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Podcast Teaching Guide  
For High School Students

BY GRIFFIN MUCKLEY

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

03	<u>OVERVIEW</u>
05	<u>ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS</u>
05	<u>ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS</u>
06	<u>LIST OF CHARACTERS</u>
07	<u>FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS</u>
10	<u>LESSON #1: UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES</u>
12	<u>LESSON #2: CHARACTERIZING COURTNEY</u>
14	<u>LESSON #3: WAS COURTNEY “SOMEBODY” OR “SOME BODY?”</u>
17	<u>LESSON #4: TRUST</u>
19	<u>LESSON #5: THE POWER OF MEDIA</u>
22	<u>LESSON #6: THE TALK</u>
24	<u>LESSON #7: WALKING BACK ASSUMPTIONS</u>
26	<u>LESSON #8: SHAPEARL’S MISSION</u>
28	<u>LESSON #9: THE ROLE OF THE POLICE</u>
30	<u>LESSON #10: THE TIMELINE</u>
33	<u>ASSESSMENT: WRITE A PODCAST REVIEW</u>
35	<u>ASSESSMENT: WRITE A SCOOP AND RUN OP-ED</u>
37	<u>APPENDIX A: TEACHING STRATEGIES</u>
39	<u>APPENDIX B: ALIGNED STANDARDS</u>
44	<u>APPENDIX C: HANDOUTS</u>
81	<u>APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPTS: EPISODES 1-7</u>

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## OVERVIEW

by Griffin Muckley

“I didn’t read,” Fantasia admitted to me, “but I did listen to the audiobook. Is that okay?” Five years ago, as I circulated the English classroom where I taught on Chicago’s West Side, I didn’t have time to weigh the act of reading vs. listening. But later, I couldn’t shake the question: Was it okay to listen instead of read? Did it engage as much of the brain? Did it allow for students to practice critical thinking?

These days, I don’t just allow critical listening, I actively encourage it.

The first time I played a podcast in class, it seemed beyond students’ ability levels: “What does that word mean?” “They talk too fast!” “I get what he’s talking about...but I don’t remember what he said.” That experience got me thinking: What would it be like to teach a podcast in place of a text? I landed on the first season of the hit show *Serial*. I figured, “Teenagers? Love? Murder? Students will get behind this.” After just one episode, students, some of whom were silent all year, were making predictions, wondering aloud about information they thought was missing, drawing conclusions, and backing them up with details. All this conversation was unguided; I let it unfurl naturally. It became clear that literary analysis comes naturally to teenagers, provided they have an interesting story in a relatable format. *Serial* became a perennial unit and year after year students listened at home, then came to school to discuss what they noticed. They relistened closely to excerpts from the podcast, and adjusted their perceptions of the story.

On my first listen of the *Somebody* podcast, I knew it was going to take my experiment with critical listening to the next level. On Chicago’s West Side, my students have been predominantly African American, and I knew that they would relate to losing a loved one to gun violence, experiencing negative interactions with police, and feeling the impact of stereotypes. I could imagine the looks in students’ eyes as they, like Shapearl, peeled back the idea of who is and who isn’t somebody.

I saw this teaching guide as an opportunity to bring conversations going on at home and on the national stage into the classroom. The killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others have brought the relationship between police and communities of color underneath a microscope; listening to Shapearl’s story reveals how a breakdown in the relationship between the police and the community leads to distrust, assumptions, and mistakes. This curriculum pushes students to analyze how experiences can shape our personal biases, no matter what community you may teach in.

Open any podcast app and you have instant access to thousands of short, digestible stories told through relatable voices in modern context. Teachers know that emotion and relatability are the

greatest gateway to engaged, meaningful learning. Whether it's a crash course in American diplomacy in *The Other Latif* podcast, or an exploration of human biology on *Science Vs*, podcasts simplify complex ideas and create narratives that make information memorable. What better teaching tool could we ask for?

When I started teaching critical listening, I thought it would be a break from strict academics. Over time, I've found that teaching students to listen is as important as teaching them how to read. It's made me rethink my responsibilities as an educator and the tools I use to teach critical thinking.

The *Somebody* podcast is an ideal vehicle for critical listening, analysis, and social justice. I hope this teaching guide helps you to experiment with critical listening in your own classroom.

*Griffin Muckley taught English at Christ the King College Prep on Chicago's West Side. He recently moved to Boston where he is pursuing a career in education advocacy.*

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## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- ⇒ **LITERARY ANALYSIS:** How can listening closely to word choice and tone reveal complex motivations?
- ⇒ **LITERACY:** How can distinguishing between facts and assumptions help us to understand an event?
- ⇒ **LANGUAGE:** How can research and interviews be combined to tell a cohesive story?
- ⇒ **LIFE:** How can listening to someone's story change our perspectives?

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## ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- ⇒ Our civic structures, such as police and fire departments, rely on trust. When that trust breaks down, they do not work effectively.
- ⇒ Individuals are shaped by the experiences that they have had personally. To understand alternative perspectives, we must listen to others' experiences.
- ⇒ As citizens, we have the right to demand information from public institutions. This keeps us informed and holds institutions accountable.
- ⇒ Facts can be difficult to define because we often color them with our own biases and assumptions.

**\*\*NOTE:** All time codes are based on the episodes posted on the Somebody website without commercials.

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## LIST OF CHARACTERS

- **Courtney Copeland** - a 22-year-old from suburban Chicago who was a senior sales rep at World Ventures travel agency. He was shot on March 4, 2016.
- **Shapearl Wells** - Courtney's mother and host of the Somebody podcast.
- **Alison Flowers** - a journalist who helps with the investigation and occasionally serves as co-host of the podcast.
- **Brent Wells** - Courtneys' stepfather.
- **Renee Faulkner** - Shapearls mother, Courtney's grandmother.
- **Claressa Hawkins** - a nurse on duty when Courtney was brought into the hospital. She is a key witness, particularly around the question of whether or not Courtney was handcuffed.
- **Alma** - Courtney's "secret" girlfriend who worked with him at World Ventures. Courtney was on his way to see her the night he was shot.
- **Elena** - a resident of Chicago's Belmont-Cragin neighborhood. She and her child were walking from their car to their house the night Courtney was shot. They heard gunshots and witnessed a car driving down their alley.
- **Edgar** - Elena's husband. He also saw a car in his alley the night Courtney was shot and was able to provide descriptions of the vehicle and the men inside.
- **Randall** - another witness. Randall was returning home from the gym late at night when he saw three men in a car who appeared to throw a gun underneath a vehicle.
- **Rocio** - Courtney's long-time girlfriend. They were not together at the time of the murder.
- **Santita Jackson** - a friend of Shapearl, and the daughter of Reverend Jesse Jackson. She tells Shapearl to write down her account of the investigation so that no details are lost over time.
- **Chance the Rapper** - a high school friend of Courtney's.
- **Chicago Police Department** - includes officers on the scene outside the police station the night Courtney was shot as well as detectives assigned to investigate the case.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **My students don't have the ability to listen on their own!**
  - ◆ If you can't assign listening as homework, listen as a class. Students can follow along with the transcripts and guided questions. You can ask the questions or you can ask students to turn-and-talk or think-pair-share to answer them.
  
- **I don't have time to listen in class and still complete all of the lessons!**
  - ◆ Using the transcripts with the guided questions can still be an enriching experience, especially for students new to critical listening. Try listening to just the first few episodes and completing the corresponding lessons. Or complete all the listening and choose the lessons you find most important, engaging, or relevant.
  
- **This curriculum appears to be VERY discussion-based. My students need movement and constant engagement!**
  - ◆ This curriculum consists of close-listening excerpts and guided questions meant to help students strengthen their critical listening abilities, like close-reading a text. It is meant to be adaptable. If you engage students with movement and active learning, apply your strategies to the lines of questioning provided.
  
- **You don't include any time for students to debrief their own thoughts and feelings after listening!**
  - ◆ Each lesson is meant to immediately engage students in the central questions and understandings. If you want to encourage more organic discussion, try working it in after the first step of each lesson. After this "hook," you can encourage students to share their thoughts for 5-10 minutes before moving on with the lesson.
  
- **What about distance learning?**
  - ◆ We are facing the very real possibility that schools will look different in the future, with students doing much of their learning online. Podcasts are easily adapted to distance learning as they are web-based. Students can make copies of all handouts, and the guided listening packets are easily shared.
  
- **Why doesn't this curriculum include more writing?**

- ◆ I find that students write best when I dedicate time just for that task rather than trying to jam it in at the end of a full lesson. Teachers can definitely use the extensions at the end of each lesson to create writing prompts for students.



# S O M E B O D Y

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## Teaching Lessons

- 01 UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES
- 02 CHARACTERIZING COURTNEY
- 03 WAS COURTNEY "SOMEBODY"  
OR "SOME BODY?"
- 04 TRUST
- 05 THE POWER OF MEDIA
- 06 THE TALK
- 07 WALKING BACK ASSUMPTIONS
- 08 SHAPEARL'S MISSION
- 09 THE ROLE OF THE POLICE
- 10 THE TIMELINE

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## LESSON 1: UNDERSTANDING PERSPECTIVES

### In Preparation

This unit is meant to generate discussions that are personal for students. Some topics discussed may be contentious. Consider ice-breakers and team-building activities before introducing the unit.

### Learning Target

I can analyze an author's tone in order to predict their purpose.

### Overview

This lesson provides context for the listeners. After reading and discussing background information and the role of journalists, the class will begin listening to Episode 1: "Courtney" to introduce students to critical listening.

### Skills

Generating Questions, Prediction, Tone, Word Choice

### Understanding

Authors' word choices and tone reveal the purpose behind their works.

### Procedure

- Pose a question to the class: *Think about your last experience with a police officer. Describe the moment. What was going on? How did you feel? Provide students an opportunity to share and listen. Allow students time to share and listen to each other's perspectives.*
  
- Distribute "Context to Courtney's Murder" and have students read the passages. Explain that each is from a different source. Have students describe the different tone each takes towards the events surrounding Courtney's death. They should use evidence and word choice. Once students have discussed, provide definitions for Journalism, Watchdog Journalism, and Police Accountability.
  - ◆ "Journalism" is the act of reporting stories

### Materials

- ["Context to Courtney's Murder"](#)
- Episode 1 audio and transcript: ["Courtney"](#)

→ **Tip:** Listen to the first episode with students to model critical listening

→ **Extension:** The Youth/Police Project of the Invisible Institute has [a series of videos](#) with teenagers talking about everyday encounters with police in their neighborhoods

- ◆ **“Watchdog Journalism”** is when journalists investigate how public institutions act in ways that are harmful to citizens
- ◆ **“Police Accountability”** is when journalists point out when police are not meeting standards

- *Ask: Why might these sources approach the topic differently? How do their purposes differ?*
- Listen to 0:00-3:38 of Episode 1: “Courtney” with students. On post it notes, have students write down what they know and what they want to know. Have them post these on a **KWL chart** in the class.
- Continue listening to Episode 1: “Courtney” using the transcript with guiding questions for **turn-and-talks** or discussion.
- With at least 7-8 minutes left, have students **think-pair-share** about what they think Shapearl’s purpose is for creating this podcast.
- As an **Exit Ticket**, direct students to the KWL chart. Have students create a post-it with one thing they learned about Courtney’s case.

→ **Extension:** Other podcasts that cover race include *Code Switch* and *Scene on Radio: Seeing White*. You could integrate episodes throughout the year.

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## LESSON 2: CHARACTERIZING COURTNEY

### In Preparation

Be sure students have listened to Somebody Episode 1: “Courtney” before this lesson.

### Learning Target

I can characterize Courtney Copeland based on details from multiple accounts and analyze why learning about victims on a personal level helps create empathy and connection.

### Overview

The purpose of today’s lesson is to analyze Courtney as a character by defining his traits. However, students will be prompted to discuss how it is easy for society to dismiss victims of gun violence when they are “faceless.” By building up Courtney as a person, students should see how they begin to empathize with Shapearl.

### Skills

Characterization, Analyzing an author’s choices

### Understandings

When we don’t share a personal connection with an individual, it is easy to overlook the things that are important to them. Getting to know someone on a personal level can change that.

### Procedure

- Post the following headlines and have students discuss which one they feel more drawn to. (Students should pick up on the fact that the first is nameless and faceless. The second tells a story about an individual person.)
  - ◆ *“Man, 22, Fatally Shot Near Northwest Side Police Station”*
  - ◆ *“Brent Wells Adjusts to ‘New Normal’ after Murder of Son, Courtney”*

### Materials

- Chart paper, whiteboard, or slideshow
- Episode 1: “Courtney” and speakers
- [Characterizing Courtney](#) handout

→ **Tip:** Use the [Characterizing Courtney](#) handout OR the *digital word cloud* or *graffiti poster* strategies

- Play Episode 1, “Courtney”, from 19:00-23:05 (or 21:00-23:05 if short on time). Ask students: *Why do you think Shapearl felt she had to protect Courtney’s image?*
  
- Have students review their notes from Episode 1: “Courtney” and gather evidence that characterizes Courtney. After gathering evidence, they should come up with 5-10 words or phrases they would use to characterize Courtney Copeland.
  
- With the class, discuss:
  - ◆ *How would you describe Courtney?*
  - ◆ *Why would his mother be concerned about defending his image...?*
  - ◆ *Why do you think the producers chose to open the show this way?*
  - ◆ *How could learning about others change our city?*
  - ◆ *How could society use this lesson to better address gun violence?*
  
- As an **Exit Ticket**, have students write a claim characterizing Courtney and integrate at least one piece of evidence.
  
- **Extension:** Have students write an extended response explaining why they believe producers started the podcast by characterizing Courtney. A complete response should include a characterization of Courtney, address how this helps the audience build empathy, and/or mention his mother’s need to protect his image.

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## LESSON 3: WAS COURTNEY “SOMEBODY” OR “SOME BODY?”

### In Preparation

This lesson allows students to make historical connections to the idea of “somebodiness” throughout the Civil Rights Movement. While it is not necessary to listen to Episode 2: “The Nurse” before this lesson, it is helpful.

### Learning Target

I can analyze how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. develops the complex concept of being “somebody” over the course of a speech.

### Overview

The lesson offers suggestions for guided reading of a primary source. Dr. King shares the importance of believing that you are somebody. Shapearl, throughout her investigation, wants the police and others to see that Courtney was “somebody” and that his life mattered. This is the inspiration for the title of the podcast, Somebody. The learning targets focus on how Dr. King develops the concept of “being somebody.” [The text](#) is available for classrooms that want to dive deeper into Dr. King’s rhetorical strategies.

### Skills

analyzing author’s structure, development of a complex concept

### Understanding

Throughout history, leaders have encouraged Black Americans to recognize that they are somebody and that they matter. American society is built on institutions that have not always recognized the humanity of Black Americans; therefore, these leaders saw declaring somebodiness as an essential step toward freedom.

### Procedure

- Students should watch the historical footage of [Reverend Jesse Jackson](#) and reflect on the questions, What does it mean to “be somebody”? How do you see yourself? Allow students to share for 3-5 minutes.

### Materials

- [Video: Reverend Jesse Jackson reciting poem “I am somebody!”](#)
  - [Episode 2: “The Nurse”](#)
  - [Video: MLK Glenville High School Speech](#)
  - [Text: MLK’s “Glenville High School Speech”](#)
  - [Developing a Concept Handout](#)
- **Extend:** Class can use the *OPTIC* strategy to analyze this [image](#) of the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike and compare it to the video

- Play [Episode 2: “The Nurse”](#) from 1:35-3:05. Explain that this idea is directly tied to the title of the podcast and the theme song. Also explain that writers develop complex concepts over the course of a text.
- Distribute [“Glenville High School Speech”](#) and the [“Developing a Concept”](#) handout. Project the handout or recreate it on the board. Begin reading as a class, modeling how to use the handout. Stop after paragraph 4 and ask: Where does he discuss “somebodiness?” What does he say about it? After a few responses, summarize ideas in the top-left box and add textual evidence. Students continue from there, reading and chunking and filling out the remaining boxes.
- Project the organizer on the board and complete it as a class, soliciting multiple student ideas. Check for student understanding before collecting the handouts. Alternatively, pose the Extension questions below for a more independent, rigorous discussion.
- As an **Exit Ticket**, collect student handouts. Students should refer to some of the following ideas:
  - ◆ “Desegregating the mind” and personal anecdote.
  - ◆ Embracing identity and culture, not feeling “ashamed.”
  - ◆ “Somebodiness” can be a source of motivation.
- **Extension:** Create an in-person or online discussion. Students can discuss how Dr. King develops his concept of “somebodiness” and why it is significant to the podcast. You might ask:
  - ◆ *Explain at least two different meanings behind Dr. King’s concept of being “somebody”. Be sure to use evidence.*
  - ◆ *Think about the name of the Somebody podcast. How does Dr. King’s concept of being “somebody” relate to Courtney Copeland and the podcast?*
- **Extension:** Use the lyrics to Chance the Rapper’s “Everybody’s Something” to demonstrate the concept of being “somebody”. This is the theme song for the Somebody podcast. Note that the lyrics are explicit. Select only the lyrics or verses that you’re comfortable teaching. Distribute the lyrics, play the song, and ask students to markup lines that show Chance’s struggles or how he’s overcome them. When finished, draw a large version of the Developing a Concept handout on the board. The “central idea” is “everybody’s somebody’s everything.” Student can then take turns sharing lyrics

- **Tip:** Students could continue reading individually. If you have students read in partners, partner one should read and partner two should decide where to stop. Partner two is responsible for explaining why they stopped and taking the lead on explaining what they see about “somebodiness” in the speech
- Chance the Rapper Video: “Everybody’s Something”
- Chance the Rapper Lyrics: “Everybody’s Something”
- These lyrics are explicit. Select only the lyrics or verses that you’re comfortable teaching.

and what they mean. Then write 4 lyrics in the 4 boxes of the handout. The class can then discuss how Chance's refrain really refers to how, no matter what struggles people go through, there is someone out there who cares about them and who believes that they matter.





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## LESSON 4: TRUST

### In Preparation

Be sure students have listened to Episode 2: “The Nurse” before beginning this lesson.

### Learning Target

I can justify Shapearl’s skepticism toward the Chicago Police Department.

### Overview

Today’s lesson asks students to look closely at the words and actions of the police and evaluate Shapearl’s perspective. There seems to be some inconsistencies in the stories that the officers tell. However, are all of the events really within the control of the officers?

### Skills

justify complex perspectives

### Understanding

People have to trust institutions in order for them to work. When that trust is broken once, it can leave lasting skepticism.

### Procedure

- Ask students to imagine asking a friend to do them a favor. Then ask students to imagine that this friend “forgot” to do what they asked. Ask, *How would you feel? What would that do to your relationship?*
  
- Allow students to share what they remember from Episode 2. If necessary, guide them toward Courtney supposedly being “combative,” handcuffs, and the nurse. Play Episode 2: “The Nurse” from 14:00-15:00. Focus on Shapearl saying “the police are a suspect.” Have students do a **modified four corners activity**. They should move to one side of the room if they agree with Shapearl, the other side if they disagree, or stand somewhere in

### Materials

- Episode 2: “The Nurse”

- **Alternative:** You could jigsaw these clips with three (or more) groups and have them share out their findings

the middle. Allow for some discussion or explanation

- Ask students where trust and mistrust have played a role in this story so far. Have prompts ready to help students reach these conclusions. Example responses might include:
  - ◆ *Courtney trusted that the police would help him.*
  - ◆ *Shapearl trusted that the police told her the whole story.*
  - ◆ *Shapearl trusted the police to do their best to solve the case.*
  - ◆ *The cops lost trust in Shapearl's when she recorded them.*
  
- Listen to the following clips with your students from Episode 2: "The Nurse." Potential guiding questions are listed beneath each. Have students **turn-and-talk** after each clip:
  - ◆ First meeting at the police station: 9:30-14:25
    - *How do the police sound to you?*
    - *At what points does Shapearl seem to grow skeptical or frustrated?*
  - ◆ New information: 18:30-20:45
    - *Why doesn't the new information about handcuffs fit the story she was told?*
    - *Shapearl says they were "playing her for a fool". Do you agree? Why or why not?*
  - ◆ Meeting Nurse Hawkins: 21:25-23:40
    - *What procedures were not followed?*
    - *What complications did this cause?*
  
- Ask students to repeat the activity from the beginning of class, moving to one side of the room if they share Shapearl's view that the police are suspect and on the other side of the room if they disagree. Allow students to stand somewhere in between the two sides if they feel somewhat drawn to one or the other, but not completely. Have them discuss: *Did you change your location after listening to these clips? Why or why not?*
  
- **Extension:** Have students create a written response explaining why Shapearl feels skeptical of the police officers. Explain that even if they do not agree with everything Shapearl says, her perspective is her truth and it needs to be respected.

→ **Alternative:** If students did not change places, pose the question: Why does Shapearl feel skeptical of the police? OR Students could simply move onto the extension question.

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## LESSON 5: THE POWER OF MEDIA

### In Preparation

Students should listen to the first half (approximately 35 minutes) of Episode 3: “The Police”. *This lesson is meant as a buffer to allow students enough time to listen to the entirety of Episode 3: “The Police” before the next lesson.*

### Learning Target

I can analyze how social media has helped to create a wider awareness of social injustice.

### Overview

This lesson is meant to get students thinking about the role images have played in the Civil Rights Movement and how social media has made dissemination and access to images much easier. This has resulted in a more diverse coalition and new approaches to organizing.

### Skills

Citing evidence that supports a claim

### Understandings

While we have tools to hold institutions like police accountable, images have the power to make hard truths *tangible* to an entire society. Social media has made sharing images easier and garnered momentum for movements like #BlackLivesMatter.

### Procedure

- Watch Video: [“Police Records”](#). Then pose the question, *Whose job is it to make sure public officials (police, politicians, city workers) are doing what they are supposed to be doing?* Wait to see if students say “the people” or “watchdog journalists”. Then ask, *How do we hold them accountable?* Explain that today you will be discussing how we can do this effectively.

### Materials

- [Video: “Police Records”](#)
- [Video: “Introduction to CPDP”](#)
- [Chicago Police Data Project](#)
- [“Social Media” Graphic Organizer](#)
- [FOIA Video #1](#)
- [FOIA Video #2](#)
- [“We’re Not Seeing More Police Shootings, Just More News Coverage”](#)

- Explain that there are a few different ways to make information public that Shapearl and the Invisible Institute used:
  - ◆ Show [Video: “Introduction to CPDP”](#). Explain that this is how they looked into the officers’ backgrounds
  - ◆ Play [FOIA Video #1](#) and [FOIA Video #2](#). Explain that this is how they requested the videotape and police scanner audio
  
- Explain that, while these methods are available, they’re not always effective. Pose the question: *Think about cases we have heard about: Laquan McDonald, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, George Floyd. Why did these come to the nation’s attention? What do they have in common?* Guide students to the conclusion that they were all captured on video.
  
- Have students read [“We’re Not Seeing More Police Shootings, Just More News Coverage”](#) individually. Students should annotate or take note of details that help to explain *how images and social media have impacted social movements like #BlackLivesMatter or the Civil Rights Movement*. When they’re finished, students should discuss their findings.
  - ◆ As a discussion strategy, have student groups try to sort their evidence into categories (ex. images create empathy, phones and social media help organize events, etc.) Students could write their evidence on note cards and create piles or make lists or a mindmap on paper. This would serve as a formative assessment. Alternatively, have students share out loud as a class and take notes this way on the board as students share.
  
- Post the **exit ticket** question (which is also on the graphic organizer): *Looking at your reasoning and evidence, create an original claim about the way that images and/or social media have made an impact on the Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter movements:*
  
- **Extension:** Have students debate or discuss whether or not it was justifiable for Shapearl to record the officers without their knowledge. Ask students to consider whether they would want to be recorded like this and whether or not that matters in this situation.

### For Differentiated Instruction

→ **Extension:** “[Good Cops, Bad Cops](#)” from the New Yorker gives context to the Laquan McDonald case and the police code of silence

→ **Extension:** Have students go to the [Chicago Police Data Project](#) and figure out approximately what percentage of civilian allegations are sustained. In Chicago, they can search specifically for their community.

Use the texts below with, or in place of, the article from CNN. Have students read/watch one of these instead OR have students **jigsaw** these texts with premade groups.

- [“Social Media Helps Black Lives Matter Fight The Power”](#)
  - ◆ This article is more rhetorical. The language is more difficult and the message more implicit.
  
- [“How video changed our view of police”](#)
  - ◆ This article directly connects images, empathy, and action. The article is simpler, shorter, and more straightforward.
  
- [“Social Media’s Impact on Cases of Police Brutality”](#)
  - ◆ This video covers similar concepts, but could allow struggling students to more fully participate in the conversation.

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## LESSON 6: THE TALK

### In Preparation

Be sure students have listened to all of Episode 3: “The Police” before beginning this lesson.

### Learning Targets

I can analyze how Shapearl’s background and the police’s lack of consistency lead to a breakdown in their conversation.

### Overview

The purpose of this lesson is to dig deeply into the mistrust that exists between communities of color and the police. Students should be able to point out where Shapearl’s conversation with officers breaks down because she does not trust what they are telling her and they feel threatened by her claims.

### Skills

perspective, complex relationships, conflict

### Understandings

For generations, African American communities have experienced more aggressive policing, lower solve-rates, and a lack of transparency from police. This has led to skepticism and distrust between many communities of color and police departments.

### Procedure

- Pose the question to students: *What’s a piece of advice your family has passed down from generation to generation? Why do you think it was so important that it was passed on?*
  
- Play Episode 3: “The Police” from 43:18-46:00. Have students write on a postcard or post-it:
  - ◆ *Which of these experiences, if any, can you relate to?*
  - ◆ *Share a moment from your life that this section reminded you of.*

### Materials

- [Police Conversation Handout](#)

- **Tip:** Try a *think out loud*, especially if you can project the transcript while you listen

Tell students that you will read some of these out loud, but that they will remain anonymous. The idea is to get students talking about how family history impacts our values.

- Explain that you are going to listen to Shapearl’s conversation at the police station in its entirety (12:38-24:00) . As students listen, they should note moments of tension or moments when the conversation between the officer and Shapearl break down. Students can use their Episode 3 guided reading packet or the [Police Conversation Handout](#). It may be a good idea to model what a “moment of tension” is by stopping at one or both of the following lines:
  - ◆ “I’m like, how do you not know my son was handcuffed?” *This reveals that Shapearl does not trust their original report.*
  - ◆ “I didn’t say that. Don’t put words in my mouth.” *The officer feels like Shapearl is misinterpreting him.*
  
- Students should discuss: *Why do you think the conversation between Shapearl and the police breaks down? Be sure to point to specific moments that support your analysis.* You might have a whole class discussion or use the **quad-pod** small group discussion strategy. Evidence may include:
  - ◆ Who’s telling you at the hospital that he was handcuffed?
  - ◆ Who knows? You tell me.
  - ◆ I felt angry, I felt like they were gaslighting me.
  - ◆ Does that have anything to do with us solving who shot him?
  - ◆
  
- If students are in quad-pods, end class with share-outs from the speakers. Otherwise, have them answer the discussion question in writing as an **exit ticket**.
  
- **Extension:** Students could discuss or respond in writing to any of the following questions:
  - ◆ *How does Shapearl’s history and identity impact her interpretation of the police’s actions?*
  - ◆ *Is Shapearl’s skepticism of the police reasonable?*

→ If students are struggling with evidence, remind them that these detectives only *read* the report that said officers helped Courtney and he collapsed. They did not go back to *speaking* with those officers.

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## LESSON 7: WALKING BACK ASSUMPTIONS

### In Preparation

Be sure students have listened to Episode 4: “The Secret Girlfriend.”

### Learning Targets

I can differentiate between assumptions and corroborated facts and draw reasonable conclusions based on those facts.

### Overview

Students will work through a series of clips today from several different episodes, although most will focus on Episode 4: “The Secret Girlfriend”. For each clip, students will have to determine what facts are revealed and what conclusions can be drawn from them. Note that some evidence may lend itself to more than one conclusion depending on how students interpret the situation.

### Skills

Drawing conclusions

### Understanding

Many times, facts are open to interpretation, meaning that one individual might draw a completely different conclusion than someone else. It is our responsibility to consider multiple conclusions and what’s missing.

### Procedure

- Ask students to think about and describe a time that they made an assumption or jumped to a conclusion that they later found out was incorrect.
- Play Episode 3: “The Police” from 42:40-43:20. Ask students, *What does it mean to “walk back assumptions”?* Situate students in today’s lesson by explaining that you will be reviewing events to determine *what we know* and *what we assume*.
- “Investigate” the following clips. After each clip, add to the [Facts/Assumptions Chart](#). You could distribute the handouts individually, to small groups, or create one as a class.

### Materials

- [Facts / Assumptions Chart](#)

→ **Tip:** Save time by using the jigsaw strategy - You could assign two clips per group OR two clips per group member and have them share out



- ◆ Episode 1: “Courtney” from 23:35-25:03
- ◆ Episode 2: “The Nurse” from 11:05-12:13
- ◆ Episode 2: “The Nurse” from 19:45-23:50
- ◆ Episode 3: “The Police” from 30:30-34:48
- ◆ Episode 4: “The Secret Girlfriend” from 19:45-23:45
- ◆ Episode 4: “The Secret Girlfriend” from 25:41-27:10
- ◆ Episode 4: “The Secret Girlfriend” 37:15-38:42

- After students listen and complete charts. Have students check their answers. This could be done as a whole class, through small-group share-outs, or by comparing their chart with a partner. If you choose the third option, be sure that you are conducting **over-the-shoulder-checks** and providing feedback.
- Collect charts or have students share them with you digitally as an **exit ticket**.
- **Extension:** As homework or in class, have students create ANOTHER Facts/Assumptions Chart as they listen to Episode 5: “The Two Year Anniversary.”
- **Extension:** Students could write a preliminary theory of the case. They should explain, based on evidence, one possible explanation for who killed Courtney and why. They should use evidence to support their theories. These do not have to be the most likely or air-tight.
  - ◆ **Raise the Rigor:** After students write their theories, have them read their peers’ answers. Students should write a response evaluating how likely their peer’s theory is. *Is it based in fact? Is it mostly an assumption?*

→ You could also have students create collaborative digital charts using Google Docs or Google’s [Jamboard](#).

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## LESSON 8: SHAPEARL'S MISSION

### In Preparation

Be sure students have listened to Episode 5: “The Two-Year Anniversary”.

### Learning Targets

I can analyze Shapearl’s word choice to track how her purpose for investigating develops over the course of three years.

### Overview

On its surface, this lesson is about tracking the development of Shapearl’s motivations. She transitions from a grieving mother looking for answers, to a citizen hoping her son can be a hero, to just hoping everyone knows her son *was somebody*. Even more importantly, this episode is about empathizing with Shapearl. Students will reflect on the fact that every lost life impacts others. In other words, *everybody’s somebody’s everything*.

### Skills

developing a concept, citing evidence

### Understandings

As Shapearl continues her investigation, and begins to understand what happened to Courtney, we can see her move through stages of grief and understanding. Empathizing with her along each step of her journey can help us to understand how her reasoning for pursuing this case evolves.

### Procedure

- Ask students to brainstorm a few dating/reality/game TV shows. Ask students what the motivations contestants might have to go on those shows. Ask: *How do you know if they’re being sincere?* Emphasize that sometimes we have complex motivations. If we listen to Shapearl, her own motivations change between episodes.
  
- We are getting into the details of what happened that night. It will be important to review information from previous episodes so students can corroborate what they know. Before moving on, return

### Materials

- Post-It Notes or Index Cards
  
- [Facts / Assumptions Chart](#)
  
- [Shapearl’s Development](#)
  
- [Tone Words Handout](#)
  
  
- Examples of motivations might be love, money, or fame

to the [Facts/Assumptions Chart](#) (or poster) from the last lesson. Students should take 4-6 minutes to add to this handout from last night's listening. Have students share out and add what their peers say, or have students each create a post-it note and add it to the class chart.

- Listen to the following sections from throughout the podcast. Students should annotate [Shapearl's Development Excerpts](#) or write down examples of strong diction that help reveal Shapearl's tone. Students can use the [Tone Words](#) handout to help them come up with descriptive language. (Example: From the first chunk you might pause and **think-out-loud** at phrases like "I'm going to tear this whole hospital up" and infer that she is enraged. Likewise, you might stop at "Courtney had been stopped before because of this" and infer that she is skeptical and jaded. Example responses below:
  - ◆ Episode 1: 17:05 - 20:35 (Ex. grieving, despondent, etc.)
  - ◆ Episode 2: 18:00 - 20:10 (Ex. skeptical, accusatory, etc.)
  - ◆ Episode 3: 40:50 - 42:20 (Ex. lost, unsure, etc.)
  - ◆ Episode 4: 8:55 - 12:00 (Ex. clinical, procedural, etc.)
  - ◆ Episode 5: 3:47 - 4:58, 16:20 - 19:55 (Ex. unconsolable, overwhelmed, etc.)
  
- Number students off with numbers 1-5 (or however many excerpts are covered). Each student's number will correspond with an excerpt to focus on. Have each student choose one tone word that describes the tone in their excerpt and include diction from the podcast that creates that tone. Have students post their Post-Its on the board. Make sure each excerpt has a separate space to post. When students are finished, read responses in order of excerpts. Then ask students: *How does Shapearl's tone change over the course of her investigation?*
  
- **Extension:** Students should answer the prompt in writing: *Analyze how Shapearl's goal or motivation changes throughout the course of the first five episodes. Be sure to use specific tone words and refer to specific moments that change her understanding of the situation.*

→ This is an opportunity to informally assess critical listening skills. Hopefully students can apply newly developed skills on their own

→ **Tip:** Model annotating for strong diction and tone with the first chunk. Then let students work as a class, individually, in pairs, or small *jigsaw* groups

→ **Differentiation** At any age, vocabulary can be a struggle for students. Provide pre-made cards with tone words and/or images depicting those emotions for students to select from.

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## LESSON 9: THE ROLE OF THE POLICE

### In Preparation

### Materials

Be sure students have listened to Episode 6: “The Tipster”.

### Learning Target

I can define the role of police officers and evaluate how well the officers live up to their responsibilities in this case.

### Overview

This lesson asks students to review the investigative work done by Shapearl and the Invisible Institute throughout Episode 6: “The Tipster”. As you walk the class through aspects of the Chicago Police Department’s investigation, students should notice that police seem to investigate Courtney and his background in order to understand how he fits into his own murder.

### Skills

evaluate evidence

### Understanding

The police have a complicated job, and there are many opinions on how exactly they should fulfill their responsibility to keep communities safe. Officers may approach a case differently than we as citizens might expect; does this mean that they haven’t done their job?

### Procedure

- Start by playing Episode 3: “The Police” from 1:04:08-1:05:25
  - ◆ *Why does Shapearl feel so strongly?*
  - ◆ *What do you think of the cop asking them to move?*
  
- Divide students into partners or groups and have them review one of the following characters.
  - ◆ *Randall*
  - ◆ *Edgar*
  - ◆ *Crystal*
  - ◆ They should be ready share the following with the class:
    - *What was the character’s role in the last episode?*
    - *What were 2-3 pieces of information this character gave Shapearl?*

□ Access to episodes 1-6

→ **Extension:** [The Killing of Harith Augustus](#) from the Invisible Institute unpacks the ‘split second’ decisions that led to the police killing of Augustus through various temporal lenses

→ **Tip:** You could use the *quad pod* roles to give structure to this activity or you could use *turn and talk*

→ **Tip:** If students need more processing time, use one or two sections with more targeted questions

→ **Tip:** If you want to assess discussion skills,

- As a transition to the main lesson, ask students: *How much of the information that you just presented did the police investigate?* Use this as a springboard to explain that today you will listen to clips about the officers' investigation. After each clip have students answer the following questions (either in writing or out loud)
- ◆ Episode 1: 18:55-21:00
    - *What does this clip reveal about the police's perspective of the situation?*
  - ◆ Episode 2: 10:23-12:55
    - *What assumptions or attitudes does this clip reveal?*
  - ◆ Episode 3: 15:15-17:05
    - *What do the police see their role as here? How does that align with what Shapearl wants to know?*
  - ◆ Episode 4: 24:30-25:45
    - *Why might the police have wanted to look into Courtney's phone? What assumptions does this reveal? Is this fair? Why or why not?*
- Play Episode 3 from 33:18-33:45 to show Shapearl's opinion of how the cops are handling the case. Then ask:
- ◆ *What is the role of police officers, in your opinion?*
  - ◆ *How well did the police do their job in this case?*
- To assess discussion skills, allocate more time to Step 3 of the procedure and use the questions from Step 4 as the basis for a **seminar discussion** or **fishbowl discussions** the next day. This would become a two-day lesson.

you could perform these chunks as a series of *fishbowl* discussions. This will likely extend your lesson 20-30 minutes.

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## LESSON 10: THE TIMELINE

### In Preparation

This lesson is meant to be completed after listening to Episode 7: “Shapearl”.

### Learning Targets

I can synthesize the information gathered by Shapearl to create my own timeline of events from the night Courtney was shot.

### Overview

Today, students will collaborate to synthesize their learning into one cohesive timeline of the night Courtney died. This can serve as a formative assessment to determine students’ understanding of the major events of that evening before moving on to final discussions and writing assignments.

### Skills

synthesizing multiple sources, order of events

### Understandings

Rarely in life will the truth be laid out before us. It’s our job as citizens to learn how to sift through many accounts and determine what we believe. Shapearl may never know *exactly* what happened the night Courtney was shot, but she has gotten a much clearer understanding.

### Procedure

- Ask students to remember what Shapearl’s *original* motivation was. Students should remember that she simply wanted to figure out what happened to her son.
  
- Explain that the goal of today’s lesson is to create a detailed timeline of the events of the night Courtney was murdered using information from all of our witnesses (Nurse Claressa Hawkins, Alma, Edgar, and Randall).
  - ◆ You can have students work individually to refer to the [“Witness Accounts”](#) handout. Model with the first account

### Materials

- Episode 6: “The Tipster”
  
  - [Witness Accounts](#)
  
  - [Timeline](#) (or alternative material)
- 
- Working individually challenges students to self assess how well they understand the events of the podcast.
  
  - **Tech:** Think of creative ways for students to depict a timeline: slideshows, Prezi, Jamboard, or other media.
  
  - Encourage competition - offer a reward for the individual with the most events on their timeline.

of Claressa Hawkins by pointing out that she claims that he came into the hospital handcuffed, and that there was not officer present right away. As they continue reading, students should plot major events on their timeline sheet. Pencils may make this activity easier.

- ◆ Use the [“Timeline”](#) worksheet or have students use technology to create a more visually appealing timeline.
- ◆ When you call time, students should check their work against their peers in partners or small groups, looking to see if their events match or if either timeline is missing items. Reassure students that even if they are not completely finished, they should check in with their peers then continue working together.

- After students have compared timelines with their peers, listen to Ep.6 27:00-30:00. Students should mentally compare Shapearl’s timeline with their own.
- For an exit ticket, students or groups should list the differences between their timelines and Shapearl’s timeline. They should note 2-3 events Shapearl included that they did not AND 2-3 events that they included that Shapearl did not.
- **Extension:** Students could write a reflection on what led to their misunderstandings or missed details, citing two events that they either missed or misunderstood. You might use sentences starters to illustrate what you mean:
  - ◆ At first I thought that...but then I realized...when I heard...
  - ◆ I didn’t realize...because...but now I see...

→ **Extension:** [“Scoop and Run: Where Cop Cars Double as Ambulances”](#) by Elizabeth Van Brocklin for *The Trace* gives context to the practice and to [the possibility of other police departments using it in the future.](#)

# S O M E B O D Y

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## Assessments

WRITE A  
PODCAST  
REVIEW

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WRITE A  
SCOOP  
AND RUN  
OP-ED



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## ASSESSMENT: WRITE A PODCAST REVIEW



**BACKGROUND** In 2016, Shapearl Wells began a tenacious investigation into the murder of her son, Courtney Copeland. With the help of journalists from the Invisible Institute, she was able to go beyond the surface-level explanation provided by the Chicago Police Department to better understand what occurred the night he died. After seven episodes it's clear this was not a police shooting. So what was it?

**DESCRIPTION:** Write a review evaluating the *Somebody* podcast. Your role as a reviewer is to analyze what you think the purpose or message of the podcast is and decide how well the podcast accomplished that purpose. Your evaluation should include specific textual evidence.

**REQUIREMENTS:** In your final evaluation, be sure to address at least *four* of the following:

- What does the podcast reveal about relationships between the police and communities of color?
- How does the podcast characterize Courtney and why is that important?
- How does the podcast force the characters and audience to look at our assumptions?
- What does it mean to “be somebody” and how does this idea develop?
- How does the podcast explore the role of the police?
- What does the podcast demonstrate about trust in institutions?
- How does the podcast explore ideas of personal rights and recording privacy?

→ *Be sure to read an example review: <https://podcastreview.org/review/somebody/>*

→ *A sample rubric for this assignment is [HERE](#). This is also compatible with Google Classroom*

## Essay Organizer

<p><i>In your own words, what is the purpose of the Somebody podcast? What does it prove? What does it teach the audience?</i></p>	
<p><i>What is one aspect of the podcast that supports your claim? Ex. The focus on characterizing Courtney helps to show...</i></p>	<p><i>What evidence supports your reasoning? Ex. His grandmother says, "...” or We see he’s hardworking in Episode 1 when...</i></p>

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**ASSESSMENT: WRITE A SCOOP AND RUN OP-ED**

**BACKGROUND:** “Scoop and Run” is a practice by which the first responders to the scene of a shooting bring the victims to the hospital. In Philadelphia, that means that police -- not paramedics -- are often the ones who rush gunshot victims to get emergency medical care. Yet Chicago Police -- and other major cities’ police departments -- don’t do this regularly.

[“Scoop and Run: Where Cop Cars Double as Ambulances”](#) by Elizabeth Van Brocklin for *The Trace* gives context to the practice of “scoop and run” and its widespread use in Philadelphia.

Van Brocklin also writes about [the possibility of other police departments using this practice in the future](#).

**DESCRIPTION:** Write an Op-Ed for your local newspaper about “Scoop and Run”. Your role is to analyze whether you think this practice should be more widespread or not. You should decide whether this practice could be implemented effectively in the place where you live. Your evaluation should include specific textual evidence from the *Somebody* podcast.

**REQUIREMENTS:** In your final op-ed, be sure to address the following:

- What are some of the merits of “Scoop and Run”?
- What are some of the ways that “Scoop and Run” could go wrong?
- How does the practice of “Scoop and Run” expand the definition of the role of the police?
- What does the podcast demonstrate about “Scoop and Run”?

→ Be sure to read an example op-ed: <https://www.them.us/story/police-brutality-george-floyd-protests-op-ed>

# S O M E B O D Y

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## Appendix

APPENDIX A:  
TEACHING  
STRATEGIES

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APPENDIX B:  
ALIGNED  
STANDARDS

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APPENDIX C:  
HANDOUTS

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APPENDIX D:  
TRANSCRIPTS

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## APPENDIX A - TEACHING STRATEGIES

- **Breakout Groups** - Time spent in small groups that allow for more student discussion. This strategy also allows students to receive help from peers, so differentiating groups by ability level may be appropriate. Usually when using breakout groups, it's a good idea to have one student from each group share out major thoughts or findings. You may need to assign reporters or speakers yourself.
- **Collaborative Reading** - This is a process where students in small groups of five or less take turns reading text out loud, stopping to ask clarifying questions, answer deeper questions, summarize the events, and predict what will happen next before continuing. It may be helpful to assign students these roles or assign a group leader to hold these groups accountable.
- **Digital Word Cloud** - Teachers can use websites such as polleverywhere.com or mentimeter.com to have students insert brief answers and create word clouds, allowing students to gauge other students' responses.
- **Exit Ticket** - A standard means of quick, informal assessment before students leave class. You might have them do these tasks on scrap paper or note cards.
- **Extended Response** - An extended response is equivalent to a longer paragraph. It requires a more nuanced claim and at least two pieces of evidence.
- **Fishbowl Discussion** - A small group of students (approximately 4-6) are situated in a center circle in the middle of the class. The rest of the class observes the small group engage in a quick discussion. The center groups should use specific evidence and build off of each other's ideas. Ideally, the outside circle offers feedback on the fluidity and effectiveness of the small group discussion.
- **Graffiti Poster** - In small groups, students write down as many words and phrases directly from the text as possible in a set amount of time using markers or other writing utensils. After time is called, the group should collaboratively decide on the five most "important" quotations written down.
- **Jigsaw** - In a traditional jigsaw, students receive one text from a set. After reading, students meet with their "expert" groups, which includes students who shared the same text, to discuss and clarify. Students then meet with their breakout groups to teach what they learned from their text. No one in the breakout group has read the same article. *Throughout this curriculum, the jigsaw technique is meant to be modified. Rather than having students regroup into breakout groups, simply have each group share out loud. This will save time and is easier to manage.*

- **KWL Chart** - KWL stands for Know, Want to know, and Learned. Before reading a text, students fill in the first two columns. After reading, students return and fill out the last column. If using Post-Its, students can literally move items from one column to another. This allows the class to collaborate and for the teacher to track what students learned from the beginning to the end of a lesson.
- **Modified Four-Corners** - This activity is meant to engage students by making them actively show their opinion. Divide the room into a scale: one side of the room is option A, the other is option B. Students must choose a side of the room or somewhere along the scale and physically move to that location on the imaginary line.
- **OPTIC** - This stands for Overview, Parts, Text, Interconnections, and Conclusions. These are five steps that can help students analyze an image. Students start by giving an overview of what the image appears to be. They then identify various details. If there is any text, such as a title or other phrases, those should be noted. Interconnections is when students explain how the different parts and text are interacting. Finally, students should draw conclusions about the message of the image.
- **Over-The-Shoulder-Checks** - Checking student work during an activity.
- **Quad-Pod** - Before small-group work, assign students roles including the discussion director, writer, speaker, and evidence enforcer.
- **Quick Jot** - Questions that are “quick jots” are meant to simply get students’ minds going. They can use scraps of paper or the margin in their notebooks.
- **Seminar Discussion** - This is a whole-class discussion that’s meant to be student-led. Other than the topic or main question, the teacher should allow students to guide the discussion with evidence, questions, and dialogue.
- **Think-Pair-Share** - Students think through their own answer before turning to discuss with a partner, comparing responses. The teacher invites students to share with the class.
- **Think Out Loud** - Teacher works through a text out loud before turning responsibility over to students. As the teacher reads, they should stop, narrate their thinking, and make notes like they want from students.
- **Turn and Talk** - Similar to think-pair-share, students discuss their own ideas. However, these questions are usually meant to get students thinking but not take up time. Students do not need to share out loud with the whole class after conferring with a partner.

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## APPENDIX B: ALIGNED STANDARDS

Each lesson aligns with Common Core State Standards listed below.

*Italicized standards are from Teaching Tolerance's Social Justice Standards.*

### LESSON 1

SWBAT analyze an author's tone in order to predict their purpose.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 - Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.
- *JU.9-12.11- I relate to all people as individuals rather than representatives of groups and can identify stereotypes when I see or hear them.*

### LESSON 2

SWBAT characterize someone based on details from multiple accounts and analyze why learning about victims on a personal level can help create empathy and connection.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3 - Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- *ID.9-12.5 - I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.*
- *DI.9-12.9 - I relate to and build connections with other people by showing them empathy, respect and understanding, regardless of our similarities or differences.*
- *JU.9-12.11- I relate to all people as individuals rather than representatives of groups and can identify stereotypes when I see or hear them.*

### LESSON 3

SWBAT analyze how an author develops a complex concept over the course of a text.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.8 - Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).
- *ID.9-12.3 - I know that all my group identities and the intersection of those identities create unique aspects of who I am and that this is true for other people too.*
- *ID.9-12.5 - I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.*
- *DI.9-12.8 - I respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.*

#### LESSON 4

SWBAT justify and explain complex perspectives.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 - Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.
- *ID.9-12.3 - I know that all my group identities and the intersection of those identities create unique aspects of who I am and that this is true for other people too.*

#### LESSON 5

SWBAT analyze how social media has helped to create a wider awareness of social injustice.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1 - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- *ID.9-12.5 - I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.*
- *DI.9-12.8 - I respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.*



## LESSON 6

SWBAT analyze how personal experiences create conflicting perspectives.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6 - Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
- *ID.9-12.3 - I know that all my group identities and the intersection of those identities create unique aspects of who I am and that this is true for other people too.*
- *JU.9-12.11- I relate to all people as individuals rather than representatives of groups and can identify stereotypes when I see or hear them.*

## LESSON 7

SWBAT differentiate between assumptions and corroborated facts and draw reasonable conclusions.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.3 - Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

## LESSON 8

SWBAT analyze word choice to track the development of a complex character.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6 - Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.
- *DI.9-12.9 - I relate to and build connections with other people by showing them empathy, respect and understanding, regardless of our similarities or differences.*
- *AC.9-12.16 - I express empathy when people are excluded or mistreated because of their identities and concern when I personally experience bias.*

## LESSON 9

SWBAT define criteria and evaluate effectiveness of an approach.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C - Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- *ID.9-12.5 - I recognize traits of the dominant culture, my home culture and other cultures, and I am conscious of how I express my identity as I move between those spaces.*
- *JU.9-12.12 - I can recognize, describe and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.*

## LESSON 10

SWBAT synthesize sources to create an order of events.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2 - Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5 - Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
- *JU.9-12.12 - I can recognize, describe and distinguish unfairness and injustice at different levels of society.*

## FINAL ASSIGNMENTS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7 - Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5 - Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance

understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.6 - Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 11-12 Language standards 1 and 3 [here](#) for specific expectations.)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.A - Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.B - Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.C - Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.6 - Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
- *AC.9-12.17 - I take responsibility for standing up to exclusion, prejudice and injustice.*

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## APPENDIX C: HANDOUTS

### CONTEXT TO COURTNEY'S MURDER

#### Source #1

Courtney Copeland's last words before he was fatally shot in Chicago early Friday morning were a plea for help, his family said. Questions surround the 22-year-old's death, including why he was shot and who shot him.

Family members said Copeland was leaving Pizano's Pizza just before 1 a.m. to head to a friend's house near Grand and Central avenues. But what happened in the next 15 minutes remains a mystery.

According to authorities, Copeland drove himself up to officers outside of the Grand and Central police station around 1:15 a.m. asking for help. He had been shot in the back.

"When he saw an officer, he jumped out and didn't even put his car in park and told them he'd been shot," Copeland's mother Shapearl Wells said. "Then he collapsed and that's all we know."

Copeland was transported to Illinois Masonic Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead.

*Florez, Emily, Katie Kim, Alex Margos. "We did Everything Right: 22-Year-Old Fatally Shot in Chicago Flagged Down Police for Help." NBC 5 Chicago. 4 Mar. 2016.*

#### Source #2

We've heard both versions of the story too often, tragic trajectories that begin with being a young Black man in Chicago and end in murder, either by police or by somebody else. In March 2016, as the city was reeling from the Laquan McDonald scandal and entering what would be its bloodiest year in two decades, 22-year-old Courtney Copeland wound up with a bullet in his back in front of the 25th District police station in the Belmont Cragin neighborhood, on the northwest side. He was shot as he was driving his BMW late at night to see his girlfriend....It took his mother four years and a collaboration with journalists to figure out what happened that night.

The...producers ultimately filed about 100 FOIAs, obtaining video, documents, and police records that CPD had told Wells didn't exist. They interviewed dozens of witnesses, including people who'd never heard from the cops even after reporting relevant information. They identified the location of the shooting and three suspects.

*Dukmasova, Maya. "One Murder, Four Years, No Answers." The Chicago Reader. 12 May 2020.*

### Source #3

In March 2016, Courtney Copeland was fatally shot by an unknown assailant near the 25th District in the City of Chicago. This unfortunate, but not uncommon, random act of violence in our city resulted in unnecessary litigation against three Chicago Police Officers. These three fine officers and the City of Chicago were vigorously defended by Michael Hartigan in the matter of Estate of Copeland v. City of Chicago, et al., 2018 CV 1596, filed in federal court. Before any depositions were conducted, this entire case was voluntarily dismissed by the Estate. It was clear that the officers were fully prepared to defend themselves and their reputations through verdict, if necessary. This was a win for the City of Chicago and the Chicago Police Department.

*Hartigan, Michael. "Wrongful Death Federal Civil Rights Suit Dropped." Hartigan Law Offices. 7 Nov. 2018.*

## CHARACTERIZING COURTNEY



### DIRECTIONS

Go back through your notes. Jot down 7-10 quotes that help you characterize Courtney. When you are finished, come up with words and phrases of your own to characterize Courtney.

*How would you characterize Courtney?*

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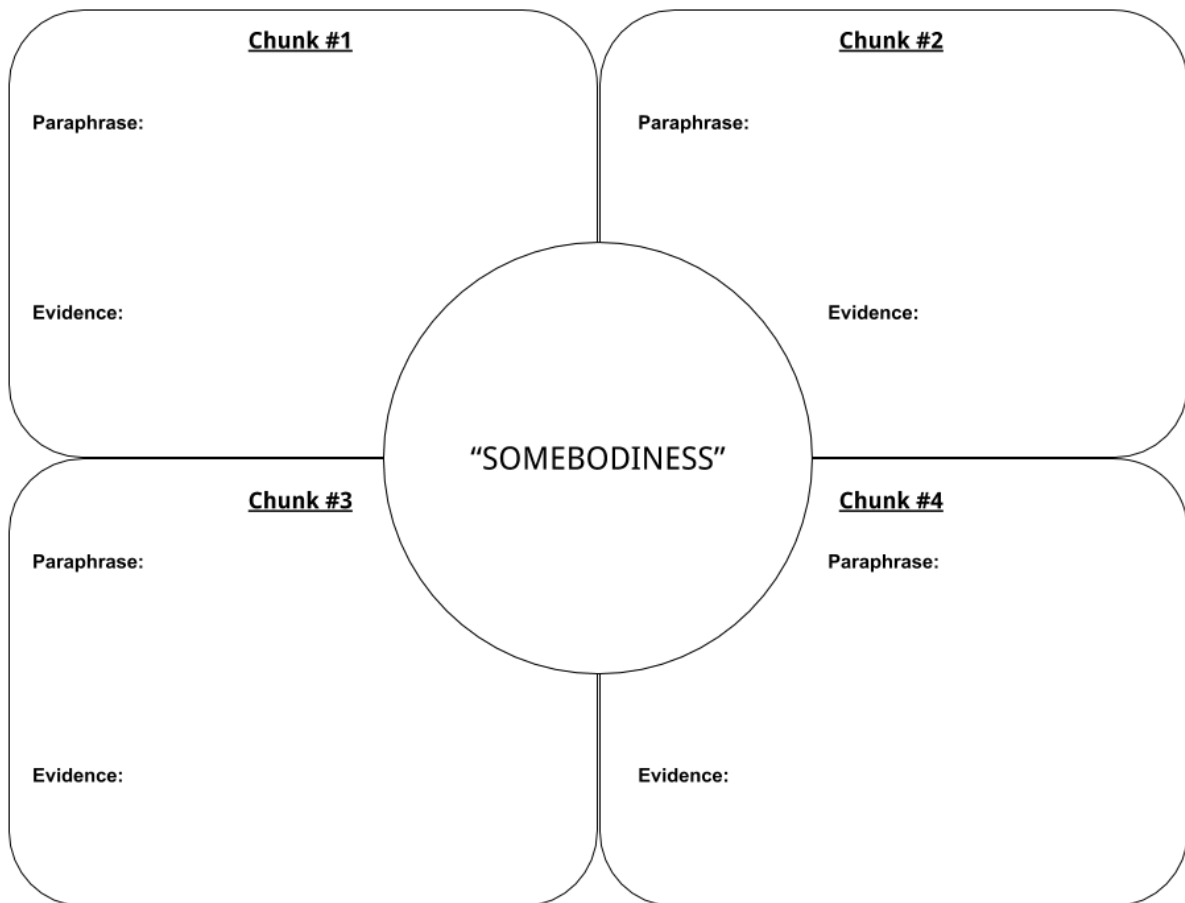
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## DEVELOPING A CONCEPT

**DIRECTIONS:** Use the graphic organizer below to help you analyze how an author develops a complex concept. Before reading, put a central concept in the center of the graphic organizer. In each box, paraphrase one chunk (or paragraph) of a complex text and provide at least one piece of evidence that supports your interpretation. When you are finished, explain the complex concept in the box at the bottom of the page.



*Explain Dr. King's concept of "somebodiness". Your answer should include what it means but also why it's important for his audience.*

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## Dr. Martin Luther King's Glenville High School Speech

*Dr. King gave this speech April 26, 1967 to a crowd of mostly black students. The following excerpt focuses mostly on the concept of "somebodiness" and seeing oneself as a human deserving of respect as a necessary step in achieving true freedom.*

How very delighted I am to be here this morning and to have the great privilege and opportunity of sharing with you and being with you here in the city of Cleveland. I never feel like a stranger when I come to Cleveland because I have so many dear friends here in the ministry and in the community and so I always look forward to coming to Cleveland with great and eager anticipation. I certainly want to thank the administration for the opportunity and I want to thank Miss. Williams for those very kind words of introduction.

As she was introducing me, I felt something like the old maid who had never been married. And one day she went to work and the lady for whom she worked said, "Ann, I hear you're getting married."

She said, "No, I'm not getting married, but thank God for the rumor."

As I listened to Miss. Williams, I said to myself, "All of these wonderful things that she said about me can't be true, but thank God for the rumor."

Now, I'm sure each of you is aware of the problems that we confront in our nation, the problems that we confront in the world, the problem that we as a people confront in all of our communities all over the United States of America.

It was Victor Hugo who said on one occasion that there is nothing more powerful in all the world than an idea whose time has come. And I want to assure you today that the idea whose time has come in our day and our generation is the idea of freedom and human dignity. Wherever people are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; or whether they are in Jackson, Mississippi; Atlanta, Georgia; New York City or Cleveland, Ohio, the cry is always the same: We want to be free.

And I would like to suggest some of the thing things that you must do and some of the things that all of us must do in order to be truly free. Now the first thing that we must do is to develop within ourselves a deep sense of somebodiness. Don't let anybody make you feel that you are nobody. Because the minute one feels that way, he is incapable of rising to his full maturity as a person. You know a lot of people have segregated minds and one of the first things that the Negro must do is to desegregate his mind.

I remember when I was growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, I had to go to high school on the other side of town. At that time it was the only high school for Negroes in the whole city of Atlanta, the Booker T. Washington High School. When I was a student there we had 7,000 students in that one school. I guess that's the reason I can't read too well now, because the teacher had to spend all the time getting the class in order and disciplining the class because it was so



overcrowded, but anyway we had to pass by all of these schools, white schools, to get to the Booker Washington High School. And I had to ride the bus from home every morning to the other side of town. And fortunately I had parents who taught me from the very beginning that I was somebody, and that I should never feel inferior. They taught all of us that, that we should feel that we are as good as any other children. And I remember day after day getting on that bus -- it was a segregated bus. Negroes had to sit in the back. And often we had to stand over empty seats because the seats up at the front were reserved for whites only.

And I started getting on that bus going across town and every time I got on the bus, even though I found myself having to take my body back to the back of the bus, I always left my mind on the front seat. And I said to myself one of these days, I'm going to put my body up there where my mind is.

Now this is all I'm saying this morning that we must feel that we count. That we belong. That we are persons. That we are children of the living God. And it means that we go down in our soul and find that somebodiness and we must never again be ashamed of ourselves. We must never be ashamed of our heritage. We must not be ashamed of the color of our skin. Black is as beautiful as any color and we must believe it.

And so every black person in this country must rise up and say I'm somebody; I have a rich proud and noble history, however painful and exploited it has been. I am black, but I am black and beautiful.

And so we must be able to cry out with the eloquent poet: "Fleecy locks and black complexion cannot forfeit nature's claim, Skin may differ but affection dwells in black and white the same. If I were so tall as to reach the pole or to grasp the ocean at a span, I must be measured by my soul, the mind is the standard of the man." And we must believe this firmly and live by it.

Now the second thing I want to suggest is this:

That we must make full and constructive use of the freedom we already possess. We must not wait for the day of full emancipation before we set out to achieve certain basic developments in our lives. Now I know the problems here. And I'm not unmindful of the fact that through segregation and discrimination many of us have been scarred.

Many have lost motivation. But I think it is safe to say that there is a host of young people in the Negro community who can brilliantly apply themselves and thereby make full and constructive use of the freedom we already possess. This means we must set out to achieve excellence in our various fields of endeavor. This means that we've got to study hard, we've got to stay in school. Again, I know the social problems that cause many Negroes to drop out of school but I urge you today to develop that rugged determination: Stay in school, stick with to the end. It may be that you will have to work harder than other people but don't mind that. Go on and do it anyhow.

It was Longfellow who said, "The heights of great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they while their companions slept were toiling upward in the night." And I urge you today to realize that doors of opportunities are opening now that were not open to our

mothers and our fathers. And the great challenge facing each of you today is to be ready to enter these doors as they open.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said on one occasion that if a man can write a better book, or preach a better sermon or make a better mousetrap than his neighbor, even if he builds his house in the woods the world will make a beaten path to his door.

That hasn't always been true but it will be increasingly true.

So, set out to do a good job and do that job so well that the living, the dead, or the unborn couldn't do it any better. And let me say that we've got to prepare now to compete with people. Many of our parents have been so scarred by years of denial and neglect that they cannot face the same challenges that we face. But I say to you that you have the opportunity to assert certain things and get ready to compete with people. Don't set out merely to do a good Negro job. If you're setting out one day to be a good Negro doctor or a good Negro lawyer or a good Negro schoolteacher or a good Negro preacher or a good Negro skilled laborer or a good Negro barber or beautician, you have already flunked your matriculation exam for entrance into the university of integration.

Set out to do a good job and do that job so well that nobody can do it any better.

If it falls your lot to be a streetsweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures.

Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry.

Sweep streets like Beethoven composed music.

Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say here lived a great streetsweeper who swept his job well.

This is what Douglas Malloch meant when he said, "If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill, be a scrub in the valley -- but be the best little scrub on the side of the rill. Be a bush, if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be the sun, be a star. It isn't by size that you win or you fail. Be the best of whatever you are!"

Now the final thing I want to say is this: That if we are going to achieve freedom we've got to engage in action programs to make that freedom possible. Let nobody fool you about this. Freedom is never voluntarily given to the oppressed by the oppressor. It must be demanded. And I say to you this morning that this will be necessary all over the United States of America. But as I say this let me give a warning signal that we must work passionately and unrelentingly for first-class citizenship but we must never use second-class methods to gain it. We've got to get smart. We've got to organize. We've got to organize so effectively and so well and engage in such powerful, creative protest that there will not be a power in the world that can stop us and that can afford to ignore us.

Our power does not lie in Molotov cocktails. Our power does not lie in bricks and stones. Our power does not lie in bottles.

Our power lies in our ability to unite around concrete programs. Our power lies in our ability to say nonviolently that we aren't gonna take it any longer. You see the chief problem with a riot is that it can always be halted by a superior force. But I know another weapon that the National Guard can't stop.

They tried to stop it in Mississippi, they tried to stop it in Alabama but we had a power that Bull Connor's fire hoses couldn't put out. It was a fire within. And I say that we can have that same kind of fire all over the United States of America. And we can transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows through this method. And so I come to you today and urge you to work in the civil rights movement, to join the civil rights organizations, to give of your time and your activity, when you have spare time, in community action.

One of the things that we need in every city is political power. Enough of our parents don't register and vote. Each of you should serve as a committee of one to work with your parents if they have not registered to vote and other people in the community.

Cleveland, Ohio, is a city that can be the first city of major size in the United States to have a black mayor and you should participate in making that a possibility. This is an opportunity for you.

And so there are things that all of us can do and I urge you to do it with zeal and with vigor. And let me say to you, my friends, that in spite of the difficult days ahead, the so-called white backlash — which is nothing but a new name for an old phenomenon — I'm still convinced that we're going to achieve freedom right here in America. And I believe this because however much America has strayed away from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned as we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America.

Before the Pilgrim fathers landed at Plymouth, we were here.

Before Jefferson etched across the pages of history the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence, we were here.

Before the beautiful words of the Star-Spangled Banner were written, we were here.

And for more than two centuries, our forebears labored here without wages. They made cotton king, and they built the homes of their masters in the midst of the most humiliating and oppressive conditions.

And yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to grow and develop, and I say to you this morning that if the inexpressible cruelties of slavery couldn't stop us, the opposition that we now face will surely fail.

We are going to win our freedom because both the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of the Almighty God are embodied in our echoing demands.

And so I say, let us keep moving, let us move on toward the goal of brotherhood, toward the goal of personal fulfillment, toward the goal of a society undergirded by justice.

And I close by quoting a beautiful little poem from the pen of Langston Hughes, where he has a mother, talking to a son. With ungrammatical profundity that mother says, "Well, son, I'll tell you: Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it, boards torn up, places with no carpet on the floor -- bare. But all the time I've been a-climbin' on, and reachin' landin's, and turnin' corners, and sometimes goin' in the dark where there ain't been no light. So boy, don't you stop now. Don't you set down on the steps 'cause you finds it's kinder hard. For I've still goin', boy, I've still climbin', and life for me ain't been no crystal stair."

Well, life for none of us has been a crystal stair, but we must keep moving. We must keep going. And so, if you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl. But by all means, keep moving.

## “EVERYBODY’S SOMETHING”

BY CHANCE THE RAPPER

Whats good good?  
And what's good evil?  
And what's good, gangstas?  
And what's good, people?  
And whys God's phone die every time that I call on Him?  
If his son had a Twitter wonder if I would follow him  
Swallow them synonyms like cinnamon Cinnabon  
Keep all them sentiments down to a minimum  
Studious Gluteus Maxim models is sending him  
Pics of they genitalia tallied up ten of em  
I slurped too many pain-kills, down I'm off a lot  
I got a lot off days but it ain't often that I'm off the clock  
Ya Kna Wha Mean  
I got the Chicago Blues  
We invented rock before the Stones got through  
We just aiming back cause the cops shot you  
Buck buck bang bang, yelling "F\*\*k Fox News!"  
Booyaka buckle up, mothaf\*\*k ops too  
Ain't no knuckling up em young cause it just not cool

Nice to see you Father New Year  
Middle finger Uncle Samuel  
Shooting death with weighted dice  
And hitting stains on birthday candles  
I know somebody, somebody loves my ass

Cause they help me beat my demons ass  
Everybody's somebody's everything  
I know you right  
Nobody's nothing  
That's right

Everybody's somebody's everything  
I know you right  
Nobody's nothing  
That's right

Everybody's somebody's everything

I know you right  
Nobody's nothing  
That's right  
Right? Igh

I used to tell hoes I was dark light or off white  
But I'd fight if a n\*\*\*a said that I talk white  
And both my parents was black  
But they saw it fit that I talk right  
With my drawers hid but  
My hard head stayed in the clouds like a lost kite  
But gravity had me up in a submission hold  
Like I'm dancing with the Devil with two left feet and I'm pigeon toed  
In two small point ballet shoes with a missing sole  
And two missing toes  
But it's love like Cupid kissing a mistletoe

Nice to see you Father New Year  
Middle finger Uncle Samuel  
Shooting death with weighted dice  
And hitting stains on birthday candles  
I know somebody, somebody loves my a\*\*  
Cause they help me beat my demons a\*\*

Like Cassius ducking the draft and now the fight is over  
The type to love from a distance not the type that told her  
Spent three days on the rap, trash it and type it over  
With babies on the block under arms like fighting odors  
Coppers and quotas  
Hold ya head like 2Pac had taught  
Obviously they are on a come up  
With better chances tobogganing in the f\*\*king summer  
Concoctions for the bad days and a condom for the good ones  
All odds against we tryna get lucky  
Doper than Lucky  
You're ending happy that's only a tugging  
Like Satan masturbating s\*\*t come hot  
But y'all still love me ugh  
How father time a deadbeat  
Maybe I'm adopted  
That'll explain why all of my s\*\*t been so timeless igh

Everybody's somebody's everything  
N\*\*\*a  
Nobody's nothing

N\*\*\*a

Everybody's somebody's everything

N\*\*\*a

Nobody's nothing

Everybody's somebody's everything

That's right

Nobody's nothing

I know you right

Source: LyricFind

Songwriters: Chancelor Johnathan Bennett

Everybody's Something lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group

## IMAGERY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

*As you read, or after you are finished, record three ways that images or social media have impacted social movements like the Civil Rights Movement or #BlackLivesMatter. Your responses could be about creating empathy, growing the movement, organizing, and so forth. Be sure to include evidence that supports your claims.*

<i>One way images or social media impacts social movements is...</i>	<i>Another way...</i>	<i>Thirdly...</i>
<i>I see this in the text when...</i>	<i>For example...</i>	

*Looking at your reasoning and evidence, create an original claim about the way that images and/or social media have made an impact on the Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter movements.*

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## CONVERSATION WITH THE POLICE

From *Somebody* Episode 3: "The Police" [12:38-24:00]

**SHAPEARL: The first time I met police in that dingy old building, I played along 'cause I needed their help. The second time, I didn't come to play with them. I needed answers. I need to know what happened to my son.**

**We sat across from each other at the conference table. White board. Vending machines. And Fluorescent lights.**

**I brought in my big case file, which had the paramedics report. That said my son had been handcuffed. And claimed he was violent and combative.**

SHAPEARL: This disturbs me, this disturbs me greatly, because of the fact that my son was handcuffed. I'm like, OK, if he collapses, at what point...

POLICE: He wasn't.

SHAPEARL: He was. He arrived at the hospital in handcuffs. There was a police officer that also followed the ambulance. And this is why I'm upset, because I'm like, how do you guys not know that my son was handcuffed?

**They kept questioning what I'd uncovered.**

SHAPEARL: When was he handcuffed, if you're saying that he was handcuffed during transport?

POLICE: We never said he was handcuffed, ma'am.

SHAPEARL: OK, well it says that...

POLICE: That's not a CPD document. That's a CFD document. OK?

SHAPEARL: So OK you're denying that he was...?

POLICE: No, no, I didn't say that. Don't put words...Please, please don't put words in my mouth. I'm saying that that's not a police department document. That's a Chicago Fire Department document.

POLICE: ...first time seeing it, hon, we can review it and absorb the contents.

SHAPEARL: OK. Again, it says "handcuffs," clearly.

POLICE: It's obvious what it says.

**They handcuffed my baby as he was dying, and they acted like it was routine.**

POLICE: I mean we can see, read in the report, we can see why the handcuffs were necessary.

POLICE: Or restraints, we'll use restraints.

POLICE: However he was restrained. Whether it was cuffs or foleys or whatever device.

SHAPEARL: It specifically says 'cuffs.

POLICE: Who's telling you at the hospital that he was handcuffed?

SHAPEARL: Oh, the nurses, everybody told me.

POLICE: Who, though?

POLICE: Yeah, cause we'll need to talk to them.

POLICE: Who specifically?

**I gave them the E-R nurse's name. Claressa Hawkins. She's the one who'd told me that Courtney was handcuffed to the stretcher when he arrived at the hospital.**

**They should have been with him in the ambulance. That's the policy.**

SHAPEARL: Again, if you put handcuffs on a patient, you would also then in turn put that information into your file that says that this person was handcuffed.

POLICE: I've never done that.

SHAPEARL: Why not?

POLICE: Why would I?

SHAPEARL: Why wouldn't you?

POLICE: Is he under arrest?

SHAPEARL: Who knows? You tell me.

POLICE: He was never under arrest.

SHAPEARL: I don't know!

POLICE: But I'm telling you. Your son was...

SHAPEARL: I don't know.

POLICE: Your son was...

SHAPEARL: It's a lot of things that you told me that have not panned out.

POLICE: Such as what?

SHAPEARL: In regards to his uh, in regards to him, well. Here, I have some...

POLICE: No, no, no, you're saying a lot of things, tell me one.

SHAPEARL: I'm gonna give you what I've been investigating in regards to this case.

POLICE: OK, you go ahead. Go ahead.

**I felt angry, I felt like they were gaslighting me. Like they were sitting here lying in my face even though the proof is right in front of me.**

SHAPEARL: Okay, so again, at what point in time from him...

POLICE: What does that...? Does that have anything to do with us solving who shot him?

SHAPEARL: What I'm saying...

POLICE: John, does that have anything to do with us solving the crime?

POLICE: No. The bottom line is...

POLICE: So it's not probative evidence?

POLICE: No.

**What they're saying is the fact that he was handcuffed, had nothing to do with solving his murder.**

POLICE: It's not probative evidence to solving the crime of who shot your son, Ma'am.

SHAPEARL: Okay.

POLICE: ....which is what we want to do.

SHAPEARL: Okay.

POLICE: ....which is our end goal.

SHAPEARL: I want the whole story.

POLICE: ....which is our end goal. So what this...so what this tells you.

SHAPEARL: Calm down.

POLICE: I'm more than calm.

SHAPEARL: No, it doesn't sound like it.

POLICE: Well, you know what? I'm just kind of this way.

**Back and forth. Back and forth. This could have gone on forever.**

**I was mad as hell when they told me that they still had not even talked to the on scene officers after a year of investigating my son's murder. They had their own reports and they just assumed what was written was true. And they were growing tired of listening to me.**

SHAPEARL: So you're assuming that's what the officer meant.

POLICE: (long sigh)

SHAPEARL: These are all assumptions. These are not facts.

**Then they started talking very sarcastic to me, flipping through *their* reports. Saying to *each other*, "How many files you got there? It appears you put some work into it."**

POLICE: It appears you put some work into it.

SHAPEARL: I'm not denying that he didn't put any work into it. I'm just trying to make him more thorough. That's my right. This my child.

**They kept trying to tell me about the work they'd put into the case.**

POLICE: I spent a good amount of time driving around that neighborhood looking for video and trying to find video evidence.

**But they missed stuff. I know they did because I was talking to people they'd never talked to. And if I could have talked to the on-scene officers myself, I would have.**

SHAPEARL: So you're saying with one hundred percent certainty that this is not a possibility...

POLICE: So what you're telling me is this: You believe that the police targeted your son and shot and killed him in front of the police station.

SHAPEARL: No, I believe that not enough has been done to solve Courtney's murder.

POLICE: What would you like done that I haven't done?

SHAPEARL: I personally would have went back and re-interviewed everybody.

POLICE: Re-interviewed the police?

SHAPEARL: Oh, absolutely.

POLICE: I'm not going to re-interview the police because the reports stand on their own.

**They assume police officers tell the truth. But I don't.**

SHAPEARL: Sgt. Mitchell. Based on the history that...

POLICE: No, no, no, no, no, no. Don't even start. Why don't you talk to me?

SHAPEARL: What I'm saying to you is that this problem didn't just occur with Courtney Copeland's case. The breakdown from the community and the police...

POLICE: I'm not here to talk politics with you ma'am. I'm here to talk reality.

SHAPEARL: I am talking reality.

POLICE: No, I'm here to talk reality about this case. No, you know what? I'm done. No. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

**These white men were having none of my experience as a black woman in Chicago...**

SHAPEARL: Your department has, not saying this particular, I'm just saying CPD in general has a history that has been *tainted*. And I know it's unfair...

POLICE: Absolutely.

SHAPEARL: Okay.

POLICE: Especially to these two gentlemen in this room.

SHAPEARL: I'm just saying.

POLICE: Absolutely it is.

SHAPEARL: I know it's unfair but that is just...

POLICE: But then why bring it up?

SHAPEARL: Because it's the reality that we live in.

POLICE: No it's not, it's not with these two guys. Because I know them personally and I've worked with them.

SHAPEARL: I'm not saying that they did anything to my son.

POLICE: I take offense to that.

SHAPEARL: Why?

POLICE: I really do. Because you are painting with a broad brush, ma'am.

SHAPEARL: It's not a broad brush when it's an everyday reality for black and brown people in Chicago.

POLICE: Your painting these guys with a broad brush.

SHAPEARL: Do you understand? OK, do you? Sergeant Mitchell, do you understand that's a reality with black or brown people in Chicago or no?

POLICE: Ma'am. And I'm not telling you not with us.

**I wanted them to understand that this wasn't only my perspective.**

POLICE: f I haven't been clear on this, I apologize. Our goal, our stated goal here, is to find, arrest, charge, and convict the offenders who did this to your son. [God willing] That's our stated goal. Okay. No variance, no nothing. No politics, no bulls\*\*t, no nothing.

POLICE: And I'll tell you something else, regardless of what you may think of me because I'm white...I really don't care because I've been a policeman long enough where there are some people that just, this is what they have a problem with. I just want to let you know number one, I don't have a problem with it. If that's the way you feel, that's the way you feel about me. That's fine. No no no. But I just want to let you know.

SHAPEARL: I want everyone to focus on this case...

POLICE: But I want to let you know. You could spit on the floor when you see me it's still not gonna affect me from working on this.

SHAPEARL: ... From doing your job

POLICE: And whether we never talk again or we become good...it doesn't matter one way or another to me. If something good comes that I'm able to pick up and run with, I'm gonna run with it, with your son's murder. And whether you thank me or tell me to get f\*cked at the end of all of this, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

SHAPEARL: Well no, I'm definitely going to thank you because that's my goal. I want to know why my 22 year old son was murdered.

POLICE: So do I, so do I.

SHAPEARL: ...for no apparent reason.

POLICE: So do I. But as far as this whole black, brown, green s\*\*t, it doesn't matter to me.

SHAPEARL: I'm saying you can't discount the history of what happened.

**It was time to go. But before I left, there was one more thing they wanted to be sure to say to me...**

POLICE: This also bothered me from our conversation the other day. The fact that you're recording me without my knowledge or consent. If you, If you ask me something, I'll answer ya as truthful as I know, but, do not be surreptitiously recording me is all I'll tell you.

SHAPEARL: Ok.

POLICE: It's a crime.

POLICE: It's a crime.

**It's actually not illegal.**

POLICE: So I'm just telling you and I'm sure your attorney would tell you the same thing.

POLICE: Just like I can't turn this on and record you. So...

SHAPEARL: I'm okay with being recorded.

POLICE: I know I know. Well I just have to let you know and I'm not okay being recorded, so just so you know.

SHAPEARL: I don't have nothing to hide, so...

POLICE: Neither do I. You do not have my consent to record me. It's illegal. Just so you know cause I know you've been recording me every conversation. You were recording me from the first day that we met.

SHAPEARL: Why you say that? Do I have a reason to record you?

POLICE: I don't know. Evidently you think you do because your whole focus on this thing is something the police did wrong.

**I just wanted to know what happened to my son. And to me, nothing was off the table.**

POLICE: What you're saying is that he was calling 9-11 while he was on the phone, while the police were there? And then the police killed him.

SHAPEARL: I don't know if the police killed him, I don't know.

POLICE: Ma'am, good luck with your parallel investigation.

SHAPEARL: I don't know. I don't know.

POLICE: Good luck with it is all I'll tell you. Good luck. 'Cause if you get any answers that I don't have, let me know.

SHAPEARL: What I'm saying is that I'm open to all scenarios.

POLICE: So am I.

# FACTS / ASSUMPTIONS CHART

<p><b>What have witnesses said?</b> These should be direct quotes or paraphrases.</p>	
<p><b>What facts have been corroborated (confirmed by multiple accounts)?</b></p>	
<p><b>What conclusions can we draw?</b> Make sure to think through all possibilities!</p>	

## SHAPEARL'S DEVELOPMENT

### Excerpt #1

(from the hospital)

The doctor told us that, when Courtney arrived, they'd opened up his chest to try and save him.

I'd been at the hospital for over an hour, and I still hadn't seen my son. And you know, as a mother, you want to have that confirmation that this is indeed your child.

They told me I couldn't see him until detectives got there. And I told them. I said, "Well, I'm gonna tell you right now, if I can't see my son, I'm going to tear this whole hospital up."

They finally let us see Courtney. He was on a hospital bed. In the trauma unit. After a few moments, I asked everyone to leave. Cuz I had to be with him. I had to be with him by myself. I began to touch him, his body was still warm. I caressed his face and kissed his forehead. And I told him, I'm sorry I wasn't there for you when you needed me the most. And I walked out of the room, and then it really hit me that Courtney was gone. I just collapsed.

Courtney's friends and our extended family were piling into the hospital waiting room. I remember two detectives came in. They were white, and middle-aged and they told us what they knew. -They said Courtney was shot in his car...and drove himself to the police station...Courtney jumped out of his car and flagged down an officer for help. But the car was still moving so the officer told him to put the car in park. So Courtney hopped back in the car and put the car in park. And then they said that Courtney ran over to the officer again, and grabbed his arm and said, "I've been shot," before collapsing.



## Excerpt #2

With Courtney's funeral now behind us, I was just left to sit in this new reality. That my baby, he was never coming back.

But, still, I didn't know the worst of what had happened to Courtney. That news was winding its way across the City of Chicago.

It started at the hospital on the North Side. Someone who worked there said something to a friend. And that friend talked to my Uncle Marvin, who's on the West Side. And Uncle Marvin called my mom, who's downtown. Uncle Marvin told my mom that there was a rumor going around the hospital that Courtney was *combative*.

Police told me he collapsed in front of the station. So when did he all of sudden get *uncollapsed* and become *combative*? Plus, when he arrived to the hospital, he was already in cardiac arrest. I asked the hospital to put together Courtney's medical records so I could see for myself.

Brent and I dropped off our daughter at school and headed straight for the hospital for the paperwork. I started flipping through the medical records before we even left the parking lot. Right away, I found a document. A write-up from the EMTs.

It says my son was "combative", "violent", "agitated", a "danger to others", and that he was handcuffed. Handcuffed! Police never told me about any handcuffs. And why would they handcuff someone who was dying? Unless they thought he was a suspect of some kind?

### Excerpt #3

(taken from after the Invisible Institute takes a closer look at the videos)

I mean this whole case for me is about uncovering the truth but it's also about clearing Courtney's name.

...

When I thought police killed Courtney, it made me feel like his death served some type of higher purpose. Like Emmett Till. Or Laquan McDonald. Their killing actually woke up the country. With Emmett Till, when people saw how he was murdered, they were shocked to see such brutality. And the same with Laquan McDonald.

With Courtney dying, if the police did it, it would have been a major coverup and it would have shook Chicago to the core.

But if cops *didn't* kill him then his death just another unsolved Chicago murder.

I went from knowing who killed my son...to knowing...*nothing*.

I talked with the Invisible Institute folks. And Alison, you and Jamie told me that you'd stay on the case. And we'd start this all again. But the way police treated Courtney still wasn't okay. And it wasn't just. We needed to reckon with this. And we needed to find out who really DID kill Courtney.

#### Excerpt #4

(after receiving Courtney's phone back from the data analyst)

We were looking for signs that Courtney was in trouble, that something was going on. But we didn't see anything. The only thing that we found was him goofing off with his friends and also singing and dancing and making videos.

Then we looked at the day he was killed. I wanted to see exactly when Courtney and Alma were in touch. He sent her a text saying "top of the morning" at 9:38 am. She wrote back a few hours later, and then they were texting all afternoon. Lots of heart emojis.

He messaged her again about 10 pm from a World Ventures presentation. He was in the city, training a new recruit, KC. I found a photo of Courtney circled up around a kitchen table with some friends. He's wearing his favorite red hoodie and everyone is holding dixie cups. Courtney is doing a hand gesture. And basically it's the "rock on" sign. Courtney was always doing the rock on sign in pictures. Rock on dude, you know! [Laughs]

Right about midnight, Courtney texted Alma saying, "I need to book a massage. Super sore."

Then Alma texted him back. "I got you."

Courtney says, "When?"

And she wrote, "Today."

Then...just before one in the morning...Courtney headed to her house in Belmont-Cragin. On the way there, Courtney was just being his social butterfly self - he was on his phone, he was talking to friends and chatting on Facebook Messenger.

He texted Alma "I'm outside."

She texted back: "What? Really?"

And he was like, "Yup."

"OK I'm going", she said...meaning that she was headed downstairs to open the gate.

From the phone records and parking tickets that we found, we know that Courtney and Alma had this little routine. He'd drive down her street. Cut through the alley and park by the church where he could leave his car overnight. Right by this gold statue of Jesus, arms open wide. Courtney would text Alma saying he'd arrived. So she'd go downstairs and open the gate for him. They did this several nights a week. Over and over again.

Alley. Park. Alma. Alley. Park. Alma.

*And that night*, on March 4th, 2016, Courtney sent his last text to Alma at 1:11 in the morning.

But he never showed up at her door.

## Excerpt #5

It had almost been two years since Courtney died. Two years.

I found out there was a deadline, a statute of limitations, for me to sue the city for how they treated my son. So, I got some new lawyers to take the case to court.

They argued that police caused delays by taking Courtney into custody and handcuffing him. And that they conspired with the Fire Department to prepare misleading reports to cover up their actions.

I wanted justice. And I wanted those officers on the record. I wanted them to be forced to testify. And I wanted the city to see that treating a young black man as a criminal instead of a victim has consequences.

There was one other thing that I needed to do on his second anniversary. I was gonna hold a *protest* outside the police station. We were gonna go there and light candles with Courtney's friends and our whole family... ..

... .. I didn't get out of the car for several minutes. I just needed to sit there and think about my son. About what he must have been feeling there on the ground. I was just trying to put myself in his position and what he would have said to police in that moment.

Police came out from the station. They started to surround me. They asked me to move out of the road. And I just simply lost it.

SHAPEARL: I'm not moving. Leave me alone. I am not moving it. No! No! I am not moving it. I am staying right here. Leave me alone please. Leave me alone. Why didn't y'all help my baby? No you didn't. What did my son say? What did he say? What else did he say? Y'all were talking to him. Y'all were talking to him. He was talking to y'all on the camera. What did you say? What did he say?

This is when I realized who I was talking to: Sergeant Ronan.

SHAPEARL: You was on the scene before the ambulance officer Ronan(?). I got the report when you came on the scene. You was on the scene before the ambulance got to him. All y'all was around him. Y'all was around him.

He was the supervisor the night Courtney died. He was *there* that night. He was right there. In that very spot. My family was holding me up. And I just wanted Sergeant Ronan to see my pain. *To see...that my son's life mattered to somebody.*

SHAPEARL: He's sitting here begging y'all to help him and y'all didn't do nothing. Can you imagine a mama seeing that? Her son begging for help. That's what happened. That's what happened to my baby. That's what happened to my child. That's what happened to him. My son is on the ground. Y'all did this to him. That's what I'm saying. Y'all did that to him. Y'all did that to him. Who went with him to the hospital? Nobody's working on it. Nobody's working on it. Nobody cares. He's just another black kid dead. Nobody cares. Y'all didn't do anything yet. How do ya'll expect to find killers if y'all don't want

em? If y'all don't go look for em? And y'all tell me my son come up to y'all and say he's shot. And then he in handcuffs. How is that possible? You was there. You was there. You saw my baby being handcuffed.

## TONE VOCABULARY LIST

### Positive Tone/Attitude Words

Amiable	Consoling	Friendly	Playful
Amused	Content	Happy	Pleasant
Appreciative	Dreamy	Hopeful	Proud
Authoritative	Ecstatic	Impassioned	Relaxed
Benevolent	Elated	Jovial	Reverent
Brave	Elevated	Joyful	Romantic
Calm	Encouraging	Jubilant	Soothing
Cheerful	Energetic	Lighthearted	Surprised
Cheery	Enthusiastic	Loving	Sweet
Compassionate	Excited	<b>Optimistic</b>	Sympathetic
Complimentary	Exuberant	Passionate	Vibrant
<b>Confident</b>	Fanciful	Peaceful	Whimsical

### Negative Tone/Attitude Words

Accusing	Choleric	Furious	Quarrelsome
Aggravated	Coarse	Harsh	Shameful
Agitated	Cold	Haughty	Smooth
Angry	Condemnatory	Hateful	Snooty
Apathetic	Condescending	Hurtful	Superficial
Arrogant	Contradictory	Indignant	Surly
Artificial	Critical	Inflammatory	Testy
Audacious	Desperate	Insulting	Threatening
Belligerent	Disappointed	Irritated	Tired
Bitter	<b>Discouraged</b>	Manipulative	Uninterested
Boring	Disgusted	Obnoxious	Wrathful
Brash	Disinterested	Outraged	
Childish	<b>Frustrated</b>	Passive	

### Humor-Irony-Sarcasm Tone/Attitude Words

Amused	Droll	Mock-heroic	Sardonic
Bantering	Facetious	Mocking	Satiric
Bitter	Flippant	Mock-serious	Scornful
Caustic	Giddy	Patronizing	Sharp
Comical	Humorous	Pompous	Silly

Condescending	Insolent	Quizzical	Taunting
Contemptuous	Ironic	Ribald	Teasing
Critical	Irreverent	Ridiculing	Whimsical
Cynical	Joking	Sad	Wry
Disdainful	Malicious	Sarcastic	

### Sorrow-Fear-Worry Tone/Attitude Words

Aggravated	Embarrassed	Morose	Resigned
Agitated	Fearful	Mournful	Sad
<b>Anxious</b>	Foreboding	Nervous	Serious
Apologetic	Gloomy	Numb	Sober
Apprehensive	Grave	Ominous	Solemn
Concerned	Hollow	Paranoid	Somber
<b>Confused</b>	Hopeless	Pessimistic	Staid
Dejected	Horrific	Pitiful	Upset
Depressed	Horror	Poignant	
Despairing	Melancholy	Regretful	
Disturbed	Miserable	Remorseful	

### Neutral Tone/Attitude Words

Admonitory	Dramatic	Intimate	Questioning
Allusive (not <i>illusive</i> )	Earnest	Judgmental	Reflective
Apathetic	Expectant	Learned	Reminiscent
Authoritative	Factual	Loud	Resigned
Baffled	Fervent	Lyrical	Restrained
Callous	Formal	Matter-of-fact	Seductive
Candid	Forthright	Meditative	Sentimental
Ceremonial	Frivolous	Nostalgic	Serious
Clinical	Haughty	Objective	Shocking
Consoling	Histrionic	Obsequious	Sincere
Contemplative	Humble	Patriotic	Unemotional
Conventional	Incredulous	Persuasive	Urgent
Detached	Informative	Pleading	Vexed
Didactic	Inquisitive	Pretentious	Wistful
Disbelieving	Instructive	Provocative	Zealous



Try combining words to get a more precise description of tone as in these examples:

cautious speculation

weary resignation

analytic objectivity

unalloyed suspicion

excited enthusiasm

cautious skepticism

delightfully sentimental

deep despair

calm assurance

unqualified appreciation

violent indignation

awe-struck fascination

solemn apprehension

aloof disinterest

dramatic revelation

unqualified endorsement

tolerant acceptance

gentle mockery

indulgent tolerance

disapproving dismissal

morally admirable

pretended indifference

apprehensive resolve

fundamental dissatisfaction

apologetic regret

affectionate delight

flippant sarcasm

sentimental regret

philosophical resignation

apologetic approval

grudging admiration

lofty indifference

fascinated curiosity

politically offensive

carelessly irrelevant

casual indifference

excited expectation

apathetic acceptance

self-righteous pomposity

momentary doubt

skeptical suspicion

disguised irony

## WITNESS ACCOUNTS

### **Claressa Hawkins (The Nurse)**

Claressa Hawkins was working the E.R. when Courtney came in. She was the one who cut the clothes off his body. I had to ask her: "Was my baby really handcuffed?" She told me, "He was."

CLARESSA: I remember him specifically being handcuffed to the bed. And so we were like, "Ok, where's the police? We need these handcuffs off." And then maybe like about, I would say about a minute, that the police walked in and they, they took off took off the handcuffs.

**Nurse Hawkins said that when she first saw Courtney, his right hand was handcuffed to the stretcher. Which was a problem, because they needed to transfer him to a hospital bed so they could work on him. And they couldn't.**

CLARESSA: Yeah, it was different. I don't remember ever seeing any other gunshot victims come in handcuffed.

**She didn't remember ANYTHING about him being combative.**

CLARESSA: So, if, if somebody is combative we know that when they coming in, cause that's one of the first things they tell us, for safety. Oh this person's combative. So be ready. We never got that report about him that he was combative, cause then our security team has to come and we have to have extra security there. And we have to have medications on board to calm this person down.

**My baby must have been so scared. He was all by himself. But it's a comfort to me that Nurse Hawkins showed him some compassion.**

CLARESSA: And I remember laying my hands on his arm and I started praying for him like, "Lord, I don't know what happened but please you know save this person's life." I started praying for him.

## **Alma (The Girlfriend)**

We went back to that night. We asked Alma to walk us through what she remembered.

ALMA: He messaged me like around, like close to one in the morning. And then he asked me if I was home, if he could come over.

**She says she was in her room, listening to music on her headphones. And her roommate Brianna came in to tell her that she was making a late-night run to Walgreens.**

ALMA: As she was telling me that, we heard two gunshots and a car drive off.

ALISON: And was that before or after you'd gone downstairs to be ready to open the door?

ALMA: No, that was before. We heard the gunshots as I was receiving the text message that he was there. So the text message came in and we heard the gunshots at the same time.

**She went downstairs to open the gate, as usual, but Courtney wasn't there.**

ALISON: What did you think happened at that point in time?

ALMA: I mean I was a little bit worried but it's not...It's not unlike him to change plans quickly...

**Alma says she heard gunshots right as she got Courtney's text saying "I'm outside." It was 1:11 am. But that just didn't make sense to us. Because we knew that just four minutes after Courtney texted Alma, he was still alive and well. He was messing around on his phone, Facebook messaging his friend Brandon who had just gotten a new job. Courtney wrote to Brandon, "Nice bro you're gonna kill it man." Courtney sent that text message to Brandon at 1:15 a.m. That was four minutes after he texted Alma and the forensic expert confirmed those times. Alison showed Alma the timeline we'd put together...**

ALISON: We ha...

ALMA: At 1:15?

ALISON: Mhm. If you're hearing the shots here, obviously he's not going to be doing...he's not going to be text--You know, he's not going to be saying to Brandon, "nice bro you're gonna kill it man." So does this at all like revise in your brain what might have happened? Or like when you might have heard the shots? Does this refresh anything for you?

ALMA: No. Not really.

ALISON: It doesn't make sense? Okay. But you're pretty confident that you heard the shots before you said, "OK, I'm going to go open the door." It was between here and here?

ALMA: Our text messages were back to back.

BILL: Did it sound distant or did it sound like it was really close?

ALMA: It sounded close.

BILL: Like outside the window close? Or...

ALMA: It was two of 'em pretty like back to back. It sounded like they were either on the street or like on the block over. But they were close. It didn't sound like it was distant.

ALISON: When you heard the shots, did you think, "Oh, that could be Courtney"? Or did it not even cross your mind?

ALMA: It didn't cross my mind because around that time there was just a lot of things going on in the neighborhood. So we had heard gunshots before. You know, it wasn't something that was out of the ordinary for us to hear.

## **Edgar (The First Witness)**

Here's what Edgar remembered. When he got to the alley, he saw a car coming fast. So fast, he was afraid it was going to hit Elena and their daughter as they tried to cross.

BILL: And did you write down the license plate number?

ELENA: He only knew the first three...Z40.

BILL: Z40?

ELENA: Yeah.

ALISON: What kind of car was it?

ELENA: A Grand Marquis.

ALISON: Grand Marquis? What color?

**A Mercury Grand Marquis. With three guys inside.**

BILL: And did the police ever talk to you?

ELENA: No, he never talked to em.

**Police never talked to Edgar. Even though Elena told them he saw everything.**

BILL: And the police knew that your husband had seen something?

ELENA: Um when they went to see me right here. I told them that he saw everything.

BILL: But they didn't ask to see him?

ELENA: No they didn't tell me to see him.

**The alley was narrow. Just a few feet between Edgar and the driver. And the car window was rolled down, they were pretty much face to face.**

ALISON: And what did they look like?

ELENA: Like my people. Like two Mexicans, he thinks, maybe.

**And Edgar remembered something else.**

ALISON: Do you remember their hair?

ELENA: One had large brown hair. Long hair.

**One of the guys in the car had long hair.**

## **Randall (The Second Witness)**

We asked him to walk us through what he saw when he was driving home that night. From the beginning.

RANDALL: I was coming home from an X-Sport gym. It was pretty late at night. As I was coming home, I noticed an individual was in the street and I almost hit him so I kind of looked at him and I could tell he was gang affiliated. Colors and his hat was cocked and he kind of threw a sign at me and I'm like whatever.

**The guy who threw the gang sign looked like he'd been running, like something had happened. Randall went to turn onto his street when he noticed a car just sitting there...a Grand Marquis.**

RANDALL: A short time later the car starts moving.

**Randall parked, and ran to his apartment. He looked out a window and saw that the Grand Marquis had driven up the block, then backed up...**

RANDALL: And then up the block again and then reversed and did it again like they were I don't know what was going on if they were intoxicated or whatever.

**Randall called 911. The cops were on their way. Then, he saw a guy get out of the car. It was the same one who had just thrown gang signs at him. And two more guys got out of the car. They tossed a weapon, and scurried away. So Randall called 911 again.**

RANDALL: ...Probably put two and two together. And they quickly ditched a pistol. I heard like a loud thud. I mean you can hear like a metal clink sound like get thrown to the ground. So I actually went out to try to recover it. I didn't know what the hell came over me. I'm a concealed carry holder so I figured well let me go see what this is. There's kids in the neighborhood, so, you know, I didn't want to...I didn't want a kid to find it.

**But, before Randall could get there — one of the guys came back to retrieve what they threw.**

RANDALL: I know it was a pistol because the way they were holding it. It was shiny. And I told the cops, hey, this was the description of the individuals, which direction they fled and which way they went and whatnot.

**The cops went up the block to get the guys. The gun was gone, but Randall did find an iPhone.**

RANDALL: I actually went through it and there's a couple of videos of them drinking in a car. And then there is a video of them flashing a revolver. One was a revolver, the other gun was like a nine millimeter.

**Randall offered to give the phone to police.**

RANDALL: They contacted me and they told me hey, you know, what's going on. They were kind of brief about what they wanted and then they hung up. And then they called back again and I'm like yeah do you want me to come to the station or not? And they were like well no at this time no. Uh. So that was that.

# TIMELINE





## ***SOMEBODY* PODCAST**

### **EPISODE 1: COURTNEY**

**SHAPEARL: When my son Courtney was twenty-one years old, he got a BMW convertible.**

**He loved that car like it was his girlfriend. He would talk to it like good morning, hello Bebe.**

COURTNEY: Buenos dias, Bebe. Buenos dias. ¿Como estas, mi amor?

**The first time BeBe rolled into our driveway, it was late at night.**

SHAPEARL: Courtney in his drop-top BMW. It's maroon...

**Courtney had the music blasting all the way up.**

SHAPEARL: You did it! You did it, Courtney!

**It's like a little block party you know in the middle of my driveway.**

**He had the top down. It wasn't even that hot outside but of course he had the top down. Oh it was a beautiful moment. And that was probably one of the most happiest moments I've seen him.**

POLICE: 2510 Robert. Just got flagged down at Grand and Central, a gentleman just said he was shot.

DISPATCH: OK we'll get EMS rolling to the 25th District.

POLICE: Oh, ok, yeah send an ambulance right away.

**But not even one year later....my son wound up with a bullet in his back outside a Chicago police station.**

WGN: And there are still so many unanswered questions about what led to the death of 22-year-old Courtney Copeland.

NBC: Family members say Copeland was on his way to a friend's house when he was shot through his car window. A bullet hit his back.

*How would you describe the tone of this moment?*

CBS: He managed to flag down a police car in front of the 25th district station and was rushed to a hospital. The wound was fatal.

**There's what you hear on the news...that Courtney got shot, drove himself to a police station where officers did *everything they could* to help him.**

ABC: His mother's heart tonight, left in pieces.

**And then there's the truth.**

SHAPEARL: I believe that not enough has been done to solve Courtney's murder.

POLICE: What would you like done that I haven't done?

SHAPEARL: I personally would have went back and re-interviewed everybody to make sure.

POLICE: Re-interviewed the police?

SHAPEARL: Oh absolutely

**My name is Shapearl Wells. I'm Courtney Copeland's mom.**

**And this is Somebody.**

THEME: "Everybody's Something" by Chance the Rapper

**Chicago police have one of the lowest murder solve rates in the country. And it's even lower if you're black.**

**So when it came time to find out who killed my son, I knew I'd have to figure it out on my own.**

**I'm gonna take you with me step-by-step in my investigation.**

**But first let me tell you about my son. You need to know who he was in life. Because we are going to spend a lot of time talking about his death.**

**Courtney was born a day after my 21st birthday. On New Years Eve, 1993.**

RENEE: And I just still remember him sleeping on my chest sometimes.

**That's my mom, Renee.**

RENEE: And then his favorite thing was warm milk. And he talked about that until an adult..."Grandma, I still remember the warm milk you would give me when I was a baby." And I just thought that was so sweet.

As you read each person's description of Courtney, jot down adjectives you would use to characterize him.

SHAPEARL: What do you remember about the early years?

BRENT: He would have like little jokes and stuff.

**Here's my husband, Brent, Courtney's father. He's raised him since he was four years old.**

BRENT: You know like in fact like the first joke he had told me, he was like what do you call stolen cheese? I said what? He said, "Nacho cheese." I'm like ohhh. I'm like it was kind of corny but it was still funny at the same time. He had a million of those.

SHAPEARL: Y'all both have cornball jokes. That's probably why y'all got along.

RICK: Next!

**Here he is goofing off with some of his friends.**

RICK: Hey, how you doing today? What's your name?

COURTNEY: Courtney Copeland.

**Courtney's pretending to be a contestant on *American Idol*. He's in seventh grade, right at that age where his voice is changing.**

COURTNEY: Don't make sense right now but it will...How'd it make you feel...How'd it make you feel...ohhhh

RICK: Congratulations, Courtney Copeland. You are going to....

COURTNEY: Hollywood, baby!

**Courtney sure knew how to turn on the charm to get what he wanted...**

SHAPEARL: And Courtney was kind of a manipulator with you you know it was like uh, he'd ask me for \$20 and then turn around and ask you for \$20 dollars, and then he was asking Kim for \$20 and now he got \$60.

RENEE: He's got \$60. That's how he would do it. And I wish I could do it for him now.

**Courtney was energetic and outgoing, I mean he was so handsome - he had this caramel colored skin and the most incredible smile.**

**He spent all his money — and I mean all his money — on food, clothes, haircuts and shoes.**

COURTNEY: My mom just came back from Wisconsin. She bought me this hat. It says Gucci. Gucci boy!

**After Courtney died, I went through his phone.**

COURTNEY: Look at Uncle Courtney...Oooh, your boy.

**All those videos and photos and social media. It made me feel like he was still right there with me.**

CHANCE: Really we called him Gucci in high school. I don't know if it was because he was free or because he looked like Gucci Mane, but we called him Gucci.

**One of his friends was a kid named Chancellor Bennett. You might know this guy as Chance the Rapper.**

CHANCE: But yeah I met Gucci when I was like in summer school. You know what I'm saying? Not to, like, I hope that that doesn't have like a negative connotation and stuff, but like I mean I was in summer school and everybody goes to summer school.... He would freestyle with me...We would kick it after school and stuff and just be rapping walking down the street and beatboxing and stuff like that.

*Why would he be worried about the connotation of summer school?*

**Courtney would always tell me, "Mom, this guy is gonna be huge!"**

CHANCE: That was like a thing at the time, like I was passing out CDs, I was burning CDs and standing outside of Columbia. He'd be standing out there with me, like he'd take CDs from me and give them to other people and stuff too.

**They went to Jones College Prep. It's one of the top public schools in Chicago. Courtney played on the basketball team and helped them win a city championship.**

**When he was 17 or 18, he got a tattoo of a basketball across his chest and it says *Ball Till I Fall*. I've always hated tattoos because I'm a religious person, and I believe tattoos are a desecration of the body. When I first saw the tattoo, I literally cried. And I said, 'you just want to hurt your momma don't you?' Then he got more tattoos, including one that says *Momma's Boy*.**

**How do you like that?**

**Courtney got a partial scholarship to play ball in Indiana. But we could only afford to help him so much. So he had to come back home after one semester. He got a job as a janitor, and at Dunkin Donuts.**

COURTNEY: Gotta get ready for work! Oh my God! Put on my pants. Put on my shoes. Put on my shirt. Ready for work.

**He was wandering through life until a friend recruited him into the business called WorldVentures. Courtney's job was to sign up members for discount vacations all over the world. Courtney was determined to go to the top.**

RENEE: And that's when I really saw Courtney turning into a man.

**That's my mom again...**

RENEE:...Because of his positive mental attitude that he developed. His change of thinking, how people treated him. He became more of a leader now.

**In just one year, Courtney signed up so many people, the company helped him lease that BMW as a bonus.**

WINGS N WHEELS: It is WorldVentures Wings and Wheels. Step 1: Get your wings. Step 2: Get your wheels...

**Courtney asked me if I would sign for the car for him and I told him 'no way.' If he wanted to get someone else to help him, that was on him...So he convinced his friend Christian Hernandez to co-sign. For Courtney the BMW was validation.**

**And we all loved that car. His cousin Shawn who's a rapper used it in his music video...**

STROKATHADON: I'm addicted to the money...I'm addicted to these hoes...I'm addicted to this cash, all I know, count that dough...

**You know it was just like a typical rap video. Sexy girls dancing all around and the guys and money.**

**Courtney's in the video too.**

**Courtney was living the high life. Just a few months before he died, he went on a trip to Cancun.**

COURTNEY: Look at this! Ha! ...Eh, I'm supposed to be at Dunkin' Donuts right now...But psych! I did something different. I said yes. I stay consistent. I work hard...

**I mean, this was a trip of a lifetime. He was just like he was on top of the world.**

**He did the Macarena in the hotel lobby...He went scuba diving...and rode a jet ski...**

**He was doing really, really well, getting close to moving out of my basement, and moving in with some friends.**

**BREAK**

**Here's what I know about the last day of my son's life. Courtney helped a friend move a sofa. He talked to my mom about becoming an in-home caregiver. The application was due the next day.**

*Turn and Talk: Review your notes and talk about how you would characterize Courtney.*

**That day, I remember I got my hair done. And that night, I caught some of the Republican presidential debates...**

TRUMP: Look at those hands. Are they small hands?

**While I was watching that, Courtney was giving a presentation for WorldVentures.**

**Around midnight, Courtney swung by Paisans, his favorite pizza place. It's a couple blocks from our house in Cicero, just outside of Chicago. And he ran into his friend Chris.**

CHRIS: The next day we were supposed to go on a little road trip. We were gonna be there for the weekend, so we were preparing everything.

**Courtney showed Chris this book he was reading. It was called "Think and Grow Rich." He was already on Chapter 3.**

CHRIS: I always tell people this story, 'cause it felt weird. 'Cause he left the parking lot right in front of Paisans and I didn't even get in my car yet. You know usually when I say bye to someone, I'll get in my car and I'll go. But I stood outside and I'm like, man, that's crazy, you know, he hit the bonus with the car, like he's happy, he's reading that book...

*Every interview is included for a reason. What do the producers want us to infer about Courtney? Circle significant details on the next few pages*

**But Courtney really wasn't headed home. It turns out he had this girlfriend...a coworker he was dating. And he was heading to see her.**

**I replayed this night so many times in my head. I wish I had text him like I usually would do to see when he'd be back home. Maybe then he would have just come back to the house. I don't know why I didn't check on him that night.**

COURTNEY: I'm excited Man, reason why is because you know I understand is that I'm God's highest form of creation.

**Before he drove into the city, Courtney posted on Snapchat. He's in his car, wearing a red hoodie under his peacoat. He looks so happy and hopeful.**

COURTNEY: And the things that I want and I have obtained in my life I can do them. I just got to believe in myself.

**His name on Snapchat was "bornleader34". Thirty-four was Courtney's favorite number. And the night he died was March fourth. 3-4.**

**An hour after he posted on Snapchat, my son was being rushed to the hospital.**

HOSPITAL: I am calling because I just recieved a patient here to our ER.

**The hospital called the police in Cicero where I live.**

POLICE: And what's the name of this gentleman?

HOSPITAL: His name is Courtney Copeland. C-O-P-E-L-A-N-D

POLICE: And you want his mom advised that he is in the hospital?

HOSPITAL: Yes...He was actually en route to I guess a police station nearby because he had been shot and then he came in by ambulance. I don't know if you want to tell her what the nature of the injury is yet?

POLICE: Nah probably not. Probably don't wanna...just that he's injured in the hospital.

HOSPITAL: Yeah.

**A little after two o'clock in the morning, the Cicero Police came bamming on our door.**

**When I opened the door, he asked me did I know a Courtney Copeland? I was already thinking that this is bad.**

**The police told us that Courtney was in the hospital in Chicago. And that's it.**

RENEE: And at that point Shapearl I remember you dropping to your knees. You said mom, I know he's dead. I know he's gone. They just don't do this. You know, this is when someone's dead.

**I assumed that it had to be some type of auto accident because Courtney was always known for texting and driving.**

**I remember my husband, Brent, driving our family to Illinois Masonic Hospital. My mom, Courtney's sisters, my aunt, we were all there. We rode in our Town & Country minivan. And it was the middle of the night. And I don't even recall any other cars being on the road.**

**Right away the staff wanted to take us to the family room. But I knew, I knew, what the family room was. That's when they tell you that your kid is dead, and I didn't want to go.**

**They sent in this nurse...a very kind nurse. She stayed with me. She held my hand to try to keep me calm. I had no idea then how important she would become to my investigation.**

BRENT: That's when the doctor came out and told us the *news*, you know, that he had died from a gunshot wound. And we were like, "What do you mean a gunshot wound? Who shot him?"

RENEE: When the doctor said Courtney was *shot*, that was like an unbelievable, we didn't hear anything else. Cause everybody drops to the floor screaming yelling, ok, oh no, oh no, oh no cause that was the last thing that we would think Courtney would be involved in is any form of shooting because he was not that type of individual, ok. He was a nonviolent person, he would not be involved in anyone who had guns.

**The doctor told us that, when Courtney arrived, they'd opened up his chest to try and save him.**

**I'd been at the hospital for over an hour, and I still hadn't seen my son. And you know, as a mother, you want to have that confirmation that this is indeed your child.**

**They told me I couldn't see him until detectives got there. And I told them. I said, "Well, I'm gonna tell you right now, if I can't see my son, I'm going to tear this whole hospital up."**



They finally let us see Courtney. He was on a hospital bed. In the trauma unit. After a few moments, I asked everyone to leave. Cuz I had to be with him. I had to be with him by myself.

*As you read Shapearl's monologue, underline words and phrases that reveal her tone. Use your Tone Words handout to label those details.*

I began to touch him, his body was still warm. I caressed his face and kissed his forehead. And I told him, I'm sorry I wasn't there for you when you needed me the most.

And I walked out of the room, and then it really hit me that Courtney was gone.

I just collapsed.

Courtney's friends and our extended family were piling into the hospital waiting room.

I remember two detectives came in. They were white, and middle-aged and they told us what they knew.

They said Courtney was shot in his car...and drove himself to the police station...

Courtney jumped out of his car and flagged down an officer for help.

But the car was still moving so the officer told him to put the car in park. So Courtney hopped back in the car and put the car in park.

And then they said that Courtney ran over to the officer again, and grabbed his arm and said, "I've been shot," before collapsing.

Then came the moment when I felt something more than grief.

I felt suspicious.

See, the detectives said they wanted to ask ME some questions.

And their first one?

They asked me if Courtney was the OWNER of the BMW.

Remember, when I told you that Courtney had to get a cosigner for the car. Christian Hernandez. Christian's name was actually on the registration, and not Courtney's. Courtney had been stopped before because of this.

*In your opinion, is this a fair question? Why or why not?*

So when the police asked me if he was the real owner of the car... I started to think: Maybe this was a police stop gone wrong. You know like Philando Castile

up in Minnesota. Maybe the police stopped him after running his plates and seeing a black man driving a car registered in a Hispanic man's name.

The first thing that Courtney's friends did is went looking for clues. They went to Belmont Cragin, the neighborhood where Courtney was shot. They saw skid marks and some broken glass on this corner, near a Catholic Church. They scooped up the glass, and talked to a neighbor who said she heard gunshots.

**We put up reward posters all over the neighborhood.**

RENEE: So we went with the flyers and we were on the radio. Just anybody that can help us get answers.

**First, we offered a five-thousand-dollar reward. Then a six-thousand. Then a Sixty-six-hundred. In the end, we put up ten-thousand dollars. But we got no answers.**

*What about Shapearl's experiences might lead her to think this?*

**We tried to keep Courtney's story alive in the news. Here I am on a local show called Jamaica Funk...**

JAMAICA FUNK HOST: Give us a little background of Courtney, what did Courtney do?

SHAPEARL: Courtney was a senior sales rep at World Ventures travel industry. And he was a rising member of the Chicagoland area.

**I wasn't just trying to solve his case. I was also fighting to protect his name.**

CBS: Police say Copeland was not a gang member. They can only guess right now why he was shot. He graduated from Jones College Prep. Played on the basketball team...

**Police say he wasn't a gang member? Why was that even a question?**

**I had to do everything I could to protect his image. When reporters asked to use photos of him, I made sure he looked his best.**

SHAPEARL: I just don't want the narrative to be negative about my son, because he was not that and that's my biggest fear.

REPORTER: OK, so you prefer we use the picture of him in the tux that's on his Facebook page.

SHAPEARL: Whoever did this to my son, I ask that you turn yourself in. I ask that you ask for forgiveness from God.

**Looking back at my face on TV that night he died, it's literally hard to believe that was even me.**

ABC: How many kids have to die? How many black children have to die in Chicago?

*What does she mean by "protect his name/image?"*

**I remember being in so much pain. But I needed to find answers. That was the only way I knew how to keep going.**

**A few people did come forward with tips.**

**One guy actually told me he was driving by the police station and saw Courtney on the ground with cops just standing around him. This bystander basically told me when he looked at the scene, he felt that the police were doing something to him. And then when I began to press him, trying to get more information and that's when he was like, "You know, I don't really want to get involved. You know, you don't understand the police around here. They'll come after me." And then he finally told me, he was like, "Look, I have children. And I can't risk my life to basically tell you what I saw."**

**Then there was a tow truck driver. He took a video. It's hard to make out. But it looks like Courtney is laying on the ground outside the police station.**

**The lights are flashing, and no one is helping him.**

**One of Courtney's friends, a World Venture guy named June, says he got in touch with the tow truck driver.**

*Underline facts the witnesses give. Circle their interpretations.*

JUNE: I mean his theory, the guy in the tow truck says his theory was that the police did it. That was, that's the first thing that came out of his mind, that's what he's been saying since the beginning.

**What the police told me is that they did everything they could to save him—but you know what, it just wasn't adding up.**

**So I said to myself, I just gotta bury my baby and lay him to rest and then I'll find out what really happened.**

**I needed some strength, so I turned to Courtney the only way I could.**

COURTNEY: Any obstacle that you are going within your life today, understand that God will never put you through anything that you

cannot handle. The reason they call it the past is because you already went through it.

**Remember how I told you that since Courtney's death, I go through his phone? Guess how he had me listed. "Uhhh Ohhh!!!" With three exclamation points. As in, "Uh-oh, my mom's calling"**

**And you know what? He was right to be afraid. Cause when I get on to something, I don't let up. And I'm putting the police on blast right now. I will find out the truth of what happened to my son.**

**And when I do, the whole world will know it.**

# ***SOMEBODY* PODCAST**

## **EPISODE 2: THE NURSE**

**Previously, on Somebody...**

WGN: There are still so many unanswered questions about what led to the death of 22-year-old Courtney Copeland.

NBC: Family members say Copeland was on his way to a friend's house when he was shot through his car window. A bullet hit his back.

CBS: He managed to flag down a police car in front of the 25th district station and was rushed to a hospital. The wound was fatal.

SHAPEARL: I believe that not enough has been done to solve Courtney's murder.

POLICE: What would you like done that I haven't done?

SHAPEARL: I personally would've went back and re-interviewed everybody?

POLICE: Re-interviewed the police?

SHAPEARL: Oh, absolutely

SHAPEARL: Whoever did this to my son...I ask that you turn yourself in. I ask that you ask for forgiveness from God.

**My name is Shapearl Wells. This is the story of my son Courtney, a young black man in a fancy car, who wound up with a bullet in his back in front of a Chicago police station.**

**And it's the story of my search for the truth.**

THEME: "Everybody's Something" by Chance the Rapper

**This is *Somebody*.**

MLK: And so every black person in this country must rise up and say, "I am somebody. I have a rich proud and noble history, however painful and exploited it has been."

**Black people have always had to say it out loud: I am somebody. Because the people in charge keep telling us we're not.**

MLK: I am black but I am black and beautiful.

**This is something Dr. Martin Luther King used to say in front of crowds. And Reverend Jesse Jackson has carried on the tradition.**

JESSE JACKSON: I am Somebody! I am Somebody!

**When I hear Reverend Jackson saying that, when he tells you that you are somebody. He reminds you to think about your own self-worth and even though the world around you is telling you that you are nothing, you are somebody.**

CHANT: We want justice! We want justice! We want justice!

**And my son Courtney, he was somebody. I felt that I had the responsibility to force the police to take a look at his case and say, “Hey, this kid is somebody.”**

SANTITA: Hey everybody, welcome back to “Keep Hope Alive” with Reverend Jesse Jackson. I’m Santita Jackson. We want you to call us at...

**That’s Santita Jackson. She co-hosts the radio show “Keep Hope Alive” with her father, Reverend Jesse Jackson.**

**Here in Chicago, their show airs on WVON. The “Voice of the Nation.” But it used to be called the “Voice of the Negro” The station was a catalyst in getting out the message of the civil right movement.**

SANTITA: And now they’re mainstream...Let me go to Shapearl, from Chicago. Shapearl, what’s on your mind?

**I’ve been a frequent caller for years. I’m *always* on their Facebook page.**

SANTITA: ...Shapearl, I’m so glad you came off of that Facebook page, Shapearl. What’s on your mind today?

SHAPEARL: Thank you so much for taking my call, Santita. Good morning to your panel. I want to actually reiterate what Dr. Roberts said [fade]

SANTITA: You were one of my best callers. Someone who was very confrontational in a respectful way, very informed, and very determined to get the story right.

**The thing about Santita, she knows so many people. She’s connected. So after Courtney was killed, she was one of the first people I called.**

SANTITA: It was 2, 3 in the morning, something like that. I immediately became alarmed because anyone who calls me at that hour, it’s typically not good news. You were in between crying and talking. And you just kept saying, “This is my son. This is my baby.” You just kept saying, “Courtney, my baby, my baby. Santita, he’s been killed.”

**I told her the detectives wouldn't tell me much of anything but they wanted to ask me a bunch of questions.**

SANTITA: I told you to stop. You need to record, that is, write down, everything that you heard and saw and felt, because you will lose it as we go, as time goes on.

**Santita's advice? To write everything down? That was the best advice I could have been given.**

SANTITA: ...In the beginning you get the truth. Cover up happens after the first day or so but, in the beginning, you get the truth.

**I went straight into investigator mode. I wrote up a timeline. And I made a voice recording on my phone to keep track of all the details.**

**I told that recorder everything I was thinking...About the night I got the news.**

SHAPEARL: So...approximately around 2:15 am, I receive a thunderous beat on my door.

**I told that recorder about my conversations with detectives.**

SHAPEARL: I began to question through my pain, can I talk to the officer? I need to know exactly what my son said to him. And they said, that that's the only thing that he had said, that he had been shot.

**I also told that recorder about what I really believe happened to Courtney.**

SHAPEARL: I believe my son was stopped, and pulled out his vehicle because they ran the plates and they saw a young Black man driving in a Hispanic area, with a car that was not registered in a Black person's name.

*Our assumptions come from our experiences. Why might Shapearl believe this?*

**Courtney had a co-signer on that BMW: his friend Christian Hernandez. It was his name on the car registration, and not Courtney's.**

POLICE OFFICER: 2522 Robert..

DISPATCH: 22 Robert. Go ahead.

**Which the police would have known...**

POLICE OFFICER: Edward 5-5-1-7-9-0.

DISPATCH: 10-4.

...they ran his plates.

And...Christian told me that police called him right after Courtney died...to ask who the *real* owner of the car was.

And another thing. We knew the police had Courtney's name.

POLICE OFFICER: Victim is a male, his name is Courtney. Copeland.

And so, they would have learned that Courtney had an I-R number. That's a number that's assigned to you when you're arrested.

Let me give you a little backstory.

When Courtney was about 17, he and some friends found a debit card at school. And they used it to buy some Harold's Chicken. And I get this phone call, and it's my mom and she's like, "Courtney's in jail." I'm like, "Who? What Courtney? Who you talking about?" So I immediately told her, "Well, I don't care what he did. Leave him there."

I remember being so mad at him.

Courtney was punished with an in-school suspension. The case was tossed. He never got arrested again. But that I-R number followed him.

No matter that he was just a kid. And all that he and his friends did was steal some chicken.

A week after Courtney died, me, my husband Brent and my mom Renee we met with police. The station was old and dilapidated.

POLICE: Let me grab the other detectives.

Brent recorded the whole thing on his phone, from his pocket.

SHAPEARL: [ringtone] Hello? Hi. How are you?

While we waited, I was taking calls and planning Courtney's funeral.

SHAPEARL: Uh the wake is at 1 and then the actual services is gonna start at 3. So it's a two-hour visitation and then the program is gonna start at...

POLICE: Hi, folks, I'm Scott Fuller. I'll be sitting in on the meeting. Can I get anybody some soft drinks, water, chips anything at all?

BRENT: Just water.

POLIC: Two waters?



RENEE: Make it three.

POLICE: Three waters?

SHAPEARL: Yeah, Monday is the burial. No, no, no, it's at 10. Hold on one second, Christian, hold on.

**The three of *us* sat across from the three of *them*.**

SHAPEARL: I just wanted know who I'm speaking with. Fuller, and what was your name?

POLICE: Sgt. Mitchell.

SHAPEARL: Sgt. Mitchell. So you're the big wig, huh?

POLICE: No...no, no, no...Believe me...

**I wrote down their names.**

POLICE: First of all you have our condolences. Um, everybody we've spoken to, your son was a great kid. Um, and nobody's had a bad word to say about him.

**They told us they'd do everything they could to find out who killed Courtney.**

POLICE: ...person who did this, or persons, to justice...Ok, we, myself and the detectives, you couldn't have two better guys working the case. Ok? Um, you know there's, you know there's, sometimes people are out in that game, they're playing out there, and you know things happen. This is not the case here. Um, and, like I said, we're..., it provides us with an extra incentive. You know, we're kind of of the belief that homicide is, you know, it's almost biblical. It's like the worst thing you can do to somebody.

**They asked if we had any questions. My mom, Brent and I...we had a lot.**

POLICE: Ok, so fire away.

SHAPEARL: Ok, the first question I had was: Who was the officer on the scene that assisted my son?

POLICE: There were several officers on the scene and um they did assist, they attempted to, they were comforting to your son. Um we know that for a fact. Um.

RENEE: May we have the names of the officers?

POLICE: Um. No I'm not going to... not right now. Ok. Let us..

RENEE: I'm the grandmother by the way.

POLICE: Ok. Um. No we're not going to give out names of officers on this, but I can ensure you that they summoned help right away. They comforted your son. They did all that they could to help him. Um. You know uh, it, you know you see and you hear a lot of things, but I'm actually really proud of the way the officers conducted themselves, you know...

**Underline the contradiction Shapearl notices.**

**But, when I started to press them, it was clear they hadn't even talked to the officers on the scene.**

SHAPEARL: So when my son approached the cops, what did he say?

POLICE: From what I understand, he related to the officer he'd been shot. Um, they called 911, they got on the radio and summoned an ambulance.

SHAPEARL: He didn't tell them anything, he didn't elaborate like who shot him or where this occurred? Cause I know my son, and that's just like hard to believe.

POLICE: We are going to speak with all the officers that were on the scene.

SHAPEARL: So you haven't done it?

POLICE: No, the detectives, you see this happened over the midnight shift and midnights assigns detectives to do the scene and they speak with the officers that were there...

**I asked them about the cameras right outside the station. The ones that would have shown what happened when my son pulled up.**

SHAPEARL: So you're talking about the police station cameras?

POLICE: The police station.

SHAPEARL: Those cameras don't work?

**They said they didn't work.**

POLICE: Those cameras do not work.

RENEE: That's crazy.

POLICE: Let me tell you something. I arrived as a young policeman to that station in May of 1987. I went to the 25th District. Those cameras were awful.

POLICE: And I was there in January of '91, until we came here four years ago...

POLICE: Multiple requests over the years by the District Commander to have them repaired.

**Right outside the police station, there's a big park, with three schools. So to tell me those cameras hadn't worked in decades? That was unacceptable.**

POLICE: I do share your frustration when things don't work for us. Cameras don't work. Computers don't work. Automobiles don't work. It is very frustrating but you know what, we have these hurdles in every investigation. You work you overcome....

SHAPEARL: I'm just trying to figure out, how can you solve it? How can you solve, I mean, I mean, I feel like your job is to serve and protect and you can't do it unless you have the proper equipment.

RENEE: But you can't do it if you don't have any equipment...

*In your own words, explain why Shapearl is upset about the cameras not working.*

SHAPEARL: ...If you don't have the proper equipment. And that shows me the lack of priority, it is, to save lives in this city.

**But when I talked to the detectives on the phone to set up this meeting, one of them told me that they had already seen a video from the neighborhood camera.**

SHAPEARL: Only one worked. And you said that you did find...

POLICE: Well no one said one video. No one ever said that.

SHAPEARL: Ok, you said you saw him on one camera right?

POLICE: I said I was able to view one camera at the time we spoke. That's what I said.

SHAPEARL: Ok, so you have, you do have other videos that you need to watch?

POLICE: I do.

**I needed to see what was on those tapes. But they wouldn't give them to me. They said it was an ongoing investigation. So I went back home and I pushed in other ways.**

PROTEST: "If the police don't work, the cameras should."

**I hit the streets...**

PROTEST: "If the police don't work, the cameras should."

**...and I got back on the radio.**

THE FEMALE SOLUTION HOST: Women have the power to transform this world. We can end crime and violence if we all agree to do one thing. Share.

SHAPEARL: My theory is that the gangbangers, the police, everybody is a suspect until they rule themselves out. I have to see the video in order to rule them out.

**BREAK**

FUNERAL: God is in charge.

**Courtney's homegoing service was at the Cicero Community Center. The funeral home wouldn't work because Courtney had too many friends. So we had people standing room only.**

FUNERAL: ...which is in charge!...

*Based on what we know, is this justified? Why or why not?*

**Courtney was everyone's best friend. He had that gift of making everyone feel important. After he had passed away, everybody was saying, "Oh, he was my best friend, he was my best friend. He was my best friend. He really was my best friend!"**

**I just loved the stories people told. Like Courtney's friend, Jova.**

JOVA: He was like our Will Smith, like the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. This kid was just like, he made himself at home. He'll open up the fridge. That was his thing. He was just in there...

**Chance the Rapper showed up too. He stayed in the back.**

CHANCE: You know walking in the room and seeing all these familiar faces and all these faces I had never seen before, all broken over my friend....you know, it just hit me...like, he was just a good dude, funny dude, and just like realizing like that somebody had taken him, you know. It was just all hard for me to deal with that s\*\*t there.

**I put Courtney in a tuxedo. That's what he's wearing in his favorite picture. So I told myself, I'm gonna make him look just like that.**

**The service, it was so beautiful. And Santita, she sang for him.**

SANTITA: No more! No more! Weeping and wailing! No more! No more!

SHAPEARL: You sang the song I think by Mahalia Jackson....

SANTITA: Troubles of the World...

MAHALIA JACKSON: No more weeping and wailing. No more weeping and wailing....

SANTITA: It says, "Soon I will be done with the troubles of the world..." You are supposed to *cry at birth* and rejoice at death. Cause as excited as we are to see a baby, you don't tell the baby, "Well this is gonna be a tough journey."

**All of his best friends were his pallbearers. They wore red bow ties, black vests and white gloves as they lowered my son's body into the ground.**

**With Courtney's funeral now behind us, I was just left to sit in this new reality. That my baby, he was never coming back.**

**But, still, I didn't know the worst of what had happened to Courtney. That news was winding its way across the City of Chicago.**

**It started at the hospital on the North Side. Someone who worked there said something to a friend. And that friend talked to my Uncle Marvin, who's on the West Side. And Uncle Marvin called my mom, who's downtown.**

**Uncle Marvin told my mom that there was a rumor going around the hospital that Courtney was *combative*.**

RENEE: What they told him about, that he was being combative, we were shocked with that information. We really were.

**Police told me he collapsed in front of the station. So when did he all of sudden get *uncollapsed* and become *combative*? Plus, when he arrived to the hospital, he was already in cardiac arrest. I asked the hospital to put together Courtney's medical records so I could see for myself.**

**Brent and I dropped off our daughter at school and headed straight for the hospital for the paperwork. I started flipping through the medical records before we even left the parking lot. Right away, I found a document. A write-up from the EMTs.**

**It says my son was "combative", "violent", "agitated", a "danger to others", and that he was handcuffed. Handcuffed! Police never told me about any handcuffs. And why would they handcuff someone who was dying? Unless they thought he was a suspect of some kind?**

**Brent was quiet but I could tell he was angry.**

BRENT: I know how he is, and I know he didn't do anything to pose a threat. Had he been a young white guy, nice car, the situation would have been totally different.

**How does this contradict what we heard before?**

**I thought about those detectives we had just met with.**

POLICE: You know you see and hear a lot of things. But I'm actually really proud of the way the officers conducted themselves.

**They were just playing me for a fool.**

POLICE: You know you can take some comfort in that. That he was...there were people there that cared and that they did, you know they did help him.

**Brent and I really needed to process all of this. We felt sick to our stomachs, but we knew we had to eat. So we went to one of our favorite restaurants, a place called Sweet Maple's Cafe. We drove there directly from the hospital.**

**Our hearts were on the floor. We couldn't stop thinking about the police handcuffing our baby.**

**Right when we walk in the door, lo and behold, there she is. The E-R nurse from the night Courtney died. You know? The one who had held my hand and comforted me. She was sitting with an older woman, her mother.**

CLARESSA: I told my mom. "Oh my God!" I was like, "Mom, you remember the story I was telling you about where the young man got killed?" I'm like, "Now, that's his parents right there."

**Claressa Hawkins was working the E.R. when Courtney came in. She was the one who cut the clothes off his body. I had to ask her: "Was my baby really handcuffed?" She told me, "He was."**

CLARESSA: I remember him specifically being handcuffed to the bed. And so we were like, "Ok, where's the police? We need these handcuffs off." And then maybe like about, I would say about a minute, that the police walked in and they took off the handcuffs.

**Nurse Hawkins said that when she first saw Courtney, his right hand was handcuffed to the stretcher. Which was a problem, because they needed to transfer him to a hospital bed so they could work on him. And they couldn't.**

CLARESSA: Yeah, it was different. I don't remember ever seeing any other gunshot victims come in handcuffed.

**She didn't remember ANYTHING about him being combative.**

CLARESSA: So, if, if somebody is combative we know that when they coming in, cause that's one of the first things they tell us, for safety. Oh this person's combative. So be ready. We never got that report about him that he was combative, cause then our security team has to come and we have to have extra security there. And we have to have medications on board to calm this person down.

**My baby must have been so scared. He was all by himself. But it's a comfort to me that Nurse Hawkins showed him some compassion.**

CLARESSA: And I remember laying my hands on his arm and I started praying for him like, "Lord, I don't know what happened but please you know save this person's life." I started praying for him.

She didn't know anything about Courtney when she prayed for him. Just that he was *somebody*.

What actions from the nurse, and from others, make Shapearl feel like her son was somebody?

We exchanged numbers and left the restaurant. But the day wasn't over yet. It wasn't even noon. Next, we had to go to the tow yard to get Courtney's car back. We'd been getting the runaround for weeks. The BMW was caught between the police and the impound lot. Just stuck in paperwork. I wanted all of Courtney's stuff back - the clothes he was wearing, his book bag, his phone. And most of all, I wanted the car, BeBe.

Courtney's friend -- Christian Hernandez -- the guy who co-signed for it -- had to meet us there to get it released. And the thing that shook us both? Is that there was no blood in the car. But police said Courtney was shot *inside* the vehicle. It simply didn't make sense.

We towed the BMW home. A lawyer we found was waiting for us to process the car. Back in our garage, the lawyer and his colleague took hundreds of pictures of the BMW as evidence. I finally felt like someone was taking my son's case seriously. They wore gloves and put the items from the car in ziplock bags and labelled them. I stayed inside the house. It was too emotional.

I've gone through those pictures of what they found. There's lots and lots of broken glass. But besides that, It was like looking into my son's world. There's a yellow sticky note taped to his drivers side that says *Marketing Director*. That's the job Courtney was working toward. It was his goal. And I promise you, looking at that, it just broke my heart. There was a lighter. A Nutter Butter wrapper. An empty Gatorade bottle. Lemon-lime, his favorite kind. And a parking ticket he was probably hiding from me. There's one winter glove. No doubt he lost the other one. He was always on the go.

Item after item. Sealed up in those plastic bags.

There was a box for a new iPhone. He just got that phone a week before he was shot. But the phone itself wasn't there. The police still had it.

A few weeks later, when I got it back, the screen was cracked...and the phone was unlocked.





# ***SOMEBODY* PODCAST**

## **EPISODE 3: THE POLICE**

**Previously, on Somebody...**

SHAPEARL: And so when they said that he was combative....

RENEE: We were shocked with that information.

CLARESSA: We never got that report about him that he was combative.

BRENT: I know how he is and I know he didn't do anything to pose a threat.

CLARESSA: I remember him specifically being handcuffed to the bed. And so, we were like, "Ok, where's the police? We need these handcuffs off."

**My name is Shapearl Wells. This is the story of my son Courtney, a young black man in a fancy car, who wound up with a bullet in his back in front of a Chicago police station.**

**And it's the story of my search for the truth.**

**This is *Somebody*.**

THEME: "Everybody's Something" by Chance the Rapper

COURTNEY 911: March 4, 2016. 1 hour 16 minutes and 53 seconds.

**This is the last time you hear Courtney alive. Just moments after he was shot.**

**It's difficult to understand. But I hear my baby saying, "I've been shot. I've been shot."**

COURTNEY 911: "I've been shot...I've been shot..."

**I felt as a mom like my baby, he's hurt, and I can't be there.**

**When police gave me Courtney's phone back, I went straight to his recent calls. And there it was. 9-1-1. But it took a whole year between me learning that this call existed and hearing it for myself.**

SHAPEARL: Did my son dial 911?

POLICE: You tell me!

SHAPEARL: What do you mean? I'm asking you a question! Did Courtney Copeland dial 911?

POLICE: What do you think?

SHAPEARL: Absolutely. So why weren't you...so why didn't you inform me the first time we met?

**That was a recording of my conversation with police. They never told me that they had 911 call on Courtney.**

**I wanted to hear the last moments of my son's life. I felt like as a mom I deserved that.**

**It had been over a year since they had contacted me about my son's death.**

**I felt like my son had become a statistic. Like he was basically put on the shelf the day after he died.**

**And I was in a battle with the city to get them to release any and all videos that they had.**

**I wanted *somebody*, anybody, to hear me.**

SHAPEARL: OK Facebook, I'm gonna try this again. Like I was saying, you know. We are the average black family trying to fight against a huge city, and everywhere we turn, we hear the doors getting slammed in our face.

**And I was like God just help me to get to where I need to be.**

**I was reading through articles. And I just happened to come across an article about Laquan.**

**Laquan McDonald was the biggest cover up that the Chicago Police Department ever had in its existence far as I'm concerned. Laquan got shot sixteen times front and back. And he was running away from police. He was 17 years old.**

PROTESTERS: 16 shots and a coverup...16 shots and a coverup...16 shots and a coverup...16 shots and a coverup...16 shots and a coverup...

**Sixteen shots and a coverup.**

**The police...the city...tried to hide what happened to Laquan. Until a judge forced them to release that video.**

CBS: Now the dashcam video shows Van Dyke shooting and killing seventeen-year-old Laquan McDonald in 2014.

**In the black community, none of us were surprised to see this. But the Laquan McDonald case got the whole country...talking about race and the police.**

*How might this impact Shapearl's perspective of police?*

RACHEL MADDOW: For months, the only explanation offered for why Laquan McDonald died on that street was that an officer had fired at him in self-defense.

**That's Rachel Maddow.**

RACHEL MADDOW: And Laquan McDonald had been shot in the chest. That was the public story about this case. The only thing that interrupted that public trajectory is that-some very aggressive journalism happened in Chicago.

**I'd heard about this reporter, who blew open the case of Laquan McDonald...**

RACHEL MADDOW: Mr. Kalven, thank you very much for your time tonight. I appreciate you being here.

JAMIE: It's good to be with you.

RACHEL MADDOW: Um, you've been chasing the information on this case for so long...

**I decided I would reach out to that reporter. Jamie Kalven. So I sent an email. I didn't know if anyone would actually read my note. But before I knew it, I had someone from his organization on the phone.**

SAM: So thank you for writing to us.

SHAPEARL: You know, I've been following what you did with Laquan, and just trying to, to get someone to listen to me, because it just doesn't add up.

**A few days later, I was sitting down with Jamie. I brought all my papers with me, my files... I mean, I had everything.**

JAMIE: I have such strong impressions of that day....so I do remember your coming and sitting right here at this table. Your ability to find in that stack of paper without file folders, tabs naming, to find whatever document you wanted, to illustrate a point you were making, which I still think of as a kind of card shark, you know, virtuosity.

**When I walked him through the case, I didn't know at the end of the conversation how it would go, what he would say. But I felt that he was listening to me.**

JAMIE: I've had a lot of these conversations in the course of my career. None quite like this, because you laid out the sequences of events as you understood it, and identified the inconsistencies and anomalies and suspect things in the police account.

**Jamie said that his journalism team would take the case. They call themselves the Invisible Institute.**

**When I first went there, I was like, "This really is invisible" 'cause of the way it's set back into a very secluded area. You'll never know it exists. Like a little detective agency type of feeling.**

**He actually referred me to his partner, Alison Flowers.**

ALISON: Hey, good to see you. How are you?

**Alison is a journalist and she also works for the Invisible Institute.**

ALISON: I saw you're busy this weekend moving your daughter into college, right?

ALISON: How are you? First, I just wanted to check in and see how your Mother's Day was?

**She's so sweet but she's a hardball. She will get the answers for you!**

ALISON: How long were you there?

And Alison, you're sitting next to me right now.

**ALISON:** Let's see we've known each other now for almost three years.

**SHAPEARL:** Yes.

**ALISON:** It's been a long road.

**SHAPEARL:** Yes.

**ALISON:** And we've been in touch almost every single day.

**SHAPEARL:** Yes.

SHAPEARL: OK, Alison, I'm back.

ALISON: OK, hey Shapearl, I'm here with Jamie and Bill by the way.

**Bill's with the Invisible Institute too.**

BILL: Hi, Shapearl!

SHAPEARL: Hi, everyone.

ALISON: So, first of all Shapearl how are you feeling after...

**I remember when I first met you I think we were downstairs in the coffee shop. And you were like very meticulous, you were taking notes. You had your list of questions. You had okay hey, we're going to hit this, were going to do this, we're going to do that. At this point, I was like, "Hey, I love her!" You know!**

**ALISON:** I remember you being very measured. But I could also tell that you were in a lot of pain but it was almost sort of secondary to your drive.

**When I first met you, you told me what you believed happened to Courtney. That he died after an encounter with police and that this seemed like a traffic stop gone wrong. And you had all this information that you compiled. The handcuffing, The fact that there was no blood in the car. And the fact that they weren't releasing the videos to you. And so you thought maybe Courtney was**

shot somewhere else. There were just a lot of unanswered questions at that time.

**SHAPEARL:** From here on out, Alison is going to join me in this investigation.

**ALISON:** OK, let's go. So, one of the first things we did was pull records for the police officers who were outside the station with Courtney.

There were a lot of officers on the scene. But there were two main players: Officer Andrew Block and Sergeant Sean Ronan.

When Courtney pulled up to the station, Officer Block was the first person he saw. Courtney got out of his car, and rushed over to him. He told him, "I've been shot." And then he collapsed.

POLICE: Just got flagged down at Grand and Central, a gentleman just said he was shot.

DISPATCH: OK we'll get EMS rolling to the 25th District.

POLICE: Oh, ok, yeah send an ambulance right away.

Block called an ambulance immediately. Which is protocol. And when we dug into his history, we didn't see much. He's now a lieutenant.

But then, there's Sergeant Sean Ronan.

POLICE: Guys as soon as you can try to pinpoint a location, we've got broken glass at Belden and Long. It might've happened over here, so we're just trying to figure it out."

**SHAPEARL:** Ronan was the one running the show.

**ALISON:** And when we checked out *his* history on the force, we found some alarming stuff.

**SHAPEARL:** And he got a whole bunch of complaints against him.

**ALISON:** *Thirty* complaints...that we've identified. More complaints than *89-percent* of other Chicago Police Officers....Ronan's been disciplined twice. That's pretty unusual, given that most of the time, in Chicago, complaints are dismissed in favor of police officers.

**SHAPEARL:** There are descriptions of him calling a Black man a "n\*\*\*er." A "motherf\*\*ker." And a "stupida\*\* gangbanger."

*What do you think about these police officers' records?*

**ALISON:** And Ronan has been accused of false arrest...planting evidence...slamming a man's face into the concrete.

**SHAPEARL:** And in one case, he and some other officers were accused of throwing a man out a window, tasing and beating him, and then refusing him medical care.

**ALISON:** That case was settled. Ronan stayed on the force.

And then...there's this...from 2017, the year after Courtney died.

**ALISON:** It's a video of Ronan shooting at a man during a traffic stop. Six times. Police put in reports that the man pointed a gun at them. He survived.

**SHAPEARL:** Oh my god.

**ALISON:** And...Ronan was involved in another shooting -- but for that one, he was given one of Chicago Police's top awards, the Superintendent's Medal of Valor.

I should note that most officers never fire their guns over their whole careers. So the fact that Ronan's done this at least twice. That's a big deal.

When I was investigating Courtney's murder on my own, the city of Chicago didn't pay me any mind.

But when the Invisible Institute came aboard, they changed their tune.

The Invisible Institute sent in a ton of record requests. Not just for the records of the officers on the scene, but for police videos, and the recordings from the scanner.

**And *this* got the attention of the detectives, finally.**

SAM: Did he say why he was calling just out of the blue after fifteen months?

**Here I am on the phone with one of the Invisible Institute reporters, Sam.**

SHAPEARL: He said I know that you guys have been filing FOIA requests, and i told him, it's your right to know.

**I told Sam that the detective asked me to come down to the station.**

SAM: Are you going to go?

SHAPEARL: I'm trying to figure out if I should go.

**A few days later, I'm sitting down with those officers face to face. It's been more than a year since our first and only meeting, just after Courtney died....and I'm recording. Once again.**

**ALISON: When I first heard Shapearl's police recordings...I was disturbed by the way the officers spoke to her...a grieving mother.**

**We want to make sure there's context to everything, so we're going to let large unedited chunks of this tape play out.**

**SHAPEARL: The first time I met police in that dingy old building, I played along 'cause I needed their help. The second time, I didn't come to play with them. I needed answers. I need to know what happened to my son.**

**We sat across from each other at the conference table. White board. Vending machines. And Fluorescent lights.**

**I brought in my big case file, which had the paramedics report. That said my son had been handcuffed. And claimed he was violent and combative.**

SHAPEARL: This disturbs me, this disturbs me greatly, because of the fact that my son was handcuffed. I'm like, OK, if he collapses, at what point...

POLICE: He wasn't.



SHAPEARL: He was. He arrived at the hospital in handcuffs. There was a police officer that also followed the ambulance. And this is why I'm upset, because I'm like, how do you guys not know that my son was handcuffed?

**They kept questioning what I'd uncovered.**

SHAPEARL: When was he handcuffed, if you're saying that he was handcuffed during transport?

POLICE: We never said he was handcuffed, ma'am.

SHAPEARL: OK, well it says that...

POLICE: That's not a CPD document. That's a CFD document. OK?

SHAPEARL: So OK you're denying that he was...?

POLICE: No, no, I didn't say that. Don't put words...Please, please don't put words in my mouth. I'm saying that that's not a police department document. That's a Chicago Fire Department document.

POLICE: ...first time seeing it, hon, we can review it and absorb the contents.

SHAPEARL: OK. Again, it says "handcuffs," clearly.

POLICE: It's obvious what it says.

**They handcuffed my baby as he was dying, and they acted like it was routine.**

POLICE: I mean we can see, read in the report, we can see why the handcuffs were necessary.

POLICE: Or restraints, we'll use restraints.

POLICE: However he was restrained. Whether it was cuffs or foleys or whatever device.

SHAPEARL: It specifically says 'cuffs.

POLICE: Who's telling you at the hospital that he was handcuffed?

SHAPEARL: Oh, the nurses, everybody told me.

POLICE: Who, though?

POLICE: Yeah, cause we'll need to talk to them.

POLICE: Who specifically?

**I gave them the E-R nurse's name. Claressa Hawkins. She's the one who'd told me that Courtney was handcuffed to the stretcher when he arrived at the hospital.**

**They should have been with him in the ambulance. That's the policy.**

SHAPEARL: Again, if you put handcuffs on a patient, you would also then in turn put that information into your file that says that this person was handcuffed.

POLICE: I've never done that.

SHAPEARL: Why not?

POLICE: Why would I?

SHAPEARL: Why wouldn't you?

POLICE: Is he under arrest?

SHAPEARL: Who knows? You tell me.

POLICE: He was never under arrest.

SHAPEARL: I don't know!

POLICE: But I'm telling you. Your son was...

SHAPEARL: I don't know.

POLICE: Your son was...

SHAPEARL: It's a lot of things that you told me that have not panned out.

POLICE: Such as what?

SHAPEARL: In regards to his uh, in regards to him, well. Here, I have some...

POLICE: No, no, no, you're saying a lot of things, tell me one.

SHAPEARL: I'm gonna give you what I've been investigating in regards to this case.

POLICE: OK, you go ahead. Go ahead.

*Why are the handcuffs significant to Shapearl?*

**I felt angry, I felt like they were gaslighting me. Like they were sitting here lying in my face even though the proof is right in front of me.**

SHAPEARL: Okay, so again, at what point in time from him...

POLICE: What does that...? Does that have anything to do with us solving who shot him?

SHAPEARL: What I'm saying...

POLICE: John, does that have anything to do with us solving the crime?

POLICE: No. The bottom line is...

POLICE: So it's not probative evidence?

POLICE: No.

**What they're saying is the fact that he was handcuffed, had nothing to do with solving his murder.**

POLICE: It's not probative evidence to solving the crime of who shot your son, Ma'am.

SHAPEARL: Okay.

POLICE: ....which is what we want to do.

SHAPEARL: Okay.

POLICE: ....which is our end goal.

SHAPEARL: I want the whole story.

POLICE: ....which is our end goal. So what this...so what this tells you.

SHAPEARL: Calm down.

POLICE: I'm more than calm.

SHAPEARL: No, it doesn't sound like it.

POLICE: Well, you know what? I'm just kind of this way.

**Back and forth. Back and forth. This could have gone on forever.**

**I was mad as hell when they told me that they still had not even talked to the on scene officers after a year of investigating my son's murder. They had their own reports and they just assumed what was written was true. And they were growing tired of listening to me.**

*From the police perspective, why don't the handcuffs matter?*

SHAPEARL: So you're assuming that's what the officer meant.

POLICE: (long sigh)

SHAPEARL: These are all assumptions. These are not facts.

**Then they started talking very sarcastic to me, flipping through *their* reports. Saying to *each other*, "How many files you got there? It appears you put some work into it."**

POLICE: It appears you put some work into it.

SHAPEARL: I'm not denying that he didn't put any work into it. I'm just trying to make him more thorough. That's my right. This my child.

**They kept trying to tell me about the work they'd put into the case.**

POLICE: I spent a good amount of time driving around that neighborhood looking for video and trying to find video evidence.

**But they missed stuff. I know they did because I was talking to people they'd never talked to. And if I could have talked to the on-scene officers myself, I would have.**

SHAPEARL: So you're saying with one hundred percent certainty that this is not a possibility...

POLICE: So what you're telling me is this: You believe that the police targeted your son and shot and killed him in front of the police station.

SHAPEARL: No, I believe that not enough has been done to solve Courtney's murder.

POLICE: What would you like done that I haven't done?

SHAPEARL: I personally would have went back and re-interviewed everybody.

POLICE: Re-interviewed the police?

SHAPEARL: Oh, absolutely.

POLICE: I'm not going to re-interview the police because the reports stand on their own.

*Why doesn't Shapearl believe them or agree that they "put in work?"*

### **They assume police officers tell the truth. But I don't.**

SHAPEARL: Sgt. Mitchell. Based on the history that...

POLICE: No, no, no, no, no, no. Don't even start. Why don't you talk to me?

SHAPEARL: What I'm saying to you is that this problem didn't just occur with Courtney Copeland's case. The breakdown from the community and the police...

POLICE: I'm not here to talk politics with you ma'am. I'm here to talk reality.

SHAPEARL: I am talking reality.

POLICE: No, I'm here to talk reality about this case. No, you know what? I'm done. No. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

### **These white men were having none of my experience as a black woman in Chicago...**

SHAPEARL: Your department has, not saying this particular, I'm just saying CPD in general has a history that has been *tainted*. And I know it's unfair...

POLICE: Absolutely.

SHAPEARL: Okay.

POLICE: Especially to these two gentlemen in this room.

SHAPEARL: I'm just saying.

POLICE: Absolutely it is.

SHAPEARL: I know it's unfair but that is just...

POLICE: But then why bring it up?

*How has her past affected her perception of the police?*

SHAPEARL: Because it's the reality that we live in.

POLICE: No it's not, it's not with these two guys. Because I know them personally and I've worked with them.

SHAPEARL: I'm not saying that they did anything to my son.

POLICE: I take offense to that.

SHAPEARL: Why?

POLICE: I really do. Because you are painting with a broad brush, ma'am.

SHAPEARL: It's not a broad brush when it's an everyday reality for black and brown people in Chicago.

POLICE: Your painting these guys with a broad brush.

SHAPEARL: Do you understand? OK, do you? Sergeant Mitchell, do you understand that's a reality with black or brown people in Chicago or no?

POLICE: Ma'am. And I'm not telling you not with us.

*Why are the police upset with Shapearl?*

### **I wanted them to understand that this wasn't only *my* perspective.**

POLICE: If I haven't been clear on this, I apologize. Our goal, our stated goal here, is to find, arrest, charge, and convict the offenders who did this to your son. [God willing] That's our stated goal. Okay. No variance, no nothing. No politics, no bulls\*\*t, no nothing.

POLICE: And I'll tell you something else, regardless of what you may think of me because I'm white...I really don't care because I've been a policeman long enough where there are some people that just, this is what they have a problem with. I just want to let you know number one, I don't have a problem with it. If that's the way you feel, that's the way you feel about me. That's fine. No no no. But I just want to let you know.

SHAPEARL: I want everyone to focus on this case...

POLICE: But I want to let you know. You could spit on the floor when you see me it's still not gonna affect me from working on this.

SHAPEARL: ... From doing your job

POLICE: And whether we never talk again or we become good....it doesn't matter one way or another to me. If something good comes that I'm able to pick up and run with, I'm gonna run with it, with your son's murder. And whether you thank me or tell me to get f\*cked at the end of all of this, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

SHAPEARL: Well no, I'm definitely going to thank you because that's my goal. I want to know why my 22 year old son was murdered.

POLICE: So do I, so do I.

SHAPEARL: ...for no apparent reason.

POLICE: So do I. But as far as this whole black, brown, green s\*\*

*What does the detective believe Shapearl is upset about?*

t, it doesn't matter to me.

SHAPEARL: I'm saying you can't discount the history of what happened.

**It was time to go. But before I left, there was one more thing they wanted to be sure to say to me...**

POLICE: This also bothered me from our conversation the other day. The fact that you're recording me without my knowledge or consent. If you, if you ask me something, I'll answer ya as truthful as I know, but, do not be surreptitiously recording me is all I'll tell you.

SHAPEARL: Ok.

POLICE: It's a crime.

POLICE: It's a crime.

**It's actually not illegal.**

POLICE: So I'm just telling you and I'm sure your attorney would tell you the same thing.

POLICE: Just like I can't turn this on and record you. So...

SHAPEARL: I'm okay with being recorded.

POLICE: I know I know. Well I just have to let you know and I'm not okay being recorded, so just so you know.

SHAPEARL: I don't have nothing to hide, so...

POLICE: Neither do I. You do not have my consent to record me. It's illegal. Just so you know cause I know you've been recording me every conversation. You were recording me from the first day that we met.

SHAPEARL: Why you say that? Do I have a reason to record you?

POLICE: I don't know. Evidently you think you do because your whole focus on this thing is something the police did wrong.

**I just wanted to know what happened to my son. And to me, nothing was off the table.**

POLICE: What you're saying is that he was calling 9-11 while he was on the phone, while the police were there? And then the police killed him.

SHAPEARL: I don't know if the police killed him, I don't know.

POLICE: Ma'am, good luck with your parallel investigation.

SHAPEARL: I don't know. I don't know.

POLICE: Good luck with it is all I'll tell you. Good luck. 'Cause if you get any answers that I don't have, let me know.

*In your opinion is this fair for Shapearl to do?*

SHAPEARL: What I'm saying is that I'm open to all scenarios.

POLICE: So am I.

**By this time, the supervising sergeant had already walked out the room.**

ALISON: Ready to go? OK.

SHAPEARL: Let's hit it.

ALISON: I got the documents.

**I needed to find someone who would tell me the truth. Someone who was right there outside the police station.**

**I got the name of one of the EMTs who cared for Courtney at the scene. Daniel Cortez. Alison and I decided to knock on his front door.**

SHAPEARL: They probably think it's somebody electioneering.

ALISON: What do you feel? Do you want to write a note or do you want to call?

**Right as we were leaving, he opened the door. I had a mic clipped to my jacket, so that's why it sounds a little fuzzy.**

SHAPEARL: Oh. Hi. Hi. Are you Mr. Cortez?

PARAMEDIC: Yes.

SHAPEARL: Hi, my name is Shapearl Wells, you were one of the EMT's that actually worked on my son the night that he had passed away. And right now I'm actually chronic chronicling this journey in a documentary and I am recording right now. And I was wondering if you had a few moments if I could talk to you about.

PARAMEDIC: Your son that passed away?

SHAPEARL: Yes. Can I show you this picture?

SHAPEARL: And it was on the...on Grand and Central.

**I had Courtney's flyer with me...the same one I had put up all over the neighborhood. And the picture of the BMW.**

SHAPEARL: ...and we were actually trying to get some information about his final moments.

PARAMEDIC: I'm sorry ma'am but I don't recall much about it. I've been on the job for many years and it's a lot of runs, so I'm sorry.

ALISON: Do you remember anything at all?

PARAMEDIC: Not that I can recall.

ALISON: He was a black guy in a BMW shot in the back.

PARAMEDIC: I can see his heritage.

**We asked if he remembered Courtney being handcuffed. He says he didn't recall.**

PARAMEDIC: I don't recall. Sorry.

ALISON: You see a lot of gunshot victims handcuffed?

PARAMEDIC: I can't answer that. I don't know. I'm not sure, so..

ALISON: Because what she's concerned about are two things. One she really wants to know just his final moments which it sounds like you just don't remember.

PARAMEDIC: No.

ALISON: OK. And the other thing is it's very concerning to her that he was handcuffed. And this was before he was in the ambulance. And so.

PARAMEDIC: Okay. I don't know I'm not a police officer, I am a paramedic. OK so whatever their procedures are I don't know. But I know what we do.

**Paramedics don't handcuff people. Cuffs...that's for the police.**

SHAPEARL: So you wouldn't have requested the handcuffs on a patient.?

PARAMEDIC: Unless they're being physically violent towards me. Unless someone's physically being violent towards me. Then I would have them arrested because of hitting me is like hitting a cop.

ALISON: Do you remember that.

PARAMEDIC: I don't. No. I don't recall that I don't remember any of that.

ALISON: Do you remember this case at all?

PARAMEDIC: Not much. Yeah I've already explained that. So you can stop questioning. OK.

ALISON: I'm sorry. I don't mean to be aggressive I just want to make sure I understand you.



PARAMEDIC: But I've already given you an answer. So that's an answer right.

ALISON: OK I understand.

PARAMEDIC: Like Yes or no is an answer.

ALISON: Sure.

CORTEZ: I'm sorry for your loss, ma'am.

SHAPEARL: Thank you. OK. Thank you so much. Thank you for your time.

PARAMEDIC: I apologize for not being a better help. I'm sorry for your loss. I hope you're at peace. God Bless.

SHAPEARL: Thank you so much. OK. All right have a good day. God Bless.

ALISON: Thank you, Mr. Cortez.

**SHAPEARL: Let me get this straight: He didn't remember. He didn't remember my son...who was right in front of the 25th district police station? I mean, like, how often does that happen?**

**ALISON: Right, and there was one thing he specifically did not remember though.**

**SHAPEARL: Yeah, he didn't remember Courtney being combative. He did not say that Courtney was fighting, he was violent. But, this is the narrative that they wrote in their reports. I mean this whole case for me is about uncovering the truth but it's also about clearing Courtney's name.**

**I really needed to see the police videos for myself.**

**After the Invisible Institute stepped in, all of a sudden, the city had no problems releasing the videos from the night Courtney died.**

**They also released the police radio from that night.. Listen to this...**

POLICE: 2522 Robert.

DISPATCH: 2522 Robert.

POLICE: Victim is a male, his name is Courtney. Copeland. He gave me a date of birth of a....Give me a second.

**It's hard to understand, but if you listen closely, the officer says, "He gave me a date of birth..." then he pauses. "He gave me a date of birth..."**

POLICE: He gave me a date of birth of a....

The detectives at the hospital told me Courtney didn't say *anything* after he collapsed. But Courtney was talking to them...and giving them information.

Finally, almost five hundred days after my son died, the city sent me a bunch of DVDs in the mail. I truly felt so sick about it cuz of what I was about to see, I braced myself and I popped the first one in the player in the bedroom.

The disc wouldn't even play. Because the city sent them in this crazy format, g64, which I've never even heard of.

This was going to be the first time I was going to see the final moments of my son. And then for those videos not to play and they knew I wouldn't be able to open this format. It's like they were trying to make it impossible for me to find out the truth.

But, about a week later, the folks from the Invisible Institute were able to convert the footage. And They brought it over to my house.

SHAPEARL: Hi, come on in.

JAMIE: Thanks.

SHAPEARL: Thank you for coming.

JAMIE: So Rajiv, our technical wizard...has figured it out.

SHAPEARL: Oh thank you guys so much. Did you watch it?

JAMIE: I have not. Rajiv you know necessarily watched it...

SHAPEARL: So what'd you think of it?

RAJIV: I'm going to let you watch it.

SHAPEARL: Oh lawd...

We sat around the dining room table. It was me, my mom, Brent, my mom, Courtney's little sisters, and my Aunt Kim.

*Why does this not fit the story we have?*

The videos came from four different cameras. The main one was in front of the police station. There were also other camera angles from around the block.

**Remember, it's in the middle of the night. The video is kind of grainy and pretty bad.**

SHAPEARL: This is the police station right here.

RAJIV: Oh good you can see it. The address is in the file name too.

**We see the BMW outside the station. The car is still running. We can see the smoke from the exhaust pipe. There are two police cars behind the BMW.**

**Then another one shows up, with its lights on. It looks like Courtney's car has been pulled over. But Courtney himself is nowhere in sight.**

**Right then the camera swings away.**

SHAPEARL: Why would you move the camera here, you know it's something going on over there?

RAJIV: I mean you can see the lights bouncing off. Right? You know there are cars. Right?

JAMIE: Yeah, yeah look at that.

RAJIV: And you can see them increase as a few more cars come in.

**We don't know why the camera turned away, or what's going on. We still can't see where Courtney is or what the police are doing.**

**Finally, a few minutes later, the camera comes back to the scene. But still, no Courtney.**

SHAPEARL: That looks like his jacket that's there.

**It was freezing that night. I know Courtney was wearing his peacoat when he was shot. There's a bullet hole in the back. But here it is, crumpled up on the ground.**

SHAPEARL: Well, where is he?

**We see a police officer looking through the back window of the BMW with a flashlight.**

**And then, the camera pans, and we see Courtney for the first time.**

**Courtney is laying on the ground on his elbows, and he's shifting his weight. He was wearing a red Nike sweater. It was his favorite sweater. Courtney is surrounded by officers.**

*As you read, be sure to mark observations that surprise you.*

SHAPEARL: See right here? This is what the tow truck driver saw. See, Courtney is there on the ground. And, and wait a minute, look.

JAMIE: He's trying to get up it looks like...

**My son is on his hands and knees. He's reaching up for somebody to help him. On the police radio, this is when they call for more officers to the scene. Courtney's definitely not combative, he's not violent or a danger to others.**

SHAPEARL: No, the EMTs are there now, right? No?

**Now there's an ambulance on the scene. There is an unmarked car blocking part of the camera's view of Courtney.**

**Somebody - either a paramedic or a cop - is pulling him up, like fast and forcefully, from the ground. It looks like there could be a stretcher right there.**

**The video is really blurry here. You can't really see what's going on. But according to the paramedics report, this is the moment when Courtney was handcuffed.**

JAMIE: So this may be where they're handcuffing him.

SHAPEARL: This has to be. This is what they're doing to him! This is what they doing to him!

FAMILY MEMBER: Handcuffing him?

SHAPEARL: They han...Oh My God! Oh Jesus!

FAMILY MEMBER: He doesn't appear to be combative.

JAMIE: Right. Not combative.

FAMILY MEMBER: He's just trying to...

JAMIE: ...just get to his feet. Yeah. Isn't that what they're doing right now? Look.

Then Courtney was gone. Maybe he's in the ambulance. All we know is that we don't see him again.

My whole family, we were all at the dining room table, just holding on to each other.

We went back through the footage of Courtney's driving and route to his girlfriend's house...before he got shot.

Jamie pointed out that Courtney's BMW was being *followed*...by two police cars.

One marked, and one unmarked.

And then, these three cars, they disappear off the screen.

And when we see Courtney next, he's on the ground, reaching up for help.

And he's surrounded by police.

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When the Invisible Institute came to my house with those police videos...and we saw Courtney, on his knees, shot, and begging for help...I saw for myself what I had already felt in my bones.

SHAPEARL: He's like, "I'm shot I'm shot I'm shot." The timestamp says...

Here's what we saw: two police cars, following Courtney's BMW. They're all there, driving down the street.

The next time we see my son, he's on the ground. In front of the police station.

What happened during those moments we couldn't see? Between him driving his car down the street, and ending up with a bullet in his back?

Everything was telling me that the police shot my son.

**I sat with this for a few days. I was by myself. My husband Brent was out of town. he drives a truck, so he was on his job.**

**But then, Jamie from the Invisible Institute came back to my door. He re-examined those videos. And, he had new information. Information that changed everything.**

JAMIE: The idea that the police were implicated seems much less likely now.... Okay? Which, as I say, I'm speaking for myself, is something of a relief...I mean we don't want that to be true. Even though that would be a big story, but fundamentally we don't want it to be true...[duck]

**After he left, I called Brent and explained everything.**

BRENT: Hello?

SHAPEARL: Hey, can you talk?

BRENT: Yeah. You good?

**He was out on the road...He drives a truck. So he was on his job....driving through the rain.**

SHAPEARL: The first car that we thought were the police? That was not Courtney's vehicle in the lead.

BRENT: OK.

SHAPEARL: ...and they found some new evidence that said that it may have happened the way the police stated.

*Based on this information, what do you think happened to Courtney,?*

**They looked at the car more closely. The shape of the trunk, the shape of the headlights, the windows. It did not match the structure of a BMW.**

**It turns out, it was never Courtney's BMW. We were looking at the wrong car.**

**And... there IS a video showing Courtney's actual car. And in it, he's going down a side street. Not being followed by anyone. Speeding toward the police station.**

**One thing that Jamie said before he left the first time is that he told me, "Now, we have to go investigate our investigation." And I'm glad he did. Because I wouldn't want to implicate wrongly anyone for this murder.**

**So now it seemed the police never followed Courtney's car after all. That it may have happened like the police told us: Courtney was shot and then drove to the police for help.**

SHAPEARL: It's still...you know, they still feel that he was treated kind of badly, but, they don't necessarily believe that at this time, they actually did the shooting.

BRENT: How are you doing though?

SHAPEARL: I mean, it's hard to swallow. You know, it's hard to swallow. I mean, because Sunday I was feeling "okay, maybe they actually did do it," but now I'm like, "okay, maybe they didn't."

BRENT: We're pretty much back at square one where we probably may still never find out who the killer is.

SHAPEARL: Right.

BRENT: Is it still raining back home?

SHAPEARL: Mmmhmm. Yeah, it's just storming.

BRENT: Cause it's like a typhoon out here.

SHAPEARL: Okay, babe, I just need to process all this.

BRENT: I'll be there for you as soon as I can.

SHAPEARL: Alright, Love.

BRENT: Alright.

SHAPEARL: Bye.

BRENT: Bye.

**When I thought police killed Courtney, it made me feel like his death served some type of higher purpose.**

**What did Jamie reveal to Shapearl?**

**Like Emmett Till. Or Laquan McDonald.**

**Their killing actually woke up the country. With Emmett Till, when people saw how he was murdered, they were shocked to see such brutality. And the same with Laquan McDonald.**

**With Courtney dying, if the police did it, it would have been a major coverup and it would have shook Chicago to the core.**

**But if cops *didn't* kill him then his death just another unsolved Chicago murder.**

**I went from knowing who killed my son...to knowing...*nothing*.**

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**SHAPEARL:** I talked with the Invisible Institute folks. And Alison, you and Jamie told me that you'd stay on the case. And we'd start this all again.

But the way police treated Courtney still wasn't okay. And it wasn't just.

We needed to reckon with this.

And we needed to find out who really DID kill Courtney.

**ALISON:** So, that's where we're headed next. But first, we needed to better understand how we got this wrong. So, I sat down with Jamie to talk about it.

JAMIE: So I think we were, in retrospect, predisposed to find that the police were implicated in the murder.

At the Invisible Institute, our goal is to hold public institutions accountable. And we see a lot of cases involving police abuse.

In the past decade, the City of Chicago has paid out more than half a *billion* dollars in police misconduct lawsuits.

All of this is true. And it influenced the way we saw those videos.

Now we had to walk back our assumptions, and start over again.

JAMIE: The metaphor of walking back an assumption feels exactly right. You're really trying to reorient and reboot really the entire investigation.

**SHAPEARL:** Alison, what has been your experience with police?

**ALISON:** My perspective on the police has changed over time. When I was a kid, I thought, like a lot of white people do, that the police existed just to keep *everybody* safe. One time, I was in my twenties, and I thought someone was breaking into my apartment. So, I rushed into my closet and I called 911 And when The police came, they just told me it was a racoon. It was just a racoon.

*Why was Shapearl disappointed?*

**SHAPEARL:** Officer Friendly.



**ALISON:** Then later, As a reporter, I've called on the police to help me with stories and I've also had to call out the police and report on their abuses of power.

Now, I'm married, and my husband is black. And he's been pulled over by police, searched by dogs. Twice. The last time this happened, he was actually on his way back from a job interview and wearing a suit.

We have a three year old son. And he was actually just a few months old when I met you, Shapearl. So your story about losing *your* son just hit me right in the gut.

**SHAPEARL:** I remember having the conversation with my son about how to interact with police. "Make sure you don't reach for anything, Courtney." "Be very calm." "Be very polite and courteous." "Yes Sir. Yes Ma'am." You have to have these conversations. It's like, it's different for white people in America. And Black people in America. It has always been different. And there has always been a sense of I believe comfort for white people and a sense of fear for black people when it comes to police.

**ALISON:** Right, I wasn't raised to fear the police.

**SHAPEARL:** And we were. For me and Brent...our fear goes way way back.

*What influenced their assumptions?*

SHAPEARL: Both of our grandparents they grew up in the South.

BRENT: Yeah.

SHAPEARL: You know, my grandmother was born in 1930.

BRENT: Yeah, my grandfather's 1927 in Arkansas.

SHAPEARL: So, they saw a lot. And my grandmother actually had to flee from the South.

BRENT: As did mine.

SHAPEARL: ...because of all the hangings and the lynchings and everything like that. My grandmother used to always call them The Man. You know we had to flee from the Man. We had to leave because of The Man. She said that she only experienced some type of freedom when she came to Chicago....

SHAPEARL: I'm just glad that she didn't see what happened to Courtney because I don't think that she would be able to have survived it....

BRENT: Yeah...

SHAPEARL: Sometimes I just sit here and I just think like, I'm still in a daze.

BRENT: There's a rhyme that came to mind, that I heard back in high school, like senior year cuz it was talking about police and police brutality. and it said, "You were put here to protect us, but who protects us from you?"

**SHAPEARL: I remember when Courtney was about six months old, it was the summer of 1994, and we were staying with my grandmother in the Englewood area. One day we were all sitting on the porch, just me and my cousins and my uncles.**

**And then all of a sudden, gangbangers just started shooting out of nowhere. And I remember my uncle grabbing Courtney out of my hands and rushing us up in the house upstairs so that we could be safe.**

**I remember telling myself, "I cannot lose my son to these streets."**

**That day, I said, "I'm moving."**

**I lived out of my car for about two weeks until I was able to secure an apartment.**

**I was like, "My son is going to have a chance of surviving." And that was my goal was just to keep him safe. To keep him out of harm's way so he can grow up and enjoy his life without worrying about being shot and killed in Chicago.**

MEDICAL EXAMINER: Medical Examiner's Office please hold.

SHAPEARL: C-O-P-E-L-A-N-D. First name, Courtney.

MEDICAL EXAMINER: Um, can I have the date of passing?

SHAPEARL: Uh, 3-4-16.

*What do Brent and Shapearl associate with the police?*

**I'd been dreading it, but I went back to the place where they did Courtney's autopsy: the medical examiner's office.**

MEDICAL EXAMINER: And how are you related?

SHAPEARL: The mom.

**The last time I was there, I identified my son's body on a metal slab.**

MEDICAL EXAMINER: OK, that's the doctor that did the examination.

That's the case number. And then this is the doctor's assistant. She'll be

able to speak with you and maybe set up something where you guys can speak about it and clarify everything.

**I was there because now my son's case was coming down to two questions.**

**One...who killed Courtney? I promise you, we're gonna dig into that soon.**

**And two...did police do everything they could to help him?**

SHAPEARL: OK, thank you, thank you so much.

MEDICAL EXAMINER: No problem!

**I needed to know if my son could have survived this injury.**

**There's a note in the hospital records that Courtney's *aorta* got hit. That's the main artery in the body. But the autopsy report says nothing about the aorta getting hit. In fact, it says it was "intact."**

SHAPEARL: So I just left the M-E's office, I wanna know, but I don't wanna know. So anyway, I'm going to give them a call and see what they say. Hopefully they could answer these pressing questions.

**The aorta getting hit... means he would have bled out within minutes.**

**ALISON: And this all mattered because there were delays in Courtney's case.**

**SHAPEARL: Yes, I felt that they took too long to get him to the hospital. From the time that he was on the scene in front of the police station until the time that they drove off in the ambulance, it was about thirteen minutes.**

SHAPEARL: Every part of me wants to believe that my son could have survived. Every part of me. Every part of me wants to believe that I had time to get to him. Every part of me wants to believe that.

**ALISON: So, Shapearl, you were waiting to get answers from the medical examiner. And we had already tried to talk to Courtney's surgeon, but the hospital wouldn't let her speak to us. So in the meantime, we turned to *other* medical experts to look at the case.**

CHANG: From the coroner's report, it appeared that the bullet went through his lung, and then it was lodged somewhere in the muscles of his left neck.

**ALISON: Grace Chang is a trauma surgeon at Mount Sinai, a hospital on Chicago's West Side. We actually talked to three trauma surgeons -- but Dr. Chang was the only one who'd go on the record.**

**And right away, she told us something that helped us understand why there was no blood in Courtney's car - because he wasn't just bleeding out, he was bleeding *in*.**

CHANG: You could say his chest cavity was filling with blood.

ALISON: Yeah, OK that's a pretty large receptacle. It can hold a lot.

CHANG: It can hold several liters of blood...

*If she knew the cops didn't kill him, what does she want to understand?*

**Dr. Chang described the emergency surgery, when doctors opened up Courtney's chest.**

CHANG: You go in there, you resuscitate their heart and you can also fix and stop the bleeding so that's why you do that.

**She also noticed the discrepancy between the surgeon's report and the autopsy report about the aorta.**

CHANG: Had it gone through the aorta, typically that's not a survivable injury either.

**SHAPEARL: So that's why I marched my butt down to the medical examiner's office for answers. Was Courtney's aorta hit or not? Did he have a chance or not?**

**And the next day, they called me back.**

**Alison and I hopped right on the phone right after.**

SHAPEARL: She said well her findings when she did the autopsy she didn't find any damage to the aorta, so that's why she didn't include it in her autopsy. And she was like, you know he did bleed out. She said you could tell that by the amount of blood that was in his chest.

**She had actually reviewed his file again and she said that his aorta was intact.**

SHAPEARL: It still brings me back to...had they taken him to the hospital right away. Because he's begging them. Help me, help me. Don't stand around looking at me, help me, get me to the hospital! For the life of me, for the life of me, Alison, I can't say that he would have survived. I can't say a hundred percent. I just wanted them to give him a chance. They didn't give him a chance.

**ALISON: Courtney's heart stopped in the ambulance, four minutes before he arrived at the hospital.**

**If he had got there just a few minutes earlier - maybe he could have been saved.**

**So every delay mattered.**

**We kept coming back to the fact that Courtney was handcuffed.**

**Reports say it was because he was combative.**

**And by the way, It's not uncommon for trauma patients to present as "combative". Especially when they're losing lung function.**

**But *handcuffs* aren't used when trauma patients are combative.**

**A spokesperson for the Chicago Fire Department told me their paramedics don't use handcuffs, they don't have handcuffs, and they don't restrain people with handcuffs. We exchanged *dozens* of emails.**

**But then, when we asked the spokesperson about Courtney's case specifically, that's when their story changed. He told me they requested cuffs because Courtney was "flailing" in the street before paramedics arrived. But that's just not what the video shows.**

**SHAPEARL: It doesn't make sense.**

**ALISON: Well, we know at this point that they had his plates and they had his name. And they knew that the car wasn't registered to him.**

**SHAPEARL: Yeah. And they were treating him as a suspect more than a victim. That's just the bottom line. You can see him reaching up, begging them for help. You see this on this tape. And the fact that they're saying that their only resolution was to handcuff him. I just know that they wouldn't have done this to somebody who was white.**

ALISON: OK. Let me just pull up the video. It's about roughly nineteen minutes into the video but um...Okay, he's the guy in the red hoodie.

RUSHIN: I mean looking at this segment of the video, it looks as if he's lying there mostly immobile as police are kind of standing up around him....

**ALISON: Stephen Rushin is a professor at Loyola Law School. He specializes in police reform. We wanted his take on the police's treatment of Courtney.**

**So we watched the footage together of Courtney outside the police station. And there's a crowd of officers, just milling around.**

ALISON: It does not look to me as though he's receiving any medical treatment.

RUSHIN: No, it looks like he's being treated like a suspect. Cause I think one thing we haven't yet talked about is the number of officers around him. All of which is relevant if you're gonna say he's a threat, if he's a risk to other people. A threat to the officers. You have 1, 2, 3, 4, 4 officers it looks like. And, yeah, if you hadn't put this in context for me, it looks like they are handcuffing a suspect to bring him in, for an arrest.

**There were at least eleven police officers on the scene. I asked Rushin about another fact...there were no police onboard the ambulance to unlock the handcuffs. Courtney's ER nurse, Claressa Hawkins, told us they couldn't get to work on Courtney right away, because they had to wait for police to arrive.**

ALISON: If they're arresting someone who is suffering a life-threatening wound, and that person has to go to the hospital and they're in cuffs, do you know whether the police have to accompany? In the ambulance? Follow? Cause I think they would need to be there to like unhandcuff it, right?

RUSHIN: I mean that's just logical.

ALISON: ...but in this case, they weren't in the ambulance....

*Underline details that lead the team to believe police "treated him like a suspect."*

RUSHIN: Yeah, and as a lawyer that starts sounding like a civil liability issue there immediately, right?

**What Rushin is saying is this....by handcuffing Courtney and not going with him in the ambulance...police officers may have stood in the way of Courtney's life-saving treatment.**

**SHAPEARL: There's another delay that also bothered me.**

**Courtney was shot on the Northwest side of Chicago but got transported all the way east to Illinois Masonic Hospital in the Lakeview neighborhood.**

**Paramedics in Illinois are supposed to take the gunshot victims to the closest trauma center that can take them.**

**The closest trauma center? Was not Illinois Masonic.**

**But maybe it was the fastest one to get to that night? Nope. We checked that out too.**

**ALISON: So, we found out that there were actually two other trauma centers that were closer and faster to get to. Stroger and Mt. Sinai. Not dramatically closer but when we're talking about life or death, minutes really do matter. It could have saved him another five to ten minutes on the road. We looked at all different routes, times of day and traffic patterns.**

**SHAPEARL: And why these four or five or even ten minutes matters? Is because my son's heart stopped four minutes before getting to the hospital.**

**Everyday, I can't help thinking about the difference those few minutes could have made.**

ALISON: I mean, what do you do with this information?

SHAPEARL: None of this makes sense to me, I swear to God, none of this makes sense. It just hurts my heart. It hurts my heart, I tell you.

ALISON: I'm sorry. I think Courtney is, you know, I don't want to say he's lucky, because what happened to him was so unlucky, but if you're gonna have any mom in the world to get answers for you, you'd want it to be Shapearl Wells.

**SHAPEARL: Police never found any physical evidence in the car...just some broken glass on the street.**

**The state crime lab analyzed bullet fragment lodged in Courtney's neck...and the bullet jacket...but it just wasn't enough to identify a gun.**

**But we knew a neighbor heard two shots. So where's the other bullet?**

BRUNDAGE: I'm just surprised that there wasn't anything recovered from the autopsy, or in the car. That's just...it's just kind of amazing that there was nothing.

**We talked to this firearms forensics expert, David Brundage. He said he was surprised police didn't find anything when they processed the car. The police searched the car on-scene. But he said, they should have also searched the car under better lighting, like in an open garage.**

SHAPEARL: I'ma pull it right now.

ALISON: Okay. So actually let me get my evidence bag ready.

SHAPEARL: OK.

**Brundage told us that sometimes bullets can hide in the seams of car seats. They just leave tiny slits. And until you remove the seat and search, you'll never know. It could actually lead us to the murder weapon.**

**He said the second bullet might still be in the car, and gave us instructions on how to search for it.**

**So, we found a BMW-certified mechanic at a little auto shop in the suburbs. He agreed to help us take the car apart.**

MECHANIC: So what we're going to do is actually unbolt the seat from its frame. Then we're going to take the entire seat up and take it out of the vehicle.

ALISON: Okay, and then where are you going to put it? Because we need to examine the seat.

MECHANIC: Wherever you want.



**We took out the front seats. After all this time, we saw some broken glass.**

ALISON: Alright Shapearl. You want to go ahead and grab that glass? How many pieces is that? One two three four five six...

SHAPEARL: So if we don't find anything here, where is the bullet?

**We kept searching, but we didn't find a bullet. We did find some debris that looked like it could be something, so we put it in evidence bags.**

**We sent them back to the firearms forensics expert. And we waited. When we got the news, we were disappointed.**

ALISON: I am guessing you have some sort of new thing to report.

BRUNDAGE: Yes. I've, well, this is not very very informative but I finished looking at the physical items that you shipped to me.....I did find one kernel of gunpowder.

ALISON: Oh, wow, ok.

**ALISON: He told us when he looked at it under a microscope, all he could see was the gunpowder was likely from the Winchester Olin Corporation, which sells to a number of ammunition companies. It could have been used in almost any type of gun.**

**SHAPEARL: Well, at least we looked...because our investigation was gonna be thorough.**

**ALISON: Now that we were rebooting the investigation, we all returned to the street where we believe Courtney was shot. The spot where his friends first collected broken glass...and saw skid marks...and where a neighbor said she heard shots fired.**

**SHAPEARL: Courtney was shot on Chicago's Northwest Side. It's a neighborhood called Belmont-Cragin. I went out there right after Courtney died, putting up posters, knocking on doors, begging somebody to tell me something.**

**ALISON: We knew that you had already covered this ground. But now, we wanted to hit every single house between there and the police station. We needed to find witnesses.**

ALISON: Shapearl's gonna lead the way. How many cars...How many spots do you have, Shapearl?

SHAPEARL: I got three. I got the seats down but I got three spots.

**We set out with a crew. A group of journalism students, of course you Shapearl, me and our producer Bill.**

**So Shapearl we're in your van. The same one that you used to haul Courtney and his buddies to basketball games as they were growing up. And I noticed a strawberry air freshener dangling from your rearview mirror. And this necklace that belonged to Courtney.**

**SHAPEARL: The necklace was a medallion that he had earned from World Ventures. It reminds me of him and it makes me feel close to him.**

**ALISON: So, the first thing you wanted to show us was the police cameras near the station.**

SHAPEARL: That's the camera that rotates. You see all these cameras? Boom boom boom. It's like cadrillion cameras right here. And you telling me you don't have any cameras....

BILL: Excuse me, m'am. Do you live in this neighborhood?

**We drove over to the intersection of Grand and Central, the police station where Courtney collapsed on the ground.**

**We put on our blinkers, and we got out.**

SHAPEARL: Uh, it looks like they still have his photo up. I'm gonna check.

**Bill and I are at the light pole on the corner. And there was a flyer with Courtney's face on it. It was one of the reward posters I had put up, more than a year before.**

**Bill and I stood on the side of the street...right outside the police station.**

SHAPEARL: Yeah, his photo is still there. They were tearing 'em all down, but I'm glad to see that this one is still up. That's him. It's been...almost

two years. See everything right now is a mystery. Everything. Because it's not just about police killing black people. But it's also about them allowing them to die. To him, he was nothing but a nigga on the street, who got shot. I feel that, sometimes, you know, when you go through these situations, the dead can no longer speak, so you have to do it for them.

**Right in the middle of all of this, a cop pulls up behind us. He asks Bill if we got into an accident...**

POLICE: Did you get in an accident?

BILL: No, we're good, you know...

POLICE: Is there a reason why you guys are blocking traffic? In the middle of Grand Avenue?

BILL: Right, her son died right here...

POLICE: I...

BILL: ...Right, and so we're uh...

POLICE: I feel bad for that, but I mean you guys could have parked over here, this way you're not putting yourselves in danger.

**Move out of the way. Don't block traffic. We called it a day.**

BILL: Bye, Shapearl. Thanks.



# **SOMEBODY PODCAST**

## **EPISODE 4: THE SECRET GIRLFRIEND**

SHAPEARL: The first car that we thought were the police? That was not Courtney's vehicle in the lead.

BRENT: OK.

SHAPEARL: ...and they found some new evidence that said that it may have happened the way the police stated.

JAMIE: The metaphor of walking back an assumption feels exactly right. You're really trying to reorient and reboot really, the entire investigation.

SHAPEARL: Every part of me wants to believe that my son could have survived. Every part of me.

RUSHIN: It looks like they are handcuffing a suspect to bring him in for an arrest.

**My name is Shapearl Wells. This is the story of my son Courtney, a young black man in a fancy car, who wound up with a bullet in his back in front of a Chicago police station.**

**And it's the story of my search for the truth.**

**This is *Somebody*.**

THEME: "Everybody's Something" by Chance the Rapper

COURTNEY: [snoring]

**This is a video of Courtney sleeping...**

ROCIO: Babe, still want to go out?

COURTNEY: [snoring]

**It's taken a few years ago by his girlfriend at the time, Rocio.**

ROCIO: Babe, BABE!!!!

ROCIO: Do you still want to go out?

COURTNEY: Yep

ROCIO: Turn up?

COURTNEY: Turn it up.

ROCIO: Get up then.

**Rocio and Courtney. They were one of those on again, off again couples. But everyone knew that Rocio was the love of his life. She always felt like a daughter to me...and still does.**

SHAPEARL: Can you show us your tattoo?

ROCIO: This is it. But it's actually Courtney's name and the date we started officially dating. It's kind of funny. It was 11/12/13. I made him wait a day to ask me out the next day so it could be 11/12/13. [laughing]

**Courtney was very caring and, for Rocio, she received all of that. He'd make her breakfast. He'd pack her lunch. He'd even, sometimes, he'd watch her niece for her..**

SHAPEARL: He's like, "Oh, this kid I'm takin' to school, and I'm babysitting her..." And I'm like, "You're doing what?!"

ROCIO: Yeah, He just loved kids...

**Rocio and Courtney joined WorldVentures at the same time. She *also* got a BMW as a sales reward- Courtney's was maroon and Rocio's was champagne.**

ROCIO: I'm kind of competitive, so as soon as Courtney pulled it out I was like, I have to go get mine, too.

**But at WorldVentures...Courtney had a lot of *other* female coworkers.**

MARILYN: You know Courtney really loved women.

**That's Marilyn. She worked with Courtney. She saw all the drama around him.**

MARILYN: There was always an incident with something like oh you know you're flirting with this girl or you're talking to this girl...we can't keep playing games and having like all these different like, you know, girls that you're talking to. Like we're here to run a business.

SHAPEARL: When I think about all these other women that it seems that he had a relationship with, they were, to me, just filling the gap.

**Here I am, talking to Alison from the Invisible Institute about all of this.**

ALISON: Do you know why he and Rocio broke up?

SHAPEARL: Because he was cheating.

ALISON: Oh. Bummer.

SHAPEARL: She found out that he was cheatin'.

**I knew Courtney had a lot of little girlfriends, but what I didn't know is that his love life was getting in the way of his job.**

**I found this recording of Courtney talking about his setbacks at work.**

COURTNEY: The thing about me is that you know it looks good on the outside but sometimes it can be bad behind closed doors. And that's that's the obstacles that you're gonna have to go through. You're gonna have to be able to take a punch.

**In 2015, Courtney's boss sat him down more than once and told him he *needed* to stop dating people from WorldVentures. They even removed him from the leadership team.**

**But Courtney... started seeing another co-worker anyway. So they had to keep it a secret.**

**Her name was Alma. And...the night he was killed...Courtney was on his way to her house.**

**When word got out that Courtney was shot, all of his friends started calling each other. They were trying to figure out who Courtney was going to see at that hour.**

***Eventually, they landed on Alma...***

MARILYN: A lot of people were very, very upset with her.

**Courtney's co-worker, Marilyn again.**

MARILYN: ...because first of all we had no idea, like *no* idea that you know they were even like talking or messing around or anything. She lives in a really rough neighborhood. Maybe an ex-boyfriend saw something and got upset that Courtney was there. You know so many things ran through our head. And of course the first thing to do was blame her because...why were you even there?

**A few hours after Courtney died, the police went to see Alma and they drove her to the hospital. Lots of Courtney's friends were there.**

**Courtney's friends were grilling Alma for information. She told them that she didn't hear anything. She didn't see anything. Just that Courtney had texted her saying he was outside her house. And then he never showed up.**

ALISON: I wonder if they would have blamed her if they hadn't been romantically involved. I feel like people do that to women, you know?

SHAPEARL: You could see the pain on her face that she felt some sort of guilt. And I told her that very day, you can't feel guilty. Courtney...Courtney, Ultimately Courtney made the choice. He unfortunately made a choice that was deadly for him.

The more I learned about Alma, the more I understood this wasn't just a hook-up situation. It was starting to get serious and he was trying to bond with her kids and he was over there 3, 4 nights a week.

It had been more than a year since my last meeting with police, and...their latest case update in Courtney's file just stated that they had...no updates.

I needed to know who shot my son...and clearly the police weren't gonna be any help - so Alison and I? We went on without them.

We kept going through Courtney's phone. Trying to understand not only who he was talking to but what was going on in his life...and the exact timing of his interactions that last night.

We got help from this *digital forensics* expert, Dr. Ashley Podhrasky who *volunteered* her time to go through Courtney's phone.

PODHRASKY: Hi Alison

ALISON: Hi Ashley, how are you?

PODHRASKY: I'm doing good, how are you doing?

ALISON: I'm doing very well, thanks....

She has these tools to scrape every bit of information off the phone, and organize it so we could find any clues that were there.

PODHRASKY: So I'm actually sending you something right now. You should get an email from DropBox.

ALISON: I did...

She's based in South Dakota, so we had to send her Courtney's phone. I was nervous that the phone could get lost... Because, you know, that was all that I had of him. And it was evidence. So I was just nervous of it leaving my presence. These are precious things to me.

It was about a week and a half when we received the phone back. It came back safe and sound, thank God. Plus it came back with a detailed log of all of Courtney's calls, texts, with time stamps as accurate as they can get.

I combed through them with my family.

AUNT: When did he make the 911 call?

SHAPEARL: At 1:16:53.



AUNT: So from 1:11 it'd have to be about 1:12 now after this ok I'm going gotta be 1:12 now.

**We were looking for signs that Courtney was in trouble, that something was going on.**

**But we didn't see anything. The only thing that we found was him goofing off with his friends and also singing and dancing and making videos.**

*What might Shapearl mean by "in trouble?"*

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COURTNEY: Get my swag on

**Then we looked at the day he was killed.**

**I wanted to see exactly when Courtney and Alma were in touch. He sent her a text saying "top of the morning" at 9:38 am. She wrote back a few hours later, and then they were texting all afternoon. Lots of heart emojis.**

**He messaged her again about 10 pm from a World Ventures presentation. He was in the city, training a new recruit, KC.**

KC: Everybody was really happy, like, by the end of the night we ended up listening to music and he was rapping which was really cool.

**I found a photo of Courtney circled up around a kitchen table with some friends. He's wearing his favorite red hoodie and everyone is holding dixie cups.**

**Courtney is doing a hand gesture. And basically it's the "rock on" sign. Courtney was always doing the rock on sign in pictures. Rock on dude, you know!**

**Right about midnight, Courtney texted Alma saying, "I need to book a massage. Super sore."**

**Then Alma texted him back. "I got you."**

**Courtney says, "When?"**

**And she wrote, "Today."**

**Then...just before one in the morning...Courtney headed to her house in Belmont-Cragin.**

**On the way there, Courtney was just being his social butterfly self - he was on his phone, he was talking to friends and chatting on Facebook Messenger.**

**He texted Alma "I'm outside."**

**She texted back: “What? Really?”**

**And he was like, “Yup.”**

**“OK I’m going”, she said...meaning that she was headed downstairs to open the gate.**

**From the phone records and parking tickets that we found, we know that Courtney and Alma had this little routine. He’d drive down her street. Cut through the alley and park by the church where he could leave his car overnight. Right by this gold statue of Jesus, arms open wide.**

**Courtney would text Alma saying he’d arrived. So she’d go downstairs and open the gate for him.**

**They did this several nights a week. Over and over again.**

**Alley. Park. Alma. Alley. Park. Alma.**

***And that night, on March 4th, 2016, Courtney sent his last text to Alma at 1:11 in the morning.***

**But he never showed up at her door.**

BALAZS: I've been living and ministering here for 19 years already.

**ALISON: This is Father Richard Balazs. He’s a Catholic priest at the church on the corner, St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr. Father Balazs lives on the second floor of the church rectory.**

BALAZS: I know there was a shooting over here right in front of the rectory. Between the two streets there. I remember that, then they put flowers there, but I don't remember the name. I'm probably numb to a lot of this

BILL: And what about that police station right there? Do you have any interactions with the police there ever?

BALAZS: Yeah. The policemen are very good to us. We used to have parish carnivals every year. And, of course, for security we had the police at that. The previous pastor stopped it because of gangs.

**SHAPEARL: The gangs. In Belmont-Cragin, it feels safe during the day...there’s parks and schools, but at night, it’s a different story.**

GERRY: I have 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 cameras.

**ALISON: This is Gerry Brito. He's a mechanic, who's lived in Belmont Cragin for 25 years, down the street from the church where Courtney used to park to go to Alma's. Gerry's put up cameras all over his property.**

**He says some years are quiet. Some years are really rough.**

GERRY: Like when someone moves out and some other people move in, and they start selling drugs or they have people that are joining gangs and they bring the gangs over.

**In Belmont-Cragin, the gangs are mostly Hispanic...you've got the Stylers, the Royals and the Pachucos. Then there's the Four Corner Hustlers - a black gang. They've all got their territories.**

**Gerry says the police come to his house all the time to pull his camera footage because the city's cameras don't always work. They even got his videos for Courtney's case.**

GERRY: They always respectful and they try to do the best they can with what they have.

**And when the city's cameras don't work, the gangbangers know it.**

GERRY: If they've been shooting they know that they can get away with it. Because the camera is not working. That's a problem if you ask me.

**He's right. Broken cameras *are* a serious problem around Chicago. Citizens pay for them to help solve crimes, but, often, they don't work.**

**Like the camera on the corner by Alma's place. The most critical camera. Courtney's police file *says* that camera didn't capture anything because of a DVR error. Shapearl and I have gone over this quite a lot. She's still suspicious.**

SHAPEARL: It just tells me like this whole POD cameras and all these things...I just don't trust it.

ALISON: That camera would have shown Courtney going down that street and turning into the alleyway.

**And we've gone out to the neighborhood several times to track down other cameras.....to see if police missed any.**

SHAPEARL: Did they get this one? I wonder if they got that. That has...

SHAPEARL: Yeah so they have cameras too. I wonder if they got that address.

**Why do camera problems impact Shapearl's trust?**

**We did find cameras that were not noted in their reports. But it's possible they were put up after Courtney's death.**

**So we didn't have any footage. But we knew there had to be more information out there.**

SHAPEARL: I believe that somebody knows something. Somebody saw something. And it just takes a lot of courage, um, from somebody to tell what they saw.

**The police file on Courtney's case...was thin. They only documented interviews with a handful of people. So we decided to go back and reinterview everyone the detectives talked to.**

**That meant it was time to talk to Alma, Courtney's secret girlfriend.**

**SHAPEARL: Alma and I haven't really been in touch. But now Alison really wanted to talk to her.**

**So...almost two years after Courtney's death... I text Alma to see if she would meet with us.**

**As I was texting her back and forth, Alma mentioned something. Something that she'd never told me before.**

**And I think it's totally crazy that she would withhold this information.**

**She said she *heard gunshots* the night Courtney died. I asked her that question. The day after Courtney was killed, I asked her, did she hear anything, did she see anything? And this girl never once told me that she heard gunshots the night that he died.**

**BREAK**

ALISON: Hey! Hi, there. You're Alma? Hi, I'm Alison. Very nice to meet you. Thank you for setting aside the time. This is Bill.... [duck]

**In February of 2018...I arranged a meeting...me, Alison, our producer Bill...and Alma. We met up with her on the North Side of Chicago...in Uptown, where Alma works at a cell phone shop. I remember it was freezing outside... so we used a conference room in a lawyer's office nearby.**

**Why might Shapearl find this significant?**

ALMA: Oh you guys really were right around the corner.

ALISON: Yeah I know you were probably like, "I don't want to go out in the cold."  
No, we're literally right around the corner.

**I sat next to Alma. Bill and Alison sat across the table.**

**All the microphones and the fact that we were in a law office made it feel sort of like an interrogation...and Alma, she definitely looked tense. The way she was sitting, it was like she was protecting herself.**

**I was just praying that she would finally tell us everything she knew. I was just ready to put myself in her train of thought and let her tell her story.**

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**Alma played us some videos of Courtney when we first sat down.**

ALMA: This is like one of those good morning videos, like he was awake, what was everybody else doing? [Laughs] That's him. He was always trying to make me laugh because I was always really serious. That was him all the time. He would say: Te gusta or no te gusta? Let's get it.

ALISON: Did the people you worked with know that you guys were romantically involved?

ALMA: No.

ALISON: Ok, so it was sort of on the downlow?

ALMA: Yessss.

ALISON: Okay. How did you feel about that?

ALMA: Um, I was fine with that. It was, um. It was a little bit complicated just because of the way that our team is set up...

**They'd been keeping their relationship a secret for months, but Courtney had become close with her three kids.**

*What is your interpretation of Courtney and Alma's relationship?*

ALMA: I told my son that Courtney passed and he asked me what happened and I told him that he was shot. And um he just started crying.

ALISON: Did he ask a lot of questions?

ALMA: Um. No. After that he just didn't want to be outside. He would always tell me we had to hurry up.

ALISON: Do you sense that the kids are still afraid?

ALMA: For a long time they were. Like, coming home from school, my son would say we have to hurry up because I don't want to die.

**We went back to that night. We asked Alma to walk us through what she remembered.**

ALMA: He messaged me like around, like close to one in the morning. And then he asked me if I was home, if he could come over.

**She says she was in her room, listening to music on her headphones. And her roommate Brianna came in to tell her that she was making a late-night run to Walgreens.**

ALMA: As she was telling me that, we heard two gunshots and a car drive off.

ALISON: And was that before or after you'd gone downstairs to be ready to open the door?

ALMA: No, that was before. We heard the gunshots as I was receiving the text message that he was there. So the text message came in and we heard the gunshots at the same time.

**She went downstairs to open the gate, as usual, but Courtney wasn't there.**

ALISON: What did you think happened at that point in time?

ALMA: I mean I was a little bit worried but it's not...It's not unlike him to change plans quickly...

**Alma says she heard gunshots right as she got Courtney's text saying "I'm outside." It was 1:11 am.**

**But that just didn't make sense to us.**

**Because we knew that just four minutes after Courtney texted Alma, he was still alive and well. He was messing around on his phone, Facebook messaging his friend Brandon who had just gotten a new job.**

**Courtney wrote to Brandon, "Nice bro you're gonna kill it man." Courtney sent that text message to Brandon at 1:15 a.m. That was four minutes after he texted Alma and the forensic expert confirmed those times**

**Alison showed Alma the timeline we'd put together...**

ALISON: We ha...

ALMA: At 1:15?

ALISON: Mhm. If you're hearing the shots here, obviously he's not going to be doing...he's not going to be text--You know, he's not going to be saying to Brandon, "nice bro you're gonna kill it man." So does this at all like revise in your brain what might have happened? Or like when you might have heard the shots? Does this refresh anything for you?

ALMA: No. Not really.

*Can you think of an explanation for this discrepancy?*

ALISON: It doesn't make sense? Okay. But you're pretty confident that you heard the shots before you said, "OK, I'm going to go open the door." It was between here and here?

ALMA: Our text messages were back to back.

BILL: Did it sound distant or did it sound like it was really close?

ALMA: It sounded close.

BILL: Like outside the window close? Or...

ALMA: It was two of 'em pretty like back to back. It sounded like they were either on the street or like on the block over. But they were close. It didn't sound like it was distant.

ALISON: When you heard the shots, did you think, "Oh, that could be Courtney"? Or did it not even cross your mind?

ALMA: It didn't cross my mind because around that time there was just a lot of things going on in the neighborhood. So we had heard gunshots before. You know, it wasn't something that was out of the ordinary for us to hear.

**We kept asking Alma to replay this moment. Was she really sure about her timing?**

**Alma's in her bedroom with her roommate...there's music on her headphones... and then they hear gunshots.**

ALISON: How many shots?

ALMA: Two.

ALISON: And did you all, like, make eye contact or acknowledge that you had both just heard shots or was it just so commonplace that you wouldn't even have a reaction really?

ALMA: Well I had my headphones on so I took 'em off and she's like, "Did you hear that?" And I said, "Yeah," but I wasn't sure. So after that, she said that she was going to the store and I told her that she should wait, because we didn't know what was going on. She went to Walgreens.

ALISON: Did she see anything?

ALMA: Not on her way there. Um, when she was on her way back from the store, she said that there were police officers with flashlights looking up and down the street, like they were looking for something.

**I couldn't understand why it took Alma so long to speak up about this. I specifically asked her after Courtney died, more than once, if she had heard any shots. I was pissed off.**

SHAPEARL: And I know, I almost positive I asked "Did you hear anything?" But I never recalled you saying anything like that. So I was like...when you said that, I was like cuz when we were piecing together the timeline. We had to figure that somebody else would have had to have heard something. So that's why that

question I posed that to you. And so I was like okay. Because that was like an important piece of information.

ALMA: Just at the time I wasn't sure and I felt like I had to be sure.

**Even if Alma wasn't sure...she still should have told me *something*.**

**And she didn't even tell the *detectives* when they came to her house that morning. She said no one even asked her about the shots. Instead, they asked her about the password to Courtney's phone.**

*How would you describe Shapearl and Alma's relationship at this point?*

ALMA: ...the password to his phone. I told him he has an iPhone. It's his fingerprint.

BILL: He didn't have a Password?

ALMA: No it's his fingerprint.

SHAPEARL: By the time we got the phone back the phone was unlocked. So they probably had to take his finger and unlock his phone.

**The police got into Courtney's phone just hours after he died. They put in their report that Courtney's passcode was his birthday. Now I *know* that couldn't be true. Because he had way too many girlfriends to do something like that.**

*Why might the detectives be more concerned with Courtney's phone? What is their assumption?*

**When the police talked to Alma, they wanted to see her phone too.**

ALMA: And they just looked at it. And they said it wasn't going to be much help and they just handed me back my phone.

BILL: How long did they have your phone for?

ALMA: Maybe like 30 seconds, he just opened it and he looked up and down.

ALISON: And they never asked you if you heard anything? They didn't consider you a witness?

ALMA: No. After that they just gave me their business card. And they said that they were going to call me to speak with me. And after that I never heard from them.

**There's just a few lines in Courtney's file about the police talking to Alma. But then, there's another report...about one of Alma's ex-boyfriends. His name was Kevin, but he also went by "Hawk". They all worked together.**

**Alma and Courtney actually met for the first time at a birthday party for Hawk. Alma said "Hawk" -- Kevin -- tried to start a fight with Courtney that night.**

ALMA: Courtney said something to me like you know we were at a birthday party. People were having drinks. He said something to me, him and I laughed it off. Kevin overheard, and the next thing you know there was like an exchange of words. And then Kevin tried to fight Courtney.



ALISON: Okay.

ALMA: I think he was just jealous of how Courtney was as a person and how other people reacted to him. I think that was really it. It wasn't anything other than that.

**Someone told the police after Courtney died, Hawk posted then deleted a message on Facebook saying, "Sorry Courtney." You can take that different ways. But then, three of Courtney's friends remember another message he posted on Snapchat - saying something like "Lord Forgive Me."**

ALISON: Would he have even known that Courtney was en route to your place that morning?

ALMA: No. That day after I came back from the hospital he came to my house and he asked me what Courtney was doing on his way to my house.

ALISON: So he was surprised to learn that you two were seeing each other?

ALMA: I don't think. I mean no one knows until now.

ALISON: And again you didn't feel like he could be involved in this in some way?

ALMA: No.

ALISON: Okay.

BILL: Like no chance or like, probably not?

ALMA: Probably not.

*What's your interpretation of these social media messages?*

**Since Courtney died, I'd been asking Alma about her other ex-boyfriends. She told me one was in prison. We looked it up: he was in for attempted murder. Another ex was just getting out of jail when Courtney was killed...but all the way in New Jersey.**

**We asked Alma if *she* had any suspicions of who killed Courtney.**

ALMA: No, not who might have done it. I know that down the street from where I live, there's a house that... this guy like he's you know he's a gang member. He lives there. We ended up getting into the conversation of what happened to Courtney. And he told me he's like it wasn't anyone from this neighborhood. He's like I think someone mistook him for someone else.

**Wait a godd\*\*n minute. Alma talked to this guy? And he knows something about what happened to my son? And she never told me this either? Oh my God. I had to hold my tongue, ya'll.**

ALISON: When did you have the conversation with the guy who lives in that house about what he said happened?

ALMA: It was....I don't remember the exact date. It was like two days after I got punched in the face. So like my eye was a little swollen and I had like a hoodie on. And um when I was walking down the street, he saw me with like my eye swollen and he asked me, you know, who hit me.

BILL: You said you got punched in the face or you looked like you got punched in the face?

ALMA: No I got punched in the face.

ALISON: Do you mind telling us what happened?

**Alma looked over at me. Bill and Alison looked at me, too. I hadn't told them about this. The punching incident...**

**It happened at my place a couple days after Courtney died.**

ALMA: I was at Shapearl's house, talking to someone there. And I got punched in the face.

ALISON: Wha? Who? Shapearl, can you enlighten us?

SHAPEARL: It's Courtney's cousin.

**This was honestly pretty embarrassing for me. Because when I invited Alma to my house, I wanted her to feel comfortable.**

**But then this crazy cousin of Courtney's physically attacked Alma.**

ALMA: We were just talking. They asked me what happened that day. I told them exactly what I remembered. And then in the middle of the conversation they said, "You killed my cousin," and they punched me in the face.

ALISON: Why did the person accuse you of that?

ALMA: I don't know. That's just what he said.

SHAPEARL: Everybody was trying to find out what happened to Courtney. And everybody was trying to lay blame somewhere because it just didn't make sense. My family was like he shouldn't be over in that neighborhood. That's a Hispanic neighborhood. Why is he over there? He's with that girl. You know. That's how they felt.

*Does this change your understanding of Shapearl and Alma's relationship?*

**This is why things were strained between me and Alma since Courtney died...Why would she cooperate with us, after I let her get punched in the face?**

**But let's get back to Alma's neighbor - the guy who seemed to know something.**

ALISON: Do you know his name?

ALMA: I don't. I just know...

ALISON: Do you know what he looks like?

ALMA: Yeah, he's shorter than myself. He has really long hair like down past his waist and he has a few tattoos. But he's always walking around the neighborhood.

ALMA: The day after Courtney was shot, he said that his house was raided.

ALISON: By whom?

ALMA: By the police. They came in searching his house.

**I'd never seen anything about this guy in the police file. No raid, no nothing. But I had a vague recollection of him, too. I remember like after the shooting, when we were all in Belmont-Cragin passing out reward fliers, I do remember a man with long black hair standing on his deck. Talking on his cellphone. Just then a bunch of kids came out on bikes to see what we were doing. As though he sent them over or something.**

**It felt strange, but there was so much going on at the time, I just filed it away.**

BILL: Thank you so much again for all your time. Yeah this was a lot of time.

ALISON: Thank you, Alma.

ALMA: This was like therapy.

SHAPEARL: You probably never talked about it right?

**We said goodbye to Alma, and headed back into the cold.**

**The next day my Aunt Kim came over.**

KIM: Mmmmm...MM!

**Kim and I were raised like sisters because we're so close in age.**

KIM: I need to see the report that the police took on her.

**I told her all the details of our interview with Alma.**

SHAPEARL: I done reread this stuff a million and one times. I went over her testimony...

**I told Kim about Alma hearing shots after all, the problems with her timeline, and this new story about the guy with the long hair.**

**All the stuff the police had missed. They barely asked her anything when they talked to her hours after Courtney died. They didn't speak to her roommate either. They just never followed up.**

KIM: When you, when you getting somebody and you interviewing them, you still asking them same questions just to see if it lines up. You want to know what you heard, did you see anybody running, how many shots? None of that stuff was asked.

**BREAK**

Police hadn't given me any updates. Hadn't told me what they thought happened to Courtney.

But it turns out ... Nurse Hawkins, from the E-R, said police told HER that very night Courtney came in.... what they thought happened. A carjacking.

HAWKINS: That they think someone had tried to carjack him. He sped away. They shot into the car, he drove to the police station, asked for help and said that he got shot, and that's when they called the paramedics.

SHAPEARL: This whole thing it just gets stranger and stranger by the minute. I have theories in my head. Who knows. But somebody covering for somebody.

*Why is Shapearl becoming more frustrated with the police?*

So when Alma told us that this longhair guy down the street said police raided his house, the day after Courtney died, we needed to know more.

We looked, but we couldn't find a record of the raid. But we did find lots of other times police were sent to this house, including for shots fired. Police found shell casings and everything.

So, a few weeks after our interview with Alma, Alison and Bill took a team to Belmont Cragin to find this guy.

ALISON: I'm gonna pull up to the church and then we can look and see if there's any skidmarks.

SAM: Five dollar haircut.

ALISON: Yeah, that's very close to where, it's like right behind where Courtney would have potentially been shot like you know on the opposite side of the church.

BILL: A five dollar haircut is so cheap.

**ALISON**: We walked up to the gate of his house. Sure enough this guy was standing on his second floor deck. And he had long hair, just like Alma described.

We called to him. We didn't record because we didn't want to scare him off.

He wouldn't come down. He wouldn't give us his name or phone number. But he talked to us from the deck.

He said he didn't remember Courtney's shooting. But he *did remember* that he was asleep that particular night. March 4, 2016. Two years before.

Then he told us it was a black guy who got shot.

When we asked if he had any trouble with police in the area, he said he couldn't talk about that, because he works with them, providing janitorial services.

He wished us luck. He said we were doing a good thing for the family.

We dug around and got his arrest records. His rap sheet is long. Once, he was arrested for driving a car in an armed robbery. But most of the cases against him have been dropped in court.

ALISON: Hi, how's it going?

BRIANNA: Good. How are you?

ALISON: I'm Alison. Nice to meet you. Thank you for making the time. Did Alma explain what we're doing?

BRIANNA: Of course. Yeah.

ALISON: So we're investigating...

A few weeks later...Alma put us in touch with her former roommate, Brianna - the one she'd been living with when Courtney was killed. I met up with her at a Dunkin Donuts.

What does his "memory" possibly tell us?

She remembers the night when Courtney was shot, but says *she* was the one who heard the shots, *not* Alma.

BRIANNA: So when I heard it I went up to her and I had asked her if she had heard anything and she let me know that she was in her room, she had her headphones on so she couldn't hear anything.

Their stories didn't fully line up.

But Brianna also remembered that guy who lived a few doors down...

BRIANNA: He had like longer hair. Black hair. And he had a couple tattoos.

ALISON: Do you know if he ever tried to talk to Alma?

BRIANNA: Just um they would pass by through the neighborhood and it was just a hi and bye as far as I know of.

At the time of the shooting, in 2016, Brianna was dating Christian Hernandez....the guy who co-signed for Courtney's BMW.

So a few days after I talked to Brianna, Shapearl and I talked to Christian. He came over to Shapearl's place with his new girlfriend and their baby...

ALISON: How old?

CHRISTIAN: 6 months.

ALISON: Oh wow. Congratulations. Boy or girl?

CHRISTIAN: Boy.

ALISON: OK. I have a little boy too. He's 19 months old.

GIRLFRIEND: I can't wait until he gets big.[laughs]

ALISON: Oh, see I was saying the same thing...

**We settled in around the dining room table and started talking. Christian said that *right after* Courtney died, at a candlelight vigil Alma told him she *had* heard shots.**

CHRISTIAN: She told me when everybody was all outside right here with the candles. And I asked her, "Did you tell Shapearl?" She said, "Yes."

**But she did *not* tell Shapearl. And I talked to five of Courtney's other friends who had been in touch with Alma in the days following. Alma didn't tell *them* about hearing shots either.**

**Then, Christian's girlfriend nudged him. She'd been quiet most of the interview but it was clear she wanted him to tell us something...**

**He seemed tentative...like he didn't want to say.**

**It was about Alma and something she posted to Facebook the same night I met with Brianna.**

CHRISTIAN GIRLFRIEND: I had something to say.

ALISON: Oh sure.

CHRISTIAN GIRLFRIEND: When were you going to tell them that the day she called you that...He went on Facebook and he seen...He showed it to me... Alma put an emoji with like the zipper face and like that I don't know what to call but it's doing this...and I told him like well that's weird.

**Christian's girlfriend made a sign with her hands. That thing Courtney always did in photos.**

**Alma had posted two emojis. The "rock on" emoji and the zipper face.**

**Then she stopped responding to Shapearl's text messages. Her lips were zipped.**

ALISON: How are you? Thank you for coming out.

SHAPEARL: Thank you so much.

JUNE: I'm June.

ALISON: Hi.

**SHAPEARL: If Alma wasn't talking, we needed to find someone who would. So, a couple weeks later, we met up with a World Ventures guy named June.**

**He's a heavysset guy with a fuzzy beard. About 40 years old.**

**He's a DJ, he works at a tire shop...and he also has a cigar company. He's always talking about it on Facebook.**

JUNE: I just wanna know who's ready for a rooftop event. It's gonna be exclusive, we're going to have a hand-roller. He's going to host the show. Tell us what's in the tobacco. What the tobacco is worth. How to savor it, how to roll it

*Brainstorm explanations for this post from different perspectives.*

**June knows a lot of people.**

JUNE: I got an ear to the streets. I talk to everybody, I treat everybody with the utmost respect so people respect me and they'll help me whatever way they can.

**June wouldn't say too much about his past with gangs...but, he did say this...**

JUNE: In Chicago if you're not you're labeled as one, and majority of time you have no choice. It's by where you live or by who your family is. And you have no choice but to be what it is.

**June came with us the first time we went around the neighborhood a couple days after Courtney died.**

JUNE: So, when I found out what had happened the first thing I did was reach out to the local gangbangers. Um. None of them took admittance to it. They won't lie to me. So, if something did happen they would tell me the truth. And I found out in the past maybe about three other murders and I found out who it was within a week or two weeks of it happening. And I've had gang members tell me oh this guy did it. Such as such did it. Because they know the innocent shoulda never gotten touched.

**After asking around, June got a lead that Courtney's murder might have been a case of mistaken identity. He said he'd heard the Four Corner Hustlers was beefing with another gang in the neighborhood.**

JUNE: They had said there were some Hispanic guys running around in that neighborhood. So, they had claimed it was a possibility that maybe they had confused him for somebody else. So, I had to follow that lead as well.

ALISON: And what did you find out?

JUNE: It was false.

**Hm.**

**Before we left, June told us a bunch of *rumors* he heard about Courtney's murder. He'd heard Courtney was killed while buying weed. He'd heard the police did it and that's why the camera supposedly didn't work by Alma's house.**

**But we needed facts. And we needed witnesses. And soon, we were gonna find them.**

*Does this match your understanding of how gangs work?*



# **SOMEBODY PODCAST**

## **EPISODE 5: THE TWO-YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

**Previously, on Somebody...**

ALISON: Did the people you worked with know that you guys were romantically involved?

ALMA: No.

MARILYN: A lot of people were very, very upset with her. She lives in a really rough neighborhood.

ALMA: We heard two gunshots and a car drive off.

KIM: You want to know what you heard, did you see anybody running, how many shots? None of that stuff was asked?

ALMA: Like, down the street from where I live, this guy like, you know, he's a gang member. ....He has really long hair, like down past his waist.

JUNE: They had said there were some Hispanic guys running around in that neighborhood..... So, they had claimed there was a possibility that maybe they had confused him for somebody else. So, I had to follow that lead as well.

SHAPEARL: I believe that somebody knows something. Somebody saw something. And it just takes a lot of courage from somebody to tell what they saw.

**My name is Shapearl Wells. This is the story of my son Courtney, a young black man in a fancy car, who wound up with a bullet in his back in front of a Chicago police station.**

**And it's the story of my search for the truth.**

**This is *Somebody*.**

THEME: "Everybody's Something" by Chance the Rapper

**We buried Courtney at this cemetery called Burr Oak. We have a family plot there.**

SHAPEARL: As you can see, these are some of the graves.

**Burr Oak was originally the only cemetery where black people could be buried in Illinois. It's also the cemetery where Emmett Till is buried. It's where my grandma is buried, too.**

**And this is where Brent and I buried our two angel babies, a set of twins, in 1999.**

**Every time I come here, it's in disrepair. The ground itself is crumbling. And there is weeds everywhere. The grass is high, there's trash.**

SHAPEARL: You can't be sad because you so doggone angry cuz the way it looks.

**I've had it out a few times with the groundskeepers.**

GROUNDSKEEPER: You didn't even have this much grass when you came in last time. Sometime we have to redo it again...have some dry dirt...

**They're nice guys, but I have to keep it real with them about the conditions of the cemetery. It's horrible.**

SHAPEARL: Look at this! Lookie Lookie Lookie. Well, it's, look at this!

GROUNDSKEEPER: I can't help that ma'am.

SHAPEARL: Look at this! Look at this! Lookie, lookie, lookie.

GROUNDSKEEPER: Well, I'm sorry. That's the condition of...

SHAPEARL: No, no, no.

*What personality traits are consistent with Shapearl? Underline your evidence.*

**You probably know by now, I'm not afraid of confrontation.**

SHAPEARL: Nobody should have to go here and look and be embarrassed when you come to a grave site to grieve. It's already a difficult situation.

GROUNDSKEEPER: Look at here. Today you want to chop my head off. But tomorrow, you're gonna be hugging me.

SHAPEARL: I'm sorry but y'all know y'all got me a little heated. I'm a little heated. When it comes to my baby, I get a little heated. It's personal.

**It had almost been two years since Courtney died. Two years.**

**I found out there was a deadline, a statute of limitations, for me to sue the city for how they treated my son. So, I got some new lawyers to take the case to court.**

**They argued that police caused delays by taking Courtney into custody and handcuffing him. And that they conspired with the Fire Department to prepare misleading reports to cover up their actions.**

**I wanted justice. And I wanted those officers on the record. I wanted them to be forced to testify. And I wanted the city to see that treating a young black man as a criminal instead of a victim has consequences.**

**There was one other thing that I needed to do on his second anniversary. I was gonna hold a *protest* outside the police station. We were gonna go there and light candles with Courtney's friends and our whole family.**

SHAPEARL: I'm just gonna do a short Facebook Live. It's kind of a difficult moment for me right now. I tried to do this last year but I just wasn't strong enough to do it. But I feel that his spirit will be there so that he would know that he's not alone right now. And I hope that you can come out and just light a candle for him. God bless.

*Describe what Shapearl believes was wrong in her son's case.*

**I was gonna do all of this in the middle of the night. At the *exact* same time as Courtney pulled up to the station and called 9-1-1, trying to get help.**

**I was gonna drive the BMW that Courtney drove...from my house in Cicero...to Belmont Cragin. Just like Courtney did. I was gonna drive down Alma's street, cut through the alley, pull up by the corner of the church. Just like Courtney did.**

**It was like for me, I couldn't be there when it happened. I always felt like some type of guilt for not being there. So, for me I had to take that journey with him. So that that way he knows that his mom was there.**

**Leading up to the anniversary... Courtney's friends started posting old videos and tributes.**

**And so my timeline was flooded with memories of Courtney. There were tons of photos of Courtney in his car, BeBe.**

**Oh my god Bebe. I think that I want to say that she's my fourth child even though she's a vehicle.**

**Over the last two years...Bebe had been through a lot. My mom had an accident in Bebe.**

ALISON: How did it get in an accident?

SHAPEARL: She was trying to change lanes. And so when she changed lanes she didn't see the other car and so they rammed right into the car. And when she told me that she crashed the car, I hung up on her. I didn't ask was she was OK because I figured she ok because she calling me, but I couldn't talk.

**I didn't leave the bed for three days.**

SHAPEARL: I can't let this car go. As much as I want to let it go, I can't. It was like State Farm was like well we're gonna sell it off for parts and part of me I

felt like they're just like taking my son and just selling my son off for parts. And I was like no I need the car back.

**So I had found two mechanics. One to do the interior work. And then one to do the body work of the vehicle. And it was *a lot* of money to get her restored.**

**But once she was good as new, I got a new license plate for BeBe. Court34. Now we were ready to take this drive.**

**ALISON: While Shapearl was getting ready for the second anniversary of Courtney's death, we were busy reporting. Turns out, Courtney wasn't the only one to call 9-1-1 after he'd been shot.**

*Infer: Why is Shapearl so attached to Bebe?*

911: March 4th, 2016. One hour twenty three minutes and three seconds.

**Someone else called 9-1-1 that night too. A neighbor. Who reported hearing shots fired. Police interviewed her about a month after Courtney died.**

911: Chicago Emergency Watchman, Hello.

ELENA: Yeah, I'm calling to....you know there was a shooting right here on Fullerton and Long.

911: Fullerton and Long? How many shots you hear Ma'am?

ELENA: Like two.

**The neighbor's name was Elena. She made that 9-1-1 call about six minutes after Courtney's 911 call saying he'd been shot.**

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DISPATCH: Okay. Anybody see who was doing the shooting?

ELENA: No but right now I was coming with my daughter from...we were together at my Ma's house.

**She said she heard two shots.**

ELENA: And I was parking when a car passed by real fast. But right now through the alley there was like two gangsters.

DISPATCH: Okay, so you heard two shots fired on the block?

ELENA: Yeah

DISPATCH: Okay I'll send someone over to check it out.

ELENA: Okay Thanks.

DISPATCH: You're welcome. Bye-bye.

**Shapearl wanted to talk to her, but her name and number were redacted from the police report. So none of us knew who she was.**

**But a few months later when we got the 911 call from the city, we found her number. It was buried in the metadata that came with the call recording.**

**So we got in touch.**

**At the time Courtney was shot, Elena lived in the neighborhood but she moved out because of the violence. These days, Elena and her family live in a garden apartment, on the West Side of the city, a couple miles from Belmont-Cragin.**

**She and her husband Edgar have two kids. An 8-year-old girl who loves to jump into adult conversations and giggle...and a little baby boy.**

ALISON: It looks like she's a good big sister.

ELENA: Oh yeah.

BILL: She seems like she's the boss though.

ELENA: Yeah, she's the mom right now.

ALISON: Do you work too?

ELENA: I used to work but right now I'm not working because of the baby.

ALISON: You've got your hands full.

**We asked her about March 4, 2016. Here's what she remembers.**

**Elena was parking...a block from the church where Courtney would park. When she heard the two shots, she was helping her daughter out of the car.**

ELENA: I opened the door when I heard the shootings. Then I grabbed her and I put her inside into the car again.

**She called her husband Edgar on the phone to come out and wait for her in their alley. That's when she saw Courtney's car speed past her and turn towards the police station.**

BILL: Were you scared at any point?

ELENA: Oh yeah I was scared. Plus I was with my daughter. She was scared too. She was crying.

BILL: Has that ever happened before to you?

ELENA: No. Nothing.

**After the shots, she froze. But, once she heard a police siren she decided it was safe enough to leave.**

**Elena and her daughter walked towards home, where Edgar was waiting for them. She saw a car speeding down the alley. Edgar saw it too. He was closer and had a better view.**

ELENA: Then my husband said that he saw a car coming by to the alley. So then the car stopped where I live, by the alley. So then um the cars was staring at my husband.

**The window was down. Some guys inside. She described them as “gangsters.”**

ELENA: My husband had his hands inside the jacket. And this is when the car passed and he was just looking at him.

**The car stopped. The guys inside stared at Edgar. He had his hands in his pockets and he didn't want to move them because he was worried the guys might think it was a gun.**

*Does Elena's information contradict or corroborate our story so far?*

ALISON: Your husband had his hands in his pockets.

ELENA: Yeah.

ALISON: OK. So the guys thought that maybe he had something.

ELENA: Yeah, so he didn't took his hands out. I don't remember the car. He knows the car.

**But Elena told police she thought she saw a Camry.**

**When we spoke to her, she said she doesn't really know cars. But that her husband Edgar remembers the make and model.**

**Seemed like Edgar was the witness we *really* needed to talk to.**

ALISON: Do you think your husband might remember what the men looked like?

ELENA: Mmm I think he will.

**Even though Edgar might have been able to identify these guys, police never even tried to speak with him.**

ALISON:] Did they... how long did they stay?

ELENA: Like 20, 25 minutes.

ALISON: Okay, and they didn't talk to Edgar?

ELENA: No he was at work.

ALISON: Okay, and they've never talked to him.

ELENA: No.

ALISON: Okay, alright.

**When we told Elena we were working with Courtney's mom, she wanted to know more.**

BILL: Her name is Shapearl. Wells. And actually she's going to be out there, in front of the police station on Saturday, at the same time at 1:15.

**We told her about the vigil.**

ELENA: This Saturday?

BILL: This Saturday.

ELENA: I will try to see if I can go. Right here on Grand?

BILL: Yeah. Really?

ELENA: I'm going to try to see if I can go. I can tell her what I saw and everything.

BILL: She would I think be really...

SHAPEARL: And where is the keys to the BMW?

**ALISON: On March 4, 2018, Bill and I met Shapearl at her house. It was around midnight. She was wearing a red "Justice for Courtney Copeland" t-shirt, getting ready, serving coffee. Her family was starting to congregate.**

SHAPEARL: Jasmyne, grab the other baby. I think Brent already got one in the car. And Jasmyne, tell, oh and Brent lock up, ok. Lock up.

**Brent and their teenage daughters, Kayla and Jasmyne were bundling up two little babies. Faith and Sahara. Shapearl had started fostering them in the fall. Now, they were six months old.**

**Shapearl was getting their bottles ready.**

SHAPEARL: You got her pacifier? It's upstairs.

SHAPEARL: I don't know nothing about this car. I swear to god I don't. Oh there it is.

**ALISON: Shapearl and Bill took off together. I followed behind.**

BILL: You said you feel like you have to do this?

SHAPEARL: Yeah.

BILL: Why? Why put yourself through it?

SHAPEARL: Because I feel like I've been hiding from it.

And so Courtney comes and he does that final snapchat in front of our house. And then I guess that's when he was talking to Alma and he decided to go over there. And it's like what if you had just went to bed? You know. It's just like that one second. That one second changed his whole life.

**ALISON: It was a pretty short drive that time of night. It only took about 15-20 minutes.**

SHAPEARL: This is Alma's block. So this is the exact way that he would come.

**We went through the alley to where Courtney would park, just up by the church. Shapearl stopped the car. This is where we believe Courtney was shot.**

SHAPEARL: And so when they found glass, they found glass by the fire hydrant, which is a little bit of a ways.

**SHAPEARL: I drove over to the police station. Pulled up in that left turn lane. I stopped the car. Right in the middle of the street. Just as Courtney had done two years earlier after getting shot.**

**Across from the police station, friends and family had started gathering, lighting candles, setting up picture frames. It was cold, you could see your breath.**

**I didn't get out of the car for several minutes. I just needed to sit there and think about my son. About what he must have been feeling there on the ground. I was just trying to put myself in his position and what he would have said to police in that moment.**

**Police came out from the station. They started to surround me.**

**They asked me to move out of the road. And I just simply lost it.**

POLICE: Can you do me a favor?

SHAPEARL: I'm not moving. Leave me alone. I am not moving it. No! No! I am not moving it. I am staying right here. Leave me alone please. Leave me alone.



POLICE: I'm just making sure you're ok.

SHAPEARL: Why didn't y'all help my baby?

POLICE: Ma'am we did everything we could.

SHAPEARL: No you didn't. What did my son say? What did he say?

POLICE: He said that he was shot.

SHAPEARL: What else did he say? Y'all were talking to him. Y'all were talking to him. He was talking to y'all on the camera. What did you say? What did he say?

POLICE: He said he was shot and then the ambulance came here and started taking care of him.

**SHAPEARL: This is when I realized who I was talking to: Sergeant Ronan.**

SHAPEARL: You was on the scene before the ambulance, Officer Ronan. I got the report when you came on the scene. You was on the scene before the ambulance got to him. All y'all was around him. Y'all was around him.

**He was the supervisor the night Courtney died. He was *there* that night. He was right there. In that very spot.**

**My family was holding me up. And I just wanted Sergeant Ronan to see my pain.**

**To see...that my son's life mattered to somebody.**

SHAPEARL: He's sitting here begging y'all to help him and y'all didn't do nothing. Can you imagine a mama seeing that? Her son begging for help.

POLICE: I can't even imagine no.

SHAPEARL: That's what happened. That's what happened to my baby. That's what happened to my child. That's what happened to him. My son is on the ground.

*Underline details  
Shapearl uses to create  
a mood. Label this mood  
using "tone and mood"  
words handout.*

**ALISON: Remember, this is the guy we looked into. Scores of complaints against him, like false arrest, planting evidence, using racist language.**

SHAPEARL: [crying]

POLICE: I wasn't in the ambulance trying to interfere or anything.

SHAPEARL: Y'all did this to him. That's what I'm saying. Y'all did that to him. Y'all did that to him.

KIM: Who handcuffed him?

**SHAPEARL: My Aunt Kim--she asked Ronan who handcuffed Courtney.**

POLICE: I don't know.

SHAPEARL: Who went with him to the hospital?

POLICE: That I don't recall. I, again, unfortunately this is two years ago. I mean I wish I had...better for you. But as far as who did this to your son, that's the detectives that follow up on that stuff.

SHAPEARL: Nobody's working on it. Nobody's working on it. Nobody cares. He's just another black kid dead. Nobody cares. Y'all didn't do anything yet. How do ya'll expect to find killers if y'all don't want em? If y'all don't go look for em? And y'all tell me my son come up to y'all and say he's shot. And then he in handcuffs. How is that possible?

POLICE: Again ma'am I don't know. I don't know what happened before I got here.

SHAPEARL: You was there. You was there. You saw my baby being handcuffed.

POLICE: I saw him in the ambulance being worked on by CFD trying to help him. That's what I saw.

*Why is Shapearl so adamant that they do more? What does she want?*

**It went on and on like this for several minutes. Right in the middle of the street. And then a white shirt, another officer, pulled Ronan away from the scene. And Ronan, he just left. He told all the other officers to leave as well. Things calmed down.**

**And our protest...and the vigil...it went on.**

**ALISON: And then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Elena...the woman who called 911. She showed up. She was standing with her family at the edge of the park across from the police station.**

ALISON: How are you feeling?

ELENA: Cold.

ALISON: Cold, very cold. You brought your kids out here.

ELENA: Yeah.

**She was with her two kids and Edgar, her husband. Everyone was shivering.**

**We ran and got Shapearl. We wanted to make sure they had the chance to meet.**

SHAPEARL: Your information is so vital to this.

ELENA: I'm so sorry.

SHAPEARL: It's vital to our investigation you know because ain't nobody else gonna help us. So we have to try to fight this ourselves. And try to find out what happened.

ELENA: I understand.

**SHAPEARL: When I saw Elena, I hugged her immediately. I was surprised she even showed up. For a mother she'd never even met. It was like okay, this is somebody that is giving me some information. She feels my pain and she's connecting me on a mother to mother level.**

SHAPEARL: Yes, I appreciate you coming out because it means a lot. And I don't know if they had a chance to talk to you but...

ELENA: You're welcome. Yeah they already talked to me.

**SHAPEARL: Before I went back to the vigil, we hugged each other again.**

SHAPEARL: Thank you.

ELENA: You're welcome.

SHAPEARL: Thank you so much.

SHAPEARL: God bless you.

ELENA: You're welcome.

SHAPEARL: Thank you so much.

ELENA: You're welcome.

ELENA: Thank you. You're welcome.

**ALISON: Bill and I stayed with Elena and Edgar to talk. We needed to know what Edgar could remember seeing that night.**

BILL: Would you mind, would you mind translating for me?

ELENA: Yeah.

ALISON: Could you tell us what you saw the night?

ELENA: He tried to...he put on his jacket and he tried to go down the stairs as fast as he could. When he got down he saw that there was a car coming through the alley real fast. He didn't stop and...

**Here's what Edgar remembered. When he got to the alley, he saw a car coming fast. So fast, he was afraid it was going to hit Elena and their daughter as they tried to cross.**

BILL: And did you write down the license plate number?

ELENA: He only knew the first three...Z40.

BILL: Z40?

ELENA: Yeah.

ALISON: What kind of car was it?

ELENA: A Grand Marquis.

ALISON: Grand Marquis? What color?

**A Mercury Grand Marquis. With three guys inside.**

BILL: And did the police ever talk to you?

ELENA: No, he never talked to 'em.

**Police never talked to Edgar. Even though Elena told them he saw everything.**

BILL: And the police knew that your husband had seen something?

ELENA: Um when they went to see me right here. I told them that he saw everything.

BILL: But they didn't ask to see him?

ELENA: No they didn't tell me to see him.

**The alley was narrow. Just a few feet between Edgar and the driver. And the car window was rolled down, they were pretty much face to face.**

ALISON: And what did they look like?

ELENA: Like my people. Like two Mexicans, he thinks, maybe.

**And Edgar remembered something else.**

ALISON: Do you remember their hair?

ELENA: One had large brown hair. Long hair.

**One of the guys in the car had long hair.**

# ***SOMEBODY* PODCAST**

## **EPISODE 6: THE TIPSTER**

**Previously, on *Somebody*...**

911: OK, so you heard two shots fired on the block?

JUNE: So, when I found out what had happened the first thing I did was reach out to the local gangbangers. Um. None of them took admittance to it.

SHAPEARL: This whole thing, it just gets stranger and stranger by the minute. And so, I have theories in my head. But somebody covering for somebody.

**My name is Shpearl Wells. This is the story of my son Courtney, a young black man in a fancy car, who wound up with a bullet in his back in front of a Chicago police station.**

**And it's the story of my search for the truth.**

**This is *Somebody*.**

THEME: "Everybody's Something" by Chance the Rapper

**SHAPEARL: So, there's this thing that I haven't told you about yet. I didn't even tell Alison and the Invisible Institute for a long time.**

**Because, when it happened, I was told it wasn't important.**

**But it turns out, it was.**

**When I first met with police...just a few days after Courtney was shot...I told them about a tip I got on Facebook.**

**It was from a guy who went by Randall Cunningham, like the football player. The note went like this.**

SHAPEARL: "Good morning. I have to state I'm very sorry for your loss. I just wanted to see if this info may help you. I was coming home from the gym that night..."

**This guy, Randall, lived in Belmont-Cragin.**

**And, the night Courtney died, he saw three guys in a Grand Marquis who tossed a pistol.**

**He called 911, twice.**

**He sent me photos along with the message. Mugshots. And a photo of the Grand Marquis that showed its license plate.**

**I thanked him. And brought it all to police.**

SHAPEARL: They called the police...

POLICE: That call is yeah. That's already been. That's already been addressed.

**They told us that they already knew about that...and that it was not related.**

RENEE: So you've done the research and it's not related?

POLICE: Yes.

SHAPEARL: So this was a separate incident?

POLICE: Separate incident. Correct.

**They said it wasn't connected at all. But I still wanted to give them all the information Randall gave me anyway.**

SHAPEARL: He gave me names of the two people, uh, that he saw in that vehicle.

POLICE: What names did he provide to you?

SHAPEARL: Um. [REDACTED]. He said it was three. He said it was three

RENEE: But the third one ran.

POLICE: Yea. That's all correct. That's all correct. The caller calls in immediately and this is well after your son was shot.

**Detective Amato said Randall's 911 call was way after Courtney's shooting. To me, they were like, you know whatever lady. We've already decided that this is not credible. We're going to take your information, but we're not going to do anything with it.**

**I moved on because I was grieving. I had to finish burying my son. I was planning Courtney's funeral. And at the time I was still thinking police shot my son.**

**And when detectives dismissed it...I thought well maybe they're right.**

**But I later came to find out from those 911 call logs that Randall's first call wasn't way later than Courtney's shooting. It was 37 minutes after Courtney was shot.**

**So when the first 911 caller's husband, Edgar, saw some gangsters in his alley in a Grand Marquis...it reminded me of Randall's tip.**

**Alison and I, we went back and looked at the picture of the car Randall sent me on Facebook two years earlier.**

*How might Randall's tip be related to the investigation? Why might the cops have dismissed it?*

**And there it was...a Grand Marquis. and the license plate started with Z-4-4. Edgar had remembered the first two digits.**

**And when I went back to the police report about Elena....it said she saw the license plate C-4-4. C and Z...you know, they sound a lot a like.**

**So the witness accounts matched up. And the police never connected the dots.**

**ALISON: We needed to talk to this Facebook tipster, Randall, face to face. To find out who he really was, and see what else he knew about what happened that night. Any details that could help us.**

ALISON: My name is Alison. I got your number from Shapearl Wells, the mother of Courtney Copeland...

**We texted and went to an address we found for him. No one was home so we left a note.**

**That night we got a call back from Randall's uncle, who'd found the note. He put us in touch with Randall.**

**So, we made plans to meet. Randall said we could catch him after a showing of Black Panther.**

**Bill and I waited for Randall in the food court of a suburban Chicago mall. Over pretzels and smoothies. *Black Panther* is a long movie.**

**Finally, he came out.**

ALISON: Did your uncle tell you we tried to reach you at his place?

RANDALL: He did. And then I was like, Why are the feds at the door? So I kind of thought you guys were feds. I'm like, "What's going on here?" And he told me it was related to the case and I'm like, "Wow!"

**He told us that even though he'd called 911 twice, he still wanted to reach out to Shapearl directly.**

RANDALL: I saw Mr. Copeland's mother on the news and I felt terrible you know and I figured well why if you know if there's this type of information out why wouldn't I want to try to reach out?

**We asked him to walk us through what he saw when he was driving home that night. From the beginning.**

RANDALL: I was coming home from an X-Sport gym. It was pretty late at night. As I was coming home, I noticed an individual was in the street and I almost hit him so I kind of looked at him and I could tell he was gang affiliated. Colors and his hat was cocked and he kind of threw a sign at me and I'm like whatever.

**The guy who threw the gang sign looked like he'd been running, like something had happened. Randall went to turn onto his street when he noticed a car just sitting there...a Grand Marquis.**

RANDALL: A short time later the car starts moving.

**Randall parked, and ran to his apartment. He looked out a window and saw that the Grand Marquis had driven up the block, then backed up...**

RANDALL: And then up the block again and then reversed and did it again like they were I don't know what was going on if they were intoxicated or whatever.

**Randall called 911. The cops were on their way.**

**Then, he saw a guy get out of the car. It was the same one who had just thrown gang signs at him.**

**And two more guys got out of the car. They tossed a weapon, and scurried away. So Randall called 911 again.**

RANDALL: ...Probably put two and two together. And they quickly ditched a pistol. I heard like a loud thud. I mean you can hear like a metal clink sound like get thrown to the ground. So I actually went out to try to recover it. I didn't know what the hell came over me. I'm a concealed carry holder so I figured well let me go see what this is. There's kids in the neighborhood, so, you know, I didn't want to...I didn't want a kid to find it.

**But, before Randall could get there — one of the guys came back to retrieve what they threw.**

RANDALL: I know it was a pistol because the way they were holding it. It was shiny. And I told the cops, hey, this was the description of the individuals, which direction they fled and which way they went and whatnot.

**The cops went up the block to get the guys.**

**The gun was gone, but Randall did find an iPhone.**



RANDALL: I actually went through it and there's a couple of videos of them drinking in a car. And then there is a video of them flashing a revolver. One was a revolver, the other gun was like a nine millimeter.

**Randall offered to give the phone to police.**

RANDALL: They contacted me and they told me hey, you know, what's going on. They were kind of brief about what they wanted and then they hung up. And then they called back again and I'm like yeah do you want me to come to the station or not? And they were like well no at this time no. Uh. So that was that.

**The police never followed up. And then, Randall lost the iPhone in a move.**

**We asked him about those mugshots from his Facebook message.**

**How did he know who these guys were?**

RANDALL: Somebody that I knew in the neighborhood knew one of the individuals in the car. So, yeah I kind of asked what had happened and they said they were questioned and then they were pretty much released.

**He said he doesn't know the guys personally...but he does know *of* them.**

RANDALL: I'm not gang affiliated. Never believed in gangs or none of that but I did believe in you know getting crimes figured out and solved and, you know, making sure justice is served. So...

**There's one more thing you need to know about Randall.**

**He's a Chicago Police Officer.**

**SHAPEARL: Alison, when you told me that Randall was a cop, I was shocked! But you know I was grateful more than anything because this information was vital.**

**ALISON: Did it make sense once you found out he was a cop?**

**SHAPEARL: I thought that well if he wasn't a cop he was definitely trying to be one... because he knew exactly the words to say. And he knew what to give me.**

**ALISON: So, the night Courtney died, when Randall called this in to 9-1-1, he was still a civilian -- he was just a guy in the neighborhood reporting what he saw. But now, he's**

been a cop for more than two years. So we were a little surprised that he was still willing to talk to us.

**SHAPEARL:** I mean I was just so grateful for anybody to give me information. The fact that he was a cop, it made me have some type of hope that all cops aren't bad. You know? I wish there were more Randalls on the Chicago Police Force.

**ALISON:** I mean, what if he had never come forward?

**SHAPEARL:** Without him coming forward, we wouldn't be able to connect the dots. Corroborate what Edgar and Elena said about the car...and the guys inside it.

But the frustrating part is...it has taken us over two YEARS to get here. All of this should have been known on DAY ONE.

And, it turns out.... it was all RIGHT THERE on the police radio the whole time.

*What makes Randall different than other cops to Shapearl?*

DISPATCH: ...Male Hispanics wearing black hoodies were sitting in a silver Grand Marquis.....it appears that they threw a gun under the car.

**ALISON:** When we asked the city for all the police dispatch in Courtney's case, we got about an hour of tape back.

The first 25 minutes had Courtney flagging down Officer Block for help...

POLICE: Gentlemen just said he was shot...

His license plates...

POLICE: Edward-5-5-1-7-9-0

His name...

POLICE: Victim is a male. His name is Courtney Copeland.

And Elena calling in.

POLICE: Shots fired at Fullerton and Long...Long and Fullerton, caller heard two shots on the block, I got no description.

But then later in the radio tape, there's this....

POLICE: BLEEEEEEEEEEP

**For 35 minutes.**

**When we asked why this was bleeped out, the city told us -- again -- that it was unrelated.**

**SHAPEARL: We pushed back and had to wait *months* to get the full tape. And when you listen to it...come to find out, it's completely related.**

DISPATCH: A Mercury, tinted windows, three occupants, circling the block twice, and then reversed. It may have a flat tire. It's double-parked by the fire hydrant, there's a male black red jacket on the corner flashing gang signs.

*In your opinion, was the redacted information related? Why might the police have overlooked it?*

**SHAPEARL: So once again, it's up to us to investigate.**

**We really wanted to know more about these gangsters Randall saw ditching this gun.**

**Two of the men actually *were* arrested up the block the night my son was killed.**

DISPATCH: We have two male Hispanics wearing black hoodies were sitting in a silver Grand Marquis, it says that you drove by and it appears that they threw a gun under the car. They have since recovered whatever was thrown under there, and they're walking northbound.

**The dispatcher is relaying Randall's 911 call to the police.**

**She says: two male hispanics, wearing black hoodies, were sitting in a Grand Marquis. It appears they threw a gun under the car, which they've since recovered, and they're walking northbound.**

POLICE: Got two possibles walking westbound on Belden toward Laramie.

**And then an officer says "got two possibles walking westbound on Belden toward Laramie.**

**The police arrested two men who were charged with a parole violation for associating with a gang member -- which basically means they were just hanging out with each other.**

**They were released the same day.**

**And the third guy?**

DISPATCH: there's a male black red jacket on the corner flashing gang signs.

He got away.

**ALISON:** We decided not to reveal their names because no one has been charged in connection with Courtney's case. And we don't know who, if any, of these guys shot Courtney. What we do know is that police should have followed these leads.

**SHAPEARL:** But when we dug around, we found out that all three men Randall saw that night are members of the Stylers gang. All of them have been convicted of gun offenses. And all have done time. They all have really long rap sheets.

FACEBOOK: I got all these killers on standby...

**This is a Facebook video of one of the men who was arrested that night.**

FACEBOOK: Bang, bang, bitch!

FACEBOOK: Where everybody at? Take a shot for all the fallen brothers. A moment, we love y'all. We miss y'all. Kind of crazy though.

**At the time of Courtney's death, he was on parole for an armed robbery sentence.**

**And the man that Randall saw flashing gang signs? He's the one that got away. He's been arrested *16 times* since 2010.**

**ALISON:** Randall and Edgar identified the same type of car. But we wanted to see if they'd identify the same men inside the car, too. So we decided to do something the police had never done. A double blind photo lineup.

**We put together a big stack of mugshots to show Edgar. We included the mugshots Randall sent to Shapearl and men who looked similar to them. Plus, some random mugshots, too.**

**And because Edgar remembered someone in the vehicle with long hair, we included Alma's neighbor. And other men with long hair.**

ALISON: Yeah. Hi Elena! Hi how are you!

ELENA: I'm fine!

ALISON: You got the little baby back here?

ELENA: Yea.

ALISON: Hey there!

**I went over to Elena and Edgar's again. Shapearl stayed back. We didn't want Edgar to feel any *extra* pressure to make an identification.**

ALISON: Is it okay if we sit back here?

ELENA: Yeah.

ALISON: Is this a good place?

ELENA: Yes.

ALISON: Thank you!

ELENA: (baby crying). Oh no, sorry.

Why would they want to make the line-up "double blind?"

**We got set up in their living room.**

ALISON: So, it's you know very unlikely that you'll be able to identify anyone so there's absolutely no pressure to do it.

**I'd brought along one of our summer reporting fellows, Matilda. The line-up was double blind, because neither Edgar nor Matilda knew who was who in the mugshots. We didn't want to influence Edgar to pick out certain people.**

**Elena stuck around to translate.**

ELENA: [IN SPANISH TO EDGAR] Since it's been two years already since this happened, you might not be able to remember but if you can remember that's good.

ALISON: Alright. So I'll have you both look at them and Matilda is going to go through...

ELENA: [IN SPANISH TO EDGAR] They're going to show you photos and you're supposed to try to see if you remember any of them. She knows who they are and their names but she doesn't.

**I left the room. And they went through the photos. One by one.**

EDGAR: [IN SPANISH] No, Not this one either. He wasn't...This one kind of looks like him a little bit.

**Edgar said, this one looks like him a little bit.**

ELENA: It maybe looks like him.

MATILDA: Maybe.

ELENA: Yea.

EDGAR: [IN SPANISH] Well, it's been a long time.

**Photo after photo. No, he said. No, he said. No.**

**Then... he turned to the next photo, and right away, he stopped...**

ELENA: He thinks that one it is.

ELENA: Cuz he remembered the long hair.

**He'd landed on the guy with the long hair. Alma's neighbor who lived by the church. That one, I think, is one of them.**

**Edgar picked out two other mugshots. He was less sure about these. But one of them was one of the guys arrested that night up the block from Randall.**

ALISON: All right. OK. That's all we had. Thank you very much. It just keeps going and going. You know we're just trying to help the family find some answers.

**SHAPEARL: So, Randall and Edgar's accounts were matching up more and more.**

ALISON: Okay, thank you Elena. Take care.

ELENA: You're welcome. You too.

ALISON: Bye bye.

**We felt like we were getting close to finding out who shot my son.**

**So we reached out to Courtney's friend June again...because we wanted to see if he could talk to some of his gang contacts. We were trying to figure out if June knew any of the guys in the mugshots.**

**ALISON: When June asked around for us, he told us it was like opening Pandora's box.**

*What do you make of these results?*

**One day, two gang chiefs showed up at his door. They said "You've been asking a lot of questions."**

**After that, June changed his number. And moved. When we caught up with him again...months later...he said he didn't want to have an ear to the streets anymore. He wanted to have an ear to the stock market...because he was all about his cigar business.**

**He was done dealing information.**

**SHAPEARL: With June out of the picture, we chased a different lead. The car.**

**We wanted to track down that Grand Marquis. But it wasn't registered to anyone any more.**

**We did find out who owned the Grand Marquis when Courtney was killed. Her first name was Crystal. We didn't know anything about her, except for her address. So we hit the road.**

SHAPEARL: So, it's not that far.

ALISON: No, she's pretty close but within a mile you know.

**On the way, we talked about Courtney. Like we always do.**

SHAPEARL: He always said he was going to be famous. I don't think this is what he wanted to be famous for. But he had this ominous feeling that he was going to die young. You know, I think he had some fear and some anxiety because his father and his grandfather also died of heart issues. We're going where Alison?

ALISON: So, just take it a little further south.

SHAPEARL: Okay. Anyway, the last anxiety attack he had was probably about six weeks before he died. And he was like, "I think I'm having a heart attack." And I'm like, "Courtney, you're not having a heart attack. If you were having a heart attack, you wouldn't be able to sit here and tell me to take you to the doctor." So he was like, I just keep seeing myself, dying. Cuz I knew what it was. I knew he was having a panic attack. I told him you do what I told you to do, which is pray. We're all here on borrowed time, Courtney. You know not thinking in six weeks, my son would be dead. That was the last, serious, serious conversation that I had with Courtney before he died.

**SHAPEARL: Crystal's street was lined with matching brick 2-flats.**

**We didn't want to freak her out, so we left the recorder behind.**

**We walked up to her building and rang the doorbell for her apartment. We waited. We're about to walk away when a woman came out.**

**ALISON: It was Crystal. We showed her a picture of the Grand Marquis. She said yes, that used to be her car.**

**We told her about Courtney's murder and that witnesses pointed to this car. She said she got rid of the car *before* 2016. On Craigslist.**

**SHAPEARL: We showed her the mugshots of the guys. She said she didn't know any of them.**

**ALISON: We were bummed. We had hoped she could tell us more. We thanked her and got back into the van.**

SHAPEARL: Well, I definitely think she's lying. I think she does know more than what she's saying. And um...she wants to make sure it's not traceable back to her. I think when you showed her the pictures, that really threw her. ...What do you think, Alison?

ALISON: I don't know. She seemed genuinely caught off guard and surprised, you know ? But I don't know.

**Shapearl was right. Crystal was lying to us.**

**A few weeks later, we were digging around in some court documents. And we saw Crystal was listed as *the girlfriend* of the guy who got away from the cops that night. They even have kids together.**

**We found some photos of him on Facebook — one of the pictures shows him at a gravesite with one of the two Stylers arrested the night Courtney died.**

**Now we had evidence connecting them to each other and the car.**

**ALISON: We hadn't heard from Randall in a while. Until one morning. November 1, 2018. He texted me.**

**"Did you hear what happened on Long and Belden? Female executed in front of her kids and friend over a car. Be safe in that neighborhood."**

**My stomach dropped. It was the same corner where Courtney was shot. And...? The car was a BMW.**

**It was all over the news.**

REPORTER: This is just absolutely heartbreaking. The victim's family says she was out celebrating Halloween, and was trick-or-treating with her twin sister and her two nieces when a masked man jumped into their car and forced them to drive...

ANCHOR: Police want to find out why a young woman was murdered by a masked man who forced his way into the car. CBS 2's V Nguyen is live in front of the 25th District Police Station in Belmont Cragin with more.

*Interpret: Why is this fact significant?*

**The gunman made them drive several blocks before he shot and killed one of the women. On the same street where the gangsters in the Grand Marquis tossed the gun. The gunman took off running to Blackhawk Park. Stylers territory.**

ALISON: OK. Are you there?

SHAPEARL: Yes I'm here.

**I got on the phone with Shapearl right away.**

ALISON: OK. So have you seen the news today?

SHAPEARL: Yeah, you know that shooting right by Courtney's right?



ALISON: Yeah, exactly right by Courtney. It was by Belden and Long. Right passed the church.

SHAPEARL: I'm looking at the address and I'm like oh my god! This is like right here!

**I told her it was a BMW too.**

SHAPEARL: Are you serious? This is like...This sent my PTSD right off the rails.

ALISON: I know, I know. I'm sorry.

**We discussed whether we should go to the police with what we knew.**

SHAPEARL: But they have that information though, Alison.

ALISON: I know they have it, but they don't, they don't understand its significance. But, I just... it doesn't feel like they did the kind of detective work that we've done.

SHAPEARL: I'm thinking like if you know...I know my son was gone. But did this other girl have to die? You know what I'm saying? It has always been about preventing things from happening to other people for me. If this was the same person, I'm hoping that they would actually follow up.

**In the end, we decided we had a responsibility to come forward. If there was any chance our findings could help them solve this woman's murder.**

**SHAPEARL: I really didn't want to meet with those jokers again but I sucked it up. Maybe this time if I came in with two white journalists, they'd actually listen to me.**

POLICE: Alison, it's Detective Amato, I spoke with you a little earlier...

**ALISON: So, we called to set something up.**

POLICE: I forwarded the message to Sergeant Mitchell. And one of the supervisors from here will be contacting you sometime...

**SHAPEARL: A few days later, me, Alison and Bill were sitting down with Sergeant Mitchell and Detective Amato. They agreed to meet us *only* if I didn't record. But the meeting *was* on the record.**

**ALISON: What did you think about the police stipulating that you couldn't record?**

**SHAPEARL: I wish we would have recorded! I do...I promise you I wanted to. I really did.**

**What does Shapearl see as a possible link between this case and her son's?**

We met for about two hours in the same conference room as before. But no one walked out on me this time. Sergeant Mitchell, he wore a tie and was red-faced as ever. Detective Amato wore a pullover. He barely took any notes.

ALISON: Here's what happened. We brought in two huge binders of documents. And we told police what we knew.

SHAPEARL: So, we walked them through our evidence.

Alison started by showing them a map.

We highlighted the corner of Belden and Long by the church where the neighbors heard the shots that night. We told them we believed this is where Courtney was shot because his friends found broken glass on the street. And others, they saw skid marks. And it's where Courtney usually parked, because he'd received tickets there before.

At this point, they said we weren't telling them anything they didn't already know.

ALISON: But we kept laying out the scene for them anyway.

We explained that right before the incident, we believe Courtney was parking his car. He was on his phone, texting Alma, Facebook messaging his friend. He was distracted.

That's when someone shot him. Courtney turned and ducked, getting hit in the back.

When Courtney sped off towards the police station, a Grand Marquis quickly drove around the block – cutting through Elena and Edgar's narrow alleyway, with the windows rolled down, giving Edgar a good look. Two years later, Edgar still remembered the car and the first few digits of the license plate.

At this point, we showed police the two mugshots Edgar picked out in the double-blind lineup: the man with the Long Hair, Alma's neighbor, and a second guy, a member of the Stylers gang, who was arrested that night.

And THAT's when the detectives said to each other that they needed to talk to Edgar.

SHAPEARL: Then, we kept going with the play by play.

Right after my son arrived at the hospital, Randall spotted the Grand Marquis on his block and called 9-1-1.

When the guys heard police coming, they tossed the gun under the car nearby and took off on foot. But before police could retrieve the gun, someone came back for it.

Number each "event" they list. Are each of these on your timeline?

**Two of the guys were arrested up the block and released without questioning. The third one got away. We gave police his name.**

**ALISON: We gave them a copy of Randall's Facebook message, about the Grand Marquis, license plate, the weapon, the mugshots.**

**SHAPEARL: That's when one of the detectives said, "You never told me this!"**

**But I did. Remember? I even have it on tape.**

SHAPEARL: I also have uh some information that I received from another Facebook person randomly. They told me that um the night of uh the shooting there was a um. What kind of car...It looks like a Grand Marquis. I have that plate number. They said that they were looking out their window and they saw them throw a gun under the truck. They called the police.

POLICE: That call is yeah. That's already been. That's already been addressed.

**None of us were surprised about how detectives acted during this meeting.**

**Detective Amato said he'd seen the video of Courtney outside the station. That much I already knew. But what surprised me was, he said he didn't think Courtney was being combative.**

**I didn't know what to make of this. No one had their story straight. Was this a coverup? Or are they just this d\*\*n incompetent?**

**At the end of our meeting, they told us they were going to assign new detectives to the case and work these new leads.**

**We all hopped in Bill's car in the parking lot to regroup.**

ALISON: They called me dear. I had to bite my tongue so many times. It was so patronizing.

BILL: I think they called someone darling too.

SHAPEARL: I felt that they were a little bit evasive when they talked about the two being arrested that night and why they couldn't... It was a murder. Why wouldn't you want to investigate them? They're known gang members there. They have a long rap sheet. So tell me why you couldn't pull them in for questioning for this murder. Why wouldn't you do that? That didn't make sense to me. Because they're already arrested and then you also had that 911 caller who is giving you a description of suspects that he's seen in the neighborhood who threw a gun underneath a car. So this is.. when they talk about we don't have enough evidence... We don't have enough probable cause to pull them over. Hell you get pulled over for a busted light in Chicago and they question you.

They take you out your car. They they handcuff you. They do all types of stuff. So you telling me that you don't have enough evidence or enough probable cause. That's bullsh\*t.

ALISON: And I wanted to reiterate to them that you know in so far as they were frequently saying that these are leads not evidence. This is circumstantial. And it's sort of like. Yeah, I know. I am coming to you because another woman was killed in a BMW on that corner. Like, I'm not saying that this is solid evidence ready to go to court. I am saying that this is what I know about the case, and it's more than what you know about the case.

**SHAPEARL: Bill noticed something during the meeting. I had turned my face away because I was crying and I didn't want the detectives to see.**

BILL: Were you crying out of frustration?

SHAPEARL: I was crying because my son is still dead at the end of the day. My son dead. So it's just like. I must admit I'm finna get emotional now. So forgive me. You know because I'm like you know every time I get closer, I get a setback. And sometimes, I'll be like, OK. You have to stop. You have to stop for yourself. For your health. But you have to stop for your kids, for your husband because...This this whole murder has it's like a ticking time bomb that just like exploded in my life and you trying to take the millions of pieces and put em together. And so parts of me will never ever be whole. It's an emotional strain on my family. My husband, my marriage. It's all of this. So the last couple of days, I've just been going through it.

**ALISON: We needed to step away. I hoped that the police would finally do their jobs.**

SHAPEARL: I think that right now based on us leaving them with the information that we left them with that they're just going to appease us by passing us off to some new detectives. Nothing is going to happen. They're not going to interview. They're not going to follow up. They're not going to even investigate anything other than what they've already done. My son will still be a cold case in Chicago.

*What is Shapearl's conflict? What does she want and what keeps getting in the way?*

**ALISON: Alright. So, it's been more than a year since we sat down with detectives. Shapearl, what's happened in the last year?**

**SHAPEARL: Absolutely nothing. You hear crickets. They haven't called me. They haven't given me any updates. They haven't contacted any of the witnesses that we gave them. I haven't heard a peep from police.**

**We've checked in with Edgar, Randall, Elena...all of these witnesses...and they haven't contacted them.**

POLICE: Press 3. Or to speak to an operator press zero...Please speak after the tone. Hi Detective Bausch, my name is Shapearl Wells, I'm the parent of Courtney Copeland, I was calling to get a status update on his case. He was murdered on March 4, 2016 and they told me that you..

**A couple later after I left this message, Alison actually ran into one of the detectives on Courtney's case. Detective Amato.**

**She bumped into him at Sesame Street Live.**

**She was there with her family...and Amato was working security.**

**She said hello, and reminded him about the case.**

**Two weeks later, Amato called me. I was at church.**

POLICE: Hi, Ms. Wells, this is Detective Amato over at Area North, I was wondering if you could give me a call at your earliest convenience.

**I called him as soon as I got home. Then I hopped back on the line with Alison.**

ALISON: OK, hey Shapearl.

SHAPEARL: Hey. OK, so basically his call was based on him wanting to all of a sudden put Courtney's case in the cold case file and make it a profile on their website.

ALISON: What does that mean?

SHAPEARL: So he wants to put Courtney photo everything on to the website stating that they're looking for information.

ALISON: Yeah. Did he say he had not talked to Edgar yet?

SHAPEARL: He ain't talked to Edgar

ALISON: Right.

SHAPEARL: He basically admitted that he ain't talked to Edgar

ALISON: And what about?

SHAPEARL: Or Randall!

*What are some possible explanations for why police did not follow up?*

ALISON: Um...So they basically didn't follow up on our leads over the last year and now they're wanting to all of a sudden put it in the cold case unit.

SHAPEARL: Right. Mhmm

ALISON: Well, how are you feeling?

SHAPEARL: I feel like he was blowing smoke. Because it was like, all, I'm thinking about your son's case, and I've been trying to...whatever, dude.

ALISON: Well...

SHAPEARL: And he was like, well, what do you want to meet with me again? And we'll go over everything. I'm like, yeah.

ALISON: I mean, we already gave him everything.

SHAPEARL: And I was trying to tell him. So that's what we were wondering. Why didn't you speak to Elena's husband. Because I said... I basically told him, I said, that information matched. Elena's husband said a Grand Marquis. Randall said a Grand Marquis. And I said it wasn't that far in between from the initial shooting.

ALISON: Wow

SHAPEARL: You sat on this stuff for a year and you ain't did nothing.

**When I watch the news...I keep seeing over and over again whose lives matter...and whose cases matter enough to solve. No matter how many times I meet with the police, my son's murder still doesn't seem to matter to them.**

**But this whole thing is so much bigger than who pulled the trigger on my son. It's so much bigger than Courtney's case.**

**Things don't have to be this way. And there's so much more I've got to do.**

*How does Shapearl interpret their lack of action? What does it signal to her as a mother?*



# ***SOMEBODY* PODCAST**

## **EPISODE 7: SHAPEARL**

COURTNEY: Yo, so, this is me...My name is Courtney Copeland. The reason I'm here is to retire my parents. 2015 is the biggest year of my life. You know, the world is ours. You know, and we just have to get out there and get it. Let's get it.

**The world is ours, we just have to get out there and get it.**

**Before Courtney died, I was too afraid to travel far. I've always had the fear of flying.**

**But Courtney wanted us to travel more and see the world with him.**

**Courtney only got a taste of what's out there.**

**But since he's been gone, I've been all over this world.**

**It started when Courtney came to me in a dream. He told me...mom I want you to live. I want you to go to *Dubai*. And I was like, Dubai? When I woke up, I booked the trip.**

SHAPEARL: We are at the Dubai Mall...

**Me and the whole family went.**

SHAPEARL: This mall is so huge...

**But Brazil? I went there on my own.**

**Here I am in the city of Salvador.**

**I took this video of people dancing outside my window late at night. I was trying to sleep, but everyone was so happy, I couldn't be mad at them.**

**I went for a gathering of mothers of murdered children...There were about a hundred of us, from all over. All of us, fighting the same struggle we're fighting in Chicago.**

**In Salvador, we were not far from the main square...where they used to auction off slaves. I was surprised that Brazil was so afro-centric and so black but then that's when I started to understand the amount of slaves that were actually sent to Brazil, and so it was a learning experience for me.**



**There were so many languages spoken at this summit. Mom after mom, we told our stories. There was one mom whose child died of hunger and thirst in prison. There was another mom whose son got shot by police during a massacre.**

**Then it was my turn.**

SHAPEARL: My heart rejoices to see the unity that is in this place. [translator] This reunion have brought the pain of a lot of mothers but my message to the mothers today is, I don't want you to mourn any longer. But to rejoice in the life of your children. Because they are more than what happened to them. I think about Courtney, I think about all the mothers who told their testimony and stories, and there's one thing that keeps coming to my head. And I recall my aunt telling me, after Courtney died, and I tell you, They can never kill the light. Never kill the light.

**Brazil. It restored my soul. All this time I'd been fighting so hard I hadn't really had time to mourn. I had to put all that on a shelf, because I had work to do.**

*Based on context, what do you think Shapearl means when she says "They can never kill the light?"*

**I was starting to feel stronger. And it's a good thing...because when I got back home, I needed all the strength I could get.**

**Our case against the City of Chicago was looking like an uphill battle. The city's lawyers kept fighting us in court. They kept denying *everything*. Even the handcuffing....**

**And eventually, my lawyers said that we should dismiss the case. That these cases were just too hard to win.**

**I was devastated. I was heartbroken.**

**After the lawyers told us that, Brent and I sat in an empty conference room at the courthouse.**

BRENT: I mean 'cuz we've been through lawyer after lawyer and it's...they just don't want to mess with it.

SHAPEARL: I think it boils down to what CPD can get away with legally, which, for me, is the reason why I feel like so many laws and things have to be changed, so that they don't have to...they don't have as much power as they do...And for the average person in America, you cannot win against CPD.

**It didn't take long for the police lawyers to announce their victory.**

**They wrote on their website that the lawsuit was "unnecessary."**

**And they called the dismissal, “a *win* for the City of Chicago and the police department.”**

**The lawsuit was over.**

**And, our investigation was too. We already gave detectives all of our evidence, the names of suspects and witnesses.**

**But I was not gonna let my baby die for nothing.**

**BREAK**

**What if? What if the world was different? What if Chicago was different?**

**What if moms like me didn’t have to dress their sons in tuxedos, put them in caskets and lower them into the ground?**

SHAPEARL: Well I’m on my way to meet with the state rep right now to propose Courtney’s Law...

**Me and my state rep...we’ve had a couple conversations now about all the reforms needed.**

SHAPEARL: What my investigation has pulled together, things that I want to try to put into this law of Courtney’s law is, one, police must provide life-saving techniques because they were first on the scene. I think they should have administered that.

**I want Chicago police to take people who’ve been shot immediately to the hospital.**

**And... I want those police pod cameras to work...and hold footage longer...and all public records? They should be in one place so victims’ families don’t have to get the run around.**

SHAPEARL: So that’s why I’m trying to fight for other people. Courtney, is finished. That is done. But if I can prevent other parents from experiencing this type of pain? ...What I want for other parents is that they know with certainty their child died with dignity and respect. I realize in all of this process, that didn’t happen for my son.

*Here, her desire is still the same, but her tactic for getting there is different. What does she want? How is she going about it now?*

**I read a story about a thing that police do in Philadelphia. They call it scoop and run. Police pick up people who've been shot and drive them to the hospital themselves. They don't wait for an ambulance.**

**Here's video of a scoop and run in progress. It sounds chaotic, but it's actually police trying to help someone.**

IAN: This was the scariest moment of my life. By far...

**Ian Hirst-Hermans was around the same age as Courtney when he was shot in the middle of the night outside a party in Philly.**

**Two police officers arrived on the scene.**

IAN: They looked at each other, gave a nod, one grabbed my arms and one grabbed my legs. The only issue was is this guy gonna bleed out or not.

SHAPEARL: So from the time that you got shot, until the time that you arrived to the hospital, approximately how many minutes was that?

IAN: It's hard to say. I would say less than five minutes. Absolutely less than five minutes.

**In Philly, about a third of gunshot victims are brought into hospitals by police themselves.**

**Police saved Ian's life by running him to the E.R.**

IAN: I found out the next day that I had about 45 seconds to a minute before I would have bled out....I was panicking beyond belief. But the police officers were doing everything they can to keep me calm. The one officer was turned around asking me questions about school, asking me about my family, just trying to keep me awake and alert.

**Right when they pulled into the emergency room, the ambulance pulled onto the street.**

IAN: And one of the cops kind of jokingly said to me, you know, "There goes your ride." ... The way it seems now is, if I was shot in any other major city other than Philadelphia, I probably wouldn't have survived....It's kind of hard for me to wrap my head around that not being the case. Um, I know it's not in every cop's job description, but it just seems like, it seems like something that just goes along with protecting the community.

SHAPEARL: I always believed that if my son could have gotten the care that you've gotten, that he would be alive today. So had he gotten to the hospital in

**What might Shapearl be**

time, you know, within five minutes, ten minutes max, if he would have gotten to the hospital, I think they could have saved his life.

IAN: [sighs] I'm so sorry to hear that. That makes me feel so terrible.

*implying about the fact that it took Courtney longer to get to the hospital than Ian?*

**Ian has grown close to the officers who saved him. He even tattooed their names of the officers on his chest.**

IAN: They came and saw me the next morning after I was shot. Made a joke about how I gotta clean out the back of their car because there's got so much blood in it. You know, these two guys saved my life, whether it was their job or not. So I still keep in touch with them. Yeah I wouldn't be here without them. So I just always keep them really close.

**I can't help but think how differently I'd feel if those officers had just scooped up my son and rushed him to the hospital.**

**Of course, Ian is white—would Philly police have picked up Courtney and rushed him to the E-R? We can't say for sure.**

**Scoop and run is a *longstanding* practice in Philly, but not in Chicago.**

**It *is* allowed here. Chicago police have the discretion to do it... but the practice isn't encouraged.**

**What if...my son's life mattered to police like Ian's did to the when officers who saved him?**

**What if, when my son came to police begging them for help,...**

**They didn't handcuff him?**

**They didn't check to see if he *really* owned his car?**

**What if they went with him in the ambulance?**

**What if it had been their kid who had been shot on that corner?**

NEWS: The consent decree is a 225-page document that is the result of ten months of negotiations between the attorney general's office, the police department and the city, after two highly critical reports found systemic problems in the police department in the use of unnecessary and deadly force.. Lisa Madigan's office sued the city to force [DUCK] reforms, many of which she acknowledged are already in place.

*As the podcast begins to wrap up, think about the purpose: What do producers want to leave you thinking about as it ends? What questions or ideas are they asking*

In the years since Courtney died, the federal court has ordered Chicago Police to clean up their act. Officers will have to report every time they point their guns at people. They won't be able to use chokeholds. And there are more changes...lots more changes...

*us to remember or consider?*

Under the consent decree, *all* of Chicago police officers will have to take medical and rescue training. And use it to help people who are injured. Even *before* paramedics arrive. Immediately. With no delays.

They weren't required to do any of that before.

CHANCE: It's tough living this life in the skin we're in.

This is Courtney's high school friend again, Chance the Rapper.

CHANCE: I just wish that he was... respected as a human life on the level that he should have been, that we respected him. And you know... you can't, you can't change the skin you're in. You just like... you just live your life. And you know he lived it to the fullest.

There are so many people, so many people who care about Courtney...Every time I've interviewed one of them...It's like I bring him back to life a little...

CHRIS: He was one out of a trillion.

BRITTANY: Everybody needs somebody like Courtney Copeland in life.

ROCIO: He taught me to believe in myself

CHRIS: Something he always used to say was everyone deserves happiness. That's what he gave people.

ROCIO: And he would always make me laugh. You know? No matter what that man would make me laugh. HE would make all of us laugh.

JESSICA: I just remember thinking to myself, like, where does he get all this energy from?

JOVA: I miss him dearly because, on my difficult days, he was always there for me.

CHRIS: If there was more people like him, this world would be a lot different.

I tried to interview Courtney's sisters, Kayla and Jasmyne. They still aren't ready to talk about what happened....

SHAPEARL: Tell us about your relationship with your brother.

SHAPEARL: It's ok. It's ok. It's ok. You're gonna be able to do this. Jasmyne. I know it's hard for you.

...so we talk about other memories...

SHAPEARL: Every day when Courtney came home he would lay in your bed right Kayla? Tell us about that.

KAYLA: I just never got to lay in my bed cuz he always there. And he would do it just to annoy me.

SHAPEARL: So what happened? Like when you got home from school..

KAYLA: I would have to fight him out of my bed.

SHAPEARL: Why?

KAYLA: Cuz he wouldn't get up.

SHAPEARL: He wouldn't get up, he would always like to lay in your bed?

KAYLA: Mhm.

SHAPEARL: Hey Courtney. [bird chirping] So hard...

SHAPEARL: I love you. Mommy loves you so much...I hope you knew that..how much I love you, how much I still love you.

**After all this time since Courtney passed away...all this fighting for the truth...I just keep coming back to the fact that my baby is gone....**

SHAPEARL: I hope you know.

**BREAK**

BILL: Can we look at the room?

SHAPEARL: Yeah! Its downstairs...

**I started a foundation in Courtney's name.**

SHAPEARL: This is our little Santa workshop down here.

**We do this big Christmas giveaway in Courtney's honor every year. His bedroom is is *filled* with toys. And we hold a big party at our church for all the kids.**

SHAPEARL: Everybody say "Courtney love the kids" so he used to always take care of all his friends' kids and he like adopted them all.

**At Christmastime I always get together with my friend Santita Jackson and help her decorate her place for the holidays...**

SHAPEARL: How have you seen me change in the last two years?

SANTITA: You've just become... you're just Shapearl taking to the nth degree. No now your circle has expanded. I've seen you become even more travelled..... I mean you're someone who's not afraid of living. You live. You live you live. You live. You live. You live live live live. But I've seen you. This is a mission for you. ....And it's like you are saying, "Okay, Courtney. I'm a go on and finish walking for you," The world's gonna benefit. World's gonna benefit from you being more of who Shapearl is. You're going to triumph. I believe that.

**Courtney's sisters are in college now. But me and Brent don't exactly have an empty nest.**

**Our baby foster twins, Faith and Sahara, they're walking around and getting into everything. I'm trying my best to potty train them, Sahara always takes off from her potty, and then Faith takes off too. This is going to be a long process.**

**After taking on the twins, I opened up my home to their older sisters too. They're teenagers. It's tough sometimes. But I hope they know I'm on their side.**

**Me and Brent celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary. Brent planned a party for us. I got him some turntables because he was a DJ before he went to truck driving school. He was so stoked.**

SHAPEARL: You guys ready to eat? I know you're probably hungry!

**Me and Alison and Jamie and all the Invisible Institute are still real tight. We had a party at my house not too long ago. I cooked up a storm. I made spaghetti, cajun chicken pasta. Fried chicken.**

**Alison brought Mac 'n Cheese. She's got her hands full too. She's expecting another little baby boy next spring. When she told me, I screamed.**

SHAPEARL: AHHHH!!! Oh my goodness!!

ALISON: Yeah, three months along...

**We're going to get the twins and her little ones together for a play date.**

**And then there's Bebe. Someday, we'll have to say goodbye to this car. Cars don't run forever.**

SHAPEARL: I call this, like, my heritage wall..... I love black art. It's just, it's just our history.

**The other day, I was showing Alison the paintings up all over my house.**

SHAPEARL: And so if you look around, this one over here in the corner basically is talking about the woman who touched the hand of Jesus garments, and then this one over here in the corner is about the Underground Railroad. This one here is a slave in captivity, and that one is Frederick Douglass. I always tried to teach my kids about where they came from. About that, we didn't start off as slaves but this is something that happened to us.

**There's one painting in particular in my dining room. His face is in his hands and his hands are shackled.**

**The painting is called "The Struggle Lives On."**

ALISON: I've probably sat at this table what a dozen times at least. And this is the first time I'm noticing this picture on the wall.

SHAPEARL: I've had it for probably like 20 years now and it's always been very special to me.

SHAPEARL: And we don't know when the artist was painting that if that was somebody's last moments last time you know that they're gonna be alive. Could be. Because we see that he's in deep despair.

**This is the story of my son Courtney. A young black man. In a fancy car.**

SHAPEARL: Black people have been shackled and abused for so long and then you have this happen to your child...

**He wound up with a bullet in his back outside of a Chicago police station.**

SHAPEARL: As a mother, you do whatever you can to protect your child, and in that moment I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it. And then you sit here and you like, I should've been there and it was beyond my control.

**And it's the story of my search for the truth.**

SHAPEARL:...the hardest moment in my life was finding out my son had died and it's still the hardest moment, living without him. That's my reality.

**My son Courtney Copeland was somebody.**

THEME: "Everybody's Something" by Chance the Rapper



