

1 GVP53, Tracey Dent

2 D: Please state your name.

3 T: Tracey Dent.

4 D: And Tracey, how old are you?

5 T: 50+. (laughter)

6 D: Really?

7 T: Yeah.

8 D: And you are, what sex?

9 T: I'm a male.

10 D: Okay. And what neighborhood do you live in in Milwaukee?

11 T: I'm in the 53210 area code right now.

12 D: Okay, and how long have you lived there?

13 T: About six years.

14 D: Okay, and please share your story of what happened.

15 T: Okay, I want to just mention one story that happened, I guess this was the, one of the reasons
16 why I became a activist.

17 D: Okay.

18 T: When, in my early 20s, I used to go out all the time, go out to clubs like six times a week. So,
19 and I've seen fights break out inside clubs and, and people shooting, so violence really was like
20 second-nature to me. I've seen it all the time. Because I used to go to those rough nightclubs and
21 stuff and bars, you know, when thing always, you know, how do they say it, jump off. But this
22 one particular time, it was on a, it was on a Saturday night. And there was a club, it's called Club
23 Sensation, and it was right there [...in Park West]. Right now if you'll go over there, you'll think

24 it's like, "Okay, it's right across the street from Fondy Mall." Or Fondy vegetable market that
25 they have every year. So, what happened was, is that I was sitting, I was standing outside talking
26 to some friends outside the club and then two white Mercedes drove up and parked right in front
27 of the club. One of the guys that got out the, got out the car start talking to this other guy. And
28 then I heard him say, "Give me your chain." And the dude said, "No," pushed him, and started
29 running. So, the guy just you know, he took a couple steps, pointed out the gun in front of
30 everybody and, and shot him a couple times in the back. So, what he did, he walked to the guy,
31 snatched the chain off his neck while he was laying there bleeding out. So, then he walked back
32 to the car, to the Mercedes and then just stood there for about a couple minutes, just talking while
33 the dude was still bleeding out. So, I ran over to, by the guy, you know, by the guy who who got
34 shot. You know. And we was trying to tell him you know, "Don't die, don't die." You know, and
35 all that kind of stuff. And then the guy finally got into the car and some other guy, some other
36 people got out the car and blended in with the crowd. You know, cause when the po-you know,
37 firefighters came, paramedics came, the police came, and stuff like that. You know, I guess they
38 wanted to see who, who's going to snitch. So, it was, it was a tr-, it was, I, I thought it wasn't
39 traumatic but it was kind of traumatic. I don't, I can't, I don't know if he ever lived or not, but he
40 lost a lot of blood and he, he lost conscious. So, that's all I, I could really say about that. But just
41 to watch, you know, somebody pull out a gun in front of daylight is kind of bold. You know?
42 Don't care. And then finding out that was part of the B, the Brotherhood of Struggle, they call
43 them the BOS Brothers. That's when they first came to like, to Milwaukee trying to take over
44 cause they down from Chicago. So, you know, and it was just, you know, when I went home that
45 night, you know, I went to sleep, I had a nightmare about it. See, and I didn't know, you know, I
46 didn't know it's going to, I was going to, it would affect me that way. You know, but it's, it's

47 very, it's very traumatic and I've seen, you know, I've got several stories. I seen people get
48 killed in front of me, more than one. So, you know, violence, gun violence, is like I said, second-
49 nature to me cause I've seen people get shot in front of, (pause) you know, so.

50 D: After that experience, did it stop you from wanting to go out?

51 T: No, actually, went out very next day cause I wasn't shot. So, I, I had, I'm not saying I didn't
52 have this fear, but I always, like, if I go to a club or whatever or a bar, I always look, look for
53 the, for the nearest exit so if something jump off, I know exactly which way to go. I mean,
54 there's one time I was in the club you know, having a good time or whatever. Next thing you
55 know, fight broke out. And you know, when the fight breaks out, especially in the small bar,
56 club, you know, everybody go into panic mode and they don't know which way to go. So,
57 everybody bumping into each other, knocking over each other, over, over chairs and tables, and
58 stuff like that. But then, I heard a gunshot went off. And the thing is, I thought, it was so close
59 that I thought I was shot cause I was in the, I was in this daze, like the motion of like, falling. But
60 I really wasn't falling, I wasn't shot, but I smelled the gun powder so strong. And then I went
61 with the, the, the, the motion, the movement of the crowd and we wind up going, cause that was
62 my first time there at this, at this bar. And they push me and we wind up going down the stairs
63 and went the wrong, of course we went the wrong way. And we wind up in the basement, so we
64 shut the door and lock the door and you had people crying, talking about they going to come
65 down there and kill us, and all that kind of stuff. So, we had to stay downstairs until the police
66 came. You know, so, it was okay to go, go outside.

67 D: Oh my God.

68 T: But you know, me being me, I went to that same club the very next day. My thought process
69 is, "They not going to shoot two days in a row."

70 D: Oh my God.

71 T: So, I mean, I got several stories.

72 D: You said that your experience with gun violence turned you into an activist, share your
73 activism with me.

74 T: Well, you know, that and then it was another factor when I was laying in bed and I heard
75 gunshots. And you know, and I was just, I just got fed up saying, "What if, whatever happen if a
76 bullet come to, go through my house and hit my daughter?" You know? And that was another
77 reason why I became a activist is cause you know, we have to pro-start protecting our, our, our
78 own basically. You know? The police can't do it by themselves, they need help, they need
79 people like us in the community to take a stand against violence. And you know, and, and also, I
80 you know, with my experience of dealing with seeing people get shot and people, you know,
81 families suffering, I have something to bring to the table. And, and that caused me to come in
82 and, and, and do vigils, or be that support person for families in their time of grieving. Help them
83 you know, supply them with resources, who to go to, who counseling, and stuff like that cause
84 you know, when, when a family gets you know, gets struck by gun violence, it's very traumatic.
85 It's very traumatic. Especially for, for mothers or parents who have to bury their own child. I
86 mean, let, you know, knock on wood that I don't have to experience that. Well, I haven't
87 experienced it yet and hopefully I never will have to, but just, you know, just to see and parents
88 go, you know, mothers crying and losing their minds because their child got shot or their dead,
89 you know, it's just, all I want to do is like, I mean, embrace them with a hug. Whatever I can do,
90 I want to like, absorb some of that pain to, to try to take it away from them. You know, when
91 they hurt, I hurt. You know and it's, you know, and I'm a very, when it comes to stuff like that,
92 I'm very sensitive and very protective of, of the families and who I help. You know? It's, it's

93 cause they doing, they going through so much and, and it's sad that we have to wait 'til this time
94 of need for our community to come together. It's very sad that we have to do it only in those
95 times, in tragic times, but you know, I will say it like this, at least we're there.

96 D: Right.

97 T: You know, that's the main thing. Now, we can build upon other stuff later, but right now, it's
98 about supporting that family who's, who's grieving. And you know, they going to, they're never
99 physically going to always you know, get over it. It's going, it's going, it's a process and it's a
100 very long process. You got to be patient with it, but it's you know, all, I know families you
101 know, parents or whatever, people take it day by day. You know? You going to have your good
102 days, you're going to have your bad days. But long as you making it through the day, that's
103 what's important.

104 D: I like how you said that.

105 T: So, you know, and it's like I said, it's all about love, support, from the community to help that
106 family because like I said, that, they go through so much, they going through so much. And I try
107 to put, you know, cause sometimes you know, we have to call a spade a spade. So, you know,
108 you know, when things like, you know, or you know, you hear comments like, "Well, they
109 shouldn't be doing what they doing and it'll never happen." You know? That may be true, but
110 still at the end of the day, that parent lost a child regardless of if they were doing something
111 legally or illegally, that parent is suffering. You know? Cause they, you know, I've been
112 criticized times where I done a vigil for a drug dealer or something like that.

113 D: Right.

114 T: A criminal, just say it like that. But it's not about the criminal, it's about the family who are
115 grieving. And that's where it's like, I let all that other stuff play out in court, today is not the day.

116 D: Right.

117 T: Today is to honor the family, that child to that family. And that's how I take approach to
118 things, you know.

119 D: That makes a lot of sense. What do you think we can do to lower gun violence?

120 T: To lower gun violence? Actually, you know, everybody say the times have changed but
121 sometimes you got to bring the past to the present. Meaning that we need those, those grandmas
122 or aunties out on the porch. If they see something, see someone that they don't recognize, have
123 them speak up, like, "Hey, how you doing?" You know? To gain their attention, you know,
124 cause they figure like, "Oh, somebody's watching me so, I can't do what I was going to do
125 because they see me out here." You know? We need those type of environments. People
126 speaking to each other, you know? What they always say is like, you know, that love is gone. It's
127 all about, "What can I get out of this person?" You know. And you know, it's like, and then it's
128 like they said, "You only going to get love, find love in the street." That's that fake love, that's
129 not real love out in the streets because the streets is up to no good and, and, if you want to go
130 biblical, it's saying that's the demons out there in the streets who's trying to lure you there to
131 them. So, to have you do the wrong things. But, you know, yeah, it starts at home, though. We
132 have to be, stop worrying, I say it like this, stop worrying about these laws that people, you
133 know, the, the, the lawmakers make, talking about that they give more power to the kid versus
134 the children when it's time to discipline our children. I just say it like this, take matters and law
135 in your own hands. And you know, my mother always said, like, "If you going to call the police,
136 call the police. I'll tell them to take you." You know? You have to lay the law, lay down the law.
137 Stop being their friend and be their mother, be their dad. Stop being their friend, stop smoking
138 with them, stop drinking with them. Back in the day, we, you know, our parents, they tell us to

139 go in the room and then, and stay in that room. We come out that room, all hell's going to break
140 out. And when they do, you know, if they going to smoke, they going to smoke, but not around
141 their children.

142 D: Right.

143 T: So, and that's the thing. Like, we got to stop being friends, stop making excuses for our
144 children when they do something wrong. Especially for the community and themselves, trying to
145 justify, "Oh, that's be-they, they was stealing because they was hungry." No they not. Lot of
146 these kids out here have money, they just want to do it for the sport of it, for the fun of it, cause
147 they're bored. That's the real reason that they're stealing. Or you know, if they are stealing that's
148 because that they don't, they, they ran away from home because they feel that their mom or their
149 dad don't love them. Because as parents, young, especially young parents nowadays, they're
150 more concerned about partying versus their own kids. You know? And I was a product of that.
151 My mother used to party all the time, left me home by myself when I was under ten, and they,
152 she partied all time, all night. I knew where she was at, I could make the phone call, but the thing
153 is, she left me in the big old house by myself. And you know, and then she would get mad, blame
154 me why she can't keep a boyfriend because you know, the guys that she meet will say that you
155 know, "I don't want to mess with a woman who has kids at the house." And she'll blame me for
156 that. And, and I can, so, I can relate to the kids today. You know, they feel like, "Well, my mama
157 don't care about me, so I'll be out two, three o'clock in the morning doing what I do." You
158 know. And we have to, as parents, adults, we have to you know, change that. And even for, they
159 call it, "elders" need to mentor these young parents. And to show them how to really be parents.
160 Because whatever's in the streets is going to still be there while you busy taking care of your
161 child, you know. If you going to be, if you going to be parents, be parents. If you don't want to

162 be parents, then give up your rights. That might sound cold, but we're, we're protecting the
163 children, you know. Cause it's no excuse to have a ten, eleven-year-old out two, three o'clock in
164 the morning. There's no excuses that a twelve or thirteen-year-old stealing cars. You know? And
165 yeah, as a parent, as a adult, and if I see a thirteen-year-old stealing a car, yeah, I'm going, I'm,
166 yeah, they need to be in jail. You know? I'm not going to say, "Oh, where the mom at? Where
167 the daddy at? Oh, we have to take care—" No, no. If you going to do the crime, you going to do
168 the time, no matter how old you are. You know? But this all starts at home. Put down the drugs,
169 take care of your, feed your children, stop worrying about what that man is doing, what is that,
170 that female is doing, worry about where your child is at. Stop trying to be a, a internet celebrity
171 or, excuse my French, but a internet ho and worry about what your children posting on social
172 media. Especially, this comes to the, to the mothers. You do not have to keep, as a mother, as a
173 m-as a adult period, but as a mother, there's no reason for you to be on the internet with your
174 panties and bras just to get attention and brag about all these people, all these men and women
175 and in your inbox trying to get with you. That's degrading to women. And that's degrading to
176 yourself. No matter how you play it out. A real woman who wants to be sexy can do it without
177 just showing her panties and bras, you know. And then that's, and like I said, if you want it raw,
178 that's raw and that's real. And then you lose respect. You lose respect of, of people like, if I, if
179 I'm a adult, if I'm a man and I see you in your panties and bras, yeah, I'm, you know, I'm going
180 to come disrespect for you in your inbox because present yourself that way. And then if you get
181 mad and you start going at it, you never know cause it's been a lot of social media violence. Gun
182 violence, people been shooting each other over social media posts and you know, that's the real
183 of it, you know, have more respect for yourself. And then the men you know, who waving
184 around guns on social media or, or people smoking weed knowing, regardless anywhere else in

185 the country, here in Milwaukee it's illegal. Don't show it off in, in social media. You know?
186 Because, and then you flashing money and stuff like that, you setting yourself up to get, to get
187 robbed or even worse, and it happens. Everybody wants, everybody wants to be a internet
188 celebrity, so they feel they have to be in their panties and bras, waving guns, you know, and
189 that's today's generation. And, and the only way to do that is the elders and just people that you
190 know need to tell that person to stop being a fool. Stop being a fool. You know, and like I said,
191 going to back, you know, to some, some women, you know, you got to stop doing that. You got
192 to stop, it's, I mean, I mean, yeah you want to be, you want to show off your body. I mean, do it
193 in a bathing suit, don't have to put no g-string thongs on, and, and then your bra to, to, just to get
194 attention. That's why there be a lot of domestic violence, that's why there's a lot of rape, hum-
195 human trafficking because of that. And then on top of it, on top of everything, if you're child has
196 social media and you friends with them, their friends can see what you have on because your
197 media feed goes down their timeline. So, if their child, if they say, "Dang, that's your mom!"
198 You know, just imagine what, how your child feels. And then if you feel, if she, if you think it's
199 okay, you're child going to think it's okay -and they going to repeat what you do or may even do
200 it worse. And that's just, you know, like I said, I'm just giving out the real hard, stone-cold facts.
201 That's the realism, you know. And, and it's, and it's sad that you know, social media give people
202 platforms to have this alter ego. You know, you try to create something that can put you in
203 harm's way. And that might not even be you, but you just want that attention. And it's, you
204 know, it's, it's really sad. You know, it's, it's the, and how to stop all that? We just have to, as
205 people we have to address it as it is. We can't sugar coat stuff, we can't be doing stuff like that,
206 we just can't. Because this what going to happen, that's why Milwaukee is the way it is now. I
207 know a lot of Mil-people say because of violence out here, we're blaming, we're blaming the

208 white people, no, we need to start blaming ourselves for our own actions. You know, they might
209 put the guns in our, in our, in our communities, but they don't make us use those guns. You
210 know? We the ones who choose to pull the trigger cause the thing is, we react before we think,
211 that's what's wrong with us. Because you know, I'm saying, I, I'll be the first one to say it, that I
212 don't want to hear your, your sorrys and apologies in court while you about to get sentenced or
213 convicted because you should've thought about that before you pulled the trigger. That's why I
214 said that we react before we think.

215 D: What would you say to elected officials and how you think they can lower gun violence?

216 T: They might not like what I have to say, but I would have to say is you got to take a better
217 stand, a stronger stance against violence. Meaning that it's, being an elected official is more than
218 just passing policies and legislation. We, we're considered, especially here in Milwaukee,
219 Milwaukee is one of the worst when it comes to population-wise, one of the worst in the country
220 in a lot of different categories which causes the, the reason of violence. We have to take a better,
221 a stronger stance, we look for you as leadership, leaders in our community, as the elected
222 official. That means that sometimes a kind word or be getting in front of the cameras to say,
223 "Hey, I'm with the community. We need, we need to do something about these guns, or this
224 violence in our city." We embrace that. We need that. You know? We don't need people who
225 don't look like us trying to stand up for us, when we have people that are in, in, in roles of
226 leadership letting other people outside of our race speak for us where we could have, we have
227 many leaderships that can speak for us and, you know, and represent us. We need more
228 representation, more than just passing policies. We need leadership. Don't, it's, don't just like,
229 "Oh, we'll leave it up to the community activists." No, we need actual leaders that we can look
230 up to so we know who, who is, who our alderman person is, who are, are elected official is and

231 we are proud to say, “That that’s our elected official. They really care about us.” Until you open
232 up and speak out, we don’t know, we feel that you don’t care about us and we don’t, we don’t
233 really respect the title of that elected official because they, we never see them. Only on, only
234 times when it’s time for election. You have you, you have your ones that are actually out there
235 all the time and they have that respect and that, that love from the community. But you have
236 some of you, they only show up when it’s election time. And know they need to step up more
237 and be more of a leader. They need to come out of the comfort zone. If you, you know, if you’re
238 going to be a leader or elected official, you have to be able to come out of your comfort zone,
239 whatever it is. And be that leader for, for your district and for you, and for your people. So.

240 D: Is there anything that you’d like to add?

241 T: Like to add?

242 D: Mhmm.

243 T: Well, I would like to add that our community leaders and even elected officials, the only way
244 that we can start reducing the violence in our city and gun violence is that we got to leave our
245 egos at the door. And that’s just plain and simple. I’m willing to work with anybody and
246 everybody but long as they put their egos by the door. It’s too many I’s, not enough We’s. And,
247 you know, it’s, it’s already defeated when you, the movement is already defeated when you say,
248 “I did this. I did that.” There’s no more movement. It’s all about that person. And, and then you
249 giving false hope to the people that you serving. Because you trying to feed your ego, not
250 feeding them. And, and, and that’s why it’s important that, that’s the only way we going to
251 reduce the violence, if we all come together. Put our egos to the side. First, they have to
252 understand what an ego is and accept it, and then put it to the side. But if they, you know,
253 sometimes you, you get that, you get that roadblock, they feel that they don’t have no ego and

254 then they try to debate with every single thing that you try to discuss. So, until they identify what
255 ego really means, they will never put it to the side. So, they have to understand what ego means,
256 the definition of that. But you know, we have to start working together and then stop saying, “F
257 the police,” or “Fuck the police!” I’m tired of hearing that because when something goes down,
258 what happens? You’re calling the police, you want them to do their job. But yet, you studying
259 degrading them, and talking about them, saying they ain’t shit. Excuse my language, but we
260 going to keep it raw. Tell them that the police and shit, but when something go down, you need
261 the police. So, you need, we need to stop that. If we going to root out the, the, the bad police
262 officers, then let’s root out the bad ones. Not all of them, you can’t generalize them. Just like
263 how other cultures generalize all black people, we can’t go around and do the same thing to
264 others. You know? That’s reverse discrimination, like it or not. So, therefore, it’s that we as a
265 people need to start learning how to work with the police to solve some of these crimes cause
266 the, the old saying is, the street knows who did, what, you know, what happened. They know,
267 they know. The street knows. But they not going to speak up, “Oh, I’m not a snitch.” But
268 something happen to you or your family, you want somebody to speak up, so, you know, those
269 are the things that I hope that one day you know, that generation will understand that, you know.
270 But you know, it takes one, I say it like this, it takes one family at a time, one, one block at a
271 time, one neighborhood at a time to start reducing the violence in our city.

272 D: Thank you. (laughter) That was good.

273 T: So.

274 D: Could the situation that happened with, when the man was shot with the necklace, do you
275 think there’s a way that could’ve been avoided?

276 T: Well, give up the necklace. You know? Sometimes you, you just, sometimes you in that
277 situation, there's no, there's no, there's no way out. I mean, if the guy has a gun, you know, and,
278 and he's stern about it, just give it up. Don't try to run, don't try to fight him, just give him the,
279 and pray they don't kill you, you know? Those type of people, they are heartless. And those you
280 know, you, and like I said, the only way those type of criminals, you have to change their
281 mindset. You have to change people mind, to stop the violence in our city, we have to change the
282 mindset of people, who they, you know, if they don't want to go down this road. You know, we
283 got to make people think before they react. So, that's the only way. We have to change the
284 mentality of people, of people, if we want to start reducing the violence in our city because like I
285 said, we react before we think. So.

286 D: Okay, thank you! That was good.

287 T: I hope it helps.

288 D: (laughter) Well, it will.

289 PART TWO: 4:55

290 T: Well, I mean, even when there's a fraternity party, a college party and it was a group of guys
291 who wanted to come in and they wouldn't, they refused to let them come in, I don't know why,
292 but they refused them. And so, they got into a argument with the-with these guys. Cause you
293 know, when later on, when the party ended, everybody's hanging out in the, in the parking lot.

294 D: And what, what general area was this?

295 T: This was I, if I remember, this was in Bayshore.

296 D: Okay.

297 T: At one of these, I forgot the name of the place, but anyway, it was in Bayshore. All I
298 remember is that the car, there was a car on the, right like on the other side of the parking lot, I

309 mean right next to us you know. It's like, you got the, that drive thing and then, and that car's
300 right there and our car's over here. So, what they did, they popped the trunk, everybody pull out
301 guns and stuff and what they did first is shot up in the air. It shot up in the air, had people start
302 scattering, then they start shooting into the crowd. You know, the people that they're shooting at.
303 And then, what's kind of crazy is that, these are college students, black college students and they
304 pull out guns and start shooting back. So, everybody you know, we duck down and we just
305 watching them shoot, you know, it's like slow-motion as they were shooting.

306 D: So, it was white and black shootout?

307 T: No, it wasn't no white and black, it was black and black.

308 D: Oh, okay.

309 T: But it was just, you just, you know, it was just, watching it was like slow motion, how they
310 was doing it. And wind up hearing about one guy got shot in the butt and he drove himself to the
311 hospital. He got pulled over by the police for speeding. But there was one fatality. Somebody did
312 get killed, and that was a innocent person who was trying to break up the whole thing. So, he was
313 the one that really tried to break up and tried to stop the violence. And he was the one that wound
314 up getting killed, you know. Yeah, and, and I didn't get home 'til like, after four, after four in the
315 morning, but then when I woke, went to sleep, there you go. It's, it's, I had that nightmare again.
316 You know. So, I've seen people get shot, you know. It's one guy, he ran, I was in the bar. He ran
317 into the bar talking about he been shot, and he collapsed in front of us. The sad thing about it, he
318 survived, but the sad thing about it, he got robbed, and shot, and killed again. Cause he was
319 selling things out of his truck, his trunk, his car and somebody just, at a gas station, [...in Lincoln
320 Park] the gas station over there somebody went up on him, shot him, and killed him. He survived

321 the first shot, the, you know, the first incident, but the second incident, he, you know, he was
322 killed.

323 D: [...]

324 T: Yeah, he came in, he came into the bar saying he been shot, and he passed out. And he was a
325 good guy, he don't bother nobody, only thing he did was he selled, he selled items out of his car.
326 That's all he does. Hehe don't sell week, nothing like that. He sells items, clothing, shoes, stuff
327 like that out of his car. They robbed him. You know? So, I, like I said, it's, I seen so much, I
328 mean, like, fights always breaking out inside the club and stuff like that, but I was just that kind
329 of, I don't know, you might call it stupidity or whatever, but I would still go to those same bars
330 and stuff like that, because everybody know each other, everybody have fun. It's just that one
331 knucklehead that wants to ruin it for everybody, you know. But yeah, so it's just, I've seen, like I
332 said, I've seen many, many people get you know, and it's just, that's what you know, people
333 thought I was going to become a police officer because I seen so much and I'm numb to it, but
334 nah, it's just more, I took a different route. It's like, you know, I want to help the families but as
335 well, support the police officers.

336 D: Right.

337 T: You know? Because they put on, they put on uniforms, they put on their clothes just like us.

338 D: Right.

339 T: When they take it off, they one of us.

340 D: Right.

341 T: You know? They go home to they families every single night, just like we do. So, yeah, they
342 one of us. And we had, we need to recognize that. Like I said, I'm not with all that "F the
343 police!" You know, I'm, I'm with the, like, let's take, let's bring down the bad cops. Let's bring

344 them down, let's take them down. But when you start generalizing all of them, I have a problem

345 with that. I have a issue with that. Cause not all officers are bad.

346 D: Right.

347 T: You know? So, yeah. I'm sorry.

348 D: Thank you.