

# I'm Built to Better Myself

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

shit, people, life, fuck, man, prison, recovery, addict, years, drugs, live, addiction, started, fucking, growing, aaron, older, dad, yo, streets

## SPEAKERS

Kurry Harbour, Aaron Smith, Eugene Ivey

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 Kurry Harbour 00:00

From the greater Boston area you are listening to the MyTERN Conversations, brought to you by Tufts Education Reentry Network. These are stories of life during and after incarceration told by people who've lived it and are working to overcome the odds.

 Kurry Harbour 00:19

What do they say in the AA recovery? What was it? Serenity prayer. Can you kick it for me? Just the Serenity Prayer, Aaron, can you give it to me real quick?

 Aaron Smith 00:28

Yeah. Grant me the courage to change, the courage to change the things I can.

 Kurry Harbour 00:36

It starts with God.

 Aaron Smith 00:38

Yeah, it says, 'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.'

 Kurry Harbour 00:46

That's right. And that's the model that I live by. See, I can't change that past. But I got the courage to change the person that I am today. And I asked God to give me the serenity and the

courage to change the person that I am today, and I asked God to give me the serenity and the peace of mind to deal with that past that I cannot change, you know. And that's how I evolved into the person that I am. You know, when you talk about recovery, that little piece there is the strongest piece that I ever got from a AA meeting, recovery meeting. Because there's so much value in that prayer, you know, and it defines the whole concept of how I live today.

K

Kurry Harbour 01:46

Hey, my name is Kurry H. And a long, long time ago, I was a big old square. And then I got caught up into some drugs. And then from drugs, I got into crime. And then from crime, I went to the penitentiary for a very, very, very, very, very, very, very long time. And then I had to find my way out of that prison. So I learned some things in the prison to help me get out and to help further my life. But those stepping stones that I used to get out of prison, with just the first stop was the first step of a somewhat long existence in the world of what we call freedom.

A

Aaron Smith 02:39

Hey, it's Aaron. So I grew up in a upper middle class, white town, and kind of from a young age, when I was seven years old, my dad was diagnosed with cancer, and, you know, my life, my life was pretty good. But that really impacted me in a way that I didn't realize at the time, and probably around the time I was in middle school, so I was like, 12, 13 years old, I first got introduced to pot and to alcohol. And from the moment I tried them, it was like, I found peace. You know, I found escape in alcohol, in drugs, and I took off running, you know. And then as I encountered obstacles, things just, I just got deeper into it. And things really hit a critical, critical mass when I was 19, I had managed to get myself into college, and I was on the basketball team there. And it was, it was the end of my spring semester, my freshman year, and I found out that my brother had died by suicide. And from there, that's when I really like fell into to hard drugs started doing heroin. And from there, it was just starts and stops. It was addiction, and I'd try to do something right in my life, it would fall apart, and I turned I'd get deeper into the addiction. And then you know, in my, in my late 20s, I really started to, I made the choice to start feeding my addiction and stop paying for it and start selling drugs. And that landed me right in prison.

E

Eugene Ivey 04:25

My name is Eugene. And prison was pre determined for me before I was born. You know, so I kind of follow that script growing up as a child, you know, getting in college, you know, trouble as far as getting. I went to the school to prison pipeline. And then from there, I ended up going to the U.S. Department of Youth Services. And then from Department of Youth Services I ended up in prison where I spent 27 years in prison. And, you know, looking back on it, it's, for me, it's just, it's a tragic situation. But it made me, it turned me into the man I am today, where I'm humble, I'm humbled. I'm grateful, you know, just to be out here in society and have a chance to be able to, you know, give back and to, you know, try to keep or inspire others to not end up where I was at, right, because it's, it's a fucking horror show inside those prison walls.

A

Aaron Smith 06:04

So growing up, like, I always, I always viewed myself as different from the community that I was in. And there was always, I never felt like I fit in. And I didn't fit into what people wanted me to be. And I think with some losses that I experienced at a young age to close family members, that it really instilled in me a distrust for the idea that if you do the right thing, everything's going to work out. When I was in seventh grade, I actually, maybe it was a little foreshadowing into my later life. I got suspended from school for two weeks, because I was selling my Rit- I was prescribed Ritalin, and I was selling it to kids in my grade, and I got suspended. And they did this thing where like, they didn't arrest me. Again, different story if I was Black, but they didn't arrest me. But they brought me down to the police station. And I was sitting there, my mom was next to me. And the detective was across the table, and he had this little notepad, he got up to go get some coffee, maybe a doughnut, and he left his notepad. And me, I look up, I lean over the table to see what's on his notepad. And it said, I had this teacher, I'll just, Miss Z, we'll call her. She said that I was in class, taking white out, putting it on the desk, letting it dry, and then breaking it up into lines and doing lines of white out off my desk in class as a 12 year old. The detective came back in and I said, 'Listen, before we get going, I need to ask you about what the fuck it says on that piece of paper. Because let me ask you this. If I was doing lines of white out in the middle of class off my desk, why the fuck is this the first time she's saying something to somebody? You should probably let people know right away.' End of the story though, is I realized that this lady is supposed to be guiding me, molding my mind and my spirit to be a successful person. All fucking adults, and this is the mindset I had, all fucking adults are just big fucking kids. They all want to be in on the story. They all just want to be- something's going on, let me get a piece of that. And legitimately from that moment on, I didn't trust anybody that was telling me anything, because who the fuck are they? Like, they just want to fit in the same as they want to be a part of it. And that really eroded my trust. And I really avoided any kind of meaningful relationship and being an addict, that's a great way to do it. Because the only people you're gonna surround yourself with are other addicts, and all anybody really cares about is not each other. It's just about getting high. And so trying to make this quick. But so I was dating this girl before I got locked up. We were together for about two years. She was from the Bronx. She moved up to Boston to live with me. It was great. We were both addicts, but we really did, you know, I loved her, she loved me. And I got arrested. A week into my incarceration, a lieutenant came down and told me that she overdosed and died in my apartment, in our apartment. And that really is something where being in prison is not a place to grieve, or deal with that. So I'm still kind of working through that. And to be honest, I realized like, those traumas of like relationships from my life still carry with me. I realized that like interpersonal connection is something that I need and is important in my life, but it's also maybe one of the things that I'm least comfortable with, and most afraid of. So it's kind of this tight rope where like, you know, you can't lose what you don't have. And that's kind of the safest way in my mind still, to operate in terms of relationships is that at a distance is best. Because then it won't hurt when it's when it's taken or when it's gone.

E

Eugene Ivey 10:30

Well said, homie. To add further with the trust thing that you just mentioned, like, I always have, like a problem with male authority figures, right? But especially like, white male authority figures, right? You know, because of my time in DYS in the school system and dealing with police in the neighborhood. But you know, you know, he's talking about, you know, like childhood, and, you know, what it means to be a man and so, so, you know, I remember coming up, and I'm pretty sure, Kurry, you can relate to this, you know, you get this warped sense of manhood, right? What manhood is in the hood. And it's sort of like, you know, you gotta take this, rite of passage, when you come from the hood. This rite of passage is like, you have to

somehow touch the joint, you have to go to the joint to be a man, you know, you get, like, these older cats who go to the joint, they come back they're your OGs. They did some time, and it fucks you up in all other areas of life, you know what I mean? Like you thinking, here you are, you're this kid, 12, 13 years old, and you walkin' around, like, your nuts is about 50 pounds, right? And you think, you know, you like this, this big shot. You're trying to be that dude, that OG that you're seeing, right. But he meanwhile, this dude, he done been to prison about 10, 15 times, right? Did a couple bids. You know, his neighborhood drug dealer, whatever, you know, but it's just and the shit is crazy. You know what I mean? I don't know, man. It's just I fell into that trap.

K

Kurry Harbour 12:34

Yeah, man. I mean, I kinda understand, man. Because I, you know, when I was growing up, like, you know, I get what you're saying I idolized the wrong people. You know, the pimp players, hustlers, you know what I'm saying, go getters, you know? And as you get older, and you reflect, you see what that shit derives from, you know, we talk about masculinity and shit. You know, as a Black man, it's a real tough role. It's something that you gotta really carry with you, man, because it derives from so many different things. You know? Because being Black in America, a Black man has never had no power. You know, he's always been powerless. You know, the white man's always had control over him, his woman, his kids, you know, how can a Black man really feel masculine? When he's seen the slave master, take his wife, his daughters and rape them and he does nothing about it. All that shit is in his DNA. So from generation, generation to generation, it comes up to someone like me. I still got that shit running through my through my veins. So in my little small, clandestined, belittled socioeconomical situation that I'm living in. Ghetto, hood, whatever you want to call it, that's where Black men they feel they're emperors in the streets. They're rulers with their drug empires, gambling empires, whatever they do, you know, get money the fast way, you know, you know all, you know all the stories. But the thing is, is that now that I'm much older, I see shit so totally different. Like I always looked at my dad as a big old square. But that man owned his own house. He paid his bills, took care of his family. I never wanted for shit. You know, that's what a man does. You know? And, you know, I know now that a man handles his business, you know.

E

Eugene Ivey 15:16

Now, Aaron. So what does, I would ask you, like, you know, growing up middle class as you did you know with a, I don't know, a silver or copper spoon in your mouth, right? So I would ask you what does, what does manhood look like to you?

A

Aaron Smith 15:36

Yeah, so, I grew up in a middle class town. But I certainly didn't have a silver spoon in my mouth. Masculinity was always a weird thing for me, because when I was seven years old, my dad was diagnosed with cancer, and he was given a short amount of time to live. And he ended up actually living for a lot longer than he expected. But he was never well. He was always sick. His cancer went in and out of remission. So, you know, it's like, growing up, I had that mindset of a man should be, like, kind of the classic man. Pay the bills, make money, support his family. And from the time I can remember, my dad was never able to. So, I always saw other people's

dads coaching teams, and I saw my dad in a hospital bed. So I didn't really get that normal relationship where your dad's taking care of you, it was moreso flipped, where I'd be in situations taking care of my dad. And from that, I think it didn't, it left me with a lot of questions and realizing that I- not really appreciating or knowing what I did have, but really focusing on what I didn't have in that classic traditional father role. And so that I think, left me searching kind of left me wondering, and then as I grew older, into what you know, into that age, where a boy becomes a man, you know, I was really left without an idea of what that really looked like. And more to the point is I was left with this, you know, cuz my dad was a good dude. And he did work hard before he got sick. And that kind of left him, where'd it leave him? It left him, you know, dying in bed with cancer. And so it really left me with a big distrust for the ideal of work hard, and you'll get, you know, what you dream of. I was like, 'Well, that didn't work for my dad. So why don't I,' and I was already dealing with my addiction and things like that. So I was like, 'You know what, might as well cut some corners and make that money quick.' Because, you know, if you do good, good comes to you. I didn't believe in that. You know, I was like, if you do good, you're gonna get fucked, life's gonna fuck you in the end. And all your hard work is gonna be for nothing. So why work hard when you can work easy and make some money? And that's kind of that brought me to where I am today, sitting with y'all.

E

Eugene Ivey 18:11

So that's your idea of, oh a little hustling going out there creating for yourself? Is that your idea of what masculinity looks like to you?

A

Aaron Smith 18:23

You know, what, I'm honestly, I'm still kind of trying to figure that out for myself. Because I went from this one warped idea of masculinity. Because yeah, in my mind, I was like, 'Yeah, I'm making it. I'm making it easy. I'm making good money.' And then I went to prison. And it's like this real extreme of like the macho man masculinity. And now I'm out. I'm trying to figure out what the fuck masculinity means to me, to be honest, still figuring it out. But honestly, I think it's more more than anything, for me, it's standing on your own two feet. And it's, it's being comfortable, it's being able to be vulnerable. It's a lot of things that I really thought were not masculine, that weren't tough. All those tough things, quote, unquote, tough things became ingrained. And, like routine is how I operated. And really what it was was a lot of hiding. And, you know, what I found is that for me to be like, my true self, to be vulnerable, to be willing to ask for help, to be accountable. That's really I guess what masculinity means to me today.

E

Eugene Ivey 19:42

You know it's strange how, you and Kurry, you know you all mention y'all fathers in y'all life. I've never had my father in my life, right? So it was just my mother and my brothers. You know, I'm the baby of my mother's three kids. So I'm the youngest. And you know, they always say that a woman can't teach a child how to be a man. But in my mother's case, I think it was a little bit different. Because she was she was tough. She was a she was a tough woman. And she, she got down, she grinded. You know, she had a little she had her faults, you know, some drug issues, alcoholic issues. But she was she was a tough woman. And, and I think I gotta thank her, you know, she passed away when I was 14. And, but the reason why I'm sitting here

today is because of her. You know, a lot of a lot of her traits I have, you know, that strength and that perseverance. And that got me through a lot of shit. So it's sad and, but at the same time, the things that she instilled in me kind of, you know, it made me who I am today like she instilled love, affection, you know, trust. You know, just these values and principles that you know, they didn't align with the life I was living in the street and by doing what I do I just it's just like I'm representing my mother out here.

K

Kurry Harbour 21:24

Substance abuse.

E

Eugene Ivey 21:25

Y'all, too.

K

Kurry Harbour 21:26

Alright, fuck it, let's talk about it. Let's talk about this shit. Man, substance abuse is real, man. You know, for me, you know? I started doing drugs when I was 10, 11, 12 years old. You know, we all got down on some rum, and shit. And rum and coke, some reefer, some motherfucking, some the the beanie reds and red pills and shit. I don't know what the fuck they were. But yeah, man, I mean, shit, man. You know? But, but substance abuse has been the very first time, the very first time that I was told that I had a problem, I thought the person was crazy, when they told me that. They said, 'I hate to tell you this, Mr. Harbour, but but it seems like you have a substance abuse problem. You know, you may be an alcoholic or an addict.' And I was like, 'Do I look homeless to you? I said, you see these jewels? You see these rings on my finger? You see these jewels around my neck? Does it look like I'm an addict? You sayin' I'm a dope fiend or a crackhead? No way.' Years later I was in the penetentiary and I was telling somebody that went to AA meetings with me about that conversation. And I was like, 'Man.' If I only I mean, it was a time in my life, where I had drugs on me at all times. Cocaine in one pocket, heroin in another pocket, pills, marijuana. I mean, not just to sell, to do. Cocaine, hard, soft, didn't matter. Kept everything with me at all times, knew where it was at. And I wasn't a drug addict? Or an alcoholic? You know, I think about how I became the addict, the alcoholic, the drug addict. Now I know how these things happen. When I first started getting into to recovery, I was looking for somebody to blame other than myself while I was in the predicament that I was in. But through therapy, a lot of hard work, going to meetings, listening to other people's suggestions, I found out that all of these problems, and all of these substance abuse issues and stuff that I have, it all stems from me, and how I viewed life, and how I experienced things, and what effects it had on me. And through recovery, I've been able to heal from this wound. It's still there. It's everywhere. I can see it all the time. It's a wound that probably will never heal. But one day at a time I can keep it from getting infected by not using any substances or alcohol. And that's what this is about. My recovery is one day at a time. I don't think about tomorrow. Today. I'm going to treat the wound. You know how I treat the wound? With the right medication. And the first part of that medication is not to use. Okay? And then the other part of that medication is to, every day, accept the fact that I have a problem with drugs and alcohol, okay? And then, action, do something about it. Go to a meeting, talk to somebody. Things that are gonna help you deal with of whatever triggers or other issues that have you running back

to these substance, substance problems. Okay? And am I healed? Yeah, I feel healed. I feel healed. But I'm healing. I'm not cured. You know? You can put it in a different way. I have a lot of wounds. But I'm tending to them, you know, and every day that I deal with these wounds, I feel better. And my man Aaron over here, you know, you know, man, he's the power of example. You know, I really learned from him, you know, like, that's another thing about recovery, man, it puts you on a roadmap on a journey that you don't really know where you're going. But if you continue to do the right thing, you never know where you'll end up. This guy ended up with a class in a classroom with me, I learned so much from him. And man, like, I've even been able, he's even helped me stay clean. One day at a time, just from knowing, you know, we did something together. We did this program together, we did another program together, this is how this thing works. This is a part of the healing. This is recovery.

 Eugene Ivey 26:43

So, Aaron, can you speak to that? Can you add to that?

 Aaron Smith 26:47

Yeah, so I mean, God knows those are some very kind words from Kurry, you know, hyping me up a little bit. But, no, to be honest, you know, I kind of talked about it a little bit earlier. But like, for me, my addiction was was hiding. It was avoiding it, and it was isolation. And, you know, Kurry just kind of touched on one of the big things about my recovery is connection, is really finding that common ground with people. And making those connections, cause we can't do it alone. You know what I mean? I can, I can get high alone, but I can't, I can't stay sober alone. And I think it's actually, this dude, brother Ali, he said, you know, basically, there's fear, faith, compassion, and pain. And it's those are four things that we all have. And the pain is kind of, for me, that's, that's what I was hiding from. And through addiction, like, just because you're not feeling something, especially when it comes to like a trauma or pain in your life, doesn't mean that it's not there anymore. It doesn't mean it's gone. You know, in that pain, that's what I was hiding from a in a getting high did a good job of that. But the most important thing for me about getting sober, and I'll be honest. If I didn't get arrested, if I wasn't incarcerated post arrest, I probably wouldn't be sober right now. You know? It removed me from my life in a way that I couldn't remove myself. But, that being said, I also got out of prison and got high immediately. But then I, when I did, it was just like, it was, you know, they say in AA, 'You're on an elevator going down. You pick what floor you get off on, but it's going to keep going down.' And I really had that kind of realization, where I was like, 'What the fuck am I doing?' You know, like, my mom signed me, like, she she bonded me out. So I was like, I'm not even fucking up my own life anymore like there's, there's people counting on me. And that connects you through all aspects. And I think the most important thing for me has been finding compassion for myself, and for others, like realizing that maybe people's pain aren't the same. But you know, there's a Richter scale that measures earthquakes, right? Now, if you think about each person has their own, like Richter scale to measure pain. Everybody has a moment, it's all going to be different, but where it hits 10, right, it's the worst day of their life. Everybody has it. Mine might be different from somebody else's, we might be able to look at somebody else's and say, 'Well, it wasn't that bad,' but it's still a 10 to them. And so once I was able to realize that it's like, alright, everybody's suffering, and I know I'm suffering. So it's all you know, in it, just that finding that compassion to that. It's all right. You know, it's alright to be sad. It's alright

to be hurt. And it's alright to get better. It's alright to do something different and go against the grain. And that's been really important to me, but yeah, really, I think the ultimate thing is addiction is isolation. And sobriety is connection and connection in sobriety.

 Kurry Harbour 30:06

That's right.

 Eugene Ivey 30:08

Wow, that's powerful.

 Kurry Harbour 30:09

When did the planes hit the-

 Kurry Harbour 30:20

-the buildings. 2001. That was my last time in isolation. I made a decision that I had to go up top. And I said, when I got to high security, I said, 'Yo, from this moment on, I'm not picking up no more D reports. I'm gonna do programs, I'm getting out.' And I put a routine together, right, a formula. So it took me from that point six and a half years to be released. My first time being eligible for parole was three years after I made that decision. I was denied for three years. Then I went back three years later, boom, got my freedom. But in between all that time, I had a routine. And I never broke it, you know, I stepped to everything, because and it worked for me.

 Aaron Smith 30:20

2001.

 Aaron Smith 31:14

Right.

 Kurry Harbour 31:15

When I went to my second hearing, the chairman of the parole board, she let me give my opening statement. And then she gave a statement. And she said, 'Mr. Harbour, in short, we sent you back with a three year setback, and you went back and did everything that we wanted you to do without us telling you to do it. And she said for that you should be commended. Where, where, how do you want to be released?

A Aaron Smith 31:47

Damn.

K Kurry Harbour 31:47

Then I went into my spiel about going to a reentry program and phasing down and anything like that. She said, 'Okay, I have no more questions.' Every board member, there was six board members that day. One had wasn't there. Every board member just said, 'Good job. Mr. Harbour, we don't have no questions.' And that's how the whole hearing went. My hearing was over in 10 minutes.

A Aaron Smith 32:15

No shit.

K Kurry Harbour 32:16

And so when you talk about, so I have to I have to look at the structure and the discipline of that routine got me to the finish line.

A Aaron Smith 32:27

Right.

K Kurry Harbour 32:28

You know, so that's the positive part. You know what I mean?

A Aaron Smith 32:32

Sure.

K Kurry Harbour 32:32

But when you come out to the outside world, you try to like put that same thing in effect out here. And it's like, it's like, the whole ozone layer is gone. Right? And things are coming out of the space out of the out of the space and hitting you rapidly. You have no like, so when you come out here to the world, you're bombarded with so much shit, man.

K Kurry Harbour 32:59

You know, everything is just, like, spontaneous. And, you know, you have to really be in a good position to ride these things out. Use those programming skills you learned in the joint. You know what I'm saying, you know? I don't care, man. I mean, like, dudes get out the joint man, and then knock programs and shit. And they be like, 'Man, I'm only doing this shit so I can get out.' I used to listen to that shit, right? When I first started doing the programs, I was saying the same shit like, 'Man, I'm not fucking, man I'm just here for the fucking, for the certificate.' But I started listening to what these people were saying. And this shit was making sense. You know, talking about getting your emotions. And you know, because I would watch movies man that were tear jerkers, I wouldn't even cry. And people used to be like, 'Man, you need to get in touch with your emotions.' But you what I'm saying? Oh, I know I've been talking for a while, but, but I started really listening to what these people were saying. And I started applying it, man. And that shit worked. Like it's so like, if you think about it, like some of the shit that they teach you. It really helps you.

 Aaron Smith 32:59

Right.

 Aaron Smith 34:24

Yeah.

 Eugene Ivey 34:25

And the thing too, right, to add onto that. Is that, like some of the curriculum, it doesn't really apply in many senses, to you know, like guys who come from like the inner city, right? Like some of it's not realistic to some people but if you shift certain words here and certain, you know, scenarios there, then it applies. It matters, right? Because that shit really does, like if you really follow it, you can get something out of it. It's what you put into it.

 Aaron Smith 34:59

Right.

 Kurry Harbour 34:59

Right.

 Eugene Ivey 35:00

You know, a lot of guys, they be like, 'Oh, fuck that, man. I don't know. I mean they don't know what they talking about. They don't know they don't know our experience.' But if you just apply yourself then that shit can mean something to you. Get something out of it.

A

Aaron Smith 35:14

And what made me even, what made me change even more like, like concrete was like to see my family come to support me. But I wasn't supporting myself. I wasn't doing what, how can I how can I have somebody come support me when I'm not even doing, and taking take care of myself? Taking care of what I need to take care of?

A

Aaron Smith 35:14

Yeah. So I mean, just to like follow up on what both you guys were saying, because like, I do AA meetings, right? And one of the things they say when you first start going is like, 'Bring your ass and your heart will follow.' You know, and especially like when you were just talking, Kurry, about like doing their certificates like just for the sake of getting certificates. And then all of a sudden you showed up to enough programming, and shit it starts clicking. And kind of like what you were saying, Eugene, where it's like, yeah, you can you can focus on all this shit that doesn't apply to you. And you can sit there and be like, 'Yeah, see, this is all bullshit.' Or you can sit there and be like, 'Alright, take that shit, push it to the side. And at the core of it. Yeah, you're now you're showing me something. Now we're talking the same language.'

A

Aaron Smith 35:53

Right, right.

E

Eugene Ivey 35:54

And that affected me. So from that point on, I was like, 'You know what, I'm gonna get right.' So I started applying to programs. I even wrote to the commissioner at the time about a program, getting me in the program, because they started a program and said lifers couldn't get in the program.

A

Aaron Smith 36:31

Right.

E

Eugene Ivey 36:31

I said, why can I get the program when I have a opportunity to go home?

A

Aaron Smith 36:35

Right.

E

Eugene Ivey 36:36

This benefits me just as much as it benefits the next man.

A

Aaron Smith 36:39

Absolutely.

E

Eugene Ivey 36:40

And they started letting guys in the programs over there. And then, so I got out five years later, I got out of DDU. And I was supposed to see the board. You know what I did? I postponed it. For five years, myself.

A

Aaron Smith 36:58

No shit.

E

Eugene Ivey 36:58

Yeah, I just said, you know, I'm gonna take the hit on, I'm gonna eat that.

A

Aaron Smith 37:01

Right.

E

Eugene Ivey 37:02

And I ate it. And then I got down to the medium, finally, after four years in the max. And I got parole in 2020.

A

Aaron Smith 37:13

I'm sure that sounds wild to people. Like, to think that, you know, you had the opportunity to go sit in front of the parole board and you said, 'Nah, I'm good.' Like, what, how'd you make that decision? If you know, if you like if there was, I'd imagine there was a big thought process that went into it. That was a hard decision to make.

E

Eugene Ivey 37:38

Absolutely. You know, you wanna, you know, freedom's right there, you're like, 'Yeah, freedom's right there!'

A Aaron Smith 37:42

Right, right.

E Eugene Ivey 37:43

It's not. Like when you're not gonna not going travel the road I traveled. I mean I was in DDU 12 years, 8 months, it was 13 from 2001 and 2014.

A Aaron Smith 37:52

Right.

E Eugene Ivey 37:53

I saw 'em 2009 here, I ain't gettin' out. And I'm supposed to see them the year I get out? I wasn't getting out because I knew I wasn't ready.

A Aaron Smith 38:01

Right.

E Eugene Ivey 38:02

Right? So, and I knew they wasn't ready to see me.

A Aaron Smith 38:05

True.

E Eugene Ivey 38:06

So you know, you just gotta own that. It's about accountability. I had to be accountable for my actions. And that's a hard pill to swallow. Five years is five years.

A Aaron Smith 38:15

I can only imagine.

E

Eugene Ivey 38:16

That's a lot of shit. So I was like, 'You know what? I'm built for this.' So, but, when I say I'm built for this, I'm built to better myself.

A

Aaron Smith 38:25

Word.

A

Aaron Smith 38:41

Now, Eugene, here's the thing, though. Why the fuck did me and Kurry end up being addicts? It's not like you lived the sweet life. You know what I mean? Why? Why the fuck did I turn to drugs and alcohol? And you didn't?

E

Eugene Ivey 38:56

You know, I can't relate in that sense. I just I don't have I don't think I have a addictive personality. Right? But, however, on the flip side of that I was addicted to the streets. And I liked that street life. I just liked being out there. And that's the shit ultimately that got me locked up, you know, cause me do 27 years in prison. But, you know, still, every day is a struggle. Like I don't have that desire to be in the streets any longer. But, you know, sometimes you you know, you want to break fool on a motherfucker, sometimes, man, when they cross you, but, you know, I gotta I gotta think better than that. I'm older now, more mature. You know, I got some hopes, some dreams, and I wanna fulfill them shits. And I think it's like laying down railroad tracks. Right? You lay down the rails to get where you wanna go in life, what you wanna be. And just remember. Keep that shit as as a reminder, where you don't want to go back to.

K

Kurry Harbour 40:00

I don't want to get arrested. I don't want to go to jail. I don't want to be away from my family members. I don't want to hurt anybody. I don't want to hurt anybody. Even if someone's trying to hurt me, I don't want to hurt them. I don't live my life like that today. Because that would mean, if I wanted to hurt you, if you said something to me, and I wanted to hurt you, you know what that means? That means that I've been carrying a lot of hurt and pain. I'm just trying to get my shit off. But today, I don't walk around with all- I walk around with joy, brother. So if you say something fucked up to me, I'm gonna be like, 'Yo, brother, how can I help you, man? How can I help you, man? I don't want to hurt you, man. I want to help you, you know? I love you, man. I don't want I don't want- I want you to get some of this love, man.'

A

Aaron Smith 40:53

Kinda going off what Kurry was just saying right there is that, I don't know what the fuck

people's view of me was. But I know that I know what my view of myself was. And I think I saw a reflection of that in other people's eyes. So when I felt like, you know, I felt all the hurt I was feeling and when people interacted with me, I always thought they were seeing, like, all my bullshit. And I always thought people were thinking the worst of me. I always thought people thought I was a scumbag. Maybe they did. And I kind of acted like it in return. You know what I mean? I was like, if y'all think I'm a scumbag- I in turn acted like one you know what I mean? I did some shady stuff. And being an addict, people kind of have judgments and my family, I'd show up high to things and my aunts and uncles would kind of look at me a certain way. You know, I'd be a mess on the streets and people walking by would look at me a certain way. And I basically I was like, fuck it. You know what I mean? I was like, 'If, like, y'all don't want to have me then I don't want to be a part of it.' And so yeah, I just kind of, I was like, 'Alright, I'm just gonna hustle and hang out with other fucking addicts, and they're all gonna think I'm cool, because I'm the one selling drugs to them.' And that that happened. And I felt cool. I was the man. People wanted to hang out with me, you know what I, they wanted to buy drugs from me, really. But I didn't let that part worry me. They all wanted me around. And yeah, I built up a life for myself that was that was just a bunch of mirrors. There was like a reflection from one mirror off another mirror. It was I was so fucked up in myself and like trying to hide from who I was not really knowing who I was that, that really to be honest, right here today. I'm really still working to figure that out. Because I have a whole lot more experience of pretending to be somebody than actually being somebody. So yeah, I'm really I'm really still trying to figure out who I am. I'm alright with where I am and what I'm doing and how I am. But yeah, I'm still trying to figure out who I am.

E

### Eugene Ivey 43:06

Yeah, shit's crazy, because, I think for me, right? Like, like, I gave a fuck about what people thought about me as a child. Because when you in the lion's den, man, you got to perform, man, or you're gonna get ate the fuck up, right? So either I was, and I always been like a small dude and shit. Like real, real small. I haven't grown that much as an adult either but it just made me become more fucking violent, man. Now that shit carried on into my adulthood. That it really like when I was sitting up in the penitentiary, the joint, up in DDU, right? I had to really like check myself because that shit was holding me back. 'I'm the one sittin' here doing this fucking time up in this cell. Fuck what everybody else got to think. It's about me.' And once I took that path, and I made that oath to myself, you know, it's been on ever since. You know, it's just me moving forward. And whoever's in the rear can kiss my ass that don't like it. You know? That's just what it is.

K

### Kurry Harbour 44:15

It's funny. I used to live when I first came to prison, I was in a block with this Spanish dude. He was a little bit older than me. This is back when I was just crazy, wild as hell. I seen this dude, 16 years later, like about two years before I got out. And he's like, 'Yo, you remember me?' He was old. He was like, he had dialysis. His hair was gray. Puerto Rican dude. He's he's a little, way older than me now. But I mean, he was much older now. And he pulled me to the side. And he's like, 'Yo, you remember me?' I was like, 'Sure,' and he said, 'Yo, we was in Walpole blah blah blah blah.' I said, 'Yeah, yeah, man.' He's like, 'Yo, you changed, man.' He says, 'Back in the day you used to come out your cell. You used to post up and shit. But now,' he says, 'Yo, you straight forward. He said every time I see you you got a book in your hand. You always saying something positive. You don't like, I don't see you with a gang of people no more. I see

you doing programs.' He's like, 'Yo, whatever you doing, man, keep doing it because you're gonna get the fuck out.' That's when I knew I changed. People into the way I view myself today is like, 'Yo, man, I'm just a happy go lucky motherfucker, man.' Like, you know, I've had my bad days but hey, man, I'm chilling. I'm alive man. That's a beautiful fucking thing. Living's a beautiful thing. I'm trying to do more of that shit, you know?

E

Eugene Ivey 45:54

Talk that shit, man. That's a motherfucking mic drop right there.

E

Eugene Ivey 46:10

Thank you for listening to the MyTERN podcast. MyTERN is a community-based, university-accredited program, providing education, mentorship, and career development support to and by those who have been directly impacted by the criminal justice system. MyTERN's objective is to provide an opportunity for each participant to rediscover and reframe your skills, interests, responsibility, and commitment. This podcast is created and produced in partnership with Tufts University Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life and the Bridging Differences Grant Program. Music brought to you by Elmer Pleitez. Learn more or support MyTERN at [TUPIT.org](http://TUPIT.org).