A: So now we're on. If you could start by telling me a little bit about yourself, whatever you want to start with

D: [*Sighs*] Open-ended stuff, that’s the hardest for me. You know, open ended, it's kind of like my life, doesn’t end. It’s not very complex, but it *is* very complex. I’m just like everyone else. I desire the same things that people want. You know, stability, happiness, to be a part of something. So, I usually focus more about where I’m going and not where I’ve been. If I said that right. And, I realize, you know, things in the past, but, the past is the past, and there’s nothing I can do to go back in time. But what I can do is have control over what I can do today. And so, since you asked that question, [stutters] I… [background nose, talking] Can we stop it for a minute?

A: Yeah.

A: Were you born in Denver?

D: Yeah, I was born in Denver. Went to high school in Denver. Oh, everything, I lived in Denver most of my life. I did take off and went to another state, the state of Arizona, for a little bit, but that was a spur of the moment decision that didn't work out. But, I was born here, worked here, family's here.

A: You still have lots of family in Denver?

D: Yeah, lots of family. Believe it or not, it's family that I will still talk to. Not often, but you know, I will still reach out and they'll still reach out to me. It's amazing how we just can't seem to, you know, have some closure to this homeless topic. You know, this thing that no one ever expected me to be homeless. And that's the hardest part of dealing with it; you never would imagine that that would be you. So, some of the things that I fight for today, I haven't dealt with growing up. I must have had really strong, negative feelings about homelessness that I never realized, you know, growing up. I may not have been totally fair, even though I thought that I was. It really tears me up to be homeless.

A: Do you have some examples about how you thought of homelessness when you were younger?

D: When I was younger, I thought of it as [*pauses*] people just, for some reason, were not able to take care of themselves, that they weren't strong. They were weak. They needed help because they were so weak. I think that was the generalization that I had about it.

A: How do you see it now?

D: I still see some of it the same. But, I have realized, though, that you have to be very strong in order to remain positive, remain somewhat upbeat. And, I think that that is, that's the one thing that I think that really, it really, really affects the people who are unhoused. The willingness to be what you are. I mean, the best that you can be. So, growing up, I thought of people who were unhoused as very weak and they needed assistance, that they didn't have the ability to do what was necessary. And, now, that does have some truth to it. But, in order to survive this, you have to be a little bit stronger. You have to be willing to accept life on different terms that you never planned for. That we never practiced for. We never imagined that we would ever have to live life on the terms that we're living now. I don't know if that makes sense, but what I'm trying to say, I'm trying to articulate in words, are deep thoughts and feelings and emotions that it's *hard* to put in words. But, what I can say is that you never, well, me personally, I never stop putting a grade on my life. You look at it, and as I get older, I know that my time is limited. And when I think about meeting my potential, I didn't come close. And I'm doing whatever I can now to educate people on this topic, to let people know that we have to start deciding how to deal with this. It's an emotional trauma that therapists don't talk about. You have very few who are.... You may have a drug counselor who's been through a lot of drug treatment and lived a lot of that life using drugs and so they get it, and they stop using. Where does a person who was unhoused for so long, where are they at? Where are these leaders and people that can inspire people to change and that there is a way out? Other than, so far, the only way out is get housing, let the government pay for it, and [whispering] *that's the only solution*. That's the only, I never see one that's really, that's made it, more than just getting a government assisted house. That's not what I want. I still want to meet my potential. So, that's what I'm dealing with right now.

A: Do you want to describe your potential a little bit, and what you sort of envision?

D: It's not a particular vision. It's just, did I do, some people may say, "God's work." I might use that word, but what I mean by God's work is, did I meet the maximum ability to reach out and spread the good news? Life is about, to me, life is about being the best we can be, and that doesn't mean financially, but it does mean, you know, humanely-- morality.

A: Like, being able to enact your morals

D: Yeah. You may not have been that way your whole, entire life. You may have done some really shady, ugly, dirty things in the past, but are you striving to do better every day? And that's what life is about. Because my life consists of so much of just trying to survive today that you forget the other part. You forget the part that I should lift people up, not tear people down. How many people in this life did I lift up, versus tearing down? And that's how I grade my life. You know, I have the ability to reach enough people, to really lift up enough lives. So, that where I mean I didn't meet my potential, at all. Not one bit. You know, Jesus made, look at the impact Jesus made. I could never reach *that* level, but you know, certainly I could have done a lot better.

A: I'm wondering, how long have you been at the S.O.S. camp?

D: At the SOS camp, I've been here since, I'm looking, it's been three months here, and at the other SOS camp, I was there a few months, so I was one of the original symbols here, with some other people.

A: Okay, and I'm thinking about what you said about, I don't believe your term was "emotional energy," but you said how much it takes to be thinking about the day to day, so then you can't do that other kind of work you want to be doing. When you moved into SOS, out on the Pearl location, did that, did living at SOS help with some of those day-to-day tasks?

D: Yes and no. It did. What the SOS did was allow me to [chuckles] get grounded and accept certain things, but then it also opened up a lot of things that I hadn't really thought about. A lot of deeper questions, deeper thoughts. You know, what's the impact that I *am* gonna have? Am I going to impact other people's lives? Are people going to learn from my mistakes? Are they gonna learn from the successful things that I've done? And I've done a lot of good things in my life, I think. You know, I accept the things that I cannot change. I've done a little bit better with that. That is something that I battle with. I really go into philosophical things that I don't have the answer to. What does it mean to accept the things that I cannot change? Well, I know what it means, but is that good? When do we get to a point where we *don't*accept the things? When do we get to the point where I'm no longer going to accept people treating me with such harsh treatment? When do I get to the point to, you know what, that's no longer acceptable? No, I can't fight back. I'm going to tell you right now, what you're doing, is saying, is hurtful and harmful, and I'm not going to allow you to do it anymore. You have every American right to, but you're not going to do it no more. When does not accepting that, I mean, the things you cannot change, I cannot change your thoughts. They're their thoughts, and I can't change it.

A: Have you ever said that to anyone?

D: Absolutely.

A: How did it go?

D: It doesn't feel good. It stirs anger. Resentment. I start reliving everything. Every mistake that I made. It means that some of the things that may be a mistake, you know, but I can't change him. But what I can do is stand up for me, and let him know, let that other person know, that *I'm* standing up for me, and that I'm fighting for all these other people who don't have houses, who are unhoused. That we deserve better treatment.

A: Are you comfortable sharing your story about how you first became unhoused?

D: Yeah, I am. You know, we wonder-- Let me just say that I'm not completely comfortable because I believe today, I didn't believe this six months ago, but today, I believe that that is one of the problems. That curiosity of *how did this happen*. Did you ever think that it happened because it's the system that we have? That's the one thing that we don't want to address. And we don't want to accept. It's like, it's just like dealing with the other movements. We want to know, how did this happen? It's the system we have-- there's gonna be people who fall through the cracks. The problem is we haven't decided how *we're*gonna treat each other. We haven't decided where the floor is for treatment of others, or standards that people should be living at. So, we're talking about people who are gonna be at the floor, because of the system. The system doesn't allow everyone to not be beneath that floor. It's designed for people to fall down there. Now, how did I fall? I fell for many reasons. Drug abuse, giving up on life, I mean, giving up, not on life, but just living too much in a world that didn't lead to anything positive, but not being told about, or not addressing, I should say, the stereotypes that we all have, that we should have dealt with growing up. So, those things impacted me in a lot of ways where I had-- [sighs] I just, I just need to pause right now.   
  
A: Yeah.  
  
D: Let me try to back up and say that it's hard to put things in words when there's so much anger, so much resentment towards a very arrogant system.

A: Do you mind describing a bit more which system you're talking about?

D: I'm talking about the system that we live in. We live in a capitalistic system. And, this isn't socialism in any way. It doesn't allow anyone, anyone can be on any level you want, that you desire, that you work for, et cetera, but we haven't decided how low a person can go. So, how did I reach there? I lived a reckless lifestyle, yeah. Okay. I thought that I was having fun. I was desiring a place in the world. That's what I was looking for. I didn't really have it-- I had it somewhat at home, but that was still desiring. Got lost, got a family-- not my family, but friends, coworkers, a different lifestyle that I wasn't used to, and that was not conducive to what I planned for. I'd never been a drug user; started using drugs.

A: Is that the different lifestyle?

D: That was the different lifestyle that spiraled downhill. And then I didn't make a lot of money anyway, so it wasn't hard to go from where I was to the floor. And then, eventually, to the basement, which is, you know, home. And then there's different levels to the basement, depending on how much you need. You know, do I need mental health? In some ways, I needed people to talk to, but there's some people out there that need professional help. There's some people out there that need emotional help. There's some people that need a variety of help. And, how do they get it? How do they access it? How do people reach someone that *can*help them, when they're ten levels beneath, below, underground?

A: Can you describe a little bit more what ten levels beneath is?

D: Well, I spoke of the floor. It's just a basic level of everyone, the poorest of the poor. The basic human needs: health and security. I mean, that's what we're talking about. But when you don't have a home, when you don't have family, when you don't have money, when you don't have all the things–a vehicle, a friend, a spouse– you don't have any of this, you become more isolated. It's harder to reach out to people. But there's different levels of need that we reach. Yeah the basic, the floor, I call it the floor, but there are people who are *way*down there. They don't have a phone. They don't have the ability, the education, to even communicate it.

A: So, when you're saying harder to reach out, I think I understand, you don't necessarily mean physically. It's not that they can't, that they're hiding, that someone can't physically find [them], it's that their emotional state is--

D: Yes, yes. It's very, yeah, you're at different levels. We haven't decided as a community, as people, how we're gonna deal with this. How are we not going to let so many people go so far below the system that we have set up, that has not been addressed? Like, everyone can just work their way to a-- and everyone can't. Some people don't have the ability to focus for a 40 hour a week job. Some people don't have the-- people have too many problems in their life. And, depending on how they deal with it growing up, and how much support they have, and some way that they can function in the future. I mean, I was a functioning person. So, yeah. So, why do I want, what I spoke of earlier, why do I then want to turn around and have the people pay for something that I can have, given that chance? We haven't analyzed that, we haven't talked about it. We haven't dealt with it. That's my anger towards the system. We *haven't*dealt with it.

A: I'm wondering, I'm thinking, so you said you were 10 layers down

D: Well, I may not be, but if I am--

A: Right, someone might be. You were only starting to think about these kind of things, you said, for six months, which is about the time you entered SOS, right?

D: Correct

A: I'd be curious to hear how you were able to reach out to SOS, or they were able to reach you, and kind of bring you in? So how you got to SOS, how you found each other, so to speak. Also, why at SOS have you been thinking about these things?

D: The reason I've been thinking about it is because I got somewhat grounded. Instead of bouncing around, worrying about sweeps, worrying about is my stuff safe, worrying about where I'm gonna go-- you know, planning your basic needs every single day becomes old. It drains you. And, it's hard. I landed here, I knew about it, when it was gonna open. I had reached out originally to St. Francis and I decided that wasn't gonna do it. Someone else was gonna do it, I was friends with them, and they decided to do it, then they decided not to do it. But we decided to do it together, but we never came in together. It's kind of hard to describe. It was just luck of the draw, I'm gonna say. It's not anything that was planned out all the way, but it was luck of the draw. It was one of the best things that have happened to me. It allowed me to become grounded, but also started bringing up more questions. Through the more questions, it has become even harder to deal with things. Again, people may think that, "well you're in the SOS camp now. Now you can get that housing and you'll do well." It's not that simple. For me, it's not. Because I've done this thinking, I'm connected emotionally to these new feelings that I've developed. In some ways it may seem like a curse, but it's a blessing. It is a blessing to ask these questions and to have enough insight to start finding answers to the real, the real, reason why. Not why a person got there, but how does a person get out of it. Not physically, but emotionally. How do they get out of this emotionally? With no resentment, and with, you know, you deal. And when I was speaking of that person, that's what I was trying to say: where are our leaders at? It's really, it's an emotional-- I'm at an emotional moment right now. And I should have probably prepared better for this. I should have dug a little deeper. I should have written notes. It's very hard to articulate this in words. Like, I even forgot the last question, just now.

A: Have you encountered anyone else who seems to be going through this, this kind of philosophical--

D: Very few. Very few, very few.

A: One or two, though?

D: I'm just [sighs] not to the level that I've gone, and not to the level that digs as deep as I dig within myself. I mean, I've dug really deep. And I asked myself the same question, because I never thought that I would be unhoused growing up. So, how did I get here? It's so easy, the mistakes, the reckless lifestyle. But that's how you land there.

A: So, is it almost like there was an emotional detachment as you quote-unquote "got there"?

D: Physically, you get there. But at that point, once you get there, you're still connected emotionally to the community, to the rest of the world, who in turn, is disconnected from you, because of the situation. For the most part, most people don't want to deal with you. You're--

A: Let me just make sure I heard that right. So, you're saying that you are still connected to the people around you, but they are disconnected from you?

D: Most, the average person, that you are connected to -- we're all connected, in this-- in my opinion, we're all connected, whether you know the person's name or not, whether you know them or not, we're all connected as people. Here, on this planet, to do wonderful things, and to take care of it, and have kids, and continue on, and die. We have this. We're all connected. But, when you are unhoused, certain people want to get rid of you. Certain people that are part of this connected system no longer want you there. You're a cancer that they want to get rid of. But no, I'm not a cancer. I'm just slightly injured right now. I'm still useful! They're saying no, you're not. So, even though you want to remain connected, you only think, "okay, I'm in this situation. It's okay. I'm gonna get out of it." You learn really quickly that, the world doesn't want your body, it doesn't want you. That's something that you have to deal with, that there's people who will treat you, where it's okay, and I mentioned this earlier, to be treated that way. Look at the city right now. They have their foot on the neck of the unhoused right now. And they're not letting go. They're choking the life out of 'em. Relentlessly. And there's no, there's very little resistance, and they're *still*choking the life-- you think how George Floyd died, you think that was inhumane. But to see what Denver's doing right now is worse.

A: Can you explain a little more?

D: They're still continuing the sweeps. They're still continuing the sweeps. What do those sweeps do? How do they affect people emotionally? How do they let people accept-- *again, accepting what I cannot change*-- here we are again. Now this is anger coming out. We're at a place where the city doesn't let you sleep. You're not allowed to do anything. They want you to live at a standard that you can't live at. They don't want people to see you. You're that much of a sore eye for people? You're ruffling a person's feathers because they *see* you? Are you serious? So, you take city property, and you push these people out, then you fence it off. That's not good treatment. That's not sending the message that you want that person to be a part of this system, of community. There's no way that that's saying that. That's saying that you don't want us to be seen. You're ashamed of us. And on the other hand, because of this pandemic, you have given city property to businesses. And they're still using this to make money, to keep running, you know, because it's needed. Things haven't returned to 100 percent.

A: You mean for outdoor seating?

D: For outdoor seating. So, you give them that, but you tell a homeless person they gotta go--,

A: Wow, that’s a good point, a really good point.

D: --and then fence it off. Are you serious? If that's not a hostile situation-- You may not want me, no, I may be the wrong person for this--

A: No, no, this is good.

D: [hesitates, mumbles/stutters] You got really, on this same block, oh god, you just, you just rolled these people out last week. [*Voice cracks, perhaps crying or trying not to*] They don't have anywhere to go. And this business is doing a lot better, it's packed. You're giving *them*city property, but you're kicking me out. Why? That's just one example. So, why would a person want to be a part of that? So, there's the emotional disconnection. So, people become [ill?] Some people don't even want their 'free home.' No, after the way you treated me? It's already, it's the moment you land there, there's a hatred coming from people you don't know.

A: Neighbors, you mean?

D: Well, yeah, people that you may, they may say, "ugh, a homeless person." And that's what we do? We pick on the most vulnerable people on the planet, ever? That's who we are? So you start questioning, who is America? Who are humans? Who are we? And that's, *who was I*, growing up, in the past. Who was I? Was I really that person I thought I was? Or, was it lip service? Who was I really? That's where I'm at. That's why it sounds so confusing. And maybe, this might be one of the ones where you play the end before you play the beginning. The beginning is so erratic you thought, "well what is this guy talking about? He sounds like Trump Jr."

A: [*laughs*] You sound nothing like Trump Jr.

D: But no, you can't articulate a point, because it's hard, because I've put some thought to it, whereas that former Mr. President did not, and it never made any sense. But, without being political, no offense, really to him, but he could not really articulate very many points. And you can probably delete that, I hope.

A: I think what you're saying makes sense. I understand what you're saying.

D: Yeah, and that's where I'm at emotionally. And I'm stuck. I'm stuck.

A: Well, you said so much of what you didn't know before, is that there's so much strength in going forward, and now you're feeling stuck. Do you see ways where that strength can help you get unstuck?

D: Yeah, I mean, it can, it will. It will, but, I can tell you right now, if I were bouncing around, if this had entered my head, these thoughts and this desire to ask myself these questions, if I were out there without the support of having a tent where I can close the door and do some thinking, then you know, I don't know where I would be. I don't know how sane I would be. I would probably be truly insane. To have to deal with that, on top of everything else? Once you eliminate your daily basic needs, and you don't have to worry about that, even for a short time, I believe that it takes away so much stress. We view stress as-- it's the emotional stress. Not knowing how you're gonna sleep, eat, the basics. The *basics*.

A: Right, never knowing.

D: Yeah. That is one heck of a thing to carry. And you carry it. So, having this little tent-- can you believe some people fight so we *don't*have it? Some people are still fighting today for us *not*to have it. Are you serious? This is how anyone could even stand up, and say that, with pride, that they don't want it there. And not to get anything said back, no resentment, no nothing: *I agree*. You know, you have people seconding that.

A: Are you talking about the Park Hill, when people didn't want it to go to Park Hill, or are you talking more about --

D: I'm thinking about Park Hill, yeah, and there are people that still don't want it.

A: I'm wondering, are you, in some of what you're talking about, you're talking about things you've seen, with your own eyes. Other things, is it things you're reading, also? I'm wondering about media.

D: Yeah, I do reading in the media. The thing is we, I'm talking about our community leaders, state legislators, city council, judges, DAs, lawyers, it's time for them, people who are making policy, people who are suggesting policy, it's time for you to come live it. To get in touch with it emotionally. Get in touch with that. The treatment. What I'm trying to articulate: it's a form of PTSD that we don't want to deal with. We don't want to believe that our system, the best system in the world, created problems for people who may never come out of it. We have to stop the bleeding there. We have to address the system. We have to address the situation where, I'm talking all of us, everybody, every single person, we have to decide as a country, as a nation, what's acceptable and what isn't. We can no longer continue to treat other human beings the way we treat 'em. And when I say the treatment, what I said earlier, it's okay to that, because they're homeless. It's okay. Um, it's not okay.

A: Where does that change start to happen?

D: Well, you have people that I personally, I have no proof, I'm not a super smart professor or with a PhD in anything, but life. I can't tell you that it exists, but I'm telling you that it exists with me. And, the people that I've talked to, it exists with them. They don't say it in the words that I say it, but it's the same thing. It's a bit of anger. We have to start taking care of people, each other. We have to become connected again. We are only as strong as our weakest link.

A: And I'm thinking back when we were talking about when you were a young man, and you were pleasure seeking, and trying to find that community. Can you think of what in the world could have spoken to you differently, what could have been said--

D: I understand what you're asking and [sighs] that's a good question. I think that, growing up, if I'd have had a conversation, *a* conversation--

A: With whom?

D: With that person. Anyone, who was unhoused. Had a conversation with them. If I had a conversation with my friends, if I had a conversation with my teachers. We should have talked about this a long time ago. This is something that, because we're going to have people through the cracks in the system, it’s the system, there's going to be people at the bottom. Where is that bottom? That's still the question that I'm asking. Where is the bottom?

A: And how do we talk to people who are at the bottom?

D: You're gonna have people. It's the system! You have people at the top. Undeservingly at the top. You have people at the bottom, but undeservingly. You have to. Too many jobs are connected to that, down there. You're going to have to have it. There has to be, now what's the acceptable number? Okay, that's the rational part of me. It's harsh, but it's the truth. The economy is connected to that. The certain amount of fear that has to be out there so people can continue to justify paying the police, justify buying the security, justifies buying this hard lock. You know, it's needed, for the economy. Okay. I get it. I'm not an economist, but I get it. We don't say it in those terms. Could the economy survive without it? With no homelessness? With no people who are unhoused? Could it survive people who didn't have the emotional problems, could jails survive people not going in and out for the petty stuff? Come on. We can't. Too much of it is tied together.   
  
But, we can talk about it. We can become stronger, stronger. And that's what I meant by strength. I'm strong enough to talk about it. I'm strong enough to talk about my pain. I'm strong enough to talk about the disconnect. It may be a bad thing. You've unleashed the animal now, that knows what he wants. And he's no longer accepting the things he cannot change. No, he's fighting the things that can't change and probably won't be able to change, and you're gonna know. So. Fortunately, you might wanna either thank the S.O.S., or you can be mad at 'em. I don't know which side you're gonna be on. But you've unleashed a guy that now is focused enough to start to fight back. So that's where I'm at. That's who I am.

A: Do you know what that will look like?

D: It will look like people having fierce debates. People being forced to listen. People being forced to wait their turn. To articulate or paraphrase what the other person`s saying. This dialogue, whenever it gets going, that's what it's going to look like. We're gonna talk about this. We're gonna have conversations. I envision that I'll get an opportunity to ask Mr. Mayor, Mr. City Council, did you know that you were hurting people? Or did you not care? See, these are the people that's supposed to do the thinking of these emotional things, of all the constituents, and how it works together. That's what they're for. Your city council, your mayor. They're the ones that keep it together. They're the ones that have failed us. Because of the lack of empathy, from them. Because they are the ones that stay in the bubble.

A: Do you think it's as simple as you don't know what you don't know? Or is it something deeper than that?  
  
D: No, it's deeper than that. They know. You don't wanna face it.

A: Right, it's not convenient or--

D: Right, because it takes too much thought. It takes too much thought.

A: So it's not ignorance?

D: No. It's lack of desire.

A: How- I'm asking impossible questions, but how, conversations, yes, but how do you bring a desire to get someone without that desire to sit and have a conversation?

D: That, I don't know. That's why I said it's gonna be forced. You know, you have to force it somehow.

A: Do you think that people who might listen to this, do you think that that is in some way a first step towards a conversation, even though you're not there to--

D: No, I think the person listening to this is probably open enough, and has a general care and concern. They're not the ones that would be difficult. It's the busy guy. The guy that works. And the guy that gives his yearly donations, large ones. [*Whispering*]: *he's done his part.*But he's the one. He or she. They're the ones that never have time. Their answers are already, they already have them. They're so arrogant that they already know. They really don't care. They really never come out of their comfort zone. They don't look at the homeless, or the unhoused. They ignore everything. Anything that you say that is uncomfortable, that requires a thought to where that person has to dig in, and it's an emotional answer, they ignore it.   
  
Let's take [the] Black Lives Matter movement, for instance. That's a movement that you would think that after watching it on TV that it would be a movement, that we would be able to do it. No, what most people do, they put some Black Lives Matter things in their yard, wore shirts, pad the economy, by the way—business opportunities.

A: Right, put it on their logos...

D: Yeah, logos, and that's all we did. There's been plates at the table for my entire life to talk about it. Still haven't shown up. So, it's a situation that because they don't wanna look at self, they don't wanna look at the system. Again, it's the same thing we're fighting. The system.

A: Can you explain what you meant by "there's been plates at the table"?

D: What I mean by that is we've been trying to have this conversation. Come on, let's talk about it. What do you want, coffee? Doughnuts? Whatever. It's been here. This invitation has been here. Still a no-show. So, no, it's the situation; they're gonna have to be forced to the table. I don't know how to force them. I'll use like parables to try to connect it, you know, but that's the problem. It's something that we haven't dealt with. We haven't dealt with it. Ever. Since what, since 1776, when we was established, and we haven't dealt with it. It's a political question now. No, it's not a political question. It's a moral question, that we haven't asked ourselves. And we don't wanna ask ourselves, because deep down, we know that we have failed ourselves. We know that we can't truly die and if there's a judge up there that's gonna judge us, can we really look him in the eye and say, "I did my best"? No, we can't. And that's what we're ashamed of. I can. I can look at him and say, "You know what? I'm not guilty, of any of that. Because I did not purposely ignore certain things. I dealt with it. And that's where my strength came in." I dealt with it. I asked myself the tough questions. I've thought about the tough questions. I haven't been able to articulate them in words, but I thought about 'em. Where's the other people? Where's everyone else at? So, with that being said, I just hope that before I die that *a* conversation is had. I hope that this mayor, who has the ability to become one of the greatest people on earth, if he takes time out and stops the sweeps, and goes all in on this type of thing, with this model. He said that he went all in, but he didn't go all in. He hasn't really, truly put all his chips in the middle.

A: So you think more SOS sites is a great place to start?

D: Well, more SOS sites forces the conversation. No, we're gonna have these SOS sites. And we're gonna have these conversations. We're gonna these community hall meetings. We're tougher than this, we're better than this, and we're gonna have them, because these are people. That's it. Forgive him for all the trauma that his policies have caused? No. But it's time for him to recognize what he's done, what he's doing, and to stop it. If it fails, at least he tried something better, more, than the other mayors. At least he tried something more than other leaders across the world. Try it-- acceptance. Talk to him. Man, he has a chance to really change the world, to create. From that, it forces the conversation of who we are as a people. Then we start establishing the floor. And people can't follow. If a person just needs-- we talk about it, about the unhoused needing mental health, staying on their medication. We talked about all of these little different things, but we haven't established them as rights, and what's needed.

A: So it's almost like once we identify where the floor is, we can better work on filling in the cracks.

D: Correct.

A: So people aren't falling through them.

D: Right, correct. That's what I mean. Whether it's the mental health, or whether it's the drug abuse, or whether it's just strained relationship or divorce, whatever it might be, they don't fall through that crack and become emotionally disconnected. That's the part where people don't want… Now we're at the part where we identified it. Now, what do we do? This is where our leaders come in. I can't do it. I can't write policy. I can't write legislation. I don't have the authority. They're not even gonna listen to me. I'm the idiot. If I had Mr. John Smith, PhD, clinical ser-- whatever, then they might listen to me. I don't have that title. But I listen. I've been through this. And it's something that we have to, we should, and I hope that we address it before I die. And I hope that I'm able to one day put it in words where people can briefly read it and consume it. Because in this world today, people don't have time. People don't have 30 minutes to sit on a topic. You need to hit it home and shove it down their throat. Hopefully they digest it. You have to go there. Or, you make it into a game or something. I don't know how to get people to slow down, but that's where I'm at. I assume that this conversation is about the SOS, which, like I said, had I not landed here, I'm pretty sure that these are not questions that we would be sitting here having right now. We would not be having this conversation. If we did have this conversation, I wouldn't be focused on this.

A: Yeah. I’m glad that you are.

D: So yeah, it has opened my eyes to a deeper rooted problem than just, you know, one or two incidents. And I was fragile before. Part of me was falling through the cracks. And I didn't know how to identify it, you know. There was a disconnect from family, emotionally, the lack of trust, the inability to talk about things, questions that I had, because they were off limits. So yeah, it started a long time before that. It's just, this where it ended. I think that, right now, it's kind of coming together a little bit, where people can understand what I'm feeling.

A: Would you like to add any last comments?

D: Well, the comment that I would add is that… [*pauses*] wow. See, we're probably only going to be speaking to people who are supportive of us.

A: Good point.

D: But that being said, I would say that if you've heard this, and you listened to it, you should know that we're human beings. And just giving a person a physical structure is not gonna solve the problems. There's still gonna be a disconnect. And you still have to reconnect all the parts, so that we all can work together as a unit, as a people, and reach our potential as a people. We have to deal with this. Because we are only as strong as the weakest link. As long as we have people who are, I'd say, are several stories below the surface, as long as we have people down there, alone, struggling, yelling but no one can hear them-- or, the people who do hear them chooses to ignore them- that's what we have to handle. That's all I would say-- just remember that. And don't turn your back on us.

And, for the people who think that people are only way down there because the chose to walk down there, it's delusional and maybe they should be considered—I don’t know; they have to be talked to. Just as urgently as it's needed to save us, they need to be talked to. The only person who can reach them are gonna be people of stature. Mr. Mayor, Mr. Governor, Mr. Pastor. Where are you? Where are they? The moral leaders. I haven't given them much thought until now. Where are our moral leaders? Absent. Fallen through the cracks. Somewhere else. We don't know. Maybe we should go looking for them. Maybe they are below surface, also. Maybe there's a treatment and respect and dignity that's been lacking there, maybe that we haven't been giving. I don't know what the problem is; I haven't thought about it. But moral leadership is not there. We need someone to stand up for what is right and what is wrong, morally. You can't have an issue as severe as this and have two moral answers. There has to be an issue of treatment to people. You notice in some ways the treatment of the unhoused is really bad. You know that it's unacceptable. In some ways, in a lot of ways.   
  
We have written legislation for animals that we have not written for people, as far as treatment. Maybe I should get the ASPCA, give them a call, and see if they can fight for humans like they did for the animals. They fought for 'em. Animals now have rights. Humans don't, in some ways. Animals have housing rights. They have to do more. Built in legislation. We haven't gotten to the point of rights for humans. So yeah, we have some problems. Our moral leaders are missing also. I'm so sorry-- I wanted this to just really upbeat conversation, where we're all happy, I don't want to force it down people's throat, but I do. I really do. I want it to hit home and I want people to have to deal with this.