

"Create My Own Fresh"

Growing up in a family of nine, my mom couldn't give us a lot. So, I used to have to "Create My Own Fresh" My Aunt died 1987, leaving four children who had different fathers. My mom [rest in peace] did not want them to be separated, so she she took on the responsibility of raising them. This is what made our household one of nine.

Obtaining name brand clothing and shoes like Nike and Guess was out of the question. With nine kids in a single parent home, things were tight! The majority of my clothing came from places like K-Mart, Pickway, or Goodwill. All of the places where kids didn't want their clothes from. My mother simply bought what she could afford.

Being the oldest, things were a little hard for me. For the first seven years of my life I was the only child and spoiled rotten. Needless to say it was hard going from having "Everything" that I wanted to not only having less, but also having to share.

I remember being in the third and fourth grades; I would spend time draw shoes...combining different styles coming up with my own style. It's kinda funny when I look at the shoes people are wearing today, they look a lot like the ones that I was designing as a kid back in the 80's.

By the time I was in my mid teens, things hadn't changed financially for my family. We were still getting getting clothes and shoes from those same places, so in order for me to fit in I would wear some friends' things. Then after school I would return what I had worn then return home wearing the "Sprints" (Shoes) that my mother bought.

The first pair of name brand shoes that my mother bought me was in w992. You talking about a happy kid! The were Nike Air Raid, and when I put them on, my mother thought that she'd have to pry them things off me. I know that it made her feel good to see me happy and I couldn't have been more grateful.

Again, as a kid I used to "Create My Own Fresh" and I was so determined to fit in that I would even try designing my own clothes. I would even take the logos off of the worn out designer clothes from my friends and add them to my newly bought K-Mart gear. I was a mess.

Unfortunately, it was my compulsion and drive to fit in and have nice things led me to selling drugs and gang-banging.

I was the oldest of the children and there was no one around my age that could relate to the things that I was going through, so at times I felt alone. So I looked for attention, recognition and acceptance outside of the home. However, I wanted to be different than the rest of my peers, because I so absolutely loved sticking out. So I would even change or enhance the designer clothes that I bought with the money that I was making.

The attention that I got from what I was wearing was intoxicating. The fact that no one was wearing what I had on and that it was a brand that they recognized was awesome. Everywhere I went there was someone asking me "Where I gotten what I was wearing.?" My response was simple and somewhat cocky; "Don't worry about it. Just know, YOU AIN'T GOT THESE", hence the name.

I had become so accustomed to wearing and redesigning my own clothes and shoes that that it sickened me to have on or be seen wearing what someone else had on.

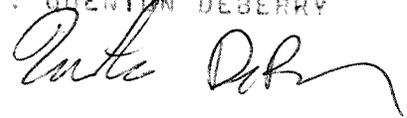
Even though prison has humbled me, my desire to create still drives me. In prison everyone looks the same, not out of desire, but out of force and to simply keep a part of myself alive that I thought would die inside of here, I reverted back to what was safe...where I found me peace as a kid and that was "Creating My Own Fresh!

As a child, creating and designing shoes kept me from being laughed at and left out. Now, as an adult in prison, creating and designing shoes has kept me alive, mentally focused, and out of trouble. It is so easy to get sucked

into the mire of prison, especially after being in here for so long. But creating things that are different and putting smiles on other people's faces has kept my head above water and hope in my heart.

Each and every pair of shoes that I create is a one of a kind design and will "NEVER" be duplicated by me or "ANYONE" else. For that reason, I hope and pray that the shoes that I am entering into this contest brings someone the same kind of joy that I had creating them and when that put them on they can proudly say, "You Ain't Got These!!!"

BY: QUENTON DEBERRY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Quenton Deberry", written in a cursive style.