Announcer:

On the next episode of Big Ideas TXST, acclaimed poet, Cyrus Cassells visits the podcast to discuss his career, family leper colonies in Hawaii, living in a monastery hermitage, and the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on his creative process.

Cyrus Cassells:

In terms of the pandemic, I wrote a couple of poems. I have a new book that's just gone to the typesetter. It's a very political book. It's not very much like my other books. It's kind of a record of this period in history, I guess. And it was spurred by the murder of my close friend and assistant's father in Houston in a Stand Your Ground incident, where he was shot coming out of a post office. And he was in a ... I guess he had parked in a handicap parking space and this other man had a scuffle with him and shot him. And he died eventually after a couple of weeks. And because of the Stand Your Ground Law, he didn't have to spend any real serious jail time. But eventually the grand jury found him guilty because the forensic evidence was that there was no scuffling, he just shot Nick and his father through the mail.

Cyrus Cassells:

So this is something I sat on for a year. I thought, "Do I really want to say something?" And then it happened to this other family in Florida. That's a much better known case. And I thought, "Well, I think it's time to let people know that you were in the vicinity of this Houston situation," at least having someone close to me go through it. Because at first they were like, "There was no surveillance. So it seems like my father has been shot and we didn't know what happened." And it was just a nightmare, such a nightmare. And I was actually overseas working again. And all I could do was ask a friend of mine who's a journalist at Houston Chronicle to look into it. So they sent a reporter and did a beautiful story in the fall. This all happened in May when his father was shot here. So this new book, it's called The World That the Shooter Left Us is about that incident and responding to that level of violence.

Announcer:

To hear the full interview, listen to Big Ideas, episode 11, available December 7th. Subscribe to experience more innovative, thought-provoking content from Texas State University.