

**Ear Hustle**  
**Episode 90: Abundant and Passionate Trash**  
**May 10, 2023**

**New York:** This is Rahsaan "New York" Thomas, producer with Ear Hustle and this episode contains language that is PG, that means parental guidance is advised because Nigel dropped the F bomb.

**New York:** *Today is March 3rd? Yes.*

**Nigel:** *Wow. Friday, March 3rd. It's 9:15. And who's in the room right now?*

**Reggie:** *Reggie.*

**Rhashiyd:** *Rhashiyd.*

**Sadiq:** *Sadiq.*

**Tony:** *Tony.*

**Nigel:** *And why are we here, Tony?*

**Tony:** *Sounds like a deposition.*

**Nigel:** *[laughs]*

*Oh, what is that?*

*[crosstalk]*

**Nigel:** So, you're all invited today down to the Media Lab to participate in a very special Ear Hustle project that is not for everybody. We're going to explain what it is, and we wanted to come with people who are open-minded and creative and who would want to participate in it.

**Earlonne:** I'm going to have to move it real close to talk about how exciting this is. It's very exciting.

**Nigel:** Bring all your sarcasm because it's only going to make this tape better.

**Earlonne:** So, trash, huh?

**Nigel:** Trash.

**New York:** Trash?

**Nigel:** [laughs]

**Nigel:** Earlonne, you know one of the things that I really love about you?

**Earlonne:** My Colgate White smile, my chocolate skin tone.

**Nigel:** Okay, well, there's all those things, but what I really treasure about you is that you are almost always so positive about everything, and you say yes right away and you're enthusiastic. And so, when you're not quite like that, I'm confused.

**Earlonne:** You confused, or you get worried?

**Nigel:** I get worried. I'm like, "What happened to the Earlonne I know?" So, I have to say, when we started talking about this, there was that edge of maybe sarcasm and suspicion in your voice that I'm just not accustomed to.

**Earlonne:** Hmm. Maybe I was literally really in deep thought about what I would produce.

**Nigel:** Oh, maybe you had some shame or consternation around it.

**Earlonne:** Probably a little bit of all that.

**Nigel:** So, can you tell listeners what we're talking about, please?

**Earlonne:** Yep. At the beginning of March, the Ear Hustle Team all gathered, inside team in the Media Lab at San Quentin and the outside team at our studio at KQED, to talk about a new project.

**Nigel:** Yes. A new challenge that I was of course, very excited about.

*So, everybody should have the instructions in front of them. I'm going to ask New York to read the first paragraph.*

**New York:** *Outside of prison, the average American produces 1,609 pounds of garbage a year, almost 4.5 pounds a day.*

**Tony:** *Every day we leave behind evidence of our existence as seen through our waste. What does that say about what we need versus what we want? What can you learn about yourself, your interests, struggles, intentions, successes, and failures by looking at the things you discard?*

**Nigel:** And the basic idea of it was that everyone on the team was going to save their trash, and I mean all of their trash for seven days. And then at the end of that week, we were going to all bring our trash into work and dig through it. Kind of like an archeological dig, basically to see what our trash says about us.

**Tony:** *Whoa. For seven days?*

**Nigel:** *Yes, for seven days. Reggie's already-- I can see his jaw going--*

**Reggie:** *Yeah, because as soon as that mackerel pouch gets open, you've got to rinse it out. Yeah. That's putrid. Oh, man, this--*

**Nigel:** Earlonne, can you tell people about those pouches, please?

**Earlonne:** Yes, I can. Well, in San Quentin, you can't have metal. So, any food that you order from a catalog, it comes in a mylar pouch. And mackerel is popular because it's cheap.

**Nigel:** Oh. That's why?

**Earlonne:** That's why. It's like maybe a dollar. Everything else, oysters be like \$2-\$3.

**Nigel:** Oh. Okay. So, it's cheap, and if you don't clean those pouches out.

**Earlonne:** Yeah, you're going to smell them and it's going be foul. So, with that said, why are we doing this again, Nyge?

**Nigel:** Okay. Fair enough. The reason to do it is because trash is this great way to sort of examine who we are, by what you throw out. If you look through your garbage, there's ways of sort of identifying how you think and what you care about and what disappointments you might have in your life and your wants versus your needs. It's like this treasure trove of self.

**Earlonne:** Here's our colleague, Rahsaan "New York" Thomas again, reading those instructions.

**New York:** *What can you learn about yourself, your interests, struggles, intentions, successes, and failures by looking at the things you discard? This will also be a comparison between trash produced by those inside prison and those outside.*

**Earlonne:** So, here's who was on our team inside San Quentin. Reggie, who folks might remember from previous episodes, talking about what it was like to eat an orange after like a couple of decades.

**Nigel:** And there's also Sadiq, who is new to the Media Lab, very cool, laid-back dude. And Ear Hustlers, Rhashiyd and Tony.

**Earlonne:** And these cats were immediately worried about logistics, how they'd pull it off.

**Nigel:** Remember, you have to save everything. So, you're going to want to carry a collection bag with you.

**Reggie:** *Nyge, you going to get us beat up.*

*[laughter]*

**Tony:** *You're going to get us stopped by the COs.*

**Reggie:** *Cops going to be like, "What is in that bag?"*

**Sadiq:** *Not just the cops. Other people too.*

**Reggie:** *I just think I'm going to have to store my trash down here.*

*[laughter]*

**Sadiq:** *I just have to double-bag it. That's what I'm going to do, I'm going to double-bag.*

**Reggie:** *When you go to the chow hall and the remnants that's left from your tray, you've got to put that in a bag.*

**Nigel:** The guys inside decided they were going to bring their trash down to the Media Lab every day.

**Earlonne:** Just so they didn't have to keep it in their cells, which are hella small.

**Reggie:** *I'm trying to imagine if somebody does have a cellmate, how are they going to explain to them, "Hey, I'm collecting garbage." I could see that being a compatibility issue.*

**Tony:** *Yeah, that'd be a problem.*

**Nigel:** *I'm just so curious that you all think you're going to have that much garbage. I thought you guys would have a tiny amount of garbage. I assume one thing that we're going to discover is that inside, a lot of the garbage is food based and outside a lot of it's not. I bet we make much more waste outside than inside.*

**Sadiq:** *I don't think we do.*

**Reggie:** *Only reason I think we're going to have more because everything we get is packaged. We don't get to buy fresh anything. So, if we get fruit or vegetables--*  
*[crosstalk]*

**Nigel:** You know, Earlonne, the guys inside San Quentin were so curious about this project, they were so positive, and it really touched my heart, I have to say. It actually made me a little bit teary. I was like, "They get it." They see value in trash.

**Earlonne:** You know, Nyge-- I hate to burst your bubble, Nigel, but when you're offering people in prison something to do, people jump in, "Let's do it."

**Nigel:** Yep, their minds and hearts are open to change.

*[laughter]*

**Nigel:** So, after all the grumbling among some of the members of the outside team, everybody agreed to sign on.

**New York:** *My name is Rahsaan "New York" Thomas, and I'm going to store my trash for seven days. Yes.*

**Bruce:** *My name is Bruce "Baltimore" Wallace, and I am going to store my trash for seven days.*

**Shabnam:** *My name Shabnam Sigman, and I am going to store my trash for the next seven days.*

**Amy:** *My name is Amy Standen and I am going to store my trash--*

**Rhashiyd:** *My name is Rhashiyd Zinnamon, sound designer for Ear Hustle--*

**Sadiq:** *My name is Darrell Davis. Everybody calls me Sadiq. And I'm definitely in.*

**Tony:** *My name is Tony Tafoya, and I am in.*

**Reggie:** *Oh, my name is Reginald Thorpe. Everybody calls me Reggie and the listeners out there, I encourage you to participate in this challenge too. I think you'll get something out of it.*

**Sadiq:** *I'm looking forward to this.*

**Reggie:** *This is going to be very interesting. This is probably going to be one of the most interesting projects I did since I've been incarcerated, probably in my life, just collecting garbage. I never thought about that.*

**Rhashiyd:** *What's crazy is every time we do projects that we collaborate with people on the outside, it makes me feel like we're part of outside. You know what I mean? And so, that's what I look forward to most. Just that connection.*

**Nigel:** *My name is Nigel Poor and I'm going to store my trash for the next seven days.*

**Earlonne:** *My name is Walter Woods and I'm going to store my trash [laughs] for the next seven days. This is Ear Hustle from PRX's Radiotopia.*

**New York:** *Today is Tuesday, March 7th, and it's the first day of collecting trash.*

**Reggie:** *Hey, this is Reggie. Today is March 7th, day one.*

**Rhashiyd:** *Today is March 7th, day one of the trash challenge. My name is Rhashiyd.*

**Nigel:** Today is Tuesday, March 7th, the first day of collecting my trash, and I'm pretty excited. I threw out my first piece of trash by mistake. It was a humble tissue, but I pulled it out of the garbage and put it into my collection bag. And I'm thinking about all of the trash adventures that are waiting for us all in these next seven days. Yay. Ear Hustle Trash Adventure begins.

Earlonne, do you want to know what I observed on the first day of trash collecting?

**Earlonne:** Yeah, what did you observe, Nigel?

**Nigel:** Excitement in the air. All of a sudden, people that maybe were a little cynical were talking about what was in their trash. [Earlonne chuckles] There was like a little glint in people's eyes, and I was so happy.

*What do you think, New York, do you think people are actually kind of laughing and having a good time with this trash thing?*

**New York:** *I think this whole trash thing is hilarious, and so I'm trash talking about it.*

[laughter]

**Nigel:** *Explain this new beverage that you created today.*

**New York:** *Well, I was making a cup of tea and I couldn't find the water, and so I mistook the coffee kettle for the water pot, and I end up putting coffee into my tea and I didn't want to waste it, and it counts towards my garbage anyway. And so, I tried this new concoction. And it tastes halfway decent, and I feel really energized right now.*

**Nigel:** *I have to say there's a little bit of madness in your eyes right now.*

[laughter]

**New York:** *I might have had a bit too much caffeine.*

**Earlonne:** While New York was making this new concoction, he instinctively grabbed some of those little plastic creamer containers.

**Nigel:** That's not a garbage.

**New York:** *I just went to put the little creamers that were on the side by the sugar.*

**Nigel:** No, no, no, don't go for those. Wait, where did you save all those containers?

**New York:** Uh-oh.

**Earlonne:** Dun, dun, dun. So, we see you right now. You just told on yourself, bruh. You let you talk for a little bit and you tell on yourself that you're throwing trash in the trash. All those little containers, huh?

**New York:** I got to get into the habit now, saving all my trash. That was an oversight, but I've been thinking about it. Just instinctively, I threw the little container away.

**Nigel:** It's easy to do that.

**New York:** Now Earl has to go back and get it for me. Do you got any little rubber gloves? [laughs]

**Earlonne:** [crosstalk] You should threw them in the right ones. [crosstalk]

**Nigel:** That should work perhaps.

**Earlonne:** Remembering to keep your trash was hard.

**Nigel:** Yes.

**Earlonne:** It was really an effort.

**Nigel:** You had to have a bag with you all the time.

**Earlonne:** All the time. And even for guys inside, they were having difficulties.

**Rhashiyd:** It is now 1:55 PM and I would say my day started fairly normal, except I forgot to save my oatmeal wrapper. So, I had to go into the trash and put it into my little personal trash bag. So, that was kind of disgusting, but I did it.

**Tony:** Today is Wednesday, March 8th, and it is the second day of the trash collection.

**Nigel:** This is Tony again. He's one of our producers inside San Quentin.



**Tony:** *This morning, I ate a banana and completely forgot that I had to save the trash and threw the peel away without even thinking about it.*

**Sadiq:** *It's kind of fun, it's kind of silly at the same time that I have to walk around with my trash early in the morning.*

**Earlonne:** And here's Sadiq, also inside San Quentin.

**Sadiq:** *And it's like, "Oh, I can't forget my baby." Like forgetting my baby or forgetting my car keys or something. I got to remember to take my trash with me to work, it's kind of silly, but I like it.*

**Nigel:** And, Amy, who's our editor for Ear Hustle, of course you have those talents of making things flow nicely. So, you were busy finding some technicalities to help you reduce your trash load.

**Amy:** Definitely. What I realize I'm doing is, I will have my eye on some mess in the kitchen and ordinarily I would just throw it in the garbage. But instead, I'll just sort of stare at it like for a couple hours or even for a couple days and just hope that someone else in my house will pick it up and throw it out because I don't want to carry it around.

**Bruce:** It does get a little fuzzy. Like Nancy and I, most of our trash is pretty shared. So what is hers? What is mine? My theory is that maybe if I make dinner, she normally cleans up, so maybe I'll just make dinner and she'll be the one throwing it away, so I don't have to hold onto it.

**Reggie:** *Are you keeping this a secret or telling people about it? Well, I can't keep it a secret because when I leave out my cell, people see the bag in my hand and they ask me, "Man, what is that? That looks like trash." I was like, "Yeah, it is. I'm participating in a trash collecting challenge to see how much trash I accumulate each day." And they are like, "Man, you're walking around with trash, you got banana peels?" "Yeah, that's what it is. That's what we do. You should try it one day, just to see how much trash you accumulate."*

**Rhashiyd:** *I am not keeping it a secret. I felt like my security blanket was to inform everybody around me, "Hey, if you see me collecting trash, I'm in the Ear Hustle Trash Challenge, so don't be alarmed." We'll see. But day one, so far so good. So, Rhashiyd out.*

**Nigel:** Today is Wednesday, March 8th, and it's day number two of collecting trash. I cannot believe all the paper towels I use, especially when I'm at work. It's kind of crazy and it's partially because I clean up after other people. The kitchen counter, [chuckles] that's funny. And then, every time I wash my cup, I dry it with a paper towel. So, I found myself washing my cup, then going into the bathroom and using the air dryer in there to dry things so I use less paper towels.

**Earlonne:** Nyge, you go in the bathroom and dry things with the air thing?

**Nigel:** I don't want so many paper towels in my trash bag.

[water tap running]

**Bruce:** It's Bruce. Today is Thursday, the third day of the challenge. And one thing I'm noticing is that I've always meant to be good about using the hand dryer instead of the paper towels in the bathroom at work. But now, when I'm faced with the prospect of adding a few more things to my trash bag, I'm really becoming devoted to the air dryer, which I previously stayed away from because frankly, some of them feel like they just blow old, dirty water back in your face. But at least it's not a paper towel.

**Nigel:** It's so interesting that people have a different tolerance for grossness. Someone finds gross, other people could care less about.

**Earlonne:** People find those pictures of hair coming out of sinks gross, Nigel. I'm glad that wasn't in your trash.

**Nigel:** You know my hobby is pulling hair out of drains.

**Earlonne:** Who pulls hair out of the drain right after the shower?

**Nigel:** Oh, my God, so much hair comes out. Yeah.

**Earlonne:** Serious?

**Nigel:** Like I probably pull a clump of hair. I don't know how I even have hair left.

**Earlonne:** Wow.

**Shabnam:** *I mean I just let like pile up until Jeff like gets really mad that the shower is clogged up and then he pulls it out.*

**Nigel:** *[laughs]*

**Earlonne:** This is Shabnam, our managing producer. She was working from home that day.

*Jeff, you heard that right?*

**Nigel:** *See, we're already learning that I clean up after myself immediately and Shabnam leaves it for her husband to clean up.*

**Shabnam:** *It comes out my hand and then I put it on the wall of the shower.*

**Earlonne:** *I do too. Oh, my God. It's a nice sculpture sometimes.*

So, after a few days everybody was walking around with these bags, talking about them, and they had all this gross whatever in it. Dead skin cells, whatever.

**Nigel:** Hair, nail clippings and flossers, teeth floss.

**Earlonne:** What's wrong with teeth flossers?

**Nigel:** Oh, sorry. I love you, Earlonne, but I don't like to see people flossing their teeth.

**Earlonne:** No?

**Nigel:** No.

**Earlonne:** I don't see that as gross as pulling hair out of a drain, Nigel.

**Nigel:** Exactly. Well, this is exactly what we're talking about. What is gross for one person is totally fine for another. And let me just say this, I hate seeing people floss teeth in public. But in private, of course, that's when you do it.

**Tony:** *Is it gross that I reuse my flossers more than once?*

**Nigel:** *I use them more than once too. It seems wasteful.*

**Tony:** *That's not right?*

**Sadiq:** *Expensive.*

**Tony:** *It's wasteful plastic.*

**Nigel:** *Yeah.*

**Sadiq:** *I just throw it away.*

**Reggie:** *No, not me.*

**Nigel:** *We're all so thrifty.*

Earlonne, this was like to me a sign that this project was going to be awesome. It was like a real bonding experience that three out of five of us reuse our floss. I feel everything about this episode has proven my point. Trash is fascinating.

*I, of course, am organizing everything. I've made three bags and one bag is for trash, one is for compost, and one is just for coffee grinds. And at first, I was going to put stuff together and then I realized, "No, they need to have separate bags." And I put them in separate bags, and I wrote with sharpie on the bag. And then I realized, "No, I need to get a piece of tape so I can write carefully the day and what's on it." So, I have like day number one, March 7th, compost, day. Number one, March 7th, trash. Day number one, March 7th, coffee. So, I had to [laughs] potentially waste bags so I could make it look better. This is the sound of my bags. [bags crunching]*

*Anyway, I'm loving this project and I cannot wait to go into San Quentin tomorrow and hear what the guys inside are thinking.*

**Earlonne:** Three days in, mid-week check-in with two of the guys inside. Tony and Sadiq.

**Nigel:** Yes. So, we went into the Media Lab, and of course they had everything-

**Earlonne:** -laid out.

**Nigel:** -laid out for us. So, we had two tables and on it were discreet piles of people's trash. Well, the bags, and then they were slowly pulling out-

**Earlonne:** What was what.

**Nigel:** -their delightful garbage.

**Sadiq:** *I have a Q-tip that I used. I have--*

**Tony:** *He doesn't want to talk about.*

**Sadiq:** *No, I mean it's just a Q-tip.*

**Nigel:** *Q-tips are private.*

**Sadiq:** *I have a letter that I got returned to sender, it came back. I must have had the wrong address.*

**Nigel:** *Oh, how does that feel?*

**Sadiq:** *It's a waste of stamp, I know. It was just a waste. It's all right. I'll try again. And I have some hair in here that I had shaved from somewhere around here. It's in one of these tissue balls. Oh, here you go, right here. A lot of hair.*

**Nigel:** *Oh, nice. Oh, look at all the hair in there.*

**Sadiq:** *Yeah, I kept it.*

**Nigel:** *Oh, cool.*

**Sadiq:** *And some more ripped-up envelopes and letters. And an inmate receipt. This is the receipt that you get when somebody's sending you money on your books. And I always rip them up. I always throw them away. I don't never keep them. I used to keep them a while ago. [crosstalk]*

**Nigel:** *Why'd you change that?*

**Sadiq:** *I've been down so long, so now I have so much stuff accumulated over time. I just started ripping it up, getting rid of it.*

**Nigel:** *Well, I have to say, what I noticed when you were going through it is you handle it so gently, with so much respect.*

**Sadiq:** *[laughs] I didn't even realize that.*

**Nigel:** *Sadiq had a green pepper stem and some meat packages. And that's how I learned that he was the main chef down in the Media Lab.*

**Sadiq:** *I cook. I cook for everybody back here. So, it's a lot of stuff.*

**Nigel:** *Oh, wow.*

**Sadiq:** *Yeah. I love cooking. It's my passion. So, I'm always cooking something. Even if I don't want to cook, I still end up cooking.*

**Nigel:** *What did you make for everyone?*

**Sadiq:** *I made burritos. I made burritos for everybody.*

**Nigel:** *Where did this cooking thing come from?*

**Sadiq:** *Watching my mom and my stepdad and my auntie, they always used to cook and I just love cooking. I used to watch all the cooking shows. Like right now, tonight, Next Level Chef comes on, so I can't wait to go watch that.*

*And this was a "miss you" letter, "I love you" letter that I sent to the mother of my child to show my gratitude towards her. She takes care of my daughter, she comes up here to visit. I'm just appreciative of everything she do. I'm grateful. I'm thankful that I have people that can help me with things because it is a struggle. Sometimes, the way they feed you here, it's not really plentiful and fulfilling. So, I am thankful for that.*

**Earlonne:** *People trash inside, just like out here.*

**Nigel:** *Mm-hmm.*

**Earlonne:** *It reveals what kind of support they have on the outside.*

**Nigel:** *Earlonne, I love it. You are finding the deeper meaning in the trash now, so what does it reveal?*

**Earlonne:** *So, you might see some that have, let's say, state Graham Crackers in there. State Graham Crackers, state this, state that. That means that they probably don't have support in society, that's sending stuff in. But then you might see Snickers, certain candies that they don't have on the inside, you can only get through packages. So, you can really tell through the trash how people are maintaining inside.*

**Nigel:** I think sometimes trash also reveals something essential about who a person actually is.

*What I saw in it was that you're a caregiver because you said you like to cook for people, and there was a lot of evidence of that because there were so many pouches. So, you must think about other people's needs, not just your own. And then, you explained what that card was and that was also about gratitude, about having gratitude for somebody who's helping you out. So, that's what I saw. I saw gratitude in someone who likes to be a caregiver.*

**Sadiq:** Thank you.

**Nigel:** *[chuckles]*

I noticed this funny bunch of balled up tape inside of Tony's trash.

**Earlonne:** What do you mean?

**Nigel:** Like all squished together.

**Tony:** *I play with tape all day long. I have since I was a child. I think it's like a calming mechanism. I'm not sure, but you'll see a lot of tape.*

**Nigel:** What do you do with it?

**Tony:** *I just tack it until it doesn't feel right anymore. Then, I just throw it away. It's like a weird, calming sensation.*

**Nigel:** A self-soothing tool.

**Tony:** *Yeah. Every single time I see a tape dispenser, no matter where I'm at, I always take someone's tape and they're always confused.*

**Nigel:** So, Bruce, this story reminds me about something that you do that we learned about during the challenge.

**Bruce:** Right. You must be talking about the very specific situations when I chew gum.

**Nigel:** Yes.

**Bruce:** Which is not like a thing I do in my normal life, but I do, whenever I'm confronted with anything vaguely medical involving me. If it's somebody else, I'm fine. But if it's just a regular checkup with a doctor, I need to chew gum to quell some anxiety.

**Nigel:** Actually, I can see as you're talking, you're getting anxious. Do you remember the first time that you put gum and anxiety with medical things together?

**Bruce:** Yeah. Well, I think there are two things. The first one, and maybe the more acute one is needles, the fear of needles, which I didn't actually always have. It developed in late teens, early 20s, and I think what did that was this moment I was involved in the environmental club at school in high school, and I was going through a bunch of recycling to sort it with the faculty advisor for that. And he found a needle and I guess, being a responsible adult, he wanted to take care of it and so he tried to break the tip of the syringe off and the needle ended up going into his finger. This was the early 90s, so of course, we immediately thought, "Oh, well, you've just contracted HIV," or like, "Who knows what you caught." I feel like that's definitely the start of my fear of needles and it made needles feel a lot more potent and dangerous than they had before.

Also, around the same time in high school, my dad was diagnosed with cancer. In high school, you feel-- it's hard to picture anything that cataclysmic if you haven't been through it before. So, when I heard that, I was like, "Okay, that's bad, but he'll be fine. Everybody's saying he's going to be fine, he's going to be fine." And then, I spent a lot of high school and hospitals. So, now I feel any sort of medical setting sets me on edge. And he did die when I was 20, so a few years later. So now, I feel even if you think you're in a medical condition and you're fine, a medical situation, a medical setting, it could very well end badly.

**Nigel:** Yeah. I can see how you would tie those two things together, seeing the teacher do something with the needle and then your dad.

**Bruce:** I tend to spiral a little bit very quickly, I'm like, "Oh, my God, it's cancer."

**Nigel:** So, you assume the worst in any medical situation?

**Bruce:** Yeah.

**Nigel:** And then, the gum comes in as a relaxant?



**Bruce:** *I think the chewing distracts me and the sugar somehow helps a little bit. I don't know, I've always-- gum has helped me feel a little more confident.*

**Earlonne:** And you know what? Bruce is going to be chewing a lot of gum by the end of this episode.

**Nigel:** That's for sure. We're going to take a quick break.

**Earlonne:** And we'll be right back.

**Reggie:** *This is Reggie, coming back to y'all. This is day five of the Trash Collecting Challenge. I've never done this before, and I'm actually shocked by how much trash I've accumulated today. I am embarrassed on how much food I'm consuming. I thought that I was eating quite healthy. When I'm starting to realize that I'm not eating as healthy as I should be for my age. I'm 47 years old, I eat too damn much, period. I consume too much food, and I'm starting to get fat. I'm out of shape. I'm eating compulsively too rather than just subsiding my hunger.*

**Nigel:** Trash doesn't lie, Earlonne. Some hard truths come out and it can actually forces us to confront aspects of ourselves that we might not be that comfortable with.

**Earlonne:** Well, trash doesn't have to snitch on you, Nyge, if you don't want it to.

*I think I'm going to have the least amount of trash.*

**Nigel:** *I think you are.*

**Earlonne:** *Because, again, I believe in the earth. I believe that we should watch our footprint. You know what I'm saying? And I think that I'm glad that y'all doing this so y'all can see the impact that y'all have on the world.*

**Nigel:** *Did you know that Earlonne was an earth warrior?*

**Earlonne:** *I'm an environmentalist.*

**New York:** *I'm going to call bullshit.*

**Earlonne:** *What?*

**New York:** *I think Earlonne is not having breakfast because he doesn't want to carry his trash around.*

**Nigel:** *I think so too. But let's let him believe that he is an earth first warrior.*

**Tony:** *Today is March 12th, 2023, and it's Oscar Sunday. Yay. I'm so excited. I have so much stuff I'm going to eat today. You should see the trash pile that's going to be here tomorrow. Oh, I can't wait for you guys to see it.*

**Earlonne:** *This is Tony. He's the tape soother. And this is the biggest day of the year for him.*

**Nigel:** *Red carpet.*

**Tony:** *I've been doing this since I was like a teenager. I have little Oscar parties. But it's not like the big ones that you see on TV where everyone gets dressed up. It's just myself.*

**Nigel:** *I love to visualize this. I mean, the cells at San Quentin are so small, so Tony's whole party is just on his bunk. He's got his little TV there at the foot of the mattress and all his food is spread out on his bunk, like a buffet.*

**Earlonne:** *And he's been stockpiling treats for weeks.*

**Tony:** *And this here I'm going to have Oreos, it's going to be the whole thing of Oreos. I will eat the whole 60 cookies or whatever. I will have a Milk Duds thing, a 10-ounce Milk Duds. [laughs] A Dr Pepper, which is the bottles, like the ones you would buy at 7-Eleven. I've got some of the Turkey Chilorio and so that's going to be there. I'm probably going to do that with rice and vegetables. Starts at 10:00 AM.*

**Nigel:** *Oh, you're going to watch the whole thing?*

**Tony:** *Yeah, I watch the whole, even the local ABC7 stuff all the way until like 9 o'clock at night.*

**Nigel:** *And it's on regular TV?*

**Tony:** *It's on ABC. So, it's on just over the air.*

**Nigel:** *Oh-okay. And you're only inviting one person to this party?*

**Tony:** *Me. I'm not even inviting my cellmate. [laughs]*

**Amy:** *It is March 10th, and I am microwaving my coffee grounds because I don't have time to wait for them to dry.*

*[microwaving sound]*

**Nigel:** *So, Amy, you should probably explain why you are microwaving your coffee grounds please.*

*[chuckles]*

**Amy:** *Well, because of course we're carrying our compost around all week. And I had seen on your desk like the day before at work, we make coffee for the whole office. Big basket coffee filter at a time. And I had seen that you did this, and you had put it out on your desk and I couldn't figure out why you had done that. And it took me a while, but I realized you were drying it out because then it doesn't create this like big, wet, sloppy mess that that you have to carry around for a week. So, I thought, "I know. I'll put it in the microwave." So, that's why I was microwaving my coffee filters. And FYI, the microwaving did nothing.*

**Sadiq:** *March 11th, day five, and this is Sadiq checking in. I eat a lot of junk at times. Like I would go on a little spurt of eating a lot of snacks, and then I'll just stop. Then, I go back to eating regular food, and then I go back to snacks. So, this bag, it has a lots of snacks in it. A lot of bags. I ate three bags of potato skins, cheddar and sour cream from TGI Fridays all in one sitting.*

**Tony:** *Yesterday, I made myself something like special with a chicken pouch and a Top Ramen. Okay, so I'll just do the recipe. It's chicken Top Ramen, some jalapeno Snyder pretzels. And this is what's going to be gross, is mango Kool-Aid. [laughs] And so, I have all that inside my little trash bag right now. And it's funny to look at that because it makes me happy to know that that it was a comfort food that I got from county, where you just make spreads out of whatever you have. It makes me smile knowing that I got to go back to my young days, and my 20s. Yeah, early 20s.*

**Reggie:** *Today is day six. This stuff.*

**Sadiq:** *Reg, that stuff stank.*

**Reggie:** *Man, I'm really doing the trash collection cat challenge, is going straight in the bag, bro. It's real, it's food, unconsumed items up in here. Bananas, whole bananas, orange peels, seafood pouches. Stuff that really stinks. This is Oscar the Grouch bag.*

**Nigel:** I hadn't really thought about this with the project, but what's clear is that the trash reveals things about individuals, but it also speaks to the institution that you're involved with. When you're at a place like KQED, it's really different. Like, people's trash is made up of the free snacks that they have here and all the La Croix cans, and people are very interested in separating their trash. So, there's recycling and compost and garbage. A very different kind of institution than a prison.

**Earlonne:** Yeah. There's no composting in prison.

**Nigel:** Oh, shocking. [chuckles] What about recycling?

**Earlonne:** No, the way it works is everyone just throws their trash into these bins on each of the tier. Then later, somebody who's on the trash crew comes through and pulls the recyclables. And then, I've heard some lucky CO takes that big bag home and cash it in. Ching-ching.

[laughter]

**Reggie:** *Looking at my trash, I'm starting to learn about my environment that prison does what's easy. How can it be done in an efficient manner as far as passing food, distributing food? I see most of plastic makes things efficient and more faster to do rather than just passing out raw food items like bread, those packagings make it more easier for them to distribute food inside prisons.*

*And I just think about myself in the stuff that I'm accumulating. I could just imagine it's hundreds over thousands of people in this institution, and they're probably accumulating just as much trash as I am.*

**Amy:** *It is day seven of the trash challenge, and I'm putting my last piece of trash-- I think my last piece of trash into my collection. It's a plastic zip tie used to secure a hair clip that I had bought from Target for Cora and put in her Christmas stocking.*

**Nigel:** *Monday, March 13th, seventh day of collecting trash. I'm happy-sad that it's over. Been actually quite interesting because it really has made me think about how much I consume and what I'm responsible for and what I need versus what I want. And I found*

*myself, even in just one week, actually using less because I didn't want to have to deal with the garbage that I produced. Happy last day of collecting.*

**Earlonne:** So, we collected our garbage for 7 whole days. And we did two reveals. One inside San Quentin and then one at our outside studio in San Francisco.

**Nigel:** Yes. So, on the day of the big reveal, we actually all gathered in the recording studio--

**Earlonne:** Sshhh.

**Nigel:** I know, with our garbage.

**Earlonne:** Don't be snitching on us.

**Nigel:** So, there was Bruce, Amy, Shabnam, New York, you, and me. Six people with seven days' worth of garbage bags. And eventually we spread it all out on the table here and dug in.

**Amy:** *I'm Amy Standen. I am the show's editor and I have some trash to show you.*

**Nigel:** *What were your first thoughts when you heard about this project? What'd you think?*

**Amy:** *I am a little obsessive about garbage. It's an eccentricity, not one I'm super proud of.*

*[laughter]*

**Amy:** *So, I immediately knew it was going to plug into some of my weirdnesses around on this topic. Like, it's hard for me to seek compost in the recycling bin or trash in the recycling bin. I worry a lot about contaminating the waste streams. It's one of the few ways in which I'm a little uptight. I don't know what it is. It's a weird-- And really, I'm not like that on any other subject, it's something about trash--*

**Nigel:** *No, I know. Wait, were your parents like this?*

**Amy:** *No. Probably about something else.*

**Nigel:** *Have you discussed this with a professional? [laughs]*

**Amy:** No.

*[crosstalk]*

**Nigel:** No, because Bruce actually has this about-- I noticed from traveling with him, he also really likes to make sure everything's set. I've seen him go through the garbage and pull things out.

*[laughter]*

**Earlonne:** I have a lot of friends that does this, and *[pauses]* I think they're all in the white community.

**Nigel:** Oh, wow. It's a white thing.

**Earlonne:** Because we mix our shit.

**Nigel:** It might be. So, Ms. Standen?

**Amy:** Yes.

**Nigel:** Court is now in session. You had the most trash.

**Amy:** I had the second to most trash after New York who is starting a whole new apartment.

**Nigel:** Is there a lawyer here that's going to object? *[laughs]*

**Amy:** It's true. I had a fair amount of trash, but in my defense, I threw a party for you guys. Remember?

**Nigel:** Oh, oh, deflecting. Oh, my goodness.

**Amy:** You all came in the house to celebrate Bruce and Nancy's new baby, and we had takeout, and all of that takeout came in--

**Earlonne:** That was like one pizza box, right? A piece of box.

**Nigel:** Yeah. No, that is true.

**Earlonne:** *Come on, Shabnam, cut it out. This is not-- no, Shabnam.*

**Nigel:** *First, can you introduce yourself?*

**Shabnam:** *Shabnam Sigman, Managing Producer.*

**Earlonne:** *Shabnam, come on.*

**Nigel:** *Okay. If you had to guess, how much do you think your garbage weighs?*

**Shabnam:** *Hmm. A pound, maybe a couple pounds.*

**Nigel:** *I cannot believe how discreet her garbage is.*

**Earlonne:** *No, it's almost like it's nothing but like little quiche, wasn't it? The little-- the light.*

**Nigel:** *Are you shocked at how little you have?*

**Earlonne:** *Seven days?*

**Shabnam:** *I'm not shocked. It's totally honestly seven days.*

**Nigel:** *This is representative of--*

**Shabnam:** *Yeah, we don't have a lot of trash.*

**Nigel:** *So, do you not buy things that come in packaging?*

**Shabnam:** *We try really hard not to.*

**Nigel:** *Do you know what's something that I discovered?*

**Shabnam:** *What?*

**Nigel:** *Both you and I clean up after people.*

**Shabnam:** *That's true.*

**Nigel:** Yes. And a lot of my trash turned out to be paper towels.

**Shabnam:** Yeah, me too.

**Nigel:** So, tell me what your cleaning process is here.

**Shabnam:** It bothers me to see a counter or a sink area that has water and soap and just stuff all over it. Bits of food. Part of me thinks, "Why can't people just wipe up after themselves?" But the other part of me is always like, "Well, I should just do it." Because I don't know, if I were the cleaning person, I would hate to show up and be like, "Wow, they're such slob."

**Nigel:** I think there's something about the visual simplicity of it that is relaxing.

**Shabnam:** Yeah, I do think having less clutter around is less stressful for me. At home, I tend to be the person who picks up or puts things away, but it doesn't bother me if things haven't been deep cleaned forever. Like, I'm not the cleaner. I just don't like stuff in the wrong place. It's just bothering the field of vision, I guess.

**Nigel:** All right, New York.

**Earlonne:** 'Saan.

**Nigel:** What are you doing right now?

**New York:** Putting on these gloves because it's about to get messy.

**Nigel:** Did you feel any embarrassment or uncomfortableness saving your garbage?

**New York:** There were times when I felt weird carrying trash around. I went to a Comedy Club this weekend, I felt weird carrying trash out the club with me.

**Nigel:** What did you take out of the club?

**New York:** [laughs] Scrap food, whatever. Napkins, I had a little plastic, a little Ziploc bag. So, it just felt weird carrying around trash.

**Nigel:** Well, I respect the dedication.

**New York:** Yeah. I'm hoping nobody think I'm crazy.



**Nigel:** We did this project at the beginning of March, which was only a couple weeks after New York had gotten out of prison. So, Earlonne, in some ways, he was at a disadvantage because he had these really big pieces of trash from one-time purchases. All the things that you get when you're-- [crosstalk]

**Earlonne:** TVs and shit and all, everything that you get in bulk.

**Nigel:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. He was starting over.

**Earlonne:** But he was also in that window where after you get out of prison, everybody wants to take you out to get something to eat. So, he probably had less cooking-at-home trash, like chicken wrappers.

**Nigel:** Yes, but he actually showed us trash from the first dinner he made for himself after he got out.

**New York:** *I made salmon croquettes last night on my own. No help, no guidance. Just me in the kitchen and they were delicious.*

**Nigel:** *Did you make this for someone else or just yourself?*

**New York:** *No, I was the only one around. Just me. Nobody made it for me.*

**Earlonne:** *You Were self-sufficient.*

**New York:** *I was self-sufficient. Put ketchup on it as always, my favorite condiment. I took it to my room, and I ate it while I was working on the computer. One hand on the computer, another hand on the fork. My side dish was grapes, so I got a little lazy on the side dish. So, I ate the grapes and that was it. Drunk some water. That was it. It was delicious.*

**Nigel:** *Well, thank you, New York, for participating.*

**New York:** *I'm not sure if you're welcome, Nyge.*

*[laughter]*

**New York:** *But thank you. [laughs]*

**Earlonne:** Bruce starts unloading his bags, and right away, it's clear that there's something different.

**Bruce:** *So, the night before the challenge, I decided to do a fair amount of cooking and freeze stuff for the week so I wouldn't generate that trash during the seven days we were keeping our trash.*

**Earlonne:** *Smart.*

**Bruce:** *The next morning though, dishes were piled up. One of those glasses fell into the sink and instead of letting it just fall and shatter, I went to-*

**Earlonne:** *Tried to rescue.*

**Bruce:** *-catch it and it ended up with part of that glass jar in my fingers.*

**Earlonne:** *So, I ended up at the ER because it wouldn't stop bleeding and it was pretty deep and I'd sort of lost feeling. I still don't have feeling in it. So, the first day of the seven days of trash, I spent five hours in the ER.*

**Nigel:** *So, Bruce sat down and started pulling all this stuff out of a plastic bag.*

*Oh, you've bled a lot.*

**Bruce:** *Those were all the paper towels before I got to the emergency room. And I was the first-- Oh, yeah, one of those I ended up at the ER with, and when they were checking me and they're like, "Oh, you can just throw that out." I was like, "No, I actually have to keep it." And she's like, "No, throw it out."*

**Nigel:** *What did they think?*

**Bruce:** *"No, I have to keep it." So, that was the only piece that I actually told somebody at the hospital I have to keep, and this was the rest of it that I scrolled out. It was a long time, and I was just sitting in the back room.*

**Nigel:** *I feel you committed to this so deeply.*

*[background noise]*

**Nigel:** *Wait a minute. I hear metal.*

*[background noise]*

**Nigel:** *Whoa. It still has blood on it. How much gum were you chewing?*

**Bruce:** *I chewed two pieces of gum.*

**Nigel:** *Finally, dun-ta-daa, it's Earlonne's turn to reveal. I see that face you're making.*

**Earlonne:** *Oh, shit.*

**Nigel:** *All right, Earlonne, your turn.*

**Earlonne:** *My turn. Oh shit. This going to be simple.*

**Nigel:** *So right now, Earlonne is looking around the room for his trash.*

**Earlonne:** *This is one of them. Oh, it might just be these two. Here I am, with my trash.*

**Nigel:** *Was it as awful doing it as you thought it would be? Was there anything that surprised you? Any garbage that surprised you?*

**Earlonne:** *The little Cuties. I be knocking them cuties down. I got cuties all in my pocket like it's money. You know what I'm saying? And I'm talking about you knock them down wherever, whoever house you at. You see some Cuties.*

**Nigel:** *Why are there Cuties everywhere?*

**Earlonne:** *Oh, I don't know. Everybody likes them, they're cute. It's only like, what, a fourth of an orange?*

**Nigel:** *Let's see what you got here, my friend.*

**Earlonne:** *Of course, when this whole thing started, I started being mindful of my trash was about to be. So, the first thing I'm coming out with--*

**Nigel:** *You're outing yourself. Are you on a diet?*

**Earlonne:** *So, this is an Atkins, Low-Carb Living Life. You know what I'm saying?*

**Nigel:** *When did you start eating Atkins food?*

**Earlonne:** *When this challenge started. I told you I was mindful.*

**Nigel:** *Mindful because you are trying to lose weight or because you wanted to express to the world that you eat low carbs?*

**Earlonne:** *That I'm low carbing?*

**Nigel:** *Yeah.*

**Earlonne:** *Yeah. Is it working?*

**Nigel:** *I got to see what else is in your trash.*

**Earlonne:** *And then, of course, I got a little Cutie right here. And then, my Atkins bowl that I washed out.*

**Nigel:** *Nice. So that's one day.*

**Earlonne:** *That's one bag. Oh, shit.*

**Nigel:** *Huh. Now, this is interesting.*

**Earlonne:** *It's interesting that I have a million little trees?*

**Nigel:** *You had a bundle of little tree fresheners, they kind of looked like felt.*

**Earlonne:** *Well, right here, and they still smell like trees. I think I might have took them out too soon.*

**Nigel:** *Why do you have like eight of them?*

**Earlonne:** *One, two, three, four, five, six. Only six. One of them is hella big.*

**Nigel:** *Why do you have six tree fresheners?*

**Earlonne:** *Well, the story behind this is Tyra had a cool smell in her car and it was because of the little Christmas trees. So as a shoutout to her, I just get the same type of smell.*

**Nigel:** *Hmm.*

And Tyra, as listeners may know, is someone who you were really close to, Earlonne, who died last year.

**Earlonne:** Yes, she did. I always keep these in the car, so every time I see them in certain places, I just get a gang of them and throw them in the glove apartment.

**Nigel:** Can I smell one?

**Earlonne:** Yeah, they still-- oh, shit.

**Nigel:** *Yeah. That's what your car usually smells like.*

**Earlonne:** *And that's it. That's my life.*

**Nigel:** *Well, for someone who didn't want to do it, you did a pretty good job. Well, what does that say about you that you didn't want to do it--?*

**Earlonne:** *I don't know because this is like a fraudulent attempt. And I told you that from the beginning I was mindful of what I did, so I didn't do trash when I was like, "Nope, not going to do that. That's going to create trash. I'm good. I'll pass on that." I was very mindful in this whole process.*

**Nigel:** *You learn anything about yourself doing it?*

**Earlonne:** *If I be mindful, I can lose weight because guess how much weight I lost?*

**Nigel:** *How much? Eight pounds?*

**Earlonne:** *Mm-hmm. Four.*

**Nigel:** *But wait, why did you lose four pounds doing this?*

**Earlonne:** *I was mindful. No McDonald's in here, there's none of the junk food.*

**Nigel:** *Wait, but because you didn't want to keep it or you didn't want people to see it?*

**Earlonne:** No, because I didn't want to keep it. I didn't want to keep McDonald bags. You leave out there with trash.

**Nigel:** And no beer. Just two bottles of beer.

**Earlonne:** I'm not like really a beer drinker like that, unless it's just like if I quit smoking weed, then I'll become a beer drinker.

**Nigel:** But it looks like you didn't smoke a lot of weed this week.

**Earlonne:** No. So, what I did was I smoked a lot of bong. [laughs]

**Nigel:** And this was just so you wouldn't have garbage?

**Earlonne:** There's a method to this madness over here, Nigel. I was walking light for these last seven days.

**Nigel:** Your garbage is somehow delightful.

**Earlonne:** Drumroll please, because we have the Queen of Trash.

**Nigel:** I would love to wear a crown for that. Thank you.

**Earlonne:** I'm going to say that Nigel has everything labeled, dated, and in their own sections.

**Nigel:** Every day has garbage, compost, and coffee.

**Earlonne:** Garbage, compost, and coffee. [background noise] Damn. So, what I'm seeing, so-- Well, shit, the Ziploc industry just came up. They had a great customer here.

**Nigel:** One thing I could say about me is, I may have produced more garbage to house my project than anybody else.

**Earlonne:** Yes, you did, because you literally had a whole box of Ziplocs for this project.

**Nigel:** And after a couple days, I had to redo every bag so they would be exactly the same because I ran out of bags and when I bought new bags, they said "hefty" on it. So, I had to go back and reorganize some of the projects so it would all be the same.

**Earlonne:** *This is a problem here, Nigel. [Nigel laughs] You couldn't be mix matched, you had to have all the--[crosstalk]*

**Nigel:** *They had to be the same. Yeah.*

**Nigel:** *Routine.*

**Earlonne:** *Yeah. I love a routine.*

**Earlonne:** *So, wait a minute, which should we do first? Because the compost look like you got a lot of compost. So technically, you got 21 bags right there.*

**Nigel:** So, I don't think, actually, Earlonne, I had a ton of trash, or maybe I feel that way because it was actually so pretty and well organized. I mean, I had tender feelings towards it, so it wasn't like I mind keeping it.

**Earlonne:** Nyge, you had a ton of paper towels. And you had a Diet Coke for each day.

**Nigel:** Yeah. But did you notice how I squished it down and made it small? And I definitely had seven popsicle sticks because I have a popsicle every night. I had some used-up bottles of like beauty lotion, I stuck a few rings in there that I was getting rid of. So, yeah, I mean I did have some, but it was not a ton. It was well curated.

**Earlonne:** Well, yeah. It was definitely well curated, and all the bags were labeled with a sharpie.

**Nigel:** When I see this, the organization of it, I find very soothing. So, it feels like there's some maybe sense of control about stuff.

**Earlonne:** But do it feel like hoarding?

**Nigel:** No, it actually makes me happy and makes me relaxed.

**Earlonne:** Really?

**Nigel:** Yeah, because I can see everything. Everything has a date. It focuses my brain, I think, from just being all over the place to see stuff cataloged. It's like everything goes in its place and it feels like the world is right then. You know what I mean? Like, it's a small way to make the world feel okay.

**Earlone:** So next up was supposed to be the Big San Quentin Inside Team Trash Reveal.

**Nigel:** That's right. Let me point out what you just said--

**Nigel and Earlone:** Supposed--

**Nigel:** -to be.

**Earlone:** [laughs]

*Bruce, I think they misunderstood what you told them because this is all the trash they have.*

**Sadiq:** *We got rid of all the trash.*

**Nigel:** Yeah. This is all they have between the two of them. So, it's a little tough here. All right, Bruce, so can you just tell us what happened?

**Bruce:** Okay. What I remember, the plan was to do the outside trash reveal, I believe, on a Monday, and then the next day on a Tuesday, we'd go in and do the inside trash reveal. There were a number of circumstances, which there always are, that led to us not being able to go in that Tuesday. So, we called into San Quentin and I said, "If there's anything in the trash that the three of you have gathered, that's going to be disgusting, you can throw that out, just document it. Keep the rest of your trash."

So then, we went in the following Monday, the three of us, expecting there to be like fair amount of trash. But [chuckles] it turns out that they had basically threw out everything except like a few pieces of selective, nicely curated trash.

**Earlone:** I think Nigel was like, "What?"

**Nigel:** I will admit it. I was like--[crosstalk]

**Earlone:** "What happened?" She was definitely--[crosstalk]

**Nigel:** I was [crosstalk] but I was like, "What the fuck?" And I wasn't blaming Bruce. I mean, I knew it got lost in translation. It took me a minute to recover, but what it did give



us was, as you said, nicely curated trash to deal with. It ended up working, but it was one of the few times I thought I was going to lose my temper inside.

**Bruce:** To me, it felt like, "Oh yeah, of course." Like every time we go in there, there's some lost in translation. Somebody's not there. That's just like the nature of it in there. But this one for some reason struck you more even though you've been in there for whatever, how many years.

**Nigel:** You're exactly right, I should be totally used to that stuff happening, and I try to be, but I will admit, I was like, "How could this be?"

**Sadiq:** *It was actually Reg trash that was smelling.*

**Tony:** *It was Reggie's trash.*

**Reggie:** *So, I kept it 100. I really kept my trash though. I didn't throw nothing out. And even in the cell, it was stinking. I was thankful that I was able to bring it down here and drop it off on y'all, to be honest with you. Oscar the Grouch would've thought that was perfume. He would've been juiced like, "Give it to me."*

**Nigel:** *We just had to ask them to describe what all that trash had looked like before they threw it out. And it was a lot. Like, way more trash than any of us on the outside team had.*

**Reggie:** *It filled up a trash can.*

**Tony:** *A 50-gallon trash can.*

**Nigel:** *And how did you throw it all out? Just one, did you put everything in one--?*

**Tony:** *In one giant 50-gallon trash can.*

**Earlonne:** But Tony, Sadiq and Reggie had each kept a little bit of trash. So, we got an idea of what had been in those bags.

**Nigel:** *Oh, wow. Can you describe what that looks like?*

**Tony:** *Yeah, it's this weird contraption that I had never seen anywhere else until I came here. It's like foil and plastic and you can pop the medication out, and it's probably the*

size of a book, like a hardcover book. It's got my name on it, and it's got fluoxetine, which is generic for Prozac.

**Nigel:** The front is orange, so it looks kind of festive. Like there's going to be some treat in there.

**Tony:** It's a party.

**Nigel:** No, it looks like candy, or it looks like an Advent calendar. And then it's got, I guess, maybe it's your CDCR number on it and it says where you live North Block San Quentin. So, this is made specifically for prison.

**Tony:** Yes.

**Nigel:** And isn't there any other use you could have for this?

**Tony:** You know what they're really good for? Stopping the door from slamming when it's really windy in North Block.

**Nigel:** Whose toothbrush is that?

**Sadiq:** Oh, that's mine.

**Nigel:** Wait, it's barely used. Why'd you throw it out?

**Sadiq:** So, it's like three months in, so I got rid of it and I got a new one.

**Nigel:** I look at that toothbrush and I could think of a bunch of stuff I would do with the--

**Earlonne:** Would you reuse it?

**Nigel:** Yeah, I would reuse it. Well, first I would use it longer because I'm definitely cheap about toothbrushes.

**Reggie:** I use mine to clean the towel when I dust the floor. I use it to get all the loose hair, pieces of dust. I get it all off with the old toothbrush. I have brought a brand-new toothbrush to brush my beard. I have it back here. Matter of fact, I always brush my beard in the morning. It's not grown out right now, but I still use it a little bit.

**Earlonne:** I mean, you just got one or you got a couple of them together?

**Sadiq:** *I just have one.*

**Nigel:** *Okay. Tony, you look so--*

**Tony:** *[crosstalk] -brush.*

**Nigel:** *A what?*

**Tony:** *An eyebrow brush.*

**Reggie:** *I use mine to clean my clippers. Mm-hmm.*

**Earlonne:** *Yeah. So, you see all these uses over here?*

**Sadiq:** *Yeah, all the uses, and I just threw it right on the way.*

**Tony:** *[crosstalk] -shake out of them too.*

*[laughter]*

**Earlonne:** *Yeah. That's old school. That's New York City.*

**Nigel:** *And finally, it was Reggie's turn to reveal his trash. And you know what, Earlonne?*

**Earlonne:** *Hmm?*

**Nigel:** *I feel like he and I are kindred spirits.*

**Earlonne:** *I do too.*

**Nigel:** *He was so committed to this project.*

**Earlonne:** *Not just committed. He can get real descriptive. Just introspective.*

**Nigel:** *Mm-hmm.*

*Did you learn anything about yourself from collecting all this--? [crosstalk]*

**Reggie:** *I eat too damn much. I need to cut back on-- and people comment on my stomach [chuckles] all the time. "You look like you obese right now." They like, "Dude, you're built like a dad now." "Damn, you got that uncomfortable dad body, like you're going to show up at a PTA meeting."*

**Nigel:** *So, what you learned is what you is that you eat too much.*

**Reggie:** *I eat too much, and I'm accumulating too much plastic.*

**Nigel:** *What do you think Reggie's trash says about him?*

**Sadiq:** *That Reggie just-- [laughs] I don't know, Reggie is wild.*

**Tony:** *Reggie is dedicated to the cause.*

**Sadiq:** *Yeah. He is.*

**Tony:** *Whatever the cause is, if he's on it, he's dedicated.*

**Sadiq:** *He's going to do it.*

**Tony:** *100 percent, 110 percent, he is going to do it.*

**Nigel:** *And I would think that your trash would be all kind of like "whaaa" kind of like crazy.*

**Reggie:** *If you would've opened that bag, you would've smelled like that noise. You do it again that noise.*

**Nigel:** *Whaaa.*

**Reggie:** *That's what it would've smelled like. Whaaa.*

**Nigel:** *Well, just because you get super excited about, like very passionate about anything that we talked to you about, so I'd imagine any project you would be passionate about. And so, your trash was like abundant and passionate trash.*

*When you look at your trash, what does it say about the life that you're living right now?*

**Tony:** *Wasteful, gluttonous, and I'm clearly not thinking about myself or the future. I'm just thinking about right now and how I can satiate whatever that need is.*

**Nigel:** *Mm-hmm. How about you, Sadiq?*

**Sadiq:** *I feel that too because when it's there, I just eat it. Like these TGI Friday chips, I ate three bags just in one sitting, just sitting there, just laying on my bunk, just eating the chips over and over and over because it's there. And I feel like I take things for granted by just eating the things that I get, that my people take care of and send in to me. And I'm not looking at the fact that they out there working hard for this stuff and I'm just wasting it by eating it all up.*

*And it plays with me now because I'm looking at these things that I've just eaten and they sat there and bought all this stuff and they wonder why I always asking for more things, like why do I need it and I just bought it for you because I'm wasting it and it shows where I'm at in my life.*

**Nigel:** *What do you think, Reg?*

**Reggie:** *What came up for me is my unresolved insecurities. I was skinny most of my life and at times, I was in a household where there wasn't enough food to eat. And I recall during my childhood, the first time I went to the refrigerator and I opened it, and it wasn't nothing in there to eat. I closed it and I went outside and played and came back 30 minutes later and I opened it and there still wasn't no food in there. That trauma sat with me, but it was so painful, I put it in the back of my mind and I never addressed it.*

*And I'm coming to realize that my insecurities about my weight and my size is showing through my food consumption. I don't want to be without. Just having food and eating it whenever I want to, I'm comfortable with that and I need to get out of my comfort zone and address that insecurity that I have with my weight and with food. I never went back and grabbed that little boy and told him, "It's all right, we got plenty of food now." Even though I'm in prison, I still need to go back and deal with that trauma.*

**Nigel:** *So, Earlonne, this is why I love doing these projects. I love the group dynamic of it, and I love how everyone on the team rallies around something and you get excited about it, and you learn about people's personalities.*

*Earlonne, I know this is hard because we know each other really well. But I'm curious, did you learn anything new about me?*

**Earlonne:** Yeah. You have a popsicle every night before you go to sleep.

**Nigel:** [laughs] That's surprising, isn't it? I don't look like a popsicle eater, but I am.

**Earlonne:** Not every night.

**Nigel:** I know.

**Nigel:** But I think beyond what we learned about people on the team, what I really like best about doing these challenges is the way it connects us with the guys inside. And like we do something together and we get excited about together. And at that time when we're doing these, it's like we're speaking the same language and I love that.

**Earlonne:** You know what I'm surprised about?

**Nigel:** What?

**Earlonne:** That a lot of people really enjoy doing this type of stuff.

**Nigel:** Mm-hmm.

**Earlonne:** I might think that it's a weird idea, but then like, "Oh, everybody into this shit. All right. Maybe I was wrong. I was looking at it wrong."

**Nigel:** If you're interested in doing your own Trash Challenge alone or with a group, please go to *earhustlesq.com*.

**Earlonne:** Click on the Trash episode, where you will find a link to our Trash Challenge User Guide. We got a Trash Challenge User Guide?

**Nigel:** Yes, and I'm very excited about it, do not put it down, my friend, please.

Ear Hustle is produced by me, Nigel Poor, Earlonne Woods, Bruce Wallace, Amy Standen, and Rahsaan "New York" Thomas.

**Earlonne:** With help from Neroli Price and Tony Tafoya inside of San Quentin. This episode was sound designed and engineered by me, Earlonne Woods and Darrell Sadiq Davis, with help from Fernando Aruda.

**Nigel:** It features music by David Jassy, Antwan Williams, Earlonne Woods, and Darrell Sadiq Davis.

**Earlonne:** Amy Standen edits the show, Shabnam Sigman is our managing producer, and Bruce Wallace is our executive producer.

**Nigel:** Thanks to Acting Warden Oak Smith. And as you know every episode of Ear Hustle has to be approved by this woman here.

***Guim'Mara Berry:*** *I am Lieutenant Guim'Mara Berry, the Public Information Officer here at San Quentin State Prison, and I approve this episode.*

**Nigel:** This episode was made possible by the Just Trust, working to amplify the voices, vision, and power of communities that are transforming the justice system.

Please don't forget to sign up for our newsletter, The Lowdown, where you can learn more about each episode and find out what the Ear Hustle Team is up to. Subscribe at [earhustlesq.com/newsletter](http://earhustlesq.com/newsletter). You can also find out more about the show on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, [@earhustlesq](https://www.instagram.com/earhustlesq).

**Earlonne:** Ear Hustle is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, a network of independent, creator-owned, listener-supported podcast. Discover audio with vision at [Radiotopia.fm](http://Radiotopia.fm). I'm Earlonne Woods.

**Nigel:** I'm Nigel Poor.

**Nigel and Earlonne:** Thanks for listening.

**Nigel:** *Oh, what is that? It's your wedding ring.*

**Earlonne:** *Why did you say that on the mic, Nigel?*

**End**

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