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Caroline Hibbert: Hello, my name is **Caroline Hibbert**.

Deshauna Dawson: And my name is **Deshauna Dawson**.

Caroline Hibbert: And on behalf of Crossroads to Freedom and the Center for Transforming Communities, we'd like to thank you for sharing your story with us today.

James Moore: You're welcome.

Deshauna Dawson: What is your name?

James Moore: James Moore.

Deshauna Dawson: What year were you born?

James Moore: Was born in 1982.

Caroline Hibbert: And where were you born and raised?

James Moore: Memphis, Tennessee.

Caroline Hibbert: Were you raised in the Highland Heights community?

James Moore: Yes.

Caroline Hibbert: And you attended Treadwell?

James Moore: Yes.

Caroline Hibbert: For how many years?

James Moore: From 3rd through 12th grade.

Caroline Hibbert: And what year did you graduate?

James Moore: 2000.

Caroline Hibbert: Could you just tell us a little bit about what Treadwell was like when you went there?

James Moore: Well, when I was a kid there, it was fun *[laughter]*. I mean it was a typical school, I guess. Had a great mix of people, the community was had nice mix

[0:01:00] to it. The student body was mixed well. It was a fun school to go to. We had a good time.

Caroline Hibbert: And what about high school? Did anything change, then?

James Moore: High school, no. I mean in general, it was a good school. You know we did notice crime and things started to be a little more widespread when we were in high school. You know, we experienced some of the people that we went to school with subjected to violence.

Deshauna Dawson: What was your home life like?

James Moore: Home life was my mother, my brother. My father and mom were separated. I had a good home life, was not what I now know to be a, know what the best word to use is, but you know, not the traditional home of a mother and a father, so you know, as an adult, now, I notice the,

[0:02:00] the difference.

Caroline Hibbert: And what did your parents do?

James Moore: My mother worked for the University of Memphis. She was a librarian at the University of Memphis and my father, he also worked for the university. He was in Building Services or something like that.

Caroline Hibbert: And what kinds of activities did you do while you were at Treadwell?

James Moore: Well honestly, at Treadwell, when I was in I guess elementary and high school, I did a lot in music, in the music classes and choir, things like that. High school, it was the same. I was in the band, was also in the choir, and some of the associations.

Caroline Hibbert: And do you still use some of those skills in what you do now?

James Moore: Yeah, definitely. Yeah. I'm still into music. I still sing every now and again. Lot of memories. I learned a lot in those areas when I was in school, yeah.

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Caroline Hibbert: And I guess, how did that kind of shape your experience while at school? Do you think it, you know, helped you be a better student or –

James Moore: Well, yeah, it did. That definitely yes. It made a big difference because the activities I enjoyed were a motivator for me to be at school, to, you know, I looked forward to being in choir because it was a fun class, so it helped with my conduct all around, I would say, because I got to do things that I enjoyed and also, you know, did the things that I didn't necessarily like doing.

Caroline Hibbert: And what did you end up doing after graduation?

James Moore: After graduation, I went to the University of Memphis, got a family pretty early, got married, adopted a niece and nephew pretty early and had kids.

Caroline Hibbert: And what did you major in?

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James Moore: When I went to the university, it was for education.

Caroline Hibbert: Okay. And so what are you doing now?

James Moore: Now, I manage For the Kingdom Camp and Conference Center.

Caroline Hibbert: Can you tell us what, I guess, that's all about?

James Moore: Yeah. It's an awesome facility in Memphis, not out in the woods or anything. It's about a mile off of 240, but we have overnight camping facilities. We have meeting facilities. We have a lot of adventure elements that you typically wouldn't find in a city setting. We have rock climbing walls, zip lines, swimming pool, things like that, and our mission, our purpose is to provide a program and a place for inner-city kids to experience a summer camp that they typically may not be able to experience for cost and things like that.

Caroline Hibbert: And what, I guess, kind of inspired you to

[0:05:00] set up or did you help set up this program or –

James Moore: Well, I've been involved in it ever since I was a student at Treadwell high school. I've been connected with it in some way or another. After graduation, I volunteered at the camp, when I was

younger. I worked in youth ministry in this area and I took kids from this community to For the Kingdom Camp. And then I guess four years ago, I was asked to join the staff out there.

Caroline Hibbert: And what, I guess, made you wanna get involved in that and go back to it after you graduated?

James Moore: Well, I guess the most important thing, the reason I'm there is to provide a place for inner-city kids to experience summer camping. I personally accepted Christ at a summer camp and I remember, I've been multiple camps over the years, but I remember the experiences I had

[0:06:00] and I want to be a part of providing a place that offers that to inner-city kids.

Caroline Hibbert: And did you go to this particular camp while you were at Treadwell?

James Moore: No, the camp had not been formed when I was a Treadwell student.

Caroline Hibbert: Okay.

James Moore: It was in the works, I guess. It was in a vision of somebody's back – I did go to the property but it was not developed as well as it is now. We just swam and ate hot dogs and chips in the back yard when I was in high school. But now it's a multimillion-dollar facility.

Caroline Hibbert: And what kind of age range does it serve?

James Moore: We serve anywhere, elementary through middle school right now are the camps that we plan and offer to kids.

Caroline Hibbert: What do you like about working with kids that are that age?

James Moore: Well for the younger kids, they're sponges. That's what excites me about 'em. They take in all the information you give 'em.

[0:07:00] They're excited about learning new things and for the ones that are a little bit older, middle school kids, they're at critical points in their life where they need to make crucial decisions that'll have a bearing on the rest of their life. So think it's a good time to get involved with 'em.

Caroline Hibbert: Do you have any specific examples of kids who took a better path than they would have because of this camp – that you know of?

James Moore: Well, the way the camp works, I would say no, first, because our facility, the way we're set up, we partner with ministries who work in the community to come and utilize our facilities and we provide a program for them to partake in so we don't do one-on-one with the kids that participate in the camp, so the ministries are the ones who bring the kids; who are there with 'em every day and who are with them

[0:08:00] in their neighborhood.

Caroline Hibbert: So do you serve kids from all over the city?

James Moore: Yes. Yeah.

Caroline Hibbert: I guess, do you do any kind of work now in Highland Heights?

James Moore: Well, now I am, I guess, doing some work in Highland Heights. It's not very definitive as to, I don't have a role or anything, so I would say I'm a supporter of any and all good things that are goin' on in the Highland Heights and Mitchell Heights community.

Caroline Hibbert: You mentioned – sorry, the youth ministries and stuff like that. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

James Moore: That are here now?

Caroline Hibbert: Mm-hmm.

James Moore: Or, I mean I'm aware and work along with some of the ministries that serve in this community now. I guess Streets Ministries is a little bit further, you know, from Highland Heights but I know those guys very well and the work that they do and support them in their ministry.

Caroline Hibbert: And do you bring kids in from –

[0:09:00] so you don't personally bring kids in from this community or anything like that?

James Moore: No. That's not my role. We don't, but ministries such as Streets, who currently, recently brought kids to our camp, brought kids from this community and so that's our role is to provide that

facility for them and they pay a greatly reduced rate to participate and camp out there at our place.

Deshauna Dawson: How'd you get involved in ____ ____ ____?

James Moore: Well, pretty much to be on staff as I am now, like I said, I've always been around it since the beginning, I feel like, in one capacity or another. I volunteered there. I came out and helped with doing skits and serving meals, washing dishes, so I've been a part of it in one way or another since the beginning and

[0:10:00] like I said, four years ago, somebody asked me if I wanted to join the staff and I did.

Caroline Hibbert: So could you describe your role now as you're a manager, right?

James Moore: Yeah, as a program manager at For the Kingdom, I am responsible for the day-to-day operations, supervising staff. We hire between 8 and 12 summer staff for 3 months out of the year. So my responsibility includes, you know, office, administrative work, and also overall operations for the facility from maintenance standpoint, food service, and also program more so in the development of the daily schedules for kids when they come out and participate in our camps.

Caroline Hibbert: Where do a lot of your volunteers come from?

James Moore: A lot of our volunteers come from local churches and ministries who are

[0:11:00] aware of what we do and, you know, we have some long-term relationships with a few ministries in the city.

Caroline Hibbert: Going back towards the Highland Heights area, what are some of, if there are any, of the major changes you've seen in the community growing up versus now?

James Moore: Mm-hmm. Well, I would say the community, a big change is community itself. The other use of the word. There's less and less community in this community. You know, people are island, you know, they keep to themselves. There's less interaction. You know, when I grew up, I walked every single street in this community couple days a week. I had no concern. My mother was not worried about my safety.

[0:12:00] But I can say, you know, now I'm not necessarily comfortable with my kids walking these streets. You know, I'd have some concern. And that's, like I said, I think a lot of that stems from the lack of community, the lack of people having interest in others and sharing their lives with each other's interacting. There's less of that going on in this community.

Caroline Hibbert: So do you still live in the community now?

James Moore: I do not, personally. I actually live, pretty much live at For the Kingdom Camp right now.

Caroline Hibbert: Okay.

James Moore: It's kinda part of the job, but my mother is still in the community. She's been here since I was in third grade and she's still here.

Caroline Hibbert: So what are some ways or ideas you have about encouraging people to kind of re-form that sense of community and get that closeness?

James Moore: Well, the

[0:13:00] I would say if there was one thing that I would vote for, it would just be more community events and the advertisement of those events, make 'em well-known and kind of encourage people to take the events, the community gatherings, take them to the people and not necessarily on the outskirts of the community, you know, but you know, I'm all for positive gatherings right in the heart of the community. You know if it's street by street, you know, to get people to come out, come off their porch, and talk, meet each other. People are aware of each other in this community, but they don't get to know each other. They, you know, and I don't know how easily that can be repaired, but I think people see each other, they pass each other, but they don't expend the effort to get to know somebody else, you know, their neighbor

[0:14:00] two or three houses down.

Caroline Hibbert: Would you say the same goes for the Treadwell school, like when you were doing your musical activities and stuff, did you find that you had a lot of support at the time, like people coming out to encourage and see you?

James Moore: From the school?

Caroline Hibbert: Yeah.

James Moore: Well, as far as the community support, you mean, for the school?

Caroline Hibbert: Mm-hmm.

James Moore: Yeah. There was more of it. Yeah, I mean we had quite a few. I participated in quite a few programs where the auditorium was packed because the community came out, you know, to see their son or their nephew or what have you and I mean the school was a big part of the community.

Deshauna Dawson: How was it like adopting your niece and nephew?

James Moore: Well, it was a interesting process. It was great. They've been with us, now, I think probably almost ten years, now.

[0:15:00] And so it wasn't as challenging on the front end as I thought it might've been. I was, you know, expecting a big, huge ordeal, you know, to have to deal with the law side of it but they were four and seven when we adopted them and my wife, we had been married for six months, so – but she was ecstatic about doing it, you know, and I remember telling my wife, you know, "This is something that needs to happen, you know, but it's my family. It's not necessarily your family in a way," you know, and I didn't wanna put anything on her, you know, that she wasn't, that she didn't wanna do. But she was excited about it and she jumped in with both feet and the rest is history, I should say. I mean, they're 16 and 14

[0:16:00] now, and they're doing awesome in school, both of 'em are A students, honor roll, principal's list. Both of 'em are athletes in school. I mean they're excelling well.

Caroline Hibbert: So how do you, I guess, encourage your kids to, you know, do well? Do you have them, kind of, give back to the community also?

James Moore: Yeah.

Caroline Hibbert: Like how is your family involved in what you do?

James Moore: Both of them serve at For the Kingdom Camp. You know, I guess I kinda did it by an age thing. My niece is the oldest. She's 16, now, so she gets some monetary compensation for some of the duties she performs at the camp. My nephew's 14, but most of his work is volunteer work and I try to be intentional in the duties and

the tasks that I give him, so he is interacting with the kids and he understands that he's serving

[0:17:00] in ministry and takes it at that and not just hanging out and having a good time, but, you know, putting forth an effort to serve others is something that is very important to me. So –

Caroline Hibbert: Mm-hmm. So I guess we're talking a lot about ministry. How big of a role did religion play in your life growing up?

James Moore: Well, it – give you an abbreviated version. I could tell you a long story about that. Nothing wild and crazy but, you know, typically, I would say basically growing up, under the age of 12, 13, from that point down, I went to church fairly regularly with my grandmother. And my parents weren't together after I was about ten or so, so then my dad would take me to my grandmother's and I would still go to church with her. And I guess it was when I was about

[0:18:00] 14 years old is when I got involved in the City Builders Youth Ministry that was here in Highland Heights community at Treadwell High School. Got involved with that ministry, a guy by the name of Isaac Little kinda took me under his wing and I had a father in my life, but he was a different kind of father, you know, He hung out with us after school, spent time with us, poured into us young men in the community and took us to a camp, which is where I accepted Christ and so religion played a big role, when I say religion, but I accepted Christ, went back to school. My ninth grade year, totally different person and it shaped the rest of my high school career, the rest of my life, that decision I made that summer, and it has a lot to do with why

[0:19:00] I'm in the role that I'm in now and why I raise my kids the way I do and I guess every aspect of my life, honestly.

Caroline Hibbert: So what kind of work did City Builders do? Because we had another Treadwell alum who graduated in 2000, I think, and she was describing when City Builders came in. What kind of work, specifically, did they do for the community?

James Moore: Well, what City Builders did – I could tell you what they did for me. Guy came into the school and he came in, he didn't come in with a Bible under his arm, but he came in representing Jesus Christ and he wasn't afraid to say that. But he did it in such a way as to where we didn't push him away. WE didn't shove him off and say, "We don't wanna hear, you know, what every other

preacher on the corner is yelling on Saturday mornings." But he came in and he did it in a loving way. He was there, consistently. He stayed around the school and

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we pretty much couldn't deny him after so long, you know. He was just courteous, nice, fair guy, you know, wasn't afraid to tell a joke and laugh with us and so he attracted us to him just by being himself. And we began to spend time with him and participate in City Builders' ministry, which was every day after school we would hang out for a few hours. Specifically one night of the week, we would have what we'd call club, where we'd play some games, we get a snack or something, and we'd hear a short message about Jesus and some nights it wasn't a preachy message, it was just a positive word to help us deal with peer pressure things or drugs and things like that in our school life.

Beyond that, we also went to summer camp in the summertime and that ministry was a huge part of my high school career and I actually

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served in a role as the program director in that ministry right after I graduated. I worked in that role for three years in this community.

Caroline Hibbert:

Are there any other, I guess, anything else you wanna add on to your experience at Treadwell or anything about your work now?

James Moore:

Yeah. In regards to this community, Treadwell High School, you know, as being when I was a young person at Treadwell High School, I now realize that I did not take advantage of some of the things that I could have. And so my encouragement to students at that school would be to utilize every avenue that they offer to get more information, to learn more beyond what's just in a textbook, participate in the clubs, in the

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special events to help you become more rounded as an individual. Put yourself around different people because I know when I was at that school, it was easy to have three friends and go all the way through school with those three friends and, you know, you'd have associates and people you'd speak to but I'd encourage kids to stretch out, to branch out, kinda open up and do more while you're in school, because it'll lead to more things when you move on to high school. If you develop that attitude in middle school, when you get to high school, it'll still be with you and that way you could – they're better in high school. There's more things to do, more clubs to participate in. So that would be my encouragement and as far as Treadwell in general, it's sad that the high school is no

longer there. I wish it was. I think it was a key part of this community. I mean, it was somewhat unique

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to have elementary through 12th grade and I think it was a strong component of the community. I think it made a big difference when that school left. That's about it.

Deshauna Dawson: Okay.

Caroline Hibbert: Well thank you so much for coming in and talking with us today.

James Moore: All right.

Caroline Hibbert: We –

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