

Cellblocks To Mountaintops
Video Episode 06: Restorative Justice
Transcript

Sterling Cunio: Restorative justice to me is living your amends. Taking accountability and responsibility for the things that you've done in your life and trying to figure out a way that you can do better. One of the things that we do in restorative justice class is share our stories.

When I think of my worst mistakes in life, it wasn't shit that I just really wanted to do. I was more worried about what these people over here would think about me than what I would think about myself.

Anthony Pickens: I think that hits it right on the head, because I got 25 years of life for something I did at 15 years old, and I distinctly remember thinking, my so-called friends won't accept me if I don't do this right here. And it was the truth. But when I got older and I finally start understanding it, that's the exact same thought process that helped me separate myself from that environment was I don't care what y'all think, and I don't agree with none of this no more, so I'm not going to do it. And I didn't care what I lost because of it.

Omar Herrera: For the longest time, I always thought I was just bad or I was just evil. And then looking in hindsight, it was all these situational factors that played a big role in my life.

Sterling Cunio: And when we doing this though, we gotta own it. Like there's no getting there. I mean, that's the very first thing that we do is own the shit that we've done. Yeah.

Cameron Hayes: I think so much of prison culture is we feel the shame of whatever brought us here, and then we're stripped of all power, and then we're thrown in this environment, and we try to, like, compensate for that by like, that's mine. That's my bench. You know, these these are these are my chairs. Don't don't sit there. You know what I mean?

We're trying to make ourselves feel important to try to combat that shame and get some of that power back. But then I think we find when we when we help the youngsters, when we, you know, when we when we participate in a class, we get we get power too. But it's a positive, you know, you could get that same feeling and reduce that sense of shame by doing positive acts.

Ben Pervish: I've listened many years, you talk about your victims and how it impacts you, and I couldn't really relate. Right? Till 20 years later I finally think about, the victim's family, and I'm at that stage now. I just want to say I'm sorry that's you know, like. Yeah. That's that's. Yeah.

Sterling Cunio: That's how you repair your self-esteem, your self-worth. It's understanding that even though you have, you know, hurt multiple people in your past, you still have the ability to do good in the present, that's an amends. That's an amends. That's not an, you know, that doesn't absolve nothing. Yeah, but it's an amends when you get to the point to where you're living in a way that benefits others... exactly, Thank you.