

To The Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Simone Manning-Moon. I extend warm greetings and my gratitude for the opportunity to speak before you today. I also bring greetings from my parents, Sam and Georgia Gaynor, who still miss and grieve for their son Norris – my brother. It is a tragic twist of irony that my big brother wanted only to live a rather anonymous existence and mind his own business, and yet we're here today before this esteemed committee in our nation's capitol to discuss him – and to put a name and a face to him. Or rather, to ALL of those who find themselves in my brother's position – claiming the sky as their temporary ceiling.

Despite all that would come later, my parents demonstrated their love for us in the most supreme way. Though not related by blood, we were both adopted when my parents had so much love to give and wanted children to give it to. We knew from an early age that we were adopted and loved immeasurably. We grew up under the tutelage of a United States Navy Chief Petty Officer and a mother who imparted a family structure which included study habits, responsibility for household chores and a respect for those in authority. We were, in effect, no different than I suspect many of you who underwent the same upbringing. With perhaps one exception – my brother was troubled. No one could quite pinpoint the issue – he was often hyperactive, sometimes angry and seemed to look for something he didn't have, yet he expressed satisfaction with his surroundings. In fact, I took my cues (and much advice) from him. Once my parents sat us down and earnestly explained the circumstances of how we came to be their children, going so far as to offer to help us if we wanted to find our “real” parents. I distinctly

remember staring at Norris when he declared his logic at the table: why would we look for parents when we already had them? When those “real” parents gave us up? He wasn’t interested. And because he was my big brother, nor was I. We were raised with high expectations, a low tolerance for things unproductive and considered foolish. So it was no surprise when, upon Norris’ high school graduation, he was expected to move in the direction of manhood and self-sufficiency. After all, this was our family mantra.

At that point, Norris’s tumultuous journey began. He faced many things – his service in the United States Army, incarceration, drug abuse, the realization that he wasn’t mentally healthy, and his struggles to find himself. For as many years as he was homeless, he was a contributing, upstanding member of society. He worked every day, kept himself in great physical condition and otherwise lived what you may call a normal existence. But he was not well. Eventually he came to see that. I suppose I should be grateful that he realized many things before wooden bats and rake handles snuffed out his life.

Norris Jay Gaynor. Not “the homeless guy who was murdered that night”. Not “the one they beat to death”. Not “that homeless fatality”. I implore you to actually say his name – Norris Gaynor. Son, brother, uncle. The one upon whom I called on for counsel, and who called me from pay phones so that he could give me advice. The son my parents referred to as “not homeless, but simply far from home”. My brother Norris who, when our younger brother Jerome died of liver cancer many years ago when we were 13 and 12, huddled in a corner with me to talk about how much we would miss him.

Norris the artist. Norris the political news junkie in his later years, who knew more about local, state and federal politics than I did, and who missed, because of some notion that it was OK for people to beat and kill those on the street, what would have been the most important presidential election of his lifetime – by mere months. He surely would have continued to discuss it to this day, and apply his honed critical thinking skills to the state of Washington in 2010. How ironic that he of all people is not here to witness the current state of affairs.

His name is Norris Jay Gaynor. He was born in 1960. He was raised in a fine family. He had his problems, but manned up and declared that he wouldn't be a burden on anyone. When he learned later in his life that due to a variety of circumstances he was eligible to apply for Social Security benefits, he refused. "I can't do that", he would say. "I'm physically able to take care of myself." This is the person those men killed that night. This is the so-called "bum". And the supreme irony? The taxpayers are now taking care of his bat-wielding murderers. And make no mistake – he was murdered because he was homeless. He was attacked because he was asleep on a park bench. Minding his own business. To the direct point of the proposed legislation we're discussing, he was murdered because people resented the homeless and thought that they could continue to prey on the homeless and get away with it.