

Interview with Eric Caine

[00:00:01] **Eric Caine** So they ran down the backstairs. I put a shirt on because I had no shirt on, to open the door. As I pushed the door, I heard my mother's voice screaming on the other side of door, begging me to open the door, because the police had threatened to knock it down. When I did, the door got bum rushed by two detectives. One I remember the name was Russell Wilson. He's the one that bum rushed the door, grabbed me by my collar then the waist of my pants. And the other detective, I remember his name was James Pienta. He didn't actually come in the house. But he was standing outside, right out the door. I had learned, I didn't know at the time, that my mother allegedly knew Russell Wilson, that she actually used to work for him. And I did not know that.

[00:01:18] **Eric Caine** So when he grabbed me, say I was under arrest. It was all so blurry at the time. My mother come rushing in, begging him not to hurt me. I don't know why she thought they were going to hurt me, but she must've know something I didn't. So she was begging them not to hurt me and... asking them why they accusing me of stuff. What did I do? He said something to the effect that they were taking me down to the station. So she was trying to hand me some cigarets and they wouldn't let her. That's when they handcuffed me and went out the door.

[00:02:08] **Eric Caine** On our way downstairs. I saw another detective at the landing at the bottom of the stairs and then I felt a knee in my back. So I stumbled downstairs. And before I could fall, the detectives that was down at the foot of the stairs rushed up and grabbed me, caught me to break my fall. Who I learned his name was I think Peterson. Yeah, Peterson. So I was kind of terrified. I didn't say anything though. So when I walked outside, I've seen approximately 20 to 25 marked and unmarked police cars surrounding the place.

[00:03:06] **Eric Caine** So they led me to an unmarked car. Put me in the back seat. I was sandwiched between Detective Pienta and Detective Peterson, and there was another detective that was driving who I learned name was Marty. Detected Pienta, I asked what was going on? He said something to the effect about, I know I did a double. I said, what you mean? What's a double? He said, you know what a double is. I said, no, what's a double? Then he said, well, you'll see when we take you to station. You know Aaron Patterson? I say, Aaron Patterson? No, I don't know no Aaron Patterson. They said, well we got him down at the station. I said what's that got to do with me? They say, you sure you don't know any Aaron Patterson? I say, no, I don't because I never knew his real

name. And then he say, you don't know nobody named Ranger? I say, yeah I know somebody they called Ranger. Well, that's Aaron Patterson and we got him down at the station. And he confessed to committing a double murder and says you were with him. I said, I don't know why he would say that because it's a lie.

[00:04:33] **Eric Caine** So to make a long story short, when we got to the station, they put me in this one small room, handcuffed me to a steel ring in the wall, on the far wall, and set me on a steel bench. They left out, came back in and asked me why would Aaron Patterson say I was with him if I wasn't. I said, I don't know why he would do that. And they asked me did I want to talk to him, I said yeah. So they unhandcuffed me from the bench and led me to the room where he was at. So when I got to the room, he was sitting in a chair looking all dirty and beat up, head down. I asked him why would he tell them that I was with him. So he was unresponsive. So I keep asking him that. And he looked up, well he turned his head to look up. But he seemed like he didn't recognize me. And I was about to ask him another question when Detective Pienta snatched me out of the room and saying that was enough. And led me back to the room, the original room that they put me in.

[00:05:58] **Eric Caine** He re-handcuffs me back to the steel ring on the wall. And I told him, I said, man I wasn't finished talking to him. I had another question. And that's when Pienta hit me in my chest real hard and made me fall back. Sat down where I fell on the bench. He said I better be cool before I got the same thing he got. I didn't know what that mean, but I know hitting me in my chest what that meant. So I didn't say nothing else.

[00:06:29] Hello. How are you?

[00:06:29] **Amanda Rivkin** Hi. I'm good thanks.

[00:06:29] Sorry, I'm just interrupting. What's you say? I'm gone.

[00:06:51] **Eric Caine** So they left out, came back. Went back and forth about why you lying [indiscernible]. So I was in that room all night long. They left me. And then the next morning, a different detective came. He introduced himself as Madigan. So Madigan unhandcuffed me from the wall, took me to another room, and handcuffed me to another ring in the wall and sat me in a chair. This room had a chair and a table, two chairs and a table. Then going back and forth again about this alleged statement, that implication. Hours later...

[00:08:14] **Eric Caine** OK. So he wound up later on that afternoon taking me down to do a polygraph test. And on our way there, during the ride, he was telling me a lot of stuff that he heard about Ranger. That Ranger was shooting at people. Went through people's house. That he was a bad dog and crazy and all that kind of crazy stuff. Why would I associate with people like him and things of that nature. So after the polygraph was over, he told me I was under arrest for the murders of Vincent and Rafaela Sanchez. So I asked him, can I call my grandma? Because my grandmama had a friend of the family of a lawyer. And he told me I couldn't just call her right now. That wasn't necessary for me to call her right now.

[00:09:19] **Eric Caine** So when we got back to the station... things transpired. He kept telling me things that Patterson was saying in the statement basically. So he like, he basically put you out of everything, he said you really didn't do anything, so you just go along with this, go along with that, then you'll be able to go home because they probably charge you with burglary if you cooperate. But I kept saying I didn't do it, I had nothing to do with it. He say, well, that's your word against his. That's basically what he was saying. He say, he was telling me how he had a friend in the state's attorney's office, that I don't have to worry about anything if I cooperated. So basically, I decided to do that because I was afraid. I was frightened all the night, all night long. Because I didn't want to be one of those guys who got killed in the police station because they claim I tried to snatch they gun or I wrestling with them, you know. These are big dudes, they ain't no little guys. And they already demonstrated to me that they had no problem with hurting these folk. I was trying to do anything and everything I could to get out of there [indiscernible]. So I wound up agreeing to the statement that was given me that was based on the statement they say that Patterson gave them. So after he wrote it down and handed it to me to read.

[Interview pauses and starts again.]

[00:11:12] **Eric Caine** This is unending. It doesn't stop, it's never stopped. Every day, every single moment and day, I have to watch what I say, who I talk to, what I talk about. Because I know that the powers may be, or authorities there are, they still constantly after me. And I know they'll take any opportunity and chance and the thing that come up to try to either put me back where they believe that I belong or to somehow redeem themselves. So the fact of the matter is, I wouldn't know what [indiscernible] in the first place.

[00:11:57] **Eric Caine** So they never be able to get me because I don't do dirt. I never did dirt. I was a gangbanger, I [indiscernible] a lot. But I didn't do dirt. What I mean by dirt. I

mean, I didn't steal. I didn't rob. I didn't do that kind of stuff. And I still don't. Matter of fact, I hate that stuff. I hate then and I even hate it more now. So they would never, ever be able to get me on that kind of crimes. So it'd be other stuff that I have to concerned myself about because, like right now, being audited. So things of that nature would never get me [indiscernible]. I just went through a whole ordeal with my DUI, you know? A separate DUI that could have been dealt with, my suspension, my driver's suspension, but that ain't what they did. They made a mountain out of a mole hill where I doing 8 more months in the county jail and put on two years probation, which is almost up.

[00:13:04] **Eric Caine** See things like that. Little things like that. Like, even at my restaurant, if I get an unruly customer or someone who's threatening one of my employees or someone, I call the police, they know exactly who I am. So they take forever to come, and then when they come, they disinterested in what happened, you know. And that's intentional cause they know me. And how I know they know me? Because when I first ever had to call, they come out the car and say my name. My whole name, not just Eric. So I already knew that that was going to happen. I was hoping it didn't.

[00:13:56] **Eric Caine** But the problem is the whole law enforcement in the area, meaning the Chicagoland area, is all aware of stuff. So they like colleagues and it's as if they trying to pay me back for whatever happened in Chicago. Just like when I had that incident when I lived in River Forest. When I was getting harassed all the time. I was getting tickets for like trying to avoid a red light because my parking spot in my building is in the rear. So I go through [indiscernible] like everybody else to go park. But instead of them seeing it that way, they write me a ticket saying I was avoiding the red light. That's crazy. You got stop signs in the alley. It's a common route. But I get a ticket for it. You know. Stuff like that. So I constantly got to be conscious of that. So I try to avoid attracting their attention anyway possible.

[00:14:59] **Eric Caine** But that's a tedious process because every little thing, I might not be at fault with it, but... Well, let's say if I'm with somebody and they have to smoke weed or something, I don't know they got weed or nothing, but I be in the car with them. If we get pulled over, they [indiscernible]. I am. So they run me. I be doing it. A prime example happened actually with an incident with me and Marvin, Marvin Reeves. I used to live in River Forest. We was in front of my building and his car, he was the driver and I was the passenger. So apparently one of the neighbors had called the police. So the police allegedly was investigating a potential DUI because they was saying we was asleep in the car. Which was...

[00:15:59] **Eric Caine** But nevertheless, when they pulled up behind us and came to the side, one came to the driver's side, and then came to the passenger side. As soon as they saw my face, they had me come out the car. Now, Marvin's in the driver seat. They didn't ask Marvin to get out. They got me out, took me to the back of Marvin's car, put my hands at my phone band. I was about to put my hand on the back trunk but they grabbed my phone. And when they tried to grab my phone, I tried to snatch it back but I just snatched my hand because I didn't know what they were doing. So they grabbed [indiscernible] phone and threw it on they car. And I'm like, what the hell is going on? I ain't did nothing.

[00:16:51] **Eric Caine** To make a long story short, I'm the one that got arrested. And they let Marvin, go. And they arrested me for... officer claim was non-physical assault. That's what I got charged with, a non-physical assault. I did even know what the fuck that was. Never heard of such a thing. But actually [indiscernible]. It's called a verbal assault. That's what they arrested me for. And I didn't even verbally assault them, nobody. But because they don't have the audio—they had the video but not the audio—can't nobody hear nothing. Stuff like that. So I already know some of the people know about me because I'm under a microscope.

[00:17:48] **Eric Caine** Because you know, that's how they get Aaron Patterson back. But that was a good thing they got him back. Because he was actually doing that crazy stuff when he went back to prison. Had his best friend recording him and he being stupid trying to be king in New York. Get guns, drugs, gangbang. I don't know what the hell was on that dude's mind. But there's no question that's what he was on. But I'm not on that. Never been on that. And that's why I believe they keep harassing me, because they actually truly believe that I am. They just can't catch me. But they don't realize the reason they can't catch me is because I don't do that, I'm not on it. You can follow me for a thousand years. And you would never see me or hear about me doing stuff like that.

[00:18:47] **Amanda Rivkin** So when you were taken in, this was your first time ever being taken in.

[00:18:54] **Eric Caine** No, I've been arrested because I told you I was a fighter. So I've been arrested for things like battery and fighting, stuff like that. But not no serious crimes.

[00:19:03] **Amanda Rivkin** What was different this time for you?

[00:19:07] **Eric Caine** You talking about when I got arrested for this? The difference is I had never been interrogated, first and foremost. I never went through a situation that was never like that in my life. I was 20 years old. So it was something really scary to me, very confusing. Before then, I thought I knew fear, but I did not know fear. I learned fear that night and that morning. I never will forget. I know you probably heard this in your life. When Black people watch horror movies and they see a monster or the killer chasing the white women. And the white women always seem to be running slow, and she always get caught cause she always fall. That's a running joke within the Black community. I know you heard about that before, right?

[00:20:10] **Amanda Rivkin** No.

[00:20:11] **Eric Caine** It is a funny running joke in the Black community. Anyway. It wasn't until after that ordeal that I really understood why that always is in the movies. And the reason why that is always in the movies not because white women are clumsy, because they be paralyzed by fear. That's why they seem to run slow. That's why they always trip over their own feet. Fear causes that. And I learned that. I learned to appreciate and not underestimate fear. Fear can make you do things that you wouldn't imagine. And so I no longer joke like that. When I'm watching a movie with friends, they'll make a comment, like, well you know, she gonna get caught, she gonna fall. And I correct them. I ask them, do you not understand why that is?

[00:21:24] **Eric Caine** Fear can make you do things that you couldn't imagine. So that's what made me do or agreed to do what the po-po or the officers asked me to do, which will go along with their story, that was based on the story of Aaron Patterson I gave them. So, he gave it to me to read. He asked me to sign it. I said, well, why would I sign it when I had nothing to do with this? And when I said that, he got mad. So I'm cuffed to the wall sitting in a chair on one side of the table, he on the other side of the table. He abruptly gets up. It happened so quick. He abruptly get up, came across, and slapped the hell out of me on the side of my face with an open palm over my ear.

[00:22:21] **Eric Caine** I heard a loud pop and loud ringing. So I doubled over screaming. And when I doubled over screaming, that's when he kicked me. He kicked me in the stomach and told me, shut up. And he had already told me he was going to help me, he had a friend to help me. To me, I'm not really hearing him, I'm just kind of, like, muffle sounds because the ringing pain was like extraordinary. So they pushed the paper back over to sign, I just started signing. I just started signing. When that was done, he say, I

told you, we cool, I got you, I got a friend I'm gonna go get him right now. You just cooperate with him and everything's gonna be fine.

[00:23:11] **Eric Caine** At that point, it was at that point, I don't care what they told me to do, I was gonna do it. If they made me, I don't mind needing to suck they dick, I'd have done it. You laughing, I'm being serious, because I was afraid. I was 20 years old. I'd never been through that kind of thing. You hear as you grow up in the hood bad experiences people have in their interactions with police. But it's quantitatively different when you actually experiencing it yourself. Anyway, he wind up coming back with a friend who introduced himself as a state's attorney. And he asked me, did I agree to talk to him? You know, I just kind of nodded my head because, like I said, at that point I was completely shut down. Everything was just automatic.

[00:24:06] **Eric Caine** So when detective Madigan left out the room and the state's attorney sat down, he asked me again, did I agreed to talk to him? I just nodded my head. He said, have I been treated well? So I just told him what happened about Madigan hitting me and kicking me. And he like, well, you did agree to talk to me though right? And I said yeah. I mean, I didn't say yeah, I just nodded. I [indiscernible]. So anyway, we went over Madigan's notes that Madigan wrote that I signed. OK. Well, there's some things I need you to expound on more, the other things on this or on that point or this point. I was like, OK. He left, came back with one of the court reporter people and we went through [indiscernible].

[00:25:13] **Eric Caine** But because of how the situation was, I was forgetting a whole lotta stuff that they was asking me to expound on. They so caught up in the moment that they forget to ask me stuff. That's why when you see the statements themselves, they don't make no sense, they all over the place. And the reason why that is is because none of it is true, first and foremost. Second, because the way it was, the whole situation. So when they took me downstairs to look up, they gave me a thing to call my grandma. And when I was talking to grandma, that's when it hit me. What just happened. That I just confessed to being a part of double murder. That's when it hit me. So I started crying.

[00:26:05] **Eric Caine** But before even then, the reason why it hit me. I believe in hindsight, because at the end of the court-reported statement, after I signed it and the court reporter left, detective Madigan and the state's attorney... what was that name...? I can't remember it right now. But anyway, after shaking hands and patting each other on the back, talking about good job, good job. And that's when it really dawned on me. Then when I called my grandmama, that's when I started crying.

[00:26:56] **Eric Caine** Well, you know, all the while I was in the county jail waiting to go to trial. I never believed I was gonna get convicted because, one, I ain't have nothing to do with it, and two, I just wouldn't believe it, just couldn't believe that I was gonna be convicted. And when I did, and they tried to get the death penalty, I was... to me, life was over. So I didn't participate in my [indiscernible] hearing, I didn't want to have... Cause to me, I was convicted for something that I didn't do. Not only for something that I didn't do, but the type of crime it was was something that was unimaginable. Because my father was senior, is a senior. And that's all I used to do every day cause he lived in a senior building. And that's all I did almost every day, go help all the seniors in the building. I go to the store for them or go wash their clothes sometimes, you know.

[00:28:00] **Eric Caine** So to me, it was kind of personal for people to believe that I would go do something like that, first and foremost, and to seniors, second of all. So it was a personal thing for me. And that's why when they convicted me, I didn't care whether or not I had natural life or the death penalty. It did matter, to me it was the same thing. So when the jury didn't give me the death penalty and they sentenced me to natural life, the judge asked me if I had anything to say. All I told him, I said, look I didn't have nothing to do with it, I'm sorry what happened to the people happened, but I'm not going to allow this to turn me for the worse.

[00:28:51] **Eric Caine** First several years of my incarceration in prison, I was not able to fulfill that. I was the quintessential angry Black man. Seriously. I was snapping on everybody. Fighting all the time. My first several years, I just didn't care if I lived or died. Didn't care whoever lived or died. I was so angry. I was so angry at myself. I could never forgive myself. Why would I admit for doing something that I know I had nothing to do. I don't even think to this very day I have forgiven myself for that. I really don't. And that's part of one of the reason why telling the story, thinking about the story, affects me the way it does because I've never learned to forgive myself.

[00:29:52] **Eric Caine** And I think the reason why that is because, like I say, I was a fighter and a gangbanger. So to me, [indiscernible], something like that shouldn't have affected me the way it did. Cause I should have been more stronger than that. I was looked upon as... you know? So I guess I was starting believing in my own shit, you know, my own hype. And that probably prevents me or prevented me from forgiving myself. I still haven't. So, a funny thing. A few years later, I'm in Stateville. And there was this guy, you probably won't remember the name. Name's Brian [indiscernible], who was falsely accused of killing his daughter. Killed this little [indiscernible] girl.

[00:30:56] **Eric Caine** Well, they wind up releasing him. And consequently, it was because the only evidence they had against him was a coerced statement that he made admitting to doing it. This was the first time I heard about somebody doing that other than myself. And when I heard about that, it was no consolation to me. Not one. Not one iota. I did not see it being as if, OK, I'm not the only one. I'm not the only this could have happened to. This could happen to anybody. I didn't think like that, I didn't look at it that way. I didn't see that. I knew that's what it meant, but it didn't register to me. It didn't matter to me. What mattered to me: I did it, I confessed to a crime that I didn't do. It's okay for somebody else to have to have do it. But it shouldn't have never happened to me. And this is my mindset. This was my mindset throughout the years. I could never forgive myself. Still I probably... I don't know.

[00:32:20] **Amanda Rivkin** Was there a time during the trial or when you were at [Cook] County [Jail] when you tried to tell what had happened to you, that you gave this coerced statement, that you were beaten?

[00:32:32] **Eric Caine** Well, yeah. At the beginning, I testified. I took the stand. Look, if you knew me, some people might say that's him and people who don't know me and heard crazy stuff about me wouldn't believe this. But the fact of the matter is, I'm one of them open honesty kind of guys, above board kind of guys. Even though I do some stuff, you know, not crime-like. Let's say for instance... I had two girlfriends, that's all right. But both of them knows because what's the point.

[00:33:20] **Eric Caine** To me in my mind, the greatest respect you could give a woman is honestly. Give her the truth about the matter, the whole truth, not just parts of it, so she can make the correct decision for herself whether she want to be involved or not. You understand what I'm saying? So I do stuff like that, but still claim I'm above board and honest person, which technically I am. But some would say, no, but he's a cheater. Well, I'm not a cheater. A cheater inherently means and involves deception. Know what I mean? And I'm not deceiving anyone. So that doesn't make me a cheater.

[00:34:13] **Eric Caine** It's a technical thing, like Bill Clinton. You know, he didn't inhale and he didn't have sexual relations, you know what I'm saying? But the fact of the matter is it's the truth. So. Maybe that's why my mind wouldn't accept that it was OK for me to admit that I was just plain scared. That I actually was just plain scared. I was a coward. That's what my mind said. That's what my mind would have accepted. Cause to me, my mind say, then you a coward. You really ain't as tough as you think you are. And me know

what? That was true. That turned out to be true. I thought I knew [indiscernible], I thought I knew [indiscernible] people. I really thought that running them streets. I didn't know jack until I went to the penitentiary where I met real tough people, real monsters, real people like that.

[00:35:18] **Amanda Rivkin** You must've been terrified.

[00:35:23] **Eric Caine** Ha! You better believe it. But I've never ever cared a shank. And the reason why I never carried a shank is because I didn't want to have to use it. I didn't want to hurt nobody. I didn't want to kill nobody. If you carry a shank and use it, it's likely you're gonna kill somebody. You might not be doing it intentionally. You might be doing it just to protect yourself. That doesn't change the fact that you potentially could have killed somebody. And I didn't even want to put myself in that type of position. So I did 25 years not once carrying a shank. I was in plenty of fights.

[00:35:56] **Amanda Rivkin** Carrying a what?

[00:36:00] **Eric Caine** A shank. A knife. A homemade knife.

[00:36:02] **Amanda Rivkin** A shank?

[00:36:03] **Eric Caine** Yeah.

[00:36:04] **Amanda Rivkin** A snake?

[00:36:04] **Eric Caine** A shank.

[00:36:06] **Amanda Rivkin** A shank.

[00:36:06] **Eric Caine** It's called a shank. It's like a homemade knife in jail. I understand, while I was there. I got stabbed in my back. I've been jumped on quite a few times. But I still didn't never carry a shank because I didn't want to hurt nobody like that. But God's grace, I never had to. I mean, I got into some things, but I survived them without carrying a shank and using one.

[00:36:38] **Amanda Rivkin** What was the hardest thing about prison for you?

[00:36:50] **Eric Caine** Not being able to accept the fact my life my life wasn't meant to end this way. The hardest thing in prison is psychological. Dealing with so many different personality individuals. You can imagine this, but the prison life is a world unlike any that you probably would know. I've experienced it because I have that experience. A prison life is a world where everybody and everything in it is... wow, how can I describe this? How the Bible describe hell? Because everybody lives for only one person and one reason. I don't care if it's the inmates, the staff, the guards, everybody within prison wake up every day with one intention and one desire only. And that's to get on everybody nerve. They try to fight, seriously, it's a sport, it's like a sport there. I'm telling you, it's a sport. This is not a joke. Everybody life to do that to somebody.

[00:38:00] **Amanda Rivkin** You're just witty about it.

[00:38:01] **Eric Caine** Yeah [laughs]. But that's what they do. All because they have nothing to do. But then they have no way, no out, no skills the way that I had to manage and deal with their emotions and things they were feeling and how they dealing with they situations. So what they do? They lash out at each other, try to hurt each other. Let me tell you something. This is the crazy stuff. That you might [indiscernible]. So, one of the things they do to irritate each other. Let's say cellies [cellmates], we don't get along. And this is a popular thing. It was funny to me at first. But then it became... anyway. So, you got a cellie you don't like. Right. So what you do to try to irritate him and get him into a fight, you make him want to fight.

[00:38:57] **Eric Caine** So you do stuff like... throw toilet paper in the toilet, not flushing it, wait til you make him flush it. So both of y'all be in a cell having to go to the bathroom but we gonna see who can hold out the longest to go flush the toilet paper that somebody threw in there because don't nobody want to go flush it. They don't want to flush it because then they have to flush all that shit. I ain't gonna keep flushing for you right behind you.. So you hold it yourself til whoever have to give up first. That's a common thing throughout the penitentiary, throughout the whole entire state. That is so crazy to me. And it took me almost a year before it dawned on me...

[00:39:46] **Eric Caine** That's why I used to always thinking I'm having these motherfuckers in here. Because that happened all time with me. Sometimes. I was like, what is wrong with you? Just flush the damn toilet. You know what I'm saying? Like, right there. The whole cell ain't nothing but a goddamn bathroom. But they'll wait until I flush the toilet and then they'll use the bathroom and do it again. [Laughs] And it didn't dawn on me for almost a year. I'm like, how the fuck I'm getting all these motherfuckers like to

do this. Then I started hearing stories about other motherfuckers going through the same situation, and that turned out to be a thing that everybody picks up on to do just as a means to irritate you. Cause that's all anybody do in jail. That's the only sport.

[00:40:41] **Eric Caine** Officers do it. They do shit mostly like, if we on lockdown, they'll pass your cell [indiscernible] on purpose. Claim they ran out the way before it comes, it never comes. You know, shit like in the winter times, they'll open up a window, they have the whole damn gallery freezing. They won't close it. Everybody's huddle down in the little gathering looking for the officers to close the window, but they don't. Or in the summertime, if [indiscernible], all of a sudden the power go out so you can't use your [indiscernible]. Or they turn off your water so you can't flush the toilet. Shit like that. That's common stuff. And the stuff that you have to learn how to deal with. It's a psychological thing in prison. The physical stuff is nothing, other than a danger of being hurt, which is constant. But the psychological stuff is non-ceasing.

[00:41:53] **Eric Caine** Non-ceasing. You can't sleep because you never know what the guy in the cell gonna do while you sleep. People get killed in they sleep because they cellie probably hit him upside the head with a TV or stab him in his sleep or something to that effect. These things will happen a lot in prison. You go in the shower, you can't wash your head cause you don't want to put soap in your eye because it only takes a second. One hit of one of those shanks in the right place, it's over. So you gonna give yourself a chance to defend yourself. Because you can't see shit, so you don't wash your face or head in the shower. And you don't stay in the shower no more than a couple minutes. Because the longer you stay in there the more likely something gone happen or could happen. You don't want to witness it, you don't want to be around it, you don't want [indiscernible].

[00:42:50] **Eric Caine** That was just the life I lived for 25 years. I was telling a panel. Not a panel, some students at a college about a couple of months ago. The issue is exonerees, people that come out of prison in general, the most undertreated or issue that's not address is the psychological things that come out. People don't deal with they psychosis. But their imprisonment may have caused. Whether it's wrongful incarceration or rightful incarceration. Either one, it doesn't matter. The fact is that people develop psychosis in prison.

[00:43:56] **Eric Caine** The longer you be there, the more you're going to develop. You never know, cause that's how the psyche is. The individual never realize that. I had a breakdown in prison because of what happen to me. As I told you, my mind wouldn't

accept that my life was meant to end this way. It would never accept it. And because it never accepted, when I started being there so long, the reality of it is that it could be. So unbeknownst to me, I went through a serious depression.

[00:44:41] **Eric Caine** I got in a little altercation with an officer when I was going to the library. And again, I don't know why this is a common tactic among law enforcement. When I was going down the stairs, he kneed me in the back. And unlike last time, wasn't nobody there to save me, stop my fall. So I fell all the way down the stairs and hurt myself. So when he come down the stairs, I just snapped. My natural reaction. So we started to fight. So to make a long story short, I was put in seg for staff assault, which gave me a year, actually gave me two years in seg for that.

[00:45:33] **Eric Caine** The night that I went there, that they put me in seg for this... I don't know why, but it was so bad. So I had already, how would you say, start collecting a lot of psychotropic medicine from guys. I was buying it from them. So I had a whole bunch of them, like 30 something pills. I don't know what the fuck they was, but I took them all in an attempt to kill myself. So they found me unconscious, unresponsive in the cell. I was in a coma for two whole weeks. And when I woke up from that coma with all these damn tubes stuck in me, one down my damn throat, I was so mad. I was so pissed that I woke up. I didn't know what to do. So I stayed at the hospital for more days after I woke up. When I got out... See this is why I really don't talk about this stuff.

[00:46:55] **Amanda Rivkin** Yeah, take your time.

[00:47:03] **Eric Caine** Sometimes I feel [indiscernible] and don't want to tell people that I was so weak that I attempted suicide.

[00:47:09] **Amanda Rivkin** I don't think that makes you weak.

[00:47:16] **Eric Caine** But in my mind it does. And that's another thing I consider. So I was telling this panel, I mean these students a couple of months ago, that I just realized. I been out now about four years, and just relatively recently I realized some of the effects that being in there still has on me. Like the story, like I told you about washing your head. You don't wash your head, or if you do, you don't do it for more than a minute and you need to get the soap out your eyes. I'm home ever since I been home, when I take my shower, I do not wash my head. And if I do, I do it quickly because I start hearing shit. My mind start hearing shit. I got to hurry up and get the soap out my eyes because

something could happen to me. To this very day, I do that. I still do that to the very day and have been out over four years.

[00:48:23] **Eric Caine** And It just dawned on me, I still do that. I still be scared to wash my damn head when I'm in the damn shower. To this very day, I don't even take many showers because of that. I take them as needed. [Laughs] You laughing but I'm dead serious. And that's a direct result of the effect that this had on me, has, not had, has. So I have to find a way to find within me to break that. I'm not saying I'm able to do so, but the fact that I recognize that I do it and it's a problem, I'm going to deal with. So that's what I'm in the process of doing now psychologically.

[00:49:17] **Amanda Rivkin** Can you talk about your release and how it came about?

[00:49:21] **Eric Caine** [Laughs] My release and how it came about. So. After I got over, or if I ever got over, my breakdown, I got OCD. I became obsessed with learning Illinois' criminal law. So much so that I was reading an average of 20 cases a day for years. That's a lot of reading. Every day for at least ten to fifteen years. That's all I would do. When you come to my cell, you'll find the state of my bed with cases all over my bed. That's all I did. I ate, slept, drank. I became so obsessed in learning Illinois' criminal law to get out of there, get out of the place. Nothing mattered to be but that. I didn't care about nothing else.

[00:50:40] **Eric Caine** So when I developed a working knowledge of Illinois' criminal law, I started filing all the appeals. I win here, I lose there, I win here, I lose there, which is one of the reasons why my case never went to the federal courts, because it stayed in the state court all them years because I end up bouncing back and forth. I win on this issue. They lose all this issue. They win on this issue. So bouncing back and forth for years and years and years. And they take years and years to do the stuff. So my last filing was a post-conviction I wrote... [laughs]. So I wrote up two hundred and thirty some page post-conviction petition, handwritten. Do you know how much writing that is?

[00:51:35] **Eric Caine** My post-conviction was that thick. That thick. Even the judge laughed at it, in hindsight. Because [indiscernible]. But I had good stuff. And I knew I had some good stuff because that post-conviction languished over 10 years. So they had me in limbo for 10 whole years because I had an arguable good issue but I wasn't able to articulate it correctly enough or present it properly enough. But they recognized that I had some good issues. So they really didn't want to throw it out or dismiss it, but they

don't want to grant it either because of the technicality. That's a loss, the technicalities. So it just languished year after year after year.

[00:52:37] **Eric Caine** They would not address it, they would not deal with it. Until... Well, even before they had, in the process of me learning Illinois law, I would write all kinds of people for help. All kinds of innocent vanguards or advocates, like Barry Scheck or David Proless, all kind of people. I would write all kind of people.

[00:53:05] **Eric Caine** I wrote David when he was at Northwestern back in '96. At that time, he had already been on my case, but on behalf of Aaron Patterson. So when I wrote to him, they denied to take my case. So I didn't know at the time that they already was on my case on behalf of Aaron Patterson. So about two weeks later, two weeks after I got the letter denying to help me, I found out that they was already on the case for Aaron Patterson. I found out through the clergy at Pontiac. Cause at the time me and my rappy was at Pontiac. He was on death row and I was on [indiscernible] with natural life.

[00:53:56] **Eric Caine** So I wrote him back. I said, oh, so I hear that you already on my case. And then I told him who my co-defendant was. He wrote me back and said, oh, I didn't realize that. When he said that, I'm like, how do you, you're investigating our case and don't know who his co-defendant is. Or didn't even recognize my name. So he said in the letter, well that mean whatever we do for him can't do nothing but help you, right. So that's that. So they still wouldn't take my case. But they used to send students down to interview me, all that kind of stuff.

[00:54:42] **Eric Caine** Consequently, they helped Aaron Patterson get a pardon from death row. So, as I'm sitting in my cell, seeing my codefendant get out a prisoner, off death row, I just knew, I was coming that night. That never happened. It took me eight years later after that to get out. So there was no trickle down effect. However, some of the things they did discover in it, well, indirectly helped me. Indirectly helped me. So. I told a story at Revered Jesse Jackson's church, online broadcast [indiscernible] broadcast on TV.

[00:55:49] **Eric Caine** I hated Jesse Jackson. And the reason why I hated Jesse Jackson was cause my mother thought so highly of him. My mother loved the dude. And when this stuff first happened to me, she went to him for help, to help me and he wouldn't do it. AND it crushed her. It literally crushed her. She just cried and cried about that. So I hated him for doing her like that. So David has a relationship with Jonathan, Jesse's son. So they wanted to try to like, honor David. And David wanted me to be a part of that.

Because he was like having what they call... a little remorse because he learned he was riding the wrong horse.

[00:57:05] **Eric Caine** And he been extremely helpful to me ever since I got out, from the moment I got out. But it reminded me of my mother. My mother died never, ever forgiving herself for what she done to me. My mother became obsessed. Her whole world was about trying to pay back what she had did to me back when I was younger. When I was 12 years old, my mother threw a pot of hot water on me in a rage, a drug-induced rage. And it burned me over 25% on my body, second degree burns. They arrested her because—they wouldn't have arrested her, but they arrested her because—she found out what hospital I was in and she came there acting fool, jumped on a nurse and all that kind of stuff. So they arrested her.

[00:58:07] **Eric Caine** She eventually got out because I wouldn't press charges, I wouldn't pursue any of that stuff. They put me in a foster home, which I left. But anyway. When she did that to me and that stuff happened, that served as the catalyst for her getting off drugs. She stopped taking drugs, she stopped doing drugs, and all that kind of stuff. So when this happened to me, I became... Her whole life was about helping me and being there for me during this ordeal. I started feeling guilty.

[00:59:03] **Eric Caine** My mother was not an educated woman. She was a very simple woman. She never went to high school. She didn't write very well and didn't read very well. [Indiscernible] wrote her like a 22 page letter [laughs], begging her to forgive herself. And she died never doing it. Not even being able to do it. She died never being able doing it. That's the same with David. When I got out, he was so bent on trying to make things right in his mind. Doing right by me in his mind that he been never able to forgive himself. And I had recognized that.

[01:00:00] **Eric Caine** So because of that, I agreed to participate in the celebrations at Jesse Jackson's [indiscernible] on his behalf. I didn't know I was gonna say the thing that I said. It's not like it was planned in the speech I gave. It's wasn't planned. I didn't even know where it came from. But anyway. David told Jesse Jackson about how I felt about the story. So he wanted me, Jesse Jackson wanted me to say it, talk about it on TV in front of the different people. And I did. But what I said is, I forgive Jesse Jackson and people like him who were coming around helping, that was helping others like me.

[01:00:55] **Eric Caine** I had learned that even though the particular individuals—Jesse Jackson, David Protes, Barry Scheck, or whoever may be—although they wasn't helping

me specifically, they was helping people like me. So that gave me hope, that gave me hope that one day, somehow, somebody like them would hear my plea, my cry and help me too. And that's what they represented to me. It ain't them. It's what they did. What they do. What they was about. So forget the individual. The individual becomes irrelevant. But what they did and what they do was important.

[01:01:49] **Eric Caine** And as long as somebody kept doing that type of stuff, defended, and helping, and advocating the innocent, I knew one day, somehow, somebody was gonna do it for me. So I no longer became angry, I wasn't angry. No no. And that's how I was able to forgive them. I said that. I don't know where it came from, it just came out. It made David cry. Because he understood. He understood. And we became the best of friends. I go to his... sometimes I go to his wife's birthday, sometimes I go for Christmas dinner, he been a tremendous help to me ever since I been out.

[01:02:43] **Eric Caine** I'm on that board. I don't know if you knew that. But I'm on the board. Not only was I on that board, I had donated I'd say about \$160,000 to them. To show him that he don't have to feel guilty, and he can forgive himself. He did the right thing. He still was on the right side. Innocence became synonymous with David Protes. Not Barry Schek, not nobody else. In Chicago, innocence was synonymous with David Protes [indiscernible]. I would argue with anybody who just claim otherwise. Anybody. I don't care who they are. I can be a real heel. So that's part of, all that was a part of our healing, so-to-speak. My maturation. Which, I'm still in the old job training of life.

[01:04:00] **Amanda Rivkin** We all are.

[01:04:03] **Eric Caine** Exactly. We all are. And that's what I learned. But it's a rough [indiscernible]. It's a rough [indiscernible].

[01:04:12] **Amanda Rivkin** How did you get out exactly?

[01:04:16] **Eric Caine** So, as I told you I filed that post-conviction that was languishing over 10 years. You know Tyrone Hood gave me a case to read. A lawsuit. It actually was a lawsuit he wanted me to read of an individual who also claimed to have been tortured by Jon Burge. So I had that lawsuit for years, actually a couple years, because I only was using it for reference purposes in my study. And then, one day I decided to look at it to see who was the attorneys on that case. And that's when I found out who the attorneys was. So I wrote the attorney, which was Russell Ainsworth, from the law offices of Loevy

and Loevy. Now, at that time, I didn't know they had created a program called the Exoneration Project. I did not know that at that time.

[01:05:22] **Eric Caine** So I wrote to them. I wrote him, should I say, at Loevy and Loevy. And it was funny because they vetted me. They didn't believe I was who I told them I was. They knew about Aaron Patterson but they did not know Aaron Patterson had a co-defendant. For some odd reason, didn't nobody seem to know that Aaron Patterson had a co-defendant doing natural life.

[01:05:57] **Amanda Rivkin** It must've been something in his trial transcripts.

[01:05:59] **Eric Caine** I don't know what it was. How is that even possible?

[01:06:04] **Amanda Rivkin** In this county. [Laughs] Do you even need to ask that question?

[01:06:05] **Eric Caine** I mean, if you studied. Okay. I mean, look, anybody investigating Aaron Patterson in this case, the main thing that got him convicted was the statement. So my name is probably in the statement. I didn't understand that. Even to this day, Governor Ryan pardoned him, claimed the only reason why he didn't pardon me because he didn't have the authority to do so because I'd never filed a clemency petition. That's his excuse. And that turned out to actually be true. He cannot go into the system and pick somebody out to be pardoned unless they don't request, officially and formally, request a pardon. That's actually the law. Illinois' law. At first I thought it was a bunch of bullshit. But that's actually true.

[01:07:01] **Eric Caine** At any rate, to go back to it, I wrote Russel Ainsworth. So he kept writing me back asking me these questions about the case, was it Aaron Patterson, until he became convinced I was who I say I was. He came to visit me, and that's when he told me about the Exoneration Project. How he got [indiscernible] all that kind of stuff and they would take my case over pro bono and things of that nature. And then that's what happened. That's when they became officially my attorneys. They took all the stuff from the Jon Burge thing, cause I.

[01:07:50] **Eric Caine** Cause outside the Wilson brothers, who actually really blew up the Jon Burge thing, I was the only victim that had actual physical documented injuries from my interrogation. In fact, when they settled, when the city settled, the city attorney, when they addressed it to council, that was the very words. He said, out of all the ones that

they brought to him for settlement, my case was the only one that's undisputed. I am still the only one that have documented physical evidence of my injuries.

[01:08:45] **Amanda Rivkin** Where were they documented?

[01:08:48] **Eric Caine** From the doctors.

[01:08:49] **Amanda Rivkin** At the?

[01:08:49] **Eric Caine** At the jail.

[01:08:50] **Amanda Rivkin** At the jail.

[01:08:51] **Eric Caine** When I first got arrested. Because they had busted my eardrum. They tried to explain in a way that it was some kind of ear infection or sinus infection or things of that nature but the doctor had told them the difference. It couldn't have been that because it was actually blood in my ear and not pus. And infections cause pus, not blood. So they took on my case. Didn't nobody know I was getting out. When they released me, didn't nobody know, including my attorneys. I never went to court. Know how when you go back and forth to court arguing. That didn't happen with me. I never been to court. Not once.

[01:09:49] **Eric Caine** And when the judge released me, didn't nobody know. How I found out, I was in my cell, in my bunk because I was working at the law library. So I goes to sleep early because we got to get up so early in the morning to go to work. So, to me, I only watched TV for two things: news and sports. Other than that, I don't watch TV. But I had been listening to news for like a couple of months because I was so engrossed in this law stuff. So this night I decided I'm gonna catch the news tonight. Catch the WGN 9 o'clock news. I was gonna come and catch it.

[01:10:38] **Eric Caine** So I was in my bunk, eating chips, summer sausage, and cheese. And when the news came on, the first story was, this actually was the headlines, that as Jon Burge spent his first night in federal prison, one of his victims, Eric Caine, will be released in the morning. That's how I found out that I was getting out. Watching the news. My attorney's didn't know. Didn't nobody know. They found out the same way. So they saw they were scrambling all that night to get things in line, to get me some clothes and all that kind of stuff when [indiscernible]. But at first it didn't register to me. So I hear

guys all in the gallery. They called me Shorty Caine then. Shorty Caine, you up. You up [indiscernible], you finally up!

[01:11:30] **Eric Caine** It was like, to me, Charlie Brown, wah, wah, wah, wah [laughs]. I wouldn't hear it because I'm in shock, I'm kinda like in shock. So I'm not gonna believing it til they flash my picture up on the screen. When they flash my picture on the screen, my cellie, he was asleep. And then [indiscernible] wake him up. I'm like, Mike. No, I said, [indiscernible]. He like, oh yeah, what's up? He said, what's going on? What're you talking about? I said turn on the news, turn on channel 9 news. And he turned it on. I paced the floor all that night. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe my fight was over. I could not believe my fight was over.

[01:12:28] **Eric Caine** But what I learned is, it wasn't. It wasn't over. It wasn't over. It just changed. It just changed. It wasn't over. What I mean what was not over, my prison ordeal was over, but the psychological distress I was under just changed. I had to relearn how to interact with different kind of people other than the jailhouse life. I had to learn how to interact with women. I had to learn how to deal with those in my family. There was kids when I left that's grown and had their own family now. And I had to interact with them. I'm still learning. I'm still learning.

[01:13:29] **Eric Caine** The problems I was having then actually is inconsequential to the problem I'm having now, or have been having since I've been out. It's just a whole different everything. I never learned how to [indiscernible]. So I never learned how to be what grown people do, what grown responsible people do. That's why I'm in the predicament I'm in now, in terms of how to do my taxes, how to do this and that. I never learned none of that. But yet enough, I'm thinking in my mind, I'm smart enough to have done that, to know that, and if not, to learn that. And I do. When [indiscernible]... those nuances that will make me derelict in my duty to procrastinate in learning because I've been dealing with some of the other stuff, emotional stuff, people stuff.

[01:14:33] **Amanda Rivkin** What were those first few days like?

[01:14:42] **Eric Caine** [Laughs] A dream. [indiscernible]. It was unbelievable. I was such an [indiscernible]. The air was different. My eyes were different. I saw things different. I felt things different. I was in love with the universe. [Laughs] It still is actually. I was in a perpetual state of celebration. That's what I felt. That's what I believed. Couldn't tell nothing different. My worst days out here quantitatively beat the best days I had in there.

Hands down. Even to this day. Even to the problems with the [indiscernible] right now. I still believe that. I still feel that.

[01:15:45] **Eric Caine** This is the first year since I've been out that I'm excited by Christmas. Christmas used to be my exact favorite holiday. Even with my birthday. I love the Christmas holiday season. Ooh, I just love it. But this is the first year that I'm actually feeling it again. And it's funny that it is because I'm going through so much problem right now. You would think that, but I do. I am. So, David, you know, David [indiscernible]. So he blogged about me a lot. A whole lot actually. Documented things I was experiencing from River Forest to [indiscernible]. But one piece he wrote that I'm proud of that I really liked went out during the inauguration of Barack Obama.

[01:16:53] **Eric Caine** I have only voted two times in my whole entire life. The first time I ever voted, I was in the Cook County Jail. That's where this ordeal first started. Before it started, I used to campaign for Harold Washington. And I was able to vote for him when I was in the county jail because before you get convicted, you still got voting rights. So I voted for him and helped to elect the first Black mayor of the Chicago. 25 years later, 26 years later, I got out. And the second time I voted I helped to elect the first Black president of the United States of America. The only times, two times, I ever voted.

[01:18:01] **Eric Caine** The significance of that to me... considering my ordeal is... surreal... at least. And David recognized that, so he wrote a nice good piece of blog about that. How I had to struggle to find out what voter precinct where I could go vote at [laughs] and all that good stuff, which I did. I had to use a team to find out where I could go vote at. [Laughs] yup, yup, yup, yup, yup.

[01:18:49] **Amanda Rivkin** So what have been the biggest challenges in the last four years you've been out.

[01:18:54] **Eric Caine** Since I've been out? The biggest challenge? Coping. The biggest challenge has been coping. Coping, to me, in terms of being a responsible adult. That's the biggest challenge. I don't have any children. I guess in hindsight you could say thank god because they'd know my ass crazy by now. [Laughs] But, I don't have any children, but coping has been my biggest challenge. That has been my biggest challenge. Keep myself from letting every little thing bring me down. Try to keep myself from... having all of the good things distract me.

[01:19:46] **Eric Caine** So, responsible people. That's what I've been doing actually. I've been in such a perpetual state of celebration, that I'm really not, have not, took adult responsibility seriously enough. You know, I mean, I pay my bills here and there and all that kind of stuff. But serious stuff, not learning the serious stuff, I would neglect it. Like filing my taxes and all, cause I never did that before I went to prison. I was 20 years old. Filing them taxes. Well, how do you do that. Seriously, you know. I have started businesses not even understand what I'm doing, you know, filing quarterly taxes from sales taxes to this type of taxes, this type of taxes. I wasn't keeping up with that cause I didn't know. So now I'm scrabbling to get things right, you know.

[01:20:43] **Eric Caine** This audit, we anticipated this to happen because of the nature of what occurred, you know. I don't know why I'm the only exoneree who has a settlement that the IRS decide to target. Because nobody else has been audited yet. But they decided to target me. Well, they froze Aaron Patterson's settlement, but that was because of the criminal matter he was under. So they really wasn't coming after him for no tax stuff. I mean, I ain't got nothing to worry about, everything can be accounted for. Some shit that can't be accounted for because it was stolen. But it still can be accounted for. So I'm not worried about that.

[01:21:34] **Amanda Rivkin** And psychologically, do you see someone or do you have help dealing with?

[01:21:40] **Eric Caine** [Laughs] Yeah, God. Me, myself, and God. Don't you know, in the Black community... What they call that? It's a bad thing for people to go see psychs, to go to therapy. That's kinda like a... It's not. Once you start to go down that road, then you have to admit that you crazy because that's what crazy people need. And in our minds, we not crazy. Even though we do crazy shit [laughs]. We still refuse. It's like doctors. We don't go to hospitals. We don't go to doctors. You know, it's a psychological thing that you develop in the community.

[01:22:43] **Eric Caine** I admit I probably do need to see somebody, but I don't see what people want to see somebody could do for me that if I put enough force and enough effort that I can't do for myself. And that's where I'm at. I don't have the money to spend to pay people to listen to me [laughs]. What I need to do is learn how to listen to myself. Cause it ain't like I don't know stuff, I just need to put it into action. It's easier said than done. I guess that's where therapy could come into play and help, to help be able to get me to do that, but... But because of the new bill that was passed in the state Senate, I think we are now entitled to free counseling.

[01:23:46] **Eric Caine** But that's not, to my understanding it's not retrospect. So because I'm not retrospect, I won't be entitled to it. Those after the bill was created will be. Someone like Hood, Tyrone Hood, he can get that for free. I can't because I'm not part of it. So I still have to pay. And I don't have no money to pay.

[01:24:16] **Amanda Rivkin** What for you has been the longest lasting effect of your experiences?

[01:24:22] **Eric Caine** Oh, you shouldn't ask me that.

[01:24:23] **Amanda Rivkin** No?

[01:24:23] **Eric Caine** No.

[01:24:23] **Amanda Rivkin** Why?

[01:24:31] **Eric Caine** It's one of those things I can only deal with by not thinking about it. But since you brought it up, the death of my mama, the death of my father, and the death of my grandmama. I have not come to terms with that yet.

[01:24:46] **Amanda Rivkin** It all happened when you were incarcerated?

[01:24:48] **Eric Caine** Yeah. It ain't just that they died while I was incarcerated. It was just the whole circumstance. I had not seen my mama over 15 years before that. I hadn't seen my father even almost longer than that. And I had not seen my grandmama at all—she died in 2001—in 27 some years. And those were the three most important people in my life.