**Jinho's Journey**

**Glynn:** This episode of Snap Judgment is supported by Now, What's Next?, a podcast that helps make sense of life after the pandemic because things are not going back to the way it was before. The pandemic has forever altered our society and the Morgan Stanley show Now, What's Next? explores how the world continues to evolve in the face of a global crisis and the rare opportunities these changes can provide. Journalist Sonari Glinton dives into unexpected stories of cities, individuals, and businesses that are rethinking age-old assumptions. He covers big ideas and speaks one-on-one with leading thinkers that are re-imagining everything. Well, I thought I had some sense of what was coming around the bend, but when I listen, I discovered more things have changed than I had ever imagined. Search for Now, What's Next? anywhere you listen to your podcasts and my thanks to Now, What's Next? for their support.

Ever since I was a kid, I've been a news junkie. I like to know what was going on, right? And even now I subscribe to five or six newspapers, several magazines, but these days I find myself, this self-described news junkie, opening those newspapers, those magazines, listening to news programs less and less. I still haven't been able to watch the eight minute and 46 seconds of George Floyd's murder, haven't seen the video of Ahmaud Arbery fleeing. I haven't looked at pictures of Breonna Taylor's murder. I want to hold my arm over that fire and feel that flame burn, but I know, I know it will consume me. But I have to practice self care to listen to myself saying you cannot see that right now. Sometimes you got to bury your head in the sand in order to keep your sanity. But what if, instead of turning away, you step forward?

Just what we proudly present: Jinho's Journey. One amazing story from the belly of the beast. My name is Glynn Washington, hoping and praying we're just one slow news day, when you're listening, Snap Judgment.

Again, with a man who asked himself some very hard questions and came up with some very radical answers. This story was adapted from the WorldAffairs podcast and radio show, and it does include scenes of police violence. Listeners, please be advised. Teresa Cotsirilos takes it from here. Snap Judgment.

**Teresa:** Last year, Jinho Ferreira found himself at a thrift store near Oakland, California. There was a cop's motorcycle turned over out front and a black SUV crashed by a nearby wall.

**Jinho:** There was a man dead in a parking lot.

**Teresa:** The man was black and he had been shot by several Alameda County Sheriff's deputies. Jinho saw this swarm of cops and started walking towards them.

**Jinho:** I'm thinking, 'I was blocks away from this when it happened.' I didn't know if it was a justified shooting or not. I literally had no idea what it was. And you know, this is a, you know, what is this? What is this gonna turn into? Is this another debate? Is this, what is this? What is this about to be?

**Teresa:** About 10 years before this, Jinho was waiting in the wings behind these massive speakers on a stage in Italy, in the middle of the summer.

**Jinho:** We walked out on stage and I grabbed the mic and I said, "Ey!" And a hundred thousand people said, "Ey!" Like, "What's up?" A hundred thousand people said, "What's up?" And it was like, "Oh shit." Like, this is amazing. Like, this is the way. This is where the tidal wave happens. So going out on that stage was like total and complete annihilation. Like we were just going to destroy the stage. We goin' in like the special forces.

**Teresa:** People call Jinho "The Piper," as in the Pied Piper who led legions of children with his music. Growing up, he got into rap battles with the kids in his neighborhood. And after years of sneaking demos into the hands of the right people, Jinho and his band Flipsyde were touring the world. They toured with Busta Rhymes, Pussycat Dolls, Akon, and the Black Eyed Peas.

**Jinho:** Snoop came out on stage in Amsterdam with a joint the size of my forearm.

**Teresa:** Then NBC made their song "Someday" the theme song for their winter Olympics coverage.

**Jinho:** That song was written at like two in the morning, eating cold Chinese food. It was definitely thinking about where I came from, all of my homies, the ones that aren't here any longer. And it was just like some day I'm going to have the world that we want someday. I was just, you know, carrying their spirit with me, carried them with me around the world.

**Teresa:** Jinho grew up in West Oakland when it was a mostly black neighborhood. And you can hear some of his friends and his music, guys who were talented, hungry, and a lot of them died too young. Jinho lost his friend Marcus Holland, his cousin Rick, who was more like a brother to him, and Jihad.

**Jinho:** He was pretty much getting straight A's all through high school.

**Teresa:** Jinho and Jihad played football together.

**Jinho:** And he was a phenomenal athlete. He wore an African suit to prom, like in '93. And he was a leader.

**Teresa:** They both went to college on football scholarships. Jinho graduated from SF State. Jihad went to school at UC Berkeley, one of the best public universities in the world. When Jinho came out with his first, honestly not that great, demo, Jihad was the one who listened to it every day. He never got to see Jinho get signed.

**Jinho:** I'm carrying everything with me, all the people that have passed away with me and we're clamoring for success and I'm working as hard as I possibly can and things, you know, just began to fall apart.

**Teresa:** In the early hours of New Year's Day 2009, a white officer on a Bart platform shot Oscar Grant. He was a 22-year-old unarmed black man. His death was filmed by bystanders and the video shook Jinho to his core.

**Jinho:** I remember watching it when he shot him. It was just like a jolt went through me. You shoot someone in the back while he's laying face down. Tears immediately came to my eyes.

Late teens, early twenties. I was across the street from my house and I remember I had a bottle of orange juice. I was coming out of the liquor store and, you know, two cops rode up and jumped out, pointed guns at me, you know, "Hands, hands, hands! Let me see your hands." I remember the look in their eyes like, it was a crazy look, like they were terrified. Like they were ready to shoot me. And they were like, "Where's the gun?" I was hyperfocused on them, in their eyes, you know, in the gun, and what they were saying. And I just made sure my hands were up and I'm like, "I don't have a gun. I'm not armed." And they searched me. And they were like, "You know, somebody was shooting around the corner."

**Teresa:** They patted Jinho down, didn't find anything on him. He was just another young black man in West Oakland to them.

**Jinho:** They get back in the car and smash off. God, I mean, it's almost like...I didn't go home and write a poem about it or a speech, you know. I didn't start organizing. It was almost like a backdrop to life. And I'm looking at it on TV and it just, it hurts so bad. And I just felt something had to be done, period. Something had to be done.

So I go to the protest, you know, and my wife and son, my friends, and there's thousands of people there. And I remember a journalist was interviewing artists and he said, "What can we do as artists to make sure this never happens again?" I'm standing in a circle of artists. I'm the only one on a major label. I have a Gold record in India. My homies back in Oakland weren't listening to our music. I'm pretty sure the police weren't. What can we do as an artist to make sure this doesn't happen again? As an artist, we can create something and hope that it has an impact, but what can we do? There's one person that decided to pull the trigger. He was a cop. If a miracle happens and we get rid of this cop, "who's going to replace him?" became the question. And I looked around at the protest and people were passionate. People were in tears, people were chanting. It was all different races, ages. You know, people were coming from everywhere and I couldn't imagine anyone there replacing him.

I sat with that for awhile and I started to think. You know what? I should start thinking about going into law enforcement.

**Teresa:**  Was the idea to reform the institution?

**Jinho:** No.

**Teresa:** Or, okay.

**Jinho:** I don't, I don't even know if I considered that. I was thinking about occupying a badge and a gun and making it do what I wanted it to do in accordance with my values, just to see if I could choose to not pull the trigger and I needed to know if that was impossible. I needed to know if that was impossible.

My mother didn't want me to go into law enforcement at all. Like my mother was extremely clear. Never expect anything from this system.

**Teresa:** Jinho's mom is a former Nation of Islam instructor. She raised him on a steady diet of black revolutionary theory. Growing up Jinho learned Swahili in school and never stood for the national anthem. And a lot of his friends had been activists.

**Jinho:** No, I love some of those people. What I heard a few times was you're not going to be able to rap after this. Rappers hold a special place in our community and in resistance. Like the moment you put on that uniform, you're not going to be able to rap anymore. There are going to be people that are always suspicious of you because you made that decision.

**Teresa:** Jinho was pretty sure he wouldn't be allowed to become a cop anyway.

**Jinho:** I've been arrested before. I had homies in the pen. I've been all over the world, rapping in front of Snoop's weed plants. You know I see him making crowds chant all kinds of stuff against the government and against the police. I felt like I needed to do something other than write a song. I need to see something that I'm doing working. And I found out when the next academy was. I went and I paid the money, and I went in.

**Teresa:** On Jinho's first day of training, he walked into a classroom with over 50 other recruits. Only five of them were black men. This academy was for the Alameda County Sheriff's department. They respond to calls all over the Bay, including Jinho's home neighborhood in West Oakland. He honestly expected to get kicked out.

**Jinho:** I went in so bad already that they took it as me having an attitude problem. And I was approached first day and they're like, "Do you have a problem or something?" I'm like, "I'm just ready." And they were like, "Okay, well, we'll see." And that day, you know, we had like this, this grueling workout, right? And I was ready. And I'm looking to the side, I'm looking next to me, and this dude literally could not do two pushups. And I'm looking at him and I'm like, "This is amazing." And I look up and one of the instructors are looking at me. It's like I told you I was ready. Whatever they were throwing at us, I was knocking back.

**Teresa:** Eight to 10 hours a day, Jinho ran dirt hills, slogged through mud, and swung through obstacle courses. The officers who trained him were tough, protected, and drilled into him that this job was dangerous.

**Jinho:** Her whole thing is: my students will survive the battle. They will live. You watch videos of cops being killed and they pick those videos apart. You know, why was this cop killed? He was careless in his stance. He wasn't, you know, at a proper angle. It's the traffic stop that you least expect that's gonna kill you.

**Teresa:** If they watched any videos where the cops were the ones that killed people, well, Jinho doesn't remember that part. I talked to the department Jinho trained with about this, the Alameda County Sheriff's department. Their spokesperson Sergeant Ray Kelly says the department now includes videos of officer-involved shootings in their training, but they didn't when Jinho was in the Academy. And some of his training was kind of surprising to him as someone who grew up in one of the neighborhoods they were talking about policing.

**Jinho:** There was one incident where the instructor was talking about how with a patdown search, how you can't just reach into somebody's pocket and pull out drugs if you think that, you know, he has drugs in there. And I countered, I was like, "You know, in Oakland, I've seen cops reach into somebody's pocket and pull out drugs and say the drugs are right here, you know?" And he was like, "Well, I'm telling you what the law is." And I'm like, "And I'm telling you, I've seen it."

**Teresa:** Jinho felt like he was from another universe a lot of the time at the academy, but he did well there.

**Jinho:** I expected hillbillies. I expected just madness. And when you're in there, it's eye-opening and you see all these people being trained and a lot of them are good dudes. It's like being on a football team.

**Teresa:** There are plays that you memorize and practice over and over again. Everyone has a job to do. Everyone has each other's backs. Jinho's good at football and he was good at this too. He was disciplined, competitive, the kind of guy who pushes himself to excel at everything he does.

**Jinho:** Like, I graduated, I think second. I gave the speech at the graduation.

**Teresa:** Then Jinho was on the force, patrolling some of the same communities he was raised in. It didn't really hit him until he clocked into one of his first shifts. He got into uniform and he ran into this guy he knew.

**Jinho:** He saw me and it was just like, oh my god. It was almost like somebody punched him in the face, but he was just stunned. He was just completely blown away to know that I was a cop. And he was like, "Okay, okay." You know, "I see you." So moments like those is when I realized, "Oh, you know, I'm a cop, wow." Or realize that the impact and the depth of what it actually meant.

**Teresa:** From the beginning, Jinho wanted to be a good cop and a good man. So he needed to be the opposite of the cops he'd had some bad run-ins with. He took certain precautions. He didn't carry a taser because he didn't want to accidentally hurt someone with it.

**Jinho:** Like my values put me in greater danger. I was very cautious. It was about to start getting dark. It was like dusk. It would probably would have started with the tone. Boop. And then everyone pays attention because they know something serious. "Units in the area of one, five, three in East 14th, armed 2-11 just occurred. Victim is, uh, you know, middle-age, uh, BFA, black female adult suspects, you know, five young black males, one possible black female, black handgun, you know, fled southbound East 14th. Occurred two minutes ago."

And it probably went something like that. And then you would have heard a bunch of cops answering up, "Put me on it. I'm on my way." And then you drive. And so you're just calculating. You're like, okay, it happened two minutes ago. They fled southbound East 14th. If it happened two minutes ago on this street, then they're probably in this area right now. So while I'm driving there, I'm going to be looking and you know, that she gave the description, the physical descriptions and you know, what some of them had on. Now, which was pretty amazing because most victims, when you know, they get robbed, all they see is the gun.

I'm driving in that area, looking for them. And I saw a guy in a park. Black dude, early twenties, had on a jacket, had both his hands in his pockets. And I grabbed the radio. But as I grabbed the radio, I asked myself, "Am I 100% sure that this dude is the suspect?" Because if I pick up this radio and I say, "I have eyes on the suspect from the armed 2-11 armed robbery, cops are coming. And they're gonna be amped up. He might have a gun. So this is basically what I would be bringing down upon this black man if I say I have eyes on the suspect and I'm at the park and this is my location. He fits the description. He's wearing what the dude is wearing. I wasn't sure enough on that particular day to put that over the radio. So I said, "Okay, I'm gonna park my car where he can see me."

**Glynn:** Stay tuned snappers because Jinho's story is just getting started. Snap Judgment.

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Welcome back to Snap Judgment Jinho's Journey. We left off. Jinho had eyes on the suspect that could be armed, could be dangerous, or could be an ordinary guy like him. If Jinho calls for help, that means cops with guns, another black man in the crosshairs. And if he does not, Jinho's on his own. Snap Judgment.

**Jinho:** So I said, "Okay, I'm going to park my car where he can see me. And if he runs, then I'll get on the radio." He didn't run. I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to get out of the car and I'm going to walk directly toward him. And if he runs, then I'll get on the radio." And I walked directly toward him. And every step I'm taking, I mean, he has his hands in his pockets. It's just, in my mind, the possibility that I could get shot is increasing with each step that I'm taking, closing the distance. I'm not going to walk toward him with my hand on my gun because my intent is to not make another innocent black man feel like a suspect. How far am I willing to go to do that?

If he was the suspect, he could have blown my head off. He could have done that. And cops would have said, "Well, it's his fault. He didn't use his training. He didn't get on the radio." Right? The community would have read about it in the paper, you know, cop got shot in the face. A lot of people in the community would have said, "So? You know, he was probably out there falsely accusing people, beating people. He's probably an Uncle Tom."

I walked all the way up to him. And I just talked to him with a smile on my face for about four or five minutes. Since most people are right-handed, I stood on his right side so if he did have a gun in his right hand and he tried to pull it out and shoot me, I would be able to at least have a fighting chance. And I'm looking to see if he touches his head, like a lot of people do before they kill somebody. Then I decide: I don't think he's a suspect. And I leave.

**Teresa:** Jinho found the actual suspects in that robbery about 10 minutes later. He'd been right. The man in the park was innocent, but it still kept him awake at night.

Jinho says he kept doing this. He was generous with alleged suspects even when it went against policing norms and even when they could have really hurt him. There was the barrel-chested guy, shirtless and sweaty, in the dead of winter who kept swinging this metal pipe and the assault suspect Jinho went looking for at midnight in someone's backyard. One night Jinho was driving home after a call about a man with a knife.

**Jinho:** It wasn't until after that, that I thought about Jihad. And I remember thinking, you know, if I was that cop, would I have pulled the trigger? I just feel like if I was there, maybe Jihad would still be alive.

**Teresa:** When Jihad was shot to death by the police, he'd been struggling with mental health issues for years. He had depression, started getting anxious. Then he started to self-medicate. He tried to get help but had trouble getting into a residential treatment program. Sometimes he'd get high and get paranoid about law enforcement, and Jinho would spend a few hours just sitting with him.

**Jinho:** I didn't feel in danger while I was with him. I was talking to a vulnerable person.

**Teresa:** When the police killed Jihad, Jinho found out exactly what happened in bits and pieces.

**Jinho:** He ran into a restaurant, I think it's the Bagdad Cafe in San Francisco. And he grabbed some knives. We came outside and he was dancing around with the knives. And, you know, he was obviously having some type of mental breakdown. And two cops showed up. So he supposedly, uh, lunged at one of them, and they shot him. And he died.

**Teresa:** Jihad's death made the news. Jinho says those first few articles didn't mention that he'd gone to UC Berkeley or been a straight-A student.

**Jinho:** It said something to the effect of "armed homeless man, shouting racial and homophobic slurs is killed by police." The saddest part is we were talking one day and he, uh, he told me he was gay, you know. And you know, it was a trip because it never, it never crossed our, we never saw Jihad with a girl. He never had a girlfriend, but it never crossed our minds. Girls were in love with him, but we just figured he was too focused on football and school and, you know, achievement.

I mean, there's this dude with all this potential. All this potential, potential to do anything, an amazing person. And, you know, I just imagine my friend having this mental breakdown where he's shouting all the things that the world calls him.

I didn't protest. I didn't, I didn't organize. I wasn't like Jihad. It was like the beast just kind of reached into my world and, and took somebody. I mean, this dude killed my friend. There was a cop who killed my friend. He didn't know who he was. He didn't care about him. And he killed him.

**Teresa:** Now that Jinho was in law enforcement, certain details about Jihad's death stood out to him like the way the cop said Jihad lunged at them with a knife.

**Jinho:** I know how we were trained in the academy. And I know what use of force laws matter. And I know how the reports are going to be written and, you know, pretty much determined whether or not the cop is going to get off. Like cops can do a lot legally. Like being in law enforcement and being trained, you know, you'll see, you'll read an article where a cop shot somebody or like, you'll see it happen. People are gonna, people are gonna be upset. People are going to protest that. And you know, in the end, he's going to be fine because it was legal. But he shouldn't have done it. Like I wouldn't have done it.

**Teresa:** Sometimes Jinho knew what the right thing to do was though it could be tough to actually do it. A lot of the time he says policing was like getting trapped in this maze. You had the power to do pretty much anything, a thousand decisions to make, and it was so easy to take a wrong turn. Day after day, year after year, Jinho policed neighborhoods like the one he grew up in. One time, a mom called the cops on her son because he just wasn't listening. Another time, Jinho got a gun call about a kid and it turns out he just had a BB gun. Sometimes a call would go out over the radio and they describe a suspect - black man, heavyset, dark clothes - that could be absolutely anyone.

**Jinho:** Have I ever been wrong about a person? Like they put out a description of a suspect and I stopped somebody and I was wrong. Yes. I've been wrong. Yeah. Yeah. I've been wrong.

**Teresa:** How'd it feel to be wrong?

**Jinho:** I felt like I was reasonably wrong, you know, but I've been wrong at least a couple of times. Working in law enforcement is hard. It's the most difficult years of my life. I went in and I've never tased anybody. I've never pepper-sprayed anybody. I've never shot anybody. I've never beat anybody's ass. I did what I came to do.

**Teresa:** I am just taking a minute to reflect on the fact that like being a success as a police officer is not committing violence based on what you just articulated, right? Like, is that what success is? Is success is not seriously hurting somebody?

**Jinho:** Well, I mean, that depends on, you know, there are instances in which somebody is going to have to get hurt. What I'm pleased about is I was able to go in and do the job the way that I wanted it to be done. I was never the cop that I would have complained about.

**Teresa:** And Jinho didn't want to just avoid being a bad cop. He tried to be an actively good cop. He helped create a new unit that focused on community outreach, trying to address the circumstances that created crime in the first place. He helped them run after-school activities, bring in therapists, created community groups, and worked with kids. And it was complicated. Some people in the community weren't that psyched to have cops running their after-school activities.

**Jinho:** So-called good cops and community policing cops around the country have done a terrible job of protecting the community from bad cops. It's like they have no reason to trust you.

**Teresa:** And a lot of cops look down on this kind of work. Jinho says some of the dudes he worked with were cool, but a lot of them just didn't see this as real policing. He says it wasn't like they didn't like each other. Jinho was just separate.

**Jinho:** The guys I worked with were the guys that I worked with. I'm like, I've never been invited to the barbecue at a coworker's house, you know. The information that you have can isolate you. And the understanding that you have.

**Teresa:** It turns out that occupying a badge and a gun can get lonely and hard. Then eight years into his career as an Alameda County Sheriff's deputy, Jinho was about to wrap up his shift when a call came in over the radio.

**Jinho:** It was just a call for shots fired. You don't know who shot who, and I showed up and there was a man dead in a parking lot.

**Teresa:** And that's how Jinho ended up walking towards a swarm of cops in a thrift store parking lot and the black man that they had just killed.

**Jinho:** Some people are on the perimeter and getting statements from everybody. We had to like interview people and everybody has a different job to do.

**Teresa:** Details about the shooting came out later. The man the deputies shot was named Chris Ballard, and he was allegedly trying to shoplift from that thrift store. According to the Alameda County Sheriff's department, Ballard tried to make a break for it in his car, and the deputies got entangled in his open car door as he drove away. They say Ballard dragged them about 20 feet, and they opened fire to stop him and to save their own lives.

Jinho didn't know about any of this yet. He remembers thinking, well, maybe this shooting was justified, but maybe it wasn't. And maybe it wasn't right. And at some point down the line, if I stay here long enough...

**Jinho:** ...how long am I going to be able to do this? How long am I going to be okay with the possibility of getting shot in the face by a person that I was not trying to treat like a suspect? Was there a point where I'm just, you know, getting on the radio? Yeah, I got the possible over here. Get down on the ground. Pulling a gun out. Am I going to get to that point? Because you know, fighting the good fight just doesn't make sense anymore?

**Glynn:** A few weeks after that shooting, Jinho Ferreira turned in his badge. He and his band Flipsyde, they've gotten back together again and they're cranking out a song a month. What you're hearing right now is one of their new singles "I Can't Breathe."

Jinho's also working on a TV series, inspired by his experiences in law enforcement and, snappers, he's been going to protests. He says he's proud of the young people he sees out in these streets, demanding a different world. We can't thank you enough for sharing his story with us. This version of the story was adapted from the piece originally produced from WorldAffairs, an incredible weekly podcast and radio show special.

Special thanks to Jared Sport and Joanne Elgart Jennings, who originally edited and co-produced this piece. If you like Jinho's story, you want to check out the WorldAffairs podcast. It's been a hell of a time, the world shifting beneath our feet. If you want help making sense of it, WorldAffairs will break it down. Search for WorldAffairs, one word, wherever you get your podcasts to listen and subscribe. The original score for this story was by Renzo Gorrio. It was reported and produced by Teresa Cotsirilos and was edited by Nikka Singh.

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