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Season 4, Ep. 10 - Being Accountable

Published July 31, 2025

[00:00:00] **X:** KALW

[00:00:07] **GREG:** For the past 30 years I've thought about this. I relive this day, every single day for 30 years. I relive it, and I still want to go back. I think going back is just, there'll never be closure. There'll never be anything that can, can fix this situation. You know, it's almost like this is the closest I can get to really, truly say I'm sorry.

[00:00:36] Yeah.

[00:00:44] That's all I've ever wanted to do is say sorry.

[00:00:50] Hi everybody, I'm Greg Eskridge and this is Uncuffed, the podcast that empowers people in prison to tell their own stories.

[00:01:03] All season, I've been telling my story. I talked about my childhood, the homelessness and the violence. I shared how I spent decades in prison and then came home about a year ago. I've talked about what I've been doing with my freedom, starting a new life on the outside. Having hard conversations with my family and getting to know them in a new way.

[00:01:36] Normally on the show, we don't talk about people's crimes. We believe people are more than their crimes. But today, in this short episode, I'm going to go there. Because this is a really important part of the story. I will always live with the fact that I committed a very serious crime. That will never change.

[00:01:58] But what is changing is how I choose to be accountable for it, and how I continue to grow and become a better person. Saying what happened out loud here on the show is part of that process for me.

[00:02:14] On May 28th, 1994, I killed a man. I attempted to kill another man. And I hit a third man in the head with a gun.

[00:02:26] We're not saying their names outta respect for them and their families. After my conviction, I was sentenced to 58 years plus two life sentences for committing these crimes. I thought I would spend the rest of my life in prison. Then, a few years ago, some California laws changed and I got an early parole hearing in March last year. It was a video hearing, and a few of the relatives of the man I killed were there. At one point, a parole commissioner asked me how I thought my actions affected the family. Here's what I said. I'm reading from a transcript. I destroyed Mr. *** life. I took him away from all the people that loved him.

[00:03:19] I took away his right to have children, to watch his family get old, to take care of his aging mother and family members. Mr. *** Has so much love from his community, so many people that loved him, so many people that were just rooting for him, and here I come, this coward that just takes his life away, and there's nothing I can do to take it back.

[00:03:46] There's nothing I can do.

[00:03:51] I wasn't allowed to speak directly to the family, so I was saying these words to the commissioner, but I knew the family could hear everything I was saying. That moment in the parole board hearing was probably the last time I'll be able to try to be accountable in front of them. Recently, when we were making this episode, my editors at Uncuffed reached out to a victim's advocate and asked him to reach out to the family.

[00:04:20] The advocate asked if the family had any comment for this episode. They declined, and of course I understand that decision. There was something I still needed to do, something I've wanted to do for decades. I wanted to go back to the place where I committed the crime, so I did. I went back to Long Beach. I drove there with my sister and a producer to the parking lot of a strip mall.

[00:04:50] It used to be a busy place with restaurants, stores and barber shops. A lot of the businesses I remember are closed now. We parked a car, and we sat there for a minute. No one got out.

[00:05:08] Like a part of me wants to get outta the car and just step on this ground because this is a very ground, you know, that somebody lost they life in, you know, I just made the most horrific decision that you could ever make.

[00:05:24] Part of me wants to, the part of me is still is hesitant.

[00:05:30] I wanted, I, I just want to acknowledge the fact that. That I know I, I, I know I destroyed so many people's lives and. A part of me getting outta here is just saying sorry, and I acknowledge what I've done.

[00:05:48] Okay.

[00:06:14] I get out of the car. I prepared for this moment for 30 years in prison, far away from where this crime happened, and now I can stand here confronted and say it out loud. I am accountable for this crime.

[00:06:41] Okay. That's it for today's episode. We'll be back in two weeks with more stories from the inside and more of my story. I'm Greg Eskridge. Thanks for listening.