

Peace and love. My name is Shamayim Harris. People call me Mama Shu. I'm the founder and director of *Avalon Village*. I'm a creator and land developer. When I look back on my childhood, I think about how I loved my neighborhood, how I thought that my neighborhood had every single thing that I wanted, everything that I needed. The people were beautiful. The elders were open and receptive to me sitting on the porch and asking for advice. I always loved to do the lawn and do the grass with my grandfather and my grandmother. I like to plan community events. I'd like to just be on my block. I loved my block so much. We had a school there, we had a party store there. It felt safe, it felt nurturing... and I just remember that; and I really had a good childhood. I feel good about my childhood. And I think it's helped me to be who I am today.

So I would say that the journey to doing my part to help to restore the neighborhood that I live in. It really kicked in back in 2007 when my son, Jakobi RA, he got killed by hit and run driver. He was 2 years, 1 month and 6 days old. Although I was always an activist and building and doing things, that particular day when that happened, it really made me just say, I'm really, really getting ready to do this. Losing a child period was the ultimate fear that I've had being a mother, like, you know, you always think like, wow, what would what would happen to me if my son died or any of my children died? And so it actually happened. So I would say that, that day I became invincible and I wasn't really afraid after that. And when that happened, it was just like... I'm doing it. I've been building the village. I've been getting volunteers like, hey, doing this and stepping out on faith. I saw the vision and worked towards it. And it's been a great healing journey actually.

This thing, this whole village building thing, *Avalon Village*, and restoring the neighborhood has been a healing journey for me. It's been a healing journey because it helps you to, you know, you never get over it because that's something that's permanent, but it helps it to

feel better. And I have a way to utilize the energy and the grief. So basically, the one block is really not enough. I will probably need to build a world if I had to gage my grief. And so right now, I'm just starting on the block. So I got a long way to go. Something like that sticks with you. You just live with it. So here I am. And I just have the courage to just keep on going. Basically, I'm raising a child in the heavens still.