

Transcripts are generated by the speech recognition software Descript. An Uncuffed staff member corrects proper nouns and speaker names. The transcript may contain errors. For the authoritative and original version, please listen to the audio version if you can. Available in podcast players and on www.weareuncuffed.org.

Lavell's Choice: Healing Or Revenge?

Published January 30, 2024

[00:00:00] **x:** KALW.

[00:00:10] **Mazza:** This is Uncuffed, a podcast made by people incarcerated in California prisons. I'm Bryan Mazza, one of the producers here at Solano State Prison, and I've got some coworkers here with me today.

[00:00:20] **Jay:** Evans from the heavens looking like solid gold.

[00:00:22] **b.f.:** Yeah, let him tell it. It is b.f. Thames, you know what it is.

[00:00:26] **Mazza:** Well, I'm glad to be here with you guys.

Yeah, we're here today to talk about life-changing decisions, decisions that we've made that have changed the courses of our lives. I'm gonna go first, I can tell you guys a story about a life-changing decision I was faced with. I came to a point in my life where I'd been to prison a couple times already.

I had an epiphany, you know, I was laying in a hospital bed and I was thinking about, you know, my mom being at home, getting this phone call in the middle of the night. And she thinks I'm doing good because I was out of prison and doing pretty well. And I fell off 'cause I wasn't sober. So, I got in a wreck, you know, with the cops.

They shot me a couple times and I ended up, back in the hospital and... And all I could imagine was her, you know, getting that phone call in the middle of the night. And how that must have made her feel. And that really was that point in time where I decided to take another course of my life, regardless, and try to reject this criminal behavior, criminal actions that were driving my life up to that point.

So, that was the, that was the time right there. And it was a long and arduous process. It didn't happen.

[00:01:38] **b.f.:** Oh, yeah. That's, that's, that's, that's major.

[00:01:41] **Mazza:** Yeah.

[00:01:41] **b.f.:** You know, that's major right there.

[00:01:43] **Mazza:** I knew I was headed back to prison. I was going back, and I knew I had to change. And that was that, that decision that I made on that day was, I was gonna do whatever it took to change the course of my life.

What do you think, Jay, you ever, you ever, come to that point in time in your life where you've made a decision that changed the course of your life?

[00:02:00] **Jay:** Yeah, probably the decision was taking anger management, learning de-escalating skills while in prison. And feeling like, man, I need, really need to grow up and practice maturation at its highest level that I could attain.

[00:02:17] **Mazza:** Yeah. So, we're talking about life changing decisions and the ramifications. You did a, you did a, a, a recording session with a, with a guy that made one of those decisions. Why don't you tell us a little bit about that?

[00:02:29] **b.f.:** Yeah. I interviewed Lavell Stewart who lived a great deal of his life creating violence.

And violence was his second language, and he made a decision not to be violent, deadly even. So, you know, we're gonna hear that story.

[00:02:51] **Mazza:** Sounds good.

[00:02:53] **Jay:** Alright, let's hear this story then.

[00:02:59] **b.f.:** This is a discussion that I think is really important, so I wanna start right in the fire.

[00:03:08] **Lavell:** Okay. My life was in jeopardy October 30th, where I was stabbed 11 times, and then my life was in jeopardy because I chose not to allow the violence to continue on, on the yard. I had been relegated to being the lead referee on the yard for basically all the recreation that was going on.

There was a game being played, a flag football game being played, and they needed me out there because I was one of the referees that wasn't biased and would come out there and basically referee a fair game. And I would say about halfway through the game, a argument ensues between a, a Black guy and a northerner.

I went and tried to squash the situation, but I seen it was too heated. So I was like, all right, game over. The two guys that was arguing had walked off and went in two different directions. Next thing I know, there's a full-fledged riot going on between Northern Hispanics and Blacks. Because of my race, I'm caught up in this situation. I'm Black, so me being five, what? Five, nine, a hundred and ninety pounds at that time. I was fighting somebody that probably was maybe 6' 1," 6' 2," and instead of me fighting him and continue to keep moving when I knocked this dude down, I proceeded to continue to keep hitting him. And it's just a whole bunch of people just standing over me, swinging on me and everything.

So, I yell, get these fools up off me. And so friend of mine comes running literally completely from across the yard because I'm noticeable because I got this zebra shirt on because I was a referee. So they run all the way across the yard, picks me up, brushes me off. With all of this taking place, I had got stabbed in my back 11 times and didn't realize it.

The guys that's sitting down on the ground start yelling at the police, "His back, his back, his back, look at his back." Because now the blood is pouring outta my, my wounds that's in my back. I went to Kaiser, Vacaville. I was in there for five days.

[00:05:36] **b.f.:** What was on your mind?

[00:05:37] **Lavell:** In those five days, I had a whole different type of understanding with the officers that were normally considered like, on the yard.

They were, you know, genuinely concerned about what was going on with me. There was this transformation that was actually taking place in those five days that I had no clue that was actually happening. Now I still have stitches and bandages and everything from the incident that took place, and I was shocked.

'Cause in prior incidents when something like this happens, usually a person is transferred to another facility, another yard, or whatever the case may be. I went back to the same exact cell that I was in prior to this incident taking place. So I was like, wow, this is, this is different. I'm feeling the level of anxiety, like, okay, well it's about to be on again.

I walked in the cell, and the expression that I seen on my cellie's face, he just was like, he couldn't believe that I was back, one, but he was relieved to see me at the same time. Maybe four days later, two S&E officers come to my cell and they called me out.

[00:06:55] **b.f.:** What's S&E?

[00:06:57] **Lavell:** It means search and escort.

They was trying to, if possible, squash the whole situation. At first, I was like, that. I ain't trying to let nothing go. But then, it was like, I don't know what it was. It was like a revelation that came over me. And I went back in the cell and told my cellie about it, and he just, we talked for hours behind the situation. And he just was like, man, it's on you.

However you feel. I'm behind you 150%. I want to say like a week later, those same S&Es came back through the building, but this time they was, they weren't alone. They had the Mac reps with 'em. And they wanted to know if I would be willing to go around to each building with them to Show a form of unity with everybody.

And so me not only being the only person that was stabbed on the yard that day, I was like, well, I can't just make that decision by myself. But since we going from building to building, I could basically go talk to the other two individuals that was also in the hospital with me and see where they felt.

So we went from building to building and eventually got the situation squashed.

[00:08:19] **b.f.:** Up until you said it was squashed and you went around, you were victimized, bro.

[00:08:24] **Lavell:** Exactly.

[00:08:25] **b.f.:** You were victimized.

[00:08:27] **Lavell:** Exactly.

[00:08:27] **b.f.:** I know You're not used to being a victim.

[00:08:29] **Lavell:** No.

[00:08:29] **b.f.:** Tell me a little bit about what type of person you had been up to that point. I mean, the person that wouldn't have responded in that way. Tell me a little bit about that person. Like when you were in your twenties, maybe in your thirties, you know, did you normally respond to things with violence?

[00:08:48] **Lavell:** Absolutely. Having went through various experiences myself from being bullied, teased, verbally disrespected... Those things carried on into my adult life.

So I wrestled with those situations. When I was contemplating on whether or not I was gonna allow myself to heal and then take my behind back out here on this yard and call myself avenging what took place. And it was funny because it was guys that even told me like, man, we know you hurt so you can sit this one out.

We got it. But I had came to a conclusion in my life and where I was at that I was cool. I didn't need to see no more violence escalate as a result of this situation taking place.

[00:09:42] **b.f.:** How did you come to that? Because we didn't go into a lot of details, but I know that you were, we were similar in the way that... one of the languages that you and I both spoke fluently was the language of violence?

[00:09:57] **Lavell:** Right?

[00:09:58] **b.f.:** I've never really seen a lot of your violence, but I know of it. You've probably seen none of mine, but trust me, it's been there.

[00:10:05] **Lavell:** Right?

[00:10:06] **b.f.:** I wanna know how you came to that from speaking that language so fluently, to getting to this point and saying, look. You know, I mean, you could have went for revenge.

[00:10:17] **Lavell:** It was funny because the same people that I got into a with, I was not no longer mad at them. I was more mad at the people that didn't help me. So then I started getting side-eye from a lot of individuals who wanted to continue to engage in the violence and seen me and looked at me as being somebody that was weak, knowing full well that I wasn't, but I just was like, I'm cool.

[00:10:46] **b.f.:** How did you deal with that brother? That had to be difficult. I know for me, it would've been a difficult decision because of what you said. People giving you side eye, thinking that you weak. Like I mentioned to you yesterday, still, there are times where I'm irritated and annoyed and I wanna backhand somebody in the mouth.

But I won't do it. There's no way I'm gonna do that. But that's because I have gotten to a place to where I understand why I feel that way. I understand that it is never good to act on impulse in that way, you know? And that's what I'm saying. I learned these things, and then I learned methods. You know, like simple methods we talked about. One of them is positive self-talk.

[00:11:28] **Lavell:** Right.

[00:11:28] **b.f.:** Because I've been real big on negative self-talk. But I really wanna know. I, I want to know why. Not just how, but why.

[00:11:37] **Lavell:** I'm gonna tell you. I'm gonna tell you like this, B.

[00:11:38] **b.f.:** Why not go back? Why not go back and, nah, they stabbed me 11 times. Why not go back and bring the sword of God down on 'em?

[00:11:46] **Lavell:** I, I'm gonna tell you like this, B. I could say that conversation with Ray Washington, aka Poochie Ray (sp), my cellie. He on the street right now. Just hours of talking to him and him being older than me and basically not trying to talk me outta the situation, but let me know the gravity of the situation and what could potentially happen as a result of the decision that I could have made. And... I just was done.

[00:12:17] **b.f.:** You going home. And I think that that's a big deal that your compassion and your capacity for it was restored.

[00:12:27] **Lavell:** This twenty-eight years ain't been no joke. It is been a lot of downs, but now it's, it's more ups than downs.

When I came into prison, my scale was pretty heavy with negativity, but over the course of these years, I've been able to balance it out because one thing about your negativity is never gonna leave. But all you can do is continue to put things on the other side of the scale. Once you balance that scale, hopefully you are in tune with yourself to the point to where now you can go out and assist other people in your plight to be who you supposed to be.

[00:13:10] **Mazza:** Well, that was Lavell Stewart, telling a story to b.f. Thames. And I wanted to ask you, Brian. He, he did, he went through that change because he was trying to get outta prison. Where is he now?

[00:13:24] **b.f.:** He's, he's out.

[00:13:25] **Mazza:** He got out?

[00:13:26] **b.f.:** Yeah. He actually did get out, you know, so, he went to board. He got out. And what he's doing right now, wait for it.

He got married to someone that he's known for 20 plus years, and they are making YouTube videos, cooking videos, together. You know, he's working. I have lots of pictures of him. I mean, he's out there doing the damn thing.

[00:13:50] **Mazza:** That's fantastic.

[00:13:51] **b.f.:** I'm really proud of him.

[00:13:52] **Mazza:** What great news.

[00:13:54] **b.f.:** Yeah.

[00:13:54] **Mazza:** Fantastic. Lavell made that decision and that choice, and he really didn't, didn't know he was getting out until, until they moved his board date up. How do you feel about that Jay? About, about Lavell and about him getting out like that?

[00:14:11] **Jay:** I commend the brother for not furthering the violence and being for those that are giving that level of hope. You don't wanna do something foolish and had a hope diminish.

And as I look at it now... during the time period that they reduced his time and gave him an opportunity to appear before the parole board, that had to be the greatest feeling that he could have had happen because of how much he transformed on his own. And as I sit up in this prison system and look around and feel the need to, you know, study, tell other people they should study.

And keep striving for what's the best thing that they could have hoping, because if you, if you're given the hope, you don't ever want it to diminish. And go away into the point of thinking, now I'm this miserable person or down this spiraling lane of no opportunity.

[00:15:09] **b.f.:** You, you know what? There's a lot that we could say, you know, about what Lavell did, but I think it... I think for the most part it pretty much speaks for itself. We're talking about physical violence. But I wanna ask all of us, including myself, how would you define violence? And actually, since I'm already yapping, let me go ahead and give an idea of how I define violence.

Generally. Sure. Physical violence. You know. But I've come to accept, and I wouldn't try to convince anybody, but I've come to accept that it's not just physical. I mean, we can be violent with people with our words. We can be violent with people with our energy. You know, I mean, there are so many intangibles that to me, constitute violence.

But if we don't give him much thought, then it makes it easier for us to be violent in those ways. So, far as I'm concerned, there are far too many ways to be violent.

[00:16:15] **Mazza:** Yeah. But where did you, where did you learn your violence? Where did, where did you know violence become prevalent in your life? I know that, you know, speaking for myself, it, it happened when, when I was a kid.

And how about you?

[00:16:31] **b.f.:** I had an older brother, like seven years and some months older than me. My mother used to call him her number one son. Right. In my presence. All his trophies were up, all his little ribbons and stuff that he did, baseball, everything. He was just this great guy. Fast-forward, 14 years old, and my peers in Pittsburg High School, Pittsburg, California, having conversations that young boys do. And it was about sex. And they wanted to know if I had had sex yet.

You know, the phrase was, have you got yours? You get yours yet? And... I wasn't smart enough to lie. But I thought, there was plenty fourteen-year-old virgins. So I told the truth. So, one of my peers said some derogatory words to refer to me as a homosexual because I admitted to being a virgin. And that, at that moment, combined with my mother calling my brother her number one son. That began my career as an ultra-violent person.

[00:17:41] **Mazza:** The bullying. Like Lavell, he said he was bullied and teased as a kid. And that's, that's a, that's the course people take.

[00:17:48] **b.f.:** Yeah.

[00:17:48] **Mazza:** Bullied.

[00:17:50] **b.f.:** I wanted other people to hurt, and I didn't want to be hurt.

[00:17:53] **Mazza:** Right, right.

[00:17:53] **b.f.:** So.

[00:17:54] **Mazza:** Lash out. How about you Jay?

[00:17:57] **Jay:** Oh yeah. I'm pretty much in the same boat, man.

You probably, the first time I seen somebody get shot was when I was six years old. And then as with a lot of communities, Black communities. You see fistfights a lot. People get shot, people get stabbed. And so living in this environment, it's almost like a, a thing, a normalcy. And at least when I first started off my sins, so I-

[00:18:26] **b.f.:** Wait, can we, can I stop you, J? Six years old?

[00:18:30] **Jay:** Yeah.

[00:18:30] **b.f.:** That, that, how did that affect you?

[00:18:33] **Jay:** Shit.

[00:18:34] **b.f.:** Or do you know how.

[00:18:35] **Jay:** No, I know how it affected me. I see the dude pull out the gun and hear the sound and see the smoke, and then the person on the ground in the empty lot just bleeding. And for me, I was walking down the street with my aunt. And I, I hear the argument.

I could see, see the people that it were. And that was the end result of it is a, is a person getting shot? And so, you know, that was the first... probably the first moment outside of watching cartoons or watching a movie, and seeing something like that up close. And they was unaware that it, that a kid was around, you know?

So I kind of, in one part wouldn't believed that maybe it probably would've been handled different. Or the intensity just ramped up so fast that it took place. And it could easily make me think of moments in here, to where as soon as I got the thought process of, I'm gonna, I'm gonna attack this person. The impulse kick in, it's, it's, it's a rapid move. In a sense, almost like an animal.

[00:19:47] **b.f.:** When I got jumped in 2000 - in prison, because I've been in prison thirty-one years. But, when I got jumped, and I got kicked in the head and got my jaw broken in three places, I still have titanium, a platelet, and a pen in my face right now holding my face together. I didn't find out until later that my family and friends weren't given details about what happened to me. And they only told me afterwards that they thought. They knew I was in the hospital, not just the prison infirmary. They knew I was in the hospital. They thought I was on my deathbed. So, with me knowing that, once I learned that, I felt terrible, I. That's why I say I, I connect with what you guys are saying.

'cause I felt terrible. I'm like, man, I don't want my, I mean, yeah, okay, this is my life, but it's not just my life. I don't want my people, man and friends and family to be hurting like that man. 'cause of some stuff that I've gotten myself into.

[00:20:44] **Mazza:** Hmm.

[00:20:45] **b.f.:** So.

[00:20:45] **Mazza:** Yeah, indeed. I learned my violence as a youngster.

It was, it was unlike, you know, you, you gentlemen. I was picked on too. I was bullied too. And it was 'cause I was a long-haired kid with second-hand clothes, and I often got, I never, never had a, a home. My home was a, a rolling home that traveled from town to town and, you know, my people were really, really poor.

So I got bullied and picked on. So I, I fought a lot. And, you know. I never really judged whether fighting was wrong or right at that point in time, at that age. But I remember an instance, it's Sycamore Public Pools in Antioch, California. I was just a little kid, and there was this, there was this other kid there, and he was just splashing, he was being an a******, whatever else.

And, and, my mom said, go kick his a**. For fighting this kid, and she was proud of me. And she, she, you know, she gave me accolades and, you know, I think I might've got an ice cream outta the deal. You know what I mean? So I was thinking, all right. You know, fighting, not a bad thing. Violence is not a bad thing.

So it kind of, kind of set the, the, the course of my life when it came to, you know, throwing my hands and, and, and, and getting kind of crazy physically. But, you know, I. Isn't like I, you know.

[00:22:06] **b.f.:** Dude, that's, that's incredible to me. Jay's six years old and sees somebody get blammed on.

[00:22:14] **Mazza:** Mm-Hmm.

[00:22:14] **b.f.:** Your mom rewarded you after sending you into battle, and.

[00:22:19] **Crosstalk:** God bless you love so much.

[00:22:20] **b.f.:** And my little weak ass, you know, all I got was some words. And that turned me. I was weak compared to you guys.

[00:22:30] **Mazza:** But you're not because there's other modes of violence. Just like you said earlier in the conversation, words can be just as devastating as getting hit in the face, sometimes more so than not.

[00:22:39] **Jay:** When we're young. Me, I had the benefit of being a great joker. So I know that the words would definitely irritate and agitate people to wanna react out, to stop from hearing that. And sometimes in those moments, if we hearing the word, if we hearing words that are damaging from the people that we love, we can't... Adults, that is, we can't react on them.

But, the minute when we out there amongst our friends or people our age, then it turns into, all right, man, if I don't like what this person is saying. And this derogatory language, then yeah, I'm gonna get right, we about to go to Knuckleberry Express.

[00:23:26] **Mazza:** That's funny. So listen, Brian, you're telling me, you told us a little story about, about, about these guys kicking you in the face and, and this was in prison, right?

You know, you could have taken a a, a a. An action against those people. Tell me about what happened after you healed up, and, and, and, you know, being the way you are. I can imagine that you, you, you were faced with a decision whether or not to, to take action. Tell me about that a little bit.

[00:23:52] **b.f.:** For the record, this was twenty-three years ago.

This was in September. September 21, 2000. That's when I got my face broken. I was at another prison. And the counselor. Counselor calls me in his office one evening, and says, you know, we got such and such here. He's on your, your enemy list. I'm like, I don't have an enemy list. Okay, well, he's here.

He wants to know if you'll sign a marriage chrono. And a marriage chrono is just simply a document generated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation that we sign as prisoners to say, I'm okay being on the line with this person. It doesn't necessarily mean that you're okay, but it relieves the CDCR of any responsibility.

[00:24:46] **Mazza:** It's kinda like-

[00:24:47] **b.f.:** Anything happens.

[00:24:48] **Mazza:** It's a disclaimer that they can't meet illegally.

[00:24:51] **b.f.:** I couldn't have said it better. It's a disclaimer. So, I signed it. I signed it for two reasons. I signed it for the prison bravado, you know, whatever. I can't imagine a situation where I wouldn't sign it. And then I really did want to see this guy.

Why was he asking to be on the line with me? You know, he would never approach me by himself. So, I did see him. And we talked. First, he was inside of his cell. And we agreed that we would talk outside of the cell, not just through the door, but it was not barking. It was all polite, you know? And actually what he said to me is something to the effect of what happened was just business.

I interpreted what he was saying to me as I should be thankful, because he volunteered to be one of the people to attack me.

[00:25:44] **Jay:** Yeah.

[00:25:45] **b.f.:** Yeah.

[00:25:46] **Jay:** I should be thankful?

[00:25:47] **b.f.:** No, I should be thankful because it was him in particular. We were close. We used to call the same people Collect on the phone. We would take turns calling his relatives because I knew his family.

So he asked their shot caller, could he be one of the people to attack me? And apparently, he was the one that talked somebody out of bringing weapons and trying to kill me. So I should be grateful. You know? Ain't that crazy how prison works? That's how people think.

[00:26:16] **Jay:** Nah, for real.

[00:26:17] **b.f.:** But anyway, we talked. Nothing happened.

I didn't attack him. I didn't plot on him. I had opportunity to do it. I really did think about it. I just didn't have it in me. I didn't feel like I wanted to hurt anybody anymore.

[00:26:31] **Mazza:** Tell me, you guys, either one of you can answer this question. How do you go about making that decision not to act violently and use violence as an answer?

[00:26:42] **Jay:** I think for myself in 2004, at Salinas Valley State Prison on C Yard, the librarian, Ms. McDonald, probably asked me one of the best questions that a person could ask that don't know me. And basically, her, her only understanding of me was just watching me enter the library every, every day and do whatever work I was doing.

Her question was, how could it, how could it be? You'll enter this place every day, do a lot of research, and then on the flip side, you'll go to the door, or some guys walking by the window. They throwing up these game signs and yelling in certain comments, and you responding a certain way. And as I thought about what she was saying, I'm looking at this like, okay, this is a staff that's a non-custody staff, and her way of looking at things is different from a correctional officer.

She helped me start reflecting on the things that I needed to do to grow up and change, because the optics of what she was seeing was, Okay, you might not be doing nothing physically violent right now on my face. But I understand, these signs that y'all throwing up or the slang that y'all using is something that could lead to other problems.

[00:28:12] **Mazza:** So with this teacher, this librarian, did she remind you that you're capable of more?

[00:28:20] **Jay:** Oh yeah, of course. Like I said, this was way back in 2004, so it wasn't like it was all these opportunities for a level four prisoner to feel like there was a need to, to change itself. And her asking the question help me out so much because she looked at it in the side of, I could see the human side that's still there.

How come you don't pay attention to, to it yourself without saying it so direct like that?

[00:28:52] **Mazza:** That was a mic drop moment right there.

[00:28:54] **Jay:** So the journey, actually the first self-help group I took was joining the book club. That was recommended by Ms. McDonald. Then after that is when anger management came about, but the first book that she handed me to read was called Black Women in White America, edited by Gerda Lerner. With growth and change, sometimes we have to look outside of ourselves, and I think her thing was to hand me a book by a woman first and see if I would even entertain it in that type of setting. And it's rare that you would see a person do that because I, I have to walk back to the yard with this book, and it's not like I have some type of bag that I could conceal what the book was about.

And then it goes into this place. You, we have people that of course make comments, but I have to shake the comments off and keep walking with it. So... that was the first test of, okay, let me grow up, let me start reverting from violence. Reading this type of material and channeling my energy into that.

[00:30:03] **Mazza:** So it took a lot of courage for you to carry that book, and it took a lot of courage for you to make the decision to be part of the book club.

And, you know, part of the, you know, the legal learning that you were, you were taking part of in the library. Did you, did they ridicule you for that?

[00:30:23] **Jay:** Oh, of course. I mean, you know, you always have the fellas, that's the, so-called friends. Some mad 'cause I'm not out there playing basketball. You know, or, or, or any of the other nonsense that exists.

And it's like, man, it's hard for, it's, it's, that's why it's hard for us as individuals to let go because we realize the minute when you start stepping away, these friends with all the old habits and all the tactics that you used to have, you become socially isolated. But in that social isolation sometimes is when you have the best internal innovation.

Because I started taking those books and really laying down a foundation for Jaycologist.

[00:31:13] **b.f.:** Yeah, what in the hell is that?

[00:31:15] **Jay:** Jaycologist is the jailhouse attorney slash jailhouse psychologist, building up the medical, psychological, or psychiatric vocabulary as well as the legal vocabulary.

[00:31:34] **Mazza:** You know, my alternatives to violence now are, I published a book and, and living the way I'm living now, which is in these groups, doing this here, you know, spending time with my colleagues and, and, and, and learning in these groups... that it might make a difference for somebody else.

And, but it also, you know, going full circle, I know that my, my, my family, to a certain extent, is proud of who I've become. And they're, they're happy to see that I'm no longer going to the hole.

I'm no longer getting into fights. I'm no longer, you know, addicted to substances and alcohol and, you know, ended up in trouble.

And I think that they're proud of that. And that's another big reason why I can shift away from violence because I, I still flash back to, my mom sitting up and getting that phone call in the middle of the night saying, Hey, you know, your son's been shot and he might not make it.

[00:32:33] **b.f.:** So then how do we relay this or relate this to younger men. You know, it's almost like that. It's almost like that corny question that we ask, but corny but relevant.

[00:32:44] **Mazza:** I think. I think.

[00:32:44] **b.f.:** Like what would you say to a younger you?

[00:32:46] **Mazza:** You can't really say anything. You can't say. You couldn't have told me s*** back then. I wasn't. People probably tried, but I ain't listening.

And I think that the best example we can have is live the way we're living as who we are or who we once were. And now take a look at what I'm doing now. 'Cause these kids these days, and I've seen 70-year-old kids. You know, but I'm talking about kids these days are not gonna listen to the words, but they're gonna watch the actions and maybe one or two are gonna internalize those actions, and they're gonna change their mind silently on their own.

And then the course will be set for 'em.

[00:33:22] **Jay:** Yeah. The young guys, they, they're gonna move at their own pace. And so what I try to do is I bird feed 'em and slow walk 'em. With a lot of these young guys, now that I'm facilitating groups in the building, I always ask them what is it that they like or wish they could have done if they had better alternatives than of choices of life.

All right, well, thank you both for your input, and thank you, Brian, for this excellent story, Lavell's choice. I appreciate it and I appreciate you guys' time.

And that's a wrap for this Uncuffed episode. You can find Uncuffed on the radio at KALW, 91.7 FM, and at weareuncuffed.org, or you can subscribe to Uncuffed in any podcast player. The Uncuffed crew at Solano is Anthony Ivy, b.f. Thames, Jay Evans, and me, Bryan Mazza.

Thanks to the team at KALW Public Radio: Ninna Gaensler-Debs, Angela. Johnston, Sonia Paul, James Rowlands, Kathy Novak, Ben Trefny and Eli Wirtschafter. . Our theme music is by David Jassy. And thanks to the staff at Solano who make this possible, especially Lt. Guerrero, who approved this episode. We fact check everything to the best of our ability. Uncuffed gets its support from the California Arts Council and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Thanks for listening.