

00:00:00	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:02	Music	Transition	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:09	Jesse	Host	We're taking this week to look back on one of our favorite interviews with Metta World Peace, from 2018. Metta World Peace has a big personality, which is saying a lot in the context of being an NBA player. Even though he's been named an All-Star and won an NBA Championship, he remains one of the most polarizing players in the history of the game. He was born Ron Artest. He changed his name in 2012. He grew up in Queensbridge, New York—the same massive housing project that was home to players like Lamar Odom and rappers like Nos and the duo Mobb Deep. He got drafted in the first round, in 1999, by the Chicago Bulls. As a player, he was always an elite defender, but he had a reputation for losing his cool.
			<i>[Music ends with a chorus of cheers.]</i>
			When it worked, it made him passionate, tough, and nearly impossible to get past. But when it didn't, things went south easily. He'd play dirty, get into dust ups on the court. Once, in 2004, at a game in Detroit, a hard foul between players escalated into an all-out brawl between players and fans. This incident, now infamous, was called then: The Malice at the Palace.
00:01:20	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:21	Clip	Clip	<i>[Roaring cheers from the crowd. The squeak of sneakers against linoleum.]</i>
			Announcer: Now Artest has jumped over the scores table and is trying to get down to the bench! Artest is in the stands! Ooh, this is awful. Fans are getting involved! Steven Jackson's in the fans!
			<i>[Screams from the audience build to a crescendo.]</i>
			Announcer: Rasheed Wallace going into the stands! The security trying to somehow restore order!
00:01:41	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:42	Jesse	Host	But Metta World Peace has been honest about his regrets in life, and in his years as a player and now coach, he's become a powerful advocate for mental healthcare. After he helped lead the Lakers to a championship title, in 2010, he thanked his therapist.
00:01:57	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:01:58	Clip	Clip	<i>[Cheers from the audience. Music plays muffled in the background.]</i>
			Metta World Peace: I definitely wanna thank my doctor, Dr. Santhi, my psychiatrist. She really helped me relax, a lot. Thank you so much. It was so difficult to play all this fuss and so much commotion going on in the playoffs. And she helped me relax. I thank you so much.
00:02:13	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.

00:02:14	Jesse	Host	When we talked, he'd just written a memoir. It's called, <i>No Malice: My Life in Basketball Or: How a Kid from Queensbridge Survived the Streets, the Brawls, and Himself to Become an NBA Champion</i> . It's a great story. He recounts his triumphs and shortcomings. Including, of course, that incident in Detroit. It's a story with a lot of poignant, reflective lows, but also pretty terrific highlights.
00:02:38	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:02:39	Clip	Clip	<i>[Cheers from the crowd.]</i>
			Announcer: Artest, that's a three! BANG!
			<i>[The crowd cheers.]</i>
			Announcer: Lakers bisects with a minute to close.
			<i>[The squeak of sneakers.]</i>
			Announcer 2: Bryant turns and comes up short.
			Announcer 3: NO! And the buzzer!
			Announcer 2: Artest <i>[inaudible]</i> .
			Announcer 3: Ron Artest!
			Announcer 4: Artest has made four baskets in a row! Three of them jams with a 40 and a time out taken by Larry Brown and company.
			<i>[Music fades in.]</i>
			Announcer 5: This is 2 for his last 13, down for 3.
			<i>[A whistle blows.]</i>
			Announcer 5: But he's stealing and doesn't stay—OOH! It goes in!
			Announcer 6: Welcome to the crowd. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Metta World Peace! Ooh, I tell ya. What an entertainer.
			Announcer 7: Bryant! Metta World PEACE! <i>[Laughs triumphantly.]</i>
			<i>[The crowd goes wild.]</i>
			(This clip is really chaotic and hard to understand, especially as someone who doesn't watch sports. I think it's multiple clips cut together but honestly I'm not really sure what's going on.)
00:03:30	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:03:31	Jesse	Host	Metta World Peace, welcome to <i>Bullseye</i> . I'm so glad to have you on the show.
00:03:33	Metta	Guest	Yes, thanks for having me. Absolutely.
00:03:35	Jesse	Host	One of the things that I found the most fascinating in your book was you talking about growing up in Queensbridge, New York. For folks

00:03:53 Metta Guest who have never been there, can you describe what it was like when you were a kid, in the '80s?
Yeah. In the—I grew up in 1979 and then in the '80s it was—it was tough, because... although you had your kid moments—you had fun, you were in a park, you're doing different things like playing skelly or hopscotch—then you also had those moments where, you know, drug transactions, gunshots, fights and—you know—nobody's motivated to become educated. You know. All those things were taking place and you just become that. I always tell my kids, "You always gotta watch who you're around, because you will start to act like those type—those people." You know. And it's not that they're bad people, but if you're trying to be innovative and progressive, you know, it's gonna be hard to do that in an environment like I grew up in.

00:04:39 Jesse Host You grew up with a lot of family in your house, right?
[Metta confirms.]

00:04:44 Metta Guest How big was your family?
Family was big. At one point, we had 17 people in a three bedroom. We did have about 13 people in a one bedroom. So, yeah. I always—when I—once I made it to the NBA, I didn't think twice about buying a house for me and my two kids and my wife. It was about my two kids, wife, my mom, my sisters. Like, everybody's gonna have rooms. You know? *[Chuckles.]* That's my thought process, when I was young.

00:05:11 Jesse Host Did you have this—I mean, like, I grew up mostly an only child.
[Metta affirms several times.]

00:05:49 Metta Guest My wife grew up in a big catholic family. And when we got together, when we were teenagers, I was always anxious being at her house, because there was just always people around and it was very normal for her. And for me, I was just like, "I just wanna go sit and read a book somewhere quiet." Or—you know what I mean? Like, just—just to have some... peace. And everyone was like being nice to me, you know what I mean? But I think, for her, it was sometimes it was the opposite, you know? It was like if there wasn't that clamor, then she wasn't at home.
Right. And it is true and that's how you grew up—you get used to it. It's like that for anybody. Any situation, any demographic, any color of your skin. When you grow up in a certain environment, and in a certain way, it's gonna affect you. So, even if you grow up rich, but your parents is not home a lot—maybe you have nannies and the nannies are just doing their job. They're gonna give you anything you want just to shut you up. You're gonna grow up like a entitled kid. You know? Or maybe you're like Stephen Curry, you know? His dad grew up pretty wealthy. Well, his dad made, and he grew up pretty wealthy, but he's still a *[inaudible]* kid. So, something's happening in that household. And you can see the parents on TV together—you know, and not everybody is as fortunate.
And look at a guy like LeBron James—you don't really see his father in the picture, but you see his mom is very supportive. You know, and it's amazing, like, what shapes a person.

00:06:46 Jesse Host What do you think it was that shaped you?

00:06:48	Metta	Guest	For me, I mean, definitely my mom, my dad. But, you know—
00:06:52	Jesse	Host	They were—they were together when you were very young and then separated, but they were both part of your life, right?
00:06:56	Metta	Guest	Yeah. They was a major part of our life. So, I got—that's why people see two side of Ron Artest. It's a lie. It's not one side. Because I experienced that mother and father laughing, tickling each other, the love. I've seen that. And then, like, the next week you will see the fighting and stuff. So, then you see that. But then they're still together, so now that becomes normal. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> That's a normal. Like, "Okay, Mom and Dad fought today. No problem. They're still there, I'm happy. I don't care." You know?
			But then when they separate, that's a problem. <i>[Laughs.]</i> You know? 'Cause you—"I need my mom. I need that hug when I go to school. And I need my dad, 'cause I need that hug. I need to sit on his lap." And that—you know, that's—you know, that causes a lot of confusion and frustration.
00:07:42	Jesse	Host	I think a lot of times, for kids whose parents have contentious relationships or whose parents split up, one of the hardest things is that kids just don't have any power in their lives and to have—to have something that painful happen and feel like you don't have a way to feel, you know, like you must—in some way—be responsible in part, but also that you are responsible for doing something to make it better and not having any tool to do that, because you're a kid. You don't have the power to do that.
00:08:17	Metta	Guest	Yeah, you don't. You really don't. I remember—I remember the times my mom and dad would fight and when my dad and mom were fighting, I literally felt helpless. I knew I was crazy enough to get a brick and throw it at someone. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> But I didn't wanna do it, 'cause I didn't wanna miss. You know what I'm saying? And it's—but you're helpless. You can't do nothing and it's like you don't want this. You want it to stop. You know? And I know a lot of kids go through that. You know. And immediately, when I started to have fights and—with my ex-wife? And verbal fights in front of my children? It—at that time, it was like, "Okay, I don't think we can be together." <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Because, um... I was spiraling out of control. You know? And not being a loyal, a faithful partner—not being a good parent.
			So, at that—no, for me, I said, "Okay, I have this separate—I've seen this before." You know. And for that—I have a very good relationship with my kids and a pretty good relationship with my ex-wife. Unfortunately, it's under these circumstances, but I've seen that whole story before.
00:09:25	Jesse	Host	When did you start playing basketball?
00:09:27	Metta	Guest	I started playing when I was eight. Yeah. I—my dad brought me on the court. I think I had already got on the court, but I think, like, he thought I could release some energy.
00:09:36	Jesse	Host	Your dad had been a fighter, right? He was a—he was a boxer, a Golden Gloves boxer.
00:09:38	Metta	Guest	My dad was a boxer. Yes. Golden Gloves and then he had me. When he had me, he got a job. He's—he was supporting his family. He was a hard worker. Really hard worker.
00:09:49	Jesse	Host	Is he as big as you are? How tall are you?
00:09:51	Metta	Guest	He's 6'2". He's wide. He's probably about 240. When he was in his prime, at 240—my family's very, like, we don't look as heavy as we

are. You know, I'm like 270. I don't look 270 and we're all like that. And so, you—I always wanted to box. He'd never let us box, though. Never let us box.

00:10:14 Jesse Host I mean, I can understand why he wouldn't wanna let you box.
[Chuckles.]

[Metta agrees.]

00:10:18 Metta Guest It's not safe!
Yeah. He didn't—we would go see him train and we would see him do pushups and he'd just come home—this big man. He was—he was cut up. Muscles everywhere. And it's like, "Wow! I wanna be like Dad!" You know? And then you see him play basketball. He could—he was a really good basketball player. Could only go right, though. But he was really good—can really shoot. Had a really good—like, kind of a pro jumper. You know? And it's like, "Wow! I wanna be—" I wanted to be like Dad! You know? Really interesting guy.

00:10:49 Jesse Host Do you think that part of your relationship with basketball was about your relationship with your dad? Given that you had so many siblings and, in the later part of your childhood, your dad didn't live I the house—that this was, like, a place where you could be with your dad?

00:11:06 Metta Guest It could have been. It could have been. You know, because that was the place I was with my dad. When he left, I was pretty upset. You know, and um... and um, it was all I had at that point in time. You know. And when they broke up, I would just go outside and play basketball. You know. So, yeah, it could have been something like that. Because I was so passionate. I mean, I put everything—I left everything on that court. And I remember the days where, you know, when I was able to play a full 48 minutes without getting tired. And like—and people were like, "Why are you so crazy?!" And they just wanted—people—players would ask me, you know, how I play so hard.

[They laugh.]

Literally, "Hey, can you be easy today?" *[Laughs.]* I remember those days. It was pretty interesting.

00:11:54 Jesse Host Did you play angry when you were a kid?

00:11:56 Metta Guest When I was a kid we played angry. Yeah, 'cause my neighborhood—everybody was angry.

[They chuckle.]

No one—when you're on the court, I mean—you know, to get on the court, it was only one court on the block, unless you go to another block. And sometimes you don't wanna go to another block, because you don't know nobody on that other block. You know. And then eventually I started to go to the other blocks and just really—that's when you know you're kind of tough, because you're not afraid to go on somebody else's block and then, you know, give them some work. You know. And that made me tough, too. Because I used to be afraid to walk on the other blocks. Then they had one court behind the neighborhood, but that's like—that's

where a lot of things go down, you know. Maybe drug transactions or somebody'd get murdered in the back.

It's nobody back there to protect you. You know, right under the bridge, you know? And then I started going back there by myself. You know? And it was nervous wreck—you know, just like, shooting there and just, like, wondering who's behind you, you know? And then—*[chuckles]* and then I start—I start—I started to become a little tough, and I would walk—sometimes I would walk away from the neighborhood, 45th Road, down Vernon Blvd. And walking down the city, it's like—real estate booming, it's crazy. *[Laughing.]* When I was there, there was no real estate boom. It was just like prostitutes and drugs. And walking, like, five, maybe six blocks just to get down to a court. Just to practice. I did anything to find a hoop. I would never let a day go by where I couldn't find a hoop. I would find one, somewhere.

00:13:23 Jesse Host Do you feel like there was a time in your life when you decided that you were not going to be involved in selling drugs?

00:13:31 Metta Guest *[Sucks in a breath.]* Ooh! Yeah, it was—it was. Was the first time I sold drugs *[chuckles]*, quite honestly. 'Cause, you know, I've seen it being cooked up. And I was a young kid just playing basketball, but it just so happens that, you know, my cousins was cooking a lot of drugs. You know, and they all served time and everything. And then, you know, my other cousins are—it was just—it was just, like, fuck if—not my dad or any of my brothers, but a lot of my cousins. And my older brother, actually. He went to jail for ten years for drug trafficking. But, you know, it was just like... I would ask my cousin for some money and he'd give it to me. And I'm like, "Wow! I could buy some chips."

And I know, like, the cousin who gave me money, he sells drugs and he tells me, "This is how you make a cookie, but don't eat it 'cause it's not a cookie." I was like, "Yeah, I wanna do that." *[Laughs.]* You know. And the first time I did it, I was 13. I bagged it up, cut up the cracked, bagged it up. And then I gave the crackhead the money. I know exactly who it is, too. And I'm like, "I didn't take the money." I didn't want the transaction. I was looking outside, I'm 13 years old.

00:14:35 Jesse Host You passed off the drugs, but you freaked out and didn't take the payoff.

00:14:39 Metta Guest I couldn't take the money. I would go back in the house and then my cousin, he was like, "Alright, where's the money?" I'm like, "Yo. I can't. I can't do this." *[Laughs.]* You know. But it was crazy, because that's it. We played Nintendo. That's where we—all the technology was there, you know? And it was like—lot of things were, I guess, criminal activity going on. But then all the fun was there. You know? And it was a Christian house. *[Laughs.]* Which is crazy, 'cause they were—they never put anything around their mom, but it was—she's super, super Christian. You know. Super into God. So, it was like—it was weird, man. It was weird.

00:15:18 Jesse Host Metta, I've never been tough for a day in my life.

[Metta laughs.]

But, you know, I—I... I remember the point in my adulthood where I had the realization that everyone around me that I thought was

weak, because they didn't always have their defenses up—everyone around me who wasn't always having that feeling of looking over their shoulder—I imagine those people—I was like, “Wh—these people need to take care of themselves!” Right?

[Metta agrees several times.]

Like, they—walking down the street, you gotta keep your head up, you gotta keep your eyes out. Like, you know, you gotta know—you gotta know if somebody's on the—you know, if somebody's coming at you. You know, you gotta know when to cross the street. And this is even—again, from the least tough guy in the world. Um... and I remember when I had this realization like, “Oh, wait! They're not broken, I'm broken.”

[They laugh.]

Like, I was like, “Right! Other people don't—aren't living that way.” Because they didn't have to deal with whatever—people trying to sell them a rock when they were nine, you know?

00:16:32 Metta Guest

Man. Man, I didn't—I've been—one of my really good friends, Bantu. Bantu was a—could have been a math genius. We was in sixth grade—fifth grade, seventh grade—he got 'A's on every test. And I'm here working hard, trying to an 'A', trying to compete with this guy, and I can never get over, like, a 70. But I'm happy when I get a 70.

00:16:53 Jesse Host
00:16:55 Metta Guest

And you loved math. That's—
And I loved math. But I wasn't great at math. That's—people thing I was great. I wasn't good. I was driven. It was my favorite subject and I wanted to be great at it. You know, so, Bantu was super smart and should have got a scholarship to Harvard or something but chose to sell drugs. And he would sell drugs to his mom. You know. And it was the craziest thing ever to watch—and I knew his mom. I used to go over to his house. I remember getting Kool Aid and, you know, and you could only—'cause I didn't have Kool Aid at my household. So, I'd got to Bantu's house and get a cold glass of Kool Aid. And you know, he would sell drugs to his mom. And I'm like—when I started to go high school, I'm like, “Bantu, are you gonna play basketball?” He was smart. A lot of muscles. About four inches shorter than me and looked like a model. Had a great look. And he could do anything he want with his life, but he loved them streets. Unbelievable.

00:17:45 Jesse Host

It seems like you were not the kind of highly talented basketball prospect, when you were a young teenager, that some of the other guys who went on to have your kind of professional basketball success were. Um... were you just... working harder?

00:18:07 Metta Guest

Yeah. I knew I wasn't that good. I played against Lamar. Another guy named Raheem Johnson, who was Lamar—

00:18:13 Jesse Host

Lamar Odom.

00:18:14 Meta Guest

Lamar Odom. I played against Lamar. Lamar was always amazing. His partner, Raheem Johnson, was better *[chuckles]*—better than both of us, by far. But he just, you know, he loved the streets also. And yeah—but I knew I had a uphill battle. I remember seeing Schea Cotton—hearing about Schea Cotton—and I remember—I remember hearing about Kobe and Tracy McGrady and I'm like, “Okay, if I'm gonna make it, like, I gotta go in.” 'Cause I wasn't as

good. You know. And people can see my game. I have a lot of flaws in my game, even now. Like, when I played. And they knew I wasn't that good, but I was tough enough where I wasn't gonna let you stop me. You know.

And I was gonna stop you. You know. And I was gonna be on the floor and play a lot of minutes and nobody knew I was gonna be a All-Star or defense player of the year and possible MVP candidate and knocking down bigshots. You know. And I—it was just hard work. And it happens a lot. It's not just me. You look at Mitchell and you look at a lot of these guys. You know, like, come out of nowhere. Kuzma, from the Lakers, you know? They just working harder.

00:19:15	Jesse	Host	It seems like you had the same problems playing basketball as a teenager that you had in your NBA career, especially earlier in your NBA career—which is every so often, you would—you know—throw a whiteboard across the room or something like that.
00:19:32	Metta	Guest	Man. <i>[Chuckles.]</i> Too many of those.
00:19:35	Jesse	Host	It seems like you didn't, um... one of the things that changed as you got older was that when you were younger—at least you describe in the book—you almost didn't think of that as a problem. Because it was—I mean, I imagine it was really tied in to exactly the same stuff that made you work so hard.
00:19:54	Metta	Guest	Man, yeah—it did—it was. It was. Back when I was a kid, I remember—I remember throwing a chair at a referee. I was in the eighth grade, and somebody fouled me. He didn't call it. We were losing. I was so mad, I throw the chair at the—and he was a police officer, by the way! Then I get kicked out of CYO. Can never play again. I've been suspended every year I was in school, by the way. I think I said that in my book. I was suspended every single year. Preschool, nursery, all the way up to high school, my—I don't think I got suspended junior year. But I did get—and I—and maybe I did.

[Jesse laughs.]

I cannot remember a year—even in college, I can't remember one year I never got suspended for something, right? And that just, like—where is the rage coming from? And then, when I was 25, I kind of know where that rage is coming from, now, as I look back. You know, and it's not—it wasn't just from my environment. You know. It was like in the household. But... you know, and then my marriage counselor helped me a lot, when I was 25. He opened up wounds and changed my life and things didn't happen overnight, but I could sense, like, things is getting better. You know, things are getting better.

00:21:09	Jesse	Host	When we continue with <i>Bullseye</i> , after the break, I'll talk with Metta World Peace about his struggles with anger on the court and how they led to one of his other most notable fights: one with MVP James Harden. Stay with us. It's <i>Bullseye</i> , from MaximumFun.org and NPR.
00:21:27	Promo	Promo	<i>[Radio interference followed by laidback music with a snare drumbeat. A phone rings as the DJ speaks.]</i>

Radio DJ: Welcome back to *Fireside Chat* on KMAX. With me in-studio to take your calls is the dopest duo on the West Coast, Oliver Wang and Morgan Rhodes.

[Click.]

Go ahead, caller.

Caller: Hey. Uh, I'm looking for a music podcast that's insightful and thoughtful, but like, also helps me discover artists and albums that I've never heard of.

Morgan Rhodes: Yeah, man. Sounds like you need to listen to *Heat Rocks*. Every week, myself—and I'm Morgan Rhodes—and my co-host here, Oliver Wang, talk to influential guests about a canonical album that has changed their lives.

Oliver Wang: Guests like Moby, Open Mike Eagle, talk about albums by Prince, Joni Mitchell, and so much more.

Caller: Yooo! What's that show called again?

Morgan: *Heat Rocks*. Deep dives into hot records.

Oliver: Every Thursday on Maximum Fun.

[Music suddenly gives way to static and a dial tone.]

00:22:13 Promo Promo

Music: Upbeat, light music plays.

Mindy Thomas: Hey, Mindy here from the *Wow in the World* science podcast for kids and families. If you're looking for fun ways to educate and entertain your kids, we've got you covered five days a week. On Mondays, go on a scientific adventure with *Wow in the World*, and Tuesdays through Fridays, play along with our new gameshow: Two Whats and a Wow. It's *Wow in the World* from Tinkercast and NPR.

[Music ends.]

00:22:34 Jesse Host

Subscribe and listen now!
Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're replaying my 2018 conversation with Metta World Peace. He spent 18 years in the NBA, played for 6 teams, was an All-Star and an NBA champion, and he talked about it all in a memoir—*No Malice: My Life in Basketball*. The book talks in great detail about conflicts in his life, both on and off the court. One incident, in 2012, involved him driving his elbow into the face of another player, James Harden, then of the Oklahoma City Thunder.

00:23:06 Sound Effect Transition

Music swells and fades.

00:23:07 Clip Clip

[The crowd cheers.]

Announcer: Artest drives in front of Zeus and the Laker crowd's fired up! What a shot! James Harden goes down!

Announcer 2: And Art—uh, World Peace elbowed him!

Announcer: Oh no.

Announcer 2: Go hard!

Announcer: Ron Artest is going off with Serge Ibaka. You know, World—World Peace, I should say, though it may—reminiscent of Ron Artest.

Announcer 2: I mean, I don't know if it was inadvertent or not, but he hit him with an incredible elbow.

00:23:33	Sound Effect	Transition	Music swells and fades.
00:23:34	Jesse	Host	Did you ever go on the court thinking—I mean, I'm talking about when you were in your late high school career, when you were in college, when you first got to the NBA. Did you ever go on the court thinking, like, "I'm gonna do whatever it takes, today. I'm gonna win, today. And if somebody gets hurt, or whatever, that's the cost of doing business." Or were you going out there, every day, thinking, like, "I'm gonna keep it clean, today." But then something went wrong and—
00:24:04	Metta	Guest	Right. Well, when I played basketball, I've never hurt anyone. I've never wanted to hurt anyone. Definitely never wanted to give up space. You know. And that was one thing, like, if you wanted to post up—I'm not letting you get to post up. And it—you know, and you have to go around me or through me to get there. So—but hurting people was never an option. A lot of the fliggin' fouls came from the hustle. And just always, always extreme hustle. Sometimes, like, if you're in the air and I don't want you to get a layup, I'll just grab you out the air and put you down, slowly. You know. Or if you're going for a layup, I'm gonna try and block your shot. You know. Or I'm hustling. But I've never—I never hurt no one. The only one I came close to hurting was James Harden, but he came—he pushed me from behind. The elbow was vicious [<i>chuckles</i>] when I elbowed James Harden. It was—
00:24:53	Jesse	Host	You said—it was kind of famous play for NBA plays.
00:24:54	Metta	Guest	It was a famous one. Yeah.
00:24:56	Jesse	Host	NBA fans. But the two of you were running down the court after a basket. You got tangled up.
00:25:03	Metta	Guest	We didn't get tangled up. He came—he came behind me and kind of gave me a push. It was—it was a light push.
00:25:07	Jesse	Host	And you gave him what maybe you intended as a, "Hey, give me some room," arm, elbow.
00:25:16	Metta	Guest	Can you curse on this show?
00:25:17	Jesse	Host	You can. I mean, we'll bleep it. [<i>Chuckles.</i>]
00:25:19	Metta	Guest	Okay, well, it was like a, "Get... the freak away from me. Get off me. Don't touch me." Right? But then it—you know, obviously James Harden is 6'4", I'm 6'6". I wasn't judging my distance and it—and it hit him right in the back of the ear. And it didn't hit him flush. He sold it a little bit on the floor. And then I was suspended a couple games. We played them in the first round. It was a smart move, by him. Smart move, 'cause then I came back and by the time I was in rhythm, it was already game seven or game five. We was done, in the playoffs. And we played them in the first round. But you know... that was the—that was the only thing I really regret, in my career. Because I could have really hurt somebody. You know. But other than that, I always wanted to use all my fouls. When I go into a game, I know I'm using all my fouls. I get six—and I can play with five fouls. I can play with five fouls for two quarters. Which not many

people can do it, you know. So, coaches never felt like they had to take me out.

And it was just, like—for me, I just didn't like people scoring. When people would score, or if I would lose, you know, I didn't deal with it. I didn't deal with it how I wish I would have dealt with it.

00:26:32 Jesse Host
00:26:33 Metta Guest

In what way?
I mean, I wish I could just lose and go home! Eat. Just go home. You know, I wish I could have just, like, lost the game and just, like—and still go off with my teammates and eat some dinner. I was literally sick. I'd take—I took it home. I argued with my wife. You know. I don't go out with my kids, 'cause I wanna go to the gym and get better. We would be in Indiana, you know, lose a game and everybody's going home. I'm in the gym. You know. And my wife is waiting for me and I just say, "You should go home. I'll see you later." Don't get home 'til 2AM. You know, something like that. I hated losing! You know. I just couldn't take it. I couldn't deal with it. Couldn't deal with it.

00:27:10 Jesse Host
00:27:15 Metta Guest

After that—after that incident with Harden, did you ever talk to him? I didn't speak to him, but I've seen him—I didn't reach out to him or anything like that. But when I saw him... it didn't land flush. That was a hard elbow. If it'd have land flush, Harden would have had a super knot on his head. He would not have been able to function. It didn't land flush. Um—and nor did I want it to. It was more like when he—when he shoved me from behind, little bit—it wasn't—it wasn't hard, but I was like—it was more like I wanted to shove him. I wanted to literally shove him and, like, push him. But it was—his body wasn't on my body. It wasn't connected. So, it was all air and all momentum. You know what I'm saying? I couldn't slow it down. And then, partially, I wasn't look before I was hitting.

So... and then I thought was Ibaka, also. 'Cause me and Ibaka have a little issue. And he was a little taller than Harden. That whole—so, that whole instant was kind of like—that's one thing I regret. Like, even more than the brawl. You know. 'Cause my track record—I never hurt nobody on the court. I never—nobody ever got a hurt knee. You might of ran into me and maybe got bruised or something [*chuckles*], but I never took anybody out, never low-bridged nobody. You know, never came up under nobody's foot and took them out the playoffs. None of that stuff.

00:28:34 Jesse Host

Yeah, I was watching the brawl that you referred to—which is commonly known as the Malice at the Palace.

[Metta confirms several times.]

And your book is called *No Malice*. And, you know, I didn't remember that much about it other than you and some teammates had gone into the stands and that it had led to monstrous suspensions. That was pretty much all I—I mean, this is 15 years ago now. And as I was watching it and also reading about it in your book, the thing that I didn't remember was you—you had basically gotten pushed on the court and you... backed away. You went and laid down on the scores—announcer's table. Almost like—there was still, you know, kind of sports fighting going on, which is to say like that kind of like pushing and shoving, get back to your bench, I'm with my teammates stuff happening. Um... but you—but you

were laying on the table like you had just, like, taken yourself out of the situation.

00:29:47 Metta Guest *[Laughing.]* I was trying to! I was trying to. I was trying to.

00:29:53 Jesse Host What were you thinking when you—when you went and did that? Do you remember?

00:29:56 Metta Guest Well, I remember—I remember when Ben hit me, pushed me—after I fouled and he shoved me and I’m like, “Okay.” There was no way was gonna be able to fight. The refs is in front of us. Fans is around. My hands was down. If he wanted to punch me, he would have punched me at that point. It was a shove and I’m like, “Okay cool.” He’s about to—he should have been ejected. You know, usually a ref—if you look at some of the instances, you’ll see referees immediately call a tech. It was—there was never even a tech called, in that game. So, I just said, you know—that whole time said—there was nothing else. Nowhere to go. To the bench? The bench was too—it wasn’t as stable of me. And then I saw the scores table. I said, “Let’s go and chill out here for a little bit.” You know. And that was it. I was just trying—I said, “I’m just gonna chill until this is—‘til this is handled.”

Steven Jackson’s over there. So, I’m not—I’m not even gonna worry. Because Steven Jackson, Jermaine O’Neal is there. My team was crazy. You know. So, when they all stood up, I’m like—this is—I am not worried. You know? If it was—if it was another team *[chuckles]* I would have had—I don’t think I would have been—I felt as safe just staying there.

00:31:06 Jesse Host But then you got it unexpectedly from the crowd.

00:31:09 Metta Guest Yeah, you know. But what happened—before I got that drink thrown on me, meanwhile he’s pointing at me. “Yeah, yeah, I’m gonna get you,” whatever he’s saying. Then he threw his towel at me—hit me. So, I got to the ref and people see me, but they don’t show that on TV. Say, “What’s going on here?” Then he throws his headband and wristband. So, now at that point, my blood is boiling. ‘Cause I’m like, “I really don’t wanna relax. I would love to fight you. But it’s too many people. I don’t want to look like a fool. I want, like, a clean fight.” And then when a fan hit me, I was just—I lost it. *[Laughs.]* You know?

And you know what? I didn’t really lose it, ‘cause when I walked in that stand, I didn’t even throw a punch. I grabbed him and what I wanted to do was say, “You—you effing a-hole.” And shake him and, “Don’t ever throw anything at me. Like, I will kill you for doing that. I’m no sucker. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” You know? And that’s what I did. I didn’t throw a punch until the guy who came up and held me. And I’m thinking, like, “Okay, he’s grabbing me to say stop.” But then he started punching me in the face. That’s when the first punch was thrown. You know. Yeah, now—going in the stands, some would argue that was wrong. You know. Um.

00:32:21 Jesse Host *[Quietly.]* I—I would argue that.

00:32:22 Metta Guest *[Laughs.]* Yes. A lot of people argued that was wrong. Some people loved it. *[Laughs.]* They thought it was like WWE. And they praised me for it, which I don’t know—I don’t wanna be praised for that. And then some people see the step-by-step process what happened.

00:32:36 Jesse Host Do you think it was wrong?

00:32:37 Metta Guest I don’t think it was wrong. No, I don’t think it was wrong. I think if somebody attacks you, you have to protect yourself. Because look

at all the bullies out there. Then you see these people committing suicide 'cause they're afraid to fight a bully. Like, never be afraid of a bully. You know. Never be afraid of somebody who's trying to embarrass you. You have to protect yourself. And that—actually, and that's how I—how I grew up. I can't survive—I couldn't have survived if... I'll take, like—one story, right, I was at Astoria Park, Astoria, Queens. First time I ever been robbed. These kids sat us down. We was in the pool. We had our locks. They sat us down and said, "Y'all sit there and don't move." We was young kids! In their neighborhood. And we sat there and didn't move. And I remember being humiliated that day. I was 12 years old.

It ain't like Muhammad Ali getting his bike taken, like stolen. Oh, you know—this was like people sitting there telling us, "Don't move." And I've never been in a situation like that. I didn't know what they was gonna do. So, they took our locks, you know, and they take our—they didn't take our clothes. But they did take our locks. Maybe took some money. And I said, "I'm killing anybody who ever do that to me again." I remember that day. And I used to walk around every day—when I saw—people in New York City kind of knows me—they know me for going to any neighborhood and I remember somebody told me they was gonna rob me. I was in the NBA. They said they was gonna rob me if I come back, 'cause I wasn't getting money. I went back to that neighborhood with no shirt on. And I was ready! You know.

And I always roll—I always rolled with people who was ready. And that's what—I had to. You know. I always—like, my crew, we was young. And, you know. But we would—we would do what we had to do. You know, violently. And it sucked. You know. So, that leads you to the brawl. You know, like, I was so—I was so upset. You know. That somebody would do that to me. So, I don't feel it was wrong. I feel like we was just protecting ourselves. You know. Back in the days of my neighborhood, we lived in—right there in Long Island City, so it was like the drug hub [*chuckles*], quite frankly. But then people would come from other neighborhoods and murder people in my community, trying to set up shop in my community, and not even from my community. You know? And then some people in my community, they look bad because, you know, they're trying to protect us, but they protect—they're shooting people. You know, they're protecting the blocks, you understand? All they're doing is trying to keep—they wanted to keep their drugs in the neighborhood, but they don't want nobody else coming in our neighborhood and not only selling drugs but committing murders and crimes and killing people in our neighborhood. You know.

So, that was the type of stuff, like, that was imbedded [*chuckles*], quite frankly. And it takes a looooong time for you to get that—you know, to get into a different mind frame and say, "Okay, how can I help these type of people?" You know, that's why I do so much mental health work. That's why I do so much work with schools. That's why I'm so into the kids. You know, that—[*chuckles*] it's that passion! 'Cause, you know, I don't want nobody to grow up how I grew up.

00:35:24 Jesse Host

It seemed like, in the book, one of the things that you regretted most about that brawl was that while you loved playing for a world

championship team, in Los Angeles, and you loved many other places you played, that Indiana—I mean, kind of counterintuitively, you know, for a guy who thought about changing his name to Queensbridge at one point—but, like, Indiana was your home and, like, you seem to have had so much of your heart invested in Indiana as a place and as a team and, you know, you were playing with one of the greatest NBA players ever—Reggie Miller—who didn't have a championship and, you know. It was the—it was maybe the peak of that team that... maybe you—maybe you even almost felt shame about the fact that you had—that your actions and your teammates actions had, in a way, derailed that.

00:36:28 Metta Guest Yeah. It was—it sucked, man. People don't understand. As a basketball player, my colleagues are hall of famers, to not have Reggie Miller have a championship ring... it sucks. And that's why—part—that's one of the reasons why I gave away my ring, even though I wanted to win more. It just didn't feel the same. I was very grateful, you know. And it was—luckily I got one. But, like, you know—for that to happen, it just sucked, you know. And I don't have a big relationship with Reggie Miller, even though I played with him for a long time. I wasn't very social. I didn't talk to a lot of people, back then. And, you know, I take the blame for that. And I'm sure they don't care. They're living great lives and everybody's doing well, financially and familywise. Happy and loving. You know. But the—there's something about the ring, you know? And it just kills me, probably more than it kills them. You know. For them not to have one, for Jermaine not to have one. You know, for Donnie Walsh not to have one.

You know, these are—Donnie Walsh came to my wedding. You know. Chuck Person came to my wedding. And, you know, sometimes just like, you think about yourself more than others. And I'm still getting better at that. You know. And then it just—so supportive. People don't understand how supportive Indiana was. They made sure I got to my therapy sessions. You know, made sure I could—it was hard for me to function from playing the game. I couldn't—I was so unstable. Literally, I needed to mentally prepare myself and they was there for me.

00:38:03 Jesse Host I wanna ask you something a little lighter. Did you actually, uh... recruit yourself onto the Los Angeles Lakers while Kobe Bryant was taking a shower, after the end of the NBA finals?

00:38:19 Metta Guest Yeah, that—it was an interesting story.

[They laugh.]

00:38:25 Crosstalk Crosstalk It was a interesting story. 'Cause a lot of—it's—there's a—the story got—
Jesse: I wanna hear it from you.
Metta: Yeah, hear it from me.
Jesse: Because I've heard—I know how sports media is.
Metta: Yeah, yeah, yeah. *[Laughs.]*
 And people love to make stuff up. Especially when it's involving me. So, I went there with a Sacramento Kings shirt on, because I wanted to sign back with the Sacramento Kings, for life. So, I—but I

00:38:31 Metta Guest

wanted to go to this game. But I didn't want to act like I'm trying to play for Boston or the Lakers. Like I'm not—like I'm a traitor. No, I'm not there—I'm tougher than that. So, I go there with the Kings jersey on. My best friend—my good friend Lamar Odom is playing on that team. You know. We been playing with each other since we were kids. So, I was hoping they'd win.

So, after the game they lose by 30. And I see the Boston wins, and I'm like, "Oh, wow, I need this feeling." So, I wanna say bye to Lamar. So, I go in the back, security let—they let me in the back. And I see Phil Jackson and I say, "Phil Jackson, great job." I never really talked to Phil like that, 'cause I didn't know him, but Phil's my favorite coach ever. *[Laughing.]* Right, you know? Chicago Bulls.

00:39:20 Jesse Host
00:39:22 Metta Guest
00:39:25 Jesse Host
00:39:26 Metta Guest

You had grown up a Bulls fan, in New York.

A Bulls fan. Huge Phil Jackson fan. *[Laughs.]*

A BJ Armstrong man, if I remember correctly.

Absolutely, BJ Armstrong. PJ. So then, after I say hi to Phil, I see Brian Shaw. And I say—I'm trying to find Kobe and I'm saying, "Anybody see Kobe? I wanted to tell him good game, 'cause I'm a big fan of Kobe." Even though we have wars. They said, "He's in the shower. And Brian Shaw said, "Just—he's right there!" So, I'm like, "Alright, cool! I'll just go in the shower." You know, Kobe's butt naked. You know. But he's facing the other way. *[Chuckles.]* And I say—I just wanted to tell him like, "Hey, man, I'm so—like—proud of you. And good game. And you're gonna get 'em next time." I wasn't saying, "I'm gonna be there with you," I was just, like, saying, like—you know, like, "You're gonna get 'em next time."

But rewind to playing on the same team—I remember him being so mad and the funny thing is, he turns around and he don't wanna talk to nobody. Kobe's like—when he's mad, he's mad. And he turns around and he sees me. He's like—he *[laughing]*—he almost like laughed, probably. But, "What are you doing here?" You know, like, "How—how is this happen—why are you in this shower?" You know? And it's just like, "'Cause I wanted to say—'cause I gotta go. I don't feel like waiting for you to get out of the shower. You know, I gotta go. But I wanted to tell you, you know, good game."

00:40:44 Jesse Host

Funny story. Funny story.

I was thinking about Ichiro Suzuki, the baseball player, who just... he didn't retire. But he stopped playing for the Mariners. And, you know, Ichiro Suzuki is famous for his incredible drive, right?

[Metta agrees.]

He brings his self-designed workout equipment with him everywhere he goes.

00:41:07 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Metta: I love it. *[Laughs.]*

Jesse: Including just on the road, with the team.

00:41:11 Jesse Host

Metta: I love him already.

And, you know, he played in the major leagues 'til the age—I believe he's 44, now. And he was famously like... would rent a ballpark in, um... in Japan, in the winter, and train six hours a day in the snow. And I thought... it's a—it's a beautiful miracle to have that

kind of drive to be. And, you know, it worked too! You know, like, what an incredible, beautiful baseball player Ichiro has been for 25 years, now. But I thought, when he's done with that what... there's nothing in my life that takes up that much space.

[Metta laughs.]

That anyone could take away from me. Much less to have just time take it from me. You know?

[Metta agrees.]

And it seemed—I felt incredibly sad about it. And you seem like you were that kind of basketball player—a basketball player who was defined by your drive.

00:42:24 Metta Guest
00:42:26 Jesse Host
00:42:30 Metta Guest

Yeah. *[Laughs.]* Yeah.

It must have been incredibly difficult to stop.

It was. Oh, do you know what is—that's a great statement and comment you made. When I was 29 years old, I said, "I'm downsizing my life. I no longer care about pulling up to clubs in Bentleys." I bought a Prius. I lived in a little apartment in Westwood. I was gonna get a studio apartment, but right before—the problem was, my kids moved with me but they was living with my ex-wife, in Indiana. And then when they moved with me, all my kids—because we just took out of a—me and my ex-wife have a relationship like that. So, then that's the only reason I got a bigger place. You know? So, it was—it was such a good feeling to downsize. My thought process, not having to be number one no more. I didn't care. I worked hard but didn't care. Not having to impress anybody anymore. It was the first time in my life I felt like that.

And now, I travel by myself. You know. Last year, I went to a Warren Buffett conference, right? And I was by myself. I was, like, the only black guy in there, right? And—but I'm by myself, like, that—20,000 people in this arena, in Omaha and it's just such a good feeling! Whereas before, it was me, my boys, always had to be around people. You know? And yeah. It was hard. It was really hard. Because you always feel like you gotta impress someone. And you're always kind of shoveling dirt in a hole, you know?

00:43:46 Jesse Host

[Metta agrees.]

Like, you're trying to—as long as I keep going, I'm doing something. But—

00:43:52 Metta Guest

Yeah! You know? It's like, who are you—who are you really trying to impress? You know, so I'm—it's—I remember when I was 20... when I was 21, I was going through withdrawals 'cause I was—had a bad habit of drinking and smoking. And I remember that being the toughest to get off. I'm like, "I gotta stop this lifestyle. Blah, blah, blah." And it took me—it took me about three years to feel comfortable without drinking and smoking. You know? But it's so worth it. You know, I feel great. I'm 38. You know. I feel great, mentally, physically, and I—but it was—at those times, them hurdles is tough. But once you get over that hurdles, it's a great feeling.

00:44:32	Jesse	Host	Well, Metta World Peace, thank you so much for taking all this time to talk to me. It was really great to have you on the show.
00:44:36	Metta	Guest	It was—it was great. It was—it was great that we had a chance to get these stories out. I love just, you know, talking. Hopefully this inspires somebody, and they really liked our conversation.
00:44:45	Jesse	Host	Metta World Peace, recorded in 2018. His memoir, <i>No Malice: My Life in Basketball</i> , is available to buy in digital and in print. If you're missing basketball, these days, it's a really great read.
00:44:57	Music	Transition	Thumpy, jazzy music.
00:45:00	Jesse	Host	That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i> . <i>Bullseye</i> is currently being produced out of the homes of the staff of MaximumFun, and my home, in and around Los Angeles, California. Normally, we would [<i>chuckling</i>] give you, here, an update on what's been going on outside our window, in MacArthur Park. But instead, I will tell you that, in Kevin Ferguson—our producer's—house, the cat licked the window the entire time we were recording this. And we don't know what the cat was getting out of that. But, you know. Cat's do cat stuff.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones and, to a lesser extent, licking windows. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Our production fellow is Jordan Kauwling. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally—also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Our thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.

And one last thing: you a basketball fan? Why not check out our interview with Baron Davis, from 2015? That was a really great one. Baron Davis is a remarkable guy. You can find it on our website, at MaximumFun.org. We're on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Just search for *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn*, keep up with the show there.

00:46:22	Promo	Promo	And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off. Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
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[Music fades out.]