

Middle-Class Thugs

Written by Wayne Dawkins ID647
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The late Russell Tyrone Jones, 35, embarrassed his dad, the so-called fisherman, at fishing, said his father William.

William Jones, 61, told a reporter from the Daily Press of Newport News, Va. about his son, who was widely known as eccentric hip-hop rap star ODB.

ODB, aka Old Dirty Bastard of the Wu Tang Clan, died accidentally on Nov. 13 in a recording studio after consuming cocaine and the painkiller Tramadol, said the New York City Medical Examiner. ODB's colorful performing career included prison time for drug possession and time spent in drug rehab.

Other colorful parts of ODB's career were claims he was a rough dude from the 'hood.

Fake, the mourning dad who sired the real Russell Jones told the newspaper.

Dad lives in a suburban-like neighborhood of Newport News, and the local paper was more receptive to his claims that his late son was a hip-hop poseur, contrary to what music trade magazines published in New York.

"You know, that story about him being raised in the Fort Greene [Brooklyn] projects on welfare until he was a child of 13 was a total lie," said Jones in the story published on Monday. "When I read it in the Vibe magazine a few years ago, my other son was here from the Navy. He said, 'Daddy, did you see this story?'"

"I was furious. I tried to get in touch with the guy who wrote the story, but all I got was a tape for two weeks. So finally I called my wife.

"She said, 'Look, I know you're upset.' She said, "Your son did that for publicity.'

"I said, 'Wow, As hard as we worked.'"

Yeah. Daddy Jones returned to his native Virginia and is retired from the New York City Transit Authority. His ex-wife, Cherry Jones, was a police department dispatcher. Jones said their son grew up in a reasonably stable two-parent, two-income home in Brooklyn.

I recognized that lifestyle. My younger brother and wife are civil servants and live in a house in Brooklyn that's full of kids. And many of my homies from Bedford-Stuyvesant became cops, sanitation workers and correctional officers after an adolescence of playing basketball and hanging out on the street ended.

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Oh, yeah – a lot of them were wild when they were young. Then they settled down, went to work and raised families.

Truth be told, ODB was doing the same: taking care of a wife and kids as Russell Jones.

“To the public, he was known as Old Dirty Bastard,” his mom told the BBC, “but to me he was known as Rusty, the kindest, most generous soul on earth.”

That reality, however, does not enable hip-hop notoriety.

As ODB, Russell “Rusty” Jones had to behave outrageously to succeed. Now, a talented entertainer is dead and not here for his family at Christmastime because of reckless living. That’s a shame.

Midwestern rapper MC Breed wisely warned in his 1991 hit, “There ain’t no future in your frontin’.” And unfortunately ODB’s fronting recalled another hip-hop poseur from a decade ago.

Lichelle “Boss” Laws seemed to be the most gangsta of girl gangstas. She posed with automatic weapons, bragged that she did prison time and claimed she was from the hard-knock streets of Detroit.

Fake, exclaimed her parents.

Lichelle was a good girl who they put through private school and enrolled in college in suburban Detroit. Her parents, an auto worker dad and schoolteacher mom, wanted her to be an achiever, but Lichelle Laws became enamored with gangsta hip-hop culture.

That’s not necessarily bad. What’s odious is what industry people told her she had to do to succeed. Producers “were telling us that we didn’t curse enough,” Laws told Brett Pulley, then of The Wall Street Journal, the brotha reporter who exposed her as a perpetrator in 1994. Laws and her female partner pumped up their act with profanity; they were a hit for minute, then they faded into obscurity.

Fortunately, and unlike ODB, Laws did not get killed or seriously injured while posing as a gangsta. However, she caused her parents a lot of pain. They were trying to offer a better life and lead by example, and their daughter rejected that.

William Jones, ODB’s dad, fondly recalled taking his sons fishing off Rockaway, N.Y. Dad could reel in porgies and bluefish, but he could never catch the blackfish like his son the future rapper. Young Russell would rib him about that.

I bet Dad wished his son was here at this cherished family time of year.

Parents, don’t give up. Cajole, lecture and plead that these ubiquitous hardcore media images remain largely gross fictions that occasionally become realistically lethal.

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