

1 D: Do you have any questions or concerns?

2 A: I don't think so.

3 D: Again, thank you for sharing your story. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

4 What is your age?

5 A: I am 42 years old.

6 D: You look good.

7 A: Well, thank you. Hey now.

8 D: What race are you?

9 A: I am Caucasian.

10 D: And what gender are you?

11 A: I am male.

12 D: And what neighborhood/area of Milwaukee do you live? General.

13 A: Southside of Milwaukee.

14 D: Okay. How long have you lived there?

15 A: I guess that's two-fold. I was released from prison four years ago; this stint has been
16 the last four years. Prior to going to prison I would had lived there for probably a year-
17 ish.

18 D: Okay. Do you remember your story of what happened?

19 A: I do.

20 D: If so, could you give me the general area of where it happened. And that is just for our
21 mapping purposes.

22 A: Correct. My crime was committed in [Clarke Square Neighborhood]

23 D: Okay. I would like to hear your story of gun violence.

24 A: My story of gun violence. That is an interesting way to put it.

25 D: Well, to help you get started. Can you tell me the approximate age of the people who
26 were involved, their race and gender?

27 A: Yes ma'am. So, I myself was 15 years old and had just turned 15 years old 3 days
28 prior. The victim in this crime, my crime, was 18 years old. The co-defendant that I had
29 was about, well I had two co-defendants and they were both in their 20's. Puerto Rican,
30 males. The victim was Asian and white.

31 D: Okay and what happened?

32 A: Essentially, with me being a young teenager wanting to show that I was tougher than I
33 really was. I surrounded myself with older gang members and I felt like I had to portray
34 this image and always be the one that wanted to be toughest or the quickest to act. I was a
35 gang member. My particular gang, the Spanish Cobras, were at war with another gang
36 called that Mexican Syndicate. We were at war with a lot of gangs in the southside of
37 Milwaukee. This is in the mid 90's and you never really knew who anybody was unless
38 they were wearing a specific color of clothes. The gang culture shifted quite a bit but
39 usually the color of clothes you wore was an insignia of who you belonged to and just the
40 general location. We knew obviously [Clarke Square neighborhood] "our" neighborhood.
41 But there were rival gang neighborhoods two and three blocks in every direction that we
42 were also at war with but on this such occasion, I remember going to school, to Pulaski
43 High School. I never skipped a day of school in my life, which is odd. I kind of lived this
44 Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde life of going to school, getting good grades and then as soon as
45 the school bell rang, running to the gang neighborhood, picking up a pistol and being a
46 completely different person. My parents really having no idea on this lifestyle because I

47 don't come from a poor family, and I don't mean monetarily because we definitely were
48 probably at or below the poverty line. But I mean, I didn't have any other family
49 members that were incarcerated or addicted to anything at least that I was aware of. So, it
50 felt like I came from a pretty loving and good family. Obviously, I didn't want to let them
51 know what activities I was partaking in. This day was like no other, school let out, I took
52 the city bus all the way down [Clarke Neighborhood] and as uncomfortable it is to say,
53 waited for rival gang members to show up so that I could earn my stripes as they say.
54 Because again, I was the youngest person in our neighborhood, in our gang at that time
55 and I didn't want people to think that I was young and weak. I had a gun, a 380 handgun
56 and I had it hidden under the porch because the block was where I was shooting so the
57 police was always there so you couldn't hold guns on your person, so you kind of had to
58 hide them in various places just in case the police came. I was riding a pedaled bike and a
59 car full of Latino males at least to me they looked Latino and it's the southside was
60 predominantly Latino males. It didn't strike me as odd, what struck me as odd was we
61 didn't recognize them. In that time, this just is what it is. The gang I belonged to was a
62 Latino organization and if you saw a car full of Latino males, that you didn't recognize,
63 odds are they were probably not friendly. Call that stereotypical, call it that racist, call it
64 whatever you like, we call it trying to stay alive. And so, as fate would have it, they were
65 rival gang members, and they were members of the M.S. and again this is no way
66 justification or justifying anything that I did. I am really trying to convey my thought
67 process and mindset at the time. This thought process is completely egregious and
68 counter to what a civilized society is just, kind of just trying to show what I was thinking
69 at the time. A couple of things happened simultaneously. My would-be co-defendant

70 drove up in a car as this car full of unrecognized males tried pull up in front of the
71 driveway that I was standing in front of, the gang leader recognized the people, I did not,
72 he recognized them as somebody that held a gun up to his head a week or two prior. So,
73 he told me to go get my gun and I could of diso-, again, no justification, I obviously knew
74 right from wrong. But I wasn't going to disobey the gang leader. I ran to get my gun from
75 underneath the porch across the street, my co-defendant had a gun, asked them if they
76 were M.S gang members. They replied, "Yes", and my co-defendant immediately started
77 shooting at them. I grabbed my gun, run across the street and I began shooting in the
78 direction as well. And keep in mind this is [Clarke Square neighborhood], probably five
79 PM so it's rush hour, very busy street. There's people everywhere they would turn into
80 witnesses everywhere. We shot, I think 20 times down this driveway and unfortunately,
81 we didn't know at the time, but we would soon find out that two people were shot, one
82 person was shot in the neck, Robert, and he did not survive. And another individual was
83 shot in the leg, but he was shot in an artery in the leg, so he thankfully survived. I took
84 my gun, ran across the street, hid it in the house, the "safe house", and immediately went
85 on the run. And my gang had plans on taking me to Puerto Rico which all this felt like,
86 and this is all going to sound so stupid or silly, it felt like it was happening too quickly
87 and so I told my gang no, and actually went to school the next day because there's a part
88 of me that wanted to pretend like this didn't happen. I came home from the school that
89 day and my gang was waiting for me at my house, and they said, "You're going." Took
90 me to Chicago, and I guess we could get into that part later if needed.

91 D: You went to Chicago, what did you do when you get there, you're 16 years old 15
92 years old.

93 A: Yup, I am still 15. I think 15 and 5 days at that point. I was taken to our gang's
94 motherland, and they had an apartment building that they owned, and they just put me up.
95 I really didn't know what was going to happen. They said they wanted to send me to
96 Puerto Rico, but they didn't have the funding to do it yet so the days kind of just went. It
97 was interesting because I didn't tell my mom whom I lived with at the time, I just ran
98 away and I remember taking five dollars out of her purse when she was sleeping there
99 and that is kind of the last memory I had as a free person with my mom, I stole five
100 dollars out of her purse. What was five dollars going to do for me going out on the run? I
101 just didn't know what to do. The days would pass, I would find out that my girlfriend was
102 pregnant who was also 15 years old, and she was pressuring me to come back to
103 Milwaukee. My gang was pressuring me not to go back to Milwaukee because at this
104 point, they knew who we are. Because again, it was broad daylight and there were
105 witnesses everywhere. But I got to a point that I couldn't stay away from my son's
106 mother any longer and I got on a Greyhound bus with a- to this day I wonder how this
107 was possible because I was a very small 15-year-old in Chicago with a trash bag full of
108 clothes getting on to a Greyhound, going across state lines, wanted for murder, and
109 nobody even looked at me sideways. I was so unbelievably nervous thinking, surely
110 someone is going to question me, stop me, ask, "Where's your parents?" Not one single
111 person even blinked in my direction, the only person that stopped me, was a guy that was
112 trying to sell me stolen watches. That was the only person that stopped me, and he was
113 outside of the station. I would eventually come back to Milwaukee. And it was like,
114 "What do I do?" My naivete said, "You have to get a job, you have to take care of your
115 child." But it's like, my mind couldn't grasp that, "How are you going to do that? You

116 are wanted for murder.” And again, I am 15 years old and maybe a month at this point.
117 It’s not like I have ever had a job or work experience, all I have are the clothes that I have
118 in the bag. It sounds so foolish that I repeat it out loud, but I had no plan. I definitely
119 didn’t have a plan.

120 D: So, when you come back to Milwaukee and what happens?

121 A: I surround myself with my former gang members, again. And now they’ve, it’s weird,
122 because I was on the run for about a month in Chicago. When I came back, I had this
123 impression of, what that welcome would be now that I have now “earned my stripes.” I
124 remember going to a house of a gang member and there were two gang members in there.
125 When they saw me, it wasn’t even pity that I saw in their faces. They had to talk
126 privately, and I couldn’t even hear what they said. And so, they kind of didn’t make any
127 deal about me at all, which I thought was, I don’t know what I thought it was, but I didn’t
128 think that was going to be the response. I thought there would be some sort of,
129 congratulatory, and that’s I think when I first realized, “They don’t care about me, they
130 don’t care about me at all.” But I instantly tried to suppress it and just thought, “Oh,
131 maybe something happened or whatever,” because what is that line of thought going to
132 get me. I am on the run for murder, I need them now more than anything because who
133 else am I going to turn to? I can’t go back to my family, my house was raided, so I had
134 heard from my son’s mother, they were looking for me. So, this is my life now.

135 D: So, when you were in Chicago, when you came back home on the run? How did you
136 eat? Did they bring you food, I mean how did you survive?

137 A: I lived with my best friend. So, the individual that brought me to the gang life, his
138 mom let me live with them.

139 D: Okay.

140 A: And I had ran away, once prior and I had stayed with them as well. So, I kind of just
141 became, and they are a Mexican family, just treating me like literally as if I were her son
142 and I was in their family. Which I look back and I, there's a part of me that's grateful and
143 there's a part of me that's like, "What type of mom lets her son's friend who's on the run
144 for murder live in their house? As if nothing happened?" It's mind blowing to me, like I
145 don't even know how to this day, how to necessarily break that down psychologically.

146 D: It's the mindset.

147 A: Yeah.

148 D: How would you say this experience affected you?

149 A: Hm, I think that experience is still affecting me. Because it obviously shaped so many
150 lives, obviously Robert's life, that was lost. Robert's father, David. His mom. Their entire
151 family, the ripple effect, which obviously I didn't understand at the time, spread so wide.
152 Because he was a student at MATC and I think he, for my understanding, he was
153 essentially caught in two lives, not dissimilar to mine because he was a gang member, but
154 he was going to MATC trying to better himself. So, I often wondered, had our paths
155 crossed in different circumstances, were we going through the same thing? Like what
156 advice would he had given me, or me him? It's one of those conversations that God
157 would allow me to have some day.

158 D: Wow. How did you get caught?

159 A: I got caught because I'm a stupid criminal. In that, it was, I want to say December 1st.
160 We were on the Northside. I was at a friend's house, and we were playing Mortal
161 Combat, believe it or not, video games. I'm not really a drinker but, the idea was that if
162 you had lost your match, you had to take a shot. So, we were playing for a while and all
163 of us were pretty inebriated. There were three of us there. The friend that brought me to
164 the gang lifestyle and his cousin. And his cousin said that his car was rob—or he was—
165 yes, his car was robbed, and they stole his speakers out of his car like a week or so ago
166 and he said, "But there's a car across the street that has the speakers in it we should go
167 take them." Again, December 1st there's probably 6 feet to a foot of snow on the ground
168 and so we go outside, and I have no reason to lie now because I have committed
169 obviously all this time in prison, I have no reason to lie. I didn't go anywhere near the
170 car, but they did. I went walking down the street, looking. I don't even know what I was
171 doing, I was looking at other cars looking for other things. So, still in a nefarious activity.
172 But I didn't approach or touch that car. They ended up getting the speaker box out of that
173 car, taking it back to the house, and we all go back inside. Don't think anything else of it.
174 About an hour later, this is in the basement that we are in, you know the basements have
175 those little half windows, we see flashlights. Were like, "What is going on?" because now
176 it's like 3 in the morning and there shouldn't be anyone with flashlights flashing into the
177 basement windows. So, we look outside the window and there's probably seven, eight,
178 nine cop cars surrounding the house. So, I'm like, "You have to be kidding me." I go in
179 the attic of the garage because I am intoxicated, I fall asleep or pass out. I come to, I think
180 it's the next day, I think a lot of time has elapsed. Because there are no windows in the
181 garage, and this is going to expel my dumb criminality. I get off of the rafters, I open the

182 door back into the house and there's probably about 11 or 12 cops in the living room. I
183 didn't fall asleep, I passed out for about 5 minutes, just long enough for them to come
184 inside and start asking questions and here I am opening the door into the garage, thinking
185 it is the next day. They were like, "Who are you?" And I am like, I gave a fake name,
186 alias, and they are like, "Well, there has been a report of a robbery, we followed the
187 footsteps, from the car that had the speakers stolen, to the back door of this house. So, we
188 know." Just one more stupid criminal story on top of another. "Did you have anything to
189 do with it?" and I said, "No." They said, "Okay. Well, we are going to need to do a line
190 up." And I think back to fate and how this transpired. They had all three of us come
191 outside, because the victims happened to see the, I don't know if they had a car alarm or
192 whatever. But they saw my friend and his friend from a distance taking the stuff out of
193 the car. They couldn't necessarily recognize the face that good, so I said, "We'll let me
194 grab a jacket." And I grab the Minnesota Viking jacket that my friend wore as he- and so
195 when I got in the line and they say, "Yes that's him."

196 D: Oh, wow.

197 A: They eventually match shoe prints and find out that those footprints weren't mine but
198 by that time they realized who I was, that I was wanted for murder. So, I was never
199 charged with that because they knew it wasn't me but at that point, they still had me in
200 custody for the murder. I hate the Minnesota Vikings, and I am a stupid criminal.

201 D: How has this affected your family?

202 A: Well, there's a stat that says, "If you go to prison your child is six times more likely to
203 go to prison." And as I said, when I was on the run in Chicago and find out that my son's
204 mother was pregnant. That is a sense of the first gift that I gave to my son. "I love you

205 son. You are six times more likely to go to prison now because of my actions.” So, that
206 was the very first gift I gave. I would eventually get arrested before he was even born. I
207 would see him, the first time through the glass of the county jail. I remember getting the
208 phone call, she just had our son. Here I am still, 15 years old, in the adult county jail,
209 scared to death because I’m the, literally the smallest person in the entire county jail,
210 youngest as well. I didn’t even know how to feel, like I wanted to be happy, but I am
211 facing a life sentence so just so many different emotions. And then she came, she brought
212 him, and I remember looking through the glass because at that time you could, visits were
213 through the glass. Just seeing him and see how tiny he was and knowing that I couldn’t
214 touch my son. It ended up taking quite a long time for me to have that first contact with
215 him. We kept in contact via visits, letters, and phone calls throughout his life. But my
216 incarceration would end up being almost a quarter of a century so the first time I was able
217 to hug him as a free man he was 25- 24 years old and thankfully, did not follow my
218 footsteps. So, the odds that I gave him he chose to rebel against those instead of the good
219 people in his life. That I am grateful to his grandparents and his mother for. As to my
220 mom and dad, they, being the awesome parents that they are, blame themselves and it's
221 one of the most hurtful parts of my crime selfishly. Obviously, my victims suffered in
222 ways that I could never understand, but to know that I could see it in their face that they
223 truly blame themselves for not being better parents for the why that I did what I did, and
224 that is heart breaking. Because I think I couldn’t ask for better parents. Because if I knew
225 nothing else, I knew my parents love me, which so many children in this world don’t
226 have. And I had two of them, that loved me more than life itself. That’s tough.

227 D: How do you think this affected your community? If you need a minute, we could stop.

228 A: I am good. I just contributed to the cancer, of gun violence in our community. You
229 know if it was just one incident it would probably just affects that one family and the
230 people that are, a few degrees separated from that family. But in the 90's and now today
231 this year 2022 we broken the all-time record for homicides. It's that cumulative effect of,
232 and now I as a community member don't feel safe. And it's so beautifully ironic that I
233 don't feel safe for the exact reasons I made others feel unsafe. I think there is a poetic
234 justice to that, and I don't feel we as human beings are supposed to live like this. God,
235 forbid you honk your horn at somebody for running a red light, like, my, I shouldn't be
236 worried about that individual shooting at me, but it happens so often now. Or looking at
237 somebody aggressively or whatever it may be there is such a lack of, I see the human
238 being in you that allows me to treat you as something other than a human being and I
239 contributed to that. And it's you know, prior to us speaking we talked about, being able to
240 forgive yourself. There's days that I feel like I have and there's other days that guilt comes
241 roaring back, like in this conversation, when I start to think that I have forgiven myself, I
242 think "How dare you?" When I think about what my actions did to the community, so it's
243 tough. It's definitely a back and forth. It's a battle within myself. It's tough.

244 D: How do you think this situation could have been avoided?

245 A: If I wasn't a coward and wanted, or not wanted, I think back and I have had this
246 conversation for decades, on the "why?" If you could get past all the lies you have told
247 yourself, all the lies or misinformation society attaches to why people join gangs and
248 commit crimes. When I look at myself in the mirror and say, "Why?", at the core, I cared
249 so much about what somebody else thought about me, which is odd because I came from
250 a very loving family, so I wasn't searching for. But I cared, to a stupid degree, what other

251 people thought about me. Those older gang members that I wanted to impress, wanted to
252 show that I wasn't this little 15-year-old kid. And where did that desire come from? I
253 don't know because again I came from- in my opinion, a good family. As I understand
254 what a good family to be. So, I am still searching for the true "why." But the second
255 level, because I care about what other people think, but I still haven't gotten to ground
256 zero.

257 D: What do you think we could do to eliminate or lower gun violence?

258 A: That's the proverbial question right, or the- not proverbial question but the age-old
259 question; "What could we do?" I was having this conversation last night, I attended a
260 domestic violence town hall and just seeing the stats, and one such stat that really, it
261 made me repeat it out loud and that's, "If a women had a gun in her house, she was 500
262 times more likely to be killed." 500 times if there's a proximity to a firearm. That's not
263 like 10 times, that's not 50 times, 500 times more likely. So, my gut reaction is,
264 proximity to firearms is the issue. And I get, a lot of people have guns legally, and that's
265 fine, to each their own right? I am nobody to judge on if you should have a gun or not.
266 But we know there are a lot of guns on the streets. And they're probably not going away
267 anytime soon. So, I think you have to have a multiprong approach on what to do. By no
268 means do I think that I have any, an all-encompassing answer, but I think on the front end
269 you have to start at a very young age and help. Because youth in this community right
270 now are growing up in traumatic environments. They're being desensitized by the
271 violence that they see and hear. I mean, you hear gun shots constantly you stop to be
272 afraid of them and you start to normalize it. Even though you do not understand it at that
273 young age, but when it comes to the age when someone gives you your first gun or you

274 see your first gun, “It’s not that big of a deal, I’ve heard that my whole life.” I think we
275 have to somehow engage with our youth and also in a conversation I had last night about,
276 you take MPS and I’m going to, actually investigate into this. You have your core classes
277 but what if we shopped ten minutes off each one of those classes and then added a 30-
278 minute counseling session for every single kid. To start to unpack some of that trauma.
279 To understand that this isn’t a normal way of living life.

280 D: Right.

281 A: Because yeah, you have math, science, English, all that stuff is important, but why
282 isn’t your mental health? Why can’t that be a part of those core classes? Because if you
283 don’t understand it, we can’t help you to deter you from it. On the back end, for those
284 that commit crimes like myself, when we get out, we have to provide people with the
285 opportunity to live a noncriminal lifestyle. If you just want to shove someone under the
286 rug, say, “You can’t live in this neighborhood. You can’t rent in this neighborhood
287 because you have a felony. You can’t get a job”, well eventually you start running out of
288 options. Again, not taking away from the crime and the victim that was created, or
289 survivor, that is now alive but if you don’t give somebody an opportunity to not live that
290 life what do you think they are going to do?

291 D: They know what you are going to do.

292 A: Correct. And it’s not about being soft on crime or pass that stage. You’ve served your
293 time and if you don’t have the resources to be a productive member of society, like
294 myself, I can never vote. Now, there’s a part of me that’s grateful because I don’t have to
295 engage in this political, whatever is going on politically in this city and country.

296 D: Why can’t you never vote?

297 A: Because I am on supervision. I am still serving a life sentence.

298 D: Oh, you're still on supervision.

299 A: Correct.

300 D: Yeah, but once your off, you can.

301 A: But I am serving a life sentence, so I'll never.

302 D: On supervision.

303 A: Correct.

304 D: I didn't know there was such.

305 A: Correct because I was sentenced to life plus 25 years for my crime. And so, there's
306 two types of life sentences. There's life without the possibility of parole.

307 D: Okay.

308 A: And there's life with the possibility of parole. So, in this case that's what I got. I
309 served 23 years, saw the parole board and that's how I was released. But should I mess
310 up today, I could go back for the rest of my life and so it's a bit of eggshells that I am
311 walking on. That, as odd as it will sound, doesn't cross my mind that often because I am
312 engaged in nothing but positivity.

313 D: Right.

314 A: But it's more the things that I don't know, like-

315 D: You are going to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

316 A: Wrong place at the wrong time and it's a, if you see me on paper, if you see me on
317 paper, I'm not a good human being. I hope that if you meet me in person and see some of
318 the work that I have been doing and that I am engaged in now that you will see that,
319 there's a phrase that I'll finish that sentence with. "Your choices are like voices; they will

320 speak for you.” With my choices, rather than me saying, “I’m sorry and I have changed.”
321 With my work and dedication and helping others not become like me, I hope that my
322 choices are showing my remorse, if that makes any sense.

323 D: Do you have anything you would like to say to our elected officials?

324 A: Thankfully, God has put me in a position where I get to work with some elected
325 officials. And I think that the culture is changing and what I am alluding to here is, I am a
326 big believer in the old cliché, “Those closest to the problem are closest to the solution.” I
327 feel that there's an answer in some of us that elected officials don't have. Conversely,
328 there's a power that elected officials have that we can't ever have. So, it's only us
329 working with them. Them working with us, that if it does come to some solution where
330 we are going to make the community a safer place. And I am grateful that the mayor and
331 the county exec and the police chief, they've taken upon themselves to allow our voices
332 to be heard and its humbling. Because a few years ago that wasn't the case, and so I think
333 we are headed in the right direction. I think it's out of a necessity of, “We're in this
334 together.” Yes, I have made some terrible mistakes, but I am trying to right those wrongs
335 and I know that there's knowledge that I possess that could help to contribute to a
336 solution. I would like to say to them, “Thank you.” As odd as that may sound because I
337 know a lot of people always want to point fingers at elected officials. Again, I can't vote.
338 I don't have a vested interest in one way or another, but I am just grateful that I have been
339 given a voice, so to speak.

340 D: What would you like to say to the community?

341 A: Again, so I wrote in response to a letter that my victim's father sent me. In that letter I
342 told him that, “I will never tell you that I am sorry.” Which sounds like a terrible thing to

343 say but I want to explain, that you tell someone that you're sorry if you bumped them, if
344 you hit their car, if you spilled milk. You don't say I am sorry, for taking your son's life.
345 I feel like that is disrespectful. What I did say is that, "I hope when I take my final breath
346 that my actions will have shown you that I am a remorseful beyond verbal description."
347 And the same thing for the community, I can't say, "I am sorry" to the community
348 because that's- especially in light of what is going on right now every single day. I feel
349 like I have to show, again with my actions. Sometimes running myself into the ground
350 with trying to provide an opportunity to somebody so they don't have to create a victim.
351 Because at the end of the day, like, that's my mantra. I am in the business of preventing
352 from tears from falling and from victims being created and if I do my job well enough, I
353 will be successful and that is how I show the community that I am sorry for what I did to
354 them.

355 D: Wow, I like that. Tears from falling. Tell us a little bit about your work, The Partners
356 in Hope.

357 A: So, Partners in Hope is a faith-based prison re-integration organization, and I
358 purposely don't use the word "program" as we spoke about earlier. And that's because
359 programs end and when somebody has done 20, 30, 40 years in prison the reentry process
360 isn't ever going to end. And so, there's always going to be needs. Success should be
361 looked at or graded at a curve. We are humans, we are all fallible, we are never going to
362 just get it right every single time. We don't get any state or federal funding. Everything
363 we do is privately raised and once a month we offer a reentry workshop, where we bring
364 in people like myself or Shannon Ross, or other people that have done significant years of
365 time. They now own their own businesses, their own car, because when you are inside

366 you create all these excuses of why I am going to fail. Why that felony is going to
367 prevent me from ever being anything other than a felon. When I tangibly show what
368 success looks like, because if someone who just got out yesterday, sees someone that just
369 did a quarter century who was doing it, who is making it. You know we have taken that
370 excuse of "He can't do it" away from him. And he might try to find another, but you
371 can't use this one. We bring in people to talk about life skills, we address anger,
372 communication skills. Another group that we bring in, that's counter to anyone else in
373 this city is Police officers, MPO's. I run a session called, "Building bridges with law
374 enforcement" where we have officers come and they write their first name on a piece of
375 paper. There's no rank, there's no title, it's that officer first name known as a human
376 being, and we have our men and women do the same and we talk about ourselves as who
377 God has intended us to be and that's human, and we eat together. It's often the first time a
378 police officer and a convicted murderer would sit down and eat. The tension is palpable
379 when it begins but at the end you could see, cell phone numbers are being exchanged,
380 hugs, and my words would do it no justice.

381 D: That's beautiful.

382 A: It is, probably one of the most beautiful things that I am blessed of being a part of. To
383 see that. There's psychology behind it. We give everybody two mentors, a peer mentor
384 and somebody that's never been in prison. Some of our most effective members, believe
385 it or not, mentors are cops. The reason is this; Oftentimes when people engage in criminal
386 activity is because they don't respect authority. But who is the most represented image of
387 authority? That is oftentimes the police officer. In Black and Brown communities, they
388 don't like the police. Understandably for a lot of different reasons. So, if you don't like

389 the police, “authority”, it’s that much easier to engage in something that’s contrary to
390 authority. But now, if you have a police officer authority in your life as a mentor, loving
391 you like you never been loved, as crazy as it sounds, that’s what these police officers do,
392 it is extremely difficult to start to go back to the lifestyle you used to live.

393 D: You know you’re doing it for both sides. Right?

394 A: Correct. Yup. Oh yeah. We now get every single recruit from the Milwaukee Police
395 Department to come down and have dinner with the former incarcerated, by rule. So,
396 before they even get their gun and badge, they are coming to humanize with those that
397 have just gotten out of prison to see us as human beings and that is truly beautiful.

398 D: God did it.

399 A: God did that for sure, for sure.

400 D: That was... I am glad that I asked.

401 A: You are more than welcome to come, we do it every Wednesday night.

402 D: Okay. I know you guys have a podcast.

403 A: Yeah- Shannon has a podcast.

404 D: Okay.

405 A: I am starting, trying to get mine, but I am trying to find the time.

406 D: Okay, that’s okay. So, it’s just “Partners in Hope”, right?

407 A: Yeah, that’s one hat. We have our other business called Paradigm Shift; we are just
408 kind of just forging into the juvenile space. We just received a grant for a program we are
409 calling “Mirror”. Because we are trying to vividly reflect the lives that they are living.

410 But some pretty unique activities.

411 D: I look forward to seeing the great things you guys are going to do.

412 A: Me too, hopefully.

413 D: You got me crying.

414 A: You made me cry earlier so. So, it's only fitting.

415 D: Also, may we please have a picture to go with your story?

416 A: Sure, absolutely.

417 D: Is there anything else you would like to add before I stop recording?

418 A: I would just like to thank you for, I can't imagine what it's like on the other side of
419 this interview. Knowing what was taken from you, so the fact that, because you had a
420 choice too. Right? You could be vengeful, or you interpret justice in you wanting to hate
421 life and hate people like me. Instead, you have taken it upon yourself to try to be the
422 bigger person and find a way to prevent other victims from being created. So, I figure we
423 are literally in the same line of work so, I am grateful to have met you.

424 D: Thank you! Believe me the honor is all mine.