

2020 National Crime Victims' Rights Weeks Theme Video Transcript

CAROLINE HUFFAKER, VICTIM SERVICES COORDINATOR, CHATTANOOGA POLICE DEPARTMENT: Justice for a victim can be everything from a guilty verdict to feeling heard and valued.

DAVID RODDY, CHIEF OF POLICE, CHATTANOOGA POLICE DEPARTMENT: It's taking the time to listen to what the victim's needs are, and making sure that we can help the individuals that have suffered violence, suffered a tragedy, suffered a crime—that we help them heal.

GRETCHEN MORRIS, RED CLIFF BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR CHIPPEWA, DIRECTOR, RED CLIFF BAND INDIAN CHILD WELFARE: Seeking justice is ensuring that the victim is protected and that they're safe, especially when they're being removed from a traumatic situation.

BROOKS DOUGLASS, FORMER STATE SENATOR OF OKLAHOMA, PRESIDENT, DOUGLASS HOUSE: People that work in the criminal justice system, they understand that the rights of victims are there; they are the bedrock that tells the world this is what victims need.

MERRY O'BRIEN, MSW, ELDER JUSTICE COORDINATOR, NETWORK FOR VICTIM RECOVERY OF DC: Letting them know, we are going to help you seek justice, and we're going to make sure we do it in a very survivor-defined way—that ultimately can inspire hope.

BROOKS DOUGLASS: When I was 16 years old, a couple of guys came to our door, and they wound up hog-tying us, hands and feet behind our back, face down on our living room floor. They took turns sexually assaulting my 12-year-old sister, and then they sat down and ate the dinner that my mom had been fixing. And then they shot us all in the back and left us for dead. *My sister and I were both able to recover from the physical wounds, and then we started our journey through the criminal justice system. And what we found out...*

JULEA DOUGLASS, FOUNDER, DOUGLASS HOUSE: Having justice is awesome for healing, but many people don't have that, that opportunity. So how do you heal without that justice?

BROOKS DOUGLASS: If victims are never validated, you lose hope. I realized that there needed to be legislation passed, if victims were ever going to be in a place where they can heal from what's happened. Having legislation tells a victim, we've thought about this and we know you need help.

MERRY O'BRIEN: *We're going to discuss the case, and as we prepare for presentation.* Making sure that victims have the right to be present throughout all proceedings, have the right to be notified, have the right to speak and be treated with dignity—all of those rights and more place the victim at the center of the criminal justice process. *We have some photographs here, and also interview notes from various people in the community.* We want to make sure that they know about all the services and that they feel confident that justice will be served, especially in cases of older survivors who aren't aware that there are professionals such as myself and many like us ready to help.

TONI BACON, NATIONAL ELDER JUSTICE COORDINATOR: Last year, the department announced the largest enforcement action for elder fraud in our Nation's history.

MERRY O'BRIEN: The Federal Government has helped the elder justice movement tremendously. It really sends a message to older survivors out there in our community that if they are living in fear of physical abuse, financial exploitation, criminal neglect, we will help you get justice. That really inspires hope.

DAVID RODDY: The words officers choose upon their initial response and how they engage with the victim after a tragedy or traumatic event are critical.

RYAN BLEVINS, CHATTANOOGA POLICE DEPARTMENT: *Hey, I'm Officer Blevins with the Chattanooga Police Department. How are you?*

DAVID RODDY: The victim has to see hope on the face of the officer.

CAROLINE HUFFAKER: Victim services isn't just us as victim service providers. We're all in the business of victim services. Advocates work directly with their patrol teams, they ride-along on a consistent basis.

DAVID RODDY: Victim services being embedded in our agency means that victim is tied to us from the start of their trauma to the end of our involvement with them as a law enforcement agency.

CAROLINE HUFFAKER: *And then another thing, a big part, is I know that there is an arrest made in your case. It's giving victims and survivors control over the very crime that's taken a hold of their life.*

DAVID RODDY: Sometimes cases aren't solved. That doesn't mean our connection and support of that victim stops.

GRETCHEN MORRIS: *Mommies and daddies, you got to get your babies off the floor because we're going to be doing the hoop dance.* The Red Cliff Indian Child Welfare Department seeks to ensure that our children are protected when they're in their homes, but also to rebuild that family and to give them the tools and the resources they need to become complete again.

DARRELL KINGBIRD, RED LAKE BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS, CULTURE CONSULTANT: *The animals brought us the seven teachings, to be highly respectful. Remember that.*

GRETCHEN MORRIS: Supports in the community have always been a way of Anishinaabe life.

DARRELL KINGBIRD: *What else do we gotta learn?* We talk about respect, honesty, humility—all these seven teachings we're supposed to apply each and every day we wake up. There's a lot of children who are just sponges for it. They'll just get up and say, "Teach me that," because they want to learn and they feel safe.

GRETCHEN MORRIS: *Now, remember, you're dancing Anishinaabe style. Listen to the drum!* Children need to have their story be told when they want it to be told.

DARRELL KINGBIRD: *Oh, good one!*

GRETCHEN MORRIS: Everyone has the right to heal and to create a story that is filled with hope.

CAROLINE HUFFAKER: Crime can have a tremendous effect on people. As an advocate, it's a very humbling position to be allowed in to some of the darkest times that a human can experience.

GRETCHEN MORRIS: In seeking justice, we're seeking cares and supports to help recover from the trauma.

DAVID RODDY: It's taking the time to pay attention to those victims' needs and their rights.

WOMAN: *Do you have a court date coming up?*

MERRY O'BRIEN: Ensuring that victims have those rights and that they're respected and treated with dignity throughout the entire process is really crucial.

BROOKS DOUGLASS: Ultimately, if you feel that validation and respect, that gives you hope.