

ANONYMOUS

I live in Venice Beach part time and also have a home in Hawaii. I've been in Venice for about 32 years.

'That kind of trauma is in our blood.'

My mother was born in Manzanar, which is where they interned the Japanese (during World War II). My grandparents were the first generation to come, and they came to Los Angeles during the depression. My grandfather would go to the LA produce market, wait 'til it closed, and then buy all the produce at cheap. He set up produce carts all around the City of Los Angeles and fed people during a time when people were starving. My grandparents became very wealthy during the depression. They had a boarding house where Japanese people could go.

After World War II, when Japan had been decimated by the bomb, my grandpa, he was an angry S.O.B. They had taken everything from him and put him in this camp. I grew up with this picture of their block, Block 8, and it's probably 100 people or so. My grandfather is the only one in a suit and he's standing there with this scowl on his face. When I went to Manzanar, it's now a park, a monument museum. When you go there, you walk in and there is a photo of Block 8. There's my family. I went with a couple of girlfriends. I was like, "There's my grandpa and there's my grandma holding my mom." I told the people [working there]. They were like, "We didn't have the names of those people." They put their names in.

They made sake in [the camp]. My grandfather became an alcoholic. I know there was a lot of trauma. I can't imagine my grandmother having a baby, my mother, during that time. We know now that kind of trauma gets passed down. My mother was the youngest [of three]. [My grandfather] was a violent alcoholic and that was transferred down.

My mother married an alcoholic. My father didn't hit her. My dad is a white guy. When I was born, my grandpa tried to pay off my dad. [He had] a racial superiority thing. He said, "You cannot have kids; they're going to be stupid. I'll pay you to go away. If you guys get married, I will disown you." My mother was disowned, and I was born. Luckily, my aunt was around, and she put me on my grandpa's lap. She said, "Here. Hold her while I go to the bathroom." The story is that we fell in love. Even though he was mean to everybody else, he wasn't mean to me. The first six years, I lived with my grandparents.

My mom was off having fun with my dad. They were drinking and doing all the things. She was 21 when she had me. They got divorced when I was 7. I had a little sister. My dad didn't [recognize] her as his daughter; I don't know why. My mom remarried a fundamentalist Christian and [when I was] 7 to 14, I was

with my mother. The trauma that she inherited was very abusive. My stepdad's niece came to live with us. This blonde, blue eyed little girl was very abused by my mother. I was older than my siblings; I saw it all.

My mom put me in charge at 7. My mom would be depressed. I would wake up in the middle of the night to feed my sister and my mom would be out all day. I was in charge of these three kids [when I was] 9 to 14, when I left. I'm just now unraveling that kind of trauma, being adultified and being responsible for things before you really know and how that affected my mothering. That's generational trauma.

'The underbelly of our society is rooted to addiction.'

My son was shot and killed on April 15, 2022. Someone that none of us knew came into the house, shot him and the girl that he was with, and then proceeded to spend four hours in the house. My son had a hidden camera in his garage and caught his own killer.

What's really amazing about this story is that [the killer's] own mother called the police because she was scared of him. He was threatening her, and it went into a high-speed pursuit and basically that's what brought him in. I'm grateful; it was because of her call that we were able to catch him.

My son was 31. He had some addiction issues. Violence, drug trafficking, and sex trafficking and these sorts of the underbelly of our society is rooted to addiction and I want to start calling it that. Homelessness – let's start calling it addiction. Gun violence – let's start calling it addiction. I'm quite sure that the man who murdered my son was an addict. That doesn't excuse him. My son had this issue and he agreed to go into treatment, and we were getting them out of this house. He was two weeks away from getting help.

'I never imagined that he would have gotten killed in this way.'

My son was born in 1991 when Rodney King happened¹. There were tanks going down the Venice Beach boardwalk. It was a time of incredible racial violence. I can remember feeling scared for my little newborn baby. *What is the world going to be like?*

I had been harassed by police before. It was this thing that happened on the boardwalk. I was talking to somebody, and my kids were on their bikes like a block away. I could see them, and police came

¹ In March 1991, Los Angeles Police Department officers were caught on video beating Rodney King, an unarmed Black motorist, during a traffic stop. After the officers were acquitted in 1992, and fueled by decades of racial tension, riots broke out across the city, leaving more than 50 people dead and more than 2,000 injured.

up and said, “Are those your kids?” They basically said that I was neglecting my kids. I ended up getting all freaked out. They had me in handcuffs. My friend came because she was like, “What is going on? You're upsetting the children.” My kids were crying because I was in handcuffs. I was yelling at the police, “You don't even know what's going on. How dare you come in and accuse me of neglecting my kids?” I got heated; they tried to contain me.

There was racial violence for my son because he's Japanese, Lebanese, Irish, English. He's a mix, but he had blue eyes. When he was little, people used to be like, “Are you the nanny?” He grew up seeing his brown skinned friends harassed by police. He had this thing in him that didn't trust the police. I honestly wonder if he didn't have that, would he be alive today? Could he have called someone? I don't know. At the end, he was living in a lot of fear. I didn't know that until after he got killed. He was afraid. I never imagined that he would have gotten killed in this way, but this is what happened.

I was scared to death.'

[The addiction] started when he was 15 years old. His dad had gotten remarried and was going to have a baby and he just started. We tried counseling. My grandma and auntie were in Hawaii, and they said, “Why don't you come here for a year?” So, we did, and he rebelled. The school that he was going to go to in Hawaii was like, “Maybe he just needs some wilderness therapy.” They came in the middle of the night. These two big guys put him in handcuffs and took him away and it was very traumatic. I still have PTSD from that night and so did he for years. One of the programs that he went into, they were doing all kinds of weird stuff. He had trauma from that.

I don't know if it was a blessing or a curse that his dad had money because he went away and did all these treatment programs to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years. They take your kid away. You have no power because you're so afraid that your kid is going to lose their life so you're willing to do whatever. I had friends that had kids that went into mental institutions, jail, death, and insanity. When you look out on the streets, that's what we're looking at. My son was never on the streets.

I finally got in the room of Al-Anon (a group for relatives and friends of alcoholics and addicts) and that was my source of strength, support, understanding, and wisdom. If I didn't find that room, if I didn't have the humility that I was on my knees with no resources, with nothing to do – I felt so alone. The beautiful thing about Al-Anon is that I learned to not fight with him. That was the biggest learning. Addicts, they feel so bad inside. B would push my buttons. He would say things like, “Feminism is cancer.” He's not like that, but he knew it would push my buttons. Then I'd be off and running and we would be fighting. Because I grew up with a lot of violence in my house, that was kind of an automatic place for me.

If I didn't have the ability to see beyond the ugly presence of addiction, I wouldn't have a relationship with him and I did have one. I had to manage my fear. I did this for so many years. From 15 to 31, he had years of sobriety. We lived together for three years in the house that he was killed in. He got into welding. He got up every morning at 5 a.m. and went to welding school. He was doing so well and then the addiction got him again and [this time], he was an adult. I had to let him make his own choices, even though I was scared to death.

He was so clever. He was so smart, and his humor was so off. It was definitely not politically correct because he liked provoking a reaction, that was his nature. He liked to antagonize. He was a trickster. He had that kind of trickster energy. I could not imagine that he would be killed by someone else. He had sores that wouldn't heal. He was skinny. I was so scared, but it made every moment precious with him. [Addiction] was a big monkey on his back, but he was brilliant in so many ways.

My son was very creative. He was a welder and fabricator. He made amazing art pieces. He was creating things up to the very moment that he was killed. Even in his addiction, he was a creative person. He had this shop in his garage. He was a welder and a manufacturer. He was such a beautiful spark of light. After he died, so many people came out of the woodwork and said, "B gave me a metal flower." "B was the most loyal. He was always there for me." He had all these friends that considered him his best friend that were part of different worlds.

There was a woman whose son was killed; she would check in on me every couple of weeks. Leading up to the trial, there was so much trepidation and I had her to call. She's like, "There's going to be an ending to this. You're going to get through it, and here's what to expect. Here's what you need to know." None of my blood family showed up for me during the trial. But every day I had at least three to eight people from my spiritual family.

My ex-husband would be like, "How does she even know these people? Who are these people?" The thing is, that group, we can share what's really going on. We can say, "I'm hurting today. My heart is breaking. I don't know how I'm going to get through this," and then someone would be like, "I lost my son too and you're going to be OK." I was astounded at who showed up and that they could be there every day. It was so horrific, the whole thing, and they didn't look away. They could look at it with me. They could hold my hand. I don't think I could have gotten through otherwise.

'It is a culture of violence.'

I've had my own addictions with things that I've had to work through. The thing that Al-Anon has taught me is it's not the obvious things, it's the control and the anxiety and the feeling like you have to fix

everything and that I'm supposed to know what to do. I'm the one that's got to figure it out. I could never ask for help.

I'm in rooms with lots of parents whose kids are addicted, and they don't know what to do. Some [parents] put them out on the street because they can't have them in the house anymore. I want to hear some ideas from our county officials. What do we do with these kids? 'Cause no one's doing the right thing and they become the violent people that steal and get into all of the bad things that killed my son. It is a culture of violence around addiction that needs to be addressed. Have addiction specialists on the street. How come I didn't have someone to call when I was up nights? I want a 911 or 811 or 711 that parents can call. Not police, but maybe people that know [what it's like].

I would pray, especially when I was trying to get him through high school. I would pray to God, "Please help me find a mentor for this boy. Let me find a strong man that can talk to him." His dad was not that person. He just wasn't. Maybe that could be the role of the police department. Maybe they could have a person that would go and work with middle schoolers and high schoolers and let them get to know them as humans. After the trial, I was so impressed by the police and by our process. I felt so grateful that we have a justice system. I don't have to go and find this killer. I really felt so grateful.

I'm looking at models where they've done restorative justice instead of putting people in prison. This is tricky because I definitely want the man that killed my son to go away for life. He will get life without parole because we did the special circumstances. I also worked for three years in juvenile hall in Los Angeles. I understand all the generational things that put kids there. There are some people that are killers. My son was not a killer. This man was a killer. Just because he had a bad childhood doesn't mean that is an excuse to kill my son and others. I'm glad he's off the streets and thank God we have a justice department that could do that. I feel grateful.

I want to honor him.'

For the mothers that are suffering out there, God bless you. Do things that help you put your oxygen mask on. Face your own generational violence and love yourself so that you can be that model of love and compassion and respect for your children and for others. Find a spiritual program. Find a room where you can share your heart and your struggles so people can hear you. That alone is huge and it's a day-by-day thing. They say that addiction is a baffling disease. It is and I hope one day you look back on this time like this was the Stone Age of treatment because I don't feel like we have good treatment models out there.

The Storytelling Project – Anonymous

Recorded at:
Los Angeles County, CA
07/08/24
3:00 pm

The legacy of losing my son is that it's so much pain, I didn't want to live with it. I still don't some days, but I want to honor him. I will pay it forward as others have done for me. We need each other, we can't do it alone.

There's some space around my pain now. It's weaved in with all this love I have for him. He was a magnificent soul. He really was and I want to honor that.