

A Memoir of David August

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Learning to Live With The Gift (Chapter 3)

As told to Ron Hardy

My elementary and junior high school years were mostly spent in Fresno, CA. My oldest 2 sisters moved to San Francisco soon after our family arrived in Fresno. San Francisco was always my home away from home. My oldest sister Eula was 13 years older. Janice was 10 years older than me and my youngest sister Judy was just 2 years my senior. These 3 sisters were like the icing on top of a cake throughout my life. All 3 had their own personality and way about them but it was like we all fit together like pieces of a puzzle. As a family we fit together perfectly and everyone independently did their own thing. Everyone stayed in their lane and had their individual role in order for the whole family to succeed. This mentality was taught and instilled in us by our mother. As I grew older and learned to read, write and comprehend the in life for myself, I gained maximum respect for the wisdom of my mother's words. She was a great philosopher and her actions matched her words. She could see what was going to happen based on the circumstances that led up to the occurrence before it happened. She called it common sense applied along with a basic knowledge of the principles and rules of life. She was not a holier than thou type person. We weren't members of any church nor never attended any church in Fresno. Today, I'm so glad I wasn't indoctrinated into religion but learned to love God. She taught wisdom and righteous living from our home. I often refer to church as the day club because the same things that go on in night clubs go on in churches. Many people attend church for the same reasons they go out to clubs at night. A place of gathering, socializing and meeting people in the community.

She was full of parables says and practical examples. I used to ask her “ Mama where did you learn all

this knowledge from". She would always reflect back to her mother's wise teachings to her. My mother certainly mastered the art of living a cheerful content life sticking to the script and playing her role in life hat she was put here to fulfill. She was very grounded.. Through her wisdom she could see every ones angle whether she played along with it or not. God blessed her for being a true virtuous woman. Although she was Black and poor from the racist South and grew up with her parents being share croppers on a plantation, she was as classy by nature and by virtue as they come. She especially knew how to handle all the many material and spiritual blessings that were bestowed on to her. She exhibited class in our house and outside our house as well. The Bible was the staple of her teachings. "God don't like ugly and cares very little for pretty" was a often heard phrase along with "What goes on in the dark , will come to the light".

Judy my youngest sister moved to San Francisco to live with my 2 older sisters a few years after we arrived to Fresno. She had issues in school there at McKinley Elementary. She wasn't as out going and fast as I am. The teachers wanted to put her in a class for slower learners. My mother didn't want to stigmatize her in that way so Judy went to school in San Francisco where she did just fine. Over the years I studied Judy's personality. She is a very stubborn person. She takes her time and refuses to be pushed quickly into doing anything. Patience was the key to dealing with her. As soon as I cracked that code, she became my ace in the hole. I had to make some adjustments in me because I'm by nature a high energy fast paced individual. Judy graduated from high school in San Francisco and went on to become a nurse. She now is retired from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation where she worked as a psychiatric nurse at a prison facility.

We lived in a house that sat on the McKinley School campus. My step father worked at the school as a janitor. What a way to grow up living on a school campus. I had full access to everything on the school

campus. I became a staple in that community as I grew older. We lived there for 7 great years. It was shocking to me to say the least on my first day of school there. I was 7 years old and never had seen or been in the presence of so many white kids and adults. We'd just moved from Shreveport, LA where it was segregated. The only people I remember seeing there Black and looked similar to me. All these white kids with different color hair, eyes and some even with freckles. It blew my mind. I felt like a gold fish being dropped in an aquarium with a bunch of strange new creatures. I was enthusiastic and ready for this new adventure. I started in the second grade. I was able to fit in and adjust pretty much. There was one minor problem when my mother and my teacher Ms. Willis had the 9 week parent teacher conference evaluation. I was there at this meeting. Ms. Willis thought that it might be wise to put me back in the first grade because I might fail. At the moment I heard her make that statement something clicked in my mind. It said, "My name is David August and I don't fail at anything." That thought just clicked in my mind. From that moment onward I was never in jeopardy of failing any subjects in school or anywhere else. Throughout those years in school there, I excelled in academics, sports and extra curricular activities such as the 4-H Club, Boy Scouts, music and sports. I was a honor roll student throughout my years there at McKinley. I later became the student body president in the 8th grade along with being Co-Captain of our school basketball team. McKinley Elementary was my little slice of paradise. I could walk 50 feet out of our front yard and be on the basketball court shooting hoops. I played basketball day and night. After school hours the basketball courts were very popular in the community. The same went for football in the fall and baseball in the summer. The school was the place to be for sports and I had the keys to the gate. I played football on our school teams and baseball as well but basketball was my passion. It may be because it's a sport that you can practice and play by yourself. As I grew older, I would open the school buildings after school hours for various community and civic activities scheduled there. I learned first hand to be my self, trust my instincts and not to fear people whom come against me to harm me for being me. In other

words not to worry about the haters because there is a power greater than me that would handle them. This first lesson came when I was ten years old in the 5th grade.. It was the day before Easter break from school. A kid named Billy who was a year older than me in the 6th grade looked at me. His eyes were piecing and taunting with a evil glare in them as if he had hated me. This look was unwarranted. It sent a shock wave through me. I could tell he wanted to do something harmful to me. I felt the jealousy and disdain that he held towards me raging through his eyes. My mind clicked to the previous year when we all were swimming together and it seemed like he tried to hold me under water a few times. I thought about the upcoming spring that we would be swimming and he might try to hurt or drown me. I was alarmed and concerned but went on and enjoyed Easter break from school. When school let back in after the Easter, the first thing I heard everybody talking about was that Billy's house had caught on fire and he was the only one that died in the fire. Wow that tripped me out. In my heart and spirit I felt a sense of relief. It unlocked the spirit of “ Fear no evil and no weapon formed against me shall prosper.”I felt and knew some kind of way that Billy was gonna try to hurt or drown me in the upcoming swimming season. We swam in canals and irrigation ditches with no lifeguards or supervision. I was only a good little guy in this big bad world. I knew from then on I was protected and blessed by a power greater than me. My mother always said, “ God will take care of all the things that we can't.” She instilled in my mind that if I did the right thing and stood for right nothing would or the could harm me. She reinforced the fact that people in this world are are jealous, vindictive and hateful with out a cause. I often wondered why Billy wanted to harm me. Was it because I was Black and getting all the attention or was he just a hater period?

took that life lesson with me throughout my life. I lived fearlessly but knowing I have a responsibility to warrant the protection of that which is greater than me. I learned to be myself and always try to do the right thing. As well I also learned that if I don't do the right thing there's a price I'll have to pay..

Life, I learned gives you back what you put into it.

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My Christmas and summers breaks were spent in San Francisco. I learned my way around San Francisco very well. I also developed long lasting friendships and alliances with many people there. I was always felt at home in San Francisco. I earned a reputation as a sportsman and a little guy with a heart of a lion. I competed and played sports in the with the best of them that were there. My older sisters initially lived across the street from the West Side Projects on Sutter Street. I made my mark in that hood. Many kids thought that I lived in San Francisco. I remember once we were playing basketball at Booker T Washington Center on Presidio street and Sutter. I had to stand up to the neighborhood bully for one of my teammates. . It was a just a pick up game but he got mad because our team won the game against his team. This bully Johnny Jacobs had a a bunch of older brothers and all of them were highly regarded as a family and in athletics. After the game on our way down the hill to the projects where they lived, he started picking on Rico my teammate. I jumped in and whipped his butt all the way down the Sutter street hill. I never lost a fight in my life when I was standing up for the right thing. In those days at the West Side Projects we played football and baseball in a grassy square located in the center of the courtyard. .In the grass area there was a statue in the middle. We all had fun for the most part. My oldest sister Eula had 2 boys, Nick and Barry. Barry was the oldest and he was 5years younger than me. Nick was a year younger than him. They were always proud of me as their uncle. I was closer to their age more like a brother, but they respected me as their uncle. I had pretty good action with the girls there in San Francisco as well. When I was about 12, a girl named Kim and I had a real romance going that summer. She was 16 and I was in love. She was very smart and I caught her with my conversation. I had a few love letters arriving through the mail to me at home in Fresno. The romance ended like these lyrics "I found love on a 2 way street and lost it on a lonely highway." by a group called The Moments from the song "Love On A Two Way Street. Actually that song was bumping that particular year and I played all the time. My mother always stayed on me about not getting too involved with girls at a young age. She always urged me to take care of fulfilling the

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purpose of why I was put here on earth and then everything else would fall in place. She wanted me to do something useful with my life. She had a cute way of saying “ David, them little pissy tailed girls gonna always be there. Take care of what you need to do with your life first before you get caught up.” She also always had a good story or example to go along with her teachings.

Herman Jones my stepfather was basically a good man. No better or worse than the next man. I respected him as a man and my mother's husband. He wanted so much for his son Darren to be like me academically, socially and athletically but Darren was completely the opposite . Although I liked and respected Mr. Herman, I always held a bit of resentment in me towards him. I heard that he and my father had an altercation. He then later attacked my father with a brick from behind and hit him in the head. That's why we ended up in Fresno in the first place. A judge had ordered him to leave the state of Louisiana and never return. My father was a 33rd degree Mason. In those days Mason's in the Black community had a lot of power and could make things happen. I don't think my father figured that my mother would leave with him and take us with her. I grew up knowing about that situation. Once while intoxicated when I was about 9 years old Mr. Herman gave me his gun to shoot him. Something in my young mind chose not to do it, although the instincts of a boy concerning the honor of his father almost kicked in. That's why when George W. Bush announced the US was going to war with Iraq, I had a feeling that it was for his own personal reason that he wanted to get Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein attempted to assassinate George H Bush while Barbara Bush was with him. That act was a double no no. They still hadn't found any weapons of mass destruction to this date. I believe it's ingrained in man's DNA to seek retaliation for a vicious act against his father or mother. Herman wanted to adopt me when I was about 10 years old. I wasn't going for it. I would ever change my last name because I always felt my father, David, Sr.'s love and presence throughout my life

At the end of the summer in 1971 as I was about to enter the 10th grade right before school was to

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about to begin my step father Mr. Herman and I had a altercation. My sisters and I called him Mr. Herman out of respect because he was not our father. That day my life changed along with everything in it. My half brother Darren who was Mr. Herman's biological son and 7 years younger than me told a lie. He said , "I had hit him". Darren liked to play little games to try to get me in trouble. Mr. Herman started to scolded me and kept fussing. It was a lie and I didn't want to hear it. I didn't attack him physically but I did lash out verbally cussing him out. I never had disrespected him before. Everything in my life changed. In my mind I was now a man. My mother instilled in me to be respectful to my elders and along everyone else. From her I learned to deal with people on their level where they were at . To get along with everyone based on who they are and not to expect more from a person than they had the potential to give. To live at peace with myself and the world. She was project oriented person. She kept me busy learning an array of valuable practical things which she felt a man should know how to do as it relates to maintaining a house. She did everything in her power to ensure that I would be ready for the world. She would often say, " David don't no woman want no sorry man."

After the incident with Mr. Herman, I went to live with my oldest sister Eula. This was just what the doctor ordered. I was 14 years old and free. My mother and stepfather were over protective and old fashioned in my eyes. The area of Fresno where we lived was on the out skirts of town. It was very different than San Francisco. I was ready to spread my wings. I knew I had learned enough from school at that point anyway. When we took the California Scholastic Achievement Test , my test scores as were all of my class mates were above the 12th grade level or better. That was taken when we were in the 8th grade. School was not what I wanted or needed and I knew it. I wanted to learn what makes the world go around. I wanted to learn what was really going on in the world for my self. Thanks to Mama I knew all the pit falls but I now had to experience them for my self. I was very socially conscientious. Although a lot of the issues that plagued America at the time did not directly affect me. I was aware

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that they were there. The topic of a speech I gave in the 8th grade was on freedom. It examined did freedom actually exist. I had references to Angela Davis, the black panther party as well as the situation concerning Lt. Kelly. He and the troops under his command faced charges for following a direct order which resulted in many innocent civilians being killed in Vietnam. I think that's why I only won second place because of the nature and content of my speech. It was shockingly real. Too real for the nice little paradise that we lived in our part of Fresno,CA. My mother always reiterated to me that I was a poor Black child living in a White man's world. I was not privy to make foolish mistakes or fall into the mindset that this was a fair world for Black people. Yes, I could be accepted in the white world, but the fact that I was Black and a male would never change. She knew her job was to prepare me to live, survive and prosper in the world as it really is. She kept me balanced and grounded. I took heed to her words which still stand to this day. She was from South but whether you're in the East, West or North at the end of the story it all still reads the same.

Everyone everywhere that I encountered always seemed to sense that something about me was a bit different than the norm. This bothered me at times. I wondered was I really that different, gifted, special or just plain weird.? I wondered if all the special opportunities given to me was because I was black living in a white community? I always tried to convince my self anybody could do anything if they wanted to or had the opportunity. Later in life when I questioned my father about certain people in his community. He would say “ Just tell me the name of their mother and their father. Then I'll tell you what they're capable of doing.” He certainly believed in family lineage along with genetics and DNA without calling it as such.

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As I my journey began in San Francisco after leaving from Fresno, I sought to understand why the world was such a mixed up divided place. I saw the hypocrisy of the words written in the US Constitution in relation to the reality of what was really happening. I sought to understand why we as Black people were so feared, hated and despised by other races of people. Why were we at the bottom of the totem pole in America and why were our rights as men left out of the US Constitution? .

I wanted to be around other black people. I knew early in life that I needed to know more about the typical black experience to be an effective advocate and spokes person concerning the state of the Black man in America. I knew I didn't want to be in politics or any position where I couldn't speak the truth. I knew I had been groomed to be a social and political leader while in Fresno. My spirit would not let me be a Black puppet who didn't truly know the truth and the reality of what it meant to be a Black person in America. Amidst all the uproar, riots and social unrest coming from the Black Community, . I Nigger without the true knowledge of what blackness truly was about in America. I was privy to anything and everything in the White community there in Fresno.. I was never made to feel less than anyone else. I love that community for that. I was welcome everywhere I went. As a kid growing up there. I never felt racism directed towards me. I knew that was not the case for other blacks in America. Why should I care? I often ask my self that question, but that's the way that I am. I care not only for myself but others as well. I was taught to whom much is given much is expected back. In My life there had been much given without me asking or having any real sense of why. A life where much was given, much back is expected back.

I couldn't feel the school thing anymore. While enrolled in the 10th grade every year during that 3 year period, my adventures where full of excitement and intrigue. At that age period all you can do is get into trouble and that's what happened. I was on my own. My mother didn't understand, nor did my

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father, sisters or anyone else but me. I was on a mission. My eldest sister Eula enrolled me into Galileo High in San Francisco. At that time half buildings at Galileo were found not up to earthquake standards and being renovated. We had half day schedules. The condemned half of the school was a gambling casino. It was the hangout spot. 21 Black Jack was what they loved to play there as well as shooting dice. There were dice and card games everywhere on the condemned side of the school. My mother had warned me about gambling. She knew that the winners usually had a system of cheating. My father was a gambler and she didn't like it at all. I gambled a little but didn't take it too serious. I didn't like to lose but loved to win.

I hooked up with Paul Johnson and Marcus Dodson. Marcus was from New York and Paul was a San Francisco native. Both Paul and Marcus were in the 11th grade. We all cut classes and run after girls. We hustled with marijuana a little. At that time in San Francisco, joint selling was the big thing going for youngsters. Everyone would hustle up a few dollars and get a bag of weed, roll it up and sell joints for 50 cents. We used to ride the Muni (The SF city bus system) and sell joints all over San Francisco. You could make a profit for the next bag and also have some weed to smoke. Paul lived in the projects on Turk Street with his mother and father. Marcus was a bit like me. He was in San Francisco living with his aunt. We all developed good friendships and had some good times together. We went to a lot of house parties. During that time in the San Francisco, house parties were the thing. Many adult aged young people living on their own gave house parties and charged to get in. They were really rent parties. Everybody had a hustle going on.

As every good thing comes to an end so did my fun. My sister was concerned about me not going to school. By then my parents had moved to Oakland from Fresno.

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I convinced my mother to let me go back to Fresno. I stayed with the Dawson family. The kid I knew from this family was one of my arch sports enemies during our Elementary and Jr. High sports years. We went to different middle schools but were in the same High School District. His name was Glenn Dawson. His parents agreed to let me come live with them. The basketball season had just begun. They had a large family of about 6 or 7 boys and one younger sister. When I arrived there, I was able to suit up and played in a junior varsity game against Fresno High without even attending a single practice.. I scored 12 points in the 2nd half which helped win the game for the team. There was a blurb in the Fresno Bee newspaper about it. I soon got home sick for San Francisco and made it my way back to the bay area.

It was time for me to go and stay with my father in Shreveport. This was in 1971. I remember when I arrived to the bus terminal in Shreveport, my father was there waiting. We knew each other off the top. It had been about 7 years since we had last seen each other. I've always called him David by his first name, as did all of his children. Shreveport was the biggest culture shock of my life to date at that time. He took me over to a section of town called cross town. It is referred to as the Blue Goose District nowadays. He lived with a lady by the name of Helen Thompson. Helen had 2 children by my father. A girl name Brandy and a boy named Richard. Brandy was about 3 at that time and Richard was about 2. I am so glad I went there at that time because shortly after I left Richard died from cancer.. I almost died at that same age from pneumonia. I'm happy to have seen and met him. I loved seeing my little brother from my father's genes His birthday was April 20 and mine is April 21. Helen had 4 other children as well. Two girls and two boys. They all liked me and we got along pretty well.

My father didn't treat me any more special than he did the rest of them. Matter of fact I think it bothered Helen Thompson that he was so hard on me. I know now that he considered me a man. I was 14. He knew I was at the age where one is hard headed and has to learn things on their own. He couldn't make up for the years we lost. When children get a certain age, they I listen to and obey their

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parents because they want to. Living in Cross Town section of Shreveport was something like I'd never experienced. For one thing, all those people in one little house. I think my father also had a few other spots where he laid his head along with that one. He was always mysterious. No one ever knew where he was at until he was there in your face. David, Sr. was well liked and much respected in Shreveport, especially in the Bottom and the Cross Town areas. Those were his stomping grounds. I was taken around and introduced as David's son by my new found stepbrothers and step sisters. There was much respect and honor given to me as David's son. I had found my roots. My Father's Mother lived on the Cooper Road nowadays known as the Martin Luther King area of town. I bonded with my Grandmother and always kept in touch with her until her death in 1991. She was 96 when she died. I would always call her on the phone. My favorite conversation with her came years later when I was about to move to Finland. I called her and said, "Grand Mama, I met a girl from the moon and I'm about to move to the moon with her." Without shock or hesitation she replied, "That nice, now don't forget to send me some Moon money." That conversation always makes me laugh. I don't know if Grand Mama thought I was crazy or just believed anything was possible with me or my Father.

My father enrolled me into Byrd High School. I don't think I ever attended one class at all. I learned how to live and hustle Cross Town style. My father soon sent me back to California, but before that I had a lot of memorable times in the Cross Town neighborhood. The life style in Shreveport was completely different than my life in California. This was a community of people that went back many generations together. Everybody knew everybody's mother, father and grandparents too. Some people could trace their family ties back to the Plantation and Share Cropping days. I really enjoyed the sense of family that I felt. I learned that they didn't fight California style. Everybody here liked to box as if they were in a boxing ring. I got in to it with a guy from another neighborhood over a girl. I

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grabbed him ,threw him on a car and commenced to attack him with the mentality of win by any means necessary. It tripped everybody out that were watching the fight. They believed in a boxing match type fight. I just knew how to win. Most of these here guys had been to reform school and fought in a institutionalized manner. They called me a wild man, but that was the way of the wild, wild west. You know coming from California to Louisiana I had my pick of the girls. There was much curiosity about me. I knew how to work it. I knew how to befriend a girl that liked me even if I didn't like her. I knew how to let them down easy and still be friends. It's a art. I don't like to hurt peoples feeling. My experience living in the Cross Town neighborhood of Shreveport gave me the sense that I was at home. My little village that I would always remember. I did return to live there for a few years in 1976 after I discharged from the army. In 1984, I visited Shreveport. I was so heartbroken to see that this neighborhood was completely gentrified and destroyed . The People were relocated to other parts of town to accommodate a freeway project which still to this day hasn't been constructed yet.

Back home to California, I had to move back with my mother, step father and baby brother, Barry . This time I was in enrolled into Castlemont High in East Oakland. I learned a valuable lesson.. My biological father was as strict as my stepfather and mother. None of them were willing to let me fall through the cracks in life. My farther didn't monitor like my mother and stepfather. He just expected me to handle my business. I rarely went to class at Castlemont High. There was one art class I would occasionally attend. The teacher's name was Mr. Fox.. There was nothing special about him, I just liked art and could go there without any expectations or home work plus there was a little cutie pie in that class that I liked. Her name was Veronica. I eventually caught her and she was my official Oakland girl friend for many years after that. We maintained a good understanding and when ever I hit town it was on.

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East Oakland was something else all together. I got in the mix with the Jungle Boys, a notorious click from the section of Oakland called Brookfield. We didn't even live in Brookfield but by chance they chose me. One day I was standing in our yard on 89th and Plymouth. A young girl walked by. She turned around and asked me if I wanted to go over her friend's house with her. Of course, I went with her. Her name was Monica. She was a year younger than me. I was still 14 about to be 15. We went down the street to her friend's house and she tripped me out, She took me to the back into her friend's room and got naked. We had sex and I didn't even have to ask or work for it. Usually during those days you had to work hard to get sex from a girl. She just laid it on me. Her friend's name was Sherry. Sherry was biracial mixed with black and white. Her mother was a very nice lady and Sherry's house was the hang out spot. I was walking one day shortly after that around the neighborhood and ran into 2 guys. They tried to jack me up for my money. I threw it on the ground and then kicked one as he was trying to pick it up. I grabbed my money off the ground and commenced to fighting both of them. I went around to Sherry's house as I was telling them about what happened. In comes a guy by the name of Don Black aka The Frenchman. The Frenchman said, "I know who they are and I don't like them. Let's ride." He had a gray Camaro. The Frenchman was with a click he called the Suburban boys. They ran the 104th ave to 108th ave. There wasn't much going on in the section where he lived. It was quiet. He was kind of a rich spoiled kid that wanted to be a gangster. He had paid his dues to the streets though. He had respect. My little altercation had occurred on 91st Ave and Cherry Street. He's the one that took me down in the Jungle aka Brookfield which was down on 98th ave and gathered support for me and the cause to ride on these guys. The two guys and I became good friends, running and hustling buddies later in the game. Joe Jones and Eric Hobbs were their names. I lived by the code that if I the first time I meet somebody and we don't click then we have an altercation. I can build a friendship with that person, but if your already my so-called friend then we end up having an altercation. We can't ever be friends or close associates again. From that encounter with Joe and Eric. I gained a little

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prominence and the reputation that I wasn't anybody to be playing with.. My mother had a nice 38 detective special that she kept hidden away. I was always a rambler and knew where everything was at in the house. I had the knack of finding anything that was hidden. I could just find it ,, anything. You could never hide anything from me. I would find it. I got the gun and went up to Caslemont the next day with my crew. We waited on Duane and I jumped out and we commenced to fight. At the end of the fight I shot my gun up in the air. That sealed my spot I with the Jungle Boys. As I said Duane , I and Claude became good friends and hustling buddies after that. I learned from that experience that it's OK to have a fight with someone that you just met and become their friend later, but if you have a fight with your already friend . He was never your friend. He didn't like you from the start and was just waiting on the time to try you. I never fought with my friends and if I did, they were no longer my friend after that.

We used to terrorize East Oakland. I knew everything I was doing was wrong. I knew better but I also knew there was a greater purpose for my actions. God was so much with me during those days and protected me with a tight hand. Selling drugs was not the big hustle in those days. Our hustle was to get money by any means necessary. That was the way we lived. My closest friend on the streets of Oakland was Gary Davis. I mentioned him earlier in my memoirs. He was the guy whose older brother shot him in the head while I was in basic training. When I met Gary he had just gotten out of (CYA) California Youth Authority . He had spent most of his life incarcerated. We just kind of clicked. We kicked it all over Oakland together. There was no where in Oakland were Gary couldn't go or should I say wouldn't go. We had a master plan that he had devised to get us over the hump. We almost made it but got side swiped in the game. The plan was to rob a jewelry store in San Jose, CA. He had it all cased it out. All we needed was the weapons. The next to last phase of our quest to was to get a arsenal of weapons. We would cut a driver in once we got the weapons that we needed. He used to talk about buying a 1969

Cadillac Coupe Deville that he saw at a car lot and wanted.

By this time I was living with my uncle Robert. My mothers oldest brother who had retired from the Navy. He had been stationed at the Alameda Naval Station and bought a house on 105th Ave in Oakland. It's funny that he had retired from the navy because he was my mother's brother that almost drowned when he was younger. He couldn't swim and his so called friend knew it but turned over boat that he was in while they were out on the Red River in Shreveport. He almost drowned but his brother Uncle Fred saved him.

I set up a burglary on a neighbor's house. I had met a kid named Ed Washington. He lived around the corner from my Uncle Robert's house. We had become friends. One day he had showed me his fathers gun collection. He constantly talked about how he despised and hated his father. I didn't think that he would mind if I confiscated it the guns from his dad. He really did have a lot of contempt for his dad. I don't know why but he did. I set it up for Gary and I to hit the house and we did. Our usual scenario was to make our hustle in the morning so we make to Castlemont High by noon. Then we'd hang out at lunch. I had a couple of special girls at school, but Veronica was my girl friend. I always try to make up to school so I could kick it with her at lunch. Well this day we pulled off the heist and stashed the guns in the basement at my uncles house where I was living. On my way up to school the police stopped me and questioned me about the burglary. We only targeted the guns but I seen a ring that I grabbed to take to Veronica. I had the ring in my pocket. I told the police that I had no idea of what they were talking about. They took me to the house we had burglarized. Ed's sister identified the ring as hers. The police took me to my uncles house and searched the house for the guns. They didn't find them but took the ring and let me go. Shortly after that my uncle came home and he found the guns in the basement. He called the police and turned the guns in to them. I couldn't believe that he had sold me out like that. His son Roscoe who was about years older than me was the biggest criminal that I knew.

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Roscoe had even been busted for counterfeiting money. He had always been on heroin and other drugs most of his life. I was very angry and disappointed that my uncle Robert turned me in. I soon later realized that my uncle Robert didn't want to support me going down the same path as his son. I know what I had done was dead wrong and especially to someone that I knew. I saw Ed around a few times after that and I felt like shit. I wasn't a crosser of my friends. I always treasured friendships of any magnitude to the fullest. I was a true person and always would strive to be a guy that you could trust. I honestly didn't think he would mind me ripping off his dad whom he despised so much. I was later arrested by the police and put in juvenile hall. I sat there until my trial. During this time in Oakland civil disobedience was at an all time high and illegal possession of hand guns and rifles was a serious offense. The Black revolutionary spirit added and social climate in Oakland added to the serious nature of this crime. At the trial the judge gave me 2 options. 1 option was to leave the state of California until I was 21. The second option was to be incarcerated until I was 21. I was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Where would I go? I had already burned my bridge down in Louisiana with my father. Again Eula came to my rescue and accepted responsibility of me until I go into the army after my 17th Birthday which was coming soon.

Across the bay in San Francisco I just hung around until I could take the Army test. Eula was living in the Haight Ashbury area at the corner of Cole and Page streets. She always would have a place for me to eat and sleep without expectations. She let me be my self and believed that I would figure my life out one day or another. She didn't push me or expect me to do it her way. I love her for that. She owned her own business a beauty shop and was always resourceful and independent. During that time period I hung out my friend Roy Johnson. Roy had a job as a janitor at a candy factory. I would always roll to work with him. I would try to help him but he'd always say "Just chill and enjoy the candy. I got this." He had a 64 Continental with suicide doors. It wasn't pimped out or anything but it kept us rolling over

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the City. Roy was extremely short but built very solid and muscular. He was about 5'1 inches played basketball like he was 6' 5". His nick name was Cash Tino on the streets. We used to hit a lot of parties in the Fillmore. His coping mechanism was snorting cocaine or heroin and sometimes mixing them together. I was always game to challenge something. I also got high with Roy. My mindset at that time was there's nothing on earth that I can't handle. Life was a mind over matter thing. Roy would always look out for me and make sure I was straight. Roy and I took the Army test together. The plan was for us to go into the Army together on the buddy system. He failed the test and I passed it. I had no option but to go. I was court ordered out of the State of California until I turn 21. Years later Roy later became a full fledged heroin junkie. The ironic thing is when I returned back to San Francisco 4 years later from Louisiana. I went down on the set at Haight and Fillmore where everything used to happen. Roy was the first person I saw. He was as they say shot to the curb and not even 25 years old. He later shuck back with the help of a Drug Program. My girlfriend Carlita and I used to visit Roy every Sunday while he was in the facility. After he was so called rehabilitated from the heroin, alcohol took control of his life but it was legal. It goes along with the saying, "If this don't get you, then that will". Con artists will say the same thing in a different way, "There's a story for everyone and nobody is immune to the con". "Life is a game. Everything along with everyone will try to beat you at this game of life if they can. It's just the competitive nature of living. Only the strong survive."

I learned to let my actions not my thoughts define who I am. My thoughts on any situation or matter could be wrong. The key is to not act to act on every thought that I might think. My thoughts could be wrong. The truth concerning the matter will make its self know at the proper time and place.