



## HANDOUT TWO: **RECONCILIATION AND REPAIR THREAD, INTERVIEW ARCHIVE**

**Directions: Underline key phrases and new details as you watch and listen to the interviews.**

### **ANTHONY RAY HINTON**

The system, some people would say, "It worked because you got out," and to those people I say, "If the system had worked, I never would've went in." But how do you go on after spending 30 years to a system like this? I ask people these questions, "What would you do if they came for you? What would you do if you were charged for the crime you know you didn't commit? What would you do if you know you didn't have the money to hire a decent defense? What would you do if every day you had to live in a cell the size of your bathroom? What would you do if the system saw you more for the color of your skin than in the errors of the case? What would you do if you've been sentenced to death? What would you do if you was waiting all your life to die? How would you survive? What would you do? And what would you do after 30 years they finally set you free? Who would you be?"

And 33 years later, nobody in the state of Alabama, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Senators, have had the decency to say, "Mr. Hinton, we're sorry."

Have they not apologized because they don't have to apologize? Have they not apologized because I'm black? Everyday I try my best to try and find an explanation why the state of Alabama haven't apologized. I truly don't want to believe that they haven't apologized because of the color of my skin. But that's the only thing I can think of, that they haven't apologized because I'm black.

### **BRYAN STEVENSON**

He spent nearly 30 years on Alabama's death row locked in a five by seven cell. There were 54 people who were executed while he was there. He watched them walk by. He talks about smelling the flesh burning when they used the electric chair. He lost his mother. You can't put somebody in a cage like that and ignore their humanity, and make things all right. You just can't do it. The fact that we had proved his innocence 15 years earlier just adds to the injury.

Sometimes you don't know, sometimes you really don't know. No one can definitively say who committed this crime. And then you give people the benefit of the doubt. But this was a case where we made it really clear he is innocent and attorneys general, prosecutors, judges just looked the other way. And so he's a remarkable person because he's come out of death row committed to talking about his experience, to changing people's minds about the death penalty. But he's come out unburdened by hate, which is no small accomplishment. It's an extraordinary accomplishment. I think Ray knows that if he hates these people, if he allows hatred to shape the rest of his life he'll still be in a prison, just a different kind of prison and that's what's so remarkable about him.

## BRYAN STEVENSON

You know, if I bump into someone and knock them down, and they are injured, I'm going to be disrupted by that. I want to make sure they know that I didn't intend to hurt them. I'm going to apologize. It will be important to me that they know and understand that I did not intend to hurt them, and I want them to do well. I want to do what I can to help them, not only because I want to make them whole, but because I want to be whole. I don't want to be burdened by something I did to another person that has caused them pain and agony. I want there to be repair in this country, not just for communities of color that have been victimized by bigotry and discrimination, but I want it to be for all of us.

When you offend another person, when you do something you shouldn't do, your peace quotient, your wholeness is also dependent on your commitment to repair. That's where I feel like we haven't learned, collectively, to apologize, and I think there's something in apology that is powerful. You know, we're a country that takes great pride in our greatness. We have a lot of strategies, and tactics, and habits that go with achievement and victory. We do the Olympics well. We do military success well. We do accomplishment well. But we don't do mistake very well. We don't own up to our mistakes very well.

The question, the notion, the idea of repair, I think, has something critical to do with how we move forward. We can't move forward without thinking about, "What does it mean to recover, to atone, to repair the damage that this history has created." I represent people in parole hearings, my clients. When I prepare a client for a parole hearing, the first thing I say to them is, "Look, when we get before the parole board, you're going to have to acknowledge the crime you've committed. You're going to have to apologize for that crime. And you need to express remorse for that crime." Because if you stole something from someone, if you robbed someone, if you injured someone, if you took from someone and you're unwilling to acknowledge the wrongfulness of that crime, if you don't show an understanding of the wrongfulness of that act, and express your remorse, the parole board's not going to trust you, if they let you out, to not offend again."

And one of the ways we have some hope that people won't re-offend is if they express a consciousness about the wrongfulness of those acts. I get it, but it's the same for us collectively as a society.

When you don't acknowledge the wrongfulness, the immorality, the sinfulness of segregation, and you don't feel implicated by that, we don't get to the conversation we need to get to about how do we recover, how do we repair? How do we overcome this history. What do we say? I don't think we should be afraid of words like repair or reparation.

I think we should actually be excited about it. That's why I think truth and reconciliation is sequential. Once you know the truth, then it actually ought to be exciting to you to figure out a way to overcome, to recover, to find a new future. I'm proud of my clients who did tragic things, violent things, when they were younger, who have come out and are committed to living decent lives, healthy lives, wholesome lives, moral lives. I think there's something inspiring about that. In that respect, we have regions in this country where the history of racial bias and bigotry is so extreme that we have an opportunity to do something that can be quite inspiring. But we're not going to do it if we just shut our ears and close our eyes every time somebody says, "Well, how do we repair this damage? How do we deal with the violence and destruction that this has created?"