

- 1 GVP13
- 2 D: Hello. Please state your name.
- 3 C: Colette Shumpert.
- 4 D: And how old are you, if it's okay for me to ask?
- 5 C: Sure, forty-seven.
- 6 D: Okay, Colette. And, have you personally been affected by gun violence?
- 7 C: I have.
- 8 D: And how so?
- 9 C: My son, Michael was killed in December of 2012.
- 10 D: And what happened?
- 11 C: Well, he was killed by his friend or what he assumed to be his friend.
- 12 D/C: [...]
- 13 D: Oh no.
- 14 C: By someone that he thought was his friend. Who in turn said that Michael had committed
- 15 suicide. So, there was an [...] investigation for months, that came behind it. [...]
- 16 D: So, he tried to cover up his killing your son by saying it was a suicide?
- 17 C: Yes.
- 18 D: (scoffs) Wow.
- 19 C: Yeah.
- 20 D: And since that's happened, how would you say you've been getting along?
- 21 C: I would say that it's a journey. That's, what I call life after loss, it's a journey. A new journey.
- 22 It's one that has brought some joy, some pain, and some definite life changes. After my loss, it

23 changed the direction of my life. My thoughts about life have changed. But it's all part of the
24 new journey, a new beginning. So, that's kind of what I would say that it is.

25 D: When you talk about your new journey, your new beginning and you also mentioned about
26 uh, some joy—what was the joy portion of it?

27 C: The joy is, is that in, in the death of my son, I found purpose. I found purpose that would
28 make his life mean even the more although he isn't here. And that brings some joy to see the
29 people that I can help along this journey. [...] Because when you lose a child or when you lose a
30 loved one, 'cause as much as I would like to focus on children. Because of my loss I find that,
31 that people need help no matter who they lost. So sometimes [...] it's just hard to breathe. It's
32 just hard to breathe. And so that's what gives me joy. Even in the midst of tears. In the midst
33 of tears, there can be a piece of joy knowing that although I heard what the person heard, you've
34 been helped. You poured out what you have to help them continue, or even yourself, to run the
35 race of the journey. That has been put before, that has been laid out before you because when
36 you lose a child, it's a journey that you didn't ask for.

37 D: That's true.

38 C: You didn't ask to be a part of it. I call it force fed. You got to eat this thing, no matter what.
39 But what you choose to do with it, will either bring joy or it'll bring continued pain.

40 D: Where did the shooting of your son take place?

41 C: It took place, ya know, it's crazy because I've never been there.

42 D: Oh, wow.

43 C: I refuse to actually go there. But it was off 15th and I can't even think of the street name, I'll
44 have to look. I refuse to go there.

45 D: Okay.

46 C: But it was in an alley, on, off of 15th street. In the, in the inner city [in Lindsay Heights].

47 D: Okay.

48 C: And it was behind a friends' house. If you don't mind, I'll describe it because I think having
49 descriptions of things help people to relate even more.

50 D: I agree.

51 C: And so him and this young man went, well, let me back up. (pause) My son did not initially
52 like this fellow. And so, if I could put a pin in that, sometimes we meet people that we don't gel
53 with and there's reasons why we don't gel with them. But we kind of shut that off because we
54 have been told we should try to make peace and deal with everyone. But his initial feeling was
55 for a reason. That's the way I see it, because we don't know what's coming next. But we force
56 feed a lot as people. Not, not as a culture, but as people, period. Some things we should just let
57 go, allow to happen. And know that it's no fault of ours.

58 D: Right.

59 C: So, but they became friends. The young man befriended him. I think they both had some
60 street knowledge of a whole lot of things that were not necessarily good. But they, they left the
61 auto parts store [in Park West] and they went [towards Lindsay Heights] because my son was
62 getting his car fixed by one of his best friends.

63 D: Okay.

64 C: And so, they sat behind this house waiting for him [his best friend] to get off work and come
65 home. And I don't know what transpired in that vehicle, but I do know that his friend's house
66 that they sat behind, his girlfriend and kids were in the house. And she heard a gunshot. And then
67 she heard somebody come to the door. And maybe some minutes passed, a few minutes, and
68 then her boyfriend, which was my son's best friend, drove up and found him there with the fella.

69 My son was bleeding out of his head. And so that night, I got the call from his girlfriend, my
70 son's girlfriend, and she said, "Ma, Mike's been shot." And I thought to myself, "Okay, this is
71 livable, this is not bad, this is, ya know, something that we can get through." And I said,
72 "Where?" She said, "I don't know, Ma. But they getting ready to take him, I'm afraid." And I
73 said, "Well, where are you?" And so, she told me, and I said, "Well, I'm on my way there." She
74 said, "Nah, Ma, the ambulance is pulling off with him now." She said, "But he waved at me, Ma.
75 He waved at me. I stood up in the ambulance and he waved at me." And I said, "Okay," I said,
76 "Well, they take him to Froedtert?" "Yes. They are going to go to Froedtert." I said, "Okay, I'll
77 meet-- I'll meet them at Froedtert." I got there before, before the ambulance.

78 D: Whoa, you was speeding.

79 C: I don't remember the ride.

80 D: Wow.

81 C: I remember it [being] still. It was still, my whole life was just still. I was moving and I knew
82 in my body that God was moving me. I remember I couldn't find my keys but I felt so
83 motionless. I couldn't get my thoughts together and I wanted to call my family, but I felt as if I
84 shouldn't because I didn't know what was happening and I didn't want my mother to worry and I
85 had so many thoughts that happened at one time, but I remember it was a still place. And, I
86 remember getting there, but on the way there, I made two phone calls. And that was to my
87 mentor, who was a prayer warrior in Alabama and the pastor who licensed me in Illinois to
88 minister. And I said, "I need y'all to pray." I didn't need to be hooked with anybody who
89 couldn't pray. 'Cause I didn't know what I was walking into, but I knew God [was with me] to
90 walk into this. And I prayed on my way there and I got there [they placed me] in the little room
91 as big as the one we are sitting in. And two doctors came out and they said, "You Michaels'

92 mother?" and I said, "Yes." And they said, "Well, Michael has sustained a wound that we rarely
93 ever see anyone come from." And, I said, "Okay." I said, "Well, [I know] God." And they said,
94 they said, "Yeah, I understand that. But we just need to tell you medically that the wound that he
95 sustained, we rarely have ever seen anybody return from." And so, by that time, I was by myself.
96 Right as they kind of finished up what happened, or what they felt at this point, or what they
97 were going to do, my family came in. And it was like everything fell out from under me, the
98 strength that I had to get there, the strength that I had for the conversation, just wiped out.
99 'Cause now I had somebody, I think to lean on. Help pick up the pieces. So, it was a long
100 night 'cause they would have to ride, do—I'm sorry, not ride—run series of tests to see if he had
101 brain activity. It was hard. And I remember that night, standing in that room when I finally got
102 the opportunity to see him. And I, I looked at him and I said, "God. (pause) I know what they
103 seeing. And if that's the road you going to take me down, I can't go down that road by myself."
104 And, "If that's the road, I need you to make his life, I need you to make his life matter. It need
105 not ever be in vain, God." Ever. And I said, [...] "God, you told me that when he left home at 18
106 and I begged him to stay. You said, he's going to come through as pure gold." And I said, "God,
107 this don't look like pure gold." That was my conversation with God that night. And the wee
108 hours of that night, the Donor Network approached me. They asked me how did I feel about
109 organ donation. (pause) And for one second, if you can have a glimpse of light in pain, I thought,
110 "God, this is you answering my prayer." Because they had already said his brain activity was
111 dwindling. And they were going to do two more tests and pretty much, he had no activity. And
112 they were making sure that the activity that he had, that he did have, was just from the stem.
113 There's a stem that goes to your brain that automatically. You see people when they're passing
114 they still have some movement in their hand or they still have a shake, but it's a tremor. Your

115 body is still functioning 'cause your heart is pumping, and all of the things are still happening,
116 but you have no brain activity.

117 D: Okay.

118 C: And I thought for a second, "God, you answered my prayer. This has got to be, I just asked
119 you to make sure his life don't be in vain. And you going to take him." So, I told them, I said,
120 "Yes. I'm okay with organ donation." But I had to be okay with organ donation because I myself
121 was a registered donor. But I never had that conversation with my family.

122 D: Okay.

123 C: My kids didn't know about that. My mother didn't know about that. I made that decision at 18
124 at the motor vehicle department. Because my thoughts were, "What am I going to do with it if
125 I'm gone?" That was how I felt. But I was never educated on organ donation at that time. I told
126 them yes. I said, "I'm okay with organ donation. [...]" And honestly, I didn't know if he was a
127 candidate for that. [...]

128 D: Right.

129 C: But whatever was possible. It was the last, and I tell mothers this is what's taking me to tears,
130 "It's the last decision you'll make. You don't get to make not one more decision for your child
131 when they in that condition. That's it. Funeral, that— those are the last decisions that you will
132 have the opportunity to make so you make 'em and you be alright with what you make. Because
133 when other people come in and try to take care of that situation for you, they rip you of your
134 decision making. So, make your decision. Do what you going to be okay with, you can't be
135 happy in that, but you will find some peace later. 'Cause you did it. And not resentful to the
136 people who just wanted to help." So, I said yes. They came back to me about 30 minutes later.
137 And they said, "Colette, did you know your son was registered to be an organ donor?" And I

138 thought, “I did exactly what you did.” For a second, I got a smile on my face. Oh my God. Even
139 though I wanted to do what was best for him in the end of this, he already did what was best for
140 him in the end of this. And you heard me in that room that I needed his life to be not in vain, and
141 not that it was or that it would ever be. But it needed to be greater because now he’s not here. He
142 needed to leave a legacy that I didn’t know was going to be a legacy ‘til years later. So that night,
143 you know, I talk about God. So, you know, I’m there and I’m spiritual. Every person who dealt
144 with my son had a biblical name. Greg. Elizabeth. Joseph. Every single—Michael. Every person
145 who touched him, had a biblical name. And all I could feel as if God was letting me see [that he
146 was there from the beginning and] that would keep me from crawling under the bed, when I saw
147 me crawl under that bed after, when I saw him laying in the bed I wanted to get under that bed.
148 But God kept holding me up with these things that kept me. And I tell mothers, “There are things
149 that you’ll see along your journey and you’ll look back and say, ‘Oh, that was something that
150 [...] was for me to keep. Something for me to think about along this journey, that God was
151 always in it. Or there was always something positive in it, if you [...] believe in God. There was
152 always a presence. If you want to see it, you got to want to see it.” So, they gave us these knitted
153 shawls when I said yes to organ donation. They were knitted by a woman, who [was a part of
154 the] Donor Network. [...] And they weren’t like regular shawls, they were like blankets. And,
155 but the ironic thing is that they were made by a woman who had lost her son on a motorcycle
156 accident. And my brother died on a motorcycle accident. So, as they told me the story about
157 where they came from that night, I thought, “God, you are so in this.” Because what are the
158 chances? They gave [them to me...]. To breathe a little bit, in the midst of this storm. [...] Four
159 people got his organs, from a teenage boy here in, in Southeastern Wisconsin--
160 D: Okay.

161 C/D: [...]

162 C: Like, in Milwaukee, to a retired man on the West Coast. They had, three people were
163 very local and one was on the West Coast. But the thing about this is that young boy's mother
164 was at the wall, like I was. Because when you need a heart, you dying. When you next on the
165 list, you're dying, you're at death's door. And all I could think is that God then answered the
166 prayer that I wanted. But she's at that same loss, ya know, "Save my son." I could— I could hear
167 her, "Save my son." And I'm saying, "Lord, save my son." We prayed the same [prayer]. But he
168 got Mike's heart. [...] "Okay, this is the Hezekiah moment." And if you know anything about
169 Hezekiah, [...] the prophet came to him and said, "The Lord said get your house in order because
170 you're about to die." And Hezekiah went to the wall and said, "Look, Lord I [...] and I didn't did
171 this, I prayed, I did everything you told me to do." And the Lord [...] changed his
172 mind— 'cause people think God can't change his mind. He said "Okay, I'm going to add 15
173 years [to your life]." And so, when you get an organ, it's the Hezekiah moment. You get more
174 life.

175 D: That was beautiful.

176 C: That's how I see it. [...] And so, those people got extended life. There were two men who had
177 just married and one had kids and one didn't and they got to have, they get to have children.
178 Michael's organs allowed them to stay around to be married, raise their kids, have children, live
179 life. And whoever has kids out of those organs, Mike's life still goes on even when they pass. So,
180 outside of that, Mike also donated, he donated skin and bone. [...] I think 14 people have been,
181 life's what they call enhanced. So, a lady had a knee surgery and they did want to put a piece of
182 material, and they put his bone. Skin grafts for cancer and for burn victims and so, I work closely
183 now with the Donor Network because of those donations that Mike agreed to when I agreed that

184 night. So, I do a lot of public speaking for them across our city and I've done some in other
185 states, not on their behalf, just because of organizations I'm a part of [...]. [I] advocate for us as
186 an African American community for us to understand organ donation from somebody who look
187 like you.

188 D: Right.

189 C: Yeah.

190 D: What would you say to a mom or a dad or a sibling who just recently experienced a loss of
191 someone to gun violence? How would you tell them to overcome or, or get through it?

192 C: Yeah. Well, I'll say this. I don't tell 'em to overcome. I don't think that I would ever really
193 tell them to get through it. It's a new journey. And you have to figure out how life is now. You
194 came to a crossroad, there's a fork in the road now. And you now got to make some choices that
195 are [not easy ones or] not ones that you had on your radar. 'Cause this is not what you chose.
196 [...] No matter how hard that is--let me get some tissue. No matter how hard that is, you have
197 to make a choice. (inaudible) I should've got this when we started.

198 D: No that's okay, you had me crying, too. (laughter)

199 C: Oh, yeah. Alright.

200 D: It's okay.

201 C: Okay. Yeah, I just, you got to make some choices. And they're difficult. They're very
202 difficult. But in that choice making, you got to know it's a process. Everybody is not the same.
203 How I did it may not work for you. How I did it, however, may encourage you. But it may not
204 work for you the same. [...] I tell people, there's no time limit. I have met people who are
205 so angry and it's been 20 years. I met people who seem to be very okay and it's been two years.
206 It just depends. I think there are variables. How acclimated you are to the fact that death happens,

207 where you are in your spirit. Who it happens to. One of the things I tell mothers, is it seems to be
208 a bit more difficult because if in fact you've carried a child, birthed a child, and then lost a child
209 to gun violence; it's difficult. Because you've lived with this life in you. You've raised it.
210 You've loved and cherished it. And now it's gone. And so, you got to find a new way. And that's
211 why I say it's a fork in the road. And it may take you a while to realize it, that it's a fork in the
212 road. You may sit at that fork for a while, and that's okay. What's not okay is that you think
213 about hurting yourself. What's not okay is that you sit at that fork in the road and have no
214 movement at all. And become very subdued or depressed, but you got to know what that is and
215 when you need other help. Coaching is what I do. That may help you, but if that's not enough,
216 I had to go see a psychiatrist. But the funny thing about that was, I found myself literally feeling
217 like I was telling her what to do. So, after about three sessions

218 D: (laughter)

219 C: That was crazy. But I felt like there's times when you just want to sit in a room with
220 somebody you don't know. Somebody who don't have any ideas about you. 'Cause it's not like
221 you don't have it together, it's just that you don't know, you don't have a place to put it. You
222 may have every answer. And, and people who make you feel like, "I can't believe you really
223 going through this because you, you always got it together." But the reality is sometimes you just
224 need a space to sit it down and say, "This is how I feel, for real." 'Cause you can't take the coat
225 off in front of everybody else.

226 D: That's true.

227 C: And mothers have that coat, consistently. And for mothers who have other children, that's a
228 whole 'nother ball game. Because either, A) you start moving more towards those children, or B)
229 you regress back from everybody. And neither one of 'em are very good and healthy in the

230 beginning. So, everybody has a journey at their fork in the road, where you got to decide and
231 you got to know the signs. You got to know when you need professional help. You got to know
232 when you need a friend. You got to know when you just need to regress, because everybody has
233 to have some of that, too. You have to know when in fact, you just need a break. There are,
234 things you have to know and it's good to have a support system. If you don't have a support
235 system, it's going to make it much harder. Because you'll always feel by yourself. One of the
236 things that I felt so much when I lost my son, is that nobody around me understood. Nobody.
237 Yet, my mother had lost her son. But I felt like nobody understood. And the reason why I [...]
238 wanted to help mothers who have lost children find life after loss, because I felt like I had
239 nobody. I didn't know how to be. And I had to figure out how to even exist. Everybody loved
240 me. Everybody called. Everybody came. But that never stopped me from wanting to get under
241 my own bed and never come out from under there. That never stopped me. I had a prayer line,
242 two and a half years that I did Monday through Friday, 6AM-7AM CST, where women across
243 the country and I prayed every day for my son [...] I felt he needed prayer. I prayed for men
244 across the country. And when I lost him, I didn't want to pray one more prayer, ever again, a day
245 in my life. But that was a setup, from as far as I'm concerned, from the enemy. That I wouldn't
246 do the thing that I was called to do. That I wouldn't still go [minister to] and talk to my best
247 friends and people who would call me to talk to their sons out of doing crack or doing dope or
248 walking out of the door, that I had to have a conversation with, that I had to pray for or lay hands
249 on and change minds. That, he never wanted me to do that again. But after time, with the right
250 people, it happened. But I didn't want it. So yeah, I would tell them, that it's a journey. And that
251 it's one that you cannot skip processes. It's like baking a cake. If you don't go through each

252 ingredient that you got to go through, that's special for you, it ain't going to [taste good and] you
253 can't rise. You can't rise.

254 D: For the perpetrator, what was the outcome for him?

255 C: Yeah. In the back of my mind, I still feel like I really need to do some lobbying for changing
256 gun laws to another degree. And that is, and I'll lightly just talk about that, the fact that he
257 had stole the gun was a charge, and the fact that he had killed my son was a charge. But because
258 of the sequence of the events, they couldn't give him more years than [he] would give him for
259 the initial charge. So, he got ten years.

260 D: Huh, wow.

261 C: Yeah, I'm going to say this, his name is Thomas.

262 D: Where is he? Do you know where he's-- what prison he's in?

263 C: I probably do. I just haven't looked at that paperwork in a minute.

264 D: Okay.

265 C: I will say this. And I know that some people probably don't understand what I'm going to say,
266 but it's the truth. And I think it needs to be said, it might help set somebody else free. (pause)
267 People make mistakes. All of us make mistakes. And some of us get the opportunity to turn
268 around. And some of us get the opportunity to say, "I'm sorry," and, "Forgive me," and
269 everything go back to normal. And then there are others of us who make huge mistakes that you
270 can't change what happened. And I think he made a huge mistake and wanted to cover it up. And
271 once you start lying, in this kind of situation, you feel like you got to keep lying. He's
272 somebody's child. I have not written a letter, but I know that it's in my heart to write it.

273 D: Okay.

274 C: And to tell him two things. “I forgive you, ‘cause you make, everybody make mistakes. But
275 you get the chance at life, to do life or hate that. And I know that every time you close your eyes
276 and open ‘em, you see what happened—whether you want to or not.”

277 D: Oh, yeah.

278 C: “No matter how much you go and try to cover that up, you got to live with pain. But you get
279 this chance at life and I hope you do it right.”

280 D: Wow.

281 C: So, I haven’t wrote that letter yet, but I’m going to have to. I definitely have to.

282 D: I think that’s beautiful.

283 C: Yeah.

284 D: I think that would help him.

285 C: Well, he’s somebody’s son. And I look at, I look at all of the violence that we have out here.

286 D: Yes.

287 C: The things that are happening, and I see men who have lost hope, who walk around hopeless.
288 Hopeless because of the environment that they were raised in, maybe the environment that has
289 been produced for them, [...] a lot of people without hope. And when you lose hope, you don’t
290 see anything else. There is nothing else in front of you. And what is so tangible, you don’t have
291 the wherewithal to stretch, to be more, to do more, to operate in a more, larger capacity. So,
292 yeah, that’s what I would say to him.

293 D: That’s beautiful. Is there anything else you’d like to add?

294 C: No. I think, we didn’t talk about the transition shawls that I created.

295 D: Yes, and also, your prayer breakfast.

296 C: Oh, yes, yes.

297 D: That's one of the forks that—one of the roads you took and that's how I met you.

298 C & D: (laughter)

299 C: Yes, yes. Okay. (inaudible) I realized about two years after my son died that, that I had
300 something special from that. That death affected me, but it didn't make me hateful and I didn't
301 stay in it as much as I wanted to, I didn't stay. Because death can hold you as a prisoner [...].
302 You can be in jail literally. In your mind, in your behaviors. And it didn't do that to me, but I
303 saw people that it had. And so, I realized I had something special and it may not seem special to
304 a lot of people, but it was special to me. 'Cause I felt like it was a gift. And so, I got a call one
305 day, my daughter called me she said "Ma, Josh died this morning." And I said, "Who is Josh?"
306 and she said, ya know, it's my grandbaby's cousin and I said, "I don't know him." She said,
307 "Ma, I think they need you to come over to the house." I said, "I don't even know them people."
308 (laughter) And she said, "But Ma, ya know, I think they might need you to, ya know, just come
309 over and pray with them." [...] And I said, "Well, let me just say this. Everybody don't want
310 prayer. And they just, that family just lost a child. And to be perfectly honest, it was hard for me
311 to start prayer when I lost my child."

312 D: Don't want to be bothered.

313 C: No. And so, I said, "I don't want to go into an environment that, first of all, I don't even know
314 them. And, but it was funny because my daughter was [a backslider], but she was asking me to
315 come bring peace. That's what she was asking. And I just happened to be on the phone with one
316 of my mentors and she said, "You know Colette, you, this sound like [an assignment]." I said,
317 "Well, I told her to tell them, if they ask then, if they want me to come, then I'll come." 'Cause
318 I'm a licensed minister. So, so, ya know, it's my duty. But it would be the first time I would go
319 out after my son died. And so, she did. She asked them, she called me back and she said, "Ma,

320 his mother said, ‘Yeah, please come.’” And then that fog that I told you about, that night that my
321 son died, I was in that fog again. And I got ready, but it was like God was getting me ready. I
322 couldn’t—I don’t remember everything that I did, but it was like a stillness again. And so, I
323 knew it was him. I knew what I was doing was something I needed to go do. And on my way
324 there, mother Silvia, the Lord dropped in my spirit and he said, “You need to get some prayer
325 shawls to take to mothers who have lost children.”

326 D: Oh wow.

327 C: And I said, “God, I don’t know nothing about making no shawls.” I don’t know nothing about
328 that, [...] God. I don’t know nothing about that! He said, “Well, I put people in your life that do.”
329 And so, on my way there, I remember picking up the phone and she didn’t answer. I left the
330 whole message on her phone, on her voicemail about what God had said to me and that I needed
331 to talk to her soon. [I] went to that house and it was so dark. It was sunny outside like today, but
332 it was dark. It was like I walked into a patio door and you had to step down into it—and it was
333 dark. It was about 30 people in this house. And it was like there was no light. And all I could
334 think was, “God, you sent me here.” And for a second, it was like fear came on and then God
335 rose up and said, “Nuh-uh. You’re walking into that door.” I went into a back room. I mean,
336 people who were swearing, laying on the floor crying, they were having that moment. And I
337 went over to the mother and I hugged on her and I loved on her and I told her, I said, “I came to
338 pray.” And she beckoned everybody to come. And so, we all held hands that day and God had
339 told me before I left, he said, “Get some money, ‘cause you’re going to bless them.” And at that
340 time, he had me have money. This is probably more information. I had to have money in the
341 house for, for situations. And so, I begin praying, and the kids began to yell. They were yelling
342 loud as I was praying. And it was as if there was a fight in the spirit.

343 D: Mmm, that's what it sounds like when you said—

344 C: Yeah. It was a fight in the spirit that, the piece that needed to come, the enemy didn't want it
345 to come. But I remember that playground voice, where you call your kids three blocks away and
346 they're going to hear you. And before I knew it, they was quiet, in a prayer while I was praying.
347 It was quiet. But it brought a peace and the light in that house. I began to pray for every person
348 that I could touch and anoint them, that they might have peace with what happened. And from
349 that day, it birthed the prayer shawls. And the first one that I made, or that I had made, I took to
350 his mother, Joshua's mother. Because that, that was from him passing that was birthed. It wasn't
351 from my son, it was from them. And so, the shawls are, well, they ventured out since that
352 moment. They used to have ironed on letters, now they're embroidered with "Shalom, God's
353 Peace" [The peace of God]. If you need a healing, it's, ya know, "Jehovah Jireh" or "Rafael." Ya
354 know, whatever we put on it, is just based off of whatever God says. But that's where the shawls
355 came from. The prayer breakfast, 20 years ago I wanted to have, [...] I went to a prayer breakfast
356 with a lady who was at the prayer breakfast that day. And I was in my 20s, in my skirt slit all the
357 way up to the thigh. Twenty plus years ago, she invited me and I went. If I could use the word,
358 Hoochie-Mama'd Out.

359 D: (laughter)

360 C: But I sat there for a minute and thought to myself, "Oooh, I would love to have something
361 like this one day." Wouldn't [bit more saved], didn't care about Jesus. And I wanted to do
362 something for the mothers. I thought, how can I get them together when it's not just a sorrowful
363 moment. But that it could be a celebration, it could be of love and embracing and encouragement
364 on the journey no matter how long, no matter how their child transitioned, no matter when.
365 Because along the journey, people forget you lost. People forget. And I wanted to say, "I have

366 not forgotten that you lost. Whether I know you or not. I know there are many of us out here who
367 have lost. And our families act as if we are not minus a child, our jobs kept going, you know, we
368 may be in relationships that are new that don't even know nothing about it, and we may be in
369 something that could care less." I wanted to say, "Me and my team have not forgotten." And
370 that's why the prayer breakfast came about. I want to love on you on this journey. If you're not
371 crying and you don't, you not at the space where you got to cry, you might encourage somebody
372 else and you might need somebody. Along with, in this place that you can help, or that can help
373 you. But one thing for sure, Colette has not forgotten.

374 D: And what was the name of your prayer breakfast?

375 C: We Loved and Lost.

376 D: And where was it located?

377 C: It was located at Underwood Parkway, a park in Wauwatosa.

378 D: Okay. 'Cause we want to be able to map it.

379 C: Oh yeah, yeah. The thing about that particular location was this: you had to drive through a
380 nice little winding road. And it was like life. It was much like, [...] how life would be, the
381 journey after loss would be. I thought this is [...] back off into a wooded, nice area. So,
382 sometimes life is wooded. Sometimes you can't see your way through or what's around the bend.
383 But when you got there, it was a place full of windows. It was a lot of light and could hold a lot
384 of life. And that's why I think, ya know, God lead me to that place. There were a lot of places I
385 could've had and I wanted to have them in the inner city. But I wanted it to also be open to
386 everyone of all cultures. It didn't have to be one race because when you lose a child, you don't
387 see color.

388 D: Sure don't.

389 C: What you see is the loss that we all suffer the same. I read a book and I don't remember the
390 name of it, but the lady, how she described us, we are an army. And everybody who has [not
391 lost] is a civilian. And I thought, "Yes. Yes. Yes." And we don't want to enlist anybody else. We
392 would prefer not. But unfortunately, we do. Everyday.

393 D: That was beautiful. (Pause) Did you have anything else? I think you said it all right there.

394 (laughter) That was a perfect ending. That was perfect.