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Lost for Life

By Unknown

Hello, this is a
collect call from an
inmate from the Banner County Jail.
Hello?
How you doing?
All right, sweetheart.
How are you?
Not so good.
I know, baby.
I have to come home.
Baby, I know that. I'm sorry;
you're going to have
to stay strong.
Are you saying your prayers?
Yeah. But, Mom,
I want to come home.
Baby, I promise you that we're
working on that, okay?
I promise you.
When can I come home?
Huh?
When can I come home?
- Sweetheart.
- Can you try?
Honey, we're
trying everything we can,
I promise you. We're trying
everything we can.
There's nothing more in
the world than I want my
boy home with me. Okay? We're
doing everything we can here.
You know how much I love you, baby?
The prosecutors
are trying to get me
life with no parole.
Huh?
Should minors who
commit murder be sentenced to
life without parole?
This is a crucial question the
Supreme Court is going
to be deciding tomorrow,
that 38 states currently allow life

without parole for minors
who commit murder,
but is it constitutional?
So the court comes
to a fork in the road.
Make a complete ban on life
without parole for adolescents
or set an age limit?
Many lives hang in the balance.
Their brains
are not fully developed,
they will change, they will
grow. Is this something that we
can judge them for for
the rest of their lives?
After Bar was questioned by police,
he was charged with the
12-year-old's murder.
Anyone who knows to muffle the gun
so nobody else hears it has
the mind of an 18-year-old.
I think everyone is
more than the worst
thing they've ever
done and I think that policy
makers can make decisions
about how to punish them.
But I think children
are uniquely more
than their worst act, they
have quintessential qualities
and characteristics that a
decent society, maturing
society, an evolved society
we believe is
constitutionally obligated
to recognize and protect.
High school is a very hard time.
I had no idea who I was. I had
no idea where I fit in
among my peers, and I thought
that I was a nobody at my high
school and I wanted
to be known. And so I tried all

these different identities and
I couldn't, you know, find an
identity that I could not be
pushed out of, I guess.
So I got into Columbine.
We saw these two kids, they were
white and they had dark hair.
upwards of a dozen people
were injured and running out of...
Columbine kind of created
a subculture for
disenfranchised kids
who don't fit in anywhere.
I saw, at the time,
they transcended their high
school, for the hour that they
did what they did, they were in
the spotlight and that's
what I wanted.
I wanted to be in the spotlight.
Actually I was really
happy to do it.
Oh yeah?
Hey, look, it's Cassie.
Hey, look, I don't know her.
Hello, Cassie.
I'm getting you on tape, okay?
Say hi, please.
Hi.
Okay, see you.
When I first met Cassie
Stoddart, I think that the first
memory I have of her is
we were joking around
in class and she was
smiling and that's vivid, the
image I have in my mind now, is
I can't get it out of my mind.
And, oh, man,
it's hard to talk about...
but, in the beginning
she was just a nice person
and she...
you know... sorry.

I was attracted to her.
I thought she was a special
person but she
started going out with this
other kid I knew in
high school, and it kind of
struck me hard and I was like,
"Okay, so, I am a loser."
Wait, have you seen Torey? He's
supposed to meet me here at 7:30

and it's 8:

You don't even care, do you? Okay.

I met Torey Adamcik
in sophomore year.

He started talking about the
movie "Scream," how it would be
cool to actually do a
"Scream" type crime.

And I was like, "Okay."

He's like, "Have you ever
thought about that? " " Not
really. I've thought about other
things like Columbine." And he
really was into that and I was
like, "Well I could either be
alone or I could join his
plan and be with him and not
be alone."

Torey got there;

there was about eight
months where we would come
up every three weeks. And we'd
leave right after work on
Friday, drive up all night, come
stay in the hotel. We
wouldn't miss a visit or
anything. Torey is a
good kid and we enjoy
the visits, we have a good time
and Torey is the
same person he was
before he went in.

My mom still

treats me like a mom and
she tells me to
brush my teeth as she is leaving
and exiting and tells me to
go to bed early or whatever,
just the typical stuff but, I
don't know, I think they're
just worried about me.
Just really good kid.
Torey is a good
kid and Torey is just a
kind, kind, kind person
and we're still family.
He's still every bit as much a
part of our family as before.
I remember the first
article I read about my case.
Jeez, they made me sound
like this brutal, cold,
psychopathic killer.
They were talking about Brian.
They were making you
just like Brian.
They put us like
as the same person.
They lumped them together.
I only hung out with him
for six weeks before this
happened.
I think it's crazy how...
the last week of me being on the
street and being free really has
affected the rest of my life.
If you were to watch that video
and nothing had happened,
it would literally be a joke.
I don't know if it was
my... it was probably my fault;
I should have seen
it but I just... he did
not seem capable of
something like this, and it
completely caught me off guard.
I was just in... I don't know;

I just couldn't believe it.
There should be no law against
killing people. I know it's a
wrong thing but...
Hell.
You restrict somebody from it,
they're going to want it more.
We found our victim and, sad
as it may be, she's our friend.
But you know what?
We all have to make sacrifices.
Our first victim is
going to be Cassie Stoddart.
She's going to be alone
in a big, dark house out
in the middle of nowhere.
How perfect can you get?
Holy shit, dude.
- I'm horny just thinking about it.
- Hell yeah.
I don't know if either
of us would have
done it if we were alone.
We fed off each other, I guess,
and it was a formula for
disaster in the end.

The time is 9:

September 22nd, 2006.
We know there are lots
of doors and there are
lots of places to hide. I
unlocked the back doors.
It's all unlocked.
Now we just got to wait.
I was actually the individual
who snuck downstairs and
locked the basement door.
And it's that one choice where
I was just kind of going along
with it. I really didn't stop
and say, "Why am I doing this?"
I just did it, and that one thing
that I did started this whole

thing, and that's something
that is hard to deal with
because all I had to do
was just not do that and this
may have never happened.
Cassie was there alone, and we
both had masks on.
He walks up and tells me,
"You do something scary
that's going to freak her out."
And I'm like, "Okay."
So I grab a door and I open it
and I slam it. And then
we just kind of go into the
room and the crime happens,
and we stabbed her.
I really don't have a lot of
vivid memories of
the actual incident.
I have what they call...
flash bulb images of that.
She's breathing hard and
her eyes are open,
and she's looking off someplace
else and, uh...
And then I...
I remember...
so many, like...
She wasn't screaming but in
my head I could hear that.
And I know she screamed before
it happened to her, and uh...
but in my memories I
have, she's screaming.
Okay.
When it did happen,
I was just too shocked
to do anything and I just ran
from it and hid from it
and I made a lot of mistakes.
But...
they were, I don't know.
I just think, I look at myself
now and I'm 21 and I think

how stupid I was at 16, and I just think how I feel like I'm paying for somebody else's mistakes at this point.

When I was 13 years old, I had a friend who was over, he was hanging out at the house and my mom just went and left on me. He said, "Man, you mom's really a bitch. You should kill her." And I didn't really take it seriously, but that's the first time the thought was planted in my head and I started escaping into that daydream. When things got really bad I could say, "Oh, yeah. One day, they're going to be gone."

In the early morning hours of December 17, 15-year-old Jacob Ind slaughtered his mother and stepfather in their Woodland Park home with the help of a friend. Jacob Ind reportedly tried to block out the screaming.

His appearance is that of a studious prep school student. As they say, Jacob Ind was cold and cruel, that he recruited schoolmate Gabriel Adams to do the job. The kid was looney tunes and I just knew he would help so I asked for his help. I just didn't want anything directly to do with it. I just wanted the problem solved, things to be gone.

I didn't want to see it, I didn't want to hear it; I wanted nothing to do with it. I just wanted him gone, and that's what I thought would happen.

I was sleeping when I
heard the gunshots go off.
The .22 that I gave Gabriel
really didn't have enough of a
punch to get the job done.
Went down the hall and saw
their door was open
to their bedroom. It was like

1:

I saw my stepdad.
He was bleeding and...
He said he'd been shot.
So I went back to my room and
got some pepper spray and
I came back and I sprayed him
with the with pepper spray,
my mom and stepdad. And I went
into their bathroom and closed
the door and I figured, "Okay,
maybe this can end. Maybe this
can be over by now."
And it kept going and going,
I couldn't see anything but I
heard that there was still a
ruckus. I just wanted it to be
over. And so eventually
the .357 was in the closet
in the bathroom,
and I grabbed that and loaded
it with one bullet.
And I opened up the door and I
saw my stepdad there,
slumped kind of against a wall
and I shot him in the head
and he fell over.
I turned around and went back,
put another bullet, and my mom
was there.
I shot at her and I missed her.
And...
So I turned around and went back,
put another bullet, and went to
shoot her again and she

asked me, "Why?" Because at that point it dawned on her what was going on. And I told her because she was cruel, and I shot her, and she fell over.

I was just so, I guess, disturbed by what I saw.

I grabbed my alarm clock, went to the downstairs couch, and I just laid there and I couldn't think.

And I said, "Man, I fucked up. Fucked up so bad."

Our organization is the National Organization of Victims of Juvenile Lifers, NOVJL.

I'm the president of NOVJL, Jennifer Bishop-Jenkins.

Three of my family members were murdered in Chicago in 1990 by a teenager who is serving three life without parole sentences in Illinois.

He got mandatory sentences for Nancy and Richard but for the baby he got an optional life sentence.

Nancy was crossing her arms over her pregnant belly.

He pointed the gun and fired, and he hit it.

Hi, Jenny.

Hi, Nancy.

How are you?

My ability to be

Nancy's sister in the world is entirely about she was murdered.

I cannot be her sister

and not care about that. The

discovery that there was a

movement to free Nancy and

Richard's killer was shocking

and horrifying to me. I actually

think that that has motivated me

more than anything, never to

have any legal finality at all
to your case. I was awake all
night for four straight months
I was so traumatized by this.
I cried all the time, I was worried about
it, I couldn't think, I just thought,
"God, if I have to spend
the rest of my life like this
and my children and my mother,
don't you care about the victims
at all? Doesn't this
worry you at all?"
It's at that point that I
realized how absolutely
clueless they are about
the cost of victimization.
I have thought
so often as I have been
down in this basement
where they died,
"Was she angry?
Was she puzzled?
Did she wonder why he had
killed her?
Was she lonely, was she cold?"
It's something that comes over you
when you're down here
but life goes on.
Sometimes you forget
why, but we go on with it.
Brian didn't
want us to know how much
pain he was in, and he kept that
very separate from our life
with him and the family's
life with him.
He just didn't want us to know
how much pain he was in.
That's the thing
that kept us up at night
the most for the longest
amount of time,
is trying to find... trying to
remember something that we missed

We adopted Brian at birth. When I think about our relationship and how strong of a relationship we had with Brian and how... good of a relationship we had with Brian, if you walked into our house back then, we were normal. And why we didn't recognize that we had... such a problem... is horrific and something we still cannot... bear.

Sorry.

Hello.

This call is subject to monitoring and recording.

I just had an emotional visit yesterday; it was really hard to come here alone. It's always hard to go to a prison and it's hard to walk down the gates and to be buzzed in, and to wait, and to go to the searches, and then just to imagine doing this forever until I'm dead, everybody involved is dead except for Torey and Brian. They will outlive the prosecutors and the families and everybody and there will be... it will still be going on. It's just very overwhelming all the time that there's never an end in sight or it's never... it's hard to imagine how we're going to spend our life doing this and I'm just overwhelmed today a

little bit. It's just hard.
My brother is going to
be 26 years old this year,
and he will have spent ten
years, a decade, in prison.
And it's a commitment to stay in
somebody's life with
that circumstance.
The majority
of families forget about them;
I refuse to.
On November 6,
2002, Stacy and Gary Alflen
were shot to death in what many
say was the couple's dream home.
In opening statements,
prosecutors painted the killers
as cold-blooded who
"killed for fun,"
maintaining that Josiah
Ivy acted as the gunman.
My parents visit
him every week, too.
He's chosen to forgive and
he's just so very grateful
of my parent's relationship
and willingness to commit
to visiting him, to be
interactive in his life,
and they have a great
working relationship.
What do you mean they
have a great working relationship?
What I mean by a great
working relationship is that
he's not embittered by anything
that happened in our childhood.
No, my parents spanked
us when we were kids.
I don't know if these days
that's considered abuse
or not, I didn't really look
at it like that.
Okay. Okay, so,

maybe, yeah, there's,
I guess there's some stuff I
really don't want to talk about,
at least not on camera, you know?
But...
I don't ever talk about it, no.
As far as our childhood, it was...
my parents regret a lot of it
and I think they would do
things very differently now
but can't go back in the
past and Josiah has
forgiven my parents.
I know you used the word,
but did you guys
grow up in a cult?
Yeah, when we were younger
we definitely grew up in
a religious cult.
I will tell you, I don't
think... I don't like
remembering our old home.
At the end there...
you know, before Josiah was
going to be sent away.
And you walk in every room
and you have
memories of things that
you'd rather not have.
Do you feel like I'm
still being closed?
I think you're being
as open as you're capable of being.
On the abuse stuff, yeah.
Just...
How old were you when
your stepfather molested you?
Four. Four, five, six.
A little bit of it,
it's still something very
easy to run away from
and not address and not confront.
The brain is a beautiful mechanism
keeping stuff like that shut out.

How long did it go on?
Did your mom know
about it? Did you
ever tell anybody?
No, God no. I never told
anybody about it.
Can I ask what they did to you?
It's not really something
I like talking about at all.
My daughter started
telling me about this weird kid
in her geometry class
and she said he dressed
like a hippie and she said he
was nice but a little odd.
And then the day of the
murders she said,
"Jacob Ind killed his parents."
And I said, "Is that the kid
you were talking to me about?"
And she said, "Yes." And that's
how Jacob Ind came into my life
because I couldn't get him out
of my mind and I kept thinking,
"What would make a
15-year-old kill his parents?"
He would have us get undressed,
then tie us,
start to masturbate, and after
he was done
he would get dressed
and say,
"You're so fucking dirty. Go
and take a fucking shower."
How do you treat a kid like
a piece of shit? How do you do
that to him? I can't wrap
my brain around that,
just the cruelty of it.
My mom used to give me
enemas when I
was like four or five years old
for reasons that didn't
make any sense. And when

you think back it's like,
"I don't... that's odd."
In traumatized children,
as they become adolescents,
we often see the remains of
the trauma if it has not
been treated, in the form
of depression, aggression,
somebody does something
to them and having
been victimized before, they
overreact it and harm the person
who victimized them.
My stepdad was the source
of terror, slamming me up
against a wall and telling
me he'd crush my head in.
But that was more
tolerable, really to me,
than the cruelty and
coldness in my mom.
That filled me with more despair
than anything else.
I could put up with getting
beat up. That's nothing;
that hurts a little while
and then it goes away.
But being berated for three
hours at a time,
four hours at a time, being
told how you're worthless,
how you deserved what you got.
When I was a little kid,
and this is when I was
getting molested and
probably the worst abuse,
my mom told me never to tell the
cops anything because if I ever
called the cops they would come
and give them a medal because
I was such a horrible,
rotten kid who deserved
what they gave me.
And that stuck with me.

I spoke up as much as I could.
With as weak as I was
at the time I thought I was
screaming from a mountaintop,
though objectively I was making
tiny whimpers.
But I raised every red flag I
could and no one paid attention.
I don't know; it put me in a
very deep, dark place
where I didn't see an option.
We live in a very, very
conservative community.
A lot of people said, "Well, he
killed them because he didn't
want to take out the trash or
whatever." That is not
what happens in parricide
cases; 90% of these kids
are badly abused.
Jacob tried to get help.
His brother tried to get help.
Nobody listened to them,
so Jacob is serving a life
sentence for the sins
of our community.
Nobody helped him.
I joined the Bloods at
around the age of 14,
and as a Blood it didn't really
mean much of anything
except selling crack, getting
into some fights here and
there with the Crips. But
eventually it became more
serious, as they
started shooting at us more,
we started shooting at
them more often.
And the first time that I ever
shot a gun...
I killed someone,
a young man who was just
walking home from work.

We said to that man that day, he was walking down the street, we said, "Hey, what's up, Blood?" He said, "I don't gangbang." One of the people I was with jumped out of the car and said, "I didn't ask you if you gangbang. I said, 'What's up, Blood?'" And that young man took off running. We laughed, "Look at him, he's running." That man got back in the car, we circle around, we're going home, we were about to go home, we weren't even thinking about this guy anymore. But then we saw him running to a house. And when he got to that house he knocked on that door and three Crips came out of that house. and that's how the whole incident started. That's when I made the decision that I'm going to shoot a gun at these guys' house to scare them. He was just a kid. At 16 years old, he was very easily influenced by his friends. Torey is much more of a follower than a leader. Yeah, who I was at that point and who I am now, it's like totally different people. But who Torey was at that age, at 16, he still didn't commit this crime. He's not saying that, he's not saying that. I'm saying I

was... I made some mistakes
and I learned from them.

But your mistakes
weren't anything you were
charged with. They weren't
for murder and conspiracy.
Yeah.

That was Brian. It
must be harder, because
you're innocent, to be facing it.
Yeah, I guess.

It's unusual that he
would have that response
and his parents having
that response.

It's a lot to deal with. You
have to accept the societal
brand that you are a convicted
murderer, and that is
a very scary term to have
affixed to your name.

And so it's really hard.
He wants to please his parents,
he wants to go home,
and his kind of behavior is
really common and it's ordinary,
I think. I think what...
makes somebody extraordinary is
when they face everything and
just kinda...
accept it.

It's a hard thing to admit I
killed Cassie Stoddart.
I stabbed a 16-year-old
girl to death,
that's pretty hard to say.
Life never gets so serious
until something like that
happens. I was a 17-year-old
kid; I didn't take anything
serious. I hardly ever went
to school. I was always
skipping class, smoking
weed, getting drunk,

that's all I ever did, sell
drugs. Life wasn't serious.
Nothing was serious...
until I took someone's life.
Man, I wanted to get out of the gang
right then and there, you know?
When I first got
here, I tried to blame others.
And I met this individual in here
and he asked me what happened
in my crime, and I told him,
"Oh, I'm not exactly
sure what happened.
They said I killed her,
I'm not even sure if
I did or not." And he sat me
down and he's like...
"Stop giving me a whole
bunch of bullshit, okay? If you
want my help you have to
completely be honest with me."
And he taught me about how
I owe a tremendous
debt to Cassie Stoddart, and
the only way that I could even
start paying that is
to first of all tell exactly
what happened to her and...
do not dishonor her
in anything that
you do in your life. And I've
tried that; it's very hard,
it's very hard, but I think that...
that's all I can do and
I have the obligation.
I have to do that
or I'm...
a monster, I guess.
When I got to prison, I
still got myself involved in
certain situations that were gang
related. Still, even then, I
felt like they were... it was
like clothes that didn't

fit. It just wasn't me, and it only took one incident in prison for me to say, "I'm living the same ridiculous way I was living before I got locked up. Man, I got to stop this." A friend of mine got into a fight with a Crip and I went to retaliate, after it was over with I just lined all of my friends up in the gym and I told them, "I'm out." I'd been studying Islam anyway, and I told them that I'm going to take this way of life called Islam; I'm going to take it serious. And in order to take it serious, I can't live two lives because Allah didn't make two hearts in one breast. So I chose to live the life of a Muslim and I left the life of a Blood behind me. When I first went to solitary confinement I was 17. I was stuck in a cell and I couldn't run away from who I was. In solitary, that's where all the worst of the worst are which, at the time, I thought the greatest convicts, the tough guys are, the real guys are. But eventually, I had to decide whether I wanted to be like those around me or if I want to be the type of man I idealized in my brain. And then I started looking at myself more in depth and said, "I don't want to be who I am right now either. I don't like who I am right now."

So I started just going layer by layer through who I was, through how I thought, what my outlooks on life were, characteristics.

And if I didn't like it I'd work on it, work on that one thing until I got rid of it, move to the next item.

And as I learn new lessons from my studies, I've learned to apply it into my life.

Forgiveness is one of them, be a more forgiving person.

To try and have empathy with others, and to empathize with where they're coming from and from their situation rather than solely from my own, from judging from my own experience, which is definitely a radical change in thinking for most people. It really changed how I looked at the world and how I viewed human interactions and dealt with people and to me it's one of the most important lessons I've learned so far in prison.

One of the reasons why life without parole is given as a sentence is because courts find that certain offenders are so dangerous that they can never be allowed to walk among us again, and that's a hard calculation to make.

Life without parole is a very rare sentence across the country; it's very rarely given and the standards are really high for any age offender to ever receive it,

as it should.

But one of the reasons they do it is because they have found time and time again that if you release certain kinds of offenders they will re-offend and very violently.

And that's what recidivism is, is the violent re-offense that happens when you let an offender out who is just not safe to be released.

I started teenkillers.org as a blog where people have come in from the outside and posted their comments, and there's a posting by an attorney in California, Daniel Horowitz, whose wife was murdered by a juvenile lifer.

If you are willing kill before you're even 18, you are so broken inside that unless you have some miraculous healing, unless something almost extraordinary happens, all you're going to do is gain control mechanisms. You're going to learn how to walk and talk like a regular person, as do many serial killers, but ultimately sieving underneath is that same sickness that erupted at least one time as a juvenile, incapable of feeling genuine compassion.

For me, one of the biggest aspects of life without parole for a juvenile is that it automatically negates any chance for rehabilitation, automatically says, "What you've done at this early age

completely makes
anything you can do from that
point on immaterial. You've
thrown away your life, you're
worthless, you're trash, we
don't want you."
I want to have a
chance at a life. I understand
that Cassie can't, and...
I never ignore that.
She's dead and not anything
is going to change that.
I did something terrible
and there has to be
consequences for that.
Everything we do in life,
there are always consequences.
Oh, man, my consequence
hurt my dad, my grandma,
my aunts, even my friends
and neighbors at school,
I had no concept that what I was
doing was going to hurt so many
people. I was completely
clueless about it and that's
it's hard for me to build
up much sympathy for my
mom and stepdad, though I did
originally right off the bat.
But for all the innocent people
that were hurt,
like my brother,
and like my family,
it's almost unforgivable.
And it's a weight that I
tried to avoid, tried
to keep off my shoulders for years.
Now...
that I have embraced
it, my driving factor is I have
to make it up to them.
They're the only thing in this
world I give a damn about
anymore, and they're the reason

I want to be the best person
I can be and make
something of myself
is to make it up for them.
I don't know. I have
a lot of ambitions,
and if I were to get out
I'd know exactly
what I do with my life. But
being in here, if that's all I
have is just these... it feels
like all I have is
just to sit here and rot and
there are no redeeming
qualities. There's nothing I can
do really to alleviate
any...
I don't know. It's like
just watching yourself
decompose. It's just horrible.
He's been in prison six
years, and he's still on his
first day. He hasn't progressed
at all and it's going to hurt
him in the end, either
psychologically, if he has a
conscience, or in courts.
They don't want to
hear that you're completely
innocent. He's not innocent,
he's not, I'm not innocent,
I'm guilty and he's guilty, and
that's where we all
should start at.
Twenty years. I would say
about 20 years after that
incident I began to try to put
a plan in motion to
instead of feeling bad, feeling
down, feeling depressed about
what I did, to try to help people,
starting with the people
that I was around. I didn't have
to reach out to the free world.

There is a bunch of gangbangers
in prison. So I reached out to
them, let them know,
"Hey, there is a better life
to live for you. There's a
life that makes more sense."
I had a lot of good, positive
mentors in prison, and they
would always hand me a book.
They would always say,
"What have you read
today?" "Well, I haven't read
anything today. " " Well, good
because I have something for
you, here." And I came up like
that in prison.
I grew up like that in prison.
I began to educate others and I
began to pass on those same
things that those men taught me.
I started feeling
like, "This is what I'm supposed
to do." And I wrote
Governor Ritter, I didn't write
and beg him to let me out
of prison; I wrote him and asked
him would it be okay with him if
I were put in a position where I
could try to keep young people
from doing the same stupid thing
that I did.
My wife's son was convicted
of first-degree murder
when he had just turned 17.
Brian just wasn't mature enough.
I thank God that I'm
not judged permanently on how
I acted when I was 16.
We need to fairly
assess mitigating factors in
some of these juvenile cases
and we need to fairly assess
who that person is today.
If I could say something,

all of this makes it sound as if
we're making excuses.

A life was taken.

We cannot mitigate
that, and we cannot say,
"Somehow it's okay because
whether this kid was 15 or
they're 35, somebody was
killed." But I think we have to
look beyond that, and that's
where Sharletta comes in.

Sharletta Evans lost her
3-year-old son, Casson,
to two juvenile lifers in a
drive-by shooting.

Let Sharletta tell her story.

Hello. Thank you,

Mary Ellen.

Seventeen years ago, my
three-year-old son,
Casson Evans, was killed in a
drive-by shooting.

Twenty-one bullets were fired.

One bullet entered the back
window, entered into his temple,
and shattered his brain stem.

So the paramedics showed
up. Right when they came
into the house where
we were standing,

Casson took

his last breath in my arms.

I was overwhelmed with grief and
sorrow, not knowing what to
feel, not knowing to sit down,
stand up, go to sleep, or stay
up. You're just consumed with
sorrow. I knew they were
teenagers but I wanted justice.

Years are going by, one
of the shooters, his mother came
to me after 11 years
and asked me would I beg her
pardon. Would I pardon her son

and her for these deeds that
they've done?
And I'm like, "Wow, are you kidding?
You know? No."
And I just walked away. I began
to argue with God,
I began to cry and
argue with God like,
"What is wrong with these people?
They still don't get it."
I would not forgive anybody and
I'm angry about this.
Right there,
I recognize the presence
of the Lord, the
spirit of God, saying,
"Would you forgive?" My heart
began to soften and
have compassion where I
found myself crying
and praying and literally weeping
for who they really were and
what has happened to them in
their lives that caused this act
of violence, this emptiness within
themselves. This could
actually be my very own son.
My surviving son was at
this time 16 and 17, and this
could very well have been
him. So, I pretty much put
myself in the place of the offender
and the offender's family.
The guilt and the shame is there
for the offender's family.
My whole family, we won't ever
be able to understand what
the victim's families
go through but our whole family...
hurts.
Are we as a society,
are we grown up enough and
spiritual enough to say,
"Okay, there is

redemption and rehabilitation
for some of them?"
And does this person
deserve a second chance at life?
Has he shown a remorse?
What does that look like?
I made terrible decisions then.
They're the worst I've ever made
and I've had to live with those
ever since. There are so many
things that
I should have done differently.
I'm so sorry about what happened
to them.
I don't know.
What if you're wrong?
What if Josiah shot
the two victims?
Wouldn't change how I
love him. It would inevitably
change some things
on how I feel about him but it
wouldn't change how I love him.
I...
I can't...
I can't...
stomach the thought of
him dying in prison.
After the crime had
happened, I had horrific dreams,
bad dreams,
where she was there and just
graphic, gruesome dreams about
her dying.
I would wake up in the night and
I would be scared, terrified.
Now I have dreams of her at
school and everything is good.
She is always smiling but I
always know in the
dream that I killed her, and
those dreams are...
even worse.
And now it's like the

only thing I can do is hurt
myself.
It takes away the pain of...
just knowing what I did.
Remorse equals pain.
You're feeling pain for what
you've done to someone else. And
it's very easy to deny pain and
run away from pain, and I did it
for a long time.
And then I started
becoming aware of
everyone else who was
hurt and feeling remorse for
that and then running away from
that pain as soon as I realized
it. I said, "Whoa, whoa, I don't
want to feel pain. So, no, it's
not my fault that all those
people are hurt. I'm going to
still put it back on my parents.
If they didn't do all that to me
well then these people wouldn't
have been hurt either."
And it took...
probably close
to a decade before I could
have the strength to stop
and say, "No. My fault."
What makes
so much of it worse now,
thinking back at my
childhood, is now that
I'm a grown man, I've
seen kids. I've seen how the
relationship is supposed to be
with your parents.
Obviously, they had to
have been mentally ill.
They're passing
down garbage from their past.
It's a cycle.
They had their own issues that
led into it that lessened their

culpability. And when you start thinking about that it's like, "Wait a minute, they didn't deserve what happened to them that caused them that way." And it starts feeding into itself and it's like, "Wow." If I'm going to say, "I deserve another shot because I was screwed up and I didn't... I was made to be who I am," then I have to have the same amount of empathy for them and what they went through that made them into who they were. A decision just released by the U.S. Supreme Court will change the way juveniles are sentenced. There was another ruling that you need to know about. The justices ruled five to four that life without parole sentences are cruel and unusual punishment for juvenile offenders. That's anyone under the age of 18 regardless of the crime. The ruling could affect as many as 38 states where laws allow life without parole for teenagers. At first when they came on they just said, "Life without parole for juveniles has been abolished." I was so happy because they didn't put any caveats in there, no stipulations. And, man, I was jumping up and down in the cell I was so happy. What the court held by five to four, Justice Anthony Kennedy joining the four liberals said

that, "It is unconstitutional for a law to say a juvenile convicted of murder must automatically serve life without parole. The judge or jury has to make a separate determination about whether the individual should serve life without parole. And the next hour when the news came on again they threw in the little limitations. Mandatory life without parole was unconstitutional and that they could still give kids life without parole. And it tempered us a little bit but that's the ruling that we expected all along. So, we're still very happy and we still actually can tangibly see light at the end of the tunnel. Judges will have to face that question of, "Are there children who should be in the adult system for long years, or for life? And how do we identify which children those are?" They have, on the one hand, a terrible offense, victims whose lives will never be the same, the community that's harmed by feeling unsafe when a crime of this sort occurs. And on the other hand, a young person who is childish, damaged by trauma, whose never been arrested before, who's never had counseling services before, and is amenable to rehabilitation.

From my experience, the number of kids who cannot be rehabilitated is very small. On January 8, 2011, one of the sergeants in my cell house called me into his office and spun his computer around and said, "Do you recognize this name?" It was the governor's website and I said, "Yeah, it's my name." He said, "What does it say?" I said, "It says Sean Taylor... sentenced in 1990 to life for first-degree murder has had his sentence commuted... to parole." I started crying immediately. Went back in the cell house and hugged all my friends and everybody. Everybody just was standing around crying... praising God. Everything feels beautiful out here, man, but I never try to lose focus. I say, "Even though I've been blessed and I'm enjoying my life out here, there's still always the mission to make sure that I can do whatever I can do, whatever I can do... whatever I can do to stop some young person from doing something like I did." Messing up their lives and messing up someone else's life and causing grief to someone else's family, I'll do whatever I have to do to stop that. I fully believe, 100%, that I'm going to get

out, especially
with the Supreme Court case that
came down. But the
pragmatist in me, about half of
me, says it's going to be a
couple more years, ten more
years, who knows how long, but
it's going to be a while.

Hello?

Hello.

- Hi.

- Hey, Dad.

I knew that the
truth was terrible.

And I was really
scared of coming clean.

Years after this happened,
we were visiting and I was
like, "No, I am not innocent,
Mom. I had a part in this.

I knew it was going to happen
and I went along with it."

And she was devastated,
of course. She had to accept
that her son had a part in this
horrible crime.

I have personally seen my dad
cry two times, and the first
time was when I won a
scholarship for a science
project I did and the other time
was when he was on the stand in
court and he was crying
because I hurt him so much.

Your parents, they love
you so much and then you show
them this by destroying them.

I got special parents.

I just wish I could go
back in time.