

SHOW NOTES

Episode 1: Throw Away the Key

After serving more than 25 years in prison, Sterling Cunio goes before the most important audience of his life: the Oregon Board of Parole. His supporters and attorneys argue that Sterling has rehabilitated, and deserves a second chance for a life beyond prison walls. But even if that's true, does that mean he should be set free? Locking him up for the rest of his life won't bring his victims back, but will it send a message that demonstrates respect for the lives he took? Will it improve public safety or help his victims heal? What does justice demand?

Please note: There are many types of parole board hearings. In this episode, Karuna Thompson speaks of one kind of hearing. Rehabilitation Hearings however, on average tend to run between 4-5 hours and it has been reported that the Oregon Board of Parole has consistently been prepared for these hearings.

Be sure to watch our mini-documentary video *The Hearing* where you will see live excerpts of the testimonies.

Show Notes

Featured in this episode:

Sterling Cunio

[Professor Melissa Buis](#), Professor and Chair of Politics, Policy, Law and Ethics Department (PPLE) and Director, [Transformative Justice Initiative](#) at Willamette University. Since 2016 she has taught "Restorative Justice" classes at Oregon State Penitentiary with both "inside" and "outside" students. Dr. Buis is also a founding member and Board Chair of the nonprofit, [Transformative Justice Community](#) (TJC). [Lauren Kessler](#), teaches Storytelling for Social Change at University of Washington, former writing teacher at Oregon State Penitentiary, author of 15 books including: [A Grip of Time](#) and [Free, Two Years, Six Lives and the Long Journey Home](#), both of which feature Sterling Cunio.

[Ryan O'Connor](#), Criminal Defense Attorney

Ryan Joslin, Chief Deputy District Attorney, Benton County, Oregon

Michael Chiu, Board Chairman, Oregon Board of Parole

Karuna Thompson, Former Prison Chaplain and Victim Liaison at the Oregon Department of Corrections

Rosemary Brewer, Former Prosecutor, Victims Advocate and Director of [Oregon Crime Victims Law Center](#)

[Danielle Sered](#), Founder and Executive Director of [Common Justice](#); Author of [Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair](#)

Anthony Pickens

Companion Video for this Episode: Video 1A - *The Hearing*

Media

[Youtube](#): Sterling Cunio's Graduation Speech at Chemeketa Community College, Oregon State Penitentiary

[Youtube](#): Professor Melissa Buis' TEDxSalem Talk

[Article](#): Profile on Professor Melissa Buis' class at Oregon State Penitentiary

References and Sources

[Research](#): Prison Policy Initiative, "Economics of Incarceration," January 2017

[Research](#): Prison Policy Initiative, "States of Incarceration: The Global Context 2021," September 2021

[Research](#): Vera Institute of Justice, "The Prison Paradox," July 2017

[Research](#): U.S. Department of Justice, "Prisoner and Prison Re-entry"

[National Survey](#): Alliance for Safety and Justice, "Crime Survivors Speak," (2022)

[Data](#): Prison Policy Initiative, "Racial Disparities in Criminal Legal System," (May 2022)