

He Convinced 400 Gang Members To Sign A Peace Treaty | Clips | Dad Saves America

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SUMMARY

Willie Ray Fleming shares his transformative journey from prison to becoming a community leader, highlighting the pivotal role of Bishop Omar, who guided him in his mission to reduce gang violence. Together, they initiated a peace treaty among rival gangs and established mentorship programs in schools, leading to a significant decrease in violence and improved student outcomes.

- *Willie Ray Fleming credits Bishop Omar as a crucial mentor upon his release from prison.*
- *Omar was initially a youth minister with a focus on reducing gang violence through his organization, Vision Regeneration.*
- *Their first major project involved negotiating a peace treaty between rival gangs, which was initially met with skepticism and danger.*
- *The peace treaty led to the collaboration of former enemies, including Grover Jackson of the Crips, and resulted in 400 gang members signing the agreement.*
- *Fleming and Omar implemented mentorship programs in schools, employing individuals from the neighborhoods to help monitor and guide students.*
- *Over three years, gang violence incidents in the school dropped from nearly 400 to just two.*
- *The initiative also improved school attendance and academic performance, demonstrating the impact of positive role models.*
- *The work initiated by Fleming and Omar eventually evolved into Urban Specialists, continuing their mission to support at-risk youth.*

- Willie Ray Fleming was a godsend to me in prison. And Bishop Omar was a godsend to me outside of prison. When I met Omar, the late great Bishop, Omar my brother, my spiritual guide. One of the most smartest persons I know. - Is he on this right here? - This is when we first met. We were both, probably 40 pounds lighter. (John chuckling) This was when we first did a magazine cover together.

But Omar was one of the most smartest person I know. And I met him coming outta prison, probably two weeks outta prison. He drove up in a Ford Probe looking like a college student. But it was just something about him. When we met, it was almost we were matched for each other. It was like, it was a

match made in heaven, man. He was what I needed and I was what he needed. - So what was he?

You say bishop, I'm Catholic, so bishop has a very particular meaning as a Catholic. But like Bishop Omar, did he head a church in Dallas? Like what did he do at that time? - At that particular time he wasn't a bishop. He wasn't a pastor. He was a youth minister but he had an organization called Vision Regeneration. And the aim of that organization was to stop gang violence in the neighborhood. That's kinda how we connected. How do we change the trajectory of young people coming outta these communities?

So whatever reason, he wasn't a gangster, he was a good guy. - [John] Yeah. - But that was his M.O. And that M.O. rang true for me because when I met him he told me about his organization. And as soon as he finished, I reached in my briefcase and I handed him something that I typed up in prison, he read it. I remember, he read it. And then he looked over at me with those eyes. You can't tell if they open or not.

(John chuckling) And he was like, "Wow." Because what he had just told me, I had on those papers verbatim. And he said, "Man, let's go to work." And our first job was to do a gang peace treaty. Because I told him, I said, "Look, man, I wanna help my neighborhood. I wanna go back to my neighborhood. I wanna do this." I had all these plans and he looked me in my eyes and he said, "We gotta go to your enemy neighborhood."

And I said, "Whoa!" I said, "That's suicide." I said, "I didn't think that far. I was thinking about my neighborhood." And Omar convinced me to go to my rivals, who last saw me shooting at them and ask for peace. We were in these rundown, drug-infested apartments, one way in, one way out, no weapons. And we knocked on the door of those guys who were my enemies, you know? And when they looked out the window and they saw me, all you heard was guns cocking and a bunch of scrambling around.

And I looked at Omar and he said, "Put your hands up." And I put my hands up like this. We were standing outside this apartment. And I remember looking up and I said, "God, I know you ain't gonna take me out like this. I've changed my life. You ain't gonna let me go out like this." My heart was beating nonstop. I was nervous, sweating bullets. And them dudes slung open that door with their guns up. And Omar started talking.

I didn't know Omar, I just met him. He started talking and he was talking for me. And as he was talking, they

were lowering they guns. And I was saying, "Lord, please keep talking, tell him to keep talking. Don't let him stop talking. Just keep talking." And Omar was talking and talking. They lowered their guns. And on that day, they gave us a pass. And they told us that because of what we trying to do, that they'll give us a shot at that.

And that became honestly the foundation of our work. 'Cause the guy who was my enemy, Grover Jackson, rest his soul, head of the Crips, he came to work for us. And we were able to get 400 gang members to sign a peace treaty that summer. - So I wanna understand the work, 'cause this is the basis of- - [Antong] Right. - What becomes, what happens next? - We got the peace treaty signed with the gang members and we went into the schools 'cause we wanted to monitor the peace.

We had to monitor the peace. A brave principal in Dallas, Robert Ward, allowed us, he didn't know us, he allowed us in that school. Because what we told him was that man, we wanted to be the big brothers, the mentors to these young people. That if we can mentor them that we can just show you that having a consistent mentor in their life can change their trajectory. That principal didn't know us. He gave us an opportunity, and we went into the schools, right?

So we essentially hired men and women from those neighborhoods, these two warring neighborhoods, to work inside the schools to monitor the peace. And they began walking the halls, walkie talkies, hall monitors. And in three years, right? Three years, gang violence in that school was, prior to us coming in was 390 something incidents a year. In three years, gang violence reduced to two incidents.

- Wow, so a huge transformation. - Huge drop, attendance went up. Extra curriculum activity went up, the scores went up. Teachers could teach without having to break up fights. Because you had these guys, these unusual guys, in the neighborhood who were hall monitors and mentors, and they was mentoring them back in their community. Because again, what I fundamentally believed was that if you can provide these type of mentors to young people at those early ages, who are, like me, looking for somebody to just say, "Man, let me show you, let me walk you through this landmine, through this land field.

Let me walk you through this. Don't step right there, 'cause you step right there, you gonna blow up. 'Cause I done been there. But step this way." Our belief was that young people needed that. Because of single parents

and whatever happened, our young people needed that. They needed to see positive role model, an influx of positive role models inside their neighborhood, who can then save young people who were like me. Who were smart, who now don't have to become what the neighborhood said they has to, okay?

They can actually become what they want to be. And that was the foundation of the work that we had started in 2000, which has then metamorphosis to Urban Specialists, what we do today.