

**Texas After Violence Project
Interview with Tammy Anderson**

Date: July 28, 2009

Place: Houston, Texas

Equipment: Sony mini-HD DV camcorder; Sennheiser external
microphone

Recorded on: Sony mini-DV cassettes

Interviewer: Lydia Crafts

Videographer: Sabina Hinz-Foley

Transcriber: Kimberly Ambrosini-Bacon

Proofreader: Virginia Marie Raymond

ABSTRACT

Tammy Anderson is the mother of Anthony Guy Fuentes, who was executed by the State of Texas on November 17, 2004 at the age of thirty for a 1994 robbery and murder at a Houston convenience store. In Video 1, Anderson shares early memories of her eldest son and discusses Anthony's childhood, his experiences with family and in school, his first job and his relationship with his fiancée. She also discusses the beginnings of Anthony's troubles with the law, his arrest for capital murder when he was nineteen, his trial and death sentence in 1996, the resulting years on Death Row, his claims of innocence of the murder charge, and the effects of these events on Anthony and his family. In Video 1, she further describes Anthony's time in prison, their writing practice and correspondence, the friendships he developed, his relationship with his spiritual advisor and his deepening Christianity, as well as Anthony's execution day, his funeral, his cremation, and the family's activities and coping after his death. In Video 2, Anderson continues to describe Anthony's relationship with his family and his experiences in school, discusses her ongoing efforts to prove Anthony's innocence of the murder charge, and elaborates on the aftermath of his execution, her memories and her methods for coping with her son's death. This interview took place on July 28, 2009 in Houston, Harris County, Texas.

[VIDEO 1]

LYDIA CRAFTS: Okay, good? It's July 28th and we're here in Houston with Tammy Anderson. Lydia Crafts - I'm doing the interview. And Sabina Hinz-Foley is doing the video recording. So, did you grow up in the Houston area?

TAMMY ANDERSON: Yeah, I did.

CRAFTS: Whereabouts?

ANDERSON: Right here.

CRAFTS: Right here?

ANDERSON: Mm-hmm. Raised and everything in this house. I was raised in this house.

CRAFTS: You were raised in this house?

ANDERSON: So was my son, Anthony.

CRAFTS: Oh, he was. Okay. So, could you talk a little bit about Anthony when he was growing up?

ANDERSON: Yeah, he was into sports. He played basketball and football and track in school. He was a pretty good kid. He had a good personality. He was smart, made good grades, made friends easy, respected his elders. Real considerate of other people. Would help anybody that needed help. Basically, he was really just a good person. I can't believe he got in this trouble.

CRAFTS: And he was your oldest?

ANDERSON: He was my oldest.

CRAFTS: Can you talk about any memories of him that stick out to you?

ANDERSON: All of them do. All of them do. He grew up doing break dancing with his friends in the neighborhood. He was in karate. We put him in at five-years-old, so he was in that. Tae kwon do. There's just a lot of memories there. I don't think there's any bad memories, except just getting in trouble.

CRAFTS: So, he taught himself. He sounds very active. Like a very active person.

ANDERSON: Yes, he was. He'd always come home from school and go play ball with the guys. Always running around doing something.

CRAFTS: How was he in school? How did he like school?

ANDERSON: He liked school. He was a pretty good student. I had taken him out of high school because he started getting into a little bit of trouble, hanging around the wrong people. And I put him in private school, and he finished his last three years in private school, and he graduated. He was on the honor roll, so.

CRAFTS: Did he have subjects in school that he liked more than others?

ANDERSON: I don't think so. I don't think he had any special subject. Back in those days, it was all about the girls. He didn't talk much about his schoolwork.

CRAFTS: He was close with his grandfather growing up?

ANDERSON: Yes, my father raised him and—

CRAFTS: Were you living in his house at the time when your father raised him? Or was he—

ANDERSON: No, I was living on the east side of Houston, and he raised him. Then, I moved after he got older. I moved over here. And Anthony was living in the house next to my dad, and he was a grandpa's baby. He loved his grandpa. He started getting into some trouble - hanging around the wrong people - and that's basically what got him in this situation. My dad tried to help him out - get him out of it - but he couldn't do it.

CRAFTS: Can you talk about his relationship with his grandfather? What it was like, and what kind of things they did together.

ANDERSON: He went everywhere with my dad, would have done anything for him, helped him out. They had horses. He rode the horses. He loved animals, loved kids. They basically just hung around each other. Whatever my dad was going to do, Anthony was beside him. And their favorite thing was to go to Jack and the Box and eat tacos. Anthony could put them away. But, basically, they just hung around each other. He watched over my dad a lot, too.

CRAFTS: And so, when did he start hanging out with the wrong people? About what age?

ANDERSON: It was about when he was eighteen. He was just hanging out with the wrong people, at the wrong time, at the wrong place. He asked me before his execution - he asked me to prove his innocence afterwards. But I don't know how to go about it, or who to talk to, or how to get it started. But he made me promise that I would prove his innocence somehow, someday. I don't know how to go about doing that. Where do you go? How do you start? I don't have no money to do anything like that. But I've got to figure out a way to help him do it.

CRAFTS: How does it feel to have that role - that he wanted you to do that?
How does that feel?

ANDERSON: It feels good. And I promised him, so I have to do it. Should have
done it sooner, I guess. But I have to figure out how to go about it. Because in his situation,
it was a younger guy, and him that supposedly got into trouble.

CRAFTS: Can you talk about your relationship with him when he was growing
up?

ANDERSON: That's momma's baby. He was with my dad, but he was a momma's
baby. He'd always come around me - always hugging on me, always kissing on me. People
thought he was my boyfriend sometimes, because he would have his arm around me. We'd
go to the mall. Some guys would mess with the girls. He'd have his arm around me - "I'm
proud of my momma." But he was a sweetheart, he really was.

CRAFTS: Yeah, he sounds affectionate. Very affectionate.

ANDERSON: When he was executed, a lot of them guards cried. They said that
they was going to miss him. He had a personality, and way to make friends with everybody.

CRAFTS: Okay, so can you talk about when you pulled him out of high
school? What made you make that decision?

ANDERSON: Because he started skipping school, hanging around the wrong
people. And I told him I wasn't going to have it. I told him, "I will take you out and put
you in private school." And he agreed to it. He never argued with me about anything. He
just - "Okay." So, I told my dad I'm putting him in private school so he'll finish up his
grades. He was too smart to just leave there and let him mess up, so he went to private
school and he graduated. It was really a big thing for him.

CRAFTS: I know it was Sam Houston High School, right?

ANDERSON: He went to Sam Houston, and I took him out of Sam Houston and put him in Good Shepherd.

CRAFTS: So how did that work out?

ANDERSON: It worked out fine. I took him to school. I went and got him and took him to school every day and picked him up. Made sure he got there. But he done good.

CRAFTS: When he was in private school, did he have different friends? Or was he hanging out with—

ANDERSON: He really didn't hang with nobody, 'cause everybody lived on that side of town. We lived on the north side, and that was on the east side, and he didn't hang around anybody, really. So, it was just his friends in the neighborhood here that he grew up with.

CRAFTS: Okay, so what happened after high school, after he graduated? What was he doing then?

ANDERSON: He got a job. His first job he ever had.

CRAFTS: What was that job?

ANDERSON: He was repairing containers - those big, square containers. He was repairing them. I was trying to remember the name of the company. But that's what he done - his first real job. The first day he came home, he fell right in the front door as far as he made it - went to sleep. Couldn't even close the front door - he was so tired. But he worked there for a little bit.

And he met this girl, Natalia, and she lived with him in the house over there. They were going to get married. He was just hanging around younger than him, and they were—I think the guy who got in trouble was in some kind of gang. But he was young. Anthony was the oldest one of all of them. So, it basically all went on him, 'cause he was old enough to know better. So, that's what they said.

CRAFTS: So, did he like his job? Did he stick with that job?

ANDERSON: Yeah, he like his job. I think that's the only job he had before he got in trouble. I think he was nineteen when he got in trouble.

CRAFTS: Okay, so these kids he was hanging out with were in the neighborhood? Or they were—

ANDERSON: Not this neighborhood. They were in between my dad's house and here.

CRAFTS: Okay. How did he meet them? Do you know?

ANDERSON: I really don't know. Just friends he—I don't know how he met them. I just know that his best friends that he grew up in on this street, I knew them - about them more than I did any of the others. I never even met but one of those, so. He'd always bring his friends to meet me. But I never met one of those but one, and that one time only.

CRAFTS: Can you talk about Latalia? Was that her name?

ANDERSON: Natalia. Natti. Natalia.

CRAFTS: Oh, Natalia. Could you talk about his relationship with her? Or, how did he meet her?

ANDERSON: I really couldn't tell you how he met her, either. But I remember when he brought her home, and he was wild over her. As a matter of fact, he brought her at the time he was living at my dad's, before he moved next door. And he brought her over here, introduced me to her. And that's when he was working at that job. And they had a good relationship, I suppose. Around the icehouse on McCarty's, as a matter of fact, he got on his knees and proposed to her, there in front of everybody, so. She was a pretty girl. I think they would have gotten married, if he wouldn't have been in trouble.

CRAFTS: So, when did you hear about the trouble he had gotten into at the convenience store?

ANDERSON: I didn't. What it was is, I was going to take him to— he was on probation for something else. I took him to probation, and his probation officer wasn't there, so he was seeing somebody else. And then, the next day, they called for me to bring him back 'cause his probation officer was there. And I think he knew what it was about.

He says, "Mom, they say it's bad when they call you back to come back in the next day." I said, "Well, Anthony." I still didn't know what he had gotten into. He said, "I got into some trouble." He didn't really describe what kind of trouble it was. I said, "Anthony, you can't run from them. They're going to catch you sooner or later." And I took him in and sat in the car. And come back out was a cop, and he asked me if I was his mother. I said, "Yeah." He says, "He's been arrested for capital murder." And I just - "What?" Just broke down. I didn't know it was anything like that. And that was the last time I saw him, except when we went to court.

CRAFTS: So that day, when he was called back in, could you talk about how was he behaving?

ANDERSON: He was nervous. He was nervous and saying, "Mom, please don't let me go back in." I just couldn't do it. I didn't want them to have to be chasing him and

looking for him. I really felt bad that I did afterwards. He was nervous about it. He didn't want to go.

CRAFTS: So, what did you do after you found out? Or, what happened?

ANDERSON: After I found out?

CRAFTS: Yeah, after he was charged with capital murder.

ANDERSON: Well, I just felt the pieces come off. Came home and cried, called my dad - basically went from there. My dad - he was going to get two court-appointed lawyers. We couldn't afford to hire a lawyer for this. And we went back and forth. Bought him some clothes to go to court with. Investigators come out to talk to us, the lawyers. It just seems like it was all a set-up deal. I mean, I didn't get to go into the courtroom except for one time, and that was when I talked. And everybody in the courtroom already had him guilty instead of proving innocent to him. It's nothing like that. They made him guilty, and you could feel it. He was guilty. That was it.

CRAFTS: How could you feel it?

ANDERSON: By the way they were all— even the investigator. Not the investigator, the lawyer. She came out and said, "Y'all need to go out to the church and pray." And that just proved it more. And I said, "What are you trying to tell us?" And she goes, "Just in case." So, we all went over there. But in the jury - they all went back in the room to make a decision. They sent a person up to ask the lawyer, the judge. When they were walking out, the judge told them, "You will find him guilty of capital murder."

CRAFTS: The judge said that?

ANDERSON: Yes. And one of them came in and said, “What is the— if we, just robbery?” He wouldn’t answer them. And he said, “What about aggravated robbery?” He wouldn’t answer them.

CRAFTS: So, what were you feeling at that point?

ANDERSON: This DA had told Anthony in a previous case that they would get him sooner or later, if they had to pin something on him. He was a very, very mean man to me. And they did - they pinned it on him.

CRAFTS: So, how did Anthony respond? What was his experience going through the trial, as far as you know?

ANDERSON: He was upset. He was upset. He was sad by it. My dad and Ursula would go in after each recess - could go back there and take him some food and stuff. I don’t know. How would you describe it? He was saddened by it. He was upset. He had seen the guy who’d done it, one time when they went back in the courtroom. They were walking him outside or something through the tunnel, and they had brought the other guy out, the one who done it. And he said, “Thanks, Anthony.” And Anthony just said, “Get away from me. Get away from me.”

But I told him, “Why are you doing this?” He goes, “Mom, I’m not a snitch. And he’s got a new wife and a new baby. I don’t have anything.” That’s what he told me, as far as that. He says, “I’m not a snitch.” ‘Cause he said that if he did, and this little guy was in a gang, they would either come to my house or my dad’s. Something would happen. And he couldn’t do it. That’s basically what he talked to me about on it. But I told him, “This is your life. You can’t do this. This is your life. You don’t bet your life.” But he wouldn’t do it.

CRAFTS: So, when you heard the sentence - or that he was guilty - what were you doing then? Or, what was happening then?

ANDERSON: We all broke down. 'Cause we were all holding hands across the bleacher things - not the bleacher, the seats - waiting for the verdict, and we just all broke down. Anthony broke down in tears. Excuse me. His girlfriend went berserk-o because of everything. He cried, and I wanted to go and hug him, and he wouldn't let me. He wouldn't let nobody hug him. Said he don't want to be touched, that it would just be harder. And then he sat there for ten years on death row. And he never was allowed a visit either. My dad mostly went. My dad went, I think, every weekend. So, no one else couldn't go. I would go. His dad and them would go sometimes. And a few friends and family members. We tried to relieve Daddy from going every week. But for ten years, he had a visit.

CRAFTS: So, your dad went every weekend. How did this affect him? Or, how was he?

ANDERSON: He's a strong man. He was. He was a strong man. That was his baby. He really loved him. All I can say is, he was strong through it. Even on the day of the execution, I figured he'd break, but he didn't. He broke in the privacy of his own home. He wouldn't break in front of me, or nothing. I broke down.

CRAFTS: When you guys would go talk to Anthony, what would the visit be like? Could you talk about that at all?

ANDERSON: It was talk about regular stuff. We'd try not to talk about that - the case, or anything. They really don't want you talking about the case.

CRAFTS: Who's "they," don't want you?

ANDERSON: I guess, Anthony. He said that they record your visits. He would just tell me how so-and-so would get in touch with him, write him a letter, call his lawyer, tell him to come up there - stuff like that. Either me or Dad. But we basically talked about

everyday things - what we'd done. I wrote him every day for a year. Every day. Even if I didn't have nothing to say. I'd just put, "Love You." That's basically what we talked about, just everyday things. He'd ask me about certain friends. He'd ask me about certain family members, and stuff like that. His fiancé - we never seen her again after that day. I talked to her. Maybe a couple of years ago, she called me. She's married and had her new baby. But we lost contact with her after that. It took a toll on her.

CRAFTS: So, you said he told you to prove his innocence.

ANDERSON: He asked me to prove his innocence.

CRAFTS: So, did he ever talk about how that affected him? He said he was innocent, but was on death row. Did he ever talk about that?

ANDERSON: Not to me. I felt like he'd try to cover up a lot from me.

[Phone Rings]

CRAFTS: Why don't we just wait until this stops for the audio - the phone ringing. So, you were saying he tried to protect you, sort of?

ANDERSON: Yeah, protect me. He didn't tell me a whole lot. I think he talked to my dad more than he did me about that. We tried. The first few times we seen him, it was hard. But after that, it got to where I was excited to see him, 'cause I hadn't seen him in a while. And he would be sitting there, turned around, looking, and he would see us coming in. He'd wave, and I'd wave back to him, make funny faces at him. But, yeah, he didn't talk to me much about it. Like I said, he didn't want me to— It's just like the execution. He wouldn't let me come in there. He said, "No, you're not going." He let my dad, and he let his sister, and whoever else. He had a spiritual advisor that was with him through the whole time. She was a very, very nice lady, and he really— Now that's the one he'd talk to. He told her everything.

CRAFTS: What was her name?

ANDERSON: Maria. I think it's Maria Martinez.

CRAFTS: Maria Martinez?

ANDERSON: I think that's it.

CRAFTS: Was he religious before he went into the—

ANDERSON: No, but he did become religious with her. She was really great. She'd come and visit us after the execution. She still comes to visit at my house, when she has to go visit at the prison. She'll stop in - "Hey, can I spend the night at your house?" She goes and visits my dad. She comes over here. She sees Rachel. That's how close we got to her. And he was, too.

CRAFTS: So, what religion was she, that—

ANDERSON: She's Christian.

CRAFTS: She's Christian. Did you see a change in him after he started becoming more religious?

ANDERSON: Yeah, close to the end. 'Cause he told me, "Mom, I'm okay with it. I'm okay with it, and I want you to be okay with it. Because I feel like God has forgiven me and it'll be okay." He said that's all that mattered. He really didn't talk a whole lot about the religion stuff to me, except for that. Like I said, he talked to Maria all the time.

CRAFTS: Did you see a change in him at all during his time in prison? Did you—

ANDERSON: He was him. He was just Anthony. Like I said, he made friends with all the lady guards. He was just him. He had a personality— Well he was a lot like me. He'd make friends with anybody. Outspoken, always had a very considerate personality. We raised him to be considerate of others. I guess he was cheerful for me when I went. I don't know when somebody else went, if he smiled and everything for them. But he was just him. Still, right there at the end, he was sad. He was sad, I could tell. It was like he tried to cover it up for me. 'Cause the whole family got to go. He's got a big family on his dad's side, and we were all there. They couldn't believe how many people were there. Even his friends and their kids, and his family's kids. Everybody was just there.

CRAFTS: Do you want to talk at all about that day when he was executed?

ANDERSON: That day, all of us were there. The thing that sets in my head, is that when we went to leave out of there, I turned to look at him and he was crying. That was horrible for me to see. First time he had cried. And I'd dream about it too. He cried, and then I started crying. 'Cause it's like, "Mom, help me." And I couldn't do nothing. Then, we all met outside the prison - the Huntsville prison. Well, first, we were in a house where he could call on the phone. They were shocked there - how many people were in that house, too. They hadn't had that many people. And he called and he said, "Mom, I smoked my first cigarette. It made me sick." Then he told us what he got to have for his last meal, and he ate steak and pizza and all kinds of stuff.

But the people that he really didn't get to see - that didn't make it there - like his cousin, Christina. They were really, really close. Her and another good friend of his, a girl - he got to talk to them on the phone. He tried to talk to as many as he could on the phone. He talked to me for a second. Then, he talked to everybody. He talked to my dad. Then, we all went over to the Walls. And my friend - they was waiting and waiting - and my friend, I'd seen her through the crowd. She shook her head no, and I broke down. I was more worried, I guess, about my dad and my daughter, 'cause they were in there. They were stronger than me. It was a very sad day. Everybody came back here.

CRAFTS: What did you do when you came back here?

ANDERSON: We all made something to eat. Everybody talked, everybody cried. He had another spiritual advisor. It was a man. I can't remember his name right now. But at the funeral - he talked at the funeral. And he asked Anthony, if there was any place he could be at that moment, where would he be? And he said, "In my mom's house. In her kitchen, eating her cooking." That broke my heart, 'cause him and his friends would always sit at the kitchen table. Always just sitting there talking, or eating, or something. That's what they did. The funeral was beautiful. There were a lot of people there. He had a lot of friends.

CRAFTS: Do you want to talk about the funeral at all?

ANDERSON: There's nothing really to talk about.

CRAFTS: Where was it?

ANDERSON: My mind is blank. I couldn't even tell you. It's on the other side of town, off of Gessner, I think. The spiritual advisor that talked - he was very good. And his best friend, Robert - he done the eulogy. Eulogy? That's what it's called? Eulogy? I asked him to do that. He didn't want to do it. And I said, "Yeah, if anybody knows him, you do." It was a very nice turn out. It really was. We got a few pictures of him in the casket. We got a few pictures of him that we have on the computer that we put them on. He was dressed up. My daughter - she went and got his clothes and dressed him. We got to dress him. Anyhow, my daughter, and his other little sister, me, and the spiritual advisor Maria. That was something. Well, that's about it.

CRAFTS: When people were talking to him on the phone that day of the execution, how was he on the phone?

ANDERSON: He was in a good mood. He was just happy-go-lucky. “Mom, let me talk to so-and-so. Let me talk to so-and-so.” I said, “So-and-so is here. You want to talk to them?” “Yeah, let me talk to them.” And they would be laughing and laughing. He’s always a jokester. He just kept his spirits up mostly for me, I think. Mostly for me. He left his sister Amy a letter. A long letter. And his best friend, Robert. He left letters for them. It was hard.

CRAFTS: Yeah, yeah. So, after the funeral, what did you do then? During the days after the funeral?

ANDERSON: Well, he had asked - at his funeral, he said he wanted us to all be in a line and come back here. We didn’t get to do it that day, so when we went back— He had asked his spiritual advisor, the man - he wanted to be cremated. And he wanted him to get some little vials for everybody - the whole family. And he had ordered them from California, and we sold them to everybody for forty dollars a piece. Most everyone got one in the family. I didn’t wear mine. Rachel has one. He said he wanted to be spread out amongst his family and friends so that we won’t forget him.

So, what we did a couple days after the funeral - we had to go back and pick these up - the vials. And I had to pick up his urn, which is right there. We keep him there. This was his favorite place to be, in him mamma’s house. There were about five or six that met us up there. It wasn’t everybody, but we got in a line and we got all back here. But the day of the funeral, everybody came back. Everybody stayed here ‘til late at night. Then, everybody started drinking. Everybody started drinking and partying. It was about two in the morning before everyone left. Between drinking and crying, and drinking and eating and crying. That was November seventh, I think, that he was executed.

His birthday was November fifth. Thirty-years old. The next year, we had a huge party. Was it the next year? No, it wasn’t. We had him a birthday party that year when he turned thirty. We had a big old birthday party here, then went back and told him. Brought pictures and showed them to him. Yeah, we had to show them to him when everyone went up there,

‘cause it was on the seventh. But everybody came to the birthday party. It was just really cool. The spiritual advisor, Maria, was here.

And there was a— he had a friend. My mind is just blank. A black guy that got executed just before Anthony. He was trying to help Anthony out with his case, but he got executed. Anthony asked me to go to his execution for him, so I did. Basically, I did anything he wanted me to do. Dominic. That was his name. Dominic. His girlfriend came to the birthday party with another friend. Yeah, she came.

CRAFTS: So, what did you guys do at the birthday party? What was it like?

ANDERSON: We got his favorite foods. He loved tacos from Jack in the Box. He liked Jack in the Box hamburgers. And he liked pizza. And we had hot sauce. He liked hot sauce - the picante sauce and chips. And he’d have that all the time - walking around, eating chips. So, we had all his favorite foods. It turned out it was all decorated in here. Just, people were everywhere. We had him a birthday cake. And plus, his niece made him a separate birthday cake, too - which he didn’t get to eat - but we had that for him. And we took the pictures to show him.

Every year now, we get together here. At some point – I think, last year – we went to— He loved Poncho’s - to eat at Poncho’s - Mexican food. So, we all met up. His best friends - he had three best friends - they met us at Poncho’s. It was my daughter, my son, my dad, and all them - they all went. But usually, we do it here. And they all bring tacos and pizza, and his favorite foods. We do it every year.

CRAFTS: So how does it feel to do that? I don’t know.

ANDERSON: We enjoy it. We enjoy it. We set his picture in the middle of the table and we get together. It’s mostly his best friends and family. His aunt will come. But we told them we’re not— This is what we’re going to do, but we’re not going to call

everybody every year. That's too many people. But everyone remembers and gets the word about his birthday.

CRAFTS: So, you said you witnessed Dominic's execution?

ANDERSON: No, I didn't witness it.

CRAFTS: Oh, you didn't.

ANDERSON: I was just there.

CRAFTS: Okay, you were just there. So, what was that like to—

ANDERSON: It was scary. It was my first time being around it. There were people there. Everybody lights candles. They do prayers and stuff. It was nothing like Anthony's. There were a lot of people there.

CRAFTS: Right, right. So how has his grandfather been in the years since you lost Anthony?

ANDERSON: Like I said, he's a strong man. He didn't show me any either. He didn't show me anything. He would talk sometimes about it. I went and had a big picture frame with a bunch of slots in it. And I went through my pictures of Anthony and made it for my dad for his birthday one year. He's got it hanging on his wall. Anthony when he was young and on up. He and Anthony together. He was just a strong man. Once in a while, he would say, when he'd hear people arguing and fighting - he goes, "They just don't know, do they? That some people have it worse than others."

CRAFTS: Just sort of arguing generally about things?

ANDERSON: Yeah, you know how people just argue about little stuff? He goes, “They’re just arguing about little stuff. But people really got some big problems.” Anthony made me see a lot of things differently. I think I’m more— I don’t know how you’d say it – just, he always brought the best out in me. I’ve always been considerate and think about other people. Everybody says I’m too nice. He just made me see— how would you say it - I think more of the little things in life than I used to.

CRAFTS: You what more?

ANDERSON: Think more of the little things in life - meaning more. People just don’t pay attention to little things. They don’t mean anything. But I don’t know. How would you say that? There’s more things important to me than there used to be. And I try to enjoy my family as much as I can. I don’t know how to say it.

CRAFTS: How do you think Anthony— Why do you think he did that? Or, how did he have that effect on you?

ANDERSON: Why? I don’t know how to say that either. How would you say that? It’s just him being him, I guess. I see so much of me in him. Everybody did. God, we like the same things. He was an animal lover, I’m an animal lover. He loved kids. His best friend, Robert - his little boy just adored him. I don’t know.

CRAFTS: How would you feel when you were around him - Anthony?

ANDERSON: When we went to see him?

CRAFTS: Yeah, or just—

ANDERSON: I always tried to be in a good mood - laugh with him, joke with him. We didn’t want to be depressing each other, I guess you’d say. The first couple times, I think I cried when I saw him. Okay.

CRAFTS: Do you need to let him in?

ANDERSON: Yeah.

CRAFTS: Do you want to talk about the first couple times you went to see him? Or, what were those like?

ANDERSON: They were hard, seeing him behind the bars like that. Mostly when they come in there, and squat down, and take the handcuffs off. It was just like, oh lord. If they only knew he's not that type of person. He doesn't need to be handcuffed. It was sad for a mother to see. But he always had a way of cheering me back up. "Mom, don't be looking like that." And I had took one of his little friends - Well, friend of mine's daughter was close to Anthony. And she could hardly take it at all. She just broke down really bad. But the first few times. Then, I started being stronger. He told me, "I'm counting on you to be the strong one." I'm sure he had his times where he cried. But I tried to be cheerful, just as cheerful as him.

CRAFTS: The year after the execution, you said you wrote him every day. How were you doing during that year, and the year since? How do you see it affecting you since he's been—

ANDERSON: While he was in prison?

CRAFTS: Yeah, while he was in prison. Not after the execution. Confused, right.

ANDERSON: I can say that I have a notebook. And for about a year, I talked to him, I'd write it down. I'd talk to him if I had a bad day. I'd tell him about it. I still have my notebook. Well, I've gotten better. Wrote a lot at first. But I don't know. I remember, every day, I'd try to as time goes by. It's nothing special. And he'd write me. I've got so

many letters from him. And he'd just tell me, "Mom, be strong because I'll be all right. Just be strong. I need you to be the strong one." I had to be the strong one.

CRAFTS: In prison, he became more spiritual. What other kinds of things was he? I don't know. What would he do with his time, there in prison?

ANDERSON: Read, basically. Write his letters and read. I made him promise me when he went in that he wouldn't get involved in any gangs or anything, and he didn't. He promised me and he didn't. I said, "Please don't get involved in all that. You're in enough trouble." So, he didn't. He didn't. He said they got to go to rec once in a while, go outside for a bit, play basketball. That was his favorite thing.

But basically, he had a typewriter. He had a fan. He got to buy all that stuff - typewriter and a fan - and he would type most of his letters to us. Dad would send him paper and stuff. They get it from - wherever they get it from - from the bookstore and stuff. There were certain books that he wanted. He wanted to learn French while he was in there. It's really weird. My son is Mexican, but he didn't speak it. He spoke German, 'cause my stepmom was German. She took him to Germany every year with her.

CRAFTS: Ursula?

ANDERSON: No, not Ursula. Edie.

CRAFTS: Edie? Okay.

ANDERSON: Yeah, that was his grandma. So, they were shocked when he went to jail. In prison, a Mexican that speaks German instead of Spanish. He wrote it and he read it. So, she taught him all that.

CRAFTS: Wow, so why French? Why did he want to learn French?

ANDERSON: I don't know. He said he wanted a French book and they got him one. As a matter of fact, I have them at my house. He had a French and a Spanish. I miss him a lot. You just had to know him.

CRAFTS: Yeah.

ANDERSON: Yeah, but it was mostly typing or writing or reading. He loved to read. That's basically what he done, that I know of. He'd go to rec when he could.

CRAFTS: Go to where?

ANDERSON: Rec, you know. Go outside when he could.

CRAFTS: So, and he met Dominic when he was in there?

ANDERSON: When he was in there, yeah.

CRAFTS: And that was his good friend in there.

ANDERSON: Right, well, he had a few friends in there. But Dominic was helping him with his case. Trying to help him out with his case. But yeah, he was really close to Dominic. He was sad after he was executed. But yeah. Maria knows, 'cause she goes and sees different ones, and her and them would talk about Anthony. She knows more of his friends than I did. But she was up there more than me. Visit one, and then go out, and come back, and visit another. Try to visit more than one at a time. But she's been to a few of the executions, too. I don't know if Anthony was her first execution or not. I can't remember.

CRAFTS: So, how have his sisters been? And his other siblings since the—
How have they been with everything?

ANDERSON: We don't really talk about it. No one really talks about it. His little sister, Jennifer – now, she really, really took it hard for awhile. She was the baby, and she took it really hard. I think she's better now. She was trying to head for that wrong way, too. But she moved away, and she's had a baby, and she's gotten better. She's grown. She's grown, and I don't think she lets it bother her as bad.

CRAFTS: Where does she live now?

ANDERSON: Arizona. She's fixing to move back here. She took it the worst, I think, out of everybody. The sister, Amy, took it hard too. Well, they all took it hard. Everyone took it hard. His brother took it hard. But nobody really talks about it. Sometimes we'll say stuff and joke around about Anthony - things that he used to do. But we really don't talk about it.

I got pictures everywhere of him in my house. Sometimes, I'll just look at them and cry. But I'll try to keep them up to make me strong. Don't cry when I look at them. Recently, it's gotten better. But I used to cry every day. Every day for the longest—for years, I cried every day. There wasn't a day went by. I'll be driving sometimes and think of him and cry. And I'll be in the shower and I'll think about him and I'll cry. I guess it's just the way it is. Your kid, your son - it's harder. I try to remember his words - to be strong for him. Don't let nobody get me down. He says, "Don't take nothing from nobody, Mom. And don't let nobody get you down and upset."

As a matter of fact, when I got married and was going to move to Livingston, I got each of my kids, and separate told them what I wanted to do. I had never been away from here. It was hard for me. I cried. I didn't know what to do. I was leaving my kids. But he says, "Your kids are grown. You can go." I even asked him, sadly. He goes, "Mom, you're grown. Do what you want to do. It's your life." He says, "But don't ever let anybody ever bother or upset you. Or ever stay with a man that is going to hit on you." He was very upset. He didn't believe in that at all. But he said, "It's all in your heart, Mom. Do what's best. It's okay with me." They all okayed it. I wasn't okay with it. That's pretty much it.

[END OF VIDEO 1]

[VIDEO 2]

ANDERSON: I like it now, I guess. It's so quiet. You don't hear no traffic or anything like that. This is really, really too quiet sometimes. Then, I come down here and listen to her holler at all these kids. She's got a bunch of kids. And I said, "Oh, take me home." She's usually got a houseful. I've gotten used to it, I guess. Sometimes I get a little lonely being here by myself when my husband works. Sometimes I wish I was back here. I miss the kids. Well, my son's living with me right now - my other son - and he helps out a lot, too. There's Rachel. I miss being here, though. I was raised in this house. Anthony was raised practically in this house. And now it's Rachel's house. I gave it to her. It's been here a long time. A lot of memories.

CRAFTS: Did Anthony have a relationship with his father at all?

ANDERSON: Yeah, I guess. Yeah, no. He wasn't too into his dad. When he got older, he saw him a few times. Then, when he moved over there to Dad's house, he was right across the park from him.

CRAFTS: When he moved to—

ANDERSON: When he moved to Dad's other house, after they left here. He lived across the park from him and never went to visit him. It was something I let them figure out for themselves. They grown up. It tore him up because his daddy didn't come to his graduation, and it really hurt him. He sat down and cried and asked me, "Mom, why didn't he come?" He did, but it was just - how do you say it? He was upset with him, but he was polite. That was his dad. He dealt with it. He'd try to get his dad to do stuff with him and—I don't know. I don't know the situation, really.

CRAFTS: Did his dad ever come visit him in prison?

ANDERSON: Once in a great while. Maybe once every six months or something. He wasn't big on that. We think it has a lot to do with the stepmom. But Anthony said he was going to write his mom a letter and let him know how he felt, but he never did it. He was a momma's baby. No matter if he was raised by my daddy, he was a momma's baby. They had talked to me about everything. Some things I didn't even want to know. But it wasn't a big relationship between him and his father.

CRAFTS: Okay, well, anything else you want to add?

ANDERSON: No.

CRAFTS: So, now your mission is to prove his innocence, you said?

ANDERSON: I don't know. Yeah, I've got to try. I don't know where to start, or who to go to, or nothing - how to do it. But I've got to try, at least. That's the last thing he wanted me to do - was prove his innocence. But I don't know how we could do that. He had a friend who did have a friend who worked at the police station. And he did look at my son's records and said, "We're going to be very, very angry if we ever see them." They don't let you see them. They said, "We're going to be very upset."

CRAFTS: Sorry, if the—

ANDERSON: His records -

CRAFTS: Oh, okay.

ANDERSON: - that they keep at the police station. He said that, "We're going to be very upset, but we'll never get to see them." They won't let you see them. I've called up there and asked them. "No, we don't do that." I don't think it's right. I think we should be able to see them. I'm going to do that for him. I'm going to at least try. I know it's

been a lot of years since then. These other guys are probably already out. They only got sixteen years, each of them.

CRAFTS: The other ones at the convenience store that night?

ANDERSON: Yeah. Supposedly sixteen years, and I don't think that's flat, either. They're already out, probably. I don't know. But that's what I need to do.

CRAFTS: Do you have any questions you'd like to ask?

SABINA HINZ-FOLEY: I had a few questions. Could you talk about what Anthony's relationship was with his siblings growing up? Like, how far apart? How old was Jennifer? And how far apart they all were?

ANDERSON: There was Anthony, and then Rachel. She's the oldest daughter of mine. Then, there's Amy and Jennifer - his dad's two daughters. Oh golly, Rachel is just a few years younger than Anthony. I couldn't tell you how old Amy and Jennifer are. Rachel could tell you more about them, as far as their ages. I know they're grown. But his sister - he loved his baby sister. He was always close to Rachel. Rachel, more or less, she'd handle whatever he wanted done - whatever my dad couldn't get done - do it for him. He trusted Rachel on everything.

Amy - they was close to Amy. Jennifer mostly. That was his baby sister. But I couldn't tell you any more about their relationship. And my son Brandon. Now Brandon is twenty-nine, I think. I got my kids, plus everybody else's kids. Everybody adopted me. His brother was little when he got in his trouble, so he missed a lot of Anthony. He says, "I just remember Anthony wrestling with him and body-slammng him." But he was too little, really, to— but he's grown now. He was more closer to his sisters, I'd say. He'd always go pick on them. But Rachel could tell you more about their relationships.

HINZ-FOLEY: Okay. Also, you said you had to move him into private school when he started to get into trouble. Could you talk a little more about that?

ANDERSON: He was just starting to skip school and hanging around the wrong people. And he only had three years to go and I wasn't going to let him mess it up. And I told him that. I said, "You're going to go to private school. If I have to pick you up and take you every day, I will." And I did. I took him every day, and I picked him up every day, and he graduated. I done the same thing to her. But that was basically it. He was starting to skip school. And I didn't get in and grudge him about it or anything. That was just the way it was going to be. I'm not going to have him missing school, and he done good, so.

HINZ-FOLEY: You said he was on probation, and you were taking him to his parole officer. Why was he on probation and what was—

ANDERSON: His probation was— What do you call that?

HINZ-FOLEY: Parole?

ANDERSON: No, no. It was probation, I guess. Dang it. I can't remember the word for that. There are so many words to remember.

CRAFTS: It's not a big deal.

ANDERSON: But, anyhow, yes, it was for another case. Supposedly something— around the wrong people again. They were saying Anthony shot somebody - a girl, a guy, or something. But anyhow, nothing came of it. I mean, it wasn't him. I'm not saying this because I'm his mother. But it wasn't him. They proved it wasn't him somehow.

HINZ-FOLEY: Did you go to any of that trial at all?

ANDERSON: Yeah, I went and picked out lawyers and stuff. Yeah. I was there and they had witnesses. But they couldn't describe Anthony. They couldn't describe him at all. Whoever it was came out of somewhere else, supposedly, they said. I barely remember a little bit of it.

HINZ-FOLEY: And this was after he graduated already, or before he graduated?

ANDERSON: Yeah, after.

HINZ-FOLEY: After?

ANDERSON: Yeah.

HINZ-FOLEY: Let me see. You mentioned writing in a notebook a lot. Have you ever revisited and reread your notebook again or gone back?

ANDERSON: I have, yeah. I haven't done it lately, but I do. I go back and read it. Boo-hoo, cry. I don't know. I guess it's just something for me to do, I guess. I would tell him, "I know you're watching. I know you see what's going on." Stuff like that. What should I do? Whatever.

HINZ-FOLEY: And how did that help you? Or, were there other things you did to kind of help yourself cope, after he was executed?

ANDERSON: To tell you the truth, that dog right there, she did a lot. His stepmother bought her for me and she's like a kid. I treat her like a kid. She thinks she's human. She's so old right now. But yeah, I think that dog helped me out a whole lot. She's treated like a kid. She even gets to wear her little dresses and stuff.

HINZ-FOLEY: What's her name?

ANDERSON: Precious.

CRAFTS: Nice.

ANDERSON: I don't know. If it wasn't for that dog, I'd probably be a nervous wreck. It's like she understands me. She looks at me like she's reading me. But yeah, I think, if it wasn't for that dog, I'd probably be worse. I guess you trade them and try to make a kid out of an animal. I know so many people that do that. She helped out a lot. It was that, and writing to him. But it's taken me about this long to ease up from crying every single day. I did it for years. Couldn't help it. Those were the two basic things: the dog and writing to him. I'd write goofy stuff, too, 'cause he was goofy.

HINZ-FOLEY: Is there anything else you'd like to say for the public record? Or, anything you'd like the public to know about your experience?

ANDERSON: I hope nobody has to go through it. A child, losing a child like that - I don't wish it on nobody. Worst feeling in the world. That's about it. That's about it. I just wouldn't wish it on nobody. It's sad.

HINZ-FOLEY: Well, thank you so much for your time.

[END OF VIDEO 2]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]