

1 GVP31 Brenda Hines

2 D: Please state your name.

3 B: My name is Brenda Hines.

4 D: And Brenda, how old are you?

5 B: I'm fifty years old.

6 D: You look good for fifty, Brenda. (laughter) And I know you've been affected by gun
7 violence, would you be willing to share your experience?

8 B: Yes, please.

9 D: Please proceed.

10 B: My life changed totally on November 13th, 2017. I never forget, it was a Sunday day. I spent
11 the whole day with my family, cooked breakfast and cooked dinner and I went out with a
12 girlfriend to help her with some paperwork, came back home, and Donovan was home. My son
13 Donovan, he loved to be called Donovan "Jude" James Hines. And Donovan was here with his
14 girlfriend. And I went upstairs to take a shower and he must've left out. But when I came down, I
15 heard her in the basement so I, I assumed that my son was here. But that night, I laid on the sofa
16 and I just couldn't get in the bed, I started prayin' in my livin' room on the sofa, and I was just
17 prayin' and prayin' 'til I fell asleep. And she was here, [...]. And she kept walkin'. And I said,
18 "Little girl, why are you walkin' all night long?" And she didn't say anything. 'Bout a hour
19 passed by and she was still walkin' and on the phone. She came to me and she told me my son,
20 Donovan, had been shot.

21 D: Mmm!

22 B: So, I figured he had been shot, maybe I can call the hospitals and check up on him to see if I
23 could see my child. I called Froedtert Hospital, they said they had no one listed as Donovan

24 Himes. So, I called the seventh district police officers and they said, “We have no homicides
25 tonight, Ms. Hines. But maybe one. Hold on one second, it may be in the fifth district.” She put
26 me on hold and she came back and she said, (pause) “I’ll tell you what, I’ll have detectives call
27 you.” Me, as being a Chaplain, and goin’ out for the homicides, I knew then that things wasn’t
28 gonna look good for me that night. So, I gotten dressed and I waited for the detective to call me,
29 ‘cause I didn’t know the location. And as a, as a Chaplain, we do get a chance to go out with the
30 families to the location, so I’m assumin’ that I was gonna be able to get out there to see my child
31 where he had been shot and everything, but I had to wait for about two more hours, ‘til three in
32 the mornin’ and finally the detective came and told me that my son had been shot on [Old North
33 Milwaukee]. So, I did go, I got in the car, me and my son and [...]. And we rode to [Old North
34 Milwaukee].

35 D: Where were you comin’ from?

36 B: I was comin’ from home.

37 D: Which is...?

38 B: [Vogel Park].

39 D: Okay.

40 B: Which is right by [street names in Vogel Park].

41 D: Okay.

42 B: So, I’ll never forget that drive down Hampton. And when I got there, I saw all the tape, taped
43 off and I saw the police cars. But when I asked to speak to the detective, they said they had
44 already taken my son, the medical examiner had already taken him to the medical examiner. So,
45 I didn’t get a chance to see anything but the car that my son was in, which was shot at fourteen
46 times.

47 D: Mmm!

48 B: I seen the casin's in the street which was fourteen casin's. And he had hit a house. And I just
49 was in shock. It was like I was just dreamin' and I couldn't believe that that Sunday was the last
50 day I had a chance to see my son, Donovan. And that was devastatin', I was like, they, they
51 killed my son and they killed part of me. I've never been the same lady, ever again, never whole,
52 I'll never be.

53 D: After you saw the scene or after you arrived, did the detectives talk to you or what happened?

54 B: One detective did come to me to let me know, I said, "Please, let me see my son, one last
55 time." And he said that my son was gone, away from there. So, it was taped off from all the way
56 from [Old North Milwaukee], the alley was tape- it was a large taping of a, like a half of a block,
57 the alley was taped off. I'll never forget it. I ride past there, sometimes I just ride past there, just
58 try to get an understandin'. Why was my child in that area? Why was he comin' down that way
59 that night? But then I learned he was goin' to see a girl that lived about another half a block
60 down and off of, off Hampton. So, that was hard. Very hard.

61 D: Was the person who, or persons who, murdered your son, were they captured?

62 B: No. Only thing I know and it's been a year and four months is what I seen on the news, like
63 about eight o'clock that morning.

64 D: Mhmm.

65 B: Where the car was there, the casings was there, and the house that my son had hit. And the
66 police officers were there and the, the lady daughter of the house was on there. And that's all
67 I've known so far, haven't heard a thing.

68 (pause)

69 D: If, for the person who, or persons who, murdered your son, do you forgive 'em?

70 B: Well, this is a big faith walk for me. And at this time, because I don't know who, what, or
71 how, I can't forgive. I'm not sayin' I can't get to that stage. But at this moment, I'm still angry,
72 I'm still bitter. And I'm very, very mad about my losin' of my child. Yes.

73 D: What would you say to someone who recently lost a loved one to gun violence?

74 B: I would, I always say to, to them, "This is not a walk that you could walk alone. You need to
75 be around people who can share your experience and share love with you, to get you through
76 each moment. Each hour. Each day. Each month. Each year." (pause)

77 D: What would you say to law makers in reference to what you'd like to see changed, if
78 anything, in reference to gun laws?

79 B: Well, I can say, I can say a whole lot. Especially where the gun's comin' from. (pause) I can
80 say to the law makers to, they need to do a better process of communicatin' with the families
81 after the homicide has been committed. It needs to be a different process in dealin' with these
82 homicides. This, this, this is, excuse my language, a Hell walk. When they say in the Bible in
83 Psalm 23, "You walk through the valley of the shadow of death..." I'm still walkin' through the
84 valley of the shadow of death.

85 D: Hmm.

86 B: It's Hell. And that is Hell, accordin' to the Bible. And anyone that who has to go through this,
87 that's exactly what they're goin' through.

88 D: So, your experience has motivated you to wanna do what?

89 B: Well, I was a Chaplain before this happened to my son. So, I would go out with a, I was
90 Chaplain with the Salvation Army and the seventh district police station. That went out for
91 homicides, fires, child death, you know, any kind of disaster that happened in the city of
92 Milwaukee. And it just makes me want to help the families more now, from being, goin' through

93 the pain and sufferin'. I knew the people was, was sufferin' so bad with the pain and hurt, but
94 now I know it personally. So, it makes me want to work even harder in the community, or
95 anything, just to be there, if that's all I could do. Be a shoulder.

96 (pause)

97 D: Is there anything you'd like to add?

98 B: I'd just like to add, I miss my son, Donovan Hines, so much. And if I could do a do-over, and
99 I could turn back the hands of time, I think all the mothers would say that they would turn those
100 times back and bring 'em back. But you can't. You have to accept it and you got to learn how to,
101 they say, "New Normal" but this not normal. To go through somethin' like this is, this is very
102 traumatic to your whole entire family so, that's all. This is hard.

103 D: Thank you!

104 B: You're welcome.

105 PART TWO (3:09)

106 D: Go ahead.

107 B: Okay, like about a month and a half before Donovan was, had transitioned, as they tell me to
108 say, Bishop Daniels tell me to say, he was workin' downtown, helpin' build the apartments up
109 down there. So, he was so happy and he wanted to become a carpenter, to, to, to help out with
110 the carpentry and gettin' it together. So, you can kinda tell when somethin' is not right with your
111 child, so he stopped workin' about, about a month. And he didn't wanna work and he didn't want
112 his girlfriend around him, you know, she lived here with us. And so, he was like, he come to me,
113 he said, "Mama, I'ma, you know, I'ma get out here. And I'ma go." And I didn't know what he
114 was sayin' when he said, "Mama, I'ma get out here and I'ma go." So, one night, I stood up and I
115 said to him, "You don't have to go if you don't want to." And I don't know if it's spiritual or

116 what, but if he would've said, "I don't wanna go," I believe God would've kept him. But you
117 know what, he, he, he walked away. Like he knew he had to go through what he was goin'
118 through. And so—

119 D: —In his death.

120 B: In his death, yeah. So, all my family and everybody said, he kept on tellin' me, "Mama!
121 Mama!" 'cause his dad lived on the East Side, he said, "Mama! Mama, I was down on the East
122 Side at the bar my dad used to go to." Then he come in the next day, "Mama! Mama, I seen this
123 person, I seen that person." He went around and visit every family member, everybody that he
124 loved, he went within that month to visit. And then, like, that Friday, I worked from home and he
125 came up, he would come upstairs and mess with me all the time, "Hey Mama, whatcha doin'?"
126 'Til his girlfriend would say, "Why you always goin' up there, messin' with your mama?" He'd
127 say, "'Cause I love my mama." (laughter) And I'd say, "I love my baby." And he would always
128 say, "Mama, ain't I your favorite son?" I say, "You know you my favorite son." And that just
129 gets me over my head, why would he tell me those things, you know? He told me that Friday, he
130 said, "You look, so, so tired." And I didn't feel like I looked tired, so he saw the hurt that I was
131 gonna go through. So, you know, he, I gonna just tell you, he was a weed smoker. And he
132 thought that weed had done everythin' for you 'cause it was herb, (laughter), from an herb. He
133 said, "At five o'clock Mama, I'ma go get you some weed. Because you know what I want you to
134 do? It's the weekend, I need you to relax." You know, so I said, "Okay." And he said, like, "Five
135 o'clock, Mama." Why he said five o'clock, I have no idea. He never did bring it back. And then
136 that Saturday and then that Sunday, that's when he was killed.

137 D: Oh my gosh.

138 B: But it was in his words, so many words he was tellin' me that Friday. "Mama, you look tired.
139 You know, you hurtin', but I'ma get you this weed and I want you to be alright." So, that's my
140 story.

141 D: That was beautiful.

142 B: I just thought you should hear that, 'cause if, if you—

143 PART THREE (2:13)

144 B: Okay, I know when I, when I speak to a lot of the families or whatever, they think they can't
145 question God. But I'ma tell you, with my son, the night, November 13th, 2017, once he died and
146 part of me died, my faith died. And so, it took me about nine months to get my faith back.

147 D: Mmm!

148 B: And I was very angry at the Lord because I felt like he was obligated. In which he was
149 obligated because that's the relationship I always had with him. I said, "Lord, if I do your, what
150 you want me to do, then you, you'll be obligated to take care of my kids." And accordin' to his
151 word, that's what it say. He say, if you do his will and be about his business, then he would be
152 about your business, and my kids was all I had. That's all, that was my heart. And so, when I lost
153 my faith, but they say over in Luke 22, it say, "Jesus say, 'I pray for you, that your faith don't
154 fail.'" So, if a God had not prayed for me and my faith and my anger and bitterness. And I would
155 tell God, I threw that Bible down, I said I wasn't gonna read no more Bible. I wasn't gonna go
156 no more church no more. Because people don't, people think that you, you don't get angry with
157 me. They got people's in the Bible that, that ran. E-even Jeremiah ran from God and said, "I'ma
158 hide up under this tree, Lord. I don't wanna go." He didn't wanna do what the Lord wanted him
159 to do. But I, I have to still trust God. So, my faith did come back. But I always tell people this
160 one thing in this in time, that I like people to hear, accordin' to Luke 18, it says in that, "In times,

- 161 when a son of man comes back, will there be faith in the land?" Now that's one question
162 everyone to have a trial or tribulation, need to, need to remember. Because the one thing the
163 enemy would love to take from us, is our faith. And that's it.
164 D: Thank you.
165 B: I always, I always, I did the—