

- 1 Tiffany Belcher, GVP58
- 2 D: So, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
- 3 T: First, my name is Tiffany Belcher, a mother of four. Very simple person.
- 4 D: Okay.
- 5 T: Laid back, love to read, love education.
- 6 D: Okay. How old are you?
- 7 T: 41. No, sorry, sorry I don't know where I'd get 41 for. [laughs]
- 8 D: [laughs]
- 9 T: I was off by four years, actually I'll be 45 next month in March. March 11<sup>th</sup>.
- 10 D: I did—I had to actually write down my, think of birthday to remember how old I am. And
- 11 what race are you?
- 12 T: African American.
- 13 D: And your gender?
- 14 T: Female.
- 15 D: And what neighborhood in Milwaukee do you live in?
- 16 T: I'm in the Northwest.
- 17 D: Okay, and how long have you lived there?
- 18 T: Ooh, I've been in North, on the Northwest side ooh, maybe for over ten years?
- 19 D: Oh, okay.
- 20 T: So, yeah, the Northwest, Mill Road, Brown Deer, 91<sup>st</sup>, all of that is my area.
- 21 D: Okay [laughs]
- 22 T: Yeah that's my area. [laughs]
- 23 D: I—I know that you lost someone to gun violence, are you, can you share your story?

24 T: Yeah, October of 2014 I lost my oldest son. He was 22 years old when he was murdered. It  
25 was on a Thursday, and the thing about it was me and him we were just together, we were just  
26 together earlier that day. All I seen to walking down the street to a family member house so, I  
27 ended up being nosy, wanted to go over there and see what they were doing, and I sat over there  
28 with them. Me and him just talked, we just talk, I—I sat in one chair, he sat next to me and he  
29 was like, “Ma don’t worry about this,” “Ma don’t worry about that,” and, “Ma this,” and “Ma  
30 that.” And, and, so I got ready to get up and go, I left him there, and it was him and my second  
31 oldest son, and the thing about it when we walked outside walked out the house, I will never  
32 forget he was standing in the kitchen I was going toward the door and he turned to me and he  
33 said, “Ma you know you ain’t got to worry about me.” I was like, “Oh okay yeah,” I’m like,  
34 “Well you know I worry about you,” You know? [laughs] “I ain’t worried about you, you the last  
35 thing you’ll be alright, you’ll be alright.” So I walked out the door and ended up seeing him  
36 maybe 3 to 4 hours later, ‘bout 3 or 4, and I dropped him off on the corner of our house and I had  
37 asked him because he was a carry—he was a carry conceal, and I asked him I asked him did he  
38 put his, his gun up or whatever because he was out, we was out, and he said, “Oh yeah I” he  
39 looked, I said “Look up under the dresser,” cause he left it on top of the dresser, I said, “Boy I  
40 put it up on the dresser”, I said, “Make fine, put that thing up and lock it up [laughs] and he  
41 shouldn’t have that thing laying around all willy nilly.” “All right. Ma got you. I got you.” And  
42 so, and the thing about it, when he got out the car, it was a pause and we looked at each other and  
43 when he got out the car I watched him walk up the street and—which is not really abnormal  
44 because I always have a thing like when my kids leave, especially my son, I will always go to the  
45 window and watch them walk off, you know? And I be smiling and I was, I’m a proud Mom. I’m  
46 just the—I’m just the Mom [laughs] and so, I’m watching him walk on up the street or whatever

47 and I'm like, "Boy, that boy know he something else." You know? Because that's who we were,  
48 me and him. End up going on with my day, working, and then dropped some kids off to they  
49 parents and I get this call. I mean I can't believe I got that call. I got the call, I call it "the call." I  
50 got the "the call." "Where you at?" "Well wh—what's going on?" And they said,  
51 "Pooh was in a shootout." I said, "Pooh was in a shootout?" I was like oh my God, what is—  
52 who'd he get into it with, what—what was going on? First thing came to my mind was, "Who he  
53 got into it with?"

54 D: Right.

55 T: That he would do a shootout, had a shooting, and I wasn't in, maybe I did go into shock, but I  
56 had to keep myself leveled because I didn't know what I was going to run into, who I have to go  
57 to cause they told me, "Go meet him, he's on 91<sup>st</sup>"—Was that 91<sup>st</sup>? And Brown Deer?— "Go out  
58 there to 91<sup>st</sup> and Brown Deer." And I said, "Okay I'm on my way." So as I, as I was on my way  
59 there, the passenger who I was with he said to me, "Did Pooh got shot? Did Pooh—is Pooh?"  
60 because they called, the passenger I was with, they called his phone too at that same time they  
61 were calling me, because they were looking for me. So, but he, it was honestly my kids' father.  
62 So, they contacted him to try to see if you know where I was at. And so, we ended up going out  
63 there and I'm telling you when I drove out there, and I made that left, I looked and it was yellow  
64 tape. It was real, this is it. Oh my God, yellow lights change, at that moment I still had my life,  
65 traveling up to him. I still had my normalcy traveling up to him, because at that point I didn't  
66 know the outcome, but yet in the back of my mind they said that it's a possibility he couldn't  
67 have made it. But I still had that normalcy 'til I turned that corner that's when everything went to  
68 the left. Everything went to the left and it was—and it's crazy because my daughter got there  
69 first. Because I'm just going to tell that, because whoever he got out into it out there with, it—the

70 information must have got to someone else, they knew where I lived, and they came to my house  
71 to let my daughter know.

72 D: Wow.

73 T: That Pooh was shot. She jumped down the stairs, she tried to wake up my second oldest son  
74 and, and he, for some reason, she said he took too long getting up, she had to get there. October  
75 she was out there with no shoes on. And she said, “Mama when I seen the tape”, she said, “I tried  
76 to run inside the gas station where he was at.” And she wasn’t able to get to him. (pause)

77 D: So, this is around the gas station? And this is where?

78 T: 91<sup>st</sup> and what’s that? 91<sup>st</sup> and Brown Deer.

79 D: I didn’t bring any tissues.

80 T: 91<sup>st</sup> and Brown Deer.

81 D: I left my—

82 T: That’s oaky.

83 D: My last pack at the interview I did yesterday.

84 T: So, she said when she got there, when she—I’m okay—when she got there she wasn’t able to  
85 get in, in there. She said she almost got there but the police grabbed her, so she stood on one side  
86 of the scene, and I’m on the other side of the scene, and so when I got out the car, I walked up to  
87 them by then, they had got him out of the gas station and to the, the par—paramedic, the  
88 firetruck paramedic, they got them in there and the truck never moved. It never moved and it  
89 never moved so you know what it is, it didn’t move. You know? It did not move, so by that time  
90 everybody got on the scene I somehow, I be got—it was by the grace of God because everyone  
91 else was falling out. I couldn’t fall out. I couldn’t fall out because my son told me that there are  
92 people that he had got into it with. So, he forewarned me before it even happened to him. He

93 forewarned me before it happened. He said, “Mama,” he said, “You get into it with these people  
94 out here,” he said, “Even when you try to crush it and walk away,” he say, “They don’t forget.”  
95 And he told me if something should ever happen to him, for me to continue to live. He said,  
96 “Mama you got to live.” He said, “I’ll be okay, but you got to live.” And I was—cause me and  
97 him we play a lot and I was like, “No son, you know somebody need to hold my heart, I’ll fall all  
98 out and I won’t—Mama ain’t ‘going to make it.” He said, “Yes you will make it, Ma,” he said,  
99 “Because you a Christian Mom you raised us right you taught us how to do the right thing,  
100 Mama you going to make it.” But I still didn’t really want to accept what he was saying to me,  
101 because I just knew he would be okay.

102 D: It sounds like he had a premonition.

103 T: He are—yeah so he when he said, “Mama,” he said, “I got to,” he said, “I got my legal gun,”  
104 he said, “My gun is legal.” He said, “Mama here go the papers,” I got the papers to this day this  
105 his papers—he said, “Mom if ever something should happen to me, or if I got to go down here to  
106 these people.” He said, “You d-“ which is the police, he said, “You take them my papers and you  
107 let them know that my gun is registered and I’m a license to carry.” He said, “You let these”—  
108 he said, “If something else happened you let them know it’s a licensing carry.” He told me that  
109 when he took the class any time you shoot someone from the waist down its self-defense. They  
110 told me that he, he shot someone but he shot them from the waist down. When I went to the  
111 scene I couldn’t crack because I needed to hear him talk to me from that scene. I needed to hear  
112 him talk to me from that scene, I couldn’t crack at that moment, I cracked later, but not at that  
113 moment, because I needed to hear my son talk to me even from the grave, even from, from, from  
114 that bullet, I needed to hear Itavian’s voice, and when they came to me and told me that he shot  
115 someone and it was from the waist down? I knew right then it was self-defense, it was something

116 that he had already told me. and he I out, he ran I found out how he ran for almost a block,  
117 jumped on someone's porch, was beating on the door, which was supposed to be someone we  
118 knew, they wouldn't let him in. He had to jump down and run into the gas station and while there  
119 were other people shooting at it him, was he was one shooter by himself against two or three  
120 other, four other shooters.

121 D: Oh my gosh. And his friend wouldn't let him in?

122 T: Well—yeah, to say “friend,” would not let him in. And he was, and my son he was at that  
123 house prior to the shooting so you knew he was going to come back. The area my son was in was  
124 murdered in they were raised in that area. They were raised there, they went to school there, they  
125 went to, when it was called Grandville. They went to school there—so he wasn't in an unfamiliar  
126 place.

127 D: So, this is the Northwest side around what street?

128 T: That, that, that, 90 I can't—yeah that's 91<sup>st</sup>, that long strip that 91<sup>st</sup>, between 91<sup>st</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup>, 96<sup>th</sup>  
129 The Mead—am I saying it right? The Meadows over there in that area.

130 D: Okay.

131 T: And we didn't live in there we lived on the outskirts of The Meadows at the time, but they  
132 were, he were, they were raised there. That was our home. So, it wasn't like he was somewhere  
133 unfamiliar. He was in familiar territory that day.

134 D: Who would have thought?

135 T: who would have ever thought.

136 D: That your baby be killed in his own neighborhood.

137 T: Yep.

138 D: His own neighborhood.

139 T: Yep.

140 D: Do you think this could have been prevented?

141 T: [pause] That's a tough one. Maybe yes and no? Maybe I say yes with the people that played  
142 their part. Even from the people that that shot at him and even from my son for maybe if they  
143 would have thought something through, or maybe if they would have just squashed it and went  
144 their ways. I don't know the total story of it, so I can't say, and I also cannot at the same times  
145 say no because, sometimes whatever is meant is meant to happen.

146 D: Did they catch your—the guy who shot—

147 T: I was told that the guy was the person or whoever was caught and brought—no! Excuse me,  
148 back up, brought in for questioning. But they saying that my son was attempting to rob. Was  
149 attempting to rob them, and he shot the girl and I guess proceeded to rob this other guy within.  
150 My son had just left my house at 9:45, about 9:45 and all this transpired and I get a call on my  
151 phone my daughter said about ten so within a 15- 20 minute span from leaving my house, from  
152 where my house was at on, on, what I off let's say off of Mill Road, 91<sup>st</sup> and Mill Road to him  
153 getting all the way down there to 96<sup>th</sup> and was able to rob and do all of that, that was in a 15-20  
154 minute time span. 15—yeah, 15 to 20-minute time span.

155 D: Why would someone who has a legal gun rob someone when they know it can be traced?

156 T: When it's legal? And he had in his wallet cause I got his wallet that was on him that day, I  
157 have brought it, he had—well it ain't here, he had in there he had his ID, his state ID, his school  
158 ID, MATC school ID, he had his social security card, and he had a piece of paper wrapped  
159 folded up nice and neat in there, with the instructions if he ever have to use his gun what he had  
160 to do after he used his gun. That was in his wallet. And his own money, now if he was robbing

161 why would the detective or police give me---what did he what why would the detectives release  
162 his wallet and the money that was in his wallet? [pause]

163 D: How has the loss of your son effected your family, his siblings?

164 T: It has affected them a, a great deal. Two of my children, they don't talk about it too much at  
165 all, they, they won't talk about him too much, even when one particular one won't talk about  
166 him, even if we talk about him. They won't talk about him. Now the other sibling, sibling  
167 number two he'll talk about him if he's talking—if we're mentioning something about him or,  
168 and they have to be direct, we have to directly say it too him, then he he'll say something. Then I  
169 have one every time I see him he, he's—it's about Pooh. Talk about him all the time. Me and  
170 him talk about him all the time.

171 D: Do you after the loss of your son, did you—did it change you in a sense of maybe worrying  
172 about your kids, the other kids?

173 T: I did at first. At first, I did yeah, because you have one that is a little bit probably a little bit  
174 more angry than the other. So, yeah, I did it was more like their safety and, and—because the  
175 person is still out there, the people still out there, it's all in the same age group, and you know?  
176 So, you kind of worry about that, but then I had to, I had to release that worry, because it was, it  
177 was too much for me to worry and, and live in fear, basically live in fear, for your other children.  
178 You know?

179 D: After the death of your son, as I'm interviewing you I'm in your office, tell us did this come  
180 to be after the death of your son? Was this created after his loss or? Tell us about We Win  
181 Kingdom Coaching, LLC.

182 T: We Win Kingdom Coaching was actually developed after my son had transitioned, and he  
183 actually named We Win, I just came up with the Kingdom Coaching because one day I was

184 washing the dishes—Oh, and the motto is, “In the end we win”. So, I was washing dishes and  
185 you know, he was like 6’4, 6’4 he was a tall boy size 13 shoe, oh my God he was just tall,  
186 slender guy. Here he is, here’s a picture of him, let you see it. Slender guy, cool, and he was like,  
187 and he know how to get me he said, “Mom,” like, “What boy?” he said—he said, “Mama I, I  
188 know why we bump heads sometimes,” and I’m like, “What are you talking about, what is he  
189 talking about?” He said, “We just alike.” I said, “You think so?” He said, “Mama I’m just a male  
190 version of you.” [laughs]

191 D: [laughs]

192 T: So, he, he got me good. He said—I said, “Yeah son,” this how I’d talk to my— “Yes sir you  
193 think so?” He said, “Mama yeah.” He said, “We don’t turn down a fight.” I said, “No we don’t  
194 do we son?” and he said—but he wasn’t talking about a natural fight, he was talking about a  
195 spiritual fight just a fight in life to win. He said, “Mama,” he said, “You know we go down, we  
196 ain’t going to stop.” He said, “But Mama you know what though?” I said, “What son?” He said,  
197 “In the end, we win.” I said, “Yeah we do, don’t you”—and so he turned his back and I went in  
198 and pulled out a couple of dollars for him, [laughs] and I told him he didn’t have to rob anybody,  
199 he didn’t have to rob.

200 D: And he didn’t have a history of—

201 T: He didn’t have a history of rob—he was like I—Itavian was—if you punch is name in, he’s  
202 known for basketball. He was a basketball player. He played for Hamilton high school he played  
203 for different AAU teams, he travelled, he travelled more than I did—

204 D: Wow.

205 T: He would call me—he would drive to Vegas to play ball and he was like, “Yeah mama I’m  
206 down here on the strip”, and I’m like, “What’s the strip?” you know? I don’t know nothing, like,  
207 “What’s the strip boy?” I said, “I’ll be, I don’t know what that is.” He said, “Ma cool it, cool it.”

208 D: [laughs]

209 T: He said, “I’m just playing with you Mama, I’m just playing with you.” [laughs]

210 D: [laughs]

211 T: So you know he flew he travelled, he was just his uh star, and the newspaper add, want to add  
212 that he was like a prospect for an NBA player so, they nicked named him out there was  
213 “Prospect,” which they tried to turn that into something different, but hey called him “Prospect”  
214 out there, and I was like, “Okay.” So, like the story I gave, I gave up, piled up a little money for  
215 him cause he had got me that day, he got me, and so he left. He went out the back door, and I  
216 saw, like I told you, when he got around I ran to the front window, and I looked and I’m just  
217 smiling I’m just watching him, grinning ear to ear like, “Yeah you got Mom today.” [laughs]

218 D: [laughs]

219 T: And I’m looking, I’m smiling, I’m like, “He got me today,” but then I stopped. I said, “We are  
220 alike.” We, we’re fighters in that, and not a natural fighter, but just life, and we, we just fighters.  
221 So, now I went thought my, cause after the you know, the services and all that I tried to hold up  
222 for a good year, but by that time I was like, “Okay I got to have my breakdown,” and I packed  
223 up, threw everything out my home, got rid of everything, traveled to Texas for 4 months and  
224 went out there and I had my, my own personal nervous breakdown. On, on, on, on a family  
225 member’s couch I laid on that lady’s couch, that girl’s couch for 4 months.

226 D: Wow.

227 T: I didn't know what, what I, you know, I ain't going to say I didn't know what was coming or  
228 going, but I had to get that off me. I had to get that off me, but at the same time that was  
229 rebuilding me. It was a it was bittersweet because he was out—it, that was coming off, but yet he  
230 was restoring me at the same time was—linking me up with people that were just speaking to my  
231 life whether it was face to face, or whether it was from somebody that I'm looking at on the, on  
232 the, on the internet. He started pouring into me and one day I got up, and I didn't want to, but he  
233 told me to come back here. So, I came back here got my place, started my little in-home business  
234 and this was when We Win Kingdom Coaching came in place, because I ask, I said, "I know  
235 there's purpose. I [inaudible] I know there's purpose in this. This don't happen to Tiffany."  
236 That's what I just mean.

237 D: [laughs]

238 T: All mothers might say that. I said, "This don't happen to Tiffany, not Tiffany that's served  
239 you, loved you, raised them kids the best of her ability, brought them up in the church, this don't  
240 happen to her." So, for this to happen to her? There got to be purpose in this. I refuse to believe  
241 that He was going to leave me in a situation like that. So then, my relationship with Him got  
242 closer because now I went from calling myself a child of God to I'm your daughter, and now it's  
243 personal. I'm your daughter, you can't leave me like this, and I told Him that every day and  
244 every day I got stronger, and stronger, and stronger, and so I was laying in the bed, and I asked  
245 God I said, "What you want me to call this thing?"—and I kept hearing "Pooh." Pooh has, his  
246 voice, has started ministering to me, "Mama in the end we win, in the end we win," and I'm like  
247 "Yep, okay I got to get up," because in the end, in the end of this we're going to win in this. And  
248 so, We Win Kingdom Coaching came and that's where we are actually coach women, mothers,  
249 you know I'll coach anybody, but specifically mothers that experience that traumatic loss.

250 Because you have to co—you can support, when I’m support—from holding this what am I  
251 doing, I’m supporting this, but if I’m coaching this, I’m going to move that. I’m going to take  
252 them out of that grief where they’re stuck at, and give them the tool that they need so they can  
253 go, cause support, if I supporting you I’m just going to hold you like this, and you can stay like  
254 this 5, 10, 15, 25, 30 years. What benefits you is this if I’m just going to support you and I’m not  
255 going to push you into your destiny, because even though you lost a child, a sister, or a brother, a  
256 mother, a father, you still have life in you, and you have to see that and you need somebody that  
257 said, “Okay I been there.” Because I went to the support group I been there and I’m looking at  
258 someone across from me that says she was there for fifteen years, and that’s when I said I can’t  
259 do that, I’m, I’m not—you not keeping me this in this right here for no fifteen years. So, you  
260 have to show me, teach me, train me, help me, through this so then I can go back and get them  
261 other ones and say this is how it’s—you can do this.

262 D: What do you say to the those who, I’m glad you mentioned that, as a sidebar but, there are  
263 those who have been in groups for 15-20 years and they say it’s a support structure?

264 T: It can—they can use the support they-- if you need– I’m not saying not get the support, not the  
265 get the support, because I had to have some support. I had informal support. I didn’t have that  
266 structured support where you going ABCDEFG. But at some point, even in your support, you  
267 have to say to yourself, “I want to live.” Other than that, you just, you just stuck there, and then  
268 now you just needing just support, you just thriving off support, you just eating up support. So, at  
269 some point, you got to say I need to go from support to movement, and coaching will do,  
270 coaching do—we give you the strategy and the plays to move; the strategy and the plays to win.  
271 I’m not saying support is not good.

272 D: I know what you’re saying.

273 T: I'm not saying that but I, I always have to stress that with other support people because I'm  
274 coming in as a coach, "No you can't put me in the support."

275 D: Right.

276 T: I support them if they call me late at night, because I had one call me late at night, but I got  
277 through supporting, the coach. I'm a coach, my son played basketball.

278 D: Right.

279 T: So, I'm a coach naturally. It's a homegrown service I thought I was his greatest coach. I was  
280 his greatest coach. He had a lot of good coaches, but I was his greatest coach. So, I have—I'm a  
281 coach, I'm a natural coach, so I'm going to push you, I'm going to tell you to feel that yes, you  
282 need to feel that pain, you need to feel that hurt, because on the other side of that is joy. But if  
283 nobody is telling you there's joy on the other side, and keeps saying, okay, okay letting you  
284 rehearse this over, and over, and over again, you stay what? In the pit, and you got to come out  
285 the pit to be successful, because you owe it to yourself, you owe it to your other children if you  
286 have other children, you owe it to society, I—the community. You owe it to most of all, you owe  
287 it to yourself, and I'm a firm believer that a lotta children that, that, that, that's going on if they  
288 could come back, they'd probably tell me, "Go get my Mama," and that's what I hear, "Go get  
289 my Mama. Go get my Mama." I believe in my son who telling him, "My Mama got them. My  
290 Mama got your Mama. She going to get to her." [laughs]

291 D: [laughs]

292 T: "Cool it! We got that. Mama got this." Cause he always tried to say, "Mama got this," now he  
293 said, "Mama got this." And I know the same thing my son spoke to me, is what them other  
294 children want to speak to their mom, "Mama live, you can live."

295 D: "I'm going to be alright."

296 T: “You going—I’m going to be okay, you live.”

297 D: You right about that. Do you forgive the shooter or shooters?

298 T: I forgive them. I did that before I was even going through the emotions, because I knew I was  
299 going to go through the emotions of anger, hurt, mad and so I prayed for the young man that shot  
300 my son. I prayed for him and I asked God to forgive him for what he did to my son. And I said,  
301 “God, the same opportunity that you gave my son,” because that bullet could—my son was shot  
302 in the back and it came through his lungs and out the chest, and he was able to run a block, a  
303 block and a half from the time of the shooting, to jump the building—jump on the porch, jump  
304 off the porch, and run inside of the gas station. “You allowed him to and then he did not die  
305 instantly,” because he laid on the floor, cause it’s on video, you can see him moving. All around,  
306 holding his leg up, holding his head up, you say all of that. He didn’t actually transition until he  
307 got into the paramedic. “You allowed him and that opportunity to talk with You, so if You  
308 allowing him the opportunity to talk with You,” because like I said, we’re a Christian family, “I  
309 would want You to give that young man a second chance.” Because I don’t know what happened  
310 that night. They could have gotten into an argument and they just got heated, maybe he didn’t  
311 mean to, maybe he just wanted to shoot to get him away, I don’t know what all happened, what  
312 all transpired—but I might not never know what all happened, and it’s okay if I never know what  
313 all happened. I’m okay with that. I had to come to terms of coming okay with that, because other  
314 that, that I would have been hounding the detectives, hounding the police, running down there,  
315 making myself sick, making myself—no, that wasn’t my purpose. My purpose is for what I’m  
316 doing right here, sitting in this office right here. He chose my son to go through that and when  
317 He chose my son to go through that, He chose me to do this. He chose me to do this.

318 D: That’s beautiful.

319 T: Yeah, so it wasn't wasted. He wasn't wasted. If God knew that I wouldn't be able to handle  
320 this and go through this, He wouldn't have allow it to happen. I tell her, I tell somebody I was  
321 talking to I told them like I said, again, I'm a Christian so I'm going off of what the Word said,  
322 God could have stopped that bullet. He d—they guns could have jammed up, He could have  
323 made that bullet hit the tree, the car, He could have let that bullet go anywhere He wanted to go,  
324 because He's God, but He didn't do that. He didn't. He allowed this particular young man that  
325 was related to me to, to endure that and for me to endure that. So, I have to give back. I have to  
326 give back. I have to give, I have to give that back.

327 D: What you would say to a mother or a—who has recently lost a child to gun violence?

328 T: I would tell her there's a life, there's a life for her. It, I know that it's hard, I know it's hurtful,  
329 painful, embarrassing, shocking, shame come with that, humiliation come with it. Oh, the biggie  
330 one, the big one here, "What did I do wrong as a mom? I failed my child." I went through all of  
331 those emotions. "What did I do wrong? Did I miss something? Did I didn't see something?" I  
332 would tell them that it's not their fault. It's not your fault, because you didn't pull the trigger,  
333 you didn't pull the trigger at all. So. it's not your fault, and she have the right to heal, healing is  
334 her portion. Healing is yours. Healing, God gave you healing. Healing is yours.

335 D: What would you say to elected officials in reference to gun violence?

336 T: I would tell them that they need, they need to look at that a little bit more. When I mean look  
337 at it a little more, let's come up with some ideas and some things to, to change this stigma this  
338 epidemic or whatever you want to call it. Change, there's some type if change that has to take  
339 place. Am I saying you're going to save everybody? No. But something can be done. We can  
340 change 2, 3, 4, 5 lives. Not only can you change 2, 3, 4, 5 lives you change 2,3,4,5 generations,  
341 and that generation can change another generation. So, we have to do something, education—I'm

342 a biggie on education, I'm a biggie on training, I'm a biggie on community development. Do  
343 more than just sit, "Oh my God help us." Sit on tv at election time and tell us these empty  
344 promises, and not looking at the gun violence, because who going to who, who, who is being  
345 targeted? African Americans? Come on now, if they ain't in jail they in the grave. So, what can  
346 you do? We can't put it just off on parents, we like to put everything off for the mother, or the  
347 father, want to put everything up for the parents. What can we do as a community, as a whole to  
348 make a difference in the lives of these people? What can we do? We tired of empty promises.  
349 And another thing, doing something with the law, we're tired of mothers out here every day out  
350 there, we're tired of hearing our children pretty much deserve what they got. Why? Because you  
351 saying they out here in the streets, they robbing—no one deserves to be killed. No one. And we  
352 need to start looking at it less as statistics and let's look at them look at these as, as, as human  
353 beings, because that's what they are they are humans, not toe tags. I did not allow them to treat  
354 my son when he passed away as a toe tag.

355 D: What do you mean?

356 T: Just another number.

357 D: No, I get that, but I mean how did you, what did you do to make sure they just treat him as  
358 a—

359 T: A, "Give me a name", I, I talk to me like he's a human being, even the detectives. I couldn't  
360 care what you had, he's a human, because you got the others said they in this, they been in this  
361 field doing this for a long time, they just look, they just, they just—a they just the average  
362 number, average and they go to the medical examiner you just an average toe tag but no, that's  
363 somebody's son, that's somebody's daughter, that's somebody's mother, that's somebody's  
364 sister, brother, daddy, that's a human being, and I think they lost that. They lost that sensitivity,

365 that's what I'm looking for. They lost the sensitivity, because I've been talked to pretty rough at  
366 the det—with the detectives.

367 D: Oh my gosh.

368 T: yeah, I've been talked to kind of rough, and I had to remind them at the end of the day, that  
369 was my son.

370 D: Did they respond to you when you said that?

371 T: Yeah if they didn't, they heard.

372 D: I—[laughs]

373 T: If they didn't, they heard. [laughs] If they didn't they heard, cause I you I would go down  
374 there and knock, I knocked on the door they'd ask me, "How did I get up there?" "I don't know  
375 but I'm up here."

376 D: [laughs]

377 T: Let's talk. [laughs] Let me tell you something, I went I went and talked to the D. A. I went to  
378 talk to persecutors, I talk to everybody. I remember one time I was sitting right there I for, for the  
379 person that was I think it was the D.A.? I think it was the D.A., it had to be the D.A., for, he even  
380 got in early in the morning, I was sitting there with my Mama and my, and my daughter sitting  
381 right there, "Excuse me, is you so and so?" so he said, "Yeah." I said, "Okay, I want to talk to  
382 you about my son."

383 D: talk about you

384 T: That man looked at me, "How'd you get up-?" "I don't know how I got up here, all I know  
385 I'm here."

386 D: God opened the door for you!

387 T: Yeah, and he said oh, first he said to me, “Well, we don’t have anything and we can’t talk  
388 about the case woo woo woo—” I said, “Okay.” I walked out I said, “I don’t care. Okay, okay  
389 you saw my face.” Walked out got in the elevator and he came, “Ms. Belcher.” I said, “Yeah?”  
390 “I will tell you this,” I said, “What?” “His case came back through again.” I said, “Oh okay.”  
391 “We’re not going to close it out because if we close it out, if we take the individual to trial and  
392 they get off on self-defense we can never ever try him again. We want to wait ‘til that piece of  
393 puzzle come.” Another detective tell me this too, “Wait for that piece of puzzle to come to get  
394 him for homicide,” because this was on my son’s death certificate. “Homicide.” Yep, I saw  
395 came, wasn’t fair. Fair you know? I believe that was the last time I went down there, that was the  
396 last time, then I just focused on this part of everything.

397 D: I think you are the first person who I met who they do not have, you know, the shooter or the  
398 murderer who said that you focusing on the healing part—

399 T: Yeah.

400 D: And not going down there to find—

401 T: That wouldn’t do me any good.

402 D: And, and, and say you want justice for your son.

403 T: Yeah, you know I think about it from time to time. I’m, I’m a mother, I’m still a Mom, so I  
404 help people. I’m still a—I think about it.

405 D: Of course, you do.

406 T: You know like, “Man I wonder what’s going on?” and I said, “Well I’m going to call down  
407 there, but I don’t feel a release to call, I won’t call.” I don’t put myself, I don’t deliberately put  
408 myself, intentionally put myself back in that box, because I got birthdays I got to go through, I  
409 got holidays I got to go through, I got, I got death dates I got to go through. Let me save that for

410 that. You know? So, you got to pick and choose your battles you know? What's really what's—  
411 come on now, what's really really—because what if they never—what if they never ever bring  
412 the justice, what do you do? Stay stuck in your heart? Stay stuck? And continue to let your heart  
413 bleed out and I believe a lot of moms do that because they feel guilty for healing. No, no! You  
414 not forgetting your son or your daughter because you heal. I healed because of my son. It was  
415 because of him I healed—I'm healed. I—because if it was the shoe was on the other foot, I  
416 would want him to heal, I don't want him to grieve me for the rest of his life and not have a un—  
417 a live an unproductive life.

418 D: Right.

419 T: So, I had to give him what I would want for him.

420 D: That's another topic of guilty for you

421 T: Yep, yep, so, it's been working but I have my, I have my days too.

422 D: Of course.

423 T: Yep, I miss him, I miss his voice, I miss his humor, I'm, you know, I think about, "Oh okay  
424 well it's been five years, wait a minute 27- I wonder he would have been?"

425 D: You said 2014 right?

426 T: 2014 yeah.

427 D: Really? Okay.

428 T: I said, "You know I, how would, I wonder how he would have been looking now?" I, he  
429 probably would have been able to have all the hair on the face, you know, what time of job he  
430 would have been doing now, you know, what if he would have children, or all of this, all of this,  
431 you know, stuff or missing the fact that we ain't getting his first gray hair. He would have called  
432 me cause it's what he do, "Ma I got—getting gray hair," I be like, "Come here and let me see, I

433 got gray too.” You know, missing all of that, or his being there when I get old, and he always say  
434 he was going to take care of me and the other kids would have been fighting over me, and I’m  
435 like, “No, I’m going with Pooh.” [laughs]

436 D: [laughs]

437 T: And he got to remind them that he’s the oldest, so go sit down, that’s him, you know so I miss  
438 all of that, but the thing about it is I know I’m giving purpose, and through him there’s legacy.  
439 Me doing this is legacy.

440 D: Oh my God I just—

441 T: It’s legacy.

442 D: I just realized what you said, you said he’s the oldest, that’s your first born.

443 T: He was my first, a teenage mom.

444 D: They’re your, bury your first born.

445 T: Yeah, that was my first, he was my firstborn child and, and we were just, we were just I mean  
446 he’s carrying my middle and last name and, so he was just my, he was just my, ugh, you know?  
447 So, but he left me enough memories and enough to keep it going. Yep, he did that for me.

448 D: Wow.

449 T: Yeah.

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

451 T: Uh, no, no.

452 D: Thank you. You know, I, I read your—when you say about your book, oh! Did your book, did  
453 you write your book after the loss of your son?

454 T: I th—yeah actually in, it was a collaboration of four other women so I just got the chance to  
455 tell my story in there, but that came after him. And then it’s a, it’s actually just stories going to

456 another book, “The Power of”—what’s it called? “The Power of My Testimony”? “The Power of  
457 My Testimony” or something like that, but it’s supposed to be coming out this year.

458 D: Wow.

459 T: So, yeah so, I actually lends my story with other collaborators, so the story can get out that a  
460 way until one day I write my own. Yeah, yeah.

461 D: Wow. So, what is the name of the first book?

462 T: “Built from Broken Pieces,” actually—“Built from Broken Pieces,” let me give you one.

463 D: I want mine signed, but ain’t crazy. [laughs]

464 T: [laughs]

465 D: [coughs] And then the, and then the story will come out again on what other publishers for the  
466 book?

467 T: “The Power of Her Testimony,” that’s the title of the book, “The Power of Her Testimony.”

468 D: I saw that on your podcast I think.

469 T: Yeah, per testimony, so that’ll be out sometime this year. I just, I actually I did a, ooh excuse  
470 me, a podcast interview and she talked around and invited me to write in her book. Yeah, so I  
471 did that so, I’m getting it out this a way you know, through the book because this is something  
472 that’ll always be around, you know so.

473 D: That’s beautiful [long pause] I’m going to take pictures of your office, this back part of it.

474 T: Okay.

475 [long pause]

476 D: Thank you!

477 T: You’re welcome.

478 D: Alright I’m going to cut it off.

479 T: Okay.

480 D: Tiffany wow, your son should be proud.

481 [recorder turned off and turned on again]

482 D: [laughs] We'll add it in there.

483 T: [laughs] Okay, okay.

484 D: Now, what did they do? [laughs]

485 T: On the news, they actually, the gas station people released the, their cameras or whatever, the

486 video, and on the news they actually had my son stumbling inside the gas station. We watched

487 him lay down, prop his legs up, hold his head, put his hands behind his head, you see two women

488 running there to—one held him in her arms.

489 D: Oh

490 T: And the other lady went to get paper towels or whatever to try to put pressure on his, on his

491 chest.

492 D: Wow.

493 T: Yeah and you could see him just looking up, he was looking straight up and you could see

494 him moving his head like that. And then one part of the video, you don't see that one too much,

495 when the ambulance or whatever came in and he raised his arm up, they raised his arm up, he

496 raised his arm up then he put it back down. Yep.

497 D: Did you hear, did you get to meet the lady who was holding him?

498 T: No.

499 D: Aw.

500 T: Didn't get to meet them it was two of them, didn't get to meet them, nope.

501 D: Oh wow. He died in someone's arms.

502 T: Someone yep, yep.

503 D: Well, well he didn't die there.

504 T: There in the—yeah but somebody was there to comfort them, and that's' why it's very  
505 important that you, you treat people right, you treat people right and you know, I worked in  
506 group homes with young men, and I always treated them fair. I treated them young men nice, I  
507 didn't treat them like criminals, I treat them like human beings. And I could not—not knowing  
508 that I was going to have that day, that day I always said, “God you know, I won't, I'm treating  
509 them this way because it's the right thing to do but I have sons, and another daughter what if I  
510 don't want nobody treating my son that a way,” you know? So, I believe God remembered that  
511 prayer and when I see young men out there asking for money and stuff at gas stations and stuff,  
512 and one young man, I remember I really blessed him and he ran up to me he said, “Ma'am,” you  
513 know, “Yeah” I said, “I have sons,” before my son was murdered I said, “I have sons.”

514 D: Right.

515 T: Or daughters, so my son he could be in that situation where he need money, he panhandling or  
516 whatever you want to call it, however that young man looked like he needed some change okay?  
517 He needed something to eat and I blessed that young man I believe God remembered that and he  
518 sent them two angels in there to comfort my son. I believe that, I know that he did. Yeah and you  
519 know when even when I did identify him, they came to me and they asked me well, “Ms.  
520 Belcher” you know, then they go to the student, “You know that sirens say you know your son  
521 you know he passed away we need you to identify him,” I said, “Well,” I said, “No I'm not  
522 identifying him.” They looked and I said, “I'm not identifying him.” Called stepdad over, I said,  
523 “Come here,” and he came. [laughs] That's the good part, he came, I said, “Look they need  
524 somebody to identify Pooh,” and I said, “I ain't identifying him because I might have to declare

525 that he's dead." And my baby will tell us to, "be absent from the bodies, be present with the  
526 Lord," so therefore I can't, I'm not seeing it. Them people looking at me like, "She's just losing  
527 it." No, I ain't losing it, I ain't lose it. So he went over there, he went over there they showed him  
528 a picture I never forget, he came he said, "Tiff!" They call me Tiff, he said, "Tiff, Tiff." I said,  
529 "Yeah." He said, "It's Pooh with the little nappy 'fro cut on the side." He said, "You see the little  
530 tooth in the mouth, tuning them up." He said, "It look like he's sleep!" He did. [laughs]

531 D: Aw [laughs]

532 T: I said, "What?" He said, "He don't look," he said, "Listen to me, I seen stuff like this before."  
533 He said, "It looks like he's just sleep." And I said, "He is sleep," and I said, "Come on, let's go."  
534 I didn't even wait for the medical examiner to take him away.

535 D: [laughs]

536 T: I didn't stand for all of that I got it that car I said, "Come on, let's go." When I got in the car I  
537 heard him say in my ear, my son, "Ma I'm alright." I just heard it cause he always tell me I got a  
538 big thing, "Mom I'm good." He used to call me like, "Mom I just want you to know I'm good."

539 D: [laughs]

540 T: You know what I'm saying? [laughs] I heard that and I got so much peace, even though I went  
541 through the process, but I had the peace of it and I got to—and when I, but I did go see him at the  
542 funeral, they let you see him or whatever and everybody was falling all out like, "Get up off me,  
543 get up, move, I got this, I got some things, I have to see, you know get up off me." So, I walked  
544 in, oh God, they did his hair as if they had the picture. God took care of him as they had the  
545 picture, everything laying there and he they had them wrapped in all white I'll never forget.

546 D: Oh wow.

547 T: And his nice [inaudible] on his face. All white.

548 D: Did you pick all this out?

549 T: No, the, this was the when they, they, when he was at the funeral home now.

550 D: Okay.

551 T: The had them wrapped in all white linen.

552 D: Oh wow!

553 T: And just nobody but his face. I touched his hand, and said, “Yeah that’s my Pooh.” I looked at  
554 the people I smiled. I said, “You did good.” He smiled and said, “Thank you, thank you.” He got,  
555 he said, “We just got oils on his face to preserve his face.” He said, “Now don’t touch it.” He  
556 said, “Those oils on his face.” It was really thick on his face to preserve him, but you know  
557 what? This eye, I loved—now I don’t tell this story often, this eye was still kind of up open like  
558 it was open, and when I looked it was like a light. It was like, kid you not I don’t tell this story  
559 often, it was like a light, a light there. I said, “God,” I said, “Okay God,” I said, “I got it.” I said,  
560 “I’m okay, I’m okay.” Before he left the house, he told my daughter, he said, “Tell Mama I see  
561 her Saturday,” and guess what day it was when I had to go see him at the funeral home? It was a  
562 Saturday. I said, “Okay, I got it.” So, I told the kids the funeral arrangements, my son’s was big  
563 on suits, because they was raised in the church, so suits. So, I said, “What y’all want Pooh in?”  
564 They was like, “Mama suit, suit” and I asked that one the girl on the end, I said, “Basketball  
565 colors.” So, his colors was dark green, lime green, and a beige, like beige. And he used to like  
566 little ugly earrings, so I made sure he had his little ugly earrings in. (laughs)

567 D: (laughs)

568 T: He loved those ugly, I said, “Pooh why you got them now?” I in his ears and tease him I said  
569 “They gone cut you! They gone cut you real good.” I had to put his earrings in but it was—and  
570 he was just there. It wasn’t, it wasn’t, and they said they didn’t put they didn’t have to put a lot of

571 makeup on him, they just dabbed a little bit on him. They said cause something he was just like  
572 preserved. They never, I get it they s—they never seen somebody die, die tragic to have a look of  
573 like that on that one them.

574 D: It's cause I believe your son had a premonition.

575 T: Yeah.

576 D: Cause he kept, based on what you're saying. Wow. Are you going to say something else or  
577 I'll cut this. (laughs)

578 T: Nah you can, I ain't going to say nothing else (laughs).

579 D: [...]

580 [recorder turned off and on again]

581 D: Let me get that. You said that he said that he was teasing you?

582 T: He was teasing me, he was—he always teased me and got me or whatever. Me and him were  
583 the two jokers of the family, and he said, “Yeah Ma,” he said, “You know Pooh know a lot of  
584 people.” I said, “Boy go somewhere,” I said, “You don't know nobody, go somewhere and sit  
585 down,” I said, “You know what tell me what you know, what you did, go somewhere and sit  
586 down, boy you in my face talking about something, saying something.” He was like, “Okay Ma  
587 watch I'm going to show ya okay?” “You know look up everybody know Pooh.” I said. (laughs)

588 D: (laughs)

589 T: I walked into the whole going service, I walked up I walked up I said, “Oh God!”

590 D: (laughs)

591 T: I said, so I'm sitting down at the front, I looked over to him I said, “Pooh you did say you  
592 knew a lot of people.” I said, you know, I said, “I can't wait 'til I get up there to see ya.” I said,  
593 “Pooh you knew a lot of people.” He had, this boy had coaches there, he had teachers there, he

594 had Caucasian people there, he had African American people there, he had every—It was a lot. I  
595 ran out of obituaries. I had a lot—after he left I'm in Menards, and one lady came up to me she  
596 said, "I wanted to hug you." I said, "Yes uh—" you know, cause you know, after that you kind of  
597 leery of people, you know like, "Okay who is you?"

598 D: (laughs)

599 T: I'm like, "Okay—". He said, "Your son"—she scared me, I tell you I'm still kind of hesitant,  
600 I'm like, "Okay who is you?" (laughs) She said, "I was at the services," and it so I go, "Service?"  
601 She said, "I just want to hug you." Like okay, you know? And one day, year ago, then I'm done,  
602 but a year ago, I'm pumping gas over on Silver Spring, pumping gas. Young man was like, "Ms.  
603 Belcher!" I'm like—so I went and opened up my car door. (laughs)

604 D: (laughs)

605 T: I opened up my car door! I said, "Okay I fixing to pump this gas, but one false move, I'm  
606 jumping in the car," right? He said, "Ms. Belcher!" He said, he said, "You don't remember me?"  
607 I'm like, "No, no," I said, "I don't remember you." (inaudible) "I don't remember you." He said,  
608 and he named my children's nicknames, they're home nicknames.

609 D: He knew you well.

610 T: I said, "Yeah, you know me," I said, "What's going on?" He said, "I just want to send my  
611 condolences to you." I said, "Really?" He said, "I heard about", they call him Tay too, "I heard  
612 about Tay." I said, "Yeah." He said— he paused and my right hand to God he said, "Don't listen  
613 to what they said about him." He said, "That did not happen that night." I said, "What you  
614 mean?" He said, "I wasn't with him." He said, "But I was out there." He said, "It's all I'm going  
615 to say." He said, "It didn't go down like that."

616 D: I wonder did he tell the police?

617 T: You know they don't want to talk. And he hurried up and just went off. He said, "It didn't go  
618 down like that." Yep.

619 D: That was—

620 T: That was for me.

621 D: That I said—ill just if I tell you that was from God .(laughs)

622 T: Yeah that was for me. And that's the last time I've really—every so often I'm might get—see  
623 somebody out there but he, he knew, he knew a lot of people. He was a basketball player. He  
624 loved basketball.

625 D: It killed me, you said, "That place was packed!" (laughs)

626 T: It was packed! I'm like, "What? What is you talking about?" And then he was like, "Ma I told  
627 you, I told you." (laughs) He was a comedian, he. He was the life of the party. He was one of  
628 them young men. He can get on your nerves but you still be looking for him.

629 D: (laughs)

630 T: Like, "Where he at? Where's Pooh at? Where Tay at? Oh, here he come! Boy come over here!  
631 Come act like no nut?"

632 D: (laughs)

633 T: You, you wanted him, he was like, we come into just something about him just light up you  
634 know? He would just--

635 D: That's something.

636 T: He was just that man, he was just that person, he was that boy, he was, he was that child he  
637 was just, I mean he was you know, he was the, he was being, always being a father to the other  
638 kids, he "Get in here and eat these noodles, who is you to complain about some noodles?" He  
639 was just that person so by him leaving us, it left us with a limp, cause it was like, for him to be

640 only 22 like, “What do we do?” It was like almost losing a parent almost [laughs] it was like,  
641 “What do we do? How—wait a minute, how we going do this, Pooh ain’t here? How we going  
642 live if Pooh ain’t here? Okay what direction is that? Okay where the argument at? Who is going  
643 agitate us? Who going to push us to do good, where is he at?” So, for a long time we were just  
644 stuck, in awe of how to live.

645 D: How did the kids take it when you left town for the four months?

646 T: They went with me.

647 D: Okay.

648 T: Everybody went with me except for my daughter.

649 D: Okay.

650 T: My daughter stayed back cause she had just graduated from high school, had a little job or  
651 whatever, but she was going to come to where we was at, but I had already made up my mind to  
652 come back.

653 D: How did they, how were they when you were on the couch and they were—

654 T: No one knew about the couch, my daughter didn’t know about the couch, the boys knew  
655 about the couch but they were, they vaguely consumed with their grief?

656 D: Okay.

657 T: So, when they come came I sat up, I sat up for them boys, I sat up.

658 D: Okay.

659 T: “Hey what’s going on, everything alright?”

660 D: (laughs)

661 T: I’d say, “I’m doing good! Mama alright just sitting here, just laying back watching TV.”

662 D: Okay.

663 T: When a person that house I was staying in, when she came home from work, I sat up, “Hey  
664 what you doing girl how was work?” Oh, but when she left, it was like, “Oh God.” Boom, I was  
665 back out again.

666 D: Okay

667 T: But I pulled it together for them, you know? They were anybody but I’m by myself I could  
668 just, let it all flow out. (pause)

669 D: Thank you Lord.