

1 VGV #75 Janice Gorden

2 D: Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

3 J: I am a registered nurse by profession and in 2015 I had a strong urge inside of me to start an  
4 agency called Victims of Milwaukee Violence, and as time went on, I figured out what and who  
5 victims of Milwaukee Violence is and what they were doing. So now being 2021, I am just, I'm  
6 all in. We do a lot of different aspects to the agency, I mean, to for the community. We help them  
7 find resources first, informational resources. Some of them might turn out to be some financial  
8 resources. We do a lot of grief support in the community, zoom, telephone calls, however I can  
9 get to people right now due to covid, and then I do a lot of follow up with people, so like this one  
10 person who was killed had eight children, just following up with the family to see if they know  
11 that those children might be eligible for social security or kinship. So I do, I'm all over the place,  
12 but I just want to be those hands reaching out to help those families when they're so helpless.

13 D: I'm going to ask you more questions about Victims of Milwaukee Violence Burial Fund, but  
14 if you don't mind, what age, how old are you?

15 J: (laughs)

16 D: You don't have to answer that (laughs).

17 J: I am 62.

18 D: Huh?

19 J: I'm 62.

20 D: Okay, and what nationality are you or race?

21 J: I'm African American.

22 D: And your gender?

23 J: I'm a woman.

24 D: Okay, and what neighborhood area of Milwaukee do you live? It can be like Sherman Park  
25 area-

26 J: Sherman Park.

27 D: Sherman Park?

28 J: Mmhm.

29 D: And how long have you lived there?

30 J: Twenty-six years.

31 D: Okay. You talked about the Victims of Milwaukee Violence Burial Fund, which sounds like  
32 it's there for people in the community. Is that once they've been victimized in any way, or just  
33 gun violence? Or how does that work?

34 J: Well, I get so many calls, I mean my first call of this year was a domestic violence, a young  
35 lady had been up all night being terrorized by her ex-boyfriend. So, I get all kinds of calls.  
36 People have been hit by cars and still living, or someone was in an accident, and you know still  
37 living, so I get, and actually saying Milwaukee violence, I have had people call me from Kansas,  
38 Arkansas, so I've helped quite a few people that had nothing to do with anything that's in my  
39 mission statement. But I still help, if they call you. I've had calls from people whose loved ones  
40 were just passed away because they needed the informational resources. So yeah, we, I've been  
41 all over the place.

42 D: So, you're out in the community, you're assisting people with funding needs in their most  
43 vulnerable time when either they've been hurt or lost someone, and then you experienced a  
44 devastating incident in your life, which happened to do with gun violence so share with us what  
45 happened?

46 J: So, in 2019, to be exact, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, at approximately 9:45 a.m., I received a call that my  
47 grandson was shot, my eldest grandson was shot. At that time, he was 24, 24? Yes. So, I thank  
48 God that I worked for myself so I could go straight to the scene, and I couldn't see him, all they  
49 said was he was critical, that's all they said. Well, you know that can drive you a little, you're  
50 sitting there, and they wouldn't let us see him the ambulance was sitting there working on him,  
51 my grandsons, my grandson went to a house to get, pick up his clothes from his house, he was  
52 having a beef with somebody, and the person kept coming over to that house where he lived with  
53 his girlfriend to just beef with him. So, I told him just, I told him don't go over there at all, but he  
54 had to go get his clothes and his youngest brother took him. His youngest brother is waiting  
55 outside in the car, he hears this big gun go off four times and here comes his brother out of the  
56 door with the, and just bleeding from everywhere. His youngest brother jumps out of the car, he  
57 is holding the wounds down so he can stop bleeding, while my grandson is struggling for air  
58 because one of the bullets went through his lung. So, actually, two of the bullets went through his  
59 lungs, so, the neighbors that were watching and heard the gun shot they called the ambulance and  
60 thank God they did, cause my grandson was devastated. So, it was devastating. My grandson is  
61 very, very, very small, I think his waist is a 28/26, little bitty guy so the bullets went through,  
62 through him, but it was four bullets that went through him, eight bullet holes, and you know  
63 initially, I just I am one that believes in God, I do. I can't just believe in Him when everything's  
64 good, I also have to believe in Him when things are not so good because He doesn't change, I  
65 change. So, I stood there trying to stand my ground in this thing, you know just standing my

66 ground. Lord if you let us, if he lives, he lives. Lord, if he dies and dies, and I'm going to lose  
67 my mind, just mind you Lord, but I had to stand there, because my grandson, my two grandsons  
68 were there, the one that was with him, and his other brother were there with me. I went to the  
69 hospital, it took hours for them to come down and tell us anything because I guess when, you  
70 know it's a learning experience, I guess when they're shot and they don't have all the  
71 information together, they're not going to give you any information. So, you're in the waiting  
72 room, this boy is in surgery, and you're just waiting. But so, that was at 10 o'clock in the  
73 morning, so we got out first word from them about 7 p.m. That they let us go see him, we did go  
74 see him while he was on the ventilator and you know sedated and patched up and swollen, but he  
75 alive and I was so grateful. I don't care if you give him to me like this, I'll take it, you know?  
76 And so just being with him that time being a part of his healing, being a part, and still being a  
77 part of his healing, because my grandson, you know he does things, I'm not even going to lie, but  
78 that was a moment that he wasn't doing anything. Karma? I don't know, but right now he's  
79 trying to change a lot of, he's made some humongous changes in his life trying to just be, he  
80 doesn't, you know, some of these younger people live on their parents so long and do things their  
81 way for so long that when they start doing things what we as older people call the correct way,  
82 it's odd to them (laughs). So, so he has a job, and he has his driver's license, been driving for 6  
83 years, but he has his driver's license. He's really trying to do things different, he's trying, and I  
84 think that that was just part of the turn you know with all this happening to him, I just I really  
85 that experience actually made me a better provider for Victims of Milwaukee Violence. I was  
86 floored when he was better, then I crashed. I just lost it, I just really lost it, and I was down for a  
87 couple days, and I thought all I could think about is oh my god their children passed away. If I  
88 went through all of this and my baby lived, what on God's green earth are they, and so I had to  
89 really start listening to my own self, start educating myself more start. Actually I spent a lot of

90 time in our group meetings asking the clients, you know what you guys I'm at a loss, I was at a  
91 loss and it took a lot to stand my behind back up and even now if I don't hear from my grandson  
92 in a day or two dude I'm calling, but the panic attacks oh my God I would just, one night the  
93 phone just rang it rang it was about 8 p.m. and everything in me said oh my god he's shot again!  
94 I went through a whole meltdown, a whole meltdown. If I am doing this and my child lived,  
95 what more, so it really is making me a better provider for the Victims of Milwaukee Violence. I  
96 should start some classes in March just upping my own game so that I can help people better. I  
97 need to, being, when we were able to go to be in the community, I hear about a family, I could  
98 go to their house and drip off something and give them a little information, you know, you don't  
99 stay in people's face long, they can't handle that. But now with covid, you can't make cold call to  
100 these families. You need to get introduced to these families, and they have so many people  
101 calling just trying to find out and the news media, they're calling. So, it's hard to even reach  
102 families. Last year was a very low amount of people for me. I usually reach at least 300 families  
103 a year, last year was maybe 65 people. It was really, really a low number. I mean I might have  
104 reached more than 65, but I only helped about 65. So, it's a struggle to reach people right now.  
105 So, this vehicle of getting the word out there and then now I do an 8 o'clock on Saturday  
106 morning podcast, every Saturday morning, Life After Loss Support, but I'm doing some other  
107 things. We are, we didn't have our walk last year. This year we'll do our walk virtual and  
108 physical, so I'm doing some other things to just get the word out there so people can get some  
109 help. We have to help these people.

110 D: And you'll notice this too Janice, I'm going be quiet because the few words that I do say,  
111 they're going to remove my voice and it's just all going to be you.

112 J: Okay.

113 D: I have a question. Without you giving me the specifics- (phone rings). I thought I cut my  
114 phone off, I'm sorry (pause). Without you giving me the specific neighborhood, what area was  
115 your grandson shot in, was it the Sherman Park area, the Brown-

116 J: I'm not sure what, they just changed the name of that park on Hampton and 49<sup>th</sup> or 50<sup>th</sup> Street.  
117 They just changed the name of that park, so I think that's the, I'm not sure what area that is  
118 called, but it's around that, it's a park on Hampton and 50<sup>th</sup> street, they just changed, I think they  
119 changed it to Jeanetta Robinson maybe? Park? I think they did. It's in that area, I'm not sure what  
120 the name of the area is.

121 D: And was the person who shot your grandson was he or she apprehended?

122 J: They were apprehended immediately, they spent a year in jail and on the streets right now,  
123 right now, on the streets. It was really a horrible experience for my grandsons, they did get  
124 subpoenaed but when they, because of covid, this person was brought in past my grandsons in  
125 the hall. They usually bring them in behind the court where the judge is, but for some reason the  
126 man was brought right past my grandsons when they went to court. And my grandsons lost it,  
127 they completely lost it, completely lost it, just bawled on the stand, just bawled, and wouldn't say  
128 a word. Wouldn't say, they wouldn't say anything against them, because of the fact they don't  
129 really know this guy, they don't know who he knows. And Milwaukee, I don't know if you know  
130 it, they're killing witnesses right now, they been killing witnesses if you really want to know the  
131 truth about it. They, I've heard, I've had a client, I have a client now, whose daughter was killed,  
132 the daughter's son saw the killer, so they came back and got him. So, yeah. But they're killing  
133 witnesses as many and as often as they can. So, who knows who is this man's family? And he  
134 was from Chicago so and that was his second time actually shooting somebody. He did 15 years  
135 for the first one.

136 D: And they only gave him a year here for the second one?

137 J: Because my grandson didn't and my grandsons wouldn't talk, they were scared to death. He  
138 did a year; he is on the streets right now. And he did 15 years for the first one that he did, then he  
139 was on the streets and then he did, then he just shot my baby four times in the back, in the back.  
140 He said it was self-defense, that's why he shot him four times in back. Alright.

141 D: Do you think at there is a way that this could have, this incident could have been prevented?

142 J: If my grandson, the night before, my grandson, it's my oldest grandson, we talk, we always  
143 have, he's like my friend too. So, we talk about a lot of stuff, help me God, he talks about a lot of  
144 stuff to me. So, the night before this happened, we had a long discussion, and I said stay away  
145 from that guy, stay away from that house, don't go over there, stay away from there. So early the  
146 next morning, he went over there to get his clothes out of there so he could stay away from there.  
147 So, if he had of just listened and stayed away from there, it wouldn't have happened.

148 D: What do you think we could do to lower gun violence?

149 J: I think we should sedate our young men and women (laughs) just a low dose of sedation,  
150 they're so angry. I don't know if I have ever seen anyone so angry, they're just so mad and for  
151 some reason, they think that the world owes them something. Or, that they have the right to take  
152 what we have you know to take what anybody has if they want, just take it. So, I don't know. I'm  
153 hoping that that generation grows out of it. It's, two things happen, three things happen. Three  
154 things happen, either they're going to grow out of it, go to jail forever, or die. And you know and  
155 that generation it's not everybody, but they're so devastating. The crimes are so devastating that it  
156 looks huge. You know, how do you, I was listening to the news the other day and a man was at  
157 his own house, he's at his own house in his house, decides he had to go somewhere, went outside  
158 and his car was gone. And he watched on the news as someone told him, the news was saying

159 there was ten people in his car. He was saying “how did they get ten people in my car?” They  
160 broke the window, broke in, it was a Honda? It was a Honda, they broke in, hotwired it and as  
161 they were driving around, they were taking other people's cars and robbing people in his car.  
162 This man was in his house, and he went outside, and his car was gone he and even the confusion  
163 on his face when he was telling the story on the news on Monday, he was telling that story the  
164 confusion on his face, I was confused with him. You know what, I’m so sorry because it’s just  
165 it's not everybody. If you take all of the actual offenders and put them I one place, we would all  
166 go (gasp) that’s all? Because it’s not everybody, it’s just the ones that it is are so devastating,  
167 they’re just different from us, I'll say it like that. So, what do I think could be done? I still have to  
168 go back to the sedation (laughs). I don’t know, I don’t know. Maybe they should put a little  
169 sedative in the water or something. I don’t know. I don’t know why they think they’re entitled to  
170 everything, maybe because we spoil them so, we give them so much as they’re growing up. And  
171 so, when they move out, they think that they are still supposed to be given to? I have a good  
172 friend whose son attempted suicide the other day, about over a week ago. And he is 21, and he  
173 almost did it. Most suicidal people or people that say they’re going to commit suicide, they just  
174 call everybody. They’ll put it on Facebook, “I’m finna take these pills,” this boy didn’t. He  
175 didn’t, he was almost successful. When he passed out, somebody just happened to be there that  
176 was his saving grace. But when it comes down to the wire, why did he do that? Because he said  
177 he couldn’t find a job, now was he looking for a job? (laughs) I don’t know, I don’t think so.

178 D: So, what do you think somebody was supposed to come and hand it to him? Or?

179 J: He was used to being under his mom’s wings, and his mom gave him everything, so when he  
180 moved out of state, he moved out of state with nothing in somebody’s house trying to dictate to  
181 that person how he’s supposed to live, and it didn’t work out. So, he took a monstrous amount of  
182 pills, a nice amount of Xanax and Percocets they say, and he really almost did it, 21 years old.



183 Now he's mad because the judge said he's a danger to himself. Well, you think? I don't know, I  
184 don't know, it didn't happen his way, so he was so mad so he as willing to kill himself. So, I  
185 don't know. Sedation is the only thing I can actually come up with (laughs). I'm really trying,  
186 I'm an intelligent person but I think if we drug them down maybe we can teach them something,  
187 maybe they'll listen. I don't know. Maybe we just give our kids way too much thinking that my  
188 mom didn't have this, and she didn't have that, so I'm going to give my children better. And that  
189 doesn't always make a better child. They still have to be taught. The child that, and I guess you  
190 really can't always blame the parents if a child goes out and steals somebody's car. This man's  
191 car was in his own driveway and the person that stole it, they said 10 people were caught with  
192 that car, but the person that stole it didn't live nowhere near that man. They had to go somewhere  
193 out of their area to go find that car to steal. It just so, it makes us as an African American people,  
194 I can't explain to any Caucasian why that person did that. I'm so far, my brain doesn't do that, I  
195 don't, I don't know why, but yet, some Caucasians can look at us and this is what they're going  
196 to see. How we're stealing the cars, how we're shooting up each other, how we're drug addicted  
197 and drug selling, selling. I have heard of a young man selling weed, all the boy sells is weed, he  
198 got 23,000 dollars cash, cash. I seen it with my own eyes.

199 D: Wow. Do you have any photos you'd like to share alongside with your story?

200 J: Did I go too far with that story? Sorry, I got into it.

201 D: No, I don't think that you went too far into what you had to say. I think that's good that  
202 you're sharing your thoughts.

203 J: I don't understand, I don't understand our new, I don't understand the generation. And it's not  
204 our generation, miss Debra, it's not my daughter's generation, it's their kids. I don't understand  
205 it, I don't get it. But no pictures at this time. I got a billion, trillion, zillion pictures, but no.

206 D: Do you have anything you would like to say to our elected officials or our community?

207 J: I would say to the community, like Pastor Daniels would say, flat footed, he says “go flat  
208 footed toe to toe.” I would say to our community, “dude you guys know who these offenders  
209 are.” It's a lot of parents who know who these offenders are. Grandma, uncles, brothers, sisters,  
210 you might be afraid, and you may not want them to get in trouble, but they're killing people,  
211 they're stealing cars, they're beating up people, raping. You know who they are. Report! Report!  
212 That's what I would say to the community, we have to start as a community. I hear that Rome  
213 destroyed itself because of the things they were doing inside of itself, and it just destroyed the  
214 whole thing. Rome was humongous in its day, and we are destroying ourselves, destroying  
215 ourselves. Don't nobody have to commit no genocide here. We're committing our own genocide.  
216 And I don't know. I think that we have to, we as a people, if we start telling on who's doing it  
217 and telling what we know and having some proof and taking it to the appropriate people, that  
218 would be a start in regards to how we can heal ourselves. We have to want the healing, but I  
219 think that our generation, miss Debra, and then our children we're the ones that need to start  
220 telling, even their children's children. Yes, if they know, we need to tell. It's out of hand. It's  
221 completely out of hand. And what was the second question?

222 D: What did you, did you have anything specifically you wanted to say to elected officials and or  
223 our community? Which I think you just did, but—

224 J: The community yes, we need to tell. The elected officials, there's so many, that's your piece.  
225 You know how I feel about, I mean I watch, and I listen, but you know the guns that are out  
226 there, they aren't registered anyway. So, how much are the gun laws actually affecting those  
227 people who are buying guns on the streets and using them over and over and over and over for

228 offending. So, I don't know, I don't know. I don't get into the official part or the political part,  
229 especially publicly. (laughs)

230 D: Okay, unless you have something else to add this will conclude our recording.

231 J: Okay, thank you.

232 D: Thank you.