

Musician who saw family murdered will play at Clothesline Project concert

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William Kellibrew has lived a life most people simply cannot imagine.

He grew up in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., in incredible poverty. His father was in and out of jail on charges that included bank robbery. His mother was on welfare. When William was 6 years old, he was violently raped by a neighbor.

If you go

What: 11th Anniversary Clothesline Concert benefit

When: 7:30 tonight

Where: Nauset Regional High School auditorium, 100 Cable Road, North Eastham

Tickets available: the Hot Chocolate Sparrow,

5 Old Colony Way, Orleans, or at the door

Suggested donation: \$15 for adults, \$10 for students and seniors

Despite his pain, William kept his assault a secret for many years. But now, as a national anti-violence advocate, he tells his story freely, and he will share that and his musical talent tonight as a special guest at the 11th Anniversary Clothesline Concert at Nauset Regional High School in North Eastham. The benefit will again support the Clothesline Project, an advocacy program marking its 20th year of helping victims of violence and educating the public about violence against women.

"It's quite a treacherous story, and I have to live with it every day," William says in a telephone interview. "I think the more we tell our stories, the more we give others the permission to tell theirs."

Unfortunately, the rape is just the beginning of William's story.

On July 2, 1984, when he was 10 years old, William woke up alone in his house in Capital Heights, Md. There wasn't much food in the house and the electricity had been shut off. He heard loud screams coming from outside and ran to the door to see what was going on.

His mother, Jacqueline, was being dragged down the street by Marshall Brent Williams, her estranged boyfriend. William's 12-year-old brother, Anthony Cephas, was pulling on her other arm, trying to help her get away.

When they knocked on the door, William unlocked it and let them in. His mother immediately ran to the window and began screaming for someone to call the police. Anthony stood with his foot up against the wall, his head bent down.

The boyfriend took out a gun and started loading it. Once the bullets were in the clip, he walked directly over to William's mother, Jacqueline, and shot her twice in the face. She fell to the ground, blood flowing out of her mouth and spreading on the carpet.

Next, he walked over to Anthony and shot him in the temple and in the throat. More blood flowed. He walked back to William's mother and shot her once more before moving at a brisk pace over to where William sat. He squatted and put the gun to William's head.

That's when William began begging for his life, first to his attacker and then to God. After a minute, William heard a click of the gun being uncocked and he was told he could leave and call the police. William walked slowly out the door, locking it behind him as he left. He kept his pace as slow as he could until he reached the end of the driveway and felt safe. Then he ran quickly to go get help.

When the police arrived, they shot tear gas into the house several times and shouted through a bullhorn, but there was no response. After two-and-a-half hours, they finally decided to go in. Three bodies awaited them. Marshall Brent Williams, who had already served an 11½-year prison sentence for second-degree murder, had used the last bullet to kill himself.

This is what domestic violence looks like for those who live within its nightmare.

William was placed in his grandfather's care and the very next day, on July 3, his grandfather got into a fight with a neighbor over a parking space for the hearse when the undertaker came to discuss funeral arrangements. The fight turned violent, and his grandfather ran into the house and grabbed a gun. He shot his neighbor and was grazed by a bullet himself. William witnessed the entire altercation.

"I was so in shock I lost my voice," William says. "I couldn't even respond. I walked away from everything I knew, everything I owned. I walked away from that day like it was Katrina, like it was the earthquake in Haiti. I walked away with the clothes on my back and I never returned to that house again."

Instead, his grandmother took in him and his remaining siblings, but she simply couldn't bear to talk about the loss of her only daughter. There were no photos and no memorabilia — only memories. By the time William was 13, he was suicidal. He considered jumping off a bridge on his 13th birthday but instead sought the help of his school's assistant principal, who immediately got his grandmother to make an

appointment with a social worker at Children's National Medical Center. He spent a year in outpatient counseling.

His teen years, however, weren't good ones. He turned to drugs and alcohol to medicate his pain, but eventually he found work in the restaurant industry, where he worked steadily for about eight years before deciding it was time to get an education so he could have a better life. And at the University of the District of Columbia, his life changed. There, two of the professors who got to know him, Barbara Harvey and Clarence Davis, historian for the District of Columbia, set up The William Kellibrew Foundation, a nonprofit organization committed to providing educational support and resources to help break the cycle of violence and poverty.

Since the organization was founded three years ago, William has served as president and spokesman. He has traveled all over the world, sharing his story and educating people about domestic violence. He has been a guest on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and did a 15-city tour with rapper Bow Wow to get out the youth vote in the national election. He does consulting work for the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime and will be a featured speaker during National Crime Victims' Rights Week in Washington, D.C., in April.

In addition to his advocacy work, he is pursuing his passion for music. He is thrilled to be able to combine both in the Clothesline Concert, especially since his mother is the one who inspired his love for music.

"My mother used to make me get up in front of everybody and do Michael Jackson when I was 8 or 9," he says. "She loved music. On Saturday cleaning days in the house, we would dance and listen to music and clean, listening to the music."