

## JUST WORDS

### The Stories of Working People In Our Community

#### Episode 44: Omar

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Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

Omar is a young man from East Baltimore.

Four years ago, he committed a heinous crime—he stole a car from a woman at gunpoint. He only did four months on a lesser charge. Is this an outrage of our judicial system? Many people would say yes. And it's true that the experience of being in prison did not inspire Omar to seek a new life. A few years after being released, he was back, charged with possession of marijuana. It took something more.

You know New Years Eve people New Years make resolutions? My son was born on NYE, the 31<sup>st</sup> of December. So many things was going through my mind. And every breath he took, was every dream, every thought that I was having to making his life better than mine was. And, I know that if he has a positive male in his life he can dodge some of those bullets that I did. He can step away from some of those gang activities, he can be away from those drugs that I did, and...its difficult to try and set a path for someone who wants to set their own path because eventually when he gets to the age where he is big and bad, and want to do his own thing, he will be bucking, He be like, I want to do what I want to do, and he's already doing it now, so when that time comes for him to get to that age where he is going to be like, Well Daddy I want to do what I want to do, I got to show him a path that I took at the age I am now, and if I show him early there is a greater chance he will never see a lot of those things that went on in my life.

**But even with this inspiration, Omar didn't know how to go about getting away from his everyday old life. It seemed all around him, inescapable. And one day, it just happened.**

I was actually smoking a blunt outside of my front door and I looked down to the ground and I saw a strive flyer, and I was like, Strive? That sound like something positive. Ever since his mother said she was pregnant with him I'm like, I got to do something. I just knew that I wanted to provide my son with something I wasn't provided for. I mean, my father was not in my life like he was supposed to be, like a lot of young black males. Cause he was bad on drugs at one point. Being different from how he was gave me the inspiration to do something different, and all I needed was guidance. Looking at that Strive brochure gave me guidance because I knew where I wanted to go at to change. I didn't know what they had to offer. I came in and gave it a shot, and giving these guys a shot gave me the inspiration to keep on going and never look back from where I started from.

**Omar is right at the edge. It's only been a few weeks since he graduated from the 3 week STRIVE Baltimore Employment Training Program, a program that teaches men and women how to be prepared for entering the workforce, and provides training on computers, presentation, job skills, and more.**

Next week, we'll hear more from Omar about the process of disentangling himself from the street life-gang life.

**Music: Belle and Sebastian, *Don't leave the Light On***

Produced by Jessica Phillips. Hosted by Marc Steiner.

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