

Resilience Rising: Ep 2

Brief intro music plays.

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Karma Wilson: Hello, I'm Karma Wilson, a manager at Strengthening Chicago's Youth, aka SCY at Patrick M. Magoon Institute for Healthy Communities at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

Kirstin: And my name is Kirstin Grabski.

Karma: We welcome you to a special episode where we hold space for youth voices on the impact of gun violence. Today you'll hear from a 17-year-old high school senior who reflects on the tragic loss of a fellow student and share their honest thoughts on grief, trauma, and the healing process.

Kirstin: This conversation reminds us that healing is not linear, and it emphasizes the importance of listening to and support young people as they process experiences no one their age should have to face.

Karma: You might notice some changes in sound quality during this episode. It was recorded 100% by our youth producers, which means the sound quality may shift from time to time depending on where and how each segment was captured. Our youth did use different devices and settings, but these variations reflect the real hands-on nature of their work, and we're grateful that you're here to listen and support their voices.

Kai Leland: Hello everyone, this is Kai Leland, and I am a senior in high school. I am 17 years old right now and there was a tragedy at my school. There was an incident at a football game, homecoming night where a 14-year-old young man, Marshawn Mitchell, was shot and killed.

As a youth, when I hear things regarding gun violence that surrounded someone my age, it breaks my heart. It makes me feel like they have to much more life to live. It's not fair to them. It's not fair to their family, their loved ones, their potential boyfriend/girlfriend, or if they were in a relationship. It's not fair to them. The event that happened at my school, it wasn't specifically traumatic to where it's like 'Oh I'm going to have to think about that for the rest of my life,' because I wasn't there. But the people that were there, they were affected, and I imagine how that must have been traumatic for them. And how do we heal?

We need to talk about that. How do people from that type of subjection heal? I feel like therapy would be great. Therapy has personally helped me, and I have been in it for three years. So someone that may have lost someone really close to them to gun violence, they could – you know – start being in group therapy, and that, they could heal, but healing takes time, and it's not something that you can rush.

Healing is not linear. Healing is a very complicated process. Healing is something that you have to be patient with yourself, and even, even if someone is listening to this right now and they've been going through something that's very traumatic and something that even if it happened five years ago and they're still healing – that is okay. Don't rush yourself. Don't rush the process. I feel like that's something that's really important. Cause that's something as traumatic as losing someone to gun violence or even being in a community that it's very common.

That is something you can't heal from if you're still in that environment. You have to get yourself out of that, but that is not easy. That is something that also takes time. You can talk to a grief counselor. You can be connected to these organizations that are personally have lost people to gun violence and you can be able to connect with them about it, you can be able to relate to them about it.

You'll be able to just come together and have these resources. Even if you're not fully healed, cause you'll never fully heal from something as traumatic as losing someone to gun violence. That's even if you lose anyone period, you may never fully heal from that cause you'll never see them again.

You'll never be able to hear their voice again. And that may be a touchy subject for some people, and they may need help to be able to talk about it. Therapy is a great resource, but if

you don't have access to therapy – there are public groups such as Sertoma. They have group sessions and they're very resourceful. There are multiple places, there are multiple communities you can go to. It doesn't even have to be therapy. You may not believe in therapy. You may just want someone to be there for you, to comfort you, to listen. You may want someone to give you as much help as you may need to be able to feel like you can heal from it. Cause grief is something that is not, not a joke. It's not something that is taken lightly. You have to do what is best for you at all costs. You know, you have to put yourself first. Like you have to do what can be beneficial to you – even if you feel like therapy isn't an option, you can start to do fidgets. You know, that's something that can help you if you have anxiety from such events. Cause you can develop PTSD from certain traumatic events, or it can follow you and linger in the long run.

What's something you've gone through that you've never healed from that relates to this topic today? You know, you can go five years, something happens to a family member, something will happen to a friend, and you can still not be healed from it. And you'll have so many issues that have never been resolved because you've never put in the work in to heal, but you were too busy mourning, grieving, which is so understandable, and that's valid. You're valid.

Will our community ever stand up and just put all our differences aside? That's a true question. Will that ever happen. Because I feel like certain events, specifically in the Black community, Black women, Black men – have spoken up about a horrible event that happened to a young man, young woman, a child, an infant, and it can cause everyone to come together temporarily.

It's never permanent. It's like for a few months, for a year at most, and it will never like – be long lasting – which I feel like is a problem because there could be a tragic incident, but after that tragic incident, and it's been a year, two years, three years, where is everyone at now? What are we doing now to come together and be there for each other? Anything? Nothing? How can you help? What can you do? What type of resources can you provide? I want to know that answer. We all need to know that answer, if you don't know that answer, I feel like you should explore and do whatever you can to be there for someone. Even if you don't know them personally, you can be there for them from a distance.

You can be there for them – like 'Hey, how are you doing?' you know? I just feel like that are too many shootings, too many accidents that aren't even accidents that people just say, they say stuff and it's not even what actually happened. Does that make sense? Like I said earlier people will say 'Oh, they have mental issues,' and then they'll let them go free. They'll let them

do whatever they want after that, there'll be not external consequences. When will that stop? When will race no longer have to do with a crime? Cause if a Black woman is in jail for life over a crime they didn't commit, and they, and then it was actually a white person who committed that crime, when will certain things like that stop?

Cause racism is a huge problem. It doesn't even just regard to gun violence. How can you help? How can you be an ally? Get into therapy and get a psychiatrist and do all of these things that you think will help, that you think will help heal you, but it's not even the resources that heal you. It is you taking the initiative. For you to take the time for you to pour into yourself, that's healing. For you to let you feel your feelings, that's healing. For you to allow yourself to do what you feel would be best for you. For you to blossom and not let your trauma hold back, which is something I'm working on.

What do you think the link is between the Black Lives Matter movement and the gun violence surrounding Chicago? The area? The movement, what do you think about that? Have you known anyone who's lost someone from gun violence? What's your take on gun violence trauma within the Black community? Is there any suppressed emotions that are coming up? Is there anything that you're specifically think about right now?

Brief transition music plays.

Karma: We thank you for listening to today's episode and for honoring the voice of our youth sharing reflections on loss, healing, and the journey forward after gun violence.

Kirstin: As Kai reminded us, healing takes time. It isn't linear, and it's okay to move at your own pace.

Karma: We truly hope this conversation encourages compassion and deeper support for the young people in our communities.

Brief closing music plays.

Karma: Until next time, take care of yourselves and each other.

Brief closing music plays.