

Thank you, Chairman Biggs and Ranking Member Jackson Lee, for the opportunity to address the subcommittee today. I am going to discuss my experience as a victim of violent crime in the District of Columbia. On December 16, 2020, I made a series of mistakes that almost cost me my life. Some may say it is “victim blaming” but the reality is that crime exists, and if you are not careful in violent cities like D.C., you may end up just as another statistic.

Shortly after 5pm on December 16th, I left my apartment on N Street in Shaw, just a short-walk from the White House. I was headed to get groceries and I did not realize that I would soon face a loaded barrel. Just as I began walking, I noticed a man acting suspiciously, he was looking over at me as we were about a block from each other. I told myself that “nothing was wrong” and that nothing bad was going to happen to me. Afterall, the street was busy, what could go wrong?

I turned down the block and headed towards the grocery store, I checked behind and there he was, still eyeing me but this time he had followed my direction. Alarmed, I noticed a couple walking just behind me, and behind them, the would-be criminal. I thought to myself, don’t worry, there are people right behind me, it’s okay.

A few moments pass, and I look behind again, the couple is nowhere to be seen, and the man is quickly approaching. Before I could think, he was next to me, asking for money. I politely said no and kept walking, without realizing he had pulled a gun.

The criminal stepped in front of me and stated “you know what it is” before aiming a pistol at my face and pressing it against my forehead. I almost didn’t believe it. But then reality set in, and I thought that I was going to lose my life to a criminal on the street.

He sat me down and I will never forget our interaction, line by line. He told me, “Do what I say and you ain’t gonna die tonight.” All I could hear is “you’re gonna die tonight” and that my mom would have to come down to D.C. to identify my body, on some cold street in Washington.

I remember looking into his eyes, and seeing no life, no thought, no empathy, just evil. During the entire interaction, where he demanded property after property from me, his finger laid on the trigger while the pistol pointed directly at my head. I fortunately concealed my phone, while it was foolish to not hand it over, it expedited my ability to call for help.

I remember the last words out of his mouth, muffled behind his Covid mask, “alright, you did good tonight, you ain’t gonna die.” I thought, well this is where he shoots me. He stood me up and told me to “walk”, and I did. After a few steps, I turn around and I can see him starting to run. I repeatedly told myself “Mitchell, you have your phone on you call 9-1-1.” I took cover behind a parked car, and called exactly who you want to respond in that situation, the police. Within minutes, squad cars line 10th&N street. I’ll never forget seeing the siren lights come, thinking “Thank God for the police.” A young female officer responded immediately and I knew I was safe and that my life was spared.

While I am trying to remain within my five minutes, I would like to note that after the arrest and coordinating with the US Attorney's office in D.C., my criminal went to trial. I gladly and passionately wrote a victim impact statement. I pleaded with the Judge not to give a lenient sentence as this man would commit worse crimes than what he did to me.

The Judge proceeded to give my criminal 24 months, and suspended a year of his sentence because the Judge believed his judgment was still forming. This light sentence was given despite my criminal robbing 5 victims and two businesses. That's right, one year for multiple armed robberies. Within weeks of my criminal's release, he would go on to rob two more people at gunpoint. I would only find out after reading the weekly D.C. arrests.

We will never be able to eradicate violent crime completely, but we can take action to ensure that it happens less frequently. Today D.C. has the highest amount of homicides in almost 20 years, it is short 400 police officers, with the average homicide suspect having 11 prior arrests.

I implore the subcommittee to understand that policing, prosecuting, and incarceration works. Violent crimes should not be dealt with lightly, how many more stories do we have to read about entirely preventable tragedies?

Thank you.