

Telling History in Public: Loyola Project for the Innocent Oral History Project

Gloria Killian

December 2, 2020 (interview conducted on Zoom)

Interviewed by Kayla Banks and Shaye Gill

SUMMARY:

In 1986, Gloria Killian was convicted of first-degree murder, attempted murder, burglary, robbery, and conspiracy for a December 1981 home invasion and was sentenced to 32 years-to-life in prison – on the false testimony of a witness who later admitted that he offered false evidence as part of a deal with the prosecution. Killian's conviction was overturned, and she was released in August 2002, with the charges subsequently dismissed. In this interview by Kayla Banks and Shaye Gill, Ms. Killian discusses her experiences in prison, her exoneration, and her work as an advocate for incarcerated women.

TRANSCRIPT

Shaye Gill (SG): Today we are interviewing Gloria Killian, who was wrongfully convicted of murder she did not commit for the Telling History in Public Loyola Project for the Innocent Oral History Project. It is December 2, 2020, and we are conducting the interview using Zoom. I am Shaye Gill, one of the project interviewers.

Kayla Banks (KB): And I'm Kayla Banks, another project interviewer. Okay, so, can you describe your general background to us?

GK: Okay, well, that stumped me. Right, right off the beginning. Do you mean prior to my wrongful conviction? Do you want me to just begin there? Okay, before we get into this, how exactly do you have it structured and how do you want it to go?

SG: It basically starts with just a little bit of your background, I think prior to your, like, conviction, and then a little bit about your experience within prison, and then about the exoneration, and then after the exoneration, so it kind of like moves chronologically.

GK: Okay. All right, um, well, I'm stuck again. This all began almost, at least 30 years ago. And I have an unusual case, in the sense that, um, my entire case went on for over 23 years. And it finally ended with my prosecutor being brought up on charges by the State Bar Association. But it began in, on December 9th, 1981, when there was a home invasion robbery in Sacramento, California, and it continued until, God, many, many years later, when it was finally, as I said, my district attorney was finally brought up on charges. Prior to that, I was actually in law school when this whole mess happened to me, which I guess goes to prove that law school

isn't always the answer. But my case involves a great deal of corruption, prosecutorial misconduct, and that type of thing, which people are beginning to understand goes on all the time. But at that time, it was, it wasn't even considered a problem or a possibility. I, I would have to say that it not only changed my life, it took my life in a new direction. I mean, needless to say, it changed my life. But, um, it took me in a completely different direction. I was 40 years old when I went to prison, and I was there for 17 and a half years.

SG: Our next question is, can you describe the circumstances which led to your sentencing?

GK: Well, I was convicted, which was the first problem. Originally I was arrested December 16th, 1981. I was charged with the death penalty. I was, obviously, I was unable to bail out, because people who were charged with facing the death penalty are not, are not allowed bail, at least at that time in California. I was incarcerated for four and a half months. And the case against me was dismissed, because there was no evidence against me. But that never stopped Sacramento County from trying. A year, approximately a year later, I was rearrested, despite the fact that my district attorney knew that I hadn't committed the crime, and also knew that there was plenty of, there were plenty of witnesses, and plenty of people that could give definitive answers as to how they said it actually happened and gone down. He still charged me with the death penalty, which is one of the scarier things about my case. Anyhow, this time they had themselves a witness, which the district attorney had helped him to come up with a suitable story, etc. They lied about the fact that he had a secret deal, etc. And I was convicted. It's difficult to defend yourself against something that doesn't exist. I mean, you can't say on, on March 13th, you know, 1986, I was in such and such place at such and such a time, because the whole case was so vague, and it was so structured. One of the problems was the district attorney vouched for his witness. But I think another part of the problem was the fact that at that particular time and place in jurisprudence history in this country, people believed that cops didn't lie, prosecutors didn't lie, if you were arrested, there had to be a good reason for it. And nobody was even slightly suspicious about what was going on at the time. Hopefully, people have gotten a little bit of an education about that kind of thing. And now look at arrests, prosecutions, etc, with something, with more of a jaundiced eye, because we have learned that you cannot always believe what they tell you. And that applies to many things across the board. But the fact remains that it's important for people to know about these cases, it's important for people to understand, simply because I don't want it to happen to you. This is not a matter of my deciding that, you know, I want to be out there and doing all this. I'm doing it for the reason that people need to know, you need to be able to defend yourself. If you have no idea that they're making this stuff up, as you're going along, you're not going to be able to defend yourself. And even though the general public has become somewhat more

sophisticated about this, so have the prosecutors, so have the police. So have a lot of people. I'm not saying they're all crooked by any means. Um, most of them are upright people doing the best they can. But not everybody is. And when you have the power of the entire state arrayed against you, you're in serious trouble.

KB: Okay, our next set of questions are going to be focused on your experience within prison.

GK: Okay.

KB: So the first question is, what was your experience like in prison?

GK: It was really strange. However, I went to prison, again, I've been on almost 20 years. And what happened to me in prison is unlikely to happen to anybody else. It was just a different time, a different set of circumstances, and prisons also operated differently. I was immediately assigned to the law library based upon my education. But in, in California, in the penitentiary, you go to what is called classification, which basically means that you meet with a bunch of staff, and they decide where you're going to work. And in California, you must work. So, um, someone that I met in the county jail had talked to the librarian about me, and so she signed a job application for me, and I took that to classification. They made fun of me, they humiliated me, they laughed at me, they said I was a liar, I hadn't gone to law school. And then they assigned me at the law library, and I held that job for 15 years. By the time, at the end, the same classification committee that had made fun of me and called me a liar and everything, actually held that job open for me when I went out to court. I had done a fair amount of work for the administration. This was a period of time when there was a lot of the beginning interest, for lack of a better term, in incarcerated, battered women. And there were several other types of cases that were just being looked into. Because cases involving men and women are very different. And yet the laws were developed for the men, and that's where they came from, but they didn't fit women at all. And so you couldn't, some that, there were many things you couldn't even talk about in court, you couldn't raise the issue, because of the way the evidence code was structured. And that's something that we worked on for a long, long time. And I find it interesting and also I'm very happy about the fact that women who killed their abusive partners are far less likely to be charged with a crime. If they are charged with the crime, they are more likely to be charged with a lesser crime, as opposed to first degree murder, etc. Unfortunately, there's a few women who are on death row in California and in other states who were convicted prior to all the changes in the laws. And/or they're from states where there haven't been any changes in the laws. And they're sitting on death row, or they're serving inordinate amounts of time. One of the problems was that sentencing guidelines, everything in

court, in prison, and in all the related areas has been designed and created for men. And the cases don't fit. And unfortunately, behind that, women are sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, death, or extremely long sentences, that they, that wouldn't happen today. But we still have these women that are kind of left behind, abandoned. California has been better about it. But in many other states, they are still sitting there after 30 years. So that was my big focus at the beginning. And I did a lot of different things. Like I said, I had that job for many, many years. But also I worked for people that had no idea how to run a law library, they had no idea what the United States Supreme Court laws were actually required them to do. And so once they got used to me, and they began to trust me, they just kind of let me do what I wanted to do, which worked out very nicely, at least for me. We were able to get services to all the different adjacent areas, such as people that were in administrative segregation, or they were in the psychiatric units, and they had no legal services at all. And we were able to get those started. We accomplished, it was a lot of things. I mean, there were times, one of the first people I met, was sent to me by my roommate who actually worked in the lieutenant's office. And this poor girl, she was always getting in trouble. And she was always getting write-ups, or what are known as 115s. And she would go in and just plead guilty and then get punished for it, whether she'd actually done it or not, or whether there was an explanation. Finally, my roommate sent her to me. I said, no, this has got to stop. And so I taught Ducky how to deal with some of that stuff. And the funniest thing that came out of it was at her next hearing, she did not plead guilty, she pled innocent. And the lieutenant who was hearing her 115 said, what happened? what's changed? And she said, I'm not pleading guilty, I don't have to plead guilty because Gloria said, I don't have to. It's not exactly what I taught her to say, but it was, it was nice, because she was always, they were picking on her, you know. and that sounds like a very childish statement, but when your guards are rated, some of the staff get the idea that you're going to be the person that they kick around, and they do it on a regular basis. And if you don't stand up for yourself, you're, you're going to have a lot of problems. When I went to prison, the women there didn't have a voice. They didn't know that they had a voice. They didn't know that they were supposed to have a voice. And so I felt that I needed to teach them how to have a voice.

SG: Um, you kind of touched on a little bit there at the end, but what were the power dynamics like in prison between prisoners and officers and among other prisoners?

GK: Well, first of all, you have no power. It was worse when I went in. Prison was going to wild and woolly at that time. You know, the cops were bringing in drugs, people were dealing, people running in circles. It was really a mess. But as far as the power differential is concerned, as a warden once said, there, you have no power. If an officer, for example, decides that he

wants to have sexual relations with you, or whatever strange thing might be going on, there isn't anything you can do about it. And even if you think it's consensual, it's not, really, there's no way it can be consensual. And this was the first warden we had that actually really stood up for us. He was also our first male warden, which made it both unusual and interesting. But as women learned to reach out, as more organizations were formed for women, um, they started, you know, having places to go, having someone to help them. I mean, when they, when I got locked up, if you, if you're getting punished in prison, you go to jail, which I know sounds nonsensical, but that's how it works, you go to jail. And I know when I went to jail, they came and got me in the middle of the night, and they dragged me off to jail. I didn't know at the time, they also took my roommate. Um, and the reason that I was locked up was they suspected that I was involved with the senate investigating committee. Because the prison that I was in had an inordinate number of may deaths, the medical department was basically busy killing us. And so, um, USC decided that they would grant us or we would create a law project. And that was the first law project that there had ever been at the California Institution for Women, and I seem to have the hiccups, sorry. And that made a huge difference. The first thing they did was file a medical lawsuit. And in fact, prisons in California are still semi under the control of a receiver. There is a receiver's office that is located in Sacramento, and this is a place where you can go if a friend or yourself or someone else is, you know, not receiving adequate medical treatment. And this is a huge expansion, because prior to that, there was only the prison law office. And it basically they dealt with issues for men, which are very, very different.

KB: Um, so the next question is, what was it like to be in prison knowing that you were innocent? How did you cope?

GK: Once you get into prison, I have honestly come to believe that it doesn't, at least for women, it doesn't matter if you're guilty or innocent. It really does not. That's supposedly not the position of the institution, it is to make those kinds of judgments. But it's a lot like being in the trenches in a war. And if you want to survive, you're not going to draw those kinds of kinds of lines, because you're going to face the same difficulties, whether you're innocent or guilty. The problem with being a lifer who is innocent, or for that matter who's guilty is that you are going to be exposed to some many different things. I personally didn't talk about my case a lot. It wasn't anybody's business, I wasn't going to give anybody any advantage to doing something with my case. They had put a, when I was arrested the first time, they put an undercover cop in the cell with us, which everybody promptly told me about. But the fact remains that you have no idea to whom you're speaking, or what they might do to you. When I was first in custody, um, my lawyer came in, and he was really, he was angry. And he

threw something across the table, you know, a bunch of documents and said exactly who is Tommy Lane, I believe it was? And I said, I don't know, I had no idea what he was talking about, or who he was talking about. And it turned out that this guy had broken his leg, or someone broke it for him, as the case may be. And as they were transporting him to the hospital, he said, hey, I know something about this big case, because the case had been all over television, you know, everybody in Sacramento County knew about it. And he said, you know, I know who did it and they said, oh, you know something about Killian, because I was the person that they were trying to crack at the time. To make a long story short, um, and as the cops even mentioned to him, he had been known to lie a lot. He was gonna try to get out on my back. And he just made some stuff up. It didn't work very well, because of what he said actually conflicted with the actual evidence that they had about the occurrence and what had happened. But it's common. You know, California is notorious for having a professional snitch, who incidentally now works as a consultant to look at people's cases to figure out if someone was lying and how and why.

SG: Did you meet anyone else who was in the – I know, you said you didn't really talk about the case much – but did you meet anyone else who was in the same or similar situation as you? Did most others you met in prison claim to be innocent, or did most openly admit their crimes?

GK: No, that's a fallacy. I don't know if it's true about men, that's obviously where the idea comes from. Most women will tell you what they did. In fact, that's a difficult problem, because when a woman gets arrested, she just might tell them every single thing that happened, which of course, they will use against her in the most ridiculous way. But um, yes, there were several other women in there who were innocent. In fact, there was a big scandal that went on a few years later, it had to do with a couple of cops who had just been lying about their cases and making stuff up. And when they were trying to clean that mess up, I found out how many short termers, quote unquote, people that were definitely not serving life sentences, and who are also innocent. It was interesting with women, because they seem to take two different approaches. One would say, I didn't do this, and I'll fight it to the death. Whether or not she'd be successful often depended on her record, you know, things that had gone on. And other women would say, meh, I didn't do this one, but I've gotten away with so much that, you know, I'm just going to go ahead and do the time and get out. And with the type of sentencing structure that we have in California, sometimes it honestly is simpler, and in some cases wiser, just to take, if they offer you 16 months, take it, because by the time you finishing, finish fighting your case, if you decide to go the other way, it could very well take you a couple of years, and you would be in the county jail. But these were usually women that had done time before that had a very good understanding of timing, sentence structure, all the different

things that would be, could be involved. And they would just go ahead and do that. Women have a different approach. And they have many different pressures, because oftentimes, their concern is child custody, they have to get out in a certain amount of time to do certain things in order to regain custody, or they may not have a secure place for their children to be. There's a lot of factors that are involved with women's cases and incarceration that are not involved with men.

KB: Um, so you kind of talked about this a little bit before, um, about, um, being in law school. How did that help you advocate for yourself? And for others in your fight for freedom?

GK: Well, obviously, I knew what I was doing, or at least I knew how to read a law book. One of the things that I find so ironic, is that a person. Okay, let's say your average person who's convicted of a homicide, and who has maybe a fifth grade education, and has never worked in the real world, etc., they're expected to learn how to read a law book, understand it, find the underlying principles that apply to them, and put together a coherent and cogent brief and submit it, and they have to do all this within a year. It's absolutely bizarre. We now have time constraints and time limits that we didn't when I first went to prison. There was a ninth circuit case, I think the guy had been down for something like three years, and he raised a new client when he was allowed to do it. But they put a stop to that fairly early on. Um, the, there's something called the AADPA, which is an act that sets out very definitive time limits and basically bars most people from getting into court and getting anything done. It's, it's another, what they're attempting to do is to exert the fight now, judgment finality, but what it does is it keeps a lot of people from having any kind of opportunity to help themselves. And most people who are incarcerated are not well educated. So, first of all, they have to learn to read, then they have to, you know, go from there. There are people who have done it. But it's not easy, and it doesn't happen all that often. So the advantage of having been to law school, obviously, you know, I had training. I hadn't finished law school, but, you know, I could certainly figure out what I needed to do. But also for me, it's, it's the thing that saved my life. It's what got me through there. I mean, the other women saved my life. But it gave me a mission, for lack of a better term. And I mean, there were days, and some of the strange things that happened, I probably wouldn't have wanted to be anyplace else in the world. But where I was that particular day when I won that particular thing, and also was able to do things that, that helped all of us, you know, that just kept them off our backs, and stopped some of the insanity. The prison that I was in was internationally known for the sexual abuse that went on there. And the drug abuse and everything else. It was the only women's prison in the state of California. And everybody said, well, it's CIW, you know, the rules don't apply. And it was downhill from there.

KB: Just a follow up question. So lots of your, so in lots of the work that you did within prison focused on those issues, like addressing those issues for you and other woman in prison?

GK: Yes. But I mean, a lot of it was just individual cases. But I mean, some of it was, some of it was funny. They do a urine analysis on people, you know, to see if you're using drugs or whatever. But they were doing urinalysis on pregnant women. And the pregnant women always came back with dirty tests, you know, so they were being punished for being drunk, all the time. I mean, there wasn't that much alcohol in the entire state of California for, you know, that stuff to go on. And it turned out that it was simply a medical fact of which custody was not aware; if you were pregnant, and you're given a urinalysis, unless it's a very specific one, that takes into account the fact that you are pregnant, you will show up as having used alcohol. All pregnant women are in a mild state of ketosis, and the test that they use tested for ketosis. And so these poor women were constantly being locked up and punished and all this stuff, and they hadn't done anything. You know, those were the kinds of things that were fun. They really were.

SG: Um, can you describe what led to your exoneration, the grounds for it, and the process of achieving it?

GK: It took five years. I mean, lord knows, they didn't want to rush. Um, 90 days after I was sent to prison, the guy who testified against me wrote a letter to the district attorney in which he said, I lied my ass off on the stand for you, I gave you Kilian, what are you gonna do for me? The district attorney suppressed that. And he had recanted, I believe, a total of three times. And there was a good deal of other exculpatory evidence, but that was the main thing that started it. One of my co-defendants was on death row. And the law firm that was appointed to represent him was very talented and very skilled, and they immediately went after that. And so they contacted me. In the meantime, I had met a woman named Joyce Ride, who finally asked me exactly what I was doing in prison. And so I told her, you know, my case and my story. And she decided she wanted to hire an investigator. And I told her, don't do it, there's nothing there to investigate. Little did I know, I mean, I had absolutely no idea all this other stuff was going on. So she did get an investigator. Um, the attorneys for my co-defendant started pushing me, and I didn't like it. I didn't know these people, and I did not I certainly didn't have to cooperate with them. So I said, no, my investigator went and talked to him. And lo and behold, they all showed up in visiting. And they actually spent a whole day with me, and they had a great deal of exculpatory evidence that didn't apply to their client, necessarily, but it applied to me. And they said, well, you know, we believe you, it's obvious that you're innocent.

And we would like to help you, but of course, we can't, because we have a conflict here. But you hire a lawyer, and we'll give you everything we have, they can come to our offices, and we'll turn everything over, and we'll do whatever we can to help you. So Joyce had lunch with all the professors at the USC Law Project and asked them who they would recommend. And they suggested Bill Genego, who's one of the founders of the Law Clinic at USC, and built up the case. It took another five and a half years, because they thought it like mad demons. And finally, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed it. But I still couldn't get out of prison. My DA was so rabid that they kept me in there for four and a half months, which, if you think being in prison is bad, try being in prison and not having a criminal case. It's very annoying to say the least. And so finally the Ninth Circuit said, you know, let her out, or you can go to prison yourself for a while, for contempt. And so they let me out. I was on a \$250,000 bail, but my attorney found a bail bondsman, who would get me out. And then it continued on for another, almost six months. And then it, it went through all the appeals processes and went to the United States Supreme Court. They refused to hear it, and that was finally the end. Sort of. And then after that, there were a lot, a lot of legislators, in particular John Burton, had become rather suspicious of the California criminal justice system, because there was too much going on. There were too many people who were not guilty, there were too many people who would be, who were over-sentenced. It was basically a mess at the time. And so they started holding legislative hearings, as to, you know, what was really going on with the criminal process in California. And they held him all over the state, and I made sure I managed to appear at every single one. And there was a lot of work that was done on the criminal justice at that, system at that particular time. And in particular, they were interested in women, because so many of these battered women had, you know, been sentenced to life without the possibility of parole or all of these other, you know, interminable sentences. And people were just beginning to understand, they were just beginning to look at the evidence code, and to understand why this didn't even apply to a woman. You know, the main thing in self-defense is equal force. Well, the problem is, there isn't going to be any equal force. If you want to live, you're going to pick up a weapon, if some, some big guy is trying to kill you, like your husband, and you're going to pick up a weapon. Based on the evidence code at that time, you were going to go to prison, probably for life without the possibility of parole. So there was a tremendous amount of work being done around it at the time, and I was just lucky enough to be in that same timeframe. And they were a lot of the legislators were very interested in what I had to say or what I knew. And then we also had several huge scandals about sexual misconduct, etc. And so there was investigations into that. Generally speaking, the entire criminal justice system and the prison system was being looked at, seriously, and from the, from the stat, from the point of view and the status of women had a lot to do with it, and so I was very helpful.

KB: Um, so the next question, or the next set of questions, are about after your exoneration. Um, so how have you adjusted to the outside world after being exonerated?

GK: What makes you think I've adjusted? I've been out a long time. I truly believe in therapy, and I've had a lot of it. Obviously, not enough. But, um, you have to deal with what happened. And I unfortunately, am one of those people that just goes, it's fine, everything's fine, I have no problems whatsoever. You know, crazy as a loon, but that's beside the point. I've had a lot of therapy. And the main thing that I did that made a difference, I think made a difference to me, is I went right back into the business. I started an organization to help the women I left behind. I work on innocence cases. I do whatever I can do to figure out ways that I can contribute to ensure that this doesn't happen to anybody else. Obviously, it happens all the time. And also, I was in there so long, that I know about a lot of things that, I mean, they're just wrong. You know, Sacramento came up, which is the head of the Department of Corrections, came up with a regulation that said you either had to, your hair couldn't be longer than your collar. They didn't think about women at all when they wrote this. I mean, for many women having long hair is cultural, particularly younger women. You can't do that, and so we fought that one a little bit, and then got that straightened out. But there's just so many things that happened to you that they're not necessary. It isn't necessary for someone to scream at you 24 hours a day. It isn't necessary to constantly degrade you, to put you down, to prey on you, to do what ever there might be. There's a lot more rehabilitative programs, but certainly not enough. But my belief was that they needed to look at things from the perspective of women. I mean, when I went to prison, for example, you could wear your own clothes, you could wear anything. And then they gradually took all that away, and you ended up wearing t shirts and jeans. And then they had to be white t shirts, which incidentally, you can see through a white t shirt, so I didn't really feel it solved the problem at all. But I was on a commission and we fought for like a year just to get a pink t shirt. You know, ridiculous. Why grown people even spent a year debating the color of T shirts, I'll never know. But there's so little attention paid to the perspective of women. There was a period of time they, oh, they said you couldn't dye your hair anymore. Didn't matter to me, I'd been gray my life. But women actually became so depressed, so unable to function because they weren't used to seeing themselves like that. Oh, that's no longer a rule anymore. But it's just example, examples of stupid things that were not well thought through and that do nothing but degrade, depress, and humiliate people. And in a custody setting where you have the majority of custody staff are male. You have guys that are really nice and understanding and polite and wonderful. And then you've got the other half, and they are abusive. They're controlling, they're just, they enjoy hurting people or being cruel. You know, there's plenty of them in the men's institutions too. But it's not necessary to treat people like that, it really isn't. You know, prison doesn't work for drug addiction. You know, hitting somebody over the head

with a baseball bat, because they're doing something you don't appreciate, isn't terribly conducive to an improvement in the behavior. Um, you go to AA, you know, they don't scream and yell and jump up and down. They, you know, ask you, they tell you their story, they ask you how they can help you, they assign, I don't know, what you call the sponsors, etc. In other words, the difference between AA and prison or AA, I mean, prison and a drug program is they don't berate you, they try to build you up, they try to help you. You know, you can send him to prison forever, it's not gonna work. Yeah, and those are the kind of things that, you know, I've tried to do something about.

SG: And just as a follow up question, um the foundation, or or the organization that you help start, is it mostly focused on these larger issues, or do you also focus on the individual people in prison too?

GK: Both, both? I mean, it depends entirely on that particular situation.

KB: So the next question is, um, you have multiple perspectives on the justice system, how would you assess it, and what kinds of reforms are needed?

GK: Well, they need to give up and start over. Because it depends on what you, you in the sense of society or particular interest groups, are looking for. The problem is that prison is a tremendous moneymaker. I'm sure you've heard of the prison industrial complex. They sell shares in different prison companies, for lack of a better term, on the stock market, and it's very lucrative. So your first problem is, you're faced with a group of people that are making lots and lots of money out of incarceration. And as long as that is the primary focus, nobody's going to be interested in doing it any differently. You know, as you know, money can buy you a lot of things. Money, if you're making money, that gives you a real voice in a particular issue. And that, that's a huge part of the problem.

KB: Um, as a follow up question, would you say that the prison industrial complex works different for women than it does for men?

GK: Not particularly, not when you're looking at it from the point of prison industrial complex. A body's a body, and as long as you have lots of them, you're going to be making money, you'll be bringing it in, you'll be doing what it is that you've set out to do. Women are very different from men in their incarceration needs and the way that they should be treated, but when you're looking at it overall, as an industry, no.

SG: And what is the main takeaway for people from your experiences?

GK: People, and I, really, I only speak about women because I don't work with men, with the exception of the wrongfully convicted, which is, you know, entirely different focus. But it's, as far as women are concerned, there is a huge tendency to over-incarcerate and over-sentence, and society very look, very seldom looks at the long-term consequences, which you may not realize have anything to do with incarceration. A woman goes to prison for whatever, she loses custody of her children. Okay, those children are now in the system. Those children may go into foster care or they may go into different kinds of homes, etc. But you've now brought this whole family into this. And these are people that, you know, may have had nothing to do with the crime, or they're very young children. But again, it's burdening another system, and it's putting children in a very bad place. And now they're going to have issues when you don't have visiting for mothers and children, as kids really suffer. And it was, you know, children who are suffering act out, and on and on and on it goes. So it impacts a lot more people than just the person.

KB: Um, so I guess I just wanted to ask, after you were exonerated, did you ever think about returning to law school? Or did you just get straight to doing the work?

GK: Yes, I did think about it. In fact, I had the opportunity to attend one law school, and they were going to, you know, give me scholarships and things like that. But the reason that I decided not to do that, is that there are a lot of good lawyers out there. But very few people know what I know, and very few people have had my experiences. I'm able to use those in a way that helps the people inside. And I'm able to use that as a position to try to bring about more substantive changes. You know, a lot of women used to say, oh, yeah, you've got to finish law school and then you can come and be my lawyer, etc. For one, I wouldn't be really good at it, because I think there's times when I'd really want to go across the table at somebody. And I think that my experiences are better used in finding alternative ways, or at least looking for alternative ways to change the system, or to help a particular person. Whereas being a lawyer wouldn't do that. I mean, I could, yeah, yeah, I could become a lawyer and then keep doing what I do. But why go through that? cause I would have to start all over again, I would have to do it all over again.

SG: Um, this is like, I guess, prior to going to prison, what about the law, like, intrigued you or made you want to study it/

GK: Um, my stepfather had a lot to do with that, because he always thought that I'd be a really good lawyer. And I have no idea why or what that means. But, um, I thought it was really interesting. And at the time, I was really, I was not interested in criminal law at all. I knew nothing about criminal law, I could have cared less. All I knew was I had to pass it. And after that, I was done. I was really interested in property law, estates and trusts, and all of that kind of thing. They're like, really interesting puzzles. But I had no interest in criminal law whatsoever. Obviously, that changed. But I want to change policy, I want to change what people think. I wanted, I want people to know that sending someone to prison, or just washing their hands of them, doesn't mean you got rid of them, you may have to deal with that particular person and issues for the next 30 years. But I truly believe that we could be so much kinder to people and so much more helpful to people if we get off this insane punishment mode. You know, I mean, when you send people to prison for 50 years for having a joint, it's insane, it's absolutely insane. And it accomplishes nothing, and it does tremendous harm.

KB: And so, I guess, off of that point, you mentioned how around the time when you were fighting for your exoneration that like the legislators and also maybe the media as well, were changing their views on, like, what happens in prisons, and how they should be responsible for it? Do you think that that's something that's going on right now?

GK: It depends. It depends on, you know, on the state and what, what's happening there. The California legislature tends to be fairly approachable and interested in some of these things. But it's certainly not anybody's driving passion. And that's unfortunate, because we could save millions of dollars, prevent lots of crime, and keep families together. And we could accomplish some really good things by going about things differently. Once you become an inmate, a prisoner, an inmate, you know, a jail person, for lack of a better term, you were instantly the scum of the earth. And that is how you were treated, and that is very, very difficult for anybody to deal with. If you had any self esteem when you went to prison, I guarantee you won't when you get out. It's, you know, and that creates huge societal problems.

SG: Um, what kinds of – I don't, I haven't really thought through this question – but um, how do you think that, are there any remedies for like the way that formerly imprisoned people, the connotation that comes with that? Like, are there any ways that you think that more education or things like that would help? Or is it just a societal, deep rooted problem?

GK: Well, treating people differently would help a lot. From my personal experience is very different, but when people get out of prison, they continue to be treated like the scum of the earth. You can't get a job, you can't get an apartment, you can't do anything. There's so many

challenges that you are facing. And they all stem from the belief that you're a horrible person. There are some people that are horrible people in prison, but the majority of women, that's not true. They just want to do better. Also, people need to understand that crime is a young person's game, people literally age out of criminal activity. And then when you're in a society where, I mean, right now everybody's struggling to survive with the virus, but when you can't get a job, you can't do anything else. You can't get a reference, you can't get a place to stay, you don't have any money, you don't have any people to help you. Nobody's gonna sit down on the street corner and starve to death because it suits Middle America. That's not how it works, you're going to do what you have to do to survive. And if we could change that philosophy, that would make a huge difference in recidivism and everything else that goes on. California is one of the states that has parole violations for, I don't know, looking in the wrong direction. You can be sent back to prison for a year for missing a phone call. Or for being late to an appointment. You can, of course, also be sent back for doing bad things. But there's so many behaviors that are known as technical violations. It's ridiculous. And that is part of the problem. There needs, you did your time, believe me, you went through that mess. You did your time, it's over, it's what the court sentenced you to you've done what you were caused to do. But no, very few people will give you a break. I went about it differently. I started screaming and yelling from the minute I got out. You know, I was never, you didn't have to check up on me or ask me, because it was the first thing I would tell you. Just got out of prison, spent all this time there, blah, blah, blah. But for many people, you can't even get a job. And that's wrong. You've done your time. You paid, you paid the price for what you did. And you should be allowed to start fresh. But again, money and politics have a lot to do with this, a lot.

KB: Um, I don't have any more questions, Shaye. Do you?

SG: Nope, that was my last question. Okay. Well, thank you so much for taking your time to speak with us and share your experiences. I know we both really, really appreciate it. And it was really informative for us to hear from you.

GK: Feel free to chop it, edit it, do whatever. But I'm happy to do it.

SG: Thank you so much

GK: Sure, good luck with your project.

SG: Thanks.

GK: Bye

KB: Bye.