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Love Letters to the World from Prison

By Little

Personal Journals

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How can a person spend 25 years behind bars for a crime they didn't commit—10 of which were in solitary confinement—and still find it in their heart to love the world that put them there?

On this episode of the By Little Podcast, Leon Benson, also known by his stage name El Bently 448, tells us. He shares the story of his two wrongful convictions, the prison and solitary confinement sentences he's endured as a result, the impact all these experiences have had on his mental health, and what life's been like since he was exonerated on March 8, 2023. He also discusses the role that philosophy and art have played in his healing process, giving us a behind-the-scenes tour of each song on his debut EP, *Innocent Born Guilty*.

Dr. Emily Crain, psychologist and mental health consultant with InnerCity Weightlifting, joins us on this episode as well. She explains how she's helped folks who've been entangled with the criminal-legal system heal, cope, and move forward with their lives as best they can. We also hear about her research on the way that the stigma associated with incarceration affects mental, financial, and physical health. Together, Leon and Emily offer their insights on the support people need in order to rebuild their lives and avoid recidivism after prison.

For the latest on Leon's music, art, and other creative pursuits, follow him on Instagram at [@el_bently_448](#).

For more about El Bently 448's debut EP, *Innocent Born Guilty*, visit Die Jim Crow Records' website, [diejimcrow.com](#), or stream/download his songs wherever you get your music.

For more on the organization Emily works with, InnerCity Weightlifting, visit [innercityweightlifting.org](#). And to learn how YOU can help smooth reentry for the formerly incarcerated, read our essays on the subject by becoming a paid By Little subscriber for \$6.50 per month.

* Read: [Unlocking Social Capital - 7 Ways You Can Help the Formerly Incarcerated Rebuild Their Lives](#)

* Read: [Normalize Opportunity - How you can help create alternatives for the poverty to prison pipeline.](#)

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Here's to working towards better together.