

1 GVP9 Tanja Dixon

2 D: Okay, and please state your name.

3 T: Tanja Dixon, I prefer to be called Trise.

4 D: Okay, Trise, just speak closer to the mic.

5 T: Okay.

6 D: And Tris, you lost someone to gun violence. Who did you lose?

7 T: My son, Anthony Daniels, we call him BaeBae.

8 D: (laughter) BaeBae, and can you reenact or tell us about that day when you found out that he  
9 was gone?

10 T: Yes. I had seen my son earlier that day, he always picked up the kids. All my grandkids go to  
11 the same school, includin' his son—this was his son's first year. And so, I had seen Anthony,  
12 about four that afternoon at my mom's house, we always congregated at my mom's house. And  
13 he said, he said, "Mommy I'm not feeling good." Anthony had Sickle-Cell Disease, so he was  
14 like, "Mommy, I'm not feeling good, I'm hurtin' and I'll see you tomorrow when I come and  
15 pick up Katrell." That's my other grandson. So, I said, "Okay, baby, I love you." He's like, "I  
16 love you mom, duce, I'll see you tomorrow." So, all that day, just after 4:20, you know I'm  
17 going through regular routine, so I get a call about, had to be about 7:30, "Have you heard from  
18 Anthony?" I said, "Nah, I ain't heard from BaeBae, why?" "Well, we got a call," this is one of  
19 his ex-girlfriends, "I got a call that [his friend] got shot."—that's his friend that he was with. I  
20 said, "Okay, well where is BaeBae?" "We don't know, he's not answerin' his phone." So, I start  
21 immediately calling his phone and textin' him, I said, so the last text I sent him 'cause it started  
22 going to voicemail, last text I sent him, I said, "Baby, you need to call me. 'Cause I'm hearing  
23 something and I need to talk to you." So, that had to be, maybe the last time was like at eight, so

24 'bout nine, after I watched the nine o'clock news, I see this shooting [Sunset Heights] and I'm  
25 going like, "Aw, I feel." They showed a car, you know, half body bag, you know, covered up  
26 and whatever, so I said, "Ooh, I feel for this family." I said, "It's too much damn violence going  
27 on in Milwaukee." Ten o'clock news, I'm watching the same thing. And I'm—but then at the ten  
28 o'clock news, something kind of tugged at my heart. And I said, "Wow," I said, "BaeBae ain't  
29 called me." And he usually, he'll call or text me right away, so I asked my husband. He said,  
30 "Well baby, you know BaeBae is, if he don't talk to you tonight, he'll call you tomorrow and let  
31 you know what's going on." I said, "But they're talkin' 'bout somebody got shot." And he said,  
32 "Well, you ain't heard from [his friend] either, so it can't be true." So, I get ready for bed. My  
33 mom called me at eleven, 'bout eleven. She said, "The detective is down here and they won't tell  
34 me, they need to talk to you, it's concerning Anthony." My heart fell. And she said, "They don't  
35 have your address, only address they have is this." I said, "Well, send 'em up." So, I woke up my  
36 husband, and I woke up my oldest son. Part of me knew what he was gonna tell me, but part of  
37 me was hoping that he was gonna just say Anthony was either in the hospital or in jail  
38 somewhere. So, when the man came, my husband went and opened the door. (Pause) The man  
39 came in here and looked at me, and he said, "Are you Tanja Daniels?" And I said, "I need to  
40 know where my son at, what hospital he at? Where y'all holding him at?" He said, "Before I can  
41 give you any information, I need to know are you Tanja Daniels? Are you Anthony Daniels  
42 mother?" And I said, "Yes, I am! Where is my baby?" "I need you to look at a picture on my  
43 phone." I said, "I'm not looking at nothing on your phone, where's my baby at?" I said, "He can  
44 look at it." I point to my husband. M' husband looked at the phone, he couldn't even look at me  
45 in the face. All he said was, with his head down, "That's our baby, he's dead, baby." My heart  
46 felt so bad. I didn't know that my daughter was in the dinin' room, all I heard was—she had a

47 newborn baby—all I heard was the baby fall. She fell to the ground and dropped the baby. My  
48 son started hitting the walls. And I thought, “Detective, no. That’s not him. ‘Cause my baby  
49 would never be shot. ‘Cause he go to the gun range, he knows how to shoot. He’ll never get shot,  
50 ‘cause he told me that he got a gun to protect his self.” My husband said, “No,” he said, “Come  
51 on baby, sit down.” I said, “I can’t sit down.” So, I finally settled down and he said the coroner,  
52 the medical examiner is on the phone, they need to talk to you. So, she said, “First of all, I need  
53 to know, the detective said you identified this--Anthony as your son.” I said, “Yes.” And she  
54 said, “I know it’s painful, so I’ll—do he have any kind of records? He ever been arrested?” I  
55 said, “Yes, he has.” She said, “Well, if you don’t mind, I’ll identify him through the  
56 fingerprints.” I said, “Yes and when would I be able to see my son.” She said “‘Cause it was a  
57 homicide, we had to do an autopsy before letting—before we let you see him.” So, I didn’t get  
58 to, I didn’t even get to see my baby until the day before we got ready to bury him. And it was  
59 painful. I felt like, I used to always tell my kids, “Y’all got four pieces of my heart. It’s in four.”  
60 I felt like that one piece was just yanked out. And I went through the motions, you know, the  
61 people coming by and I just all up to the funeral, I just still wouldn’t believe it, did the vigil and I  
62 still didn’t believe that was him. I didn’t—I’m sorry.

63 D: I understand.

64 T: I didn’t believe it was him. I kept sayin’, “No, he gonna pop up. ‘Mom, that wasn’t me.” And  
65 then, I didn’t even know how many times he was shot ‘til I got the medical examiner’s—well the  
66 death certificate. My baby was shot three times in the back, he never made it out the car. So, he  
67 never even had a chance to defend himself. And that hurts me to this day. Like, maybe he  
68 woulda had a chance.

69 D: Did they capture who killed him?

70 T: They got one suspect. But the one that actually shot BaeBae, they don't have him. 'Cause  
71 they, they said seem like he's a step or two ahead of them.

72 D: So, he's on the run?

73 T: Yeah, and they actually—him and his friend was actually set up by a 52-year-old woman.

74 D: Do they-- did they find out why?

75 T: Drugs. His friend was selling his pills. And my baby was a ride or die. He also always said,  
76 that's my ride, I ride or die with my friends, they're my brothers. And to this day, I always say, I  
77 think my baby died protecting his friend. Yeah and only thing they too—the police said it was a  
78 robbery gone bad. Only thing they took from Anthony, if it was a robbery like that, only thing  
79 they took from-- him and his brother, my oldest son, they had a necklace with praying hands on  
80 it. Together they went and bought those gold necklaces together, they took that. That was the  
81 only thing—his money was still in his wallet, his medication was still around his neck, 'cause he  
82 had the little pill bottle things, the only thing they took from him—that wasn't a robbery gone  
83 bad, I don't care what nobody say.

84 D: Hmm. So, do you think they took the necklace as, almost like a, a token?

85 T: I think so. I think so, 'cause they robbed [his friend], they took everything that [his friend]  
86 had.

87 D: So, they had probably assumed your son didn't have any money, maybe.

88 T: That's right, 'cause he was the driver.

89 D: Right.

90 T: So, yeah. So, they—I think, my oldest son keep saying, “Ma, betcha they looked back and  
91 was like, ‘Ah, let's just snatch that. That'll look nice, it's gold.” It was gold. And, but he got his

92 necklace back though, because my son, my oldest son, the day we buried him, he put his angel,  
93 his necklace in there. So, he still, he still protected.

94 D: So, for someone who just lost a child to gun violence, what would you say to him or her?

95 T: To my son?

96 D: To someone who just lost—

97 T: Lost—

98 D: A child to gun violence, what would you say to him or her?

99 T: I would tell them that it's okay to cry. Because this is something that you lost, this is  
100 something that you carried, this is a child that you carried, but forgive. (phone goes off) Please  
101 forgive. Because it consumed me, being mad, it consumed me. Being mad at a person that did  
102 this thing, I didn't know him. So, forgive, not forget. And remember, if you have other kids,  
103 please let those kids know that you didn't die with your other child. That's the most important  
104 thing to me because I did that. I—my kids thought that I, when he died, I died. Because for  
105 weeks I couldn't even function. So, yes. Let your other, surviving, kids know that (phone goes  
106 off) "I'm here. I'm still here." Ya know, "And I got us." You got to let them know that. But yes,  
107 you have to, you have to forgive the person that did this. Because—

108 D: That's beautifully said. Name a, a time, a, a good memory that you have of him.

109 T: Oh my god.

110 D: Pops in your head.

111 T: A night when my husband, he went to sleep, and so me and my three oldest kids, Anthony,  
112 Antoine, and Maggie. We were just sittin' listenin' to music, drinking drinks and he got up, him  
113 and my oldest son, they got up, they were dancing to the old Temptations and then Chris Brown,  
114 *Rock You Back to Sleep*, or whatever it is. Oh my god! He did this little dance. "Rock you back,"

115 and he was singing! And that sticks 'cause he, that was the moment, that was one of our family  
116 moments where it was just me and my kids. Even though my youngest wasn't there. It was me  
117 and my kids and he, he's like, "Mama, this for you." And he was singing, and I, actually,  
118 somebody had the video and they'd put it on Facebook and I saved it.

119 D: Aww.

120 T: So, when I wanna go back, when I wanna hear his voice. I go back to that video and I see my  
121 baby dancing, at his happiest. And he was happy. He was gonna get married.

122 D: Aww.

123 T: So, yeah. He was a proud new dad of a kid that was going to school for the first time. He was  
124 ready to do all that.

125 D: Oh wow!

126 T: Yeah, so yeah, that's my memory of him-- singing and dancing to that song. Oh my god!  
127 Like, he was happy. (laughter) He was so happy. He loved The Temptations, he would just bust  
128 out. Like on one of my lowest days, I feel so tired, he come here, "Mama, 'My girl, my girl...'"  
129 (laughter) so yeah, and his smile was just to die for.

130 D: Well, thank you.

131 T: You're welcome.