

WeHome, Episode 9 Transcript The Mentors

Erica Ciccarone (host): WeHome is a podcast about the Wedgewood-Houston and Chestnut Hill neighborhoods in Nashville, Tennessee where history, policy, people, business interests, and housing intersect in a way that says a lot about the future of Nashville. If you don't live here, you might find that the stories we uncover apply to your neighborhood, too. Each episode, we bring you on the ground to hear from a chorus of South Nashville voices. Then, two community members tour each other's lives and tell each other stories. I'm Erica Ciccarone.

A quick note before we get started. This is the last episode of WeHome—at least for now. About year ago, Courtney Adair Johnson and I set out to create a project that would amplify the voices of people in South Nashville. Courtney is a fantastic reuse artist, who has been making art with the people of Nashville for close to two decades. Our team grew to include Carri and Brian Jobe—whose support as project coordinators has anchored our ideas and my sometimes unwieldy visioning; Joseph Bazelais, whose experience as a community organizer and advocate has acted as a compass in making our work impactful; Lauren Cierzan and Micheala Intveld-Sutherland, who gave WeHome a striking, visual face; and Tony Youngblood, the love of my life who set everything to music. With our grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, we've been able to pay everyone for their time and talent, including our podcast participants. And in the background, we've had support from Nashville Metro Planning Department, in particular, Greg Claxton and Laura Hardwicke, whose patient maneuvering in working with a half dozen artists has been remarkable.

Greg and the Planning Department have undergone a market study of Wedgewood-Houston and Chestnut Hill as we've been producing the podcast. And they're looking for your help to envision the future of these neighborhoods. They'll be joining us on April 14 for WeHome Day, and we'd love for you to come. The Planning Department will be on hand to get feedback from you about what you'd like to see here. Solar sidewalks? Greenspace? Affordable housing? Bring your creative ideas and inspiration.

We'll also have listening stations for each episode, and you'll be able to meet the podcast participants, who will join us as honored guests. If you have enjoyed their stories and learned from their experiences, please come thank them. They're pretty wonderful.

In addition, three artists are making work related to the podcast. Jana Harper has been creating a tree map of the neighborhoods; Xavier Payne is making a WeHome coloring book featuring some of the participants and South Nashville history; and Alysha Irisari Malo is sourcing poetry and photography from the neighborhoods and partnering organizations, and you'll help her put it all together in a book—and take home a page.

Again, it's on April 14 from 1-4 p.m. at Track One. That's at 1201 4th Avenue South.

Now back to this episode. It's called "The Mentors."

Today, we're going to head back to JC Napier to talk to a guy who is pretty well known.

Sterling Wright: Start with Sterling walking around the neighborhood, talking about what he does for community. Say that he does work with Papa Joe. Napier has how many residents?

Sterling Wright: Hi Miss Sharon!

Miss Sharon: Hi Sterling.

SW: Who's that you with?

EC: It's a beautiful day in late September, and Sterling Wright invites me to walk with him. He carries a shopping bag that he's bringing to an elderly woman who has congestive heart failure. It's one of many such stops in his weekly schedule. He checks in on her, brings her hygiene items, food, toilet paper. He takes out the trash and finds out what she'll need next week.

SW: This lady who we're going to, she's a lonely lady. She's a sweet little lady. Every time I see her I give her a hug, and when she tells me what she needs, I stop and go get it. Nobody should be alone in this world. That's how I feel. There she go right here. Ms. Willa! Wait until you see her face.

EC [on tape] Should I turn this off? I don't want to take her by surprise with the recorder.

EC: Sterling grew up in J.C. Napier, and he loves the community even as he tries to tackle its biggest problems, like poverty, violence, and crime.

He's a chef, and a few years back, he was working the grill at the Midtown restaurant, the Slider House, when he got accepted to be in the FOX series Hell's Kitchen. It's a chef show that has all the markings of an American TV competition: high stakes challenges, teammates who aren't there to make friends, and a sharply critical judge, Gordon Ramsay. Sterling didn't win Hell's Kitchen, but he became a fan favorite. He didn't get ruffled, and he didn't talk bad about the other contestants. When he was eliminated mid-season, Ramsay, who rarely has anything nice to say about anyone, called him a joy to be around, who brought a smile to everyone's face. Ramsay let him keep his chef's jacket as a reminder of what he achieved in the competition. The other contestants cried.

In Napier, he's treated like a local celebrity, but not because of Hell's Kitchen. It's because even though Sterling doesn't live there anymore, he's always around helping out. In a FOX17 news story, you can see three little kids attacking him with hugs that drag him to the ground.

We walked around the community for about twenty minutes, and every person we saw said hello. And Sterling stopped to give a handshake or a hug, or to joke around.

SW: Don't start with that Jimmy Lee! Hello Charles! How you doing man? What's up Little Man, how you doing man? All right...As you can see I'm loved.

EC [on tape]: Yeah, I can see! You know everybody.

SW: I don't ever want to get too big that you ain't know where you come from. These projects made me the man I am. That's why I be hating when people, "I ain't never going back to the ghetto!" you know? The ghetto made you who you are. The ghetto made you strong! OK, come back and teach the kids how you made it out. That's the whole plan. Hey what's up y'all? How you doing? Hello!

Man: What you doing brother?

SW: I'm talking to the police.

Man: No you ain't. [laughs]

SW: What's up with you man?

EC: But he turns serious when he begins to talk about the situation for kids in the neighborhood. He's been working with Papa Joe Bradford. He's the guy we met back in episode 6, who brings thousands of dollars of donated groceries to people in the community during the Walk of Love. Sterling has a similar compulsion. When he sees that something's needed, he figures out how to fill the need. Like the past two years when he and Papa Joe cooked Thanksgiving dinner for the whole community. Or when they got coats donated for the kids at Napier Elementary School two years in a row.

SW: He helped me raise over 200 coats last year. I was doing a toy drive, and I so happened to see these kids walk without coats to school. I'm talking about it's 20-something degrees, and it's a T-shirt with no socks on. And I see the kids, wow, these kids you need coats. I talked to Dr. Lawless, she was like yeah, can you provide us with coats? And so when me and Papa Joe get close, it was 20-something degrees outside. I went to the top where some of these kids walk. That's Bloods...Notice, if you see that spray paint on the ground, our kids gotta walk through Bloods, Crips, and Gangster Disciples before they get to school. Three different areas of gangs. That's crazy. They selling drugs at nine and ten years old 'cause they never had no men. Papa Joe seen me do that, got 400-some, all the kids at the school got brand new coats, and it was just a blessing from God to be able to it.

EC [on tape]: What do you do with the girls? Books not boys?

SW: It's the seven Bs I teach the young ladies. Books before boys because boys bring babies. Our kids today is so much far away from books, and if you look around, it's just a bunch of single moms. So I came up with that term cause my dad used to tell it to my sisters. When you get those books before any boy, look how successful they'll be. And I teach my young men, their attitude plus their choices equal they life. Simple.

EC [on tape]: It's a simple equation.

SW: And it's the truth.

EC: We paired Sterling with someone from an organization that is addressing some of the same issues Sterling is fighting. It's called Harvest Hands, and it takes a multi-faceted approach to youth development. They have an afterschool program for pre-K to eighth graders that includes homework help, and extra-curricular activities like engineering, gardening, art, and music. Their healthy living initiative programs sports leagues, triathlons, swimming lessons, and track. It's a Christ-centered organization, so spiritual teachings inform all of their work. In all of this, mentorship is key.

Our next guest is a mentor in the organization's social enterprise: Humphreys Street Coffee and Soap Company.

Ruben Torres: My name's Ruben Torres, I'm full name is Ruben Torres-Fuentes. I'm not sure if that's important though, but I work at Harvest Hands. I've been living in the neighborhood in Wedgewood-Houston and Chestnut Hill area for the past 10 years. Right now, I am the head roaster and sort of youth mentoring coordinator for Harvest Hands. And so we employ high school students and roast coffee and teach them all about what it is to, you know, have a good a job. And I started off as a student. I'm in it, so it's great to be able to come back and be on the other side helping students.

EC: Harvest Hands and Humphreys Street formed in 2007 in Wedgewood-Houston, but as the neighborhood gentrified, the people they served were moving out. So they moved right down the street from Napier Place homes and Sudekum Apartments, where they could make a bigger impact. The facility is gorgeous and modern, with a spacious production facility, classroom, a library, a gym, and outdoor playground and garden...it's unlike anything else in the neighborhood.

RT: Yeah, so we moved in the center in November of 2016. It's a great space. We love it. We started in a little house. It was maybe about half of the space [we have now] just for our coffee and soap production room. So that by itself has grown over twice of the whole center. It's just a dream come true to be able to be in a huge space where we can serve more students.

EC [on tape]: So why coffee and soap?

RT: Courtney and Brian, they're the couple that started the dream of Harvest Hands along with Howard Olds, they were very into crafted items, you know, high quality handmade things. And Brian specifically was a coffee fanatic. Ms. Courtney had just learned how to make soap. So they wanted to sort of pass those things along. With the coffee specifically it was a huge draw to teenagers. I was one of the students at that time, it was, oh coffee! I'm like a grown up now, drinking coffee and roasting coffee. It had a big appeal. The teenagers, they don't really want to come in to an afterschool program, so sort of trick them with a job, like, hey you're here to work! Just kidding! You're here to be mentored.

EC: Aside from learning the basics of producing coffee and handcrafted soaps, the student employees learn financial literacy, the ins and outs of running a micro business, customer service when they bring their products to sell at events, and perhaps most importantly, they learn basic job etiquette—those soft and hard skills that are so important to youth development—in a

neighborhood where few economic opportunities exist. It reminded me instantly of Ms. Leola Cullom, the woman on episode 3 who was born in the neighborhood in 1944. She bemoaned the lack of opportunities for teenagers, the after school and summer jobs that she and her siblings got when they were growing up. Humphreys Street is restoring those economic opportunities for 16 kids a year, and they're growing.

Ruben gave us a tour of the coffee production part of the facility, and his knowledge about the craft of roasting coffee is mind boggling.

RT: My first stop is always our coffee bar area. We have a little espresso machine and then all of our pour-over and grinders. It's sort like our coffee lab where we will do all of our tastings for the roasts that we have, make sure that they're consistent roasts, keeping the quality up, finding the right profile for the right coffee, all those sorts of things. Also just getting our morning fix, you know, with coffee.

Now we're sort in the entrance of the coffee area, and this is where we have all of our green coffee. Behind this board is our, they're just big 160-pound coffee bags, and we have from Mexico, some from Costa Rica, Columbia, and Ethiopia. Those are our current offerings. We take a lot of pride in having good coffee, not just that we roast, but we know that it was sourced well and responsibly.

We're gonna start with... this is from Costa Rica, our Cafe Vida, what we call the workhorse. It's a good price, really good quality. It has very high clarity, which means you can taste a lot of the different notes in it very easily.

EC: He knows all the nerdy details about harvesting coffee and how the fermentation and drying process changes the taste. But our next stop is his home away from home, a machine he's had a relationship with for a decade.

RT: We have our roaster right here. You can probably smell some of the roasting remnants from yesterday. It's called a Deadrick IR7 Roaster. IR stands for infrared, and then 7 is the capacity, 7 kilos, which is about 15.4 pounds, and that's the maximum we roast here. When we first got it, we weren't roasting a whole bunch, but now we're doing about three to four roasts a day. One of these costs about \$25,000. We got very lucky with this actually...

EC: Back in 2007, the organization got funding from the Cal Turner Foundation to buy the Deadrick I R7. The students, including Rubén, helped write the business plan when they applied for the grant. The first time around, they were rejected, but Cal Turner helped them revise their plan, and with the money from the foundation, they bought the roaster.

RT: We were able to get the grant for this, and along with that, we went to the facility. It was just a great experience being trained on this machine from the guy that invented it. He's a very eccentric guy. Quite the character. He would grab this thing right here as he was training us. He would flip it to look at the coffee and get it out, then be like, Oh that's looking beautiful. That's gorgeous. Oh yes, it's almost right there. It was hilarious. I would crack up laughing at him, so he

would do it even more. But quite the character. He had this almost love affair with the machine and the coffee that he was roasting.

EC [on tape]: So how does this thing work?

RT: It has a drum right in here, so this is the axis that it rotates. We've got a hopper right above that. So we put the green coffee up on this hopper. This is really hot. We start the roast at around 400 and some change, depending on how much coffee we're roasting, but that gets really hot so we don't want to leave it there too long because those coffee beans are going to start getting roasted before the others, right? So it goes there, and then we pull that lever and the coffee will fall in here, and then the drum is constantly rotating. We want even roast everywhere. It's controlled by air flow, some infrared burners, so gas basically, and it's got some ceramic plates on the side. Basically the same grade of ceramic that's used on the outside of some spaceships. So technically, you could have one side be red hot and then touch the other side, and it will be cool to the touch. We don't do that because we don't want to die. [laughs] It's capable of doing that. And it transfers heat very well. I'll turn it on for a second.

So we've got our drum right there, and it's starting to rotate, so you can see it rotating right here. Then our blower, so that's how we control our airflow. And we've got our gas. This lets you know that the gas is on. That's igniting right there, and if you look through this little glass panel, you may be able to see this little flame, jet blue flame. And then we have the plates that get ignited as well, and so you'll see the fire expand to those. We control these things, we've got our air flow right there. And we use all those different things to control at what speed the coffee's being roasted, how it's being roasted, so there can be some calculus involved in there, some derivatives, it can get pretty nerdy. And it's great. We've got a lot of control.

EC: The person at the helm controls the gas, the air flow, taking into consideration the density of the green coffee and its temperature. Ruben and the student roaster, Keyvante, make tiny adjustments throughout the process to get the flavor right.

Sterling, Joseph and I met Ruben at Harvest Hands. Quick note: we met at the end of a weekday, so kids were around, and the cleaning crew came through during the interview. You might hear a little of this in the background. Sterling brought along a friend who he partners with in community initiatives.

Larry Turner: Yes. My name is Larry Turner. Many know me by LT. I am from J.C. Napier. While I was incarcerated, you know, went through a transformation and went from being a thug and hustler to wanting to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem.

SW: you know so much I love about this brother? Man, he shows what unity can do. Man, when you try by yourself, look how far you go. A couple years ago, he was walking the projects looking for somebody to help out. I just didn't know we were going to wind up like this. As he can tell you, man, I was trying to do things by myself. All it took was one Halloween. Candy. See one kid do fifty-something push-ups for Snicker. You can see all these kids running over to his truck, like, man, he got the big candy! To see the kids light up for candy but also want to exercise for that candy. To see the kids grow, and then to come back and feed J.C. Napier. He

helped me come up with a slogan: You see J.C. in me. It's the truth! Even if you flip it. J.C. you see in me. To see him and me grow together and do things, we never expected. Coming up together and playing from football in Woodbine to other things in the projects—to have this effect on the community. To see people's smiles. They honored us for feeding the projects. We were thinking about just doing it. But for that, it shows the work we're doing might not be noticed by a lot, but it's getting noticed. And that's the drive to keep going. Like that coat drive we're doing. To be the ones, the first ones from our neighborhood, to give Napier School 400-something coats last year. That's amazing! This year, we're gonna reach it. To see the ones that came from the community, the ones that everybody turned their back on. The ones that they said weren't gonna be about nothing, are the same ones helping. Just like you. They counted us out. Now they're counting on us.

EC: When they started out, Sterling has some ties to the business world in the city, and LT, after being released, had ties to what was happening on the streets where people needed help. Both men found the need to serve after a personal transformation.

The difference in Ruben is that he was raised to be of service, right here in South Nashville.

RT: Like I said, I've been around here for the past 10 years. I'm 21 years old, So for the first 10 years of my life I lived in Mexico with my family. We moved here because of violence and I lived right in the, near the border with Texas. And so there was a lot of drug dealing, drug trafficking, the town being taken over by drug traffickers. My family decided to, hey, you know, let's get our kids to safety. Let's go to the U.S. and start life all over. So it was uprooting everything coming over here to the U.S. We didn't speak the language at all, only Spanish, and at the time I was going into fifth grade. The next day we arrived, my mom got me into school. That was in 2006, and not too long after we connected with Harvest Hands. It was through a breakfast, a community breakfast that they held every Monday morning and it was just a friend of mine from the neighborhood said, you know what, there's these really cool people serving breakfast right over here. And how about you check it out? And so my family and I went and we met Brian and Courtney, the directors of the program at the time. We said, this is an awesome thing you guys are planning on doing here. They were just starting to connect with the community and they were doing the breakfast as part of their plan to hey, let's me more neighbors and see what the need here is. Like I said, I was in fifth grade at the time and they were gonna start an after-school program, and that's how I got involved. So as a student, it's been great to grow with Harvest Hands, going from that part of the neighborhood on Wingrove and Byrum, there was an old crack house right there. So they bought that property because the neighbors said, hey, we don't want that there. So they bought it, tore it down. And I'm just seeing Harvest Hands grow going from there to Humphreys Street and just going from serving maybe about 25, 30 students to then going to 50, 60 in that area and starting our social enterprise and doing businesses and teaching students what it takes to have a job, run a business really because we have been taught that since the beginning what it takes, you know, every single part of it. We were part of writing a business plan to get a grant to get our \$25,000 roaster. Now we're here in Napier serving the community here and a much bigger space where now we are serving over a hundred kids, 16 high school students, and many, many more with sports leagues.

LT: Do you see any similarities from when you was in Mexico and the, you say the violence and the poverty that was taking place there and what's taking place here in Nashville or in this community? Do you see any similarities?

RT: I do see some similarities. I mean you come to this neighborhood, and it's now almost going to a, like you're not enough first world country anymore, you know. The conditions are so different then if you just go a couple blocks across the railroads and you're in Wedgewood, - Houston, where now that place is so different than it used to be. You know, it used to be like, like it's here and in Chestnut Hill, and it's just changed so much. There was always a sense of insecurity in Mexico that I kind of see here now. I was lucky enough to exit the country as things were starting to get bad. So from that time till we got here, we have heard terrible, terrible things—people getting killed.

SW: I actually got to take my hats off to you. Seeing somebody from a different race or different culture to come here to try to make a difference and is making a difference. Take my hat off to you. You're not one of the ones that want to see the change in the community. You're actually helping with the fight to change the community. So man, I really take my hat off to you because man, you don't see a lot of young men and like you with your story with your background. You're definitely a diamond in the rough.

RT: Thank you. It's part of being, you know, in the struggle, having a rough life, and even then I feel lucky to have people around that have encouraged me, and I see them invested in the community and that makes me want to do the same, you know? Like I said, I started off as a student at Harvest Hands and so many people poured into me, and I was just in all of that and I grew up and I look back at it and I'm so thankful for it that I want to give back. Be like the people that mentored me, that poured into me and, you know, try to get the kids to see that hey, you can do anything that you set your mind to it. You just gotta be smart about it. You got to plan it, you a work for it, you know, and we're here, I'm here to help you. It's just sort of what was instilled in me by the people that, like you Sterling, that are in the community, are living in it, are pouring themselves into it and changing a kid's life, you know?

LT: Do you ever get discouraged when sometimes you don't see like instant results?

RT: Yeah, for sure. We're serving quite a bit of kids, especially the high school students, and there have been very few that we've seen graduate and go on to college. Um, but the ones that we do see that makes it all worth it, and it's so discouraging and so hard when you see a student sort of distance themselves from you because they're getting involved with the wrong crowd, doing things that they know they shouldn't do, and they know that we're here to help them sort of go back into the right path. And because of that they distance themselves and it's hard to help them.

SW: Can I ask you to do one favor? I know [Larry will] probably want this also. So you always feel a kid who's calling out for that love that's scared to ask, and then he won't come to you because you're a different skin color, 'cause of your race or because of your background. If you see that kid I want you to say, Sterling. Larry. Man, I think this kid needs y'all. Cause you know you can't save everybody, but one, like, you know, that like, man, thanks to you, I changed my life because that's, man, when I get older that's all I really want to help. Thanks to you, Sterling,

thanks to you Larry. Thanks to you. Thanks to you Joe. Thanks to y'all believing in me. I changed my life. To me, that's all the negative people and I'm built up around this place. That one rock he in, that child's testimony would knock all that down for me, man. That's what I'm living for.

RT: I will for sure. Thank you.

SW: Ten years ago to the day, I'm still the same spot but a different level. I still hear devils, but now I got was on a different level, but I got the same God. I was in the dark in 2007. Now I'm in the dark with the light trying to lead people from that dark. It's like the transition, you know, like coming up, seeing a lot of things, man, you know, people hear our stories, what we grew up seeing and noticing and wonder how we made it from murder to robbery to so much drugs to so much money. Also, I see what they missing today is a village. When you was coming up my age, when you was young coming up, you knew a person selling dope, but you never seen him sell that dope. You knew they smoked weed, but you never seen them smoking weed. You come around and they doing any of that, they going to call it a butt whooping. Anybody coming up like anybody in J.C. was coming up as an adult no matter what they've done, we weren't allowed to judge them, but we just had to listen to them. There wasn't no backtalk. In the past 10 years, you just see it grow. Like all this just a faded away. It just faded away. Just want to bring it back really. The respect is no more. The love is no more. When the last time a child has been hugged by male and say it's going to be all right and I believe in you. You can do it. When was the last time has happened? All you see is a bunch of mothers out here just doing it by themselves, by themselves, and then they looking for love in the wrong spots just because they don't want to be lonely. From 2007 to now, it's all I see is loneliness now.

RT: We see that here with my students. The moms come around. You never see the dads. That's very rare. And so, when I see that, I think, you know, what can I be for them? I don't want to take that and, you know, try to undermine the mother and all the work that she's putting into it. Right? But I want to be able to say, hey, I'm going to pour a little bit of myself and maybe try to fill a little bit of that.

EC: It's impressive for a man as young as Ruben to have this dedication to serving others—to giving back to a community that helped him. This is in large part to the example set by his parents, Jael and Ruben Sr. At this point in the conversation, Sterling realized that he knows Rubén's mother and father.

SW: Your mom's the one with the soap?

RT: Yeah, she talked to me about you.

SW: And your dad?

RT: And my dad is the one that painted everything.

SW: Man, you got history, man! Man, to have your parents and keep it in the family like you've done since y'all come from across the border. Nobody can tell a story like y'all's man.

RT : I'm doing this in great part because of them. They're showing me with their actions. They're not just telling me, hey, do this, do that, it's the right thing to do. They're doing it. They are actually part of the community. Been involved when the business was started. My mom was a business owner back in Mexico for 10 plus years and we didn't know what we were doing with the businesses. So we brought her on, and—well, I didn't know; I was a student at the time—but they brought her on to start managing the programs, managing the businesses. She's been at it since, and my dad, he's been involved in every step of the way to doing a whole bunch of murals for Harvest Hands and for Wedgewood-Houston. It's been amazing to see that they are so involved to show me that, hey, if you're gonna be doing something, this is how you do it. I've learned so much from them. I'm still learning from my mom so much about businesses because now I took over that coffee aspect, and it is great to see that, hey, this is how you do things and keep learning from them every day. They keep showing me love for immediate family, extended family, strangers, everybody, you know? Everybody's got to be shown love. They're the first ones that I saw that with. They're great people, like if you meet either they have great personalities, you can talk to them for hours and hours.

SW: Yeah, like these conversations now.

RT: Yeah. I feel like we could keep talking until one, two in the morning, still be having lots of fun. But yeah, it's the people that you surround yourself with. In this case, I was very lucky to have two of them be my parents.

SW: You've got the perfect example. When you see when you see how your dad treat your mom, man, it's a blessing to learn from.

RT: Obviously I've been very lucky because of that, but also I see because I grew up with friends that they didn't have that. I was able to see. Dang. They know I'm very lucky.

SW: Very!

RT: And that's one of the things, even though I had a different than they did, I wanted to come back and say, Hey, I know what you're going through. I've had friends, very close friends that were, you know, in the same situation. And I'm here for you. I want to do as much as I can and not just myself like we've got, you've got all these network of people here and in your neighborhood and your schools everywhere, you know.

SW: They have them, but see, you have something the other resources don't have. You have they heart. It's priceless, man .

EC: At this point, Joseph cut in off tape to ask what type of community the mentors would like to see, and what it would take to get there.

LT: I think most of it is just dependent on the city, having had confidence in like ex-offenders like myself because in most cases they somewhat hesitant on giving us a platform to go back in and repair what we destroyed and like a brother Sterling spoke on earlier, if you never been now how do you know what types of solutions to bring?

RT: So my, my vision I'm sort of living it in a way, but changing a community takes time. Unfortunately we, I really wish it could be even a couple of years if not sooner, you know? But that's unfortunately not how the world works. But I just want to be able to, to see people, especially, I mean at this point, a lot of it is kids that they come in with a different mindset of, hey, it's all about love. It's all about loving your neighbor, loving the place that you're at, you know, being good stewards of what you have and having people come back into the community and pour into other people. So at the end it ends up being maybe even generations, which sucks. But, that's what my vision is, is to see people that said, hey, I really want to change this place, come back and then teach other people so then they can be the same way. They can say, I really want to change this neighborhood and then keep on going and they keep pouring themselves—and you start with one person that does that. At the end you ended up with the whole community, you know, that learn from the person, from their mentor, what they learned from the mentor of their mentor, you know? That's my vision for the same people to just keep on coming back.

SW: My vision I would love to do is to see a bunch of men walking around in the middle of the night, the darkest hours. Come out here, pull a brother to the side, a young man to the side, a young lady to the side, tell them their value and their worth. Just take time. Time is the most valuable investment you can't give anybody. It's something you can give back. Just me personally. I want to see a bunch of guys because the women is doing a lot by themselves. Just see a bunch of guys come through and just together united is one that would be a powerful force.

EC: What's your vision for South Nashville? Please let us know on Facebook and Twitter, and come to WeHome Day on April 14, 1-4 p.m. at Track One.

A huge thank you to Sterling, Larry, and Ruben and all our guests: Bill and Anna; Frank and Audra; Leola and Andrea; Alysha, Eric, and Amelia; Betsy, Mena, and Makarious; Papa Joe and Josh; Odessa and Ed; Ann and Brent; and all of the voices that chimed in at the start of our episodes.

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I'm Erica Ciccarone, and I've learned from WeHome that there is only so much the city and state can do to improve our lives—and often, they'll act against our desires. So it's up to us to build strong communities that amplify each other's voices. I'll see you out there.

