

Texas After Violence Project, Visions After Violence

Interview with Louis Gould

Interviewer: Lovinah Igbani-Perkins

Narrator: Louis Gould

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Summary: Lovinah Igbani Perkins interviews Louis Gould. Louis describes his upbringing in Flint, Michigan and Houston, Texas. He faced difficult situations as a child, including abuse and difficulty adjusting to his new environment in Houston. After feeling disconnected from his peers and his family, Louis left his home and dropped out of school at a young age. Louis then describes the series of events that led to his arrest and 15 year sentence. Louis talks about the struggles he faced getting into parole, as well as the obstacles he encountered after his release. He describes the difficulties of reentry, such as employment, using new technologies, and caring for himself and his son. Louis discusses his mental health and the importance of taking care of one's self. Louis also discusses a couple of programs that have helped him stay out of prison, such as Step Up Houston.

LOVINAH IGBANI-PERKINS: Alright. Hello. Hello. Hello. How are you doing?

LOUIS GOULD: I'm doing just fine, and you?

IGBANI-PERKINS: I'm great. Thank you. Thank you so much for agreeing to the interview. I really appreciate you. I guess we could start with just telling me your first and last name.

GOULD: My name is Louis Gould.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. All right. So, I guess we could open it up with you just giving a little background about [00:00:31] your life before prison a little bit, maybe share a little bit of your childhood or how things were growing up, and lead into prison, like what led you there?

GOULD: [00:00:43] Well, I grew up as a child in Flint, Michigan. [00:00:50] It wasn't easy, but I had a lot of family in Flint, Michigan. [00:01:02] I guess everything was okay, except for I had a few bad things happen in my childhood. That was probably the reason why we moved to Houston.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Gotcha. Gotcha. So—[cross talk]

GOULD: You need to know the bad part of my childhood?

IGBANI-PERKINS: Whatever you're comfortable with sharing. At what age did you move to Houston?

GOULD: I moved to Houston at 13.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. All right. So yeah, whatever you're comfortable with sharing. You don't have to share any specifics, if you don't want to.

GOULD: [00:01:38] I'm over it. I don't mind sharing with the world. I grew up in, basically, an abusive household. My mother was beat on the **lab** by my father. [00:02:00] I guess, [00:02:02] I mean I was abused by my mother. In [00:02:08] other words, I had good grades and all that. It was me, the oldest kid, my sister, second, and my little brother named Rafael. [00:02:23] The one bad thing that happened that kind of changed my life is that I was sexually abused [inaudible]. [00:02:32] So my mom found out about that, we moved to Michigan—I mean, moved to Houston,

IGBANI-PERKINS: move to Houston, okay, right. Yeah. Thank you for sharing that, first of all, and I know—in my experience that's something that for me is overlooked a lot of times. It's not

even always considered as it is for women. As if [00:02:57] boys, young boys, don't experience the same trauma in that area as girls, or little girls, or females, do. So I appreciate you sharing that.

So you moved to Houston. You're 13 years old. Tell me a little bit about just your adolescent years.

GOULD: [00:03:20] Well, I moved to Houston and I was totally lost. [00:03:29] I knew nothing about the city and I had no friends. Just, you know, my mother, we just came here. I went to [00:03:38] Middle School at **Deady**. And, you know, I don't judge nobody, but it was an all Hispanic school. I didn't even know how to speak the language.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right, you didn't feel included, then. No connection with people.

GOULD: Listen, all I did everyday was basically [00:03:59] get into fights.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:04:01] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you grew up—as an adolescent, then, you were kind of violent?

GOULD: [00:04:10] I wasn't violent. I was pushed to being violent. Because I had to protect me and my sister. Just like, [00:04:23] from what I recall, it was like, I would disrespect **her Neal**, [00:04:30] It was, I mean whatever, you know, it was just [00:04:34] It was just a shot. What was going on? I had good grades. When I first moved here, [00:04:40] I was an A and B student. I went from liking school to, I'm not going to school. No. [00:04:53] That was a problem, because everybody was short, and [00:05:01] I was like, Woah, you know, 6 feet tall, 13 years old, size 13 shoe. So I didn't dress good. **It was like someone who made it bullying today.**

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah.

GOULD: [00:05:17] I just [00:05:20] wasn't accepting it.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah, that's what I, yeah. It seems like if you were pushed to it, you had to defend yourself. You did what you had to do for you and your sibling. But it wasn't that you were just a violent person. You were put into that and had to do what you had to do to protect yourself.

GOULD: [00:05:40] Yeah, 'cause we were kind of, like, all that we had.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right, Yeah. So at what age or at what time in your life did things shift to any type of criminal behavior?

GOULD: Well, [00:05:57] I didn't have no juvenile record. I guess it all started when I was—[00:06:06] when I was 15 and I started working. I started having trouble with the police when I got about 15. [00:06:17] My mother's car had broke down and she called one of her friends to come tow it, and he was pulling the car while I was driving, and the police pulled us over and [00:06:32] they started asked me questions about my father. I was like, Y'all tell me. You know, he came down here too, but that didn't last like a month, before he started putting his hands on my mom, taking her car. So she [inaudible] I didn't know what was going on with him, right?

So at 15, they took me down to the HPD [00:06:56] and start asking these questions about my dad and where he was at. And me, telling the truth, like, I don't know where he's at.

So I was just like, Wow! Y'all got me in jail. and they was like, [00:07:12] We're going to put you in this cage with this man who had [**breasts**]. I looked over there. I was like, Okay, I'm going to beat him up. They were just like, Oh you tough? I said No, I ain't tough. But I'm not scared of no man with no breasts and I'll keep on telling y'all I don't know where my father's at. So they finally let me go home. [00:07:38] **Told him I was going on, you know, nothing she can do about it**, you know. So then, the next time I got in trouble with the law, I had been kicked out the house—Well no, she didn't kick me out. I left.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:07:58] Your mom?

GOULD: Huh?

IGBANI-PERKINS: Your mother?

GOULD: I left. She didn't kick me out, I left.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. Okay.

GOULD: [00:08:10] I was just getting tired of **weapons**. One day, she came in the house and she was like, You in that refrigerator again? I **let** that out. [00:08:18] I was like, Nothing here to eat. No way. You know what I mean?

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah,

GOULD: I'm just like take care of them. I'm gone. She like, Huh? I'm like, take care of them. Imma be all right, you know. And I just went to the streets.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. Okay, and when you say you went to the streets, you mean you literally went to the streets? How were you surviving? Where you selling drugs or what were you—how were you surviving?

GOULD: I was, I was selling flowers.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:08:50] Okay, so you sold flowers.

GOULD: [00:08:52] I used to sell flowers in the corner, and sometimes I might find a job with a construction site and something like that. Sometimes I'd get the money, sometimes I don't. Then the whole thing bad started. I was running through some apartments one day, trying to see if I could find some kind of work. [00:09:14] And this Black dude asked me, he said, Hey man, watch this stuff for me. I'm like being naive, don't know what's going on. I watched it and I became part of a burglary.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Oh, wow. Wow, so that was a charge for burglary? [00:09:33] Burglary of a habitation?

GOULD: Yes.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. All right. And did you go to, did you do jail time for that, or prison?

GOULD: I went to [00:09:45] Harris County jail. And [00:09:51] I was in there probably like three months. Four months. That's [inaudible]

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:09:57] Okay. You signed for probation. Okay. All right, tell me about—so, actually, before I ask that question. Right now, [00:10:09] when was the last time you were incarcerated?

GOULD: [00:10:15] Like, the prison?

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yes.

Gould: Since 2012.

IGBANI-PERKINS: 2012 was your last incarceration. And you've been out since then?

GOULD: I went to the county one time because I was homeless, and didn't know I had a **blue one**.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. Okay.

GOULD: I was only in there for like two days.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. And are you currently on parole or probation?

GOULD: Yes, I'm on parole until 2023.

IGBANI-PERKINS: So 2023. So, this is your last year, right here, you get off next year.
[00:10:55] Okay. Yeah. A long time. How long were you on parole for, are you on parole for?

GOULD: [00:11:02] I was on parole for 15 years.

IGBANI-PERKINS: 15 years. Alright, can you tell me about what led up to your incarceration?

GOULD: [00:11:14] This last time when I got this [00:11:18] 15 years. I was in a hotel [00:11:23] with my girlfriend doing drugs. [00:11:30] I looked out the window. There was some, they were doing some **hurricane**, and I seen her surrounded by these construction workers and she was a Caucasian woman. I hear them telling her, Why you with that Black, dude? You know, That's a pimp or something. She said, No, he ain't my pimp. Me being, I mean, that was my girlfriend. When I seen her I like, What's going on, what y'all mean. [00:12:05] They just was, like, talking crap, and I hit them. [00:12:10] I know they was going like call the police. And the police came [00:12:16] to the door that morning, and [00:12:19] I walked outside and they was like, [00:12:23] Where the gun? I'm like, What gun? You know, 'cause I didn't have no gun.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: So, they started to put me in handcuffs, and they went in there and whipped my girlfriend up and they found the drugs we was doing. [00:12:40] We went to jail together, and [00:12:45] I was already on probation from Montgomery County for [00:12:52] intent to deliver.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay.

GOULD: So we was in the courtroom in Fort Bend, and my girlfriend [00:13:02] whispered to me and said, **Tell them it ain't mine**. And I looked at her and I was like, Whatever, you know. 'Cause she was pregnant at the time. So I told—the judge **had heard her**, he had a special section, just me, him, her and I guess the D.A. I told them, I was like, They my drugs. I said, She's pregnant and I'd take the whole case. [00:13:33] He basically couldn't believe that I said that. And he said, Because of you being a man and taking the charges, I'm gonna give you a five year sentence.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Hmm.

GOULD: So I signed for that five years, because he told me he was going to call Montgomery County Judge Michael Mayes, right there in the courtroom and if he agreed to the same five when I signed for it. He called the judge in the courtroom. They went to test his **test** together or whatever. The Judge from Montgomery County said, Yeah, I'll give him the same five.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:14:13] So running those charges concurrent?

GOULD: Yeah, It was supposed to be.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay.

GOULD: [00:14:20] I went to TDCJ. [00:14:24] Got ready to come home. I was at **Berkeley** unit doing good, doing everything I was supposed to do. It was like, four years—I would say about four years of my 15-year sentence. Getting ready to go home. [00:14:40] One day they came and got me out of class. [00:14:44] Took me and put me in lock up. I was like, Why am I going to lock-up, you know, I ain't done nothing wrong. So, my teacher came down, and she was like, [00:14:56] I'll go find out what's going on and blah, blah, blah because, you know, she was like, Sometimes bad things happen to good people. And then when she came back, she was just in tears and I'm like, What's wrong? She was like, They finna call you down there. You want me to go with you? I was like, Yeah. [00:15:17] So I walked in front of the warden and he was like, You want to sit down? I was like, Somebody in my family die? He was like, Nah, no. That's okay. Tell me what's going on. This was his **actual words**. I had never seen nothing like this before. But they just took your parole. And you going on [inaudible]. [00:15:43] I just blacked out. [00:15:47] My Mama had just left, [inaudible] and my son, telling me I made parole and all that, and I was like wow.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:15:57] Wow, and it was for the charge from there, and so evidently, then, something—it was not done concurrent then, and you were not getting credit for that charge then, right?

GOULD: No.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Wow, so do they sentence you to TDC again?

GOULD: [00:16:16] Yeah. I went to Montgomery County. My Mom had got a lawyer, and all my **friends had got a** lawyer for me. So I'm thinking, in order to help my mom, we're just going to go over there, sign the paperwork, and [inaudible]. I got over there standing in front of the

judge. Looking at him. He said, [00:16:39] If you don't sign for this 15 years right now, I'm gonna give you life in jail. Look at my lawyer like, [00:16:49] What's going on? My mom stood up, and the judge told her, You want to go to jail? I'm like, Mama just sit down. Just sit down. She starts screaming, I ain't you. I'm like, You are me. You just don't know this, man. They ain't playing. [The judge] said, I got to go hog hunting, can you sign for this 15 or I'm going to do what I said. I said, Give me the paper. [00:17:16] Signed for the 15. [00:17:19] Went back to the cell. I guess I might of did like, [00:17:28] I can't recall, maybe a year or so more, and I made parole.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Then you made parole. Okay. So wow. [00:17:39] How many times have you been to TDC?

GOULD: [00:17:52] At least three or four.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Three or four times, okay. Was the 15-year sentence the longest sentence you've gotten?

GOULD: Yes.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. [00:18:03] So, [00:18:05] I just can only imagine like, mentally, what that could do to somebody. Like, you're getting ready to get out from prison, and then not only do you get stopped shortly before your release, but then you have to get bench pointed to another County and then get, I mean, 15 years is not a small number. You get, you know, a hefty sentence, which is for a drug charge, right?

GOULD: Yes.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: I've been to prison so much I don't even, I can't even count.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah.

GOULD: I really can't count. But if nothing **weren't** for the first time because [00:18:49] I had actually changed my life around full circle. I was in college, just had a 3.2. [00:18:59] I went from a ninth-grade dropout to a 3.2 GPA in under two years. Just signed to go play basketball at the University of Kentucky. [00:19:14] And I came back from the visit, and my coach told me, he said, You forget to **report**? I'm like, No, why would I forget to **report**? He said well, Houston said you did. I was like, What? [00:19:30] So, I'm like, I'm like, Wow, you know.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah.

GOULD: At the time, I was coaching girls basketball, coaching boys. Working with abused juveniles.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Mm-Hmm.

GOULD: I really changed my life around. And I had all these people, these kids' parents, doctors, lawyers, had all this paperwork. [00:19:59] [inaudible] looked at me and said, You thought you was going to the NBA? and I was like, I am. [00:20:06] He said, Nah. You're going to TDC and gave me five years.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:20:11] That had to be devastating. To have, like, finally have figured that you're turning your life around, going to school, possibly going to the NBA. You know, you got a future all mapped out for yourself at that time, I imagine. And then—

GOULD: [00:20:28] Yeah, I was finally happy for the first time in my life.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Wow.

GOULD: [00:20:34] Yeah. [00:20:36] Then I **took** criminology in school. [00:20:39] 'Cause I wanted to help juveniles.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Then arrested in that Criminal Justice System. [00:20:44] Yeah, let's talk about the last time you were incarcerated, [00:20:49] when you were getting ready to get released. Do you feel like you were prepared by the prison at all for release? And if so, how were you, how did they prepare you to be released?

GOULD: I wasn't prepared for it. No, because [00:21:10] I had a son out here. [00:21:15] I had another girlfriend who I did know where she was at. So I had a lot of things and you know, it's like, [00:21:27] it was so much bad stuff that happened when I was young. Not sexually abused and that. It was more like, mental abuse.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:21:39] Emotional abuse, mental.

GOULD: Just the way they treat you. My dad had died. And I had—

IGBANI-PERKINS: How old were you when that happened?

GOULD: I was—when my dad died, I was over in [00:21:56] Huntsville, at a Trustee Unit. Now, out of all the things, I'm in a Trustee unit. Where you're free—I mean, you ain't free, but they so-called trust you.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right, you have more—

GOULD: You have more freedom. But you still go to work. You can go unit to unit. You can drive **tractors**. All that. And my dad died when I was in there. My mom came and called, telling me my dad died and I was like, So? You know, I'm like, [00:22:37] He's the reason why [inaudible], me having the same name as him, every time something happened, Where your daddy at? I'm like, Man, I do not know. So when she came to tell me, at first, I was like uhh...

IGBANI-PERKINS: You were kind of nonchalant?

GOULD: Yeah, I didn't care, you know. Dealing with my Mom. [00:23:07] My mom was like, you know, I want you to go to your daddy's funeral. [00:23:13] I'm telling them that I'll pay for it and everything, and they're going to let you go. I'm like, Okay, you know. [00:23:21] I'm gonna go to the funeral, [00:23:24] playing the game all with her. And as soon as she left. [00:23:30] Here we go again. Somebody who ain't never got in trouble in prison ever. [00:23:42] They put me in lock-up. [00:23:44] I'm like, What y'all doing? Y'all just told my mama that I could go. And I didn't watch all these killers, murderers, [00:23:56] with **license**, get to go to their parents funerals. [00:24:02] Why I can't go? [00:24:05] They put me in lockup.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:24:14] that's—

GOULD: Like... and I wasn't even mad [00:24:18] that they lied to me. I was mad 'cause my mama.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah, they had her hopes up and—

GOULD: **That's not meant to turn**, don't get your hopes up. I mean, it's all on record. I have never got in trouble in prison. [00:24:37] 'Cause I always stick to myself.

When they did that, I went in there, and I gave 'em what they wanted. I tried to tear the door down. [00:24:49] I tried—I mean, I didn't raise hell, but they put me in that little room and I could not take it. [00:24:57] **You're in that** door for, like, two days. Telling them, [00:25:05] somebody, please come here. [00:25:08] Then Monday came and the pastor at the church found out I was in jail. He said, Y'all gonna let him out right now. [00:25:18] And they let me out with

him, and I wanted to talk to him. He prayed with me and he was like, I don't know what's going on, but it just ain't right.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Mm-Hmm.

GOULD: [00:25:32] I guess too much [inaudible] they send me home.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay. So let's talk about the last time you got out of prison. Did you take any classes during that time?

GOULD: [00:25:47] Yeah, I took, actually, a computer class. They weren't no good. Because half the time, the jail might go on lockdown and you couldn't go to school. Or they didn't have everything they needed for the computer to work. So they were trying to make everybody **secretaries**. Who knows? Personally. [00:26:13] I mean it wasn't worth it.

IGBANI-PERKINS: You said it wasn't working?

GOULD: They didn't let me do what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a truck driver. I wanted to be a truck driver, but they said, You gonna do this. [00:26:27]

IGBANI-PERKINS: You didn't have any say about it, you just had to do—you couldn't pick up the skill that you wanted, that you could use on the outside. You had to do what they wanted you to do.

GOULD: What they said they had available.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Hmm.

GOULD: Which everybody knew was a lie.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah, its whatever they benefited from, probably.

GOULD: Make they money off of. You gotta have this class full so bad. Or, You ain't gonna be here that long to take that class. How y'all know? You know, I mean, you know the guy, you just go with the flow and you go to [inaudible]

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:27:03] The classes, were they taught by prison staff or outside staff?

GOULD: [00:27:11] Outside staff.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Outside staff. Okay.

GOULD: [00:27:18] And he would have [00:27:21] the inmates that was good at what he was training, he would have them help him.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:27:31] Okay. [00:27:33] And then think about when after you were released, when you were finally released, on parole, which you're still on. But when you were released, [00:27:43] what mental health issues or problems did you have after being released?

GOULD: [00:27:50] Well. [00:27:53] I think I've been—it must have been **real**, now that I know a lot about mental [00:28:01] health and all that. I've been screwed up. You know, it's been like, so much trauma in my life, that I didn't even know what it was 'till I went to prison [00:28:13] and I was getting ready to go for parole. [00:28:18] I was standing in line and for some reason, I was the only one that was standing in line right. [00:28:29] This man came out. I mean, he was the parole, the man, and he said, Hey, everybody but you, come see parole. And I'm like, Who me, you know. He like, Yeah, you. He told everybody else to go back. I'm like—He was like, He's the only one standing in line still. I was like, Okay. He would look through some paperwork and he was looking and he was like, Man. [00:28:57] How many fights have you had? [00:29:02] I said, Maybe 50 or more. And he was like, Wow. And I was like, Okay. [00:29:09] I said, What you do see is those fights happening all in one place. He was like, Yeah, whose place was that? And I was like, Mine.

You know, because [00:29:22] we would have parties to put ourselves through school. You know, people get drunk, and they want to start a fight. **I ain't never met anyone like that n-word.** [00:29:42] They would always put their hands on me. [00:29:48] And I just got into fights. Yeah. No, but then he said this. He says—this is the first time I heard that—When something happens over and over again what you call that? And I was like, I don't know. And he said the word for it. So, you don't realize you got mental illness, you got a problem. And I was like, Yeah, I think you're right about that. Because [00:30:17] I can't let people **make it with stuff.** [00:30:21] I can't, like—I mean, I knew I could whup him. [00:30:28] I never went fighting one person. I would fight like four or five people at one time. [00:30:35] So I got my blood on some of them, but never held no grudges. We all come back, you know. I don't know. It's just, I don't think it was them. I think it was always what I've been through in my life.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right. And I'm sure prison had a big impact on that, also, some of those experiences. [00:31:00]

GOULD: You know what though, one thing about prison? [00:31:06] I never got high. [00:31:09] I never broke no rules. [00:31:13] I was always straight.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah. [00:31:18] Some would—

GOULD: I wouldn't smoke a cigarette.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Mm-hmm.

GOULD: It was all there. I think I know what it was. Just seeing my mama's face. [00:31:31] Like again, [00:31:34] when we went to that court in Conroe. She was like [inaudible]. I said, You finally see, that it wasn't me all the time? [00:31:46] She saw when that judge looked at me, she was like, Wow. You've been telling me the truth. I said, I told you **I didn't do it, that case** I didn't do. [00:31:59] They just gave me the case.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right. Oh, so that's what you got the 15 years for?

GOULD: [00:32:06] Yeah, I didn't do that.

IGBANI-PERKINS: That was for a charge you actually didn't do.

GOULD: I did not do it.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right. So you're wrongly incarcerated, you get out, and I guess it's safe to say, from what you were just saying, is that you were [00:32:23] more aggressive and had a hard time with relationships, got in fights a lot?

GOULD: I had a hard time with everything.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:32:36] Mm-hmm. Hard time adjusting.

GOULD: [00:32:38] When I got out, I didn't know everything had, you know, it was like, computers, phones. [00:32:45] I didn't know how to work this. I still don't know how—

IGBANI-PERKINS: It's overwhelming.

GOULD: hen [00:32:51] I stayed with my mom and I had a son. Then the first day I got out of jail, my baby mama was trying to put me back in jail, [00:33:02] because I wouldn't—you know, she was at the parole office, I'm gonna get all y'all fired if y'all don't tell me where he's at, and all this. And I'm like, Wow. [00:33:13] They was like, Wow, stay away from her. And I was like, I am staying away from her.

I'm helping my son and I had to go in and the policeman told me to take him with me. I'm like, so now, I'm out of jail, my baby mama trying to put me back in jail. [00:33:37] My mom is

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arguing at me about [00:33:43] all kinds of stuff, that it's my fault, and I'm just like. [00:33:49] I couldn't take it. I'm like, Y'all don't understand, before I came here, what I've been through in there.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Mm-hmm.

GOULD: [00:33:57] You know? I'm like, working hard in there. I'm wearing a size 13 boots, and I wear a 15. I can't even get up. You know what I mean? Y'all don't know why I can't go to work right now. My feet is killing me. [00:34:16] I finally get to put on some big shoes. I mean, my feet tell the evidence today. I'm just like, I went through a lot, but I had to work to eat.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: [00:34:32] I mean, it is what it is. I had to work to eat.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Do you feel like your mental health after you were incarcerated caused you to have problems getting other needs met, like housing and employment, things like that?

GOULD: [00:34:50] Oh, yeah, not just mental health. Yeah, cause **not just mental health because** people didn't understand. They'd look at me like, You look all right to me. Nah, you don't know me. Thank you.

IGBANI-PERKINS: You can't always [see] mental health.

GOULD: You don't know that something in my head is telling me something. [00:35:19] And I can hear it, but I guess you can't.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: They're telling me right now to get away from you. [00:35:30]

IGBANI-PERKINS: Holds you back.

GOULD: Huh?

IGBANI-PERKINS: I said yeah, that can definitely hold you back.

GOULD: Yeah. And they don't know. I mean, [00:35:40] I **wouldn't** be played with. [00:35:44] it was—I guess it was always expecting the worst. Okay, they being nice now, but tomorrow, this is going to happen. [00:35:56] And then, you know that's... [crosstalk]

Like I said, I went homeless on parole, and I could have stayed with my mama, but I couldn't stay with her. You know?

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: She would drive me crazy about some stuff I couldn't control. I'm on parole, Oh parole, **you gonna do that?** Yes, they is. They put up [inaudible] like I was some kind of killer. [00:36:33] And she like, Not in my house. I'm like, So what you want me to do? [00:36:39] **I want that thing in my house, but I ain't got the thing.** I'm like, I do not know, I ain't got no murder case. You know.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:36:50] Yeah. You feel like they treated you like a violent criminal, like a violent offender?

GOULD: Yeah, they had me in the same parole office for sexual offenders. [00:37:03] They know what I've been through in my life.

IGBANI-PERKINS: A violent person, actually.

GOULD: Yeah, they sent me to a sexual offender parole office. [00:37:16] I'm like, why you got me over here? [00:37:19] Y'all know my history. Why y'all got me here? [00:37:23] This is the—[scoffs] here we go again. [00:37:28] I'm like, here we go. [00:37:31] My baby mama, my son. My mama. Everybody [00:37:37] going at it and it's like I'm supposed to get out and be the same. I'm trying to save me right now.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right. Right.

GOULD: I don't even know what's going on. I don't even—I've been going, like, five, six years. I don't even know what—the whole city has changed. I don't know how to use these computers. [00:38:03] I don't know where these places are at. You know what I mean?

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: [00:38:08] Parole wants you to do this, this, and this. But they **don't want you to think about [00:38:15] other things you can do.** Then I realized, I don't stay with me. I stay with my mama, and she got her own rules.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: I got a son that I'm trying to get to school, trying to go to court to get him because his mother's abusing him. [00:38:35] It was just too much.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah. It seems like a lot.

GOULD: **One day there I was again, back in** [inaudible]

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:38:49] Right. Do you feel like your mental health after you were incarcerated, caused you, or impacted your ability to maintain relationships with people?

GOULD: [00:39:02] Yeah, I shut down.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:39:05] Really closed off.

GOULD: [00:39:07] I don't want to talk to nobody. I don't want to write nobody. [00:39:13] I just want to go do my little time. Stay out the way. [00:39:19] I mean, I just shut down.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:39:22] Did you have any difficulties accessing mental health help? After you were released from prison?

GOULD: [00:39:41] Well, yeah. Cause I was trying to do everything for everybody else. But still they're trying to help me. [00:39:51] Then, when I got my housing I started finding out about people that'll help you. [00:40:04] Then I started doing better. I got my house, started being able to deal with my mama. [00:40:13] Deal with my son's mom a little more. Started going to court to get my son. And then, she died. My son's mama died, and I guess I still had feelings. [00:40:34] You know, I started getting high again. [00:40:39] Started smoking kush. [00:40:42] Went homeless. Started screwing up.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:40:48] Yeah, you would say that you struggled with getting connected to some help for your mental illness, then?

GOULD: Yeah.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Who finally helped you? How did you finally get connected with some assistance, some support for mental health? How did you finally access that support?

GOULD: Well, I found out when I was going to Beacon. I was going to the place next to the Beacon, then. What really helped me is when I started going to a place called [inaudible] I started going to them.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay, so you started going to a clinic that focuses on helping individuals that are homeless or facing homelessness.

GOULD: Right.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay.

GOULD: To me, it's just something about the way they treat you. **You [00:41:48] ain't gotta go in there, and it's a rush. They're coming to get you medicine. It's just what you need to do. And you take it from there. Just, I don't know. I mean I went to [inaudible]. Couldn't take it.** [00:42:11] It was just too crowded. [00:42:15] It was just crazy, you know. [00:42:19] They kept trying to send me there. I just, I just couldn't. I don't know. I don't like being all up under a bunch of people. [00:42:29] They just got mental problems, too. And they all in your business, you know. [00:42:37] Just, I couldn't do it. I couldn't do it there. But where I went to now. [00:42:44] I can handle it and then it works for me. And I had a couple jobs, you know.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah, did any faith-based organizations help you at all since you've been home>

GOULD: [00:43:05] No, actually what helped me a lot, and some people it's this [00:43:14] organization called—first, it was [00:43:19] Direct Hope. [00:43:24] They helped me lift my spirits up by helping other people, you know.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Okay.

GOULD: [00:43:34] You know, help people that are homeless and been through what I've been through. And then I went with Step Up Houston who I'm still with. Every time I say I need to talk to somebody, I can call them and they all, nothing negative to say. You know, today they called me and said Happy Birthday, you know. [00:43:58] So, I just love them to death, you know.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Oh my goodness, today is your birthday!

GOULD: Yeah.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Wow, happy birthday. [laughs] That's right. I just thought of your date of birth right now. But yeah, happy birthday. Wow, thank you so much for doing this on your birthday. Wow.

GOULD: [00:44:22] I'd rather be doing this than anything else right now, trust me.

TAVP Interview with Louis Gould

IGBANI-PERKINS: Wow.

GOULD: I'm not out there drinking, doing nothing wrong. I'm just trying to live.

IGBANI-PERKINS: If health care—if there was healthcare coverage available somehow, like immediately as soon as you got out, or given to you right before release, do you think you would have gotten out and immediately sought help rather than going through the homelessness and everything before finally getting connected to help?

GOULD: Yeah.

IGBANI-PERKINS: You probably wouldn't have even used—

GOULD: You're exactly right. You're exactly right. I was working on that in jail, because they was trying to connect us to Obamacare. This lady had a talk with me, she was like, You need to get Obamacare, because you've been in jail so long, and get straight out and get some mental help. But I left that prison and **went to the—before** they get out, and they told me I couldn't get it. I was like, Okay, I could get it over there, but I get here and all of a sudden I can't get it. There we go with the mind game again, you know. The whole time, I should have had Obamacare. [00:45:38] Just because of how long I'd done in prison. I should have had it, but the man over here decided to lie, you know.

So I got out, and I didn't even know about Gold Card. You know, I didn't even, I mean I didn't know until later, But when we was in parole, there wasn't no one talking about no mental health. Now they are, they talked about it now, but back when I got out they weren't talking about that. [00:46:11] I was talking about you got to be here. You got to do this. I'm like, I still ain't free. No, I'm out of jail. But I got **this monster on my leg** [00:46:22] and I'm standing out here in Cyprus, where there's no buses. How you all think I'm going to go. [00:46:31] You know, I got to ask your mom for some money, I ain't doing that. You know, I mean, I will. [00:46:38] But after a while, I got to hear that. So I do not want to hear that from my mama. So once again I went homeless.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah.

GOULD: [00:46:55] I'm kind of like scared of my mama, for real.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:47:02] So, tell me about now. Where are you, what do you have going on now? Where are you in life now? What are you doing?

GOULD: Now, well, before I called here, I talked [00:47:16] to my son. He got a basketball game tomorrow.

IGBANI-PERKINS: More involved in your son's life?

GOULD: [00:47:26] Yeah. That's my love of my life. You know what I mean? My son.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah, that's good. You being a father.

GOULD: The only thing I worry about though is he got my name, too. [00:47:41] You know. He got junior.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah, do you feel like your name is a curse?

GOULD: [00:47:49] I got my daddy's name. My son's name. I'm on file. I just pray every day, [00:48:03] that **which I know is true, because I didn't see other people in the prison system.** [00:48:12] They got the same name.

IGBANI-PERKINS: It's like a family thing, like, Dad goes, son goes.

GOULD: [00:48:19] They've been through the same thing I've been through.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah.

GOULD: [00:48:24] Worst thing about it, my dad, he never been found guilty or nothing. That's the funny thing about it. And I was found guilty of nothing. [00:48:38] Nothing.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Mmm.

GOULD: [00:48:41] So, I'm just—now I guess I got his guilty.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:48:50] If you could give, what advice would you give to other people who are preparing to get out? They have a mental health illness, mental illness, and they are getting ready to get out of prison. Any advice you would have for them?

GOULD: [00:49:11] To get a job as soon as they get out. I mean, really, get you a job soon as you get out so you can stay busy. Cause you aren't really working when you leave jail. You working hard, harder in there than you are here. Concentrate only on you while you can. [00:49:40] You got mental health, go to the healthcare for the homeless and talk to somebody.

[00:49:47] You know, go see a psychiatrist, and if you can work, go to work. [00:49:56] That's all. **If you don't got no money, you going to do something that you don't need to do.**

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right. Yeah.

GOULD: That's just it. If I could have just got out and had me a job waiting, I don't think I would be where I'm at now. [00:50:19] They need to have something to where people can get out and have they driver's license. You know. I got out, I didn't have my driver's license. I didn't have [00:50:34] a lot of things to go to work. I wouldn't had it now if I had found out some of these programs. They help. I think they need a whole lot of help. [00:50:54] Just to get started, 'cause people don't understand, when you got somebody in jail controlling your whole life, [00:51:02] you get out you like, wait a minute. [00:51:07] This ain't—in there is not how it is out here. [00:51:12] Nobody gonna be picking you up to go to work. [00:51:19] I mean, if they could just, two months before they got out, have somebody show them what it's really going to be like when they get out and it's all up to you. [00:51:40] It's going to be all on you. Not what your wife want, not what your kids want, if you on parole.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: [00:51:50] None of them can save you [00:51:53]. You can only save yourself because you actually belong to TDCJ still.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah. Until you get off parole.

GOULD: Yeah, you got to go straight to work and do good to get these people off your back. That's all you can do. If I knew I could have went to work and work, work, work. And after awhile I'd be seen only once every three months, then once every six months, then once every year. Then I'd have had time for my family. But I didn't know that.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Seems like you need a balance between everything.

GOULD: Yeah, you need to get out and go straight to work 'cause they cannot stop you from going to work.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: And that'll be your, not only money in your pocket, but it'll be a peace of mind, really.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah, for you, work really helped you improve your mental health? It sounds like.

GOULD: Hmm?

IGBANI-PERKINS: I said it sounds like for you, going to work really helped improve your mental health.

GOULD: Yeah, because I could stay busy instead of being confused, [00:53:23] you know. When you working, you got one set of things that you know you got to do. You know what time you got to take a break. You know what time's lunch.

IGBANI-PERKINS: You have a schedule. You have structure.

GOULD: Yeah, I didn't have no schedule [before working]. I had parole, son, mama, house. [00:53:47] I'm like, [00:53:51] If I just went to work. [00:53:54] You know, I love my son, which I couldn't help him, you know. Daddy on parole.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Right.

GOULD: Daddy's on parole, I ain't being here to raise you. I got to try to raise myself. I mean like, raise myself back up to where I can help you. You know, baby, I can't leave you at home by yourself, you know. [00:54:24] So, I mean, it was like, they try and tell me what they don't know. They ain't been in jail. They don't know what you got going on parole. In my family it's like, I'm the only one been in jail.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Hmm.

GOULD: I mean, luckily.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:54:42] Yeah.

GOULD: My mama ain't been in jail. My brother ain't been in jail. [00:54:48] So they just don't know.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah. Is there anything else you would like anyone else to know before we close? [00:55:00] Regarding mental health?

GOULD: [00:55:05] You gotta take your meds.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Take your medication.

GOULD: It works.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Yeah.

GOULD: It'll help you sleep. [00:55:15] It'll help you get a peace of mind. [00:55:18] And it's non-addictive.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:55:24] That's right. Well thank you so, so much for agreeing to do this interview. I really appreciate it. Especially that you did it on your birthday. I really appreciate you taking out the time for this.

GOULD: [00:55:36] I appreciate you too.

IGBANI-PERKINS: Absolutely.

GOULD: [00:55:42] That's it.

IGBANI-PERKINS: [00:55:44] That's it. One second.