

The Peale, Baltimore

Out of the Blocks Storytelling Series

Recorded by Aaron Henkin; Photographs and Music by Wendel Patrick

Produced for the *Out of the Blocks* website, created by the Peale, <https://ootb.thepeale.org/>

Out of the Blocks is supported by PRX and produced with grant funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cohen Opportunity Fund, The Hoffberger Foundation, Patricia and Mark Joseph, The Shelter Foundation, The Kenneth S Battye Charitable Trust, The Sana and Andy Brooks Family Fund, The Muse Web Foundation, and the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund, creator of the Baker Artist Portfolios



Yusuf Ali ([00:03](#)):

Yusuf Ali from Liberty Heights in Gwynn Oak.

I hustle. I thought I would be a millionaire by now, as long as I've been in the game. But right now, my life is really in shambles, man. I got a kid on the way. My life is really wild right now.

Speaker 2 ([00:29](#)):

How so? Say more about that? What's chaotic about it?

Yusuf Ali ([00:33](#)):

I sell narcotics. So, like right now, I got enemies around.

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Speaker 2 ([00:40](#)):

Talk about how that happens. How do you make enemies?

Yusuf Ali ([00:44](#)):

I might take something from somebody. I might rob somebody. You think they're going to just lay down? And this guy just took my money, and I ain't doing nothing to him? I ain't going to do nothing back?

Speaker 2 ([00:56](#)):

But you feel like it's worth the risk then?

Yusuf Ali ([00:59](#)):

If you got a record like mine, the jobs are not hiring. They're looking at your record, "Oh, you did a second, three-time felon. You can't... Nah, we ain't having that." I had just came home at the beginning of the year, and I just got caught up in this drug life again because I couldn't find a job fast enough. And so now, I could be on my way back to jail because of some fines I ain't paid yet. They want me to pay like a thousand dollars as soon as I come home, but how can I do that if I don't have a job? And now you got to go back out here and sell drugs because you can't get a job fast enough.

The drug trade is just not my only hustle. Man, you can tell me cut your grass for \$50, I'm going to cut it. You tell me to dig a hole for a hundred dollars, I'm going to dig that hole. You know what I mean? I don't care what you're using the hole for. I'm going to dig it. You know what I mean? You can be ready to throw a body in there, how big you want it? I'm going to dig it for you. So, it never stops.