

City University of New York (CUNY)

CUNY Academic Works

Capstones

Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism

Winter 12-15-2017

Only The Strong Live

Dewayne Gage

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gj_etds/243

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).
Contact: AcademicWorks@cuny.edu

Treatment

By: Dewayne Gage

Only The Strong Live

Background

Rikers Island is well known for abuse, corruption and a culture of violence. On March 31, Mayor Bill de Blasio vowed to close Rikers Island. “New York City is at the forefront both of ending mass incarceration and reducing crime,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio. “We are building a correctional system that is smaller, safer, and fairer—one in which jails are safe and humane.”

Cadeem Gibbs, 26, is a product of the trauma many face at Rikers Island. He spent two years in Rikers Island, one of those years in solitary confinement at Rikers, and four years in upstate prison. Since being released in 2013, Gibbs has spoken on panels about his experience and worked toward reform at Rikers Island. After spending a majority of his life incarcerated, Gibbs feels that his sole purpose is to give back to the youth who are faced with the same conditions he faced as an adolescent. Yet Gibbs is still faced with the challenges of overcoming society’s stereotypes of convicted felons. One of Gibbs’ biggest challenges is at his workplace.

Cadeem Gibbs grew up in Harlem, NY, the middle child to a family of three. His father had a history of incarceration and run-ins with the law. Gibbs even remembers watching the police drag his father out of his home. This is one of only a few memories he has of his father as he left his life at a young age. His mother suffered from drug addiction and Gibbs felt the responsibility to provide for himself and his siblings financially.

Gibbs’ first arrest happened in middle school after being caught with a firearm. After Gibbs’ first arrest, he couldn’t escape the system and he was in and out of juvenile centers until 16, when he was arrested and convicted of attempted robbery.

After Gibbs spent one year in solitary confinement he decided to speak up about his experience on panels and was featured in the film *Rikers: An American Jail*. The film featured a series of men and women who spent time at Rikers Island discussing their traumatic time. The film was raw and uncut.

But this film is focused on the life of Cadeem Gibbs, a glimpse of his past and a lot about the present and how he is dealing with the past as we follow him along his journey of life outside of incarceration. According to the Marshall Project 40 percent of former inmates return to prison within three years of release. After being released in 2013, Gibbs has never been back.

Act I

The film will open up with a shot following Cadeem Gibbs through his home. The audio of Gibbs describing his lifestyle before that lead him to incarcerated to begin the film. While the audio continues, tight shots of Gibbs will appear until the scene changes to Gibbs at work. Gibbs help put together an event as a youth advocate at the Brownsville Community Center. The event was created to empower young women in the program. Shots of the girls jumping rope, playing games, music, etc will appear. The scene will then cut to Gibbs explaining in an interview at the event what the event is all about. This will lead to Gibbs explaining why he believes that working with the youth is so important.

Act I will focus on Gibbs recounting his past. Archival photos will be used while Gibbs' audio describes his early childhood and some of his first run-ins with the law. We then move to another scene where Gibbs is taking us through his old neighborhood. We will then meet Ice, Gibbs' close childhood friend who will describe how life was for them growing up in Harlem. As we continue to walk around his neighborhood people who recognize Gibbs stop and greet him.

End of Act I: Life Incarcerated & Solitary Confinement

The scene will open up with a clip of Gibbs from the film *Rikers: An American Jail*. Act I will end with Gibbs' childhood friend expressing the importance of him doing jail time but coming out even stronger. Then an intimate interview of Gibbs describing life inside at Rikers Island takes place. The interview takes place in a studio, dark lighting. Gibbs will close Act I by speaking on how solitary confinement changed his life for the better.

Act II: Gibbs Personal Life Now

After Gibbs explains how solitary confinement changed his life for the better the film will cut to Gibbs in the car with his fiancé. They are on their way to pick up Kendell from an interview at Target that turned into a job offer. Gibbs and his fiancé discuss in the car ride about how Gibbs didn't have a real job at 16. They also decided to go shopping and at that point we are introduced to Gibbs fiancé. Gibbs and his fiancé shopping at target will serve as b-roll as his fiancé talks about how they first met. Act II will end with Gibbs' fiancé describing his biggest challenges to date, which is work.

Act III: Problems Gibbs Still Face

The final act will open up with clips of Gibbs, his fiancé, and younger brother all speaking on what makes Gibbs experience special, b-roll of photos of Gibbs meeting with social leaders, traveling all over the U.S., etc. The film will end with Gibbs explaining what he overcame and why you shouldn't just jump to conclusion about convicted felons.

Link: <https://youtu.be/oXzigycgH6Y>