

# Criminal justice reformer Mark L. O'Brien to donate book sales proceeds to combat criminal justice and addiction trauma.

*The author's debut memoir explores the profound consequences of a moment that forever changed his life and cut short the life of the woman he loved.*

BALTIMORE, MD, UNITED STATES, June 5, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The morning after a birthday party she threw for him, Mark L. O'Brien woke up in the hospital to learn that his girlfriend was dead, and he was going to prison for causing the car crash that killed her.

In his debut memoir, [Crashing: I Love You. Forgive Me](#), Mark L. O'Brien leads us on a deeply personal, intimate, and emotional journey—grappling with loss, regret, and his fragmented memories of the night of the crash, questioning a new relationship fraught with immense shame and colored by his continued attachment to his lost love, and ultimately finding that the forgiveness of his girlfriend's family and questions about his guilt can't save him from incarceration.



Mark L. O'Brien outside his home in Maryland.

While the heart of *Crashing* is O'Brien's unflinching exploration of his pain and shame in the aftermath of the crash and his path to redemption, readers will be shocked by the banal dysfunction and casual incompetence of the criminal justice and addiction treatment systems. O'Brien confronts this and has since dedicated himself to reforming these systems.

"I knew I made a horrible mistake, but I was stunned to see the disgrace we've allowed these systems to become," O'Brien says. "From racism and dehumanizing cruelty to nearly comic ineptitude, none of us are better off living in a society with a criminal justice system that makes it impossible for people to choose a better path and an addiction treatment system that leaves people more traumatized than when they entered it."

O'Brien has committed to donating all proceeds from sales of *Crashing* to nonprofit programs



Mark L. O'Brien has lived through a tragedy and made something beautiful of it. He has gathered the pieces of his shattered life, and from them built this unforgettable book."

*Darin Strauss, National Book Critics Circle Award Winner*

that address the trauma of criminal justice involvement and addiction.

#### About the Author

Mark L. O'Brien is a leading advocate and nonprofit executive in trauma, criminal justice, and addiction. He began his reform career working with advocates, members of Congress, and Obama-era White House staff to address systemic barriers for people with criminal records and improve access and quality in addiction treatment. After working as a Senior Policy Associate and Director of

Communications at the nonprofit Legal Action Center, he served as Baltimore City's Director of Opioid Overdose Prevention where he managed a high-profile overdose response, cited as a model by then-President Barack Obama. O'Brien then became an Executive Vice President at Addiction Policy Forum where he led development of local government strategies for addressing addiction as well as programs serving survivors of substance-related losses. Recognizing that unaddressed trauma was both a cause and consequence of so many of the problems in these systems, O'Brien founded [Trauma Informed](#) to empower trauma survivors and promote trauma-informed approaches to public safety and behavioral health.

Advance Praise for *Crashing: I Love You. Forgive Me.*

"Mark L. O'Brien has lived through a tragedy and made something beautiful of it. He has gathered the pieces of his shattered life, and from them built this unforgettable book. Not only will this story of transformation move you; it will challenge your most basic assumptions about guilt, grief, mercy, and justice. Not to be missed."—Darin Strauss, National Book Critics Circle Award recipient and award-winning author of *Half a Life*.

"Mark L. O'Brien's powerful memoir, *Crashing*, takes readers on a heartbreaking journey through his pain and anguish as he comes to terms with his role in his girlfriend's death. It's a powerful reminder of the human spirit's capacity to choose redemption, and also an excellent primer on how substance use and addiction needs to be treated—with scientific evidence and compassion."—Leana Wen, MD, CNN Medical Analyst and author of *Lifelines*.

"When [Mark] first shared his story with me, I was aghast. I was obviously shocked by the details of the moment that changed Mark's life forever, but I was equally shocked by Mark's transparency and authenticity, which is on full display in this book. *Crashing* is not only a book about tragedy and heartbreak, but it's also about love, forgiveness, and hope. Mark's courageous memoir is a true illustration of growth after trauma."—Devon Still, MBA, MAPP former NFL player, founder of the Still Strong Foundation, and author of *Still in the Game*.

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