

Life-Changing Advice on Mindset, Identity & Gratitude W/ Damon West

I tell a lot of people like what's the worst thing that's gonna happen The job's gonna say no well then you move on What's gonna be the worst that happens That boy or girl says no they don't want to go on a date with you What's the worst thing that's gonna happen You're gonna make 50 videos nobody watches and you're gonna do something else like people create this fear of judgment that doesn't exist Hey everybody Uh Welcome to another episode of the Gary V audio experience Uh been really trying to be selective and creative with our guests Uh I think we've got a really good one for you uh Today Uh We're gonna yap hopefully inspire Um And uh and and most of all get you to think and feel And so uh I'm gonna allow my guest to introduce himself Uh Tell you who he is and two minutes about him and then I'm gonna dig right into it So the uh I'm excited You're on the show How are you Hey Gary I'm great man Thanks for having me on man It's uh it's truly an honor to get to meet you I'm sure you hear that a lot but you're a Trailblazer And uh look man uh Gary uh Damon West here man And uh I'm telling you it's uh I got out of prison about 7.5 years ago And since then I've been out there sharing my message the story of the coffee bean which we're gonna talk about today And that message has caught fire all over the world brother And I appreciate you letting me come on your podcast today to share this message with your audience because I truly think we're gonna enrich the lives of millions of people today So let's get right into it Tell everybody uh you know 23 minutes on you Like how did you grow up Let's go way back like where where were you born What kind of kid were you And then let's get into the meat of the story and then get into the meat of the message Yeah I mean I grew up in this little town called Port Arthur Texas Port Arthur is down by Louisiana and Texas on the Gulf coast came from a great family Uh had everything going for me in life Good athlete uh great athlete Actually I got a scholarship to play division one college quarterback University of North Texas uh got injured in college and went off to work in different jobs Like worked in Congress worked for a guy running for president worked on Wall Street Uh it was there that job as a broker in 2004 that I was introduced to meth for the first time And it took about 18 months from the introduction of meth into my system to lose it all to give it all away Gary Cause that's what addicts do we give things away man I gave up my job my home my car

my savings account my family my tether to God and I went from working on Wall Street to living on the streets of Dallas Gary And that's when I became a criminal I was a meth addict and I was the ringleader of a bunch of other meth addicts breaking into people's homes And that is a good place for us to launch and start the story today Actually before we do that brother because I think you know the modern technology allows people to obviously it's a very intriguing starting point and I think a lot of people can pause their podcast Google your name and probably see you talk about that part I actually especially knowing this audience actually want to double click into something that just caught my attention Talk to me about When did you think that you were going to be or when did you realize that you were a very talented athlete And did you at any point think you were going to be a professional athlete or how much did you being a good athlete define who you were you know you know I'm in the athlete business with Boehner sports I know exactly what part of the country you grew up in that Friday Friday Night Lights was a very successful sitcom So I think a lot of people listening to not in the sports business can probably have a good sense of what being the star quarterback of a high school team uh in that part of the country means I get the luxury of seeing you right now I know a lot of people are listening some will watch videos but I can see you so I can tell that you were clearly also a handsome star quarterback as a senior in high school I want to go into identifying as something at a young age and how big of a vulnerability that could be So I I just yapped a lot Let's break this down When did you realize you were good at sports Gary great questions and you're getting right to the heart of it Uh When I first realized I was really good at sports I was about 11 or 12 years old God blessed me with a cannon for a right on and you and you hit them you hit the nail on the head man This is Texas man Friday night lights Texas high school football That stuff is a religion down here where I live and and and I was the man I was a three year starting quarterback for a five A school biggest division was Boo Chip Um back then Boo Chip was like the real big thing to me It was like they have the star system now of course But um yeah and so being a quarterback was everything to me it's how I identified in life and because I was such a good athlete I got away with a lot of things in life Gary a lot of the rules didn't didn't apply sorry a lot of the rules didn't apply to me Gary I I was able to skate by with things my behavior never really got checked and I'm not blaming anybody for that But that's just why you're not blaming the you're not in the school you're not blaming your parents you know But you know

what in hindsight being the byproduct's just jump because I want to make this very valuable for the parents that are listening at home right now who either have a straight A student and that's the religion who have a great you know the Alcaraz match just happened So tennis is on a lot of people's mind have a great tennis player and that's the religion football you know whatever it is How much do you now realize that creating boundaries is obnoxiously healthy Oh it's incredibly healthy And here's what I realized about about that now and I didn't pick up on this when I was a late teenager or in my twenties because you were the beneficiary of it at the time you were pumped that you could skip class or you could drink with your buddies or whatever the fuck you're about to say But now you understand like nobody ha holding you accountable led to you subconsciously and then consciously realizing you could get away with shit Oh Yeah And it's Gary even more than just cutting class I mean I mean I got pulled over drunk I got all kinds of things happened to me that would have put somebody in the criminal justice system long before I went in there when I was 33 years old man But but because I was the quarterback because I could throw a football you know my identity Gary was wrapped up in being a college football player and and the danger about this and I'm talking to all the parents and and even young people out there is that when you attach your identity into something external something you can attach to you're setting yourself up for a enormous failure Gary you know this man you you you can't attach yourself to a job your your athletic ability the card job you were you were so kind to me before we got on camera and then immediately repeated it Like when I tell you that I have no feelings towards my professional success you'd be baffled I'm on the other side of the fence on this I don't give a shit that I'm Gary V I don't give a shit that I'm good at making money as an entrepreneur I think none of that means anything and no one should treat me in any shape or form different because I have a lot of followers or I'm good at making money or I say nice things I I just know and I've known since I was 10 this is why I was a bad student I was a bad student because I didn't feel attached to needing to get A's and B's I love that you're going down this path Uh It's uh this is why I'm double clicking on this Like I know that you're about to say a bunch of great shit But I also assume because you've had a lot of success that we can see a lot of that shit on the internet because like it's the same with me I you could see my core principles out there every day what we're talking about you and I right now is actually going to change the course of five or six people's lives out of the 100 thousands that are listening right now or over

the course of the next couple of years because it's those early days of attaching to something It's not just a star quarterback This is why I'm so scared of school being an Ivy League student Those kids are failing left and right every day as well in their twenties And thirties because all they wanted to be was a straight A student Go to Ivy League and then you're 22 And now what Yeah Absolutely And and you're and you're wise Gary in your life to not attach yourself to anything that's going on in in the world that you've created with your successes Because man that's not what it's about Look Gary I have this healthy perspective now on what a bad day looks like And and I think that we all have perspective what a bad day looks like But when we're wrapped up in this world we don't even live in a reality when we're attached to this fake identity That could be coming from social media it could be coming from the sports we play and look I speak to college football teams all over America I've met a lot of your players man You've got some great guys that you represent and and I think that the the danger of that is is that when you attach yourself to something external you set yourself up for an enormous failure in my life today Gary every day that I wake up and my feet don't hit the cold concrete floor of a prison cell I'm winning I'm gonna have a good day and it doesn't matter if I'm out there speaking on some stage or or writing books or doing whatever I'm out there making a positive impact But I didn't understand that Gary when I was when I was in in the middle of it man And whenever I'm going through this living in Texas everything is available to me that I wanna do But on on on September 21st 1996 Gary the entire world changed for me I I call this a fork in the road in life and and life's about this fork in the road days these very pivotal days where you get knocked down you get back up you dust yourself off but you're gonna make a decision at the fork in the road You're either gonna make the right choice and go the right way or the wrong choice and go down the wrong direction September 21st 96 Gary we're playing against Texas A and M it's a beautiful Saturday in College Station Texas I'm 20 I'm the starting quarterback for a division one team at 20 years old Gary I'm driving my team down the just for fun Who was the who was the opposing quarterback opposing quarter I don't remember who the opposing quarterback is I can tell you who the opposing linebackers were Keith Mitchell and Dat W Yeah Yeah Oh I played against it That was the game that I played against DAT win In fact that tackled me on on a couple of plays before this third play of this game Gary I'm driving my team down the field against the Aggies in College Station Packed house Beautiful Saturday afternoon And what little boy growing up in Texas

doesn't even wanna wanna play for these guys or against these guys Right
And there I am driving my team down the field third play of the game I'm
down on the ground and don't get back up It's a career in an injury I separate
my shoulder that day and I never played college football again And when I
get up to this Fork and Road in life at 20 years old and football is gone and
my identity was going with it and and Gary talk it through for a lot of people
listening A lot of sports fans a separated shoulder in 96 is different than it is
today First of all modern medicine but second of all I assume that means on
your right shoulder you're throwing arm or you know and what it just didn't
heal well like or did you not rehab properly Break it down for me Yeah
here's what happened So I separated shoulder and my dad was a sportswriter
for 50 years down in Port Arthur Texas Jimmy Johnson is also from Port
Arthur Texas My dad and Jimmy are best friends and so Jimmy sent me to
the NFL quarterback surgeon A guy named Dr Vander Beer in Dallas Texas
and Vandermeer goes in they they cut my collar bone out the distal clavicle
because it's popped through It's got a third degree separation and I start
healing and coming back in the spring in the off season and then June of the
next year I I cut my Achilles 10 in half So I never got to play college football
again Gary that game against Texas A and M I thought I could make a
comeback and I and I was coming back in the in the in the quarterback room
in the spring but the next summer I severed my Achilles tendon in half And
did you did you did that mentally again As you know even the mid nineties
one could conceivably come back to that or are you telling me after all the
work you put in Right You're in the QB room you're 20 you're staying away
from the fun you're focused It was that achilles that was like fuck this You
know I would I'd like to be able to say I stayed away from the fun and I was
focused But honestly man in my story and and and my autobiography talks
about this the change agent We talk I talk about in there a lot Uh I was a wild
guy back in college Gary I partied a I was in a fraternity I you know I I did
the fraternity thing when I was in there and when that happened it broke me
man I was done with trying to because the rehab to come back from achilles
injury it just seemed like it was a path too steep for me and you were just like
fuck it I'm just gonna be a college kid and have fun I'm gonna make money
But the good the good news is is that the coach kept me on scholarship man
He didn't have I I ran into Gary the other day I run into my old college coach
in the airport A guy named Darryl Dickey He used to be the offensive
coordinator at Texas A and M and now he's a uh he's an analyst at University
of Georgia He runs into me at the airport man I'll take a picture with this guy

He's like my hero because this guy keeps me on scholarship for the next two years He didn't have to That's a valuable scholarship for a school like North Texas man We're d we're planning to get some of the biggest guys in the country Alabama LSU all these schools And he keeps one of those 85 scholarships for me who lives a less than desirable life But he understands that if he cuts me loose that there's no telling what happens to Damon West back in 1997 or 1998 So he keeps me on scholarship until I graduate And I'm Gary I I'm I'm a I'm I'm kind of a pitiful person at that point I've got a lot of talent obviously God blessed me with the ability to talk to people and and and get out and and get out there and and get good jobs I like I said I worked in the United States Congress after college I worked for a guy running for president of the United States raising money I was a political fundraiser raising money all over you not only had a Canon right arm you also had gift of Gab and charisma which was good for a lot of fun but was also good in those early twenties in that transition to set you up for opportunities because that is a massively God given talent By the way for all the kids that are listening right now you're charisma and ability to talk is a monster monster talent And sometimes you guys and girls downplay that don't obviously you've got to back it up with a stake to that sizzle but it is do not downplay charisma It's no different than being born super funny super attractive super motivated super athletic It is one of the other pillars of God given talent One that society does not talk enough about charisma is a big deal Yeah and it's it's a muscle You can work too by the way Gary you 100% you can get better at it and look at this little side note man I talk to people all the time They're like hey man I you know I wanna be more outgoing but I I have this fear of of confrontation or this this fear to get out and talk to people Listen I do things I'm afraid of so I can do things I'm afraid of The more you address these fears and deal with that especially speaking to people and being you know upfront and outspoken the better you get at it But I I was born with that though Yes you were born with that gift but you also live a life that got you to places of adversity which then put things into perspective I tell a lot of people like what's the worst thing that's gonna happen The job's gonna say no well then you move on What's gonna be the worst that happens That boy or girl says no they don't want to go on a date with you What's the worst thing that's gonna happen You're gonna make 50 videos nobody watches and you're gonna do something else like there's a people create this fear of judgment that doesn't exist It's in their head 100% It's all in your head And that voice in your head is usually fear Gary A lot of times it's fear I I don't

listen to myself Gary I talk to myself I used to listen to myself I went down some poor pitiful roads because I listened to myself But you know Gary yeah you're right I was blessed with the ability to talk to people and and that was something that got me into a lot of doors like I said you know United States Congress worked for a guy running for President Wall Street Back in 2004 I was back in Dallas training to be a stockbroker for U BS one of the biggest banks in the world But it was at that job as a stockbroker in 2004 Gary that that my life and the lives of a lot of other innocent people would forever be changed And and look I was before you go there I before we go into how meth got into the system and all that that you set us up with was your And this is so damn important Big moment in the podcast was your decision to go to Wall Street 2004 96 You were 20 So you're 28 at this point or so 2004 Yeah 28 was was it now Hey I wanna make as much money as possible And Wall Street's a thing you nailed it dude The vices man I just wanted I just wanted to I wanted to party I wanted something that would support a lifestyle of partying and hanging out making money I mean at that age Gary I didn't understand the important things in life One of the reasons why I like your content I'm gonna back up a little bit and talk about something I've learned from you Is you in an entirely different path you realized by the time you were young that you were meant to do something bigger You took your dad's wine business and and you blew it up You were doing things in your twenties that now in my forties I'm I'm able to start making those roads but I was late to the game Gary I was late to the game because I got distracted Yeah the good news is look And by the way for all the kids listening home I would argue I went a little too far because at 47 48 years old there's certain things I didn't develop I probably didn't get enough fun out of the system Like listen there's a great Russian saying that translates to everything's at its best when it's balanced right And I think to your point I was on one extreme where like listen I'm thrilled and pumped with every aspect of my life knock on wood And one of those is why the question always becomes why why did you want to party and think that you know I always think like first of all I think that's incredibly normal I think anybody of the age of 15 to 30 has some percentage of them You know some is 10% some is 100% that wants to hook up that wants to party that wants to be popular I think that's normal human behavior But when you start going through the path unfortunately too many people want to do it because they don't have self-confidence And they don't love themselves and they need that drug of others liking them and all those vices And then for me I think I went a little bit too far Like I I'm proud

to say this and I think people that go to Vicon or really know me Like I think I love my parents like probably a little bit too much Right And so for me I was obsessed with I had a sense that I had a talent as well And I was gonna milk that in my twenties to do big for my parents because I always was very grateful that they raised me well and took me out of the Soviet Union to America And I was I've been always grateful always grateful And so um that that's kind of how my story played out But I think the balance of the two as people are listening I don't want them to over correct into my direction because I think you know it would have been ok in my twenties to go on a vacation for a week Like that would have been ok Everything would have been still fine And to your point like you you can have fun but you can grow up The best part is forties is still young I'm pumped that you have your whole life in front of you You know all of a sudden when you're 80 that window of 15 to 28 or to 35 or whatever window you're about to explain us That's gonna be a small blimp right now It's still a big percentage of your life This is what I want I want people to get excited in their thirties forties fifties and sixties to realize when you're 90 15 years was a small blip You're on that path now Absolutely And it's never too late It's never too late to turn around I was like you were I was listening to one of your podcast the other day and you were talking to the to the other guy you were talking to about you know the stuff you're even doing now You you're you're looking forward to the stuff you 40 years from now You know I'm in such a weird place I know we're bouncing around here but like this is gonna get you pumped and I think this will bring value This is why I'm jumping in I kind of weirdly make pretend I've done nothing Like that's how I talk to myself I'm like I love it man I do the same thing It's called the Rookie Mindset Mindset I'm kind of like ok cool but like not really like fuck it It's all gone today's day one and like let's go fucking crush anyway I want to actually hear because this is sexy now Like this is fun for people that like a little you know Hollywood stuff like ok cool You're 28 I'm kind of into this story So I want to get back to it You're 28 you're starting to train for it What happens You meet the wrong guy is that what ends up happening So you were you the wrong guy You know I sometimes you hang out with the wrong wrong crowd long enough you become the wrong crowd right You are the wrong crowd that's gonna happen soon in the story But but you know that in several different points because you said you know about what happened in college I couldn't live life on life's terms Gary And that's one of the hallmarks of being an addict right But but when you do something like I did you start getting into all these

different drugs and alcohol a lot and you're an addict that's a dangerous game you're playing because now you become an addict and you're in your addiction And in 2004 I was in my addiction I I partied cocaine was my drug of choice back then But it was one day at work in 2004 I'm passed out of sleep This other stockbroker comes up he sees me sleeping and he wakes me up He's visibly shaken and he's like he's like Damon wake up He said you can't sleep on this job He said dude the stock markets are open you're you're messing with people's money they're gonna they're gonna fire you He said come on down the parking garage I've got something that'll pick you up So I get up out of my desk I follow this guy down the parking garage It was nice little sports car I I believe we're gonna do a little blow But when we get into the car he hands me this glass pipe with these crystal rocks in it Gary I've never seen a class pipe before I mean what is that And he's like Damon just relax He said it's crystal meth He said you're gonna love this stuff Truer words have never been spoken Gary I fell in love with Crystal Method It was the most evil most destructive most addictive drug I've ever put in my body Man I smoked it one time and I was instantly hooked just like that and I gave everything away for that drug because Gary that's what addicts do Addicts give things away Addicts give up their goals to meet their behaviors Now and when I'm talking about addiction there for everybody listening I'm not just talking about drugs and alcohol That's the obvious addiction We talk about addicted to anything food money clothing shopping sex the internet social media whatever it is you're addicted to If it takes you away from the most important things in life you give away your goals to get there But uh you know so when I started giving away everything I gave away my job first then it was how fast how fast I want to get content 18 months I was living on the streets of Dallas homeless without that I heard that I heard earlier take it back You go in the pipe that day Do you do crystal meth The next day with that dude Oh I was up for four days the first time I did it I mean I was up I mean I was doing it every day after that and and here's the deal How quickly and how quickly did you lose that job because of it About a month about a month here And here's why I lost the job too because whenever he's whenever I get introduced to meth I'm in the middle of studying for my series seven and my series 63 my my entrance exams to being a broker Yeah man there's no more studying that goes on I fail my series seven and my series 63 they bring me in the office and and the guy that hired me a guy named Charlie Eldemire a family friend of my dad's he brought me in he's like Damon is everything ok I'm like and I'm I'm high as a kite I'm like yeah

man everything's great Charlie He said well you failed your exams He said you're you're fired He said there's nothing I can do for you Damon And they walked me out of the office Gary I left that day I got into my car and I called the guy up I said I need your dealer because I just got off early today I I looked at it as getting off early man I went and got high again Gary brother let me ask you a question because I think this is a common thing You know I just listened carefully there I heard some of the stuff you know congress somebody ran for president correct me if I'm wrong given the religion of sports in this part of the country which I love because I'm a sports I'm addicted to sports So I need to be you know the New York Jets are gonna put me into ruins Um It sounds like your dad was able to have a lot of nice relationships that he earned over his life that he was able to really set you up with some and maybe it's your mom Like I don't know like it sounds like your family was able to create some door opening Not only was your gift of gab there but it was also like talk to me about the process of like taking your parents for granted with entitlement and when you're an addict total entitlement Gary And I mean look let's call it for what it is I was a privileged guy man I was one of the most privileged people that you could ever meet man I had everything in my path waiting for me There's a lot of different ways to grow up in America Gary and I had one of the most privileged ways to grow up We weren't rich or anything like that We were middle class But man but the relationships were there the relationships and the relationships are everything in life Gary you talk about this I talk about this with everybody They're everything in life My dad had built up relationships through all those years in sports man and look being around sports Gary I'm a sports nut too We learn a lot of lessons in sports and life Sports teaches us how to win how to lose how to be part of a team It's why it's why I'm petrified of eighth place trophies If we eliminate the losing and how to handle it we get kids that are scared of everything but Gary and we're gonna get into this in a story Sports didn't just teach me those kind of lessons man My dad was the first sportswriter in Southeast Texas to put black athletes on the front page of sports pages 1971 1st time it ever happened it was a black running back from Lincoln High school named Joe Washington Junior Went on to play for the Redskins went to play for the Colts Yeah Little Joe when my dad puts Little Joe on the cover of the sports page in 1971 people down in Southeast Texas lost their minds over that They broke his windows they set his tires they sent hate mail to him But when I was a little boy I was like eight years old my dad goes up in the attic one day he comes down with this

box with all these envelopes these letters It it's all the hate mail and he set me down as a kid that day and he made me read every letter of hate mail every nasty negative word that people said about my father and my mother because my dad puts a black guy on the cover of sports page But you know what my dad told me back then he said Damon I want you to see what it looks like to take a stand and do the right thing because he said sometimes taking a stand and doing the right thing it means you're gonna stand alone But he but he said it's always ok Do you think that your parents And again they sound so wonderful So this will be hard but I'm desperate to bring value and I see this a lot and honestly I think it's a challenge for me Do you think it's easier to kind of do the right things in the world than necessarily do the right things for your Children because you love them so much so you give them inches and and miles that you don't give to others Yeah I think that people uh I look girl I'll tell you from what I see A lot people reach out to me a lot because I'm a very visible person now and people know that I'm in recovery I get a lot of messages from parents whose kids are suffering from addiction issues or incarceration and and and I have to tell these parents the same thing every time Look I'll talk to your son your daughter I believe that's one of the reasons why I got out of prison I'll I'll do that kind of service work all day long I'll talk to anybody that reaches out to me but I may be here to talk to you because you as the parent you are exhibiting addictive behavior too you've become an addict you're addicted to fixing somebody you can't fix and when parents become the addict because they're addicted to fixing their kid It reminds me of my parents my parents they would do anything to help me out but sometimes doing those things to help out a young person is not the best thing for them You become enr in the process And I think that's where you're going with that My parents that's exactly where I'm going Like I fear like by the way this is why I wrote my last book to talk about candor I hate conflict with people I love which leads into employees and I create I'm an enabler you know people love me like but you know but the reality is I can enable bad behavior because if I love you I you know Gary V the public figure is dominant because I'm just talking to the world so I can draw those lines in the sand and I can talk about a ca I can talk about these things but as it gets closer to you know from an acquaintance to a friend from a to a good friend from a good friend to a great friend to a best friend to family It gets harder for me and I'm so empathetic that I think everyone listening right now can associate with what we're saying now which is it's a lot harder when it hits at home and with a child there's nothing you love more than that It's just

the way it is Absolutely And and it's you know I think that like I said one of the reasons why I even got out in the first place is to be able to have these difficult conversations because it goes back to almost what you're saying about the eighth place trophies We are setting up an entire generation for failure when we don't allow people how to lose and learn tough lessons in life But here's the trick you can also lose and learn those tough lessons in life You're a Gen X guy I'm a Gen X guy man We grew up in a in a generation where I mean and it's real popular on social media right now Everybody's tagging that and hashtag and Gen X and all that But but I mean look we we grew up in in a in a time where you could still lose and and you still had to you had to communicate with people back when we grew up Gary you didn't have phones If you wanted to say something to somebody you had to go you had to talk to your face You had to have a little bit of human interaction and and right now antisocial behavior is kind of like the norm of what we're going to in this country and it needs to come back to where people are communicating with each other in person We had the benefit of that But you I'm saying that to say this you can have all those things going for you in life and and I certainly did I had everything going for me in life but you can still go down that wrong road It's like my dad told me with those letters I was reading He said sometimes in life you're gonna have to take a stand That's why I want you to read these letters He said it's it's sometimes in life you're gonna have to stand alone But he said it's always OK to stand alone as long as you're standing on the right side of history So it it wasn't like I was raised by people who didn't have a conscience of what was going on But my parents were in the middle of the civil rights movement in the Deep South And they they understood they got it And my dad I mean my dad he explained sports to me at a young age He said Damon before there was MLK there was Jackie Robinson before you integrated lunch rooms in the American South You integrated locker rooms Of course he said sports has the power to bring people together like nothing else can And and and that's what sports does do It's it's it's why I've always associated with it I think it's one of the great comps to real life and it's why I'm passionate about it My brother I know we bounced around a ton and I know that that might have gotten us off track in some places in the last five minutes that we have here together What have we not touched on that you want to get to in this story or a point that you feel will bring value to the listener Let's go July 30th 2008 Almost exactly 15 years from recording in this episode I'm on the couch that day I've got my meth dealer sitting next to me and I and I'm telling this his

name is Tex my dope dealer and I I might text you gotta get out of here man The cops are closing on me The end is near and just about that time the window on my right blows out and shatters and it's a flash bang grenade Gary it's going across my living room floor The thing blows up in my face and when I came to and I can see it here again There's a cop standing over me in full swat riot gear Man This boodle on my chest the pare of assault rifles digging in my eye socket and he's screaming at me Don't move don't move And and I'm like man don't worry don't worry And one of the cops came in screaming We got it We got the uptown burglar Gary I went from being a star college athlete to this guy known as the uptown burglar They took me to Dallas County jail that day they processed me and I spent the next 10 months in county jail waiting for my day in court And on May 18th 2009 I stood in front of a jury that sentenced me to 65 years in the Texas Department of criminal justice A life sentence in prison Gary And and right after the trial was over my mom and my dad are talking to me and my mom has this one last visit with me Gary Epic stuff and she's like Damon you can't go off and become someone we don't recognize She said you owe Texas the debt of 65 years You gotta go and pay that debt You did everything they said you did But here's the debt you gotta pay to us when you go to prison You will not get in one of these white hate groups one of these aryan brotherhood type gangs you weren't raised to be like that You weren't raised to be a racist And she said you come back as the man we raised Damon or don't come back at all Gary I'm floored man I don't know how I'm gonna do this But but on the road waiting for the bus to come get me I'm two months I've got to wait for the prison bus to come get me I meet this guy in Dallas County jail this older black man this Muslim guy named Mr Jackson and Mr Jackson shares with me exactly how I'm gonna do it He said imagine prison as a pot of warm water He said you have three choices how to respond to this pot of warm water called life You can be like the carrot that turns soft and mushy and weak or an egg which becomes hard Mad and me you know the carrot goes in hard it becomes soft the egg goes in with a soft liquid inside it's hard but the heart becomes hard He said or you could be like a coffee bean because a coffee bean changes the pot of warm water into a pot of coffee He said the coffee bean is the only thing that would change the water because it is a change agent And the last words this guy said to me before the prison bus come to pick me up He looks at me he says west be a coffee bean And Gary I remember how I felt when he told me that I mean I can get that man I can understand I had three choices in this life and and I go to prison Gary it's

a baptism by fire I mean the first two months of prison are spent fighting my butt off man and and end up I end up sports again Gary I end up on the rec yard earning respect out there with those guys playing basketball with them And so when the violence was finally over the threat to my physical safety was gone I got to work on myself I became that coffee bean And seven years later the parole board in Texas comes to visit me and uh the lady from parole interviews me in 2015 She says Mr West we don't see a lot of people like you come through the system Kind of the same thing we've been talking about Gary She said you had it all every advantage every privilege every opportunity She said you're you're the definition of a privileged person She said but you didn't just change yourself When you came to this prison you changed the entire prison around you She said so I have one question for you today She said if you could be remembered for being anything in life anything at all She said tell me what that would be in just one word Go Hey Gary I breathe out and relax That's an easy question for a coffee bean I fired her answer back at her and I was like ma'am useful I just want to be useful You know Gary I think everybody wants to be useful you know and and I told her I said I just want to be useful ma'am and I can be useful inside this prison that you've already seen or I could be useful in the free world again November 16th 2015 Gary I walk out of a Texas prison Now I'm not a free man When I walk out man I I've got a little more time left on parole in Texas I'm on parole until the year 2073 So from the recording of this episode I've got 15 more years on supervised release but I haven't let that hold me back here Meaning meaning if you do if you do any version of a slip up it's a wrap Yeah I mean it they've got a short leash on me every month I see my parole officer in Beaumont Miss Braggs I paid the cup I pay a fine I answer the questions if I want to leave Texas Uh I gotta get permission from Texas and but Gary look man I'm a coffee bean The only way this coffee bean is going back to prison is when I go to prisons all over America That's my passion man I go back into prisons a lot because I'm the guy that delivers hope In fact the the inmates in America they call me the smuggler of hope I smuggle hope into a place that's hopeless You know the only way I go back to the prison is when I go on my own terms and I walk out the front gate of all my prisons But when I got out Gary I I moved back to Southeast Texas I lived with my parents for the first two years on parole and I started sharing my story around the area of Southeast Texas Then uh the big break happens You got a couple more minutes Gary you're gonna love this story I'm so brother and everybody who's listening is gonna be so pissed at me Everyone who's

listening just to remind you I am not a professional podcaster like some of your other favorites I'm already eight minutes late for a client who texted me saying basically what the fuck So I'm here even cause I'm captivated by this brother Listen everybody is listening It's not a super hard name to look up D AM on Space W est If you've enjoyed this there's a ton of content out there I thought this would be a good um a good conversation of perspective gratitude parenting entitlement accountability uh and attachment to identification I hope you took that out of it Damon We're cheering for you brother Keep building keep coffee beaning it And I I hope we cross paths soon bro Be a coffee bean here Take care my man