

Ear Hustle
Episode 105: Moms
May 01, 2024

Phyllis Poor: My name is Phyllis Poor. And I'm Nigel Poor's mother.

[cheers and applause]

The following episode of Ear Hustle contains language and content that may not be appropriate for all listeners. Discretion is advised. Ooh. But please enjoy and thank you.

[Ear Hustle theme]

Earlone: Have you called your mom yet.

Nigel: Earlone, I think you know I talk to my mother every day. We actually Zoom every morning. Yeah, I have.

Earlone: Okay, well, you better be doing something special for Mother's Day.

Nigel: Ooh, that is coming up. What's your plan for moms?

Earlone: Just ask her what she needs paid for.

Nigel: Aw, you're such a good son.

Earlone: [laughs] As long as it's not a house or nothing. [Nigel laughs]

Nigel: I know that moms are important to both you and me, and obviously moms are in the background of so many of the stories we've done, but we've never really focused on them for a whole episode. So, man, it's time to give moms their due.

Earlone: It is beyond time

[laughter]

I'm surprised we haven't been cursed out yet.

Nigel: [laughs] I'm Nigel Poor.

Earlone: I'm Earlone woods, and this is Ear Hustle from PRX's Radiotopia.

Mary: *So, this is from 2019. Made the five-hour drive to Cindy's. Had a box of tissues on the seat next to me. Use them all. A five-hour drive through the desert left me alone with my thoughts. They wandered to the darkest places. It was a gorgeous, sunny bluebird day, 70 degrees, so many bikers out. People out doing their Sunday things. Bikers, drivers, joggers, cyclists, all life continuing on while mine and my son's is in purgatory. Thinking of my son and how terrified he must be, hoping and praying he is safe. Hoping he knows how much I love him, how so many people love him, how we all support him. Immediately while I was backing out of the garage, I imagine, how many times will I be making this drive over the next months or years? Will the drive eventually lead to prison gates?*

The sun is shining. Cacti on the roadside are standing tall, reaching to the sky, while I'm here wilting. How many beautiful days like this will my son miss over the months and probably years to come. My plans to get property in Reno suspended. My plans to get him to

Reno to enjoy being a snow bump for a few years suspended. My dreams and his dreams suspended. How will this change him? How will he learn to become a man? How will he trust? How will he love? So, many questions flying at me during the long five-hour drive. Just like the bugs splattering on my windshield, visions come crashing into my brain. I wish I knew what my son was going through, and I wish I could take it all away.

[vehicle drives by]

Nigel: That journal entry was written by a woman named Mary. She's an ICU nurse who lives in Las Vegas, and we first got to know her after she sent us an email a while back. And, Earlonne, I was so moved by it, I wrote back to her, and that started a conversation.

Earlonne: And in the email, Mary told us about her son that was arrested in 2019 when he was 17. His case was, him and his friends went out to rob a drug dealer, and one of those friends shot and killed the dealer. All three were charged with murder.

Nigel: *How did you find out that he'd been arrested?*

Mary: *I got a call from his father, and it was in the middle of the night, and his father and I were not together, and we live in different states, and my son was living with his father, and he said, "Our son had been arrested." So, I tried to call the police department where he was at. They didn't know of anything. And they said, "Call the marshals service." I called. They didn't know anything. So, nobody could even tell me where my child was at.*

Finally, a detective called me, and my son had to go to the hospital, actually, because when they went to arrest him, he ran. Shot at him with the bean bag or the rubber bullets or something, and he had to go to a trauma ICU for a couple days. So, then I found out he was in the hospital, and they wouldn't let me talk to him.

Nigel: The next time Mary saw him was in court, a couple weeks later.

Mary: *When they brought him in, he was shackled with chains around his waist and his hands. I'll never forget that image of him and that sound, [sobs] the sound of the chains clinging around when he was walking in. It's surreal, and it's also a real hard-hitting reality, that this is real. The judge said, "You should probably hug him because it's probably going to be a while before you get to hug him again." [sobs]*

Nigel: *What do you remember about that hug? What it felt like or smelled like or how long it lasted?*

Mary: *It was a lot shorter. I wish I had hugged him longer. I wish he could hug me back. But his hands were chained down to his beltway, so he could just tap my hands and lean his head into my--*

Nigel: *When you hugged him--? I feel terrible asking these things. Did he feel like a boy to you?*

Mary: *Oh, yes. Mm-hmm. I mean, he's tall, but he's thin, lanky. And that was another thing that struck me, was how big the chain waist on him looked. And even the scrub, they're like scrubs. They looked big and hanging off of him, and his face was just--*

Earlonne: *And did he go straight to the adult system, or was he in the juvenile until he was 18?*

Mary: He went to juvenile hall just for a couple days, but because his charges were first degree murder, they don't keep them with those charges in juveniles. So, he went to county adult, but then they keep them in what they say is protective custody for under 18, but it's basically solitary. He gets out for maybe half an hour, maybe an hour once a day to shower and make phone calls, and then went back to his cell. And then literally at midnight on his birthday, they transferred him over to the adult side. [Sobs]

Nigel: How do you even take that in?

Mary: It's so hard because it's such a mystery. [sobs] There's so many loose ends and open ends, and you don't know what's happening. I'm educated, I've been to college, I have a nursing degree, and all these words flying around in court, I don't know what they mean. Just to be in those courts, it's so intimidating.

Nigel: I wonder who understood the gravity of the situation first, you or him?

Mary: I think me. I mean, I think back to when I was 17, and you think you're immortal and invincible--

Nigel: And I think you might also still believe your parents can fix it.

Mary: Yeah.

Nigel: Yeah.

Mary: I found myself having to be busy all the time, whether I filled it with the gym or hiking or working. And I just filled my days with, I would wake up, I was meeting with lawyers, I was trying to get police reports, I was trying to find funds. He had a car, and I sold that because I needed money for the lawyer. Every evening when I would get home and I would break down when I was in the shower and cry. But I just kept myself busy constantly. I definitely drank more. It was more like I had to have a glass or two of wine almost every evening to try to shut my brain down, to stop the spinning hamster wheel.

[upbeat music]

Nigel: Mary told us that the whole time her son was in jail awaiting trial, she was only able to see him via video visits. And, Earlonne, it was three years before she saw him in person again. I mean, can you imagine that?

Earlonne: Yeah, I mean some places are really strict about this. And Arizona's Maricopa County, where Mary's son was in jail, it's one of those places.

Nigel: She had so little information about what was happening with him that she was just looking for any clue she could get.

Mary: So, when he went to county, they have their mugshot, and that's the picture that stays with them. And then when they get transferred to prison, they have a new mugshot. And when I looked it up, his nose was crooked, so I knew that his nose had been broken [sobs] at some point. And so, when I asked him, on a visitation, when I finally got to see him, he's like, "Oh, it's all right, mom. Don't worry about that." But, when I saw that picture, I was crushed.

Earlonne: Mary's son ultimately took a plea bargain, 10 and a half years. Then he was transferred to prison.

Nigel: Which from Mary's perspective, meant she could finally visit him. And that was great. But she also had this whole new system to learn the ins and outs of.

Earlone: Yep, the prison system, do's and don'ts, that's something that every family has to learn.

Nigel: *What about packages and putting money on his books and phone calls? Did you want to shower him with things? Be like, "Okay, this is how I can help you. I can put a lot of money on your books. I can make sure you get a lot of mail."*

Mary: *I did. And my husband warned me about putting too much on his books too fast and warned me to give my son a heads up, like, "We're going to put this money in your books, but don't spend it all at once. Don't be flashy. Just get what you need." And I hadn't thought of that, that having a bunch of stuff and a bunch of money and ordering like crazy, when you get there, would make people be like, "Oh, look at him. Like, he's got a family that's got money."*

And then I didn't realize that he, my son was also asking his cousins for money, his aunts sometimes were putting money on his books. When you have extra funds in there, that's when you can, I guess, maybe gambling or I don't really know exactly what he was into, but he was not using the money wisely, just for food and supplies. And once we found, and it was like, "Oh, my gosh, like, I can't--"

Earlone: I mean, I get it, you're trying to fit in, and you want to do what you can, to find what is available to you that was available to you on the streets, so you going to get into all that stuff.

Nigel: Honestly, I would be losing my mind. I mean, you can't take care of your kid in there, but you also can't discipline him and help him-- get on the right path again.

Earlone: Right.

Nigel: It's just got to feel--

Earlone: Helpless.

Nigel: Helpless. Helpless.

Earlone: Yeah.

Nigel: *How often do you talk on the phone now? Has that changed?*

Mary: *We talk almost every day. It's a lot. [laughs]*

Nigel: *And what are the phone calls, have they changed over the years?*

Mary: *They definitely have gotten easier, more light hearted. We have a lot of laughs and clowning around and joking. There's not this super dark cloud hanging over the phone call. We can joke and laugh, and it goes by a lot faster too. Then at first it was like trying to fill the air, and now it's like, we'll just be talking, talking away, and then, boop. "You have one minute left." We're like, "Whoa."*

Nigel: *Is it the 15 minutes that you get.*

Mary: *Mm-Hmm. 15 minutes, yeah.*

Nigel: *In the first six months or year of phone calls, what would you talk about? Because I get it must have been just excruciating.*

Mary: *It's hard. I would talk about, ask him what he's eating, which is basically all the same stuff. And then I guess, just fill him in on what I had been doing. And then that was hard too. Because I felt bad being, we were went camping or we went snowboarding or, oh, we went to the river, feels like rubbing it in his face or making him feel bad on the phone about what he's missing out on. But he said, "No, I want to hear what you've been up to," especially when he was in county, because his days were the same every day.*

Nigel: *Yeah.*

[background noises]

Mary: *He told me one day in county, they got fresh eggs, hard boiled eggs. And he said [chuckles] something just yelled out on the tier, [announcement] "Listen up, everybody, listen up. We got eggs. We got real eggs." And he said, everybody went woo-woo. And I just-- I don't know, that made me laugh so hard when you told me, [laughs] like, how mundane their days are, that the whole tier is cheering for a couple of real hard-boiled eggs. You know what I mean? It was like, party. If they had confetti, they probably would have thrown it.*

Nigel: *And I love that somebody wanted to share the good news.*

Mary: *Yeah.*

Nigel: *"Hey, everybody. [Mary laughs] Everybody, listen up. We got real-*

Mary: *[crosstalk]*

Nigel: *-eggs. Real eggs."*

[upbeat music]

Nigel: *Did you figure out any, like, coded language to say mushy things to each other. Or do you like or was he free with saying I love you?*

Mary: *No, he was free with saying I love you. Ever since he's a kid, when we hang up the phone, we always do, "muah, muah, love you." And he still does that. And I just picture him, there with all these guys around and him going, "Okay, mom. Bye, muah."*

Nigel: *[laughs] Do you go days without thinking about his situation, or is it with you constantly?*

Mary: *No, I think about him every day. I don't dwell in a way, I'm not like, Eeyore walking around, daily. But definitely he's on my mind. I always wonder how he's doing or even simple things, "Well, I wonder what he had to eat today," or, if the weather's nice I'll think, "Oh, I wonder if he got to play basketball today. Did he go out to rec?"*

Earlonne: *Did you share that your son had been arrested with people around you?*

Mary: *With my close friends, family had to pick and choose you know, along the way, over the years of who to share with, because there's a lot of stigma. I think society puts a lot of blame on mothers. [sobs] When your child makes a dumb decision, there's a lot of judgment placed upon mothers.*

Nigel: How do you figure that out and get past it?

Mary: In all honesty, I don't think I have. I don't think I've figured it out. There's just always going to be people that judge that. I haven't figured it out. It comes in waves. Some days I'm feeling fine, and then other times the guilt and the shame come crashing at me.

Earlonne: What type of shame? Is it the shame of having a child that's incarcerated, or is it the shame of having a child that was involved in someone else losing their life?

Mary: It is the shame of having a child that was involved where a mother lost her son. Not some-- that's heavy. And then it's not really the shame of having a son that's incarcerated, but the shame that you feel that something was wrong with my mothering. That's how I feel. I think that's how other mothers I've spoken to, they feel that way often too. It's hardly ever you don't hear mom saying, "Well, I was a great mom, and I gave them every opportunity, and I did everything perfectly, and they just chose to do this terrible thing." Well, we went through a divorce, or I had to move around or I had to work a lot. So, it's not really the shame put on him. It's my thing.

Earlonne: I used to tell my mother felt the same way in some instances. And I used to always tell her, like, "Mama, you did your job within our house and our yard. But once I left our yard and was in the community, it was different." And that's not her watch, it was just different. She worked. So, yes, I had a lot of time to meddle in the neighborhood. And, of course, with that comes influences, with that comes, in some cases, peer pressure or in some cases, you just trying to fit in with what's going on in the neighborhood.

And what I used to always tell my mother is like, "Look, the lifestyle that I was living, that she didn't know that I was living, which was the same as your son. I was robbing drug dealers from the time I was 15 years old, kidnapped, robberies. I went to prison at 17 for kidnap, robbery. That was dangerous. Instead of your son in prison, your son could be in the mortuary or in the grave, you know what I'm saying? I used to tell her that, the life I was living, I could have died at any moment because people are serious when you're coming and trying to muscle somebody out, they stuff, it can go either way, but I used to just try to reassure her that, hey, I'm here. I'm still here. I know I'm in this type of place, but I'm still here.

Mary: My son too has done a really good job of trying to relate to me that this is not my doing, that I did a good job that he made poor choices. But people can tell you what they're going to tell you, and you're going to feel the way you're going to feel, especially as a mother.

[ambient music]

People ask, "Oh, how's your son?" and it's like, "Oh, he's living in--" "Oh, what's he doing? Is he in college? Is he in--?" And it's like, "He's working on some things." I still haven't really worked out what to tell them. Part of me just wants to be, "This is what's going on. This is what's happening." But then part of me is like, "Well, it's not everybody's business to always know all your business." I don't know.

Nigel: Yeah. Also, because sometimes those questions are just so casual. It's like asking someone, "How are you?"

Mary: Yeah. And then you just, like, lay down this novel in front of them. [laughs] Greek tragedy.

Nigel: Yeah. [Mary laughs] Yeah.

Mary: They were like, "I wasn't really asking about all that."

Nigel: How do you deal with Mother's Day now?

Mary: He always sends me, something nice card and a nice message, now that we got the tablets, he's always writing a nice message, and he'll send a letter. And then I just usually, well, since I'm a nurse, I quite often will be working, or I'll volunteer to work so other mothers can have it off with their children, or I practice self-care, go get a massage. The first couple were really difficult, but it's gotten a little easier. And I think because he's over the hill and now he has less time facing the-- I think that makes it easier too.

Nigel: Do you remember what you did the first Mother's Day?

Mary: I don't think I did anything. I think I was a mess. Because he got arrested in March. So, then it was only a couple months. Yeah. I feel like I was in bed feeling sorry for myself. [laughs]

This is the drive back home driving back home now, some loose ends tied up. Sold his car to help pay for the lawyer. I feel guilty for this, like I've lost hope of him getting out anytime soon. I hope he doesn't feel like I'm giving in, but I must be real. The business of helping him. Driving out of town, I have mixed emotions. I will be relieved to sleep in my bed, but I can't help to feel that I'm abandoning him. My brain knows I've done all I can here for now, and I have to get back to work.

Yeah. My heart feels like I should be here. Going home also makes this sink in that this is real. There was a level of surrealness crashing at Cindys. Like I could hide from the reality of it all. Now I am leaving the sanctuary she kindly granted me and going back into the world. But going back completely changed an all-new reality. I wish I had given him a longer, stronger hug when I finally got to see him. How long will it before I get to hug him again? How long before we can laugh and clown around again? I want to scream. Scream at him, scream at his father, scream at myself. Scream at all the dumb, impulsive, reckless decision teens make.

[background noises]

Reggie: I say I was about six years old, that's when I started noticing changes in our household and different smells.

Earlonne: This is Reggie over at San Quentin. The guy who peeled the orange slowly and ate it. Remember him?

Nigel: Oh, totally. Exactly. And listeners might also remember him from 12 Hours on the Yard. He was the dude wearing the diaphanous tank top.

Earlonne: Oh, okay. [Nigel laughs] Well, here he's talking about his mom.

Reggie: I was able to equate smelling opium burning and my mother having a state of, like, she was drowsy. I could see it. I could see the change from smelling that, knowing that it's coming from out the room that she, into her state that she in, how she changed. It smelled like chemicals. It was more of a chemical smell. It wasn't something that was common. It didn't smell like food. It didn't smell like a fart. It didn't [laughs] smell like flowers. It was different. And that was the same with crack. Whenever I smelled that smell, that was like, a trigger for me to leave the house.

Nigel: Wait, and how old were you?

Reggie: *The First time I smelt that six years old. It was just seeing the spoons being burnt and not being able to eat my cereal, I couldn't for some reason. It's just I would lose my appetite if I have seen that black soot on the spoon. And it might be the best cereal in the world. Captain Crunchy fruity pebbles, something that I really want to eat. And my whole appetite would just leave if I see that on the spoon. It started happening more often than not, until it got to a point where it wasn't no spoons in the house. And I couldn't eat my cereal. And I was angry. I was extremely angry.*

And it just so happened that one day, one of my mother's friends that she was getting high with, he had stopped by the house to come see my mother. And he seen me on the porch crying. And I had a bunch of spoons in my hand. It was exactly 12 of them, I'll never forget it. And he looked at me, he was like, "Man, why you crying?" And I looked at the spoons and I said, "Man, all these damn spoons, they burnt." And I slammed them on the ground. And he looked at me, he was like, "Come on." He grabbed one of the spoons off the ground. He was like, "Come on, I'm going to take you. And I was going to show you something." He's like, "Give me a towel." And I grabbed a towel and he wet it. And he went to the cigarette ashtray, and he put some cigarette ashes on the cloth and he wiped the soot off. It was like a magic trick.

It was like David Copperfield, and what's the boy name have you walking on water? David Blaine ain't got nothing on that trick. He did when he made that soot disappear off that spoon because I had been trying for years. I was using S.O.S pad, Chore Boys, Brillo pads. I could not get all that soot off that spoon. I tried everything. And when he wiped it off with that soot, I never forget. And then what was even more rewarding for me is when I did it for my brothers and sisters. When the spoon was burnt, I was like, "I'm going to show y'all a magic trick. I made it more eventful for them." Man, I'm about to start crying. [exhales deeply]

Nigel: When Reggie was 24, he was charged and convicted of murder.

Reggie: *The last time I had seen my mother was during my trial. And the district attorney had pulled out the assault rifle and was showing it to the jurors. And I look back to see my mother reaction when she seen that attorney, district attorney pull that rifle out the box. And when I look back, she was in a stupor. She was in a nod because she was high from using. And I turned back around and I just put my head down and that was like the last time I had actually seen my mother in the flesh. And I used to pray and ask God not to let that be the last image that I have seen of my mother. I was haunted by that. Seeing her stooped, I mean, and nodding like that.*

Earlone: After he got sent to prison, Reggie kept trying to see his mom.

Nigel: And this was a really hard time for him. His mom finally got clean, but she was HIV positive and she got really sick. Reggie worried she was going to die before he could see her again.

Earlone: Even though she lived close by, Reggie's mom couldn't get approved to come visit him in prison.

Nigel: Oh, so frustrating.

Earlone: Yeah, that happens a lot. I mean, especially if a family member has a criminal record or a lot of arrest in their past or even tickets. If you don't write all that stuff down on

the form or maybe you forget some of the stuff, you'll get denied. And that's what kept happening to Reggie's mom.

Nigel: But eventually, after 12 years, she was able to come and see him.

Earlone: We're going to hear about that visit after the break.

Nigel: We'll be right back.

[upbeat music]

Nigel: So, where we left off, Reggie was in prison. And after 12 years, his mom finally got approved to come visit him.

Reggie: *I waited a whole decade for my mother to get approved, for her to come and visit me. And when she finally did, just being able to embrace her and kiss her on her cheek. It was hard to describe. It felt like I was being born all over again. She just looked it like my mama. Like I went back to a child. It felt like I was that little boy coming in the house and just seeing her smile. I remember the tears. Feeling her tears on my face when I kissed her. She cried a lot. I really didn't want to let her go. I just wanted to keep holding on to her. And just seeing her again bright, shining. It was liberating. We sat down, we ate. I really ate candy, though. [laughs]*

She bought me a bunch of candy because that bit so long since I ate some candy, I felt like she took me to the candy store when I was a kid and bought me a bunch of Now & Laters. But it was Tropical Skittles and Sour Skittles and peach rings.

[ambient music]

Nigel: Earlone, it's so funny. I actually ran into Reggie at San Quentin, like, just yesterday, and we had this whole conversation about peach rings. [Earlone laughs] Mm-hmm. I do love candy.

Earlone: Reggie's going to always bring up some candy.

Nigel: [laughs] Totally.

Earlone: Something sweet.

[scrambled music]

Kat: *Do you remember the movie Castaway?*

Nigel: *Yeah.*

Kat: *Where he had the volleyball and he got attached to it. I had a lot of Wilsons and I just could not throw them away.*

Earlone: This is Kat. Just last year she was released from the California Institution for Women after 10 years.

Nigel: Yeah. And Kat is a mother of two. When she went to prison, she left behind an eight-year-old daughter. And God, Earlone, I can't even imagine what that's like.

Earlonne: [takes a deep breath] I suppose all those feelings of being a mom, they got to go somewhere.

Nigel: Yeah.

Kat: *I had a sock baby that some woman made for me, and I had it forever. That's one of my Wilsons. And I couldn't detach from it. And one time I lost it during a search, I tucked it, I hid it away somewhere and lost it and got all emotional about it. I think I even did the, "I'm so sorry. Oh, God. I didn't protect you like I should have."*

Nigel: *What did you call it is?*

Kat: *It is a sock baby. Yeah. It had some stuffing in it and it was tied into a sock. And then the inmate pulled the blanket. It looks like a blanket. And then she drew a little baby face on it. It was really cute. And so that represented my baby girl.*

Nigel: *Did you ever tell her about the sock baby?*

Kat: *I did. I did.*

Nigel: *What was it.*

Kat: *Yeah. That was one of the things I told when I got out. She just laughs.*

Nigel: *[laughs] Do you know where the sock baby ended up?*

Kat: *Oh, I'm sure that it's been in the trash, and when the correctional officers come in, the COs, they take everything that's contraband and they just dump it or what they think is contraband, or they just take anything they feel like.*

Nigel: *Yeah. And was there a mourning period after you lost it?*

Kat: *Oh, yeah. Oh, my God, yes. Looking back at it, yeah, I was mourning over a stuffed sock. The other Wilson I have is a barrette. It's a plastic butterfly, barrette. One of those baby ones. Cheap.*

Nigel: Okay. I want to make sure listeners can really picture this because it's such a familiar object, one of those little plastic barrettes. I feel like they were big in the 80s, and they're so small, they can only hold a few strands of hair.

Earlonne: I mean, yeah, I see little girls with them on, with the bright colors at the end of their hair.

Nigel: Exactly. And this particular barrette had been through a lot.

Kat: *My daughter was wearing it during visits, and she took it out of her hair, and she gave it to me. And so, I did what they call keistering. [laughs] I did that, and I paroled with it. So, it's one of those things that I kept.*

Nigel: *How did it never get taken from you?*

Kat: *I always had it on me somewhere.*

Nigel: *Somewhere?*

Kat: Yeah. And it's made of plastic, so it doesn't beep. So-- [laughs]

Nigel: What are the different places that you've hidden it?

Kat: Oh, gosh. Well, there's some personal areas where I had to hide it, but most of the time, if I wore my hair up, I would stick it in my bun somewhere and just hide it. Because when they go to pat you down, they don't come up here like that.

Nigel: So, how many years have you had that?

Kat: All 13 years.

Nigel: Do you mind if I hold it for a second?

Kat: Go for it. This is carrying my daughter around like she's still a baby. Because I see this. This is my daughter right here. And I carried her around in prison. She gave it to me. So, I'm still with my daughter, and that's what this plastic barrette means to me. [laughs]

Nigel: Well, E, the good news is, Kat doesn't have to carry that little barrette around with her anymore.

Earlonne: No keistering required.

Nigel: Really, Earlonne.

Earlonne: And the reason for that is because Kat and her daughter get to see each other as much as they want now.

Nigel: Because when Kat got out of prison, she enrolled at San Francisco State University, the same college where her daughter goes.

Kat: I'm always texting my daughter. I'm making myself a pain in the butt to my daughter. "Are you okay? I haven't heard from you in two days. Where are you?"

Earlonne: Do y'all hang out together at college?

Kat: So, what's really great about-- I don't know, she enjoys this as much as me, but I love that I'm going to college with my daughter. [laughs] And so, every time I'm out of class, I text her, "Hey, you want to go out for coffee? I just got out of class," and then I don't hear anything back. [laughs]

Nigel: She's ghosting you. [laughs]

Earlonne: Ghosting her.

[laughter]

[upbeat music]

Alyce Woods: Hello to all the mothers out there. My name is Alyce Woods and I'm the mother of Earlonne woods. Ear Hustle is produced by Nigel Poor, Earlonne Woods, Amy Standen, Bruce Wallace, and Rahsaan "New York" Thomas. Shabnam Sigman is managing producer. The producing team inside San Quentin includes Derrell Sadiq Davis, Tony de Trinidad, and Tam Nguyen. The inside managing producer is Tony Tafoya and our inside sound designer is Rhashiyd Zinnamon. Thanks to Acting Warden Andes at San Quentin,

Acting Warden Williams, Associate Warden Lewis and Lt. Newborg at the California Institution for Women, for their support of the show. Thanks also to this woman here.

Lieutenant Guim'Mara Berry: The piece about Reggie was very emotional thinking about the spoons and the residue from the substance being on the spoons and how it bothered him. Thinking about having your mom and dealing with her being in a state of mind where she can't really offer much love or assistance. And I'm like, "Wow, I can't imagine having such a heavy burden at the age of--" What did he say? He was six years old. I think about the relationship that I have with my grandson and how much he watches me and pays attention to my every move. And, yeah, it was wild hearing that.

I am Lieutenant Guim'Mara Berry. I serve as the public information officer here at San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, and I definitely approve this episode.

Alyce Woods: This episode was made possible by the Just Trust working to amplify the voices, vision, and power of communities that are transforming the justice system. For more information about this episode, check out the show notes on Ear Hustle's website, earhustlesq.com. You can also find out more about the show on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube [@earhustlesq](https://www.instagram.com/earhustlesq).

Nigel: Earlonne Woods sound designs and engineers the show with help from Fernando Arruda, Harry Culhane, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, and Darrell Sadiq Davis.

Earlonne: Music for this episode comes from David Jazzy, Antwan Williams, Fernando Arruda, Dwight Krizman, Rhashiyd Zinnamon, and me Earlonne Woods.

Nigel: Want more Ear Hustle? Subscribe to Ear Hustle Plus. You want to hear more Ear Hustle?

Earlonne: Yep.

Nigel: [laughs] I thought you had enough of this gig.

Earlonne: Nope. We've got bonus episodes and live chats where we get to chop it up with listeners of about the show.

Nigel: And last week we dropped a never before heard interview from our vaults with Nadya from the performance art group Pussy Riot. And she told us about what it was like when she spent months in a Russian prison.

Earlonne: Subscribe at earhustlesq.com/plus or in the Apple Podcast app.

Nigel: And while you're looking at your phone, make sure you never miss an episode. Hit that follow button on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or iHeartRadio. Or really, wherever you get your podcast.

Earlonne: Leave us a review on the app of your choice too. It really helps other people find the show.

Nigel: And we also want to say a special thank you this week to Tessa Outhyse at CDCR. She's been in the loop of proving our episodes for a few seasons now, and she's also, Earlonne, been really great help finding other stories for us to follow.

Earlonne: Yep, she got a promotion, and she's moving on up. Thanks for everything, Tessa.

Nigel: Ear Hustle is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a network of independent, creator owned, listener supported podcasts.

Earlone: Discover audio with vision at Radiotopia.fm.

Nigel: I'm Nigel Poor.

Earlone: I'm Earlone Woods.

Unison: Thanks for listening.

[upbeat music]

Earlone: *So, mama, I did a total of 27 years in prison. Do you recall-*

Alyce Woods: *Yes, I do.*

Earlone: *-any of the Mother's Day cards that I used to send you? [Alyce laughs] Dun, dun, dun.*

Alyce Woods: *Well, the one that stuck out the most is the one where you were trying to say that I was old and losing my sight.*

Earlone: *What?*

Radiotopia from PRX.

[Transcript provided by [SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription](#)]