

1 GVP Lamar Harris

2 D: Please state your name.

3 L: Lamar Harris, also known as Harris McCloud.

4 D: Okay and, Mr. McCloud, how old are you?

5 L: I'm 30 years old.

6 D: You look good for thirty.

7 L: Appreciate that.

8 D: (laughter) And I know you've experienced gun violence will, are you willing to share your
9 story?

10 L: Yeah, I could sti-I could share a story.

11 D: Okay, please proceed.

12 L: So, when I was younger, can't really recall what age, maybe around thirteen, twelve or
13 thirteen, my friend he had a, it was his birthday. It was a party. It probably was about thirty to
14 fifty of us outside, you know, just hanging on the corner, doin' what kids do. And so, he must've
15 got bored or somethin', he decides he wants to point his little laser gun at somebody and, you
16 know, it was funny. We did it to like four or five cars, their reactions was funny. Some people
17 would swerve and do stuff. I know that sounds reckless, but that was what was trippin' us out.
18 But, so then a cat in a pick-up truck, he pulls up and he got a bigger one to point back, you know.
19 And it's actually functional, you know. So, you know everybody runs, so we go through a back
20 cut that we always used to cut through, w-whatever, we ran through the meadows, there was
21 armed security or police, whatever. We just, we would just run through that. But this dude, he
22 must've knew where we was goin', he must've telegraphed it, I don't know. He pulls up on the
23 other side of the block and now he's chasin' us down. So, now at this point, it's like me and two

24 other friends. And, one of m-one of my homie's kicks the door in on somebody's house. I
25 apologize whoever that was, I don't remember who you were, but. So, we run in their basement,
26 we just hid there and dude never came in there. So, that's just how we rolled that one out.

27 (laughter) And that's just one story, but you know.

28 D: What would you say to someone, how do you think we can lower gun violence in
29 Milwaukee?

30 L: Well, I don't-I don't think guns necessarily come down to, to people havin' vendettas or ill-
31 will. It just, when you're in a situation where your money might be tight, you do things that you
32 don't really rationalize if your money was good. You know? Like, I know a lot of scenarios
33 people feel like they gotta protect themselves 'cause they might be hustlin' or doin' somethin'
34 else. But if they had that kind of money and that kind of income and resources, you wouldn't
35 really feel pressed to do that, you'll feel like the, the, the risk is way bigger than the reward at
36 that point. But until then, it's kind of gonna be a cycle of this and that 'cause people gonna try to
37 get money however they can when desperation's there.

38 D: Hmm, so you think, so are you saying that desperation is why we have gun violence?

39 L: It's, it's a lot of that. I mean, it's a lack of a lot of things. Like, I know people you know, I had
40 a little sixteen, seventeen dollar an hour job, people thought that was like, the, the, the moon to
41 them. But like, really if you look at that, that's not, that's barely even functional. Like, most
42 people, they say most people don't even have four hundred dollars for an emergency. But like,
43 and four hundred dollars really not a lot of money, like, I done had a chunk of money at one time
44 and I blew that ridiculously quick. And that was probably like, a quarter of somebody's yearly
45 salary.

46 D: Wow.

47 L: Like, and that just showed me how much, how fast, you know money come and go. So, yeah.
48 I-it-it-it's deeper than that. It's deeper than just, just gangs or, or, or just young people being
49 bored. It's that too. It's also whenever you bored you get in trouble. I had situations when I was
50 younger, I had to do probation and stuff like that. And, when you don't got nothin' to do,
51 especially nobody to supervise you, you gonna do whatever you wanna do. Like, I, I could go on
52 and on. Like, it's, I had no supervision. Not sayin' my mom wasn't doin' her job, but she can't
53 watch me all the time, so you know.

54 D: Right.

55 L: So.

56 D: So, y-you mentioned you can get in trouble easily. Is it easy to get a gun off the street?

57 L: Relatively. I mean, it-it's easier than what you would think. It's not like you just walk down
58 the block and just go grab one, but if you ask the right person, they'll direct you. Especially if it's
59 somebody who really don't have good judgement and they just don't, they don't really, they not
60 gonna filter why they givin' you a gun? "You want a gun? Okay, I got it." "You got the money?
61 Okay, here." You know, like they, they don't wanna no why you doin' it, why you gettin' it.
62 They don't wanna be connected to it after that. So, I mean.

63 D: How much, I'm just curious since you said that, how much does a gun go for on the streets?

64 L: Well it depends what kind of quality it is.

65 D: How about price range from the low end to the high end?

66 L: I mean, well if you gettin' like a little Saturnigh-Saturday Night Special, you probably can get
67 that off somebody for like a hundred bucks. It's not reliable, it might jam, you know, the a-the
68 sights might be off. But you can get it, you know, so. I, and even if you took guns away on the
69 streets like, even if you went away and say, you know, "Oh, we gonna take everybody guns,"

70 somebody gonna have one. I seen the dude make a, he made a Mac10 out of a nail gun and spare
71 parts. And it shot, automatic.

72 D: Whoa.

73 L: So, if you know how to make a gun, you can't really stop that.

74 D: What would you say to legislators on how we could reduce gun violence?

75 L: Kind of back to what I said before. Just puttin' revenue back, investin' back into the, the
76 communities. You know how they talkin' about gentrification and everything like that, and part
77 of that is is they come back in, they take everything that's broken down, they strip it, they redo it,
78 jack the price up, now you can't live there. But, if people invest back into situations where now
79 people got jobs, they can afford to stay in these communities, or even own somethin' in these
80 communities. You don't have to lose your culture in it, or lose your identity. You know, but, you
81 know it's deeper than that too.

82 D: You mentioned culture and identity. Do you think education about self or our culture could
83 help?

84 L: Yeah, I th-I think the problem though, with like, the way education is set up now, they don't
85 introduce any real like, life skills. Like, like actual real-life skills, like, it's a lot of things once
86 you get out of high school, like once you on your own that you really don't consider. Like, even
87 you might've even thought about it, like, "I'ma get a job. I'ma get a place. Yeah, I know I got
88 rent, I got this, I got that." But there's things that pop up unexpectedly. And if you don't got
89 somebody navigatin' you, tellin' you how to plan for that. Like, you know, in our, in our
90 neighborhoods, especially growin' up, everybody tell you, "Oh, your credit don't matter." Until
91 your credit matters. You know? And then, now you lookin' like, damn, I wish I didn't go off
92 that, I could've been up. But, they don't introduce things like that, they don't tell you about

93 stocks, bonds, annuities and everything like that. That's what suburban rich kids is gettin' taught.
94 And that's how they get out and they, they come out on a good foot and you really, you can take
95 more risk in that situation. Now, if you really wanna do somethin' that's out of the norm and
96 chase your dream or somethin', you can do that. And they got family members they could fall
97 back on, they good financially. So, you don't have that structure or that support.

98 D: That's a good point. What would you say to someone who you mentioned when you were a
99 young kid and you were shooting at, pretending to be shooting with this laser gun, what would
100 you say to youth in reference to guns?

101 L: Well, I mean even then, I knew the reality of it. But, maybe the consequences wasn't real
102 enough. Like, I was still reckless at that point. That was before I even actually had to like, sit
103 down and like, you know, get put away and do stuff like that, so. I think when you that young,
104 everything just excitin'. You know, like, somebody give you the right thing to be excited about,
105 you probably be better off. But, like I said, when, when you bored, opportunity can be trouble,
106 you know. The difference between opportunity bein' trouble is when you got opportunity in the
107 right actions, then that turns into luck. Because then you, you know, you put yourself in
108 positions. That's why people always be like, "Ah, he's lucky." Like, nah, he's puttin' himself in
109 a position for opportunity to happen. That's what luck is. But, you know. We, when you got a
110 bunch of other things to fill that void, not properly, it's just gonna repeat until, everybody gotta
111 learn the hard way. Which is unfortunate for us, but like, that's how it goes. Like, you know,
112 everything sounds cliché 'til then.

113 D: So, where is the meadows located?

114 L: Excuse me?

115 D: Where is the meadows?

116 L: Oh, that's in the Brown Deer area, North Ridge area.

117 D: Okay.

118 L: So, you know, people don't really know. Some people know, a lot of people know, but some
119 people don't realize, like it's actually, it's a whole, it's a whole ghetto out there. A whole low-
120 income housing complex, multiple, not even just one.

121 (pause)

122 D: But I want it for the story.

123 L: Yeah, I know. (laughter) That's why I was tryna break it down like that, you know.

124 D: Okay, did you have anything that you'd like to add?

125 L: No. No, no. That was it.

126 D: Thank you!

127 L: Yeah, no problem.

128 D: Yeah.

129 L: I hope that was good, though.

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131 L: Aw, no.

132 D: I'm ready.

133 L: Alright, so I was about seven or eight years old, this was when I was livin' [Franklin Heights].

134 We was in the back, cookin' out, we did that a lot. And I was so used to hearin' gun fire and

135 stuff, like, I didn't even assess the situation. Like I w-I think I was just numb to the whole thing

136 at this point. It was just regular. So, I'm chillin' outside and at this point, it was like, one of those

137 scenarios where everybody goes in to get somethin'. So, I'm still outside by myself in the

138 backyard. I heard these two cars just, goin', they just, I can hear them gassin' it down the street.

139 Gassin' it. But they shootin' at each other and I remember just sittin there starin', I don't even
140 know why I was starin', but I just sat there and just looked at it. I jus-just lookin' at 'em. They
141 kept gettin' closer and closer and closer, they get to right in front of my house, I just remember
142 my grandma just pullin' me off my feet, she dragged me to the house, like. And that was just
143 like, somethin', some of the norm, like, you know. People, New Years, be shootin' right next to
144 your house, shotgun out, normal. Drive by, normal. You know, normal, this is all normal. Police
145 comin' to look for somebody with guns out, normal. Gun pulled on me and my mom, normal.
146 Like, don't assess it no more, like, I don't go home like, "Man, I can't believe they did that to
147 me." Like, what's the most recent thing? I was downtown one day, I was waitin' for my, my
148 kids' mom pick me up and she's pullin' up to the corner, I'm walkin' across the street to like,
149 you know, m-like, meet her halfway and the police pull up, comin' from like, what is that? Like
150 comin' from that Fond du Lac, crossin' by the, the new books-, they comin' from that way, they
151 comin' from west. And they come down to-towards east whatever, they pull up on me, me and
152 Chico Manolo. They say, "Oh, we heard shots in the area." But they talkin' about three, four
153 blocks north, but we three, four blocks south. And you just seen us come from west, goin' east,
154 so why would we be doin—it didn't, it didn't make no sense. But you know, they didn't even ask
155 us questions, get out the car right away, start tryna search people.

156 D: What?

157 L: Yeah, I wasn't lettin' 'em search me. But before you know, I can say anything to speak on his
158 behalf, or get him to say anything, they already tryna go you know, "Pull up your shirt, let's see
159 if there's a gun." And that's not, you know, that happens all the time. I been chillin'. [Sherman
160 Park] chillin', somebody just, police drop by, "Oh there's been a shootin', you guys wanna pull
161 up your shirts for me?" Normal shit, you know, it's illegal, but it happens every day, it's just

162 normal. And some people don't even question it, you just go on home. 'Cause you just don't

163 want the in-you don't want the interaction. You like, just, just go. You know what I mean, so.

164 D: Wow. (pause) Thank you.

165 L: Yeah.

166 D: Man!