

Official Trailer: MyTERN Conversations Cohort One

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Featuring Shakir Abdullah, Hector Bannister, Calvena DeVoe, Rahim Gray, Joseph Irizarry, Marie Lafontant, & Devon McNeil

Rahim: 00:03

From the greater Boston area, you are listening to the MyTERN podcast, brought to you by the Tufts University Education Reentry Network. These are stories of life during and after incarceration told by people who are living it and working to overcome the odds.

Joseph: 00:19

The more I read, the more I got upset, because I found the less I knew. And I thought I knew a lot already; as a young person, we grow up believing that the world is ours, that we're infallible, you know, that nothing can touch us. That's how it was with me when I first started to read in solitary confinement. And there were so many days that I literally threw a book at a wall because I got upset. I got upset about what I was learning and how it was just waking up so many different parts of my brain that I hungered for more knowledge.

Marie: 00:30

So it's hard to tell yourself that you're worthy of going to college, or you're worthy of getting a career, or you're worthy of never having to be incarcerated anymore, you're worthy of being a great mom. But it's a constant fight on a daily basis.

Devon: 00:51

It's a lot. It's a whole lot. I can see how some men just say, I can't do this no more, especially if they don't have a support system. Before I used to be so hard on guys that got out and came back, but I understand it now; I really do. None of them would ever argue with me. They would say: "you'll see when you get out," and I think that even aggravated me more because I kept thinkin, "I'm free...why would I...I'm free!" They were right. There's so many variables to freedom.

Shakir: 01:06

My journey is a whole journey of just transformation and a lot of obstacles and misfortunate situations. And to come out better than it was before I went into education is...I'm very fortunate.

Hector: 01:20

For you all to still have that hope that we can actually get over these hurdles and become better individuals, better human beings, make better decisions...it's really a blessing because when you first come home you're lost. It's a blessing, man, it's just a blessing.

Calvena: 01:34

My future is...I see these cells demolished. I see them completely gone. Real talk, I can't stand prisons. And I have so many dreams and so many goals, and I can see them all and I dream about them all.

Rahim: 01:54

Everybody's different. And I think me as an individual, it took that process and that path to get to the point where I was just like, Yo, I got to do somethin different. And it's crazy how when you start thinkin that, when you say that...like how my bed is I wrote on the side where the dresser is stuff that I can say, because when you say it, you believe it and when you believe it, it happens. It's like puttin it in the universe: I am strong, I am smart. I am beautiful, like I can do it.

Joseph: 02:19

Thank you for listening to the MyTERN Podcast. The MyTERN program is a Tufts University-accredited program, providing education, mentorship, and career development support to — and by — those who have been directly impacted by the criminal justice system. MyTERN's objective is to provide an opportunity for each participant to rediscover and reframe their skills, interests, responsibilities, and commitments. This podcast is created and produced in partnership with Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life and the Bridging Differences Grant Program. Music brought to you by Bernell Jones II. Cover art brought to you by Rahim Gray (Instagram: @rahimgrayart). Learn more or support MyTERN at TUPIT.org.