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(THE ULTIMATE SURVIVAL: THE SILENT OFFICE RIOT, 8/20/18)

(The following may contain unintelligible or misunderstood words due to the recording quality.)

KIMBER GIST: I want to first thank the Florida Police Chief Association for allowing me to come and share my story with you all today. I'm not sure if you all are familiar with Chief Mike Cochran that used to work in the state of Florida. He is actually my deputy chief now in Berkeley County, so that's how I got in touch with Chief Touchberry and how I ended up here. So, if you all were wondering how South Carolina ended up in Florida that's how I ended up here.

So, like I said, my name's Corporal Kimber Gist. I am now 28 years old. When this incident happened in 2016 I was 25 and I had just started on patrol. And being a cop was the one thing that I always wanted to do since I was a kid. Whatever T.V. show that featured any type of police work, I watched it. I always knew I wanted to be an officer, but I just didn't know what field I wanted to go into. I didn't know if I wanted to do CSI, if I wanted to be a corrections officer. So, of course, like any parent, my mom just told me, you know, go to college and figure it out from there. And that's sort of kind of what I did.

I've been with the Berkeley County Sheriff's Office for four years now. I started in 2013 at the detention center,

which is our Hill-Finklea Detention Center. It houses about maybe 400 to 500 inmates. At that time we were very short staffed, so there would probably be four or five COs to the 400 or 500 inmates. So, it was very dangerous, but we were going through a tough time as an agency. We just got a new administration about two years ago. So, this was prior to the old administration.

I did a short eight months at the detention center when I got a call from the major and they had heard that I wanted to leave and go on patrol for another agency. So, of course like most good administrative officers they put a block to that, and they were like, "Hey, why don't you just stay with us? Don't go somewhere else." So, of course I said yes, and that's how I ended up on patrol for Berkeley County.

And before I started working at the Hill-Finklea Detention center I went to Charleston Southern University, which is in Charleston, South Carolina. I'm pretty sure everybody's familiar with Charleston. I did my undergraduate there for four years, got it in criminal justice and a minor in psychology. And just to fast forward just a little bit so you all know the background, I just graduated with my masters in May of this year, and that was something that I decided to do while I was out for medical leave after being shot. So, that will tie into it but that's just a recent picture of my graduation.

So, like I said, I started in the detention center. I graduated in February of 2014. That's my sister, my nephew, and my uncle. My mom's taking the picture. And just a short year after that I went back to the academy to become a class I officer, is what we call it in South Carolina. So, I basically was in the academy for almost a year because I did the first stint and then turned around and went back for road deputy patrol.

So, after I graduated from the police academy I went to the basic shift that all single people that are young go to, got put on the night shift because everybody wanted day shift, which I love the night shift. The entire time that I was on the night shift, especially in the area that I worked, which was called Goose Creek, South Carolina, was your drug hub. That's where everybody wanted to work because that's where all the action happened. Of course, I was the rookie on patrol, so I wanted all the action.

So, this is actually a picture from my first night on FTO, and this is one of the females that I still work with actually to this day. She just got promoted to sergeant. And of course, me being me, completely nervous, didn't know what to expect, didn't know what was going to happen, but I quickly moved out of that stage. I quickly got into the patrol Kimber. I figured out my niche. I figured out basically how to do my own

interdiction. I followed all the K-9 officers around. I followed all the narcs around. I figured it out really quick. And to this day I still love doing it.

This is another picture of myself during FTO. The officer that's standing beside me was my phase III FTO. His father was actually murdered in the line of duty when he was eight. So he's, of course, been in law enforcement since his father was murdered back in, I think it was 2000 -- I want to say like 2001, maybe somewhere in there, 2001-ish. That's Corporal Nick Johnson. His father was a highway patrol, so if you all look at the highway patrol website; they have all the officers that have ever been killed in the line of duty; his father's up there.

So, he was a great FTO. He actually taught me basically everything his father taught him when he was younger, that, you know, you never know if you're going to come home. You have to do everything that you can yourself to stay alive. And he actually passed that down to me so I'm always grateful for having Nick as my phase III FTO, and he is also a narcotics deputy now too. So, a lot of everything that I learned from Nick I actually transferred over to my own learning and way of teaching.

So, in February of 2016 was when my incident occurred. But right before that, in January, I was promoted to corporal with less than one year on patrol, and that came with a lot of

responsibility. My stats were probably the highest on my team as far as drug arrests and gun arrests, and I was always known for at least making one or two felony drug arrests every night. So, once I got promoted I felt like I had to keep that status quo. I felt like I had to keep going. I felt like I had to strive and make sure that I understood that -- I basically felt like I was carrying my shift on my back at that time because, like I said, our agency was going through a really tough time administratively, and nobody wanted to be proactive. This particular area, if we didn't have at least two or three shootings a night we knew something was wrong.

So, for me to know that I was in this area trying to make a difference actually excited me a little bit. So, every night I went to work I would do the exact same thing. I would stop cars. This is a high foot traffic area. Anybody that was walking, especially after the sun went down, on a bike, they probably knew my name 'cause we were going to have a discussion. And that's how I kept up with basically my popularity at the sheriff's office.

So, on this particular night I was actually supposed to go home early. We normally work a 4:30 in the afternoon to 4:30 in the morning shift, unless it's our last night, and our last night orientation is our 5:30 morning. So, this particular morning I was supposed to get off at 5:30, but my nephew's

birthday party was that Saturday and we were getting off Friday morning, and from where I work and where I'm originally from in South Carolina it's about a three-hour drive. So, I didn't want to sleep all day and then basically only spend a day and a half at home.

So, my supervisor at the time was like -- it had been really slow. I had only gotten one call for service all night in this area. So, he was like, "Yeah, it's fine." My zone partner was training a new guy, so he was like, "Oh, he can take all the calls. He needs to learn the paperwork anyway. And there's only been one call tonight so it shouldn't be that bad." So, I said, "Okay. I'll go home" and I planned on going home around midnight. That was only going to leave them maybe four hours to actually get a call because most of the calls stopped around, like, 4:15 in the morning anyway. So, the last hour we were just sitting there looking at each other at the office.

So, I decided that I was just going to ride around my particular area and I was going to check this one area that I knew for a fact that always had somebody there doing something. And it ended up being a Food Lion parking lot. So, typical grocery store plaza. It's a Food Lion and I think they had like some more little restaurants. And on the end -- if you look at the building, on the end it's kind of blocked off. So, for you to see behind the building a little bit you would have to

somewhat drive in. So, it made it perfect for them to go back there and do anything they wanted because that was the only light that was back there, and for you to see all the way behind the store you would actually have to drive.

So, as I'm driving by the road I see like a little shimmer of light, and I look over and I realize it's a car with their headlights on. And by this time it's I think about five after midnight. I was, like, oh, that looks like it should be something good. So I drove up and I turned around and I waited probably 10, 15 seconds, 'cause I figured if they just saw me drive by then they're going to leave. Well, they didn't. So, I drive back by to actually try to turn into the parking lot, and before I drive around the corner; obviously I didn't want to drive straight up in front of them; I sat for a second 'cause I'm like, okay. Now they really do see me so they're going to pull off. They still didn't leave.

So, I'm just like, okay. Well, now I'm going to have to talk to them, figure out what's going on, and see what they're doing behind the grocery store at midnight. So, I call out to Dispatch to let them know exactly where I am and what I'm doing, and I told them that I'm getting out with a suspicious car behind the Food Lion parking lot. And they were like, "Okay." And I remember my zone mate, who was training the new guy, had just pulled a car over; suspicion of DUI or something; and I

think he was probably a mile and a half away, not even that far, even if it was a mile and a half. So, I was like, okay. If something happens he's right there. There's two of them. It's no big deal.

And one thing about my team was that we were so short-handed at the time that I could literally go an entire night and I wouldn't see anybody else that I worked with because they would be on the other end of the county dealing with God knows what. So, it wasn't unusual for me to be by myself all night. So, I get out of the car and as soon as I look at it I realize that there's a paper tag on it. So, I couldn't exactly tell them, you know, hey, this is where the car belongs to or figure out the address to it. And I realized that there were two people in the car. There was a female in the front seat, and then there was a male in the back passenger seat. So, they were sitting diagonally across from each other.

So, me and the little bit of interdiction that I learned in less than a year of being on patrol I was like obviously the seating arrangement doesn't make sense so they're up to something that they shouldn't be or there's somebody else in these -- there's a patch of woods back here that goes directly to a really bad apartment complex. They use that as a drug thoroughfare all the time. So, I didn't know if somebody else was out there or what was going on at the time.

So, when I asked the female why she was sitting behind a grocery store her original answer was, "My battery's dead on my truck." And I said, "Well, how did you get behind a store if your battery's dead if you're coming from somewhere?" She was like, "Oh, well I just knew it was about to go dead so I just pulled up here and stopped so that it would go dead" was her initial answer, which obviously makes no sense. And I said, "Okay. Well, do you have your driver's license with you?" So, she said yes and she handed me her driver's license, and I look at the guy in the backseat and he's shivering, like about to, like, shiver out of the window, like -- just like he's freaking out, like he's scared.

So, I look at him and I say, "Well, do you have your information with you?" and he goes, "No, ma'am." And that's all he says. He didn't say anything else. And I said, "So, where are you coming from?" and he said that he worked at Northwoods Mall. So, from this area to the mall is about 10 minutes at best, and it's midnight and the mall closes at 10:00. So, I asked him, I said, "Well, if you live over here" which was right across the street is an apartment complex; I said, "Well, if you get off at 10:00 and you live here and it's midnight there's two hours that don't account for." And he was like, "Oh we have to fold clothes before we can leave. So, I said, "It takes you two hours to fold clothes before you can leave the mall?" and he

didn't have any answer whatsoever.

So, I asked her again, I said, "So, what's the real reason you're back here because common sense tells me that you just don't pull up and let your battery go dead, especially if he lives across the street?" You would think that she would just go ahead and take him home, right? And she didn't have an answer. She just kind of was like she was stuck. And at that point I could tell that neither one of them knew what was going on or what was going to happen and they had no clue that I was about to pull over. They didn't even have time to basically concoct a story.

So, my sergeant calls me on the radio and he was like, "Hey, are you okay? I'm about to get out with" -- my zone partner at the time was Daniel, and I said, "Yeah, I'm fine. Just see what he has with the DUI." So, once I told them that I'm fine, I'm used to handling stuff on my own, I asked the guy that was in the back seat if he'd mind stepping out and talking to me so I could separate him from the female. So, he gets out; he leaves the car door open. And I had my spotlight, my take-down lights, and the one light that's back here, the light that's on the picture. She was parked directly right beside. I mean, you could tell she actually pulled up and parked right beside the light.

And I got him out. So I could still see her and I was

talking to him at the same time, and I asked him, I said, "Well, do you have a problem with me patting you down, make sure you don't have any weapons?" He was like, "No, go ahead. You can search me." I was like, "Okay." So, I do; I do exactly that. He has absolutely nothing. So, I start talking to him some more, and I was like, "So, what's her name?" and he gives me some off the wall fake name. And I was just like, "So, how long have you known her?" He says, "Oh, well we work at the mall together. She works as our mall security." And at that moment I was like, huh, that might be true because she had a white shirt on that had security letters on the side of it. So, I was like he might be telling just a little bit of truth there.

So, I said, "Well how long have you known her since before you all were working at the mall?" And he says, "I didn't. She's only been there for about two weeks, and that's exactly how we met, and she was trying to take me home and her battery went dead." I said, "Did her battery go dead while you were driving or did you perfectly park the car and you all had been back here for a minute and it happened to go dead?" And he was like, "No, we literally just got here." So, I asked him, I said, "Well, if you live directly across the street" excuse me; which he did, later on I found out; I said, "Why don't you just walk home?" He said, "Well I don't want to leave her here by herself if her car isn't working."

I said, "Okay. I'm going to talk to her now. Is she going to tell me anything different?" He goes, "No, she shouldn't." I said, "All right. Well, if you don't have a problem with that, do you have a problem with sitting in my car so that way I can talk to her?" He goes, "No, I'll go sit in your car." So, at this point I'm starting to re-think which one I should be paying more attention to because he's been completely calm now. He was shaking in the beginning, but once I got him out of the car he just relaxed. So, I had the typical Tahoe, so I had the whole cage, back seat in, so once I put him in the car and my car door was locked; I had the cage; I was not worried about him anymore 'cause I knew he couldn't get out. He couldn't do anything unless I allowed him to.

So, I walked back out to the car and I stayed on the passenger side. I didn't go re-approach on the driver's side 'cause I still had my view. And I look at her and now she's nervous. Now she's the one that won't answer my questions. And when I re-approached the vehicle I realized that I could smell perfume that I didn't smell the first time. So, I asked her, I said, "What did you spray in the car?" And she was like, "Oh, I didn't spray anything." I was like, "BS" like "I didn't smell it the first time, you obviously sprayed something." She was like, "Oh, well this is just my perfume that I like to put on when I'm not doing anything." I said, "Well, that doesn't seem

logical because you have a cop standing here interviewing you. Like why would you want to put fragrance on? That makes no sense."

So, I asked her, I was like, "What are you trying to cover up?" and she's like, "Nothing, you can search the car." And I was like, "So, it's on you?" is what I'm thinking in my mind. So, I get her out of the car and she does the typical won't stand still. She's pulling on that one spot that they always teach you about in the academy when somebody's telling you where something is. So, I told her, I was like, "Hey, stop pulling on your shirt. Like, put your hands on top of the car, I'm going to pat you down for weapons." And she was like, "Well, I don't want to be searched." And I said, "Well, at this point you don't have that option." I said, "I'm going to pat you down for weapons because of how you're acting right now and the simple fact that you're favoring this one side of your shirt isn't sitting well with me."

So, I try to start patting her down and she drops her hands down. So, I went to actually put her in handcuffs and she put her hands back on the car. And at that point I was just like, all right. It's time to call for somebody. So, at this point I still had my lapel mic on; which I live by my lapel mic; and I grabbed my lapel mic and I started to tell my dispatcher that I was in a fight because she locked her arm out. So, at this

point is when everything just went from real time to microseconds.

So, I remember she made a quick turn over her shoulder and that was when the first shot actually ended up going off. At that point in time I had no clue what happened. All I knew it was something loud and something really, really bright, and I couldn't see anything. I couldn't hear anything. The only thing that I had at that point was just the smell. So, I remember like a little bit of the white particles, when you have a bright flash. It started to clear up just a little bit and I could see just the silhouette of the trees that were outside. So, I saw that the trees were moving. I was like, "Okay, like what do I do now?"

So, I was like, okay. I can't see; I can't hear. Just take a deep breath in. So, I took a deep breath in and that's when I smelled the gunpowder and I was like, oh crap. I've been shot or she's trying to shoot me. At that point I didn't know if I had actually been shot. I just knew it was close enough to my ear that I couldn't hear anything. So, that was when the second shot went off, and that one was the one that I could actually pretty much feel. I thought it went and took my whole bottom jaw off; that's how bad it hurt, that's how much blood that I could taste in my mouth. Like, every time I tried to say something or talk it felt like the tip of my tongue was gone.

So, that's when I knew it was either fight or flight or freeze, and my personality, most people that know me, I'm not the type to fight -- I mean will fly or freeze up. So, I knew I was going to fight back. So, I'm not sure still to this day if the force of the gun or if it was her that pushed me, but I knew I was falling. I remember her trying to push off of me so I'm guessing with her strength plus me being shot at the same time is when I started to lose my balance. So, I start to fall on my right side, which I'm right handed so I was falling on my gun side. So, I was like, all right. Well, I'm going to fall. I can't break the fall at this point. So, I was thinking ahead of how do I get off my gun side.

So, once I hit the ground I remember putting my arms like right up in my face 'cause I didn't want to knock myself out and just basically be defenseless. As soon as I hit the ground was when the shot went under my vest; there was probably about that much under my vest, between my vest and my belt and the bullet went straight under my vest. So, I felt that one. That one really, really hurt. So at this point in time I'm really mad. Like, I was already mad that the situation was happening, but now I'm just like she's not even trying to run anymore; she's actually trying to kill me because the first two shots could have given her a head start, but she didn't take that.

So, as soon as I hit the ground I remember I flipped over,

but I didn't want to flip over into a head shot because she was still actually shooting at me while I was laying on the ground. So, I rolled over and I kicked my left foot out. As soon as I kicked my left foot out was when that shot ended up coming up through my foot, and the blood just blew all over my face. Like, I could see bone, blood. I could literally see the bullet coming through my foot. That's how slow time gets. So, by this time I'm off of my gun side and I'm just like, okay. Now I can actually shoot back.

It's been two years, almost three; I still don't remember pulling my gun out of my holster. I'll probably never remember just because of how much training that I had going to the academy, after the academy, pulling my firearm. And that's probably the best thing that ever happened is to this day I still don't remember that. I just knew that I needed to pull my gun. So, I remember once I pulled my gun out I could see her directly in front of me. So, probably from here to this chair is how far we are from each other, and there's the car that's blocking her. So, she's trying to duck behind the car while she's shooting at me at the same time. So, she and I both are just basically playing this old western shootout, trying to figure out who's going to survive and who's going to die, and I knew at that point it wasn't going to be me.

Still to this day I don't remember how many shots I fired;

SLED had to tell me. I just remember one of the bullets -- one of the last bullets that she shot at me hit the ground and bounced off, and that was the last that I saw her face. So, I knew that she fell behind the truck; I just didn't know how far behind the truck. I didn't know what she was doing. I didn't know if she was dead, and I honestly completely forgot about the guy that was in my car. So, there was one of those big trash can, like the normal ones that you see behind a grocery store, so I had probably about a quick split second to think about where I was going to go from that point 'cause I didn't want her to jump back up and start shooting at me and I wasn't behind any cover or anything.

So, I jump up and I run and I dive and I get behind the trash can. Well, that was when I remembered that I still had a hole in my foot, and that slowed me down a lot. I still couldn't see her. I didn't know what she was doing. And at this point my whole bottom jaw was completely numb. I couldn't even talk. I couldn't form words. I couldn't do anything. And I just remember grabbing my radio and trying to key up and say shots fired and told them exactly where I was again. So, by this time I'm behind the trash can and I'm reloading because I don't know how many times I shot; I don't even know if she's dead. I don't know what she's doing.

And then, all of a sudden, the truck that she was in starts

to back up, and I was just like, okay, there's a third person that I didn't account for or she's still alive. So, I jump up and I look and the opposite side of the grocery store is where she's backing up and driving around to. So, I jump up and this corner side that's up here, I ran to the opposite side. So, when I got to the front of the grocery store she and I met and she was actually driving the truck. And that's when I had this epiphany of, okay, so, do I continue to shoot at her while she's driving away and there's random people walking outside or do I just let it go and let somebody else finish this fight for me basically?

So, at that point in time I chose to actually let her drive off. South Carolina is kind of finicky right now about us shooting at vehicles, even after we've been involved in a shooting, and the only thing that was in the back of my mind at that time was I don't want to go from a victim to a trial. So, I actually let her drive off. So, I'm in the middle of this parking lot. By this time I'm actually bleeding everywhere; I can actually see the blood now. I'm actually throwing up blood in the parking lot, and I'm trying to figure out where everybody is because my partner was like a mile down the road. So, I'm just like what just happened. Where is everybody? Why isn't anybody coming to my rescue at this point?

So, where my truck is is where I was deciding either I'm

going to run back to or there's a convenient gas station store right around the corner. So, I had two options; I was like either I can make it to the gas station or I can make it back to my truck. And out of the blue, as I'm deciding which way to go, this car comes out. And the whole time I was talking to those two before this entire shooting happened no cars drove by; no people were out. It was literally, eerily dead silence. And that was one thing that I've always thought about is how many times have you talked to people, how many times have you done something and at least one car or one person comes by. That entire night, thinking about it, nobody drove by the entire time.

So, this one lady that drove by just basically stopped in the middle of the road 'cause she saw me and was like, "Are you okay?" And at this point I didn't realize how bad I was bleeding everywhere. So, I had this random citizen stop her car and call 911 to get people to come to help me. Till this day I actually still talk to her. She's a really good friend. She's a sweetheart. She just happened to be my guardian angel that night.

This is just part of the crime scene where I was. He ended up shooting at me eight times and I ended up firing at him four times. Out of the eight shots five of them actually hit me. One hit my radio, which is when we found out why nobody was

coming to me, because my radio wouldn't transmit. So, when I fell on my side -- I keep my radio obviously on my left side, and when I fell that shot -- she ended up shooting my radio too. So, even if I had tried to get out they said that I couldn't get out if I wanted to. That was something that we figured out later on is why nobody was coming.

This is the inside of my truck, just to give you a feel. It was 2015 Tahoe. I'm pretty sure some of your agencies have those. So, it was the typical setup. Like, once he was in the back seat he was in the back seat. He wasn't coming out. That's my truck that's parked sideways because he was parked up against the sidewalk. So, I actually had to turn and position my truck because I didn't drive around the entire store because I figured by the time I drove around the entire store and got all the way back that they would be gone. So, that was just how I positioned my truck to get there.

That's my supervisor's truck once they pulled up. So, once everybody got there -- my sergeant ended up being the first one there, the one that asked me if I was okay. He ended up getting there first, and I remember, like, I handed him my gun, and by this time the pain in my stomach was excruciating. I still can't put that into words. I hand him my gun and he just looks at me, and I'd say, "Hey, I'm finished" like you all have got to deal with the rest of this. Like, I don't know where she went,

what she did, who she is, but you all have got to go find her 'cause I can't do it right now.

And I remember they laid me down, obviously, typical cops, they start stripping me down on the side of the highway and the guy -- the new guy that that was training actually put my tourniquet on. First night at work and he put my tourniquet on. So, I don't know how -- and I know for a fact we've done this now, but our rookies and FTOs, they learn how to put tourniquets on their first night. So, if you have anybody in training don't let them get to the last phase; don't send them away to training. Tourniquets should be something done in-house. And unfortunately with me being the guinea pig a lot of the stuff that we do now is because of my incident.

That was the Expedition that they were in. They ended up finding it in North Charleston, where they were from. Like I said, like, North Charleston is the next city over. It's in Charleston County. Once you go under the bridge literally from where this is you're in Charleston County. So, a lot of their riff-raff comes under the bridge and just goes right back. So, we just play this bouncing game with the next-door county. Obviously the yellow markers were the shell casings that were found. And the interesting part of this was when I was put in the back of the ambulance my supervisor walks up to me and he goes, "Do you know who it is?" And I said, "Oh, wait, I forgot.

Give me my shirt." And he hands me my uniform shirt and I pull out the I.D. and I hand it to him and I said, "This is who shot me." And he goes, "Okay."

So, of course he jumps off the back of the ambulance because they were trying to do the prep before we leave, and I remember he opens the door back right when we're about to pull off and he has two I.D.s in his hand, and he thinks -- he's one of those supervisors that you know he was either upset or confused when he fixes his glasses. He's one of those that you could kind of tell their natural behavior to. And I looked at him and I was like, "What?" like I'm trying to get to the hospital. Like, what is going on right now? He's like, "I need you to grab the I.D. of the person that you said shot you." So, I grabbed the same one, and he goes, "Are you sure?" And I'm like, "Yes." Like, what is the deal? And he was like, "Just lay down. I'll explain it to you later."

So, the part that they waited to explain to me was after I woke up in the hospital and they ran -- obviously ran the I.D. The I.D. came back to this house, which he was an idiot, and I say he because I found out later on that it was a transgender and that it was actually a he and not a she. So, that's why he was confused; and everybody was confused because they thought that they were looking for a female. So, when they got to the house and all these males started coming out they were like,

wait a minute. Like, what's going on? So, we later on found out that the incident that was going on behind the grocery store was a prostitution/drug deal, and the guy that was in my car didn't realize that it was a male. And he found out later on that it was a male. He thought it was a female. That's kind of my ah-ha moment for you shouldn't kill, or try to kill the police.

So, once they found the truck they actually found the blood trail coming from the truck going back into the house. I ended up actually obviously shooting him, which helped for them to find him, because once he got out of the truck -- there was blood all in the truck. He got out of the truck, tried to strip down. There ended up being a four-hour standoff. He barricaded himself in the house, wouldn't come out, and once North Charleston City was like, all right. We've had enough. Like, I was already in surgery. They didn't know if I was going to make it or not. That's just how bad all my injuries were.

North Charleston basically said, "Hey, we've had enough. Like, she's in ICU. We're not going to play this game with you all." They went in to try to apprehend him and he ended up shooting himself with the same gun that he shot me with. So, he ended up committing suicide right when the SWAT team went in to get him. The bed right there is where he tried to actually nurse his own wound from basically where he was about to bleed

out anyway because they refused to obviously send EMS in to help him when he had just almost killed me. That's just a close-up of him.

This is the citizen. This is her vehicle. As you can see, I was bleeding on the side of her car, which at the beginning I didn't realize why she was freaking out. I was just like, "Hey, can you just call 911?" Now, you know, it all made sense after that fact that I was, like, bleeding on this girl's car. Like, that's why she was freaking out. But, like I said, she was my greatest help, if anything, if I can say that. She's probably just my angel at this point. That's just some more evidence from where I was laying.

These pictures are from actual injuries. This is where we figured out what happened all together. My foot, down on the left side is where the bullet came in on my foot, and then the one that's on my knee we never really truly figured out where that one came from. We just associated it with the position of my foot when it was shot. So, we're thinking it was just the same bullet. He took off half of my ear. So, the first shot was why I couldn't hear, and I still lost a lot of hearing in my left ear but some of it came back; not a lot of it. My lip was cut in half. They had to do plastic surgery two times on my lip and on my ear. That's just another one of my ear -- I mean my lip. And then that's just a little close-up of my ear.

That's the perfect round circle of my foot. That injury was probably the one that kept me out the longest. I had to have three surgeries on my foot. I have a plate in it now with a screw that goes all the way through it. So, my middle toe is the one that doesn't move too well. That was the one that we thought was going to be the deal breaker of me coming back to work or not, but obviously I overcame that, which is a good thing. I had really good surgeons. That's just the knee.

There's my radio. My agency actually let me keep my gun and my radio for this incident, so I still have me radio. And my gun they just signed it out to me; I own it; you know, how they do at retirement. But they just went ahead and gave me mine. So, I actually have not shot it since that day. I have a little trophy shrine at my apartment where I have everything that I had on that day besides my uniform. I just threw that away 'cause I didn't want it back. I have the radio, the gun, my mags, the same pair of handcuffs, a lot of the gifts that people sent me. It's just on one big shrine so in just look at it every day when I go to work. It's kind of like my motivation. These are autopsy photos.

So, a part of my speech for today for the administrative side was the support and the return to work and how I got back to work, and this is where our agencies come into play. We had the typical shift; two on, two, off every other weekend. So,

this happened on a Thursday night where we were off that Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. This is actually my entire shift that was working with me that same night. There's actually a K-9 in there, Cero [phonetic], who was actually on our shift too. We have a shift briefing every day that we -- every first day that we come back to work.

So, that Monday was their first day back. My sheriff and my chief, Chief Cochran, actually told my entire shift that they could take off because they had literally been at the hospital with me from Friday morning up until this point. Of course, all of them said no, they were going to go back to work. They weren't going to let, you know, one guy determine the rest of their life. So, they decided that they were going to have the squad briefing at my hospital room. So, that was them. They came in, which to this day is probably one of my favorite pictures. I had no clue that they were going to do that. My SGT and everybody's in that picture.

So, coming from an administrative side, just to know that, one, you give your shift off. Don't send them back to work the same day. I've been to New York, California; this is my fourth time in Florida; and I've met a lot of people that have been involved in shootings and they either went back to work the same day or the next day. It's horrible. And I'm not talking about just us. I'm talking about the people that were also there.

The shooter isn't always the number one priority; it's the people that respond to you. I didn't realize until probably two months after my incident how much my incident affected everybody that I worked with, because they had to hear that over the radio.

It was one of those nights where everybody was just riding around being quiet because it was raining somewhat off and on that night. It was freezing. So, no good cop gets cold or wet, right? So, they weren't doing anything, so for them to just hear that come across the radio, that startled them too. A lot of us in this picture, this was our first year. The next day, the 28th, was my one-year anniversary on patrol, so I hadn't even made it through a whole year yet. So, just remember that it's always about everybody at the agency, not just the person that's actually involved in the critical incident. It's everybody's involved.

That's my sheriff. The next week -- I stayed in the hospital for a week. The following week a Chick-fil-A in our area did a fund raiser for me that I had no clue that they were going to do. Two local Chick-fil-As in the area, they donated 10 percent of the proceeds to me at every order. Apparently this is something that they all put together without me knowing. So this is just some of the support that I gathered. When we're out of work we don't get overtime, we don't get the fund off

duty, and that base paycheck is horrible. Luckily for me I just feed me. I don't have an entire family. I don't have a husband, wife, kids.

A lot of these officers that are involved in incidences, they have to support people. They still have to feed people in their family, and if you're only getting a \$1200 check before taxes with no overtime it starts to add up really quick. So, I was blessed to actually have people that were getting donations for me that I didn't even know about. My agency was behind a lot of that. My sheriff, in general, bought me groceries for my apartment, made sure I got to every doctor's appointment. Once my mom had to go back to work, after she used up all her FMLA, a lot of the guys that I work with took me to my doctors' appointments. They came and cleaned up for me. They cooked for me. I never went without anything.

I'm probably one of the blessed ones in an officer-involved situation because a lot of officers don't get that blessing. They don't have somebody to help them. It's kind of like your administration cares for the press release and the day after and then it's back to business as normal. And I think that's where officers start to fade. That's where you start to see your suicide rates go up. That's when you see officers that just don't come back in general. I wanted to come back. I knew I was coming back, but I also had the support to come back. I

knew I was coming back. I knew that they wanted me back. Never did they tell me, "Hey, don't come back." They were like, "When you're ready to come back." They didn't give me a start date. They said, "You give me your start date." And that meant a lot.

The picture on the right is our September 11th run that we do every year in Charleston on Daniel Island. That was the first year that I attended, which was a few months after my incident. The two guys that you see in the picture, the one with the blue shirt on was on my team. He actually ran in uniform for all of us that have been hurt or shot and killed in the line of duty, and so did North Charleston Police Department, because they also had a part in my incident as well. So, they ran in full uniform, which was a lot of support. There was a lot of people from the community that showed up, and our entire command staff was there, from the sheriff down to I think, my sergeant was even there.

So, it wasn't just a community-based thing, "Well hey, you all go out and do that." If I went anywhere, the sheriff went with me. The sheriff or the chief went with me. And that's another incident where the sheriff is with me everywhere I go. CSU, the college that I went to, Charleston Southern, they actually asked me to be the first speaker to ever come address the issue about officer-involved shooting for the criminal

justice program, and that was actually the first speaking engagement I had ever done for my shooting.

I was actually still in a boot for that one, so they had like a little podium and a chair for me to sit in the entire time. And that's my mom. Like I said, the sheriff goes everywhere with me. My chief was in this. I think my chief actually took the photo. My major was there. My patrol captain was there, a couple guys from the shift, and I think some more people from, like, surrounding agencies just came, even though they already knew my story. They just came for the support aspect of it.

And I just put up some bulletin points just to bring this to your attention for -- I'm sure you all have had to experience your officers being involved in shootings or any other critical incident, is the reason why it's so important to have the support is because we know that you care. It's not like we feel like we're just another number of an officer. It's just like, hey, that's not Officer Such-and-such. Like, you actually know my name. You actually know my incident. You've been to a couple of my doctors' appointments, which we got really, really familiar with each other when they actually came to my appointments 'cause they wanted to keep up and know what was going on.

We feel like you understand at the same time. I know a lot

of people when they climb up the ranks they kind of forget what it feels like to be on patrol. Coming back and helping us lets us know that you're still human as well. It lets us know that you're still there for us. It lets us know that you actually want us to do well. You actually want us at your agency. You actually want us to come back. You actually want us to be there and work. Calling us after our incident means a lot. My sheriff and my chief called, if not every day, it was like every other day. We're on a texting basis. They knew when I had to go to the doctor. They knew right after what the doctor said.

If anybody wanted to talk to me about my incident as far as the media they asked me first, even when the media wanted to talk to them about my incident they were like, "Hey, is this okay? Do you want us to put your incident out there? Do you want people to know about it?" It wasn't like they just kept me out of the loop on everything that happened. I knew everything that happened with my incident. And that's exactly what it is. It's my incident. It's nobody else's. It happened to me. So, don't use your officer as basically a pawn or as publicity because that incident is still sensitive. It's still sensitive to me even two years later. It's still a sensitive subject.

And the counseling, I still go see a therapist once a month for my incident. And when this first started I was just like any other officer, I didn't want to go talk to anybody. I

didn't feel like I needed to go and talk to anybody. I thought that going to talk to somebody was a joke until one of my doctors at my doctors' appointments walked in the room, and he said, "Have you went to go talk to somebody yet?" And I said, "No." And that's when he started to explain to me his background, that he actually was a medic in the Army, and he had done tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He says, "You need to go talk to somebody." And that was the breaking point.

When somebody basically sits you down and says, "You're going to talk to somebody" or "You have to go and talk to somebody before you can come back to work" that's a lot of motivation to go and get it done. My major had to continuously call me and coach me and say, "Hey, you need to go and talk to somebody. We've never had to deal with this before. We're going through this just like you are, and we're all going to go talk to somebody too." So, to hear that, I was like, "Okay." So, we have what we call a debriefing team at our sheriff's office. No longer than two days after your incident you have to go in and convene.

So, basically what it is is officers that are within our agency that have been involved in some form of critical incident and then all of the officers that were just involved in that critical incident. So, it can be anywhere up to 10 or 15 people sitting in a circle in a chair in our training room and

everybody goes around and you have to talk about the incident. And being here two years later, I thought it was crazy, but talking about the incident really does help. And it helps because there's a lot of pieces of my own incident that I had no clue happened. I didn't know about how people were coming from 45 minutes over to get to me. I didn't know that some people didn't know until the next morning. I didn't know that some of them still had nightmares about it. Some of them freaked out when I came back to work, when they hear me on the radio. It's a lot.

That's why I say it's just not our incident; it's everybody's incident that happened that was with me. It has to be everybody. It can't just be the officer that was involved. It has to be everybody has to go. My lieutenant, I think it affected him the most. He's a lieutenant now, but he was my sergeant when it happened. When I came back to work he actually came over to -- I'm on the community action team now, so when he came back over and he was directly supervising me again and I went back to work, and he -- to this day he'll tell me, he's like, "Hey, sometimes it still affects me when I hear you do stuff." And that's natural.

I mean, I respect that, for somebody to actually come up and tell me that, "Hey, your incident still makes me come to work, and it still makes me fear." And it still makes me wonder

because he told me that he thought that when he basically shooed me off that he was the reason why I was shot. And I was like, "That wasn't the reason." So, he and I actually had to sit down and talk about my whole incident from beginning to end so I could explain to him that basically I thought I was okay. It wasn't your fault that I told you not to show up. I thought I was fine.

So, sometimes you might have to have a one-on-one. You might have to have officers come in and talk about their incident with other agencies. That helps too. I've talked to surrounding agencies, North Charleston, Dorchester, Orangeburg, Columbia. That helps too because you just never know what other agencies are going through. You just never know what other officers might be going through as well.

And our changes in behavior: We show signs of changes in behavior just like everybody else. We'll get quiet. We'll get reserved. You won't hear from us for a couple of days. Keep calling. If you got to, send somebody to beat down our door. Do that, because I've actually had to have people come and talk to me while I was out. I was out for a whole year. It got to the point where some of medical incidences just kept reoccurring. I had to have multiple surgeries on my stomach. My foot surgery, I had three all together. It was just one of those things that to me it just kind of got long-winded. I

think halfway through the process I felt like I lost hope a little bit. And you do lose hope.

You're out of work for a whole year. I live in the same county I work in, so you see people going somewhere while you're riding around trying to find something to do because you're bored. You get kind of upset because you want to know what's going on, and you know you can't call right in the middle of it because obviously it's important. And you just kind of start feeling disconnected. So, keep calling. Keep texting. Like I said, if you have to send the cavalry over there to break the door down to pull them out of the house do it. Just don't let them sit there. Don't let them feel sorry for themselves. Just go get them.

And the last thing: The most important thing is do not blame. I've never gotten blamed for anything in my situation. Do I realize that some of the stuff that I did was a rookie mistake? Absolutely. I own that. But if you were to walk up to your officer and say this happened because you did this, you'll just shut them all the way down. They'll probably never come back to work. They'll probably never want to be in law enforcement again. Speaking these last two years I've met two officers in general where that exact thing happened to them. One of them actually played out in the media. Thank God he was never charged, but it happened. His agency blamed him. And

another one, he said that he just didn't want to come back after hearing his deputy chief tell him, "Hey, if you hadn't done this then you wouldn't have been involved in your incident."

So, please, even if that's you feel, there's a way to express that. There's a way to use our incident as a training experience. Use mine all the time. I don't mind my agency pointing stuff out to the rookies, "Hey, don't do this. Don't do that." I don't mind it. But they've come to me. And you have to make sure your officer is actually in that place to hear their corrections as well. Like, obviously me being in the hospital waiting to figure out if I'm going to ever go back to work isn't the time to come in there and say, "Hey, this is what happened. This is what went wrong." Make sure they're actually in that place to understand.

Make sure that they -- in their mind they've went back through their own incident. There were months where I would sit there and play back my entire incident, why I didn't realize that I should have caught this sign, that sign. There's a lot. Once SLED, which is the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, they investigate all of our officer-involved shootings. Once they closed out my case I actually got a copy of my case file. Love that to this day. That's how I get most of the pictures. To actually see how SLED did my investigation and to see some of the incidences that went down before that I didn't know about,

it helped me. 'Cause I was like, "Oh, I should have saw that coming. I should have investigated this part. I should have asked more questions about this first." And I didn't. But I was also in a place where I was ready to hear that.

I went back to work January 17th, 2017, which was exactly 11 months after my incident. That's my first day back photo. I also have a picture with me, the sheriff, and the chief. Obviously we're really close. That's why I always talk about them. The first day I came back they called me. They were like, "The media's freaking out. Do you want to talk to them? We're not going to do an interview if you don't want to do it." And I was like, "Yeah, let's do it." And that just shows that they obviously care about me as a person. They don't want to keep putting me out there if I'm not willing to talk about it. Anytime somebody will ask for me to come anywhere they ask me first.

They don't talk about it unless they ask me first, which I think is amazing. That lets me know that obviously they care about me. But that's just the journey. That just shows you the journey that I went through. It took I might as well say a year for me to get the point. When I first went back to work that same night they put me on day shift because they didn't want me on nights right off the bat, and that made sense. They didn't want to put me back out in the jungle. They switched my zone,

which is also a good move. So, they switched my time and the area that I worked so that I wasn't constantly in the same area where I was shot.

The first night I did my traffic stop by myself, halfway through it I had to give the guy his driver's license back and I got sick on the side of the highway. So, it doesn't stop when you come back to work. That's just one more hurdle that you have to climb. Even a year later, some stuff, I can be driving down the road and just randomly hear like a gunshot in my ear. Lights and sirens: For probably the first month and a half that brought back a little bit of PTSD for it. The first gunshot wound that I went to; right after that there was a lady that got randomly shot in the interstate; that brought up a little bit of PTSD. One thing I will say is that when I was tending to her my team was looking at me like, "How did you know what to do so fast besides the tourniquet and all that?" And I was like, "Well, once you've been shot all gunshot wounds are the same." So I can tend to anybody.

There's just little things that will bring it back, but it doesn't affect me anymore. At first, if I had any memory of my shooting at all I would just break down. That would be the end of my day, especially when I started back on light duty. They had me helping with ATF reports. If we arrested anybody with a gun we would send it to ATF, try to get them federally charged.

If I read any report, trying to get the report, the case together to send to our ATF liaison, that would do it. Two hours at work and I'm reading a report where they got in a fight the night before with a guy with a gun and I was like, "I'm done."

Right before my incident I went to Zaxby's Drive-Through to eat, so when I was in the hospital and they were trying to prep me for surgery I would get sick obviously because my body was trying to push out a bullet, and the only thing that I could taste was Zaxby's fries, the little seasoned fries. To this day, I still can't eat Zaxby's seasoned fries. I just don't eat Zaxby's. Zaxby's will do it. I can eat their salad, but it's just something about those crinkle fries, that auditory nerve goes back to my brain, and my brain's like, "Oh no, this is what happened the last time you ate our fries." Zaxby's does it.

Hearing gunshots doesn't do it as much anymore. They took me shooting I think about nine months after the fact. That's another thing. If your officer was involved in a shooting take them back to shoot immediately. Don't wait. That's one thing that we kind of regretted because I was just freaking out the whole time. I didn't want to hold the gun. I didn't want to shoot it. Completely past that now. But, yeah, take them so they can hear the sound of a gun again, because the last time I heard a gun was somebody was shooting me. So, kind of put that

gap in there. Try to show them that, hey, this isn't the only time you're going to hear a gunshot. So, that helped. And my major actually owns a farm, so he actually took me out to shoot and -- free ammo. Don't make them pay for ammo. I've heard of people that had to bring their own ammo to shoot before they went back to work. Don't do that.

And I think that's it. If there's -- I have enough time for Q and As, and that's all my contact information up there, the sheriff's office, my work email, my personal email. I try to keep both of my cell phones on me, so if you all need to contact me Chief Touchberry can get in contact with me and my chief can kind of flag me down if you all need me. Thank you.

(CONCLUSION OF SESSION)

Transcribed by: hmc/hmc