

- 1 GVP33 Kristina Paris
- 2 K: Okay.
- 3 D: Please state your name.
- 4 K: My name is Kristina Paris.
- 5 D: Okay, it's comin' in good.
- 6 K: Okay.
- 7 (pause)
- 8 D: And Kristina, how old are you?
- 9 K: I am 61.
- 10 D: Wow, you look good for 61. (laughter)
- 11 K: Thank you.
- 12 D: You're welcome. And I'm just monitoring, making sure the sound is comin' in, that's all.
- 13 K: Okay.
- 14 D: And I know you've been affected by gun violence, could you please share your story?
- 15 K: Yes, it's been a long time ago, it was actually August 5th, 1990. And I play Irish flute in a
- 16 band and our band was practicing that evening for Irish Fest. And I came home, I drove home, I
- 17 drove into my garage and then I went to the trunk of my car to get my flute and sheet music out
- 18 and when I l-had lifted the trunk up, at that point, there was somebody behind me and he held a
- 19 gun to my head and he was choking me with one arm, or one hand and then held, holding the gun
- 20 to my head in the other. And he pretty much kept saying over and over, "Don't you make a
- 21 sound or I'm gonna blow your head off." And this was in the evening, I think was about ten
- 22 thirty or eleven, so it was dark. And so, he, he pulled me backwards like, to start walking down
- 23 the alley. So, he, he was walking behind me, choking me—

24 D: Where did you live?

25 K: —this, at that time I was living in Shorewood. So, that's where that happened.

26 D: Okay, approximately the area of...?

27 K: It was like on, off of, [in the Shorewood] area.

28 D: Okay.

29 K: Yeah, yeah. And, you know, it, it, Shorewood is considered a pretty safe neighborhood and I
30 always say to people, "You know, guns and rape do not have any bar-borders, you know."

31 D: Amen.

32 K: Ages, anybody. So, he pulled me behind, walking backwards until we got to the alley. And
33 then he started walking me forward, so he was behind me the whole time with the one hand
34 around my neck and the other to my head with a gun. And I could kinda tell, it was like a, silvery
35 metal, so I, you know I know it was a handgun of some sort. And it was summer. I had my flip-
36 flops on and as I was walking, I was kinda, like, you know, it was like, "Clip, clip, clip." And he
37 was freaked out about any noise, 'cause he kept saying, "Don't you make a sound, or I'm gonna
38 blow your head off." So, I mean, he was just really paranoid that he, that somebody would
39 stumble upon us, I think. And I, of course I was nervous too, because I thought he was gonna kill
40 me. So, I kept walking like he told me, and he kept saying, you know, "Don't you make a sound,
41 or I'm gonna blow your head off." He just kept saying that over and over again. And so, as we
42 were walking down the alley, it seemed like what he was looking for was a dark place. So,
43 finally he found a place that was dark. There were no lights, between two garages. So, then he
44 walked me into that space and that's when I started to realize what was gonna happen. Because
45 he started to, he said, "Take your clothes off." And, he, you know, he put my hands above, on
46 one of the garages and then he started to touch me. At first, he touched my breasts and then, you

47 know, and he had told me to take my clothes off then. And I was really scared that he was gonna
48 shoot me. Because I knew he had a gun. I wanted to live. I'm a single parent. I had just met
49 somebody who was in another country 'cause his father was dying. So, you know, I, I wanted to
50 live through this. So, I started thinking ahead, like, "Okay, it looks like he's gonna rape me." He
51 actually did rob me first because, and I'm trying to think when he took my money, I think that
52 was the f- when I first got out of the car, he wanted my money. And I had volunteered at a
53 Lanterns for Peace event for Peace Action. And so, I had their deposit in my bag 'cause I was a
54 volunteer book keeper. So, he stole that money. It's kind of ironic how, you know, Lanterns for
55 Peace, and here's a violent act. So he robbed me and now I knew he was going to rape me. So, I
56 was thinking ahead, "I wanna live through this." So, I said, "So, you want me to take my clothes
57 off. But you don't want me to identify you, do you?" Like, I was trying to put that suggestion in
58 his head. So, that way I kept my purple sweatshirt on my, you know, I had it on and then I had
59 taken it off, but then when he told me to lay down on the grass, then I put that over my face. And
60 so, I felt like, at least there was that little bit of control in me. It was a survival skill. I do know
61 that later on, one person who interviewed me after the assault, said, "Well, why can't you
62 identify his face?" You know, just like, "Why didn't you see him?" And I said, "Well, because I
63 didn't want to. I didn't want to be shot because I was worried he might, you know, be worried I
64 could identify him." So, you know, there was a little judgement on that persons' part. But I was
65 like, "No, I survived this. So, I did this right." You know?

66 D: You did do it right.

67 K: Yes, yes. That's what I thought, too.

68 D: Mhmm.

69 K: And so then, here I am laying down. When I first laid down, before I put the sweatshirt over
70 my head, I noticed that it was, you know, dark. It was summer time. There were stars in the sky.
71 It was just a surreal moment. And then I had the sweatshirt over my face. And he then, you
72 know, I could hear him zipping his, it, it sounded like a zipper windbreaker. And then he, you
73 know, and then his pants of course came down and you could hear the zipper and, and that's
74 when he raped me. I don't know where the gun was at that time. I'm sure it was very close by.
75 And it was a really weird thing that happened, like as this was happening, I could almost
76 visualize myself even though my, you know, my face was covered. But I could feel myself, like,
77 my body was out of it. Like, I could see myself from up high. And it, it was, I don't know, it was
78 just a really weird feeling. You know?

79 D: Wow.

80 K: Just for that time that he was raping me. He had suggested anal sex. And I said, "No, no, no."
81 You know, just in my head, I was just like, "Get this done." You know? And, and so he, he, he
82 made a comment I remember, like, "Oh, isn't this," you know, "aren't I great or big or?" Blah,
83 blah, blah, you know. And it's like, you know, I didn't answer. But I'm thinking, like, "You're
84 tryna make this a sexual thing when this is a violent act? You're holding a gun nearby. And, you
85 know, this is what you're doing." But, you know. It's a violent act, it's not a sexual act. And the
86 gun just made it that much more possible, in my mind. 'Cause I've known other people, my
87 sister even was assaulted, or tried to. A, a guy came up with a knife to her and she fought and
88 screamed. Whereas when you have a gun held to your head, you do what they say. You know?
89 And, and I guess for me I was very happy that I, you know, like, I almost feel like, about having
90 that sweatshirt over my head, to me that was, over the years of reflecting on this, I, I'm very, I

91 don't even wanna say proud, but just happy that I, that that came to my head. Like, it was a
92 survival thing that just came there when I needed it the most.

93 D: Yes.

94 K: And I made that suggestion to him and he took it and you know, that was a good thing. And
95 then, you know, then it was over. I, you know, here I am, laying on the ground with my you
96 know, my knees kind of spread eagled, naked, with a purple sweatshirt over my head, and there
97 he is, I can hear him zipping up. And then he said, "Don't you move for five minutes, or I'm
98 gonna shoot you." And you know, then, "Okay." Then I didn't hear anything and I'm wondering,
99 "Okay, he said five minutes. I don't know what five minutes is." Then I start wondering, "Well,
100 what if he changes his mind is, and comes back and wants to kill me because he did- doesn't
101 want any witnesses?" So, I'm really nervous about what five minutes is. Do I stay? Do I leave?
102 Whatever. So, what I did, is I slowly moved one of my legs, just a little bit because I thought if
103 he was there, he'd probably say, "Don't you move." And I didn't hear anything, so then I slowly
104 took the shirt off my head and looked around, I didn't see him. I saw my pile of clothes next to
105 me. And I was gonna put 'em on. And I thought, "No way! I'm getting the hell home. Quick!
106 Now! Before he changes his mind and comes and shoots me." So, I grabbed my clothes, I looked
107 left and right down the alley, didn't see anything. And then, so I ran zig-zag home because I was
108 really, I really was afraid he was gonna shoot me. And so, I ran home, came and saw the garage
109 was still open, of course the, you know, the garage door. I ran into the back door, I pounded on
110 the door and my son was there. At that time, he was fourteen years old.

111 D: Oh my gosh.

112 K: Can you imagine what it is for a fourteen-year-old son to open the door and see his mother
113 there standing naked? And that's when I broke down and cried.

114 D: Oh.

115 K: I said, "Justin, call the police now! I was just robbed and raped." And so then the police came
116 and they were there fast, but, you know, you feel like it's an eternity too. And you know, there's
117 sperm dripping down my legs and you know, it's just like, you know, I wanted to get clean, but
118 they said if, "If we're going to the hospital, it's really better if, if you wait, 'til you clean
119 yourself." And, and so they took me right away. And my son came with me. We went to Family
120 Hospital at that time. That was the one hospital in that area, at that time, that was had, that had
121 trained staff that could do the evidence collection for sexual assault.

122 D: Where is Family Hospital?

123 K: Wait, no, I'm sorry. You know what? We went to Sinai Samaritan.

124 D: Okay.

125 K: I'm sorry.

126 D: That's okay.

127 K: It was not Family, my son was born in Family, that's why I got that mixed up. So no, we went
128 to, to Sinai Samaritan and that's where they had a nurse that was trained to collect the evidence.
129 And, and the sad thing is, there was one nurse on call and there were three women ahead of me.
130 So, I had to wait for hours and hours to be seen. And, you know, it, it's really, how sad. I think
131 that was the time when there were more budget cuts and, and lot of the family services for
132 medical treatment were being cut. And I just, you know, working with peace and justice issues,
133 that was just really appalling to me.

134 D: Where is Mount Sinai Samaritan located?

135 K: That is downtown Milwaukee. I'm tryna think, I wanna say on Kilbourn or Clybourn or?

136 D: Okay, okay.

137 K: It, it's still there, yeah.

138 D: Okay.

139 K: And I think now more hospitals are trained to collect the evidence but this was, I think that
140 was the, the specialty hospital to collect evidence for prosecuting sexual assault survivors.

141 D: Wow, and you said three more people, women, were waiting before you?

142 K: Yes.

143 D: Oh my god.

144 K: Yeah.

145 D: Three other women had been raped that night?

146 K: Yes. That we know of, that we know of. Yeah. So, it's, and so you know, the, the process of
147 being there, it, you know we got, I, it, the evidence was collected and you know, they, the, the
148 police officers drove me and my son home after that. And I will tell you that morning, I was so
149 grateful to be alive, colors seemed more vibrant, you know, I think when you survive being held
150 at gun point, robbed, and raped, you see life maybe a little bit more differently. I met other
151 women who also had this, through a support group. And some women, and also men and
152 children, go through this, it's not just women who are raped, some never get, can get through
153 their day. And I was grateful to have support of family and friends and coworkers and I did go to
154 a support group. The other thing about that though is that I had to wait about two or three days
155 before I could even get through on their phone line, 'cause they didn't have enough money to
156 have their own phone line. Again, budget cuts, the priorities of our government paying for you
157 know, support groups versus weapons and military to hurt people. So, that was one thing that I
158 used my music connection and I had a concert, a benefit concert to raise money so that the

159 support group could have their own phone line. So that women who had had this happen to them
160 didn't have to wait for a couple days to get through. So, I felt really good about that.

161 D: Good for you!

162 K: Yeah, yeah that was a good feeling. And then, you know, I also, the next day, the police were
163 canvassing and asking neighbors, you know, if they had seen or heard anything or found
164 anything and, and, you know, it just became aware that, that, to me, that people needed to know
165 that this can happen anywhere. And is there a educational forum that one can do to educate
166 people, just, you know, as far as things one could do just for prevention? So, so I, I was involved
167 in that for quite a few years and still am, actually. And then I'm very active with gun violence
168 prevention work, too. I volunteered with peace and justice groups and, and with WAVE and
169 other groups, so that's, that's a lot of what happened. Unfortunately, it took years before the case
170 was brought to trial. Well, this is what happened is that, so that happened in August of 1990. I
171 was asked to be involved in a line-up in December of 1990 because there was a person that had
172 done the same kind of thing, following somebody getting out of their car. And so, there, there
173 was a guy in the line-up and I, you know, he, because, his build you know, like when he was on
174 top of me, I could tell his, his build. And so, because I never saw his face, I asked him to say the
175 words, "Don't move, or I'm gonna shoot you." And I said, "Well that person would be eighty
176 percent," I could say, "by the voice." And I was later told that that person that I said was eighty
177 percent was the person that six other women, his DNA was positive for that. My DNA
178 unfortunately disintegrated after those years of waiting. So, my case was never resolved. But, in
179 my head, it was because that's the person that I said was eighty percent by the voice and by his
180 build. So, I do know that he is in jail and I did find out that he had been out on, he had been
181 accused and put in jail before for raping and he was out and did it again and again and again and

182 again. And I also found out by going to the trial, I met each of those six women and we hugged.

183 And the gun that he used on me was a gun that he stole from a PI in her glove compartment. He

184 raped her too, but he took her gun and used it on the next couple vic- survivors, including me.

185 The, the police officer's kind of figured out the chronological order of how—

186 D: PI, private investigator.

187 K: There was a private investigator, she had a gun and, and he apparently that, that gun was

188 taken from her and used on others. So, it's, yeah. So, it's, it's, so many lives were affected by

189 that, you know.

190 D: What would you say to someone who recently experienced rape or, by gun point or someone

191 who's been injured by someone with a gun and survived?

192 K: I would say, number one, do whatever it is that you need to do to get through the day, or even

193 the next minute. That's number one. And also, if you are fortunate enough to have caring friends

194 or family, coworkers, you know, ask for help. Don't be afraid to say, you know, "I can't come in

195 today." Or, "I need to leave early." Or, "I need to go for a walk and just cry." Or whatever. Just

196 be good to yourself. You know, that's really important. I do remember while I was waiting for

197 hours in the hospital, to be examined for the evidence, my son was with me. And he had this, he

198 had a Grateful Dead shirt on, you know, he was a teenager and he was into the Grateful Dead

199 and stuff. And I was sitting there and you know, he was actually really, he was beating himself

200 up, saying, "Why didn't I come out? Why didn't I come out when, when you were in the garage?

201 I could've saved you." And I, and I said, "But if you would've stumbled upon us, that guy

202 might've shot both of us. You know, don't do this to yourself." But he went through, it seemed

203 like the stages, really quickly of anger, revenge, questioning and all that. But then, when we were

204 in that hospital room, I kept saying, "Oh, I'm so grateful, I'm so grateful I'm alive. I'm so

205 grateful, so grateful!” And then I noticed, so Justin’s got that Grateful dead shirt on. (laughter)
206 So, so we, you know, it made us both laugh. You know? So, so that was, that was nice. So, so
207 like, in that case, humor lightened it up a little because I’m a pretty serious person anyway. And
208 so, you know, just do what you need to do to get through the day. Like, I will tell you, for I’d say
209 eight to ten years, I could not drive into a garage again.

210 D: Wow.

211 K: No, I would not go into my garage. I had special permission not to. And then, also, I bought
212 myself a clear shower curtain because I was super jumpy and if someone came up behind me and
213 say, “Hey! How are you?” You know, they’d tap me on the shoulder, I would jump a mile high. I
214 was real paranoid. And I do remember too, like, the first year, if I would go out a door, I would
215 not just walk out a door. I would look left and right before I’d walk through a door. I’m, I would
216 just be very paranoid. I need to know my surroundings, I need to know what’s coming up. I’m
217 still that way, but not to the degree I was back then.

218 D: Mhmm.

219 K: And like, flashbacks I remember shortly after the incident, my husband came back from Italy
220 ‘cause his, his dad had passed away and I know I was lying in bed and then all of a sudden, I had
221 a flashback that there was a gun to my head, that silver gun was to my head. And you know, and
222 I think it was actually triggered because my husband kind of gently put his, his head next to
223 mine.

224 D: Oh wow.

225 K: But because the touch up by the side of the head, it turned into a gun and I freaked out. You
226 know, so I mean, those kind of things happen. They, they don’t happen as much anymore. And I
227 will say to people who’ve gone through this, time heals, but it doesn’t erase. ‘Cause I will never

228 be the same person that I was. I-I, the way I see this is that I'm a book and another page is turned
229 with time, with let's say with gun legislation, if something passes that's positive for survivors,
230 whatever it is, there's another page that closes in my book, but it's never ended. You know, you
231 will never be the same when, when you've been a survivor of gun violence and you know, and I
232 work and volunteer with a lot of people who've lost loved ones to guns. And when I hear their
233 experiences, you know, I have a great deal of empathy and I'm grateful that I work and volunteer
234 for change, but there's also a little part of me that feels guilty that I lived through it, when I hear
235 of the loss of others. And it's kind of sad because I, you know, like I feel like I was allowed to
236 live through this and maybe because of what I do, hopefully but it still doesn't take away the
237 sorrow that I hear when, when other people have lost loved ones. It's, it's just so sad and also,
238 when I hear on the news of mass rapes. For instance, in other countries, when military people use
239 rape as a tactic, and you hear of children being raped, grandmas. I mean, my assailant raped a
240 woman who could've been his mother's age. You know, things like that, it just, it just breaks
241 your heart. And, you know, because I know what it went through, what, you know, what I went
242 through and I consider myself pretty strong, but you know, it's, it's really an awful thing. And,
243 and my son also, as he got older developed a mental illness. And he also was assaulted sexually.
244 D: Oh, no.

245 K: So, I mean, you know, that, having known what I went through and loving him so deeply, and
246 he was my rock through that experience, and then to have people take advantage of him because
247 of his mental illness and, and sexually assault him. I mean, like, how can people live with
248 themselves doing that? How do they even think about doing things like that? That's you know,
249 that, that's stuff I struggle with. And those are the dark days, but then I'm surrounded with

250 people who, like yourself, bring this courage and energy and love and determination to make
251 change. So that, hopefully, one day, no one will have to experience these things.

252 D: And that's what you do.

253 K: Oh, thank you.

254 D: You're welcome. What would you say to lawmakers, what would you like to say to them?

255 K: Oh, god. Please have empathy and listen to us and make changes so that we don't have to go
256 through this. You know, you just, you just sometimes wonder, like, "Don't they get it?" You
257 know, there's such common sense things people can do and, you know, I mean, background
258 checks and you know, the, the, the risk factor of if someone's suicidal, if, if, you know, taking
259 away the guns temporarily so that you can save a life, things like that. That's just common sense.
260 It's not taking away your gun rights, it's, it's common sense. We live in community. And so,
261 there's reasons we have red lights, green lights, yellow lights. There's reasons we have to go
262 through TSA. So, why can't that same factor be held to guns, you know? I mean, it's a no-
263 brainer in my mind and I don't understand why, why legislators don't see that. Some do, of
264 course. But I, I think we need to, we need to talk and they need to listen. And you know, there's,
265 hand-in-hand, it works.

266 D: Is there anything you'd like to add?

267 K: Hmm. (pause) I know I think, I think you, I think, no.

268 D: Do you forgive the man who raped you?

269 K: Oh, boy. That's, that's a question there. I will tell you after I was raped and robbed and went
270 through many years of support and support group and stuff, I started to speak at correctional
271 facilities to youth in, I think it was Racine or Kenosha.

272 D: Mhmm.

273 K: Racine, I believe it was. And very powerful. The, the, I mean these, these kids open up and
274 they ask you deep questions and I was asked that question as well, have I forgiven this person? I
275 am normally a very forgiving person. But, I have not forgiven him. And the reason is, is that he
276 denied it. He, after watching six women, whose DNA did match 99.99999%, that's what DNA
277 does, he denied it to every single one of them. And he said he never did this. And so, I, I have
278 not forgiven him because he hasn't accepted responsibility for what he did. And he's in jail for
279 320 years because Judge Maxine White, I was in the court room.

280 D: Good for her.

281 K: She said, "You didn't take classes or treatment programs that were offered in jail the first time
282 you did this. You turned it down. And when you got released, you did it again and again and
283 again." And so, she gave him the maximum and so, he will never do this again. And I am a very
284 forgiving person, anyone who knows me, I give someone the benefit of the doubt. I, I consider
285 myself very kind and understanding and I like that about myself. But, I have not forgiven him
286 because he has not accepted and admitted to it. So, and I'm okay with that. Some people
287 question, like, "Ooh, doesn't that tear up inside of you, that you haven't forgiven him?" No, I,
288 'cause I, I'm proud of what I've accomplished with my actions and what I've done as a result of
289 this. I've met some just amazing people through this awful situation, people so strong, who
290 you'd never believe would be. So, I'm okay with that. And you know, if, if, it's up to him and his
291 maker to figure that one out. But I'm, I'm okay with not forgiving him.

292 D: And did you have anything else you want to add? Thank you. (laughter) That was wonderful.

293 K: Oh, you're welcome.

294 (laughter)