DIVINE EXPOSURE

40 Years Behind the Lens of Faith, Culture, and History

RAYFORD JOHNSON

40 Year Journey of a Photojournalist

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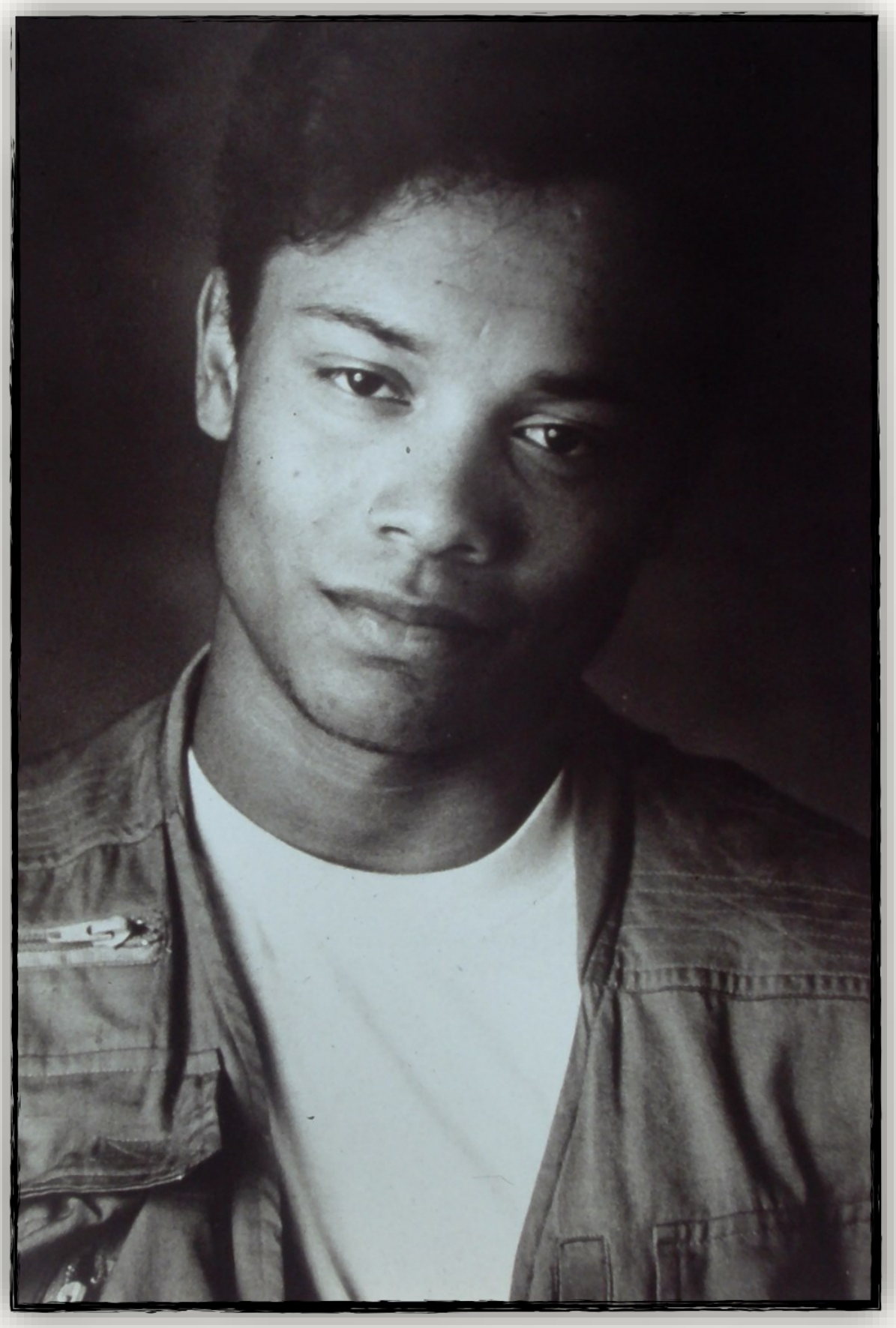
INTRODUCTION

40 YEAR JOURNEY OF A PHOTOJOURNALIST

When I first picked up a camera as a young teenager, I had no idea that God was placing a divine tool in my hands that would help rescue my life, shape my purpose, and open doors I could have never imagined. At the time, I was just a teenager trying to find my way—struggling with low self-esteem, poor grades, depression, and the pressure of being influenced by the wrong crowd during a time when gang culture and gangsta rap were becoming powerful forces in the lives of many young people around me. But God, in His mercy, had another plan.

Photography became more than a hobby for me. It became a lifeline. It gave me focus when I was unfocused, confidence when I felt inadequate, and a vision for my future when I didn't know if I had one. Through the camera lens, I began to see life differently. I learned patience in the darkroom, discipline through developing film, and faith as I watched images appear slowly in the developer tray like small miracles under a red light.

This book is not just about photography. It is about God's grace, mercy, and goodness He lovingly bestowed upon me.



It is about how the Lord used a camera, a homemade darkroom, loving parents, godly mentors, youth ministry, and many divine appointments to guide me through danger in the streets, depression, temptation, Hollywood, ministry, my career in corrections, and more.

Looking back over the past four decades of my life, I can see how every chapter connects. I've had some incredible moments— photographing celebrities, attending red-carpet events, and even having an unforgettable backstage encounter with Whitney Houston at the NAACP Image Awards.

I have endured some painful and dangerous times in my life, such as losing close childhood friends to gang violence and other circumstances. I have also experienced the loss of my sister, brother, and parents, and I have faced intense situations while working as a correctional officer and counselor. Additionally, I have encountered real spiritual warfare in ministry, which has tested me in ways that most people may not understand.

Through all of it—the highs, the heartbreak, the danger, and the battles—God has remained faithful. His strength and guidance have carried me every step of the way.

I was blessed to grow up with a father who was not only brilliant with his hands and mind, but also loving, patient, and present. When we could not afford an enlarger for my darkroom, my father simply said, "We will make our own." That moment taught me more than photography—it taught me faith, creativity, perseverance, and the power of a father believing in his son.

My mother, with her unwavering faith in God and a deep zeal for reaching souls, instilled in me a profound love and reverence for the Lord from an early age. Her steadfast prayers and her living witness kept my conscience vibrant, even during times when I wandered too near the edge of the wrong path.

This journey also includes my years as a young photojournalist working for the Sacramento Observer Newspaper, winning national photography contests, traveling to Los Angeles in the

1980s, freelancing with BET, meeting entertainers, and seeing behind the glamour of fame. What I once thought would fulfill me— celebrity access, money, recognition, and status—God slowly revealed as empty without Him. The Holy Spirit began to show me the pain behind the fame, the spiritual battles behind the entertainment industry, and the need to pray for souls rather than worship public images.

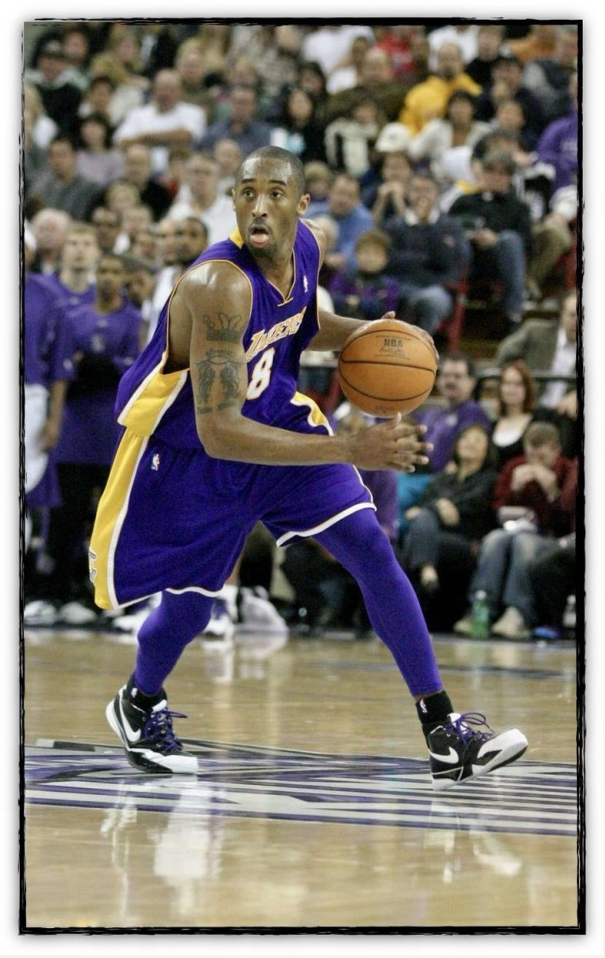
As my life went on, God started expanding my calling beyond the camera. He led me into group home counseling, teaching photography, a career in corrections, and ministry. But even through all of that, photography was still woven into my journey. The camera may have opened a lot of doors, but it was the Holy Spirit who gave me purpose once I walked through them.

The images and stories in this book are more than a professional portfolio; they are pieces of my testimony. They remind me that God can take someone like me — once lost, insecure, depressed, and academically limited — and lead him into places of influence, danger, and service, all for His glory.

I did not travel this road perfectly. I made mistakes. I had moments of fear, foolishness, pride, confusion, and weakness. But God's mercy followed me. His grace corrected me. His Word healed me. His Spirit guided me.

My prayer is that as you read this book, you will not only see the journey of a photojournalist, but also the hand of God behind the journey. I pray you are encouraged to look back over your own life and recognize the moments where God protected you, redirected you, provided for you, and called you closer to Him.

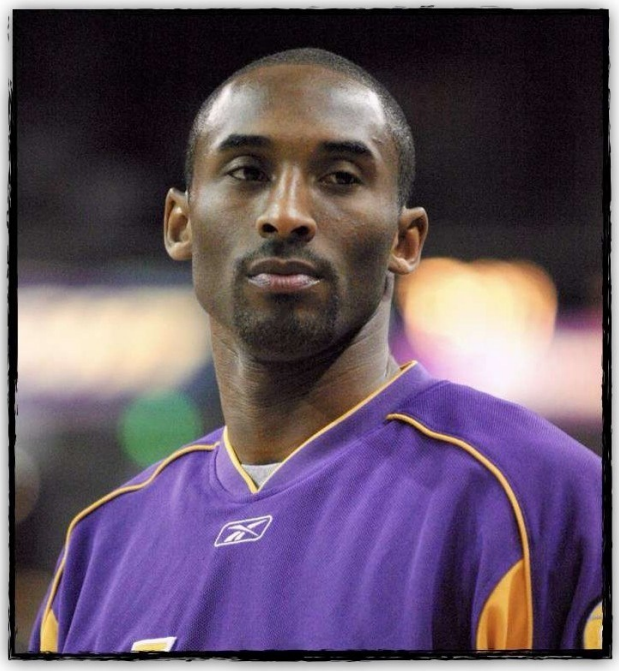
Because sometimes what looks like a camera is really a calling. And sometimes what begins as a hobby becomes the very tool God uses to reveal your purpose.



Kobe Bryant driving with the basketball, Lakers vs. Kings, Arco Arena, 2006.



Kobe Bryant with hands on hips, portrait, Lakers vs. Kings, 2006.



Kobe Bryant in Lakers warm-ups, courtside portrait.



Kobe Bryant in a leather trench coat at the Soul Train Awards.



Kobe Bryant stretching with trainer on court.



Danny Glover surrounded by Ebony Fashion Fair models, 1986.

CHAPTER

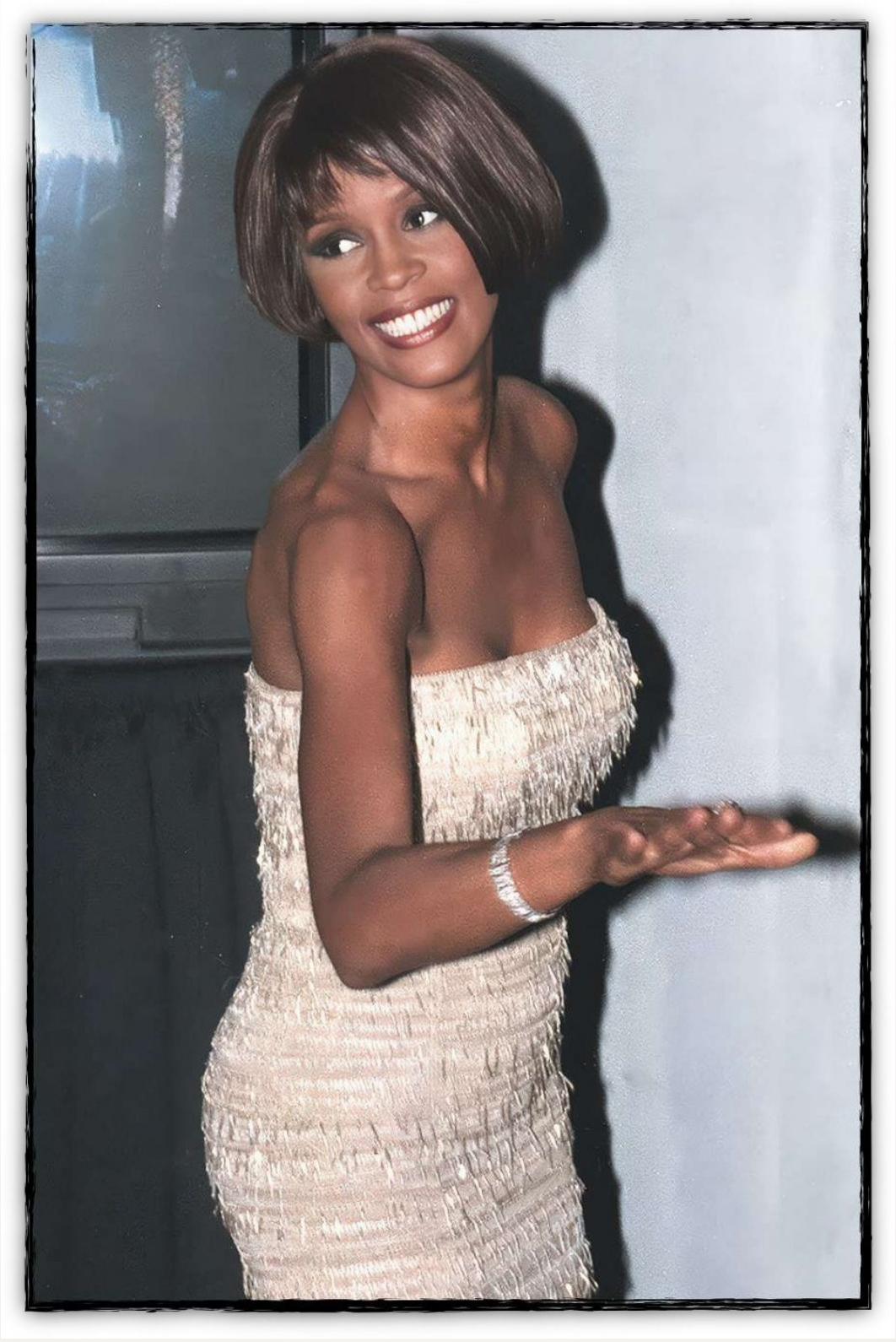
1

MY EPIC ENCOUNTER WITH WHITNEY HOUSTON

It was 1987, and my first celebrity photoshoot took place in Los Angeles, California, for the Sacramento Observer Newspaper. I was backstage at the NAACP Image Awards, just 18 years old, when the legendary Whitney Houston descended the stairs, with a limo waiting at the bottom.

At the time, I believed I was in love with Whitney Houston, and this was my chance to photograph her. However, her team kept getting in my way, blocking my shot. Before I knew it, she was in the limo and pulling out of the backstage garage. All the other photographers looked as disappointed as I did. Suddenly, I decided this wasn't acceptable—I had come to photograph Whitney Houston, and I wasn't going to give up that easily.

I took off like a track star, chasing the limo down an alley and then a small side street. I was gaining on it when the limo suddenly swerved right, and the back passenger window slowly rolled down. It was Whitney Houston, smiling at me and waving me over. I was, admittedly, star-struck. In a surreal moment, I looked behind me to see if she was addressing someone behind me — nobody was there. I was stunned that it was actually me she was calling over.



Whitney Houston wore a gold fringe dress in Los Angeles, California, during the 1990s.

Her manager abruptly said, "Whitney, we gotta go!" We chat for a few more seconds, then she says, in a theatrical way, "Ray, I want you and only you to take my picture." At this point, the word spreads to the other photographers that Whitney's limo has pulled over, so from a distance, I see them rushing toward us. Her manager again says, "Whitney, we gotta go!" I step back, take the photo, and thank her. She replies, "Bye, Ray." By now, veteran photographers are surrounding me, some patting me on the back and giving high fives. A moment I'll never forget—when she passed, I was very saddened and prayed for God's mercy on her soul. For that brief moment I shared with her that night back in 1987, I truly saw a kind, humble, humorous, and loving spirit. I hope to hear her singing with her beautiful, angelic voice in Heaven's Choir when I get there.

The NAACP Image Awards night was lively, filled with excitement and awkward moments. Before the Whitney Houston incident, I committed a major blunder that gained global attention because it was caught on camera by the worldwide media.

I arrived early in the media press room and positioned myself at the bottom row of the three rows. My camera was set up, and I needed to prepare my cassette recorder to catch the Q&As, which would help the Observer staff journalist write the story.



Whitney Houston smiled from a limousine window after I chased it down in 1987 in Los Angeles, California.



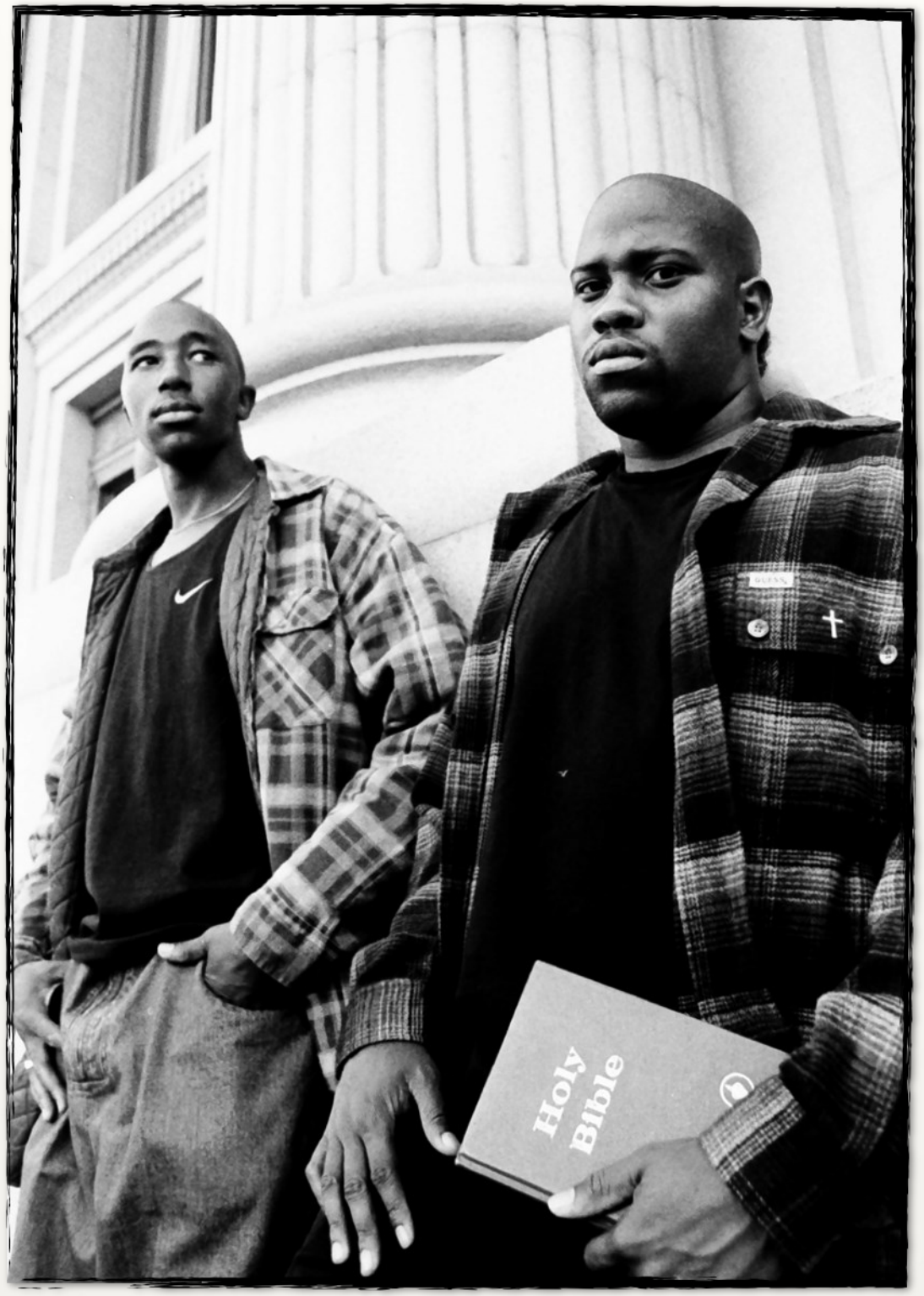


Jenifer Lewis performs her signature high kick on stage at the Mondavi Center in Davis, California.

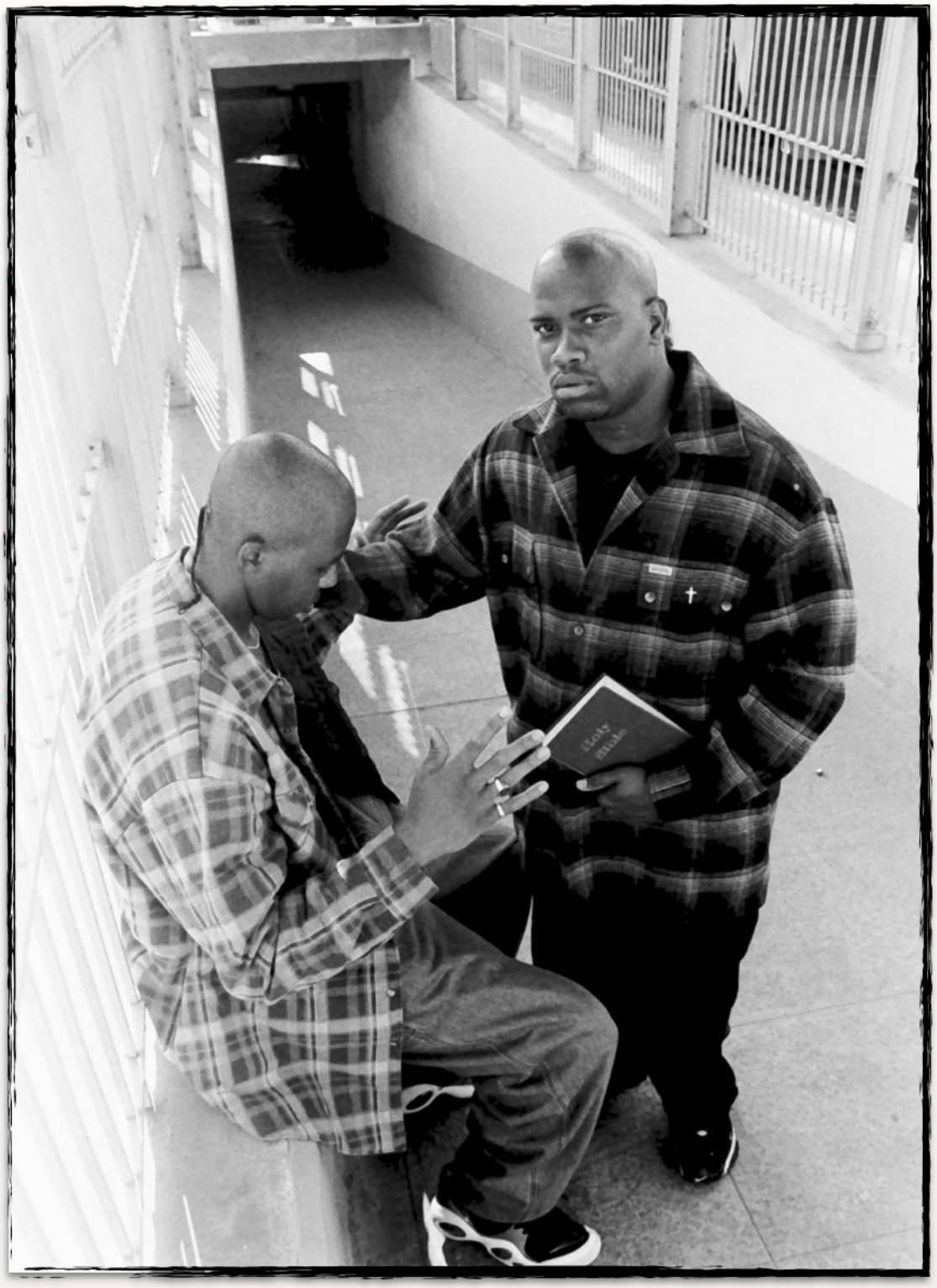


Jenifer Lewis smiling at Steinway grand piano, Mondavi Center, Davis, California.





Rapper and street preacher Tim Jones poses with the Holy Bible alongside our late friend Kevin.



Tim Jones is praying over his late friend Kevin while holding a Holy Bible.

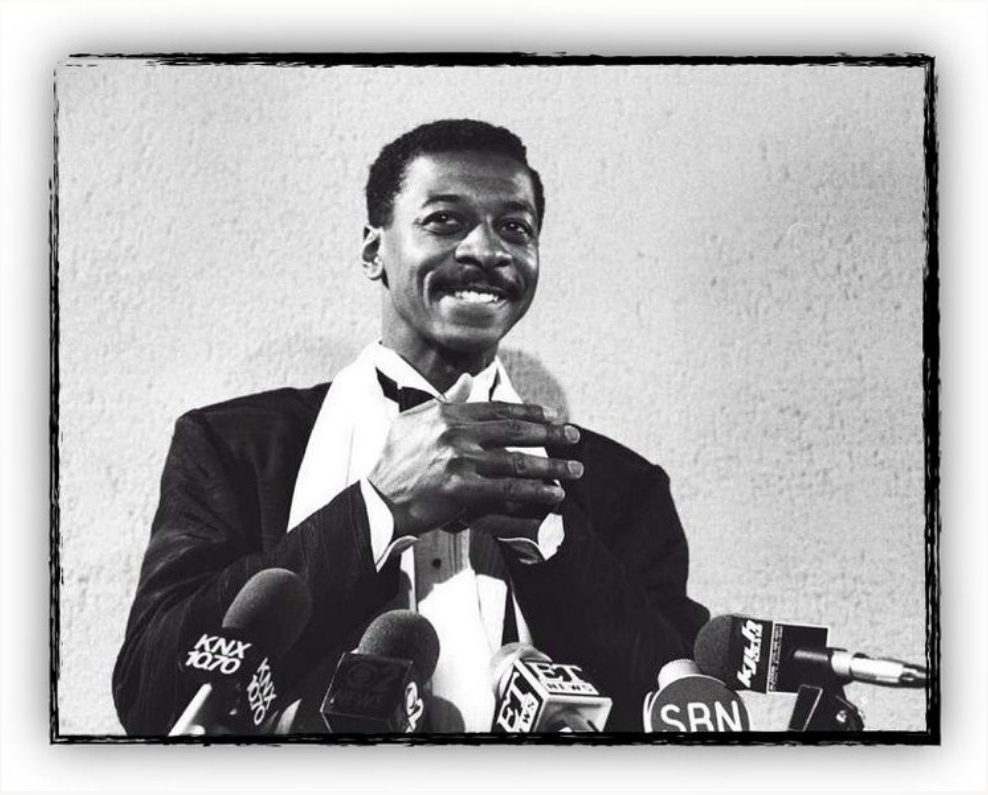
Shockingly, I realized I hadn't brought any blank tapes to record on. I had to think quickly; the only tape I had was a gospel mix tape I made of a Southern Gospel choir. Since this was such an important event, I decided to record over it and make a new one when I got home.

The press conference started, and I placed my bulky tape recorder on the podium. The charismatic actor and filmmaker Mario Van Peebles took the podium. I was ready, my recorder was on, and I was capturing some great footage as the award recipient posed dramatically for the media when suddenly he banged his hand hard on the podium. Then the unexpected happened: my recorder, set to full volume, in front of three bleacher sections filled with media from around the world, suddenly blared out a gospel choir.

Everyone looked shocked, including Mario, who appeared very surprised and glanced around to find where the music was coming from. Then he started dancing to the music, and the media room erupted in laughter. In a panic and feeling confused, I sheepishly stepped up to the podium in front of all the reporters and video cameras, fumbling with the recorder, trying to turn off the music. The laughing crowd grew louder as they saw me struggling to shut off the recorder, and my nerves made me unsure. Meanwhile, Mario kept dancing as if he were in a Southern Baptist church. Finally, I managed to turn the volume off. Mario stopped dancing, the laughter continued, and in good humor, he thanked me for deejaying his moment.

I have met Mario a few times. He's truly humble and a really cool, down-to-earth person. I appreciated how he lightened the mood and made us laugh during such an awkward moment.

I captured some iconic shots that night with Vanessa Williams, Will Smith, Jasmine Guy, Jayne Kennedy and her daughter, Robert Townsend jokingly punching his fists in frustration for not receiving an award for the movie *Hollywood Hustle*, and many more…



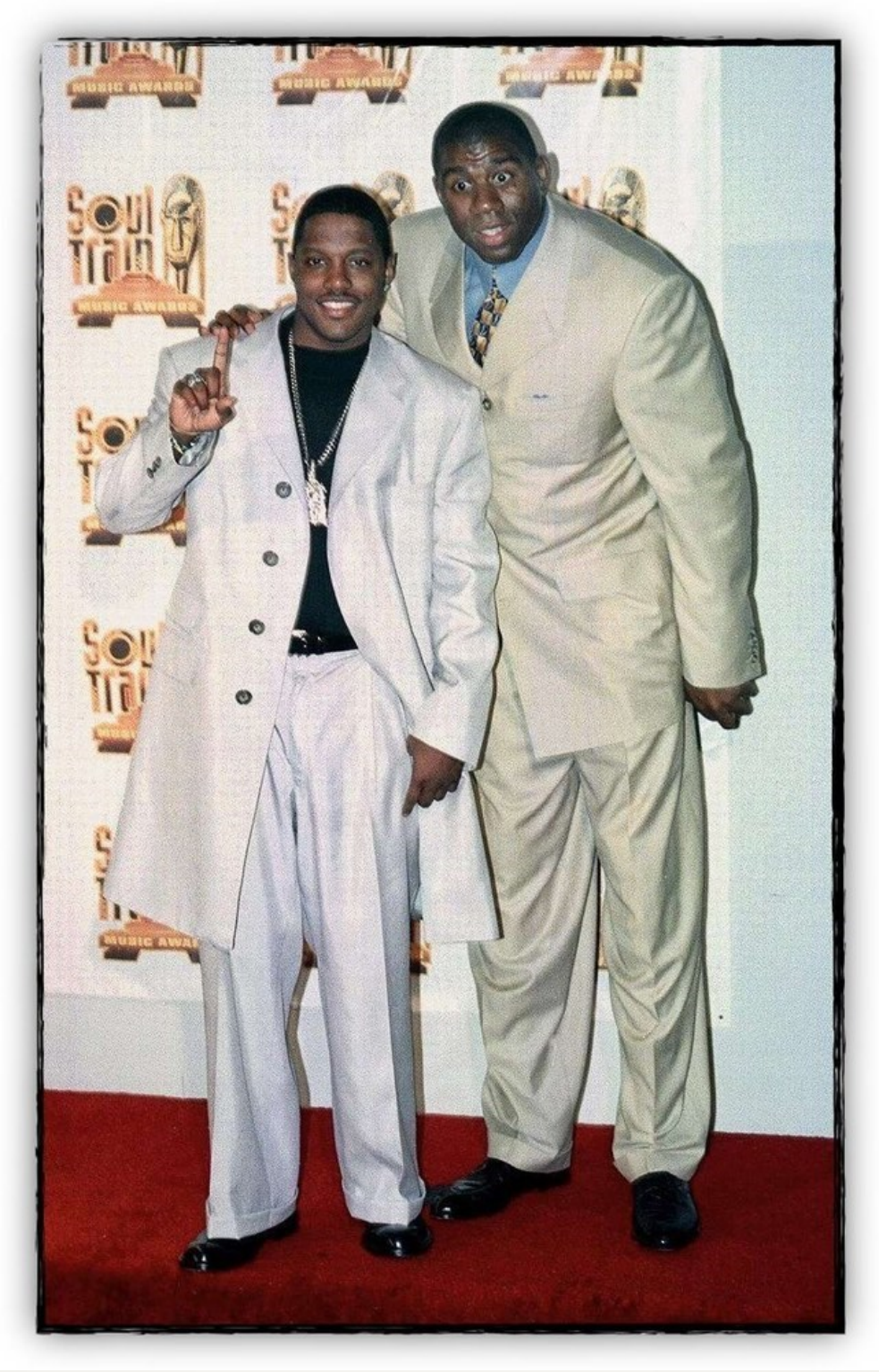
Robert Townsend entertaining the audience at the press conference for the NAACP Image Awards in 1987.



Mario Van Peebles celebrating with the 1988 NAACP Image Award.



In 1987, singer Anita Baker is seen holding her NAACP Image Award trophy.



Mase and Magic Johnson at the Soul Train Music Awards in the 1990s.



Reverend Al Green smiling in a tuxedo at the 1988 NAACP Image Awards.



George C. Scott at the NAACP Image Awards, 1987.



Bobby Brown in acid-wash denim and a leather cap, 1988 portrait at his birthday party. in Universal City, California, 1988.



Luther Vandross and Whitney Houston at the Soul Train Awards, Los Angeles, California.



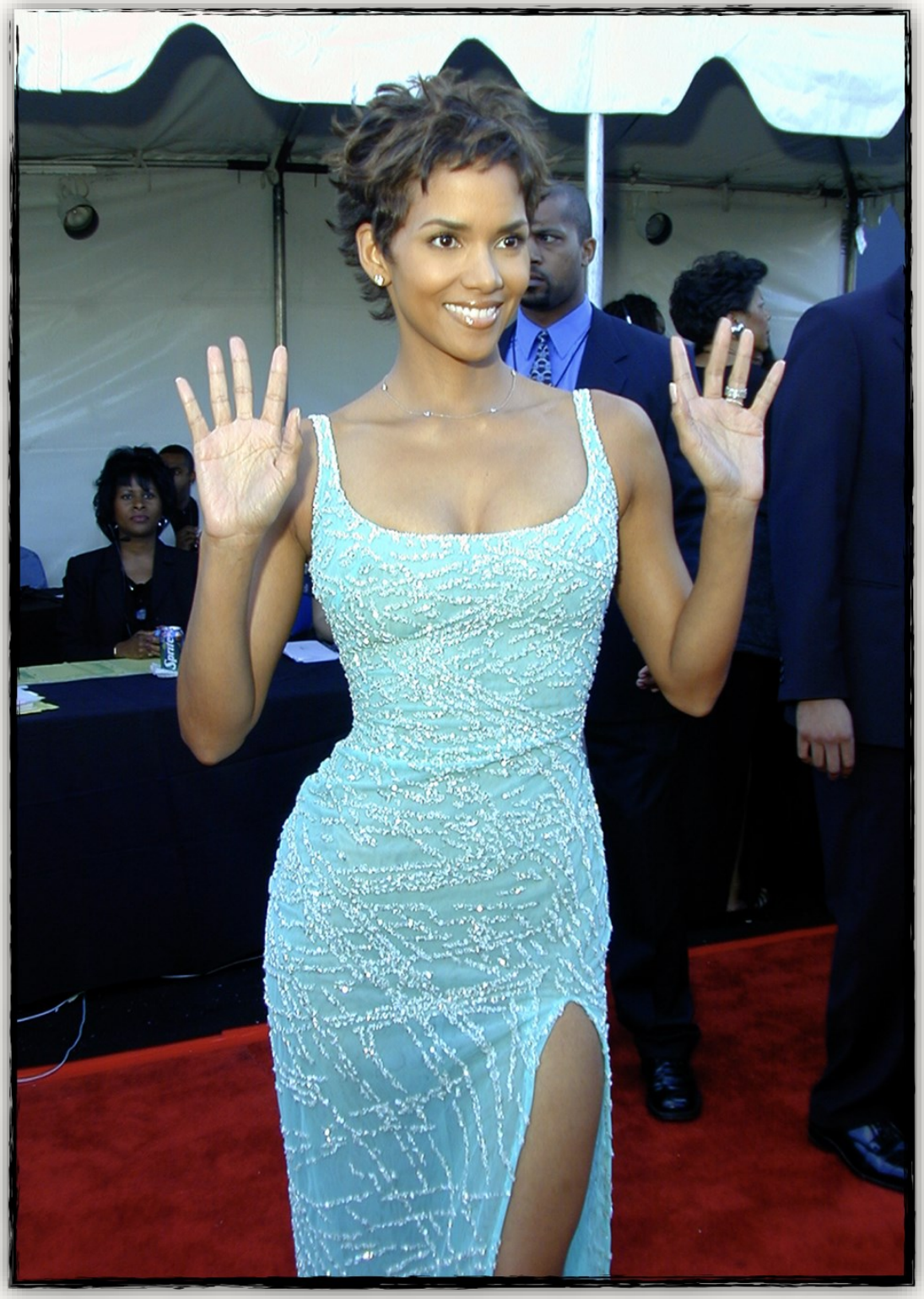
Danny Glover speaking to the press at the NAACP Image Awards in 1988.



Oprah Winfrey wore a sparkling purple dress at the NAACP Image Awards in 1987.



Actor Jackie Chan is smiling in a white suit at an international diplomatic meeting in Century City, California, in the early 2000s.



Halle Berry is waving with raised hands in a turquoise gown on the red carpet of an awards show in Pasadena, California, during the early 2000s.





Peaches and Herb performed a live duet on stage during a concert.



Britney Spears smiling in a lavender beaded dress in the early 2 2000s at the Billboard Awards.



Actress Esther Rolle clutching her award at the NAACP Image Awards in 1987.

CHAPTER

2

PHOTOGRAPHY WAS A LIFE-LINE

Some may ask, how does an 18-year-old get employed by a newspaper as a photojournalist photographing A-list celebrities at red-carpet events in Los Angeles?

Let me quickly give you a little backstory:

I truly believe God used photography as a lifeline to pull me out of the path I was heading down as a young teen.

I was an unfocused student with little to no ambition to go to college because I felt I wasn't smart or responsible enough.

Although I grew up in a loving Christian home, my struggles in school, small stature, and lack of stylish clothes made me somewhat of an outcast. Consequently, I found acceptance among a rough crowd.

I appreciated the respect I felt while hanging out with my rowdy peer group. Many students at my school feared this group, and that fear translated into an unwarranted respect for me.



Here I am with my 80s shag hairstyle... lol... during a model shoot.



Me and an actress in a black evening gown in the 1980s at an awards ceremony in Los Angeles, California.



Me with actor Billy Dee Williams in Beverly Hills during a BET shoot for his movie Batman in 1988.



I worked with Jackie Jackson on a Pepsi commercial shoot in East L.A.



Me and actress Robin Givens, portrait at Underground Books in Sacramento, California.

This was the late 1980s when gangsta rap became popular. Rappers like Too Short, LL Cool J, Eazy-E, and the group N.W.A were very influential to me and my friends.

I am thankful that I had a strong moral foundation during that time. I appreciate my wonderful parents, who upheld high standards, even though I often fell short of them. Their influence kept me from straying too far. I never used drugs or viciously attacked anyone; instead, I frequently defended and protected those who were bullied because I understood how it felt to be teased and ostracized. This led to many fights during my early school years.

In 9th grade, I became deeply focused on photography, marking a significant achievement in my life. My late best friend from childhood, Dwayne, who was more like an older brother to me, took a high school photography course when he was in 11th grade. He was two years older than me.

Like me, he was not a focused student. He had some past trouble with the law, but I noticed that he genuinely loved photography.

Dwayne's passion for photography was infectious, and I truly admired that about him. He was quite the ladies' man and excelled in everything he pursued, whether it was sports, video games, or other activities. Although he was very intelligent, he didn't enjoy school much—except for his photography class, which he loved.

His mom bought him a nice camera, and, like everything else he immersed himself in, he became very skilled at photography. I would ask him many questions about his camera and how he developed pictures in the darkroom. I found it fascinating, and as a result, I became obsessed with photography through him.

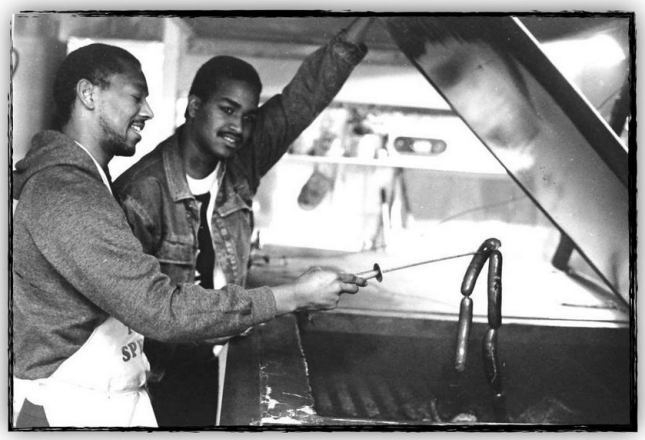
I developed such a strong passion for photography that I started visiting the library, something I never did before. Back then, I hated reading and writing, but I found myself reading about photography and even taking notes.



"Watching Dwayne's love for photography helped to inspire me to become a photographer."



Dwayne and Michael are excited to announce the grand opening of Goree's Pit BBQ in Oak Park.



Brothers Michael and Dwayne at Goree's Pit BBQ, smoking links in Oak Park. Both of my friends passed away too soon; I really miss them as they were like brothers to me growing up.



Michael and Mark Goree at Brick BBQ Pit in Oak Park during the 1980s.



Dwayne is serving a customer at Goree's Pit.



Da Brat backstage at the 2000 Lady of Soul Awards, wearing a camo bandana.



LL Cool J performed in a yellow satin tracksuit in 1987.



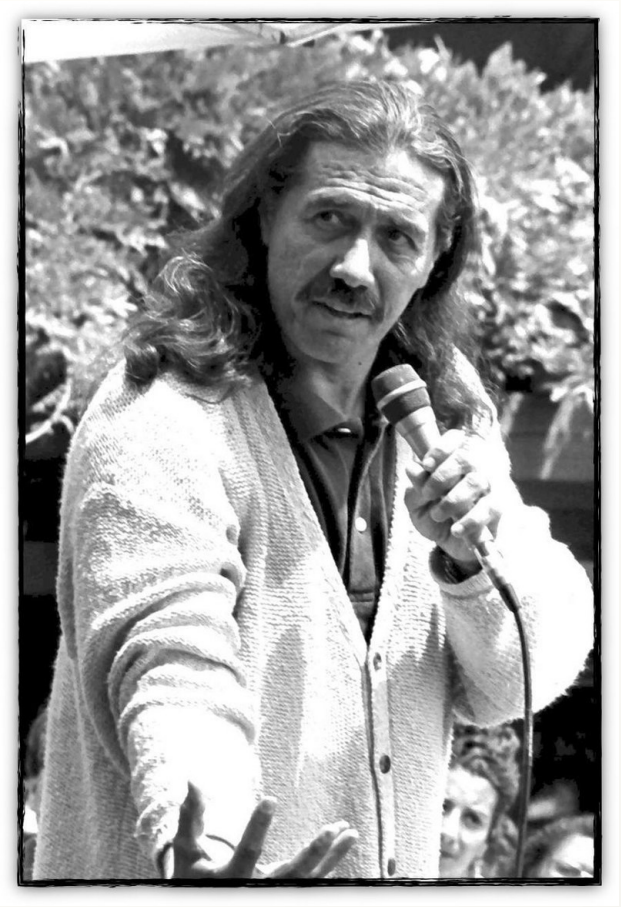
Will Smith and Kadeem Hardison attended the NAACP Image Awards in Los Angeles, California, USA.



Backstreet Boys at the 1999 Billboard Music Awards press room.



Educator Jaime Escalante (From the Movie Stand & Deliver) stands and delivers a speech to a group of teachers.



Edward James Olmos speaking at Sacramento State University in the 1980s.

CHAPTER

3

BUILDING THE DARKROOM

I remember the night when I told my late father I wanted to learn photography. I could tell he was glad I was interested in something that might help me in life, especially since I hadn't shown interest or talent in academics, colleges, or careers.

To my surprise, my father told me that when he was in high school, he built a box Brownie camera (pinhole camera) and his own darkroom. My father was a brilliant man, a great father, and a loving husband. He was an engineer who built and worked on rockets and satellites at Aerojet.

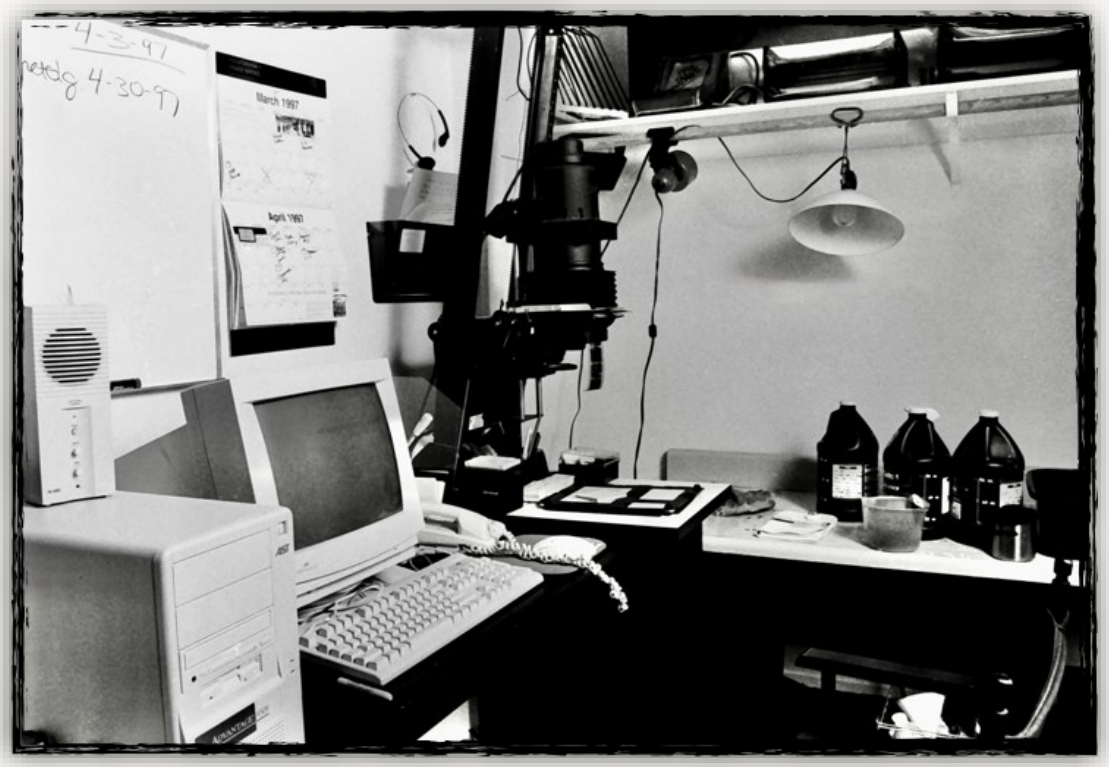
He explained in a meticulous, step-by-step way how he built his camera and the darkroom. Hearing him share his story and details was so exciting and made me more confident about pursuing photography. Then I suddenly asked, "Dad, can we do that here?" He paused and said, "Yes."



My darkroom in the 1980s.



Chemical trays, tongs, and a reel for the darkroom.



I was excited, but I was also aware that our household finances were quite limited. I don't usually use race as an excuse, but it's important to note that my dad was a Black man in the late 1950s when he got this job—a time marked by widespread systemic racism.

I recall a high-ranking co-worker at Aerojet sharing his frustration with me when I was older. He mentioned that the company had unfairly treated my father. According to him, my father authored the quality and control manual, which was used for training for years, yet he was never properly compensated. He also told me that when my Dad sought promotions, the company would intimidate him by threatening to demote him.

He said that he and his friends urged my father to file a lawsuit for racism, claiming my father could have won millions. This took place in the early '80s. Despite this, my father, a very peaceful man, chose not to pursue legal action for discrimination.

My father dedicated 35 years of hard work and commitment to that company. During this time, he trained new employees who had just graduated from college, and they often earned more than he did when starting off.

When we talked about setting up a darkroom for developing photos, the most essential piece of equipment was the enlarger. This device functions as a vertical light projector, with the negative positioned beneath an insulated lamp. It projects an image, much like an X-ray, onto the baseboard through the lens.

In a darkroom illuminated by red light, the photographer would place the photographic paper on the baseboard and then activate the enlarger, exposing the paper to the image for a set number of seconds. Before this step, the photographer would create a test strip by exposing a piece of paper to various times—typically between 3 to 5 seconds—to determine the best exposure time. After finalizing the exposure, the photographer would then move the paper into three trays containing different chemicals for processing.

The first tray holds the developer, where the image appears. The second tray is the stop-bath, which stops the development process. Then comes the fixer, which reinforces the stop-bath, ensuring the picture won't develop any further. Afterward, rinse the photo, squeegee it, and hang it up to dry.

When we priced the cheapest enlargers at local photography stores, they ranged from $185 to $500.

My father told me that we couldn't afford it at that time. Although I was disappointed, I recognized he was right; at first, I felt like my dream was broken.

I began searching for items in my garage to sell, but most of it was just junk that likely wouldn't bring in more than $20.

My father had a brilliant idea: he suggested that we build our own enlarger. He was a determined and clever man, and when he shared this thought, I felt a surge of hope and joy. I instantly believed that we could successfully create it.

My dad created a detailed plan and blueprint to build the enlarger. We returned to the garage, where he picked up his father's old camera, which was at least 50 years old.

It had bellows and a lens at the end, and it would be the centerpiece of our enlarger. Afterward, we went to the hardware store to buy the necessary supplies.

- Ringlight
- Blackout round shade
- Bracket for attaching the camera to the pole
- Two metal pipes, one slightly larger, are used to move the

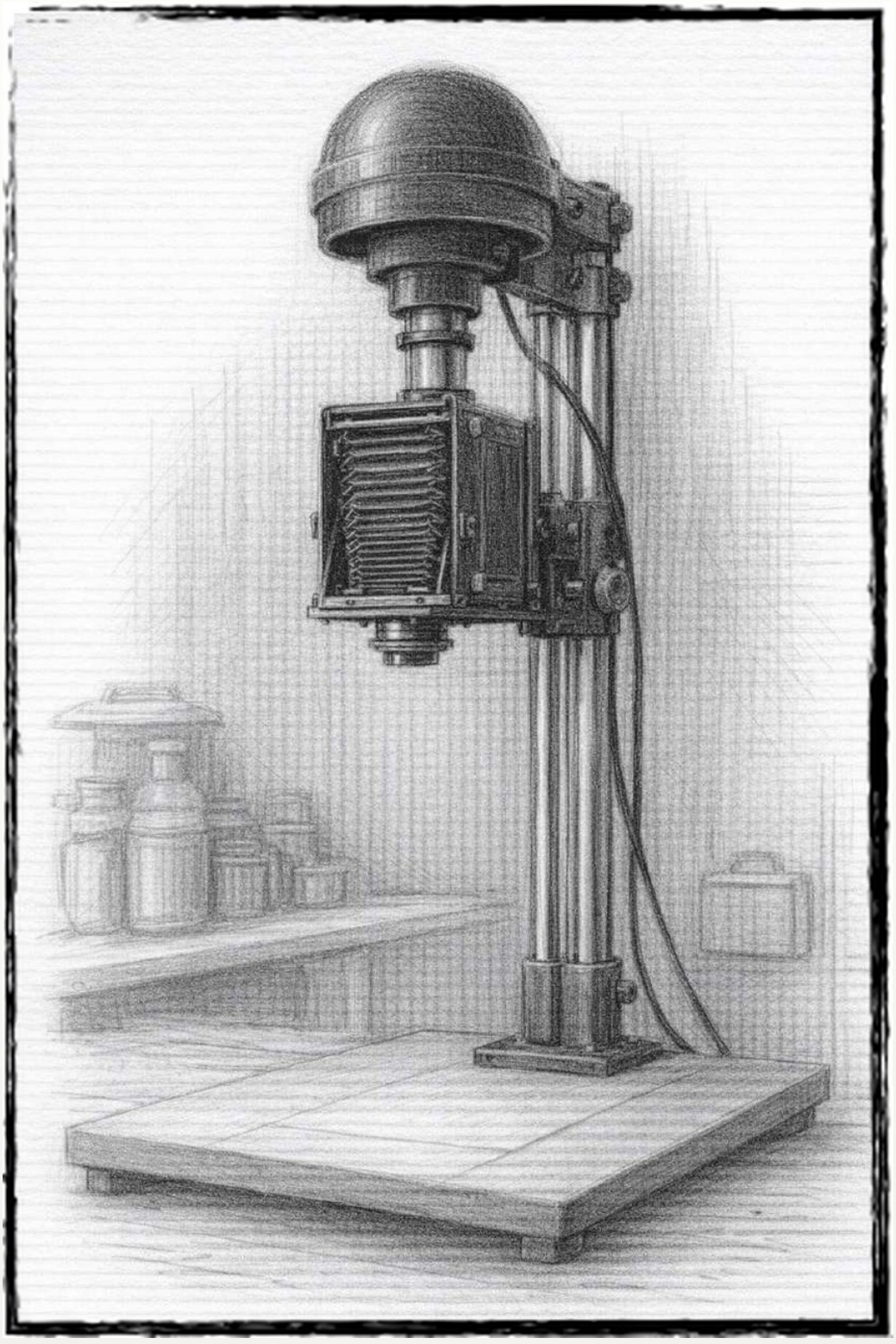
camera up and down.

- Metal knob to hold the camera in place.
- Baseboard to hold up the camera

Now, I needed a camera to capture images. Fortunately, my late sister Josie had received a free 35mm camera as a gift from a mail-order purchase she had made. Although it was a very inexpensive and low-quality camera, I am eternally grateful that she let me have it.

I loaded the camera with film and tested it out using my sister Josie as my model. I developed the negatives in my darkroom film canister. When I placed the negative strip under the enlarger's lamp, I was thrilled to see my sister's image appear in x-ray form. After that, I took out my photo paper, followed the printing process, and created my first photo print.

After that incredible experience, I felt so energized! Photography quickly turned into my addiction.



"My father and I made a homemade enlarger."



My late mom, along with my sisters Ruthie and Angie, gathered together to celebrate my late sister Josie's graduation from Sacramento State University, where she earned her Master's degree in English. I love my sisters; they always supported me as I was growing up. They provided wisdom, knowledge, encouragement, and kept me in check since I was the youngest in the family. Lol!



My sister Josie, Mom, and artist Ashley Bryan, who illustrated my grandparents' books. They were anointed authors, along with sister Ruthie and Uncle Charlie.



Tito Jackson and band performing onstage at the Michael Jackson memorial concert.



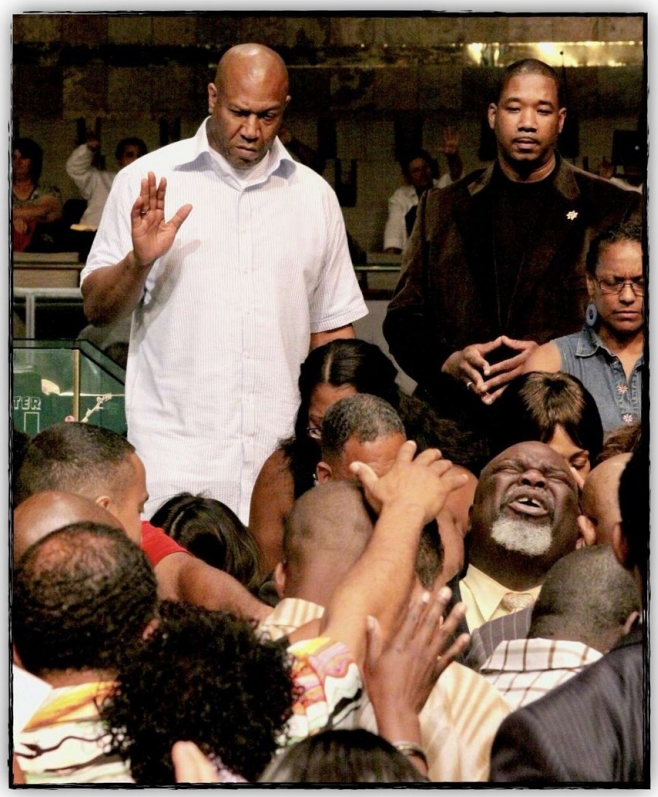
Tito Jackson performed guitar live on stage at the Michael Jackson memorial concert.



Eddie Griffin and April Sutton at the Michael Jackson memorial concert, 2010.



T.D. Jakes is preaching at Calvary Christian Center in Sacramento, California.



Actor Tommy "Tiny" Lister Jr. praying over Bishop T.D. Jakes in Sacramento, California.



A beautiful portrait of my mom from the 1980s.



Dr. Dorothy Height, a civil rights leader, with my mom and dad in the 1980s; she is my dad's cousin.



A thoughtful portrait of my dad, Campbell C. Johnson Jr., wearing a sweater.



My mom and dad in the 1980s.



My dad worked with his business partner at Baily Engineering in the 1980s.



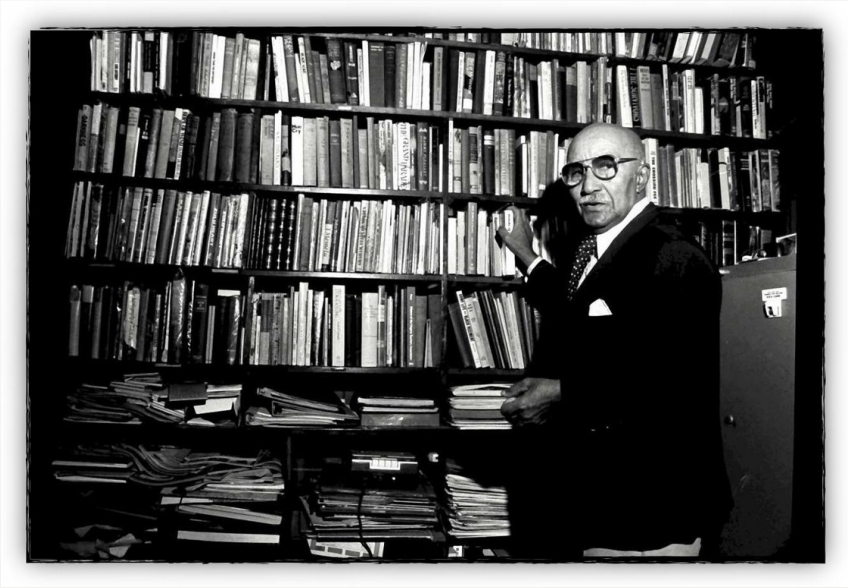
My grandparents, Nonnie and Pop Pop, in 1988.



My nephews, Justin and Julian, are with their great-grandmother, Nonnie.



My grandfather, author Lorenz Graham, is climbing a library ladder to reach for a book.



My grandfather, author Lorenz Graham, has a personal library in Los Angeles, California.



Mike Tyson slapped Jake Paul during the weigh-in event in Irving, Texas, in 2025.



During the weigh-in in Irving, Texas, in 2025, Jake Paul was slapped by Mike Tyson and touched his cheek.

CHAPTER

4

DIVINE CURATIVE FOR MY DEPRESSION

I felt quite content being alone in the library during lunch, contemplating my next photographic subject while exploring photography and darkroom methods. I loved the entire process—mixing chemicals, projecting light through negatives onto the baseboard, and testing strips to determine the right exposure. I truly enjoyed every aspect of it.

This was a time when I was struggling with depression, which I now recognize as a genetic issue in our family—something I view as a former generational curse. I recall having suicidal thoughts unexpectedly starting around the age of seven.

I remember my mom's worry when she took me to see a psychiatrist around the age of nine because I was overwhelmed by suicidal thoughts. Now, I realize this was a demonic attack.

The room was dark, and I sat in a small chair, gazing at a stern older man in a large, king-like chair. The psychiatrist recommended medication, but my mom declined it. She had been a long-time patient of depression and was already on medication, even before her twin sister Jean died by suicide from postpartum depression at the age of 23. My mom also lost two of my brothers early in life.

Our family history is marked by struggles with mental health, as my mother, grandmother, and great-grandfather all battled depression. Tragically, on my father's side, my grandmother took her own life—an event that my father witnessed firsthand when he found her hanging from a ceiling fan in her home.

I thank God that later in life, through a deeper understanding of His Word, I realized that what I was experiencing was the result of a generational curse. I also

learned through the Holy Spirit that these curses could be broken, according to Galatians 3:13.

I overcame depression's demonic influence through the power of Christ. This understanding initially came unexpectedly from a divine encounter with a professional Christian psychologist during my time as a correctional counselor.

He taught me how the brain functions in relation to thoughts and chemicals. Positive thoughts release dopamine and serotonin, while negative thoughts suppress these chemicals, creating a low-frequency state. Interestingly, the number 6.66, which is associated with the Mark of the Beast or the Anti-Christ, is actually the frequency for clinical depression.

This Christian psychologist simply explained that overcoming depression involves disciplining one's mind to think positively, as Philippians 4:6-8 states, and casting down negative thoughts, as 2 Corinthians 10:5 instructs. By practicing these principles, I was able to overcome the diabolical spirit of depression within about three weeks.

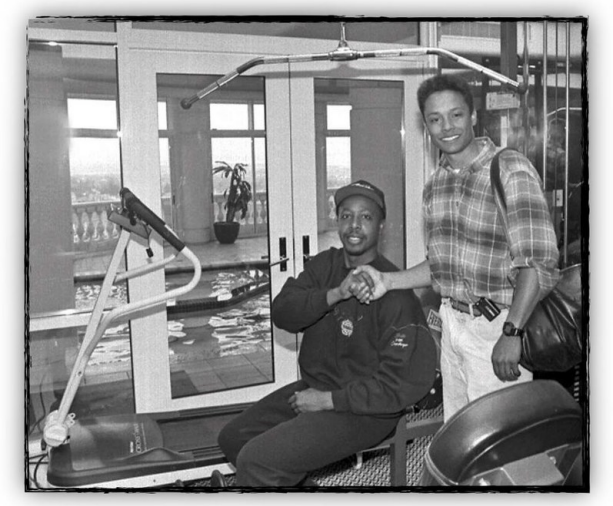
Ironically, at the time, I sought advice from this staff correctional psychologist while preparing a small group that day to teach inmates how to overcome depression. During this brief meeting, a life-changing conversation unfolded that forever altered my life. As the Bible wisely states, "In all thy getting, get an understanding" (Proverbs 4:7), and God's Word provided me with a biblical remedy for depression. Praise God!

Despite all the tragedies my mother endured throughout her life, witnessing her convey God's boundless love to complete strangers was truly remarkable.

She always volunteered, gave, and ministered to the poor and elderly. She would deliver food in gang-infested neighborhoods to single mothers. Whenever a repairman came to the house, she had Christian tracks ready to witness. Gospel music was always playing in our home.



Comedian Michael Winslow and I in the 1980s, Los Angeles, California.



I was with MC Hammer in his gym in Fremont, California, during the 1990s.



This is a photo of me with Benjamin Hooks, the NAACP national president, during the 1980s, Los Angeles, California.



I am with Miss America, Suzette Charles, in Sacramento, California, during the 1980s.



I am with my photography mentor, Robert Maryland, in Sacramento, California, during the 1990s.



I met Curly Neal from the Harlem Globetrotters in Sacramento, California, during the 1980s.



A Harlem Globetrotter playfully dips a fan during a comedic moment on the court in Sacramento, California, in the 1980s.



Promotional models for Pepsi wore black bomber jackets in Sacramento, California, during the early 1990s.



Larry Lee and the late Publisher Dr. William H. Lee holding up the Sacramento Observer Metro Chamber Award. The Observer was like a second family to me growing up. Dr. Lee was like an uncle to me; he was a good man.

CHAPTER

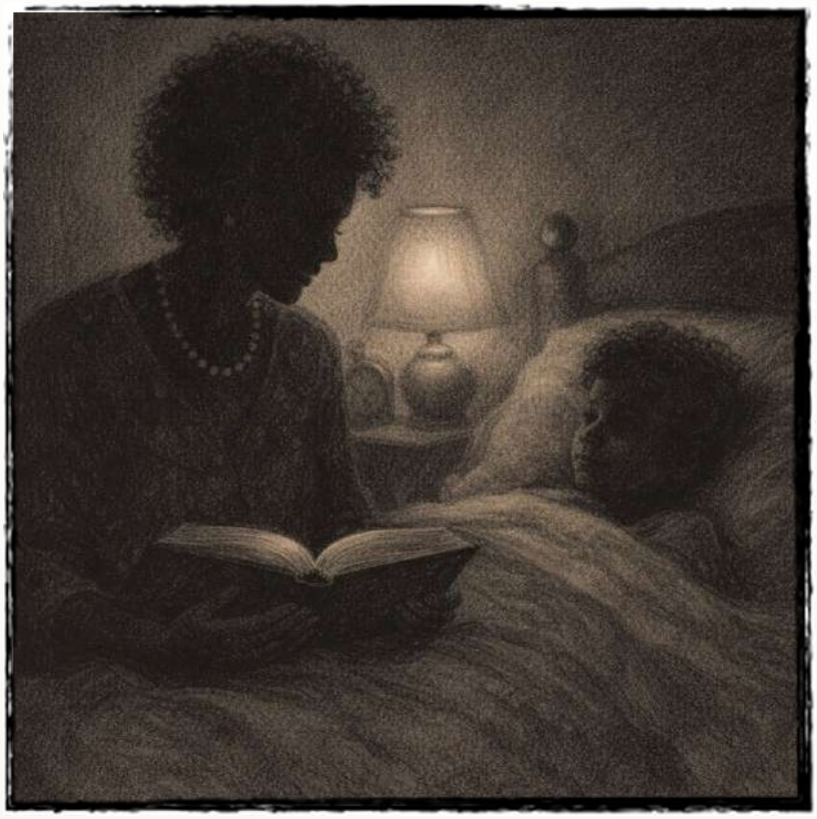
5

SOUL WINNING MOM-THE GIFT OF THE FEAR OF GOD

From a young age, my mother consistently emphasized the importance of sharing the Gospel of Salvation. This was driven by a godly desire to prevent anyone from missing Heaven and potentially ending up in hell.

When I was a child, before going to bed, she would come into my room and read a children's Bible story to me. Afterward, she would kneel beside me and lead me in prayer.

I now comprehend, by the grace and mercy of God, that He orchestrated this spiritual routine between me and my mother to prevent my conscience from hardening even when I was recklessly associating with thugs and gang members during my younger years. In the mid- '80s, gangsta rap gained popularity, and Satan was presenting these rappers as our new role models. The music was demonically transforming many of my peers to embrace a thug mentality, which led many of them into hardcore gangsterism, with very tragic outcomes.



"Mom would read the Holy Bible to me at bedtime as a child, this I know kept my conscience healthy."



"Gangsta rap music has made some of our role models thugs."

I didn't realize at the time, but I was being brainwashed into respecting that mentality. My peers did the same, and they gradually adopted it, which resulted in many of them being sent to juvenile hall and California Youth Authority(CYA), and eventually prison. Back then, that wasn't necessarily a bad thing. The music manipulated us into having a distorted respect for incarceration, as if it were a rite of passage into manhood. I know, it was foolish.

At the age of 17, I was falsely arrested for armed robbery. I was arrested at gunpoint by a large group of police officers, and it was later revealed that the arrest was due to mistaken identity. When I returned to school, my peers treated me like a "rock star." Dwayne, who was arrested alongside me, was featured on the news because he was an adult.

I felt ashamed and embarrassed to admit that we hadn't committed the crime. Despite this, I couldn't develop the hardened, ruthless attitude that I foolishly admired in my favorite rappers and peers at the time. I was too focused on the well-being and feelings of others. As a result, I felt inadequate, believing that this concern was a weakness in me.

I realized that it was my parents' fault. My mom created an atmosphere of holiness at home, and my dad, a good Christian man, lived with integrity and honesty, always showing love to my mom and all his children.

I've come to see how blessed I was to grow up with loving, responsible, and Christian parents. I often share this realization with the inmates I work with. I tell them, if you have children, be sure to be a caring and attentive parent.

I believe that if it weren't for my father and mother modeling the Holy Bible as their standard, I would have ended up in prison or dead by now—especially considering my struggles with depression, low self-esteem, poor grades, and constantly battling bullies. I honestly don't think I would have made it without their support and godly wisdom.

These stories aren't exclusive to poor low-income ghettos or projects. I grew up in a middle-class neighborhood in South Sacramento. My childhood best friend

Eric, whom I had known since toddlerhood, was killed by a gang member on the lawn of my childhood home

. Another good friend of mine, Tran, lived down the street, and we had known each other since elementary school. I believe I was his first friend. Tran immigrated from Vietnam by boat in the 1970s, and tragically, he shared with me that some of his family members drowned during the journey.

We were incredibly close and shared a special bond because we were both among the shortest students at our school. Tragically, Tran was killed in a drive-by gang shooting on Halloween night when he was only 18. I could go on and recount many other tragic stories.

A few years after graduating from John F. Kennedy High School, I ran into my gym coach and wrestling instructor, Mr. Enomoto. At the time, I was photographing for the Sacramento Observer Newspaper. He appeared surprised and inquired about what I had been doing since high school.

He remembered my grades and the group I associated with. I wasn't a troublemaker at school; I was a quiet and polite kid; I just hung around with the rowdy crowd. The first time I met Mr. Enomoto, I got into a physical altercation in the gym locker room. I managed to successfully defend myself against a bully, and he asked me to join the wrestling team. I didn't want to join, but I trained and worked out with the team occasionally after school.

He signaled for me to come over., "Come with me, Rayford." At that moment, I was there to capture a pro football player delivering a motivational speech. He took me into a classroom filled with students. I had no clue why I was there. Mr. Enomoto then introduced me, saying, "This is Rayford Johnson, a former student of mine. He's a photojournalist for the Sacramento Observer Newspaper." What he said next caught me off guard. He remarked, "You know, I thought he would have been in prison by now." The students appeared bewildered, and an awkward silence ensued. However, Mr. Enomoto broke the silence with approval, saying, "I'm proud of you."

Mr. Enomoto was always a kind and encouraging teacher who genuinely cared for his students, just like Mr. Erickson, my printing teacher. He taught us how to print the school newspaper, the Kennedy Hornet, and I loved that class. Mr. Erickson made me feel important, as if I were genuinely employed there. I had access to a high-tech darkroom, which felt like my own office. Throughout the day, I would go in and out, developing the photos I had taken for the school newspaper and yearbook, and helping with the printing process, which was quite detailed. We would then print the newspaper on a large printer that was about the size of a medium pickup truck.

Photography made school so much better, especially because I was the newspaper and yearbook photographer. I had much more freedom. For the first time, I was actually looking forward to going to school.

My sister Ruthie's boyfriend, Alphonzo, who is now my brother-in-law, gave me a game-changing gift. One day, while he was at our house, I showed him some photos I had taken and talked about the darkroom that my father and I had built in a small, cramped space underneath the stairs. Originally, it was a mini bar. I installed a red light inside and sealed off the opening leading to the family room. It turned out to be an ideal setup for the next couple years.

My sister's boyfriend, Alphonzo, said, "I have a 35mm camera that I don't use, and I'll let you borrow it." Hearing those words at that moment felt like winning the lottery.

The camera he gave me was an old-school Canon TX, and I used it to significantly improve my photography skills. This simple manual camera, which had no automation, was ideal for learning. As a result, my confidence soared, and I elevated my photography to a new level.



Mr. Enomoto introducing me to his class, at my old high school.



In the early 2000s, the late Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes was holding awards in Los Angeles, California.



Natalie Cole holding the NAACP Image Award against a Fox backdrop in 2001, Los Angeles, California.



Destiny's Child, featuring Kelly, Beyoncé, and Michelle, wore yellow gowns at the Lady of Soul Awards in the early 2000s in Los Angeles, California.



Erykah Badu and Destiny's Child backstage in Los Angeles, California, in 2000.



A portrait of Jackie Jackson, wearing a white shirt against a red backdrop.



Jermaine Jackson with daughter and April Sutton at Jackson family home.



Randy Jackson, studio portrait in a turtleneck and blazer.



Tito Jackson and designer Keith John, San Fernando Valley, California.



Jackson brothers with BET Commentator April Sutton at the rehearsal for the Pepsi tour in East Los Angeles, 1987.



A female athlete is soaring through the air during the long jump event at the U.S. Olympic Trials in Sacramento, California, in the early 2000s.



Dwight Phillips soaring in mid-air during the men's long jump at the US Olympic Trials in Sacramento, California, early 2000s.



Vanessa Williams, crowned Miss America in 1987, is also known for her acting. Los Angeles, California.



Halle Berry and Eric Benét were seen at a red carpet event in Pasadena, California, in 2010.



Will Smith attended the NAACP Image Awards in 1987, held in Los Angeles, California.



Author Sister Souljah and Mother Rose are associated with Underground Books in Sacramento, California.



Founder Autumn Yarbrough and the leadership team of Nustandard Haircare, based in Dallas, Texas, 2023.



Ese Azenabor is a fashion designer who operates a luxury bridal atelier in Dallas, 2021.



Martine Elyse Philippe is the Arts and Culture Director at the Majestic Theatre in Dallas.



The Sacramento State modern dance troupe performed on stage in white attire in San Francisco, California.



Members of the Dallas Black Panther Party raised their fists during a meeting in Dallas, Texas, in 2022.



Vivica Fox wearing a Gucci monogram suit in Los Angeles, California, during the 1990s.



Portrait of Miss California USA at the California State Capitol in Sacramento, 2005.



Edward James Olmos smiling at Sacramento State University in 1989.



Reverend Jesse Jackson speaking at the Guild Theater in Sacramento in the 2000s.



Portrait of Jasmin Crockett, Dallas, Texas, 2021.



Tavis Smiley, keynote speech at the Sacramento Black Expo, Sacramento, California.

CHAPTER

6

1ST PLACE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO CONTEST

After countless hours of practice in the field and in the darkroom, my hard work finally paid off. By the grace of God, I secured first place in a national high school photography contest in Dallas, Texas, in 1985. I was awarded $2,000, a gold medal, and had the incredible experience of receiving a stage hug from my celebrity crush, actress Kim Fields, known for her role in the TV show “Facts of Life."

Winning locally in California and reaching the finals was surreal. It felt like a dream.

On this trip, I met my photography mentor and good friend, Robert Maryland, who became like a big brother to me. Robert was a chaperone for the boys during the event. The contest was the Act-So NAACP Awards, which featured high school students competing in various categories within their local cities. The winners were then sent to the national competition.

Robert and I connected instantly. Although he was only six years older than I, he was already a renowned and respected photographer throughout California. Moreover, he served as the chief photographer for the Sacramento Observer newspaper.

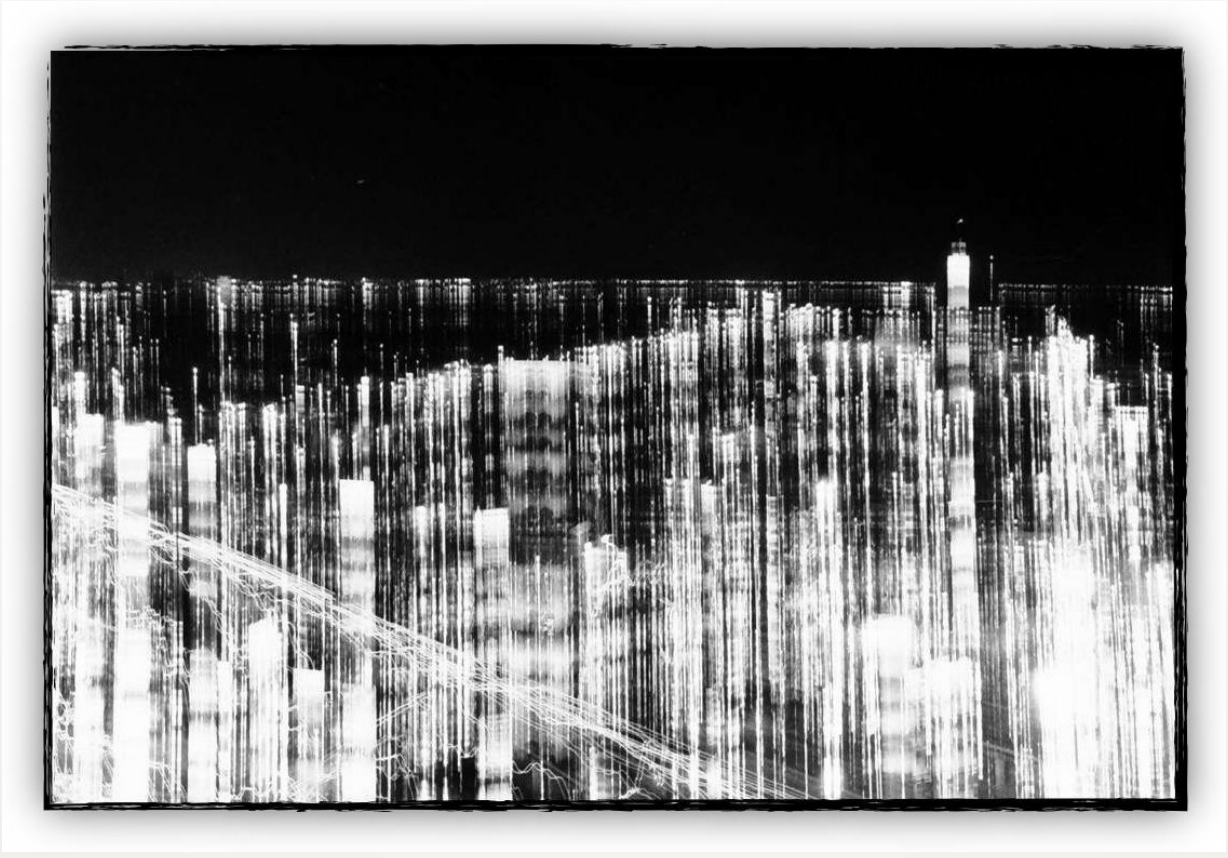
While in Dallas, we often sneaked onto the Sheraton Hotel roof late at night to take long-exposure photos, some lasting 5-10 minutes. It was fun, and I got to learn from Rob while capturing some amazing images—one of which I featured in a series. That photo even won me a first-place award.

Again, the following year in Baltimore, MD, I won first place at nationals again, this time receiving $1000.

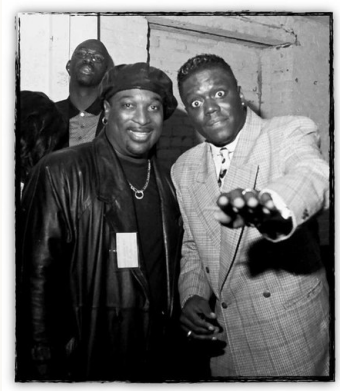


In Dallas, Texas, in 1985, I won 1st place in a national high school photography contest with actress Kim Fields.





Dallas skyline, abstract light trails, photo contest winner, 1986.



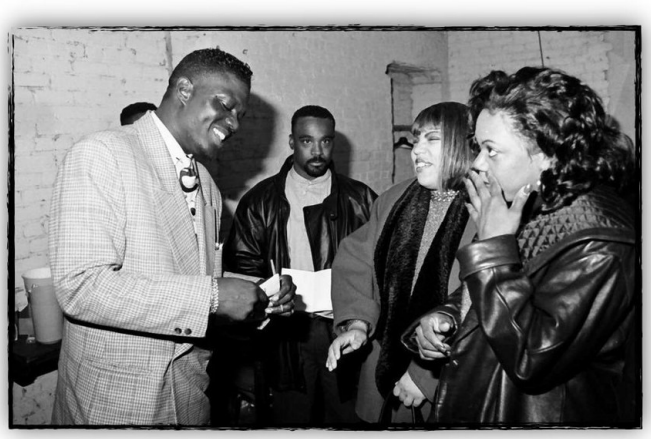
The late Robert Brookins and Bernie Mac backstage in Sacramento, California.



Bernie Mac is signing autographs backstage at the Crest Theatre in Sacramento, California.



Bernie Mac performing at the Crest Theatre in 1992.





Bernie Mac greeting fans at the Crest Theatre in 1992.



Serena Williams is in a ready return stance, holding a racquet in 2012.



Serena Williams lunges low for a forehand shot on the tennis court.



My first special effects photo was created entirely in the darkroom, without using Photoshop. I took this photo in 11th grade at Hiram Johnson West-Campus in 1985.

CHAPTER

7

HIGH SCHOOL PHOTO-HUSTLE

In 1986, shortly after graduating, I received a job offer from the Sacramento Observer Newspaper as a photojournalist. This was my dream job. I couldn't believe that at just 18 years old, I was getting paid to attend Sacramento Kings games, Oakland Raiders games, political events at the state capitol, fashion shows, and Hollywood events in Los Angeles. It made life better than good.

During my high school years, my grades were still struggling, but not in my newspaper and printing class.

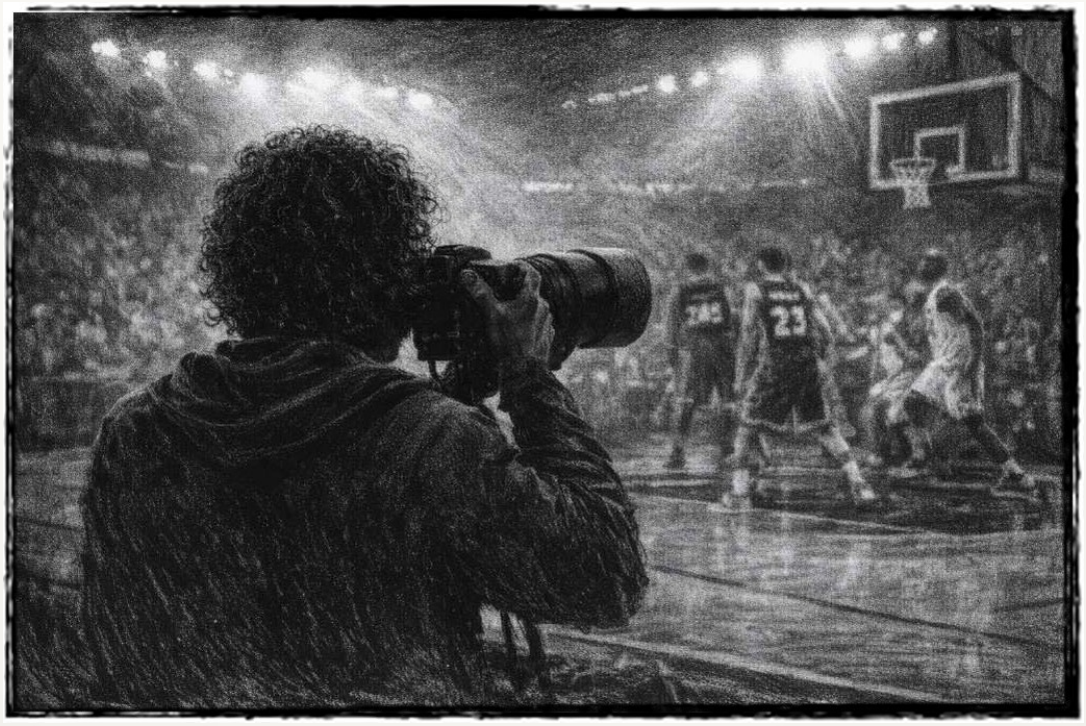
During my junior year, many things changed. First, I experienced a sudden growth spurt right after the Dallas contest. Initially, I didn't realize how much I had grown, but my family and friends immediately noticed the difference. I also began receiving a new type of attention from girls. To some, I no longer seemed like a little brother, which was a welcome change. I felt incredibly grateful to God for this shift.

Many of the girls began asking me to take photographs of them and their friends. The athletes wanted me to capture their highlights during games. The BMX riders from the affluent side of town invited me to join them on their paddle boat to photograph them as they jumped their bikes off a ramp into their private lake.

I created a successful business system around photography. After taking the photos and developing the film, I would make a proof sheet with small images for display. I then brought the proof sheet and some full-size prints to school, displaying them on a table in the cafeteria during lunch. This often attracted a

crowd, allowing people to see their photos. If someone wasn't there to view their image, others would inform them, which sometimes led to sales. Displaying the images also worked as effective advertising, helping to draw in more clients.

I estimate it costs about 15 cents to create a 5x7 image and around 25 cents to make an 8x10. I plan to price my prints between $2 and $6 each. I thought that by running my own business, I could avoid spending long hours over a hot grill and fryer at McDonald's. I had been a dishwasher at a Chinese restaurant, and that was not an enjoyable experience. With this hustle, I could earn more money while doing something I love. One of my biggest fears about getting older was lacking the necessary skills, which could force me into a low-paying, unpleasant job for over 40 years. Eventually, I realized that God had an answer for my struggles, even with my poor grades at the time.







"The kids at school who lived in the town's affluent neighborhood would pay me to photograph them jumping off their BMX bikes into their lake."







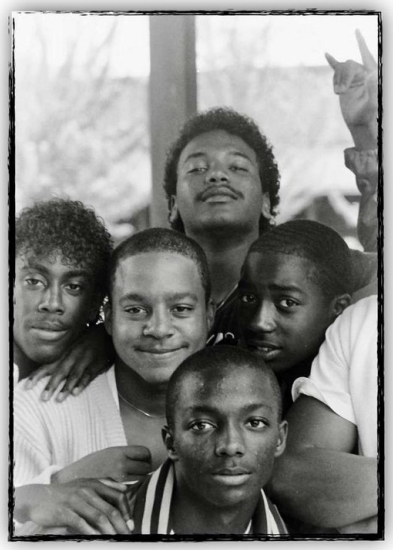
I have photos of John F. Kennedy High School students on campus in Sacramento from the 1980s.











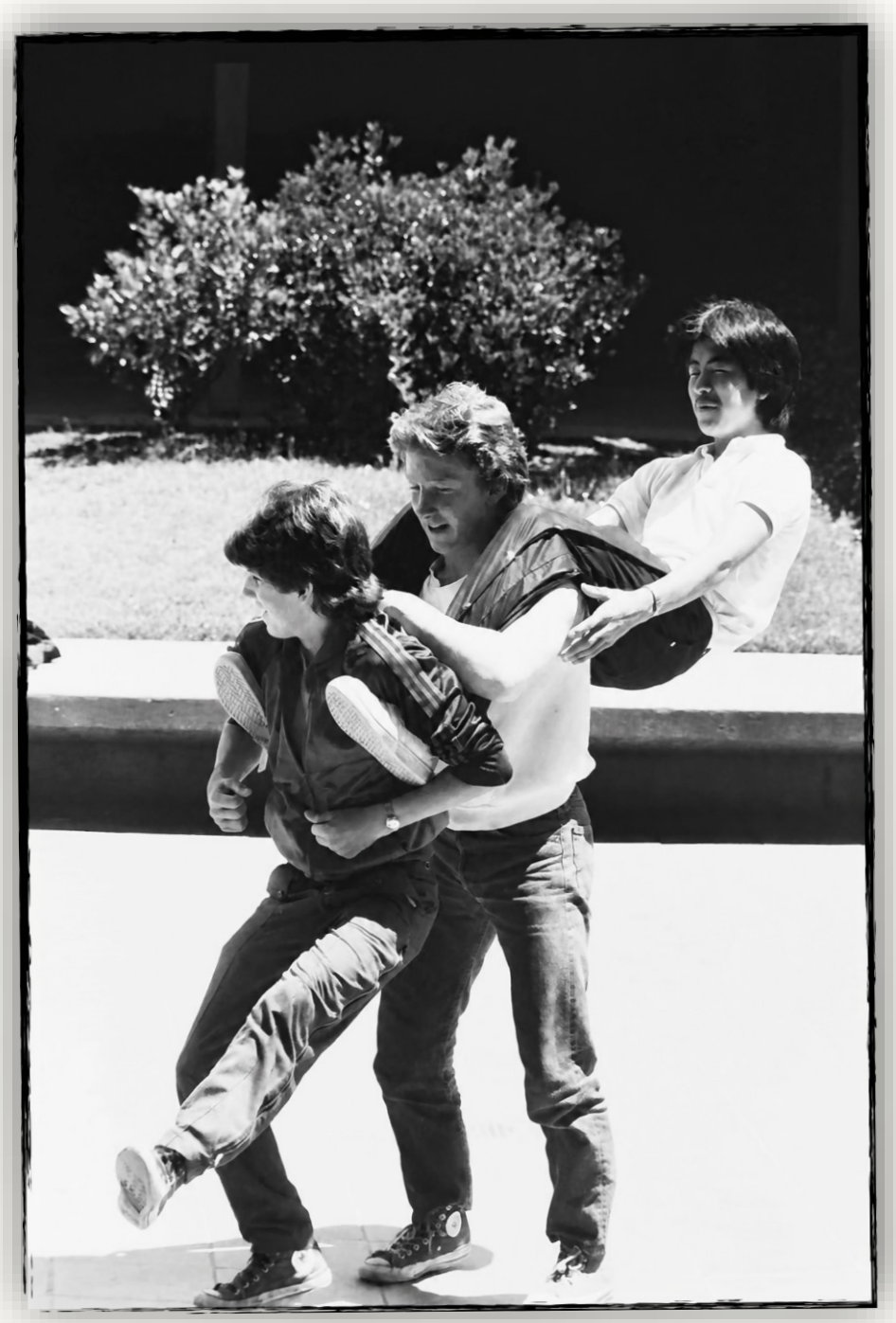
I have photos of John F. Kennedy High School students on campus taken in the 1980s in Sacramento.







"My photographs of John F. Kennedy High School students on campus in Sacramento during the 1980s."



CHAPTER

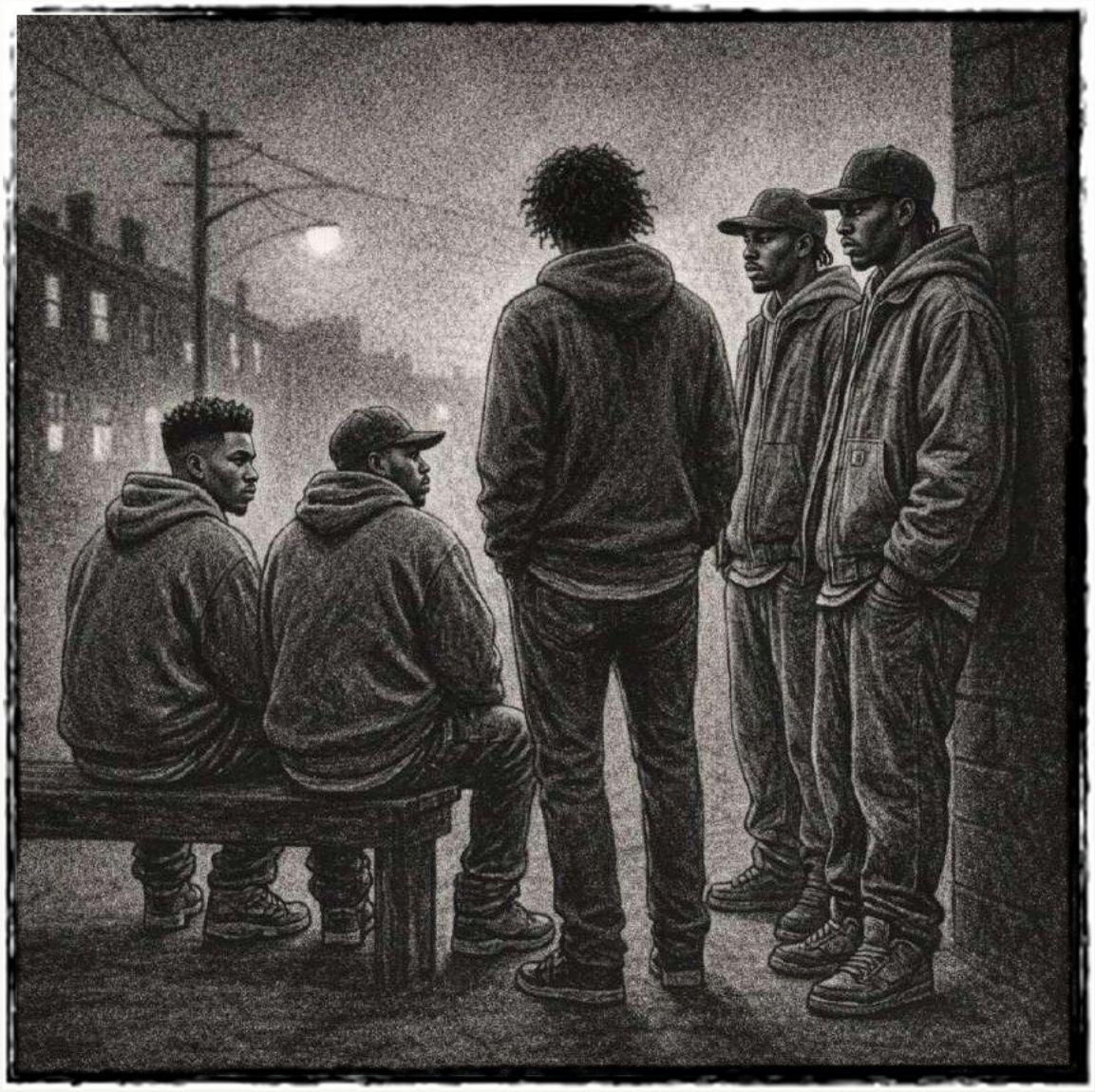
8

YOUTH MINISTRY SAVED MY LIFE

A grade below me, Sheri Logan, who was like a sister to me while we were growing up, invited me to a youth ministry event on a Friday night. At that time, I was starting to hang out more with peers who were involved in the "streets," and some were gang-affiliated.

I was drawn to the lifestyle, influenced by the gangsta rap that was just beginning to gain popularity at the underground level. The entertainment industry portrayed it as bold and stylish, and it felt empowering to imagine living that rebellious, indulgent life. However, my fear of God kept me as a fan of the culture rather than an active participant. I believed that being part of this scene and attending parties would make me more attractive to the girls I liked.

I didn't want to be officially labeled as a gang member because, in my heart, I knew that once you're in, the only way out is often death or a life sentence in prison. I also had to think about my family's safety; if I joined a gang, they would become targets. A good/mentor friend's wife was murdered by gang members as an act of retaliation against their son, who was involved with a gang and living at home. She was shot dead in their hallway during a home invasion by a rival gang.



Despite these dangers, I still craved respect from the streets. I felt that being associated with my street peer group gave me that sense of respect and security. Hollywood also added to this allure, as many girls began to take an interest in the "thug" persona, especially after the release of MC Lyte's song "Ruffneck."

Lyrics: *"I need it and I want it, so I gotta get a ruffneck! (Hey)"*

When I arrived at the youth ministry at 7 pm that evening at Calvary Christian Center, I felt a little out of place, yet I felt a divine peace.

Drake Jones, a young pastor from Oakland, California, delivered a sermon that resonated deeply with me. He connected God's Word to real-life situations I was facing. I appreciated that he occasionally used some street slang, but what truly stood out was the simplicity and clarity of his message. It felt as though he could read my thoughts, making the Bible's scriptures clear to me for the first time.

I understood everything completely and experienced a new level of joy and excitement while listening to his preaching.

That night, the topic of discussion was "We Have the Mind of Christ."

He shared his story about struggling with poor grades and difficulty understanding the school curriculum. I listened intently, feeling a connection, and was captivated, hanging on every word.

He simply explained how he used a scripture from the Holy Bible, specifically 1 Corinthians 2:16, and applied it to his life. He said, "I wake up in the morning, place my hand on my head, and declare, 'I have the mind of Christ' in Jesus' name!" He emphasized that God's Word becomes powerful when you act on it in faith. As he spoke, my faith grew, and I felt joyful and excited to try what he was suggesting.

That night, I returned home and followed the suggestion given to me. I declared to myself, "I have the mind of Christ." I consistently affirmed this truth by speaking God's Word over my mind—whether in front of the mirror, around the house, or while driving in my car. I repeated, "I have the mind of Christ," over and over again.

Over time, I started to see improvements in my reading comprehension, my grades, and even my creativity in photography.

I was ecstatic; I was able to graduate, which had been a major concern before that church service. Later on, I won two national photography contests. About ten years after that, I ranked second academically in the Academy at the California

Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation during my training as a peace officer.

Pastor Phillip Goudouex of Calvary Christian Center often said, "God's Word works when you work the Word." My testimony proves this is true.

Years after I graduated, my mother revealed that she had kept my high school assessment scores from me, and they were quite low. The school faculty had suggested that I consider careers in manual labor, such as becoming a custodial engineer or a factory assembler, based on my aptitude scores. There is nothing wrong with these occupations; they represent honest and respectable work. I have also worked as a janitor and have great respect for the men and women I labored alongside in that field. It is an honorable profession.

The problem was that my potential was documented to be limited to that role. I am grateful to my godly parents, who always believed in me and prayed for the hidden potential that God has given me.



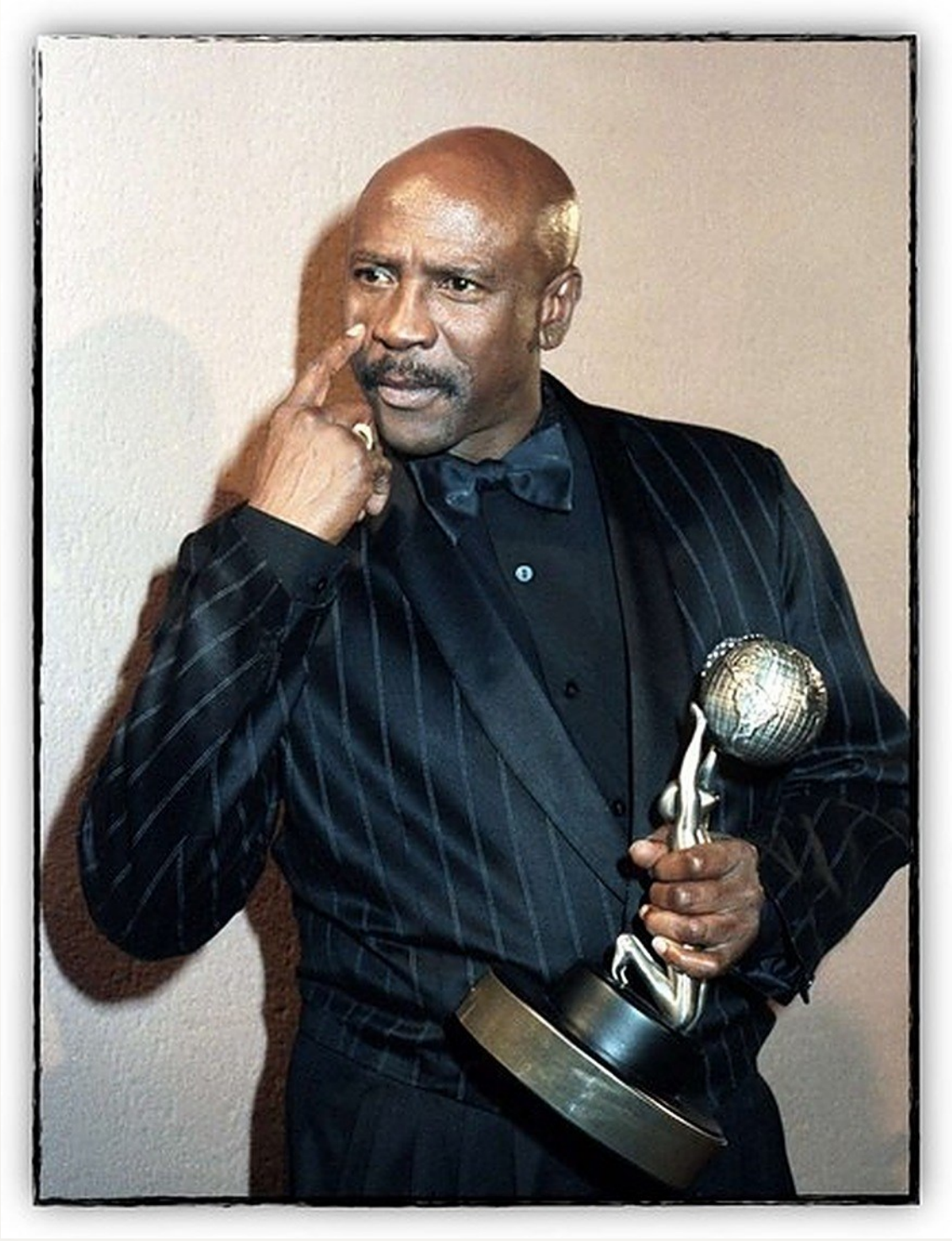
"My Youth Pastor Drake Jones."



Blaque, the R&B group, in futuristic purple metallic outfits on the red carpet, 1990s.



Halle Berry and Eric Benét smiling on the red carpet, 2000.



Louis Gossett Jr. with a trophy at the 1988 NAACP Image Awards.



Sidney Poitier with a trophy at the 32nd NAACP Image Awards.



Bobby Brown in acid-wash denim and a leather cap, 1988 portrait.



Black Panthers jumping from a pickup truck on the Panther film set.



Mario Van Peebles directing the Panther film with a Panavision camera, Sacramento, California.



Black Panther movie reenactment on the California State Capitol steps, Sacramento, California.



Mourners beside the casket at a funeral in Sacramento, California, in the 1980s.



Black clergy attend a funeral for a fellow clergyman.



An Asian youth, incarcerated at the California Youth Authority, in the recreation yard.



California Youth Authority inmate looking through cell food slot.



Photo for an anti-gang-violence calendar to show unity. Photographed at a California Youth Prison, 1993.

CHAPTER

9

SUDDEN CALL INTO MINISTRY

Before locating to Los Angeles, I frequently attended celebrity events and freelanced with BET as a still photographer. Occasionally, I stayed with my grandparents in Los Angeles. My grandmother, “Nonnie," was a strong, charismatic Christian woman with a way with words, and she had the gift of instilling a fear of God in me from as early as I can remember.

From a young age, she would create vivid mental images of the horrors of hell and speak about the consequences of disobedience to God. She described it as a place filled with enormous, vicious rats that nibbled on people, along with violent demons who excelled at tormenting souls amidst the unbearable heat of hellfire.

One evening, I remember her praying boldly in her study, crying out to God and speaking in tongues. As I walked down the hallway, her door suddenly swung open, and with her small 5-foot frame, she pressed me against the wall. She looked at me intensely, her white hair standing out dramatically, and said, "God just spoke to me and said you will be the preacher.”

I looked at her, confused and extremely concerned because my dream was to become a well-paid, celebrity photojournalist.

Nonnie wasn’t backing down, so in my confused state, I nodded my head in agreement.

From that point on, I could see God changing my destiny. I felt led by the Holy Spirit to draw closer to God by initiating the discipline of studying God’s Word and praying daily.



It was the Soul Train Music Awards, and I was assigned to photograph for the Observer Newspaper. I vividly recall the event as if it were yesterday. Suddenly, an inexplicable urge to pursue a career as a celebrity photographer vanished from my heart. Here's a brief backstory to explain this unexpected turn of events.

Backstage in the lot, I was initially star-struck by celebrities like Stevie Wonder, Heavy D, and other A-list stars. Suddenly, everything felt like it slowed down, and I was overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit. It was as if my mind and perspective shifted to another realm. Instantly, my view of these celebrities changed; I sensed their

sadness, disappointment, and depression. The glamorous illusion I had was gone. I felt deep sadness, compassion, and a strong urge to pray for their souls.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matthew 6:26

During the Soul Train Awards, God revealed a profound truth to me: despite the allure of glitz and glamour that my worldly mind was drawn to, true fulfillment would always remain out of reach. I understood that neither money nor fame offered the satisfaction that many celebrities sought. Instead, I felt a deep sense of hopelessness, emptiness, and despair—an unending yearning for something more substantial. In that moment, God made clear the eternity He had instilled within me at my rebirth of being "Born Again.".

What God showed me that night was not just a warning — it was love. "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). God wasn't correcting me out of anger; He was revealing His heart. He loved that celebrity standing under the lights. He loved the fans screaming their name. And He loved me, sitting there chasing a glory that could never satisfy. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). That love was for the artist on the stage just as much as it was for me — and He didn't want any of us to perish, but for us all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

I realized that spending my life chasing short-lived thrills had no eternal value or meaning. Though God had truly given me favor and blessed me with a career as a photojournalist, getting rich and famous in that role was never my calling — it was just a post along the journey to fulfill the assignment He had for me: to pray for those held captive in the industry and for their fans, and to expose the darkness with the truth of Christ. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).



Stevie Wonder wore a bright yellow suit at the Soul Train Awards in Los Angeles, California, during the 1990s.



Heavy D in blue velour at the Soul Train Awards in the 1990s.

That assignment was rooted in the Great Commission — "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20). I understood that my core mission wasn't only to the unsaved fan or the lost celebrity chasing fame without Christ — it was also to the saved, the believer in the industry who had compromised, grown cold, or wandered from the truth.

Jesus didn't only go after the lost sheep outside the fold; He pursued the one who strayed from among the ninety and nine (Luke 15:4). My calling was to minister to the lost and the backslidden alike, both saved and unsaved, wherever I found them — on the red carpet, in the studio, or in the crowd.

When I was nineteen at a youth ministry camp, former Los Angeles gang member-turned-evangelist JoJo Sanchez prophesied over me that one of my mission fields would be the entertainment industry. That prophetic word was fulfilled in 2009,

when God had me start a ministry called ThugExposed.org — a ministry built on Ephesians 5:11, exposing the darkness of Hollywood, the music industry, gangs, and more with the truth and light of Christ.

We have ministered to celebrities and their fans. Many have watched our ministry and testimonial videos, read our ministry books, and called our prayer line for prayer and counseling. I have visited them in jail, met with them at various locations for counseling and prayer, and led them in renouncing demonic covenants made in the industry, gangs, and unhealthy relationships. Many have experienced deliverance from curses and demons, finding freedom through the power of Yeshua!

Through this calling, I have gone on to write about numerous topics addressing music, gangs, and culture—each one another doorway to reach the lost and the wandering with the truth of Christ.

I have written several books, including Demon Mentality Exposed, How to Renew Your Mind, The Jezebel Booby Trap, and Thug

Mentality Exposed, which contain many of these testimonies along with biblical wisdom and knowledge on how to address, confront, and be set free from the vices of the devil. You can find purchase information on the last page of this book, or download the e-book PDF for free at www.thugexposed.org.



I firmly believe that God has chosen me to utilize my talents in photography, videography, and writing to create content inspired by the Holy Spirit. Through this content, I aim to share His biblical warnings, revelations, and, most importantly, His loving invitation to the world to repent, believe, and trust in His Son, Yeshua.

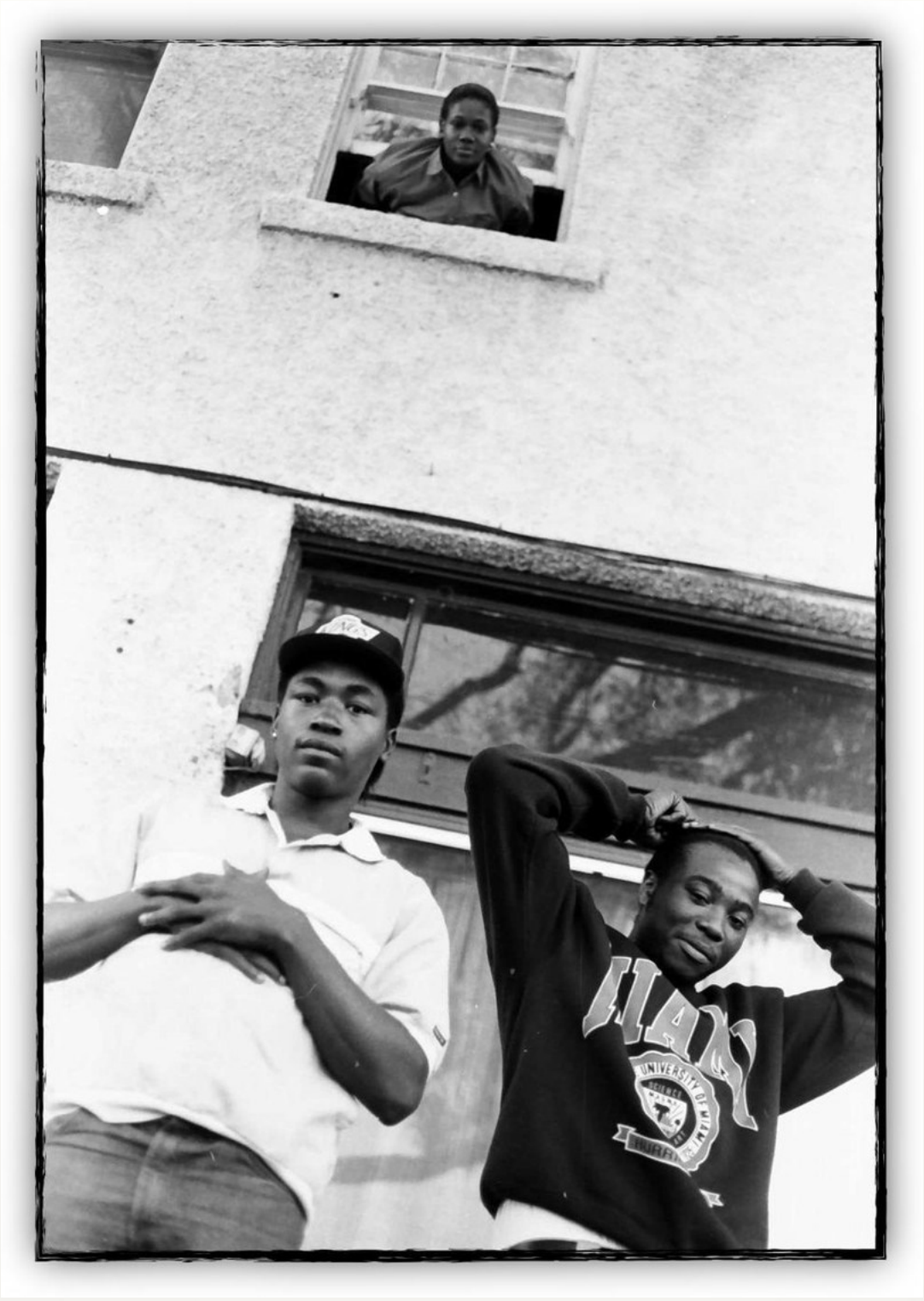
God guided me into counseling through a series of divine appointments. For example, after a photoshoot at a group home, I felt inspired to apply for a job there. I was hired immediately, marking my first counseling position. My volunteer experience in youth ministry helped qualify me for this role. This experience deeply touched my spirit and inspired me to pursue a career in counseling. Ultimately, this choice led me to a fulfilling career as an officer and counselor at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. I am now retired from that path, but I am still serving in prison ministry.



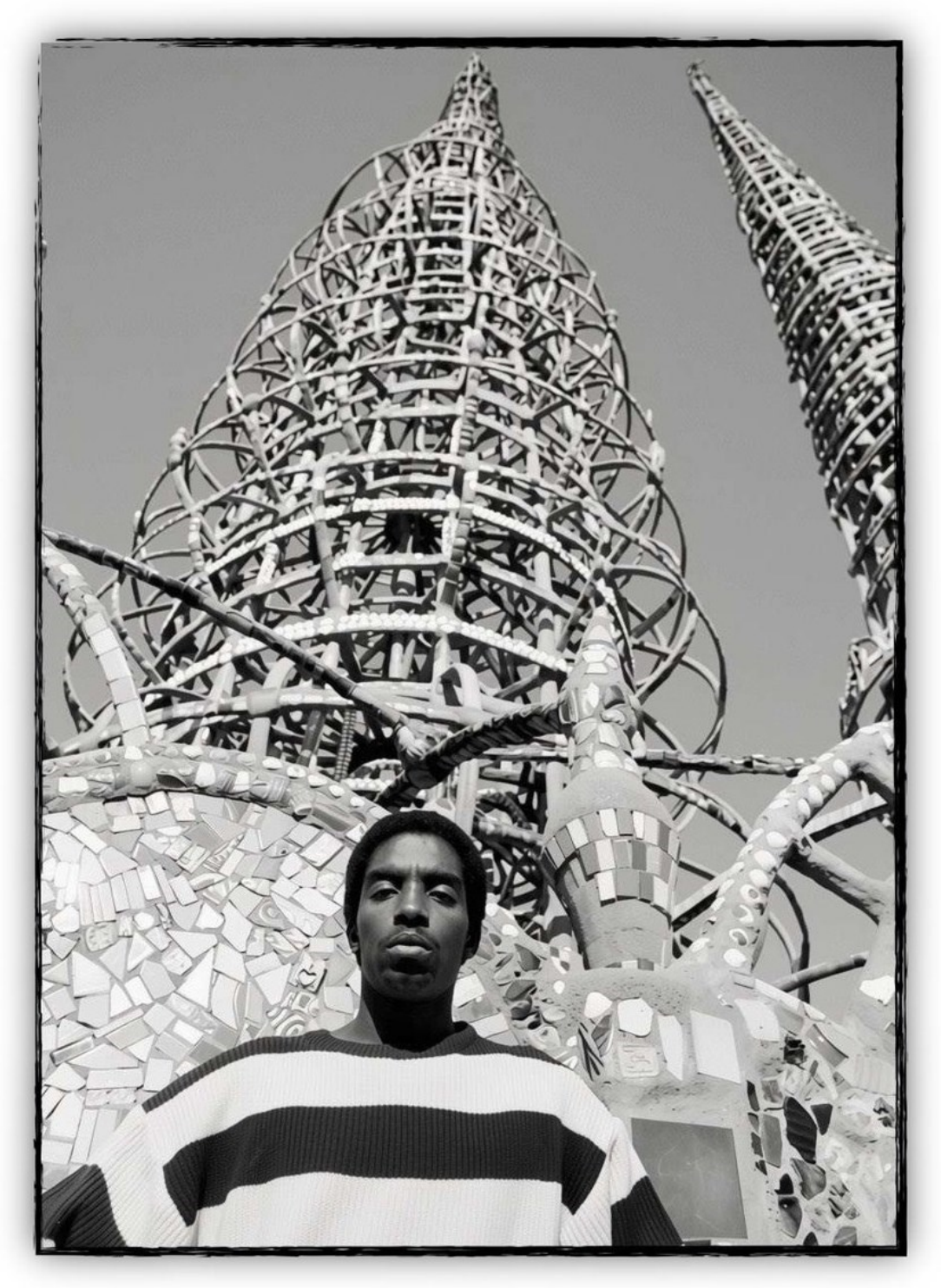
My journey as a photojournalist inspired me to become a licensed photography instructor. This professional experience allowed me to earn a California teaching credential in photography, which I have used to teach students in public schools, group homes, and correctional facilities.

Throughout my teaching career, I had the privilege of working with individuals of diverse ages, from the general public to inmates, which gave me an extensive array of invaluable and meaningful experiences and stories.

The images in this book represent over 40 years of my testimonial portfolio. I am deeply grateful to God for blessing me with countless experiences to share with you and the world.



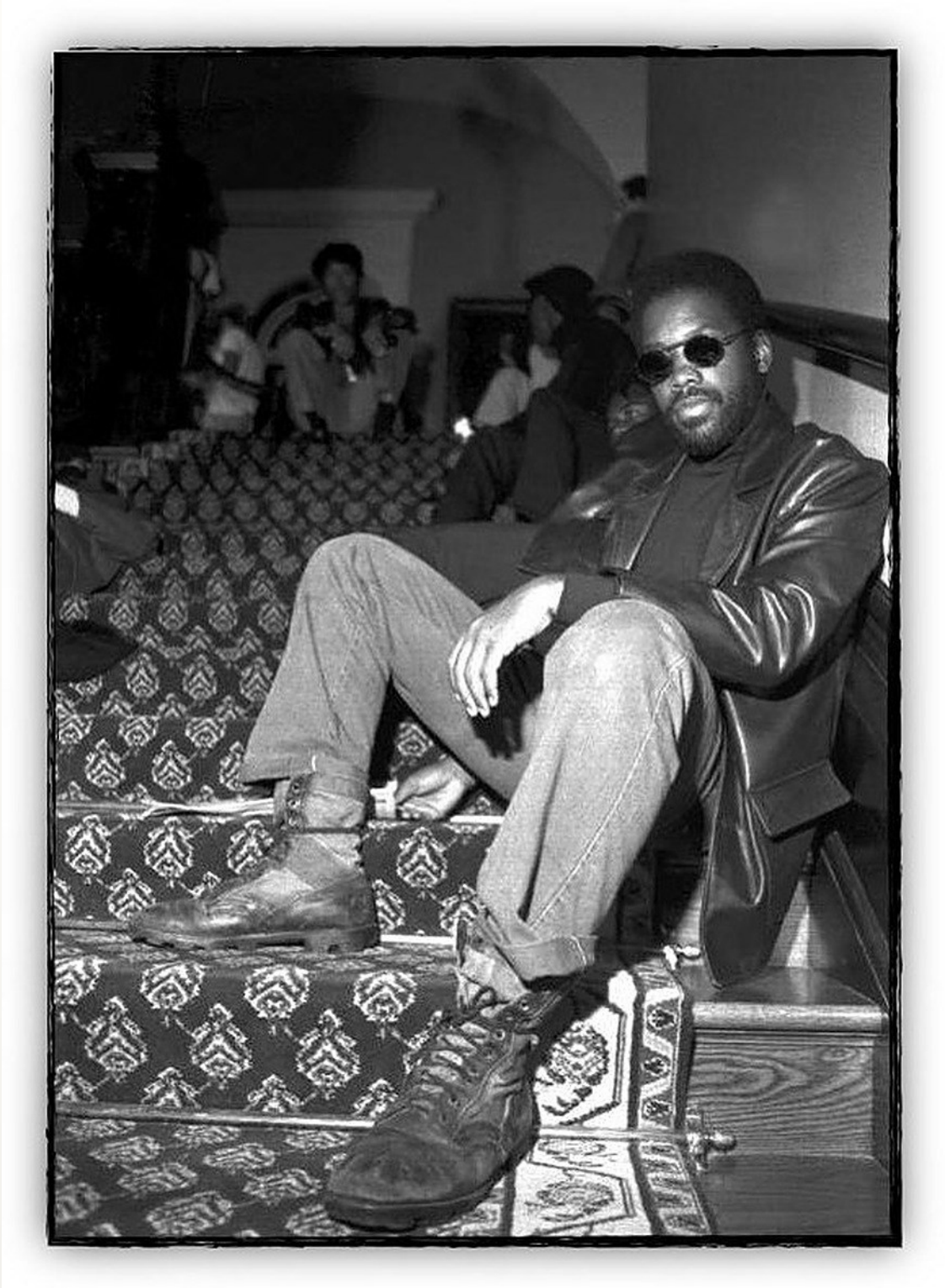
Oak Park youth posing outside an apartment in Sacramento, California.



Tommy in front of the Watts Towers, Los Angeles, California, USA.



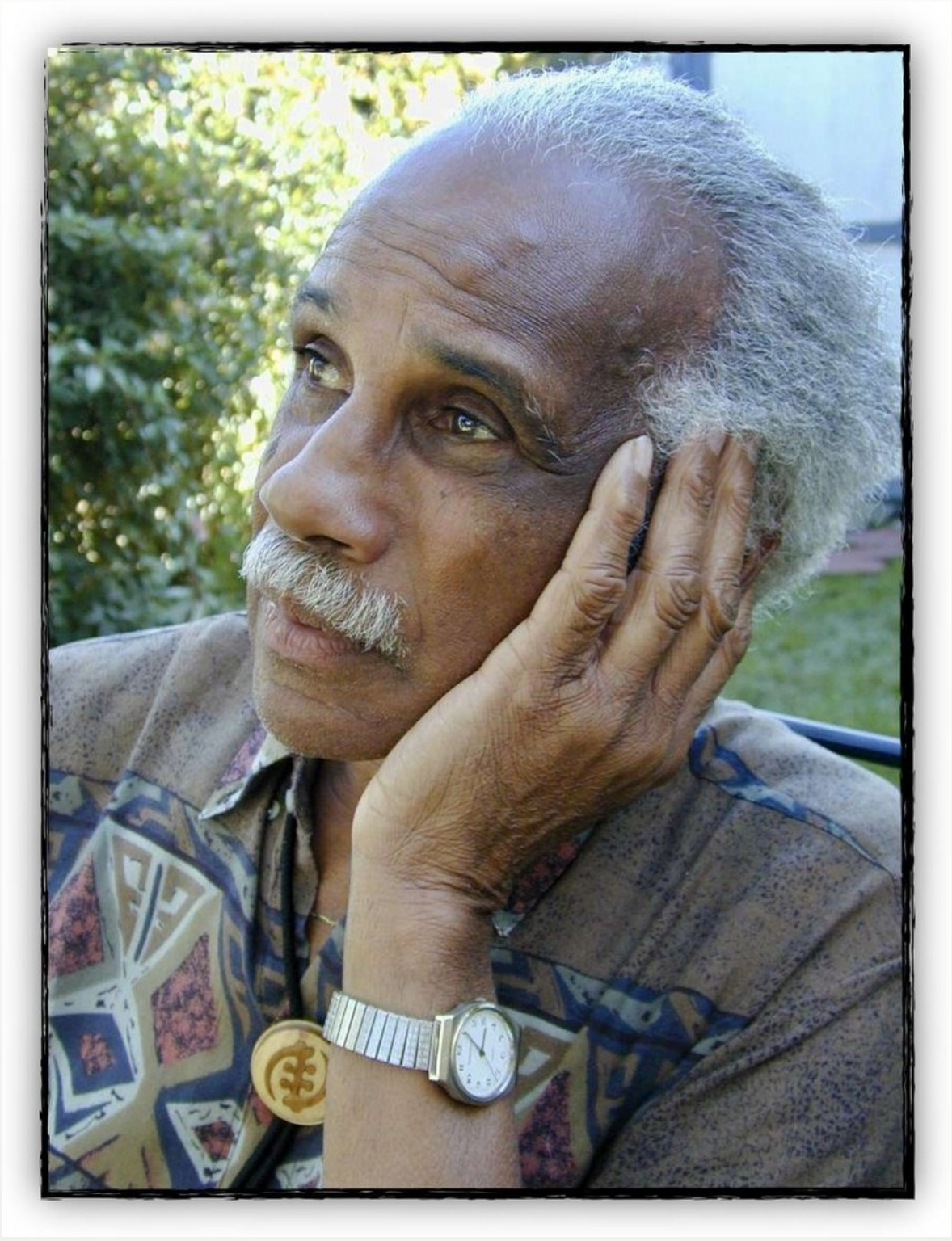
Gospel singer Marvin Winans praises with a raised arm in concert.



Kadeem Hardison on the set of the movie Panther in Sacramento, California.



Ruby Dee speaking and laughing in an interview in Sacramento, California.



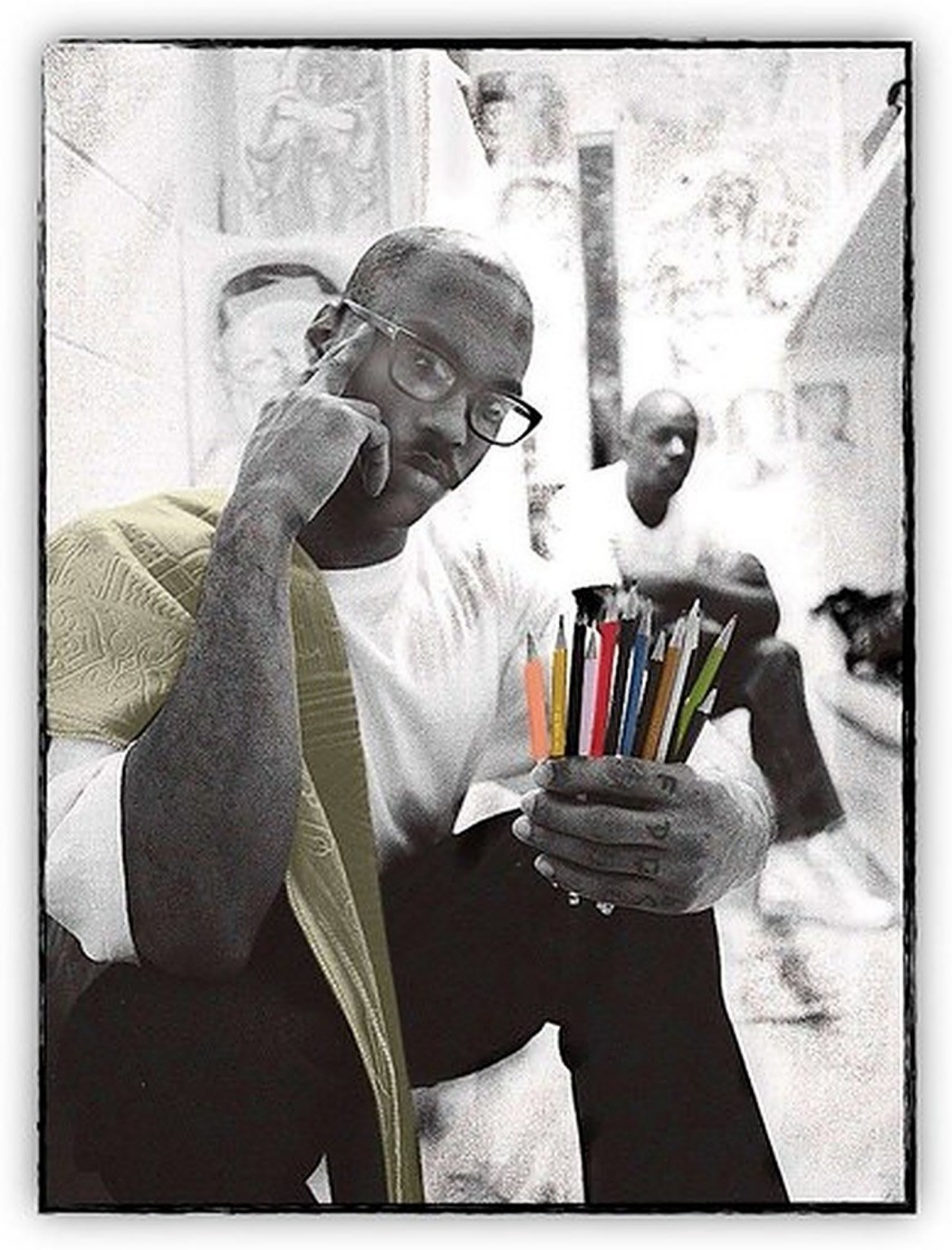
Ashley Bryan, renowned artist and author, pensive outdoor portrait.



Cornel West was applauding at a forum about violence prevention in a South Dallas high school in 2023.



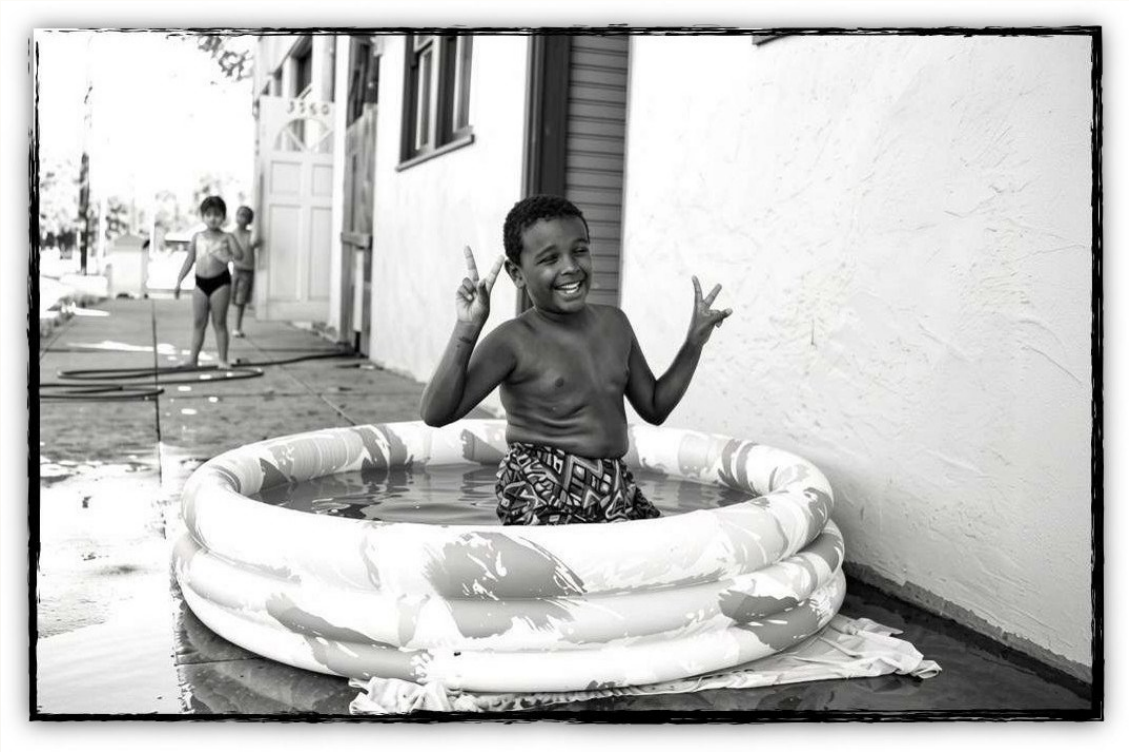
MC Hammer is at home with his daughter in Fremont, California.



An inmate artist holds up his colored pencil in his cell in Stockton, California, in 1997.



A joyful boy in a wheelchair participating in the Sacramento Special Olympics during the 1980s.



A young boy is setting up a peace-sign inflatable pool on the sidewalk in Oak Park.



A young boy is riding a skateboard in the housing projects of Oakland, California.



California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation, 2008.




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Oak Park Little League, 1986.



Evangelic Schumeier celebrates her graduation from the University of La Verne.


LAKERS







"The Soap Artist" N.A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility.



Compton Ministry Outreach – ThugExposed.org Ministries & Gospel Rap Group Keno-Camp, Compton, California, 2012.



An Oak Park trick-or-treater smiling in a raincoat and mask.



A little girl is grabbing her mother's hand, with her little brother trailing behind her in Oak Park.



Businesswoman Denise, corporate office, Dallas, Texas.



King of Curls salon owner, Sacramento, California, cornrows hair business.



Dennis Cail, Zirtue CEO, standing at a desk, office portrait.



My nieces and nephews and kids, I'm very thankful to God for.







Kamala Harris speaking at the podium, gesturing with a raised hand.



Dr. Dorothy Height, civil rights leader, speaking at the podium.



Winnie Mandela with folded arms, Sacramento, California.



Karine Jean-Pierre is speaking in Sacramento, California.



Activist and scholar Angela Davis speaking at podium.



N.A. Chaderjian-CDCR



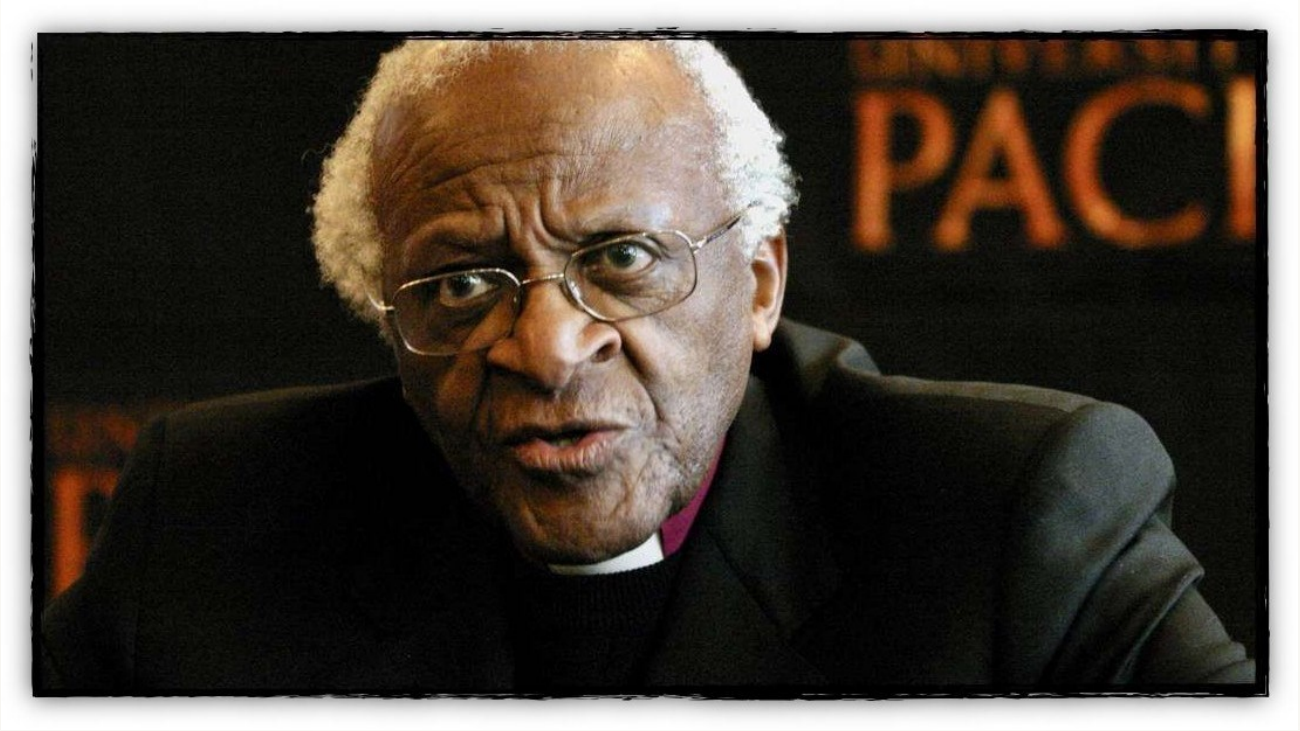

PELIGRO!



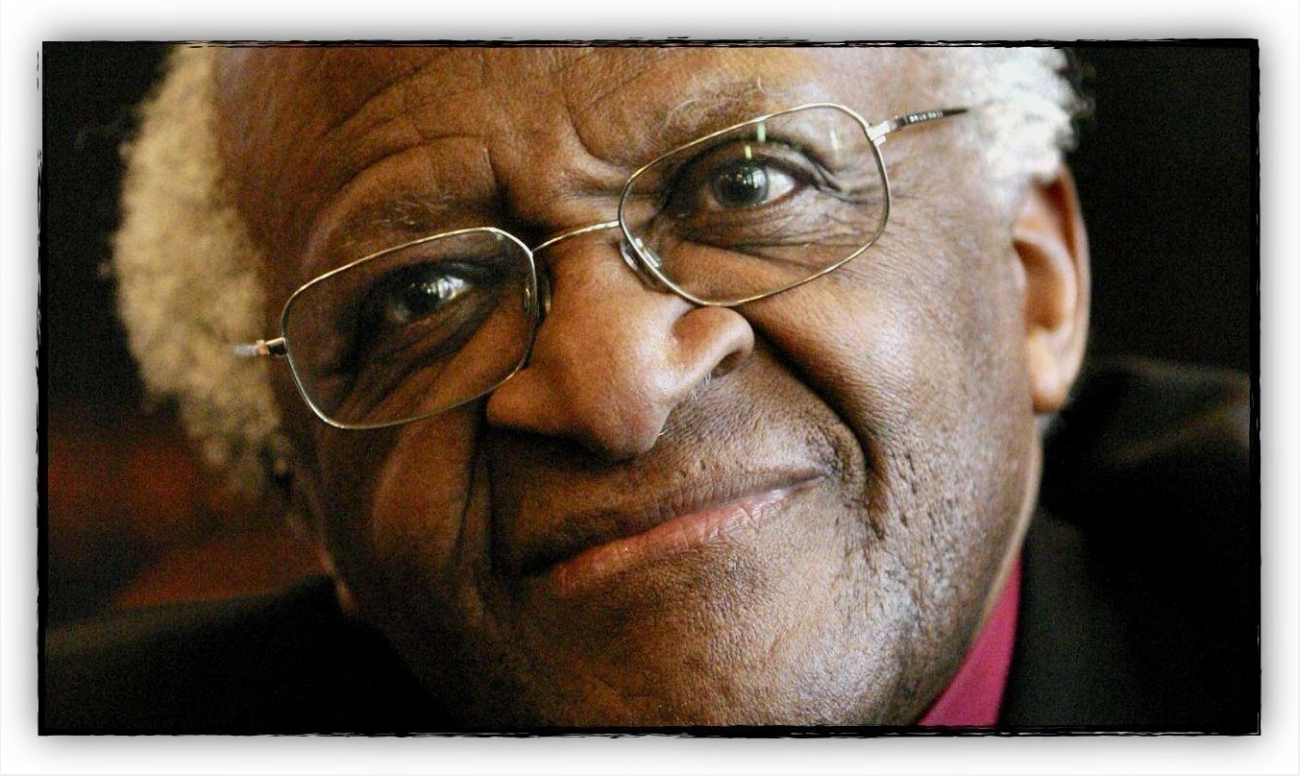
Dorrough Music, Dallas rapper and Mavericks anthem artist, theater portrait.



Dallas Black businessmen and leaders in suits at the American Airlines Center.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu speaking at the University of the Pacific.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu, warm smiling portrait, in a clerical collar.

CHAPTER

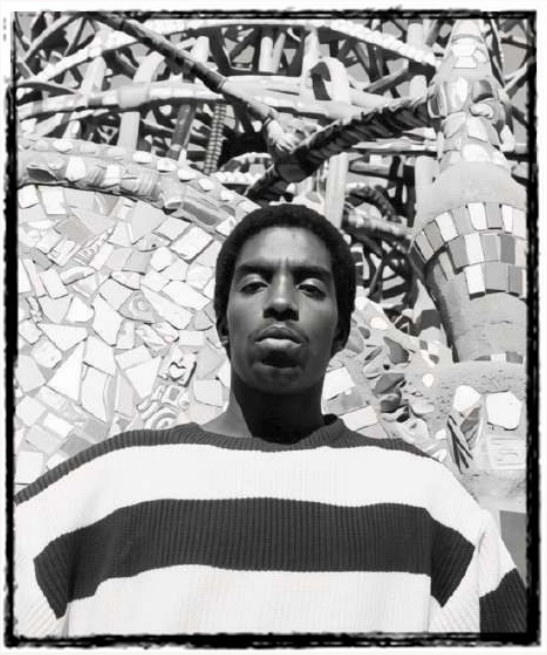
10

LEAVING HOME…RITES OF PASSAGE TO MANHOOD



Eager to test my life skills and prove my manhood, I left home at 18. My friends Thomas and my late friend Jesse, whom I met at the Calvary Christian Center Youth Ministry, lived in North Sacramento, specifically in the Del Paso Heights area, also known as DPH. Those familiar with the area understand its notorious reputation for crime and gangs, often referring to DPH as the "deepest part of hell."

The church became a sanctuary for me, offering peace, motivation, and a deeper connection to God. This environment kept me grounded and provided a new community—a church family, friends, and opportunities for recreation, prayer, and Bible study. It truly felt like home, allowing me to become more independent. From the age of 18 onward, my life centered around my photography work for the Sacramento Observer Newspaper and my involvement with the activities at Calvary Christian Center, particularly the youth group.



Tommy, whom I call my brother, was another good and faithful friend; he was my "road dog."



Jesse was more than just a friend; he was my brother from another mother.

My late friend Tommy from my neighborhood in the South area and I spent so much time in Del Paso Heights with our new friend group, which became family, that we started crashing on our friend Thomas's couch and floor. Thomas's father, "Big Thomas," ran a home-based business selling rice hulls.





Childhood friends Tommy and Jimmy showing a handcrafted burl wood table.



Tommy and Malik Koolaid holding a historic peace newspaper, 1980s.



Jimmy is polishing the wooden table.



Willa Kern "Big Willa" celebrating with raised hands at a banquet. banquet.





Willa Kern "Big Willa" seated at a community



Demola, violinist, with focused intensity under a blue stage spotlight.





Note: Rice hulls, or husks, are the tough, fibrous outer coverings of rice grains that are removed during milling. They are a sustainable, lightweight, nutrient-rich organic byproduct that contains silica. Commonly used in gardening for soil aeration, drainage, and mulching, rice hulls are also used in eco-friendly building materials and industrial fuel.

Big Thomas was a dedicated, no-nonsense man from rural Louisiana who took pride in his roots. He worked as a custodian at the California State Capitol during the graveyard shift. In addition, he managed a courier service and ran a rice hull business. His team consisted of independent contractors who drove the rice hull trucks and delivered packages for the courier company. He also employed a group of freelancers whom he paid us 25 cents per bag that we stuffed with rice hulls, which we considered a fair wage.

All the rice hulls came from the West Sacramento River port. Big Thomas's driver collected them in his vintage red truck and dumped them into a field behind the very small house. We bagged the rice hulls at our own pace, which suited me since I was attending junior college and working for the Sacramento Observer Newspaper, earning $25 per photo assignment.

This was in 1986-87. All the rice hulls came from the West Sacramento River port. Big Thomas's driver collected them in his vintage red truck and dumped them into a field behind the house. We bagged the rice hulls at our own pace, which suited me since I was attending junior college and working for the Sacramento Observer Newspaper, earning $25 for each assignment. This was in 1986.

We stayed in the small three-bedroom house on Hayes Avenue in Del Paso Heights. A group of five to seven of us camped out on the floor in the living room with blankets, while the more senior full-time workers took the two couches. It wasn't the most comfortable living situation, but we had an incredibly fun time because everyone contributed to the ministry in some way.

We stayed up late cooking mini teriyaki chicken wings, making chocolate cake in the microwave, and discussing deep Bible topics like the end times, the Mark of the Beast, the rapture, and other spiritual subjects. I learned a lot, grew spiritually, and felt good about starting my journey toward independence as a young man.

Jesse Darden was one of my closest friends and a dedicated worker for "Big Thomas." He had an extremely tough past filled with hardships and abuse that no child should have to endure. At just 16, he was on his own after his family abandoned him and moved to St. Louis while he was in juvenile detention. When he returned home, he found his family gone and the house empty.

I won't go into detail about the severe abuse that Jesse and his siblings endured from heartless family predators, but it's truly remarkable how he managed, at just 16, to hold down a job, attend school, and faithfully serve in ministry.

Jesse consistently credited Christ for his survival. He formed a strong bond with "Big Thomas," who took him in to prevent him from entering the foster system. During this time, Jesse learned valuable business skills, remained dedicated to ministry, and successfully completed high school. Later, he got married and started a family.

Even though I was a year older than Jesse, he became my spiritual mentor. He patiently taught me the Word of God and showed me how to apply it in every aspect of my life, which was incredibly helpful. He also corrected and guided me whenever I slipped back into a secular mindset.

He warned me about the spiritual dangers of secular music, which promotes sinful lifestyles. He called it "worldly," meaning it was not from God. Today, I have written three books on the subject.

Jesse and little Thomas gave me cassette tapes of gospel artists like The Winans, Commission, the Clark Sisters, and more. At first, it took me some time to embrace this music, but eventually, I began to love it, and it became part of my daily routine.

Listening to this music, along with reading God's Word and praying, refreshed my soul and spirit. It brought me peace and joy while strengthening my faith to act on what I believed God was guiding me to do.

I want to take a moment to honor my late friend, Tommy. He was a natural comedian with a kind and genuine heart for everyone he met—truly, everyone. Wherever Tommy went, he brought laughter. It didn't matter if he was with someone from the neighborhood or a 70-year-old white cowboy; Tommy had a special gift for spreading joy and humor. We always smiled when Tommy arrived because we knew that within seconds, he would have us laughing. He had an extraordinary ability to turn the simplest moments in life into hilarious and memorable experiences. Tommy was truly a gift from God, especially for those who were struggling with depression.

Tommy faced numerous challenges throughout his life and had spent some time in prison. He grew up on the tough streets of Oakland and Richmond, California, before finally settling in Sacramento. His mother, lovingly known as "Big Willa," was a kind and compassionate Christian woman—almost like a second mom to me. She was always generous and ready to help others, much like my own mother, and frequently fed the less fortunate. People often came to their home, and Big Willa, along with her daughter "Lil Willa," Tommy, and his brother Jimmy, would serve, counsel, and spend time with those going through hard times. It truly was a loving and nurturing environment; they were like my second family.

I introduced Tommy to Calvary's Youth Ministry shortly after I started attending, and it was life-changing for both of us. Together, we worked to bring our friends, many of whom were involved in gangs and drugs, to the ministry, and God transformed many of their lives too. During that time, Tommy remained dedicated to the mission of evangelizing on the streets. I truly miss my friend.

While this was happening, I regularly traveled to Los Angeles with my friend and mentor, Robert Maryland, who trained me well in the darkroom, studio, and photojournalism.

April was a beautiful Christian woman, and she pulled me aside to warn me about Hollywood's dangers.



April Sutton, a BET commentator, interviewed R&B artist Pebbles at the Grammy Party in Los Angeles in 1987.

April hired me for freelance jobs with BET, which opened many doors for me in the world of media photography. She was also a good friend of the Jackson family and assigned me several tasks related to them. Although I never met Michael Jackson, I did work with his brothers, Tito and Jermaine, as well as their father, Joe Jackson.

I remember attending a barbecue at the family's home in Encino, California. The occasion was to watch a pilot for a show produced by a family friend of the Jacksons, who wanted media attention to promote it. I recall Joe Jackson approaching our table in his backyard, which resembled a landscaped theme park. He asked my friend Robert and me how we liked the barbecue. I politely responded, "This is delicious, Mr. Jackson."

What Robert said next still gives me a reason to tease him to this day. While he was biting into a pork rib with barbecue sauce dripping from his hands, he exclaimed, "It needs more sauce." I couldn't fully interpret the expression on Joe Jackson's face as he looked at my friend, but it definitely didn't convey, "Thank you for your honesty, my kind friend."

The more assignments I took on in Hollywood, the more I realized—through the guidance of the Holy Spirit—that worldly pleasures, fame, and wealth are merely superficial. I once believed that being a successful photographer in these influential circles was the ultimate achievement, but I began to understand that only Yeshua can truly fill the emptiness in my heart and in the hearts of these celebrities.

In these circles, you hear and see what the media won't reveal: the pain, suffering, demonic oppression, and addictions that many celebrities endure.



My photo of Jermaine Jackson, his daughter, and April Sutton was taken at the Jackson family home in Havenhurst, Encino, California.



I was at the Jacksons' house photographing Jermaine Jackson, his daughter, and April Sutton. Videographer Loren Reed is on the right.



Parole Agent talking to a youth inmate.



Chaplain McAllister ministering to incarcerated youth in a cell corridor.



California Youth Authority officers restraining a ward at the security fence.



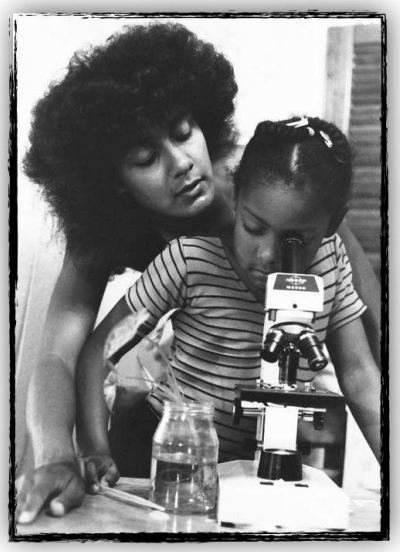
California Youth Authority-school in a cage.



L. Sister Josie and niece in formal attire. C. Me and Josie.



"My Sister Josie"



Josie and my niece Randi were looking through a microscope in the 1990s.

I love and miss my sister Josie, who was like an angel to me growing up. She always kept me aware of my God-given conscience and significantly influenced my decision to pursue ministry. Josie was deeply involved in ministry; she served on staff at Campus Life and Masters Commission. She also dedicated her life to being a missionary in Brazil and did important outreach work for girls and women affected by sex trafficking.

I fondly remember our late-night conversations in her room before bed during my grade school years. She would share her thoughts on the biblical end times, the coming of the Antichrist, and what would happen after the rapture. Those moments were truly special to me, and I look forward to seeing her in Heaven



Dallas Fashion Model



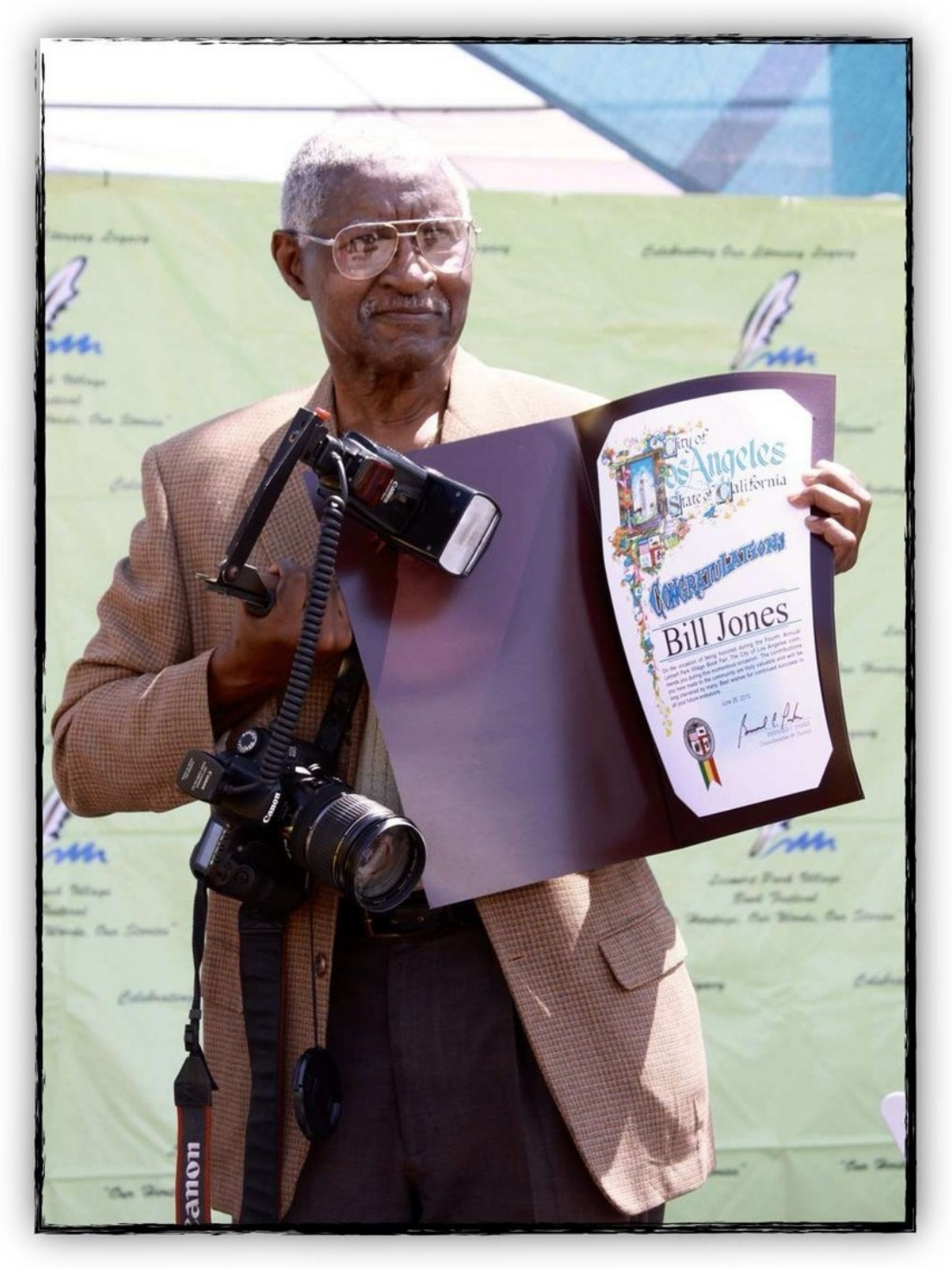
DeSoto, Texas, Black women civic and educational leaders.



Bethann Hardison, fashion activist, portrait, Dallas, Texas.



Businesswoman Pleshette Robertson smiling, portrait on a couch.



The late legendary photographer Bill Jones was honored in Los Angeles's Crenshaw District.



Invites to the Michael Jackson Memorial concert in Beverly Hills in 2010, held on the red carpet.



80s R&B group New Choice



Me posing with New Choice in 1980s at a business reception at Rancho Arroya in Rancho Cordova, California.



Malcolm-Jamal Warner and his date at a red carpet awards gala.



Malcolm-Jamal Warner and Michael DeLorenzo at a red carpet awards event.



Actor Malcolm-Jamal Warner is smiling for a red carpet portrait.

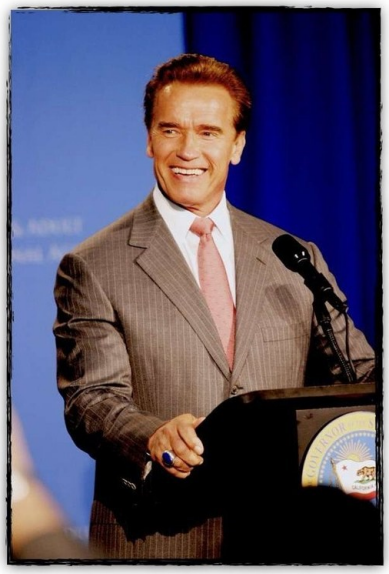


Tia Mowry, Tamera Mowry, and Tahj Mowry on the red carpet, Los Angeles, California.



April Sutton and me.

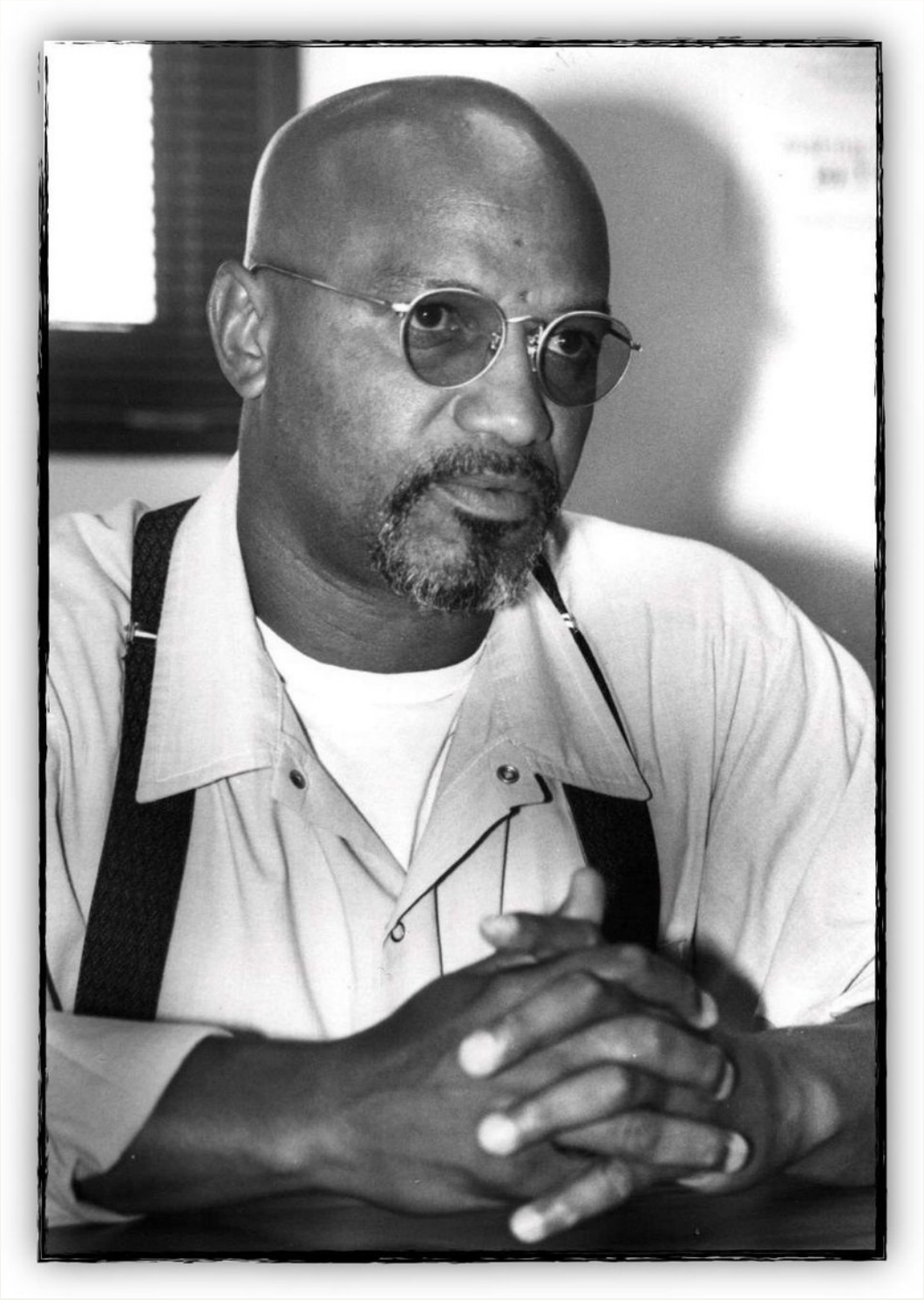




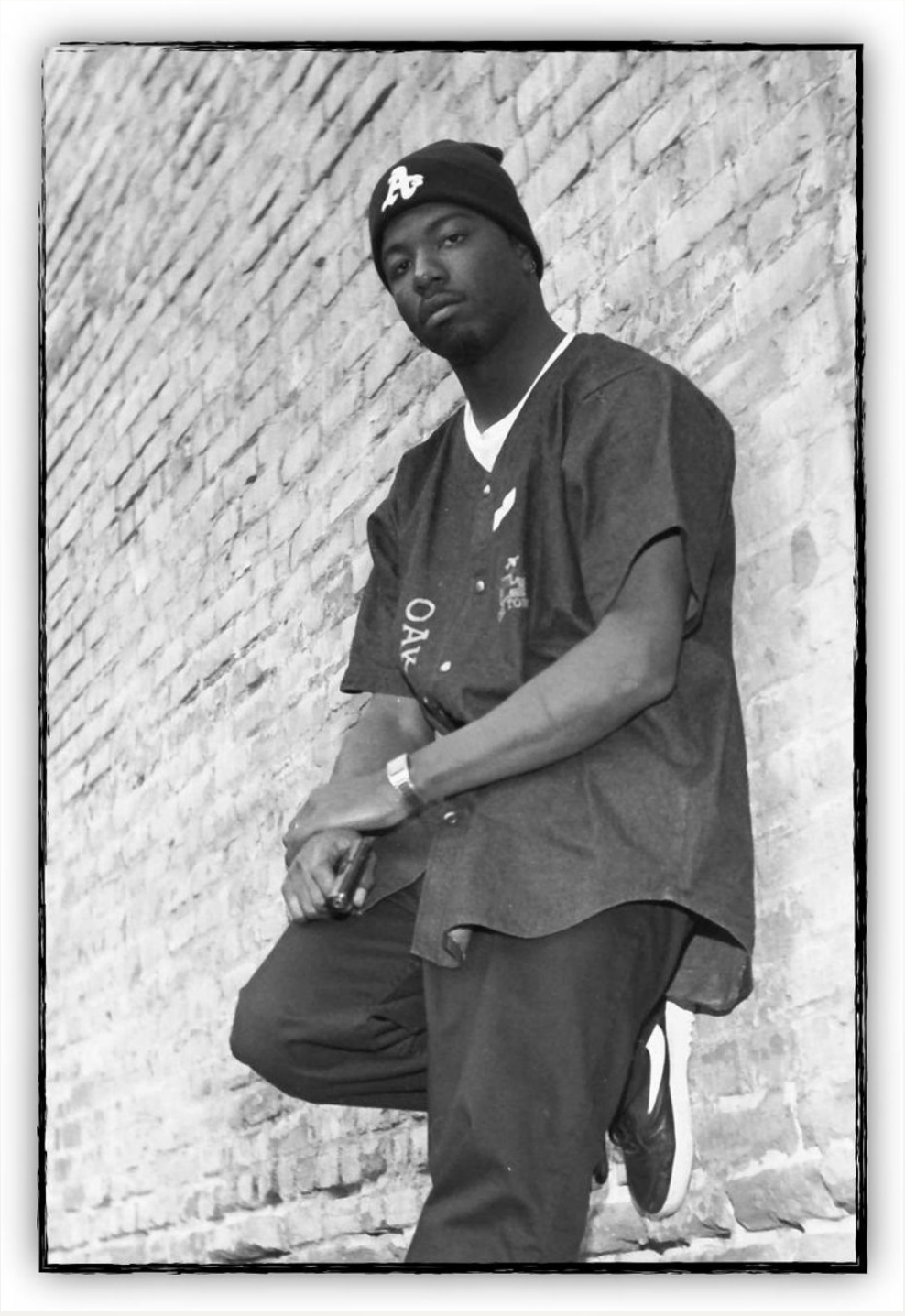
Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger arriving with a motorcade at N.A. Chaderjian prison in Stockton, California, for a press conference and tour to address the extreme violence at the institution.







Black Panther leader Geronimo Pratt (Ji Jaga), prison portrait, Ione, California.



Rapper Spice 1 in Sacramento alley holding a handgun.



New Edition's Johnny Gill performed in Oakland, California, in the 1990s.



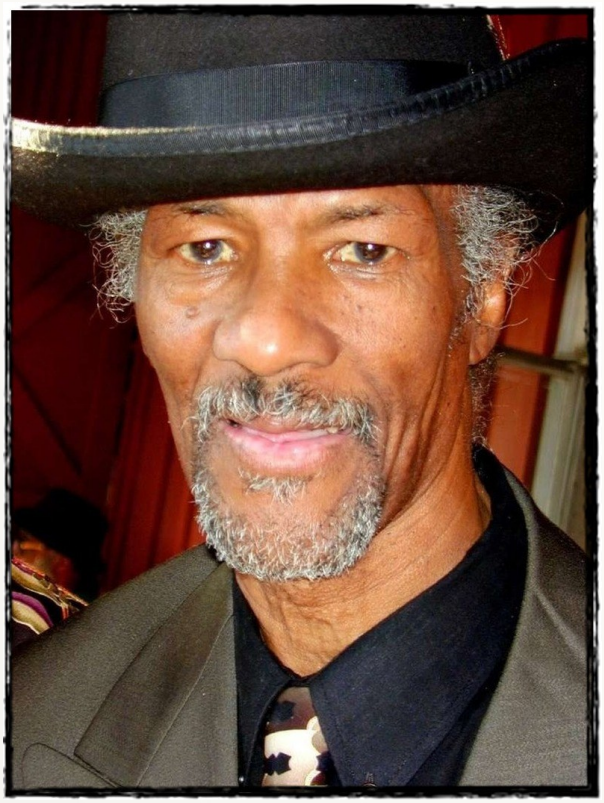
New Edition performing in baggy plaid pants, Oakland, California, 1990s.



Ronnie DeVoe

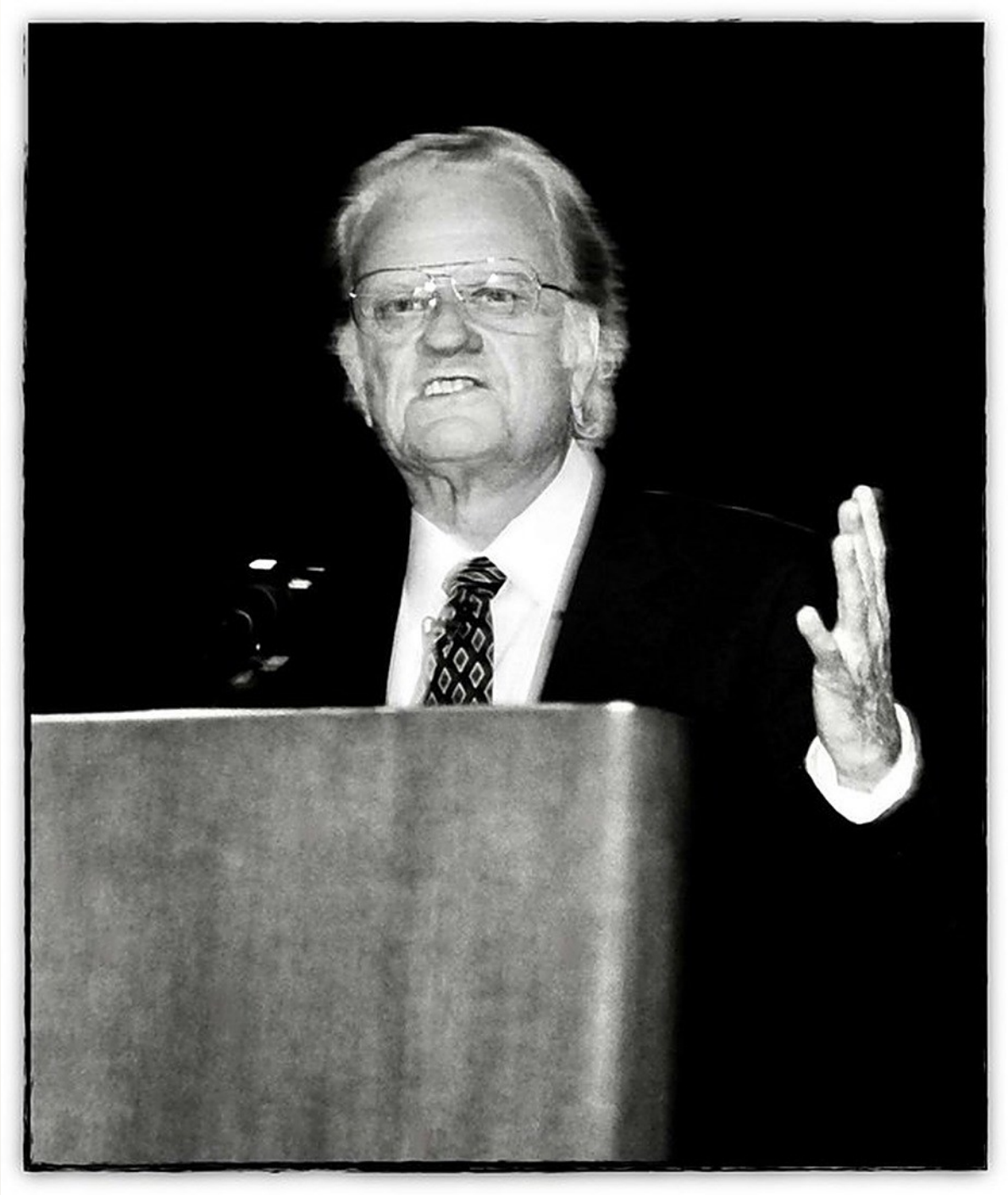


Ralph Tresvant





Fillmore Slim (Clarence Sims): infamous Bay Area street icon/pimp turned veteran bluesman.



Billy Graham preaching at Cal Expo in Sacramento, California, in the 1980s.



Billy Graham seated in contemplation, hand to chin.



Dr. Charles Stanley speaking warmly, In Touch Ministries portrait.

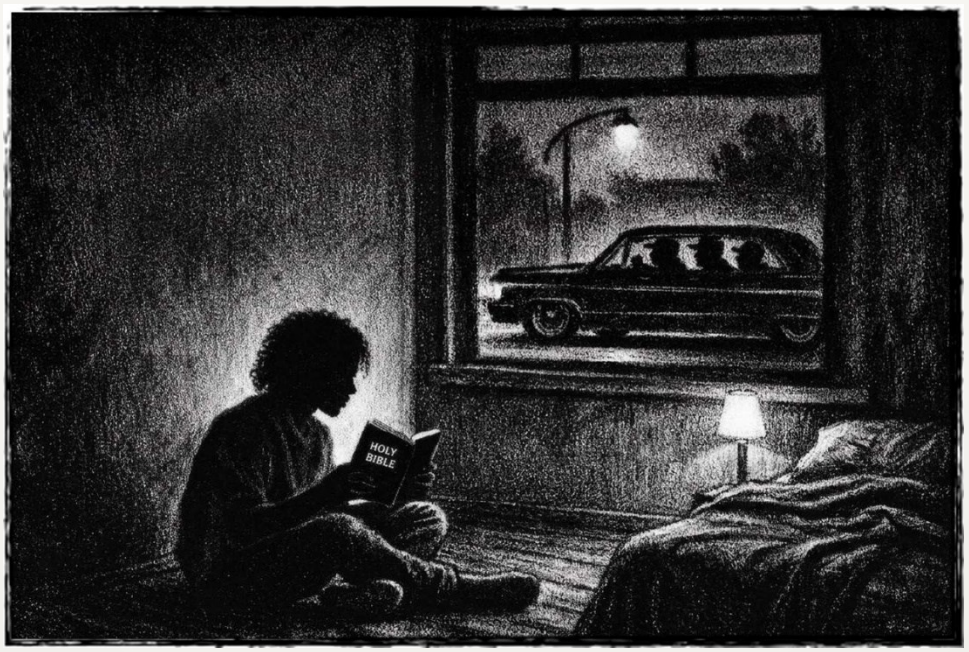
CHAPTER

11

ADVENTEROUS JOURNEY TO LOS ANGELES IN THE 80'S

I moved to Los Angeles at the age of 20 and enrolled at L.A. Trade Technical College while working as a movie usher at Mann Theatres. The college was an excellent community trade school— affordable and conveniently located near downtown L.A. It offered resources similar to those found at major universities, including access to facilities, equipment rentals, and field trips to prominent photo studios in the area, all at junior college prices. My only school loan was just $150.

During this time, I was broke and slept on a wooden floor in a sleeping bag in the Crenshaw District, an area known for its association with the Rollin' 60s Crip gang. I was committed to making it on my own and viewed this period as a personal rite of passage, determined to establish my independence as a man. Nonetheless, I was grateful for my mom and dad, who were willing to provide a safety net if I truly needed it.



When I first arrived, my roommates advised me not to eat at the kitchen table and suggested I sit on the floor and lean against the couch instead. This caution was due to the frequent drive-by shootings in the area. The Rolling 60s rivals often recklessly and indiscriminately fired at shadows in the windows at night, hoping to hit their intended targets.

Despite the potential hazards, I was grateful to have somewhere to stay. I was so low on money that, along with the other movie ushers, I often borrowed from Tony, our favorite panhandler in Westwood. Despite his disabilities and leg challenges, Tony was quite successful in his role. He regularly lent us money throughout the week, and we made sure to repay him every Friday.

We also offered him free popcorn and soda because he would help us with change for the cash register. Tony was a nice older Black gentleman who was fun to talk to, very sharp, and always had a great story to tell.

We had many celebrities visit our theater, from the child actor Webster to Prince and even Michael Jackson, whose security would sneak in through the alley door in disguise before the movie started.

I remember in 1988, our sister theater around the corner hosted the movie“ I'm Going to Get You, Sucka."

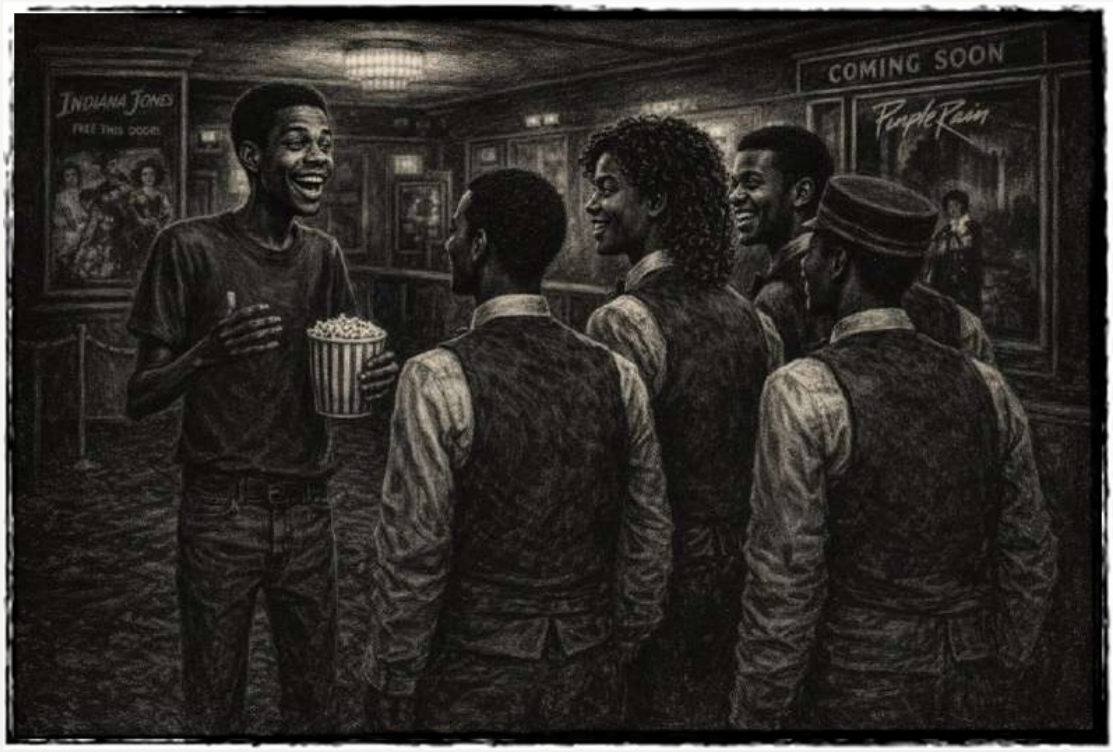
Chris Rock, a young comedian and actor who wasn't exactly a hit yet, walked into our theater after everyone had already settled in. Most of the ushers were from the inner-city neighborhoods of Los Angeles, and some were gang members. We all wore our usual uniform: a maroon tuxedo, bow tie, and shiny black dress shoes.

Chris walked in with such confidence, as if he had already made it big in Hollywood. He quickly became friends with all of us movie ushers. One of my colleagues even joked, "That's the guy from that movie down the street… 'I'm Gonna Get You Sucka!'" He's the character who walks into the BBQ place and

asks, "How much for one rib?" That role, a significant break for Chris Rock, was brief but left a lasting impression on the audience.

Whenever the movie was playing nearby, Chris would swing by our theater. Now, this wasn't the famous and rich Chris Rock—it was the broke Chris Rock. I'd catch up with Chris during my break, after the patrons settled in, and we'd often treat him to a free mini-sized popcorn and soda. We'd chat about everything from the latest movies to life's challenges. He was very excited about his acting dreams and shared how he'd met Eddie Murphy. But a few of my peers snickered and weren't sure if he was telling the whole truth. I bet they know now that he was…lol.

It turned out the main reason he came to chat with us was the dopamine rush he got from walking in front of the theater while "I'm going to get you, Sucka" was playing, then seeing people randomly and enthusiastically recognize him near the front door. This became a never-ending loop for Chris while the movie was showing at that theater.



A young Chris Rock conversing with us ushers at the Mann Theater.

Chris would sometimes cut me off mid-sentence to ask, "What time is it?" Occasionally, he'd say, "Okay, got 5 minutes." We playfully teased him about it, and he would chuckle before making his way to his spot at our sister theater just around the corner.

Chris was funny, friendly, and down-to-earth, and he seemed sincere, genuine, and humble. We really enjoyed his visit to our theater and chatting with him during those few weeks.

A New Christian Brotherhood in L.A.

I got to know another Christian brother named David Myles, who is now a brother to me. He is a member of a Christian rap group called GFS Forever. We first met in the 1980s at L.A. Trade Technical College. I remember feeling very lonely in Los Angeles and praying for some good Christian friends. After a few weeks, one afternoon on the school's outdoor quad, Dave came over and struck up a conversation with me. It turned out that he was also studying photography.

We talked Gospel rap and found out he was a really talented anointed rapper and singer. Dave had previously rapped in a group with a member of the Notorious rap group NWA, but the Holy Spirit convicted him, and he's been dedicated to Christian rap ever since. I told him I had a Christian rap song I'd written, and he invited me over to his place to record it. That evening after school, I met his friend Charles, who became a great friend and brother to me also. Charles was a talented urban artist and an amazing graffiti artist. Businesses in South Central Los Angeles would ask him to paint murals on their buildings. He also does pop-locking, which he still does today, teaching classes for a nonprofit in South Side Chicago.

Once again, the Holy Spirit guided me to another blessed and safe haven. I headed over to David's house in the heart of South-Central Los Angeles. When I arrived, he had already set up a makeshift studio. I got on the microphone and couldn't help but laugh, knowing that his rapping skills were far beyond mine. I decided to bow out and simply enjoy listening to his raps.

Dave's house was a blessing; his caring parents welcomed me in. I often visited for dinner, where David's mom cooked fantastic soul food.

David's house was known as the Kool-Aid House, a place that felt like a spiritual revival. Through this connection, I gained another family of brothers and sisters in Christ. We occasionally held Bible studies in the evenings, sometimes led by David's mom. I remember one night during a Bible study when gang-related gunfire erupted nearby—it sounded like submachine guns. Despite the commotion, David's mom remained calm and prayerful, saying she would pause the Bible study until the gunfire stopped. Once it was quiet again, she seamlessly continued the study without missing a beat.

David's mom was a kind and eloquent woman who boldly stood up for Christ. She was neighborhood-famous for leading one of the area's most notorious Crip gang leaders to Christ.

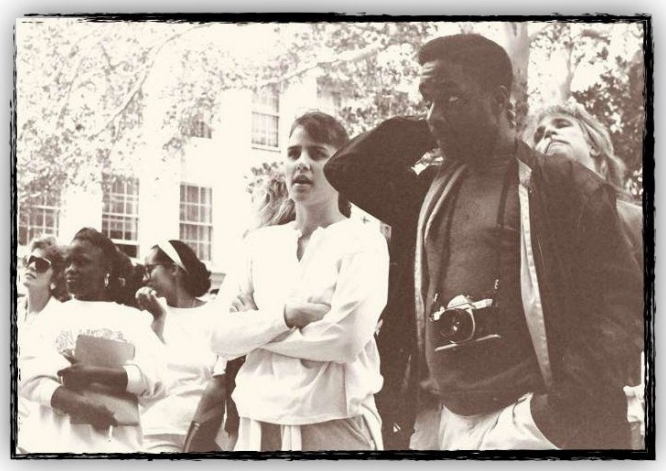
In the evenings, especially on weekends, David's house was the main gathering spot. We would hang out there, or sometimes drive to Westwood Village to walk around, or go to the all-night bowling alley in Venice Beach. It was literally all night; sometimes we didn't leave until 6 a.m.! We also had a favorite burger spot that we went to religiously every week. The place was called "Quick and Split," right in a very dangerous section of South Central Los Angeles on Western Blvd. We risked our lives going to that area late at night, just to get our burger fix. We all ordered basically the same thing, every time.

- Strawberry Soda
- Chili Cheese Burger
- Fries
- Cup of homemade vanilla ice cream

It was our ghetto paradise meal, and we looked forward to it week after week.

I have learned so much from David, both as a photographer and as a wise friend. I am incredibly grateful for the way God has blessed me by surrounding me with spiritually healthy people, resources, and support that help me fulfill His purpose for my life.

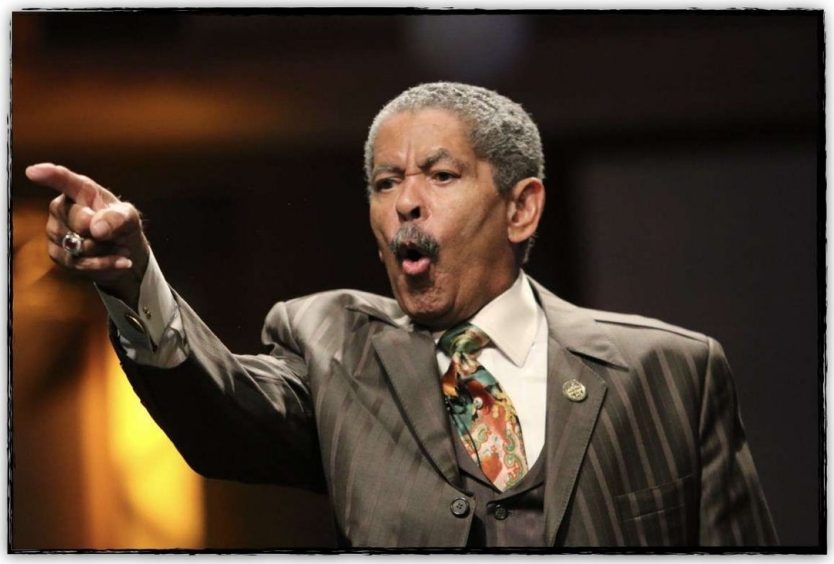




David Myles and I were staff photographers for the newspaper at L.A. Trade Tech College during the 1980s.







The late Apostle Fred Price was preaching at Calvary Christian Center in Sacramento, California.



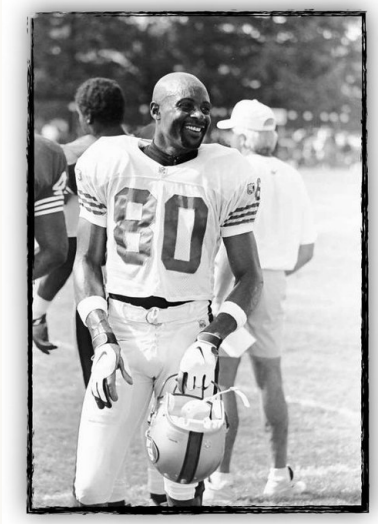


Straight Line program speaker reveals prison scars to incarcerated youth.



An inmate's arm hanging out of a cell slot at the California Youth Authority. Straight Line gang prevention program: a lifer inmate counsels a juvenile offender at Deuel Vocational Institution prison in California.

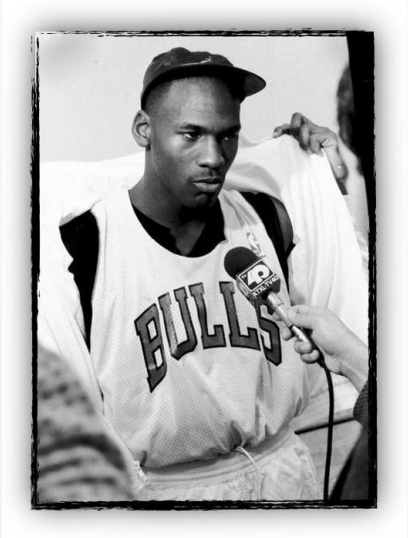




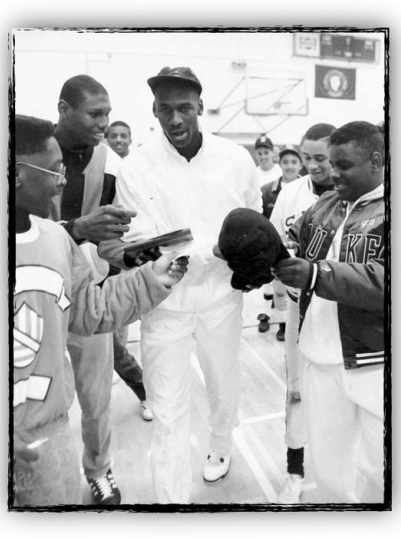
Jerry Rice smiling at 49ers practice, 1980s.

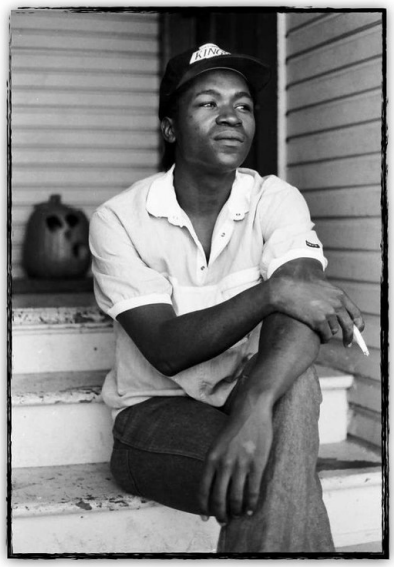


Michael Jordan, Bulls practice interview, signing autographs in Sacramento, California, in 1986.

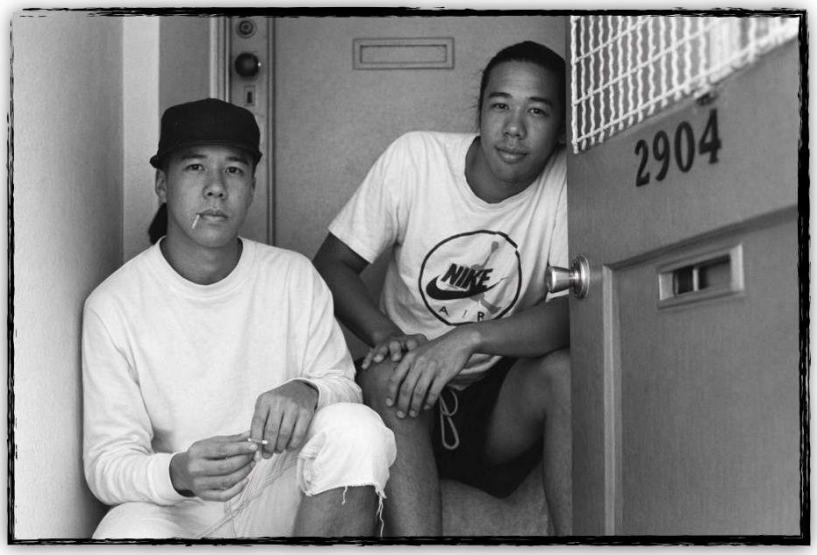








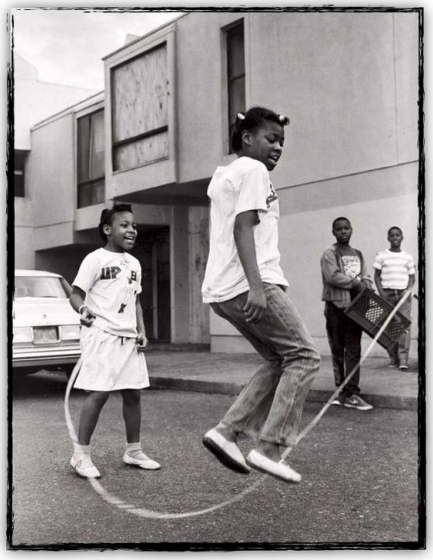
Man relaxing outside his home, in Oak Park.



An Asian American youth sitting on a doorstep stoop in the Oak Park neighborhood, Sacramento, California.



Old neighborhood friends outside.



Two girls jumping rope in a West Oakland housing project right after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.



An older man is sitting on the curb of a sidewalk, contemplating life on a street in Mexico.



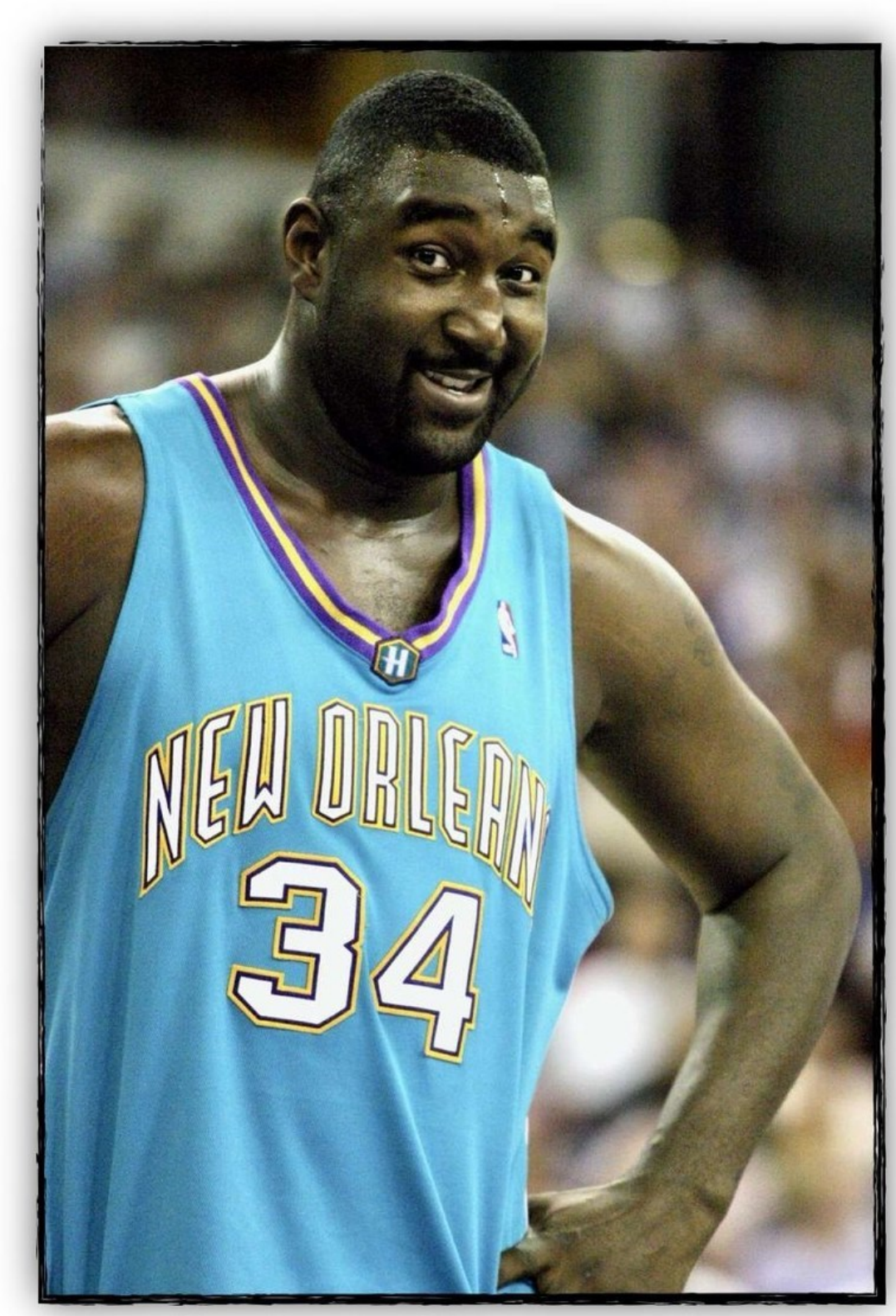
Men in custody are looking through a barred window at a Telmex payphone in Mexico.



A young boy is playing an arcade game on an open-air patio in Mexico.



Cornel West and the One Hundred Unit, a women's dance troop, raised their fists in Sacramento, California, at the State Capitol.



NBA player Robert "Tractor" Traylor, number 34, played for the New Orleans Hornets.



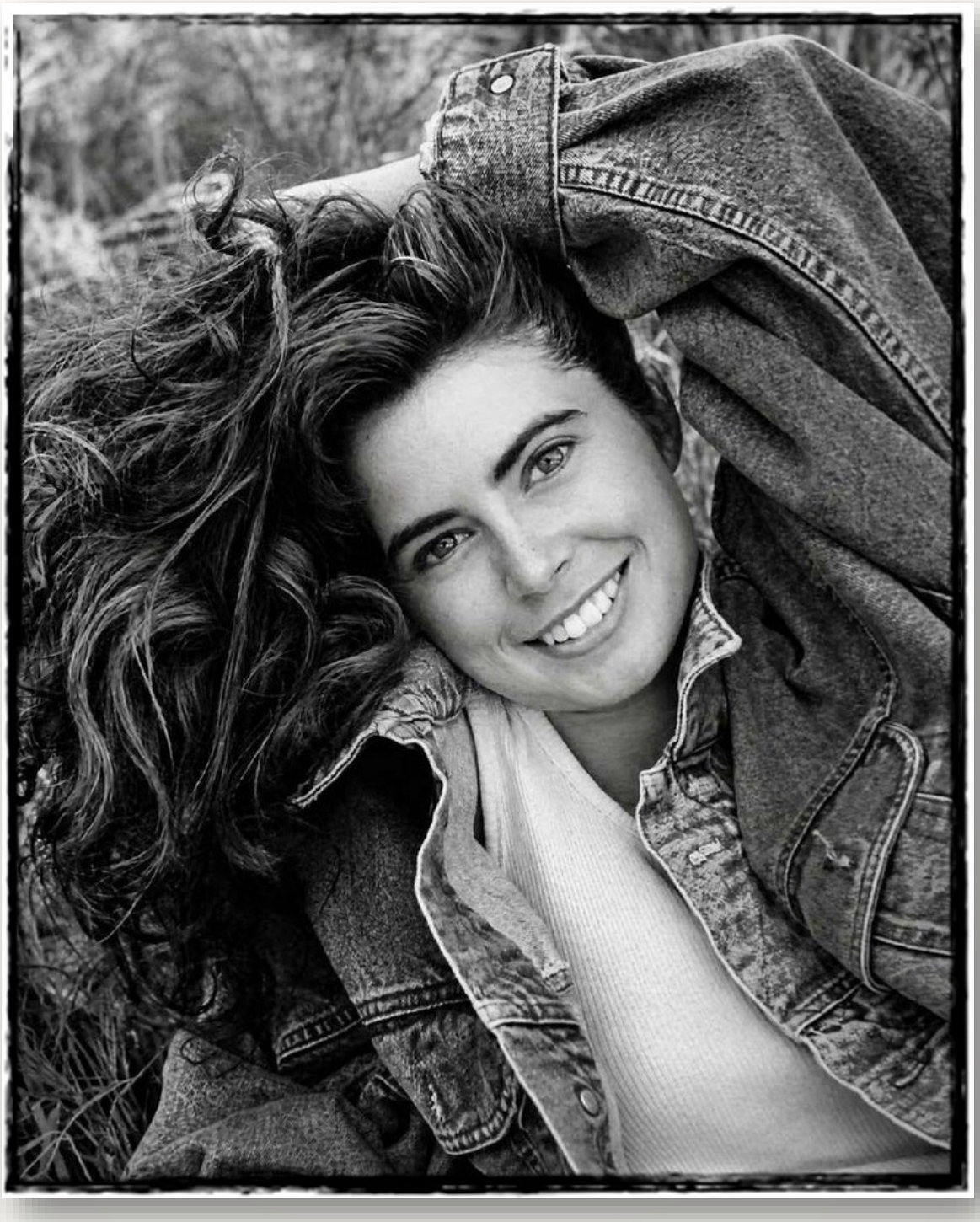
Karen R., Life Coach, Dallas, Texas, 2022.



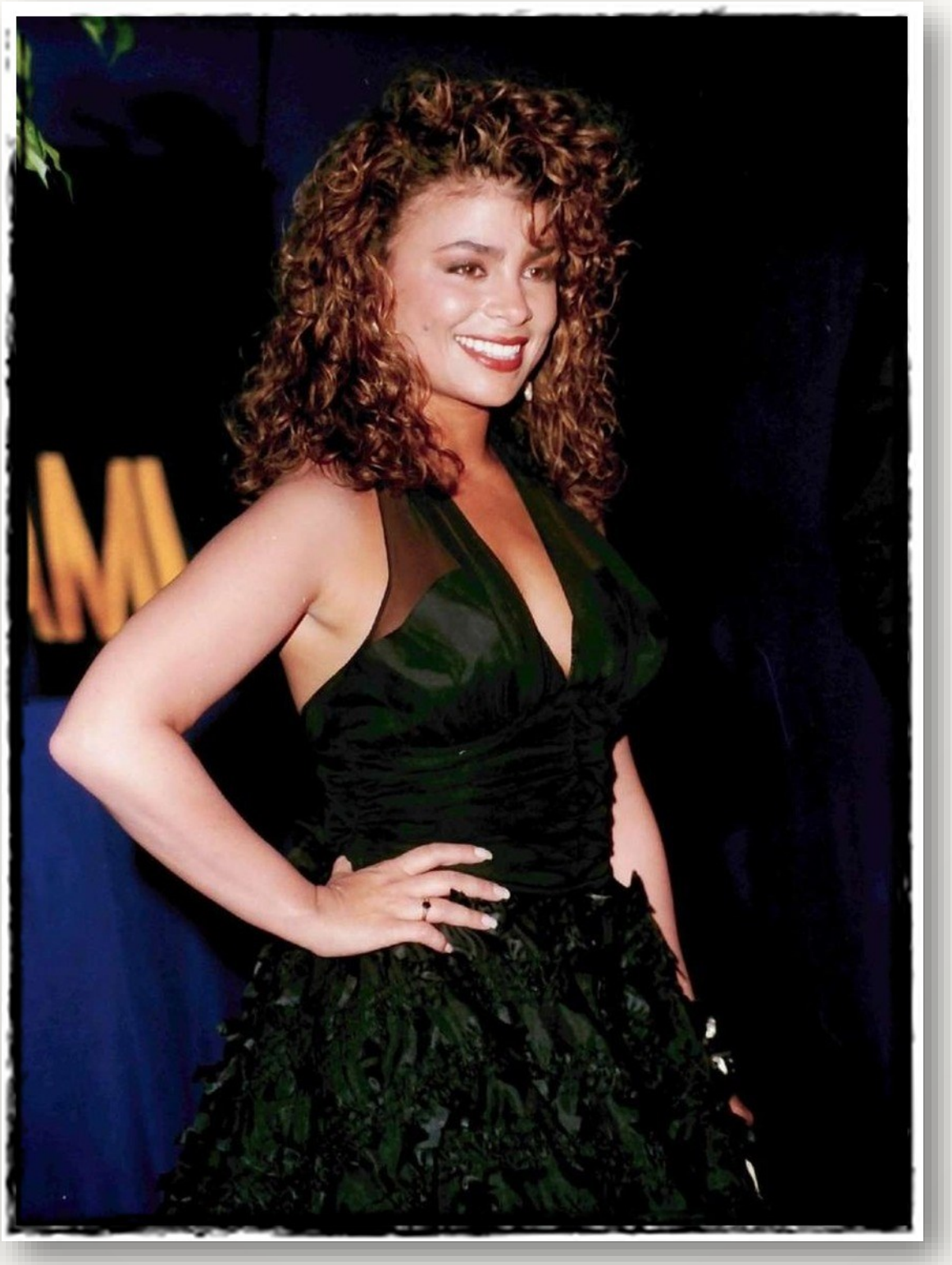
Professional Portrait at the State Capitol in Sacramento, California.



Abstract Art Fashion Shoot Featuring Model Sheila, 1999.



Fashion shoot with a model and actress who was my supervisor at the movie theater where I worked as an usher in Los Angeles. She was a very nice woman.



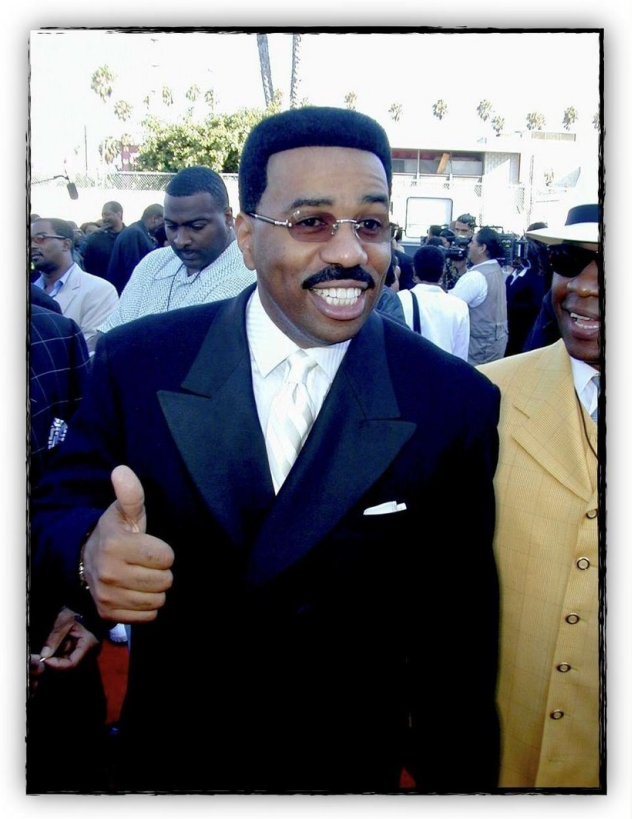
Paula Abdul backstage in Los Angeles, California, in 1987.



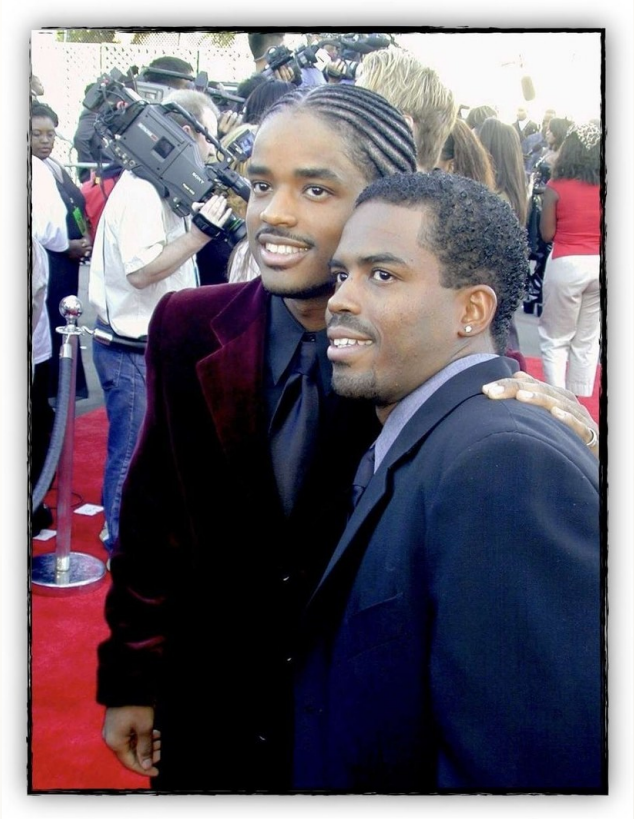
Fashion model smiling in a knit sweater, for a fashion shoot I did in Old Sacramento, California, in 1989.



R. *Kelly, known for his controversial reputation, poses on the red carpet while holding a video camera.*



Steve Harvey is giving a thumbs-up while on the red carpet.



Larenz Tate and his brother Lahmard Tate attended a red carpet awards event.



Oprah Winfrey, wearing a fur coat, attended the NAACP Image Awards in 1987 alongside Stedman Graham.



Joe Jackson with music executives at the Grammy Party in 1987.



Will Smith attended an award show in 1987 with his mother and crew.



L.A. Reid, Pebbles, and Babyface attended a party at the House of Blues.



My friend Joe Sai Sai



Joe Jackson at a pre-Grammy party in 1987, Los Angeles, California.



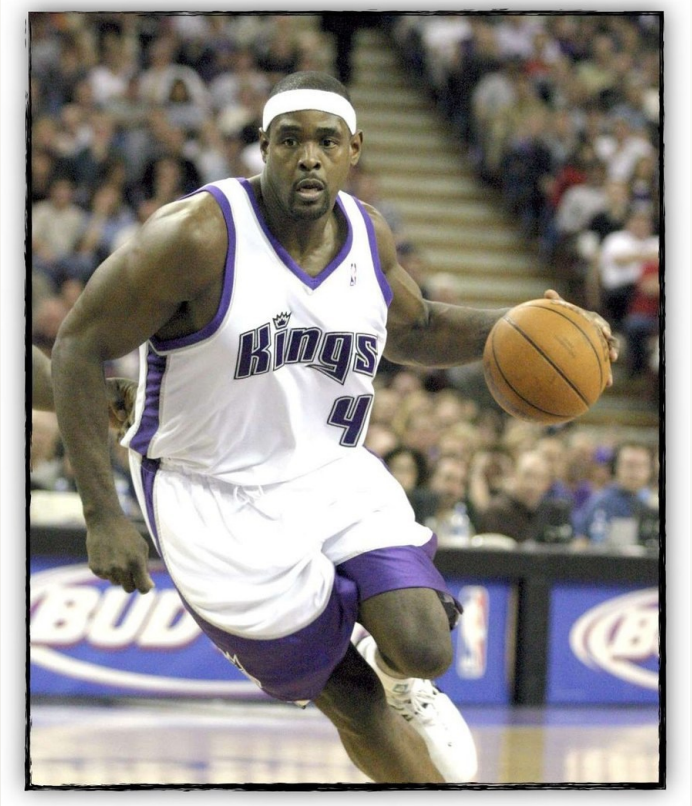
G.L.O.W. Praise Dancers, Sacramento, California, 2006.



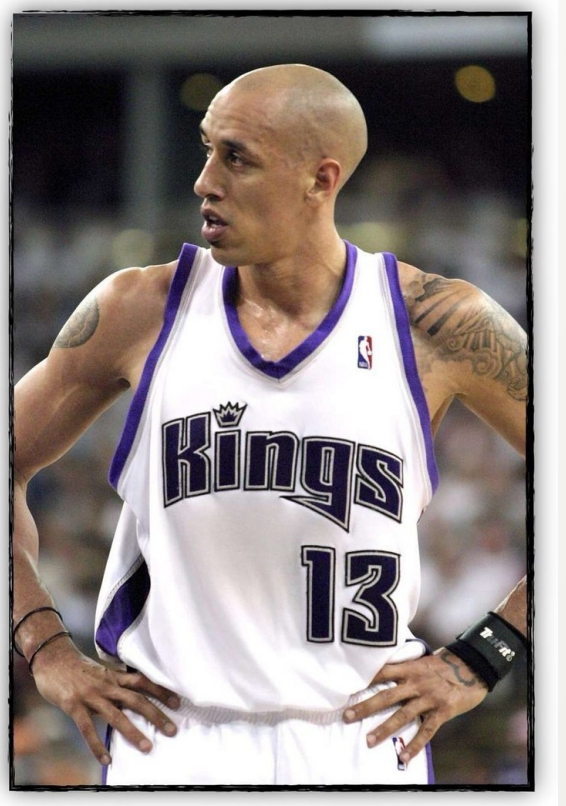
Matt Barnes drove past David Lee during the Sacramento Kings vs. San Antonio Spurs game.



DeMarcus Cousins talked to the referee during the game between the Sacramento Kings and the San Antonio Spurs.



Chris Webber, playing for the Sacramento Kings, is driving the ball during a court action.



Doug Christie stands with his hands on his hips, wearing a Sacramento Kings jersey with the number 13.



My friends Robert, Larry, George, and I have been good friends in photography for a long time.



Dr. Ben Carson has mentored me through his books for years; his godly wisdom has truly impacted my life.



My daughter Ciera, my family, and I at her high school graduation.



Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones is doing his signature tongue roll.



Jay-Z is wearing a denim jacket at the MGM Grand.



Snoop Dogg and the Eastsidaz crew wearing jackets in Los Angeles, California.



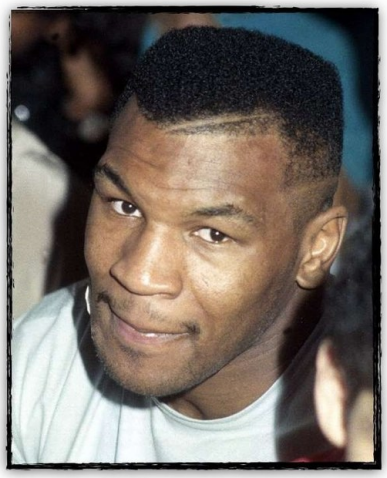
At the 1999 Billboard Music Awards, attractive young men were seen holding their awards in the press room.



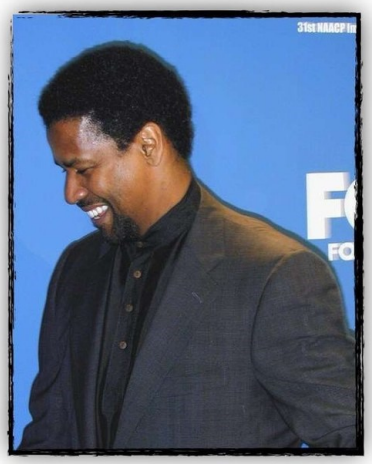
A dramatic hair salon showcase features a stylist cutting vibrant hair on stage.



The R&B girl group Isyss attended the Lady of Soul Awards red carpet event.



A portrait of Mike Tyson at Bobby Brown's party in 1988.



Denzel Washington smiling, stepping down from an award show podium.



Spike Lee is holding an NAACP Image Award trophy in Los Angeles, California.



In 1987, Will Smith and Kadeem Hardison attended the NAACP Image Awards in Los Angeles, California.



Steve Harvey is interviewing Wyclef Jean, who is wearing a red leather jacket.

CHAPTER

12

DIVINE PROTECTION FROM A GANG ATTACK, PRISON RIOTS AND MORE…



Living in that part of Los Angeles felt like the most dangerous place I've ever been. Yet, I felt a deeper sense of peace and security there than in many places that were statistically safer. I've come to realize that no matter where you are, the safest, most fulfilling, and joyful place to live is right in the heart of God's perfect will.

God has truly revealed Himself to me in countless ways, through provision, favor, and angelic protection—He is undeniably real. I won't delve into all the details,

but I have documented some experiences in my books and shared video testimonials of Gospel messages on my social media.

Divine Protection in Watts

A Testimony of Praying in the Spirit

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."Acts 2:4

I still remember the first time I truly understood the power of praying in the Spirit — praying in tongues. Praying in the Spirit manifests God's glory on the scene, along with protection, wisdom, and healing. I had recently received this spiritual gift and knew that God's power resided within me. However, what happened in Watts, California, showed His power in a way I'll never forget. This is that story.

Stranded in Watts

I was driving to Los Angeles with my friend Thomas, whom we call "Lil Thomas" since he is the son of "Big Thomas" from the rice-hull house. Things took a turn when my car broke down, and through a series of uncontrollable circumstances, we found ourselves in Watts, California. I didn't know much about Watts, only that it had a reputation for gang activity. Fortunately, we ended up staying at Thomas's aunt and uncle's house, along with his two cousins. The male cousin, who is about 19 years old, is actually a gang member in the area.

At that time, I was really on fire for the things of God. I had been praying, fasting, and serving faithfully in the youth ministry, so even though we were facing a challenge, we found joy in the Lord. We spent our time there praising God, reading the Bible, and praying. The family kept saying, "Stay inside the house. We're on 92nd and Broadway; it's not safe out there." So for a couple of days, we took their advice— staying indoors, praying, and looking for a way to get my car fixed.

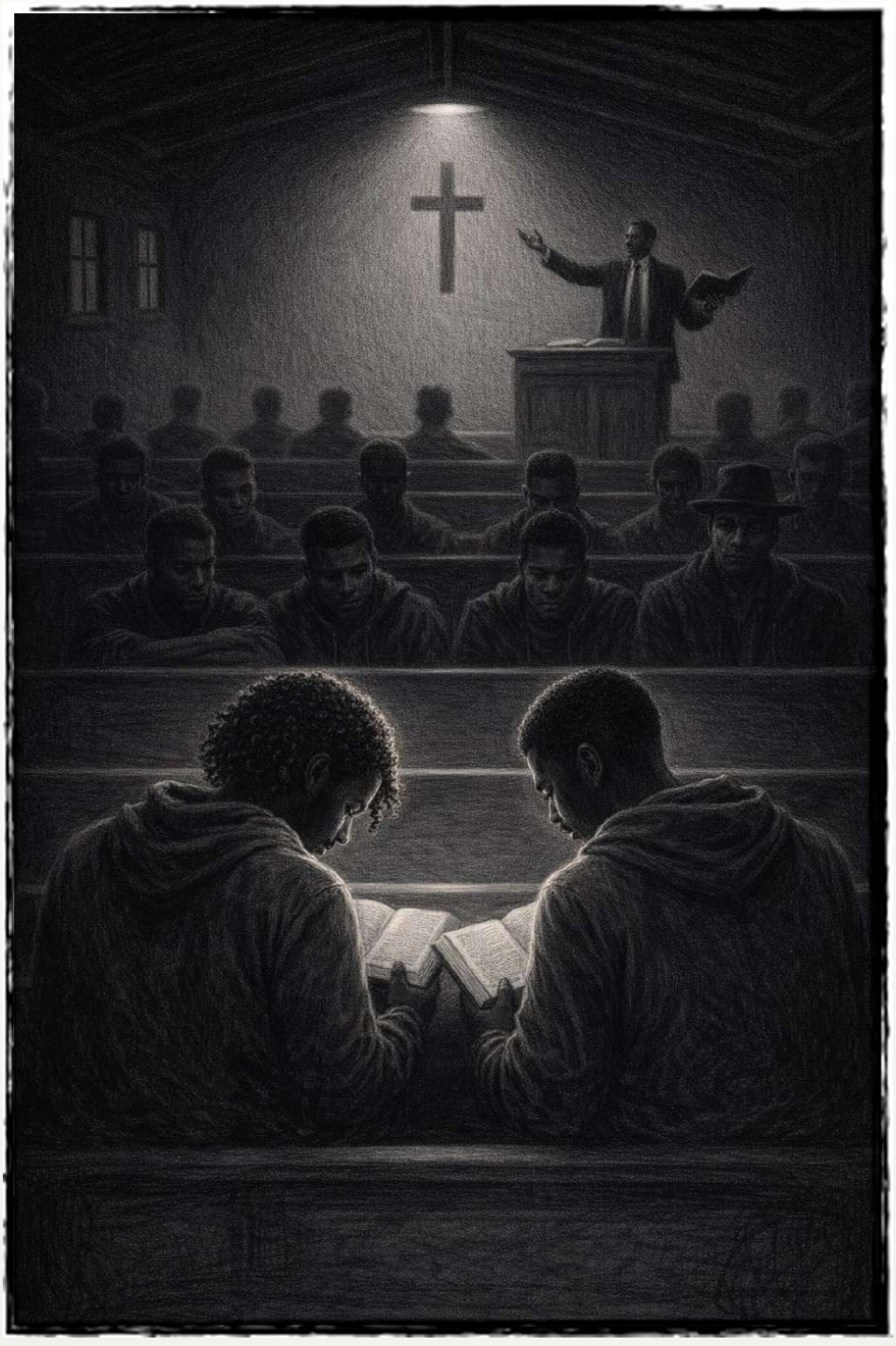
Walking Into the Unknown

After a few days, I couldn't take it anymore. I told Thomas, "Let's go to church tonight." The problem was, we had no idea where a church even was. His girl-cousin at the time tried to warn us again — "You don't understand what's out there" — but we felt led to go anyway. So we started walking. It was nighttime. We walked block after block through Watts — 93rd, 94th, 95th Street — looking for any sign of a Wednesday night Bible study. Eventually we crossed onto Main Street and into a mostly Hispanic neighborhood, still walking, still searching. Finally, around 105th and Main, we found it: a small Hispanic church with a speaker set up outside, playing a service in Spanish. My friend said, "Man, they're speaking Spanish; we don't understand that." I told him, "I don't care — I feel the presence of God. Let's go in." Picture this: it was the late 1980s, I had a big shag haircut, I was wearing a blue coat, my friend had blue on too — nothing overtly gang-related, just how we dressed — but we looked like we could've been gang members walking into a small church where hardly anyone else was there. We sat in the middle, and my friend leaned over, confused: "Man, they've been speaking Spanish this whole service." I told him, "It doesn't matter — do you feel the presence of God? Because I do."

About ten minutes into the service, my friend tapped my shoulder and said, "Man, check this out." Suddenly, a group of Hispanic gang members—whom I now believe were affiliated with the 18th Street gang—strolled in with intimidating looks on their faces. Apparently, the church was hosting a gang outreach that night, and they had brought in several gang members in a van to attend the service that Wednesday. They all sat in the back while we sat in the middle, and they began mean-mugging us. We weren't gang members, but in that moment, we certainly could have looked the part.

I told Thomas, "Just look straight ahead. Don't look back." There was only one exit visible in that little church, and some of the gang members began flashing gang signs at us. We realized they thought we were rivals. There were about twelve

to fourteen of them, and I couldn't help but think, "Man, we're about to die in here." Then another thought crossed my mind: "Well, at least we're saved and in church.



Praying Through the Danger

That's when I felt strongly compelled by the Holy Spirit to start praying in tongues. Quietly at first, then with more intensity, the utterance grew stronger. And right then, a specific verse rose up in my mind — Isaiah 54:17: "No weapon formed against you shall prosper." I actually opened my Bible to that verse and held onto it. I remember the pastor said: "The Word works when you work the Word!" Every time we glanced back, they were still throwing gang signs and watching us. I said quietly to Thomas, "Keep praying. Keep praying." The tension in that room was real — my intuition told me that some of those gang members thought we might be packin' (armed with guns) and were watching our every move, on edge, waiting to see if we'd make a move first. Maybe they thought we were planning to shoot our way out in fear.

We kept praying in tongues. Then something shifted. I felt the atmosphere in that room divinely change — like electricity. That's what praying in the Spirit does: it changes the atmosphere.

The Altar Call

At that moment of tension, the pastor felt led to give an altar call. Miraculously, right after the call for Salvation, I heard weeping. Grown men were crying right there in the sanctuary. My friend and I exchanged uncertain glances, wondering if we should even turn around.

When we finally looked back, we saw it: that same group of gang members walking forward, weeping, and falling to the altar. We thought this might be our chance to slip out the door while everyone was distracted. Instead, the pastor looked directly at us and said, "Come on. You two come forward, too." So we did. The same men who just minutes earlier had been throwing gang signs at us, ready for a confrontation, began to hug us—patting us on the back and embracing us like brothers. That's the anointing. That's the glory of God. Praying in the Spirit carries

real power; it brings a manifestation of God's glory that, quite literally, saved our lives that night.

Why It Matters

Looking back, God placed that scripture — Isaiah 54:17, "no weapon formed against you shall prosper" — in my spirit, and graciously allowed me to see a live demonstration of the power of His Word. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

As a minister, I've come to trust in God's divine protection when conducting deliverance prayers for spiritually possessed individuals. People often ask me, "Have you ever encountered violence during deliverance?" The answer is yes, it does happen occasionally. Nevertheless, I firmly believe in a fundamental truth: "No weapon formed against us shall prosper." In those challenging moments, we are never truly alone. Scripture assures us that we have angels working tirelessly on our behalf. Hebrews 1:14 describes angels as "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation," and Psalm 103:20 (KJV) speaks of angels who "excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word."" In the midst of deliverance, I sometimes declare authority by saying, "Angel of the Lord, put his arms behind his back, in Jesus' name." I've experienced this in correctional settings, where I've seen a person's arms move behind their back as commanded. I might also say, "Angel of the Lord, take him to his knees, in Jesus' name." I have witnessed even big, strong men—those who lift weights and could easily overpower me—suddenly find themselves unable to move as they intended. They often say, "Something just grabbed me and put my arms behind my back." I want to clarify that when I make these decrees, I do not speak from my mind and will; I decree from the Holy Spirit within me, which gives me the

utterance (John 7:38). I take authority in the name of my Lord and Savior, Yeshua (Jesus in Hebrew). That night in Watts taught me something I've carried with me ever since: praying in the Spirit is not just a personal devotional practice; it is both a weapon and a shield. It changes the atmosphere, reveals God's glory, and provides protection, healing, provision, and comfort in ways we might not fully understand in the moment.

No name is greater than His: the name of my Lord and Savior Yeshua! (Jesus in Hebrew).

Romans 8:26 (ESV): "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."

1 Corinthians 14:39 (ESV): "So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues."

Mark 16:17 (ESV) : "And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues;"

Saved from a Gang-Related Shooting

Back in the 80s, I picked up two of my childhood friends who were both gang members and had spent a significant part of their youth locked up. I was driving them to a non-profit agency where I had set up an employment interview through a family friend. Just a week before, they had joined me for youth ministry on Friday night. I felt a sense of hope and believed that change was on the way in Jesus' name. I wanted to keep the momentum going in a positive direction, so I thought getting them a job would help.

One of them is a well-known gangsta rapper, whose name I will keep private, and the other recently finished a 27-year prison sentence for a gang-related murder. What I'm about to share happened in the late 80s.



As we were driving, I felt excited to share all the great things happening in the Youth Ministry. Both of them seemed open to change, and my bright yellow Toyota Tercel—my trusty "hooptie"—was filled with upbeat Gospel rap music that I thought they would like. Suddenly, my friend in the passenger seat rolled down the window, climbed onto the door's window ledge, and started yelling gang slurs while flashing gang signs at a group of rival gang members in an old, packed deep in a long Cadillac driving next to us. I couldn't believe it; the whole scene felt and looked so demonic.

As we came to an abrupt stop at a red light in heavy traffic, the rivals jumped out of their car. One of them brandished a gun and was running towards us. During a brief physical struggle, they attempted to pull us out of our vehicle, but they were unsuccessful. I can't explain it, but I felt a sense of calm throughout the entire ordeal,I knew God was with me. Suddenly, we managed to break free from the chaos, like the parting of the Red Sea! I successfully navigated us through the

chaotic traffic. It truly felt like it was guided by God's Divine Hand. Thank God for His mercy and grace.

That last experience made me realize how good God is and how often He has rescued me from dangerous situations. Some of these situations were the result of my own foolish choices, like when I used to go to rowdy, gang-infested teenage clubs before getting involved in youth ministry—places where gang shootings and riots could erupt without warning. Looking back, these experiences have shown me God's undeserved mercy and grace in my life.

I also see how God was developing my counseling gift, using me to counsel others and help prevent violence and even death on several occasions.

For example, I once had a real-time emergency counseling session with a hostile man who was about to kill two people. Here's some context: he was a peer from my neighborhood who asked me for a ride to his girlfriend's house. I agreed, as I was headed that way anyway to go to the mall. He had recently been released from the California Youth Authority (youth prison), and I wasn't aware at the time that he was murderously angry at his girlfriend for cheating on him while he was locked up.

As we drove, we casually talked while I played Gospel rap and shared about the youth ministry, which he seemed really receptive to. When we got to our destination, he calmly asked me to keep the car running because he just needed to drop something off quickly. By God's grace, I heard two clicks and noticed the gun he was trying to conceal. I told him, "No!" and then went around the car to block his path to the apartment door. He got angry, shaking the gun violently in his hand as if he was about to hit or shoot me with it.

At that moment, God gave me the courage and wisdom to de-escalate the situation and counsel him. He emotionally shared his story with me, saying he just wanted to talk to his girlfriend, and he agreed to put the gun back in the car. To prevent him from doing something rash, I walked with him to the apartment door.

When he knocked, his girlfriend opened the door with a chain, and an argument immediately broke out. This escalated further when her new boyfriend appeared behind her, which only fueled his hostility.

In that tense moment, I physically pulled him away from the door, and she quickly slammed it shut. His temper raging, he attempted to go back to the car to get his gun. I blocked his entrance; the Holy Spirit quickly gave me the right words to calm him down again, and it worked. I helped him focus on the consequences if he carried out such an action, on rebuilding a positive life for himself, and reminded him of how terrible incarceration had been for him.

Sadly, a few years later, he was killed in a police shootout that he had initiated. This experience had a deep impact on me, creating a strong desire to intervene and, most importantly, to prevent these types of unnecessary tragedies from happening to others. Eventually, this led me into a career in the Department of Corrections and to starting the outreach ministry, ThugExposed.org.



Shielded on Duty: Divine Protection Behind Bars

As a prison officer, I have been shielded and guided by God through many riots and direct assaults. I was never seriously injured, even during life-threatening attacks involving weapons.

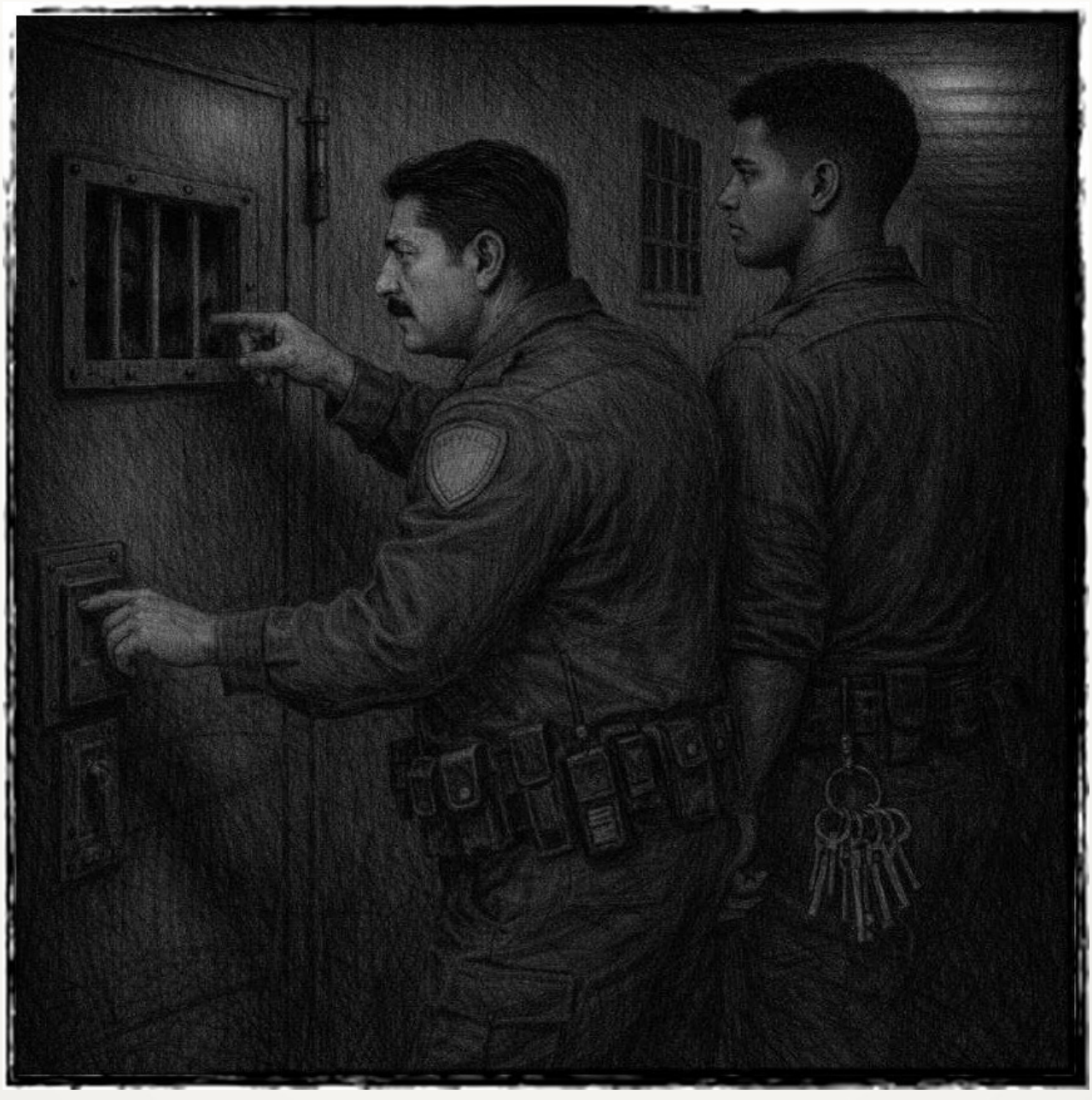
I remember a specific incident involving a very large Mexican- Surneo gang member from Los Angeles who had mental health issues and was extremely violent. He was so dangerous that he was only allowed to participate in a solitary recreation program for just one hour each day, spending the other 23 hours confined to his cell.

Earlier that day, another officer and I had to physically restrain this inmate who attempted to violently lunge over the desk to attack our Team Treatment Supervisor. We handcuffed him, escorted him back to his top-tier cell, and secured the door. About an hour later, we returned to release him for his one-hour recreation period. Because this was a maximum-security unit, we had to follow strict procedures before releasing inmates.

One officer provided specific commands while the other served as an extra set of eyes: "Put your hands through your hair, open your mouth, let me see under your tongue, lift your arms, show me your flip-flops, lift your sack, and squat and cough." (Inmates sometimes hide weapons in their rectal area.) My colleague, Officer Blas—a man of integrity—led the commands while we both watched through the small window in the door. He gave the commands, and the inmate appeared to follow them accordingly.

Just as I was about to unlock the door, Blas stopped me and said, “No, something's not right.” I stepped back, and he repeated the commands again. Just as I was about to open the door, Blas stopped me once more. By this point, the inmate was starting to rage with fury. Blas insisted on going through the routine again. Again, he said, “Something ain’t right, Johnson.” The inmate began yelling

and demanding to be released. Blas sternly repeated the commands one last time, shouting “Squat and cough!” even louder.





I was with a crew from the California Department of Corrections on the inmate living unit, this was a good crew, great to work with.



My peace officer badge, equipment, and press credentials.



Ordained as a minister in 2003, the day I received my ministry license from my mentor and pastor, Dr. Darnell Thomas, at Showers of Blessings Church in Sacramento, California.

The inmate, now seething with rage, angrily followed the routine once more, squatting and coughing louder as he had been instructed. Suddenly, I heard a heavy metal object clink onto the floor from his rectal area. Blas looked at me intensely and said, "It's a shank," meaning a prison knife. We immediately called for backup to conduct a cell extraction, and the weapon was confiscated.

After the officers interviewed the inmate, they informed me that the knife was intended for me, as he had planned to stab me in the neck. When I asked him why he targeted me, he explained that it wasn't personal. He said he had just had twin boys and believed that if he stabbed me, he would be transferred back to Southern California, where his children lived, allowing his girlfriend and the twins to visit him.

The N.A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility in Stockton, California, had become one of the most violent institutions in the country. Gang riots and assaults on staff occurred frequently, and the situation continued to deteriorate. It became so severe that Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger personally visited the facility and held a news conference with journalists from across the nation. I felt honored that day when the superintendent, aware of my work as a photojournalist, allowed me to leave my assigned security unit to take photographs.

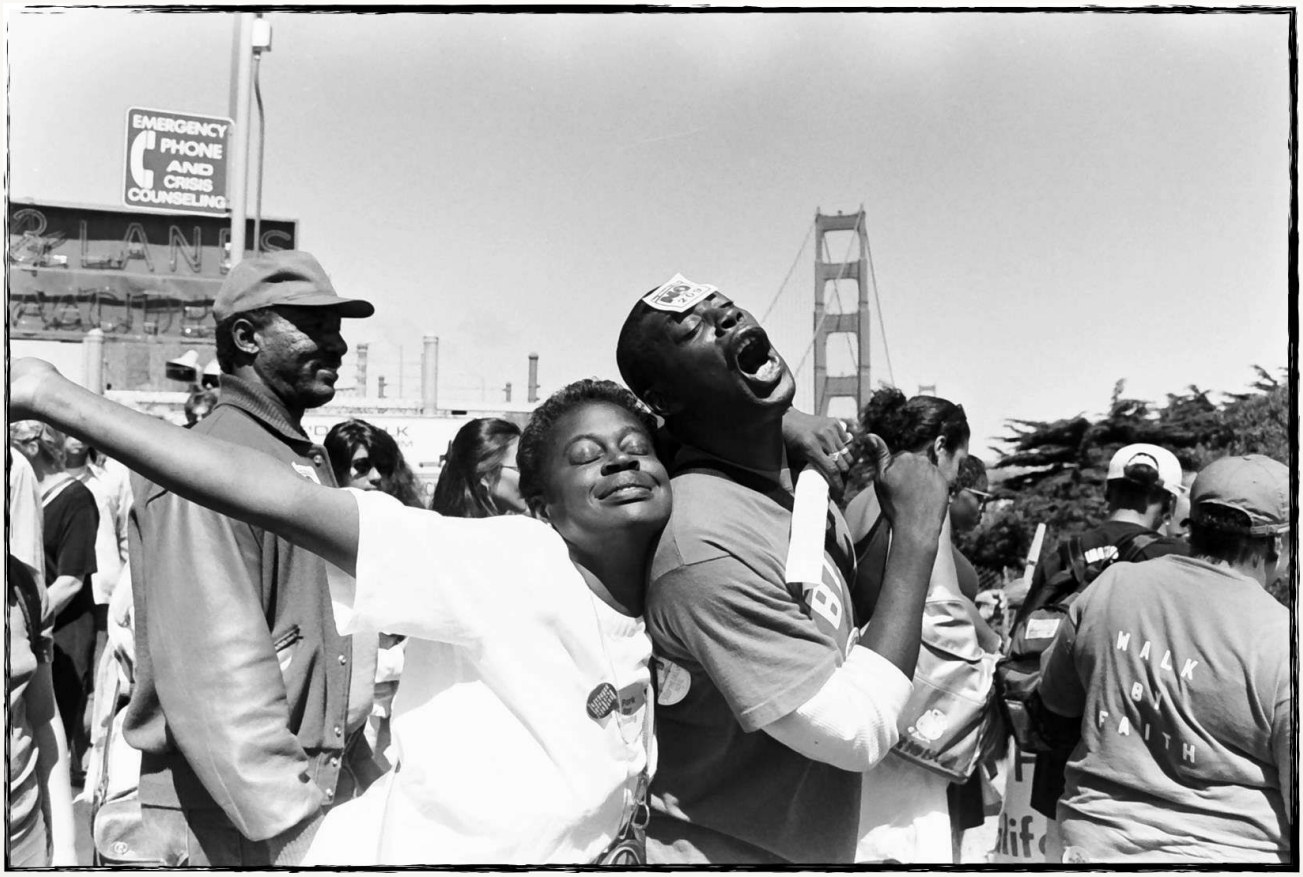
Governor Schwarzenegger's visit was helpful. He promised changes, and he delivered. He installed more security cameras and transferred many gang leaders to other institutions. As a result, the facility improved over time. Although it was still dangerous, it became much safer to work in.



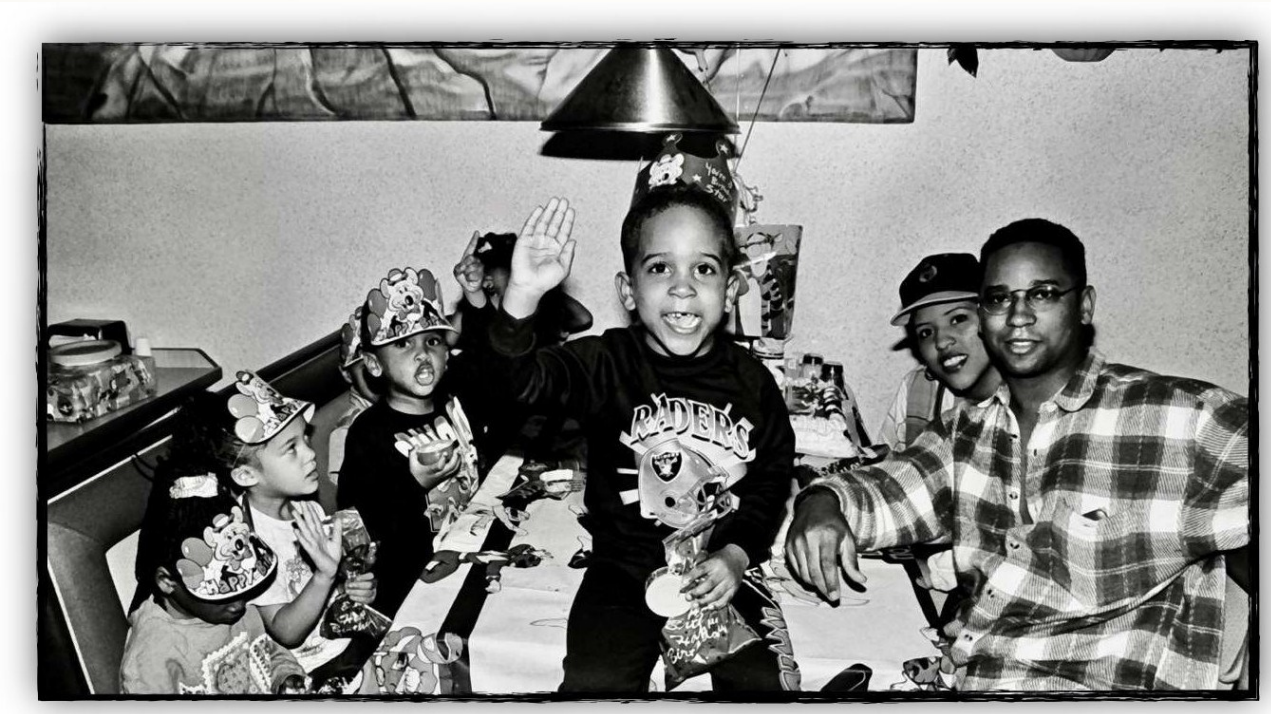
Governor Schwarzenegger touring N.A. Chaderjian.



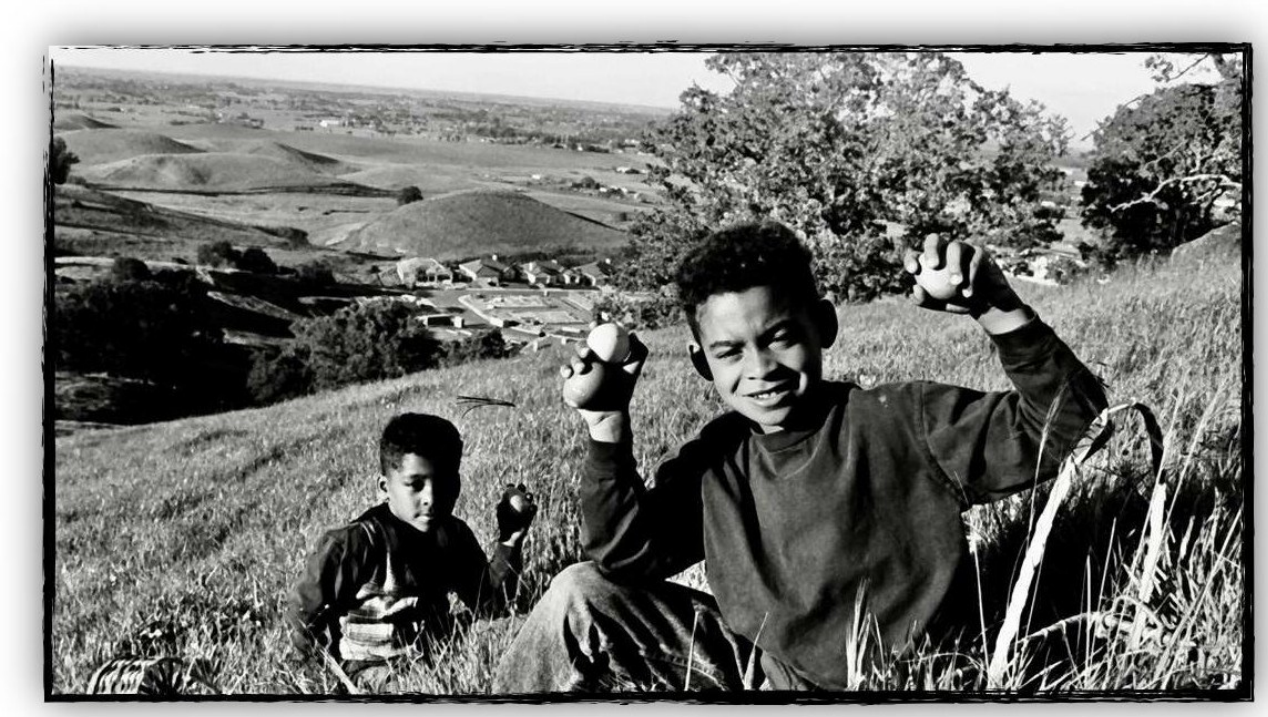
The press core at the N.A. Chaderjian Youth Correctional Facility in Stockton, CA, is awaiting the arrival of Governor Schwarzenegger.



California Proposition 209 protest march Golden Gate Bridge.



My nephew, Joshua Lane, who is now the lead singer of Sacred Souls, is celebrating his birthday in the 1980s.



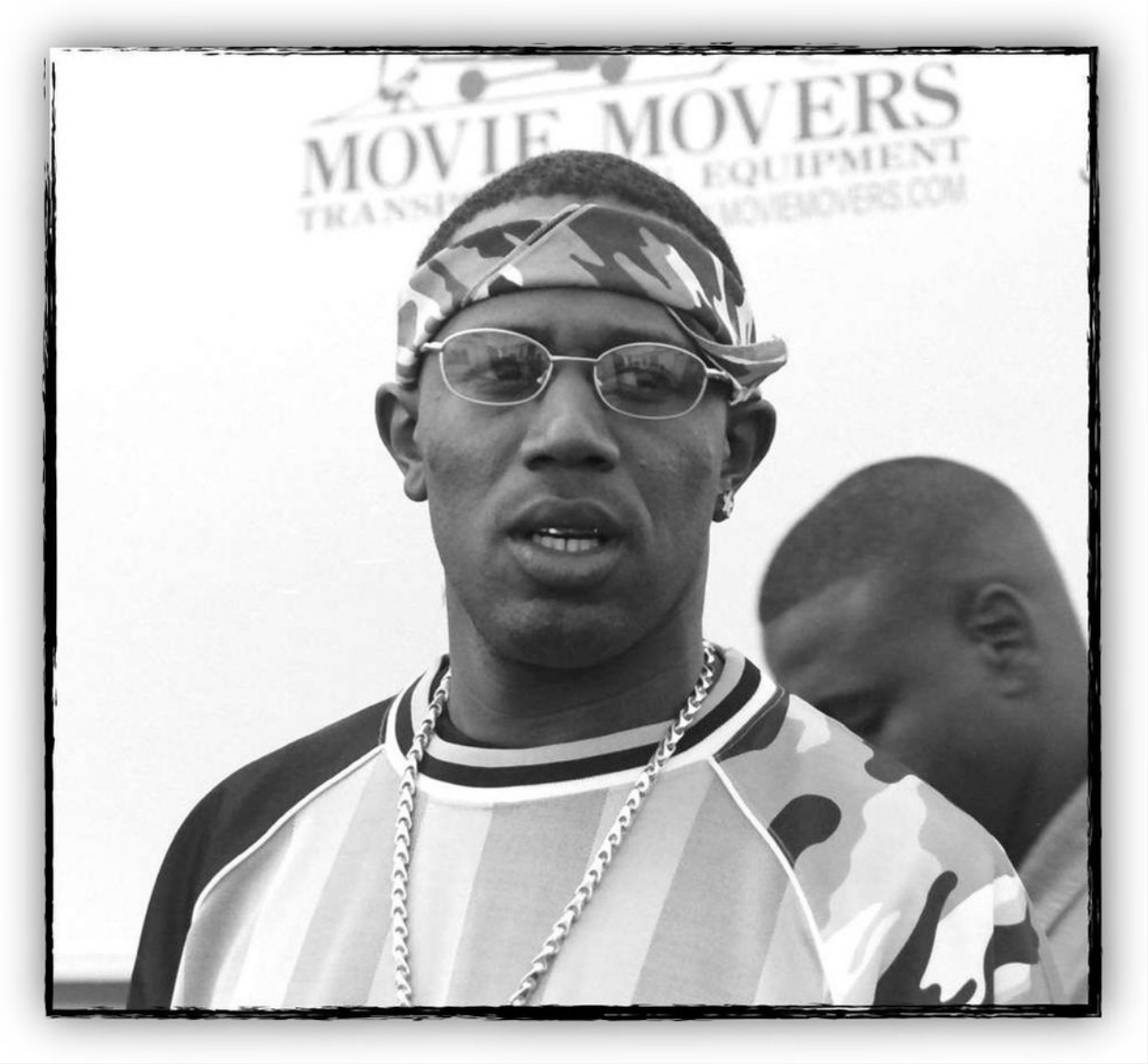
My nephews are searching for Easter eggs in Vacaville, California.



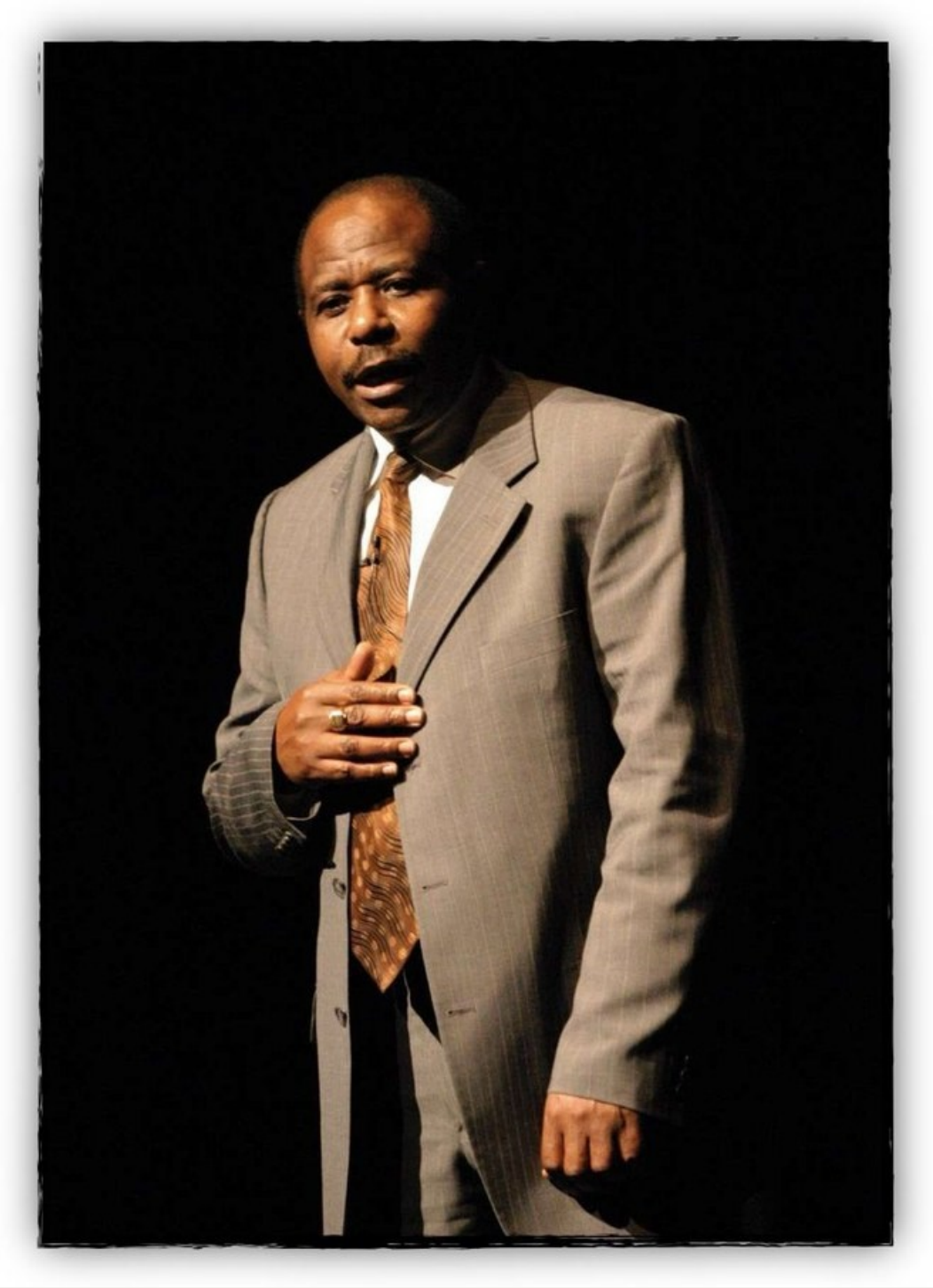
Jayne Kennedy kisses her daughter at the NAACP Image Awards in 1987.



Jayne Kennedy laughing with her daughter at the NAACP Image Awards in 1987.



Master P backstage at the 2000 Lady of Soul Awards, wearing a camo bandana.



Paul Rusesabagina, known for his role in the film "Hotel Rwanda," is a prominent humanitarian speaker.



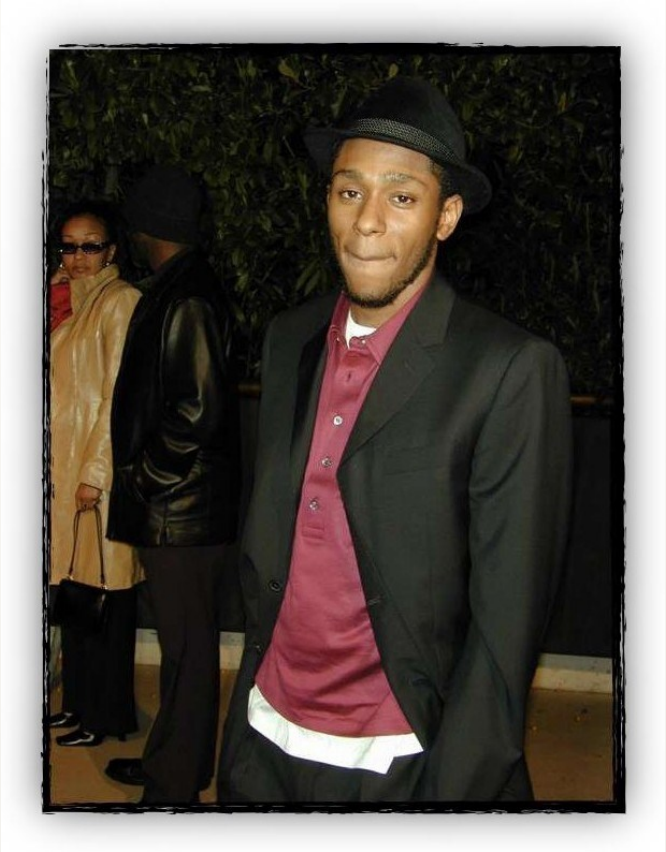
A daughter donates a kidney to her mother.



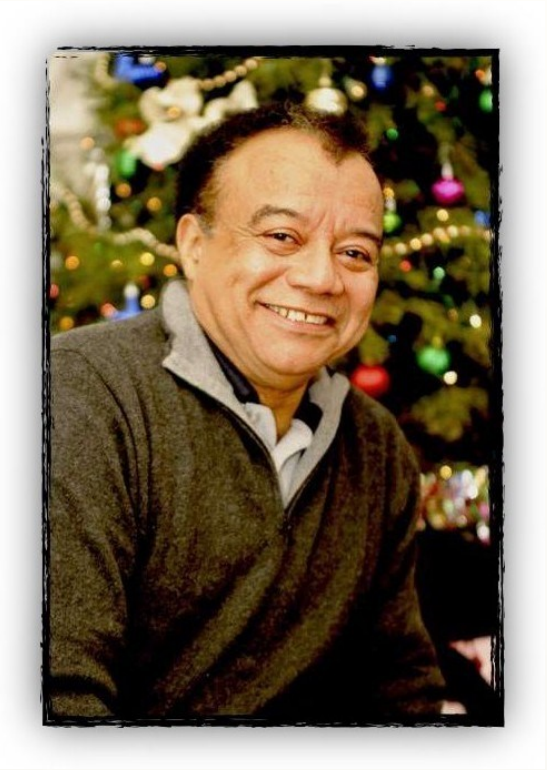
Portrait of an African American centenarian wearing a top hat to celebrate his 100th birthday.



The general's portrait.



A portrait of Mos Def, also known as Yasiin Bey, wearing a fedora and a burgundy shirt in the evening light.



My late big brother Butch is smiling in a portrait taken by the Christmas tree.

"My Brother Butch"

Butch was a truly generous individual who dedicated his life to making a difference. He founded a nonprofit organization that supported many low-income and displaced people affected by gentrification in Washington, D.C.'s inner-city neighborhoods.

In the early 1970s, he lived in San Francisco and was active with the Black Panthers. As my father's son from a previous marriage, Butch was primarily raised in Washington, D.C. His nickname, "Butch," came from his given name, Campbell, which could lead to teasing in South Side Chicago, where he lived during elementary school. To spare him from bullying, our dad affectionately gave him the nickname.

In his youth, Butch was outspoken and rebellious, even becoming involved in criminal drug-related activities before ultimately reforming his life. Highly intelligent, he earned a master's degree in business; however, his strong personality often made it hard for him to thrive in corporate environments. Despite the age difference, which meant we didn't see him often while growing up, he always treated my sisters and me with love and respect. His impact on our lives is something we cherish deeply.



My daughter, Ciera, is giving my mom a kiss. This photo was taken not long before she went into Glory.



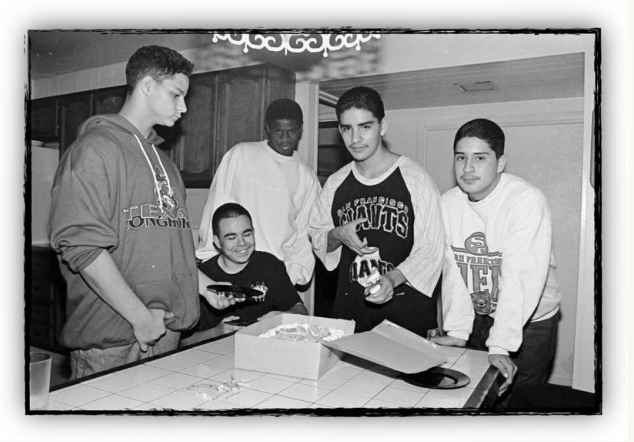
My great-grandfather and Frederick Douglass.



My father, me, along with my sisters.



Owner of Sweet Meats Barbecue Restaurant, located in Sacramento, California, 80s.



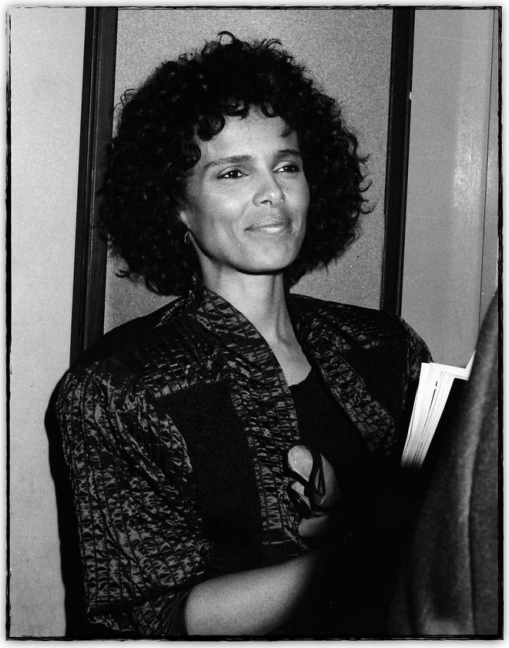
Celebrating a birthday in a group home kitchen, 90s.



A college basketball player executing a soaring slam dunk at Sacramento State in the 1980s.



A record store owner in Sacramento has a collection of vinyl albums and wears a Tupac hat, 80s.



Actress Shari Belafonte is holding a script in a portrait taken backstage, 80s.



Legendary actress Clarice Taylor smiling in a mink coat on the red carpet, 1980s.



Terry McMillan spoke and gestured at a Sacramento event, early 2000s.



Opal Lee, the grandmother of Juneteenth, is at home in Fort Worth, Texas, 2023.



Dr. Melba Pattillo Beals, a member of the Little Rock Nine, is speaking at the podium, 2017.



Two boys in West Oakland are making peace signs in the 80s.



A young boy is holding a wrapped sandwich next to a truck tire, in the 80s.



California Youth Prison: Maximum-Security Classroom.



An inmate at the California Youth Authority is speaking through the ventilation grate in the wall.





A silhouette of an inmate looking out the cell window, and an inmate in a caged educational pod.



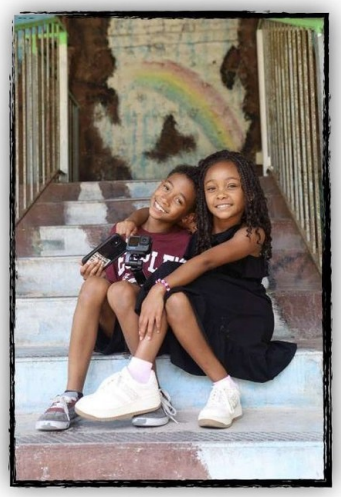
Kaleb and Jenesis are posing together in their winter gear.



Kaleb and Jenesis are joyfully running.



Kaleb jumping high mid-air at Klyde Warren Park, Dallas, Texas.



Kaleb and Jenesis are sitting on the steps in front of a rainbow mural.



Kaleb and Jenesis were climbing on playground tires on a sunny day.



Actress Desalene Jones is holding a curly-haired puppy in Sacramento, California.



Desalene Jones outside Cha Cha's doggie daycare sign.



Dallas Black Dance Theatre dancer leaping in studio rehearsal.



A portrait of a dancer from the Dallas Black Dance Theatre at the ballet barre in Dallas, Texas, 2023.







Dallas Black Dance Theatre dancers posing with red clown noses, Dallas, Texas, 2023.



Me interviewing actor Wilson Ramirez on the set of "Kilroy."



Actor Wilson Ramirez is aiming a handgun on the set of the movie "Kilroy."



"Brother Shane," actor Wilson Ramirez, and I were on the set of the Christian movie "Kilroy," a biographical film about Ernest Roybal, the founder of the Mexican Mafia.



Portrait of a couple who are Board Members for the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, 2024.



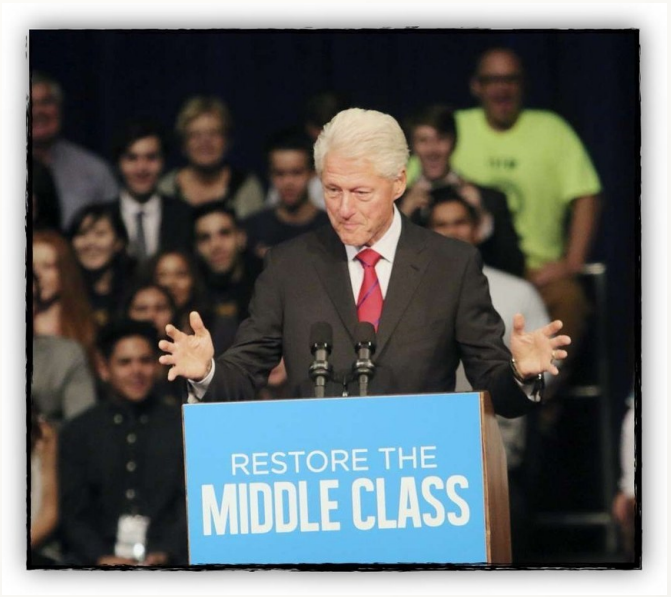
The Oldies Concert is becoming interactive in the 1980s.



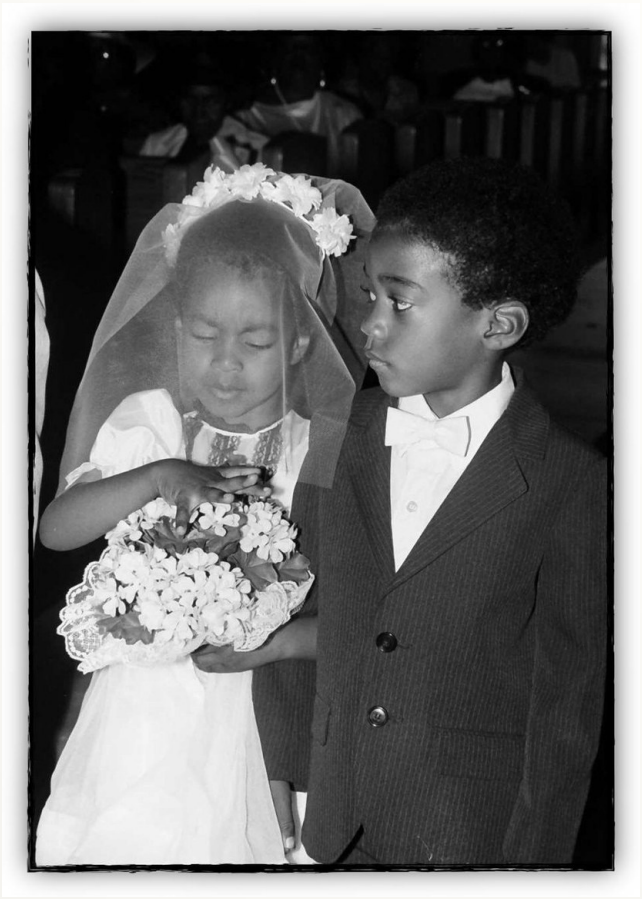
Ronald Isley, of the Isley Brothers, singing at a concert in Sacramento, CA, in the 80s.



"President Barack Obama's commencement speech at Morehouse College in 2013."



President Bill Clinton spoke at a rally in Davis, California, 2019.



Tom Thumb Wedding Fashion Show, 80s.



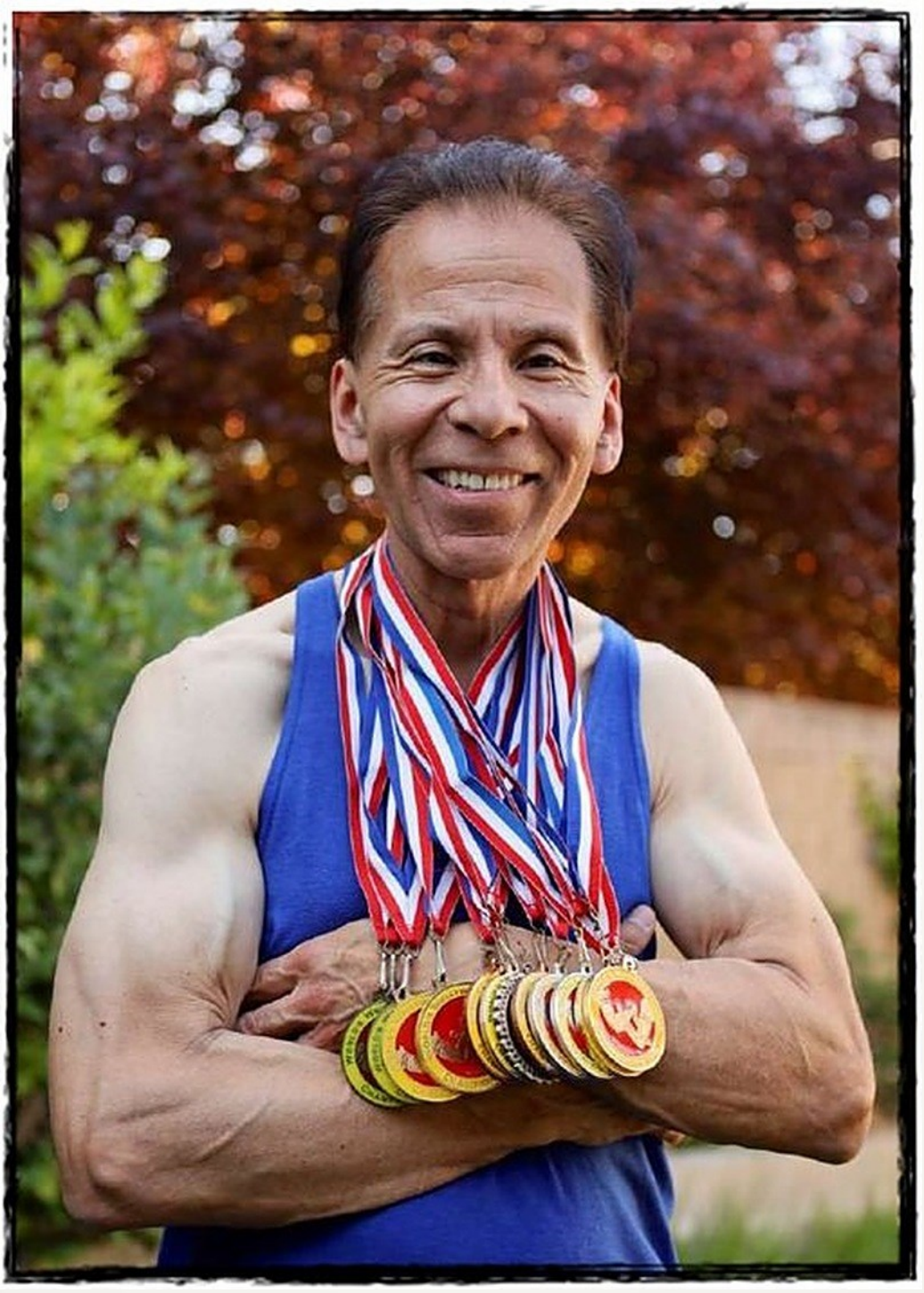
My son is playing in a little league game in Sacramento, California, where he is throwing the baseball.



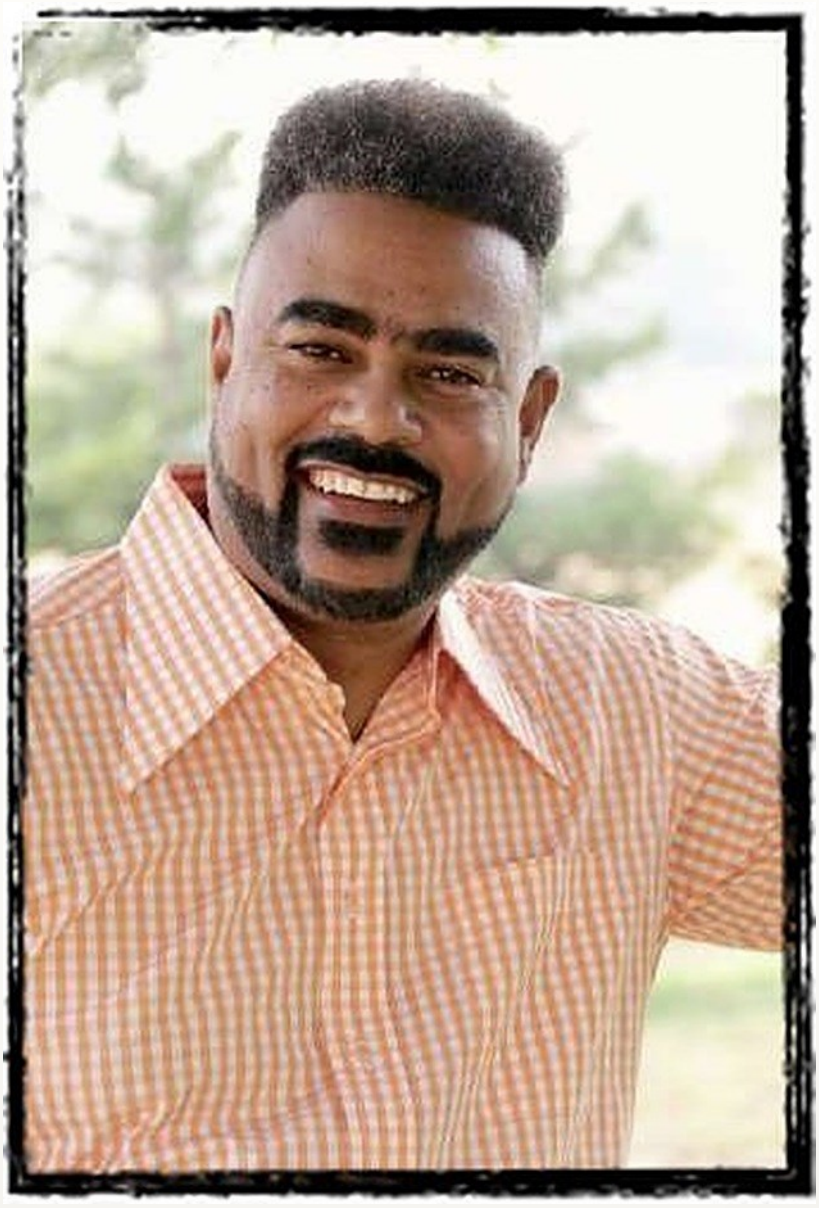
My kids' adopted grandpa, brother and supporter of ThugExposed.org. He has been author Chaplin Bill, has been a godly friend, a true brother to me. He is an awesome spiritual uncle, mentor, prayer partner, and speaker and has a powerful healing advisor for ThugExposed.org. Chaplin Bill is anointing. a wise, generous, and anointed counselor. I am grateful to have him as a friend.



Brother Allen is a good friend and prayer partner.



(My friend and mentor, author Victor Torres, is a 26-time world arm-wrestling champion and a big of ThugExposed.org. He has been a true brother to me. He is an awesome speaker and has a powerful healing anointing.



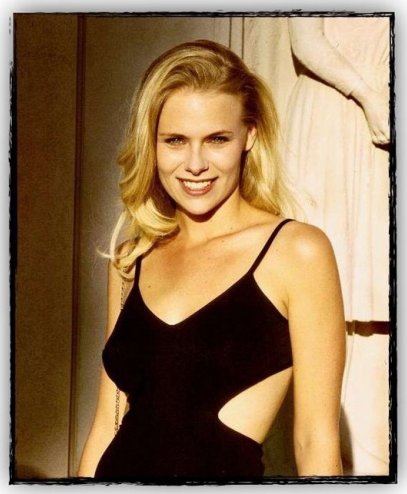
Pastor Rich Schumeier of Victory Restoration Center is a good friend and spiritual mentor of mine. He is a powerful, generous, and anointed preacher. He encouraged and coached me as I prepared for my first sermon at Showers of Blessings Church in Sacramento, California. God truly used him that day, as I was very nervous. His anointed guidance brought me divine peace.



Pastor Dr. Phillip Goudeaux of Calvary Christian Center has played a significant role in my spiritual journey, especially when I began attending the youth ministry. I am grateful for his anointed teaching. He often said, "The Word works when you work the Word." He not only taught this principle but also demonstrated how to apply God's Word (the Holy Bible) to real life.I witnessed my first healing miracle at that church when he prayed for a lady who was bleeding profusely after being struck on the head by an object. The bleeding stopped immediately when he laid hands on her and declared God's Word.



Jackson brothers in East Los Angeles, rehearsing for the Pepsi Tour in 1987.



A model stands in front of the Grammy Center in Los Angeles, CA, in the early 2000s.



In 1987, April Sutton of BET presented an award to producers L.A. and Babyface at the pre-Grammy party in Los Angeles, California.

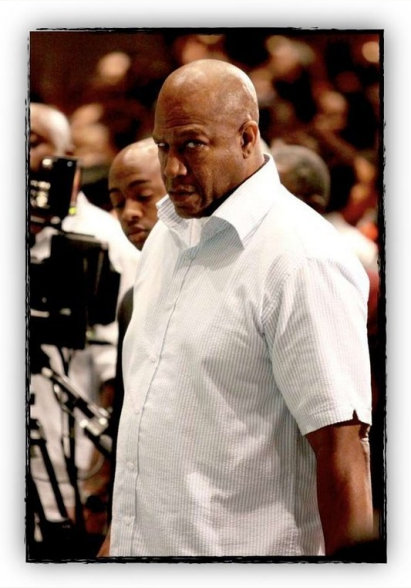


Actor Lawrence Hilton-Jacobs played Joe Jackson in "Jackson's American Dream" in 2010, Los Angeles, California.





My former youth pastor, Drake Jones, opened a popular soul food restaurant in Sacramento, California, in the early 2000s.



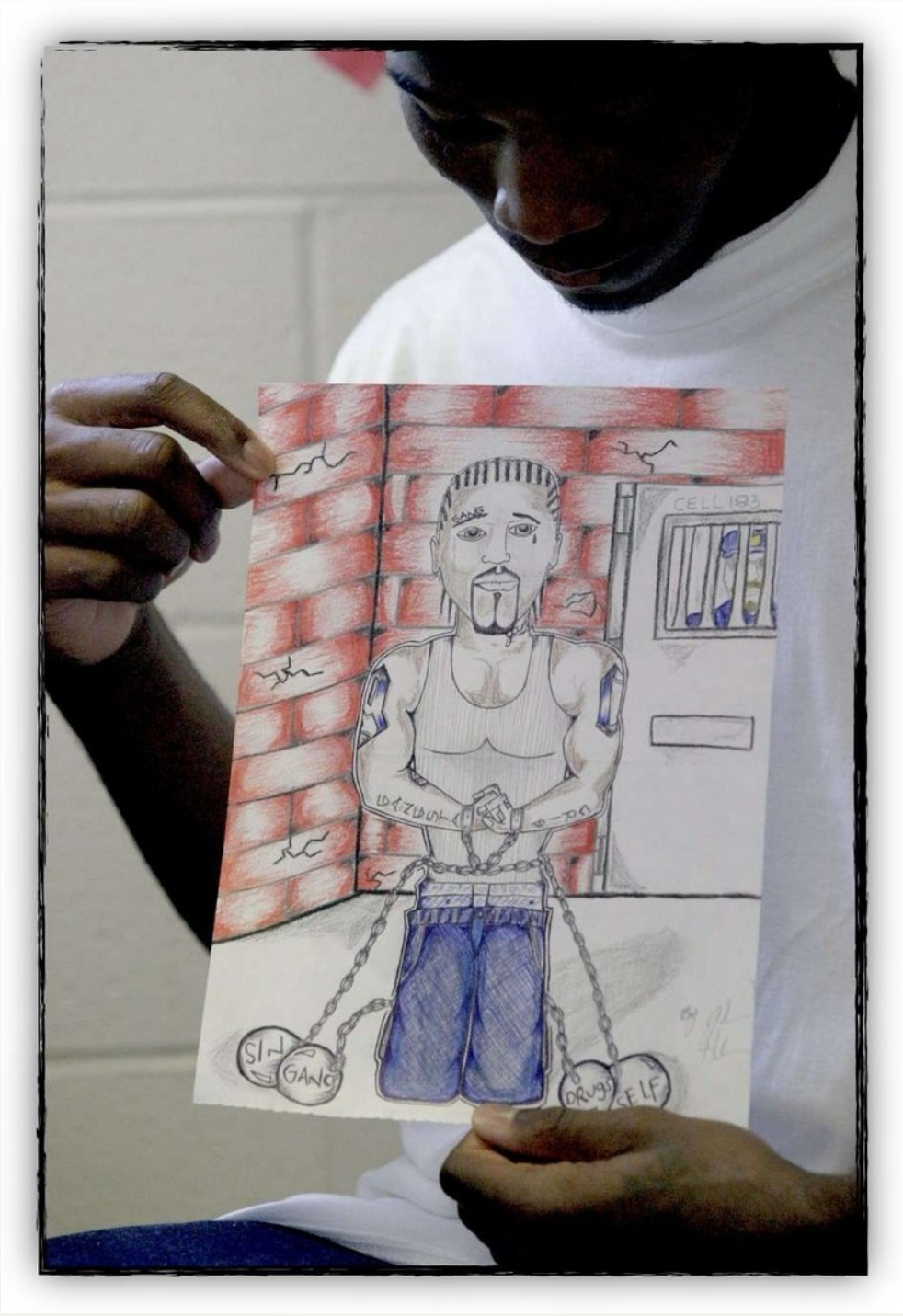
Tommy "Tiny" Lister Jr. at Calvary Christian Center, Sacramento, California.



Motivational speaker Les Brown is speaking at a conference.



Eric, my childhood best friend, walked through the front door of our house without knocking, as usual. Unfortunately, Eric passed away tragically in his youth when he was shot by a gang member in front of the house where I grew up.



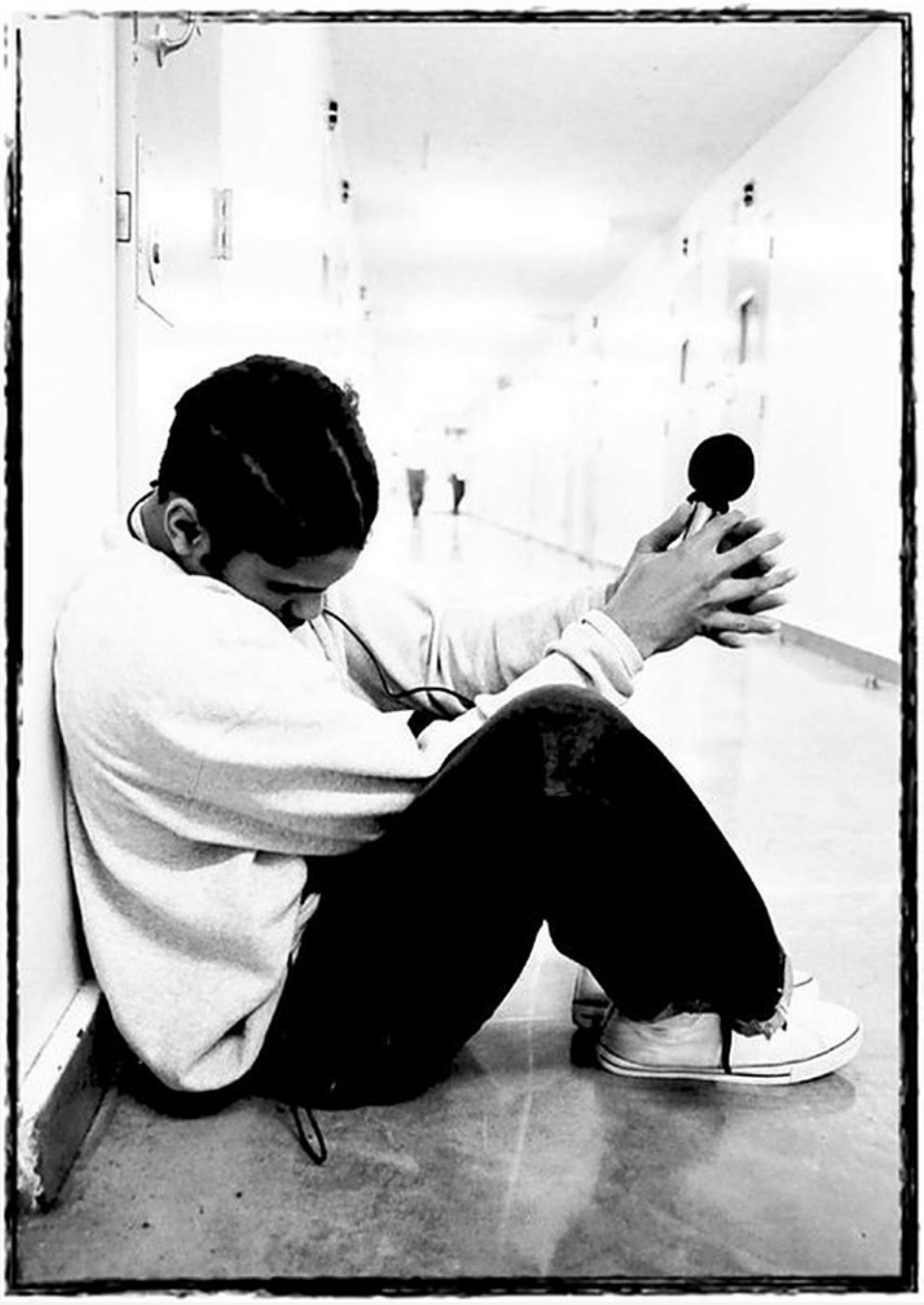
An inmate at the Youth Authority shows me the anti-gang artwork he created for me.



Towering redwood tree trunks in a California forest.



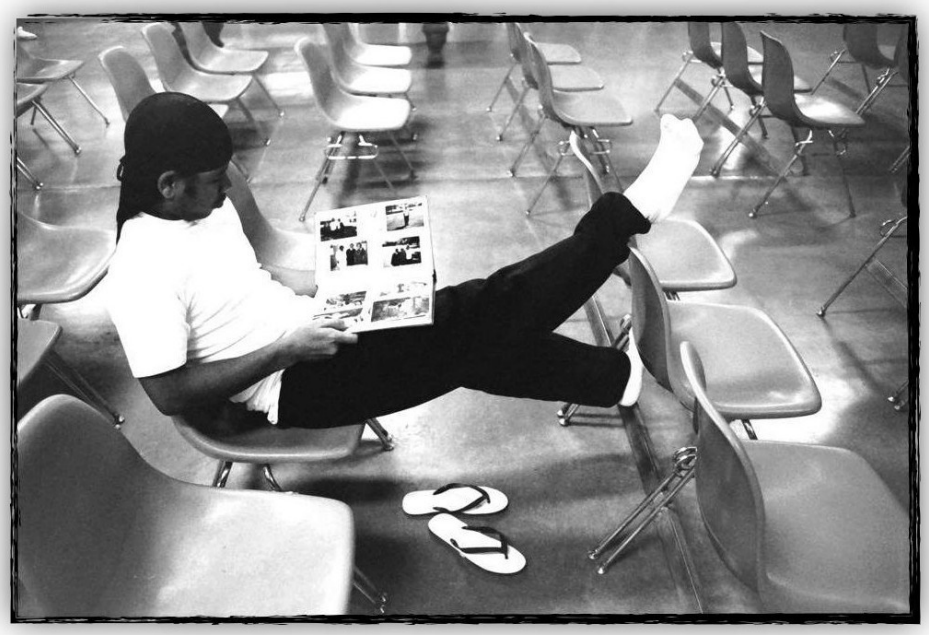
Sunlit woodland trees covered in climbing English ivy.



Incarcerated youth holding a microphone appears on the California Youth Authority album cover for the gang-prevention album titled "Lyrics on Lock-Down." Stockton, CA, 1993.



Mentor Simeon Gant is counseling incarcerated youth in their cells in Stockton, CA, in 1993.



A young man in a youth authority facility in Stockton, California, is browsing through a family photo album. 1993.



Two dogs playing in the ocean surf at a beach in San Francisco, California.



A shorebird, a sandpiper, holding its catch on wet sand at a beach in San Francisco, California.



Kaleb is hiking with his sister Jenesis behind him at a park in California.



Kaleb is walking along the ocean shoreline, listening to the crashing waves on the beach



Jenesis, Joshua (stepson), and Kaleb.



Family photo, me and the kids, Bishop Arts, Dallas, Texas.



Ciera is smiling in a portrait featuring lavender fairy ballerina wings.

CHAPTER

13

CONCLUSION

When I started this photo book project, I didn't plan to write much about my background; I just wanted to write concise captions. However, the Holy Spirit guided me in a different direction. I felt compelled to give God the glory for all the good things, as well as the trials and tribulations I have experienced, reminding myself that all things work together for good (Romans 8:28).

This photo book doesn't capture my entire history; it's a snapshot of the journey God has led me on. I've learned that our purpose isn't just reaching a destination; it also involves the tasks God gives us as we are guided by His Spirit throughout our journey.

Being guided each day—whether at work, in the mission field, or even in a jail cell—is our true purpose. Sometimes God reveals the big picture or the long-term goal; other times, He asks us to trust Him without seeing it. The Holy Spirit wants to live His life through us, and that, in a nutshell, is our God-given purpose (Galatians 2:20).

With over 40 years of experience as a photojournalist, I have witnessed and captured countless images through my camera lens. I believe God has used these experiences to teach me valuable lessons and grant me wisdom and revelation. This understanding has enriched my roles as a father, author, counselor, teacher, and evangelist.



A radiant golden sunset over the Pacific Ocean, viewed from a coastal beach.

At this moment, by the grace of God, I am still on my journey. I have retired from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Now, I volunteer as a chaplain in youth and adult correctional facilities, creating ministry videos and writing books that we distribute freely to institutions, treatment centers, and for street ministry.

I work as a freelance photographer and videographer. Through my experiences, I've learned that God teaches us throughout our lives—both in good times and during challenges. Our purpose, no matter who we are, is to be guided by His Holy Spirit, to continually praise and thank God, and to give Him all the glory and honor He truly deserves.

Our greatest gift is His Son, who was sacrificed to pay for the sins we have committed. Because of these sins, God's wrath rests upon those who have not yet been saved (John 3:36). However, by repenting, accepting Yeshua into your heart, and confessing Him as your Lord and Savior, you will be Saved (Romans 10:9).

If you choose to pray, I encourage you to do so. Your decision to read this book was not an accident. I urge you to say the following prayer out loud and believe it in your heart:

Prayer for Salvation, Deliverance, and the Infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Father, I decree Your Son, Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus in Hebrew), as Lord and Savior over every area of my life and across all generations. I believe, Father, that Your Son, Yeshua HaMashiach, was placed on the cross and died for my sins and the world's, and that You raised Him from the dead on the Third Day.

I repent and renounce all my sins (name them) and those of my ancestors, known and unknown, on my mother's and father's sides across every generation. I ask your forgiveness for all these sins, and I forgive all who have offended or sinned against me. I forgive myself.

I renounce, reject, and repent this day of all:

• Witchcraft, sorcery, black magic, white magic, and divination
• Pharmakia (witchcraft through drugs)
• Horoscopes, New Age practices, yoga, psychic readings, and similar practices
• Tarot cards, palm readings, and cultic practices that pay homage to pagan Eastern religions
• Ouija boards
• Worldly music and entertainment that honor or glamorize evil lifestyles
• Prayers to false gods and spirit guides
• Membership in secret societies, Greek-letter organizations, Masonic organizations, and other groups that honor false gods
• Ungodly political covenants, including pro-choice and pro-LGBTQ agendas and candidates
• Gang and criminal ties
• Current and past soul ties, and demonic unions associated with fornication, masturbation, dreams, LGBTQ identities, occult sex magic, and perversions

• Demonic spiritual husbands and wives, and spirits such as Jezebel, Incubus, Succubus, Lilith, Enchantress, Queen of the Coast, Mammon, Leviathan, Baphomet, and Baal
• I renounce all demonic covenants, soul ties, and portals to the soul and third eye created through drugs, alcohol, strange piercings, tattooing, jewelry, and wearing weaves, extensions, and wigs made from hair from pagan temples.

By the power of the blood of Yeshua, I break every curse, hex, spell, soul tie, and curse words people have spoken, as well as generational curses of disease, sickness, premature death, depression, addictions, lying, theft, mental illness, anger, murder, divorce, gang covenants, violence, poverty, sexual perversion, witchcraft, abuse, abandonment, rejection, trauma, idolatry, jealousy, unforgiveness, pride, and social life problems in every area of my life. I now call the fire of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:29) to burn and torment every demonic spirit hiding within my conscious and subconscious mind, emotions, heart, body, tattoos, symbols, home, etc. I decree the Holy Spirit's fire in Yeshua's name to burn them out of their hiding places now!!!

I decree that, according to Psalm 103:20, the Heavenly angels hearken to the voice of God's Word. Angels, bind every demon, cohort, and principality in every area of my life, and bind them with fiery chains under the authority of the mighty name of Yeshua!

Break their demonic crowns off their heads, along with all their jewelry, amulets, and any devices and weapons they brought on their assignment.
I command these spirits to pack their belongings right now and prepare to leave my body, heart, and soul, along with my home and family, in the mighty name of Yeshua HaMashiach... Now!!! I say out!!! In the mighty name of
Yeshua!!!

Angels of the Lord, in the mighty name of Yeshua, drag these spirits and every spirit under their authority into the Abyss. Evil spirits, I command you never to return again.

I decree that every portal of my soul be closed in Yeshua's mighty name! This includes those opened to the demonic realm through the sorcery of drugs, alcohol, sexual sins, worship of demons and false gods, generational curses, occult magic, gangs, pagan secret societies, witchcraft, etc., and the spirits that haunt the mind with tormenting thoughts, voices, hallucinations, nightmares, demonic paranormal experiences, sickness, and disease, etc.

I thank you for the blood of Your Son Yeshua. I decree that it protects and covers me from the enemy. I thank you, Yeshua, for the stripes that were violently torn into your back. Your Word states in 1 Peter 2:24, "By His stripes, we are healed." So I decree that by Yeshua's stripes, I'm healed from the top of my head to the soles of my feet.

Father, Your Word says in Romans 10:13, "Whosoever that calls on the name of the Lord, shall be Saved." John 8:36 states, "Who the Son has set free, is free indeed." So I call on you, Yeshua HaMashiach, as my Lord and Savior, and I decree by Your Word that I am set free indeed!!!

Father, I ask that you fill me now with your Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 says I will receive power when I receive the Holy Spirit, and John 16:3 says He will lead me into all Truth. I receive this Holy impartation by faith, along with the gifts that accompany it, such as the gift of speaking in new tongues, among others referenced in scripture, according to 1 Corinthians Chapter 12. Lord, I ask you to give me discernment of every skill set, talent, and spiritual gift you have placed within me, so I can use them to win souls and bring you glory. I decree by faith that Your Holy Spirit is leading me now toward Your perfect will, plan, and purpose for my divine destiny in Christ's Kingdom.

I decree that I have the mind of Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 2:16, and the divine armor of God, according to Ephesians 6, which includes the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God), and that my feet are prepared with the Gospel of Christ. I decree that I and my family are blessed in Yeshua HaMashiach's name!

So be it!!!! Praise God!!!

"A Word to the Reader"

Dear Reader,
Thank you for walking these forty years with me — for lingering over every photograph, every memory, and every testimony that the Lord allowed my lens to capture. What you have discovered in these pages is more than history; it is evidence of a faithful God who keeps, protects, and purposes a life surrendered to Him.

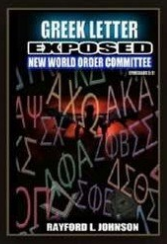
My prayer is that as you close this book, you do so with hope: that the same Lord who directed my steps through faith, culture, and history desires to guide yours. Keep your eyes on Yeshua, stay rooted in His Word, and trust that no season of your life is wasted in the Master's hands.

May God bless you, keep you, and make His face shine upon you — and may everything your eyes behold from this day forward give glory to Him.

God Bless, Rayford Johnson www.rjphotomedia.com www.thugexposed.org rayfordjohnson@me.com

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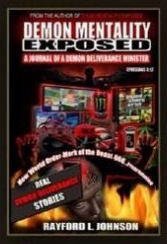
RAYFORD L. JOHNSON



GREEK LETTER EXPOSED

Why are secret societies secret? An exposé of Greek-letter organizations, their oaths, and the New World Order agenda.

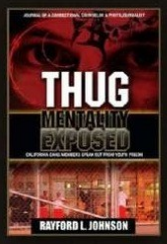
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DEMON MENTALITY EXPOSED

Demons are real and work through humanity's free will. A journal from the front lines of deliverance ministry.

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THUG MENTALITY EXPOSED

California gang members speak out from prison — compiled by a retired state corrections counselor.

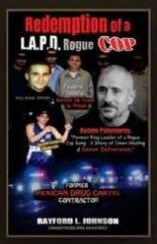
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HOW TO RENEW YOUR MIND

A biblically based success plan: meditating on God's Word to discover His will for your life.

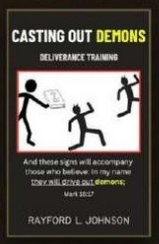
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REDEMPTION OF A LAPD ROGUE COP

The true story of Ruben Palomares — from the gang-infested streets of East L.A. to the LAPD and back to redemption.

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CASTING OUT DEMONS

A biblical training manual for deliverance ministry, built on Mark 16:17 and years of frontline practice.

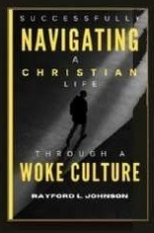
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HOW TO BLESS YOUR FOOD & BEVERAGES

Safeguard your table from witchcraft and toxic additives by blessing your food and drink, according to Scripture.

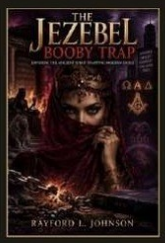
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NAVIGATING A CHRISTIAN LIFE THROUGH A WOKE CULTURE

A thought-provoking journey through America's woke culture — and how believers can stand firm without compromise.

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THE JEZEBEL BOOBY TRAP

A biblical examination of the ancient Jezebel spirit, its influence today, and the path to spiritual freedom.

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Photo Credits: Robert Maryland

Page 31 – I worked with Jackie Jackson on a Pepsi commercial shoot in East L.A.

Page 53 – Comedian Michael Winslow and I in the 1980s, Los Angeles, California.

Page 53 – This is a photo of me with Benjamin Hooks, the NAACP national president, during the 1980s, Los Angeles, California.

Page 53 – I am with Miss America, Suzette Charles, in Sacramento, California, during the 1980s.

Page 54 – I met Curly Neal from the Harlem Globetrotters in Sacramento, California, during the 1980s.

Page 73 – In Dallas, Texas, in 1985, I won 1st place in a national high school photography contest with actress Kim Fields.

Page 142 – I was at the Jacksons' house photographing Jermaine Jackson, his daughter, and April Sutton. Videographer Loren Reed is on the right.

Page 152 – April Sutton and me.