



My name is Sister Maria Orlandini, Director of Advocacy for the Franciscan Action Network. Gun violence prevention is one of the issues I pay special attention to, inviting FAN members to advocate on. I'm inviting you to listen with your heart and pay attention to how you are moved as you listen to the short story of Greg Jackson, now the Executive Director of Community Justice Action Fund.

Greg Jackson:

"I'm excited to share a little bit about my story, but also about the work that we're doing and the crisis of gun violence and the solutions we see, as well as some of the progress that we've made. So just first, a little bit about me.

I'm a survivor of gun violence, but I was someone who had been passionate about politics and campaigns really my entire life, and that landed me in Washington, D.C. after college. And while working there, I worked on multiple campaigns, the Obama campaign twice, and then ultimately did some work around issue organizing for then-President Barack Obama.

And then while doing that work, coincidentally, I was shot as an innocent bystander in April of 2013. And I learned firsthand, frankly, how severe the trauma is from being shot and being directly impacted.

The bullet that hit me hit two arteries, and so I nearly bled to death just en route to the hospital. And then when I arrived at the hospital, I wasn't met with surgeons and gauze

and everything that someone who is harmed typically does. I was met with investigators who interrogated me before I could get any treatment. And I nearly bled to death, frankly, while being interrogated. Luckily, I made it through my surgery and spent about six months in recovery, kind of learning how to walk again and bounce back. But I'll never forget that feeling of being seen as a criminal first and a patient second.

Also, when I was shot, I was shot four days after the Senate failed to pass the [bill on] background checks. And so not only was I going through the physical and emotional pain, I was looking to political leaders, many of which I had looked up to my entire life, and watched them make excuses, excuses of why they couldn't take action, how this timing wasn't right, how they couldn't get it done.

And it was very similar to our current climate. We had a Democratic House and Senate and President in office, so that really struck a nerve, for lack of a better word. And so I really dug into the issue of gun violence a lot more and started to pay more attention to not only the personal instances and the people I knew, but looking at it from an academic standpoint and also from a policy standpoint of what can be done.

So I started working with the DC government and their Office of Neighborhood Safety and helping to build out and implement some of their initial strategies to address violence. And we saw mixed success.

But one big challenge we saw was that no matter how much we implemented in the city, there was this big cloud beyond the city of guns that kept pouring in and loopholes, frankly, where people could get away with either bringing guns in or committing crimes right on the edge of the district that rippled into our city.

And then on top of that, in 2019, one of our childhood friends from my mom's side of the family was shot and killed in Greensboro, North Carolina. And my little cousin, who was in the hospital with me, was holding this young man, Tray, in his arms. He bled to death and died.

And I just will never forget hearing my cousin Tyler tell me the story of how it went down and just realizing that now he's been traumatized by two incidents of shootings, and he lost a good friend and also watched me, his big cousin, go through it."