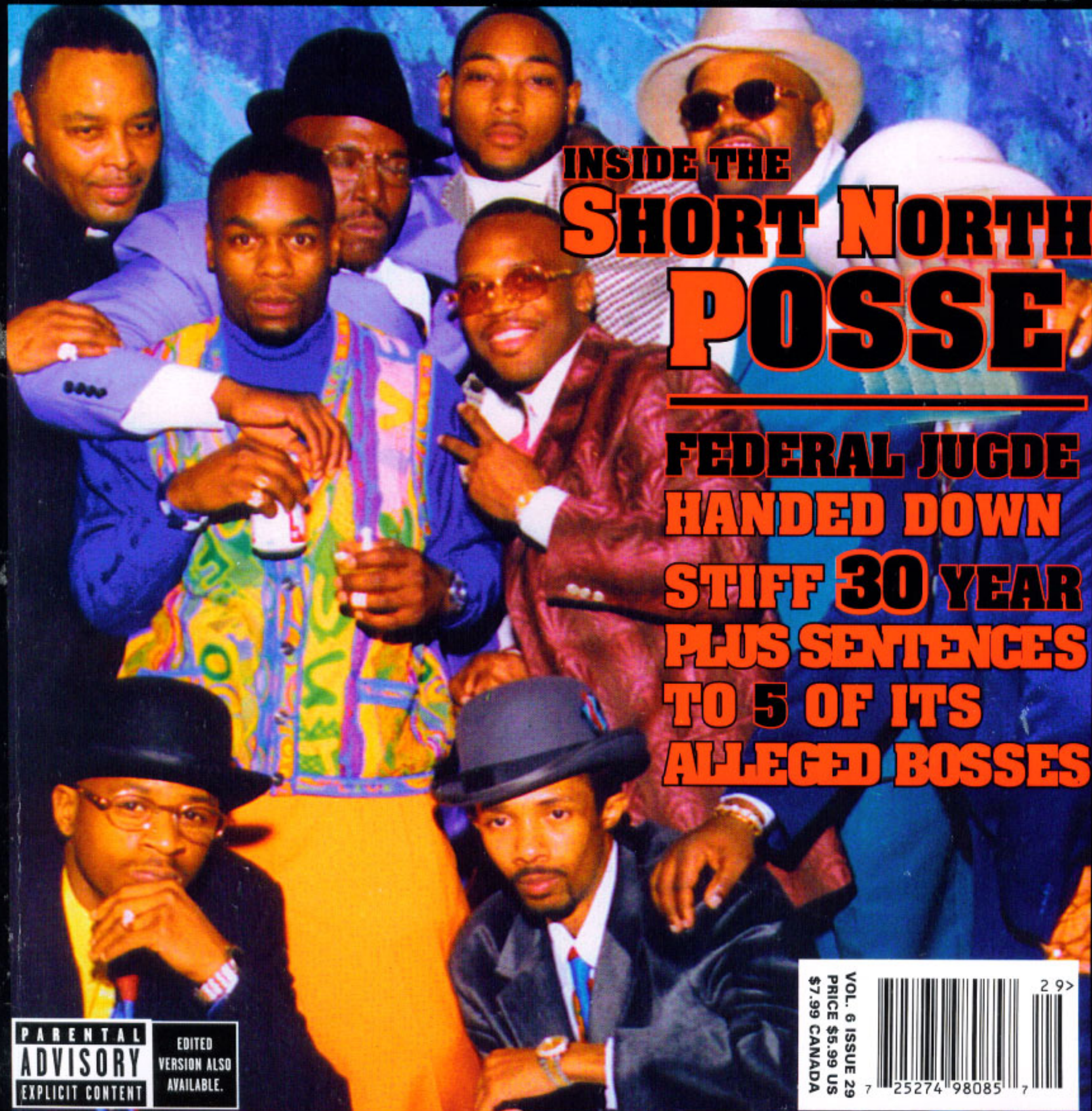


PLIES • JADAKISS • BOBBY V • SLIM THUG • MUSIQ

# F.E.D.S.

FINALLY EVERY DIMENSION OF THE STREETS



## INSIDE THE SHORT NORTH POSSE

FEDERAL JUDGE  
HANDED DOWN  
STIFF 30 YEAR  
PLUS SENTENCES  
TO 5 OF ITS  
ALLEGED BOSSES

PARENTAL  
ADVISORY  
EXPLICIT CONTENT

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INFAMOUS CRIMINALS • SPORTS • MUSIC • POLITICS • FILM • ETC

This story is unlike most of our cover stories, these guys weren't your typical kingpins or individuals that would appear on the cover of F.E.D.S. This story is a reminder and an eye opener. The federal laws and guidelines have placed so many individuals with stiff sentences that didn't match their crimes. There are men in jail since they were kids and kids going to jail for life for crimes unfit for such lengthy sentences. Please understand that F.E.D.S Magazine is here to inform you that crime doesn't pay. The youth of today need to understand that the new federal laws do not discriminate. Some think that until or unless they reach kingpin or organization status they are not subject to federal investigations or laws. This is very untrue, the federal government is sentencing young disorganized criminals, that haven't made any money, who haven't any knowledge of the federal laws, to prison sentences of 25 years or better in federal prisons and shipped states away from there loved ones. They are placed in federal prisons with kingpins, mobsters and terrorist, but they lacked their organization, boss status or money. This cycle is vicious so please do not fall for the bait! **F.E.D.S**

*In the chronicles of Gangster lore the big city drug barons get all the love. The New York City drug crews, Detroit kingpins, Washington DC coke dealers, LA gangbangers and Chicago gang organizations receive all the shine, newspaper headlines and publicity. Just like the big market sports teams they remain in the public's eye. Rappers like 50 Cent, Snoop Dog, Common, Nas, Jadakiss, Ice Cube and JaRule have honored these street legends in verses making their names ring from hood to hood, across the ghettos of America, by broadcasting their exploits and name dropping them and their crews in their rhymes.*

*But as the emergence of the street literature genre has shown us there are hood tales from all over the United States.*

*Back in the day there was a crew on Columbus' North Side that was holding it down. In the late 80's and early 90's they regulated their neighborhood and held gangster status throughout the city due to their deeds. They called themselves the **Short North Posse**. It was said that any outsider who dared to sell drugs in the Short North Posse's territory was beaten and robbed or even killed. Wars for control of the neighborhood's streets raged as hustlers from Detroit and Indiana tried to move in on the area to no avail. They were repulsed, violently if necessary.*

*The U.S. Attorney characterized the Short North Posse as the Columbus areas "largest and most violent gang." It was said the heavily armed posse, which sold crack and regulated crack sales in their neighborhood for five years, was the terror of inner city Columbus. "This gang was a cancer on the city's North Side, it turned neighborhoods virtually into war zones," a federal judge said of the SNP. But neighborhood residents begged to differ. They remembered a clique that sought to protect them from outside exploitation. "The Short North Posse held it down for Short North, period." Says one longtime resident. "They didn't let no outsiders run our streets, let alone set up shop."*





Let's go back to the 80's and take a look at the North side of Columbus, a place called the Short North and explore the reasons for the formation of the Short North Posse.

"I knew that area forever. We called it the Short." A Columbus native we'll call the local says, "In Columbus the area goes from 1st Avenue to 11th Avenue. The reason we call it the Short is because of the street numbers. It only goes from 1 to 11. As soon as you leave out of downtown that's where the Short North is, north of downtown. The Ohio State campus is right there. The campus is right in the hood." Columbus is a huge city, 210 square miles, in comparison all five boroughs of New York are only 230 square miles, so imagine all that space. Columbus is three times the size of Cleveland and within that 210 square miles are 800,000 people. That's just the city itself, not including the suburbs. Short North is a real small area within the city but it has a rich history. "The Short has been off the hook since the 60's." The local says. 4th and 8th was in the Wall Street Journal as a top 10 toughest street corners in America and eventually reached number one before 1986. The roots of gansterism grew deep in the Short and the Posse were just continuing a long standing tradition.

"It's a rough area. You got to be strapped." The local says. "If somebody got shot over there the police would take forever to respond. There was a lot of prostitution, a lot of crack houses. It was all row houses. The main drag was Street and 8th Avenue was like the main area in Short North. There was a bar called The Eighth Avenue Lounge, a hangout for cutthroats and killers. On 4th and 11th Avenue there was a little Arab store where everyone congregated. They hung out at the payphones and the parking lot. People would pull up and bullshit. That's the border of Short North."

The Columbus Dispatch reported that the Short North Posse allegedly formed in 1989 in the Short North area of Columbus, Ohio to control local sales of cocaine base by excluding from the area drug dealers who were not residents of the Short North. They allegedly terrorized the 42 block neighborhood bordering the Ohio State University area for up to six years. The violent prone youngsters began selling crack cocaine and firearms in August 1989 in an area bounded by East 11th Avenue, Grant Avenue, 5th Avenue and North High Street. They used cellular phones and pagers to communicate. Much of the gang's drug dealing occurred along North 4th Street between 7th and 9th Avenues. Other sites were near a Certified gasoline station at Summit Street and 11th Avenue and a Kroger store on North High Street.

The Posse's unofficial headquarters was Kelly's carryout at 1521 North 4th Street. Its social club was the Golden Eight Ball pool hall at 222 East 11th Avenue. An illegal after-hours bar called the Juke Joint on East 9th Avenue between Grant Avenue and North 6th served as the gang's

distribution center where they could pick up cocaine and guns to sell in the neighborhood. "The name Short North Posse, it was a bunch of kids, but they went hard. They handled their business." The local says. "There's always been Crips there, then Folks came. The SNP was mainly Crips and Folks."

The Posse formed in 1989 after a friend was shot in a drug trafficking incident. Robert "June" Dotson and Marshon Mays decided to band together to form a group that would offer protection to its members in the area directly north of downtown Columbus. They began selling crack on the north side in the 42 block area south of East 11th Avenue.



Row Houses on 8th Avenue

It was nothing new. Crack had hit southern Ohio in 1984. But the youngsters coming up wanted to do it their way. Dotson and Mays then came up with the name Short North Posse to describe their clique. Gang members bought hats and shirts with the letters SNP on them and they were on their way. After Therhan Jones was wounded in a shooting by a competing gang the

SNP became even more determined to keep outsiders from their territory. It was a get mine or be mine mentality.

The group of street level dealers were tried and tested. Gangstas ran the retail operation in their hood representing and holding it down for their area. Due to the



government's and media's propaganda several myth's have been perpetrated as truths. As the dude from the area says, "That shit was printed to get them convicted. Myth #1- they didn't terrorize residents. Actually when the feds came in there was a lot of protest from the Short North natives,



# Just like any other hood I was exposed to just about everything from pimping, robbery, the dope game, beat downs, murder but most importantly loyalty. -Ant

young and old, black and white. Myth #2- the Short North Posse did not rob people. They were gangsta's. It was the crackheads robbing other crackheads. The reality of it is that the SNP are legends in the city for being real dudes, not bitch ass niggas." From their inception the SNP aspired to protect their hood and to prevent anyone from outside the Short North from selling crack in the neighborhood.

"Most of those Short North dudes were gangbangers," the local says. "A lot of weed, everybody was smoking that weed. They was on the corners hanging. You couldn't go up in there. They lived up in the row houses with their baby mamas. They were young boys, but they held it down. They were like baby gangstas. The dudes that had the biggest names were Trouble, Ant and Fridge." They were the dudes in the Short North that were getting big props at that time. Those were the names that were ringing. And because of our reputation in the streets those are the dudes the F.E.D.S talked to.

## What was the Short North Posse about?

**Lamont "Fridge" Needum:** I love my hood til this day. Short North, Just saying the noun makes me want to throw four fingers in the air. Anyone fortunate enough to be there in its glory will tell you ain't nothing like it. I honestly think the place is haunted.

**Anthony "Ant" Gibbs:** The Short North Posse was a group of people that all grew up in the same neighborhood and went to the same school coming up.

**Fridge:** Short North is the shortest part of the north side coming off of downtown. Columbus is the largest city in Ohio. Columbus is full of all the things that make cities pop, but the mentality of Columbians is- you can come, kick it, then you better get the fuck out.

**Ant:** It was like a well net family that didn't take no shit from anybody and always had each others back no matter what. We took care of our own whether they were nine months old or 99 years-old. We were one big family.

## What types of things were you exposed to growing up in that neighborhood?

**Fridge:** Regular hood shit but if an old person wanted to walk the streets of the Short at midnight for no apparent reason they were free to do so and nobody better not fuck with them, that's how it went down. It was beautiful to see black men standing for one love and one hood.

**Ant:** Just like any other hood I was exposed to just about everything from pimping, robbery, the dope game, beat downs, murder but most importantly loyalty.

Fridge, Ant and their crew were from the old school of thought. They didn't disrespect old folks or mess with kids. They protected their own. The youngsters banded together and went to war with outsiders to keep their hood sucker

free. It wasn't a matter of selling crack, making money or none of that, although that played a part, it was more about neighborhood pride, representing to the fullest and holding it down for everyone that lived there.

It was about holding down the neighborhood but then again it was about so much more. "They was young and thuggin' like a muthafucka," the local says. "It was money, cash, hoes but more than anything they was violent niggas." And their violence was directed at any fools blatant enough to try to sell crack in their hood. The dudes from Detroit, Indiana and other places all tried to muscle in and set up shop but they were all sent running. Short North didn't bow to anyone.

**Fridge:** If you brought your ass into the Short to put your goon hand down that ass was toast, no exceptions. Our turf was our domain. My old ass will always rep the Short side of town for life. I'm not the same guy I was before. As you grow, your priorities shift, but surviving the bloody years of the Short makes me a strong man. Short North for life.

**Ant:** My mentality was shit first and eat later. I was just one of them laid back niggas that you didn't cross.

## What kind of clothes, footwear, whips were you all rocking?

**Fridge:** I know folks read this interview to hear about cars and jewels and bitches and shit, but I can't find it in my heart to come with that. Those are merely the residuals of the game. What I loved more than anything was the Short North, the unity amongst its people, young and old, black and white.

**Ant:** Back then there wasn't really a dress code, but you could find niggas rocking Polo, Tommy, Coogi, Guess, Nautica, Gucci, Nike shoes, Bally's, Tims, Gators. Really you could find a nigga in just about everything that was in style back then. New cars, Vets, Iroc's, old schools, Benz's, Lex's, Regals, Caddies, Monte Carlos. When we roll, you knew it was us.

**Fridge:** Styles haven't really changed over the last 15 years, cause young niggas just do what we did with more glitter. We had all the flash, but it's so lame now. That shit is outdated and overrated. The things that impress me are integrity, proper displays of valor, little black kids striving to be great, real love, not that canned shit.

"There was a lot of hype. They started making noise in 1990," the local says. "All you would really hear was its getting wild over there. Fourth and 8th was where shit was jumping off and shit could get violent real quick." Dudes were known to get robbed too. In the first month of the probe into the Short North Posse's activities Rodney Russell, an undercover agent from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms allegedly was robbed

at gunpoint by Fridge who was 18 at the time. Fridge allegedly walked out of an apartment and pointed a Tec-9 semiautomatic pistol loaded with a 32 round clip at Russell's head and cocked it.

But locals dispute this. That's the government and media lie they say. What they sold to the masses to create a media storm that assured the SNP would be assumed guilty until proven innocent. "The biggest myth created by the feds in the whole case is that the ATF agent got robbed," the dude from the era relates. "Rodney Russell was a crack head who smoked up all the feds money and then started lying about being robbed to conceal his smoking activities. That dude was dirty. I was there. He was smoking." And in his crack induced haze the agent invented a robbery scenario and pinned it on Fridge.

"At first I thought he was going to try and sell it to me. Then he pointed it at my head and put his hand on my shoulder. This guy weighs over 300 pounds." Russell said. For a few tense seconds Russell said he believed that Fridge was going to kill him. "I thought someone had tipped him off that I was an undercover agent and I was finished." Russell said creating the scenario for the papers. He said later that he kept his hand on his gun, which was hidden beneath his untucked flannel shirt, throughout the incident to portray himself as the cool ATF agent under pressure.

"You're too busy thinking about your options to be afraid," Russell said "I didn't want to take him down. I was thinking if I shoot this guy now it's all over. We'd have to shut down the investigation." To hear Russell tell it he kept his cool and allowed Fridge to lift more than \$400 from his shirt pocket. But the dude from the era tells a different story. "Fridge sold the agent crack at his spot but he didn't rob nobody. The niggas like 350 pounds.

Nobody looks like him, why would he rob somebody at his own spot. All Fridge did was snatch dudes shirt pocket off because he saw a list with beeper numbers sticking out. He thought dude was five-O and wanted to see whose beeper numbers he had. "The biggest mistake they made was robbing him. That made him more determined than ever to get these guys." But was it all done under a crack induced haze of an investigation?

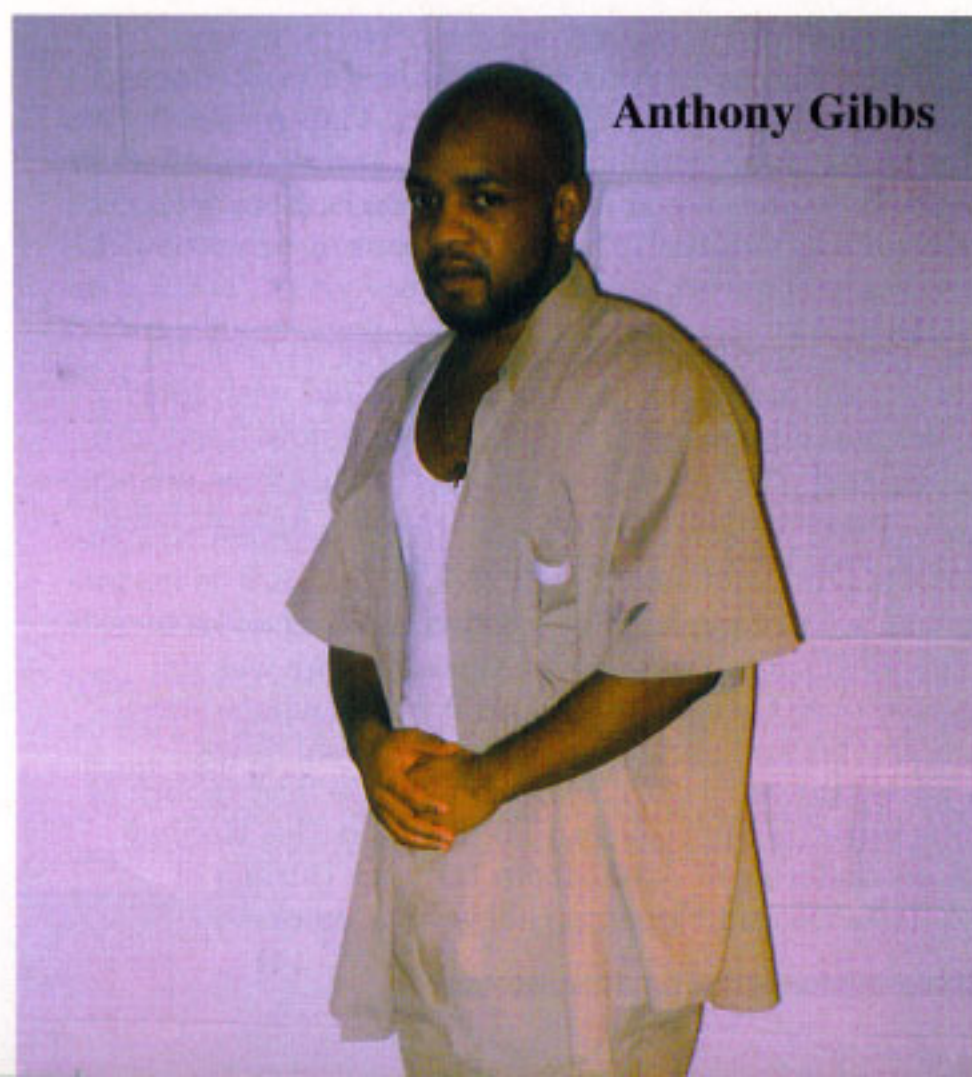
The state and federal governments continued conducting their extensive undercover investigation with Agent Rodney Russell of the ATF leading it. Russell prowled some



of the meanest streets of the North side, making almost 100 drug buys from Posse gang members. From April 1994 until March 1995 Russell bought \$40,000 in cocaine from Posse dealers and smoked a lot of it. "These guys are very aggressive," Commander Nick Panzera of the Columbus Narcotics Bureau said. "We're supposed to target the most violent offenders. We key in on quality targets, the armed career criminals and narcotic traffickers. We're finding more and more drug dealers are involved in street robberies and sometimes we are the victims of these rip-offs." And the feds found it was hard to identify SNP members because they all went by street names.

"Street names allow them to remain anonymous. They cause a bit of a problems for us identifying people." ATF Chief Mapley said. The dealers rarely used their real names and matching nicknames with actual identities often took months of investigation. Still the ATF persevered. With one of their own allegedly robbed at gunpoint they weren't giving up at all. "It's a macho thing with some of them. We found out Antwan Woods was known as Trouble and he tried to live up to that name. Lamont Needum was known as Fridge because he was as large as a refrigerator." ATF Chief Mapley said. But in truth the ATF chief had it wrong. The local corrects him. "That name was given to Fridge out of respect by his niggas because of his athletic abilities. He got that name when he was nine."

Police and federal agents were intent on smashing the



Short North Posse though despite the obstacles. Actually they went after them with a fever. And the youngsters made it easy for them by wearing SNP t-shirts and hats that included the language 'Death Row' and 'Caps get peeled' along with images of tombstones and references to shootings, openly in their hood. Because being a member of the gang was an honor in the hood. The SNP thought they had everything on lock but the feds had other ideas.

"These guys are well aware of what they're involved in. If they're going to use guns and we find out about them, they're looking at a severe hit." ATF Chief Mapley said. "When it goes federal they're in for a big shock. This isn't state court. If they don't like the sentences that are being handed out they need to find another vocation." At one point in the investigation an associate of the SNP identified Russell as a federal agent but by that time he had been buying drugs from the gang for 10 months. Everybody thought he was just another crack head. "They didn't know whether to believe their own informant." Russell smirked. During one cocaine buy Big Fridge became suspicious of Russell. He asked the undercover agent, "Are you a cop?" But Russell didn't answer. Fridge turned to the crack addict who had introduced Russell to Posse members, "If he's a cop, I know where you live." But by the time the SNP found out for certain it was too late. The crackhead agent had enough info to get them indicted.

Authorities found a cache of handguns in a September 1994 raid at Woods' home at 690 East 4th Avenue and they confiscated many semiautomatic handguns and assault rifles during their investigations along with all the buys that Russell made. On March 23, 1995 a federal grand jury charged 46 people with a total of 210 federal charges of drug dealing, money laundering and illegal use of guns. The newspapers up the ante with a series of headlines portraying the Short North Posse as vicious thugs and hoodlums who terrorized their neighborhood. But in reality it was much different. "The Dispatch disrespected the shit out of those kids. Those kids are stand up niggas. They held it down and stayed true.

46 Face Federal Drug Charges; Lawmen Round Up Reputed Short North Posse Members, The Columbus Dispatch reported on March 21, 1995. They were arrested at night and morning raids on North Side bars, houses,

apartments and street corners. The raids were conducted by the Columbus police, U.S. Deputy Marshals and agents for the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. The arrested were held without bail in the Franklin County jail. The arrest capped a one year investigation by local and federal undercover officers.

### Tell us about the indictment and trial?

**Fridge:** It takes a conspiracy to create one and no one is better at doing that than the feds. Our problem was that we were too close to Ohio State University. In 1993 an ugly incident took place. With all the shit popping in the hood it was the proverbial straw that broke the camels back. O.S.U. is Columbus. Something had to be done. First my cousin Jason (RIP) was killed in an accident in the Short, he was a linebacker at O.S.U. and then this. The powers that be had to show they were in control. That coupled with the visions of the prosperous and the Department of Justice's mission to fill prisons under the Clinton Administration made us prime targets. Rather than find the sick motherfucker they decided to give 46 young black dudes over 300 years in prison. Everyone from the judge to the then mayor (Greg Lashtuka) were state alums.

**Ant:** Our case is really about politics. It's a long story that Fridge touched



Lamont "Fridge" Needam

on. The police needed a scapegoat so they sacrificed 46 blacks to kill two birds with one stone, so it was fucked up. I'm a drug dealer, so I knew I was guilty. The reason why I went to trial is to see if them hot ass niggas had the heart to look a nigga in the eyes while they testified and they had the heart. I couldn't do nothing but grit and nod my head.

### Tell us how you felt at trial?

**Fridge:** A black person should stand up every time they get the opportunity. Our lack of stick-to-it-ness is why we

have no rights in federal court. A two point reduction for a selected few is not justice. People are being indicted for five grams of crack and being sentenced to life

**Ant:** My hearing was fucked up. My PSI officer lied about the amount of drugs to boost my time, so they gave me 353 months. I was 19 at the time, so I didn't think it was too bad until I went back to my cell and did the math.

Authorities described the Posse as one of the most vicious gangs in Columbus history. "When this happened it was big news," the local says. "The news kept running stories about the SNP, hyping things up. The news was calling the SNP a violent drug dealing gang that could only be handled by the feds." And one of the stories circulating in Columbus concerned the feds take down of Vickie Stringer's drug ring, which precipitated the SNP's fall.

Testimony during Vickie Stringer's plea hearing revealed that her ring supplied cocaine for several Columbus area gangs, including the Short North Posse. Testimony during the plea hearing revealed that dealers bought large amounts of crack from Vickie Stringer's smuggling ring and then sold the drugs to Posse street dealers. Stringer had already pleaded guilty to smuggling drugs to Columbus from New York. Terms of her plea bargain required her to testify as a government witness against members of her own ring and defendants in the Posse case.

"For six years, this gang was terrorizing the neighborhood, spewing drugs on our streets," U.S. Attorney Edmund Sargas said. "We were able to take action against them because of the high level of cooperation among law enforcement agencies. The deals were made often in broad daylight, in apartments and outside of commercial establishments. The Short North Posse literally took over the neighborhood with violence." The government alleged that the goal of the group was to prevent anyone not living in the Short North from selling cocaine base there without permission. The government contended the SNP achieved this goal through threats and intimidation. The bulk of the government's evidence would consist of testimony from cooperating witnesses, most of whom were alleged members of the SNP who had pleaded guilty and turned snitch.

The gang that stuck together to protect the neighborhood fell apart when the feds came after them and started talking football numbers. "The feds started picking all the kids up," the local says. "We thought it was hype. The feds do large neighborhood sweeps in Columbus about every other year. But this time they were serious." And armed with their snitches their game plan was tight, 46 suspects were indicted in the SNP drug dealing case but fewer than a dozen went on trial. A rash of guilty pleas kept most of the alleged members and associates of the North Side gang from appearing in the first floor courtroom of U.S. District Judge George C. Smith. Thirty-six Posse defendants pled guilty to a variety of drug and firearm related charges and a big majority of them turned snitch. Among those that stood up to face the charges were Antwan "Trouble" Woods, Lamont "Fridge" Needum, Chad "Boss Moss" Gibbs, Anthony "Ant" Gibbs, Robert Curtis, Donnetto Berry, Richard "Manual" Hough and Jimmie Reed.

The most significant pleas came from Therhan Jones, a reputed leader of the gang and Raynard Wallace one of the gang's cocaine suppliers. Terms of their plea agreements required both men to appear as government witnesses in the trial. Jones oversaw much of the gang's day-to-day drug dealing, authorities said and Wallace brought large amounts of crack cocaine from Detroit and sold it to Posse

members. Antwan Woods, another reputed leader of the gang maintained his innocence and went to trial. He was charged with seven felonies, including drug trafficking and firearm charges. Lamont Needum was charged with

8 felonies, including three gun charges. The most serious of which was his alleged robbery of the ATF agent who spurred on the case.

The government would argue that the SNP was a drug conspiracy. The defendants conceded that they were street level crack dealers but contended that the SNP was merely a neighborhood identification of a loose-nit group of friends and acquaintances, most of whom grew up in the Short North area. The guilty pleas left eight Posse defendants-charged with a total of 43 counts- to stand trial. The trial, which would last 6 weeks, commenced on September 27, 1995. Sixteen Deputy Marshals and courtroom security officers were assigned to provide security in the federal courtroom in Columbus.

Federal prosecutors laid out their case. They contended that the Posse had a monopoly on crack cocaine sales for six years in the 42-block area of the North Side called the Short North. Several members of the gang were making up to \$10,000 profit every three days, agents testified. "They provided services 24 hours a day, seven days a week," AUSA Salvador Dominguez said. He displayed scores of items of evidence including bags of crack, wads of money, gang t-shirts, and plenty of guns. Most of the bags of crack that Dominguez held up for the jury to view were worth only \$30 to \$50. "Crumbs of crack, perhaps," AUSA Dominguez said. "But guns are a part of crack dealing." The guns and drugs had been confiscated in raids on homes of some Posse members when they were arrested after the indictments. Other relevant evidence came from undercover officers, SNP members turned snitch and non-SNP drug dealers or users.

"It was easy money, quick and fast," Robert "June" Dotson testified. As to the origins of the gang he explained how his friend got robbed. "We decided we're not going to let that happen again. We were going to stay together and protect each other." Asked by AUSA Dominguez what would happen to outside drug dealers who invaded Posse territory Dotson said, "They'd get beat up, robbed. If you didn't know nobody you weren't allowed out there." The gang had no leaders and did not hold regular meetings, Dotson said. However members of the gang "did get together for informal discussions." Also hatreds within the gang were put aside if a Posse member was threatened or got into trouble. "If anything happened to somebody you'd pull together even if you didn't like him" Dotson testified. Dotson's most damaging testimony was that he saw seven of the defendants selling drugs in the North 4th Street area between 11th and 5th Avenues.

Quinton "Q Dog" Clausell testified but was vague about the times and locations of the defendants alleged narcotics dealing. Andrew Jackson though gave the most detailed description yet of cocaine selling by the defendants on trial in the case. Jackson named seven of the eight defendants standing trial as regular drug dealers in the area. Clausell told of beating people up. "I take it out on them. It all depends on how I feel. I beat them down." Q Dog testified. Prosecutors stressed how guns played an important part in the Short North also. George Miller a 32-year-old crack addict testified that Antwan Woods brandished guns regularly. While complaining about police harassing his drug customers, Woods once pulled a handgun from his pants and said he was sick of police hassling "my clientele," Miller told the seven women, five man jury. Woods not only



# Fortysix years and one month, I got one year for myself and one for all my co-defendants in what was the biggest gang conspiracy in Columbus history. -Fridge

supplied Posse members with crack cocaine but also offered to sell them guns, George "Gee" Gladden a Posse dealer testified. Gladden said Woods offered to sell him firearms as they talked on an apartment porch along North 4th Street. "He would come to me and tell me, 'I got the guns you need,'" Gee testified.

Posse members didn't have any compunction about selling drugs near elementary schools, Jeremiah "Boogy" Berger, an 18-year-old former Posse member testified. He saw Hough selling crack across the street from Weinland Park Elementary at 211 East 7th Avenue, Berger said. A prosecution witness also recanted his testimony and said that federal authorities pressured him into lying about drug dealing activities by three defendants in the Short North Posse case. Defense attorneys said the surprise remarks of Reginald "Froggie" Crenshaw in U.S. District Court threw doubt on the testimony of the other government witnesses. "When you testified about Donneto Berry, did you lie?" Asked attorney George Luther. "Yes, sir," Crenshaw replied. He gave similar answers to questions from attorneys for Reed and Hough. Luther also asked the witness, "You would have said anything they wanted you to say, wouldn't you?" Crenshaw answered, "Yes, I had to say something. I was pressured for the whole testimony. I had no choice."

Lawyers for the defendants argued that the SNP was not a gang and they claimed more importantly it was not a drug conspiracy. There was no distribution network, hierarchy of leadership or organization of members. The different members of the SNP claimed to have sold their drugs independently of one another, choosing their own locations, price points and working hours. Dennis Belli, Woods' attorney said Woods grew up with many of the defendants and even considered some of them his friends, "but mere association doesn't make a conspiracy." While some of the defendants were friends others didn't like each other, Belli said. "They engaged in turf wars," he told the jury. "There was no particular leader. There was no chain of command." Judge George C. Smith dismissed a total of seven charges against five defendants; Woods Needum, Reed, Curtis and Chad Gibbs, but they still faced a total of 25 counts.

"We've all heard stories about dope being used by everyone from three and 4-year-olds to grandmothers in the Short North side," Steven Brown, Reeds attorney said. "But don't hump all the evidence together." He slammed the prosecution for putting a witness on the stand who testified about Posse members being involved in drug dealing and who later, as a defense witness, recanted his testimony. "Who are you going to believe government witnesses or government witnesses?" Brown asked. Judge Smith ruled that the jury should determine which version of testimony

given by Reginald "Froggie" Crenshaw to believe.

After deliberating for nearly five days on November 8, 1995, the jury convicted seven members of the SNP on 34 drug dealing and gun charges. One defendant, Jimmie Reed, was acquitted. The defendants showed little emotion as the guilty verdicts were read. The judge characterized the Posse as one of the most dangerous gangs in Columbus' history. U.S. Attorney Edmund Sargas praised the ATF and the Columbus Police Narcotics Bureau for their joint investigation. "The convictions say a lot about good solid police work, it shows by working together we can make the community safer."

A federal judge imposed the stiffest prison sentences possible on the members of the SNP in April of 1996. The defendants were convicted by jury in the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Ohio, George C. Smith presiding, of conspiracy, drug trafficking and firearms offenses. "This was a street gang that was a plague on the community," the judge said. "They made life in the area unlivable. It is astounding to me the young age that some of you started dealing drugs. The brutality of threatening the life of an agent who was putting his life on the line in the war on drugs is intolerable." The judge was livid and hell-bent for retribution on the SNP.

"The sentence, forty-six years and one month," Fridge says. "I got a year for myself and one for all my co-defendants in what was the biggest gang conspiracy in Columbus history." Anthony "Ant" Gibbs was sentenced to 29 years 5 months, Antwan "Trouble" Woods to 40 years, Richard "Manual" Hough to 22 years 6 months, Chad "Boss Moss" Gibbs to 33 years, Robert Curtis to 17 years and Donneto Berry to 10 years one month. "This is an indictment on the whole criminal justice system," George Luther, Berry's attorney said. "My client was a low level participant. This is an example of how the guidelines have disproportionately required judges to impose lengthy sentences that don't fit the crime. All these sentences do is warehouse these young men. You can't warehouse people and expect it to make a difference in the country's drug problem." But the war on drugs was in full effect and exerted its full force on the SNP.

**Fridge:** "The gig was up. None of us really cared. Growing up in the projects was like growing up in prison. All my dudes were in with me so it was like my high school reunion on steroids. At six-foot-four and with a top-billing reputation in the streets and the joint, crying was not an option. My niggas expect better of me and I demand class of myself. We went to trial with an Ohio All Star defense team. We chopped their asses up, but nobody talks about

that. Nobody talks about the good we done." The feds were only spinning it one way. They wanted the SNP to go down and go down hard. They didn't care about the community the SNP protected.

"Clearly people are getting fed up with violent crime. The judge sent a clear message, if you're going to pick up a gun and use it in a violent crime, its going to be the biggest mistake of your life." ATF Chief Mapley said. "The sentences were appropriate," U.S. Attorney Sargus said. "The defendants were convicted of having played substantial parts in the conspiracy with a high level of personal involvement." And ATF Chief Mapley added, "If you don't warehouse them, they'll be back out on the streets doing the same thing. The money is too fast and easy." But justice would prevail at least to a point for the SNP, the sentences wouldn't stand.

Members of Drug Dealing Gang to Spend Less Time Behind Bars, The Columbus Dispatch reported on March 16, 2000. The stiff sentences imposed on seven members of the SNP were reduced because of a ruling by a federal appeals panel. The judges reversed a total of 12 convictions while upholding 21. The three-judge panel of the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati found, "with respect to the other defendants the government's evidence proved simply that these defendants independently sold a lot of drugs.

"The case was bogus, I always thought they'd get some relief from the court/appeals." The local says. "It was a trumped up drug conspiracy. You know how the feds do. They twist shit however it suits them." Antwan Woods Attorney Dennis Belli said of the rulings, "It appears to be a general repudiation of the government's theory that simply because individuals are selling drugs in a certain neighborhood that they're engaged in an organized conspiracy." The appeals judges ordered Judge Smith to re-sentence the seven SNP members.

#### **Tell us about the re-sentence?**

**Fridge:** April 1999, two days before my birthday. I received a precious gift. The Dispatch announced that we had won our appeal. We all knew the conspiracy was pretty much a stunt. Shoot, three months grinding it out in trial proved that. I'm thinking new trial, but they didn't grant a new trial. They re-sentenced me to 27 years.

**Ant:** The re-sentencing was cool, because I got the chance to see the posse again. We had beat the conspiracy along with a couple other charges, but we still got fucked. I was re-sentenced to 248 months.

His co-defendants got similar cuts. Hough to 19 years, Woods to 33, Curtis to 8, Boss Moss to 19 and Berry to 8. It was a victory but the defendants wanted more and they appealed to the judge who rejected their motions for leniency. "You were part of one of the most odious groups of criminals ever to exist in Franklin County." The judge said. "The only thing the system can do is keep people like you off the streets as long as possible. You spread a slow death to many members of the community through your dreadful drugs."

Big Fridge benefited the most because his gun convictions were overturned. The appeal judges ruled that Needum's gun conviction be reversed because the weapon was not used in connection with drug dealing. The alleged armed robbery of the ATF undercover agent occurred after the

drug sale. The feds were outraged. ATF Chief Mapley said, "This definitely undercuts the dangerous job Rodney Russell did. I'm shocked and dismayed." The feds couldn't leave it alone either. "Two weeks later the feds called in a favor from the state and had them drop an indictment on me." Fridge says.

Needum was charged with aggravated robbery, robbery kidnapping and unlawful possession of a dangerous ordnance by Franklin County Common Pleas Court. "We want to make sure that he is in prison for as long as possible because we consider him a dangerous man," Assistant County Prosecutor David DeVillers said. Talk about vindictive prosecution and what about double jeopardy? "If a prosecutor is going to press charges he isn't suppose to wait to see if you're going to win the appeal five years later," Fridge says. Fridge was facing fifteen to twenty-five years in the state. That is Amerikkan justice there, but it seems only to apply to people of color. Fridge ended up copping out to three years, so in reality the case was really weak. The state knew the testimony of the crackhead ATF agent wouldn't hold up.

And as the Short North Posse members rotted in federal prison they watched as the unrighteous made money and fame off of their blood. With the release of Let That Be the Reason and the founding of Triple Crown Publications Vickie Stringer turned her life around after five years of prison and became rich and famous. After snitching Vickie Stringer was sentenced to five years in the feds. She wrote her book in prison.

Vickie Stringer got busted in September 1994 and agreed to plead guilty and testify against others even her brother in exchange for reduced charges, the Columbus Dispatch reported. "Stringers information was found to be accurate and was corroborated by other confidential cooperating sources and independent investigation," authorities said. "Everyone at the crib our own age knows what the deal is with her," the dude from the era says. But people in other cities don't. When in reality the real gangsters, that she snitched on, are sitting in the penitentiary while she profits off their stories. And imagine how the dudes from the Short North Posse case felt doing decades of their lives in the pen as the person who caused their case to come about rocketed to hood rich and street star status off of their blood.

#### **Tell us about Vickie Stringer and what happened with your case?**

**Fridge:** Our case started a domino effect. Lames far and wide jumped on our case in an attempt to reduce their sentences. People lied about being our connects or getting dope from us or something to get a time reduction. Many of them couldn't identify us in a lineup, but the first to tell can tell their own stories. I've stopped talking to homies because they mess with certain hot niggas and figure its cool, because they didn't tell on us. Rats are spineless and their supporters are just as spineless.

**Ant:** Cases are like sequels to a book series, because one case leads you to the next. Because Rob Brondon got caught and he told on Vickie Stringer, she tell on niggas on her case, my case along with niggas on other cases. The shit goes on and on. A rat is a rat. There's no justifying that. Now, the rats on our case most of them was niggas that brought me to the



game.

**Fridge:** I'll acknowledge the facts, but we're not rappers. Real niggas don't broadcast their business. Yeah, she bogus, yeah, he bogus, but that's all I got to say. A warning to all those who may come into contact with so and so, but that's it. That's how real niggas operate.

On January 17, 2002, the appeals court ruled that SNP members could not get their prison sentences reduced a second time. So that was it, the gig was up. Appeal Judges Guy Cole, Karen Nelson Moore and John O'Meara decided one sentence reduction was enough.

#### Closing thoughts?

**Fridge:** It's well known that we were not a threat to the university or our hood. We're old school, we respected the turf. Yet they still caved in our little community, but there are reasons behind this that blacks aren't looking at. It's as easy as killing three birds with one stone. In the Clinton years he was responsible for the cleanup of NAFTA. All the factory jobs were pouring out of the country, but many of those jobs were replaced with prison industries, especially in rural areas. Blacks fill up those prisons. So here you have it. You indict whole neighborhoods of black males that are getting a little money, make them face doing life or telling on everyone they know, which causes a split in the unity forever. My legacy is as of yet unfulfilled.

incarceration is castration. HIV and Aids will take care of the rest. The state of black America is scary. But still I'm gonna be who I am. I slay dragons not talk them to death. Nobody cares about a grown ass man, which is what I am. They want to worship hot niggas and shit. I say let them have it. Niggas like us need to worry about one thing and that's gathering real niggas. Connecting game on a boss level and wiping clean what you can when you can. I got to mention my man Sherman "Sugar Shack" Giles. Sherm is one of those real niggas that got out the way and didn't roll his tongue. He was a big boy on the turf who chose to hold true. Much respect to him and all my other comrades. Real soldiers who go hard these days are a rare breed. I'm honored to associate with niggas on this level.

**Ant:** I've ran into a lot of good niggas that may never touch the streets again, so I would like to send respect to them- the posse, Big Fridge, Trouble, Richie Rich, Boss Hog, Sherman, Gangsta, Crusher, Dan Dan, Tom Cat, Styles P, Too Short, Mike G, Sneaky Lord, Soup (Cuz), those Ohio Playas, Creed, Philly, Man, M and M, Bones, Cheeze and last but not least Larry B.H. and all the rest of the real niggas that took one on the chin and is still standing. Real eyes recognize real lies. Loyalty ain't everything, it's the only thing. Death before Dishonor.



**Ant:** Well, being that only eight of us took it to the box out of 46 I would say that we are respected and looked up to by few. The reason why I say a few is because if you are from a city that is filled with about 80 to 90 percent of hot snitch ass niggas what can we expect. Few stick to the street code, but a lot of them break like sticks.

#### How would you like to end this?

**Fridge:** Look around. Projects are being destroyed left and right. The trap I grew up in has trees and gates and shit, and at the bottom of the Short is \$100,000 to \$300,000 condos with more to come. Incarceration reduces the black population, because

