

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.

I'm Somebody's Hero

Published November 8, 2022

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

[00:00:12] **Greg:** What's up everybody? It's Greg Eskridge from the San Quentin side of Uncuffed. Just a quick note, the episode you're about to hear was recorded this past spring. Since then, producer Thanh Tran has gotten out. Stay tuned for an update from Thanh at the end of the episode.

[00:00:30] **Edmond:** What's up everyone? This is Edmond coming from the San Quentin side of Uncuffed.

Right now I got in the room with me. I got Greg and Thanh, go ahead and introduce yourselves. Say what's up to the people.

[00:00:43] **Greg:** What's up? What's up? What's up?

[00:00:45] **Thanh:** It is I. Thanh Tran. Here.

[00:00:48] **Edmond:** That's what's up, man. It's good. It's good to be in the room with y'all. It's good to see y'all faces. I'm glad. I'm happy. I'm excited for the news that we about to drop on everyone. Thanh, man. Like what's going on? What's happen? Speak to the people.

[00:01:03] **Thanh:** I'm going home. I'm going home.

[00:01:05] **Edmond:** Okay.

[00:01:05] **Greg:** Man.

[00:01:06] **Thanh:** I'm going home.

[00:01:06] **Edmond:** That's what's up. Tell me more about that.

[00:01:08] **Thanh:** I'm going home, man.

[00:01:08] **Edmond:** What does that mean?

[00:01:10] **Thanh:** Last week, my attorney told me that the district attorney of my county is granting me an 1170 D, which meant that I was eligible for immediate release because I was sentenced to 17 years. Now with the re-resentencing of 1170, it would take off the 10 year gang enhancement, which left me with seven years, and I've been incarcerated for over 10 years now. So that meant time served. Immediate release. I was just like stunned. I'm still stunned.

Even just saying it now is like...

I just work so hard for this, you know. I just work so hard for this. It's just bananas. I can't believe it. Like, I haven't been sleeping well for like a week now. And I just lay there in bed, and I think about... basically I'm 28 years old, but I spent most of my life incarcerated since 12 years old. I was 12 years old when I first got incarcerated.

And from 12 to 18, I spent most of that time in juvenile halls, correctional centers. And a month after my 18th birthday, I was arrested. And I've been incarcerated ever since. So I just, it's just surreal for me. Just even think just these past few nights I've been just, honestly, I, I, I mourned my childhood.

I, I mourned all the suffering I caused myself because of all of my bad decisions I, I made out of a place of hurt.

[00:02:55] **Edmond:** Right.

[00:02:55] **Thanh:** Yeah.

[00:02:56] **Greg:** 12.

[00:02:57] **Thanh:** Yeah.

[00:02:58] **Greg:** Damn.

[00:02:58] **Thanh:** Yeah. 12 years old.

[00:03:00] **Greg:** That's, that's super young, man. Like how does... how does a person become incarcerated at 12 years old. Like, how does that even happen?

[00:03:10] **Thanh:** For real, like rest in peace, Lenny man, love him to death. He was my best friend. He was murdered when I was 12, but it was me and him. He was just one of my friends that I started hanging out with, and he was a bad influence, you know? And he's like, You know what? Hey, I know these dudes that got some money. I'm gonna rob him.

Just come with me. You ain't gotta do nothing. I'm like. Right. I'm 12 years old. I, I just wanna belong. I just wanna fit in. I'm like, All right, let's go. I follow him. And then we stopped these two kids, and we rob him. It was these two kids I went to school. It was like, I, I'm 12 years old. I literally sit in the classroom with these kids.

There was no getting away with this crime, but I'm not thinking about that. I just like, I'm just gonna go along with my friend. And then after the crime was committed, like a week later. Cops came, dragged me out of the classroom, threw me into an interrogation room, and arrested me. And that was my first contact with the juvenile system, and ever since that, I never could get off of probation.

[00:04:12] **Greg:** Hmm.

[00:04:12] **Thanh:** I, I can never get out of the system after that. Like the longest I stayed out was probably a few months at a time, and I would always be reincarcerated for either, it was probation violations, getting into a fight at school, being 12, 13 years old, not really understanding life and just coming from a hurt place.

And I was like, Life is unfair. This is just the cards I've been given. I might as well go all in with this thug in.

[00:04:39] **Edmond:** Right.

[00:04:39] **Greg:** Yeah.

[00:04:40] **Edmond:** I know you had to go through the whole process, fingerprints. You had to line up, take some pictures, and then you get processed into this facility, man. Tell me what that was like for you. What did you experience?

[00:04:51] **Thanh:** Man? 9601 Kiefer Boulevard. That was like my second home when I was a kid. And not in a good way. But I remember 12 years old. I was terrified. I was completely terrified. I didn't understand what was going on, like literally.

[00:05:05] **Edmond:** So is that the address of the juvenile hall?

[00:05:07] **Thanh:** Yes. It's the address of the juvenile hall.

[00:05:09] **Edmond:** That's crazy that you still remember.

[00:05:09] **Thanh:** I remember that. I'm telling you, that was my second home. And once again, not in a good way.

[00:05:15] **Edmond:** Right.

[00:05:16] **Thanh:** So, it was just bananas. I remember being 12 years old. I'm in seventh grade. A seventh grader, right? And because the charges I had were, were serious. They charged me for armed robbery.

They put me into a pod with like a bunch of older kids. And immediately, I remember when I was placed into the holding tank at juvenile hall, I seen gang graffiti written all over the walls. I remember the smell. It was like, it was a weird smell of like, urine and chemicals. And every single, it was like, felt like I was getting placed into the military.

Every kid had to like, interlace their fingers and then tuck it into their waistbands and keep their heads down as they walk through the hallways. And I remember seeing this and I was like, Where the damn, I like what is going on? I'm 12 years old, and I remember crying to my foster mom, saying like, Please just take me outta here.

And she said, I can't take you out. I can't fix this one for you.

[00:06:23] **Edmond:** What was it like being a foster child?

[00:06:25] **Thanh:** It was a trip being a a foster child because my biological mom, she was around, but she was on crack, and it was obvious she was on crack, you know? And she would always come around saying like, Thanh, I'm gonna bring you back home, like, I'm not gonna leave you here in foster care. And then she would get incarcerated, right?

So from just my entire. From like 18 months old when I got placed into foster care till 12 years old, when I finally got incarcerated for the first time ever, it was just, it was like a cycle back and forth of my mom popping up saying, Hey, I'm gonna bring you back, get back on drugs, get locked back up.

I see her two, three years later, again, same cycle all over again. So it was just feeling, you just feeling not good enough. And my foster parents, I love em to death. I love em to death. My foster mom did her best, absolute best. Salute. However, one thing she did that was very harmful to me as a child is that she kept reminding me that I was a foster child. And that at any moment, she'll send me back to the state.

And I knew they weren't playing because they sent my big brother to a different foster home. And then after that, they sent my big sister to a different foster home. So I, I always, I grew up in fear of being abandoned into this nameless system where I would just be like, just, just lost. Just lost.

[00:08:06] **Edmond:** As a friend, just hearing that, man, that really, really touches me. I see you, Greg. You have something to say.

[00:08:12] **Greg:** Looking at him and listening to him, hearing his story, it just, it just, it blows my mind how our stories are so similar. You know, to, to hear Thanh, to look at Thanh and, and, and as he's talking, I'm just picturing this little kid, right?

I'm picturing this little 12 year old boy. And not only am I just pitching this little Thanh as a 12 year old boy, I'm seeing myself as this little 10 year old kid. Whose journey started off at the age of 10 of running away from home, and then being inside of the, the juvenile systems, the foster, foster homes.

And so, man, just hearing you just say all that, man, it just, it took me back to the 1980s, man, when I was a when I was a young kid, man. And I feel you, bro. I, I, I, I truly un, I truly understand it, man. I, I truly, know what those difficult footsteps look like and feel like to walk. Again, bro.

[00:09:16] **Thanh:** So right before my 18th birthday, the gang that I was a part of. Like these dudes I've been gang banging with for like six years.

I gave him everything I had, like, this was right before my 18th birthday. I was robbed by my own best friends, and it, and it messed me up. Like I was spiraling, spiraling, spiraling. And... from this criminal lifestyle, from these ideologies that I've developed that, you know, like, if I feel like, I bet money will make me feel better, I go get me a bag.

I'm gonna feel a lot better after that. So I was like, you know what I'm gonna go do and I gotta go get a bag. So. I decide with my two co-defendants to go commit this robbery. And it was 11 days after my 18th birthday is when we committed this robbery, and one of my co-defendants shot Preset Lee, and thank God he survived.

And I was arrested shortly after that. It was in December. My birthday was in November. In 2011, I just turned 18 a month ago. Now, I'm facing 75 years to life.

[00:10:27] **Edmond:** Damn.

[00:10:28] **Thanh:** I was like 75 years to life. I never even lived life yet. What you mean, 75 years to life? I can't even comprehend this s***. I'm like, what?

[00:10:37] **Greg:** At 18?

[00:10:38] **Thanh:** Yeah, 18. And... I remember I was just crushed. Crushed and lost. More than anything, I was just lost. And, and, and at first you go into this denial, I'm sure y'all can relate when you first become incarcerated. Like, I was in this denial, like, this ain't, I'm gonna get out. Matter of fact, I'm gonna get out in a week. Matter of fact, first arraignment, I'll get out.

You know what? Second arraignment, I'll get out. You know what? Prelim I'm gonna get out. And then... Now I'm in county jail for over a year, and I'm realizing I'm not about to get out. I'm not gonna get out real soon like I thought I was. I'm about to sit down and do some time. And they offered me my first deal, which was 25 to life.

I was like, I can't take 25 to life. Like, how's that a deal.

[00:11:29] **Greg:** Exactly.

[00:11:29] **Thanh:** Like how's, how's that an opportunity. Like, and my attorney's telling me, you should take it. It's a real good opportunity. 25 to life. I'm not even 25 years old.

[00:11:38] **Greg:** Dump truck.

[00:11:39] **Edmond:** That's just crazy to tell a 18 year old that.

[00:11:42] **Thanh:** It was bananas.

[00:11:42] **Edmond:** Take this life sentence. You could do it.

[00:11:44] **Thanh:** Around this time, the thing that really shifted me and like flipped me on my head was my little sister came to visit me in county jail. And.... I was considered high security risks at the county jail. So everywhere I went, I had to be in belly chains and shackles and ankle chains, and I would have to waddle like a duck.

And all these chains are here, chin ching, ching, ching, ching, ching.

[00:12:11] **Greg:** Mm-hmm.

[00:12:12] **Thanh:** As I'm walking down the hallway, so this is to from when my family visits me, this is what they see behind a glass.

[00:12:20] **Greg:** Right.

[00:12:21] **Thanh:** And my sister comes and visits me. My little sister. And I waddle to this small room and I'm through a glass, and we have to talk through this phone.

And for the first five minutes of our half an hour visit we had, she just cried. She just cried seeing me look like this. And when she stopped crying, she was like, Thanh, did you know you was my hero? I was like, what? Like, how am I worthy of being someone's hero? Like, all I did in life was f*** up. But she was like, No, think about it.

Why do you think I always try to follow you everywhere? Why do you think I always listened to the music you listened to? Why do you think I always try to act like you? Why would you think I always asked you where you was going, what you was doing? Because I admired you. You, like I always loved you, and everything you did always affected me.

And I think up to that point, I always felt like all of my suffering was my own. I always felt like everything I did only affected me. But to see and hear for the first time ever that I was hurting my family for all of these years. It's already bad we're all in foster care. It's already bad we don't have our mom and our dad. But their big brother, the person that they looked to. I was hurting them too.

I just told myself like, I, I can't do this no more. Like I, I'm... like, I can take the suffering. Like it's cool, but not them. They don't deserve the s***. They didn't do the s*** I did. They don't deserve to suffer like I did. So... it was ever since that visit with my sister, I said, I gotta do something different.

I'm gonna figure, I don't know what the f*** I'm gonna do. I just gotta do something different.

And that was like the start of my journey of like saying like... I, I want to be different. I don't know who I was gonna become. Like, I never had any role models to look up to. I didn't know, I didn't have a, a path to follow. I just knew that... I was gonna have to do it for myself. Like everything else in my life, I had to do it for myself.

And I did. And I just did. And I just told myself like, it starts now.

[00:15:05] **Edmond:** For sure.

[00:15:06] **Greg:** Man. I just wanna just take a minute, man, cuz I, I see, Thanh, you like super emotional. I'm emotional, Edmond, you know, we, we sit in this space, man, I just want just to, just to hold this space with you, man, just to take a breath, you know, and. That's a lot to, that's a lot to take in, bro. Things... create sparks for people in our lives. And I swear, bro, your, our stories are so similar to me. You know, I mean, cause my sister was pretty much like the beginning of my transformation as well. But it's just so beautiful to hear you say, for your sister to say that you were her hero. Because it seemed like you carried around so much guilt and so much shame in your own life, and you felt so insignificant. And seemed like you felt like you didn't matter. And it was you against the world. And it, it wasn't. Like you really had people who, who cared about you and looked up to you and, and they valued you. Even when you possibly didn't even value yourself.

[00:16:29] **Thanh:** Factual.

[00:16:30] **Greg:** And to hear, to hear that validation, man, that come from your sister, a little sister, someone that I'm pretty sure that you've always did your best to protect, is beautiful bro.

[00:16:41] **Thanh:** Mm-hmm.

[00:16:42] **Greg:** To hear that was your turning point in your life.

[00:16:47] **Edmond:** So can you walk me through what it was like after this point?

What was going on in Thanh's mind? What really changed? What steps did you take to make sure that you weren't the same person that came in, came to prison.

[00:17:03] **Thanh:** With this knowledge and like this mind frame, going into this sentence and getting sentenced to 17 years. I told myself like, I'm not gonna do 17 years in prison. I'm just not. Like, I refuse.

[00:17:16] **Edmond:** That's right.

[00:17:17] **Thanh:** I just, that's what I told myself. I was like, I refuse to do these years, and a matter of fact, I'm not gonna escape. That's not what I'm referring to. I said, I'm gonna do everything I can to get the f*** out early. Right. I'm gonna do everything I can. . And literally, from that point I was just told everybody, it's like, Dude, don't call me by my gang name.

I'm not a gang member. Like, I'm trying to change my life. I don't know what that looks like, but I'm trying. Please respect the fact that I'm trying. And a lot of people didn't respect that because it doesn't fit into their paradigm. However, I was like, I stuck to it cuz it wasn't about what the dudes thought in prison.

It was about what my family thought. It was about now I'm realizing my, my little, I'm my little sister's hero. I got a responsibility now. You know?

[00:18:07] **Edmond:** I think that should like happen right there, right?

[00:18:09] **Thanh:** Yeah.

[00:18:09] **Edmond:** Like 18th birthday, you get robbed by your best friends.

[00:18:15] **Thanh:** Mm-hmm.

[00:18:15] **Edmond:** Like you were seeking this external validation from people that, that you, you genuinely loved, but you weren't receiving that back. And then you had your family members who always loved you, regardless if you were in a right or wrong.

[00:18:31] **Thanh:** Factual.

[00:18:32] **Greg:** That's crazy, man.

[00:18:33] **Edmond:** You know what I'm saying?

[00:18:34] **Greg:** That's crazy to hear, Edmond, just, you just say that.

[00:18:36] **Thanh:** You tied that s*** together cold, huh.

[00:18:38] **Greg:** No, because it's, hey, it just makes you realize that the people that you, we've al the people that have always had our backs, are the ones we turned our back on. And the ones we show loyalty to are the ones end up screwing us over.

[00:18:55] **Thanh:** Right. That's the facts.

[00:18:57] **Edmond:** Damn.

[00:18:57] **Greg:** That's crazy.

[00:18:58] **Thanh:** That's the facts. It's crazy how you tied that together, cuz you right. I moved from... at 18 years old getting incarcerated from seeking external validation. So now having this internal validation of knowing that I'm somebody to somebody, you know. And...

[00:19:16] **Greg:** And you've always been.

[00:19:18] **Thanh:** I've always been that.

[00:19:19] **Greg:** That's crazy.

[00:19:19] **Thanh:** And I never recognized it. I never recognized it, so I'm like finally starting to develop self-worth. Right. That was real, genuine self-worth. And this is the same. So that is what carried me through these 10 years that I've been incarcerated. That carried me through the level three yard when everybody wanted me to participate in gang violence and things like that. And I was like, I'm not with that bro. I'm trying to change my life.

I'm trying to go to college. I'm trying to get a degree because my momma all, all my foster mom ever wanted me to do was go to school.

[00:19:51] **Greg:** Mm.

[00:19:52] **Thanh:** And that, and I remembered that. So when I got to prison, I finally had a chance to go to college. I went to college, and I got my AA degree. That's what's, and when I walked that stage, my foster mom was right there to see her son walk the stage.

[00:20:03] **Greg:** Man.

[00:20:04] **Thanh:** You know? And and the, and these were the things I did. I took every program available. Shoot, when there wasn't programs on the level three, I created a program. We created Toastmasters up there. Ultimately, I was transferred to San Quentin. And I remember when I got here, I transferred here, I believe it was 2018, and it was like a historic time in incarcerated history.

And why it was so historic was because Governor Brown was granting commutations like crazy.

[00:20:41] **Edmond:** Left and right.

[00:20:42] **Thanh:** Like I call it the commutation gold rush. For real. Like everybody had their pick axes and shovels out. Like, we need to get a piece of this gold, right? Like, like it didn't matter what was going on.

Everybody filed a commutation. Everybody. And, and on that list of everybody was Thanh Tran.

[00:21:02] **Greg:** So the commutation is the, that's the process of like, basically... asking, throwing yourself to the mercy of the governor, basically. Asking the governor for.

[00:21:13] **Thanh:** Clemency

[00:21:14] **Greg:** To lessen your sentence.

[00:21:15] **Thanh:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. Consider clemency. It's basically saying, Mercy. Have mercy on me. So in 2018, I filed. Optimistic as ever, and I didn't get it.

[00:21:29] **Edmond:** I think at this time I knew you for maybe a good six months, eight months. Our relationship was still growing, and I remember reaffirming. Like there's a plan for you. Like

keep fighting, keep doing what you're doing. Just because you didn't get it this time doesn't mean that you're not gonna get it in the future.

[00:21:56] **Thanh:** So for the next year, all 2019, I'm grinding myself to death. And then the pandemic hit. And with the pandemic going on, all of a sudden, there was this call from the outside saying, Free them all. Like we need to get people out of prison.

Like dudes were gonna die.

[00:22:21] **Edmond:** I remember that.

[00:22:21] **Thanh:** You remember that? Like, remember all over the news? Shout out Ella Baker Center. Shout out all the people who was fighting for our freedom. They was like, We need to get them out. And then boom, three dudes in our building get commuted. And I was terrified of like, man, like I'm gonna try again, but what if I don't get it?

[00:22:44] **Greg:** So...talk to me about the time, the moment where you first found out that you got the commutation. .

[00:22:52] **Thanh:** I remember in January of this year, I remember I was on the yard with Edmond, actually, just trying to get my mind off things, cuz I've been stressed out the game. Like I'm telling you, prison makes you a stress case.

I'm like losing my hairline and everything. I swear to God, I'm 28. I shouldn't be losing it. What the heck. But I'm with Edmond. And he's like, Dude, up stressing man, man, dude, they're just gonna call you bro, and all of a sudden they're gonna call you. You're gonna get your commutation. I'm like, Shut up, Edmond, you are way more optimistic than I am.

And all of a sudden I hear Tran, report back to the building. I was like, Edmond's like, I told you. I'm like, Bro, you don't know this.

[00:23:31] **Edmond:** I don't even know what it is at the time, but you're such a stress case. It's just like, get outta this negative state of mind. Be positive. It's gonna happen. Let's speak it into existence.

[00:23:44] **Thanh:** That's.

[00:23:44] **Edmond:** And then we, and then you get that call. How'd you feel, man?

[00:23:47] **Thanh:** I'm so nervous. I'm walking up the stairs. My knees are like jello. And San Quentin got a lot of stairs. Let me tell you, there is so many stairs here for no reason. And I was like, All right. All right. So I rush over to the counselor's office, and mind you, around this time, it's like 11:30.

And my counselor goes, You gotta come back at one. I'm like, What? Come back at one, for what? And she's like, I can't tell you. I was like, What you mean you can't tell me? But I'm

starting to have an inkling, like something good is going on. And at this point, I go back to my cell and Edmond pops and was like, So what? What happened? Told me the good news. I was like, Man, they said I gotta come back at one. He's like, What?

So I go back at one. We go to the phone to make the phone call. And then I hear a lady's voice, Is this Thanh Tran? I was like, this is I. She said, tell me your CDC number, and I say, my CDC number AT 1676. She said, Well, I'm from the governor's office, and I just wanted to let you know that you are getting a commutation. Whew.

[00:24:50] **Edmond:** What would. So what ran through your head?

[00:24:54] **Thanh:** I was like, Man, this is a, this is beautiful. Like I just, I think I've, I felt this huge, and it's so cliche, but I really felt a weight just melt off me. She's like, You ready to hear the rest of it? I was like, Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm ready to hear the rest of it.

She's goes, but you're going to board. Wait. I was like, wait, wait, so I'm not going home? She said, I'm sorry, but you're not going home. And I'm confused. I was like, wait, so what? She says, You're not going home. You have to go to a board of parole hearing. It's probably gonna take like six months at the soonest before the board is gonna see you. Best luck, Thanh Tran.

[00:25:42] **Greg:** That's crazy.

[00:25:43] **Thanh:** I was like, oh... this is not the victory I expected at all.

[00:25:49] **Edmond:** So what did you think was gonna happen. And what are, what are, like, what are your options when you get commuted?

[00:25:55] **Thanh:** Great question, because it, the governor has an option to either send me straight home or send me to a board of parole hearings and allow the Board of Parole to conduct a hearing and determine whether I'm not a threat to society or not.

I don't want this to sound like I'm ungrateful, cuz I'm definitely not. It's just that in my situation of being so short to the house. So short to being, coming back into society and getting released. Board was not beneficial to my cause at all. As a matter of fact, when I finally got my, a board attorney assigned to me and I talked to them, my first thing she told me, my attorney told me, is like, You most likely will get denied at board.

Your chances are so slim because you only have two years left. The board doesn't have, the board has no incentive of letting you out. Because if they deny you for three years, they'll never see you again cuz you'll be released anyways.

[00:27:02] **Edmond:** So maybe you.

[00:27:02] **Thanh:** Mind me every day.

[00:27:03] **Edmond:** You, you got the commutation?

[00:27:05] **Thanh:** Mm-hmm.

[00:27:06] **Edmond:** You have to go to board. This is not what you want. What happens next?

[00:27:13] **Thanh:** Oh. Even though I didn't get the commutation that I wanted. During this whole process of going through the commutation process and all the anxiety, I had. I'm the throw every iron in the fire type of guy. Like try everything you can, right? So I had put in for an 1170, which is resentencing through your district attorney.

Right. So in early '21, I had reached out to a few non-profits, and they're like, Heck yeah, we're gonna help you. We're gonna support you. So I'll put that iron in a fire. And it got dragged out. Dragged out, and I didn't hear anything about 1170. And finally, in January when I actually got commuted, that's when I got an attorney to reach out to my district attorney one more time and ask him, Can we grant Thanh Tran at 1170?

And he said yes. He said, yes. What prison has taught me is that home is not a place.

I've always had a home, and that was with my brothers and sisters. We've always had each other, and like through these 10 years, they have always been by my side. I want them to know that their big brother is here for them. Like I'm home. And I'm with you. I support you through anything and everything. Like whatever you need, Thanh got you. I need them. I need them to not just know that, but to feel that. To feel that, you know. That I'm back. I'm here. And maybe for the first time ever I'm here.

[00:29:06] **Edmond:** The first time that I met your family was at... You were getting your degree, you got your AA degree.

[00:29:15] **Thanh:** Yep.

[00:29:15] **Edmond:** We were all together at your graduation, filming it. And I got to meet your family, man. And your sisters, they, they are. They look just like you. You look just like them. But they also have like your sense of humor. And I asked them both a question like, What is the biggest change that you've seen in Thanh? And they just looked at me with a smile and was like, his hairline. And I was like, damn. Like damn.

[00:29:44] **Thanh:** Oh, God. I love them. I love them.

[00:29:46] **Edmond:** So you gotta, you're a beautiful person, man. You have a beautiful family.

[00:29:52] **Thanh:** Hmm.

[00:29:52] **Greg:** You're on your way home. And deservingly. You're a good dude, bro. And you're gonna be great in society. The world is being gifted with somebody that's going to really make a difference out there in the world.

[00:30:07] **Thanh:** Thank you so much, bro.

[00:30:07] **Greg:** I love you, man. And you another one uncuffed.

[00:30:11] **Thanh:** Oh man. Love you, too, brothers. We uncuffed, y'all.

[00:30:14] **Greg:** Yes, sir.

[00:30:15] **Edmond:** I just wanna say that I'm hella proud of you for sticking in there. I know that you're going home soon. And for me, as it is for like all of my friends in here, is bittersweet man.

[00:30:28] **Thanh:** Mm.

[00:30:28] **Edmond:** And it is, it has been such a privilege to be your friend, to help you grow. You've, you've held, held my hand through, through a lot. And it's hard for me, out of everyone to like, see you go man. And I think, for people who don't know us, they're like, Man, those guys are always fighting. I don't think they like each other.

And they would be right, because I got so much love for you, bro.

[00:31:01] **Thanh:** Yeah.

[00:31:03] **Edmond:** So I'm excited for, for your freedom. I'm excited for you rebuilding relationships. I'm excited to, to see you return to your family. I'm excited to see them react to the man you are today.

[00:31:20] **Thanh:** Mm.

[00:31:21] **Edmond:** And I tell you this all the time, man. You are enough. I love you. Check in.

[00:31:30] **Thanh:** For sure.

[00:31:30] **Edmond:** When you get out.

[00:31:32] **Thanh:** Man, I don't like you. I love you too, bro. Nah. Thank you, brother. Man. Like I think this is the most painful part of getting out is to know you're still in here. To know greg's still in here. It just, it eats me up, you know. Like I can never, I can never fully enjoy my freedom knowing that you're still in here. Like you're my family. You know? Like, I never had a home. I've never been at one place for anywhere long, but San Quentin, I've been here for five years now. And you've been my best friend for almost every step of the way of it. You know. Like you're my family, dog. And, and, and to leave you in here. I, I'll never feel good about that. I'll never feel good about that. If you don't call me for the first three days, our friendship is done.

[00:32:42] **Edmond:** And just even thinking about that, man, that's like probably the longest we've ever been apart or.

[00:32:47] **Thanh:** Dude.

[00:32:48] **Edmond:** Stayed out of contact.

[00:32:49] **Thanh:** Yeah, right. Like I talk to you every day. Every day.

[00:32:55] **Edmond:** I'm gonna be here. You know I'm coming home.

[00:32:58] **Thanh:** You're coming.

[00:32:58] **Edmond:** Even if I gotta be the one who's optimistic about it. I will remain optimistic about it. But.

[00:33:04] **Thanh:** Please.

[00:33:05] **Edmond:** I'm gonna be right there. So I want you to enjoy. Like man, enjoy your life, man.

[00:33:10] **Thanh:** Yeah.

[00:33:12] **Edmond:** Real talk. Like you stepping out is like we all stepping out. So step out, make me proud.

[00:33:19] **Thanh:** For sure.

[00:33:20] **Edmond:** Stop crying. Try that s*** up. Be a man.

[00:33:25] **Thanh:** Oh my God. Love you, bro. I love you. I love you, man.

[00:33:31] **Edmond:** I love you more.

[00:33:33] **Greg:** In May of 2022, Thanh Tran walked outta San Quentin State Prison, a free man. Recently, he and his sister Thu Vo Harris listened to the conversation you just heard. They reflected on Thanh's journey and all that's happened since he got out of prison.

[00:33:56] **Thu Vo:** First time hearing it, it definitely broke my heart to hear that my wonderful bighearted, bigheaded big brother felt like he didn't have any worth.

Man, bro, I love you so much. You always like you.

[00:34:18] **Thanh:** I love you, too, sis.

[00:34:19] **Thu Vo:** You always go and be my hero.

[00:34:23] **Thanh:** Oh, thank you, sister.

[00:34:26] **Thu Vo:** Ugh. Oh.

[00:34:29] **Thanh:** Just listening to it over, all over again. Like I cried. I cried. And I just feel so much gratitude in my heart because, like I'm doing everything I said I would ever do. You know, for the first time in many years, I feel like there's momentum.

Like we finally slowly climbing out of this hole that we called our life, you know, so. Like, I, I couldn't, I couldn't do it without you, sis.

[00:34:56] **Thu Vo:** I feel so inspired and empowered by you, brother, and I feel like with you next to me, with you, with us, with your family. It's a privilege to feel that, to be able to feel that.

And a lot of people aren't able to get there. I'm so grateful to have you bring me up here with you. You know what I mean? And we're still climbing.

[00:35:16] **Thanh:** Going our way.

[00:35:17] **Thu Vo:** Yeah. We still climbing. Home is wherever I'm with you.

Since you've been out, brother. And the few months that you had with me, a dream. I, you helped make our house a home, you know. You definitely changed the definition of home for me, bro. I said that.

[00:35:42] **Thanh:** I love that, sis. I had this vision of what home would look like. I had this idea of what home would look like, right? And I could have never imagined that it would be as beautiful as it is today.

[00:35:55] **Thu Vo:** Oh man. Big, big things is coming, big things popping, and little things stopping. Ooh, you feel me?

[00:36:03] **Thanh:** Tell em again, sis.

[00:36:04] **Thu Vo:** Yes.

[00:36:05] **Thanh:** Yeah, I'm excited to announce as of yesterday, I just found out that I got a baby boy on the way. Shout out to my beautiful wife, Lupe. Thank you for carrying this child for me, lupe. You're amazing.

[00:36:18] **Thu Vo:** I see this next generation as our responsibility. And I say that because we are in the process of breaking this generational curse. The one that's had on us, on our parents, and on our grandparents, that we don't even, God knows who exists.

You know what I mean? Your, your baby boy is gonna know his grandma. You know what I mean? Your baby boy is gonna know his aunties and his uncle. You know what I mean? Like, bro, like we're, we're having, we're starting our own traditions that we always wanted to have, you know, with like (sp) getting older, we are becoming the patriarch and the matriarch of the family.

You know what I mean? And like, we're stepping into those shoes. Doesn't feel, doesn't feel as big when you're next to me. You know what I mean? And it doesn't feel so, so big when we have such a great fam, familial support. As, as, as much as I can see what the future holds, there's so much I can't see yet.

[00:37:30] **Thanh:** Mm.

[00:37:31] **Thu Vo:** So I can't even see how it's gonna look, but I know it's gonna be beautiful.

[00:37:35] **Thanh:** Mm. Shout out.

[00:37:37] **Thu Vo:** We are making it beautiful, brother. Actively and mindfully making it beautiful. You know, you're gonna be a great father. Your awareness, your mindfulness, your attentiveness, your love. Bro, you're gonna be an amazing father.

[00:37:52] **Thanh:** Thank you sis. That means a lot. That means a lot. Like I was terrified at first, sis. You remember when I first talked to you? I was like, Oh my God, sis, what am I going do?

[00:38:03] **Thu Vo:** Barely been down a few months.

[00:38:06] **Thanh:** Right? I was like, what the, like how am I gonna be a daddy? Like, I'm barely like figuring out life.

[00:38:10] **Thu Vo:** You're like, I was, I had culture shock in the cereal aisle. How am I supposed to be a daddy?

[00:38:18] **Thanh:** Right? I was like, damn, I'm, I got all these options in the cereal aisle. I don't even know how to like show my son this stuff. It was like, oh man. It was bananas. It was bananas. But like over time, it's kind of like you said, though. Like, I got Lupe. I got you. I got the fam. It makes me feel confident, you know.

Like knowing I got a village to support me, and like shout to all my Ella Baker Center folks. Like, the love is just everywhere, and the support is everywhere. You know? And, and I'm just grateful for that. You know, I'm hella grateful. And I feel confident. Like this baby's gonna know this, baby's gonna know. Like you said, their grandma, their aunties, this baby's gonna know generational wealth. It's gonna know things that we ain't never had.

You know what I mean? Mm-hmm. . So like I'm grateful to give the child like everything and more that we always wanted.

[00:39:16] **Greg:** A special thanks to Thuvo Harris for being a part of this episode. The Uncuffed crew at San Quentin Prison is Tommy Shakur Ross, Edmond Richardson, Thanh Tran and me, Greg Eskridge. Thanks to the team at KALW Public Radio: Ninna Gaensler-Debs, Angela Johnston, Sonia Paul, James Rowlands, Andrew Stelzer, Ben Trefny, Eli Wirtschafter, and our sound designer, Eric “Maserati-E” Abercrombie.

Our theme music is by David Jassy, the Swedish phenom. And thanks to the staff at San Quentin Prison who make this possible: Mr. Skylar Brown, Ms. Madeline Tenney, and Lieutenant Sam Robinson, who approved this episode. We fact-checked everything to the best of our ability. Uncuffed gets support from the California Arts Council and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

[00:40:18] **Shakur:** Hi. My name is Tommy Shakur Ross, one of the producers for Uncuffed. When I was incarcerated at San Quentin, I learned how to be an audio producer and share my stories and those of other incarcerated folks. It was really impactful and important work for me. Support Uncuffed so that more stories like mine can get out into the world. Donate at we are uncuffed.org/donate.