

1 GVP49, Treneshia Gilbert

2 T: As a matter of fact, it's two years today that my God brother got killed.

3 D: Really?

4 T: Yep. We, well, now, let me not say two years today. This date, two years ago, we were
5 burying him.

6 D: Wow. Okay, and can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

7 T: Well, I am a teacher for Milwaukee Public Schools. I'm a mother of one. I'm a laid back,
8 pretty calm individual, you know. I like to be mellow. I enjoy going down by the lake, I think
9 that's probably the best way to kind of just relax your mind, get your mind focused, do some
10 meditation, some praying and stuff like that. So, those are some of the things that I like to do the
11 most.

12 D: How old are you?

13 T: Thirty-two.

14 D: And what race are you?

15 T: I identify as black, African American.

16 D: And what gender are you?

17 T: I'm a female.

18 D: And what neighborhood or area of Milwaukee do you live?

19 T: Well, I would say this is the Northside. Yeah.

20 D: And how long have you lived here?

21 T: I've been over here five years.

22 D: And do you remember where your story happened?

23 T: My story actually happened [in Williamsburg Heights], in that area. I'm not sure if you, are
24 you familiar with that area a little bit? Okay, okay.

25 D: And if so, well, you said the general neighborhood for mapping purposes.

26 T: Mhmm.

27 D: And now I'd like to hear your story.

28 T: Well, I will never forget. I had just went on a date. After losing my own biological brother, I
29 went on a date, I was having a really good time. You know? It was time for me to kind of get
30 back out there, you know. 'Cause losing my biological brother really, really did something to me
31 mentally. So, it was just good to get out and feel like a human again. So, I would never forget. I
32 probably want to say that I came to my mom's house at about 7, maybe 6:30, 7 o'clock that day.
33 We sat out there on the porch and you know, it was me, my mom, my sister, my daughter. We
34 just having a good time, enjoying one's company, laughing, and you know, just being in the
35 moment. And I will never forget, there was a phone call that my mom received. And in the
36 phone call, it was, it just said, "Will was shot. Will was shot." And she's like, "What?!" Now, at
37 the time my youngest brother was down there as well. So, my mom like, "Where's Todd? Where
38 is Todd?" That's my youngest brother. And nobody could tell us where he was at. So, we're
39 scrambling. I could remember my sister getting the news and just falling, just falling and
40 collapsing, couldn't drive her car or anything. Now mind you, having just lost our own biological
41 brother and seeing the same people who had sat with us and cried with us and consoled us now
42 be faced with those very same emotions. It just was berserk to me. But we hopped in the car, I
43 mean, we putting kids in seatbelts and we racing, we racing. Now, the whole time we're racing
44 we just like, you know, no one knew whether he was gone, if he was still breathing or anything.

45 So, we, we, we try not to rush through traffic you know, because you know, you got to obey the
46 laws you know, of the land. So, we driving and we finally get down there. The street is
47 completely torn. You know, just, just, it's in chaos. Everybody is everywhere. There's tape
48 around. And the only thing I could remember is just this, this dreadful, dreary, sad emotion come
49 over me. No one had ever known at that time if my brother had made it or if he was you know,
50 so, we sitting here and I'm, I'm trying to be hopeful. I'm praying, I'm like, "God, come on now.
51 You know what we just went through, we just lost my brother." You know what I'm saying?
52 And by that time, my God sister and them, they were gone, they had went out to the hospital
53 'cause they kept on telling us that he was at Froedtert hospital. But my little brother's the one
54 that actually found him. Now, prior to the situation without going too much into detail for safety
55 reasons and things like that—

56 D: 'Course.

57 T: My little brother had ended up giving us the background of the story and he said he
58 remembered that day and everybody was standing on the corner, everybody was enjoying
59 themselves.

60 D: The corner of what, do you know?

61 T: [In Williamsburg Heights].

62 D: Okay.

63 T: Mhmm. And these guys had been circling the neighborhood and my brother got this weird
64 feeling and he like, "I don't know bro, something just don't sit right." And about two minutes
65 after he said that, "Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop! Pop!" Everybody scattered. Everybody scattered
66 on. Some went down the hill. Some went the opposite direction. My Godbrother just so
67 happened to, he motioned himself down in a kneeling position and somehow, and it was, it's

68 ironic to me because my Godbrother, we grew up in that neighborhood. But it looked as if he
69 was trying to find a way out, he just got cornered. And in this specific part he got cornered in, he
70 had no out. So, as the bullets continue to rain, everybody has ran and the guys finally sped off.
71 So, my little brother and they calling everybody out. So, they doing like a roll call. "Such-and-
72 such you here? Such-and-such you here?" Everybody like, "I'm good. I'm good. I'm good." So,
73 everybody they looking for Will. No Will. No sound, no nothing. So, my brother's calling his
74 phone, "Come on bro, where you at? Where you at?" Because my brother thinking everybody
75 scattered about. So, he just so happened to constantly call my Godbrother, he saw a phone. The
76 lighting of the phone. And so, he ran over there. He found my Godbrother with a gunshot wound
77 in the head.

78 D: Hmm.

79 T: And so, that's just the, the background story of it. So, just imagine driving down there after
80 getting that phone call, everybody's berserk. 'Cause no one knows what's going on. My little
81 brother, we also couldn't find him. So, that's even more anxiety on top of the anxiety that I'm
82 already having on top of just losing my biological brother. So, I don't know what's going on. My
83 little brother ended up having to go down to the police station for questioning. He didn't even
84 know that my Godbrother had passed away. They ended up having my Godsister and some of the
85 family go out to Froedtert. They sat out there. They sat out there. They sat out there. No one
86 could tell them what was going on. But when they put them in this small room, I said that was a
87 clear indication that they were trying to find out how they were going to tell you all that he didn't
88 make it.

89 D: Hmm.

90 T: And when we got the phone call it was just unreal. It's almost like your heart being snatched
91 and thrown on the ground. Which remind me, two years of exactly how I felt with my own
92 brother. So, that's pretty much the background of the, of the way that it went.

93 D: Wow. How would you say this experience affected your family, you, you and your family?

94 T: It's one thing to lose somebody- natural causes. Losing somebody period is never easy. But to
95 know that somebody was full of their own issues of life, that they felt that it was okay to take
96 somebody else's, is a, a feeling that one can't even begin to explain. So, I think that it has caused
97 people to be unsafe in their own neighborhood. There's no justice because we still don't know
98 who the individuals were.

99 D: Wow.

100 T: So, you know, and there's, there's always talks about who possibly it could be. But until
101 somebody are, is behind bars for it, it's still injustice.

102 D: So, you can be passing the person, not even know.

103 T: And not even know it.

104 D: Oh my God.

105 T: Not even know it. So, I think for, if I couldn't speak for myself, I would speak for my
106 Godsister. That's a, a part of your soul that's at, you know, that's not resting. That's uneasy. And
107 even more so I would say if my Godbrother had a voice, I would say the same for him too. You
108 know, it's one thing to like I said, to leave here and be at peace. And when you, if you had the
109 chance to view him, you would've said he was at peace. But the, the reality of it is to have
110 somebody here that thought that low of you, to take your life and still be walking around here is
111 just pure ridiculous.

112 D: Wow. What age, race, and gender was the victim? It's your step-brother, your Godbrother?

113 T: Godbrother. I want to say, well, he's a African American male, I want to say that he was
114 twenty-five.

115 D: Okay.

116 T: Mhmm.

117 D: Do you think the situation could've been avoided?

118 T: I think it definitely could've been avoided. I think a lot of times men have stronger egos,
119 pride, egos again, you know, like, your ego in, in being a male is, is very big. 'Cause you have to
120 have a certain stature about yourself and when you feel as if somebody else is higher or you
121 know, it's hard for you to be able to accept that. But I think the reality of what we're missing is,
122 men being able to sit down like men and talk.

123 D: Hmm.

124 T: We all claim to be adults, but nobody know how to actually be an adult. You know? I feel like
125 I would even go so much to say as, if you going to fight it out, get in the street and duke it out.
126 "Hey, man, you got the best of me," and it's all love.

127 D: Right.

128 T: You know? And I just think that men are just, some men in our world today are just cowards.

129 D: I think that was well said. And you said the perpetrator was not caught?

130 T: No. Not caught. (pause)

131 D: Do you have any photos other than yourself, of the person, that you'd like to share?

132 T: I can get them.

133 D: Okay.

134 T: So, it's not a problem with getting them. I also just want to make sure that I, you know, talk
135 with the family and let them know.

136 D: Of course.

137 T: You know, so yeah.

138 D: Is there anything you'd like to say to elected officials?

139 T: If there was anything, so you saying like the senators and? For one, I think the biggest thing
140 that we're having a problem with is (pause) people have lost authenticity when it comes to the
141 police. So, I think that's something that needs to be brought to the forefront. When you have
142 these situations awry, you already have dirty people- dirty cops, injustices with the system at
143 bay. So, it's like, even when these men have these problems, or people in general have these
144 problems, they don't even feel safe going to the people that's supposed to make them safe.

145 D: Hmm.

146 T: So, I think we need to do a better at understanding the people that we're hiring. You know? I
147 think we need to do a better job with checking their mental health background. I think there need
148 to be more programs for mental health, you know. And I understand cost and things like that, and
149 money 'cause money is, it makes the world go round. But you know, but the issue is people are
150 out here hurting. And these people out here need outlets, positive outlets. You know? So, I will
151 say just bringing those things back into communities, start fixing on the streets, making the
152 communities look better. Just because they live in a, a rural area or part of the community
153 doesn't mean that it shouldn't have resources. Offer resources that are going to be beneficial to
154 the people. Get out there and actually be the forefront, stop hiding in, behind your office and
155 what not, but actually get out there in your community and find out what's going on and how
156 you can really make a difference. Nobody care about your name being on the ballot, they care
157 about what you doing once your name is on that ballot and how you're helping ensure that our
158 city is safe. So, I, if I can say anything, show y'all face. And not just during voting time, you

159 know what I'm saying? You don't see these people no other time. You only see them when they
160 ready for you to vote for them.

161 D: What would you say to people, to the members in the community?

162 T: I think I, because it's a, it's like a relationship so they coexist. I would tell the people in the
163 community that we need to start being a better community. If I see somebody doing something
164 that they have no business doing I need to be able to pull your coattail. I need to be able to say,
165 "Hey, that ain't right." You know what I'm saying? And it be all in love. It all be because I care
166 enough about my community, where my daughter live, where I lay my head, and where you lay
167 your head at. So, let's start being a village 'cause it really do take a village to raise children. It
168 take a village to be able to stand together. When you can stand together you, you're much more
169 of a, a mighty force. But when you're fighting against each other like crabs in a barrel, who you
170 think going to win? What you think is going to be accomplished? Only somebody going to be at
171 the top. (pause) But that's what I would say. You know? Just being mindful of those things.

172 D: Do you have anything that you'd like to add?

173 T: I just would, I guess if I could say anything else, I would say that I hope this is a wake-up call,
174 this documentary. People have, that have lost family members, I hope this is a wake-up call to
175 not just sit back and do nothing. But even if you can't get out there in the community and
176 volunteer, share your story. You know? Give people an inside on what it was like to be in there,
177 you know, in that shoe. But not only that, don't be afraid to share your story. A lot of times
178 people hold a lot of that stuff in and what ends up happening is no one gets to hear it. And if you
179 don't heal, you know what I'm saying, or help nobody else, then guess what? Nothing get
180 accomplished. So, heal yourself so you can heal someone else.

181 D: Hmm.

182 T: That's what, that's approach I would say.

183 D: That's beautiful. Healing yourself so you can heal someone else.

184 T: Mhmm.

185 D: That, that was powerful.

186 T: Well, thank you. (laughter)

187 D: You're welcome. I'd like to, as a teacher, how have you, have you seen a lot of Post-

188 Traumatic Stress in your classroom?

189 T: Oh yeah. Oh, my goodness.

190 D: Can you speak to that?

191 T: I will, and I will use just this one kid in general, I won't say his name or anything. But you

192 know, he's a challenging student and somebody once told me, they said, "Well, you know, he

193 lost his dad." His dad was shot and killed.

194 D: Hmm.

195 T: Now, before this, this young man was a well-dressed, presented himself nicely, respectful to

196 his peers and teachers, just a all-around, overall, well-rounded individual. But after his dad

197 passed, he's not that same kid at all. He gets into so much more trouble. So, he's actually going

198 to the fourth grade this year and I had my apprehenses you know, about him being in one of my

199 class. I'm like, "Ugh!" You know, but I had to go back to the very instant. I may have not lost a

200 parent, but I know what it's like to lose somebody.

201 D: Right.

202 T: So, what healing am I going to take now, which I'm doing, to ensure that I am that positive

203 force that this baby needs. So, Post-Traumatic and deaths, stress it's, it's very prevalent in our

204 youth. It's very, very prevalent. And the sad reality of it is there is not enough mental health
205 resources there, for these students in these, in these classrooms and in the schools.

206 D: Wow. So, after his incident, there was no one for him to see at school?

207 T: No, no. And I, without saying too much—

208 D: Right. You don't have to name the school, that's fine.

209 T: It should've been.

210 D: Right.

211 T: It very well should've been. You can't be the biggest psychologist, you can't be the biggest
212 teacher, you can't be the biggest secretary, principal, social worker and you know, whatever else
213 in the building and not understand the kids you're servicing. It's so imperative! You ain't, you
214 don't have to live with these kids, but you're with them for seven to eight hours in the day. So,
215 the least you could do is give them that, the parental love, that guidance, that hug that they need.
216 That's why no matter what and how I'm feeling, if a kid come up to me, it doesn't matter if I
217 wanted to really chew they head off, if they come up to me and they need a hug, they going to
218 get it.

219 D: Oh wow.

220 T: If they come up to me and they need somebody to talk to, not minding you were just naughty
221 yesterday, you called me out my name and everything, but it doesn't take away the fact that that
222 probably came from a place of hurting. So, why should I hold you accountable for that? No one
223 holds me accountable for the things that I may have done in my hurt. And if they have, that's on
224 them, but when it comes to these babies, they need it. So, if I'm going to be in this school
225 building, my job and how I see everything is positivity, loving on these kids when the- when you
226 love on them, they learn. When they learn, they grow. And when they grow, the more they know.

227 So, they, they getting everything that they need, that they may not be getting at home. It's all I
228 say, "Love on the babies."

229 D: I love that. So, so in some way you're saying what they need in school is counselors for Post-
230 Traumatic Stress?

231 T: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

232 D: Okay. Just so, right?

233 T: Yeah.

234 D: Is that how it goes? Okay. Anything else?

235 T: No, I think that's it.

236 D: That was a great interview. (laughter)

237 PART TWO 1:45

238 T: Yeah.

239 D: So, you were talking about mental health and please share why that's so important to you.

240 T: Well, you know, it's, it's important because when we allow emotions to stay within our
241 bodies and we don't talk about it, we don't seek the help, those things begin to resonate into our
242 mindset. And whether it's consciously or subconsciously, when those things happen it does
243 something different to your body. So, a person who was dealing with mental health issues may
244 not feel the same way and every, you know, they wondering why. "Why am I not feeling like
245 myself? What is going on with me?" That type of stuff eventually, 'cause it's toxic and it has to
246 go somewhere. So, it's best to give your pain a voice. Give your grief a voice. Give whatever
247 trials and tribulations you been through a voice. That way, that pain can resonate outside. You
248 heal and you can help others heal, but when you don't, it's set inside of you. It creates chronic
249 pain. It creates depression, anxiety, insomnia, stomach problems. It's so many different things

250 that not dealing with mental health creates and puts a stressor on the body. Then you wondering
251 why you, you know, you look older than you actually are. Or you want to know why you got
252 bags under your eyes or you don't, you know, you don't have sleep you know, restful nights, it's
253 all sleepless. So, it's important. It really, really is important. And I would tell, and I would say
254 my black community because I think they feel like it's a, it's like a disease to go and get mental
255 health treatment. Nothing is wrong with seeking mental health.

256 D: Thank you. That was good.

257 T: Thank you.