

THRESHOLD PERSPECTIVES™ / HUMAN RIGHTS JUSTICE SYSTEMS™

THE SON AND THE BROTHER

Grief, authority, family, and the architecture of human continuity

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Threshold Perspectives™

A long-form inquiry, not an executive brief.

This monograph moves between memoir, public records, population statistics, institutional analysis, and practical tools. The first-person narrative is not offered as a substitute for the record. The statistics are not offered as substitutes for individual facts. Each is used to widen the field of inquiry without collapsing distinct people, systems, or power relationships into one explanation.

The governing method is simple: Ledger Before the Myth. Preserve what is known. Separate observation from inference. Name uncertainty. Examine power. Keep what survives evidence. Correct what does not.

Readers who need the deeper framework for the word shadow can consult [Shadow Literacy™](https://hrjs.org/ShadowLiteracy) at HRJS.org. The live HRJS formulation is: “Inquiry before certainty.”

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*Most are never taught the difference.
Some inherit grief.
Some men inherit strength.*

THE ARCHITECTURE

Overlap without collapse.

The central roles and systems in this essay touch each other. They are not interchangeable. Father, son, brother, police authority, protest, family rupture, class, race, mental health, and institutional process carry different powers and responsibilities. The work is to examine the handoffs without forcing every difference into one story.



Human continuity asks: who absorbs the consequence when a handoff fails?

PART I

A FAMILY THAT IS NOT MINE

The real Von Erich story, a film scene, and the first question: what is strength allowed to look like?

*Most are never taught the difference.
Some inherit grief.
Some men inherit strength.*

Before my brother, another family

Before I explain my brother, my son, police violence, family separation, Black Lives Matter, the Thin Blue Line, or any of the systems I have spent years trying to understand, I need to begin with a family that is not mine.

The Von Erich family became one of the most famous dynasties in professional wrestling. Their real surname was Adkisson. Their father, Jack Adkisson, wrestled under the name Fritz Von Erich and built World Class Championship Wrestling in Texas. His sons became enormously popular stars, especially Kevin, David and Kerry, later joined in wrestling by Mike and Chris.^[1]

But the story behind The Iron Claw is more brutal than the movie. Fritz and Doris had six sons. Their first son, Jack Jr., died as a child. David died in 1984 at twenty-five while wrestling in Japan. Mike later died by suicide. Chris also died by suicide. Kerry survived a catastrophic motorcycle accident and the amputation of his foot before dying by suicide in 1993. Kevin remained.^[1]

The movie removes Chris entirely and folds portions of the family history into other characters because the full sequence of loss was more than the film could sustain. The real story was, somehow, too tragic for the tragedy.^[1]

The scene

Near the end of the film, Kevin is sitting outside with his sons. He is crying. He apologizes for it. He reaches for one of those old masculine commandments many boys learn long before they understand its cost: men do not cry.

His sons do not accept the rule. Eventually Kevin explains why he is sad. He says that he used to be a brother. His children respond by offering themselves in the only language they have: companionship, presence, love.

The scene is dramatized. The grief underneath it is not.

What if strength was never supposed to require disappearance?

Father, son, brother

The scene hit me because it made several roles in my own life collide.

Father. Son. Brother.

They are not interchangeable. A son is not his father's peer. A father should not turn his child into his therapist. A brother does not possess parental authority merely because he is older. The distinctions matter.

But the roles overlap in their highest obligations: to notice, remain, protect, tell the truth, permit vulnerability without exploiting it, carry weight when somebody else cannot, correct without humiliation, and receive pain without surrendering judgment.

I have names for some of those obligations now: Masculinity Without Domination. Receptivity Without Pacifism. Command Without Collapse. Authority Without Humiliation. Power Without Worship. Father-Rooted Stewardship.

I did not learn them because somebody gave me a laminated leadership wheel. Some came from grief. Some came from institutions. Some came from being a brother.

*Most are never taught the difference.
Some inherit grief.
Some men inherit strength.*

PART II

THE BROTHER I ALMOST GOT BACK

Foster care, ordinary brotherhood, repair, and the cruelty of almost.

*Time did not finish.
Time was supposed to do the rest.
Blood made us brothers.*

Ordinary brotherhood

My brother's name was Kalob Watts.

Foster care had separated so much of my family that Kalob and I never received the ordinary accumulation of brotherhood most people take for granted.

People understand the obvious things children lose when they are moved between homes: stability, school continuity, safety, possessions. But siblings lose ordinary familiarity too: inside jokes, annoyances, arguments over nothing, stories only two people understand.

You lose the thousand forgettable moments that eventually become the sentence: That's my brother.

Kalob and I did not get enough of those.

Around 2009

Around 2009, my mother was trying to find safety from her ex-husband, who was Kalob's father and also the father of my sister.

I went down and got Kalob. I brought him to Missouri to live with me.

For a period of time, I had my brother with me.

It was not a cinematic rescue followed by swelling music and perfect emotional repair. Actual families have apparently declined to coordinate with screenwriters. There was trauma everywhere. There were histories nobody knew how to communicate. There were people trying to survive while younger people were still becoming themselves.

But we had proximity. We had a chance.

Estrangement becomes geography

Years later, my mother and I had a major rupture connected to a relationship I was in at the time. The woman had betrayed me. My mother and I disagreed about what happened around that relationship, and eventually I stopped speaking to her.

Years passed.

Family estrangement begins as a decision. Then it becomes geography. People age on the other side of it. Birthdays continue. Christmas continues. Children become adults. Life has the terrible administrative habit of continuing even when relationships do not.

Eventually my mother and I began repairing. Slowly. There was no grand reconciliation. A conversation. Then another. A little trust. A little more tolerance for unfinished things.

Repair often looks disappointingly ordinary while it is happening. No orchestra. No judge announces that the relationship is hereby restored. Two people just keep deciding not to close the door.

Almost

Somewhere inside that process, Kalob and I were beginning to move toward each other too.

We were almost there.

That word has become one of the cruelest words I know.

Almost.

We had not repaired everything. We had not become the brothers we should have been. But we were approaching the possibility. After foster care. After family instability. After years. After trauma had rearranged everything.

There might still be time.

And then there wasn't.

Kalob was killed before I ever got to see him again.

What he saw in me

Later, people told me he looked up to me. They told me he loved the fact that I lifted weights. He was curious about it.

That detail has haunted me almost as much as the large ones. Powerlifting, to me, is bars and plates and numbers and calluses. Apparently, from where my younger brother stood, it meant something.

Maybe strength. Maybe discipline. Maybe it was simply something his older brother did that he thought was cool.

I cannot ask him.

That is one of death's cruelties. Questions become permanent. There is no clarification call. No later conversation. Only witnesses telling you what somebody said about you when you were not there.

I almost got my brother back. Then death closed the door faster than either of us could reach it.

*Time did not finish.
Time was supposed to do the rest.
Blood made us brothers.*

PART III

THE SON

Living loss, Christmas, four handprints, and what children inherit from adult rupture.

*Time did not finish.
Time was supposed to do the rest.
Blood made us brothers.*

The first howl

There is another kind of loss in this story.

Before Kalob died, the mother of my youngest son moved across the country. I did not know she was leaving.

As far as I knew, I was going to pick my son up the following weekend. There was a plan. There was a next weekend. There was a child I expected to see.

Then I received an email saying she had moved. That was how I found out.

At the time, I was supervising a startup operation involving DHL and ASML. I remember receiving the news at work.

There are moments when adulthood becomes a costume. I had a title, responsibilities, a team, a schedule. People expected me to know what happened next.

Then something reached underneath all of it.

I went outside and howled like a little boy.

Not a tasteful executive tear. Not the dignified masculine stare into the middle distance humans apparently prefer in movies about emotionally constipated men. I howled.

My son was alive. That distinction matters enormously. He was not dead. But he had suddenly been removed from the geography of my life.

My body understood the loss before my mind could develop language for it.

The court before Christmas

By December 2023, I had already been through criminal allegations that I maintained were false and that did not ultimately result in the outcome sought against me. I had also successfully defended against an order-of-protection proceeding.

A paternity case had been opened in Arizona involving my youngest son. I believed I had done what institutions constantly tell people to do: document, preserve records, show where the child lived.

I had medical insurance records, dental records, and other documentation that, from my perspective, established his Arizona residency. His mother had traveled across the country with him.

In early December 2023, the court nevertheless determined that my son was not an Arizona resident. I still do not completely understand that determination.

His mother submitted a plane ticket as part of the residency question. I believed I had a broader set of records showing the ordinary institutional fingerprints of where a child lived: medical care, dental care, insurance.

Yet the ruling did not go the way I expected. Maybe there were jurisdictional rules I did not understand. Maybe the evidence meant something different legally than it meant to me as a father. I will not pretend expertise I did not possess.

December 25, 26 and 27

Then came Christmas.

*Time did not finish.
Time was supposed to do the rest.
Blood made us brothers.*

I had sent my son gifts. On December 25, 2023, I was supposed to watch him open them over Skype. I was looking forward to it.

Family litigation produces enormous language: jurisdiction, custody, residency, petitions, orders, findings. But I was not waiting for a legal event.

I wanted to watch my little boy open Christmas presents.

Contact was cut off that day. My girlfriend at the time had become close to him too. We spent Christmas grieving.

The presents existed. My son existed. We existed. The connection did not.

The following day, December 26, my brother Kalob was killed. I did not know yet. I learned on December 27.

And when I was told, something in my body recognized the feeling: the same collapse of language, the same strange sensation that something inside me had become much younger than the adult everyone else could see.

My son was alive. Kalob was dead. One loss contained possibility. The other contained permanence. Those differences matter.

But my nervous system recognized something shared: someone I loved had become unreachable.

Early December: a court decision I could not reconcile. December 25: I lose contact with my son. December 26: my brother loses his life. December 27: I learn he is gone. A few weeks. Three days. One hinge.

Grieving someone who is still alive

Grieving someone who is dead is devastating because death gives you an answer you never wanted: they are gone.

There is no ambiguity about why you cannot call them. There is no wondering whether tomorrow will suddenly restore access. There is no possibility that they are somewhere living an ordinary day you simply are not allowed to witness.

My brother died brutally. Nothing about what I am about to say diminishes that. His death carries its own permanence, violence and finality.

But grieving someone who is still alive can carry a different kind of cruelty.

Because the person still exists. Somewhere. They wake up, eat, sleep, grow, get sick, laugh, become afraid, meet people, change.

And when you do not have access to them, you do not know any of it. You do not know what they remember about you. You do not know what they are forgetting. You do not know whether they ask about you. You do not know what moments you are missing.

You do not even quite know what you are supposed to grieve because the person is not gone. Your relationship with them is. Or at least your access to it is.

Death almost gives grief permission. Living separation has no funeral. No body to bury. No single day when society says: now you are allowed to mourn.

*Both can empty the room.
Separation leaves it standing open.
Death closes the door.*

Death says: you cannot reach this person because they are gone.

Living separation says: the person is still there, but you cannot reach them.

One contains certainty. The other contains possibility without access.

With Kalob, I grieve what can never happen again. With my son, I grieve what may be happening right now without me.

One asks me to live with permanence. The other asks me to live with uncertainty.

*Both can empty the room.
Separation leaves it standing open.
Death closes the door.*

22.2 MILLION

children under age twenty-one lived with one parent while the other parent lived elsewhere in 2022.

That is 27.1% of children living in families - more than one child in four. The Census statistic does not tell us why the parent lived elsewhere or who was right in a dispute. It tells us the scale.^[6]

U.S. Census Bureau, Custodial Parents and Their Child Support: 2022. Living-arrangement measure, not a legal custody determination. See Source 6.

Family separation has an economic architecture

The same Census report found large racial differences in the share of children living with one parent while another lived elsewhere: about 46.4% of Black children, 30.8% of Hispanic children, 23.9% of White children, and 9.2% of Asian children.^[6]

Race matters. Another set of numbers matters too. The poverty rate among families containing a custodial parent was 20.7%, compared with 11.3% among all families with children under twenty-one. About 5.6 million children in custodial-parent families lived in poverty.^[6]

That does not mean separation automatically causes poverty. It means family separation often unfolds inside economic conditions that make continuity harder.

Transportation costs money. Lawyers cost money. Taking time away from work costs money. Child care costs money. Travel costs money. Housing appropriate for visitation costs money. Phone service costs money.

Family courts also increasingly confront people navigating complex cases without lawyers. The National Center for State Courts reported in late 2023 that family-court dockets involved in one national initiative were seeing self-represented litigant rates of 80% to 90%.^[7]

A procedure can technically be available while remaining functionally difficult to access. Those are not the same thing.

The four handprints

There was once a time when all four of my children were together. I still have evidence.

Not a court order. Not a formal photograph.

Four little handprints on my freezer.

Four children were once in the same place long enough to leave four marks behind.

Nobody sees children touching a freezer and thinks: preserve this, one day this might be sacred. At the time it is fingerprints, mess, kids touching something because apparently every clean surface in a house represents a personal challenge.

Then people leave. Children grow. Hands get bigger. Memories fade. Suddenly a handprint becomes an artifact.

My oldest son sometimes asks about my youngest. He does not really remember him. He asks when he is coming back. Every time he asks, I almost cry.

He is not asking me for a jurisdictional analysis. He is asking: Where is my brother?

Sometimes fatherhood means becoming the keeper of relationships your children were too young to remember clearly.

The child is not the trophy

I still intend to pursue lawful partial custody and meaningful access to my youngest son.

But whatever anger, sadness or grief I carry toward his mother does not give me the right to erase her. My pain does not automatically make me the morally superior parent.

*Both can empty the room.
Separation leaves it standing open.
Death closes the door.*

As far as I know, she is not a danger to him. I would not seek to deprive her of parental rights unless there were a legitimate child-safety reason requiring that.

I believe children should, where it is safe and feasible, have meaningful access to their parents or stable parental figures: mother and father, mother and mother, father and father, or other durable caregiving structures.

The precise configuration matters less to me than safety, attachment, stability and human connection.

Imperfect does not mean unsafe.

But that statement needs a companion: biological connection does not automatically mean safe.

Both must survive. Otherwise one side weaponizes safety and the other weaponizes parenthood. The child becomes the battlefield.

What the research says about conflict

Research on high-conflict separation gives us good reason to care about that distinction. A 2020 meta-analysis covering 115 samples and 24,854 divorced families found significant relationships among interparental conflict, parenting processes and children's adjustment.^[10]

The point is not that every disagreement damages a child. Parents are human. Conflict exists. The concern is chronic, intense, unresolved, child-centered conflict in which the child becomes part of the adult struggle.

The relevant question is not who wins. It is: what does the child inherit?

Parental alienation and the seduction of one explanation

The phrase parental alienation is emotionally powerful. It also needs discipline. A 2016 representative North Carolina poll of 610 adults reported that 13.4% of parents said they had been alienated from one or more children.^[8]

That number is worth examining. It is not a national diagnosis rate. It is not proof that 13.4% of parents were objectively alienated by malicious former partners.

Family-court scholarship repeatedly warns against using one factor to explain every parent-child contact problem. Rejection or estrangement can involve manipulation, actual parental behavior, abuse, conflict, attachment processes, developmental factors, or combinations of them.^[9]

To me, that tension is not weakness. It is the lesson. A real mechanism can exist without being the explanation for every case.

We do not know. We should look.

The shadow of the parent who has the child

Sometimes a parent genuinely needs to protect a child. Abuse exists. Neglect exists. Domestic violence exists. Stalking exists. Dangerous substance use exists.

But protection has a shadow. Protection can become possession. Relational hurt can quietly become child-safety language.

He hurt me, therefore he is dangerous to the child. She betrayed me, therefore she is a bad mother.

The child becomes a witness, confidant, messenger, ally, or evidence. At its harshest, every imperfection becomes danger and every attempt at repair becomes manipulation.

And because the parent experiences themselves as the protector, their own coercion can become almost invisible. That is shadow.

The shadow of the excluded parent

The excluded parent has a shadow too. That includes me.

Parents really can be unfairly excluded. False or exaggerated allegations can happen. Social narratives can reinforce institutional narratives. Economic inequality can determine who can keep litigating. Years can disappear while a child develops without one parent.

But legitimate grievance does not grant immunity from self-examination.

An excluded parent still has to ask: Did I frighten my child? Did my anger become something they had to manage? Did I turn every boundary into proof of alienation? Did I mistake legal parenthood for automatic emotional intimacy? Did I make my child responsible for validating my story?

At the harshest edge, the excluded parent can need complete innocence. Every former partner becomes pathological. Every therapist incompetent. Every judge corrupt. Every child brainwashed. Every disagreement becomes further proof of conspiracy.

That is not inquiry either.

*Love made them sacred.
Memory made them evidence.
The marks were ordinary then.*

PART IV

THE BROTHER

The kitchen, the federal record, the asymmetry of aftermath, and the questions law does not answer for us.

*Love made them sacred.
Memory made them evidence.
The marks were ordinary then.*

His room

After Kalob died, my family had to raise money simply to have him cremated.

There is something profoundly humiliating about that kind of grief. Death is already enormous. Then somebody hands you an invoice. The body becomes a logistical problem before the family has even learned how to speak about the loss.

Then I looked around his room.

He barely had anything.

That image stayed with me: a young man dies, and the physical evidence that he occupied the world fits into almost nothing. No accumulated proof of some long, comfortable adult life. Just a room that felt far too empty for somebody who had been alive inside it.

Human beings collect objects partly because objects reassure us that we are established somewhere: clothes, books, shoes, photographs, something stupid bought on impulse, something sentimental nobody else understands.

Kalob barely had any of it.

But there was a cat.

The kitchen

Some things resist abstraction.

How did Kalob's encounter end?

My brother died in my mother's arms. In her kitchen.

There was blood across the floor. There was bodily tissue from the shooting across a room that, moments before, had simply been part of her home.

A kitchen. Coffee. Plates. Food. Arguments. Ordinary life.

Then it became the room where a mother held her dying son.

I later watched a neighbor's video of the aftermath. My mother was on the floor crying. There are things you see once that your mind continues showing you without permission.

I cannot comfort her enough to make that disappear. I can sit with her, help her, translate records, carry documents, pursue answers. But I cannot make December 26 stop existing.

Repair is not resurrection.

But something can still be done. Truth can still matter. Justice can still matter. Accountability can still matter. Not because accountability can bring Kalob back. It cannot. Because the next family still exists.

*Love made them sacred.
Memory made them evidence.
The marks were ordinary then.*

The ledger

The federal record provides a sequence that deserves precision. Kalob was twenty-one years old and had a documented history of serious mental-health problems. On December 26, 2023, my mother had him in a bear hug in the kitchen, his hands behind him, with a firearm in one hand. Officer Miranda West arrived first and was alone at the scene for about eight minutes.^[2]

Scott LaHay, then Bismarck Police Chief, arrived afterward. The court record states that LaHay knew Kalob and knew he had mental-health problems. Only about two weeks earlier, LaHay had been involved in another response where Kalob threatened “suicide by cop”; that earlier encounter ended with Kalob voluntarily going to a hospital by ambulance for psychiatric evaluation.^[2]

On December 26, after LaHay entered the kitchen with his gun drawn, the court described him as loud and aggressive. One recorded statement was: “Drop it or I’ll shoot you right in the fucking face.” Kalob repeatedly asked to be killed. About one minute and fifteen seconds after LaHay entered the kitchen, he fired twice.^[2]

My mother later brought federal civil-rights claims. On May 14, 2026, the federal court granted summary judgment to LaHay and the City on the federal constitutional claims. The court concluded that even taking disputed facts in my mother’s favor, Kalob’s lunge toward LaHay as my mother lost her footing provided an objectively reasonable basis to perceive an imminent threat. The court also found qualified immunity as an alternative basis. The state-law claims were dismissed without prejudice for lack of federal subject-matter jurisdiction.^[2]

That ruling belongs in my ledger. I do not have to erase it to continue asking questions.

A legal answer and a systems question are not always the same question.

A court determines whether a legal standard was crossed. A systems inquiry can still ask: what happened before the threshold became decisive? What changed? What language changed the room? What was known? What options existed? What narrowed them? What had worked two weeks earlier? What happened to time?

Three fatal encounters

Kalob’s death was not the first fatal police encounter involving Scott LaHay. That sentence needs precision.

In 2005, while LaHay was a Ste. Genevieve County sheriff’s deputy, he was present during an encounter in which Officer Michael Coon fatally shot Dennis Heberlie. LaHay did not fire the fatal shot. He and Coon were later defendants in a wrongful-death action that settled for \$600,000.^[3]

In January 2020, LaHay himself fatally shot Dustin Eaton during a domestic-disturbance response in Bismarck. Reporting based on the Missouri State Highway Patrol investigation said LaHay reported seeing what he believed was a rifle barrel through a door window. The Highway Patrol cleared him of wrongdoing. Reporting also noted bullet holes through the closed front door.^[4]

Then came Kalob in 2023.

So the defensible statement is: LaHay was involved in three fatal police encounters across those years. He fired the fatal shots in two. Another officer fired in one.

That does not prove the encounters were identical. It does not establish that each was unlawful. It does not tell me what was in anyone's heart.

But three fatal encounters are worth examining. Intellectual restraint does not require intellectual blindness.

The asymmetry of aftermath

As of the latest Missouri law-enforcement directory I could verify during this project, dated May 9, 2026, Scott LaHay was still listed as chief of the Bismarck Police Department.^[5]

That asymmetry matters to me.

My brother is dead. My mother remembers the kitchen. The institutional world continued.

That does not prove legal wrongdoing. But human consequences belong in the ledger too.

The report ends. The body camera ends. The officers leave. The lawsuit reaches an order.

But the mother still remembers the floor.

The shooting ended. The aftermath did not.

1 IN 5

people killed by police in the 2025 Mapping Police Violence dataset showed symptoms of mental or behavioral-health issues.

The same dataset reported that 89% of those deaths followed an officer response to a call for service. If behavioral-health crisis repeatedly enters the police supply chain, empathy, crisis recognition and regulated command are operational competencies - not decorative virtues.^[12]

Mapping Police Violence / Campaign Zero, U.S. Police Violence in 2025: Year-end Report. Advocacy-operated independent dataset; see Source 12.

What happened to time?

If police routinely encounter people in mental crisis, then empathy and curiosity cannot be dismissed as optional personality traits possessed by unusually nice officers.

They become operational competencies.

That does not mean danger disappears. It does not mean an armed person should be treated as though the weapon is imaginary.

Receptivity Without Pacifism means exactly the opposite: see reality. All of it.

The weapon. The crisis. The frightened mother. The history. The officer's risk. The prior successful intervention. The available time. The words being used.

Then ask: what is the next action that preserves the most options without unnecessarily increasing danger?

I cannot prove that another ten or fifteen minutes would have saved Kalob. Maybe nothing changes. Maybe the same ending occurs. Counterfactual grief is still counterfactual.

But I cannot stop asking: what might ten more minutes of active, regulated curiosity have changed?

Not ten minutes of standing around doing nothing. Observation. Questions. Containment. Assessment. Connection. Reassessment.

There is a difference between refusing certainty and refusing inquiry.

93%

of people killed by police in the 2025 Mapping Police Violence dataset were male.

The Washington Post's decade-long fatal-shooting database similarly found that more than 95% of victims were male. Policing itself remains heavily male. Whatever else the problem involves, a large portion of lethal police encounters occurs between men.^{[12][13]}

Sources 12-13. The statistic does not prove masculinity caused any individual shooting; it establishes why theories of male threat, command, fear, submission and restraint deserve examination.

Strength, domination and command

There are at least three things we constantly confuse: strength, domination and command.

Domination needs something to submit: another man, a partner, a child, an employee, sometimes your own body.

Domination says: stop crying, stop needing, destroy the threat, end uncertainty, make the room obey.

Strength does not require that. Strength can hold weight. Strength can tolerate uncertainty long enough to receive more information. Strength can fight. Strength can stop fighting. Strength can discover its first interpretation was wrong and survive the humiliation of correction.

Command is something else. Command is orientation toward responsibility.

That is why Command Without Collapse matters to me. I howled like a little boy. That was not a collapse of responsibility. It was a collapse of composure.

Composure is presentation. Command is orientation.

I can cry and still know what I owe somebody. I can be devastated and refuse to make another person pay for my pain. I can lose control of my voice without losing control of my ethics.

PART V

THE NUMBERS AND THE SHADOW

Race, class, policing, collective grief, and the danger of letting one true variable become the whole person.

PAIRED TRUTHS

Two true numbers can still tell incomplete stories.

ABOUT HALF

of fatal police-shooting victims
in the Washington Post
database were White.

MORE THAN 2×

Black Americans were killed at
more than twice the White
population-adjusted rate.

BOTH ARE TRUE.

Raw counts answer one question. Population-adjusted rates answer another. Before a statistic becomes a weapon, ask what it actually measures.

Source: Washington Post Fatal Force database, 2015-2024 historical series. See Source 13.

*The ledger kept moving.
The aftermath did not.
The shooting ended.*

Race, class and place

Mapping Police Violence's 2025 estimates reported fatal-police-violence rates of about 0.75 per 100,000 for Black people versus 0.29 for White people, roughly 2.6 times the White rate. The same dataset reported elevated rates for American Indian and Alaska Native people and especially Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people.^[12]

Race matters. It cannot honestly be erased.

But race is not the only variable. A 2024 peer-reviewed study of 6,901 fatal police shootings across more than 32,000 ZIP codes found that social vulnerability and racial composition were independently associated with fatal police shootings. High-social-vulnerability ZIP codes had about 3.26 times the adjusted fatal-shooting level of low-vulnerability ZIP codes.^[14]

That matters to me because I have lived across Black and white worlds. I am not a Black man. I do not claim that identity. But large portions of my life have overlapped with Black communities, Black families, Black poverty, Black grief and Black institutions.

I have also seen white poverty, white trauma, white addiction, and white families living inside institutional abandonment that political vocabulary sometimes reduces to laziness, criminality or dysfunction.

The histories are not identical. Race does not disappear because poverty creates similarities. But some mechanisms look painfully familiar: unstable housing, trauma, addiction, family fracture, institutional friction, and people navigating systems without enough money, time or translation capacity.

The serious answer is not: it is race. Or: it is class. Race, class, place, vulnerability, violence, mental health and institutional practice interact.

Annoying, I know. Reality has once again refused to fit on a bumper sticker.

Who gets collective grief?

After Kalob died, I reached out to Black Lives Matter and other social-justice organizations. I wanted somebody to look. I wanted visibility. Maybe advocacy. Maybe simply recognition that another human being had died and the circumstances deserved examination.

I received silence.

I want to be careful with that silence. I do not know why nobody responded. Maybe the organizations had no capacity. Maybe the message never reached the right person. Maybe they received hundreds of cases. Maybe it was geography, timing, circumstance, networks or media attention.

Kalob was biracial. I found myself asking: what would have qualified my brother for collective grief?

Some police deaths become names the entire country learns. Others remain inside a kitchen.

I am not claiming there is a conspiracy determining which is which. I am asking how visibility gets allocated.

Before Kalob was a case, he was a brother. Before he was a police fatality, he was a son. Before somebody could categorize his race, mental illness, weapon, choices or legal circumstances, he was human.

When my past arrives before I do

There is another question I cannot prove.

My name is searchable. I had a period of far-right radicalism in my life.

I do not erase that. I grew out of it. I have taken responsibility for it. I have tried to understand what I believed, what was wrong, how I got there, what harm existed in it, what was useful to understand about the pathway, and what needed to be discarded.

The internet does not understand time particularly well. Search results are strange monuments. An old affiliation can walk into a room before the living person does.

So I have wondered: when I reached out about Kalob, did somebody search my name? Did they find my history? Did that cause somebody not to look?

I do not know. Maybe nobody searched me at all.

We do not know. We should look.

But the question opens another systems issue: if somebody leaves a radical movement, takes accountability, changes beliefs and behavior, what is the social destination?

Do we actually believe in reintegration? Or do we tell people to change while quietly promising that they will forever be reduced to the worst public snapshot available?

Understanding why somebody became radicalized is not the same as excusing them. Reasons are not excuses.

Accountability without memory is dangerous. Memory without movement can become its own cage.

Shadow Literacy

This is where I use the word shadow carefully.

Shadow is not shorthand for evil. It is the disowned, projected, exaggerated or unexamined material inside individuals, relationships, groups and institutions that can begin governing behavior precisely because it remains unexamined.

The HRJS Shadow Literacy framework puts it this way: “What remains unseen still participates in the outcome.” Its working premise is Inquiry before certainty.

Readers who need the full framework can find [Shadow Literacy™](https://hrjs.org/shadow-literacy) at HRJS.org.

PART VI

TWO SIDES, SAME HUMAN SHADOW

Black Lives Matter, the Thin Blue Line, and why opposing groups can carry different truths through similar human mechanisms.

*The ledger kept moving.
The aftermath did not.
The shooting ended.*

Black Lives Matter and the Thin Blue Line

These are not institutional mirror images.

Police possess state authority. A protest movement does not. Police can arrest, detain, search, use force, take liberty, and under specific circumstances take life lawfully. That power asymmetry matters.

But the psychological shadow mechanisms inside groups can still resemble one another.

I do not need either group to be entirely right or entirely wrong. I need to know what each sees clearly - and what each stops seeing when identity takes over.

What I keep from Black Lives Matter

I keep the insistence that power can abuse vulnerable people. I keep scrutiny. I keep the refusal to require a perfect victim before asking what authority did. I keep racial analysis. I keep the demand for transparent use-of-force review.

I keep the simple sentence: Black lives matter.

Black people have documented reasons to experience policing differently. In the Bureau of Justice Statistics' nationally representative 2022 survey, Black people were more likely than White or Hispanic people to report experiencing the threat or use of nonfatal force during their most recent police-initiated or traffic-accident-related contact: 6% versus 2% for each of those two groups.^[11]

Those differences deserve examination.

The shadow of police-brutality movements

A legitimate grievance can become a total explanation.

Officer becomes oppressor before evidence arrives. Civilian becomes victim in a way that makes examination of the civilian's own behavior morally forbidden. Every shooting becomes murder. Every complicated fact becomes victim blaming.

Every example of good policing can become inconvenient because it interrupts the narrative of permanent institutional evil.

If evidence of improvement threatens the worldview, improvement is no longer entirely the goal.

I can believe police brutality exists and still conclude that one officer acted appropriately in a specific encounter. I can conclude another officer acted wrongly without declaring policing itself evil.

Those are adult sentences. Tribes find them exhausting.

What I keep from police-solidarity culture

I keep something important from the other side too.

Policing is difficult. Officers walk into rooms everyone else is trying to escape: domestic violence, psychosis, weapons, suicide attempts, children in danger, traffic fatalities, people who are frightened, people who are violent.

*The ledger kept moving.
The aftermath did not.
The shooting ended.*

Sometimes officers genuinely have seconds. Officer safety matters. Due process for officers matters. Society requires some legitimate mechanism capable of responding to coercion and violence.

In 2022, about 49.2 million Americans age sixteen or older - 19% of the population - reported at least one contact with police. Among people who initiated their most recent contact themselves, almost half were reporting a possible crime.^[11]

People criticize police. People also call police. Both are true.

Police officers are also wage-earning human beings rather than an extraterrestrial governing caste. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported median police-and-detective pay of about \$77,310 in May 2023, versus \$50,980 across all occupations, and describes the work as stressful, physically demanding and dangerous.^[15]

That does not eliminate institutional power. It means institutional power is exercised by humans. Which makes accountability more important, not less.

The shadow of the Thin Blue Line

The shadow begins when solidarity becomes insulation from scrutiny.

The badge becomes moral armor. Criticism of an officer becomes hatred of police. Accountability becomes betrayal. A civilian's criminal history becomes the answer to what happened in the present encounter.

"They should have complied" becomes a universal explanation for events it cannot actually explain.

The harshest supporter begins needing the officer to be right. Then the search starts for the victim's imperfection: drugs, mental illness, a record, a weapon, a bad decision, anything that makes further inquiry unnecessary.

The hidden rule becomes: if I can prove this person was imperfect, I no longer have to examine what authority did.

No. Imperfect does not mean disposable.

Where the shadows meet

At their harshest edges, the two sides can begin using remarkably similar machinery.

One says: the badge tells me what happened.

The other says: the victim category tells me what happened.

One begins with: how do I prove the officer was justified?

The other: how do I prove the officer was guilty?

I want to begin with: what happened?

Identity before evidence. Certainty before inquiry. Selective empathy. Narrative protection. Loyalty tests. Dehumanization of the out-group. Punishment of insiders who complicate the preferred story.

Those are not uniquely left-wing mechanisms. They are not uniquely right-wing mechanisms. They are human mechanisms.

NOT ONE CLASS

racial-equality protesters in Pew's 2020 survey differed from U.S. adults by age, race and geography, but not considerably by income or educational attainment.

I originally suspected many people inside these conflicts might cluster primarily in the working or middle class. The evidence requires a more careful statement: economic strain changes options, but neither racial-justice activism nor police-solidarity culture can responsibly be reduced to one socioeconomic caste.^[16]

Pew Research Center, June 24, 2020. Used narrowly to caution against class stereotyping of racial-equality protesters. See Source 16.

PART VII

CAPTURE BEFORE CERTAINTY

A deceptively simple tool for keeping one person's account alive long enough to be examined.

*Sometimes it is a future.
Sometimes ten minutes is options.
Sometimes ten minutes is time.*

The narrative arrives first

This is the mechanism that keeps repeating.

A narrative about me may arrive before I do. A narrative about a police officer may arrive before he does. A narrative about a Black civilian may arrive before he does. A narrative about an estranged parent may arrive before the parent does. A narrative about my son's mother can arrive before I allow myself to see her as a complete human being.

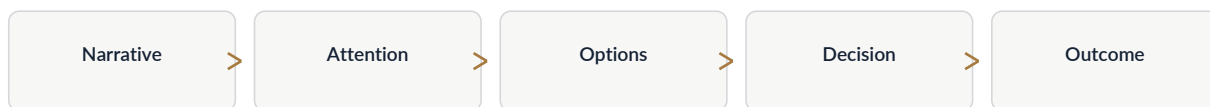
And perhaps a narrative about Kalob arrived before anybody really looked at Kalob.

Again, I cannot know what was inside LaHay's mind. Systems analysis does not need psychic powers. It can examine what pre-narratives do.

Dangerous. Noncompliant. Suicidal. Armed. Threat.

Once the category is complete, the category begins answering questions before anyone asks them.

Narratives shape attention. Attention shapes options. Options shape decisions. Decisions shape outcomes.



The First-Person Incident Narrative

On HRJS, the tool is called the First-Person Incident Narrative. The live public description is: “A guided record for preserving sequence, direct observation, immediate actions, and unresolved questions after an incident - so a person can communicate clearly with police, agencies, advocates, or legal professionals.”

It is currently listed as in development and expressly does not replace emergency response or licensed legal, medical or financial advice.

It looks simple. That is the point.

What happened? What did I directly observe? What did I do? What am I interpreting? What remains unresolved? What do I still not know?

The mechanism is: Capture Before Certainty.

Not: my narrative is truth. My narrative is evidence. There is a difference.

A first-person narrative preserves one person's account before memory degrades, social narratives harden, or an institutional summary becomes the only surviving description. Then compare it. Ask questions. Find contradictions. Add records. Correct errors.

That is Ledger Before the Myth turned into a practical tool.

*Sometimes it is a future.
Sometimes ten minutes is options.
Sometimes ten minutes is time.*

DIRECT OBSERVATION	INTERPRETATION	UNRESOLVED
What did I actually see, hear, receive, or do?	What do I believe it means - and why?	What is still unknown, disputed, or missing?

Live tool description and status: [HRJS Next Step\(s\)](#).

The tool belongs in family conflict too

The police-report version is only one application.

Think about family rupture. A child says something upsetting. One parent immediately decides what it means. The other parent decides what the first parent's behavior means. Then families decide. Friends decide. Social media decides. By the time a court sees the conflict, everybody may be carrying a mythology.

Imagine preserving a more disciplined record: what did the child actually say? What did I observe? What did I feel? What did I infer? What action did I take? What do I still not know?

Observation: my child said X.

Interpretation: I believe the child said X because the other parent manipulated them.

Those are not the same statement.

Observation: the parent missed an exchange.

Interpretation: they do not care about the child.

Again, not the same statement.

That tiny distinction can preserve enormous room for later truth: mediation, repair, investigation, accountability, safety.

The First-Person Incident Narrative is not important because a worksheet will save civilization. That would be an unreasonable amount of pressure for a PDF.

It matters because it operationalizes a deeper principle: slow narrative hardening long enough for reality to remain visible.

PART VIII

THE HANDOFF

September 1, good policing, Kovu and Nixie, order of operations, and what accountability is actually for.

September 1, 2026

I know the mechanism can help because I used an early version myself.

On September 1, 2026, two people came to my home in connection with a rental-car dispute.

There was pounding on my door. Then the words: “Police, open up.” Then the door came in.

The satirical side of that absurdity lives elsewhere in my work, in the Shadow Car Cop section of the Absurdity Ledger.

This essay is about the serious side.

Those words were not neutral to me. Kalob had died during a police encounter. The woman involved in the rental-car incident knew that history.

After the forced entry, I also could not immediately find Nixie, my cat. That triggered another history.

Kovu.

A cat is not just a cat

After Kalob died, there was a cat in the home. My girlfriend at the time and I took him in. We named him Kovu.

Kovu was not a replacement for my brother. Love does not operate like warehouse replenishment. Lose one unit, order another, slot filled.

Kovu was Kovu. He was a living thread connected to Kalob’s world. I could not protect my brother anymore. I could protect something still alive.

Then one night a sliding door by the balcony was left open. Kovu was partially feral. He escaped. I never found him.

At one point someone texted me claiming they had found Kovu. I walked across town crying. Then I discovered it was a prank.

Somebody had looked at another person’s missing animal and grief and thought: this seems like excellent entertainment.

So when I could not immediately find Nixie after two people forced their way into my home, the event was not merely: where is the cat?

It was Kalob. Kovu. The words “Police, open up.” My home. Another living family member potentially gone.

Nixie does not replace Kovu. Kovu did not replace Kalob.

Family is biology sometimes. It is also attachment, routine, responsibility, who waits for you, who depends on you, who you search for when something goes wrong.

That is stewardship too.

The officers who listened

After the September 1 incident, I initially called police. No officer arrived. That belongs in my ledger.

My phone service was unreliable, and roughly three days passed before I completed the follow-up. That belongs there too.

Then two officers eventually came.

I explained the forced entry, the police language, why it affected me, and what happened to Kalob. I told them directly: I am not blaming you for what happened to my brother.

They were not involved. They were two officers standing in my home dealing with a different situation.

They listened. They took my first-person narrative. Then they asked questions I had not thought of. They connected pieces. They closed loops. They were empathetic.

That matters.

Because if I am willing to criticize police when nobody arrives, I have to give police credit when officers arrive and do something well. Otherwise I am not conducting an inquiry. I am collecting exhibits for a conclusion I wrote in advance.

Those officers demonstrated a mechanism worth preserving: Receptivity Without Pacifism.

They still had authority. They still had investigative responsibilities. They listened anyway. Authority did not disappear because curiosity entered the room.

If you burn it down, what replaces it?

I do not believe police are inherently evil. I do not believe police are inherently good. I think that question is too small.

Policing is an institution. Institutions should be evaluated by what they produce: what works, what fails, what gets corrected, what repeats, what survives evidence testing.

I believe society needs some form of legitimate public-safety authority.

So when somebody says: burn the police department down, I have another question.

Who receives the power afterward?

Private security? Political groups? Armed neighborhood organizations? People with money? Nobody? A different agency?

Power does not vanish when an institution disappears. It moves.

Maybe the replacement is better. Maybe it is more terrifying.

We do not know. We should look.

That is not an argument against radical reform. It is an argument against pretending destruction automatically produces justice.

What accountability is actually for

Accountability is not collecting only failures. It also means identifying what works and protecting it.

The first police response after September 11 failed me. No one came. The later officers helped me. Both facts belong in the same record.

This worked. Keep it. This question helped. Keep asking it. This officer listened. Train for that.

This failed. Why? This handoff broke. Why? This command escalated. What changed? This pattern repeats. Investigate it.

*Both need the denominator.
Another counts rates.
One number counts bodies.*

This is harder than worship. It is harder than hatred.

Good.

The invisible record

Social narratives often become miniature courts. People decide who is dangerous, crazy, lying, innocent, deserving of access, deserving of exile.

Then the formal system receives the social narrative. The formal system produces a document. The document travels back into the social world as proof. A loop develops.

Meanwhile, another record may exist: messages, dismissals, court outcomes, medical documents, residency evidence, witnesses, context, contradictions.

That invisible record matters because reputational narratives can affect more than reputation: employment, housing, family relationships, economic mobility, privacy, resource access, doxxing.

A person can become psychologically stripped until every new interaction begins with the requirement to disprove an old story.

And when enough systems fail their handoffs, the damage cascades. Very often, children inherit it.

My order of operations

Trying to reunite with my son and trying to pursue justice and accountability for Kalob have remained at the front of my mind.

But human bandwidth is finite.

I had been trying to create an order of operations: housing, transportation, income, then stronger legal and family action.

Since September 2025, I had spent roughly three hundred dollars per week, plus deposits, on rental vehicles.

That is temporary infrastructure eating permanent infrastructure. Every dollar keeping the rental alive is a dollar not becoming my own vehicle.

I was trying to stabilize my lease, save, build transportation, then return with more capacity to my son and my brother's case.

My employment situation complicated that sequence. During leave, my pay effectively froze in a way I struggled to get explained through the organizational hierarchy. Then I was terminated while on leave.

The full employment process belongs elsewhere in my work, in the Human Systems Field Study™, where it can be examined on its own evidence.

But the consequence belongs here. My order of operations broke. Again.

Instability does not only take money. It takes attention. It reroutes the brain toward survival: rent, food, phone, transportation, benefits, forms, appointments, another deadline, another handoff.

Systems do not fail in separate boxes. They cascade.

The case I keep returning to

I was heavily involved in Kalob's civil case in the beginning. Life gradually pulled me away.

During leave in 2026, one of the things I wanted to return to was that case. After the federal disposition, I pivoted back toward helping my mother communicate with the attorney's office: collect the records, rebuild the timeline, translate legal language, figure out what routes remained.

Then my own stability collapsed again. I turned away again. Not because Kalob mattered less. Because survival stole the bandwidth.

But I intend to return.

I am not an attorney. I am not trying to manufacture a predetermined conclusion. I want to function as a translator and organizer.

Help my mother understand counsel. Help counsel understand what she is asking. Rebuild the record. Find out what happened. Find out what lawful routes remain. Seek justice. Seek accountability. Seek truth.

Those goals need to remain distinct enough to protect each other.

If justice requires me to ignore truth, it is not justice. If truth becomes an excuse for abandoning justice, it is incomplete.

PART IX

THE SON AND THE BROTHER

What remains after the audit: stewardship, repair, and the responsibility to keep looking.

*Humanity survives the audit.
The victim is not a saint.
The badge is not a halo.*

The standard has to include my ego

This is where We do not know. We should look. becomes most uncomfortable.

It has to apply to me.

My brother does not become flawless because I love him. The officer does not become evil because I am angry. My son's mother does not become disposable because I grieve.

I do not become innocent of everything merely because some things done to me were wrong.

My far-right history does not disappear because I changed. Nor should that history be allowed to answer every question about me forever.

The standard has to be capable of producing an answer I dislike.

Otherwise it is not a standard. It is branding.

What I keep from every side

From Black Lives Matter and police-accountability movements, I keep the scrutiny of power, racial analysis, the insistence that vulnerable people deserve to be heard, and the refusal to demand perfect victims. I discard dehumanization, predetermined guilt and evidence avoidance.

From Thin Blue Line and police-solidarity movements, I keep recognition of dangerous work, due process, officer safety, the necessity of legitimate public authority and respect for good policing. I discard worship of authority and automatic justification.

From protective parents, I keep: children deserve safety. I discard the conversion of adult relational hurt into ownership of the child.

From excluded parents, I keep: children can suffer enormously when safe parental relationships are unnecessarily severed. I discard the belief that exclusion automatically proves the excluded parent did nothing wrong.

From my own political past, I keep whatever understanding helps explain how radicalization happens. I discard the ideology that harmed my ability to see human beings clearly.

This is what synthesis means to me. Not splitting the difference. Truth does not always live in the center.

Synthesis means refusing to discard a true observation merely because somebody I dislike said it - and refusing to protect a false mechanism merely because somebody on my side depends on it.

The son and the brother

Which brings me back to the movie.

A grieving father. His sons. Brothers who are dead. A man who believes masculinity requires him to hide his tears. Children who know something the adults have forgotten.

*Humanity survives the audit.
The victim is not a saint.
The badge is not a halo.*

You can still be strong while somebody sees you hurt. You can still be a father when your son comforts you. You can still exercise command without domination. You can remain receptive without becoming passive. You can need another human being without surrendering your responsibilities to them.

Father. Son. Brother.

Different roles. Overlapping duties.

I wanted to be Kalob's brother. I wanted more time to become his brother again. I wanted to hear what he thought about the weights. I wanted another phone call, another argument, another stupid joke.

I wanted him to accumulate enough ordinary adult possessions that his room would not feel so painfully empty after he died. I wanted my family never to have to raise money just to cremate him. I wanted my mother never to hold her son while he died. I wanted her kitchen to remain a kitchen.

I wanted Kovu to remain in my life. I wanted the message saying somebody had found him to be true.

I wanted my youngest son to keep growing up with me present. I wanted to pick him up the next weekend like I thought I would. I wanted to see him open Christmas presents.

I wanted my oldest son to know his younger brother well enough that he would not have to ask when he was coming back without really remembering him.

I wanted the four handprints on my freezer to remain ordinary.

I wanted Christmas to be Christmas.

I wanted one of those years when nothing historically significant happened inside my family and everybody complained about dinner.

Human beings rarely understand how luxurious ordinary life is until ordinary life becomes unavailable.

Repair is not resurrection

I cannot resurrect it.

I cannot turn back December 2023. I cannot manufacture the conversations Kalob and I almost had. I cannot create childhood memories between brothers who were separated by systems and trauma. I cannot restore Kovu. I cannot remove my mother's memory of the kitchen.

I cannot force every organization to care. I cannot prove why some did not. I cannot prove another ten minutes would have saved Kalob. I cannot erase my own past. I cannot make every institution give me the answer I want.

But I can decide what I carry forward.

I can tell the truth carefully. I can remain curious where certainty would be dishonest. I can examine power without worshiping it. I can criticize police while preserving good policing. I can believe Black lives matter without requiring every police officer to become a villain. I can believe policing is necessary without making the badge sacred.

I can pursue access to my son without making his mother's destruction the price of my restoration. I can examine the shadow of an excluded parent while being one. I can examine my former ideology without pretending I was never part of it.

I can grieve without requiring another person to become smaller. I can lose composure without losing command.

I can return to my brother's timeline. I can help my mother. I can continue building tools that preserve people's accounts before institutions and social groups flatten them. I can protect Nixie because she is Nixie. I can remember the handprints.

I can remain a father. I can remain a steward. And I can continue trying to be a brother even though the person I wanted to be a brother to is gone.

That is not resurrection. That is continuity.

We do not know. We should look.

There is a reason I keep returning to that sentence.

It is not passive. It does not mean: we do not know, so shrug.

It means: do not pretend to know what you do not know. Then look like hell.

Look at the timeline. Look at the power. Look at the person. Look at the context. Look at the race data. Look at the class data. Look at the child. Look at the parent. Look at the officer. Look at the civilian. Look at the prior intervention. Look at the weapon. Look at the mental-health crisis.

Look at what worked. Look at what failed. Look at the first-person narrative. Look at the institutional summary. Look at the contradiction between them. Look at your own shadow. Look at the story your tribe needs you to believe.

Then ask whether the evidence survives it.

This does not mean there are no villains. Sometimes people do terrible things. It does not mean every conflict contains equal fault. It does not mean every side is equally powerful. It does not mean truth always sits politely in the middle waiting for centrists to discover it.

Sometimes truth lands hard on one side.

But I want the evidence to take me there. Not my ego. Not my grief. Not my politics. Not the badge. Not the hashtag. Not the custody narrative. Not my reputation. Not somebody else's.

*Ledger Before the Myth. Capture Before Certainty. Power Without Worship.
Receptivity Without Pacifism. Masculinity Without Domination. Command
Without Collapse. Human Continuity.*

What I owe the truth

I did not need my brother to die so I could learn those things.

I reject any philosophy that turns Kalob into a sacrifice for my development.

I did not need his death.

I wanted my brother.

But I am the one who remained.

*Humanity survives the audit.
The victim is not a saint.
The badge is not a halo.*

So the question is no longer what his death was for. The question is what I am going to do with myself afterward - and what I am going to build so somebody else has a better chance of getting another ten minutes.

Another conversation. Another Christmas. Another handprint. Another ordinary day.

Because sometimes justice is punishment. Sometimes justice is correction. Sometimes justice is acknowledgment. Sometimes justice is preserving access. Sometimes justice is discovering that the thing you believed was wrong. Sometimes justice is making sure the next person gets a better handoff.

And sometimes the first step toward justice is embarrassingly simple:

Write down what happened. Separate what you saw from what you assumed. Preserve what you do not know. Hand it to the next human being. Ask another question. Then keep looking.

PART X

SOURCES & RESEARCH NOTE

The intellectual spine: court records, government statistics, peer-reviewed research, independent datasets, contextual reporting, and HRJS tools.

*Accountability must permit movement.
It does not own the future.
My past belongs in the ledger.*

Research and interpretation note

The statistics in this essay describe populations and associations. They do not determine the facts of my family case, establish why any individual police encounter occurred, prove parental alienation in a particular family, or establish what any organization or individual privately believed.

That limitation is not a nuisance attached to the research. It is the point.

Statistics widen the field of inquiry. They do not replace the human record.

We do not know. We should look.

CONTEXT / HISTORY

1. Von Erich family and The Iron Claw. WWE histories and major reporting on the real Von Erich/Adkisson family, the deaths of the brothers, and the film's compression and omission of Chris Von Erich. Used for the opening historical frame and the distinction between real history and dramatization. [Open source](#)

COURT RECORD

2. Watts v. LaHay et al., No. 4:24-cv-01475-SPM, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, Memorandum Opinion and Order, May 14, 2026. Used for the encounter chronology, prior suicide-by-cop response, timing, language, summary-judgment analysis, qualified immunity, and state-claim disposition. [Open source](#)

COURT RECORD

3. Heberlie/Bening v. Coon and LaHay, E.D. Missouri. Federal order concerning apportionment of a \$600,000 wrongful-death settlement. Used for the 2005 Heberlie encounter and settlement, while preserving the distinction that LaHay did not fire the fatal shot. [Open source](#)

CONTEXTUAL REPORTING

4. Reporting on the 2020 Dustin Eaton shooting and the Missouri State Highway Patrol investigation. Used cautiously as secondary reporting, not as a judicial finding. [Open source](#)

GOVERNMENT DIRECTORY

5. Missouri Law Enforcement Agencies directory, State of Missouri Data Portal, report dated May 9, 2026. Used to verify Scott LaHay's listed role as Bismarck Police Chief at that time. [Open source](#)

GOVERNMENT DATA

6. U.S. Census Bureau, Custodial Parents and Their Child Support: 2022, Current Population Reports P60-285, published 2025. Used for 22.2 million / 27.1%, racial distributions, and custodial-family poverty statistics. Census living-arrangement definitions do not establish legal custody or fault. [Open source](#)

COURT SYSTEM / ACCESS

7. National Center for State Courts, family case-management initiative materials, 2025. Used for the reported 80-90% self-represented litigant rates in participating family-court dockets; not presented as one universal national rate for every court. [Open source](#)

PEER-REVIEWED

8. Harman, Leder-Elder & Biringen, "Prevalence of parental alienation drawn from a representative poll," Children and Youth Services Review 66 (2016). Used for the 13.4% self-reported estimate and only with methodological caution. [Open source](#)

PEER-REVIEWED

9. Family Court Review literature on parental alienation/contact problems, including Johnston & Sullivan (2020), emphasizing multifactorial explanations and caution against one-factor diagnosis. [Open source](#)

PEER-REVIEWED

10. 2020 meta-analysis of interparental conflict, parenting and child adjustment across 115 samples and 24,854 divorced families. Used to establish that persistent high-conflict family environments are associated with child adjustment problems. [Open source](#)

GOVERNMENT DATA

*Accountability must permit movement.
It does not own the future.
My past belongs in the ledger.*

11. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Contacts Between Police and the Public, 2022. Used for 49.2 million / 19% police-contact prevalence, resident-initiated contacts, and racial differences in reported nonfatal force/threat during relevant contacts. [Open source](#)

INDEPENDENT DATASET

12. Mapping Police Violence / Campaign Zero, U.S. Police Violence in 2025: Year-end Report, updated 2026. Used for race-specific fatality rates, male share, behavioral-health share and call-for-service statistic. Advocacy-operated dataset, treated as such. [Open source](#)

INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM DATA

13. Washington Post Fatal Force database, historical fatal on-duty police shootings, 2015-2024. Used to demonstrate the distinction between raw counts and population-adjusted rates and to corroborate the overwhelmingly male profile of fatal shooting victims. [Open source](#)

PEER-REVIEWED

14. “Analyzing Fatal Police Shootings: The Roles of Social Vulnerability, Race, and Place in the U.S.” American Journal of Preventive Medicine (2024). Used for independent associations between social vulnerability, racial composition and fatal police shootings, including the high-vulnerability incidence ratio. [Open source](#)

GOVERNMENT DATA

15. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook: Police and Detectives. Used for median 2025 pay and occupational context. [Open source](#)

PUBLIC OPINION / DEMOGRAPHICS

16. Pew Research Center, June 24, 2020, demographic profile of recent racial-equality protest attendees. Used narrowly to caution against reducing racial-justice protesters to one income or educational class. [Open source](#)

CONTEXTUAL REPORTING

17. Reporting on the Thin Blue Line symbol and its modern political associations, including police solidarity, Blue Lives Matter and conflict around police-reform movements. Used for movement context rather than a universal definition of every supporter. [Open source](#)

HRJS TOOL

18. Human Rights Justice Systems™, Next Step(s): First-Person Incident Narrative. Live public description: a guided record for preserving sequence, direct observation, immediate actions and unresolved questions after an incident. Currently marked in development and not a substitute for emergency response or licensed professional advice. [Open source](#)

HRJS FRAMEWORK

19. Human Rights Justice Systems™, Shadow Literacy™. Used for the reader-facing definition of shadow, disciplined curiosity, “Inquiry before certainty,” and the distinction between uncertainty and accusation. [Open source](#)

Publication pathways

This monograph is designed as a long-form reading experience. A later executive brief can compress the architecture for readers who need the map before entering the full inquiry. The long form remains the primary work.

Related HRJS pathways: [Shadow Literacy™](#) · [Next Step\(s\)](#) · [HRJS.org](#)

THE SON AND THE BROTHER

Human continuity is common ground. Responsible reform is how we protect it.

Harold R.J. Sloke, BSW, MPA

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