**Transcript from NPR Planet Money Podcast: Getting Out of Prison Sooner, July 17, 2020**

UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER, BYLINE: This is PLANET MONEY from NPR.

(SOUNDBITE OF MUSIC)

MARY CHILDS, HOST:

Alexis Nicholson has this picture from when she was 8 years old.

ALEXIS NICHOLSON: So, yeah, this picture means a lot to me. I've always held onto it, even though it's just a piece of paper from Chuck E. Cheese.

SARAH GONZALEZ, HOST:

It's a picture from her eighth birthday party. There were a lot of people there, but this picture is special to Alexis because it's just her and her dad, Reggie. They're in a photo booth and their heads are up against each other, smiling.

A NICHOLSON: We was at Chuck E. Cheese. And I don't really - it's hard to talk about it, but...

CHILDS: Alexis is Reggie's only daughter. She's 25 years old now. And she got this picture printed on a pink sweatshirt that she's wearing.

A NICHOLSON: I've always been a daddy's girl. You know what I mean? So I've always been close to him even though he's always been far away, I guess you could say.

CHILDS: Her dad was arrested not too long after that birthday party, when he was just 25 years old.

GONZALEZ: According to transcripts, the police had shown up at Reggie's house in Oklahoma City because his home burglary alarm had gone off. Reggie wasn't home for it, but when he got there, his door was left wide open and police were waiting outside. They had responded to the alarm. And Reggie told the cops they could go in, look around. And while they were looking around, they found a shoebox with some drugs, money and a gun inside. And they arrested Reggie.

A NICHOLSON: I do remember when I got told. My grandma picked me up from school. And she was just like, they got your dad (crying). And, like, I knew what she was talking about, but I didn't want to believe it. So I asked her - I said, who - I said, who has him? She said, the police do.

GONZALEZ: The police had found 635 grams of crack cocaine in the shoebox, which is a decent amount. It would be like two soda cans worth of crack, a little over a pound, enough to be considered trafficking. This was in 2003.

CHILDS: Now, if you were caught with this exact amount of drugs today in Oklahoma, the most prison time you could get is 20 years, so a long time. But the laws were much harsher back then.

GONZALEZ: Especially because Reggie had been caught with drugs twice before. And that combination - two drug convictions, plus a trafficking conviction - it carried one sentence and one sentence only - the rest of your life. At the trial, the prosecutor told the jury that life meant they could give Reggie a million years if they wanted. Mercy is for people who don't commit one crime after another, the prosecutor said. Mercy, he said, is for the innocent.

CHILDS: The jury gave Reggie life in prison without the possibility of ever getting out. That was mandatory. But then the jury added another 1,650 years after life, even though that's impossible and even though he didn't do anything violent. For Alexis, it was like she had to mourn a living person.

A NICHOLSON: It's different from seeing somebody in a casket versus going to, you know, a prison and you can't leave with the person that you want to leave with that's breathing. That person has life. You know what I mean?

GONZALEZ: This impossibly long sentence came out at a time when Democrats and Republicans were trying to top each other on how tough they could be on crime, especially on drugs, and even more especially on crack.

CHILDS: They said someone like Reggie should never come out. But this year, after 17 years behind bars, Reggie got the chance to do something he never imagined he'd be able to.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: OK, you're Reginald A. Nicholson Jr.?

REGGIE NICHOLSON: Yes, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: Mr. Nicholson, could you give me your DOC number, please, sir?

GONZALEZ: Reggie got the chance to ask to be considered to be released from prison one day, even though he was told this would never be a possibility. But here he is before a parole board about to make his case.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: You recognize these folks?

R NICHOLSON: Yes, sir. That's my mom. That's my son. That's my daughter.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: OK, great.

CHILDS: This was in February. We were able to be there for this - for Reggie's parole hearing. His whole family showed up.

R NICHOLSON: Oh, that's my dad, also. I didn't see him with his big head back there. That's my dad.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: All right.

R NICHOLSON: (Laughter).

CHILDS: We're all in a small conference room at a prison in Oklahoma City. Reggie's the only one appearing by video screen.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: All right, Mr. Nicholson, would you raise your right hand, please?

R NICHOLSON: Yes, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: Do you solemnly swear the testimony you will give before the board today will be the truth?

GONZALEZ: This hearing was almost impossible to imagine 20 years ago. And Reggie didn't get this opportunity because his case stood out. It didn't stand out.

(SOUNDBITE OF HENRY PARSLEY, MATTHEW SIMON CLARK AND NICOLAS PHILLIMORE DAGNALL SONG, "YES I CAN")

GONZALEZ: Reggie got before this board because lawmakers said, maybe we went too far - not just with Reggie, with a lot of people.

(SOUNDBITE OF HENRY PARSLEY, MATTHEW SIMON CLARK AND NICOLAS PHILLIMORE DAGNALL SONG, "YES I CAN")

GONZALEZ: Hello, and welcome to PLANET MONEY. I'm Sarah Gonzalez.

CHILDS: And I'm Mary Childs. For years, Oklahoma put more people in prison per capita than almost any other state. But that's changing. Politicians across the U.S. and from both parties are starting to reexamine and maybe to some extent reverse how they think about long sentences and prisons.

GONZALEZ: And maybe it's about morals, but it's definitely about money. Today on the show, we go to Oklahoma to watch a state change its mind and start letting out a bunch of people.

(SOUNDBITE OF CAR DOORS SLAMMING)

GONZALEZ: Oh, did you just get out?

ANSLEY MAYFIELD: Yeah.

GONZALEZ: Oh, my gosh.

MAYFIELD: Thank you, Governor Stitt. Yeah.

GONZALEZ: Can you tell us your name?

MAYFIELD: Ansley Mayfield (ph). I just did three years on a possession charge.

GONZALEZ: Ansley Mayfield, what's the first thing you're going to do?

MAYFIELD: Drink a beer.

GONZALEZ: Nice. Enjoy the beer.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #1: Not until we get home.

GONZALEZ: OK. So this February, Reggie Nicholson got the chance to try to convince the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board to release him from prison 17 years into his life-plus-1,650-year sentence.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: Here's how we're going to do this. In just a minute, we're going to put the camera on your attorney, Mr. Blake.

R NICHOLSON: Thank you, Judge.

CHILDS: Reggie's family and legal team have shown up to help him make his case. The board will vote immediately after.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: Does one of the family want to say something to us?

A NICHOLSON: I'd like to start off and just say that (crying)...

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: It's OK.

GONZALEZ: Reggie's daughter speaks - Alexis. His public defender, Glen Blake - he speaks.

GLEN BLAKE: Yeah. He's clearly a young man that went into prison, you know, with zero hope. You know, I have all the faith in the world in him. And I hope the board will consider his request.

CHILDS: At the end, the board asks if Reggie wants to speak. He doesn't have to, but he does.

R NICHOLSON: A year ago, I didn't have a chance at parole, you know, and God changed the law. You know, through you guys' eyes and Mr. Blake's eyes, you guys seen the change in me.

GONZALEZ: The whole thing lasts less than six minutes.

R NICHOLSON: Thank you guys. I appreciate you guys.

UNIDENTIFIED JUDGE: All right. Good luck to you, sir.

BLAKE: Thank you.

GONZALEZ: And that's it. Now the board votes. Reggie has to leave for it.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #2: Kelly Doyle.

KELLY DOYLE: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #2: Adam Luck.

ADAM LUCK: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #2: Allen McCall.

ALLEN MCCALL: Yes, ma'am.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #2: Robert Gilliland.

ROBERT GILLILAND: Yes. It's a yes.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #2: Parole is granted to the CS (ph) case.

CHILDS: The board just said yes. They said Reggie could get out now. But it goes by so quickly that the family doesn't even realize they got good news. Glen Blake, the public defender, he whispers to them, like, we got it.

BLAKE: He was 25 years old and was basically told, you're going to die in prison, you know? And so, I mean, I think, you know, hope's a real thing.

CHILDS: And Reggie's mom, Peggy Nicholson (ph) - she can't believe it.

PEGGY: You know, they said back then that he wouldn't get out. And God told me that that wasn't going to happen to my son. You can only imagine he can't wait to have a good dinner. (Laughter) He just want a good homemade meal.

GONZALEZ: This was a huge day for Reggie Nicholson and his family. But for Reggie's public defender, Glen Blake, all day and the next day, Glen will be asking this parole board to shorten other people's sentences, too. He has 19 cases ahead of him.

BLAKE: All the time, every month, there's somebody in there who gets 25, 40, life for possession with intent that now carry seven years.

CHILDS: Shortening sentences like Reggie's, that's called a commutation. Glen Blake is one of the people leading the effort to correct excessive sentences in the state.

GONZALEZ: Are you from Oklahoma? Yeah? Oh, yeah. OK (laughter).

BLAKE: Been in Oklahoma my whole life.

GONZALEZ: OK. What part?

BLAKE: Well, I've lived - I lived in - well, I lived in Tulsa my whole life, with the exception of the two years I spent in prison, so.

GONZALEZ: No way.

CHILDS: Bury the lede.

GONZALEZ: Well, do you - would you - do you mind sharing?

BLAKE: No.

GONZALEZ: OK. Why were you in prison for two years?

BLAKE: So I actually went to prison for a drug trafficking charge.

GONZALEZ: Yeah. Glen Blake was caught with enough drugs on him to be considered trafficking back when he was an employment lawyer, not a public defender. So Glen got the same conviction as Reggie, his client. Glen had meth on him. He gave up his law license and he was sentenced to six years in prison.

CHILDS: And when he walked in, it wasn't what he expected.

BLAKE: I'm like, man, this place is just full of a lot of normal people that made bad choices, you know.

CHILDS: Glen got out in 2 1/2 years, not six.

GONZALEZ: Why do you think you didn't get life or something - because you had no priors?

BLAKE: Yeah, because I'm a, you know...

GONZALEZ: Lawyer?

BLAKE: ...Privileged white guy from South Tulsa.

GONZALEZ: Is South Tulsa where it's fancy?

BLAKE: And I'm not going to sit here and act like I didn't get a better deal because of my background and everything else.

GONZALEZ: And Glen, Glen used to be an intern at the Tulsa Public Defender's Office when he was in law school. So when he got out of prison, he called up his old boss like, remember me?

BLAKE: And it was funny 'cause I called and I said, hey, I'm out on parole, and they want me to do 200 hours of community service. And she said, well, come down here and do it. And so I did. And then, you know, once that was over, she's like, you need to come to work here as an intern because you're going to get your law license back. I was like, whatever.

GONZALEZ: I'm so happy for you.

BLAKE: There's a long, long list of people that gave me second chances, you know. It was years and years of hard work, but I went through the reinstatement process. And in 2016, the Oklahoma Supreme Court reinstated my law license. That's one of the reasons why this is my passion (laughter).

CHILDS: As for his client Reggie, he got his sentence shortened before the pandemic hit the U.S., five months ago. He's actually still in prison waiting. There's a paperwork thing and a backlog. He called us from inside.

GONZALEZ: Hello?

R NICHOLSON: I'm here.

CHILDS: Hi.

GONZALEZ: Hey, Reggie.

CHILDS: Reggie is shockingly patient about the whole thing.

R NICHOLSON: Yeah, the hard part's over with. I know the true test is when you walk out of prison. But I believe that as far as getting my time commuted and, you know, getting the time up off me, I think that's the hard part. I've got that done, so I'm ready to go out there and see what the world has to offer me. And I'm still pretty young. So, I mean, I just thank God that he gave me another chance.

GONZALEZ: By the way, other prisons across the U.S. have released inmates early because of the coronavirus. Because if you were caught with drugs or you stole something and you die in prison because of the coronavirus, that is not a fair sentence, right? Like, death is not on the table for those things.

CHILDS: But the pandemic has also slowed things down for a lot of people. And that's making Reggie a little worried.

R NICHOLSON: Yeah, yeah. I'm thinking that right now. That's what I'm going through right now. It shouldn't take you four or five months to leave to go home.

GONZALEZ: OK. Reggie and his public defender, Glen, got swept up in a tough-on-crime trend that really started happening in the U.S. in the late 1960s with the war on crime, then the war on drugs in the '70s. Republicans and Democrats got us here. Between the '70s and '90s, all these laws pop up in states that make it easier to get into prison and harder to ever get out to the point that today, 1 in 142 people in the country are behind bars - 2.3 million people.

CHILDS: And Oklahoma became the No. 1 incarcerator in the country. They were No. 1 in locking up people of color, and they are still No. 1 for women.

KRIS STEELE: That's whack. How does that happen? I mean, how is it even possible?

CHILDS: This is Kris Steele.

STEELE: That is the saddest thing I've ever heard.

GONZALEZ: Kris Steele was in the Oklahoma House of Representatives when Reggie was arrested and when Glen was arrested. Kris is a Republican. And at the time, Kris says Republicans weren't really talking about how big the prison population was getting.

STEELE: It's never been a traditional Republican core issue.

GONZALEZ: Like any good conservative Republican, as Kris said, he believed that you make neighborhoods safer by putting people in jail.

STEELE: Political value was seen in being, quote-unquote, "tough on crime," and we gave very little thought to the actual cost.

CHILDS: Every year, lawmakers would introduce a new offense or a new crime that they thought people should go to jail for, or they would introduce new bills to increase the amount of time Oklahomans should spend in prison. And Kris says he voted for probably every one of those measures.

GONZALEZ: Then, in 2008, Kris gets more responsibility over the state's budget.

STEELE: The thing that jumped off the page for me at that moment in time is that spending for corrections had become Oklahoma's second-fastest growing expenditure.

GONZALEZ: After what?

STEELE: Medicaid.

CHILDS: And at first, Kris is like, OK, that is fine if it's keeping us safer. But when he starts looking at crime stats, he realizes, oh, it's not - it's not doing that.

STEELE: It would be one thing if mass incarceration actually worked in reducing crime or improving public safety. It does not. In fact, not only does Oklahoma have higher incarceration rates, our crime rate is not decreasing nearly as rapidly as in other states. And so it just doesn't make any sense.

GONZALEZ: For Kris, the whole system goes against a core conservative principle.

STEELE: I would even go as far as to say that it's impossible to identify oneself as a fiscal conservative and continue to be OK with wasting money on an inefficient system that is not producing the results of what it's intended to produce.

CHILDS: And for Kris, that was it.

STEELE: As a lifelong Oklahoman, I would tell you that our faith is part of our culture, and we boast about how important it is to us when we run for office. And yet, we have created a system that is almost entirely based on retribution and punishment.

GONZALEZ: Kris was no longer going to be a part of it. He decides to dedicate himself to prison reform. He says he has a lot to do to make amends for some of his past decisions. Kris also happens to be a Baptist minister.

STEELE: And so I would like to challenge my faith friends and ask the question, where are the elements of grace and mercy and forgiveness and restoration and redemption and all of those things that I think make faith attractive?

CHILDS: Kris Steele starts trying to find other Republicans like him, and he finds another conservative in Texas who was thinking along the same lines.

MARC LEVIN: Oh, good. I'm Marc Levin, vice president of criminal justice at the Texas Public Policy Foundation and Right on Crime.

GONZALEZ: Right on Crime - get it?

LEVIN: Well, it's just the kind of double meaning that both we're correct in our solutions for crime but that we're also conservative (laughter).

GONZALEZ: Meaning Republican conservative?

LEVIN: Well, we're nonpartisan, but from a conservative free-market perspective.

CHILDS: OK, there was a time when prisons were much cheaper to run. It was a long time ago. There were less rules and requirements, and many prisons were basically slavery under another guise. Prisoners were forced to work for free, often even literally picking cotton.

LEVIN: But that kind of was the plantation system that evolved out of slavery and everything. And, of course, it was awful. But they became non-self-sustaining and started costing billions of dollars.

GONZALEZ: When you put so many people behind bars, the costs add up. And this is the part of prison reform that Marc is looking at. Today, according to the Prison Policy Initiative, the whole incarceration punishment system costs the government and the public at least $182 billion a year. That includes prisons and jails and the parole system and food and guards - everything.

CHILDS: And a lot of this money is being spent on people whose offenses are pretty silly, Marc says. Like, a lot of people are in prison right now not because they committed a crime but because they broke some weird parole rule after they got out of prison.

LEVIN: Whether it's missing a meeting, drinking alcohol, leaving the county without permission - these are all things that you or I could do - of course, marijuana.

CHILDS: And Marc's like, you can go back to prison for years and years because you drove out of the county for a bit or drank a beer. That feels very big government and like a waste.

GONZALEZ: And making people sit in prison for years and years or forever doesn't sound super fiscally responsible, either. He's thinking we should really cap the years.

LEVIN: Forty years - that's a lot of punishment that you've served in prison, and we've accomplished the punishment purpose of sentencing. So let's take a look at, have you been rehabilitated, or are you just so geriatric at this point that you can't pose a threat to anyone, and let's just try to act in the interest of the taxpayers if not in the interest of mercy.

GONZALEZ: Yeah, old prisoners. Marc is thinking, is keeping 90-year-olds and 95-year-olds in prison really a great victory for public safety?

CHILDS: Marc starts approaching all the bigwigs in the Republican Party with his ideas - Newt Gingrich, Grover Norquist, major conservative donors and PACs.

LEVIN: I think a key was to say, you weren't necessarily wrong, you know, 30 years ago, but we did that stuff. In other words, we - incarceration rates went up six times from the early '70s to the early 2000s. We went a bit too far. But, you know, we needed to do some of that, but we went overboard.

GONZALEZ: And Marc does get a lot of pushback. Republicans are like, why is a conservative organization pushing for these things? But eventually, many Republicans start listening, in part because the call was coming from inside the house, probably.

LEVIN: Right, exactly. Yes. There's no doubt about that.

GONZALEZ: And we just want to say Democrats were having a parallel conversation about prison reform, but Marc says, for them, it was more about how prisons disproportionately impact Black people and people of color. So everyone is coming at this from a different place, but they arrive at the same destination.

CHILDS: And then the 2008 financial crisis hit. And as states hemorrhage money, it suddenly becomes a lot easier to look at prison budgets as a place to cut costs. Blue states and red states - they all start changing their laws, saying those weird parole violations, they're not going to send you back to prison as easily. And we're going to demote a bunch of crimes. You won't even set foot in jail at all for some of them.

GONZALEZ: Which brings us back to Oklahoma. A group called Oklahomans for Criminal Justice Reform was saying the real problem in Oklahoma is just how long the sentences are. That's why there's so many people in jail, and that's why it's so expensive. And they say, if politicians aren't going to change those laws, we will. Remember Kris Steele, the minister lawmaker? He has left office, and he is part of this group now. They get an initiative on the ballot to let the people vote. And it passes.

CHILDS: Simple drug possession becomes a misdemeanor in Oklahoma, no longer a felony, which means you'll get way less time. And this group thinks, great, we did it. Except what if we could actually get some people out of prison, too - the ones in under the old laws? What if we could get their sentences shortened?

GONZALEZ: They come up with a list of about a thousand people, and they make a plan to get them out of prison earlier. In the summer of 2018, they knock on the door of the Tulsa Public Defender's Office, where Glen Blake has just gotten his law license back. And Glen Blake is like, sign me up.

BLAKE: This is just - like when I say this is my dream job, I mean, I literally mean it's my dream job.

CHILDS: Glen and some law students start looking for the most compelling cases in that list.

GONZALEZ: And Reggie's case - you know, Glen's client with the 1,650 years - he doesn't even make the first cut of the most compelling cases.

CHILDS: Glen and the law students just start showing up at prisons.

BLAKE: It was kind of funny because, you know, we show up, and you've got, you know, 25 people who are incarcerated sitting around looking at us like, why are you here? And we'd be like, hi, you know? Basically, hey, we're here to help you try to get out of prison. And people were just floored.

CHILDS: They find 50 people that they think the parole board can't say no to. And the board approves 30. The governor, Mary Fallin, a Republican, was on her way out of office, and she signed all of the releases.

BLAKE: It was a surreal but amazing experience. I mean, it was incredible. And we thought, wow, that was great, you know? But then we kind of thought, well, that sure was fun. Maybe it's over.

GONZALEZ: But it was unexpectedly popular. The Legislature expanded on it. And when the next governor took office - also a Republican, Kevin Stitt - he ordered a mass release. Last November, on a Monday, 462 people walked out of prison early, the largest single-day commutation in the country's history. And it took Oklahoma from the No. 1 incarcerator to the No. 2 incarcerator and, most recently, the No. 3.

CHILDS: It saved them $12 million, according to the state. But states like New York, Connecticut, Vermont, New Jersey, Alaska - they're actually doing much, much better at significantly reducing their prison populations. Like, they've cut them by 30%.

GONZALEZ: In order for Oklahoma to be in line with the national average, they would have to release 12,000 inmates. Oklahoma only released about a thousand.

CHILDS: And regardless of how you feel about letting people out early, being there when people walk out years before they ever thought they would, it's kind of incredible. That's after the break.

The day we got to the Northeast Oklahoma Correctional Center in Vinita, Okla., about 100 people were scheduled to be released across the state.

DEZMEN NICKELBERRY: Oh, God (laughter). I came all the way from Colorado for this.

GONZALEZ: Dezmen Nickelberry (ph) is here to pick up her brother.

D NICKELBERRY: My brother - that's my everything. That's my whole world, my whole heart. And today is the day.

CHILDS: Dezmen's been sending her brother money for five years.

D NICKELBERRY: So I got two jobs. One job was just, you know, for me because I love to go out to eat. And then when he got in trouble, it was just like, OK, make sure he calls every day. He has commissary every week. We don't go to bed without saying goodnight.

GONZALEZ: Her brother got 20 years for having, like, 13 blunts worth of weed. But the governor shortened his sentence to five years, which he's already done, so he can walk out now.

CHILDS: And he has some strong opinions about just how he wanted to walk out.

GONZALEZ: What did you - what do you have here for him?

D NICKELBERRY: He's got some Levi pants that he wanted, an all-black T-shirt and a jacket. So he's like, I want to walk out in all black, so - you don't even know. This is the biggest blessing (laughter).

GONZALEZ: OK, I won't delay you, but he knows we're going to talk to him afterwards.

Dezmen walks into the prison. We were told we couldn't go in, but we found a window.

I'm looking at them through a window. They're kind of far away, but I can see them. Oh, we're going to get in trouble for poking in (laughter).

CHILDS: Like, sticking our little faces in.

GONZALEZ: She's in there, jumping on him and hugging him. And the guards are telling her, ma'am, ma'am.

CHILDS: No jumping.

GONZALEZ: Don't jump on him.

CHILDS: He's out. He got all changed in his outfit.

GONZALEZ: I can see him. He looks so happy (laughter).

CHILDS: All right, he's grabbing some stuff. He's getting his things together. They're standing up in the front, waiting.

D NICKELBERRY: Oh, my God.

JACQUEZ NICKELBERRY: Hey. How are you guys doing?

GONZALEZ: Good. How are you?

J NICKELBERRY: Good.

GONZALEZ: I'm Sarah. Nice to meet you.

J NICKELBERRY: Nice to meet you, too.

GONZALEZ: Some guard comes out and is like, you guys are not actually going to be able to stand here and talk. And everyone is like, yeah, no problem.

J NICKELBERRY: Yeah, we're out of here. We're out of here (laughter).

CHILDS: This is Jacquez Nickelberry (ph).

GONZALEZ: He goes by Quez (ph).

J NICKELBERRY: Man, it feels good to be out. It's been almost 4 1/2 years (laughter). And, yeah, so it feels good to just be released early (laughter).

CHILDS: We get in their car. He meets his baby niece, who's there in diapers with the grandpa. There are hugs and kisses. Jacquez asks about his grandma. She'll be his first stop. And then, like any self-respecting person, Quez asks for his sister's phone.

J NICKELBERRY: Yeah, I just asked her for her phone so I could check my Facebook. Don't you got to put www at the beginning? You don't?

D NICKELBERRY: (Laughter) He asked if you put www. in front of his email.

J NICKELBERRY: Hey, I forgot. I don't know how to work this.

GONZALEZ: He's like, let me see if I remember my password.

J NICKELBERRY: It might not be - oh, that was it. What (laughter)?

GONZALEZ: What are you doing right now?

J NICKELBERRY: Posting on Facebook that I'm free (laughter).

GONZALEZ: And then everyone is like, no one's on Facebook anymore, Quez.

Do you know about Instagram? Instagram is where it's at.

J NICKELBERRY: That's what everybody was telling me.

(SOUNDBITE OF HENRY PARSLEY'S "FREEWHEELING")

GONZALEZ: On our Instagram, we have pictures and videos of Quez getting out. We are @planetmoney. We are also still on Facebook and Twitter, but let's be real; our TikTok is really where it's at. You could also email us - planetmoney@npr.org.

CHILDS: Thank you to Steven Bickley at the Pardon and Parole Board and Robert Chase, a prison historian, for all their help. Today's show was produced by Alexi Horowitz-Ghazi and Darian Woods. Alex Goldmark is our supervising producer, and Bryant Urstadt edits the show. I'm Mary Childs.

GONZALEZ: And I'm Sarah Gonzalez. This is NPR. Thanks for listening.

[POST-BROADCAST CORRECTION:July 21, 2020:A previous version of this story cited the wrong last name for Reggie’s mom, Peggy. Her name is Peggy Palmer-Webb, not Nicholson.]

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