



Episode 18: Down Low
First aired June 6, 2018

Lady Jae [00:00:00.00]: The following podcast contains language and sexual content that may not be appropriate for all listeners. Discretion is advised, and I mean take.... Be very careful what y'all listen to on this podcast, 'cause Lady Jae is hot, hot, hot, hot. [intro music]

Earlone [00:00:22.08]: You're now tuned into San Quentin's 'Ear Hustle' from PRX's Radiotopia. I'm Earlone Woods. I'm incarcerated here at San Quentin State Prison in California.

Nigel [00:00:32.01]: I'm Nigel Poor, a visual artist who volunteers at the prison.

Earlone [00:00:35.22]: And together, we're gonna take you inside. In this episode, we're talking about what it's like to be LGBTQ in prison. [melody of tones]

Nigel [00:00:58.00]: Earlone, there's so much I appreciate about spending time in here. I have great conversations with so many people, but there's this one thing that drives me crazy.

Earlone [00:01:06.00]: What's that?

Nigel [00:01:06.23]: Ok. It is the negative attitude that so many guys have about LGBTQ issues.

Earlonne [00:01:13.03]: Right.

Nigel [00:01:13.03]: It's just.... It's so different from the conversations that are happening outside.

Earlonne [00:01:16.22]: Yeah. It's a touchy subject. I mean, people don't want to talk about it.

Nigel [00:01:21.06]: Truly.

Earlonne [00:01:21.11]: And you might catch people being pretty disrespectful.

Nigel [00:01:25.15]: Uh, yeah, yes.

Earlonne [00:01:27.26]: Very. Very much so.

Nigel [00:01:28.26]: Yeah. So, the conversations around it are difficult, but what really blows me away is that there's thousands of guys here at San Quentin and, as far as I know, nobody is openly gay.

Earlonne [00:01:38.18]: That's because no one here is gay.

Nigel [00:01:41.17]: Yeah right. [laughs] Ok. I mean, guys talk about other guys being gay, but there's no one here that I know that publicly says, "Yeah. I'm gay."

Earlonne [00:01:51.20]: We'll get to that. But first, let's go out to the yard and ask some guys what they think about this. [chains rattling, walkie-talkie crackling, background voices, lock]

Nigel [00:02:01.06]: Why do you think there's no one here who's openly gay?

Male [00:02:03.29]: They got that macho image, so they don't want it to come out.

Male [00:02:06.03]: To be honest, I don't know.

Male [00:02:08.00]: One of those things where it's, you know, kind of a safety concern for them, because once they expose themselves, they become exploited.

Male [00:02:15.18]: I guess they scared what other people gonna think about 'em.

Male [00:02:17.19]: Are you gay?

Male [00:02:18.19]: No.

Nigel [00:02:19.25]: Are you gay?

Male [00:02:20.15]: [laughs] No. No. [laughs]

Nigel [00:02:25.05]: Would you cell with a gay man?

Male [00:02:26.21]: No.

Male [00:02:27.12]: No.

Male [00:02:28.14]: I'm not at that point yet. Not at the point yet. I'm still changing, you know.

Male [00:02:33.03]: The only thing I wouldn't go through, like, calling him a woman's name or anything.

Nigel [00:02:38.17]: Um, would you have a gay cellie? [long pause, male laughing] Thank you.

Male [00:02:46.24]: No.

Male [00:02:47.23]: Um, we have different lifestyles. Um, and so, because of that, to, to live in those small quarters together would be a problem.

Male [00:02:56.11]: I wouldn't and not because he's gay but because they bring unwanted and unnecessary attention to the cell.

Nigel [00:03:06.23]: Do you have any friends that are gay?

Male [00:03:08.08]: Actually, yes, I do. I actually have family members that are gay.

Nigel [00:03:11.27]: And so, do you think you have a different attitude than other guys here?

Male [00:03:15.18]: Oh, yeah. Yeah. [strung out piano music]

Nigel [00:03:19.28]: Earlonne, there are some guys in here who are tolerant.

Earlonne [00:03:22.17]: Right.

Nigel [00:03:23.19]: But, I think it's safe to say it's a pretty homophobic institution.

Earlonne [00:03:26.23]: True.

Nigel [00:03:27.12]: Because not only are there no openly gay men, but even if you're suspected of being gay, you're probably gonna be ostracized.

Earlonne [00:03:35.03]: Right. And even bein' friends with a gay guy has its repercussions because people gonna start thinkin' you gay too.

Nigel [00:03:40.22]: And that can be dangerous.

Earlonne [00:03:42.00]: Cause in here, it's a challenge to your masculinity, and that kind of challenge can escalate into violence real quick.

Nigel [00:03:48.08]: And it's that threat of violence that makes it really hard to find anyone to talk about what it's like to be a gay man here, but luckily, E, we got to talk to Mike.

Earlonne [00:03:56.29]: And Mike Adams is a cool dude. He's part of a group called ACT, Acting with Compassion and Truth. They get together and talk about LGBTQ issues.

Nigel [00:04:06.16]: And listener alert! [laughs] His voice sounds so much like Lieutenant Robinson, who's, you know, the San Quentin public information officer. [laughs]

Earlonne [00:04:15.24]: Somewhat. [distorted squeaking locks]

Mike [00:04:20.15]: I think there's a lot of homophobia in prison. Uh, the environment in itself is based on hypermasculinity, kind of the alpha male, so homosexuality or any LGBT issues actually undermine the strength

because heterosexual people see it as a weakness. And so, where it's a kill or be killed or survival of the fittest mindset in prison, homosexuality is seen as a fault, as, as really a liability. And so, for people who have seen that and maybe have experienced homosexuality or are homosexuals or lesbians or transgenders, to survive they have to hide, and that's internalized fear. [melodic beat]

Nigel [00:05:03.05]: In other words, gay men at San Quentin are on the down low. They're definitely not out and they're actually afraid to come out.

Earlone [00:05:10.06]: In this respect at least, the culture inside seems to be less tolerant than many communities on the outside.

Mike [00:05:16.10]: Recently, we saw the movie 'Moonlight' and the images were of a strong, black man, right. Muscular. Got the durag on. The gold chains, right. A lot of people were offended by that because that's not the image that society paints of homosexuals. And so, it, it makes you uncomfortable when the place that you walk in as a black man, right, or any man for that matter, and all of the sudden, you can identify with the external that you see in this person, but internally he's informed by something else. So, there's this whole other dynamic of who am I and what does that have to be. So, people, yeah, it's crazy to live it. [tinkling melody and piano]

Nigel [00:05:55.05]: Earlone, when 'Moonlight' played at San Quentin, it was the most I ever heard guys yell down in the media lab. I mean, they were really offended by it.

Earlone [00:06:02.18]: Yeah. Last year, there was a screening of the movie up in the chapel, and I didn't go, but I heard a lot of people walked out.

Nigel [00:06:09.02]: We're gonna hear more from Mike later in the program. He's got an interesting backstory that helps explain why he has so much

insight into all of this. But our other window into what life is like for LGBTQ people is a transgender woman.

Earlone [00:06:22.23]: There's a group of six or seven transgender women in San Quentin. Not many, but you definitely notice 'em.

Nigel [00:06:28.03]: Ok. No openly gay men, [Earlone laughs] but there're openly transgender women.

Earlone [00:06:32.13]: Right.

Nigel [00:06:32.17]: And that's always been confusing to me.

Earlone [00:06:36.12]: We're gonna try to make some sense out of that. The one transgender woman that pretty much everybody in San Quentin knows is Jarvis Jovan-

Lady Jae [00:06:44.22]: Lady Jae.

Earlone [00:06:45.08]: Ok. My bad. I've been checked. [Lady Jae laughs] I'll go back to what Lady Jae.... Lady Jae has been in prison for almost 30 years and at San Quentin for about five. Her personal story tells us a lot about LGBTQ life inside and out.

Lady Jae [00:07:02.01]: Yes, mam.

Nigel [00:07:03.03]: Could you just describe yourself for me?

Lady Jae [00:07:04.22]: Ok. This is gonna be fun. So. I am five-ten and a half. I weigh none of your business. I'm very voluptuous. I have boobs a go-go. I have backside for days. Big thighs. Cute face. You know. I couldn't be more cuter if I tried, if I drew my own self. [rolling notes]

Nigel [00:07:30.10]: Lady Jae has identified as female since childhood. She's 57 years old now and is from San Diego.

Earlonne [00:07:36.05]: When she was 12, she tried to explain who she was to her family.

Lady Jae [00:07:40.27]: I'll never forget. I was sitting in the front room and my.... I have a sister that's older than I am. It, it just.... Something just said, "Tell her! Tell her! Tell her! Tell her! Tell her!" And I said, "Um, Rinda, I have something to tell you." And she looked at me and she said, "What is it, baby brother?" And I said, "Well, I feel like, I'm, um, like you and mama." And she said, "What are you talkin' about?" And I said, "I like boys." She said, "Oh. Ok." She didn't say anything. She was very calm. Until she heard my mother's car pull up in the driveway. [bass beat and drums] She jumped up off the chair. She bolted out the door, broke the screen door, and then went screaming, "Mama! Mama! Mama! Mama! Mama! Jarvis said he like boys!" So, when my mother came in, she said, "Baby, you don't know what you like. You don't." You know. I think my mother was afraid because this was the seventies and this was like '73. My mother was really afraid that, if it got out, that they would put me in a mental institution. So, it because my mother's secret, my secret, and my sister's secret. [melancholic music] In this day and age, in 2018, these young people have the language. They have developed this new language. So, for me now, I can express it better, but as a child, I had child words, and the only thing I could say to my mother at that time was, "I'm like you and Dorinda. I like boys." Right. That, I was telling them, in my way, that I want to rock dresses. I want to wear makeup. I want to wear high heels. But the only thing they probably heard was homosexual or the word they used back in that day was **fag**. Queer. Sissy. Punk.

Nigel [00:09:25.13]: Ok. So, when was the first time you remember that you were able to dress the way you wanted to dress?

Lady Jae [00:09:29.21]: Oh, god. I was 19 and, um, it was one of those things. I went over to my sister's house, Dorinda. The one that I'm really tight with now. And, uh, me and a friend, we just dressed up one day, and we came down the steps and my sister looked at me, and she said, "Oh, you're cute. You're cute."

Nigel [00:09:48.07]: What'd you have on?

Lady Jae [00:09:49.02]: Uh, I had on a red dress with some tennis shoes because, at that time, you know, it was very hip-hop culture. It was just beginning. Salt-N-Pepa. I had, um, my hair was just short and curly. Um, I had on a little bit of makeup and just a dress and just came down. It's time to go party. At that time, I was not this size. You know. I'm a voluptuous girl now. But back in my young day, [laugh] I gave Naomi Campbell and Halle Berry a run in body. Ok? Snap. Snap. [snaps]

Nigel [00:10:19.23]: [laughs] And how did it feel that day when you-

Lady Jae [00:10:21.14]: Oh my god. I, I think the best thing was that my sister did not freak out. She didn't look at me like, "Oh, my god." She just said, "You're cute." [deep, melodic music] And that was it. No more. No less.

Earlone [00:10:39.13]: We don't know the details of the crime that put her in prison and it's not relevant to this story. But we do know that Lady Jae was convicted of first-degree murder and first-degree attempted murder. She's serving a sentence of 27 years to life.

Nigel [00:10:52.11]: So, you came in as a woman.

Lady Jae [00:10:54.02]: Very much so. I was 26, 27 when I came in. And, uh, I lived on the street as a woman. Um, even my court case even talks about how I used to walk around the apartment complex and do bikini

contests with the girls in the neighborhood, and the woman that got on the stand said, "It was so disgusting! Mr. Clark would walk around in the bikini and the men would..." Yeah, because I was bumping, chick! Don't hate. My body was on flick. Or is it fleek?

Earlonne [00:11:24.13]: I would say fleek.

Lady Jae [00:11:25.10]: Fleek. It was on fleek. I don't know what that mean, but I know it meant my body was all that and a bag of chips.

Nigel [00:11:31.08]: So, why didn't you go to a women's prison? Why were you put in a men's prison?

Lady Jae [00:11:33.20]: Well, because I still have that nasty little apend-, pen, a peen-, this, this, what is the word I'm lookin' for?

Earlonne [00:11:41.13]: A outie.

Lady Jae [00:11:42.08]: Yeah! [laughs] Yeah. So, since I do have this outie, um, I'm not allowed to go to a women's prison because I haven't fully transitioned. And, when I came to prison, there was no such thing as the state giving you a sex change. When I came to prison, it was you're classified as a male, you're going to a male's prison, no matter what form of LGBTQ you were. They went directly by what it says on your birth certificate. Period. [distorted locking sound]

Earlonne [00:12:18.07]: Laws have changed since Lady Jae came to prison. Now, it's possible for inmates to get gender reassignment surgery and, if that happens, they'll be sent to a women's prison.

Nigel [00:12:28.08]: The same is true for transgender men. They can get hormones and it's possible to get surgery but, as far as we know, there aren't any transgender men currently at San Quentin.

Earlonne [00:12:38.19]: So, I'm just curious.

Lady Jae [00:12:39.12]: Yes.

Earlonne [00:12:39.29]: You, you ready for the snip-snip cut-cut?

Lady Jae [00:12:41.18]: Well, you know what, in all actuality, I am not really there yet. I mean, I have to wrap my head around it, because I have had the outie for all these years. I don't know. I'm happy with the transition I'm at right now because I can express. This is my gender expression. You see who I am. I come at you and you see this big ol' girls walkin' your way. It's like ok. We know what that is. That is a girl. You men in blue won't call me that, but the people on the outside in the world, they see me as a woman. The men in blue, it's a little bit harder for them to understand because I'm here with them, but if they saw me on the street in my full gay, livin' my glory, child, please. [distorted locking sounds]

Earlonne [00:13:32.08]: All right. Would you cell up with a transgender person?

Male [00:13:35.12]: No.

Earlonne [00:13:36.16]: Why?

Male [00:13:37.14]: For one, um, that's not conducive to what I believe in, because I know they're gonna try me every day and every night, and, um-

Earlonne [00:13:44.24]: You think this sexy **motherfucker**, huh?

Male [00:13:47.06]: Well, [laughs] actually, yes. [laughs] But, we're not gonna go there. No. They're gonna try you too, Earlonne. Or, they're gonna try any man that, if they're in the cell with them every night, and then, there

ain't no tellin' what you might do. I mean, you know men do tend to get erections and haven't had women in a while, and you know, the, uh, the thought of oral sex or somethin' might just overwhelm you if you're constantly up under that temptation every night, so I don't even wanna be in that position.

Earlone [00:14:12.08]: I think that might be the misconception of transgender people is that, they're not sex hungry. It's just that their choice to just identify as a woman.

Male [00:14:20.00]: Ok, then, we'll go back to what you said. Maybe I'm just sexy, because they all come at me like that. I'm just bein' totally honest with you. I'm not tryin' to be funny. I'm not tryin' to be-

Nigel [00:14:29.11]: Ok. Earlone, we're talking about LGBTQ issues in prison, but the truth is, it's a lot different for gay and bisexual men than it is for trans women.

Earlone [00:14:38.18]: Right. To start with, transgender woman can live openly as women. It may not be easy, but they can do it.

Nigel [00:14:44.19]: And they have certain privileges, like they can shower separately from the men.

Earlone [00:14:49.02]: And, they can cell alone if they want, but for gay men, it's harder. For one thing, they don't come out to the world and say, "Hey, I'm gay."

Nigel [00:14:57.21]: And that's why I was so interested to talk with Mike, who we heard from earlier. In the course of our conversation, he mentioned having sexual experiences with men before he came to prison, but he also resists the gay label, and I found that kind of confusing.

So, I'm sorry. I have to ask for a clarification. I may be really dense. So, are you, do you identify as a gay man or are you saying that's what people are putting on you?

Mike [00:15:22.24]: Yeah, I do not identify as a gay man.

Nigel [00:15:24.11]: Ok. Ok. So-

Mike [00:15:29.13]: I do identify as a bisexual.

Nigel [00:15:30.24]: Ok.

Earlonne [00:15:32.19]: Mike told us he's had two relationships with women since he's been incarcerated.

Nigel [00:15:36.10]: Yeah. Men do meet women when they're in prison and, you know what, we've got to do a whole episode about dating in prison.

Earlonne [00:15:41.08]: Yeah. Yes, we do.

Nigel [00:15:41.28]: How guys meet people, but that's not what we're talking about right now.

Earlonne [00:15:44.29]: Right.

Nigel [00:15:45.21]: The point is, Mike wanted us to know that he's also interested in women, but he doesn't deny having been with men in the past.

Mike [00:15:53.20]: I won't deny what experience I had up to that point, because it's made me who I am and I'm hoping that my ability to identify in the way that I do with the LGBTQ community helps to bridge a gap in understanding about what people.... There's always a backstory. Some of what you're doing here is about the backstory.

Nigel [00:16:12.10]: Right.

Mike [00:16:12.24]: And people don't want to hear the backstory, especially if it challenges the ideas about something.

Nigel [00:16:18.01]: But we did want to hear Mike's backstory. It helps explain why he has so much interest and insight into the LGBTQ life in prison. Here's how he told it to us.

Mike [00:16:29.01]: I was.... I was molested as a child by a school social worker, and it wasn't a violent molestation. It was a whole grooming thing. We hear a lot about grooming. And so, I learned a lot of behaviors because I had a dysfunctional home. Uh, a dad who was somewhat abusive, an alcoholic. And, this person just came in and kind of taught me some things. And this started at about 10 years old. Right. And that was the life that I learned was for me. Uh, I, I lived as a homosexual in the homosexual community. Been to gay pride parades. Been to, uh, Milwaukee. I'm from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Been to, uh, Wisconsin was the first state to have a gay rights bill passed. Um, and got a lot of information very, very young. And the older that I got, I found some disconnect with some of the community. There were aspects of it that I was ok with, but there were some other things, some core issues that I just had a problem with, and so, by the time I was 28 years old, that was the first time that I had recognized what had happened to me was actually a violation. By that time, I had been in drugs and alcohol, criminal thinking and criminal behavior. Uh, a lot of relationships. A lot of domestic abuse, domestic violence.

Four years later, I began to deal with this issue of actually having been violated. I'm in prison. Uh, for the murder of a gay man by the name of Robert Stratton. And it, it, it, um, it challenged my whole sense of being in the earth and on the planet, right. Um, because now I don't have just the fact that I was molested. Now, I'm in this environment that I know that I

can't even talk about this. [melancholic music] And I will say this for anybody who's listening. When I came in to my faith, the God that I've come to know never asked me about my sexuality. Never told me that my sexuality was wrong. I was just told to focus on him. And that's what I did. In the spirit of transparency and searching for truth in my life, I shared that story with some people who are very close to me. And they took that story and took it to some people here at San Quentin. And then, all of a sudden, by 2000.... I got here in 2005 and by 2007, I was gay. Throughout the institution. And 2018, I'm still gay. Throughout the institution. The story perpetuates itself, and so, if I walk the yard with somebody more than once or twice, this person was my lover. I, I'm just the gay guy. I mean, it's been, it's been 11 years and I tell you, I am so tired because I've lost friends. [soft, scaled music] I know what it is to have a label or to be so misunderstood that it causes pain, that it causes depression, that it causes fear of just walking out of your cell. I'm afraid when a new cellie comes in, right. Because, not because of anything inside of me, but they may come in, be cool, have a couple days, and then the next thing you know, "Yeah, my homie said I have to get up out of here" but because of this, and yet, and still we're fighting to go out to society. Supposedly having a new idea about who we are and who people are, but you can't get it right right where you are. It's crazy.

Lady Jae [00:20:02.27]: I'mma do a little history lesson. Ok. So, when I first came in, it was 1989, and the thing for men back then is.... I, I don't want to say it was almost acceptable, but if you got with a transgender, it was almost like, "Ok. You're strong enough to handle it." And, a lot of guys back then were doing it. It's ok to have a girl as long as she was a girl. Not a gay boy, but a girl.

Nigel [00:20:33.08]: In the 1990's, Lady Jae was serving time in Calipatria, a maximum security prison east of San Diego. And during that time, she shared a cell with a man who was much more than a cellie.

Lady Jae [00:20:44.19]: His homeboys felt that it would be one hell of a lark to see a makeshift wedding. So, I said ok. I rolled along with it. He proposed. After he proposed, we decided on a date. And, in prison, necessity is the mother of invention. So, um, to make a wedding gown, I took a laundry bag, and at that time the laundry bags were blue.

Earlone [00:21:12.03]: Before you get there, the laundry bag is see-through. The laundry bag is like-

Lady Jae [00:21:15.15]: Oh, the laundry bag, but you have to-

Nigel [00:21:17.01]: Oh, wait, the mesh ones? Oh, you had.... Oh, that probably looked great!

Lady Jae [00:21:18.02]: The mesh laundry bag. It did! I was a lot smaller then, but still quite shapely. Picture that. It was cute. It was really, really cute. So, I said, "Ok. I need a veil." So, I took a white t-shirt, flipped it upside down so the neck became like my waistline and the bottom of the t-shirt became my veil. It was very chic and, um, my cellie, wink-wink, he put on his best blues and his best man put on his best blues. We walked out and we had all of my homeboys from San Diego. They were sitting on one side, so they were the guests of the bride. [bright, light music] His homeboys was on the other side and, uh, one of his younger homeboys became the officiator of the ceremony.

Nigel [00:22:12.01]: So, what were the vows?

Lady Jae [00:22:13.27]: Do you Lady Jae take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband, to honor, to love, to cherish, in sickness and in health, share your canteen with him and your packages? Uh-huh. He's mine. I'm his. I'm his. He's mine. Uh, we jumped over a broom, so that was my wedding.

Nigel [00:22:37.06]: So, how did they, like, so at that time, guys just didn't care? They were totally fine? There was no-

Lady Jae [00:22:44.16]: Well, well. What was happening back there, I think, because no one saw the light of the tunnel like it is now, and when they gave us a life sentence, we had to make families in there, because we might die at any time during a violent situation, because that's the way the prison was, especially the level fours back in the late 80's, early 90's. They were very violent, so we made families. [strobing, light music]

Nigel [00:23:16.09]: Lady Jae told us that back in the day it wasn't as big a deal for a guy to move in with a girl, especially if the guy was an active gang member with rank.

Earlone [00:23:24.17]: Now, not all gangs accepted these relationships, but for Lady Jae, once she jumped the broom, she was brought into the gang's family.

Lady Jae [00:23:33.11]: I became his wife and their big sister. For the young ones, I might have become their surrogate mother. For the elderly, I became their, you know, I'll walk the yard with them and help them with their canteen, maybe even going in and clean their cells for them and wash their clothes, because that's the role that I took in that setting, and I'm not the only girl that went through this. It's just prison history. I'm not unique in that, but I was the only girl that ever had a wedding at Calipatria.

Earlone [00:24:11.20]: You know, when I came into the system, I seen it.

Nigel [00:24:14.18]: Really?

Earlone [00:24:14.26]: You had.... Yeah, yeah. You had certain guys who were involved in relationships and it was out in the open. But, as the time went on, those guys became targets.

Lady Jae [00:24:25.10]: Today, it's more on the DL. Right? And, and I don't really understand when it changed, but it changed. And now, when a guy wants to be with one of us, he almost have to creep and sneak about it. You know, it's something shameful and dirty, but when I first came in, it was not. It was, it was, "Hey, that's my wife." [strobing music]

Nigel [00:24:49.20]: Lady Jae's prison marriage lasted two years. Then her cellie was transferred out, and Lady Jae says she doesn't do long-distance relationships. She since had other close relationships in prison, including two years with a man who was also her cellie, but social pressures were too much for him.

Lady Jae [00:25:06.13]: And he came to me and he told me, "Look, you got to move." And I'm like, "Why? I love you, man. Why?" He said, "Because my homeboys don't want you with me anymore and I'm more afraid of my homeboys." I'm like, "Wow. Are you for real?" And, that broke my heart. Because I was really, I was vibing on this dude. I mean, we'd been together two years, and after two years, "Wow. Really?" That, that was the worst point of me doing time ever, right there. [distorted, bubbling locking sounds]

Nigel [00:25:48.23]: Do you think that in general transgender women are more accepted than gay men inside prison?

Mike [00:25:54.21]: Oh, definitely.

Nigel [00:25:55.14]: Why is that?

Mike [00:25:56.07]: I think because with, uh, with transgenders, it's external. You can see it. So, from a male role belief system, I can subjugate a transgender, make him my **bitch**, so to speak. Right. And, if I really, let's say if I even have a bent towards that life, it's more accepted if I'm with someone who looks like a woman versus being with a man. So,

it's, it's easier for a transgender to survive on some levels, because then there's still the violence that happens to transgenders that won't happen to an in the closet homosexual because they're not out, right. But, from the external, because, you see, there's a few transgenders who are here, right. And, for the most part, they're free to do what they want to do. But, like you said when you started, there's no gay men here, right. So, that tell a story in and of itself. [melancholic music evolving into rolling beat]

Nigel [00:26:58.07]: Thanks to Mike and to Lady Jae for sharing their stories. It's not easy to talk about these things in prison.

Earlonne [00:27:03.19]: Not at all.

Nigel [00:27:08.00]: So, E, do you think for people inside the conversation will ever be easier?

Earlonne [00:27:13.00]: I really don't know. In prison, this is a hard issue to sell.

Nigel [00:27:17.10]: Well, I will say, just the fact that we were able to get people to come down here and talk about it, it's a good sign.

Earlonne [00:27:23.24]: Yeah. I mean, I'm waitin' on a response from the people in here, because it's gonna be two different sides. One side gonna be like, "Ah! You did a damn good job with the story!" And the other side is gonna be like, "Man, that was some foul play."

Nigel [00:27:35.15]: [both laugh] Ok. Well, let's hope the conversation continues.

Earlonne [00:27:41.08]: Indeed. [snapping beat with bass music]

Nigel [00:27:46.01]: We're gonna take a break, and when we come back, we have count time. That's when we play some tape that we really want you to hear but doesn't quite fit with our story.

Earlonne [00:27:53.28]: It's about a change that took place here in San Quentin in the 1970's, and it made life better for one small community.

Male [00:29:00.24]: [bell ringing] Hey! Count time!

Count time!

Count time, everybody! Count time! [overlapping voices, names being called.

White Eagle [00:29:13.23]: [drum beats] My name is White Eagle, and I was privileged to be here after they built the very first sweat lodge here in the United States in a prison in 1979. Before the Religious Freedom Act signed by Jimmy Carter, it was illegal for us to practice this ceremony. The purpose of a sweat lodge is in curing. We go back into the womb of our Mother Earth to get rid of all the things that we've picked up in life. Our anger, our violence, our drinking, our drugs. So, each round, we take care of our self, because we're taught before we can pray for anybody else or ask for anybody else to have something, we have to be right with our self. So, we connect to Creator, Grandfather.

Earlonne [00:29:55.25]: Ok, cool. And you have in your left hand, what?

White Eagle [00:29:58.25]: This is a gourd rattle, a shaker. My people use this in a drum when we sing our chants, you know. Every tribe, every tribe has a little bit different. They'll use maybe only drum. They'll use a deer tail shaker. They'll use a clapper stick. But, my people, Comanche, we use this. [shakes rattle] I'll do a little friendship song for you. [sings] So, we think about our grandmas, our grandpas, things they went through, being killed,

and having our language and our land taken away from us. So, it gives us strength because our people were strong. This has endured all these years, so this is the same way. Our elders say this is the way. It never changes. [bells ring] [outro music]

Nigel [00:31:06.27]: Thanks to White Eagle for telling us about the San Quentin sweat lodge.

Earlonne [00:31:10.26]: And thanks to all the people who shared their thoughts with us for yard talk.

Nigel [00:31:14.01]: 'Ear Hustle' is produced by myself, Nigel Poor, and Earlonne Woods, with help from outside producer Pat Mesiti Miller who also comes in to work with the sound design team. This episode was scored with music by Antwan Williams and David Jassy.

Earlonne [00:31:28.09]: Curtis Fox is our story editor and Julie Shapiro is our executive producer for Radiotopia. We want to thank Warden Ron Davis and, as you know, every episode has to be approved by this guy here.

Earlonne [00:31:40.12]: And here he is.

Lieutenant Sam Robinson [00:31:42.27]: You know. Listening to this latest episode, I was thrown off initially, and I was thrown off because Nigel said that there was one of the participants in there that she had to put a disclaimer on that sounded like Lieutenant Robinson.

Earlonne [00:31:56.21]: I think he only sound like you like in the first couple of words.

Lieutenant Sam Robinson [00:32:00.08]: Well, you didn't come to my rescue and say that.

Earlonne [00:32:02.19]: I'm doin' it now.

Lieutenant Sam Robinson [00:32:03.10]: [laughs] Well, for those of you who are true, authentic Ear Hustle listeners, you know that there's only one Lieutenant Robinson voice.

Earlonne [00:32:15.08]: Correct.

Lieutenant Sam Robinson [00:32:16.03]: I want you to know that this is the authentic Lieutenant Sam Robinson, and yes, I do approve this story.

Earlonne [00:32:25.23]: Next time on 'Ear Hustle', exit interviews.

Male [00:32:28.23]: The one thing that I will be most nervous about being with a woman after like 22 years is like, I'm just gonna be completely honest, right, like, I hit the, the finish line prematurely.... Yeah. [outro music]

Nigel [00:32:44.14]: Check out our website: earhustlesq.com, where you can see all kinds of pictures like people from our stories.

Earlonne [00:32:51.17]: Like listeners wearing our 'Ear Hustle' tees.

Nigel [00:32:54.09]: They are everywhere. And you can also sign up for our newsletter. And, by the way, thanks to everybody who's been writing those great reviews on iTunes.

Earlonne [00:33:02.16]: Indeed.

Nigel [00:33:03.08]: I got to bring some in to share with you.

Earlonne [00:33:04.05]: Please do.

Nigel [00:33:05.19]: 'Ear Hustle' is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a collection of the best podcasts around. Hear more at radiotopia.fm. I'm Nigel Poor.

Earlonne [00:33:16.16]: And I'm Earlonne Woods. Thanks for listening.

Succinctly, who is Mike Adams?

Mike [00:33:23.05]: A gentle, sensitive, God-fearing man who has struggles and challenges like everybody else and just wants to be loved and to love.

Earlonne [00:33:33.19]: Sing about it.

Mike [00:33:35.19]: [singing] I've had some good days. I've had some hills to climb. I've had some weary days and some lonely nights. But when I, when I look around and I think things over....