

February 9, 2024

To whom it may concern:

When I wrote to you in September, about my efforts to build a real solution for a very broken system, I mentioned a veteran killed in the **** property I recently fled. Because his story is so emblematic, I'm going to share it with you now.

The soldier's name was Donald Clark, but everyone I know called him Shorty. He was a black man raised in 1960s New York with an angry, violent father. Against the odds of many disadvantages, Clark found a home along with the promise of escape and success in the Army. In his early 20's he was stationed in Maryland, had a girlfriend he loved, an assignment to drill sergeant school and was preparing to reenlist.

One day while conducting morning muster, Clark discovered that a soldier and friend from his unit was absent. Upon checking the young man's barracks Clark found him in his room dead from hanging with as Clark described "eyes bulging". As happens too often Clark did not get the support he needed from his command. When they insisted he return to live down the hall from the source of his nightmares, he felt his only recourse was to leave the military and go home. For that act of self-preservation, he received a dishonorable discharge making him completely ineligible for help of any kind from the country he'd proudly served.

Looking for another way out, Clark traded the relative safety of a "normal" job for the fast money of the streets. This time he was rewarded with a severe beatdown that left him with permanent injuries and metal installed to shore up his broken body. In retaliation, Clark resorted to the violence he was raised on and served 23 years in prison.

I met Shorty in 2022 when we both lived in Section 8 housing in ****. I learned his story while attempting to get his discharge status reversed and maybe some additional assistance. I'd heard the stories about his violent streak (a fact that property management was well aware of) but had yet to see it personally. The Shorty I knew was friendly, helpful, and generally kind.

My own interaction with him halted after a confrontation when I witnessed him beating his dog Boogie. I made endless complaints about the living situation there to management, local authorities, a small claims judge, and frankly, anyone who would listen willingly or otherwise. But since Clark was far from the only danger in that building, I left soon after.

Only a few weeks later Clark broke a restraining order to assault a young lady in the building we'd all lived in. That action ended with him dead of stabbing, and the unfortunate woman, emotionally traumatized and scarred for life.

If his was the only tragedy, you wouldn't be receiving this letter. However, Clark was only one of thousands, too many of whom I know personally. I've devoted my life and sacrificed everything to continue this fight. All I'm asking is for an audience with someone who cares enough to listen and consider my vision. Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Dawn Keegan