Movements Against Mass Incarceration Lab & Oral History Archival Project

Oral History Interview with

Stanley Howard

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

2024

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Stanley Howard conducted by David J. Knight on April 13, 2024. This interview is part of the Movements Against Mass Incarceration Lab & Oral History Archival Project.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

Transcriptionist: Descript	Session #1
Interviewee: Stanley Howard	Location: Chicago, IL
Interviewer: David J. Knight	Date: April 13, 2024

Howard: Stanley John Howard.

Q: Thanks.

Howard: I kind of smiled because there's only one guy outta my whole incarceration. Calls me Stanley John Howard all the time. Refused to call me S man or anything else that I am known by, but Stanley John Howard's the name.

Q: Yeah. And how was your drive up here this morning? Did you find your way here? Okay.

Howard: Yes. Yes. It was, it was nice. It was speeding, trying to get on time, but I felt under pressure from a big guy.

Q: You made it. We're all good. We're all good. So, we're going to jump in and just kind of go in chronological order. So, can you start by telling us a bit about who you were before you were arrested?

Howard: I was just touching on this a couple of days ago with this piece I'm trying to write with Jim in New York who does the TV show The Radical Imagination and I was this kid. They grew up on the south side of Chicago in the heart of Chicago's ghetto in Bronzeville. Our apartment was connected on the side of the hill. And as a kid, I would say that my playground was the alley up on the hill. And my favorite toy was a car tire. I used to roll all

the time. Life was carefree. No worries. My mom started working at the post office when she was pregnant with me. And my grandmother's, my maternal grandmother's best friend, Tommy Gibson, used to always rub my mother's stomach saying that this kid was going to be a lawyer. And he didn't know whether or not I was going to be a boy or a girl, but he just knew I was going to be a lawyer.

All of a sudden, as I got older, life took a drastic turn for me. As a kid, growing up around gamblers, pickpockets, drug dealers and abusers, prostitutes and pimps, I could go up and down the line of the negative influences that was around me. There was no real positive roadmap for me to follow to the good life. With parents working all the time, the only real love that was received was from 924-3428. 924-3428. That was my grandmother's number who stayed about a block or two away. She was always there, always ready to hug and kiss him. Solve any problems that me and my brother and my sister had. Life was fun. It was good.

Then all of a sudden came to teenage years in adolescence, walking around with a sour soul.-I remember when they sold drugs out of the house from the time I was a kid. I hate to air dirty laundry like this, but there was this one guy that I really didn't like. Just to come over to buy drugs out of the house. I saw this cop grab him and throw him down one day and I fell in love with that. For some reason, at that moment, I wanted to be a cop. Not just any cop, I wanted to be a detective. I'm surmising that I wanted to protect the world. But later on, life, I realized in my teenage years, I go from wanting to be a detective, a cop, to throwing bottles and bricks at them. Felt like even then I was in a police state, even at that age.

I dropped out of high school in the ninth grade. I really didn't go. Didn't want to be there. Because my mother, she moved us from 51st and King Drive to 87th Street. And Lomas told

her out of the neighborhood that we was from. And me and my brother, we didn't want to be there. In the school I went to, Calumet High School. It was a no for a guy like me that was connected with somebody else by your association, so I just didn't go. It wasn't that I couldn't do the work. It wasn't attractive to me, it didn't pull me in, so I just dropped out. Those the early years. Oh, yeah, it was full of parties chasing girls smoking weed. I've never been a sloppy chump. But I did what most kids my age and my peers did. I lived for the weekend. The weekend was the life.

I had a teenage love. Her name was Terry Jones. We ended up having a daughter together. Then I had two other boys. My two different girls, Stanley Boston and Stanley West, they both are gone now, but my daughter, she's still here. Speed up a little bit, came November the first, 1984, the day I was arrested. But before I go into that. I would like to say that one of my most positive influence was my stepdad. This cat. There was nothing he couldn't do. Electronically, plumbing, carpentry, all the mechanics. There was nothing this guy couldn't do. Including selling drugs. But, asking that question, who am I? Like I mentioned in the book, Locked down prison hard. I am the proud son of Jeanette Johnson and William Drivers. That's what I am.

Q: And how old were you when you were arrested?

Howard: I was twenty-one. Five days away from my twenty-second birthday.

Q: Can you talk about that time a little bit? Especially, you know, as you began the judicial process, did you ever imagine being sentenced to death?

Howard: No. Knowing that I was innocent. I thought that the system was going to take care of the problem that I was having, the problem that I was having was that I had a bunch of

crooked cops. I just knew for some reason that this confession was going to be threw out and the real story was going to be told. Then later I found out that the system don't work like that. It was horrible. I received—my mom, she refinanced the house to get me a lawyer. Spent a lot of money trying to save me from the system, protect me from the system. It didn't work. My first conviction, I got twenty-eight years. But my attorney told me I was only going to receive six to twelve because it was my first conviction. My first felony conviction. So, when the judge gave me twenty-eight years, I misheard him. I thought he said eight.

And then when I realized it was twenty-eight years, I'm like, Wow. The crime carried sixty, thirty years. So, I made it a point to let him know that there's no difference between twenty-eight and thirty. And I asked, "Why twenty-eight?" I knew then there was something wrong. At that moment, I knew that there was something wrong. The judge was named Judge John J. Mannion. So, I tried to get in front of this guy. My lawyer filed a motion for a substitution of judge. This cat comes in the supervising judge's courtroom. Sailing the bench and swore to God that he had nothing against me. And I was only mad because he gave me a sentence within his discretion. Supervising to send me back in front of this guy.

But I knew something was wrong because his interactions with my attorneys was nothing but bizarre. So, the next case came. He gave me fifty years. He ran the fifty years consecutively with the twenty-eight for a total of seventy-eight years. And at this time, I was still twenty-two and we tried to get from the front of this cat again. He wasn't having it. Then came the death penalty case. There was no money. Couldn't hire a lawyer.

So, it was time to have the Public Defender's Office represent me. For some reason, I discovered later that no public defender in Markham Courthouse wanted to touch the case. Apparently because of their interactions, or they knew what Judge Mannion had already did.

And I guess they didn't want to be involved in the case that probably would have got me executed. Then we had this one guy by the name of Patrick Moriarty volunteered to take the case. And Kathleen Pantle, another public defender, decided to join him. She later became a judge at my suppression hearing to get my confession throughout. It seemed like it was a joke. There was no chance in hell. All the officers came in and lies saying that there was no abuse. The prosecutor who took the confession, Denise O'Malley, who also became a judge in the appellate court judge later, she said she didn't witness no abuse. But I know for a fact that when she saw me on November first, she knew I was not in the same condition state of mind when she saw me on November third to receive that confession.

Q: What would she have seen then that would have told her what you've been through?

Howard: Slight swelling, more wrinkled, and my demeanor. I think it was obvious, probably obvious to her that something had changed. But I knew at the confession was taken that she probably was in on it, too, with the high fives and the laughter and the jokes and good job with the other officers that was in the room after the confession was taken. After I lost my suppression hearing, it was almost like a sense that I was going to be found guilty. Now that I have these other two convictions in my background. My attorney advised me not to take the stand, so I didn't. I never got a chance to explain what happened. What this death penalty case consists of.

This lady, I don't want to mention her name, I'm just going to give her initials, TM. She claimed that her and the victim had been out all-night drinking. And they had went to the American Legions after that, they went to his garage to listen to some music and to drink more beer. She said they had stopped on two, three different bars. And these times she had a drink or two. She said on the night of May twentieth, 1984, at about three o'clock in the

morning, four o'clock in the morning. Unknown male Black walked up to the car and asked for a light when the victim who was sitting in the passenger seat of the car said he didn't have a light. She said that the guy stepped back maybe about ten to fifteen feet and shot into the car and ran off. She said at that point she had jumped out of the car looking for help and then jumped back in the car and drove the car away from the scene of the crime with the victim still slumped over the passenger seat. The victim had been shot through the rear-view window, through his seatbelt and hit him in the back. She drove the car to 95th street and she saw a police car and flagged him down. They tried CPR, but they end up taking him to Little Company of Mary Hospital where he died. And that is her story.

Fast forward to November the first. When I was in about fifteen, twenty different lineups on November the second. She viewed the lineup that I was in. Much later after the crime happened. She wasn't positive about her identification. According to the Polish reports, she said that I looked like the guy who had committed the crime. And based on that, the state's attorney's office did not press charges on that day, but they did with the other cases after the lineup after the rig lineups. It wasn't until November third, later that night, at about two or three o'clock in the morning, after they beat the hell out of me and suffocated me with a plaster bag and got this confession, it was then that the state's attorney's office filed charges in the murder case.

That was the story that was given at trial, except for one change. All the police report says that she was not certain. She was not positive. I looked like the guy that all of a sudden, her testimony changed. So, she was positive that I was the guy and she would never forget my face. And based on that, the jury found me guilty along with the confession. And I was sentenced to death by the same jury. And the day I was sentenced to death, it was reported in the papers that I laughed. I laughed at the judge, said I was flipped, that I didn't care what

happened to me. The problem was I did care. My mom and family then was crying in the audience, but it was something about that judge. I didn't want him to know that I was touched in such a manner. So, I left. I laughed. It wasn't a joke. What happened to me was a joke. And that's how I end up on death row.

Q: Can you talk about the moment that you were sentenced to death? I think there's an instant change right when you go from being a pretrial detainee to being someone who's been condemned. Can you talk about what that changes like?

Howard: I have been in the county jail for a couple of years. At that point, this case, the death penalty case, happened in April of 1987, and I have been in county jail since November the fourth of 1984. And from that moment on, I was this monster that couldn't be trusted. I was immediately taken from the wind. I was wrong and taken downstairs in the basement of the old Cook County Jail, a unit called ABO. Even today, I do not know what ABO even means, but I know it's ABO. All the officers around me was even acting strange and different. It was like I had to be separated from everybody else. I was different all of a sudden, now that the jury had made their determination. But when I got down to the ABO, we had this guy by the name of Edgar Hope and Renaldo Hudson slinging each other around in the day room like rag dolls.

I'm like, "Whoa, man, wait a minute, there's too much steel and concrete in this. Man, knock it off. Somebody going to get hurt." Two guys I never met in my life. I went from telling them that somebody's going to get hurt to screaming, "Man, put me down, man. Put me down." These two guys had me in there. And that was the beginning of my life as a condemned man.

Q: And at that point, did you believe that somehow this mistake would be corrected?

Howard: Yes, there was this guy by the name of Lonnie Yates, who was also across the wing that I was on, who was sentenced to death and had his death penalty case overturned. My dad always told me that Illinois was not executing the body. And when the cases go to the federal court, if it goes that far, they're going to kick it back down anyway. And he gave me this rosary view that the case will automatically be reviewed and you're going to have this piece by piece look at the case, if you will. So, I always thought that, and it wasn't until they actually start executing people after Charlie Walker volunteered to be executed and open up the floodgates. We're talking mid early ‘90s. So, I always felt like I wasn't going to be executed. But when they start executing people, I had to face reality that it was a great possibility that this was going to happen.

Q: So, I'm just thinking about how you must have imagined or pictured death row, and then you got there and I'm guessing the reality was probably different from what you had pictured. Can you talk a little bit about what you expected of death row and then what you found when you got there?

Howard: I never been to prison before, let alone death row. So, my first day leaving the county jail, I got on the bus with everybody else. It was two buses going to Joliet, but I was sitting up front and when we got off the bus, my name was called first and I was separated from the rest of the guys. I was going through the intake process. They shipped me through this intake process really quickly. I think it lasts no more than about forty-five minutes, maybe an hour. Then there's some cars outside that was waiting for me. We had the Illinois state police and Illinois corrections. It was like two cars in the front, maybe a car or two in the back. And the car I was in was in the middle. It was a nonstop convoy on my way to Pontiac Correctional Center.

We didn't go through the front door. We went through this alley, pointed back. And this car drove down to the prison. And I'm looking around, you know, we all have these thoughts about how prison is. And yeah, I'm nervous. I'm scared, not knowing what to expect. We pull up to the North house where they have the segregation unit at, not knowing that they're frozen on the other side, but when we walked through this door, they flipped his switch and this red light started blinking. Before they opened up the door, they secured the gates, whereas nobody could go into the depth, the cadet unit. And then me and this one officer walked into the cadet unit. And even though I had been strip searched two times that day already, or was it three, I was still searched again.

And walking down one gallery on the lower level on my way to—these cells had bars, so the men were able to see me walk past. There wasn't a lot of us initially, but there was some men also into gallery upstairs who couldn't see me. So, they walked me down the gallery to where they had these steel doors at. And when they put me inside the cell and closed the door, it was like, wow. Wow, that was an experience. Then all of a sudden guys started calling me, “Hey man, what's your name?” S man. I guess a few guys that heard about me and knew me, but the guys upstairs who didn't see me. The next day, after they saw me, they started laughing, and I'm like, “What the hell is so funny?” “Man, you was talking like you was some big old gorilla, and you sounded like you was huge.” Look, I'm like, “What the hell?” “It's your voice, man. You sound like—” Oh, here we go. But the love was immediately there.

Some of the older guys, they started sending me stuff, and asking me if I need anything, and you automatically get this trembling feeling like, what the heck is this all about? It's just a great setup, what the heck, but it wasn't. These same guys who had been leaning on each other, grabbed me to make sure that I had somebody to lean on, from day one. From day one

until the day I left, I had somebody to lean on, and somebody had me to help them lean on. And that was the first day of my experience of death row.

Q2: Yeah, this has driven a lot of memories. Stanley, when you walked into that unit, though, the sensory, because I remember that light and the bell. And it would ring, right? But what was it like though, when you realize, there's this moment that I think about that you realize you really not in control of anything and despite what people are saying, when you said that door slam, what was that moment? What did that say to you? What really just happened to me? What were your thoughts around that?

Howard: I wish I knew. I wish I could go back to that moment, but I did know I had this feeling of being overwhelmed, but there was a spirit in me from my upbringing. And I guess maybe it was in my blood from centuries of being left over by people in this country, that I wasn't the first one. So living a bad life growing up, did this actually prepare me to be a little bit stronger? I don't know, but I can say that I didn't believe at that time that life was over. I had already knew that life had changed with the seventy-eight years that I had. I knew that things was going to be real different. And I had been preparing myself mentally for that, but I couldn't and didn't prepare to be sentenced to death. It has to be. Around the so-called worst of the worst.

Q2: You mentioned earlier about the older guys when you heard that, like who were these guys? Do you remember anybody specifically? From the old group of, as you describe as old guys.

Howard: Yeah, I would say, older than me. Larry Mack, William Bracy, Taffer [*phone rings*] William Collins, Emerson, Hashima [*phonetic*], we know those, but there's so many.

Q: Can you choose maybe one and just talk a little bit about that person to give us a sense of how they mentored you or supported you?

Howard: The first one to reach out was—well, I'd say the first two was Larry Mack and William Bracy. They wanted to know how I was feeling. And what was my thoughts. They kept asking me if I needed anything. And Enoch, these guys that worked on the gallery, they were always coming back and forth. William Jones, we had some of these guys that was really good to me. And what I mean by that was that, as a kid, I think I was one of the youngest ones there at the time. And it wasn't what I was expecting. I was expecting what we all imagined what prison was going to be like and how the guys was going to act. And it wasn't like that. These relationships ballooned into an uncle and big brother type relationship. I used to always call William Bracy and tell him, “Man, bruh, I can't take this no more.” Murray Hooper, how can I forget Hooper? Man, who was just executed a couple of years ago in Arizona. I used to tell William Bracy it, “I can't take it no more, man.” He like, “Just do one more day.” And every time I say that, he'd say, “Man, just do one more day, just get out of this day. And we worry about tomorrow when tomorrow get here. Let's do one more day.”

It was pretty good, so the mentorship. "Man, read this. Read that. Read this. Hey, what you watching up there? Hey, turn it over here, man. I want you to watch this." It was like, some days I couldn't watch TV without watching what they wanted me to watch. I guess that idiot box could also teach you some things if you watch the right things. I hated C-SPAN. I don't know why you want to watch Clarence Thomas or William Lincolns, but these are—later I discovered—these are the people that you want to watch and listen to. And you better watch it, man, because when we get to the rec room tomorrow, I want to ask you a couple of questions. So now I'm forced to watch. Yeah, so there were some guys that was there that was, not was, is my brothers. Yeah.

Q: So, in light of that, it sounds like it really was a brotherhood. So then can you talk a little bit about then, when the execution started and there would be an execution day, what was that like for you?

Howard: Well, to give a little bit more clarity, after you go through the appeal process, and you have exhausted all of your appeals, even on the first day when you are sentenced to death, the judge gives you a death date. Which is stalled until, well, after you file a notice of appeal and you start appealing then, that death date is stalled until the next court make their ruling. So, after you have no more appeals, the judge or the court will set an execution date. So, when you exhaust your appeals, we know when the execution date is set. Most of the time within ninety days. And guys that you've been around a long time, will know that you had this death date coming up. And the tension, it's really thick. And I've never been in no situation like this before. I don't know how to act around people who are facing something like this and going through this. The only thing I could do is try my best not to change, try to be the same person I was to him before he received a death date.

And I mentioned this before. I think I was a coward because a lot of these executions took place and I refused to say goodbye when these cats was going on that last day. I would play like I was asleep because I didn't want to say goodbye. I remember Williams who was executed with Jim Free. On this particular Friday, I think that was the execution day was set for that Monday or that Tuesday. We had perch fish, the first time we ever had this. He was on one gallery, I was on two gallery. And he called up to me and asked me for that fish. I'm like, "No man, I'm not giving you this damn fish. Because if I give you this fish, that means that I would acknowledge that you are going to be executed. You still got hope. It's still there." And I wanted to instill that into him. I didn't give him that fish. But he was executed along with Jim Free.

And it was a double execution that day and I always wonder when the first one was being executed and they was taken to Stateville, and the first one has been executed and the other was in waiting. What was the other person thinking about when he knew that the other guy was on that table receiving a lethal injection? Hashima Williams was one of my brothers. He was a good friend to me. A good friend to all of us because he worked the gallery the whole time I was there, he would do everything for us because we locked inside the cell all the time, twenty-three, twenty-four hours a day. And by me being so little, I don't like the wintertime. So, during the winter months, when it was cold, I'd just stay in the cell if I can't get to the rec room. So, most of those days was like twenty-four hours a day. And during the execution time, it was really tough. It was really tough.

I think one of the hardest times I had was when Walter Stewart was executed. Because I realized after talking with him, he got caught up in some garbage. And To see a man like that With all the love that he had in his heart to be extinguished in such a manner. It's crazy. I said that about Renaldo at his birthday party, how he transitioned from the person that I first knew to the person that everybody called this big old lovable teddy bear. He doesn't think that the state of Illinois wanted to execute him. It could have been him. It could have been him. And I'll be sitting here talking about the person that Renaldo was when he was executed.

Q: Thanks for sharing all that. So, a little while ago you talked about how you didn't really start getting scared until they started executing people, and you talked about kind of the appeals process that people go through, and once they've exhausted their appeals, they get their date, and that's when they know to be worried. So, just curious if you could share a little bit about your own appeals process and what that was like for you.

Howard: The other day, when I was preparing to write this article, this op-ed, I found my execution order, I haven't seen this thing in almost like thirty-something years. It was in one of these envelopes tucked in. I looked down at it and saw Judge Mannion's signature and I laughed. But now I'm going to frame this, I'm a frame it, but my appeals went straight to the Illinois Supreme Court. And because of the state of Illinois capital litigation division, I was represented by this woman named Carol Wessendorf. And she gave me some horrible advice, I realized later, but it sounded good at the time. The advice that she gave me was, "You have seventy-eight years over here, but you have the death penalty over here. I think we should put all of our focus and energy into the death penalty case and don't worry about that right now because if you lose this death penalty case you'll be executed and after seventy-eight years it's not going to matter." At the time the Illinois post-conviction statute was ten years. You had ten years to file your post-conviction petition. Well, I was still on direct appeal. I thought I was going to win this appeal. Especially after they started dragging and dragging. There was no Supreme Court. It seemed like they was just dragging for some reason. We had good arguments. But it seemed like it just kept dragging.

Then all of a sudden, I realized why it took so long. This case called *Payne v. Tennessee*. It came down about victim impact statement and the Illinois Supreme court was in a rush to judge me to make my case president in this state. Why so? Because in the beginning of my trial, the victim's mother, who's sitting in the audience, when TM started testifying, the first five minutes of my trial, while she was spelling her last name, the victim's mother started screaming, "Oh my God, you killed my only child. Oh my God, you killed my only child." And she was in a really bad place. And the bailiffs had to take her out of the courtroom. At that moment, when the jury looked at me, I felt like I was found guilty at that moment. The first five minutes of the trial, my attorneys moved from this trial. But the prosecutor told the

judge where she was sitting directly from behind me, and I really couldn't understand what she was saying. I said what everybody heard.

She kept saying that I killed her only child. And the judge, he said he couldn't really understand what she was saying either. But he's going to admonish the jury, advise the jury, to un-ring this bell that they all had just heard, to ignore it. So, the Illinois Supreme Court, just to speed up a little bit more, the Illinois Supreme Court said that that was a victim impact statement. And we know now that that is done doing sentencing. So later, I realized I had to tell my new attorneys that they was going to give me a new trial, because I read that they had to review the Stanley Howard case when they came out with this other case.

[INTERRUPTION] I lost the first appeal. The Illinois Supreme Court denied it, even though I had claims that the confession was bogus. And that the officers had a history of torturing other guys in the same manner. They didn't care. I knew that they knew about the torture claims because other torture cases that came before mines that they denied also. Then I got lucky, the capital litigation division reached out to this law firm Schiff Hardin and Waite, who had offices in the Sears tower decided to represent me pro bono. And Paul Dengel, Miss Wilson, David Blickenstaff, and Christine Brown. I think they did a really wonderful job of overturning every brick. Some of these bricks they overturned was the pattern practice of torture that occurred under Jon Burge at area two, I was arrested. They attached that argument to my post-conviction also. It was a strong argument, but my strongest claims came was that the state had a problem now.

The problem was when I was arrested on November first, running from the police, I had just entered the backyard of my son's house on May, 88th and May, it's about 4:35 o'clock, it started getting dark. And all of a sudden, I hear this. There he is right there. And without even

thinking, I bolted in the other direction, not knowing who it was. Then came the gunshots. I made my way to the alley, ran down a few houses and made my way back to May Street. When I got on May Street, it was like I was in the war zone. The officers shot at me so many times. I just knew they were trying to kill me. Did I stop? No. My feet was on autopilot. I got to 89th street, made my way across the tracks, being shot at. When I turned to the next alley, I thought I had got away and I hid myself up on a porch that was under construction. And it seemed like there was cops everywhere.

I wanted to come out, but after being shot at so many times, I thought they was trying to kill me. This one cop came in the backyard that I was in. And he kept coming closer and closer. I knew he was going to see me. So, when I jumped up and ran between the two houses, I mean, no more than about eight and a half feet separated. These two houses, this cop got to the back of the house and fired four or five shots at me. I was between this little space and this, I even heard the bullets whistling past me and I was able to hide again in this one backyard I was in. I saw this, the flickering light of this TV set. And I guess this little girl who had on these happy day glasses was looking out the window, trying to figure out what was going on. So, when the cop came into the backyard, I was in, I immediately jumped up. And stood up out in the window that the little girl was in, and I did like to see her. Then he ran up on me, grabbed me, and slammed me to the ground. I mean slammed me to the ground and put the handcuffs on me.

During that chase, I climbed over this fence and banged my hip so bad that requested on November first to be taken to the hospital. And they took me to Roseland Hospital and I got seen in a few hours later. I was taken back to Area 2 headquarters. When I got to the county jail during the intake process, they have this medical exam that goes on in the beginning. My new attorneys, I never even thought about that. My new attorneys discovered that the injuries

that was reported on November the first was not the same injuries I had on November the fourth, which means that the injuries that occurred that was found on November the fourth, I must've received while I was in police custody. And what was those injuries was, was the same injuries I showed with Judge Mannion.

When the cops came and got me out of the bullpen early that morning, I was taken upstairs to an interview room. These two detectives took me upstairs and—James Lotito and Ronald Buffo. When we got upstairs, Sergeant Jon Burge was at this desk. There was nobody else around that I knew of or could see. And they took him to this interview and handcuffed me and put those cuffs to another set of cuffs on the wall. They started questioning me about this murder case, which I knew nothing about. They started beating the hell out of me. Pounded on me in my mid-section. And this one cop kept kicking me. Kept kicking me. And James Lotito went and got a plastic bag. And he came up on the side of me and put this plastic bag over my head. And I was trying to wiggle away, trying to like—but realizing that the bag had a hole in it, he went and got a typewriter cover. Of one of the typewriters that was in the Jason room. And by being so long, he put my head on one side and took the typewriter cover and wrapped it around my head. Then he came on the side of me and grabbed me by his forearm and took his other hand and he take me off the bench. Suffocate me with this plastic bag, but the problem was I was still handcuffed to the wall. So, when he pulled me off the bench, the handcuff dug deep into my wrist. And you could still see the marks on the handcuffs that had dug into my wrist. You could see on both sides.

And I showed Judge Mannion those injuries and I told him about the injuries I received from the guy kicking me so much. Judge Mannion saw these exact same injuries, he's like, “Wow, is those the same injuries on your legs? Almost like three years later?” I'm like, “Yeah, he was kicking me, man, kept kicking me. Even when I would put my leg like this, he didn't

want that. Well, as soon as I revealed this leg, he would attack it." And anyway, my new attorneys had interviewed the doctor who saw me at Roseland Hospital and showed him the intake report and asked him, did he see these same injuries? He said no. That I didn't have those injuries on November the first. That was the first time I realized that we actually had some real evidence besides my testimony and the history of the cops to show that I was abused by these cats.

Q2: Stanley, can I direct you just to help me to go back? Because this is really deep. But could you go back a second and talk about how when you lost your appeals? Because I follow the lawyers coming in and building out the evidence and that's really important part of the story. But what did it do? What was your movement? What did you do yourself inside, after your appeals were denied, what did that trigger for you? The stuff that you had to start doing with respect to organizing or thinking about what could you do for yourself?

Howard: There was nothing at that time. I think my first appeal was denied in '91, '92. And I didn't know nothing about the system. I was just at the mercy of these attorneys. I didn't know. I didn't even know what the next process was. I was literally, legally illiterate. And, but I was, I was really messed up because I thought that we had a good argument as far as what I saw. When you could tell me that this car is going to run after you put a new carburetor in it, but find out later after it gets going, it stops again. You don't know what happened, why it happened, because you don't know nothing about automobiles and I ain't know nothing about the legal process at the time.

So, my thing was, what's next? What we do now? And it was time for post-conviction and that's why I was just telling how these new pro bono attorneys. From Schiff Hardin and Waite, the job that they did was amazing. But at the time, mind you also that they still wasn't

executing people at the time. And I thought, Okay, like I was saying that Lonnie Yates had told me whenever I get to the federal courts, I really was going to get a nice review there. And so, I wasn't worried then, but yeah. It felt really bad to lose the first appeal when I just knew I was going to win it.

But back to what I was trying to say was that not only did my new attorneys discover the new evidence about the torture claims, they also went out and interviewed the people who stayed in the apartment building in front of where this guy had been shot at. And all of these people gave affidavits. One of them, this elderly lady, she gave a deposition. But collectively, they all contradicted what TM had said. In her story, she said that all this occurred within a ten second span, fifteen second span. Early in the morning it had been drizzling and they were sitting in the car and we all know that there someone sitting in the car with this weather, the windows most likely was fogged up, but that wasn't the argument. Our argument was that the new witnesses that we had were earwitnesses. They weren't eyewitnesses because they said that they heard someone arguing out in front of their house for about twenty, twenty-five minutes. And whoever fired the shot, TM knew the person who fired the shot because she got out of the car and was talking to the person before the person ran off and she got back in the car and drove the car away from seeing the crime.

So, her story didn't add up to the new affidavits that we had. And what was, why is this important? Because come to find out that TM was having an affair with the victim. And where did the victim get shot at? Where was they sitting at? Two houses from her house where she lived with her husband. Am I saying that it was the husband? No, I don't know. But the affidavits says that whoever shot that guy, she knows who shot that guy.

Q: So, I want to make sure we leave a lot of time to talk about your activism, but it sounds like really what you're saying is you had a legal team who was strong, who really did their homework.

Howard: Yes.

Q: Who brought all these things to light.

Howard: Yes.

Q: But then what was the result of that appeal?

Howard: It drug on. It came on the case, I think late ‘92, early ‘93. And it just drug on. I was on post-conviction. My whole time, all the way up until 2003, when I left there for this long appeal process. And throughout that time, I started educating myself. Nathson Fields invited me down to Jumu'ah service one day. He gave me a Koran and a rug. I thought, when I first went down there, I thought they were going to beat the hell out of me because that's a long story. But he gave me a lot of love. He wanted me to get in school. So, I took the TAFE test, come to find out that was April of ‘91. And. The teacher said I was ready for the test. I'm like, Wow, how is that possible? I dropped out in the ninth grade. I attended GED classes in Kennedy King College, but that only lasts about three months.

But after May of 1990, I had my GED. Then all of a sudden, I wanted to continue on. We went from, at Tom Lee's service, they were studying Arabic. And like I said before, I don't even understand English. How in the hell am I trying to understand Arabic? So, I left Islam and fell in love with criminal law. The end. I started teaching myself and I couldn't take no more classes because Joe Biden and Bill Clinton administration had ended the Pell program.

So, all the money that was given to the max joints that had dried up and there was no more education for me on death row. So, I had these books available to me. So, I started studying, studying, studying and becoming oppressed of what I was dealing with. And that led me to the law class that I started on death row, trying to help other guys fight for their life because now we talking ‘96, ‘97. And execution was in full swing at that time. But my idea for starting the law class, I asked this goofball assistant warden, who nobody liked because he was a tyrant to the prison. It wasn't the warden that everybody was worried about, or the wardens that we had. It was always assistant warden Larry Junt. He was chief of security. And I asked him to allow me to have an extra period in the rec room to have law class. We weren't going to be playing cards or dominoes or space or any of that or using the punching bag or the universal weight set. We was going to have law class.

And my idea for that was knowing that there was probably some other guys in the same state I was initially in, not knowing anything about the criminal justice system or what they were dealing with. I wanted to try to share the knowledge that I had with them in hope of being able to allow them to be some assistance to their attorneys or to help guide their attorneys in the fight for their life. And then I ended up having a beginner's course. And then I had a regular course to begin. The course was upstairs in the upstairs rec room on Saturday mornings. The regular course was on Wednesday and not knowing that so many guys wanted to come and it was only fifteen guys that could come at any time at this time we had almost like eighty, maybe seventy, eighty guys on the unit. So, I had to navigate around that, but. It took off and it became really good to ask, I should draw up these police reports and a petition to crime, whereas we had guys that was prosecutors on the prosecutor team and guys that was on the defense team.

We had judges, we had, we had the courtroom and the reason behind that was to give a guy some courtroom experience instead of. You know, they say practice makes perfect. Instead of being able to, instead of walking inside of a courtroom quietly and leaving quietly, now you probably have some knowledge on how to speak up for yourself and maybe even conduct your own trial if you need it. And it went pretty well. It went pretty well. And out of the law class came some activism also. So, things started speeding up. Jon Burge got fired in ‘93 and we still, it was only, it was ten of us, eleven of us on death row. We had been tortured by these same cops. I was counting these guys every time I hear one of these guys talk about their case. I knew they was connected to the patent practice of torture.

So, Aaron Patterson was out there. S. Aaron Patterson defense committee. He was known, but my attorney was holding me back because he didn't want me out there publicly because the judge at the time was giving us everything that we wanted. So why rock the boat if he's given us everything we wanted? But that didn't last long. So, I called down there one day and asked him because I was scheduled to talk with his mother. And I used to call into a citizen alert, the non-profit and police watchdog group that Mary Pyle used to have. And I called there one day, called down to Aaron Patterson and asked him, I'm like, "Hey man, I'm trying to contact them." He's like, “Hey. Stop calling them. Call your own mama.” Like, Whoa, where that come from?

And then I was advised by the big fella that I needed to get from up under that umbrella and start my own thing. And using Renaldo Hudson's cue, I started rolling that idea around in my mind. And I started calling to us the Jon Burge’s Ten. Realizing that nobody around the world probably know when the heck John Burry's is, I started calling us the Death Row Ten and I took a black marking and sheet of typing paper with my ugly handwriting, I wrote Death

Row Ten on the top. And I used my manual typewriter and typed all the names of the guys, of the Death Row Ten team members directly under that.

And then these clippings and pieces that I had, I started gluing them to this paper. Why was I doing that? Because I was calling the protest and I wanted to use this flyer to call this protest. September the eighth, 1998. And I was doing this in May of 1998. This gave us a lot of time to prepare for this protest. I tried to get the flyer copied. They weren't gone, the law librarian, they weren't gone. But this one lady, she decided to copy it for me, so I got a hundred copies. And I started giving it to the other Death Row Ten team members, asking them for help. send these flyers off to their family members and get the copies also.

But at the time I started writing to a lot of different organization groups and people asking for help. It wasn't there. Nobody wanted to help that. I contacted, nobody wanted to help. Some people wrote back, some people didn't. And, but this one lady. Marlene Martin, she wrote me back, who was connected with the campaign and the death penalty. She said she would love to be able to help us in any manner that she could. So not long after that, Joan Parkin and Alice Kim, this is how we met them. And the Death Row Ten campaign started.

Q: Before we talk more about that, I just want to go back a little bit because I think the mock trials that you talked about were so important. And you said, you know something about fictitious cases, but you also really based the mock trials on The cases of the people you were surrounded by.

Howard: Yeah.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about that? And then the role that played in kind of uncovering the fact that so many people had experienced the same torture?

Howard: Well, we was a close-knit group where we wasn't going anywhere. We was always around each other twenty-four hours a day and we locked inside the cells. So, most conversations took place within ear range. either in the rec room or in the yard or in the gallery. So, we're around each other all the time when you hear guys talk about the cases and at the time when I've started guys ask me questions, legal questions and send me material.

I was able to realize then that way that some of these guys was connected reading statements of facts. But it wasn't like I was just going around. Hey, you was tortured by the you know, it didn't work like that. It wasn't like that. It was just like, I missed some of the names. This is how I named us the Death Row Ten. But by the time I got connected with the campaign and the death penalty, we had spent this money on the banners and flyers and all this old stuff. It was too late to call us the Death Row Twelve. This train had already left the track. So, we continued on as the Death Row Ten, even though it was twelve of us.

Q: And can you name the twelve?

Howard: No.

Q: Or at least the ten.

Howard: Aaron Patterson—I probably, you know, repeating some—Aaron Patterson, Madison Hobley, Leroy Orange, Leonard Kidd. Jerry Mahaffey, Reginald Mahaffey, Frank Bounds, me, Derrick King—I'm missing some people here—Grayland Johnson, then later, Cortez Brown, and I can't think of the other names, but we do know William Bracy, William Collins. They want to recognize, but it wasn't until I saw the banners that they was also abused early on in the process.

Q: And you've been referencing Jon Burge, but for people watching this, who may not know who that is, can you just explain briefly who is Jon Burge?

Howard: An asshole. I hate to talk about dead people, but Jon Burge lived on the South side of Chicago. He went to the military and was an MP. While in the military, he learned how to torture people using an electric box and a power generator. According to some of his comrades, that's what they used to do in order to get confessions out of some of the victims during the war. According to Jon Burge, when he came back from the military, his neighborhood had been taken over by Blacks and he became a cop. And early on, he was known for being able to get confessions out of people. He quickly rose in the ranks of the Chicago Police Department to Sergeant, to Lieutenant, to actually running the nonviolent movement at Area 2. He on the south side of Chicago.

There's been many stories told about how Jon Burge and his Midnight Crew, how they used to get confessions out of people. That’s why they was called the Midnight Crew. Because most of the torture took place After midnight, some of the torture consists of was some things that I've heard and read about taking people and burning them outside the hot radiator, suffocating people with plastic bag, waterboarding, Russian roulette, just beating and kicking the hell out of people and just make sure that you don't leave too many marks. The black box. It was a hand powered generator, where you could generate electricity out of it. The first time I heard about it was in the Andrew Wilson case, where they had took the wires, and took the wires and clipped a note to his ears and shot the electricity through his body.

And what was the evidence to prove that this had happened? He had marks on his ears like he had been bitten by little alligators. And then you have stories where, I don't know why they was focusing on the penis, but these cops also had connected these electrodes to people's

penises and testicles to shoot electricity into them. I heard Darrell Cannon said that they also had a cattle prod, used a cattle prod on him to shock his genitals. And a few guys that claimed that they had been held outside of a window upside down, threatened to be, or even the elevator shaft, threatened to be dropped. I think Jerry Mahaffey said that he was actually dropped.

Q: So, then you're—

Howard: I'm original, but I have to—

Q: Okay. So, then you're finding yourself surrounded by people with similar experiences. Where, where were you, incarcerated women? Where did the Death Row Ten to form?

Howard: In Pontiac Correctional Center on death row. We had a few other members that was in Menard Correctional Center on death row also. And we had one guy that was in the county jail back on the appeal, I think it was.

Q: And even before you started working with your outside allies, how did your membership, your leadership of the Death Row Ten change you?

Howard: We started having a lot of push back from some of the guys. I don't want to air some of the dirty laundry, but you know, when you get a bunch of guys together and everybody had their own views and focus on how things should go because their lives is on the line. I did my best to try to keep the group together. There's been many times whereas, guys didn't want to participate, they didn't want to be a part of it. But we just kept going full steam ahead.

Damn, the name I forgot was Ronnie Kitchen. Oh, hegoing tonna kill me. But, me and Ronnie, we work close together. And Leroy Orange. More so than some of the other guys.

But we had Frank Bounds and Grayland Johnson also. That was on our team that was pushing in the direction that we wanted to go to. And it was pretty good on the first day of the first protest, I called into this event and I gave my best speech. I think it was at the end of it. I let everybody know, and it was actually recorded in the newspaper. That I said that these people was trying to execute us with their help out there. We're going to have a good chance of not letting this happen. I believe that people power was stronger than the political power. And I was using their people power in order to challenge the system. And I wanted them to know there was only two things that was going to happen. Either it was going to be a funeral, or it was going to be a party. And that was the quote that was taken, that it was going to be a funeral. Oh, it's going to be a party. And with their help, I was hoping that it was going to be a party. And that was the first protest. And it led to me calling in to a lot of different places around the country. Live from Death Row. A term that was taken from Mumia Abu-Jamal. In Pennsylvania, where I will call into some of these events and talk about the Death Row Ten, the torture scandal, my life on death row, and me in general, something that I love doing.

Then the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, they allowed me to have my own column in their newsletter called the New Abolitionists. Well, I was able to use some of my new writing skills. I'm a high school dropout now, all of a sudden, I'm a writer. I could talk about anything I want to talk about now. I got a whole lot of things to talk about. The article was called, "Keeping It Real". Because I went back to the county jail and there's all these kids who say, “Hey man, keep it real with me, man, just keep it real.” So, I'm like, Okay, "Keeping It Real", that's the name of my article. And a lot of the things I used to talk about at the end of the article, I was like, Okay, keeping it real, this.

Okay. Let me give you an example. One of my best pieces I believe was called, “We Must Disarm Bush”. That the Bush started the Iraq war. I was in this cell with this kid when I got to

Stateville. I didn't have my property. I was watching this TV and [*unclear*] and he was cheering his stuff on and I'm trying to figure out, why is he cheering? "Oh, man, we got to show these people they can't fly planes into our buildings," and I'm like, "Man, Saddam had nothing to do with that," but he's still cheering because Saddam is Muslim. He believed that Muslims was the problem and I'm like, Whoa, wait a minute. So, I wrote about that in my next piece. And in the piece, I explained that Bush, the executioner, who I never liked in no way, because he said that all 168 people that he had executed, all of them was guilty. And he pushed George Ryan off his committee because George Ryan was trying to show what had caused the moratorium and had this Blue-Ribbon Commission looking into the Death Penalty. So, George Bush asked the executioner, he was saying to everybody that he had executed was guilty. I'm trying to figure out how in the hell he knew that.

So, I never liked this guy. So, when he kicked off the shot, I knew that was all about more killing. And he said, either you with us or you with them. And there's no us and them when you have my brothers and sisters fighting each other and killing each other on the battlefield. And then the story changed from weapons of mass destruction to liberating the Iraqi people. And I said that this guy did not care anything about liberating the Iraqi people. No more did he care about liberating the Palestinians from the invading occupation of Black folks in this country. And at the end of the article, I said that, to keep it real, his only agenda was to kill. And if you kill because he wanted you to kill, he'll make you a hero, but if you kill, he'll kill you. So that was one of the pieces that I wrote called “We Must Disarm Bush”. But I like writing for the New Abolitionists because it gave me a voice that I could push out.

Q: Yeah. It sounds like with your collaborations, you were really able to get your voice out into the world and be heard. And I wonder if you could talk about just in the abolition movement in Illinois. What were some key moments that really gave you a sense of hope?

Howard: Well, when Renaldo Hudson, and Bill Ryan started talking about the moratorium. And that there was a possibility that we was going to have a moratorium on the death penalty. I'm like, Yeah. And we talked about that in the law class. We used to always talk about death penalty issues and how things were going. You see, at the time, in the beginning, we was in this get tough on crime era. Now, all of a sudden, because of what was going on here in Illinois, in my view, it started in Illinois because we had eleven, twelve guys executed, but we also had eleven, twelve guys exonerated, which means there was a fifty-fifty chance on Death Row that he was guilty or not.

And then came Anthony Porter. Anthony Porter was thirty-some hours away from execution. And I remember him telling me one day in Jummah service that he was innocent. And I'm like, "Man, I'm innocent." He's like, "Nah, man, for real, I'm innocent."

Q: So, you were talking a little bit about I think one of the things that you thought made Illinois unique was the movement toward the moratorium. So, can you talk a little bit about the moment when Governor Ryan declared a moratorium on the death penalty?

Howard: It was great. We all was happy. There was a sense of relief, but I keep going back to the central point that they was executing people. It had gotten so bad, that we had this one guy come back from court. He had a new sentencing hearing. He come back screaming, "I got him man, I won, I got him, I got him." Like, "What'd you get?" "Man, I got ninety-nine years, man." Like, whoa. But he was happy with the ninety-nine years. Because again, they was executing people and it was time to get the hell away from there. And I know for a fact, I wouldn't have been the only Black man wrongfully lynched in this country. Or just lynched. I view it as a modern-day form of lynching anyway.

So, when he called the moratorium, it was, a sense of relief, but we was marching down towards this anyway, because the Death Row Ten campaign wasn't just connected to the torture claims. It was connected to the death penalty also to show how bogus it was. The United States Supreme Court ended the death penalty in early 1970 because it was being issued in arbitrary capricious manner. But later, when we tried to use that same argument, this new court said that, no, you can't use those statistics to prove this point, like you can prove the statistics in unjust housing or other racist practices. But in the death penalty situation, you can't do it. And it's still been issued out in an arbitrary capricious manner.

But to be back on point again. We was marching towards this way anyway, because of what was going on here in Illinois, whereas we had all these exonerations and guys being released and back to Anthony Porter. It was his case that actually said, well, wait a minute, this is just getting crazy. And then we had this other girl by the name of Latanya Haggerty, who was shot and killed by a cop because she had a cell phone. When the dispatcher had told the people that was chasing them to stop the chase and they up killing this little girl anyway.

So, the Death Row Ten caught this head wind from Anthony Porter and Latanya Haggerty and Robert Rush, who was killed on the expressway, who went to Northwestern. Speaking of Northwestern again, speaking of Northwestern, they got all the credibility for saving Anthony Porter's life. But it was Joan Parkin and the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, they called the press conference to have his mother beg for his life. And during the press conference, Anthony's mother said that he had always had a low IQ and that he had something that always been wrong with him. And use that, Joan and the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, Alice Kim, they approached the attorneys with that information. And that is what stopped the execution.

Then later, while the execution was paused, then our story, Simon and the Northwestern Journalism students and everybody, they was able to get the evidence to prove that he was actually innocent. Thank you. So, we have been marching towards this moratorium anyway, and then Ryan's so-called Blue-Ribbon Commission that found all these problems wrong with the death penalty, not just the death penalty, the criminal justice system as a whole.

They came out with a hundred something recommendations that the Illinois General Assembly surpassed in order to solve some of the problems or to reform the death penalty. There's no reform the damn death penalty. It's being ran by a system that's corrupt and broken. I keep saying broken when I realize now that it's not broken. It's working the exact like it's designed to be working. Marlene Martin said, I think I said this before, that you can't point to one individual and say it was because of that individual that we had the moratorium or we had the death penalty ended in the state. She said that we was operating like little ants, working for the colony, working for one goal. I like to think I was a big ass butt.

We always like little hands. And when I called Joan, who I was engaged to at the time, and she told me, I think this was January the fifth, that Governor Ryan was going to give me a pardon and for the Death Row Ten members. I'm like, Wow, just Death Row Ten members? Yeah. Only Death Row Ten members was going to receive these five pardons. And I was told I was not going to be released like these other guys because I was still happy. It's only seventy-eight years, which is why I was saying that Carol Wessendorf in the beginning, when she gave me that bad advice, she knew.

When John Wayne Gacy was executed and the Illinois General Assembly discovered how long he had spent on death row doing this get tough on crime garbage that they was on, they started tinkering with the Post Conviction Hearing Act on how to speed up execution by

messing around with the statute of limitations. It went from ten years to seven to seven to five to five to three years. So, when they had amended the statute And the time frame in which I had to file my post-conviction petition, did she know or she should have known that I was heading towards defaulting on ever filing the appeal in those cases. And she should have told me that, but—

Q: Can you tell us what was your actual release date and can you describe that day a bit leading up to that day?

Howard: My out day was November the first, 2023, but I realized that they weren't going to release me until November the second. I discovered that in May and I've been fighting for that one day for a long time. I'm like, “Man, wait a minute, my day is November the first,” and the counselor told me, “You've been locked up thirty-nine years. What's one more day?” And that just sent me into overdrive trying to get this one day.

I lost a lot of people. My dad, my son, Stanley Boston got gunned down in 2016. My son, Stanley West had just died a year or two earlier. I just lost my only brother a year before that. All of my hunkers were gone. My two best friends were gone. And I was marching towards getting out, knowing that all the male figures that I had in my life was gone. So, when I got out, or when I was on my way out, this system smacked me in the face with one more day.

Now on the day I'm about to get out, all of a sudden, I'm being treated differently again. They didn't want me to walk through the front door. They wanted to take me around the back and let me out through the back door around the sally port. I'm like, What the hell is this all about? You never did this before. Nobody else. Why? So, I'm protesting that. So now what's supposed to be a good thing now is to piss me off now. And this is why. When I did get out, it

felt so good. Looked up. I did a lot of thank you's. And then to see my wife, Renaldo, Ronnie, and you guys. It felt really good. I had my paintings. I know I had all this legal work.

I'm focused. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that. And all of a sudden, I started thinking about my dad and it just broke me down, got me even angrier, but I was happy because I knew he was watching.

And on my way walking over to the Dixon Correctional Center sign, Mike told me, "You free." He thought he was whispering, but he said, "You free, motherfucker." And ever since then, he been reminding me that I can do what I want to do. I'm not locked up no more. I have control over me. But yeah, it was a good day. But quickly you discover that things change. The life I knew was gone. It's a brand-new damn planet. Everything has changed. And it's hard. It is hard being out. Yeah, it's a good thing, but the challenge is, it's like starting over again. Yeah. I'm trying to start over, but it's tough. It's tough.

Q2: Yeah, it's tough. You remember this? "You free, motherfucker."

Howard: Yeah.

Q2: I said privately and I thought I was whispering. But I said probably. Right? And you have support. You know? And it's hard still for all of us. But we made it through this shit. And because of your activism, because of the work you did, and forming the Death Row Ten, and listening to the people that was around you, we're here and we're able to tell our story, man. And so, you can be proud of coming through a hard storm.

Howard: The sun is shining, man.

Q2: It's coming up, baby. You hear me? So, man.

Howard: I appreciate it.

Q2: Like, you have every reason, man, to be saluted and, like, honored, man.

Howard: And I'm honored. brother.

Q2: You're welcome, man.

Howard: I want to tell, I think this is important because it is important. It's part of the reason why I stayed in there for so damn long. I skipped over the part that my attorneys investigated the judge and I believe that he didn't think a Pope like kid would even go that far, but they investigated the judge, come to find out Judge Mannion was an ex-cop who worked with Jon Burge before and the officer that tortured me and the public defender that volunteered to take the case also is an ex-cop that also worked the area too.

The frame was in, they all knew about it and even worse, Judge Mannion worked with the cop that I was accused of robbing. And the reason why he gave me twenty-eight years, because he knew that guy. He was partnered with that guy from 1961 to 1964, and he never told me or my defense team that. When the Sun Times wrote the article about a torture path to death row, and Judge Mannion was interviewed, he said, “Yeah, he believed now that Jon Burge and company had tortured some people, had abused some people, but Stanley Howard, no, I don't think he was abused.” I'm like, Damn, all these years later, you still doing this?

Then I'm reading in the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin—my attorneys used to send me their old newspaper because I wanted to read their old news is new news to me—I read Judge Mannion's retiring. I'm reading in this article that all of a sudden it turns to me about one of his regrets. This son of a bitch said that he felt like I should still be on death row. And that the

jury heard the evidence. In other words, that I still should be executed. I spent all that time in prison, in death row, knowing that this judge knew, he knew, but he was no different. No judge at that point has ever threw out a torture confession.

Q: So, in your mind, what's the biggest reason why no state should have the death penalty?

Howard: Why do the United States still have a death penalty? When you look at all the other countries that have abolished in the Western civilized world has abolished their death penalty. Why? We all know it's ran by humans. It's wrong. Unless you also can say that some humans do not have the capacity to change. No. I mentioned Murray Hooper. Murray Hooper was on death row with us. In Pontiac here in Illinois. After the death penalty got ended here and we all was released, they took Hooper to Arizona. I'm reading the paper that I didn't even know he was in Arizona. That Arizona had executed Murray Hooper. Then wait a damn minute—which I wrote about this also—you mean to tell me in the state of Arizona, where half the state do not have confidence in their elections, where some of them actually still believe that Donald Trump won the election? They don't have faith in their elections, but they have faith in being able to carry out executions and execute other human beings.

You don't rob the robber. You don't burglarize the burglar. You don't rape the rapist. But why murder the murderer or last murder? Like I said before, the little girl in Sister Helen Prejean's book, *Dead Man Walking*. When the little girl was watching the news and her mother had to explain to her what execution mean. And she explained that they was killing him for killing someone, he always could take the advice of a child because of their innocence and their pure thoughts. The little child asked, "Who's going to kill them for killing them? And where do it ends?" It's home.

Q: We just have a few follow up questions and we can—so that you all ask them, or I got a couple notes, but, okay. So just to follow up on a couple of things that you talked about one of the things that a few people that we've spoken with have talked about is this, this flyer that the Death Row Ten created that I asked you about earlier. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

Howard: The flyer, yes. I used to get newspapers and magazines and articles and things like that. And when I had the idea about the first protest, I wanted to organize this protest. I want it to happen because I believe that if we left it in the hands of the system, that there was no justice coming out of these courtrooms. As long as we kept the fight within the closed doors of their courtrooms, we didn't have a chance. So, I wanted to take the fight to the people. I wanted the people to be able to know what happened, why it happened and what is going on. And I believe that people power is stronger than political power.

So, [*phone rings*] like I described how I made the flyer, I had these newspaper articles and magazine clippings and like this little cartoon of the guy sitting in the electric chair, a picture of Jon Burge and other little quotes about the death penalty or the death row. I mean, or the death penalty. Is that it? I glued it. I ran out of glue. I started using jelly to glue this stuff to this flyer to get it there. Jelly works too. And then came the hard part of actually trying to get the flyer copied. You see, we didn't have no law library on Death Row. We just had two cells that was a wall tore down and that's where all the books was at. There was no librarian back there. There was no copy machine. There was no typewriter. There was nothing but just these books. In the beginning, the books was in four cells on two gallery. Three cells on the beginning of two gallery. And then they moved it because they wanted to use those cells. They moved it to the back.

So, the law librarian from the general population had to come to our building once a week, if we're lucky, twice a week. And we make requests like that. So, the first couple of times I tried to get the flyer copy. No, it's not happening. What is this? Why? And, and then, what's her name? Joanlee Starwood. Who also used to have a job at St. Leonard's. She copied the flyer for me. Gave me a hundred copies. And then when I gave it to other guys, I was like, "Man, go to Joanlee she going to copy it for you." So that's how the flyer came about. And then after that, I started having my own personal flyer. Was my personal flyer. Then I got sophisticated at the—the Death Row Ten was mentioned in the newspaper. I took that Death Row Ten pieces, and I put that at the top. Instead of where I wrote them with the marker, I used that at the top. And then I type my name and address at the bottom. So, when I used to write letters, I used to fold that up and put that inside my letters. So, when people see it all, just come to Stanley Howard, here's his address, here's his ID number. Yep. I'll show you.

Q2: One follow up question because we both will be in trouble. Like you talked about a lot of people, but you didn't mention Alice Kim specifically.

Howard: I did.

Q2: Pardon me. This is my question. Like you talk specifically about specific people and you mentioned her in a line of a list of people, but I'm curious with respect to your activist work, like the Live from Death Rows, was it specific people, that Alice Kim play an actual role in the interviews?

Howard: No, no, no, no, no, no. Marlene Martin was the director, if you will. And Joan Parkin and Alice Kim was, what? Assistant directors or something like that, and they played a crucial role in everything that we did. First, we used the mindset that Joan Parkin was the death routine coordinator. But it wasn't just Joan, it was Joan and Alice Kim. They pushed

this, and like right now, because of the torture memorial that we are building right now, I'm fighting to try to make sure that it is separated from all these other groups. It's been listed as the people that was fighting for the Death Row Ten. And it was not true in the beginning. The only organization that we had that was helping us was the campaign in the death penalty. We was getting pushback from lawyers and other people because they didn't want us to be out there publicly talking about this. And I just kept going forward, staying in my head because, like I said, people power is stronger than political power.

We had other organizations that was also out there, but they was paper pushers to me. What I mean by that, I don't need you fighting for my—I do need you to, whatever. That because you able to take a handful of dirt and I'm trying to move this big old mountain. I take that handful. Another people is having truck loads to take dirt. I take that too, but I needed somebody that was going to be confrontational. That was going to stand up to the powers that be. And they was willing to go to the police station. They was willing to go to city hall and the state's attorney's office and say, and demand justice for us. And bringing our family members. The mothers of the movement, my mom, Aaron Patterson's mom, Frank Brown's mom, and Ronnie Kitchen's mom, went all over this damn country trying to tell this story. We had mothers of the movement and they played an important role in making sure that we was being heard.

So, to speak of Alice Kim and Joan and Marlene, they were the heroes to me in helping to get the death penalty overturned in this country. Why I say that? I don't want to exclude nobody like Mary Johnson or Aviva or other people that was connected to the movement or Bill Ryan. I don't want to exclude nobody, but in my opinion, because of their activism. It changed the tide in this country. I truly believe that. From strict, get tough on crime, to actually being reformers. It just didn't happen overnight.

Q: Well, and it's the reason we're talking to quite a few people. It's not one person can't tell it all, right? There's just so much there. I just want to make sure to get one thing fully stated for the camera that we talked about, but, you know, just make sure we capture that the Death Row Ten was formed at Pontiac Correctional Center on the condemned unit there and stretched to the other people on death row. Can you just state that one more time fully for the camera to make sure we have it nice and clear?

Howard: The Death Row Ten was not formed, it was formed by these crooked cops, but it was organized because of a need to get the word out from outside these courtrooms. And it started at Pontiac Correctional Center. By me. And when I took it to the other guys, they was really aboard with this, especially when I finally got some help. Somebody agreed to help us. I wasn't by myself. I had Renaldo pushing me also to get out there, get out from the shadow of this other individual. So, it was really good. It gave me a lot of hope.

Q2: I guess the question is like—and we follow that—but did the Death Row Ten stretch beyond Pontiac to Menard?

Howard: Yes, it did, because we had other Death Row Ten members there also, and but we weren't able to work closely with them cats like we was here in Pontiac. Menard is almost like eight, nine hours away from the city of Chicago. And Pontiac is about an hour and a half, two hours, if you will. So, it was easier for Alice and Joan to come visit the Pontiac than it was to drive all the way to Menard. It was like New Year's Eve 2000 when Jesse Jackson came down to Death Row to visit the Death Row Ten. Governor Ryan was supposed to have been coming, but he didn't come. He sent his deputy director of criminal justice and public safety, Matt Bettenhausen.

And when he called all of us up to the visit that day, we didn't know what the heck was going on. Why are we all sitting in this damn visiting room like this tonight. Man, be quiet, man, be quiet. I don't know what the heck is going on, but man, be quiet. [*Unclear*] this is totally unusual. So, we sat in the visiting room, basically in total silence, trying to think about, what the heck is this all about? And then came my mom, Ronnie Kitchen's mom, Alice Kim, and Joan, and Jesse, and all of them, and the warden, and all these people. And it was, "Hey, take them handcuffs off." Whoa, for real? I'd never been in a handcuff around nobody or shackled around nobody. Unless I was around other condemned men. And so, it was the first time I actually got a chance to hug my mom and slob all over this, give her a big old hug and kiss. And we said a prayer. So, the Death Row Ten had actually started in Pontiac and was more so organized in Pontiac.

Q: Before we end, I want to give you a chance to share anything that maybe you wanted to share, but that we didn't touch on in the interview. But just before that, I want to check with the team to make sure. Is there anything else that—?

Q2: No, no.

Q: Okay, so yeah, just if there's anything you didn't get to say during the interview that you want to make sure to share now, please feel free.

Howard: Yes, I have one thing, [*unclear*]. Going in and out of the condemned unit every day, it was like you're stuck in the cell all the time. The guy's been executed. It's like every time we leave out of the cell, before they even open up the door, you have to be handcuffed behind the back or shackled, even to go to the shower. When Willie Enoch, who had his death penalty case, his case was one of the amazing cases because he didn't file a notice of appeal, didn't have the argument, but anyway, he had blood clots. And one morning, he started

screaming, "I can't breathe." And we started rattling the bars, trying to get the police to come upstairs. When they finally came upstairs, they obviously saw him laying on the floor. There was no opening the door to go in to try to rescue him or help him. They had to go get this fishing thing to drag him to the door, to put the handcuffs on him before opening the door. And when the paramedic, or whoever the hell he was, when he came rushing to the unit. When he walked past the cell, I realized he didn't have no first aid kit and this son of a bitch didn't even have on a watch to take his pulse.

It was bad, but there was always this one thing that I always felt good about. When you walk inside, not the front entry where you go into the North cell house. But on the side entry that we always use to go to the yard. When you look up at the top of the building, where the gutter is at, there was this crack in the bricks like, and a bird apparently had went up there and defecated. And there was literally a tree. Growing out of the bricks. Up over the door of the condemned unit, there's a tree growing up over the damn door. I'm like, Wow. And it always told me that, you see, if you give life a chance, it's able to flourish anywhere. So, every day when I walked in that condemned unit building and I looked up there at that top, it always gave me hope. That would give your life a chance. It could grow and flourish anywhere. Now, I'd like to go back there and see whether or not that damn tree is still there too.

Q: That's a really beautiful note to end on. Thank you so much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]