

Interview with Curtis Milsap

[00:00:00] **Curtis Milsap** I'm Curtis Milsap, age 44.

[00:00:06] **Amanda Rivkin** And take us back to the day that you were arrested by the police. Tell us about that day.

[00:00:14] **Curtis Milsap** OK, I was arrested, I was picked up on 59th and Loomis by some detectives and I was transferred to 51st and Wentworth, to a police station. And then from 51st and Wentworth, I went to 39th and California. That's the homicide detectives. And when I was there, they... I was handcuffed to a wall and then I sat there for a while, then put in a holding cell. And then from the holding cell they took me to a room and they started questioning me, asking about a taxi cab drive-by and...

[00:00:58] **Curtis Milsap** When I told them I didn't know anything about it, they told me I was lying. They wanted me to say that me and a guy named Terrance Brooks was... Terrance Brooks was the one who was doing the shooting out of the cab. And I knew him and...

[00:01:15] **Curtis Milsap** I kept telling them that I didn't know anything about what they was talking about. I was repeatedly slapped. I was kicked in my testicles. While they were doing that I was handcuffed to a file cabinet. You know, both hands. It was like that. You know, spreaded out on a file cabinet. Everytime I tell them, what are you talking about, it was a police there, it was a police there. And they both taking turns slapping me on the side of my face. And after so many hours... It seemed like two days. But, you know, I guess it was like a day. You know, they repeatedly kicked me and beat me. And I just told them what they wanted to hear. You know?

[00:01:56] **Amanda Rivkin** Tell us what you told them.

[00:02:03] **Curtis Milsap** I didn't tell them nothing. Whatever they made me look at, they had wrote down. That's what I did. I agreed to, I signed my name to it. And I ended up staying in jail for two and a half years. Fighting three murders, three attempted murders. And I'd say after two and a half years, Judge Earl Strayhorn, he vindicated me came from the case. And then... My rappy Terrance Brooks, he had a lawyer. They had got in contact with me. Gator Bradley. Gator Bradley, he put everything together for me far as helping me to get the necessary paperwork to get this lawsuit they had out.

[00:03:06] **Curtis Milsap** One time, say about seven years ago, somebody, some lawyer told me he wanted to talk to me, so they want to meet me in Jackson. So he flew down here from Chicago. I went up there to Jackson, me and my son. And he did an interview with me and he was asking me what the police did. Said they have a lawsuit going on. But he told me I wasn't qualified to receive any money, you know what I'm saying. So I left it alone, but then my co-defendant Terry, he called me and told me he got a lawyer, Gator Bradley. He say he gone help me out. So I went up there in June of last year and met with Gator. And Gator got the paperwork, took me to Chicago Sun-Times. And, you know, I talked with the... I forgot the guy name that worked there. They helped me get the paperwork and get me started on filing papers for me to get the lawsuit.

[00:04:17] **Curtis Milsap** Then, this year, January, they're saying I qualify for that, for it. You know, I received a check for \$100,000. I had told the guy at the Sun-Times, he was like, what you gonna do with the money? And I was like, I'm gonna open me a restaurant. He said, restaurant, that's not, ain't a lot of money. I say it'll make money down here. I'mma sell Chicago food. I'mma sell the gyros, the pizza puff. I'mma get in with Harold's Chicken. You know what I'm saying? I said, I'mma sell all that down here, you know what I'm saying? I make good living off of that. And he's like, well, when you do, just let me know. So when you do your grand opening, we come down here, we'll interview you. So I'm like, yeah, that's what I'll do.

[00:05:01] **Curtis Milsap** But as far as what they did? They beat me and I went to jail. They put my on A3, in the Division 1. They took me up there and I talked to a officer, a sheriff that was there. His name was Officer Allen. And he was like, why you walking so funny? I was like, my testicles are swole. And I say, the police beat me up. And he was like, you want to go to the doc? I say yeah, it was OK. So he took me to Cermak. And for six months going back and forth. You know. My testicles finally started going down. A lot of inflammation in them.

[00:05:45] **Curtis Milsap** When I went to court, they gives us 6 months continuous, Judge Strayhorn gives us 6 months continuous. And when he did that, when I went back. [Indiscernible] I thought he gone throw it out so I can go home. I stayed there 2 and a half years fighting the case. [Indiscernible] Three murder, three attempted murders. And I'm not happy, my momma no happy. And they say we not gone live up there no more. They wanted us to come back down here because they was getting too much trouble. So my momma done move right down here and then I end up following her, you know. So that's where I've been ever since '94. Right here. In the city.

[00:06:37] **Amanda Rivkin** Can you talk a little bit about the effects this experience has had on you? I know some of the men talked about their sleep arrangements or sort of their day to day life. Feelings of... This is just what some of the other guys have told me, is that it's individual. But like, they're still in Chicago, they'll be on a bus and police will come on and they'll be, you know, are there effects you still feel from what happened to you?

[00:06:54] **Curtis Milsap** I mean, I don't say nothing to them. I'm scared up. You know, the detective, they don't play games. You know, but I don't want that around there. I don't see them no more. But the police in Chicago, they are dirty. They'll whoop you. So I try to stay out their way. Far as just going to visit up there, I go visit my grandkids. I got grandkids. I got them here with me now. I go visit them and then once I get through visiting them or whatever, I stay up there a couple of days, maybe a week, and I come back here. I don't say nowhere, get in no trouble. Nothing. And just try to avoid them. You know, don't mess, don't do nothing crazy so they won't pull you over and... I don't worry about it. That experience, you know, I was having bad dreams when I was in jail. But since, you know, I got out, I don't really think about it no more.

[00:07:43] **Amanda Rivkin** Really. That's good. And then, if there's anything that you sort of want to talk about with regard to what that experience walking out of jail was like.

[00:07:59] **Curtis Milsap** Oh, that felt good. When I found out I get to, I had another case pending. So the judge found me guilty on that case. And so I went down to... Joliet Prison. I went down there. I didn't stay in there. I just like went down and they just put an X on your back. So I dressed in and dressed out. And then once I got out of there, that was the best feeling. I kissed the ground, the concrete, and everything. You know, I was free. I [indiscernible] my 3 years. I was happy as I don't know what. Me and five more guys. We all got out. Went down there, dressed in and dressed out. And we all out there, we just. Everybody had been given, they gave us \$25. But the guy had been there, that had been to the penitentiary before, they gave him \$100. But me and two more guys, they didn't. Just gave us \$25. You know what I'm saying. I asked about it, man, why he get \$100. Do you want to get out? I said, yes, sir. I want to get out of here. So I got \$25. They gave me a bus ticket back to Chicago. We all got on the train, bus and the train, and went back to Chicago.

[00:09:23] **Curtis Milsap** When I got there, I went and picked up my two daughters. I went back to my mamma house. She stay at Altgeld Gardens. Went to her house and then from there, I remember my wife was staying there. She wasn't my wife at the time, but she was staying at my mom's. You know I hugged all everybody. My aunty, my mom,

my sister, and all them. And then they left and came on down here because they just, it was just moving down here. I had to wait till I tell my parole officer. So I saw the parole officer and told him I don't want to be up here no more. My mom, everybody in my family move to Mississippi, so I want to go back to Mississippi. And he say, well that's good. I'll help you out with that. I'm find you a parole officer down there. And then you just transfer it down there. So.

[00:10:08] **Curtis Milsap** So I got down here and it was a parole officer [indiscernible]. He was racist. He was talking all kinds, so I called my parole officer. They wanted me to pay \$50 for him to be my parole officer. I had to pay that I think like every two weeks or once a month or something like that. And I was like, no man, I won't pay nothing up there. I'mma come down here and pay for. And he was like, you want to do that. So I called my parole officer up there and told him the situation. He called him. He was like, don't worry about him, he just report for me. Report to me. Cause at that time I got a job. My daddy got me a job and everything down here. He was like just report to me. Call me like you call me normally and we'll work like that, cause you ain't got more than three months anyway and you'll be out. So that's what I did and I been here ever since.

[00:11:03] **Curtis Milsap** And I wouldn't trade this for nothing. My cousins, they don't like it down here, they says it's boring. But they live the life that I live, you want to come here and stay. You know what I'm saying. You want to go outside. Well, not back to Chicago, anyway. It's a good place to visit. But you don't want to live there. And that's what it is. It's a hard life up there. Down here it's sweet. It's nice. You know what I'm saying. Quiet. You hear gun shots every day up there. You know what I'm saying, you hear car wrecks, you see car wrecks. People getting stabbed. Raped. Whatever. You don't get all that down here. Accidents, really. Accidents down here. You know what I'm saying. Somebody do this right here. He ran into a [indiscernible], and he killed. Up there you getting killed, you know what I'm saying. So nowadays up there it's just the younger kids are doing the killing. So all the older people trying to get they kids that doing the killing, they tryin' to straighten them out. But they don't want to listen. The drugs got 'em going crazy. This the place to be, Mississippi, it's quiet. It's nice.

[00:12:01] **Amanda Rivkin** Can you talk a little bit about your daily life down here?

[00:12:03] **Curtis Milsap** Well, yeah. Well, all I do is I leave here, I go down to my momma house, sit in my momma yard, you know what I'm saying. Go down there where they live at, you know what I'm saying. We all sitting, all the guys sitting around just, just kick it. You know, they get off work. We all around in the same spot. We ain't gotta worry about

looking around here and seeing if anybody shooting at us. None of that. It's nice down here. It's totally different from Chicago. I love it. Quiet. You see a lot of pretty cars down here, you know. In Chicago they just get the regular rims. Down here they get the big rims. You know, be looking nice. Big decorating. The country boys do. City boys, they don't do that. Some of them do. But not like down here in Mississippi. It's nice. Everything is lovely. Fishing. Hunting. I can't do the hunting no more because I'm in a wheelchair now, but I can still fish. So I like doing that. Like going to the track in... where that? [Ingville ?]? [Ingville ?] and sit and watch the races. They got an 18-wheeler with a jet engine on it. They got a school bus with a jet engine on it. It's nice. You should see all that. And people around here. They racing each other down on the track. On Friday nights, you go down there, you can put your car on the track and you can race. We gone race. So it's nice.

[00:13:25] **Amanda Rivkin** Very cool. Well thank you. That's actually a great spot to end the interview part. You're great. Thank you.

[00:13:31] **Curtis Milsap** Thank y'all.

[00:13:31] **Amanda Rivkin** You've clearly told your story before a few times. Which is helpful.

[00:13:36] **Curtis Milsap** Yeah.