

TRANSCRIPT: MORE THAN MY NAME

Milli, Glow and Shadow | April 15, 2021

Judge Patricia H. Clark Children and Family Justice Center | Seattle, WA

Three young men discuss youth incarceration, and end with a poem.

[MUSIC FADES IN]

[GUARD: "CODE THREE! YOU GUYS HEAD ON IN, YOU GOTTA GO!"]

[AUTOMATED PHONE RECORDING: "THIS CALL WILL BE RECORDED AND MONITORED. IF YOU WISH TO BLOCK ANY FUTURE CALLS OF THIS NATURE, DIAL SEVEN NOW."]

[MUSIC FADES OUT]

Milli: How you guys doing? It's Milli from the 206.

Shadow: It's Shadow representing the WA.

Glow: It's Glow from the South.

Milli: In today's podcast, we're going to be talking about everyday urban struggles. All the speakers are incarcerated youth in the city of Seattle.

To start us off, I'd like to know how you guys feel about youth incarceration. Personally, I feel like I sit on two sides of a coin, you know? The youth should be punished, and they should have repercussions for their crimes. But at the same time, we're still young adults, still growing, our mindsets aren't fully there yet, you know? We're still developing right from wrong, all that, you know?

Shadow: We feel you, we feel you. Glow, on a more serious topic: What were the factors in your past that shaped your future?

Glow: You know, like, there's a lot of things that happen in life, you know, like, I lost my dad. So like, growing up without a father figure, it wasn't good for me, you know? So I'm just like, damn. Like, if my father was with me right now, you know, I wouldn't be in this situation.

Shadow: We feel that, we feel that.

Milli: 100% I feel what he's saying too, you know. It's just the support system wasn't fully there. So yeah. If you guys could change one thing about your life, what would it be?

Shadow: Personally, I think if I can go back and change something, or prevent myself from doing something, I would change the people that I chose to hang out with. And separate myself from that kind of crowd. You know?

Glow: Yeah, that's good. I know what you're saying.

Shadow: Glow, it's Ramadan this month, right?

Glow: Yeah, it's Ramadan this month.

Shadow: How do you feel about Ramadan when you are incarcerated?

Glow: Damn, I feel like kind of good, you know? Like, it's not the same. It's not the same as being home when you're fasting. You know? I just got to accept that, you know, I'm here for a reason. And I just gotta learn from my mistakes, you know? Ramadan, you know, is getting here, you know, I have to wake up from 6 AM, pray. [Sounds of prayer] All the way to 8 PM. That's when we eat, you know? I have to fast through the day, you know? But yeah though, I feel good about it.

Milli: Alright then. So this is a question for everybody. What are you most proud of? Like, what's your biggest accomplishment? Or, what makes you the happiest that you can reflect on and be like, 'okay, yeah, I did this.'

Shadow: What I'm most proud of probably be how I was there for my family, you know? I put the people I love in front of me, and I was just there for them. I did a lot of bad shit, which was the lifestyle I was living and it's just...I did that for my family. And so I was able to put a roof over their head, you know, put meals on their plates and stuff. But, you know, I just took the wrong steps to do it. But I feel 100% that I wouldn't want it no other way. You know? Like, I'll sacrifice my time just for their wellbeing.

Glow: That's nice. But about me, you know, I feel like, like the same thing as Shadow. Like the same thing that he said! The reason why I did this, you know, it's because, for my family. Because, like, you know, we ain't have food in the refrigerator. And we had nothing else. But you know, I'm just gonna accept it. But yeah.

Milli: Definitely, definitely. That's what's up.

Glow: How about you?

Milli: For me, I think what I'm most proud of is to be able to say that I overcame every obstacle in my life. That I continue fighting through, you know, just everything. All the let downs, all the hardships. Just not letting those things knock me down. And continuing to strive for self embetterment.

Shadow: Yeah, I hear what you're saying.

Milli: Yeah, definitely. I think like, a big question that people will ask listening to the podcast is: what do you guys do in jail? Like, what are activities you guys do?

Shadow: Well, we don't do a lot. But we find a way to make the day go fast. You know? We're able to enjoy ourselves. A lot of times, we just spend the day talking to each other, communicating with each other. Laughing, making jokes, doing stupid shit. It's like, we act like kids in here. On the outside, we're young adults, and we try to be much older than we are. And we are much older than we are on the outside. We're more mature. But in here, we get to live a little. We get to act like kids. We don't have to worry about where our next meal is gonna come from. We don't have to worry about the enemies looking for us. We don't have to worry about anything to be honest. You know, we get food, we get clothes, we get shelter. So it's just, we're able to enjoy ourselves more.

Glow: Exactly. Yeah. I agree with him.

[MUSIC FADES IN]

Milli: Definitely, definitely.

To close it out, if you could tell the people listening, like, what's something about yourself that characterizes you, or like, that makes you unique? What is that one factor of yourself that you like about you?

Shadow: Personally, I feel like I don't change up on no situation, you know? Like, I'll always be the same. Like, I'm not going to change for nobody. I'm not going to try to get anyone to accept me. And I'm not going to try to, like, say, a teacher doesn't like me. I'm not going to change for them. Say a guard doesn't like me. I'm not going to change for them. Say a kid doesn't like me, I'm not going to change for them. Regardless what you think of me, I'm gonna be myself because I hold my opinions for myself, you know?

Glow: Straight facts.

Milli: Definitely, definitely. How about you?

Glow: I mean, I'm a funny person. I just like joking around with my friends and stuff. You know? The people in here are like my brothers. So I want them to think about, like, what they've done too. I want them to make sure when they get out, to not do the same things over and over and over again, bro. So like, that's why I gotta say to you youngins over there: it's never too late to change. You guys can always change.

Milli: Definitely. Wow, that was powerful. I feel like for me, I just want people to know that our worst actions don't define us, don't make us who we are. We're way more than what people think we are. You know, we all had to go through hardships and situations that forced us to live the way that we live. So if I could tell people one thing it's just don't judge a book by its cover. There's way more that goes on beneath the surface than just what you see.

[MILLI READS A POEM HE WROTE]

More than my name.
I am more than what people think.
I am more than my worst actions.
I am much, much more.
I'm a son. I'm a brother. Uncle. Dad.
I have a story.
I have a story of hardships and let downs.
I have been through the mud.
But you don't see that.
All you see is my worst action.
You see the bad but refuse to see the good.
How can you judge me without even knowing me?
That's okay, because I know I am more than just my name.

Milli: But you know, it's been real. It's your boy Millie, 206, again, signing off.

Shadow: It's your boy Shadow. I hope we were able to give you guys something to think about.

Glow: It's your boy Glow from the South signing out.

[MUSIC FADES OUT]