

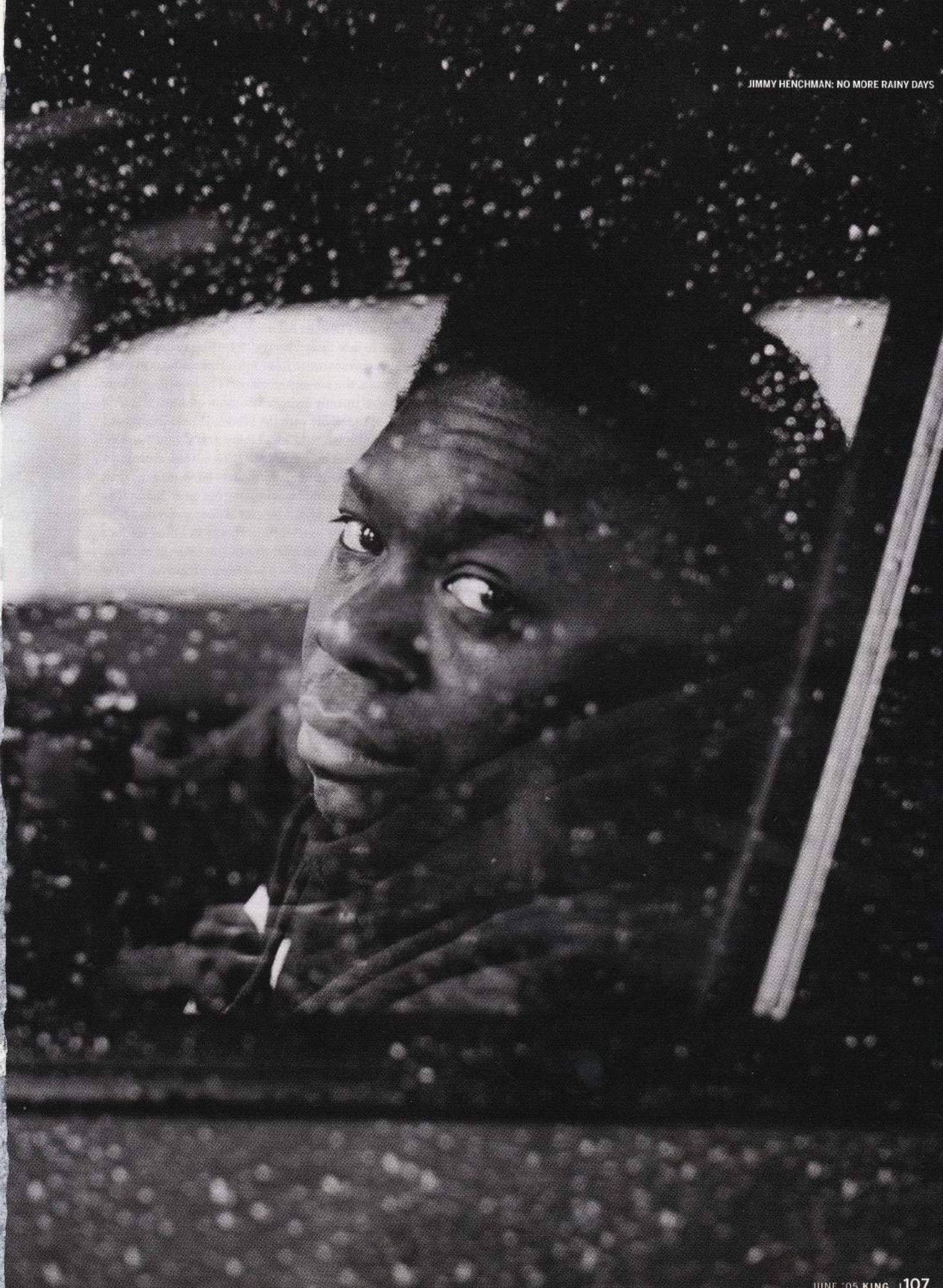
SOUL
SURVIVORS
2:

For those who've seen the penitentiary, staying free isn't an option—it's a necessity. These six reformed felons reveal the life-altering lessons they learned while doing hard time, showing the trials and tribulations they met on their long road to redemption and freedom. Against all odds, this is the realest shit they've ever spoke.

Story
Anthem Sarnoff
Photography
Clay Patrick McBride

CELL
THERAPY





Jimmy "Henchmen" Rosemond ALIAS: The Executive AGE: 36 REPRESENTS:

Brooklyn, NY BID(S): Three years waiting to be cleared on drug charges and weapons possession charges; 11 months for a separate weapons-possession charge TIME FREE: Almost 4 years and counting

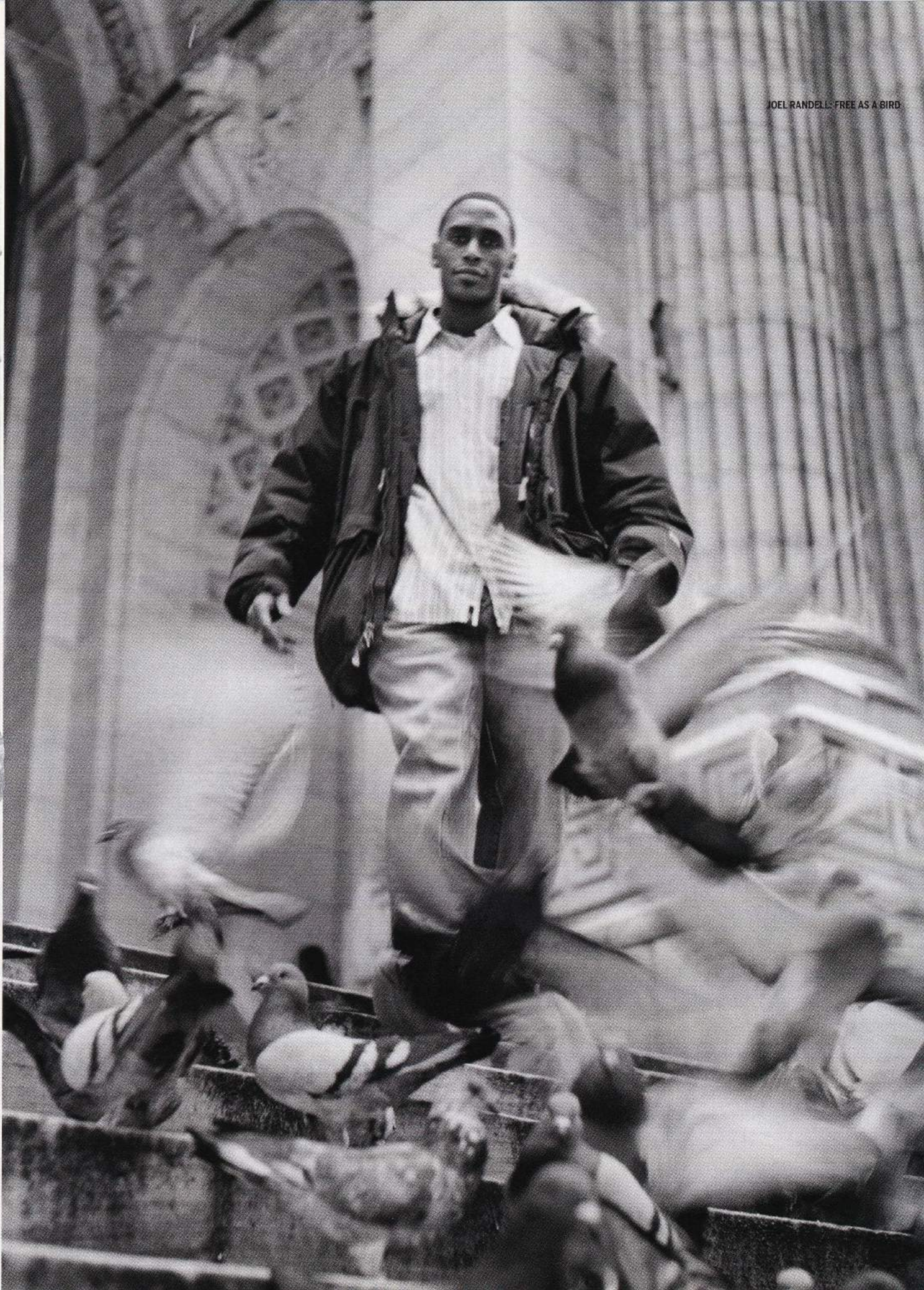
I've been in the music business for about 14 years now, but before that I was knee-deep in the streets. Nobody in the industry really knew that. All they knew is that I was the guy who helped finance the How Can I Be Down? Conference and that I had some hit records. So I was able to make a name for myself in the industry and just hide from the Feds. The music business was like my refuge. ¶ But in 1996, my past caught up to me. During a trip to L.A., I was arrested. I don't know how they knew I had [a gun], but the police raided my hotel room and found one. Then they discovered I had a few cases that I was on the run from. I had one gun charge in New York that I had jumped bail on, and then they hit me with some conspiracy charges for crack and an attempted murder. They were all federal charges so I was facing two life sentences. ¶ My cases were old, like from '91 or something, but the Feds wanted me bad. But I wouldn't cop out 'cause I knew I could beat it. So I went to jail for almost four years, continuously fighting these cases and ended up beating them. I was only home for about eight months though, 'cause all of a sudden the California [District Attorney] says they gonna charge me for the gun they found in my hotel room. So I had to go back to L.A. to face those charges. ¶ During the sentencing hearing, friends of mine like Gladys Knight, Wyclef, Queen Latifah and a representative from Jesse Jackson's camp came to my defense. They very touchingly gave speeches about where I came from, the amount of careers I've helped, and how much I've changed as [a person]. That really won over the judge, so I ended up only owing a few more months. ¶ It took going to jail for me to realize that I couldn't fuck with the streets no more, especially with the kinda opportunities that I was coming home to. 'Cause people like [Flavor Unit's] Shakim Compare, [Violator's] Chris Lighty, and [Loud Records' founder] Steve Rifkin were my peers. We were all managers at the same time, but here it is: I take this fall and these guys' careers propel. I [was watching] them on the TV in my jail cell, like, "Damn, there goes Shakim, there go so-and-so." So it was that kinda torment that I was going through, man. I almost lost my mind knowing I was missing out on all that. ¶ The whole experience made me know what I needed to do when I did come home for good. 'Cause a lot of people stay on a negative path until they get struck by lightning. My lightning was the tribulations I went through being in limbo for four years not knowing if next month I had a life sentence or another case to fight. ¶ I dealt with a lot of ignorance in my time, so for me to come from that to becoming an astute businessman is truly a blessing. I'm a kid from Brooklyn; I never thought I'd be having conversations with Dr. Dre every day. But that's where I'm at now. From going to the penitentiary to only being home for three-and-a-half years and to accomplish the things that I have, there's no better success story. I thank God for that.

THE VERDICT: Jimmy manages the Game, Mario Winans and Black Rob. He also coexecutive produces *The Vibe Awards*, and released *The Original 50 Cent DVD* this year.

**Joel Randell** ALIAS: The Writer AGE: 34 REPRESENTS: Long Branch, NJ BID(S): Three years and eight months for robbery; two years for grand larceny/auto theft TIME FREE: Two years and counting

I was 19 years old and me and my homies were clownin' and drunk on a saturday night. We went into this 7-Eleven on the West End of town and started boostin' food. We got confronted [by the store clerk] and just threw the stuff on the ground. Then I pulled out this pellet gun and we walked out. That's when the police pulled up. The attendant came runnin' out like, "He's got a gun!" The cops drew their weapons and arrested us. ¶ The trial was intense. I can't even front and say it wasn't scary. When the jury came back and said, "We find the defendant guilty," my stomach just fell and my knees buckled. It was like walking into a subway tunnel and there's no light. I felt completely dark. ¶ Two weeks after I got out of prison, I was in college. For the next five years, I never took a semester off until I got my Bachelor's in Journalism and Mass Media. But I was still into stealing cars and takin' them to the chop shop to get cash. And there was an incident with an American Express Gold Card [I found in a car], where me and one of my homies charges up like \$10,000, but of course that left a paper trail. So a month after my graduation, I went back to prison for that. I literally went from the school of higher education back to the school of hard knocks. ¶ Gettin' popped a second time, I went through a borderline breakdown. It just came at such a bad time. I was just getting my foot in the door as a writer. I was writing for all these top newspapers and magazines, and I was up for a job at *New York Newsday* and the *Detroit Free Press*. ¶ The disappointment in myself was pretty heavy, not to mention how I felt for my family and friends. I had been out for five years doing my thing, going to college, so it was really a speechless reaction when I told them I had to go down a second time. It was just a tough pill to swallow, man. ¶ If I had the opportunity to do it all again, I certainly wouldn't want to go to prison twice. Now I just wanna be a better man. I have ambitions of getting married one day, having seeds, crossing that threshold of 40 and looking back on my prison time not with shame, but as a learning experience.

THE VERDICT: Joel is an editor at a national celebrity magazine. He plans to publish his memoirs sometime in the near future.

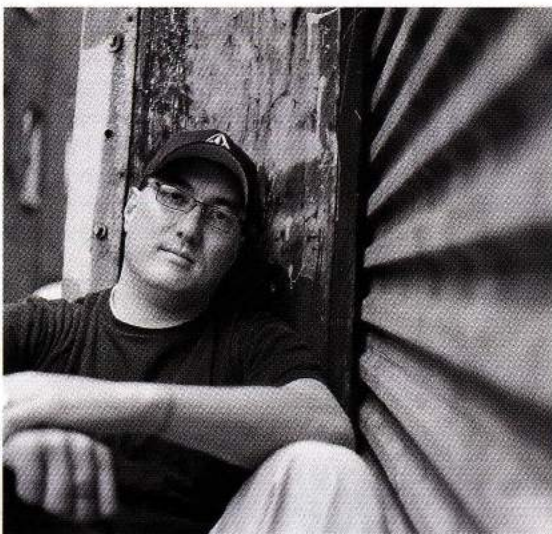


LITTLE SHAWN: SURVIVED THE BIG HOUSE



Dennis Wakabayashi ALIAS: The Artist AGE: 34 REPRESENTS: Denver, CO BID: Two years for 15 counts each of aggravated robbery and aggravated assault TIME FREE: 18 years and counting

I happened to go to school where there were a lot of Crips. I was known on the street for graffiti, which was just part of the neighborhood, and then became a Crip. [My crew was] young, like 15 or 16, so it was hard to really get your serve on. So we had to supplement that with robbin' stores and stuff. There ain't too many Japanese-White kids in Colorado, so somebody recognized me one time and called the police. ¶ I was pretty well known to the police 'cause my dad was a career criminal as well. When you go to the county jail, they have a picture of him and me next to each other on the wall. So they knew who I was and came to arrest me at school. I didn't get out for another two years after that. ¶ My daughter was born when I was 18, and I pretty much stopped Crippin' after that. I took all my Dickies, my flannels and my T-shirts and put them in a big Hefty bag and threw them in the trash. I had two pairs of pants and a shirt left. I went to my boys and they were like, "We understand you wanna try to make it, so go ahead. But if there's a problem, we can't protect you anymore." So I was pretty much on my own. ¶ About a



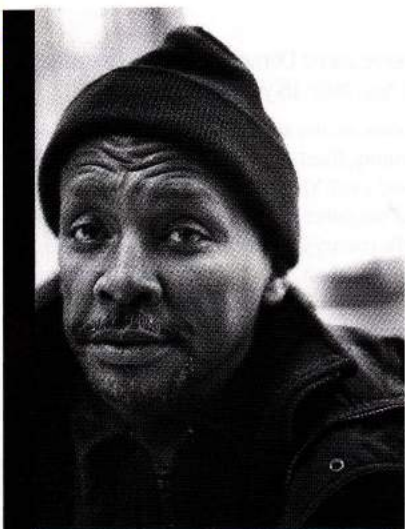
year later, I was doing some graffiti [that was broadcast] on TV and this advertising agency saw me. The CEO tracked me down and gave me a job. That's how I got into advertising. With all the programming and computer stuff I taught myself in jail, and my natural art background, it was a perfect fit. ¶ About 18 months later, I was at the number-one agency in Colorado. I went from being in trouble all the time and having to watch my back to having some rich White guy say, "Hey, would you take some money to come work for us?" Hell, yeah! ¶ Being part of a gang isn't that bad. It's just the peer pressure and stuff you do to other people that you have to avoid. And in some strange way, it's like my family is my gang now. And I'm definitely down with that.

THE VERDICT: Dennis heads up the creative division of an ad agency in Colorado. He also mentors local youths in his spare time.

Little Shawn aka Shawn Pen ALIAS: The Rapper AGE: 35 REPRESENTS: Brooklyn, NY BID(S): Five years for a conspiracy to distribute narcotics charge TIME FREE: 18 months and counting

I was at [New York City music studio] the Hit Factory when I heard the Feds was at my crib. I had just signed my fourth recording deal with Sylvia Rhone for a bunch of paper. I wasn't even hustling at the time; I had stopped like a year prior. But I knew they was coming. ¶ What happened was, some dudes I knew got caught [with four kilos of coke]. Then I started getting strange phone calls and people asking me funny questions. But I never talk on the phone, so if you ask me something crazy, I'm gonna hang up. I never actually got physically caught [with any drugs]. But the Feds don't need evidence to indict you; all they need is word of mouth. ¶ If it was up to me, I would have fought the case, but you can't beat the Feds. They got a 98-percent win rate. And if I went to trial, I would have been facing 35 years, so I just copped to a conspiracy charge. Five years wasn't nothing compared to everything I did back in the day. Really, if you get under 10 in the Feds, you're blessed. ¶ I totally had the wrong perception of lockdown. The state prisons are like gladiator school, but the Feds is a mental game: Like, when I got to prison, it started with me wanting to be home to get back in the industry. After a year, I just wanted to see my family. Another two years or so, I wanted just to see a tree, to get outside and feel some rain. But you know what they say, "You gotta do the time. You can't let the time do you." Well, the time was doing me for two years. ¶ The hardest part was not seeing my daughter, who was 5 when I went away. You don't wanna leave your child at that crucial age. And she's a girl, so she needs to see Daddy. At first, I didn't want her to see me behind bars, but after the first two years of not seeing her, that changed. So I had my mom bring her up. ¶ I was fortunate because I never really lacked for a [visit]. A lot of dudes that I ran with had a lot more time than me, like 10, 15, 25 years, and never had visits. So you're really conscious about coming off the visits talking about it 'cause they don't wanna hear that. It's a big miserable experience. Everybody in there is mad and very emotional. They're on the edge all day, every day, every year. ¶ It's a great experience being home, but it's an adjustment. I'm out in the street, no hammer in my waist. I'm in cabs, I'm on the train—in the [New York subway system] there's no more tokens! All that's a readjustment for me. ¶ I have no regrets or bitterness, though. In fact, I'm so glad I went away. I needed that. Trust me when I tell you I needed that. When you hear a dude telling you that, believe him. I went through something spiritual, and it changed my outlook. A lot of young kids I left on the block are either dead or on their way to jail. I just came from there, and I'm not trying to go back.

THE VERDICT: He's looking to find his indie label Brain Power a home. In the meantime, he's ghostwriting material for other artists.



going to jail was a bit of a strain on my family 'cause when I came out there was another man in my wife's life. We're divorced now. But in retrospect, that was nothing. I seen so many guys come out with HIV, so [at least I] have my health. ¶ Being incarcerated is not what it's about. Some guys actually think going to jail makes you a man. Nah, this is a mistake. This ain't where you belong. One of the jobs I had while I was in there was this volunteer program that taught guys how to read. I got a couple success stories I feel good about. At least when I was there, I did something.

THE VERDICT: Anthony is between jobs but makes ends meet as a personal chef in NYC. He also wants to work as a registered dietician.

Anthony Bryant ALIAS: The Chef AGE: 57 REPRESENTS: Harlem, NY BID(S): Three years for second-degree manslaughter; seven years for assault and robbery TIME FREE: Five years and counting

At the time [of my first arrest] I was doing contracting work. I met this guy through another friend, and we became partners [at work]. One day we had a confrontation up in the Bronx, and he threatened me. Then, he said, "I'll kill ya woman and kid." Those were the last words he uttered. ¶ I fired four shots to his body. To this day I don't regret it. My child? My woman? Uh-uh: I knew what this man was capable of. He had held this [other] man's child out the window one time and broke his older son's leg just trying to get money from him. So I had no doubt in my mind he would do what he said. Thank God someone came forward to [corroborate] this man's violence. If not for that, I probably would have gotten more time. ¶ The first night in prison was horrible. I didn't sleep. I couldn't use the bathrooms. I wasn't used to nobody watching me take a crap. It wasn't scary; it was just being able to cope with it. Most people can't handle stuff like that, but I can get along with my own thoughts. The only thing I hated was just being around other folks. ¶ The first time I went in, I got visits every few months. The second time, I got one visit in seven years from my sisters. I'm sure

Dawn Hurd ALIAS: The Activist AGE: 43 REPRESENTS: The Bronx, NY BID(S): 16 years for second-degree murder and third-degree criminal possession of a weapon TIME FREE: Eight years and counting

Me and my boyfriend met when I was 14. He was four years older than me so we waited until I was 16 before we got intimate. That's when the relationship started to go downhill. He just became really obsessed with me and violence came into play. ¶ The day he got shot I was going to meet up with his sister to go to the club. He was playing dice in front of the projects when he seen me. He took me to the side and asked me where I was going. After I told him, he got upset and then one thing led to another. He started grabbing on me and it was like the straw that broke the camel's back. ¶ I wasn't planning to shoot him, it just happened. He used to carry a gun on his waist, and I grabbed for it. It was only one shot, but the bullet hit an artery and he ultimately bled to death. I never thought he would die. I just went for the gun to let him know I was fed up. Obviously, if you take a gun you could cause somebody's death but I wasn't thinking rational at the time. ¶ After the shot went off, people on the street turned around to see what was going on. I didn't want to leave him there, but my boyfriend told me to run. Nobody actually ever saw what happened, they just knew it had to be me 'cause I was the only one close to him. So I basically got convicted off of circumstantial evidence. ¶ I found out I was pregnant four days after I got to prison. My daughter's father was a guy I met through my sister while I was out on bond. It was only a two-month relationship so I was like, "Oh, no, this is all I need." But I don't think God would have let me have a baby if it wasn't meant to happen. ¶ Back then, they used to shackle women in prison while they gave birth—especially if you had a murder charge. The whole thing was painful. I was nine months pregnant with a chain and belt across my stomach. ¶ The courts allowed me to bring my daughter back into the prison. I would have kept her for a year but they reopened my case and I had to send her home. My mother came on the next visit to get her. That and my mother's death from cancer a year-and-a-half later was the worst experiences I had in prison. ¶ By the time I got out my daughter was already in high school. Although we never got to bond like mother and daughter, we're still very close. And I was always truthful with her. ¶ The biggest regret I have is that I took somebody's life. And he was so young, just 21 years old. Maybe he could have changed. So when I look back on everything I feel horrible, and I'm always gonna feel that way. I feel God forgave me, but I never really forgave myself.



THE VERDICT: Dawn is a program associate for the Women's Advocacy Ministry, a New York-based organization that helps female convicts adjust to life outside of prison. She hopes to one day open her own organization to help keep incarcerated parents in contact with their children.