

Episode 4 SHOW NOTES Episode 4: Love, Loss & Art

Relationships with people in the outside world are essential for maintaining hope, working towards rehabilitation, and reducing recidivism. Letters, emails, and in-person visits from friends and family bring a shred of humanity to an otherwise inhumane environment. In Sterling's case, he found a pen pal that would become very dear to his heart. And in writing, he began to express himself in a way that people would finally listen.

This episode includes description of suicidal ideation (Minute 7:57-9:47). Listener discretion is advised.

If you or anyone you know is struggling with a mental health crisis or suicidal thoughts, please call 988. That's the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, 988.

Show Notes

Featured in this Episode

Cheryl Cunio

Sterling Cunio

[Lauren Kessler](#), former writing teacher at Oregon State Penitentiary, author of [Free, Two Years, Six Lives and the Long Journey Home](#), which features Sterling Cunio, and fourteen other books.

Performers in *The Bucket*: Troy Ramsey, Key Davis, Ben Pervish

[Becca Stevens](#), Grammy nominated singer-songwriter

[Antonio Sánchez](#), 4x Grammy Winner, Film Composer of 2014 Best Picture Winner, "[Birdman or \(The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance\)](#)"

[Thana Alexa](#) - Grammy nominated vocalist, composer, arranger and producer. She performs *The Bucket* in this episode.

Media

[Video](#): Oregon Department of Corrections, "Hospice Behind Prison Walls" (2013)

[Podcast](#): Palliative Care Chat, "No One Dies Alone," Interview with Chaplain Karuna Thompson and Marty Crittenden (April 2018)

[Story](#): Sterling Cunio, 2nd Place Story in PEN America 2018 Prison Writing Contest, "Going Forward with Gus"

[Program/Script](#): PEN America 2018 Prison Writing Contest, First Place in Drama Winner, "The Bucket"

[Youtube](#): Antonio Sánchez; "The Bucket" (featuring Becca Stevens)

[Youtube](#): NPR Tiny Desk Concert, Antonio Sanchez (performs “The Bucket” at minute 9:04)

References and Sources

[Report](#): Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Mortality in State and Federal Prisons, 2001-2018-Statistical Tables” (April 2021)

[Article](#): Vera Institute of Justice, “Government Can’t Say How Many People Die in U.S. Jails and Prisons” (March 2022)

[Report](#): National Criminal Justice Reference Service, “Hospice and Palliative Care in Prisons” (1998)

[Program Statement](#): Federal Bureau of Prisons, “Inmate Discipline Program” (July 2011)

[Study](#): Vera Institute of Justice, “Safe Alternatives to Segregation Initiative: Findings and Recommendations for the Oregon Department of Corrections” (October 2016)

More Information

[Organization](#): Humane Prison Hospice Project

[Article](#): The New York Times Magazine, “The Prisoners Who Care for the Dying and Get Another Chance at Life” (May 2018)

[Article](#): Portland Mercury, “In Oregon’s Prisons, Terminally Ill People Are Left With Little Recourse” (February 2023)

[Article](#): NPR, “There’s No Run Like a Prison Run” (June 2014)

[Article](#): Runner’s World, “The Wall” (June 2018)

[Letters](#): Prison Journalism Project, published pen pal letter exchanges

[Article](#): University of Texas- Austin, “Building Meaningful Relationships Through Prison Pen Pal Programs” (June 2023)

[Article](#): Truthout, “Prison Pen Pals Chip Away at the Prison Industrial Complex” (March 2022)

[Article](#): VICE, “How to Find an Incarcerated LGBTQ Pen Pal- and Why You Should” (June 2020)

[Article](#): BuzzFeed News, “These Women Wrote to Incarcerated Men, Then They Fell in Love” (August 2022)

If you or anyone you know is struggling with a mental health crisis or suicidal thoughts, call 988. The 988 Lifeline provides free and confidential support and resources for you or your loved ones, around the clock. That’s 988.