm because I want to close to my heart because I'm a walk with this forever. It's a constant reminder if I bang my head really really hard and forget about everything. I will wonder what this is and I will learn about it. I'm still gonna have it. It's the medicine man. That's what keeps us strong. What keeps us smart keeps us sharp keeps us happy.

[01:06:50] You know today's. Like I said today is a good day. It's good to be up in front of you and speak about more and a handful of things. Let me talk some more. I've got a couple more now a couple more stories. We're good. Yeah. Nice to see you.

[01:07:08] Ok the next individual I want to ask to come up here. I'll get you a different look. But not both. David if you come up your year with a mouthful of chimichangas. Yes let him let him. Let him talk to you guys. Give you guys a different look. Got a lot of important things to say.

[01:07:32] All right. So my name is David. David Lujano. And you know I'm really proud of my brother. You know George we met like a long time ago in the yard. You know he mentioned like playing handball and all that stuff. You know I'm here really blessed to be here in front of you you know telling you a little bit about myself. I come from a lifestyle that. a lot of people get caught up in too. I'm a Mexican-American. You know I grew up in L.A. between L.A. and Mexico. I came up here to Seattle back in 97 and running away from the game line down in L.A. once I came up here. That means we're gonna be a little bit better. But you know the mentality that I had it wasn't wasn't gonna be no different than back home. So it was just a matter of time before I find myself in trouble. I spent about a year maybe a year here in Seattle and then I find myself in a situation where I was also sentenced to 17 years in my life. George mentioned something about being 16. I was 19 when I first fell in my life. I already knew I had that coming. I have been accepted that way before I even got locked up for the way that I was living my life and the people I was hanging around with. You know there's a couple of things they mentioned there hit back home to me. It got me really thinking about that time that I fell you know being young 19 now really know what was coming my way. A thousand die in prison.

I thought that that was it for me. I never as far was going to be able to get out. And so I went in with that mentality and I was gang related. And so that's the only thing that I knew how to do well.

[01:09:22] So I just kind of got with myself and said This is where I'm going to be facing might as well just go ahead and go at it. So I went from King County all the way to Shelton as everybody knows same route. I learned that at Walla Walla back in 97 when it was just the walls six and eight. You know I'm not trying to glamorize it but it was fun times because I was young I was mad I was pissed off actually I wanted to take off on anybody at any given time just like my brother was saying you know but now it wasn't not because I wanted to be hard. I was just mad. I was hurt. I didn't know how to live life the right way. I didn't know a lot of things back then and now that I'm older I get to answer some of those questions. But in the moment I thought I was mad. And people saw me as a bad person. So I believe I was a bad person so therefore I act the way that I was supposed to be acting in front of people that got me into all sorts of trouble. When we talk about the whole has everybody understands the hole by raising your hand. Yeah for the ones who don't understand. You spend twenty three hours locked in. I did a whole bunch of time myself when it got me to reflect them back to my time how I grew up my parents my brothers my neighborhood how I got caught up in games why I chose this life and I really didn't have no answers for it.

[01:10:51] I thought I was just it is just about another Mexican-American Chicano that is going to end up in prison because I grew up in L.A. but with the time when we talk about culture you know I find myself one time in segregation doing two years. And you know what. After six a months if you behave they give you a TV. And so I was able to get one. And for me that was the first time I was watching the Discovery Channel and I learned the story about this Painter's coming down to Mexico to the Asterix. And even though it was years ago I'm pissed off. I was like hand that held these fools came over here and got us I got all of our people. Just you know give us a different language and everything but then that sparked the interest of learning about my culture and went back to mainline and trying to create like a cultural group for us and eventually even till this day still goes on. But as the time went by I start losing family. I lost I have lost my parents. I lost you know the mom of my two sons at that time.

[01:11:59] My kids went back to Mexico. So I find myself up here in Washington just by myself. And again you know thinking back how I started it. I figure I'm never going to get out. But then you know the brother was saying something about grabbing onto something for me at the beginning. It was my homeboys. It was the gang culture. I really wanted that. That's what got me going every day. And it was for people the wrong thing you know. And I accepted that. And then as I was getting older my mind started changing. I start thinking different. And I started learning different things. And one of those those things that I did learn was that I needed an identity. I always believed it was this bad person because everybody told me that's where it

was. But then you know I discovered that I have that you know pretty good communication skills with the same homies you know that will listen. So I start practicing that at all. And it got me to different positions as far as the culture grouping a precedent or maybe doing some politics for the homies as well. That is also skill that now I can practice in a good way. But you know long story short I was I was 19 and I got sent this to 17 years close to my almost half of my time.

[01:13:22] I was a pill and because I was in a situation where you know I was with my cold defender. And eventually you know he ended up you know snitching on me and everything which is not a big deal now. Then it was really like something huge for me. But I ended up doing most of the time and. I guess that's what was supposed to happen to me as I went through life and as I went through the system I was able to discover so much about me the potential that I had in life and the person that I really was today. You know I got out back in 2011 so I ended up doing like 15 years and a half and when I got out or when we're talking about massive incarceration you know I made a commitment to myself not to go back. because I already know how that is. And I made a commitment also to help someone else not to go through the same things that I do that I that I used to do to go to end up in prison. So it took more than one you know. A few people helped me out when I first got out. Same thing I went to work release. Had he have really family out here I was just by myself. Did you know Seattle at all.

[01:14:37] I was only up here for about a year and so it was really hard especially being locked up for so many years. I came back straight to downtown Seattle the sound the smell the people like is just so crazy. Only you there have been there. Well I understand that poor that in times you feel like you know what this is not for me. I want to have to go back but then you know at the same time nobody wants to go back so I had a fear some up. But the reason why I mention that is because it took more than a few people to help me where I'm at today and I'm going to get to that right now. But like at first I didn't know much about anything even just as simple as that's going to the store where before it was no cell phones or you know it was pagers and now everybody's on their phones people talking to themselves. That's what I thought then because they got the Bluetooth or one. It was really confusing for me but then they're still trying to tough it up. I ended up going to college because I've got to prove to this one program they help to help you to get in college. But even then I just fresh now I go to a college college scene where everybody's riding around and and I get flashbacks as far as being in the yard and it had I had a couple of us here to watch as they happen to me where you know I can tell you why for example was coming back from school I used to go to Bellevue College and I came back and I was on my way to work release and this kid you know I mean not a kid but a young guy you know turn around and hit me with a backpack and my first reaction I was so close to the window because I didn't know the street.

[01:16:13] So I want to make sure I don't miss my stop but he happens to hit me in the face and my first reaction was to get up and you know grab him and drop him. So the whole boss freaked out the driver is like Get the hell out of here we gonna call the police I'm on probation I'm still work release is like all man. What am I doing. I had to get off the bus and walk all the way back to the work release. So I did I was literally almost in tears because it was like this is going to be a horror. I got so many bad ways of living that if that'll fix that is gonna send me right back to prison but then again every day is a new day kept on you know just striving for it to be better.

[01:16:55] And as the tank continue to be now here I always go back to that because if it wasn't for the people that was around me I'll I'll Well we'll probably was going to be one of the statistics to go back to prison. I went to school and I was given an opportunity to work with youth at risk and I ended up doing that work for like a part time. And as I did you know I feel like I was doing something good for someone and it was also helping me to reflect back to you know how I was brought up all the struggles that I went to and sort of make me you know trying to help somebody else not to go through the same stuff. Today it's been almost like seven eight years that I'll be now. I haven't been back and I'm not planning on going back that's for sure but I've been working with youth all the way around. I'm part of two different programs and I supervise both now today. And we have an intervention program and I specifically work with the Latino population gangbangers you know youth that are doing the most out there trying to give him those choices because I always felt like he had that the big homie the person to guide me in the right direction.

[01:18:11] I always had somebody telling me otherwise two to one put to work. And so I've been somehow successful in that part and I also do a prevention program down in Kent where we also get the guys from middle school to prevent them first start doing those choices. So today you know I don't remember I'm never going to forget where I come from but I'm not trying to live in the past. I'm trying to live in the future but to me it took all of that to get to where I am and where I could have done that if I was 15 16 having someone around me guiding me the right direction and I think that goes back to what George was talking about when people are coming back. They're coming back with a whole bunch of baggage is like I did but it took some people to help me out to be where I'm out today. To them my beautiful wife two kids I have a job. I have a life. But it can only take one mistake to take that away. Because I'm a felon. I used to be gang related. And if you don't normally assume in the streets are useful with the homeless you think I'm fully game related and I know I face that every single day every single time up I'm out in a battle. But I feel good for the things that I'm doing and that is that I that I see my brothers doing today because we made were worth nothing.

[01:19:31] We met in the yard or in the hall or just light whatever is on me. I used to see sweat lodges I never knew what it meant. I never knew as a culture of Mexican culture that we had

that as well. And it took me a minute to understand that part. But now today being all here with his brothers as well you know it shows that everybody can change if you give him the opportunity to do so. I was given an opportunity if there is anything that I can leave you with today is give yourself a chance to help someone else not to go back to the same stuff that we're doing and hopefully as a community we can help each others out because if we don't help these guys coming back out she is not going to be easy for nobody. And I'm glad that the brother you know got something going from for himself. I got something more from myself and today I think is the beginning of like getting together united to help everybody. The best way that we can but then yeah we can do ourselves. Even though we have the background on how to understand people coming back now we need a lot of people as well.

[01:20:36] So I'm not going to take too much time of your time. I really appreciate you. George forgive me the opportunity to be here and I'm going to stick around. Thank you.

[01:20:50] Ok so one of the things that I want you to before our next guy comes up here one of the things that I want you to like really understand and to really take back with you from this place is that there is one thing that we're giving you. That. When somebody comes to you and like they ask you what is it that. Like what. What can we do that can help impact the community. And you are hearing and hear from the people that are coming from the joint out here. Trying to tell you is the culture. There's one thing that is like is is is that guiding light. And even like like I said before like people out here you might not even see it. You might not know it. But that's one way that we can change things. You know what I'm saying. There's one way we can make a difference not only to the guys that are out here the people that are in there but to the youth.

[01:22:04] Passes to Tana.

[01:22:08] Thank you George. How's everyone doing tonight? I do appreciate you guys being here. And by the way my name is Tana Vaivaimuli. I know there's a mouthful in it but thank you guys for being here tonight.

[01:22:23] It it's really important to all of us and for all of us to have this you know it's not often that I get involved with these guys doing stuff like this cause you know I'm always busy at work and put everything else but I I'm glad I'm here. You see I'm nervous I'm not really a big fan of speak in front of people you know and when George texted me a few days ago if I wanted to attend this not knowing I was gonna stand up here and speak to you guys.

[01:22:59] He didn't mention that part of it. Oh no he left that out till I got here. When he was up here.

[01:23:06] So I do appreciate it. Know I appreciate you guys. And to start off my part of my story. I was 17 when I moved to the U.S. not knowing anything about you know this culture. I came from such a small place to a place that was open up to me and it was a culture shock to me. It's I don't know what to expect. Everything around me moved around so fast because I'm from a small island. The Samoan island so and so I had to adapt either learn to go with it let it flow let it come to me. But I did none of that happened. I was trying to move too quick with it. He said it just you know go with the flow. At 17. Now with the summer of 90. Not even four years in the U.S.. In Washington. I caught a case. I took a life which I'm not very proud of it.

[01:24:24] And it took me a while to try to get back into myself.

[01:24:34] Get back in to my family because they were the ones that were hurting the most. I wasn't suffering. They're the ones that will suffer. The victims family were the ones that suffer the most. It is because I was doing time in prison. Does it mean himself. We all know the people that were suffering on my families and victims family because they are the one they had to deal with all the negativity that was coming their way.

[01:25:02] No on both you know from the victim's family and my family and they had to deal with it and they had to be patient with it. So and for me I had a deal with a lot of stuff when I was incarcerated. There was so much so much negativity in their guts. After all it's a prison. No there's nothing good in there but we have to adapt to it. But we take that and we tried to make something positive out of it. For ourselves especially for me. It took me three years. Just snap out of it. Three years one phone call. I call mom and she was crying. She was on a phone cry. Goddamn it. Talk to her in three years. I didn't want to call her or any of my family members because I know it hurts. Especially for Mom and Dad we only get 20 minutes to talk to our family members. So. Like she cried for like 19 minutes and that last minutes ago Yeah I love you son. Don't forget to call me.

[01:26:25] So went on for a while I never called her in here my counselor called me to his office. Your mom's on the phone. I said why she calling you. Well she's asking why you have a caller. So it hurts. And for her they do that they call the prison and ask about me.

[01:26:48] How am I doing it. So three years added changed my life around. I met a lot of good people and there a lot of good men in there. In a lot of them are never going to see the streets

ever again and they are the ones that helped me. Even though going up 17 years I grew up on the island I knew about my culture.

[01:27:14] But as far as me sharing it with other people I never did that until I met George. I met AJ. Those are the guys that helped me.

[01:27:27] You know so us in there we had to break that barrier. That was. Separating us. The word the API is in there. The Asian Pacific Islanders but all of them were not really getting together. None of them were really talking to each other they were segregated because they were doing it to themselves. So with George and AJ we had to get together with their help and we broke that barriers. With all the brothers in their native islanders no New Mexicans. We all got together and we support each other. You have no idea to support that. All the brothers. Get in there just like they mentioned earlier just like us around here. We all gathered in one we outside of yea we talked about stuff you know how can we help each other how can we support each other even when we come out of here what can we do to help each other out. They gave me twenty six years in eight months. Oh yeah. I hated the system. I blame the system. You know there was nothing but hate. Heart. Because they are the ones that sentenced me. No. Never got involved in any trouble. Not a gang member. First time felon. And he sentenced me to 26 years. In eight months. So I was in there just hating life in there did not want to talk to anybody. I fell when I was 21 just turned 21.

[01:29:18] Ninety four. And what a birthday. I didn't like it didn't like the life near. I didn't know what to expect when I went here but I was prepared for whatever comes my way.

[01:29:38] You know troubles whatever trouble was coming my way. I was taking care of it but never. Never got a no fights at all. When I was in there. So after a while I was in there. We found each other the support that we had for each other. We help each other out. So we used our culture. We educate a lot of brothers in their. Especially native brothers. She also. George was teaching us about the whole culture about the native culture which it was a it was a great blessing to all of us to all the brothers that are still in there trying to get back out here and be with their family. We are so blessed right now for us to be out here. Couldn't say couldn't be out at a better time. That's all right now. I got out in 2016 two days before Thanksgiving. That was a blessing. That was a truly a blessing for me.

[01:30:49] And.

[01:30:52] For us to be out here for me to be standing right here in front of you and talk to you guys about this I want you guys to open up your heart. I want you guys to have some knowledge some understanding of the native culture and who they are and the Asian Pacific Islander culture. They're all over there all over the all around us and every single one of us. And we're all related in some way. We all want. And I like it you know. Time for Unity which it is. Not a better time than this time right now for all of us to be together. And I've learned so much from these brothers when I was in there and the brothers are in their.

[01:31:49] A simple phone call or a letter say hello or a low to them could make a big difference to their.

[01:31:58] We have no idea cause we can help them you know. Think about what's going on here. Lift them up.

[01:32:09] It's like I said earlier it's a negative place. It's a really really negative place cause wherever we go it's always something going on. Negative. Negative. But we make it into a positive place because we decided to cause our mentality. We teach ourselves. not to follow that path because we learn from all the past mistakes. So we use it and we use that as a fuel for our souls. Then we help each other out. And for us to get involved in a sweat lodge in the prayers the Pipe Ceremonies that really helped us out not really give us the motivation to be out here and be amongst you guys and talk to you guys. And we can all you know get together like this. Hopefully more of them will be you know in the future. And I really like this. This is what feeds our soul. This is what make us come back to it. Like I said it's he's the one who's gotta keep me updated on what's going on. And you know what I find the time I make it I'll take some time off work so I can attend it because I know how important it is to him and I'm sure how important it is to all of you would be here. And it is important because. Me getting out I felt. I mean it's like all the way it's been lifted off my shoulders. It's all gone. It's no longer there. I mean it's bittersweet but I'm out of here.

[01:34:06] And for me to transition back out into the community I had to go through steps. I went to camp which though was in Cedar Creek and my family lives in Marysville. They had to make the drive all the way from Marysville to Cedar Creek. That's Little Rock. It didn't heard a little rock Washington. As a little rock there was only Little Rock Arkansas. Oh no there's a little rock in Washington. It's out of middle nowhere. My family took their time. Come out and visit me. We hung out with them for a couple hours. We do events for them when they come in and celebrate them and we celebrate us too. As a culture as a family. And hopefully I have the time. I'd like to ask my brother George if I can. Saying went out to the. to the people. But yes from. From camp which is helped me. Coming back out into the community into the. Because it takes baby steps. And he took. Some steps coming back out because I want to pretty much

just learn how to walk again. When I stepped out and came from camp to work release right down the road. Run off to work release. And that too took some time for me cause I would again culture shock just being out there not knowing what's going on not knowing what's going to happen. Because it's everything change after twenty two years.

[01:35:56] Twenty two years in there I've learned so much from a lot of brothers that were in there and they taught me a lot. And hopefully. Now I'm out here. I can do the same. To all the young brothers did I hear coming out in the ones that are get ready to go in. Hopefully we can stop that. Break that barrier. Help them educate them. Show them what's right. Which road to go even though it might be hard but still it is our job to educate them to help them out from them coming out and when they're going in.

[01:36:42] Again and when I got released it would. It was a blessing. My brother brought my mom and his two daughters to pick me up from Ron's work release.


[01:36:55] And.

[01:36:58] My mom couldn't stop crying. She I don't know how long she was crying but it was like forever. I didn't care. I didn't care. I just see. Her hair was on my shoulder. I just let her do whatever she did cry. Because he was a happy. Her son was home is bad enough. When I got one went in. Three years later my younger brother got shot in the streets. So she had to deal with one gone to prison. And she had to deal with a death another. It's hard for mom to bear two sons losing two sons in such a short amount of time. And she's a strong woman.

[01:37:48] She's a Samoan woman where she gets mad. All of us. We find an exit. We can put holes to the wall. It is to get out. Get away from her. Oh now things go flying everywhere. Yeah.

[01:37:59] All right Mom we'll see you a couple hours when you cool down. She's a strong woman. And I love her. There is no I tell her every day how much I appreciate her how much she means to me. Everything that she has done this whole time. She stayed with me for twenty two years never left my side. Always there. Help me out with money with the food packages and stuff. She's the one that kept me alive in there.

[01:38:35] She's the one that helped me keep my sanity. Because if it wasn't for her.



[01:38:47] 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.

