

1 GVP11 Roy Washington

2 D: Please state your name.

3 R: My name is Roy Washington.

4 D: And Roy, how old are you?

5 R: (laughter) 52.

6 D: Okay. (laughter) And Roy have you, have—have you experienced gun violence?

7 R: Yes, I have, I have experienced gun violence.

8 D: Could you please share your story?

9 R: Okay, I grew up on the north side of Milwaukee. 53206 area code, which now- nowadays
10 everybody is saying, like one of the worst area codes in the city. But ya know, it was a little
11 different when I was a kid, in the 53206 area code, ya know. But, ya know, was probably about
12 10 or 11 years old, maybe 12. We used to raid the all the trees in the neighborhood, as far as the
13 pear trees, plum trees, everything like that. Ya know, climbing up in people's trees, gettin' a bag
14 full of stuff—plums and stuff, and then ya know, doing what kids do, did at that time. Going
15 back to the club house, ya know, havin' a meal off of it. Then, one night this one guy came
16 storming out of the house, ya know, with a shot gun. Now, we jumped out of trees and was
17 runnin' down the alley and he just started unloading. And, ya know, you can—you can feel the
18 shots roaring past us.

19 D: Wow.

20 R: Ya know, so like I said, we were just kids. Ya know, but luckily no one was hit. Ya know,
21 that was a moment, ya know, you see your life flashin', ya know, in, in your mind, ya know.

22 Having live shells roaring past you, your, your head. So that was a scary moment. Also had a

23 moment where I think the Lord intervened, I think some kids tried to rob me one night. I used to

24 go play basketball at the, at the, at the courts at nights. You know, go up there, ‘cause I was a
25 pretty good player back in my day, nice to go up there just to practice and shoot around. And
26 three young men came up there to the courts, that one night I was up there and they asked me if I
27 had any money or if I could loan them some money, said, “Nah, I don’t have anything.” And you
28 know, they standing around, you know, shootin’ the ball a little bit too, like they shootin’ with
29 me. But I can tell that somethin’ else was up. You know, and they said, “You sure you don’t got
30 nothin’ on you.” No, kept asking me stuff like that, said, “Nah.” So then, I just came out with it,
31 “What y’all tryin’ to do? Y’all tryna rob me or somethin’?” They got quiet, then all three of ‘em
32 turned their backs to me. And one of ‘em pulled out, which I assumed to be a gun, ‘cause it just,
33 it just glowed in the moonlight. Ya know? You could tell it was somethin’, some kind of metal or
34 somethin’ but I believe it was a gun. And the guy said, “Hey you seen our face now, man. Too
35 late, you seen my face now.” And so, I was standing there and I think God intervened because
36 then they, the three of them walked to the edge of the court and just was kind of standing around,
37 so I’m like, “Man, do I—do I run? What do I do?” I didn’t know what to do. So, I was kind of a
38 little slow, I picked up the ball and I shot a couple more times. I was watchin’ them and then one
39 of them threw a rock at me. And to me, that was my cue. That was I guess them saying, “Man
40 get outta here!” So, they threw that rock at me and then that’s when I took off. I had a bookb—I
41 remember I had a bookbag layin’ toward the edge of the court. I tried to swoop it in one, get it in
42 one swoop, I missed it. I said, “Bye-bye bookbag, I’m gone.” And I took off running and I was
43 maybe a half a block away, looked back and they weren’t even chasin’ me. So, it was like, I
44 think God touched their heart. And then they just kind of wanted to say, “Why he’s still standing
45 here?” And I think that’s what they said, that’s why the threw somethin’ at me to make me get
46 out of there. And run, I took—I took the hint and I got outta there, but God definitely intervened

47 that night. And I think I wouldn't be here. And I remember the next—that was a Saturday night,
48 I remember that next, next day was a Sunday—I was in church, shoutin' in song. You know, but,
49 yeah, that was two instances, you know, where, you know, violence knocked on my door. You
50 know, and just glad that God was able to spare, spare my life and then did it in the first instance,
51 the life of my friends too, was about four of us and that guy was unloading us, but you know, no
52 one got hurt and we made it out of that alley and turned the corner. So, nothing but God's
53 blessin's on that one.

54 D: When you were robbing the, the different fruit trees—(laughter) and the club house, what area
55 was that around?

56 R: That was on— [North Division], that was our little area that we used to—plenty of trees back
57 then, plenty of plum trees and all kinda stuff, you know, I think it's different now, but back then
58 there was a lotta kids doing it, ya know. Like I said, we all have a little paper bag and ya know,
59 get and get us about maybe 20 plums or something, you know, and go home and put some salt on
60 them bad boys and kick back in the clubhouse and that's, we was kids. That's how we—we'd be
61 outside, we have a great time, you know.

62 D: And where was the clubhouse?

63 R: Man, we had so many clubhouses. We had one in the back of my friends—that's the best
64 clubhouse we ever had. We had one in the back of our friends' house, [North Division] on 19th,
65 right off of Center. And he, he had a neighbor, a old man named Abraham. He was a old military
66 vet and he showed us how to build it. So, we built that clubhouse out of wood and we had like,
67 two rooms in there, we had a nice roof on there, it was—it was nice size, probably about half the
68 size of a garage.

69 D: Wow.

70 R: In his backyard, yeah, then we had, you know, 'cause we made that into a clubhouse, we had
71 file cabinets in there and stuff 'cause back then we was into all kinda stuff. We was into finding
72 UFOs, chasin' UFOs, and investigate the stuff at night so we keep our files and our reports in
73 there. (laughter) And yeah, then we had clubhouses in oh—in the garage one time, or underneath
74 porches—that's, that's how it was comin' up, you know. Yeah, so, you know, we clean out the
75 underneath somebody's porch and, ya know, put some pillows and stuff down there, some old
76 discarded stuff and be lookin' like a little livin' room in there, ya know, down there doing our
77 thing.

78 D: What would you say to legislatures and—about any changes you'd like to see happen with
79 gun laws today?

80 R: Well, I just—I just believe that maybe there could be more, a more thorough check on the
81 mental health of some of these people who's goin' to buyin' these weapons. Like say the guy
82 from Parkland, that Parkland incident really stood out to me, 'cause he—there were so many
83 instances before that that people should've been paying attention to. I forgot how many times—I
84 did the research on 'em when I was doin' my show—police had been called to his house many
85 times and him, incidents between him and his mom. And you could tell he was totally not there,
86 he was quite a few cards short of a deck. Someone like him should not have, you know, be
87 purchasing. And, you know, you see a lot of these cases, a lot of these guys, I don't think they
88 have the mental-- you have to, you have to look at their mental health you know, and before
89 givin' them that kind of weaponry. Know what I mean, why do you need AK-47's and all that?
90 You know what I'm saying. You wanna protect your home, how about havin' a weapon that's
91 suitable for a citizen, not, not—you're not part of some cartel out there, you know. So, that's
92 just—that's just my thoughts on it.

93 D: And is there anything else you'd like to add?

94 R: I'd just like to add that, you know, when, when, we have these young men, people dying in
95 the streets, you know, they're leavin' behind mothers and sisters, dad's. They're leaving behind
96 families, you know, that, that's gonna miss them and that's—and, and we can't reverse that, no
97 matter how, how much sorry you say. They're gone. And all we have is their, you know, their
98 memories. You know, so, please think about that. And then not only them, but if you're the one
99 pulling the trigger, you get sent away now. You may have a daughter or people who gonna miss
100 you as well, so everyone's affected from that situation, so I mean, be gettin' into with somebody,
101 or whatever, ya know, well, buck up. And then go for it. You win some, you lose some, but
102 everybody gets to go home at the end of the day. You know, so, that's, that's, that's just what
103 I'm, what I'm sayin', you know, let's get smarter and, you know, talk it out, or if you gotta
104 tussle, just tussle, but at the end of the day, you know everybody goes home.

105 D: Thank you.

106 R: Thank you.

107 D: That was good.