

"You know my name, not my story..."

By Sherrell Adams, 8th grader at Carl & Louis Stokes Central Academy

Wow! Where can I begin? I mean there have been tons of times I've had a problem that I had to overcome. But there is only one time, one DISASTEROUS time, that I remember the most.

It was a spring night in 2009 of May 29th when the problem began. I remember this night as if it were yesterday. Shynnelle and I were lying in bed, getting ready to go to sleep so we could get started with our next day, when our mother walks into the room and says...

"Hey you guys turn on the television and turn to the news!" My sister and I were confused. Why did she want us to turn to the news? What was going on? My sister Shynnelle immediately turned the TV on and turned to the news. She didn't like the horrid look on my mother's face. We just watched afraid of what was going to happen next. My mother had a worried look on her face. She turned the TV off and looked into our eyes and held our arms and said as clear as day,

"That might be you guys' father."

We looked at her with a confused look on our face. What is she talking about?

"Huh?" was all we said.

"Well the news reporter stated that a man was gunned down on Buckeye Road and your father lives near Buckeye Road. All I'm saying is, this could be Thomas," she answered.

"That's not our dad. We know that's not our dad. It can't be," Shynnelle said.

"You could be right, but investigators are not sure who the dead victim is. I've tried numerous times to contact your dad but he's not answering," Mom said.

"Well what did they say?" I asked.

"They said the suspects robbed the victim for his cell phone, and the victim must have fought back because the teenage boys who were doing the robbing jumped him. When they got a hold of the phone, they shot the man in the leg. They then

shot the man at the back of the air and rode off on their bikes. The man was found this morning and discovered dead at 12:45 A.M. Police are not sure who the teenagers' were but witnesses saw three of them ride off on their bikes."

"Well can I try to call him again?" Shynnelle asked.

"You can try, but...", was all she could say before Shynnelle ran to get the house phone. She quickly dialed my father's number, anxious to see if he was going to answer, but unfortunately he didn't.

"One of you can just try again in the morning. I'm sure he's probably asleep. It is late. All we can do right now is keep our fingers crossed, pray, and get some sleep. Goodnight," my mom said turning off the light the TV, and shutting the door behind her.

I prayed before I shut my eyes that night. And decided I'd cross my fingers until I fell asleep.

"The man is not our dad", was what I keep saying to myself until I fell asleep.

But more conflicts awaited me as I woke up the next morning.

I woke up nervous, shaky, and anxious the next morning. My stomach also hurt and it felt as if someone was punching me in the stomach. I had a bad dream the night before as well. I had a dream that I found out that the man was my dad and my mother left us to be escorted to a foster home. We had horrible foster parents and Shynnelle and I were eventually split up. I woke up with sweat all over my brow and I felt nauseous. It was the worst dream of my life!

I didn't eat breakfast that morning. It hurt to even think about eating. I glanced at my sister and it seemed as if she'd forgotten about the situation last night. Maybe she thought that it wasn't true. I wish I could feel that was but images still roamed in my head of the bad dream. Voices in my head were telling me that the man could be my father.

I called my father a million more times before leaving out for school and again, no answer. Why wasn't he answering his phone? Did he not want to speak to us? Did he have other kids he cared for more than us? Multiple questions roamed through my head that morning in my homeroom class. Surprisingly, my teacher brought up the subject of the victim who was shot on Buckeye road. He told all of what was said on

the news & what my mother had said about the shooting. I wanted nothing but to get off of this subject so I put my head down for the remainder of the period.

Fortunately, at lunch time, I was feeling a little better. The thought of the situation about the man who was shot disappeared from my mind. I was having fun throwing food, singing, and chatting with my friends at the lunch table. I had a pretty decent remainder of the day, until after school.

My sister and I, along with my friend Miracle and two other boys, decided we'd take a trip to the park. My sister and I hesitated, but we then agreed we'd all go to the park for a little while.

For thirty minutes we swung, slid, ran; anything you could think of. We were exhausted and were all ready to go home. We needed to get home anyway before we got in trouble.

Shynnelle and I rushed home as we waved good bye to our friends. *Our mom is going to kill us*, I thought as we ran towards our front door. When we approached the door, my brother was already walking out of it.

"Oh, mommy looking for y'all. Go upstairs now!" he boomed as he walked down the sidewalk towards the corner where he and his gang friends met up to just stand there and do nothing, all day long.

While we were walking up the stairs I thought, *Man she must have belts, sticks, rocks, maybe even a bat ready to hit our behinds as soon as we went through her bedroom door.*

She must have heard us coming up the stairs because she opened the door abruptly and said, "where have y'all been?"

We stood there, shifting from one foot to another. We were lost for words. I finally spoke up and said, "Ma, we were at the park. Sorry we're late. We just wanted to have a little fun. Are we in trouble?"

"Never mind that," she answered and said, "come in my room and sit. I have something to tell you."

Shynnelle and I walked into the room and sat on different sides of the bed. We looked at each other, then our mother as she shut her bedroom door.

'What's going on?' I said staring at my mother.

She hesitated for a moment, took a deep breath, but finally spoke up and said, "Look... you guys'. It's going to be hard for me to say this but...the man that was killed on Buckeye Road...was your father."

I couldn't believe my ears. I looked around the room as my sister began to cry. I didn't notice before I saw my mother that her eyes were puffy red as she began to tear up. And you know what I did. I laughed.

I know that might be a shock to you. I was even shocked when I did it, but I just couldn't believe it. There's no way my worst dream could be coming true, no way! But it all hit me. I looked around the bedroom once more. Then I began to wail. The tears kept falling and falling and

Between sobs I was saying things like "*Dad why couldn't you just give them the phone!*" It was completely devastating.

The next day at school I told my teacher that the man was my father. He was completely surprised and felt horrible and said if there's anything I need, I can talk to him. But nothing can bring back my father, nothing.

The following Monday, we went to his funeral. My dad was cremated, so all we saw were slide show photos of him when he was little, and teenager, and even all grown up. Boy did some of those pictures have my crying with laughter. I guess afros were the style back in the 70's & 80's. (Sigh) I was really going to miss him.

Now I'm 14 years old and the situation still haunts me till this day. But this is a problem I overcame. For years I thought I'd never get over the death of my father. I'd grow up without one and probably won't make it in life. But as years progressed I've learned the only bad choices I can make are the ones I choose to make. No one can choose for me. Not my mom, my sister, my mother, not even my dad.

But you know who can, ME! Yeah, it still makes me cry, and I do have bad days when I think about it. But I know as long as I had the faith in God, that's I'd always overcome those bad times. I'm still overcoming it till this day. But I know I'll be loved, cared for, and protected with the spirit of my father, and the faith in God.

All I can say is..." You know my name, Not my story."